

## Foreign Policy of Pakistan vis-à-vis China & Russia: Prospects of Cooperation

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### *Abstract*

*Historically, Russia, China, and Pakistan have been the countries of unusual importance in the Global Politics, particularly after the 1970s. On one side, China and Pakistan are proudly maintaining a brotherhood-relationship, which is one of the warmest and cordial ever seen in the international relations. On the contrary, Russo-Pak relations have been a victim of resentment, distrust, and a hint of bitterness due to evident historic reasons, especially the role of Pakistan in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. In the contemporary world, relationships between these three states have seen a transformation driven by several factors of strategic importance, and the three countries have witnessed enhanced cooperation in economic, cultural, and political aspects under the umbrella of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). It is proven from research and political think-tanks that the cooperation of the states in this region is vital in achieving regional growth through SCO. The current research study aims to bring in an investigation of the pragmatic projections of collaboration based on major factors related to economic, political, strategic, security, cultural, and religious aspects. Furthermost, the most necessary factors of cooperation demand serious and meaningful goals and effective steps in command respective to the actualized points of cooperation. This research study has two major sections that dive into a little diplomatic history, and importance is given to find out about the ways that lead towards the enhanced mutual cooperation between the three countries.*

**Keywords:** *China, Cooperation, Pakistan, Russia.*

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### **Introduction**

Two of the six primary foreign policy objectives of Pakistan listed on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are focused on regional cooperation, friendly relations with the great powers and especially the neighbors. Coming to the point of the same patterns, Pakistan has some of the core objectives inside its foreign policy which are focused on establishing good relations with great powers such as the USA, PRC, and Russia. It is a fact that the Islamic Republic of Pakistan was established in the very era of the Cold War which was a power struggle and strategic contestation between the major two bipolar nations of the USSR and USA, starting immediately after the end of Second World War. Viewing the point of focus, it was rather problematic for the state of Pakistan to establish good and effective ties with the above-mentioned states. Such as China can also be the existing part of communist bloc during the early years of Pakistan's independence from Colonial rule. Although, to continue the healthy relations with these states was a tough

job but we have got the guiding moralities settled by the nation's founder which seconded the basic grounds to deal with such states with pragmatic relations. As follows the message of the father of the nation Mr. Muhammad Ali Jinnah

*“Our foreign policy is one of friendliness and goodwill towards all the nations of the world. We do not cherish aggressive designs against any country or nation. We believe in the principle of honesty and fair play in national and international dealings and are prepared to make our utmost contribution to the promotion of peace and prosperity among the nations of the world. Pakistan will never be found lacking in extending its material and moral support to the oppressed and suppressed peoples of the world, and in upholding the principles of the United Nations Charter.” (Ghani 2015)*

No doubt, this point turned to be quite perceptible and was clear from the time of birth of Pakistan that mutual, pleasant, and loyal relations with the adjoining states in the region, with the Islamic world and as well as the world powers and the crucial role they played in the construction of the country's future foreign policy. It would be significant to mention crucial role of historical ties, ideology as well as the socio-politico-religious points on the strategic scale of a state while formulating its foreign policy. Under the lens of International or World Political Affairs, Pakistan must consider the above-mentioned components while formulating and executing the foreign policy. These complex factors influence Pakistan's relation towards its neighboring states and these components have a major role in building and maintaining the ties with other states. The ideological aspects, overall history, the very closer affiliation with Muslim Ummah, its conventional and strategic rivalry with the Republic of India, it is not very understandable position between the global positions of the United States and the Soviet Union and its very geostrategic location of Pakistan has been playing the role of a chess board with respect to the regional and global scenarios (Sattar 2015). As being familiar with the fact that Pakistan borders China to the North, Arabian Sea in the Indian Ocean to the South, Afghanistan to the North West, Iran to the West and India to the East. From the perspectives of security, politics, economy and connectivity, this remarkable geostrategic location makes Pakistan a state of utmost importance not only in the region but around the world.

