



## EVOLUTION OF CHINA-PAKISTAN SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

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### ABSTRACT

#### KEYWORDS:

CPEC, Karakoram corridor, Liberation Army, PLA Doctrine, Terrorism,

*There is no dearth of generous adjectives to describe China-Pakistan bilateral relationship. The 'all-weather friends' have also been referred as 'weatherproof' partners and 'iron brothers'. The core of the Sino-Pakistan bilateral relations is strategic. There is hardly any doubt that the relationship is special and strong, however, the rhetoric and limitations of the relationship is also evident. The year 1962 emerged as an anti-climax for the India-China bilateral relations and ushered out the era of **Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai**. India suffered a crushing defeat at the border. This led to the beginning of a dark period for India-China bilateral relationship. Post 1962, China's South Asia policy was based on a single pillar- its all weather friendship with Pakistan to balance India in South Asia.*

### INTRODUCTION

The People's Republic of China (PRC) was established on 1 October 1949 and Pakistan was the first Muslim country to recognize PRC in January 1950, although formal diplomatic ties were established on 21 May 1951. However, there was no high level contact until Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai met Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Bogra during the Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung in April 1955<sup>1</sup>. Both leaders agreed to cooperate to increase their leverage against New Delhi.<sup>2</sup> The China-Pakistan partnership developed with real momentum after the 1962 Sino-Indian border conflict.

The year 1962 emerged as an anti-climax for the India-China bilateral relations and ushered out the era of *Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai*. India suffered a crushing defeat at the border. This led to the beginning of a dark period for India-China bilateral relationship. Post 1962, China's South Asia policy was based on a single pillar- its all weather friendship with Pakistan to balance India in South Asia. Chinese scholars such as Ye Hailin also agree that the strong relation between China and Pakistan was formed after India-China border conflict (1962) and India-Pakistan war (1965).<sup>3</sup> They regard China's strategy as 'single dimensional' and 'limited'. To realize this strategy China established very close relationship selectively with certain South Asian countries especially Pakistan.<sup>4</sup>

China and Pakistan signed a boundary agreement in 1963. Through this agreement Pakistan illegally ceded 5,180 kms. of Indian territory in Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir (PoK) to China.<sup>5</sup> The boundary agreement facilitated Karakoram Highway and led to develop strategic relationship between Pakistan and China, which began as a counter strategy against India.<sup>6</sup>

Further, China used Pakistan to meet broader policy objectives as well. Pakistan was instrumental in facilitating Henry Kissinger's secret visit to Beijing in 1970s. It was a frontline state against the Soviet in Afghanistan not just for the US but also for China. Pakistan also provided a gateway to West Asia for China and helped in keeping Taliban out of China's troubled Xinjiang region.<sup>7</sup> Pakistan was the third non-Communist country to vote in favor of the recognition of the government of the PRC as the only legitimate representative of China to the United Nations in 1971.

### STRATEGIC FACTORS: MAJOR DRIVERS

#### *Balancing against India*

The China-Pakistan relationship of balancing against India is now several decades old. Strategic issues continue to play most important role in shaping China's policy towards Pakistan. China enjoys strong defense ties with Pakistan. In recent years, this relationship has been strengthened through ongoing Defence projects and agreements between Pakistan and China agreed to provide 50 JF-17 thunder aircraft to Pakistan on easy loan terms in 2011. The aircraft is currently jointly produced by Pakistan and China in their respective countries, but it has been reported that 50 aircrafts may be equipped with more sophisticated avionics. Moreover, the fact remains that China has been Pakistan's biggest supplier of conventional arms and Defence cooperation is a major aspect of Pakistan-China relations.

The strategic alliance with Pakistan is also a requirement to secure Xinjiang province 'extremist separatism and terrorism'. Further, China's Pakistan policy has increasingly been driven by domestic factors or the factors which influence China's internal stability and development.

These include: instability in Pakistan-Afghanistan region; cross border linkages of terrorists in China and need of strategic resources. The beginning of India's rise is another factor which has influenced China's Policy towards Pakistan..

