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Political Relationships between Pakistan and China Since 1947 to 2025

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Abstract: The political relationship between Pakistan and China has evolved into a stable and strategic partnership, significantly influencing South Asia for several decades. This paper examines the historical trajectory of Pakistan-China relations from 1947 to 2025, highlighting key events that have shaped their bilateral ties. The early years (1947-1962) saw Pakistan seeking international recognition and support against India, initially aligning with Western powers but maintaining diplomatic ties with China. The Sino-Indian War of 1962 marked a significant shift, aligning Pakistan more closely with China. The period from 1962 to 1971 solidified this partnership, with pivotal moments such as the Sino-Pakistan Border Agreement of 1963 and China's support during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965 (Levine, 2003). The 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War

further reinforced this strategic alliance. The post-Cold War era (1989-2000) saw both nations adapting to new geopolitical realities, focusing on economic and regional security cooperation. The 21st century brought new dimensions to their partnership, particularly post-9/11, with increased cooperation in counterterrorism and regional stability. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), initiated in 2013, marked a significant phase in their relationship, enhancing economic connectivity and infrastructure development. Contemporary developments in CPEC have elicited responses from global powers like the US and India, highlighting its strategic importance. This paper elucidates how the Pakistan-China strategic partnership has evolved and its impact on regional and global dynamics.

Keywords: Pakistan-China relations, strategic partnership, regional stability, international diplomacy, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

Introduction

The political link between Pakistan and China can be rendered as stable and a strategic partnership that provides for South Asia; it implies a strong bond between the two countries that has structured the regional politics for several decades. This relationship has gone through various stages, through cold war rivalry after Sino-Soviet split in 1951, and the restoration of diplomatic relations in 1972 with many twists and turns in between. It has been quite apparent that the friendly relations between the two nations are marked by mutual respect and compatibility of interest which have seen them bring out various historical events and geopolitical transformations that have characterized their bilateral relations in a bid to enhance the relations. Through the years, the partnership between Pakistan and China has achieved major events such as in moments of economic cooperation in collaboration with business ventures and strategic partnership that tackle issues concerning security (S. M. Ali & Ali, 2020). This relationship that was characterized by shy touch and limited cooperation in the beginning of the period has grown into a rich strategic partnership seen today. This article elucidates the complicated Pakistan-China relations and the major events between 1947 and 2025 and its effects on regional and global strategic relations these shows how the duo's strategic partnership shaped the region and world today.

Early Relations (1947-1962)

Pakistan's Independence and Initial Foreign Policy

For a brand-new country like Pakistan, the imperative for structural cohesion in the wake of state establishment was an especially potent source of constraint when, at the time of Pakistan's independence in 1947, the entire region, let alone the international community, was caught up in a tumultuous period. The newly formed state focused on the protection of its borders and on the international recognition, mainly due to the antagonistic relations with its neighbour – India. The events of partition especially the conflict over the area of Kashmir led to various issues of violence that in turn required Pakistan to look for support from outside. In a first stage, the major focus of the Pakistan's foreign policy was the Western countries especially the United States of America because Pakistan wanted to obtain weapon and financial assistance to stop its bulky and powerful neighbor. This alignment was sealed by Pakistan joining SEATO in 1954 and CENTO in 1955 both being contained organizations of the U. S. which aimed at checkmating communism on one hand and availed support for Pakistan on the other. Nevertheless, cutting ties with China conflicted with Pakistani's interests therefore Pakistan appreciated the need to maintain a relationship with China despite it being on the side of the West (Javaid & Jahangir, 2015). Thus, Pakistan, one of the first nations to do so, agreed to provide diplomatic recognition of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1950. This was the initial form of diplomatic

interaction which was based mostly on shared concerns including, but not limited to, containing Indian's expansion in the ASEAN. This paper also provides evidence that China's own border issues and conflicts with India made Pakistan a strategic partner for China due to both's rivalry against a common foe; India.

