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A Deeper Insight to the Growing Nature of Pakistan and China Relations

Abstract

Pakistan and China have enjoyed a long term relationship but the intensity of such relations have increased in recent times particularly after 2008. After that time period the number of agreements have increased multifold. In addition to that the extent of the relationship has also increased in terms of political, economic, military and technological relations between China and Pakistan. The current study is an attempt to find out the latest trends and patterns in these relationships. For that purpose a qualitative investigation based on secondary data was conducted and data was analyzed through discourse analysis. The findings of the study has showed that a shift is quite observable in terms of the relationship. Prior to that time period most of the relationships revolved around political and economic areas but after 2008 the ties increased in military, nuclear and technological way as well. Hence, the growing nature of the relationship is quite evident and observable.

Key Words: Pakistan, China, Diplomatic relations, bilateral ties, South Asia, India, US, CPEC

Background

Bilateral relations have been an important aspect of theory and practice when it comes to the international relations and peace studies. The world has shifted from bipolar to unipolar and current trends show that it has shifted to multipolar where different regions have gained much importance. In the backdrop of multipolar world the importance of bilateral ties between different countries has increased and experts from different disciplines analyze the impact of bilateral relations on the region and global politics. The major examples of such bilateral relations and its impact on global as well as regional politics is the relationship between USA and Russia, USA and UK, USA and Japan and USA/ China relations. As these relations not only shape the politics and significance of the region but also the world.

Objectives

The objective of the following study is to investigate the nature and extent of Pakistan and china relations in terms of political, diplomatic and military domains. Each section of the relations was dealt with the historical trend as well as the current situation.

Significance of the Study

The current study is very much in line with the current trends in the social science research and mostly used the existing patterns of the conducting social research. Pakistan and china have very deepen relationships but at the same time the nature of the relationships is often distorted and there are some low points in such relations. In the current era the importance of bilateral relations have widened to a greater extent and current study rightly looks into this domain in the current study. In addition to that nature of bi-lateral relations have changed in the modern time period and is not confined to political and diplomatic relations rather it also includes military and cultural ties. Hence, the current study looks into this domain and proved to be beneficial for the academia and research community as in includes multiple dimensions of the relationship between Pakistan and China.

Methods and Materials

The current study used qualitative research technique as the primary way of investigating research. As the objective of the study is to find out the nature and extent of relationship between Pakistan and china relations hence, qualitative research technique is the most suited.

In addition to the qualitative research technique the current study is based on descriptive research design. The idea behind using descriptive research design is to describe the nature of the relationship between the Pakistan

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and China. The study is not directed towards finding out any predictive relationship between the variables hence descriptive research design is most appropriate.

Finally and most importantly the used discourse analysis to identify varying themes of the study to determine the nature of the relationship between Pakistan and china. The use of discourse analysis for the current study is aligned with the use of qualitative research technique for the current study.

The study is mainly based on secondary data which provided the basis for the current study and data collection. The study primarily used research articles to determine the relationship and meet the objectives of the study. In addition to that concerned books and government reports were taken into consideration for the analysis of the data.

Pak-China Diplomatic Ties: A Historical Perspective

At the time of independence, both Pakistan and china needed true and loyal friends so that they may approve themselves in the international relation system. Pakistan came into being after a long tussle with British and the Hindu community of India (Siddique, 2014). Both the Hindu community and the British were not in the favor the separate homeland for the Muslims in Subcontinent. In the same scenario, China also had troubled relationship with Hong Kong and Taiwan. This was the situation that both Pakistan and China emerged on the global during the mid of 20th century. Again this was the major motive behind the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China (Zhongping, & Huang, 2014).

On the other hand, both of the countries share a geographical boundaries and this is the natural phenomenon that the border sharing countries wish to develop strong ties with each other. Although, both Pakistan and China established relations since very start of their independence but the major turn came between this relationships after the Sino-Indian war of 1962 (Siddique, 2014).

During the early years of independence, China was not as big global power as she is today. Hence, Pakistan needed a powerful ally against the aggression of India so she developed ties with US at that time (Jetly 2012). It is also reality that US supported Pakistan militarily and economically during the early decades of Pakistan. But this is another story that Pakistan had to pay more than she received from US. As the time passed, the cleaver mentality of US and India was disclosed and this again pushed both Pakistan and China to come closer each other (Rakisits, 2012).

