



PAK-CHINA STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AND ITS IMPACT ON REGIONAL POWER STRUCTURE

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Abstract: The Sino-Pak strategic Cooperation plays a vital role in the current geopolitical dynamics of South Asia, exerting a substantial influence on the regional power structure. This article investigates the various aspects of this collaboration, including military, economic, and diplomatic cooperation, and analyzes its wider impact on the regional distribution of power. Historical development of Sino-Pakistani relations, based on shared strategic objectives, has transformed into a complete alliance marked by many military cooperation and economic endeavors, most notably the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). This relationship acts as a means to balance out India's regional control, escalating the strategic rivalry between India and Pakistan and changing the security calculations of the area. Growing participation of external powers, notably the United States and China, intensifies the intricacy of South Asian geopolitics. This research provides a detailed analysis of the strategic reasons, economic interdependencies, and geopolitical strategies that form the basis of the collaboration between Pakistan and China. It provides a comprehensive knowledge of how this partnership affects regional power dynamics, influences interactions between states, and impacts regional stability. This study provides valuable insights into the changing security structure of South Asia and contributes to the wider discussion on international relations and strategic studies.

Keywords: South Asia, China, power structure, Strategic Partnership, Impacts, Geopolitical.

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Introduction

Cooperation between Pakistan and China is considered one of the most important alliances in current geopolitics, especially in the South Asian region. This enduring alliance, commonly referred to as an "all-weather friendship," has significant consequences for the power dynamics in the region. The alliance has undergone substantial development over the past few decades, including various aspects such as military, economic, and political, based on shared strategic goals. The Alignment of interests between Pakistan and China is primarily motivated by their common concerns on regional security, economic progress, and a mutual aim to counteract the influence of other regional powers, especially India.

The Pak-China relationship started to strengthen in the 1960s, as China and India had border conflicts and Pakistan then improved its connection with China. With the passage of time, this bond has grown into a comprehensive strategic alliance, characterized by considerable military collaboration, encompassing defense sales and joint ventures in military technologies. China's significant contribution to the development of Pakistan's nuclear and missile capabilities has played a crucial role in creating the strategic

landscape of the area, thereby contributing to a fragile equilibrium of power in South Asia.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a significant example of the strong collaboration between Pakistan and China. It is a major initiative that falls within China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The objective of CPEC is to strengthen connectivity between the two nations through the construction and improvement of infrastructure, like roads, trains, and ports. The project is anticipated to yield substantial economic advantages for Pakistan, potentially reshaping its economic terrain. CPEC offers China a strategic pathway to the Arabian Sea and the Middle East, circumventing the potentially exposed Malacca Strait. This ensures the safeguarding of a vital commercial route and energy passage.

The strategic ramifications of the Pak-China alliance go beyond their bilateral relations, influencing the regional power dynamics. This alliance functions as a means to balance out India's control in South Asia, adding complexity to India's strategic decision-making and exerting influence over its foreign and defense policy. The Cooperation also aligns with wider geopolitical dynamics, such as the strategic rivalry between the United States and China. As the United States aims to enhance its relationship with India as a

component of its Indo-Pacific strategy, the alliance between Pakistan and China presents a comparable source of influence that poses a challenge to the developing alignment between the United States and India.

Furthermore, the Alliance between Pakistan and China has broader implications for regional security and stability. The Strengthening relationship between these two countries possessing nuclear weapons brings new aspects to the regional security structure, namely regarding the distribution of power and the way threats are seen in South Asia. The strategic alliance between China and Pakistan is based on their common security concerns and mutual interests in countering India's influence in the area. This cooperation has wide-ranging effects, not only in terms of the military and economic aspects, but also in terms of cultural and political ramifications. It has the power to shape public attitudes and diplomatic engagements throughout the area. In 1963, Pakistan and China entered into a border agreement that defined the border between China's Xinjiang region and its surrounding areas. However, India vehemently objected to the notion of a shared border between Pakistan and China (Bhatty, 1996, 158).