During the 1950s and until early 1960s, Pakistan learnt how to walk on the thin line of Cold War diplomacy by being a part of western alliances and at the same time trying to establish good relations with China. Though, the main security and economic help was received from United States and other Western partners Pakistan still looked forward to strengthen its diplomacy with China. By doing this, it successfully provides for the delicate balance of power which defining feature of Pakistan's foreign-policy making process during this period was carefully managing the intricate give-and-take of the Cold War system and regional rivalries. The laid foundation during these early years defined the future pattern and evolution of a more complex bilaterism with China in the ensuing years.

Establishment of Diplomatic Relations

In 1951, Pakistan made one of the historical steps in the foreign policy and for the first time acknowledged the People's Republic of China and signed the contract on setting diplomatic relations. Pakistani strategic decision making which led to the initiation of this conflict was in an attempt to maintain a balance on international diplomacy couple with the quest for support to counter Indian regional hegemony. During the Cold War, which can be considered as the period of two powerful opposing blocs, Pakistan tried to have the diversification of its partners, besides being connected with the Western states. Pakistan ensured their regional security by recognizing China to compete with its regional rival India in South Asia (M. N. Mirza, Abbas, & Malik, 2020). The initial interaction can be said to have made this change, thus signifying the start of this relationship as an important facet of Pakistan's diplomacy. In the 1950s Pakistan-China relations started gradually and there was diplomatic and economic interaction between both countries. Each country began searching for each other and comprehending each other's position in the regional and global perspectives. The first forms of diplomacy included the usage of ambassadors and the creation of the formation of embassies that played a significant role in building the base for diplomatic relations. Such preliminary communications were also useful in creating rapport and laying the ground work for a better relationship. It enabled both countries to advance the issues that both of them have in common or it enabled each of the sides to tackle their problems in the way which would be suitable for both.

Strengthening Ties (1962-1971)

Sino-Indian War and Pakistan's Strategic Alignment

Pak-China relation started dating back from 1950s but the Sino-Indian war of 1962 was a blinker for both Pakistan and China to change their strategic partnership significantly. The issue arose from a standing territorial disagreement between the two countries, namely China and India it was seen that Pakistan and China had similar strategic goals. For Pakistan, there was a chance to become closer to China due to the war, which became the key element of its policy to challenge India. It could be therefore concluded that the years between 1962 and 1971 formed the basis of continuing strategic partnership between Pakistan and China. By dealing with the pros and cons that both countries have for each other and responding to the nearby pressures, they strengthened their partnership not only in the context of geographical politics. By underlining their cooperation in the period of improved relations, they were able to reveal the significance of partnership, as well as the advantages of synergy. This laid the basis for Pakistan-China relationship to remain active and progressive so that both countries can face the future regional and global challenges side by side. The strategic partnership that was established in this period thus became a foundation for their bilateral relations and laid the framework for the partnership that would be between the two countries in the future.

Border Agreement of 1963

The Sino-Pakistan frontier agreement that signed in On 3 March, 1963 may be considered as one of the landmark events in the existing relations between the two countries. This notable agreement was an important evolution in the nature of the relations between the two countries since it defined the border between China and Pakistan. Before this, border disputes, especially of the area of Aksai Chin, negatively impacted the

relations and set up a tense environment. These historical issues were effectively settled by this agreement in a way that the both the parties had clear and well-defined border, out of all the negotiated terms. This resolution was very helpful not only to give a resolution to a problematic matter but also to showcase that both of these countries are willing to follow diplomacy and negotiate the existing problems. The existing Sino-Pakistan Frontier Agreement can therefore be testified as a friendship between Pakistan and China. Consider the fact that most border issues remain sensitive in South (Kahandawaarachchi, 2015).

Asia, the signing of this agreement pointed towards the fact that despite conflicts, diplomacy and courtesy towards the other nation can pave the way to problem solving. Thus there was an additional bonus of having a more friendly relationship between the two countries in addition to having handled the Aksai Chin issue. This diplomatic success emphasized on the methods of bilateral negotiation and compromise in dealing with complex international affairs and also created a positive tone for the following negotiations. The Sino-Pakistan Frontier Agreement meant that each country will stand for the other, giving long-term support to strategic partnership between Pakistan and China. the elimination of one of the greatest territorial questions, they opened a way to new and more comprehensive cooperation of the two countries. This fact showcased their capacity to handle and address regional issues peacefully that consequently benefitted the parties and boosted their bilateral partnership and synchronization. For the Pakistan-China relations this agreement helped in charting the future direction of this strategic relationship moving towards much stronger bearing in the decades to come.

