

SEVEN DECADES OF PAK-CHINA RELATIONSHIP: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract. The mysteries and distorted claims about Pak-China relations have sometimes made it intricate for outside observers to reach an accurate appraisal. The present work aims to engulf multiple dimensions of ties converting into relations then relationship and eventually transforming into friendship between the two unneighborly countries. Ranging the assessment of relations from state to state, society to society and to the common interests of the public' of both countries at large is a pursuit. It traces the history through the prism of commonalities of ideological, political, economic, social cultural and strategic determinants of the foreign policy of both of them. Relations between any country in the modern world are determined by certain factors called determinants of foreign policy in the discipline of international politics. Broadly speaking these factors include geographical location, population, history, economic resources, and the efficiency of government and nature of political leadership, quality of diplomacy and the Ideology of the interacting countries. Keeping in view all these factors one may very safely say that no other such example of foreign relations on either side and across the world can be seen that cordial and intimate as between the two neighboring countries of China and Pakistan.

Key words: CPEC, OBOR, Pakistan, China, foreign policy, international relations.

Introduction Pakistan-China Relations

China won independence on 1st Oct 1949. Pakistan was the first Muslim country and was at the third number in the world to recognize China as an independent sovereign county. That was a time when a sharp rift was going on between Communism and Capitalism and the whole world was divided into two halves under this polarization between these two contending economic and political ideologies. Despite allying with Capitalist America, Pakistan's relations with China were quite fraternal. (Rakisits, C., 2015; Khan, M. M., & Kasi, M., 2017) This basically is so due to the innate commonalities in the approaches of both countries. Starting from the ideological factors if we see the influence of the teachings of the sages like Confucius, Tao, Hsün Tzu, Buddha and Mohism of Mozi on the politics of the Chinese ideological landscape both national and international. Similar influences can be seen in the ideological landscape of Pakistan of such sages or prophets in that consideration including the teachings of Abraham, Daood, Moses, Naoh and finally that of Muhammad (PBUH).

Pak-China Boundary Commission was established in November 1959 which completed its work in on demarcation of boundary between the

two countries in 1962 amicably. (Small, Andrew., 2015)

Sino-Indo/ Indo-Pak Wars

The Sino-Indian war of 1962 made the value of strategic cooperation fully apparent to the Chinese and the Pakistanis and brought a rapid resolution to their own outstanding border dispute. The Indo-Pakistani war of 1965, in which there was a real prospect of Chinese intervention in Pakistan's favour, formed the basis of China's status as the "all-weather friend" in the Pakistani public imagination. The Indo-Pakistani War of 1971—in which Beijing could not come to Islamabad's support—allegedly showed the limits of the relationship. Nevertheless, in many ways it triggered the security collaboration of an even more momentous nature. Though Pakistan and China have never been treaty partners, yet their armies come from such radically different traditions that the two sides have often talked past each other on matters of strategy. (Hussain, Z., 2017). China helped Pakistan after its devastating defeat, to develop a set of military capabilities to ensure that it would never face the same fate again. Central to this was China's backing for Pakistan's nuclear ambitions. Close collaboration on an area of such high sensitivity has built a level of trust between

the two militaries that a more conventional security partnership might never have delivered. (Hussain, Z., 2017). Although it ensured that during subsequent crises on the subcontinent China was far more likely to try to defuse the risk of war than to swing in behind the Pakistanis in a confrontation with New Delhi, the fundamental nature of China's support has been unwavering. Even as the Sino-Indian relationship has improved, India's rise as a potential competitor to Beijing has further reinforced the original rationale for its partnership with Pakistan. As India was supported by Britain, France and USA, the China had the support of Pakistan and USSR (now Russia). Pakistan joined SEATO – Southeast Asia Treaty Organization in 1954 and CENTO – Central Treaty Organization in 1955. China also supported the stance of Pakistan on prisoners of war issue after the 1971 Indo-Pakistan War.