Historically, Pakistan and China have enjoyed warm and friendly relations with one another and both countries have supported one another on every global diplomatic platform. Leadership from both the countries has also played a key role in strengthening the bilateral relations between the two countries, and from the good times to the toughest of the times, the two countries have always been there for each other. Moreover, the people of both countries have also shared mutual love, respect, and admiration for each other. People have always rose side by side with each other and the support Pakistanis have received from their Chinese brothers and sisters during crisis times such as natural disasters or even the Kashmir issue are not a secret from the world. While the relationship between Pakistan and Russia have been a victim of distrust, the relationship between Pakistan and China on every level has always been ironclad (Sattar 2019). This brotherhood between Pakistan and China took seven decades in the making and in the past 70 years, this time-tested friendship has only grown stronger.

Despite the historic bitterness between Russia and Pakistan during the Cold War, many international policy makers, foreign policy experts and academic scholars from all around the world argue that in the recent times, the interests between Pakistan and Russia are converging in many ways. It is a reality of the global politics that there are no permanent friends and certainly no permanent enemies in the international relations. The only reality that matters is the national interest of the country. Therefore, an evident reality of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that the national interests of both Pakistan and Russia are converging on many levels. The contemporary world that is post-911 and now undergoing COVID-19 era is very complex and its strategic chessboard presents possibilities and scenarios that are unprecedented and unparalleled.

Contrariwise, relations of Pakistan and Russia have been facing bitterness and distrust based on a wide array of factors, most of which are historical in nature and their primary cause is the role of Pakistan in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan during the Cold War. At that time, the political and military leadership of Pakistan made strategic decisions that suited the national interest of the country, and those decisions

consequently favored the United States, while adversely affecting the Soviet Union. However, nearly half a century later, the ground realities of the region are much different, and tables have been turned on many levels for all the stakeholders. Considering the recent developments in the region, while also considering the role of China and her relations with both Pakistan and Russian Federation, it is safe to say that all the indicators are favoring the ground realities and the interests of the two nations are at last, converging for good. The recent meeting between Pakistan Prime Minister Khan and the Russian President Putin at the SCO Summit also led experts to believe that the two countries are indeed coming closer on the diplomatic stage.

On 1<sup>st</sup> of May in 2018, Pakistan celebrated 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of establishing diplomatic bilateral relations with Russia. These relations were established 7 decades ago in 1948 and have seen many ups and downs over the years. In addition, Pakistanis were expecting a visit from the Russian President, followed by the SCO Summit meeting between President Putin and Prime Minister Imran Khan. Experts have always believed that there were several backdoor diplomacy channels established between Russia and Pakistan, however, in the recent times, the front doors of diplomacy have been opened and acknowledged by both countries. In addition to several areas of key interests including military cooperation, fight against terrorism, and energy sector, there are several international factors that are also leading to the convergence between Pakistan and Russia. At the international level, the new strategic partnership of India and the United States has also drawn India, a traditional strategic ally of the Russians away from Moscow and near to the Washington DC. This has also naturally brought Pakistan and Russia closer, creating a new avenue of convergence of interests between the two nations (Mehmoona 2019). Moreover, an atmosphere of a trilateral strategic partnership is also in the making since China is an active constant in the regional and global equation.

### **History of Pakistan's Diplomatic Ties with China**

Pitching into the point of China-Pakistan's bilateral diplomatic partnership, the relations started with divisions based on the factors of varying hostile means in terms of ideology and politico-economic systems. Viewing all these major differences, one of the difficulties in nature. Basic point was that the political and ideological difference amongst the two states because the Islamic Republic Pakistan stated to be a country of Islamic Ideology, which was set up in the target goal of the constitution although there were contrasts of judgment among the savvy people concerning religious government versus common positions of both the relating states (Shulin 2015). Despite the reality, essential sources and data confirmed that the philosophical support of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan was based on the core values of Islam which succinctly graphed in the target goal which is viewed as the substance of the apparent multitude of set up constitutions of the Pakistani state.