Support during Indo-Pakistani War of 1965

The indo Pak war 1965 acted as turning point in the development of Pakistan China relations because it shows how close and strategic partners both the countries (Amin, 2019). This conflict was crucial in strengthening the relation between China and Pakistan because the latter received a lot of support from the former. Chinese help was in a way that was political as well as military in nature. On the official level in the governmental level, the Chinese provided diplomatic support at the multilateral level and at the United Nations actively supporting the Pakistani side and attempting to counteract Indian agenda. This diplomatic support become very important in molding the international opinion and establishing Pakistan position in the conflict. Furthermore, it clearly explains how the China's role in the context of military assistance played a crucial role in enhancing the strength of Pakistan's defence infrastructure which was essentially the agent that brought balance the military power surplus prevalent in the region. This help was crucial in supporting Pakistan's campaign during the war and demonstrated the growing entrenchment of the two countries' ties. During the 1965 war which India fought with Pakistan, China supported Pakistan by providing supplies etc, this show clearly that this relation has immense strategic cooperation at the back drop of conflict (Munir, 2018). Pakistan short of Chinese support also ensured that China's support was not only a sign of China's loyalty to Pakistan but signaled the potential of this Pakistani Chinese partnership for the rest of the regions' futures. This span of cooperation strengthened the perception that both Pakistan and China could rely on each other during difficult situations which further strengthened their relation and provided a trend for the future relations. The support, which was exchanged during the war, proved that their cooperation was rock-solid and depended on mutual interests – this fact had a major impact on their further relations.

Deepening Cooperation (1971-1988)

Support during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War

The crisis was highly explosive especially the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War that finally saw the disintegration of Pakistan and emergence of a new state known as Bangladesh (Raghavan, 2013). However, during this crisis, Pakistan found the strategic importance for China in the South Asian region and both countries continued to support each other in all fields of diplomatic and military support during such change of highs and lows. China has supported it in the international level by providing favourable opinions whenever Pakistan's stance was under debate, since India, which was also a part of the conflict, had been dominating

the region. Moreover, during this war, military assistance that China provided to Pakistani side was very important for the defense of the country. This support was also consistent, it also signifies the strong base of support which never faded between both Pakistan and China because of their strategic commitment to each other in troubled times. Pak-China relations during the 1971 war were very strategic and highlighted that China and Pakistan wanted to curb India's rise as they had seen it as the primary reason for Pak's defeat and the emergence of Bangladesh (Afridi). Thus, China showed that it was willing to support Pakistan both diplomatically and militarily and deepen the existing strategic partnership in responding to various regional issues. This unfortunate episode of cooperation demonstrated the potential of their partnership and the common desire to address the problems of maintaining the balance of forces in the region. Such a supportive stance that China made during such a time can be said to have strengthened their friendship and it was a historical period of China – Poland relations that manifested the proposition that both countries could always count on the other during a time of hardship. Thus notwithstanding the final result of the war and the loss of East Pakistan, support coming from China during the 1971 conflict created a stronger base for the bilateral relations between the two countries (Marwah, 1979). Thus, large-scale regional catastrophe became an additional basis for strengthening the strategic alliance between Pakistan and China, which became one of the key stages in their cooperation. Thus, this period stated the factor of their cooperation and at the same time presented a scenario for heightened collaboration in other decades. The solid foundation of the relationship built during this period of conflict was deliberate to shape their future diplomatic engagements in the light of many challenges they and other nations encountered in the region and the world in general.