PAK-China Defense Cooperation

Defense cooperation between Pakistan and China started in 1965. The geopolitical dynamics of the region during 1960s made Pakistan and China indispensable defense partners. Historically speaking, cooperation between both the countries strengthened after the Sino-Indian border clash of 1962 and the Indo-Pak war in 1965. In 1971, Pakistan mediated the visit of US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to China. This ice breaking visit between China and USA was followed by the visit of the first ever President of US Richard Nixon to China in 1972 China helped in developing nuclear technology in Pakistan with the development of nuclear power plants. In Aeronautical Cooperation Pak-China

launched first JF-17 in 2003. Pakistan developed more than 50 JF-17. In Navel Cooperation Pak-China Warship Pact for F-22P frigates was signed in 2005. Pakistan and China also signed a contract for 6 Maritime Patrol vessels in 2014. (Javid Husain, 2016)

Main Part

PAK-China Economic Ties

Economic ties between the two countries started with the start of Karakoram Highway started in 1959 which was completed in 1979. A Free Trade Agreement was signed between Pakistan and China in 2006. (Perveen, S. & Khalil, J., 2015) Trade volume between Pakistan and China before FTA was 4 billion dollars which increased to 18 billion dollars in 2018. Orient group invested 700M dollar in 2012. Mineral resources were developed in Sandak and Rickodeck to explore copper and gold under a lease which was extended for 5 years in 2017. The mega projects of CPEC, Lahore-Orange Train and Zong are exemplary outcomes of Pak-China economic cooperation. Development of Diamer-Bhasha Dam with the generation 4500 MW of electricity has increasing the life of Terbela for 34more years. (Ahmad, B., Naz, F. & Majid, J. (2018).

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is basically a part of OBOR i.e. One Belt One Road. The Silk Road was an ancient network of trade routes that connected the East and West.



Figure 1 – The Silk Road

Source: by Whole World Land and Oceans published on 15 March 2018

The CPEC is primarily a combination of transport and energy projects and includes the development of a major deep seaport offering Chinese access to the Arabian sea. (Blanchard, J.M.F. & Flint, C., 2017). It was signed between the two countries in April 2015 with the original cost of the project at 46B \$—for Transport – 11Billion \$ and for energy 33 B \$ to be produced more than 10,000MW by 2019. Pakistan and China and have successfully completed three power projects:

- Port Qasim Power plant 660x2 =1320MW
- HUBCO = 1320MW
- Sahiwal Power Project 660x2 =1320MW

OBOR

The OBOR—One Belt One Road a Eurasian land connection, known as the “New Silk Road

Economic Belt” or simply the “Belt,” is made up of railways, highways, oil and gas pipelines, and major energy projects. (Lingliang, Z., 2016).

Under this OBOR project China envisages building of six major economic cooperation corridors:

- CPEC—China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
- CMREC—China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor
- CCAWEC—China-Central-Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor
- CICPEC – China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor
- BCIMEC –Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor
- ELB – Eurasian Land Bridge



Figure 2 – OBOR – One Belt One Road Outreach

Opportunities for Pakistan

An incrementally increasing cordial cooperation between both countries has multi-faceted opportunities for both countries. Multiple benefits of CPEC for Pakistan may help it mitigate its acute energy crisis. It has announced to create Jobs for 0.7 m to 2.3m jobless people by 2030. It has also declared to establish forty-six (46) Special Industrial

or Economic Zones all across the country. (Ahmad, M., 2017). Under this single project of CPEC the volume of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has exceeded more than the total size of FDI since 1970s. (Abid., M & Ashfaq, A. (2016). It will certainly help in the evasion of Pakistan’s dependency on USA and will lead the country towards economic stability, poverty alleviation and self-sustainability. (Perveen,

S. & Khalil, J., 2015) It will also in expanding the horizon of Pakistan's access to Europe through Iran and Turkey. A goods train has also started from Pakistan to Turkey through Iran, which may also lead to passenger transportation in the future. It will also switch Pakistan with the Central Asian Republics (CARs) for trade and provide them access to the Indian Ocean. (Ibrar, M., Jianning, M., Rafiq M. & L. A. Karan, L. A., 2016; Smith, P. J., 2011).