Early Years

The historical ties between Pakistan and china are based on the universally recognized measures i.e. common interests, security and defense cooperation. When two countries come closer to each other, their closeness is based on some of such indicators. Pakistan needed economic and defense support from China and in return China also wished to safe her southern border which is aligned with her enemy India. Both countries continued to develop their bilateral ties on such motives (Rakisits, 2012).

Although there was difference in ideologies of both countries as China has her own socialist ideology while on the other hand, the Jinnah's policy was inclined towards the west yet both strived for strong ties. This relationship started from the era of Liaqat Ali Khan and being continued to date. Now the friendship of Pakistan and China is considered higher the Himalayas and deeper that oceans. Despite the differing ideologies, Pakistan and China have smooth political, economic and military relationships (Dawn, 2010).

The uniqueness of diplomatic Sino-Pakistan relations is the strong beliefs in each other. This can viewed in their relations with other countries. Pakistan established relations with United States along with China but she never minded about that. The foreign policy of Pakistan remained inclined towards US till the war of 1965 yet Sino-Pak ties continued to grow. China was well aware about Pakistan's dependence on US in the fields of politics, military and economy. Pakistan became the part of military alliances of US i.e. SEATO and CENTO yet both Pakistan and china strengthened their bilateral relationships. This clearly discloses that the bilateral ties of Pakistan and China are based on true friendship and both of them never involved in each other's internal matters (Khan, 2017).

Indian Factor

After a decade of setting relations, their integrity started to grow in sixties. There happened two major incidents in the region which brought Pakistan and china closer to each other. One was the Sino-Indian war 1962 which flamed the conflicts between china and India. And the other was Indo-Pakistan war of 1965. The Indian factor was same with both of them which again helped them to strengthen their closer ties (Paul, 2003). At that time framework, India became a mutual enemy of Pakistan and China which forced them to be closer. On the other side, there was US factor which also helped them to be loyal to each other. US helped India against China and

remained neutral despite a clear and close ally of Pakistan. This was a crucial time for Pakistan to keenly readdress her foreign policy to think for another option.

Indian factor has more effects of Pak-China relations because it is based on the regional matters. All of them share territorial borders with one another. India has border disputes not only with China but also with Pakistan as well. China claims Indian controlled Arunachal Pradesh and by the same token India also claims some Chinese administered areas. Similarly, India has border and land disputes with Pakistan where they share almost 1600 km long borders. This is another factor Pakistan and China developed strong bilateral relations.

Wars with India

At the time of Indo-Pakistan war 1965, Pakistan had close relations with US while India had the same position with USSR. But at the time of war, suddenly US stopped the supply of arms to Pakistan while India was benefited through USSR. At this occasion, China came to help Pakistan which also helped to flourish Pak-China political belongingness. China supported Pakistan not only militarily but also diplomatically (Paul, 2003).

China-US Ties and Role of Pakistan

The actual shift in the foreign policy of Pakistan and China came during the seventies. Pakistan and China became so closer that Pakistan played a key role in development of political ties between China and US. The flight of Henry Kissinger to Beijing flew from Islamabad, Pakistan. This shows that how reliable friend Pakistan was of China. This era provided more opportunities for Pakistan not only in the perspective of US but China also. This again helped Pakistan to establish such close relations with China that in future Pakistan got nuclear assistance from China (Paul, 2003).

Nuclear Development and Soviet's Invasion Era

The year of 1971 is like a black spot in the identity of Pakistan because in this year Pakistan lost her eastern wing due to conspiracy of India. This was awful period for Pakistan and again China helped Pakistan at every forum. Although this was a neutral period of China with India and Pakistan yet the sympathies were with Pakistan. But this cannot be said that the relationship between Pakistan and China withered away. It was just an occasion which passed (Chaudhuri, 2017).

After the nuclear tests of India in 1974, the prime objective of Pakistan was to get nuclear power to balance of power in the regions of South Asia. Pakistan and India were the enemies of each other hence it was the need of Pakistan to establish nuclear power to counter the Indian aggression. In such scenario, the country which came forward to help Pakistan was not other than China. US was also aware of this Chinese assistance to Pakistan but she could not halt this nuclear program due to Soviet invasion in Afghanistan. On the other side, US wished to maintain her control in the South Asian region so US had to bear Pakistani nuclear mission in the eighties.

During the era of late seventies and eighties, US again came closer to Pakistan in the response of Soviet's invasion in Afghanistan. China more or less was neutral in this issue but Pakistan was aligned with US in this matter. US opened the mouths of aids and debts for Pakistan in the return of assistance against the Soviet's in Afghanistan. China did not involve in the internal matters of Pakistan that she is establishing relations with US. During this period, Pakistan got a plenty of military and economic assistance from US which helped in Pakistani military and economic fields (Christine, 2002).