Strategic alliance between China and Pakistan is based on their common security concerns and mutual interests in countering India's influence in the area. The strategic rivalry between China and India, which is characterized by border disputes and competition for regional dominance, aligns with Pakistan's security requirements, resulting in a mutually advantageous partnership (Small, 2015). The China-Pakistan cooperation has undergone substantial development with the initiation of CPEC, a high-value infrastructural and economic initiative designed to bolster connectivity and economic amalgamation between the two nations. Pakistan has pursued strong partnerships in order to offset India's regional dominance, spurred by historical tensions between the two countries, especially around the Kashmir dispute. Rivalry between China and India, which is characterized by border disputes and competition for regional dominance, aligns with Pakistan's security requirements, resulting in a mutually advantageous partnership (Small, 2015). This alignment can be comprehended by considering both the balance of power and balance of threat theories. These theories propose that states align themselves based on the distribution of power and the perception of dangers, respectively (Walt, 1987).

Undergone substantial development with the initiation of CPEC, a high-value infrastructural and economic initiative designed to bolster connectivity and economic amalgamation between the two nations. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a prominent initiative within the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which demonstrates China's strategic objective of establishing land links to the Arabian Sea and enhancing its influence in South Asia (Siddiqi, 2019). Pakistan views CPEC as both an important economic lifeline and a strategic asset that bolsters its position in relation to India, by improving its economic resilience and strategic depth. The project encompasses investments in transportation infrastructure, including roads, trains, and ports. A significant aspect of this project is the development of the Gwadar Port, which will grant China direct entry to the Indian Ocean (Ahmad, 2018).

Military dimension of the Pak-China relationship holds similar importance. a major provider of military equipment to Pakistan, supplying items such as airplanes, navy ships, and missile

technology. two nations frequently engage in collaborative military drills, which improve their capacity to work together effectively and coordinate their strategic efforts (Small, 2015). The military collaboration acts as a force multiplier for Pakistan, allowing it to offset India's overwhelming conventional military capabilities. In addition, China provides support to Pakistan in strategic technologies, such as nuclear and missile technology, which are essential for Pakistan to retain its strategic deterrence against India (Garver, 2001).

The consequences of the strategic collaboration between Pakistan and China go beyond their direct relationship, impacting the wider regional power dynamics. The collaboration poses a threat to India's aspirations for regional supremacy and has resulted in a more divided regional structure. alliance with the United States, Japan, and Australia, known as the Quad, is viewed as a means to offset China's sway in the Indo-Pacific region. As a consequence, the security environment has become intricate, with South Asia emerging as a crucial arena for major powers to compete for influence (Pant & Joshi, 2018). The Indo-Pacific policy, which focuses on restricting China's influence, adds complexity to the power dynamics in the region, highlighting the significance of the Pak-China alliance for regional stability.

Furthermore, the economic and infrastructural aspects of the Pak-China alliance, namely through CPEC, have consequences for regional economic integration and development. Although the project offers substantial economic advantages for Pakistan, such as the creation of employment opportunities and the construction infrastructure, it also gives rise to apprehensions about the sustainability of debt and the country's economic reliance on China (Malik, 2018).of The strategic positioning of CPEC, which links China's western region to the Arabian Sea, further strengthens China's presence in the region, disrupting established strategic power dynamics. The amicable relations between China and Pakistan have significantly deteriorated a robust strategic alliance between the two nations. India views the alliance between China and Pakistan as a potential danger to India's dominant dominance in South Asia.(Bhadrakumar, 2015).

Literature Review

The Pak-China strategic cooperation is a consequential and long-lasting alliance that has influenced the geopolitical landscape of South Asia. This review consolidates significant academic literature that analyzes the historical progression, strategic aspects, and regional consequences of this collaboration, specifically on the distribution of power and dynamics of potential threats in the area. Established in the early 1960s due to mutual strategic goals and similar worries regarding India's regional expansion. Andrew Small's book, "The China-Pakistan Axis: Asia's New Geopolitics" published in 2015, offers a thorough examination of the geopolitical factors that resulted in a convergence of interests between Islamabad and Beijing. These factors include India's alignment with the Soviet Union and its boundary disputes with China. Pakistan played a crucial role in strengthening the cooperation between China and the United States in the 1970s, which had a considerable impact on the geopolitical situation at the time.Scholars have extensively analyzed the military dimension of the alliance between Pakistan and China. Notable authors such as TV Paul in his book "The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry" (2005) and John Garver in his book "Protracted Contest:

Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century" (2001) emphasizes the significant military collaboration between China and Pakistan, which includes China's assistance in developing Pakistan's nuclear and missile capabilities. Assistance is considered a strategic means of offsetting India's conventional and nuclear capabilities, thus contributing to a regional equilibrium of power that has substantial consequences for stability and security in South Asia. These works highlight that the military collaboration between the two nations is motivated by shared security interests and the intention to discourage India. The literature has extensively examined the economic aspect of the alliance, specifically focusing on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Ziad Haider's research on Sino-Pakistan Relations and Xinjiang's Uighurs: Politics, Trade, and Islam along the Karakoram Highway (2005) and Michael Kugelman's analysis of Pakistan's energy crisis (2017) investigate the role of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a vital element of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This initiative aims to provide China with strategic access to the Arabian Sea and contribute to the improvement of Pakistan's infrastructure and economic growth. Although these endeavors offer economic advantages for Pakistan, they also give rise to apprehensions regarding the sustainability of debt and strategic ramifications of increased Chinese influence in area. The literature frequently discusses the recurring issue of geopolitical consequences of the alliance between Pakistan and China, especially in relation to the strategic struggle between the United States and China. Harsh V. Pant's books, "The US-India Relationship: Strategic Partnership or Complementary Interests?" (2012) and "The US Pivot and Indian Foreign Policy" (2018) examine how the partnership between the US and India acts as a counterweight to the increasing alignment between the two countries, which aims to limit China's influence in the Indo-Pacific region. These works emphasize the strategic calculations involved in the alliance between Pakistan and China, as they aim to challenge India's dominant position and reduce the impact of external powers such as the United States. The balance of power and balance of threat play a vital role in understanding the dynamics of the collaboration between Pakistan and China. Origins of coalitions (1987), offers a fundamental understanding of how governments establish coalitions in response to perceived threats. Although the alliance provides strategic advantages, several researchers warned about potential concerns. This thesis is specifically applicable to the relationship between Pakistan and China, as both countries perceive dangers from India's military capability and strategic alliances. The balance of threat approach, which takes into account elements like as geographical proximity, offensive capabilities, and assumed intentions, provides a detailed understanding of the reasons behind the strategic partnership between Pakistan and China.

Alliance provides strategic advantages, several researchers warn about potential concerns. Sahni's book, "Balancing China: The Strategic Response of South Asian States" (2016), explores how other regional actors perceive and respond to the collaboration between Pakistan and China. These actors typically seek alliances to counteract the strength of this partnership. These critiques highlight the intricate and potentially disruptive consequences of the cooperation, especially if it worsens regional rivalries or involves outsider forces.

The strategic cooperation between Pakistan and China is a substantial and long-lasting alliance that has influenced the geopolitical situation in South Asia. This review consolidates significant academic literature that analyzes the historical development, strategic aspects, and regional consequences of this alliance, with a specific focus on the distribution of power and the dynamics of threats in the area. The establishment of the Pak-China alliance can be traced back to the early 1960s, driven by common strategic goals and shared worries regarding India's regional hegemony. Andrew Small's book, "The China-Pakistan Axis: Asia's New Geopolitics" published in 2015, offers a thorough examination of the geopolitical factors that brought about a convergence of interests between Islamabad and Beijing. These factors include India's alignment with the Soviet Union and its boundary disputes with China. Pakistan played a crucial role in strengthening the cooperation between China and the United States in the 1970s, which had a considerable impact on the geopolitical situation at the time. Scholars have extensively analyzed the military dimension of the alliance between Pakistan and China. Notable scholars such as T.V. Paul in his book *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry* (2005) and John Garver in *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century* (2001) emphasize the significant military collaboration between China and Pakistan, which includes China's assistance in Pakistan's nuclear and missile initiatives. This assistance is considered a strategic means of offsetting India's conventional and nuclear capabilities, so contributing to a regional equilibrium of power that has substantial consequences for stability and security in South Asia. These works highlight that the military collaboration between the two nations is motivated by shared security interests and the intention to discourage India. Although these endeavors offer economic advantages for Pakistan, they also give rise to apprehensions regarding the ability to manage debt and the potential strategic consequences of increased Chinese involvement in the area. The literature has extensively examined the economic aspect of the alliance, specifically focusing on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Ziad Haider's research on Sino-Pakistan Relations and Xinjiang's Uighurs: Politics, Trade, and Islam along the Karakoram Highway (2005) and Michael Kugelman's analysis of Pakistan's energy crisis (2017) investigate the role of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a crucial element of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This initiative aims to establish strategic access to the Arabian Sea and bolster Pakistan's infrastructure and economic progress. Endeavors offer economic advantages for Pakistan, they also give rise to apprehensions regarding the ability to manage debt and potential strategic consequences of heightened Chinese involvement in area.