In addition, the political and economic structure was other major difference among the two neighboring states of China and Pakistan as the Islamic Republic acknowledged itself as an Islamic Country, and its ideological foundations somehow differed from those of the People's Republic in several ways. Also, the financial gap differing among these two nations was brought up in the structure of private enterprise against socialism or communism. Pakistan moved into the industrialist square and China joined the communist square. The nonaligned foreign policy of India gave her a special space to get China on her side in the greater battle among free enterprise and communism drove by America and Soviet Russia separately. India also took great advantage of its non-alignment foreign policy, which got her closer to Russia, especially in obtaining military technology of the time. A major portion of the Indian Air Force armada still comprises of Russian fighter jets, while Pakistan Air Force has been flying American jets since the 60s. Another vital factor was that there were two China's around then one is the People's Republic of China and the other is the Republic of China, which is also known as Taiwan. The world needed to determine up till now which one is actual China, and Pakistan became one of the first countries in the world to officially recognize the People's Republic of China in 1950. (Kanwal 2011).

Pakistan's formal recognition of China was the initial step in establishing what would become an exemplary partnership in the history of international relations. From the Taiwan dispute to the Hong Kong matter, and from the South China Sea region to the stance of China in the spread of the coronavirus in 2019, Pakistan has always stood by the side of its Chinese counterparts from the Government level to the citizen level. China has also historically and practically reciprocated the Pakistani side by extending economic and military cooperation of great significance. From its support to the Pakistani people in natural disasters to its diplomatic support on various occasions being the permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, China has played a role of a paramount ally of Pakistan at many occasions. The jointly produced multirole combat fighter aircraft called JF-17 is just one out of many examples of the cooperation and partnership between China and Pakistan. Moreover, the biggest project of cooperation by far is without any doubt the China Pakistan Economic Corridor or CPEC. China comprehended the significance of the geostrategic spot of Pakistan since it turned into the regional corridor of remarkable significance. CPEC will not only connect mainland China to the warm waters of the Indian Ocean through the Gwadar Deep Sea Port but will also become a symbol of regional and continental connectivity. Not only will it connect Eurasia, Central Asia, South Asia, China, and Middle East, but it will also reshape the very dynamics of global trade.

During the decade of 1960s, the worldwide power of intensity governmental issues directed the two nations to help each other on various stages. It is relevant to state here that the overall influence close by notwithstanding a worldwide degree was the prevailing capacity of global governmental issues during the bloodless fighting age. This impulse demonstrated a surprisingly beneficial development for vigorous strategic relations among Pakistan and China. Logically, the outskirt pressure among India and China changed over to a controlled battle inside the main portion of the 1960s. (Ishaque 2009).

This become followed with the guide of an outskirt settlement among Pakistan and China which finished in giving of 5180 sq. Kilometer part of Gilgit to China which finished in more noteworthy string relatives among every country. In the mid of 1960s-decade, Pakistan and India did battle in 1965 in the US forced an arm ban on Pakistan even as China prepared not best its discretionary guide to Pakistan anyway additionally helped Pakistan by means of giving palms (Khurshid 2015). India could not figure out how to pay for two-the front battle with Pakistan and China which demonstrated helpful for Pakistan.

During the underlying long periods of 1970s decade, Pakistan played a greatest crucial capacity in developing Sino-US understanding by method of getting sorted out the situation go to of Henry Kissinger the previous secretary of the country of US which transformed into thought of us as prevail upon USSR as the US expressed that it was given China in its industrialist headquarters. Besides, Pakistan also kept up China to get a permanent seat in the UN Security Council regardless of India. It is being said that if Pakistan did not sort out a puzzle visit of Henry Kissinger to China it very well may be absurd for China to get an permanent seat in UN Security Council and One China system was seen by using the US. This changed into a reformist factor in China's arrangement of encounters as China almost certainly fell if it could not get an enduring seat in the UN Security Council, China maintained Pakistan (Dar 2010). China provided vital help to Pakistan and oppose each Indian step which was against sovereignty of Pakistan. in any case China and Pakistan wind up being certified as iron brother.

During without a doubt the last decade Pakistan, Pakistan was pushed in Afghan Jihad against the Soviet Union. Pakistan has become a front-line non-NATO alliance of the US and with the help of the US dispatched a jihad despite USSR in Afghanistan. Basically, following multi decade of doing combating covertly towards the USSR through Mujahideen US got that part of cold fight which in the end completed in the breakdown of the USSR. Soon after the soviet war, the US constrained consents on Pakistan over the Pressler Amendment and let Pakistan isolated vulnerable before assignments and troublesome associations. At this indispensable occasion, China provided Pakistan economic and military help. This sort of unshakeable guide incited welding relations in a noteworthy manner.