Saudi Arabia was also a strong ally of US during Soviet's invasion in Afghanistan. She also helped Pakistan in the debacle of Soviet Union in Afghanistan. The doctrine of Jihad was aided by Saudi Arabia and US to dismantle the Soviet troops in Afghanistan. China remained a close observer of these happenings but not involved in the Pakistan's policy in Afghanistan (Steele & Kuo, 2007).

After 1965, another major turn came in the bilateral ties of Pakistan and China after the Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan. The Soviet forces were smashed by the guerilla fighters in Afghanistan and ultimately the cold war ended in 1991. The year of 1991 changed the international scenario because the world was shrunk to uni-polar from bi-polar system. After becoming superpower, US forgot the help of Pakistan in the Afghan war and put sanctions on Pakistan as she was pursuing nuclear plan (Sarita, 2013). The bitter economic sanctions were imposed on Pakistan and installments of military and economic aids were postponed. This time again, China came to help Pakistan during the 1990s contrary to the Pressler Amendment. This was the golden era of Pakistan and China bilateral relations and after that period both of them never stepped back. Their mutual relations encompassed more fields other than military and economy only (Sarita, 2013).

During the post cold war era, Pakistan and China aligned themselves in advance level strategies. Earlier to this period, the bilateral connection was at initial level but later China sold 34 short range ballistic M-11 missiles to Pakistan. China like other global community condemned the nuclear tests of Pakistan but continued to help Pakistan in establishing Khushab reactor facility at Islamabad (Lisa, 2009).

Pakistan and China engaged themselves in strong due to multiple factor across the different time periods. But during the last decade of 20th century, there were three prime factors responsible for close political and diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China. The first factor was the Indo-Pakistan confrontation on the line of control due to Kashmir issue. China occasionally supported the Pakistani stance over Kashmir Issue. The second factor was the Kargil war between India and Pakistan. Once again this war was related to the issue of Kashmir. The third reason of Pakistan and China close relationship is related to the Kashmir issue after the attacks on Indian Parliament. This whole situation explains that China's help to Pakistan is the Kashmir issue is at primary level (Zemin, 2001).

Era of 21st Century

With the starting of 21st century, the bilateral relationships between Pakistan and China started to strengthen day by day. Now the world quotes the examples of this bilateral closeness across the globe. The mutual integration has involved more and more fields but the special concern is being given to the defense, strategic and economic fields. Pervaiz Musharraf the president of Pakistan cooperated with China as close ally side by side US. He paid several visits to China in order to improve the cohesion between both of the countries. The year of 2001 was the 50th anniversary of Pakistan-China diplomatic relationships. Both of the countries celebrated this 50th anniversary with zeal and zest. The officials from both sides visited each other with greetings (Siddique, 2014).

During the first decade of 21st century, more targets were set by Pakistan and China. This era is considered as the most prominent due to initiating new economic and military fields. Both Pakistan and China started the joint military exercises in order to share the military expertise to each other. On the other hand, technology and intelligence were also shared. The prime objective of these military exercises was to culminate the wave of terrorism in Pakistan. As this is the notion that China always helped Pakistan in every odd circumstance, likewise during the bitter wave of terrorism in Pakistan again she came to help Pakistan through every possible means. The joint military exercises of Pakistan and China were known as "Friendship 2004" (Jetly, 2012).

After the important years of 2004, the Chinese President came in Pakistan in 2006 where new milestones and targets were set. After the joint military exercises, the next target was set in the economic field. Pakistan and china signed a joint China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement in 2006. The actual enforcement of this agreement came into existence in 2007 which flourished the bilateral trade between Pakistan and China (Rakisits, 2012).

Again in 2007, the defense agreement was made between both nations. With the passage of time, the military ties are grown between them. Pakistan established JF-17 Thunder with the assistance of China. JF-17 Thunder brought a military revolution in Pakistan as this jet became one of the superior fighter jets in Pakistan. This is also the notion of Pakistan-China friendship (Jetly, 2012). In the later years, the charge of Pakistani Gwadar Port was handed over to China despite the opposition of India and US. This was the contemporary innovative bilateral era between them. After handing over charge of Gwadar, China initiated China-Pakistan Economic Corridor which highlighted their bilateral diplomatic and economic friendship across the globe. Currently, CPEC is in its middle range projects which are going to complete by 2030 (Siddiqui, 2017).