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Theoretical frameworks, such as the balance of power and balance of threat, play a vital role in understanding the dynamics of the collaboration between Pakistan and China. Stephen Walt's book, *The Origins of Coalitions* (1987), offers a fundamental understanding of how governments establish coalitions in response to perceived threats. This idea is especially applicable to the relationship between Pakistan and China, as both countries view India's military capabilities and strategic partnerships as potential threats. The balance of threat approach provides a sophisticated understanding of the reasons behind the strategic relationship between Pakistan and China, taking into account elements such as geographic proximity, offensive capabilities and assumed intents.

Although the alliance provides strategic advantages, several researchers warn about potential hazards. Sahni's book, *"Balancing China: The Strategic Response of South Asian States"* (2016), explores how other regional actors perceive and respond to the collaboration between Pakistan and China. These actors typically seek alliances in order to counteract the strength of this partnership. These criticisms highlight the intricate and potentially disruptive consequences of the cooperation, especially if it worsens regional conflicts or involves outside forces.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SINO--PAK STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Economic Relations

The economic link between China and Pakistan is a fundamental aspect of their bilateral ties, exerting a substantial influence on the socio-economic landscape of Pakistan and the wider regional economy. Economic link between China and Pakistan has a long history, originating from the early years of diplomatic ties between the two nations. In the past, this economic collaboration was restricted but held great strategic importance, frequently encompassing Chinese aid in infrastructure initiatives and military advancements. Economic aspect of the relationship significantly accelerated in the early 21st century, especially with the establishment of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Ziad Haider, in his work *"Sino-Pakistan Relations and Xinjiang's Uighurs: Politics, Trade, and Islam along the Karakoram Highway"* (2005), states that the initial focus of economic cooperation between China and Pakistan was on sectors like energy, mining, and telecommunications. This laid the foundation for further and more comprehensive collaboration under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is the most ambitious and all-encompassing aspect of the economic ties between China and Pakistan. The initiative encompasses a range of infrastructure endeavors, such as roadways, trains, energy initiatives, and special economic zones (SEZs), with the objective of improving connectivity between China and Pakistan. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) holds great strategic importance for China due to its ability to offer a more efficient and secure pathway for importing energy resources from the Middle East, while avoiding the need to pass via the Strait of Malacca. Pakistan views CPEC as a prospective economic lifeline that has the ability to rejuvenate its infrastructure, stimulate industrial expansion, and generate employment opportunities. According to the study conducted by Andrew Small in his book *"The China-Pakistan Axis: Asia's New Geopolitics"* published in 2015, the development of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is

divided into multiple phases. The initial phase of development prioritizes projects related to energy and transportation infrastructure. The Gwadar Port, which is an essential part of CPEC, is planned to be a crucial point in this corridor, offering China a significant advantage in the Arabian Sea. This port serves as a hub for both trade and military operations, which can significantly impact the balance of power in the surrounding marine region.

The economic partnership between China and Pakistan is a fundamental aspect of their mutual relations, exerting a substantial influence on the socio-economic environment of Pakistan and the wider regional economy. The economic link between China and Pakistan has a long history, originating from the early stages of diplomatic ties between the two nations. In the past, this economic collaboration was restricted but held great strategic importance, frequently encompassing Chinese support in infrastructural initiatives and military advancements. The economic aspect of the relationship significantly accelerated in the early 21st century, especially with the establishment of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Ziad Haider, in his work *"Sino-Pakistan Relations and Xinjiang's Uighurs: Politics, Trade, and Islam along the Karakoram Highway"* published in 2005, states that the initial focus of economic cooperation between China and Pakistan was on sectors like energy, mining, and telecommunications. This laid the foundation for further and more extensive collaboration under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

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Export/Import

China and Pakistan maintain a robust trade relationship, characterized by a substantial exchange of goods and services, with China being Pakistan's largest trading partner. The bilateral trade volume reached approximately \$19 billion in 2020, driven by the deep economic ties facilitated through initiatives like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Pakistan primarily imports machinery, electrical equipment, textiles, chemicals, and iron and steel products from China, which are crucial for its industrial and infrastructural development. These imports are essential for

projects under CPEC, reflecting China's role as a key supplier for Pakistan's economic growth. (Ahmad, E. 2021)

