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Pakistan-China Strategic Relationship: A Glorious Journey of 55 Years

Abstract

Pakistan-China strategic relationship is an epitome of enduring friendship, regardless of different belief systems and cultures. Both countries have taken thousands of steps to further their relationship into a strategic partnership based on shared values and interests as there is a famous Chinese saying, “the journey of thousand miles begins with a single step”. The very first step to develop this friendship was taken way back in 1950, when Pakistan recognized China as an independent state; and the first step towards strategic partnership has been taken in April 2005 while both countries signed a treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Good-neighbourly Relations. The two countries have travelled over 55 years of long journey of smooth relations. This study attempts to provide a detailed account of historical developments of Pakistan-China intimacy through the lens of Cold War and post-Cold War politics in South Asia from 1950 to 2005.

Keywords: Pakistan-China bilateral relations, strategic partnership, Cold War, post-Cold War, South Asia, triangular interaction, all-weather friendship.

Introduction

Pakistan and China as “all-weather strategic partners” have had a history of ‘glorious journey’. Both countries have been able to develop a multidimensional relationship and a good example of peaceful coexistence despite different social, political and economic systems. Historically, both nations shared a common Indian threat to their security that caused to create a strong bond of entente. Pakistan and China came closer after experiencing fifty years’ of vicissitudes; internally and externally before entering in twenty-first century. China’s strategic interests forced it to form relations with South Asian neighbours and superpowers after 1949, but never ready to sacrifice its harmonious relations with Pakistan. China’s support— implicit and explicit— to Pakistan’s Kashmir stance during ‘60s and ‘70s changed

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toward neutrality because of its diverting policy toward India in '80s and '90s. Despite swinging regional and global conditions of world politics in 21st century, these two 'time-tested' friends not merely stood firm in the rocky pathway, but also strived hard to expand their 'strategic partnership of 2005' thereafter. This article throws light on the context of international strategic imperatives and geopolitical dynamics during 1949-2005, behind strategic relationship of Pakistan and China, particularly. Within this period of arduous journey, Pakistan and China both progressively made their headway by cooperating in areas of defence, culture, socio-economics, politics and trade through high-level diplomatic exchanges alongside people-to-people diplomacy. A key focus in this article is to shed light on historical events of Cold war and post-Cold War politics which paved a smooth way to bring Pakistan and China closer. These ground-breaking past engagements have established "all-weather" and "time-tested" current Pakistan-China friendship. After doing an extensive literature review, it seemed very relevant to include such a section to address the changing nature of Pakistan-China relations along with the "triangular relationship" perspective in the context of power-politics of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the United States (US) — since this dimension remains unexplored in the existing literature/up till now. This framework provides a nuanced understanding of the subject matter and makes a novel contribution in literature. Intertwined with this chronologically-mentioned history is a strong foundation of this research made while mentioning Pakistan-China strategic relationship in-depth.

Pakistan-China Bilateral Strategic Relationship

Friendship with China has always been a cornerstone in Pakistan's foreign policy. Pakistan has tried to adopt a bilateralism policy with the PRC, USSR and the US—without success (Khan, 2006: 233). Moreover, Pakistan's geographical location has been on the crossroad of big and small powers' rivalries and politics. Besides, Pakistan-China current multidimensional friendship has not developed overnight; it has experienced a lot of vicissitudes in the evolution of today's smoother, stronger, deeper and ever-expanding amity. Therefore, it is essential to understand Pakistan-China bilateral relationship in the pre twenty-first century from a correct perspective to have a detailed evolutionary review in the chronological pattern of phases mentioned in the following flowchart:

A. Early Historical Contacts and Geographical Linkage

China as an ancient civilization has rich annals of dynasties. The pivot of China's security strategy has been the strong Chinese belief regarding China as 'Middle kingdom' and outsiders as 'barbarians' (Hunt, 1984: 5-7). China has been greatly influenced by its traditional and historical pattern of exchanges with the foreigners according to 'cosmopolitanism policy' these influences are still manifested in China's foreign policy. China's contact with the outside world began in the Han dynasty when China established connections with Jib in (Kashmir, the sub-continent part of South Asia) by Silk Route. Moreover, Chinese travellers FaHsien and Heun Tsang visited this region in early seventh century BC.

On the account of these historical interactions, religious contacts deeply penetrated in Xinjiang province—particularly of Islam. While, Buddhism spread vastly into other parts of China. These religious affinities slowly but surely curtailed the geographical distances whereby forming religious, cultural, and economic linkages between the both old-enrich civilizations. The Buddhist pilgrims used to visit northern India (presently Pakistan's areas of Gilgit and others) all through their long expeditions from Kapica (Butt, 2007: 21-22).

Further, the Gandhara art of Pakistan influenced Chinese art in the first century. In the Indus Valley, Hyderabad and Bhambore about thirty miles to the east of Karachi, the archaeologists have found plenty of Chinese relics. Therefore, it can be said that China and Pakistan have historical, religious and cultural linkages as well. Similarly, both countries also had strong trade connections through the famed caravans and Silk route (Butt, 2007: 23-24). This link mainly started from Xinjiang (China) which connects Kashgar (Pakistan) through Karakoram. Both areas are greatly dwelled in by the Muslims (Haider, 2005: 522-523). This region has great geographical significance in the subcontinent and China's historical commercial associations vis-à-vis ancient Chinese Silk Route. The Chinese trade convoys while travelling through Xinjiang and traversing Ladakh and Gilgit, came into present-day Pakistan (on the western side) for financial transactions.

The Chinese travellers contributed significantly in establishing contacts with Bangladesh (former East Pakistan). The most primordial indications of these links existed in 'Periplus of the Erythrean Sea'. During the course of foreign Muslim invaders, China and the east wing of Pakistan (Bangladesh) shared close links. Likewise, political and trade connections between both the countries were developed by the Afghan and Mughal rulers in the sub-continent (Chaudhri, 1970: 77).

