

# **Pak-China Defense Cooperation and Evolving International Relations**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study is about the impact of different global and regional changes resulting from Pakistan-China's defense cooperation and further examines the increasing range of diplomatic cooperation in the social, tactical, and economic realms. The paper focuses on three events: (i) the 1978 transformation of China and its opening-up policies; (ii) disbanding of the U.S.S.R (1991); and (iii) the event of 9/11 in the United States. These events had a significant influence on Pak-China ties. This study is a literature review and contributes to a better understanding of the evolving international systems namely the India-U.S. tactical relations and strategic cooperation. The paper concludes that China and Pakistan need to preserve amicable, strategic, and diplomatic connections with one another as it is necessary for the peace, security, and economic development of not only China and Pakistan but for the region overall.

**Keywords:** Pakistan-China Relations, Indian Concern, Regional Peace, Defense Cooperation, Strategic Interests. Defense Policies.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### ***The 1978 transformation of China and its opening-up policies***

As neighbors, China and Pakistan maintain a 520-kilometer shared border. Their bilateral relationship began in the mid-twentieth century. On Oct. 1, 1949, Chinese political leaders

founded the People's Republic of China (PRC). Two years later Pakistan emerged as an independent Islamic Republic on the the14th of August, 1947. Pakistan established official diplomatic ties with China on May 21, 1951. India had established diplomatic ties with China a year ago, after developing tensions with Pakistan over several territorial concerns, notably Kashmir. Since then, these three nations—China, Pakistan, and India—formed a complicated regional trinity.

Jawaharlal Nehru, former Indian Prime Minister had always desired friendly relations with China. Nevertheless, boundary issues led to the Chinese-Indian conflict of 1962, which damaged their relationship. China and Pakistan, thus, began cultivating closer connections. The border conflict between India and China proceeded and led to the Trans-Karakoram Tract between China and Pakistan. India's hostile behavior gave Pakistan ample headroom for forging deeper relations with China. The two nations have since grown into close allies with friendly diplomatic, economic, and strategic links. Pak-China characterized their friendship as "greater than hills, deeper than seas, sweeter than the honey" (Javaid & Jahangir, 2015).

Political developments under Deng Xiaoping, leader of China from 1978-1992, provided the groundwork for China's present foreign policy (Arif, 2017). Communist notions informed Chinese future strategic decisions that included developments in the agricultural and industrial sectors and the expansion of China's position in international, economic, and political areas. Under Deng Xiaoping, China's reform policies resulted in double-digit development for the Chinese economy and provided grounds for the future foreign policy-making process (Narayan, 2005).

### ***Disbanding of U.S.S.R (1991)***

The fall of the U.S.S.R. ended the long protracted Cold War and resulted in substantial changes in international and regional perspectives. China became a formidable challenger of regional

domination with the global aspiration of maintaining a delicate balance between its rising international stance and bilateral connections. Inside this framework, China evolved its position on all controversial global and regional problems. The transformation became apparent in 1996 when Chinese President, Jiang Zemin, encouraged Pakistan to establish mutually strong ties with India to resolve political issues through discussion (Acharya, 1996).

### ***The event of 9/11 in the United States***

The incident of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the U.S. changed both international and regional policy guidelines of the US and for different countries across the world, including Pakistan and China. The U.S. started a worldwide War on Terrorism by which it established its formal troop involvement in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The expanding regional influence of the U.S. ran counter to China's goals and had a negative impact on Pak-China's social, financial, and strategic interests (Yousaf & Khan, 2010). The U.S. focused on the Asia-Pacific area as a part of its geopolitical strategy through active diplomacy and repositioning of its military assets in the Asia-Pacific area (Campbell & Andrews, 2013). Although the U.S. claimed to assist China as part of its strategy towards the Asia-Pacific region, Chinese interests were damaged by the comprehensive nuclear accord between India and America, which included features of political, economic, military, and nuclear cooperation. In the wider context, the focus was India and Pakistan's central position as well as its emerging interactions with significant regional entities such as Afghanistan and India. The India-U.S. nuclear accord along with the competitiveness of the U.S.-China Asian Pacific, and the U.S. containment policy of China were destined to affect Pak-China relations (Jangir, 2012).