Post-Cold War Era (1989-2000)

Transition from Cold War Dynamics

The break of the cold war in 1989 decided a fresh approach in the affairs of strategic world alignments for many countries including Pakistan and China (McMahon, 1988). In mid-1980 and early 1990 both the nations were able to face the challenge of shifting their foreign policies with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the unilateral domination of the United States. In response to this dramatic change Pakistan and China decided to give up the Cold War like ideological orientation and focus the relationship more on economics and regional security. This transition entailed paying more attention to commercial cooperation, as bilateral economic initiatives like trade and investment were imperative for sustaining relations through the available changes in the foreign relations' landscape. Thus, the termination of the Cold War political processes opened up new possibilities for both countries to seek cooperation that would be beneficial to each and strengthen stability and security in the region. This period saw Pakistan and China stand firmly for each other in different international organizations (Kent, 2002). It is worth noting that the two portrayed a close cooperation especially when it came to dealing with issues like terrorism and issues of regional security. To prevent terrorism and for stabilizing the South Asia, it was realized by both the countries that was in their interest as well as supported the existing cooperation (Dash, 1996). Thus, through actions on these fronts, both Pakistan and China furthered their security interests, and at the same time, upheld the principle of balance in the region and the maintenance of world peace. This cooperation was helpful in managing all the challenges that characterized the post-Cold War international relations and also in exercising the necessary efforts meant to strengthen the strategic partnership.

Economic Reforms in China and Impact on Bilateral Trade

China's economic liberalization in the later decades of the twentieth century transforming manner in which Beijing interacted with Islamabad. After China began its transition from a centrally planned economy to a more market, a more open door policy was adopted regarding international trade and investment (Bhatti, 2008). The latter signified a shift towards one of the most vibrant processes of economic liberalisation, which not only transformed the economic structure of China, but also provided a suitable background for the formation of supercharged cooperation between countries. For Pakistan this was a chance to strengthen the

bilateral economic cooperation with China which was particularly valuable since both sides were interested in increasing the number and the significance of economic relations in the context of the shifting economies' geopolitics. The effects of the Chinese reforms were most obvious from the increase in the trade relations of the two countries over the 1990s (Jalil & Ma, 2008). With the growing economy of China and with more liberalization in the economy and entrance to the world market, Pakistan found in China a major trading partner. Once again, trade volumes continued to rise hence pointing to the broadening diversity of economic relations between the two nations. The expanding trade ties truly reflected the accommodative transformation of both the economies to the emerging structure of global economy, wherein China's liberalisation was opening new opportunities for the Pakistan economy to explore. This period had promoted the economic relations which not only improve the bilateral trade but also dramatically evolved the economic relation between the two countries (M. Ali, 2019).

Collaboration on Regional Security Issues

In post-Cold War period, the Pakistan and China cooperation on the issues of security in the region emerged as central characteristics of this strategic entente. Both nations had unstopping security issues that called for intervention; there was growing terrorism and separatism that made the two nations insecure. Thus, the key threats posed by the groups and organizations mentioned above were countered with cooperation between Pakistan and China through the share of intelligence data and numerous combined operations. This partnership turned out to be significant for improving their capacities to prevent terrorism acts, to control probable security threats, and to respond to the instability in the region. Through combined resources and ideas, the two countries were able to construct a better and more comprehensive defense mechanism that counteracted the demanding security features during that period, implying a growing strategic cooperation. Another factor that confirmed the strategic change of the relations of Pakistan with China was the consolidation of security dialogue (Hussain, 2014). Thus, both the USA and Russia managed to prevent and counteract potential threats that exist within the area of common interests, strengthening their relations while also responding to the goals of maintaining stability in the region. Thus, this partnership was not only about the current and emerging threats, but it also aimed at establishing the basis for a lasting military relationship. Through the shared interests in security and diplomatic cooperation, the relations between Pakistan and China became more stable and mutual, thus it built a rather strong foundation that was ready to observe the changes in the security environment of the post-Cold War period (Yang & Siddiqi, 2011).

21st Century Partnership (2001-2013)