B. Pakistan-China Relations and South Asian Politics in Cold War Scenario (1949-1990)

Since the early years of Cold War, Pakistan's geographical location and strategic importance served as a magnet for the then superpowers (Soviet Union and United States) as well as the peripheral power (China). Its land consisted of two parts: West Pakistan (current Pakistan) and East Pakistan, which further amplified its importance. Additionally, some internal weaknesses and security compulsions made 'Pakistan a crossroad of big and small powers' hostility and strategies as quoted by K. Subrahmanyam in these words:

"Pakistan lies at the intersection of big powers' rivalries and politics. It is physically accessible to a number of big powers. Consequently, any development in Pakistan that has an impact on the security and viability of that country will inevitably attract the attention of a number of external powers. These powers are China, the Soviet Union [now Russia], Iran, and Afghanistan. If these powers get actively interested in the developments in that country, it is not likely that the United States, as the largest power in the world and a military ally of Pakistan, will lie low and keep away from the area" (Subrahmanyam, 1974: 71).

In post-1971, geographical remapping of Pakistani territory created a new state— Bangladesh. Connected to late 1970s' politics of Cold War, Pakistan at western side was essentially a focal point of the Cold War rivals—especially due to Afghanistan in the aftermath of Soviet invasion. Pakistan suited well to China's strategic interests within South Asia and across the region owing to Pakistan's centrally-located position in southern Eurasia; its nearness to the Muslim world and due to its role in Afghanistan-Iran-Pakistan triangle which held its influence upon Central Asian Republics, Gulf States, and the Middle Eastern states (Brzezinski, 1997: 34). Pakistan-China bilateral relations can be analyzed by studying defence and economic friendship during the entire period of Cold War while considering triangular interactions: (1) Pakistan-China-India, (2) Pakistan-China-US (3) Pakistan-China-Soviet (4) Pakistan-China-Afghanistan triangle.

a. Dawn of Diplomatic Ties (1949-53)

Early in 1950, Pakistan-China political relations were not pleasant but the old commercial and cultural links remained in place as Pakistan's government was engaged in domestic affairs. Whilst the Communists took over Chinese mainland and established government in Peking, Pakistan was not fully in the position to recognize China's

government. Pakistan remained confused either it should have recognized a communist state or not, as Pakistan got first invitation of the formal visit from the Soviet Union. Pakistan's security was under threat from both Eastern and Western sides as Indian incursion on Kashmir and Afghanistan's claim of Pakhunistan were also menacing Pakistan's integrity. Therefore, Pakistan could not afford more enemies than it already had (Bhola, 1986: 17-25). Secondly, ideological difference was politicized by both Pakistani and Chinese sides. Thirdly, both countries were in state of almost ignorance about each other. However, the Sir Muhammad Zafarullah Khan was the only person who was somehow familiar with China and helped introduce it to Pakistani political elites.

Fourthly, within bipolar international structure of Communist against Capitalist, Pakistan could scarcely evade to be a prey of 'power-bloc rivalries' and Cold War politics (Bhola, 1986: 13). As first premier of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan had already approved the invitation of the US being the representative capitalist bloc instead of the USSR, the representative of a Communist bloc; therefore, Pakistan pursued non-alignment foreign policy.

Lastly, the US did not recognize the Communist government of China. However, circumstances dictated that Pakistan recognized China. While the trade between Pakistan and India was halted owing to Indian unethical action of devaluing India's currency at once in September 1949, although Pakistan was importing coal from India in preference to exporting it cotton and jute. The act of currency devaluation froze the bilateral trade between India and Pakistan. Nonetheless, the unavailability of transport and coal to run the limited industry was a setback for Pakistan's economy. At that moment, Chinese came up with an offer of 'coal for cotton barter deal' during 1949-1950 backed Pakistan's weak economy (Chaudhri, 1970: 80). Thus, Pakistan became the first Muslim country and third after India and Burma which recognized China's independence.

Among the layered objectives of Pakistan behind Chinese recognition, one was that after having the United Nations' seat and veto power, China could support Pakistan's standpoint on Kashmir in the UN Security Council (Amin, 2000: 157). On the other hand, in early 1950s, the US policy of containment against Communist bloc hampered China's efforts to gain UN membership; while China's campaign of territorial integrity in Tibet and Formosa (now Taiwan) resulted in conflict of interests between the US and China it also impacted Pakistan's foreign policy. Being a Commonwealth member, Pakistan, depended upon the West— especially Britain strongest US

ally—for its socio-political and economic stability. Nevertheless, through successful bilateralism policy, Pakistan befriended with the US and China while earning USSR's animosity. At these critical junctures, Pakistan preferred to stay neutral on China's internal affairs i.e. Tibet. On the question of China's permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Zafrullah Khan openly supported China (Arif, 1984: 5-6).

During 1951-53, Pakistan-China diplomatic relations started by exchanging envoys. By July 1951, Major General N.M. Raza from Defence Service was assigned the duty of first ambassador to Peking (Goswami, 1971: 14). At that time politically, there was no diverging point between Karachi and Peking. Even the undefined Pakistan-China border remained in peace and Chinese position was not clear over Kashmir dispute at least at the time of China-India warm relations as India and China were enjoying very good relations during this phase. Economically, Pakistan-China trade extended under the barter agreement of 1952, under which Pakistan exported Rs. 97.2 million worth of cotton to China and in exchange of coal and jute. It was followed by another wide-ranging trade pact in 1953 (Dixit, 1987: 1067). Conversely, Pakistan attained technical and financial aid from the US under the 'Point-Four Programme' signed with the US President Truman (Goswami, 1971: 22).

b. Bandung Diplomacy and Pakistan-China-India Border Disputes (1954-1970)

Toward the year of 1954, Pakistan needed to underplay security threats to the nascent communist country as a stark contrast to increasing Indian military power under the support of the USSR and the US. Owing to China's military, Pakistan joined capitalist bloc to upgrade China's military technology. Alternatively, the US was planning to contain Communism in Asia by making collective military alliance. Pakistan came into the western camp after the exchange of Pakistani military personnel's visits to the US, Secretary of Defence Iskandar Mirza's visit. Commander-in-Chief of Pakistan army, General Ayub Khan visited Turkey (then stronger ally of the US), and the US. As a result of these visits, Pakistan signed two significant military pacts with the US i.e. Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) on September 1954 and later, Central Treaty Organization (CENTO)—earlier known as Baghdad Pact—in February, 1955 (Naseer and Amin, 2011: 4).

