

References *Academic Session: Sino-Pak Ties*

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## **CHINA-PAKISTAN RELATIONS: WITH REFERENCE TO THE POLITICAL ECONOMY**

**Dr. Mohammad Ahmed Qadri \***

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***Abstract:** Pakistan has a long and strong relationship with China, and it will remain their strength due to their geo-political requirements. A close identity of socio-political views and mutual interests in the political economy remain the centre-point of bilateral ties. Since 1962 war, Pakistan has supported China in important matters regarding national and international issues. Pak-China also collaborated extensively in military and economic projects. Pakistan has also served as a conduit for China's influence in the Muslim World. China has pledged to vastly increase their investment in Pakistan's economy and infrastructure. The author of the paper believes that this paper would academically contribute towards Pakistan to promote peace through political economy between China and Pakistan.*

Keywords: geo-political, socio-political, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Pak-China, political economy

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### **Introduction**

Diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China were established as early as May of 1951. Pak-China relationship has a glorious past, [and a] bright future.<sup>1</sup> Karakoram Highway, the connection between China and Pakistan, is also sometimes referred to as the Eighth Wonder of the World. One of the reasons for this is that the solid ties between these two countries have been built on the fact that there is mutual benefit. Pakistan shares a common border with the People's Republic of China through her Northern States of Hunza and Gilgit (about 300 miles).<sup>2</sup> The Chinese ancient traders used to visit the land of the Indus for commercial purposes. Their contributions are more valuable than the merchants in the promotion and exchange of ideas and culture between these two ancient civilizations.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Pakistan has repetitively received help with regional issues because the Pakistan military depends heavily on Chinese armaments and joint projects of both eco-militaristic importance. The diplomatic relations between the two countries were established on the basis of equality, mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty.<sup>4</sup>

To ensure that the trade between the two countries remains strong and continuous, development of the very significant China-Pak Economic Corridor is in progress. It will connect Pakistan with China and the Central Asian countries via highways from Kashgar to Khunjab and Gwadar. It will reduce the time required for transporting and trading goods, and thus decreasing overall expenditures. The most important consideration of all, in favour of recognition of Pakistan by the Chinese was the fact that Pakistan, then aspired to play a leading role among the Muslim states of the Middle East, China therefore, regarded her relationship with Pakistan as a prerequisite to a role of its own in the Middle East."<sup>5</sup>

### **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor**

Trade is a residual item, a way of making up deficiencies or disposing of surplus.<sup>6</sup> China has pursued trade relations with a number of underdeveloped countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, including Pakistan. In many of these cases, motivation has been as much political as commercial or economic.<sup>7</sup> It is basically a construction project which will result in the formation of many different forms of routes to ensure the continuous and bountiful trade between these two major countries. According to the Board of Investment of the Prime Minister's Office Government of Pakistan,

"The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a network of Roads, Railway, Energy Infrastructure, and Pipelines with 3,000 km from Gwadar in Pakistan to China's western Xinjiang region – It includes a total of over US \$46 billion Investment."<sup>8</sup>

This project is expected to be completed up to 2030. It was decided that the finance for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor will be provided by both the countries, to decrease the dependence on foreign countries. Establishment of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was first proposed by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang during his visit to Pakistan in May 2013.

It was announced by the Chinese government in November of 2014, that \$45.6 billion will be spent on financing energy and infrastructure projects in Pakistan as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.<sup>9</sup> For example, the Karakoram highway (1,300 km long highway from Havelian in the Abbottabad District to Thakot) project, which first began construction in 1979, will receive new attention in order to widen it and get the most out of it. The Islamabad-Hazara motorway is yet another route that the Chinese government will assist Pakistan in building. Lastly, due to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the areas surrounding the pathway will be updated to match the level of development of the highway.<sup>10</sup>

### **Mou's Signed during the President Of China's Visit<sup>11</sup>**

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On April 20, 2015, the Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Islamabad to meet Pakistan's officials and decide on new plans of actions. Pakistan and China signed 51 MOUs, 5 of which were pertaining to energy sector while 30 pertain to the economic development. They also decided that China will invest about \$45 billion in Pakistan to improve renewable energy, optical fiber installation, anti-terrorism, anti-narcotics, LNG, Karakoram Highway and many others.

China's president, Jinping stated,<sup>12</sup>

"The purpose of my visit is to strengthen ties with Pakistan. Like Pakistan, China also expects peace in Afghanistan. We support the efforts of Pakistan regarding terrorism." Furthermore, he added that "a new era of economic development would begin with these agreements between China and Pakistan."

As an additional bonus, both Presidents also inaugurated 8 projects after the ceremony, unveiling the following plaques:

- ✓ Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, Lahore Branch.
- ✓ Energization of 100 MW solar power plant at Quad-i-Azam solar park, Bahawalpur.
- ✓ FM 98 Dosti Channel studio PBC-CRI, Islamabad.
- ✓ Demonstration project of DTMB Broadcasting in Pakistan.
- ✓ China Cultural Center, Pakistan.
- ✓ China-Pakistan Joint Research Center for small hydropower, Islamabad.
- ✓ China-pakistan Cross-Border Optical Fiber Cable System Project.
- ✓ Metro Rail Transit System on the Orange Line in Lahore.