### ***Theoretical Framework for the study***

The theories of Neorealism and Realism have provided the theoretical framework for this study. Realism defines a nation's condition between war and peace and Neorealism adopts the position that the cooperation between states is maintained on the basis of common security threats (Joseph, 2014). The State's efforts to counter, address, and balance security threats from a bigger state is an essential part of maintaining peace in the region. The objectives behind such efforts are to control the emergence of a hegemonic power. If any state becomes powerful enough to dominate other states, it would be dangerous to the multistate system (Baylis, 2020). Neorealism provides structural directives to a state to increase its power base and level of national security. According to Realism, if any state becomes capable enough of launching a military attack on other states, then survival becomes the main concern for the targeted nations. The single genuine concern of every state is to ensure its security at any cost (Rudloff, 2013). Accordingly, it is Pakistan's main mission to attain security while facing a lot of issues with regional and global states. The need for survival and security is the core of Pak-China defense and strategic cooperation. According to Neorealism, the type of government and culture of a nation has nothing to do with a nation's requirement for security and survival, it does not affect the nature of relations between states. Pakistan and China, both have an objective to defend and protect their interests on regional and international levels in the wake of tensions between India and the U.S.

## **PAKISTAN-CHINA RELATIONS**

### ***India-U.S. tactical relations***

The long-term strategic connections between Pakistan and China were important in curbing Indian influence in the region and always helped Pakistan in protecting her territorial integrity

and provided security from Indian threats. Pakistan has been regarded as China's most trusted friend and ally, which formed the core strength of this friendship. As per foreign policy objectives, Pakistan's friendship with China suppressed India's hegemonic and domineering posture in South Asia, Central Asia, and elsewhere. Hence, in the promotion of their long-standing geostrategic aims, China and Pakistan shared a partnership that proved to be of considerable benefit.

Pakistan supported China's point of view regarding her crucial geopolitical and geo-strategic goals. China offered tactical, economic, and political help in times of need to Pakistan. Over time this collaboration grew into a strong and stable strategic partnership covering extensive fields of cooperation. Both states appreciated the great necessity for missile cooperation and nuclear collaboration, notably in the reduction of the Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal that intended to decrease global and regional security threats (Jahangir & Khan, 2020). The security and defense components of the Pak-China interaction were focused on their common national security interests and ambitions, but political and strategic concerns likely affected this cooperation.

India's aggressive attitude was a driving element in forcing Pakistan to build military relations with China. Preserving security and territorial integrity was a key factor in Pakistan's external strategy. Foreign policy experts of Pakistan stressed that Pacific security could not be preserved without a strong relationship with China (Arif, 2017). When the U.S. placed an armament ban and economic embargo on Pakistan in the 1965 India-Pakistan war, China was the sole country to help Pakistan (Faruqui, 2019). In addition to supporting Pakistan's weapons and military technology, China made a significant contribution by providing aerospace and Red Arrow Anti-Tank missile launchers. During the time of heavy western embargoes on Pakistan, China became a trustworthy supplier of military equipment and played an essential role in modernizing and developing Pakistan's military, i.e., its navy, and air force (Raska &

Bitzinger, 2020). China provided technical assistance for building the industrial-military facility in Kamra (Gul, 2022) with financial help in creating a defense industry, shipbuilding, power stations, and infrastructures for communications.

Chinese policies towards Pakistan have been aimed to counter Indian regional dominance and ambitions. With the completion of the treaty of cooperation, friendship, and peace between the U.S.S.R. and India in August 1971, relations between the two nations were further reinforced and enhanced. Indian nuclear power was recognized as a danger to regional peace and security by Pakistan and China. India's fundamental goal was to suppress China's aspirations and to become a global power (Shivamurthy, 2022). China has made a considerable contribution to developing Pakistan's nuclear capacity to control India's dominance in the region. The 1979 Invasion of Afghanistan by the U.S.S.R. also strengthened the military partnership between China and Pakistan. The main element of Chinese Afghan policy was the preservation of Pakistan's security. In 1992 China provided Pakistan with a short-range ballistic M-11, which was a great advancement in China-Pakistan armed cooperation. Pakistan as well as China claimed consistently that any rocket technology transferred from China, was a part of the Missile Technology Control Regime. Despite this argument, in 1993 the U.S. government carried out penalties on China for its delivery of certain M-11 missile systems to Pakistan. Such missiles could readily strike Indian towns in the boundary zone between Pakistan and India (Waller, 1997).