Despite Pakistan's nod to the US for establishing its military base in Peshawar, Pakistan could not reap any substantial benefits from this mutual defence assistance except some military and financial assistance from 1953 to 1961. Conversely, Pakistan-USSR relations were strained after Pakistan's denial of the Soviets' offer of a visit to Moscow. Consequently, the Soviets launched an anti-Pakistan campaign such as creating the disturbance in Northwest Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa) via Afghanistan, backing Pakhtoonistan issue and favouring Indian standpoint on Kashmir in the UNSC (Levi, 1962: 215-216). On the other hand, China accused the US of engaging in "subversive" and "interventionist" activities. At once, Peking explicitly and directly criticized Pakistan's alliance with the US regarding SEATO and CENTO. A People's Daily correspondent accused that Pakistan's treaties with the US and Turkey would menace peace and cause pandemonium in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Notably, these pacts would turn Pakistan into an American "war base" and jeopardize its security and sovereignty as well (Syed, 1974: 56-58).

Change in the governments did not change Pakistan's foreign policy, which is tilted toward West; however wind of country politics was steadily embracing communist changes. Pakistan's then Premier Muhammad Ali Bogra cooled down the anti-western sentiments prevailing in Pakistan through Bandung Diplomacy. At Manila Conference, Pakistani ambassador assured Chou Enlai that the Sino-Pakistan relationship would continue flourishing regardless of Pakistan-US close ties. Likewise, Chou Enlai reciprocated same sentiments that "China and Pakistan could peacefully coexist" henceforth (Goswami, 1971: 33). Pakistan agreed to Chou Enlai's invitation to attend Bandung Conference.

At the **Bandung Conference** (1955), the heads of non-aligned Afro-Asian states met together at one platform led by Chou Enlai and Nehru. China-India ties were in full swing at Bandung Conference as the top leadership of both countries undertook to reinforce the spirit of *Panchsheelaccord* (1954) on Tibet issue (Seth, 1981: 350). This agreement encompassed famous five tenets of 'peaceful coexistence'. Later, Pakistan's Prime Minister Muhammad Ali Bogra succeeded in convincing Chou Enlai that Pakistan had no fear of invasion from China as Enlai expressed Bogra's stance on his behalf during the conference that Pakistan had signed SEATO with America just for its security compulsions regarding India. He reassured that Pakistan would not engage in any war fought between the US and China or not be the part of anti-China alliance. The Bandung Conference ended with confidence building between both Pakistan and China. At the same

time, Pakistan's ten-point agenda, "Seven Pillars of Peace" was also endorsed by the Chinese premier (Chaudhri, 1970: 82), which was rejected by Nehru (Indian ex-premier).

Success of Bandung Conference gave way to smooth diplomatic, cultural, commercial and people-to-people relations. Further, Suhrawardy and Chou Enlai reiterated that both countries had no point of difference. Furthermore, China's stance on Kashmir issue remained that both India and Pakistan should settle the dispute peacefully. Contrarily, during Bandung Conference, India tried to lead the Afro-Asian states, which highlighted growing 'conflict of interest' between China and India. More importantly, Pakistan got an opportunity to make its image better within Afro-Asian states and in China's eyes. Similarly, China had fully realized geostrategic significance of Pakistan vis-à-vis connecting China to the Middle East and other regions via Indian Ocean; as breach between China and India began to grow on territorial disputes.

Meanwhile, the US commenced the policy of "**Atoms for Peace**" during mid1950s and provided nuclear technology to India as a relative option instead of Pakistan (Muhammad, 2009: 107). These developments were to disturb regional balance of power; which instigated nuclear proliferation and later an arms race in South Asia. As Pakistan grappled with another security threat; China, on the other hand, bolstered its attempts of becoming/gaining nuclear power; both China and Pakistan explicitly demanded disarmament and non-proliferation at the UN forum. Yet, during Marshall Law in Pakistan, Ayub Khan resumed the pro-western policy in milieu of 'bilateralism' strategy. While it was mainly because of his "crisis of legitimacy", hence the focal foreign policy objectives in Ayub's period were Pakistan's urgent "need for security and development, as well as preservation of its ideology" (Kundi, 2009: 12).

While pursuing the pro-western policy, Pakistan interceded into Chinese internal affairs at the time of China's measures in Tibet. It also denied China's sovereignty over Taiwan and other islands, and welcomed warmly Taiwanese Haji Mission in Karachi by 1959. Likewise, Ayub remarked in an interview that

"The subcontinent would be vulnerable to attack within five years. Chinese occupation of Tibet and road construction activities in Afghanistan poses a serious threat from the north. It is a threat that cannot be overlooked by wishful thinking" (Jain, 1981: 23).

Consequently, such anti-Chinese behaviour from Pakistani side exasperated China; thus, it explicitly criticized Pakistani acts. Nevertheless, Ayub's policy shift was critically analyzed at home. Besides, Zulfikar Bhutto forewarned President Ayub that Pakistan-China relations could sour. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Secretary of External Affairs, S.K. Delvi persuaded Ayub for rapprochement with China and coolness with the US as it was covertly helping India increase its military prowess. They expressed their serious concerns that these US-supplied weapons could be used against Pakistan (Arif, 1984: 124). At this junction, difference between China and India were widened due to their border disputes and Indian asylum to Dalai Lama in 1959. Despite that Pakistan proffered India to form a "joint defence against the North" which India declined as it felt no need of the joint defence against north—the USSR and China (Bhutto, 1978: 124). Later, threat to India came from 'north' and China-India clashes during 1960s.

Hence, owing to rapidly changing internal and external circumstances, Ayub Khan's government introduced a trivial change in Pakistani foreign policy as he pursued a **bilateralism strategy** of 'balancing Pakistan's relations with the three big nations i.e. China, the USSR and the US' (Bhutto, 1978: 237), and peaceful policy with all neighbours. Thus, Pakistan inked an oil pact with the Soviet Russia and a bilateral agreement with the US in 1960. The U-2 incident of 1960 exacerbated Pakistan's security in the near-term Cold War rivalry. Realizing the need of time, Ayub adopted a flexible approach with all great powers; the policy itself was as akin to "walking on a triangular tightrope". Likewise, Ayub recommended 'give and take' strategy as Pakistan was interested in demarcation of its border with China. Consequently, China demarcated the undefined borders between China and Pakistan and in return gained full cooperation from Pakistan regarding China's admission in the UN.