Post-9/11 Geopolitical Shifts

The events of 9/11 in 2001 by which the world was shocked introduced a new type of geopolitics which drastically influenced the relationship between Pakistan and China (Small, 2015). Thus, Pakistan rising up as one of the more influential frontline states in the War on Terror brought

increased strategic relevance to the country. This shifted geopolitical map made China realize the importance of Pakistan in counter terrorism and hence provided the country political and economical aid. The relations between and Pakistan and China during this period started witnessing a new intensity of diplomacy and economic cooperation, both being totally relevant with the Chinese interest of supporting Pakistan's fight against threats of extremism. It was also a strategic move to boost its own ally, but also to bring China into line with the general goals of international security while retaining its hegemony in South Asia. Thus, it can be stated that during this period, which started right after September 11, Pakistan and China's strategic interests were more aligned. Each country was threatened by acts of terrorism organizations and thus required a high level of support and coordination. China supporting Pakistan in its counterterrorism measures depicted a mutually shared security and a bilateral concern for the region's security. This support manifested itself in the following ways some of which are a diplomatic push in the global scene and strengthened security relations (HAMMAD, 2021). This was a period when there is coordination on strategic goals that supported

their bilateral relationship, more so, their cooperation in addressing threats, and maintaining stability in the region.

Initiation of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

Another major shift in the 21st century dynamics for Pakistan and China was the start of the \$ 46 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in 2013. This colossal endeavour which was a part of China's Belt and Road Initiative was intended to significantly improve linkages and create economic synergy between the two nations (Syed & Ying, 2019). From Xinjiang in China to Pakistan's Gwadar port, CPEC involves building of roads, rail and pipe lines. The main purpose of this particular type of a corridor is to facilitate trade and investments between the two countries to foster integration and create new opportunities for the business. Through these regions it intends to reinforce economic connections and trade relations, ease the flow of products respectively increase cross-border investments which suggest that China and Pakistan's bilateral relationship has gone to a further level.

The creation of CPEC has brought significant changes within the regions concerning the connectivity of nations and their development. Besides improving the trade connectivity, the construction of a rail-link and roads to connect the Xinjiang region to Gwadar port offers the China the much-needed maritime access underpinned with huge strategic and economic values. This linkage is intended to promote the international trade of goods and services, bring down transportation costs and thereby, boost the economic growth of both regions. To Pakistan, CPEC is a chance and investment in the development of infrastructure and socio-economic transformation in industrial production, employment generation, and regional integration. The construction of Gwadar Port, particularly, is on the right path toward becoming the flagship of today's trading potential, and therefore beneficial for the regional economy and the economy of South Asia in general. CPEC is now a very important aspect of the relationship between Pakistan and China and it can be viewed as a current for the development of the economic relations between two countries and their practical actions for strengthening their positions and ensuring the strategic partnership (McCartney, 2022). It is assumed that the project will improve economic development, the incentives can be the creation of new jobs for the population, construction of infrastructure, and maintaining stability. Thus, apart from enhancing bilateral relations, CPEC facilitates improvement in social infrastructure and economic growth which in turn helps the region as a whole. It is expected that the effective implementation of this formulation for establishing this corridor will help provide strength with the political leadership of both nations to establish the fact that both Pakistan and China are confined to respond to global challenges simultaneously, opportunities of emerging in this evolving world economy (Garlick, 2021).

CPEC and Strategic Partnership (2013-2020)

Details of the CPEC Projects

CPEC or China Pakistan Economic Corridor, is a comprehensive interconnectivity and development framework which envisages immense improvement in China-Pakistan relations in terms of economic infrastructure. Core and most important component of these projects include laying out of highways and railway with a view to improving the transport links and thus improve trade between the two countries (Anwar, Khan, & Sarwar, 2017). This transport linked infrastructure are not only expected to alleviate logistic constraints' drag but also increase movement of goods and services in the region. Besides infrastructure on transportation projects, CPEC is a series of large-scaled and far-reaching energy projects on power development and upgrade of power supply systems with adjusting and improving the power generation and distribution in Pakistan to remove power shortage. This concentration in energy is important to Pakistan's

development since it has tried to meet fixed power shortages that have hampered industries and stability in the region. Furthermore, establishing special economic zones in the context of CPEC, the objective is to lure the foreign investment, to spark the industrial growth, and to promote the diversification which acts as pillars of a sustainable and vibrant economy. One of the major components of CPEC is the establishment of Gwadar Port which is projecting one of the most strategic and vast projects not only for China but also for Pakistan (F. M. Mirza, Fatima, & Ullah, 2019). To China, Gwadar provides China access to the Arabian sea which is essential for safe guarding the economic interest on sea borne trade and energy. It is part of the BRI as it connects mainland China's trade overland infrastructure to sea transport. To Pakistan that is viewed as the country where Gwadar Port is located, the new economic development has a valuable potential for boosting the trade capacity on the new level and for stimulating the regional economic evolution. The port is expected to develop as the centre of marine commerce and help international organizations to invest in business leading to Pakistan's crucial position in the region's commerce industry. It is believed that the prospects of development in Gwadar could enhance the employment, infrastructural advancement, and the connection of the neighboring states.