Military Ties between Pakistan and China

In the modern world which is full of conflict and violence bilateral relations have taken another dimension. This new dimension of bilateral relations is in the form of strategic and military relations. The modern warfare and simple conflict is often directed towards ideology which puts pressure on the other state to use weapon and other tools. Hence, military relations have become core in the modern bilateral, regional and international relations.

Keeping in mind the overall geographical importance of south Asia and geostrategic importance of Pakistan. The military ties of Pakistan with other countries is shaping in the right direction and there is an increasing trend in it. But most importantly the military relations with China are most important and worth mentioning. This is also one of the main objectives of the study with a time frame of 2008 till year. After the Pakistan and India war in 1965 and separation of Bangladesh in 1971 Pakistan has focused to a greater extent on the military relations with the neighboring countries mainly China. In this regard Pakistan's ties with China in terms of military relations is very high and prominent (Chaudhri, 1986).

It has been observed that after the year 2008 the nature of the relationship between Pakistan and China has witnessed a paradigm shift from political to military and strategic domains. It is quite evident from the existing statistics that Pakistan imports around 70% of its arms from China and it reached its highest level in 2016 when it was around 83% of entire volume (Pieter, 2017). The nature of military relations includes transfer of military technology, equipment's and sharing of techniques and knowledge. The collaboration between both countries is based on three major areas i.e. army, navy and air force.

- One of the biggest example of this sharing is the joint venture of JF-17 thunder aircraft which has become a very vital sign of military relations between the two countries. This collaboration is further extending in the design of latest and modernized avionics capability of the aircraft.
- In terms of navy the nature of the relationship is also on rise and there are multiple agreements underway between both the countries. Pakistan Navy (PN) is collaborating with People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) in many areas. In 2013 Pakistan Navy has received three Azmat Class fast attack craft and in 2015 an agreement was established for 7 submarine from China. Out of these seven, four were built in China and three in Karachi establishing a strong military tie. On the same token there is an agreement of purchasing four T054A frigates having the capacity to demolish the land and air targets from sea areas (Baqir, 2015).
- The military ties in terms of army establishment is also of prime importance that makes the huge share of military ties. Pakistan army obtained low range LY-80 air defense system from China to establish strong land based army. Al-Khali and VT-4 tanks are also very important in this regard. Not only traditional but modern drone have also been provided by the China on shared technology. Pakistan have purchased 48 Wing Loong-II. Drones from China to increase military ties (Samuel, 2018).
- In addition to that Pakistan and China are continually engaged in military exercise from time to time to share the expertise and technique of modern warfare and conventional methods of warfare (Samuel, 2018).

Nuclear, Science and Technology

The modern nature of the relationship between the countries include modern technologies which include science and nuclear. Same is the case with Pakistan and China relations where there is a growing interest of nuclear as well as technological linkages between the countries.

Nuclear politics has become an important subject matter in political and international relations. Nations are striving towards building healthy nuclear relations with other countries. This global trend is also visible in Pakistan and China relations. This trend started after 2013 when China committed of building two nuclear power plants of around 1100 megawatts of capacity. China is financing a whopping amount of 6.5Billion dollars in nuclear trade between both the countries. Similarly, China is the major stakeholder in Chasham which is supposed to provide 1100 megawatts of energy. China has included Pakistan in 48 major nuclear supplier countries (Shadia&Francois, 2016).

In addition to the nuclear ties China is helping to Pakistan in terms of education, science and technology. In 2012 SUPARCO and CNSA have agreed for a 2012-20 project to enhance the technological assistance in space technology. Under this agreement Pakistan was able to use China's indigenous satellite navigation system *Beidou* (Sabena, 2017). Similarly, in 2016 an agreement was also signed to launch remote sensing satellite of Pakistan. Similarly, in March, 2018, SUPARCO concluded an agreement with China Great Wall Industry Corporation (CGWIC) to jointly manufacture and launch a communication satellite (Paksat-MM1) (Yufan&Yan, 2017).

Conclusion

The whole above discussion shows that the diplomatic relations between Pakistan and china improved with the passage of time. Both of the countries give dignity and respect to each other's stance. Both of them do not involve in the internal matters of each other. Pakistan and china have built such marvelous ties which are not acceptable to India and US yet they are improving and strengthening their diplomatic relations by leaps and bounds. In addition to that the study concludes that a paradigm shift has been observed in terms of military relations at the top and nuclear and science and technology as well.

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