On the export side, Pakistan sends textiles, agricultural products (such as rice and seafood), and minerals to China. Textiles, especially cotton yarn and fabrics, constitute the largest portion of Pakistan's exports, catering to China's vast manufacturing sector. However, despite these exports, the trade balance remains heavily tilted in favor of China, leading to a significant trade deficit for Pakistan. This deficit raises concerns over economic sustainability and the need for Pakistan to diversify its export base and enhance competitiveness. (Ministry of Commerce, Pakistan 2020) The Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the two countries, effective since 2007, has boosted trade volumes but also highlighted the challenges of managing a trade deficit. To fully benefit from this relationship, Pakistan aims to improve its export diversification and value addition, reducing its reliance on a narrow range of products and leveraging its strategic partnership with China for greater economic gains. (Pakistan Business Council (2018)

China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was launched as a component of the One Belt One Road (OBOR) program, proposed by Xi Jinping, with the aim of enhancing connectivity and fostering cooperation among nations in Eurasia. And China has consistently supported one another under all circumstances. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a strategic initiative aimed at promoting economic integration and development in the region. It is expected to bring significant benefits not only to Pakistan and China, but also to the largest countries in South Asia and the entire Central Asian states. project commenced on April 20, 2015, following the execution of agreements between the Chinese and Pakistani governments. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor has established a connection between the Pakistani ports of Gwadar and Karachi, which are located near the sea, and the Xinjiang area in China. to Mongolia, Russia, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and India. Integration of the countries in the region. The CPEC, in addition to time and distance, would also decrease the expenses associated with delivering items such as natural gas, which China imports through the straits of Malacca and the South China Sea. CPEC would supplant these straits by offering a superior possibility for the movement of trade among the nations. The primary objective of CPEC is to enhance the infrastructure and energy transportation networks in Pakistan. Additionally, it aims to stabilize or enhance the economy in the broader region through mutual collaboration and assistance. Their relationship is characterized by being good neighbors and strategic partners, with a strong sense of mutual trust, support, and win-win collaboration. This has led to increased dependency between them. One significant facet of collaboration between the states is the advancement of CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor).

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) encompasses various facets, such as economic, political, geopolitical, civilizational, and cultural. Both Pakistan and China view the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a valuable opportunity. Mr. Nong Rong, the Chinese ambassador to Pakistan, emphasized that CPEC is a significant and pioneering project within the Belt and Road Initiative. The leaders of both countries have given it great importance and actively supported its development. Additionally, it has garnered unanimous support

from both nations, as it seeks to offer fresh prospects to the public and invigorate the China-Pakistan friendship with new energy and perspective.

The Chinese ambassador is Mr. Nong Rong.

China has made an investment of almost 62 billion dollars in Pakistan. The initial amount was \$45 billion, but it was subsequently raised to \$62 billion. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) would significantly augment economic prospects for both China and Pakistan. The project's implementation, which involves the construction of dams, installation of nuclear reactors, and the development of road networks and railway lines, will effectively reduce poverty and unemployment in Pakistan, leading to a significant increase in the country's economy. establish a physical connection between China and markets in South Asia, Europe, and other regions. Currently, 80% of China's oil is transported from the Strait of Malacca to Shanghai, covering a distance of 16,000km. However, once the Gwadar operation is completed, the distance for oil transportation will be reduced to less than 5,000km. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) encompasses the development of chemical and energy sectors. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) encompasses the development of the Gwadar port and construction of the Gwadar metropolis. Within the framework of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a total of 21 energy projects have been officially agreed upon. These projects encompass various sources of energy such as natural gas, petroleum, and solar power. A total of 14 projects will generate a maximum of 10,400 megawatts of energy. projects will collectively generate a total of 16,400 megawatts of energy. projects will effectively eliminate load shedding and result in a decrease in the oil bill. However, it is important to note that there may be an increase in the import of coal. total of \$35 billion is invested in energy projects.

The Ministry of Planning provides a detailed account of the development of Gwadar port, various routes, strategic interests, and obstacles associated with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Social and Cultural Relationship

The cultural interaction between China and Pakistan is an essential component of their comprehensive bilateral ties, indicating a strengthening bond that goes beyond political and economic aspects. An essential component of this association is the existence of Confucius Institutes in Pakistan, which have played a crucial role in advancing Chinese language and culture. These institutes provide language classes, cultural workshops, and activities that enhance the understanding and admiration of Chinese traditions and values within the Pakistani population (Confucius Institute Headquarters, 2019). Similarly, cultural festivals and events, such as Pakistan Week in China, showcase Pakistani arts, cuisine, culture and customs, thereby promoting a deeper comprehension of Pakistani culture among Chinese individuals.