Some of the important agreements and MOUs signed are as under:

- ✓ Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement between China and Pakistan.
- ✓ Exchange of notes of feasibility study of the demonstration project of the DTMB, on provision of anti-narcotics equipment, on provision of law enforcement equipment, and on feasibility study of Gwadar hospital.
- ✓ MOU on provision of Chinese governmental concessional loan for second phase up-gradation of the Karakoram Highway (Havelian to Thakot), Karachi-Lahore Motorway (Multan to Sukkur), Gwadar port East Bay Expressway Project, and Gwadar International Airport.
- ✓ Protocol on banking services to agreement on trade in services.
- ✓ MOU on provision of material for tackling climate change.
- ✓ Framework agreement on cooperation on major communications infrastructure project.
- ✓ MOU on cooperation between NDRC of China and Ministry of Planning Development and Reform of Pakistan.
- ✓ MOU on Pro Bono Projects in the Port of Gwadar Region.
- ✓ MOU on establishment of China-Pakistan Joint Cotton Bio-Tech Laboratory.
- ✓ Framework agreement between the National Railway Administration, China and Ministry of Railways, Pakistan on joint feasibility study for up-gradation of ML1 and establishment of Havelain dry port of Pakistan Railways.
- ✓ Protocol on the establishment of China-Pakistan Joint Marine Research Center.
- ✓ MOU on cooperation between the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Films and Television of China and Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and National Heritage of Pakistan.
- ✓ Triple party agreement between China Central Television and PTV and Pakistan Television Foundation on the re-broadcasting of CCTV-NEWS/CCTV-9 Documentary in Pakistan.
- ✓ Protocol on establishment of sister cities relationship between:
  - Chengdu city Sichuan Province of PRC and Lahore city
  - Zhuhai city, Guangdong province and Gwadar city
  - Karamay City, XianjianUgur, and Gwadar city.
- ✓ Framework agreement between NEA and MOPNR on Gwadar-Nawabshah LNG terminal and pipeline project.
- ✓ Commercial contract and agreement on financing for Lahore Orange Line Metro Train Project.
- ✓ MOU on financing for KKH up-gradation Phase-2 (Havelian to Takot), KLM, Gwadar East Bay Expressway, Gwadar International Airport projects.
- ✓ Financing agreement relating to the 870MW hydro-electric Suki Kinari hydropower project between EXIM Bank of China, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China Limited and SK Hydro (Private) Limited.
- ✓ Financing cooperation agreement between the EXIM Bank of China and Port Qasim Electric Power Company (Private) Limited (on Port Qasim 2x660MW Coal-Fired Power Plant).
- ✓ Framework Facility Agreement for 720MW Karot Hydropower Project between China Development Bank Corporation, EXIM Bank of China and Karot Power Company (Private) Limited.

- ✓ Term sheet of the facility for Zonergy 9x100 MW solar project in Punjab between China Development Bank Corporation, EXIM Bank of China and Zonergy Company limited.
- ✓ Drawdown Agreement on Jhimpir Wind Power Project between UEP Wind Power (Private) Limited as borrower and China Development Bank Corporation as lender.
- ✓ Terms and conditions in favor of Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company for Thar Block II 3.8Mt/a mining Project, Sindh province, Pakistan arranged by China Development Bank Corporation.
- ✓ Terms and conditions in favor of Engro Powergen Thar (Private) Limited, Sindh province, Pakistan for Thar Block II 2x330MW Coal Fired Power Project arranged by China Development Bank Corporation.
- ✓ Framework Agreement of Financing Cooperation in Implementing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor between China Development Corporation and HBL.
- ✓ MOU with respect to cooperation between WAPDA and CTG.
- ✓ MOU among PPIB, CTG, and Silk Road Fund on Development of Private Hydro Power Projects.
- ✓ Facility Operating Agreement for Dawood Wind Power project between ICBC and PCC of China and HDPPL.
- ✓ Framework Agreement for promoting Chinese Investments and Industrial Parks Development in Pakistan between ICBC and HBL on Financial Services Corporation.
- ✓ The Financing Term Sheet Agreement for Thar Block –I between ICBC, SSRL.
- ✓ Energy Strategic Cooperation Framework Agreement between Punjab province and China Huaneng Group.
- ✓ Framework Agreement on the China Pakistan Economic Corridor Energy Project Cooperation.
- ✓ Cooperation Agreement between Sino-Sindh Resources (Pvt) Ltd and Shanghai Electric Group for Thar Coalfield Block I Coal-Power Integrated Project in Pakistan.
- ✓ Cooperation Agreement for Matiyari-Lahore and Matyari (Port Qasim)-Faisalabad Transmission and Transformation Project between National Transmission Distribution Company (NTDC) and National Grid of China.
- ✓ IA on Port Qasim Coal Fired Power Plant between Power China and GOP.
- ✓ Cooperation and Facility Agreement for:
  - The Sahiwal Coal-fired Power Plant Project between Industrial and Commercial Bank of China Limited, Huaneng Shandong Electricity limited and Shandong Ruyi Group.
  - HUBCO Coal-Fired Power Plant Project between CPIH and HUBCO Power Company
  - Salt Range Coal-fired Power Project between CMEC and Punjab Government.
- ✓ MOU between NUML Pakistan and Xinjiang Normal University, Urumqi China for Cooperation on Higher Education.
- ✓ Agreement on collaboration on establishment of NUML International Center of Education (NICE) between NUML Pakistan and Xinjiang Normal University, Urumqi, China.