### **Instability in Pakistan-Afghanistan Region:**

Persistent instability and turbulent security situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan has created security challenges for China as well as India. The situation in Afghanistan is volatile and

Fragile. China's strategic objective in Afghanistan is linked with a host of factors including: its special relations with Pakistan, stability in Xinjiang and desire to play a larger regional role. Developments in Afghanistan coupled with growing instability in Pakistan are likely to cast a shadow on China's Western region of Xinjiang as well as interest in Central Asia.<sup>8</sup> Prof. Li Xiguang of Tsinghua University notes "any military policies and actions taking place in the region must serve the interests of national security, national unity, social stability, economic development and regional cooperation among the three countries: Pakistan, China and Afghanistan".<sup>9</sup>

China's Xinjiang problem is increasingly being connected with the network of cross border and trans-national terrorism as cited in the White Paper released by the Chinese government. In sum, Xinjiang is a case in point where the challenge for China is to balance state security with human security. Besides, there is potential for future conflict too. The extent of violence in Xinjiang especially since the July 5 riots of 2009 indicates the magnitude of the ethno – religious separatist problem in the Xinjiang region. However, the strike hard policy of the Chinese government may not offer a durable solution. The Chinese government could work towards finding a more effective political solution to the problem

Some Chinese experts have argued that that instability in Pakistan is a source of concern for all countries in the region, including China. China has been increasingly worried about the culture of violence in Pakistan, which has the potential to spread across the border and to the entire region.

### **War Against Terrorism**

Since the Abbottabad raid of May 2, 2011 in Pakistan, China has expressed a high level of verbal support to Pakistan on the counter-terrorism issue and has highlighted the so called 'sacrifices' made by Pakistan. This was further endorsed in the Joint Statement signed by the Head of States of both governments in recent years. The Chinese side has reiterated that Pakistan's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity should be respected and Pakistan efforts to promote peace and stability in South Asia should be recognized and supported. It is significant that the Joint Statement signed in 2011 also notes: "Pakistan reiterated that it would never allow its territory to be used to attack any country and will continue to support international counter-terrorism cooperation".<sup>10</sup> What is more important today is that the signatories to documents, also assure each one about the serious commitment to the compliance with the letter and the spirit of the statement. It has been a consistent demand by India that Pakistan must not allow its territory for terrorist acts against India. Evidence suggest that China's approach towards dealing with this menace is quite different and it has stalled India's proposals to counter terrorism at the United Nations in the recent past.<sup>11</sup> Pakistan is a source of terrorism and that China needs recognize this fact.

Event in recent past has triggered a debate about the strategic balancing role in the region by China and Pakistan against the US. Further, there is a view in China that the US presence in Pakistan also serves Chinese strategic interest.<sup>12</sup> China's ethno-religious separatist problem in the Xinjiang region is increasingly being connected with the network of cross border and trans-national terrorism as acknowledged by the Chinese government from time to time. It is in the interest of China that the US Drone strikes continue in Pakistan since some of the strikes in the past were directed at the training camps of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the Islamic Jihad Union in the Waziristan, which were also training Uighur terrorists from the China's Xinjiang region.

China's strategic alliance with Pakistan also ensures stability of the Xinjiang region. The Joint Statement signed during President Xi Jinping Visit to China in April 2015 points out that the two countries regard East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) as a common threat and reaffirmed their resolve to resolutely combat ETIM.<sup>13</sup> Today, China's greatest domestic security concern is ethno-religious and separatism in Xinjiang. However, there is a possibility that "instability in Xinjiang that can be traced back to Pakistan could turn out to be the real chink in the rhetorical armor of the relationship with China".<sup>14</sup>

Recently, Chinese netizens and bloggers at *the Global Times* even noted that China-Pakistan strategy is to secretly send Chinese special troops to Pakistan for protecting nuclear installation against any US takeover.<sup>15</sup> However, the Chinese government approach has been cautious enough not to strain their relationship with the US by discussing any such proposal publicly.