### ***U.S. containment of China policy***

After the 9/11 event in the U.S., Pakistan and China acquired a higher degree of understanding for further collaboration in terms of strategies and defense. Comprehensive understanding and convergence of ideas increased the frequency of the high-level contact between the two states

on all significant global and regional issues and trends (Rehman, 2002). The extensive exchange of visits by members of the military services of these two nations significantly boosted their mutual military and strategic cooperation. In October 2003 Pakistan and China undertook a cooperative search-and-rescue marine drill near Shanghai to boost naval cooperation. This was the first time that the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) maritime force conducted a foreign drill. A significant friendship and cooperation pact was signed in April 2005 between Pakistan and China (Faisal, 2018).

China's unequivocal and unambiguous commitments in the defense of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and regional autonomy of Pakistan were the most essential part of the Treaty of Friendship, signed in 2005. Under the Treaty of Friendship, China produced four F-22P frigates constructed for Pakistan Navy (Awan, 2020). In recent years, the collaboration between the two nations for defense manufacturing has also grown. The JF-17 Thunder, a multi-role aircraft, was co-founded in Pakistan and China in 2007 (Air Force Technology, 2020). Pakistan is looking to purchase J-10 aircraft to become the first country to have the most advanced and modern Chinese military technology. J-10 planes will make it possible to establish two fighter squads and substantially increase Pakistan Air Force fighting capacity. The J-10 indicates the extent of the strategic alliance between China and Pakistan. China reportedly gave the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) and the National Development Complex (NDC) the right to manufacture the M-9 and M-11 (Tertrais, 2012).

China has also aided Pakistan in the development of the Shaheen-I Ballistic Missile, which is solid-fueled and has a capacity and range of 750 km (Abbas, 2022). Furthermore, China has agreed to provide Pakistan's Navy with eight submarines to secure the coastal areas. Under the agreement, four S20 submarines will be constructed in China and will be provided to Pakistan Navy in 2022-23. The other four submarines will be constructed in Pakistan and will be handed over to Pakistan Navy in 2028 (Rana, 2015).

Beijing sponsored the transit of the Nodong Ballistic Missile and Taepodong of North Korea to Pakistan. Pakistan will outfit its 250 JF-17 Thunder jet fighters with Chinese weapons and flying systems. China's four surface-to-air missiles will be acquired by Pakistan to bolster its military armed forces. Furthermore, the latest growth in Sino-Pak military and strategic cooperation was the collaborative manufacturing of medium-tech JF-17' (The Express Tribune, 2010). Military cooperation in missile manufacturing, will not only help Pakistan overcome its handicaps, but will also support the power balance in the area. The Xingang Shipyard of the China State Shipbuilding Company (CSOC) has pledged its full assistance and commitment to the launch of these First-Fast-Attack-Craft-Missiles. The services of Chinese experts and engineers regarding the production of the First-Fast-Attack-Craft-Missiles have been enthusiastically welcomed by Pakistan. In response to India's sophisticated missile development, Pakistan is looking to procure anti-ballistic missile systems of high altitude from China. Pakistan has recently received the HQ-9/FD2000 missile from China. It is a heavy and powerful anti-missile system that can target airplanes, cruise missiles launched from the air, and ballistic missile systems (Defense Brief Editorial, 2021).

### **DEFENCE STRATEGIES OF PAK-CHINA MUTAL COOPERATION**

On 21 May 1951, Pakistan and China formalized their diplomatic ties. Pakistan tilted towards the Western Block for SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization) and CENTO (Central Treaty Organization), and at first, the two states were not very warmly linked (Amin, 2010) but in 1955 the Conference of Bandung (Indonesia) enabled them to develop their bilateral links. Subsequent events, like the Taiwan Hajj delegation in 1959, the joint defense proposal by President Ayub to India in 1959, and the conflict between the Islamabad and Beijing borders in the Hunza area in the same year, brought tension between the two states (Sharma, 1967). In addition, the boundary dispute over McMahon Line was crucial to the links between China and

India (Global Security, 2013). This fight was triggered by a territorial conflict between Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh, and India's aid to the deposed Dalai Lama's government in Tibet (Chu, 2007). Consequently, a new era of Pak-China strategic collaboration began with the 1962 clash between India and China followed by the 1963 frontier agreement between Pakistan and China (Choudhry, 1975).