### **Contemporary Nature of Relations**

In forefront development, the crossing point of interests of China with Pakistan is replicating grouping capacities over congruity, investment, and upgrade for political, energy and economic, security. Regardless of the way that, China is depending upon Pakistan as for as a few countries are anxious. For example, the Malacca issue for China is the greatest snag concerning power protection and ocean change. For this circumstance, Pakistan's key zone is the principle reasonable reaction for China to prepare another alternative. On the elective hand, Pakistan's monetary inactivity urges it to get China's assistance as the US changed itself to India to include China. Thusly, financial, essential, energy, security, and home thoughts made it totally apparent that get together of pursuits between China and Pakistan is becoming strategic-partnership and beyond for both international locations. (Mehmoona et al. 2010).

When China has become a member of the WTO it began to increase its financial family members with essential international locations as China has grown to be the most important exchange participant within the world so it needs greater markets, extra electricity, and more economic corporation. In this backdrop, each of the international organization signed diverse MOUs of alternate and financial and hence they expanded their economic, energy and, power, Telecommunication infrastructures. The first decade of 21st century become era of the Chinese technological economic and political ties were deep rooted in most part of world. Rebalance Asia Strategy to include the growing influence of China and stopping it to grow to be the nearby hegemon of Asia Pacific place (Hafeez 2010). This turned into taken into consideration the safety part of the initiative was released on China containing group called Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) which basically is multi-trillion-dollar deal to marginalize Chinese influence. The main objective of this alliance and initiative was to counter china influence, moreover this was because china changed his policy towards to influence and dominate region via economic means. Furthermore, the Pakistan Premier also signed a billion-dollar agreement with Xi Jinping which include up to 60-65 countries 4 corridors and CPEC is one of these.

The mega initiative of China Pakistan Economic Corridor is constituted of four additives: transportation, power, and energy, strengthening the SEZs or Special Economic Zones. For that, Chinese President Xi Jinping payed official visit to Pakistan in 2015 and introduced a flagship project of BRI below the call of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which became, to begin with of \$ 46 billion but it was extended to \$ 62 billion. This big funding is some other superb example of joint China and Pakistan. The mega initiative is created from 4 components: transportation, energy and power, strength, and Special Economic Zones. Transportation elements will cover rail, power, transport, and industrial projects. It is a large-scale construction of infrastructure so that it will make shortest and most liable route of connectivity from Gwadar to Kashgar and then to East China. In second phase, ways of communication especially telecommunication, advanced. Thirdly, a crucial element of CPEC is strength security as Pakistan is passing via worst instances fiber optic line will make communication and innovation easier and fast moreover energy security would also be enhanced. Fourthly, nine Special Economic Zones are created to generate financial activities in specialized industries to make Pakistan's financial system greater numerous and dynamic, Pakistan economy is agrarian and main exports are agricultural, in this context China has started innovation of Agri-technologies and support Pakistan economy so to enhance its agrarian economy more strong and both are egger to boost exports and balance trade deficit.

In the security cooperation arena, the cooperation between China and Pakistan is stronger than ever before. The historic military and defense cooperation are now turning into a strategic partnership because of the ongoing regional and global political developments. The strengthening of strategic partnership between the United States and India has also consequently brought Pakistan and China closer than ever. China and Pakistan are collaborating on many levels and the cooperation in the Socio-Cultural Sector is also on the historic rise. Several Chinese institutes have opened in different parts of Pakistan to educate the Pakistanis about Chinese language and culture, while a plethora of Pakistani students travel to China each semester to start their higher education. Chinese universities are hosting Pakistani students in a wide range of areas ranging from medical sciences to engineering and social sciences.