### **Role of People's Liberation Army:**

The Central Military Commission (CMC) of the Chinese Communist Party directed a very important change in the armed forces' training and preparation for war in 1985. The Chinese People's Liberation Army was instructed that it was no longer necessary to prepare for a war with the Soviet Union. Hence, the PLA's doctrine, strategy and operational concepts would be focused on preparing for the likely form of future conflict, which is local, and limited war (*jubu zhanzheng*) around China's periphery.<sup>16</sup> The decade following the CMC's directive has seen the Chinese armed forces begin the transition towards a more modern military force. The PLA changed their organizational structure, command and control, and training to focus on military conflict along China's borders and maritime territories.<sup>17</sup>

The role of PLA in China's foreign policy decision-making has changed over time. With the exception of Taiwan issue, involvement of branches of the PLA in foreign policy started with the Chinese leaders' decision to allow PLA to sell arms surplus overseas in the 1980s. However, by the end of 1990s, PLA hand over all its businesses to civilian authorities.<sup>18</sup> In recent times, the nature of PLA involvement in foreign affairs especially in neighboring countries has changed. There is now evidence that PLA play a physical role in the affairs of neighboring countries including Pakistan. Some report suggests influx of an estimated 7,000 to 11,000 soldiers of the PLA in disputed region of Gilgit-Baltistan. PLA soldiers entered Gilgit-Baltistan to work on the railroad, Karakoram Highway or to build a link between China's Xinjiang region with PoK. Some work on dams, expressways and other projects.<sup>19</sup> Such initiatives by the Government of China or Pok can create can

create geopolitical problems. Further, PLA has emerged as a player that competes for influence with other actors. PLA officers debating foreign policy issues in public domain is a new phenomenon. The PLA no longer shies away from antagonizing its neighbours...<sup>20</sup>. It is also noteworthy that views of Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China do not converse on many strategic issues related to neighbourhood.

### **Cross Border Infrastructure Initiatives**

China's infrastructure expansion in South Asia is focused primarily on the railroad corridors which manifest Chinese strategic depth. Vis a Vis India are Karakoram corridor till Gwadar. Other Chinese initiatives in Pakistan include widening the Karakoram highway from the current 10 meters to 30 meters, building a rail link from Havelian to the China border and starting a new bus survive between Kashgar and Gilgit. Initially China started to develop connectivity in its immediate neighbourhood in South East Asia to consolidate trade and strategic linkages. China shifted its focus to South Asia in the last decade only. Chinese projects have the potential to limit India's strategic influence in the region.

### **CHINA-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC RELATIONS**

Some Chinese experts believe that China's relations with Pakistan are politically and strategically strong but economically weak. However others like Du Bing (at the South Asia Centre, China Institute of Contemporary International Relations) has noted that, "Economic cooperation is the mainstay of China-Pak friendly relations".<sup>21</sup> According to agreements signed in 2010, China was to invest around US\$ 30 billion in next five years in Pakistan.

A significant reason for Chinese interest in Pakistan is the trade and energy corridor from the Gwadar port of Pakistan to the Western regions of China. Apart from being short and secure, this route serves as an alternative to the sea route that passes through the Straits of Malacca.<sup>22</sup>

China's policy towards Pakistan is closely linked with its leaders' objective of economic modernization of the country. Sino-Pakistan economic relations largely favor China. The volume of bilateral trade reached US\$ 12 billion in 2013. However, Pakistan's trade deficit is more than US\$ 4 billion. The China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement (FTA) signed in 2007 has benefitted China far more than Pakistan as Pakistan's goods face tough competition in the Chinese markets. China's call for a 'dynamic trade balance' with Pakistan will go unfulfilled unless concrete measures are taken by China to reduce the trade imbalance. During his visit to Islamabad in 2015, President Xi Jinping pledged to invest US\$ 46 billion on building a China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) - a network of roads, railway and pipelines. However, experts have raised questions over Pakistan's ability to absorb this huge investment given its problems with militancy, separatism, political volatility and official corruption.<sup>23</sup> China is also worried about violence from ethnic Uighurs in Xinjiang region and fears that separatists could team up with Uighur militants fighting alongside members of Pakistan's Taliban. Further, a decade-old separatist insurgency in Baluchistan province of Pakistan, where the economic corridor starts, makes that area extremely volatile.<sup>24</sup> The CPEC has also been called "the Dark Corridor" due to turmoil in Baluchistan<sup>25</sup>. There are great worries for China. In recent years, there have been occasional kidnappings and killings of