The China-Pak Economic Corridor will serve as a much needed transformational positive revolution in bringing many solutions to the country's most pressing issues involving energy and infrastructure among other things.<sup>13</sup> Federal Minister Planning, Development & Reform, Mr. Ahsan Iqbal, stated,

“CPEC will help overcome the energy crisis, increasing power generation capacity and fulfilling the electricity needs of the country. Chinese assistance will also help to construct LNG pipeline to supply gas to power stations. That that is known for drought would emerge energy capital of the country that would ultimately provide diverse opportunities of employment and growth in the backward areas of interior Sindh. The development of Gawadar port & airport and construction of Eastern, Western and central alignments would connect all the provinces and regions of the country and would turn the country into manufacturing expert.”<sup>14</sup>

### **China Pakistan Corridor is a Fate Changer**

**Benefits for Pakistan:** The friendship between the two nations is not based upon expediency.<sup>15</sup> As part of the agreement China has vowed to invest up to \$45.6 billion in Pakistan in order to jumpstart its economy and solve its major energy issues.

According to “Senator Hussain, chairman of the Pakistan Parliament's Defence Committee, in an interview with Chinese media, “CPEC is a corridor of unity, uniting the people of Pakistan, the provinces of Pakistan, all the regions and areas of Pakistan in a quest for prosperity through different projects.”

Hussain [continued by saying that] Gwadar port in Pakistan's Southern province of Baluchistan, will create a new situation in the province as well as in Pakistan, and a number of projects like road links, industrial parks, power projects, the rail links and fiber optics will directly benefit all people of the country.”<sup>16</sup>

The multiple improvements of the infrastructure will mean easier access throughout and out of Pakistan. This will benefit the country in two ways: one is that trade will become easier, cheaper, and more efficient for Pakistan with its surrounding countries thus improving the trading aspect of its economy.<sup>17</sup>

By contributing to bettering the energy sector of Pakistan, China is pretty much guaranteeing Pakistan an entrance into an entirely new level of technological advancement. Energy and electricity is at the root of every other type of advancement: educational, political, economic, and social; thus by improving the base, Pakistan will be able to build the rest on top of the firm foundation.<sup>18</sup>

**Benefits for China:**<sup>19</sup> For China, the main benefit of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor comes in two tremendously important ways. One of which is that the new route will be a shorter more efficient way for oil to be transported from the Middle East and Africa to China in order to fulfil China's enormous daily energy needs. The other is that through the new route, there is a greater chance for trade to flourish even more because of the ease of access between the two geographical areas that will be connected through the roads and pathways.

China is home to a very large population, all of whom are working towards bettering the Chinese economy through their daily jobs, expenditures, and businesses. A great deal of them rely heavily on energy sources in order to conduct their part in the society and economy, thus China has a great demand for oil, as cheap as they can get it. This means that their cost for importing oil is at an extreme level, but there is nothing they can do about because oil is one resource that they do not have, but desperately need for all their people. Energy is at the base of every single one of China's projects, or the world's for that matter, and without they cannot even imagine progressing in their economy.

Oil imports are very important for China; however, another very important benefit that China will gain from this deal has to do with the fact that "half of Chinese exports are destined on its Western side, so it will also gain tremendously by saving on its containerised traffic costs."<sup>20</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Contemporary changing patterns of international politics will draw attention of the world's leaders to look at the recent change in the region of South Asia and its impact on the rest of the world. Just after the global recession after September 11, 2001, China did not face the challenges which the North American world faced because of its establishment in the political economy and public policies towards actual grooming of economic zones and support to its people. In response to government's support, Chinese people, whether they live in Chinese territory or any other part of the world, believe that the stability in the political economy of China will always maintain the positive image of Chinese nation in rest of the world to defeat the unipolar system after the war between the former USSR and USA. Undoubtedly, Pakistan's rival, India has shifted its political role to support the USA and expand its business and allow US to expand businesses in the Indian Territory which might have previously been a challenge to the neighbour country of China. Realizing this fact, Chinese leadership decided to motivate its nation and decision makers to encourage and support the China-Pak Economic Corridor, which is obviously a great message in world politics regarding mutual understanding between China and Pakistan, economic growth, and war against terrorism. Furthermore, this effort will create a meaningful message of peace and tolerance as well as restoration of the message of the United Nations for peaceful settlement and cooperation among the nations. This effort would also be a source of inspiration for promoting socio-political relations as well as intercultural communications among nations.

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## **ASSESSING THE RATIONALE OF 'SPECIAL' RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHINA AND PAKISTAN**

**Dr Ghulam Ali \***

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***Abstract:** This study is an attempt to explain the rationale of China's "special" relationship with Pakistan with reference to the following contributing factors: compatibility of national interests, geographical proximity, the Indian factor, mutually agreed border settlement, the Muslim world's role, China's "distinct" diplomatic style, the tenuous nature of Pakistan-US relations, military domination in the two countries, regular high-profile visits and the role of media. As a result, both sides developed, as they often claim, a degree of "trust" and "reliability" on each other.*

**Keywords:** Sino-Pak relations, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, South Asia, special relationship.

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### **National Interests**

First and the foremost factor is the congruence of the national interests of China and Pakistan which binds them into an enduring relationship. The old dictum, "in international politics there is neither a permanent friend nor an enemy but national interests" perfectly applies to this relationship.

### **Geographic-proximity**

China and Pakistan share 523 kilometre long border. This geographic-proximity obviously plays an important role in shaping China-Pakistan relationship.

### **The Indian Factor**

The Indian factor – India as a common "enemy" of China and Pakistan – has played an important role in the growth of Sino-Pakistan relationship. Often times, the old saying, "enemy of my enemy is my friend" is referred to explain the positioning of Sino-Pakistan relationship vis-a-vis India. The fact that there appear very little chances of normalization of relations between India and Pakistan, "the Indian factor" will continue to play a role in Sino-Pakistan relationship.