At the critical junction of 1962, India blamed China for indulging in war within parts of Ladakh (Kashmir) and North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) (Maxwell, 1970: 39-40). At that time, the USSR and US's tilt towards India became more obvious as Pakistan's plea for military help was turned down whereas India received full military support during Run of Kutch war in 1962. In this manner, after Chinese unilateral ceasefire, Pakistan fully condemned India for fake war fought in the pursuit of procurement of weapons from the West and the US. The US, on the other hand, denounced China for its aggressive and expansionist objectives/policies. Similarly, certain other US tactics of creating differences between Pakistan and China also went in

vain; as at that moment it sent its representatives to pressurize India for opening negotiations on Kashmir issue with Pakistan, the talks, however failed ultimately. Following awful defeat of India, China decided not to discuss boundary dispute with India, which was actually the area in west of the Karakoram Pass that separated Baltistan from Indian-controlled Ladakh. Another view is that China first offered India to settle the boundary dispute. After India's unresponsive attitude, China moved ahead in resolving the territorial differences with Pakistan as China didn't commit itself for boundary demarcation with Pakistan earlier but when India's response wasn't positive, it went ahead with the demarcation process with Pakistan whenever China-India relations went sour (Van Kemenade, 2008: 90-93).

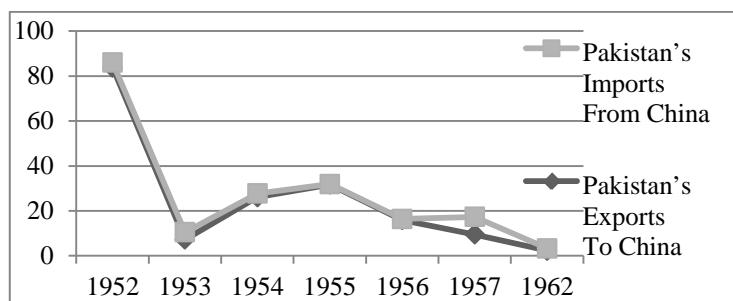
However, since the first half of the 1960s, Pakistan and China opened a new chapter of historic friendship. With regard to **China-Pakistan Boundary Agreement** of demarcation, Pakistan awaited China's feedback and then eventually on March 2, 1963, the two countries signed a boundary agreement of provisional nature, aiming at "the boundary between China's Xinjiang and the adjoining areas, the defence of which is under the actual control of Pakistan" (Dobell, 1964: 290-292). Both nations showed firm consent about demarcation and reopening agreement after resolution of Kashmir dispute. The agreement yielded strategic, political and economic benefits. Dobell (1964: 290) asserted that Pakistan got hold of some "750 square miles of land affording salt and grazing ground, access to all passes along the Karakoram Range and three-quarters of the peak of K-2". "It is a practical demonstration of peaceful coexistence" quote done Pakistani editor (Montagno, 1965: 314). Some western analysts believe that Pakistan-China ties got into "ballistic relationship" after Pakistan's compromise of Pakistan '5,180 square kilometres of land in Northern Kashmir and Ladakh' and China's concession of 1,942 sq. kilometres area to Pakistan (Riedel and Singh, 2010: 2-3).

The border agreement was a jolt for India as well as the US. The United States published a series of articles titled "Sino-Pakistan Series" and labelled this agreement 'an unlawful accord between "fraternal friends" as there is no common border between Pakistan and China' (Aziz, 1964: 92-93). America voiced grave apprehensions that 'this document would endanger then continued India-Pakistan talks over Kashmir issue'. In the wake of this hallmark in Pakistan-China relations, an air transport agreement was signed authorizing each other's airlines to land and operate along with other services. It was profitable for PIA to enlarge business. The two countries commenced their relations and won hearts and minds of people. The agreement

called for a direction from Karachi and Dacca to Canton, Shanghai, and probably Tokyo in 1964; as a response, America “postponed” a Point Four US\$ 3 million loan for Dacca airport. Afterwards, China provided special financial assistance for airport construction. Nonetheless, six rounds of talks on Kashmir issue ended without fruitful results. Due to India’s disinclination to resolve Kashmir dispute, a window of ‘golden opportunity’ was missed while there was war going on between India and China, as per statement of Z.A. Bhutto (Arif, 1984: 44).

During 1965 war between India and Pakistan, China overtly assisted Pakistan militarily, diplomatically and economically. China not only supported Pakistan’s stance on Kashmir issue; it criticized India’s “criminal aggression”, and threatened India of dire consequences. Moscow remained neutral during war but Washington placed embargo on both India and Pakistan. This incident ultimately made Pakistan realized that there was a huge difference in friendship of US and China. In due course, Pakistan and China signed trade agreement founded on the “most-favoured nation treatment” in trade, commerce and shipment. Additionally, army-cum-navy top heads of Pakistan visited Peking many times. Thus, China supplied machinery worth of 15 million rupees for the Heavy Mechanical Complex in Taxila in 1968 (Syed, 1974: 207).China also provided million of dollars interest free economic assistance to Pakistan for its infrastructure and small industries development. During 1950s and 1960s, Pakistan-China trade volume fluctuated owing to China’s domestic engagement in Cultural Revolution of 1966, and Pakistan’s political rambling and post-war situation. In 1963, China gave Pakistan US\$ 50 million interest free to strengthen economic bond (Bhalla, 1999: 139-140). [See Graph 1].

Graph 1. Pakistan's Bilateral Trade with China in the US Million Dollars (1952-1962)



Source: Aziz, Qutubuddin. (1964). 'Relations between Pakistan and the People's Republic of China'. In Latif Ahmed Sherwani et al. Foreign Policy of Pakistan – Analysis (pp.74-75). Karachi: The Allies Book Corporation, 76, 78, 81, 84, 91. Barnds, William J. (1975, September). 'China's Relations with Pakistan: Durability amidst Discontinuity', *The China Quarterly*, no. 63, 472, 478, 482.