Chinese workers in Pakistan. In March 2015, Baloch separatists attacked tankers carrying fuel to a Chinese company working on a mining project. Gwadar port, which was recently put under the management of a Chinese company, was a particular target. Militants do not want to see it developed unless Baluchistan becomes independent.<sup>26</sup> Further economists have also raised concerns about CPEC because China will be a big beneficiary as US\$ 36 billion investment will be commercial projects of China and only 10 billion will be concessional loan to Pakistan.

### **CHINESE RESOURCES DIPLOMACY IN PAKISTAN**

After more than three decades of economic growth averaging ten per cent a year, China is the second largest economy and also the largest exporter in the world. As part of its growing influence, China is actively engaging in economic diplomacy through a wide range of means, including bilateral trade agreements, foreign aid and investment projects in different parts of the world including neighboring countries. Some scholars have termed China's foreign policy as "resource-based foreign policy". Noting that China's foreign policy is domestically driven, they argue that China's "resource-based foreign policy" is a key to economic growth and CCP political survival. An unprecedented need for resources is now driving China's foreign policy.<sup>27</sup>

As reported by state media, China is forging ahead with studies of resource reserves and acquisition possibilities in neighbouring countries. "Our research into overseas mineral resources includes iron ore, gold, copper and bauxite," an official with the technology and international cooperation department under the Ministry of Land and Resources told.<sup>28</sup>

Chinese mining companies are investing in Copper and Iron in Pakistan. Recently, **three state-owned companies in the Chinese province of Gansu presented a plan to the Board of Investment in Pakistan showing interest in mining fields.** The heads of the companies Baiyin Nonferrous, Huaneng Gansu Energy Development, and Jinchuan Group visited China and proposed to make investment in the mining and energy sectors.<sup>29</sup> Further, Baluchistan has received Chinese investments in infrastructure such as Gwadar deep sea port, Karakoram highway and a refinery. Other major projects involving Chinese investments in Pakistan are the Chashma Nuclear Power Plant and Chinese Overseas Economic Zones. Chinese firms in Pakistan are operating in crucial sectors such as oil and gas, information technology, power generation, infrastructure and mining.<sup>30</sup>

### **THE BEGINNING OF INDIA'S RISE**

The Beginning of India's Rise has also impacted China's policy towards Pakistan. India's relations with the world have seen a transformation since the initiation of economic reforms in 1991. Economic reforms and fast-growing trillion plus dollar economy of India has provided opportunities and enormous significance for the rest of the world. India's prudent management of its own economy and its role in the global recovery from recession has made the world look towards India as a rising global economic power. As the largest democracy in the world and an emerging economy, India has begun to play a significant role more appropriate to its stature in regional/international organizations and economic groupings.

The notable aspect of the beginning of India's rise in global politics is her benign and non-threatening role, which has been largely appreciated by the world. India is playing an

increasingly pro-active role in global affairs, in promoting peace and development across the globe. India's emerging status is being recognized in the foreign policy field. In recent times, India has signed strategic partnership agreements with around 30 countries which include major powers. The Indo-US nuclear deal of 2008 in which the US agreed to provide nuclear technology and equipment to a non signatory of NPT like India is itself an important recognition of India as a responsible and emerging power.<sup>31</sup> Prof. Zhao Hong notes that "in the face of India's growing strategic influence, China's approach is to develop economic and strategic ties with South Asian nations, ensuring that India is surrounded by countries friendly toward China."<sup>32</sup> A team of researchers in China including researchers from the Institute of Asia Pacific Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing, drafted the report "2010: Regional Security Change and China's Strategic Response". The report underscored to pay special attention to India's diplomacy in coming years.<sup>33</sup>