In 1965 India attacked Pakistan. China vigorously supported Pakistan and started cooperating in defense after the war (Syed, 1974). In the 1971 India-Pakistan war, China again provided arms to Pakistan (Nixon, 1972). At the request of Pakistan, China used its veto power to prevent Bangladesh from entering the United Nations for the first time (Chaudhury, 2020). President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's first visit to China improved bilateral relations and strengthened collaboration in all fields (Bhutto, 1977). On the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 2005, Pakistan and China signed the "Best Neighborhood Treaty", which stated that "no alliance or block which infringes the other Contracting Party's sovereignty, security or territorial integrity, and not acting in this way, including the conclusion of such a treaty, which shall be entered into by either Contracting Party" (The Dawn, 2005). The two nations also signed ten additional bilateral cooperation papers on the same day, including issues on Counter-terrorism Cooperation, Separatism and Radicalism, Customs, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance, FCA, the Bilateral Free Trade Agreement Plan for Early Harvest (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2005).

Furthermore, in 2006, Chinese President, Hu Jintao, visited Pakistan at the request of Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf and eighteen new accords were signed (Pak-China Embassy, 2006). The positive ties and partnerships set a good example for third-world countries in general and regional nations in particular. In 2010, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visited Pakistan and during his speech to Pakistan's Parliament, he said that Pakistan was at the vanguard of the international counter-terrorism operation and Pakistan's efforts must be

properly recognized and supported by the international community (Yousaf & Khan, 2010). During this visit, seventeen treaties, four memorandums of understanding, and a combined project were signed. Representatives of the Pakistan Space Institution (SUPARCO) and China Space Administration (CNSA) signed a pact for collaboration and investment of about 35 billion dollars (Khan, 2014).

Pakistani Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani visited China in May 2011 to commemorate 60 years of diplomatic relations, as well as to examine the situation that arose following the murder of Al Qaeda's leader Osama bin Laden (Krishnan, 2011). China's Foreign Ministry asked the U.S. to preserve Pakistan's sovereignty following Bin Laden's murder, Chinese Foreign Ministry underlined Beijing's unequivocal position that Pakistan's sovereignty and national stability must be maintained (Tarpley, 2011). China also granted 50 JF-17 fighter planes to Pakistan to defend against any possible U.S. or Indian invasion with a statement that any assault on Pakistan would be viewed as an assault on China. Both states declared that they would remain eternally good neighbors, partners, and close friends. China respected Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity and appreciated Pakistan's enormous efforts and significant sacrifice in the battle against terrorism. However, India expressed great concern over the growing China-Pakistan growing defense relationship (Shahid, 2011).

### ***Pakistan-China Cooperation in Nuclear Sector***

Pakistani-Chinese nuclear cooperation began in 1996 with China's commitment to build a nuclear reactor in Pakistan (Narayanan, 2005). The subsequent completion of the Chashma Nuclear Power Plant in 2000, was a watershed moment in Pakistan-China relations. Another agreement was also signed between the China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC) and the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) for the supply of a 300 MW nuclear power plant to Pakistan. On February 10th 2006, China initiated a hydropower project at Jinnah Barrage on the Indus River, which started commercial operation in 2012 (The Express Tribune, 2012a).

Pakistan aims to purchase two combined 2,000 MW Chinese nuclear power reactors. These will be built at the nuclear power plant in Karachi to deal with the energy problem in the country. The National Nuclear Corporation of China and the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission scheduled design changes for new facilities and Pakistan talks continued with China to purchase eight more nuclear power reactors. Construction of the plants began in 2015 and is expected to be completed by 2025 (Gul, 2021). The new power stations would add 4,800 MW of electricity to the national grid of Pakistan.

In 2005, both countries inaugurated the construction of Chashma Nuclear Power Facility II, a Chinese-supplied nuclear power plant with China as the major investor, which became operative in 2011 (The Dawn, 2011). Four years later, in 2009, Pakistan signed a contract for two more units. Construction of CHASNUPP-III began in 2011 and became operative as an electricity grid system in 2016 (World Nuclear News, 2016); in 2013 Pakistan and China agreed to build another unit at the Chashma nuclear power plant site which started operation in 2017 (World Nuclear News, 2020). Pakistan's foreign policy for Afghanistan has changed significantly post-9/11.

Pakistan chose to back the coalition forces led by America, while China promised that it would remain steadfast in backing Pakistan (Shamsi et. al., 2019). The U.S. and India felt uncomfortable with China's announcement of the construction of two additional nuclear power plants at Chashma. The U.S. State Department demanded clarity from China on its agreement to build two additional civilian nuclear reactors for Pakistan, as such collaboration would require particular permission granted after the consensus of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. China is a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, which does not allow for access to nuclear technology by those states that have not joined or signed the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, such as Pakistan (Hibbs, 2010).