Keeping in view the overall context of Cold War, China gained considerable power in Asia by developing its nuclear technology and defence system in 1964. Meanwhile, China's nuclear explosion could have conferred certain protection to the country's interests, heavily laid in the Asian region as 'a deterrent umbrella' against the US-USSR co-existence strategy and mutual aggression. Respecting China's relations with the USSR and the US, Chinese neutral gesture was not to demonstrate its divergence with the USSR, whereas the US considered China a major threat to its interests in Asia and sought to contain China's growing influence, with the help of USSR.

Alternatively, Western and Indian analysts believed that Pakistan had obtained a security shield by developing amiable relations with China and normalizing ties with the Soviet Union. China was fully committed to assist Pakistan against any "foreign intercession", backed Pakistan's standpoint on Kashmir, and increased cultural co-operation under cultural agreement of 1966 (Hasan and Qureshi, 1966: 422). Consequently, Pakistan supported one China policy and Peking's seat in the UN, overtly. The two countries shared 'a common agenda' of 'universal disarmament', alongside nuclear demolition continuance of Bandung Conference's ten rules, for preserving peace in the region. China offered an anticipated sum of US\$ 445 million as foreign aid to Pakistan between 1965 and 1971 (Bhola, 1986: 221). In defence,

relations immensely strengthened during 1965-1971 [See Appendix A, Table 2]. However, the US raised pressure on Pakistan through annulment of all economic assistance and stood by India as a bulwark against Pakistan and China. Thereafter, power dynamics in South Asia underwent metamorphosis as external players changed their policies.

However, the turning point in Cold War politics came with China's successful hydrogen bomb test in 1967. Pakistan viewed China's nascent power as its bulwark against India. Contrarily, the global players deemed it a threat to the world's security order. As the US was entangled in Vietnam against the Chinese' backed native militants, the USSR capitalized on these circumstances, extending its influence against China through bolstering Indian military arsenal/prowess. Furthermore, it initiated policies to contain China and extended control in Indian Ocean (Fisher, 1971: 307).

Yet, at the end of 1960s, the US took another U-turn in its foreign policy toward China. Both countries were against the Soviet expansionism in Asia. In this regard, Pakistan — by secret diplomacy of Henry Kissinger's visit to China before US President Nixon's visit to Beijing — played a key role in removing bitterness between China and the US the West regarded Pakistan as its 'only channel to China' (Riedel and Singh, 2010: 3). Consequently, Beijing and Washington signed a treaty heralding a new era of collaboration in diverse fields.

c. Era of Entente and Détente — A Strategic Engagement (1971-90)

The era of 1970s began with scores of internal and external development for Pakistan in the milieu of Cold War. First, a sudden shift in power from Ayub to Yahya Khan and Yahya's mishandling the situation of East Pakistan pushed the country into anarchy. The differences between Yahya, A.Z. Bhutto and Mujib-ur-Rahman after 1970 election, gave way to Indian intervention in the East wing, culminating into 1971 India-Pakistan war. Thus, East Pakistan got separated and Bangladesh came into being (Sidky, 1981: 365). Second, major developments such as Pakistan's engagement in US-China alignment; USSR-India Treaty of Friendship and Peace, 1971 and the USSR's explicit support to India in East Pakistan caused to change the states' political demeanour at regional level. Through US-China rapprochement, Pakistan aimed to strengthen its bilateral ties with the US and China while hedging the USSR and India. Concisely, the early 1970s marked the era of détente between China and the US and end of détente between the USSR and the US. India backed by the superpower caused insurgency in the East Pakistan by sparking anti-Pakistani

feelings among Bengalis; India infiltrate armed RAW agents as Bengalis in East Pakistan through the West Bengal (India). However, Pakistani leadership remained blind to these developments and failed to address legitimate concerns of Bengalis; leaving Indian interference unchecked despite China's warning to keep East Pakistan 'tranquil' (Tamimi, 2011: 110-115).

US-Pakistan-China nexus was very significant; however it left Pakistan exasperated when the US, instead of giving military support to Pakistan, sent Seventh Fleet to Bengal port in Indian Ocean to rescue American nationals. Therefore, Pakistan chose to quit SEATO and CENTO in 1972 and 1979 respectively. It was a trial for Pakistan-China friendship and the same sort of support during 1965 war from Chinese was anticipated by Pakistan. Unfortunately, China showed mere "verbal support" before and during the crisis, for instance denouncing India for interference in Pakistan's internal affairs and China's resolution in the UN Security Council against Indian aggression versus Pakistan (Choudhary, 1982: 254-256).

At that critical juncture, Pakistan was interested in a military pact with China but Z.A. Bhutto did not receive any assertive response during his Beijing visit in 1971. For this reason, the question was why did Chinese show such nonresponsive attitude? China's reluctance was due to US-China rapprochement as Washington fully propped Beijing's permanent UN membership. Alongside, Beijing attempted to sustain its 'peace-loving' status in global community by not engaging in any war as it could end up in a nuclear war in the region; for India's massive military build-up was backed up by the USSR. Contrarily, India accused China of covert, military assistance to Pakistan in 1971. But Pakistan-China relations became frosty due to Chinese role in East Pakistan Crisis.

Over the years, Pakistan has come to realize that big powers especially the US would not extend a helping hand toward Pakistan, in trying times. Similarly, China, after vowing support against any "foreign aggression and threat" (Hasan and Qureshi, 1966: 432), also backed off. In contrast, the USSR provided India with diplomatic, economic and particularly military support 'against any external aggression' (Hilali, 2006: 76). As for China's neutral approach, some circles here voiced their doubts that China was involved in disintegration of Pakistan Mao's global revolutionary approach inspired Bengali freedom-fighters (Sidky, 1981: 379). Additionally, Chinese mostly-supported projects were in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) such as ordnance factory in 1970. However, these claims were rejected. Another reason for China's lack of support was the 'deadly

confrontation between Chinese party and army leadership' (Bhola, 1986: 202-203). Likewise, China was engaged in helping the US in Vietnam to upgrade its military capability against the USSR and India. In these conditions, Pakistan had to find yet another choice instead of China for its security needs.