## CONCLUSION

After more than three decades of economic growth averaging ten per cent a year, China is the second largest economy and also the largest exporter in the world. As part of its growing influence, China is actively engaging in economic diplomacy through a wide range of means, including bilateral trade agreements, foreign aid and investment projects in different parts of the world including neighboring countries. Some scholars have termed China's foreign policy as "resource-based foreign policy". Noting that China's foreign policy is domestically driven, they argue that China's "resource-based foreign policy" is a key to economic growth and CCP political survival. An unprecedented need for resources is now driving China's foreign policy

## ENDNOTES

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## Appendix

### THE BOUNDARY AGREEMENT BETWEEN CHINA AND PAKISTAN, 1963

The Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of Pakistan;

Having agreed, with a view to ensuring to prevailing peace and tranquility on the border, to formally delimit and demarcate the boundary between China's Sinkiang and the contiguous areas the Defence of which is under the actual control of Pakistan, in a spirit of fairness, reasonableness, mutual understanding and mutual accommodation, and on the basis of the ten principles as enunciated in the Bandung conference;

Being convinced that this would not only give full expression to the desire of the peoples of China and Pakistan for the development of good neighborly and friendly relations, but also help safeguard Asian and world peace.

Have resolved for this purpose to conclude the present agreement and have appointed as their respective plenipotentiaries the following:

For the Government of the People's Republic of China; Chen Yi, Minister of Foreign Affairs;

For the Government of Pakistan; Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Minister of External Affairs;

Who, having mutually examined their full powers and found them to be in good and due form, have agreed upon the following:

#### Article 1

In view of the fact that the boundary between China's Sinkiang and contiguous areas the defence of which is under the actual control of Pakistan has never been formally delimited, two parties agree to delimit it on the basis of the traditional customary boundary line including natural features and in a spirit of equality, mutual benefit and friendly co-operation.

#### Article 2

(One) In accordance with the principle expounded in Article 1 of the present agreement, the two parties have fixed, as follows the alignment of the entire boundary line between China's Sinkiang and the contiguous areas the defence of which is under the actual control of Pakistan:

- (1) Commencing from its north-western extremity at height 5630 metres (a peak, the reference co-ordinates of which are approximately longitude 74 degrees 34 minutes east and latitude 37 degrees 03 minutes north), the boundary line runs generally eastward and then southeastward strictly along the main watershed between the tributaries of the Tashkurgan river of the Tarim river system on the one hand and tributaries of the Hunza river of the Indus river system on the other hand, passing through the Kalik Daban (Dawan), the Mintake Daban (pass), the Kharchanai Daban (named on the Chinese map only), the Mutsjilga Daban (named on the Chinese map only), and the Parpik Pass (named on the Pakistan map only), and reaches the Khunjerab (Yutr) Daban (Pass).

(2) After passing through the Khunjerab (Yutr) Daban (pass), the boundary line runs generally southward along the above mentioned main watershed up to a mountain-top south of this Daban (pass), where it leaves the main watershed to follow

the crest of a spur lying generally in a southeasterly direction, which is the watershed between the Akijilga river (a nameless corresponding river on the Pakistan map) on the one hand, and the Taghumbash (Oprang) river and the Koliman Su (Oprang Jilga) on the other hand.

According to the map of the Chinese side, the boundary line, after leaving the southeastern extremity of this spur, runs along a small section of the middle line of the bed of the Keliman Su to reach its confluence with the Kelechin river. According to the map of the Pakistan side, the boundary line, after leaving the southeastern extremity of the spur, reaches the sharp bend of the Shaksgam or Muztagh River.