Opportunities for China

This project of CPEC will not only enhance Pakistan China economic, social and cultural diplomacy rather will bring many blessing to the People Republic of China in many ways. Like it will provide China the shortest route to Middle East for oil imports reducing the distance from 16000km to just 3200km by avoiding dependence on strait of Malacca. It will help increase Chinese trade with Middle East from \$250B to \$600B. It will help counter US influence by countering the 5th fleet near Bahrain and the 7th fleet near Taiwan. Connectivity of china with Europe through Turkey is an additional outcome of the project. Finally, this project will expedite the process of development of the Xinjiang province of China. (Khan, K. & Anwar, S., 2016)

Concerns of India on CPEC

Successful running of the CPEC and its related other projects and development is alarming many countries in the world. Particularly India has vey concerns on its passing through the disputed territories of Gilgit Baltistan. (Khan, T., 2016). India is also scared of the Chinese control over Asian and Middle Eastern trade routes particularly affecting the Iranian port of Chahbahar where the volume of Indian investment is as high as \$500m. Development of Gwadar under this CPEC will minimize the importance of Chahbahar port. (Ahmad, M., 2017; Afzal, N. Yaseen, Z. & Muzaffar, M., 2020; Thoker, P.A. & Singh, S., 2017).

Issues / Sets back to CPEC

Certain issues are posing challenge to the completion and functioning of the CPEC, which need to be taken off for immediate resolution. First and for most challenge is, that India is fomenting terrorism in Pakistan to sabotage the project and is trying to create trust deficit between the two partners. (Rizvi, H. A., 2015; Hamzah Rifaat, T. S., 2016).

Insurgency in Balochistan and tug of war between the two major tribes of Muree and Bugti are a reflection of the same. Arrest of Kulbhoshan Jadhav – an Indian spy from Baluchistan in March 2016 has exposed all such obnoxious plans of India. India wants to flop the Gwadar Port of Pakistan to protect his huge investment which she has done on the development of Chahbahar Port in close proximity of 70km in Iran. An Indo-US nexus is highly active in this entire plan. (Jawad.F., 2015; Afzal, N. Yaseen, Z. & Muzaffar, M., 2020).

Concerns about CPEC

Having such a huge investment by China in Pakistan has created high concerns of the state as well as the society or general public at large. The first such suspicion is that whether CPEC is a loan or investment? Secondly, is CPEC another Marshal Plan for Pakistan? Thirdly, what kind of environmental influence will it have on Pakistan? (Bingbing, W., 2011; Shaikh, F., Ji, Q. & Fan, Y., 2016; Chansoria, M., 2016; Aneel, S. S., 2017; Anoushiravan Ehteshami, N. H., 2018). Fifth, is Chinese business favored over the local business? Finally, it is being considered as if the Gwadar Port has been handed over to China on Lease just like the Hambantota Port of Sri Lanka has been leased to China? All these and certain other alike concerns need to be addressed substantially by the Chinese government. (Kayani, F.N, Ahmed, M. & Shah, T.A., 2013).

Conclusion

Finally for a smooth running of the project both the countries need to develop state to state and society to society relations. For this purpose, people to people contact and exchange programs need to be promoted further. It basically requires switching from economic to social capital development agenda. Both the countries may promote cross cultural exchanges and cross lingual ties. Exchange Translation Works should be encouraged. International Pak-China Chairs should be established in the universities of one another country. There should be very cordial visa policy for facilitating the stakeholders across the borders. This all is possible when both the states should shift from regional to universal approach with the resolve to falsify the dictum of clash of civilizations with the flash of civilizations.

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