### **"Mutually Agreed" Border Settlement**

It is pertinent to mention that the 1963 Border Agreement between China and Pakistan proved to be a turning point in their relations. Here again, it was the Indian factor which accelerated the conclusion of Sino-Pakistan border negotiations. However, the territory in dispute was not large and the agreement was provisional in its nature. Nevertheless, the "mutually agreed" settlement left behind no territorial dispute and paved the way for a smooth and uninterrupted relationship.

### **Tenuous Nature of US-Pakistan Relations**

Recurrent disruption in US-Pakistan relations also kept pushing Islamabad closer to the Chinese side.<sup>1</sup> Although, Pakistan and the US had signed defence pacts during the 1950s, cooperated with each other after Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and later remained allies in the post-9/11 'war on terror', both lacked long term strategic convergence. Each spate of US sanctions increased Pakistan's economic, political and military dependence on China.

### **Two-way Relationship**

Importantly, Sino-Pakistan relationship is bilateral in nature in which both sides gained from each other in one way or another. China provided large scale economic and military assistance, shared technology and built mega projects in Pakistan. Pakistan's return support for China though was not in material terms, it was not less significant. Islamabad supported China in breaking its isolation during the 1960s, worked as bridge between China and the Muslims world, helped in Sino-US rapprochement, worked for China's legitimate seat in the UN, and extended support on the issues such as Taiwan, Tibet, democracy and human rights. Pakistan's support remains consistent on many of these issues. The give-and-take structure of the relationship prevented it from turning it into a pattern-client equations and thus contributed towards its durability.

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## **China's Distinct Diplomatic Style**

A look into China's diplomatic nuances shows as to what makes it distinct from other powers' behaviour. This character of Beijing's "distinct" behavior towards Islamabad was reflected in its patience during the initial phase of the Cold War when Pakistan joined anti-communist defence pacts. Beijing's economic and military assistance remained free of strings attached. It showed willingness to transfer technology to Pakistan at many instances.

China also supported Pakistan in non-traditional areas such as domestic upheavals, natural calamities, economic bankruptcy, terrorism, international isolation and occasional US pressures and sanctions placed upon Pakistan. China also supported Pakistan during wars of 1965 and 1971 and vetoed against Bangladesh's entry into the UN in 1972. In fact, Beijing has rendered diplomatic, moral, economic and military assistance at various other forums and during various internal and external crises. Islamabad is confident that it would get China's help in difficult times. Some wealthy Middle Eastern states can provide economic assistance to Pakistan, but no Islamic country has political clout in world affairs that can make a difference. On the other hand, Pakistan hardly shares long-term strategic interests with any major power. China, thus, appears to be the only power that possesses both economic and political clout in world affairs and shares long-term interests with Pakistan. What makes the difference is that, at no occasion, Beijing fell short of Islamabad's expectations. It is in this context that Pakistan terms China as a pillar of its foreign policy.

## **The Role of Islamic World**

Pakistan's strong Islamic identity, close ties with Islamic countries, and an important role in the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) has also played a meaningful contribution in strengthening Sino-Pakistan relations. This factor became relevant right at the inception of Sino-Pakistan relations. Since the establishment of the Islamic Association of China (IAC) by the Chinese government in 1953, the body has played an instrumental role in promoting the interests of China's Muslim. China established relations with Saudi Arabia in 1990. Until then, Pakistani facilitated Chinese Muslims for pilgrim to Mecca. Those devotees used to apply for visas at the Saudi Embassy in Karachi (and later at Islamabad after shifting of the capital). Pakistan helped them by offering many services during their stay in the country. Pakistan also played a direct role in establishing China's diplomatic ties with Iran in the early 1970s and with Saudi Arabia in 1990. According to some analysts, Islamabad has been providing almost unconditional support to China in Islamic states.<sup>2</sup>

Beijing often consults Islamabad regarding its relations with the Muslim world.<sup>3</sup> In the same way, many Islamic countries especially from the Middle East did not have proper understanding of the "atheist" China and they consulted Pakistan when establishing relations with China. In other words, Islamabad worked as a conduit between the two sides.

## **Pakistan's Role from the Platform of OIC**

Pakistan has played a role in establishing contacts between China and the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC). Islamabad has often attempted to persuade member Islamic states not to criticize Beijing's policies in Xinjiang or take up the issue to the platform of OIC. For instance, in July 2009, riots erupted in Xinjiang in which over 197 people died. Some member countries wanted to take the issue to the OIC platform while the Secretary General of the OIC wanted to visit the affected region. It was Pakistan that used its influence to prevent these moves. Islamabad stated that all the issues including handling of Uyghurs should be addressed with China bilaterally; the OIC platform should not be used for this purpose. Islamabad was successful in its campaign. Had the issue taken to the OIC platform, it could have caused diplomatic setback to Beijing, even though OIC resolutions do not carry any action.

China is cognizant of Pakistan's continuing influence in the Muslim world. Thus, this factor would continue to hold importance in Sino-Pakistan relations.

## **Mutual Trust**

China and Pakistan claim that over a long period of their sustained relationship, they have developed a degree of "trust" and "reliability" with each other. There exist a good amount of research literature that refers to the special nature of Sino-Pakistan relationship.<sup>4</sup> In Pakistan, there exists outright consensus among all political parties on maintaining strong ties with Beijing. Islamabad terms relations with Beijing as a "pillar of its foreign policy." It has become a norm for incoming Pakistani rulers to choose China as their first visit destination.