(3) From the aforesaid point, the boundary line runs up the Kelechin river (Shaksgam or Mistagh river) along the middle line of its bed to its confluence (reference co-ordinates approximately longitude 76 degrees 02 minutes east and latitude 36 degrees 26 minutes north) with the Snorbulak Daria (shimshal river or Braldu river).

(4) From the confluence of the aforesaid two rivers, the boundary line, according to the map of the Chinese side, ascends the crest of a spur and runs along it to join the Karokoram range main watershed at a mountain-top (reference co-ordinates approximately longitude 75 degrees 54 minutes east and latitude 36 degrees 15 minutes north) which on this map is shown as belonging to the Shorgulak mountain. According to the map of the Pakistan side, the boundary line from the confluence of the above-mentioned two rivers ascends the crest of a corresponding spur and runs along it, passing through height 6520 metres (21,390 feet) till it joins the Karakoram rangen main watershed at a peak (reference co-ordinates approximately longitude 75 degrees 57 minutes east and latitude 36 degrees 03 minutes north).

(5) Thence, the boundary line, running generally southward and then eastward, strictly follows the Karakoram range main watershed which separates the Tarim river drainage system from the Indus river drainage system, passing through the east Mustagh pass (Mustagh pass), the top of the Chogri peak (K-2), the top of the broad peak, the top of the Gasherbrum mountain 8068, the Indirakoli pass (names on the Chinese maps only) and the top of the Teram Kankri peak, and reaches its southeastern extremity at the Karakoram pass.

(Two) The alignment of the entire boundary line as described in section one of this article, has been drawn on the one million scale map of the Chinese side in Chinese and the one million scale map of the Pakistan side in English which are signed and attached to the present agreement. (Not attached in this book)

(Three) In view of the fact that the maps of the two sides are not fully identical in their representation of the topographical features the two parties have agreed that the actual features

on the ground shall prevail, so far as the location and alignment of the boundary described in Section one is concerned, and that they will be determined as far as possible by joint survey on the ground.

Article 3

The two parties have agreed that:

Wherever the boundary follows a river, the middle line of the river, the middle line of the river bed shall be the boundary line; and that

Wherever the boundary passes through Daban (pass), the water-parting line thereof shall be the boundary line.

Article 4

- I. The two parties have agreed to set up, as soon as possible, a joint boundary demarcation commission. Each side will appoint a chairman, one or more members and a certain number of advisers and technical staff. The joint boundary demarcation commission is charged with the responsibility, in accordance with the provisions of the present agreement, to hold concrete discussions on and carry out the following tasks jointly:
  1. To conduct necessary surveys of the boundary area on the ground, as stated in Article 2 of the present agreement, so as to set up boundary markers at places considered to be appropriate by the two parties and to delineate the boundary line of the jointly prepared accurate maps.
  2. To draft a protocol setting forth in detail the alignment of the entire boundary line and the location of all the boundary markers and prepare and get printed detailed maps, to be attached to the protocol, with the boundary line and the location of the boundary markers shown on them.

Article 5

The two Parties have agreed that any dispute concerning the boundary, which may arise after the delimitation of the boundary line actually existing between the two countries shall be settled peacefully by the two parties through friendly consultations.

Article 6

The two Parties have agreed that after the settlement of the Kashmir dispute between Pakistan and India, the sovereign authority concerned will reopen negotiations with the Government of the People's Republic of China, on the boundary as described in Article Two of the present Agreement, so as to sign a formal Boundary Treaty to replace the present agreement:

Provided that in the event of that sovereign authority being Pakistan, the provisions of this agreement and the aforesaid Protocol shall be maintained in the formal Boundary Treaty to be signed between the Peoples Republic of China and Pakistan.

Article 7

The present agreement shall come into force on the date of its signature. Done in duplicate in Peking on the second day of March 1963, in the Chinese and English language, both texts being equally authentic.

Marshal Chen Yi,

Plenipotentiary of the Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto,

Plenipotentiary of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Government of Pakistan