Chinese support and backing of Pakistan and vice versa do not end at the production of JF-17 fighter jet or CPEC. In fact, it goes beyond this and in addition to Chinese support of Pakistan at the UN Security Council, the People's Republic and the largest economy of the world is also supporting Pakistan in her recent diplomatic crisis. Pakistan has been struggling hard to get her name erased from the blacklist of FATF and it requires support from the key international actors in this regard. Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has been hostile towards Pakistan as the Islamic Republic has been repeatedly<sup>a</sup> accused with terror financing and harboring terrorists. These claims have never been proven and became widespread worldwide due to the effective propaganda and media campaigning by India. Indian diplomatic officials along with Indian media have been trying hard to get Pakistan blacklisted in the FATF and surprisingly, Pakistan's long time ally, the United States has also supported this ill-based Indian stance. Blacklisting from the FATF method is a serious threat to Pakistan's current crippling economy, and the Indo-US strategic alliance aims to weaken the countries that are seemingly joining the 'Chinese Bloc'. Pakistan has been very clear on its Foreign Policy Objectives and believes in maintaining healthy bilateral relations with all the nations of the world. Therefore, the accusations of Indian media that Pakistan is joining the Chinese Bloc or even the very existence of any such bloc in the international system are absurd and misleading.

### **Prospects of Cooperation**

In the modern-day world, no one can survive isolation because of rapidness in global system. There transformed into a period while countries like America picked of seclusion as abroad approach and were given its countrywide force most impressive yet in this day and age, it is practically impractical as association is the new truth inside the time of globalization. This relationship is overwhelmed by economic and financial participation, social change, people to individual's touch, economy, security, and key unions and associations. In this way, China is a top-notch choice for Pakistan and Pakistan is an extraordinary inclination for China in building, keeping up, and improving collaboration inside the zones. It is being assessed that Pakistan and China can enliven their reciprocal change ten-folds in contrast with present exchange amount. Pakistan is a populace of extra than 2 hundred million, which is the greatest market for China and then again, Pakistan gets a monetary push from China to make its an economy more different and dynamic. (Mehmoona et al. 2013).

On the other front, Pak-China developing vital association is each other region of collaboration as an Indo-US key organization utilizing both worldwide areas to counter their pursuits. A joint security percent or an arrangement would of remarkable noteworthiness on the grounds that it will make certain shared protection of every nation. It should be recollected that China is experiencing the South China issue and Pakistan is confronting Indian danger thusly China and Pakistan through joint protection arrangements offer security to each other. This will not just pick up Pakistan and China yet in addition for the total spot from Kashmir experiencing Afghanistan to Central Asia. The travel industry each other basic zone of collaboration for each the nations and monetary overflow of this area can be expanded to complex as Pakistan and China have appealing quality, fields, mountains and non-common spots like Buddhism and Sikhism combined with sites of Indus Valley Civilization and Merger human advancement that are viewed as the most seasoned civic establishments of the area. Also, possibilities of participation in the control of preparing, period, and fighting towards illegal intimidation and containers are considerable. As of late China demonstrated its administration top notch while it practically handled the Coronavirus flare-up in Wuhan. Pakistan can get focal points in developing and modernizing its wellness foundation to a greatest amount.

### **Pakistan's Foreign Policy vis-à-vis Russia**

The incomparable truth of worldwide relations is that interests are preeminent instead of companions and opponents. During the Cold war, America was Pakistan's companion and yet, it forced authorizations on Pakistan ordinarily. It is a document of the records that Pakistan battled Afghan jihad and battle on fear for America, but America agreed with India when Pakistan required its buddy. Thusly, the favored reality or the dependable guideline of overall relations is defensive countrywide inquiries which keep on being continually lasting

### **Russo-Pak Relations: Historic Baggage of Bitterness**

Historically, the Russo-Pak bilateral relations have been somehow bittersweet. Before Pakistan actively got involved in the Afghan Jihad, the two nations did benefit from each other, briefly. The state-owned mega project of Pakistan's Steel Mills in Karachi was also established with contributions from the Soviet Union. In this project, which was the largest of its kind in Pakistan by the time, Soviet Union provided techno-financial assistance to Pakistan. The two countries entered into an agreement to establish the Pakistan Steel Mills in 1969, and the relations were not quite 'bitter' until the decade of 1980s. Pakistan did join SEATO and CENTO alliances of the Western Bloc during the Cold War, but there was never a direct conflict or confrontation between Russia and Pakistan. The role of Pakistan in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was strategic in nature and the militaries of the two countries never confronted one another directly during this war. This bitterness of the 80s has been well documented and debated among the scholars from both sides. However, in the changing times, the interests are converging, and the two nations are coming closer on many platforms.