Educational exchanges serve to enhance and solidify these cultural connections. A large number of Pakistani students are awarded scholarships to pursue higher education in China, with a special focus on fields such as medicine, engineering, and the social sciences. These exchanges not only promote academic and professional growth but also foster enduring ties among students from both nations (Rahman, 2018). Furthermore, the Increasing influx of Chinese students pursuing education in Pakistan signifies

a mutual desire to delve into the cultural and academic realms of both countries.

Tourism is experiencing rapid growth as a result of enhanced visa regulations and infrastructural development through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is promoting cultural exchange. Chinese Visitors who travel to Pakistan are showing a growing interest in the country's abundant historical landmarks and natural beauty, while Pakistanis are exploring the various areas and cultural legacy of China. These contacts facilitate the improvement of mutual comprehension and the eradication of cultural prejudices (Siddiqui, 2021). Media collaborations, such as cooperative film projects and documentaries, have a substantial impact on connecting different cultures by presenting the unique narratives and principles of each country to a wider viewership (Khan, 2020). Nevertheless, obstacles such as linguistic difficulties and divergent social norms remain, yet continuous cultural interactions and educational endeavors persistently tackle these concerns..

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PAK-CHINA STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AND ITS IMPACT ON THE REGION

South Asia is an area characterized by substantial geopolitical, economic, and strategic intricacies. The power dynamics in this region are predominantly shaped by the relationships between significant states, particularly India and Pakistan, and the strategic objectives of outsider powers like China and the United power dynamics in this region are predominantly shaped by the relationships between significant states, particularly India and Pakistan, and the strategic objectives of outsider powers like China and the United States. The power dynamics in South Asia are intricate, encompassing political, economic, and military elements. Key actors such as India and Pakistan, as well as influences from China, the United States, and other regional and global powers, play vital roles in shaping this regional power structure. Here is an

overview of the main elements and forces that influence the distribution of power in South Asia.

Key Actors and Their Influence

India is the largest country in South Asia in terms of territory, population, and economic magnitude, and it has a crucial position in the region. The objective is to uphold its supremacy and extend its impact through means of economic integration, military modernization, and strategic alliances. India possesses the world's fifth-largest economy and holds a prominent position as a military force, boasting considerable conventional and nuclear weapons. Regarding India's economic and military Capabilities world's fifth-largest economy and holds a prominent position as a military force, boasting considerable conventional and nuclear weapons. Country is currently engaged on military modernization, which involves increasing its naval presence in the Indian Ocean and improving its missile and space capabilities. India has established strategic alliances with major global powers such as the United States, Japan, and Australia, particularly through its involvement in the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue). The primary objective of this alliance is to counteract China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region. Pakistan's foreign policy and security initiatives are predominantly influenced by its enduring rivalry with India. The two countries have engaged in multiple armed conflicts, mostly due to their disagreement over the contested territory of Kashmir, and maintain a constant state of elevated military preparedness along its borders. The nuclear arsenal of Pakistan plays a crucial role in its security strategy, with the objective of preventing Indian military aggression. The nuclear dimension has a considerable impact on the power dynamics of the region, resulting in a precarious power balance. Pakistan upholds a strong strategic alliance with China, encompassing economic, military, and diplomatic assistance. In In addition, Pakistan has played a crucial role as well as strategic partner of the United States in its endeavors to combat terrorism, but the nature of this alliance has experienced variations over the years. The increasing economic and strategic engagement of China in South Asia, namely through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), has notable consequences for the power dynamics of the region. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a prominent initiative under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that strengthens China's strategic connectivity to the Indian Ocean. Military deployment in the Indian Ocean region, along with its economic investments in infrastructure and development initiatives, is intended to safeguard its strategic interests and counteract Indian influence. The United States considers South Asia to be a vital area for combating terrorism and as a means to balance China's increasing power. The strategic alliance with India is a fundamental element of its Indo-Pacific strategy. The United States maintains a substantial military force in the Indian Ocean and has formed defense and economic cooperation pacts with several nations in South Asia.