According to China, the project was within the international nuclear non-proliferation obligations, because it built two nuclear reactors in Pakistan before becoming a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, (NSG) in 2004, so the new atomic deal should be allowed (Iqbal, 2010). As China had previously assisted Pakistan in the installation of two civilian nuclear reactors at Chashma, which did not diverge from NSG guidelines, and the nuclear collaboration and strategic cooperative endeavor were not against any other nation, the two countries agreed to expand their economic cooperation and counter-terrorism partnerships (Ahad, 2011).

### ***Pakistan-China Cooperation in Battle Tanks Supply***

The Main Battle Tank- 2000, also called the Al-Khalid Tank, was introduced by China and Pakistan jointly in 2001 in the defense strategy field. A development agreement took place in 1990 for the Al-Khalid tank and in 2001 it was handed over to Pakistan (Global Village Space, 2022). The Al-Khalid was fairly light compared to other contemporaneous tanks with a system of inertial navigation (INS) and a system of satellite navigation (SNS). Contemporary technologies, including an active thermal burn manufacturer, an interior fervor extinguisher, an explosion suppression, and a laser detection structure, which was installed in this tank. Several other countries were interested in purchasing tanks and the Bangladesh military made a 44 MBT-2000 purchase. (Global Village Space, 2020).

### ***Pakistan-China Cooperation in Air Crafts Manufacturing***

Pakistan needed a new combat aircraft to replace its aging fleet of Mirage III/5s, Chengdu F-7s, and Nanchang A-5s. In lieu of this, China and Pakistan signed a Memorandum of Understanding for a joint project and the expansion of a new fighter jet in 1995 (The Dawn, 2009). In 2007 China developed the JF-17 Thunder (FC-1 Fierce Dragon) to meet that goal. It was a multi-role fighter jet built by China and Pakistan in collaboration. The JF-17 Thunder made its first flight in May 2006 and was formally launched in 2007. A launching ceremony for the multi-role combatant airplane's building plan was held at Kamra Airbase, Attock

Pakistan (Rehmat, 2011). In comparison to previous devices of a similar sort, it featured a single-engine and was a light multifunctional battle plane. It could carry a wide range of weapons, grenades, rockets, and missiles.

### ***Pakistan-China Cooperation in Navy Ships***

Pakistan received the first F-22p frigate, the Pakistan Navy Ship (PNS) Zulfiqar, from China in 2009. Since the late 1990s, Pakistan has been in talks with China about purchasing four frigates. Following successful financial and technology transfer discussions, a deal was signed in 2006 (Aneja, 2006). Anti-submarine warfare helicopters and ammunition for the frigates were included in the 750 million dollars purchase. PNS Zulfiqar can commence anti-air, anti-surface, and anti-submarine warfare missions simultaneously (Naval Technology, 2014). The two nations' defense ties were further strengthened as a result of this collaboration.

Pakistan has been a permanent buyer of Chinese military apparatus and both states have signed many common projects. Approximately fourteen frigate warships have been designed and developed by China after PNS Zulfiqar, which included PNS Shamsheer, PNS Saif, and PNS Aslat. These are all modern frigates capable of independent operation and with the main navy, air defense, and general patrolling actions. PNS Zulfiqar was commissioned in 2009 along with PNS Shamsheer. These ships immediately provided the Pakistan Navy with its most powerful surface fighters (Naval Warfare, 2018). In 2012, the Pakistan Navy commissioned PNS Azmat, its first rapid assault vessel. China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation (CSOC) and the Pakistan Navy collaborated on its development. Its huge armament combined with stealthy qualities made it a truly adaptable platform that would not only prove crucial for assuring Pakistan's effective presence in an area of operations but it would also provide Pakistan with a huge capacity to carry arms secretly (The Express Tribune, 2012b).

The Pakistan Navy had a long-term operational need for it. In 2010, Pakistan and China agreed to collaborate on the construction of rapid attack craft under a technology transfer

agreement. The very first craft was made in China, while the second was made at KSEW (Karachi Shipyard and Engineering Works). The first two crafts of PNS Azmat were commissioned in 2012 and 2014 and the third craft of PNS Azmat was launched in 2016 (Savox Communications, 2016). AZMAT-Class FAC (Fast Attack Craft) was the name given to this ship. It was outfitted with cutting-edge technology such as Surface-to-Surface Anti-Ship Missiles, stealthy features, and high-tech sensors, making it more effective than its competitors (Archus, 2019). The Azmat-class ships were intended for deployment in maritime patrol, anti-surface warfare, anti-air warfare, search-and-rescue (SAR), and anti-piracy missions. Although the Pakistan Navy was adequately prepared to respond to any force threatening the country's sovereignty and territorial waters' security, maintaining the balance of power in the region was also beneficial to the Pakistan Navy. The fourth and final Azmat-class fast attack craft PNS Haibat was launched on 31 March, 2022 in Karachi (Military Leaks, 2022).