Pakistan is the only country to which China refers as the "all-weather" friend.<sup>5</sup> China's uninterrupted relations with Pakistan during the Cultural Revolution, standing by Pakistan defying Western pressure, fulfilment of whatever commitments made with Islamabad, the transfer of technology even in sensitive areas, all these factors taken together indicate the depth of China's ties with Pakistan. Beijing also displays the nature of its special relations with Pakistan through symbolic gestures. For example, making high profile visits, receiving Pakistani delegates with most frequency as compared to any other country, giving Pakistani incoming and outgoing diplomats special protocol, and on occasions top Chinese leaders attending Pakistan Day celebrations organized by Pakistan Embassy in Beijing on 23<sup>rd</sup> March.



This “trust” factor was also evident in the defence sector. China’s armed forces chose Pakistan for their “first” dealing with a foreign country. Pakistan was the first foreign country whose army conducted a military exercise on Chinese soil in August 2004. Similarly, the PLA selected Pakistan to conduct its “first” ever military exercise on a foreign land. In the naval sector, the China chose Pakistan to conduct “first” ever naval exercises. The PLAAF conducted a joint air exercise with Pakistani counterparts in March 2011. This was the first time that Chinese combat aircrafts were deployed on a foreign territory. China’s selection of Pakistan on these occasions shows its level of trust in Pakistan. Examples abound in other areas as well.

### **Policy of Non-interference**

An important principle which governs Sino-Pakistan relationship is their adherence to the policy of non-interference in each other’s internal affairs. This practice started from the early days of their entente cordiale and has remained unchanged. There has been no reported incident of China’s involvement in Pakistan’s internal affair. A Pakistan scholar stated that China accepted Pakistan with all its follies:

“China has observed with interest several upheavals inside Pakistan over the decades. Besides its benevolent interest, China has scrupulously avoided any move or observation that could even remotely be construed as interference in this country’s internal affairs.”<sup>6</sup> Pakistan reciprocated in a similar way. Since the early 1960s, Islamabad has consistently been following the policy of non-interference in China’s internal affairs. At occasions, it went against the international trend to stand by Beijing. Regardless the nature of China’s political system and way of governance, Islamabad strictly followed the policy of non-interference. According to an observer, “the crux of the [China-Pakistan] bond is based on a reciprocal policy of non-interference in domestic issues, and avoiding a clash with each other’s core national interests, at least in the public arena.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Expansion of Cooperation from Bilateral to Multilateral**

Over a period of time, the relationship between China and Pakistan has expanded from bilateral to multilateral forums. Diplomats of the two sides often coordinate with each other on relevant international forums to gain each other’s support.

### **The Role of Armed Forces**

The armed forces of Pakistan and China yield considerable clout in their respective national affairs. Since the strategic cooperation remained at the center of the overall relationship, the armed forces of the two countries played an important role in deepening the two-way relationship.

### **Regular Exchange of Visits**

Another important factor behind the continuity of this relationship, as this study finds, is a constant contacts at the top leadership of the two countries. From the Chinese side, except Chairman Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, other prominent leaders have visited Pakistan. From Pakistani side, since the mid-1950s almost all rulers both military and civilian have visited China. During the mid-1980s, then incoming Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Khan Junejo set a new tradition of choosing China as the first foreign visit. Many of his successors followed or tried to follow this tradition. If China could not become the first overseas destination, it was at least among the first countries Pakistani rulers visited after assuming power. Since the advent of new century, the number of visits from Pakistani side has increased significantly. For instance former Pakistani President Zardari visited China ten times in his five year tenure. Although visits alone do not make a big difference, they at least provide opportunities for leaders to review the relationship on regular basis, remove any irritant, and add new contents in line with changing geo-political realities.

### **The Role of Media**

Media in two countries has also played an important role in shaping a favourable public opinion on both sides. From the early days, Chinese media has been controlled by central government which guided it to portray Pakistan as a friendly neighbour, highlight its help to China especially during the early phase of the relations and ignore negative ones. As a result most Chinese continue to remember Pakistan’s role during difficult phase of their country’s history and term it as “Iron brother.”<sup>8</sup> Likewise, Pakistani media which were small in size and remained under government influence until the start of new century, projected China as the sincere and reliable partner. Under this policy, Chinese leaders were regarded for their simplicity, vision, and commitment to their country and its populace a symbol of resilience that overthrew centuries-old dynastic system and foreign occupation, and for its hardworking to attain glorious place among the community of nations. Under this goodwill, it has become a norm in Pakistan to remain positive towards China, overlook its negative aspects and avoid commenting on its internal matters. Thus, happenings inside China were hardly reported critically. It has become a norm in Pakistan to avoid criticism over China’s leaders and their policies.

## Conclusion

As this study explains, a number of factors together provide an explanation of the continuity of China-Pakistan relationship. The geographical-proximity coupled with shared security concerns vis-à-vis India, remained at the center of this relationship. The strategic nature of the relations provided the armed forces of the two sides to play an important role in fostering it. Given the place of strategic and security components in the overall relationship, the Indian factor remain important. This study however argues that in literature on Sino-Pakistan relationship too much importance is given to this factor. Over a period of time a number of other factors have emerged thus reducing the importance of the Indian factor. Furthermore, this relationship emerged in a mutually beneficial framework in which both sides gained from each other. China rendered economic, military, political and diplomatic support. China's distinct diplomacy, long-term vision and non-interference also added in the growth of two-way ties. Pakistan's return support though was not in monetary terms, it was not less important. Islamabad supported China's seat in the UN, broke its isolation during the 1960s, worked as a bridge between China and the Muslim world and acted as a broker in Sino-US rapprochement. It has also backed China on Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang, and human rights issues. Many of these areas constitute core of China's security strategy. Thus, it would not be wrong to argue that Sino-Pakistan relationship evolved in an interdependent framework. This bilateral nature of the relationship prevented it from turning into pattern-client equation and contributed towards its durability. On the top of that, media of the two countries with support from their respective governments helped in building goodwill while regular visits by the top-level leadership helped in consolidating the friendship. A true understanding of this relationship can only be gained by taking all these factors into account.