Meanwhile, Pakistan under the premiership of Z.A. Bhutto not earnestly tried to resolve the differences with India in Simla Accord while strengthening Pakistan-China relations. In 1970s, Pakistan-China joint defence ventures were Heavy Mechanical Complex, Heavy Ordnance Foundry and Pakistan's largest Aeronautical complex. During this period, Pakistan's national security was in jeopardy on western as well as on eastern borders, for India became sixth nuclear power by 1974. On the western side, the Soviet Union was backing pro-Soviet regimes in Afghanistan. To neutralize India's nuclear threat, Bhutto showed strong will to launch a regular nuclear strategy (Cheema, 1983: 58). On October 2, 1974, Chinese Foreign Minister ChiaoKuan-hua seconded Pakistan's stance on establishing "a nuclear-free zone in South Asia", in the UN General Assembly (Arif, 1984: 157-158).

In 1970s, changing interests and strategies of superpowers and regional players set up dynamic geopolitical trends in Cold War. Islamabad emphasised on retaining normal relationship with Moscow. However, Moscow's desire was to wean Islamabad away from Beijing and find firm footings in Pakistan to access warm waters by making India the Soviet's satellite. But the then Indian premier Mrs. Indira Gandhi started to project India's supremacy as a regional power. China focused on normalising relations with India as it feared India being used as a bulwark by the Soviet for Chinese encirclement. Superpowers' muted reaction to India's explosions raised security threats for Pakistan and China whereas the Soviets' expansionism towards southern Asia alarmed the US. Pakistan-China inimitable relationship even continued in regime change within each country. The US viewed a potential ally in India to maintain balance of power and contain China in South Asia.

Even in the late 1970s, Pakistan-China relations invigorated diplomatically, economically and militarily. China granted military assistance to Pakistan worth 'US\$ 630 million'; Pakistan 'ranked second in China's military aid recipients' since 1958. Pakistan-China also collaborated in the construction of Karakoram Highway by 1978 (Dixit, 1987: 1072-1074). But, the West and India denounced Chinese cooperation with Pakistan in Pakistan's nuclear program.

During Cold War, Afghan crisis played a critical role in alliance policy within South Asia. From 1979 to 1989, it was an acme of US-China-Soviet triangular strategic détente and entente, where Pakistan's role was instrumental in Afghan crisis. The USSR's grand strategy aimed at encircling China as well as confronting the US by extending influence in Third World. China was facing three-dimensional threats: the Soviet troops' deployment on northern border and in Mongolia, the Soviet's prop to Vietnam forces in China-Vietnam War 1978 and the Soviet forces' expansion toward Afghanistan in 1979. It was widely stated at that time that Pakistan and Iran could have been under the direct Soviet's threat. China was greatly vexed concerning its "main ally" (Pakistan) and had the apprehension that Baluchistan could be used by Soviets drive to access warm waters (Hilali, 2001: 328-329).

Therefore, in Pakistan-China-US nexus, China used Pakistan card for alignment with the US and the US used Pakistan through China against the USSR during Afghanistan catastrophe. Thus, Pakistan was on the top of US agenda. Nevertheless, after US refusal of weapons supply to Pakistan turned to China, which vowed support against Soviet expansionism. Afterwards, over Chinese plea, the US finally lifted economic and military sanctions on Pakistan, which were imposed for making "Islamic atomic bomb". America promised fiscal and military aid to Pakistan, US' frontline ally in the Afghan war.

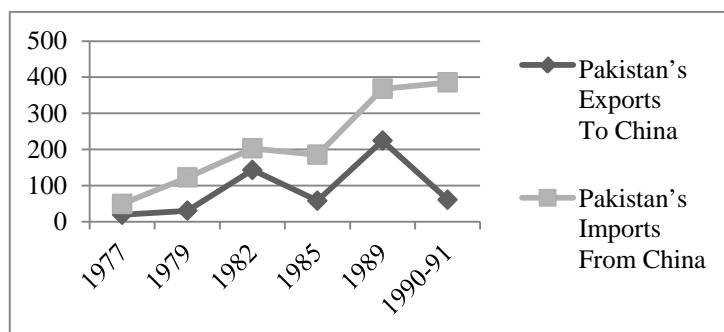
Analysts held that US-China relationship had been technical instead of cordial. This 'give and take' relationship began to counter the Soviet hegemonic designs where Pakistan was a key actor. Hence, China obtained several political gains through US ties such as Most Favourite Nation (MFN) status, successful modern technology procurement, massive bilateral trade escalation and healthy relations with Japan. In response, Washington used Beijing to gain support of Third World and Islamabad against the Soviet's expansionism as the US's strategic interests laid in South Asia and Middle East. Though, India pursued neutrality during Afghan crisis on account of Sino-Indian normalized relations. China is accused of providing financial and military assistance to *mujahideen* through Pakistan (Hilali, 2001: 362-363). In the late 1970s, US-China relations again soured over the issue of arms sale to Taiwan and averting policies due to administrative change in America. China's dynamic leader, Deng Xiaoping was in pursuit of "mending fences with various Asian neighbours" through an independent and pacific policy rather than alignments against hegemonism (Scalapino, 1991: 65). Beijing's two-front threats to security forced it to revive détente with the Soviet Union.

In the mid-1980s, Gorbachev commenced Soviet-China détente and US-Soviet entente, which made the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan easy in the wake of Geneva Accord, 1988; while Benazir Bhutto continued Bhutto's policies especially nuclear policy. In spite of normalizing ties with India and pursuing a pro-America policy, Washington was sceptic about Pakistan-China friendship and was inclined towards New Delhi as a counterweight vis-à-vis China in South Asia (Burke and Ziring, 1990: 451-453). After the demise of the USSR, the US was to be the sole superpower in world politics, which began supporting democratization worldwide. By 1989, the US criticized China for repressing democracy nationally and forced 'Pakistan in the matter of sanctions over China on Human Rights issue (as a consequence of Tiananmen Square)'. On the contrary, Pakistan always backed Beijing's 'one China' policy and national integrity strategy about Tibet, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Yet, Chinese leader Li Peng offered Pakistan to resolve all disputes with India bilaterally for it had become a 'vital country of South Asia'. Hence, friendly relationship among all neighbours would be indispensable for regional stability and development and to contain superpowers' intervention in the region.