In recent times, Pakistani political and military leadership is keen on establishing and strengthening warm bilateral relationships between Russia and Pakistan, and the country's leadership is determined to create a fresh start in the cooperation between both countries. The distrust and bitterness of the Cold War is something that Pakistani leadership is trying to leave behind, and the Pakistani Foreign Office aims at establishing a policy of 'Fresh Start' towards Russia. The interests between both countries are converging and the dynamics of global politics are also changing, which is why the interests of the two countries are being converged naturally.

### **Prospects of Cooperation**

Pakistan and Russia are coming closer, and Pakistan and China are already very close and share warm bilateral ties. The Sino-Russian interests in the region vis-à-vis terrorism and their stance on Afghanistan are also converging. Moreover, the American policies towards Pakistan, Russia, and China are also playing an important role in converging the interests of the three states. From CPEC to energy sector and from regional connectivity to human resource development and several other areas of key importance, the prospects of cooperation among these countries are increasing day by day. Moreover, the three countries share common objectives in their fight against terrorism, and China has appreciated the efforts made by Pakistani forces against terrorism on several occasions.

Therefore, there is a giant capability of prospects of cooperation among Pakistan and Russia. Important areas of cooperation between Russia and Pakistan are given below.

- Cooperation in hostile against terrorism is naturally congregated for both the countries
- If lasting peace is achieved in Afghanistan, then Pakistan and Russia can establish and enhance their terrestrial trade and can also establish rail-road transportation links.
- Pakistan can do a lot of trade with the Central Asian States which are energy-rich, and have particularly high reserves of natural gas
- Russia as well as the CARs can import food from Pakistan because Pakistan is rich in the cultivation of many food items that are not grown in these countries. This means that Pakistan can become their food supplier and this partnership can strengthen in the years to come.
- Being an active member of SCO, Russia can play its role in making India understand the importance of the UN Resolutions and the right of self-determination for the Kashmiri people in the Indian Occupied Kashmir.
- All the three countries can join hands in their collective fight against drug trafficking, which is a serious issue affecting the region

- Pakistan can get help from Russia in revitalizing the state-owned Pakistan Steel Mill and the Islamic Republic can also obtain get technical support in the field of agricultural technology from Russia.
- Climate Change has adversely affected Russia, Pakistan, and worst of all, China. Therefore, the three nations can join hands in their collective fight against climate change.
- Military partnerships between Russia, China, and Pakistan can also play a significant role in expanding the trade volume between the three countries. Pakistan already enjoys strong defense production partnerships with China, and since Russia is one of the largest manufacturers of arms and military technology, Pakistan can greatly benefit from Russians in this area.

## Conclusion

Pakistan, Russia, and China are the vital members of SCO, nuclear powers, and important political actors in the global politics. The prospects of cooperation among the three countries are brighter than ever. In the contemporary global political developments such as the corona virus pandemic outbreak, American foreign policy vis-à-vis China, increasing US cooperation with India, and the recent conflict between India and China, the nature of relations among these nations have evolved more rapidly than ever before. Furthermore, CPEC and the Russian interest in this project have also paved the way for a prosperous future and stronger relations between these countries. Role of Pakistan in Afghanistan has always been vital and both China and Russia understand the importance of Pakistan as a key player in the region. Trends of global politics are changing, and the balance of power is shifting from the west to the east, which makes these three nuclear armed nations central to the development of the entire Asian continent, especially South Asia. Significantly, for Pakistan, it would be beneficial to not only normalize their ties with Russia but also gain another market to exploit for their own benefit. Pakistan requires ample strategical ties that would allow the nation to have a solid footing within the region, especially to counter their adversaries. The CPEC Project - one of the largest investments involving Pakistan and China - is thoroughly proving to be beneficial for Pakistan not only economically but also geopolitically. Similarly, Russia would gain an ample opportunity through a normalization of ties with Pakistan. Both the States would gain equivalent profit through the available market and the growing needs in both the regions.

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