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- <sup>3</sup> According to a Chinese scholar, being an "atheist" country China faces the quandary how to deal with Muslims states especially Arab rulers in the Gulf and the Middle East. In those circumstances, it does not hesitate to get an advice from Pakistan that has deep religious, historical ties with most of them. Interviews with a Chinese scholar affiliated with official think tank.
- <sup>4</sup> Despite divergent socio-political systems, cultures and ideologies, profound changes in domestic, regional and international system, the two sides have constantly maintained a robust relationship. This was not possible to maintain without trust and reliability. Such views were expressed by several Chinese Pakistani scholars who were interviewed.
- <sup>5</sup> A Chinese scholar explained the origin of the term "all-weather". Since its emergence, China established close relations with four countries namely, North Korea, Albania, Vietnam and Pakistan. Beijing provided large scale assistance to these countries. Even though the amount of Chinese assistance to Pakistan was far lesser than given to other three allies, only Pakistan withstood the vicissitude of times. Beijing's ties with Ponyong, Tarana and Honi have undergone different ups and down during the last several decades. Given this context, China uses the term "all-weather" friend for Pakistan. Interview with Professor Li Xiguang, November 2013, Tsinghua University, Beijing.
- <sup>6</sup> Khalid Saleem, "Pakistan-China ties in focus," *Pakistan Observer*, April 7, 2011.
- <sup>7</sup> Rosheen Kabraji, "The China-Pakistan Alliance: Rhetoric and Limitations," Asia Programme Paper ASP PP 2012/01, Chatham House, December 2012. p. 2.
- <sup>8</sup> During field trips to China the author talked to a wide range of people such as taxi drivers, vendors shopkeepers and asked them about Pakistan. Majority of them regarded Pakistan as a friend of China, although most of them did not know much more about it.

## **STAKES OF CHINA ON PAKISTAN'S WAR AGAINST TERRORISM AND ITS IMPACT ON BILATERAL RELATIONS OF CHINA AND PAKISTAN**

**Maira Qaddos \***

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**Abstract:** *Pakistan and china have long been on friendly relations. At present, law and order has become a new challenge in the way of promoting bilateral relations. This paper examine concerns of China on Pakistan's war on terror especially with reference to operation Zarb-e-Azb, launched by Pakistan military to clear the region from terrorists. Study is qualitative as its methodology is to review the existing literature available on the issue and analyzing it by carrying out systematic literature review. It has been found that China has certain concerns on Pakistan's war on terror like placement of U.S. army in the region, Pakistan's reliance on U.S. for military weapons and necessary action against Xinjiang's Uighur separatists, present in Pakistan etc. It is concluded that in spite of all her concerns, China still considers Pakistan a valuable ally and appreciates all of her efforts in eradicating the terrorist elements from her soil.*

**Keywords:** Stakes, war against terrorism, bilateral relations, law and order, ETIM

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### **Introduction**

China and Pakistan are enjoying strong political, economic, social and defense relations for more than five decades and now the global challenges demand new forms of strategic cooperation between both the countries which include countering the forces of extremism. These forces are posing serious threats to prosperity, sovereignty and law in order situations in form of terrorism and separatist movements. It is argued that these changing dynamics in the region may affect the long held friendship between the neighboring states ultimately undermining all the serious attempts of promoting strategic partnership over a longer period of time.<sup>1</sup> This serious concern was highlighted at the time when serious attempts were being made at governmental level to enhance cooperation between both the countries for combating terrorism. During previous regime (2008-13), President Asif Ali Zardari visited Xinjiang's region of People's Republic of China and pledged to work even harder in cooperation with China for fighting terrorism.<sup>2</sup> Before Mr. Zardari, Foreign Minister of Pakistan Hina Rabbani Khar also visited Beijing and vowed to look for more robust ties in this war against terrorism by increasing collaboration and mechanisms.<sup>3</sup>

There are certain boarder questions which need to be addressed in the current scenario like what may be the possible objectives for furthering co-operation between both the countries for countering terrorism, what gains may be achieved from this war on terror in terms of regional peace and security, what possible effects Pak-U.S. relations may have on Sino-Pak relations, whether China trusts Pakistan's efforts in countering terrorism and ready to extend her cooperation in military and development sectors. This paper is an attempt to explore various studies already contributed by different scholars in this regard and analyzing them to prepare a synthesis of the ideas presented in them.

### **A brief overview of terrorism and Pak-China Cooperation in counter-terrorism**

Pakistan is not only working in cooperation with China but also with many other countries to counter terrorism. She is one of the most important allies of the United States of America in war on terror after 9/11 attacks.<sup>4</sup> This means terrorism is not only the issue of this region but whole world is in a wave of terrorism, but the problem is with the geostrategic location of Pakistan as it is situated in neighborhood of India, Afghanistan and Iran.<sup>5</sup> It is high time to develop strategic partnerships for the sake of ensuring peace and stability worldwide.