Keeping in view the geopolitical spectrum of South Asia, it can be analysed that tensions among triangular interactions between Pakistan, China and India were on its apex since 1987. Sino-Pakistan relations were a little strained owing to China's neutral stand over Kashmir issue. Conflicts disrupted peace in South Asia by developing chances of wars between India and Pakistan at one side and India and China at other. Once again Beijing came forward with a promise of full support to Pakistan.

Briefly, Cold War came to an end with interactions through 'strategic engagements and normalization of bilateral relations' with neighbouring nations. While analysing Cold War situation, it can be deduced Pakistan remained at losing end of the triangular interactions: its dismemberment of 1971 and a decade-long involvement in Afghanistan. Proxy Afghan wars which Pakistan fought boomeranged on it. Pakistan-US relationship was at loggerheads because Washington continued placing sanctions over Pakistan owing to its nuclear program and left Islamabad unaided following war-blighted Afghan situation. However, Beijing assisted Islamabad especially in defence in 1970s and 1980s (see Appendix A, table 2). In the same way, economic ties also improved as China provided aid to Pakistan for economic stability in 1977 and Afghan refugees [See Graph 2].

Graph 2. Pakistan's Bilateral Trade with China in the US Million Dollars (1977-1990)



Source: Kumar, Atul. (2006, September). 'China-Pakistan Economic Relations'. *Special Report Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies*, no. 30, 3-4. Sarwar, Gulam. (1996, August). 'Sino-Pakistan Efforts to Maintain Peace and Promote Development'. *National Development and Security*, V(1), 99. Bhalla, Madhu. (1999, May-December). 'Sino-Pakistan Trade and Economic Relations'. *Peace Initiatives* V(III-VI), 139-140.

C. New Postures in Nations' Foreign Policy in Post-Cold War (1991-2005)

In Post-Cold war era, Pakistan's strategic significance to great powers declined due to changed international scenario and its support for Taliban. Therefore, Pakistan had to review its foreign especially security policies. The bloc-rivalry ended and the US emerged as the sole superpower after its opponent's demise. China started appearing a key power in the unipolar world order in the 1990s. Globally, the concept of security widened from traditional to socio-economic matters. Regionally, nuclearization in South Asia became central to Indian and Pakistani foreign policy. Since the most period of the Cold War, the USSR and the US equally maintained 'their nuclear arsenal parallel to disarmament and non-proliferation attempt sand China became a member of "global non-proliferation regimes" (Sawhny, 1999: 24).

Triangular interactions among India, China and Pakistan got disturbed over Kashmir issue. Momentarily, China pursued a neutral stance over Kashmir issue for settling boundary disputes with India. However Indian unwillingness to resolve China-India territorial conflicts provided firm ground to strengthen Pakistan-China entente. Nevertheless, China emphasized to resolve these disputes according to

UN resolutions. It was conceived by academia circles that Pakistan considered Delhi-Washington-Islamabad ties would only impact Pakistan's interests—negatively. Nonetheless, this situation could be changed in the case of Delhi-Beijing-Islamabad ties. It was assured that China-India relations would never take precedence over Pakistan-China ties.

Furthermore, Pakistan-China economic relations were at full swing in 1990s. China was swiftly emerging as a great economic power next to/after United States. Pakistani exports to China increased significantly up to US\$ 30.1 million while imports to China also increased amounting to US\$ 70.2 million, during 1994-95 (Sarwar, 1996: 99) (See Appendix A). In the early 1990s, the US imposed military and economic sanctions on both Pakistan and China for their alleged collaboration in nuclear and missile technology. But China stood with Pakistan, and did not bow to pressure; which further rejuvenated their friendship. During the 1990s, Pakistan's uncertain political situation and incomplete tenures of political governments adversely impacted its economy. But China supported Pakistan economically when the US had turned its back towards Pakistan by placing economic sanctions on it.

In defence, China and Pakistan extended their cooperation; China's military support immensely boosted its defence capabilities. In intelligence reports of India and Americans, the Chinese were charged to have provided 500 ring magnets to A.Q. Khan Research Laboratory in Kahuta (Pakistan) for developing its indigenous missile and nuclear programme. Beijing was also accused of transferring M-11 missiles capable of carrying nuclear warhead. These allegations were vehemently denied by both Pakistan and China. A pre-planned blame game was propagated against both strategic partners by the US and India. Similarly, the US think tanks also criticised China for supplying the nuclear assistance to Iran and North Korea. They highlighted dire consequences of Chinese nuclear proliferation for the world and Asia (Fisher and Dori, 1999: 70-72). Therefore, Nuclear Co-operation Agreement (NCA), 1998 was such an effort to engage China and improve bilateral US-China relations. Under these circumstances, the US imposed serious political sanctions on Pakistan.

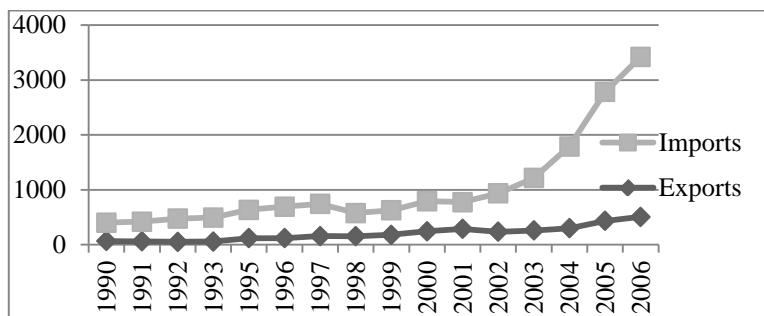
Nonetheless, China continued fortifying Pakistan's defence potential in spite of mounting US pressure. Pakistan's nuclear explosions on 28 and 30 May, 1998 after the series of Indian nuclear tests on 11th and 13th May were seen as strategic imbalance in South Asia. Vajpayee voiced his apprehensions on the 'presence of overt nuclear state (China) at Indian border' and blamed China for enabling

Pakistan to go nuclear. In response China held, “India’s explosion had sabotaged the fragile trust built up with Beijing over the past decade and raised the spectre of a nuclear war in South Asia” (Fazal-ur-Rahman, 1999: 184). The US laid sanctions on both India and Pakistan under the charge of nuclear proliferation. However, China’s muted response to Pakistan’s nuclear explosions was considered an encouraging element for Pakistan and to maintain strategic equilibrium in South Asian geopolitics. Additionally, US-China strongly committed themselves for global agenda of non-proliferation in the wake of India and Pakistan’s nuclear explosions. During the 1999, the limited war between India and Pakistan at Kargil (Kashmir) resonated threats of nuclear war in South Asia. The US pressurized both Pakistan and India to pacify tensions by ending war. China’s stance was absolutely neutral due to easing US sanctions on India and increasing US-India bilateral relations as “strategic partners” in late 1998 (Mansingh, 2005: 2222).