The various Launched Initiatives of CPEC are as follows: – The objectives of CPEC projects are ambitious but achievable as both China and Pakistan have a common understanding of aforesaid projects to fill the infrastructural gap and boost the connectivity of the region. This largest strategy also points to the enhancement of the strategic and economic relations between the two nations, which are interested in the joint development. In a way, which seeks to reinvent and modernize the infrastructure of Pakistan and which improves the trade connectivity, the CPEC envisions a more interconnected and prosperous region in the making. The effects of these two projects show just how beneficial the cooperation is for both countries and the region as a whole in regards to enhancing each nation's tactical objectives. By these means, the bilateral relation between china and Pakistan is not only being adjusted but other neighboring countries can also follow the same to unfurl a new and economically vibrant region.

Contemporary Relations (2020-2025) Recent Developments in CPEC

The enhancement of the Pakistan-China relations through CPEC has changed the world map's dynamics, enough to draw a marked response from the major world powers: the United States and India. The US has raised worries as to the strategic shift of power balance in CPEC. Being a part of BRI, CPEC is China's dominance strategy to assert its authority in South Asian region. The prospect of this Chinese presence raises concern in the U. S. , because this change of the strategic scenario might be disadvantageous to America and affect its strategic gains. As such, Washington has been very attentive to the project and has attempted to cooperate with regional friends and allies in order to gather a counter-force against China and its regional dominance and expansionism as well as to consider other inputs and resources for development by avoiding the path of China. India has been most vociferous about CPEC due to its passing through the part of Kashmir, claimed by India but occupied by Pakistan, namely Gilgit-Baltistan. This area is recognized as belonging to India, and any construction of infrastructure by Pakistan and China are thus viewed as a torpedo to India's sovereignty. Due to CPEC's geostrategic importance, besides its strategic importance, It further stressed the relations between India and both Pakistan and China. India has been very much vocal in their disapproval of the corridor as they deemed it as an insult to their sovereignty and a destabilizer to the South Asian region. The Indian government has formally conveyed its protest to Pakistan and the Chinese government and has called for international diplomatic pressure against this project due to its adverse strategic implications which violates India's sovereignty and poses threats to its security and strategic interests in region through CPEC.

Responses from these world's powers show the other side of geopolitics of CPEC, which is badly looked or followed by the big powers of the world as they are interested in the progress of CPEC and its impacts. The development of the corridor has not only increased regional rivalry but also reveals the strategic interests of the international players. The continuing rivalries and acts of diplomacy that relate to CPEC point to how big projects in infrastructure can afford to alter relations in the geography and give new angles to international

politics among powerful actors. However as CPEC moves forward, its impact on the stability of the region; effect on the relations between the countries of the region and outside; and the impact on the strategic equations in South Asia will remain the subject of interest and debate among the international community.

Conclusion

This paper's aim is to outline the Pakistan-China interactions in the political field since the early days of their diplomatic partnership in 1947 and the subsequent development of the bilateral strategic partnership. This evolution named has been driven by mutual respect and self-interests and governance through strategic partnerships. The interrelation between the two countries has proven to be strong and sustainable for decades with references to many regional and international difficulties. Major events like the occasion of CPEC emphasize on the enhancement of cooperation between both countries that are now jointly solving multifaceted problems that concern them and working to ensure sustainable developments. Thus, Pakistani and Chinese aptitude to steer through changes in the regional dynamics and enhance cooperation has further cemented the partnership and put this partnership at heart of regional stability. Proactively, the future is bright for their relationship as they anticipate scaling up on challenges that arises in future and leveraging on opportunities that arise in future. The fact that both have maintained the partnership going emphasizes their strategic importance for a future of growing integration and advancement.

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