CPEC and Indian Security Dilemma

The construction of Gwadar port which is divided into two stages as a form of Chinese Pakistan Economic Corridor raises the condition of security dilemma for India. (Hudaya 05 April 2018.) The debate over the expansion of Pakistan's Gwadar port as a Chinese naval base also poses a threat to India's security. The Gwadar port discourse is not only an instrument to succeed Chinese OBOR ambition, but also part of China's maritime doctrine of "String of Pearl" The intended interest of china is to

protect China's Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC's) in the Indian Ocean Region (Brewster, 2014). Furthermore, Khurana (2008) said that in the 1990s, China's interest in the IOR, has demonstrated a fairly aggressive naval power projection in the IOR. The presence of the Chinese navy as a new actor in the IOR has the potential to bring India into a security dilemma condition (Brewster, 2014) under these circumstances it is very possible that an arms race between India and China and Pakistan will be occurred. According to Malik (2012) Gwadar has a very high strategic role for some countries. For Pakistan, Gwadar is a safe and very supportive port for being a trading hub compared to its main port of Karachi which Brewster (2014) believes is too close to India so it is quite dangerous if the relationship between the two countries being worsen. Malik (2012) adds that Gwadar, is a very strategic place for China. First, as a transit point for merchant ships from China to Africa. Secondly, as a strategic point for China to monitor the Persian Gulf which is a main source of 60% China's energy requirements. Third, the port is also very strategic for China to reduce the trade distance to Central Asia. Therefore, although Brewster denies the discourse of Gwadar's development as a naval base, the writer sees that there is a strong enough reason for China to present a naval presence at the port, which also makes China a great "player" in the Indian Ocean. (Hudaya 05 April 2018.) The increased cooperation and collaboration between China and Pakistan under China Pakistan economic corridor. The Indian security dilemma in this regard is quite natural because the increase in security of Pakistan which is not only the neighboring state but on one hand a natural enemy with a lot of historical and ideological differences and disputes would threaten Indian status in the region.

Pak-China strategic partnership threat to Indian hegemony

China - Pakistan: "All Weather Ally"

Since 2013 Pakistan is the only country to which China has "all-weather strategic partnership". The Pak-China relationships are described as Deeper than oceans, sweeter than honey and higher than mountains. These relations are mutually beneficial, both countries are dependent on each other for their development and trade and economics through the CPEC project. Through CPEC Pakistan is even becoming stronger and China is becoming a global power. (Giridharadas, 2018)

Threat to Indian Hegemony

Trade and economics are the major reasons behind China's too fast growth and development. China has made enormous investments in the CPEC and BRI. CPEC is providing China with a shortest way to reach the major markets in Asia, Europe and further leading to increase the economic benefit but this thing is lacking by India as India has not much developed markets and other economic projects as compared to China. India still lacks many resources in order to compete with China even with Pakistan. If this huge economic difference continues to grow between China and India then eventually India will lose its hegemonic power in the region, so China's investment, trade and economics is a great threat to India. (Joshi.2016).

After trade and economics another important thing is the military and military operations, especially in the routes of CPEC. Both Pakistan's and Chinese military are supporting the CPEC, and opposition army is failing to harm this project. India is unable to counter this threat coming from both rivalries collectively. This

imbalance in military capabilities always favors China and CPEC. CPEC has led to the flow of Chinese military into many regions of Pakistan. There is also establishment of People's Liberation Army (PLA) Western Theater Command for the protection of CPEC workers and assets of CPEC posing a great threat to India. There is also collaboration and coordination between the intelligence agencies of both countries to counter the terrorism and insurgencies created by Indian agents and spies. These security measures being taken by China are directly or indirectly leading to Pakistan's security and this is making India's influence become less as compared to China and Pakistan.

Now after military concerns, the greatest concern for India is regarding the growing influence of China in Indian Ocean Region (IOR), through CPEC and Pakistan's help. Pakistan's Navy Officials are going to help Chinese Naval Ships to be deployed at Gwadar port for the safeguard of Gwadar port and trading under CPEC. This deployment of Chinese navy is posing a serious threat to India as China will further increase the influence in IOR. The development of Gwadar port will also make China heavily dependent on Indian Ocean and to avoid Malacca Strait for trading purposes. So CPEC is a great source for China to have direct transportation through Indian Ocean. (Rahman.2021).