### ***Pakistan-China Joint Military Exercises***

In 2003, China and Pakistan began a combined naval drill in Karachi. The Chinese Fleet participated in a cooperative maritime drill with a foreign navy for the first time. Joint rescue operations and patrolling and monitoring the doubted invaders were included in the exercise. Pakistan's closeness to China urged India to strengthen its naval ties with Russia, including joint exercises at India's Visakhapatnam Port in 2016 (Gady, 2016). In 2011, a joint China-Pakistan military drill; YOUYI (Friendship) was launched (The Economic Times, 2011). The goal of these exercises was to eliminate terrorism in the region. The combined exercises lasted for two weeks and were designed to allow for a shared exchange of knowledge and experiences through a real-time training program. The YOUYI operation was a high-level joint exercise between the special armed forces of both states.

The Chinese Army was well-equipped and highly focused on technology; the troops were careful, eager, and evenly skilled in their approach. YOUYI began in 2004 and to date,

both nations have collaborated on three exercises, two of which were held in China and one in Pakistan. The Joint Military Exercise YOUYI-IV leveled the ground for the current bilateral defense cooperation and strengthened it further. The exercise was attended by senior military leaders from both sides. The YOUYI-IV was a living example of a popular Chinese proverb that states, "Pakistan-China friendship is higher than mountains and deeper than seas." According to a senior Pakistani army officer, "this is the first time China and Pakistan have held brigade-level war simulations" (Yousaf, 2011). This was also an anti-terrorist practice for the greater area that encompassed South Asia, China, Afghanistan, and Central Asia. India expressed worries about the military exercise even before it began, calling it "hazardous for India." According to India, the combined military exercise was India-centric and unrelated to terrorism. On July 30, 2011, China agreed to equip Pakistan with a squad of revolutionary J-10B multi-role, all-season fighting airplanes. The jet had been outfitted with cutting-edge weapons (Iqbal, 2022).

#### ***Pakistan-China Cooperation in Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV)***

Pakistan stated that it would purchase armed Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) from China, which according to China, could be equipped with a variety of missiles similar to American vehicles. China also offered the CH-4, a UAV with a comparable design, weight, and performance to the U.S. Predator. The CH-4 was shaped similarly to the bigger American MQ-9 Reaper. A pair of Blue Arrow 7 missiles might be carried by the UAV (The Dawn, 2013). Pakistan utilized a variety of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) near the Afghan and Indian borders. The Italian Falco UAV, which Pakistan acquired, was the most effective of these. The aforementioned UAV could take off and land on an airstrip, using a catapult or parachute. Pakistan had been deploying Chinese unmanned aerial vehicles for the past many years (Akhtar, 2014).

Pakistan has also been developing the unmanned aerial vehicle "Uqaab". The Uqaab was similar to the RQ-7B Shadow 200 of the U.S. Army (Global Defense Insight, 2021a). A Pakistani company developed the 470 kilograms "Shahpar," which could fly for seven hours each sortie. That model looked a lot like the CH-3 of China (Global Defense Insight, 2021b). Pakistan had requested Predators from the U.S., but they were denied because China could dissect the American UAV and reveal too many industrial secrets, even though China and Pakistan had been friendly for decades. However, Italy and Germany were also willing to sell surveillance drones to Pakistan.

### ***Construction of the Karakorum Highway***

Commonly known as the "Friendship Highway", the Karakoram Highway (KKH) is the world's most heavily paved international highway that connects Pakistan and China through the Karakoram Mountains. It was built by Pakistan and China and is important economically and strategically to both nations. Construction began in 1959 and was finished in 1979. For the security of China's strategic and economic goals in Afghanistan, the Indian Oceanic, the Persian Gulf, the Middle East, and Africa, China later agreed to expand the KKH (The Dawn, 2006).

Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) shares strategically important borders with Afghanistan to the west, Tajikistan to the northwest, India to the east, Chinese Xinjiang to the north, and Tibet to the northeast. Via G-B, China can now easily reach the Strait of Hormuz and the Suez Canal. India viewed the development of the KKH as a militarily nefarious effort intended against India (Gupta, 2015). China, by contrast, was concerned over the growing radicalization of the Uighur population in its Xinjiang province that heightened with the development of the KKH. As a result, Pakistan made all necessary steps to assuage Chinese worries and to refute Indian charges of foreign backing for Uighur insurgents from Pakistan's radical Islamist political parties (Chu, 2007). In 2006, China and Pakistan agreed to spend 325 million dollars to build

a 200 km expansion of the KKH from Raikot to Sazeen in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (The Dawn, November 25, 2006). Along this route, China intended to build parks, dispensaries, and restaurants.

### ***The Gwadar Port Project***

The construction of the Gwadar Port was another watershed moment in the Pakistan-China relationship. It was built with significant Chinese funding and became operative in 2007 as a revolutionary project in the naval history of Pakistan. The first phase of the port cost 248 million dollars. China contributed 198 million dollars to build this port. After Phase-I was completed, the Pakistani government chose to take over operational responsibility of the Port of Singapore Authority International, and Pakistan and China agreed to a forty-year deal for port expansion development (Hussain et. al., 2020). The port was to be a tax-free and duty-free zone. Estimates put the cost of Phase II at 932 million dollars with China contributing 526 million dollars to the efforts: nine more docks and facilities at Gwadar Port; a coastal highway; and, a road between Kashgar and China's eastern coastline ports. The cost-benefit analysis of Gwadar for China's imports and exports reflects Pakistan's long-term economic motivations (Shahid, 2007).

Pakistan is to gain strategic depth southwest of its naval base in Karachi, which has traditionally been vulnerable to Indian Navy blockage. The Pakistani naval bases at Gwadar and Omara in conjunction with Chinese naval stations are also to limit the influence of the U.S. Navy's presence in the Persian Gulf and lessen India's goal to become a Blue-water navy. The port would also develop a Pak-China naval link to counter the Indian Navy and foster secure commercial shipping in the Indian Ocean. If China decides to develop the Aynak copper resource and engage in mining activities in southern Afghanistan, then Gwadar can be used as a transportation hub. This decision would be practical as China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan all intend to construct far-reaching road and rail lines to connect Central Asia and

China to the Arabian Sea coast. Along this same line, China considered building an overland bridge from Iran through Central Asia and to China. From a geopolitical standpoint, this bridge would be out of reach of the U.S. and Indian fleets. China and Pakistan have also struck an agreement to strengthen energy ties, which currently include oil from Kazakhstan and fossil fuels and natural gas from Turkmenistan (Blank, 2011).

To counter the Gwadar Port, India developed the Chabahar port in Iran's Sistan-Balochistan region. India also supported Iran in the construction of a 200 km road between Chabahar and Afghanistan to get Indian commercial commodities to Afghanistan and Central Asia in a faster time. Gwadar, unlike the seasonal port of Chabahar, which is impracticable during the monsoon season, functions all year. It is rightfully dubbed Pakistan's enormous booming metropolis, a location of breathtaking beauty and limitless possibilities. In terms of air travel, the expanded Gwadar airport and enlarged runway accommodate landing of large jets. The Pakistan local Civil Aviation Authority is planning to invest heavily in upgrading the Gwadar Airport with the support of the government of Oman. Over time, if the roads and rail lines connect Gwadar to the rest of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia, then it could emerge as Pakistan's main trading hub and shipping point. It would give a huge boost to Pakistan's revenue, making it one of the tigers of the Asian continent.

On February 18, 2013, the Pakistani government handed over the operational authority of the China Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC) to China. Although COPHC would operate the port, it would remain the property of the Gwadar Port Authority. India interpreted the deal as a Chinese takeover (Khan, 2019) and an endeavor to increase military pressure on their influence in the international sphere and the region specifically (Tourangbam, 2011).

## **INDIA'S CONCERNS**

Pak-China's strategic and defense cooperation have progressively improved since 9/11 with potentially negative consequences for the Indian State. India looks with great alarm at these events and developments. India's long-standing geopolitics and geo-strategies in the region, are strongly linked to the Pak-China missile and nuclear technologies. India is tremendously worried about the linkage between Pakistan and China in the strategic arena and continuously assesses the military might of China to modify its actions accordingly (The Economic Times, 2009). As noted earlier, India has been uncomfortable with the Pakistan and China military drill in Rajasthan along the Indian border region (Bhatia, 2011). According to them, China intended to exert influence and pressure on India through Rajasthan, an important area on the Pakistani border. Further, in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, several Indian press reports indicated the presence of Chinese troops. India has also been in a difficult situation with regard to China backing Pakistan on the Kashmir issue.