Here it is important to notice that China despite facing separatist movements in its provinces is not that much affected by terrorism as Pakistan, where a number of people are losing their lives in terrorist attacks everyday. Pakistan is on number three on terrorism index after Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>6</sup> Law and order situation of both the countries is quite different and Pakistan is facing insecurity and stability problems more than being faced by China. Although serious attempts are being made to counter terrorism by government and military but still there is a need to address concerns of China because she considers Pakistan as important to its national security and stability as Israel is for America.<sup>7</sup>

China and Pakistan have longer been in cooperation with each other not only in field of defense but also in development sector including energy, education, infrastructure development, coal and mining ets. All of these projects are in danger because of deteriorating law and order situation of the two countries. Terrorist attacks on Chinese engineers in 2004 tried to sabotage the long held friendship but still Chinese Premier visited Pakistan in 2005 to further cooperation between both the countries and signed many Memorandums of understandings and agreements. But the continuity of attacks on Chinese workers in Pakistan couldn't stop as there were four attacks on Chinese in six years from 2001-2006 in which 12

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Chinese were killed.<sup>8</sup> China offered her help to Pakistan for tackling this issue in order to continue collaboration in development and economic sectors without interruption in 2009 when Pakistan's PM Yousaf Raza Gillani visited China. During present regime, PM Nawaz Sharif during his visit to China ensured Chinese President the safety of all the Chinese companies willing to invest in Pakistan and Chinese workers contributing in various development projects from militant attacks.<sup>9</sup>

In spite of all the above mentioned efforts, terrorist activities continued and it was found by Chinese authorities that these extremist elements were not only attacking Chinese workers in Pakistan but they were also backing terrorist activities like blasts, killings and attacks on Chinese people in Kashghar city which is located in Muslim majority region of China called Xinjiang. It was claimed by China that terrorists involved in this region were trained in tribal areas of Pakistan. This showed there is a need to work even harder on countering these forces and also to assure China that Govt. of Pakistan considers Kashgar as a junction point between both the countries. Hence, it is strategically very important for promotion and facilitation of trade.<sup>10</sup>

It was not for the first time that a link between Uyghur separatists and terrorists groups in FATA was found but there had been news in this regard even before and measures were taken by Pakistan to handle. Terrorists involved in these attacks were arrested and handed over to China in 1997, 2002 and 2009.<sup>11</sup> Because of disturbances in China by the terrorists trained in Pakistan, China's major concern on Pakistan's war against terrorism is necessary action by government of Pakistan, against militant groups involved in terrorist acts in Xinjiang.<sup>12</sup> Recently launched Operation Zarb-e-Azb by Pakistan military against hardcore militants in tribal areas will serve to further strengthen relationships of both the countries as it will help eradicate those elements from the soil of Pakistan suspected to be involved in separatist movements in China.

### **Operation Zarb-e-Azb and Pak-China relations**

Operation Zarb-e-Azb was launched by Pakistan military against militants belonging to various terrorist networks like Al-Qaeda, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, Haqqani network and East Turkistan Islamic Movement etc. on June 15, 2014 (U.S. commander commends Zarb-e-Azb for disrupting Haqqani network's ability to target Afghanistan, 2014).<sup>13</sup> This is a comprehensive effort to flush out all the terrorist elements from the region without any discrimination of foreign or local and good or bad in North Waziristan.<sup>14</sup>

This operation has not only helped Pakistan in clearing its soil from terrorists but also to counter international propaganda against her that it is a safe haven for militancy and backs various groups involved in terrorist activities worldwide. Therefore, Pakistan's bilateral relations are improving with the countries worldwide in general and neighboring countries in particular. China is one of those countries which have always supported Pakistan during difficult times for the sake of peace and security in the region.<sup>15</sup>

China is facing the problem of separatist movement in her Xinjiang province by a terrorist group called East Turkestan Islamic Movement and this operation is not only against TTP or Al-Qaeda but its aim is to clear the whole area from all the terrorists no matter whether they are involved in terrorist acts in Pakistan or in her neighboring countries. China has serious reservations on presence of anti-China elements in North Waziristan. Her concerns were addressed by Pakistan Army Chief of Logistics' Staff, who visited China in May, 2013 and expressed his tensions over presence of ETIM elements in Pakistan and suggested an operation against Uyghur separatists present in Pakistan.<sup>16</sup> After the launch of Operation when President Mamnoon Hussain visited China, was informed that ETIM has recruited many Uyghurs who have received training by extremists in Syria and Iraq are having intentions of returning back to Xinjiang to disturb law and order situation in the country. Mamnoon Hussain declared ETIM as a "common enemy" of both the countries and informed China that necessary action against its terrorists is top policy of Pakistan.<sup>17</sup> President of Pakistan told China that almost all the Uyghur separatists had been eliminated during Operation Zarb-e-Azb.<sup>18</sup>

These efforts of Pakistan in countering terrorism were not only acknowledged but appreciated by Chinese President Xi Jinping on his visit to Pakistan in April, 2015 who termed this operation a real game changer.<sup>19</sup> Chinese President showed a stronger commitment towards extending their support for Pakistan's government in all its attempts to fight terrorism for the sake of bringing stability and peace in the region.<sup>20</sup> All of these visits and statements of high officials of both the countries show that they want to resolve the issue of terrorism as soon as possible.

China was so concerned on presence of Uyghur terrorists in Pakistan's North Waziristan Mountains especially after the attack on a train station in Kunming city of China killing 29 people in the urge of establishing an independent state. China accused terrorists involved in this bloodshed to be trained in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan showed deeper concern on those attacks and tried to address China's concerns as she considers her an important friend in international community.<sup>21</sup> So, after this mass stabbing and killing, handing over of Uyghur terrorists to China has served in settling the possible tension between both the countries because of that attack.