All the above-mentioned elements are making China's influence not in the Asian region but throughout the world and it is a threat not for India but also for the western countries and especially America as a present superpower. The BRI and CPEC both are massive trade networks that led China to Import tremendous amount of raw material and to export a tremendous amount of manufactured goods across the world. Pakistan alone is importing 30% of China's exports. The BRI and CPEC is all about China's growing power and position in the world.

Thus, the growing partnership between Pakistan and China is a great source of concern for India. India needs to rethink strategically in order to counter these two countries especially Pakistan because Pakistan is the only country that is benefitting China to increase its trade and commerce with the rest of world by giving its territory for CPEC. And in return to this China is providing Pakistan with military weapons and great investments. Pak-China friendship is really not a normal thing for India, so rather than opposing China's growing power India should pay serious attention to the Pak-China engagements. (Jacob, 2020)

Balance of Power vs. Balance of Threat

The strategic alliance between Pakistan and China has a substantial impact on the power dynamics in South Asia, specifically in relation to the theories of balance of power and balance of threat. The balance of power theory suggests that governments establish alliances in order to prevent the emergence of a single dominant state, hence ensuring stability through a condition of equilibrium. Stephen Walt's balance of threat theory posits that governments form alliances not solely based on their might, but rather on the perceived threat emanating from other states. This theory takes into account several elements such as geographic proximity, offensive capabilities, and aggressive intentions.

The strategic relationship between Pakistan and China serves as a concrete example of these theories being put into practice. Pakistan's alliance with China functions as a means to offset India's increasing influence in the area, especially considering India's strategic alliances with the United States and its expanding military

capabilities. This alignment represents a strategic approach that seeks to maintain a balance of power and a balance of threat. Pakistan views India as a substantial regional threat, mostly due to past conflicts and ongoing geopolitical difficulties. According to Walt (1987), governments are more inclined to form alliances against a perceived danger rather than a state that is just dominant. This tendency is clearly demonstrated in Pakistan's strategic decisions.

Furthermore, China's engagement in Pakistan, particularly through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), strengthens its strategic reach and sway in the region. This alliance not only enhances Pakistan's military and economic capabilities but also acts as a geopolitical balance to India's influence, hence reshaping the regional power dynamics (Siddiqi, 2019). The growing military collaboration between China and Pakistan, which includes joint military exercises and the exchange of weapons, highlights the balance of threat relationship. Both countries sense a shared threat in India's strategic aspirations and its strengthening alliances with Western nations (Small, 2015).

The Consequences of this relationship go beyond the interactions between two parties, affecting the broader security structure of the region. China's Efforts to strengthen its relationship with Pakistan, a significant player in the region, have been motivated by the United States' Indo-Pacific strategy, aimed at countering China's dominance. This has resulted in a heightened division within the regional structure, as distinct alliances have formed among various state entities. Therefore, the Collaboration between Pakistan and China not only changes the distribution of power in South Asia, but also emphasizes the importance of perceived threats in influencing alliance behavior and regional stability (Pant & Joshi, 2018).

Conclusion

The strategic Cooperation between Pakistan and China has become a crucial element in the changing power dynamics of South Asia. This Partnership, commonly referred to as an "all-weather friendship," has considerably strengthened throughout time, covering a broad range of military, economic, and diplomatic aspects. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a key component of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by China. It has significantly changed Pakistan's economic situation and strengthened China's position in the Indian Ocean region.

The Consequences of this collaboration for the regional power hierarchy are significant. Pakistan's partnership with China serves as a vital means to offset India's prevailing influence in South Asia, strengthening its military capacities and economic stability. The Exacerbation of the longstanding rivalry between India and Pakistan has led to an escalation in a weapons race and increased tensions, particularly regarding disputed areas such as Kashmir.

China views its alliance with Pakistan as providing strategic advantages, including increased security for energy supplies and trade, bypassing the potentially dangerous Strait of Malacca. Additionally, it functions as a method to expand China's influence in South Asia and offset the increasing strategic alliance between India and the United States. This alignment has established a novel power dynamic in the region, which disrupts the previously dominant unipolar or bipolar regional structure. The Pak-China partnership's strategic realignment has significant consequences for both regional stability and global geopolitics. The participation of

foreign powers, such as the United States and Russia, introduces additional levels of intricacy to the regional security framework. Although the United States backs India as a means to balance China's might, Russia has expressed interest in bolstering its relationship with Pakistan, suggesting a possible change in longstanding alliances.

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