Pakistan highly regards China’s commitment, reliability and favor for Islamabad’s defense requirements as compared to the US for Pakistan often had to experience unreliability from the US unlike China. Furthermore, Beijing has been successful in winning Islamabad’s confidence and assisting it in attaining self-reliance in the defence sector. China helps its closest ally in terms of transferring technology, supplying spare parts, and setting up local overhauling facilities etc.

In terms of economic relations, Pakistan’s economic ties with China were limited in the post-Cold War era and trade balance was overwhelmingly in China’s favour. Conversely, India focused on expanding its economic ties with China as they shifted towards normalized relations. Hence, both countries increased their trade volume. However from 1990 to 2006, Pakistan’s imports from China exceeded its exports to China. In the due course, not for even a single year Pakistan enjoyed a trade surplus with China. Moreover, with the passage of time, trade deficit between China and Pakistan had been increasing. According to the graph 3 and table 1, Pakistani imports from China were 5.03 times of its exports to China and in 2006, the country’s imports were 5.75 times of exports to China (Kayani et al., 2013: 454-460) [See Graph 3 and table 1].

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Graph 3. Pakistan's Bilateral Trade with China in the US Million Dollars (1990-2006)

| Year | Exports | Imports |
|------|---------|----------|
| 1990 | 66.91 | 336.68 |
| 1991 | 61.36 | 358.44 |
| 1992 | 54.12 | 420.78 |
| 1993 | 59.97 | 436.59 |
| 1995 | 121.16 | 515.26 |
| 1996 | 118.88 | 574.27 |
| 1997 | 158.20 | 584.80 |
| 1998 | 154.96 | 422.75 |
| 1999 | 180.72 | 446.76 |
| 2000 | 244.65 | 550.11 |
| 2001 | 289.38 | 487.02 |
| 2002 | 236.37 | 698.54 |
| 2003 | 259.64 | 957.33 |
| 2004 | 300.58 | 1,488.77 |
| 2005 | 435.68 | 2,349.39 |
| 2006 | 506.64 | 2,914.93 |

Table 1. Pakistan's exports to China and Imports from China (1990-2006) in the US million dollars

Source: Kayani, Farrukh N., Ahmed, M., Shah, Tahir A. and Umar N. Kayani. (2013). 'China-Pakistan Economic Relations: Lessons for Pakistan'. *Pakistan Journal of Commerce and Social Sciences*, 7(3), 454- 462.

Pakistan and China began their real bilateral economic engagements after Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) in November 2003. Thereafter, negotiations for framing a compact bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) were conducted and both countries are striving to escalate their economic ties. Both countries are fully determined to have worked for a bright future for their peoples. In this entire scenario, Pakistan should focus on export promotion policy over import substitution strategy and should enlarge its range of exports to China for augmenting national growth as well as for bolstering Pakistan-China economic bond.

Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Good-neighbourly Relations on April 5, 2005 rejuvenated multidimensional Pakistan-China friendship through high-level strategic dialogue (Zaki, 2010). The former Pakistani Premier Shaukat Aziz claimed that Pakistan-China strategic relationship treaty was indeed a reaction of US-India strategic partnership (Tkacik, 2011: 3). This was a breakthrough in Pakistan-China relationship wherein both countries were willing to address challenges in existing bilateral relations through new policies and strategies. This historic multi-layered partnership is considered a hallmark in Pakistan-China relations, vis-à-vis China's grand security strategy for South Asia in particular and Asia in general.

Conclusion

After evaluating the above discussion, it can be deduced that Pakistan-China 'strategic partnership' in the new millennium has not strengthened overnight; it took five decades of arduous struggle by the leadership and people of both the countries. It is clear from the facts that Pakistan-China friendship has been momentous in South Asian politics. India—being the common adversary of both states—brought about nuclear cooperation between Pakistan and China as it became a nuclear state. In the midst of changing dynamics—regional and worldwide—the historic defence co-operation fostered bilateral cooperation in diverse fields especially trade and commerce, in the 21st century. In this vein, multidimensional horizons of cooperation between Pakistan and China are opening. Pakistan's economic ties with China were limited in the post-Cold War era and trade balance was in favour of China whereas, India focused on expanding its economic ties with China as both countries began to normalize their connection. Therefore, Pakistan needs to expand its economic ties with China while focusing on national growth.

After assessing Pakistan-China strategic relationship during 1950-2006, now major findings of this historical study are spelled out:

- Pakistan-China relations epitomize peaceful coexistence, non-interference and mutual cooperation despite different belief systems and cultures. Both countries supported each other in regional and global politics.
- While the US promotes dependency in weaker nations, China opts for ‘self-reliance’ policy; underscoring the difference in their policies. Unlike the US, China has assisted Pakistan unconditionally; while refraining from interference in its internal affairs. However, Pakistan never received a *quid pro quo* from the US and bagged only the losses from this alliance. Whereas Pakistan-China relations have been consistent and China helps Pakistan by optimizing its own resources.
- India in South Asian Triangle of Pakistan-China-India ‘lies at the top while Pakistan-China at the bottom’ as per analysis of this study. Whereas Indian analysts view this position of India as isolated (Tharoor, 2011). However, this study asserts that India has successfully been enjoying its strategic partnerships with Russia as well as US since the Cold War era in consequence of proactive diplomacy. Even in current scenario, India is having “exceptional” status in its strategic partnership with the US as compared to China and Pakistan.
- ‘The weak and defenceless country in this world invites external intrusion and offensive behaviour’ as once stated by Quaid-i-Azam (founder of Pakistan), if Pakistan remains weak internally then it will not have any influence in regional and international politics (with Brig. IqbalShafi, president of Sir Syed Memorial Complex and former Pakistani ambassador to China during 1960s, personal communication, July 20, 2013).

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