## China's concerns on presence of U.S. military in the region

All the countries in the region are concerned about terrorism and want to eradicate it. China is also facing the problem of terrorism in her Xinjiang's region and accuses U.S, Pakistan and Afghanistan for formulation of Taliban. China does consider presence of U.S. military in the region an important factor responsible for aggravating political and social disorders and demands UN supervised mission of peacekeeping in Pakistan and Afghanistan to put an end to U.S. influence in the region.<sup>22</sup> Pakistan's position in U.S. war against terrorism is as a frontline ally after 9/11 but it already had closer associations with the U.S. in 1950s when it was a part of Cold War alliance. In spite of the fact that this alliance threatened China, convergence between China and Pakistan was not affected by it. China did have certain strategic concerns over U.S. military presence in Pakistan especially after 9/11 especially because of developing U.S.-India linkage which will ultimately affect China's strategic aspirations.<sup>23</sup>

China does have an idea of possible threats to her sovereignty because of presence of U.S. military in the region and modernizing her military to cope up with the global standards. Her military modernization doesn't involve the mission of challenging superiority of U.S. military only but also to weigh her defense relations with her neighbors like Japan, India, Afghanistan and Pakistan etc. First step taken by Chinese authorities to modernize the army is to make them more efficient by intensive trainings and realistic exercises followed by next step of bringing three military services in practice of joint operations rather than working in isolation. China tries to challenge U.S. overwhelming superiority wherever and whenever it is possible. On the other hand, U.S. demands China to follow a responsible stakeholder model and after developing and deploying an efficient army, it should co-operate with the powers in dealing with international turmoil including terrorism.<sup>24</sup>

China's aim is to protect her boundaries because presence of U.S. military in Pakistan and Afganistan may pose any serious threat to her and for that it is investing in various aggressive military developments. China is spending a lot on her defense in her budget and has also changed her policy from no first use minimum deterrent to first use. China is also trying to challenge U.S. hegemony and ensuring her safer side by investing in chemical and biological programs to make weapons. Moreover, she is trying to create or become a part of different military alliances to counter any offense on her boundaries.<sup>25</sup>

These efforts of China to ensure her defense may be viewed as U.S.A. is far ahead from China in her military technology and arms race and because China perceives her as strategic competitor, ignoring the fact whether she accepts it publicly or not, she has to work over modernizing her military, weapons and even nuclear program too.<sup>26</sup> China not only has to work on her defense because she considers her a principal threat but she is also concerned about giving signals to other countries like India, Japan and Russia that she has a potential to deal with the conflicts, if imposed on her.<sup>27</sup>

Since, China is developing her conventional and modern weapons; she does have concerns on Pakistan's war against terrorism that Pakistan is largely dependent on U.S. for purchase of weapons.<sup>28</sup> Pakistan on the other hand has certain budget constraints and need to make strategic decisions to fulfill her quality and quantity needs in terms of weaponry. Pakistan may get quality weapons from west at higher cost and meet the quantity may get less modernized weapons from China at a cheaper cost because in spite of all the modernizations, China is still unable to meet U.S. in technology of arms development. But Pakistan has to keep both the countries in her foreign policy by accommodating their demands and needs.<sup>29</sup>

On the other hand, U.S. doesn't see China's role positive in the war on terror. U.S. has certain reservations that China is not extending her cooperation for the U.S. led war on terror as she has not cooperated with the U.S. army in training of Afghan forces instead rejected it as an attempt of practicing hegemony in the region.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, China has cleared her position by claiming that she is facing real problems in the course of responding to war on terror. She wants to extend her support and cooperation for the sake of resolving issue of terrorism in the region but on the other hand she doesn't want to be an ally of U.S. in any case where its sovereignty is expected to be compromised. It is better to be a part of international efforts led by UN against terrorism rather than U.S. because China also wants issue of Xinjiang separatists to be settled.<sup>31</sup>

## Limitations of study

Researcher doesn't have access to policy papers. So, paper is developed on the basis of news reports published in media and research work already done related to this topic. Researcher doesn't have a background of political science or similar fields like strategic studies or international relations, so her way of looking at things may be different from the people directly related to the field.

## Conclusion

From above discussion, it may be concluded that in spite of all the stakes and reservations on Pakistan's war against terrorism, China still considers Pakistan as her valuable ally and wants to work in collaboration with her in fighting terrorism. Both the states are having an agreement on intelligence sharing and joint efforts to counter terrorism and are looking for more serious attempts in this regard. They do have a mutual understanding of potential threats and security concerns, if no necessary action is taken in time. Operation Zarb-e-Azb has played a significant role in this regard as the strategic relationship has been further strengthened by killing and handing over of terrorists to China by Pakistani government. Military relations between

both the nations have grown to unprecedented level as they are making their efforts to their best for eliminating terrorism from their soil.<sup>32</sup>

China's concerns are justified because she is bringing business of billions of dollars to Pakistan and must be concerned about law and order situation for she has already lost lives of many of her workers and engineers involved in development projects in Pakistan. Pakistan also values China's concern of security of her workers in Pakistan because she is facing serious economic and development issues. Operation Zarb-e-Azb has served to regain the confidence of China on Pakistan and because of that China has invested in many projects of energy, development, transportation via rail and roads to link China with Gwadar etc.<sup>33</sup>

China trusts Pakistan's efforts and wants to strengthen her relationship for the sake of mutual economic interests and establishment of peace and security in the region. But this is a global issue which needs to be addressed by joint efforts of the whole world especially powers operating in this region. So, there is a need to develop a proper strategy to counter terrorism involving all the powers working in the region including China, India, Pakistan and U.S. Moreover, there is a need to develop strategic cooperation by developing executable policies for countering terrorism for the sake of ensuring peace and security in the region.

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