China has shattered India's over-ambitious plans and aspirations by giving assistance to Pakistan in Kashmir and participating with them in roads and infrastructure projects that include enormous financial support for Pakistan's Bunji hydroelectric project and building a railway line that connects Gwadar to Kashgar via Abbottabad and the Khunjrab Pass. High-ranking Indian military personnel pointed out that India should prepare a 'two-war front,' in case of conflict with either China or Pakistan. Alluding to the role of China, India commented that the conflict between Pakistan and India was not a war but a fight between the three nations. In past battles, China has carried out a major army buildup along the Indo-China border aimed at preventing Indian forces to approach Pakistan's western border (The Economic Times, 2009).

India is closely monitoring Gwadar Port's ongoing construction and is strictly observing Chinese activity on the coast of Makran and the shore of Gwadar as China's close interaction with neighboring countries including Pakistan could seriously jeopardize India's sea routes in

the Gulf of Persia and India (Sakhuja, 2013). The Indian motivation for the Blue-water navy is focused on developing aircraft carriers, powerful anti-ship and offensive weapons, and large numbers of submarines; which can be hardly detected; to project India as a great maritime force. The Indian objective is to subjugate Pakistan's naval forces, as well as counter Chinese naval expansion in the Indian Ocean towards Saudi Arabia. Conventional naval cooperation between China and Pakistan is a tremendous force to resist India's domination and supremacy over the Indian and Arabian Seas.

In international politics, the Indian Ocean is of considerable strategic importance. The closeness to the Persian Gulf and massive oil and gas resources are essential elements that have enabled the Indian naval force to be strengthened and expanded. China's principal purpose is to maintain its stability in the Indian Ocean for the ongoing flow of maritime traffic. China wants navigational freedom, the security of communication routes, and safe commercial transactions (Ahmed, 2015). India is likewise attempting its best to develop its naval power in the Indian Ocean to suppress and limit the rising influence of the Chinese navy in Malacca.

India is seriously concerned about the civil nuclear pact between China and Pakistan and has strongly complained that China and Pakistan's export of nuclear equipment and materials have violated international procedure and was proof of China's international commitment and its determination to put India at a loss (Yang, 2016). This has forced India to constantly monitor progress in this respect and channel its diplomatic efforts to ensure that necessary protections are respected.

## CONCLUSION

In the early 1950s, diplomatic connections between China and Pakistan declined because of Pakistan's conciliatory tendency toward the Western Block to overcome their defense needs. By the twenty-first century, Pak-China ties reached a higher degree of strategic understanding

and cooperation as evidenced by the frequency of their interactions. In addition, they held the same opinions on all major issues and countless regional and international developments, which included developing a mutually advantageous strategic collaboration for the war on terror. The choice of Pakistan to support the U.S. and supply it with airfield installations caused doubts in Chinese quarters but the exchange of high-level visits nonetheless underscored Pakistan's position that any attempt to disrupt China's strategic interests in the area would not be supported.

The Chinese side fully grasped the limitations and duties on Pakistan's part and expressed sympathy with Pakistan's diplomatic relations with the U.S. With the signing of the Treaty of Friendship, and increased collaboration for trade and military strength, the long-term strategic cooperation between Pakistan and China was further reinforced. The joint declaration called the Treaty an advance in boosting future strategic relationships between China and Pakistan. Both countries have demonstrated their support for ongoing strategic and defense partnerships and joint military exercises. China has struggled to work with other states in the region to prevent terrorist attacks. Since the 1950s China and Pakistan have regarded one another with mutual respect and confidence and built up a multifaceted cooperative relationship in the most rational ways. These relations have consolidated positions in the key areas of geopolitics, trade, and military infrastructure, and also in the associated sectors of regional agreements and investments.

Based on this review, we can conclude that China and Pakistan need to preserve amicable, strategic, and diplomatic connections with one another as it is necessary for the peace, security, and economic development of not only China and Pakistan but for the region overall. Ultimately, as the theoretical framework for this review suggests, Pakistan from both the perspective of Realism and Neorealism, needs China as a strategic trade and military partner

for safety and defense reasons in the face of uncertain relations with India and the U.S. Pakistan also needs China for advancing trade relations and investment and long-run economic stability.

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