

Pakistan Factor in India-China Relations (1972-1991)

Paper Submission: 10/09/2021, Date of Acceptance: 23/09/2021, Date of Publication: 24/09/2021

Pakistan had been a consistent friend of China for over several years despite the change of governments. It is because China had developed geo-strategic interests in Pakistan which acted as a link between China and West Asia. It is also because there was a time in the sixties when Pakistan had granted reconnaissance facilities to the American war planes to spy over the Soviet territories from its base near Peshawar. Likewise, during the Sino-Soviet rift Pakistan's sympathies lay with China. Thus Pakistan had come to be regarded as an all-weather friend of China.

Key Words: Proxy, Entente Cordiale, Nixon's, Simla Agreement, MIGs, Nuclear Umbrella, Peking, Kanupp, Chashma, International Atomic Energy Association, Pak-occupied Kashmir, Arabian Sea, Kashmir Dispute, Right of Self-determination.

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Introduction

In the mid-1970s, Pakistan played a significant role in working with secret communications between the US and China that brought about Henry Kissinger's secret visit to China followed by President Richard Nixon's noteworthy visit. China-US standardisation of relations was seen in Indian strategic thinking as the emergence of a US-Pakistan-China strategic triangle, which provoked India to sign a treaty of peace, friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union. The Indian nuclear explosion of 1974 introduced a new dimension to the strategic balance in the region and gave new stimulus to growing Pakistan-China defence cooperation. Somewhere in the range of 1971 and 1978, China helped Pakistan in building two defence related mega projects, first, the F-6 Aircraft Rebuild Factory and second, the Heavy Rebuild Factory for T-59 tanks. The Chinese meant to make Pakistan self-reliant in the production of an ordinary weapons system, without associating any political strings to its assistance, developed profound respect and altruism for China in Pakistan. Although the 1980s, Pakistan-China relations continued to frame into a far reaching relationship. While China improved its relations with India towards the end of the 1980s, Pakistan didn't feel that China's improving relations with India were at the expense of China's relations with Pakistan. In spite of the fact that there was an evident change in the Chinese position on Kashmir, Pakistan policy makers acknowledge that China's improved relations with India would go probably as a preventive factor on Indian belligerence towards Pakistan. Pakistan consistently supported China on all issues important to Chinese national interests for example, sovereignty over Hong Kong, Taiwan and Tibet and issues relating to human rights and democracy. Throughout the 1990s, Pakistan stayed under US sanctions and China was the primary source of Pakistan's military hardware procurements. During this period Pakistan-China defence-related cooperation also substantially increased. China's help for Pakistan's nuclear and missile programs turned into a steady aggravation in China-US and China-India relations, particularly the issue of supply of M-11 missiles and 500 ring magnets to an "unsafeguarded" nuclear facility. China, on its part, notwithstanding huge US strain to cut off high-technology links with Pakistan, stayed enduring in its obligation to strengthen Pakistan's defence capability.

Aim of the Study

Throughout the text the main theme which finds detailed discussion is related to the Pakistani factor determining its relations towards India.

Main Text of the Study**China's Interest in Pakistan**

China's interest in Pakistan has been for three reasons. China has developed geo-strategic interests in Pakistan because as long as China's navy was weak and it will remain so for many years to come, China's outlet to West Asia will remain effective only through land which only Pakistan could provide. And since Pakistan believed that it could not survive without maintaining its hostility towards India and also without involving foreign powers in the affairs of the sub-continent, a basic conflict of interest between India and China would remain. If China could influence Pakistan leaders to come to terms with India, one of the basic causes of the stalemate in Sino Indian relations would have disappeared.¹

Second, China's long-term ambition has been to become a dominant power in Asia; this it could do only when it pinned down India to the status of a sub-regional power in south Asia. The only way this objective could be achieved was the creation of Pakistan as a countervailing military power against India. If China's commitment to Pakistan had not been large enough, it is because its objective was being achieved by American supplies of arms to Pakistan, which were qualitatively more sophisticated and quantitatively more liberal.²

Third, development was the emerging three-sided overall influence in Asia. China might want India to acknowledge the remainder of Asia as being in the Chinese range of authority. Pakistan was a protected state for China as it couldn't at any point dream to guarantee a place of prevalence versus India. It could stay content with assuming the part of a satellite state to China all things considered with the assistance of the last that it had been bothering India. It is through Pakistan that China, in the event that it decided, would fight a "proxy" war against India.

It ought to be reviewed that till 1962 Pakistan kept on assaulting China on the Tibetan issue in the UN. In a year's time it switched its policy, the Sino-Indian conflict being the major factor. By 1963 the Sino-Pakistan understanding was agreeable. Then, at that point, the 1965 India-Pakistan war in which the Chinese proved unable, however they needed to, make inconvenience for India yet their unfriendly mentality uplifted strain between the two nations. The situation kept on weakening for one explanation or the other till people of the then East Pakistan rose up against their western counterpart.

From the earliest starting point of the Bangladesh crisis, China had a hand to play in the developments in East Pakistan which resulted in the flare-up of war between India and Pakistan. It was anything but a simple mishap that Pakistan's ten-day notice as a potential start of war with India concurred with the stay in Pakistan of a Chinese delegation driven by a senior minister, Li ShuChing. The notification period expired on 3 December and around the same time the Pakistan air force made a bombarding strike on Indian air ports.

All through the freedom struggle, China kept on supporting the western Pakistan abuse basically in light of the fact that India had distinguished its inclinations with peoples of Bangladesh. By this nonsensical advance, the Chinese not just offended the 100 million people of East Pakistan who were generally Muslims yet in addition made shame the Marxist groups all around the world who, by their actual way of thinking, couldn't stand to go against the freedom struggle dispatched by the took advantage of people.

The Chinese delegate in the UN, Fu Hao in his assertion repeated the line taken by his government up and down, that the difficulty in Bangladesh was totally an internal matter of Pakistan. Yet, it was by all accounts not all that much on his part to draw an equal between the movements for independence in Tibet with that in Bangladesh and between the refugees who escaped from Tibet when Peking fixed its hold over the space and the large numbers who had looked for asylum in India from the tactical fear in Bangladesh. What he intended to say was that in both the nations Tibet and Bangladesh, India affected the dissenter to rise up and split away from their metropolitan countries?

After the liberation war the Chinese placed the onus of continued India-Pakistan tension on India and that they expected the latter to normalise its relations with Islamabad as a precedent to any improvement in its ties with China. China never accepted the Indian view of its difficulties with Pakistan and why it had not allowed any third party to interfere in matters relating to its ties with its neighbours.³ Likewise, China never reconciled itself to Bangladesh's friendship with India which, in its view, was solely motivated by India's desire to weaken

Pakistan. This was totally against the interest of China. Later, after the assassination of MujiburRahman, China tried to take full advantage of a new regime's adverse attitude towards India in order not only to prevent a rapprochement between the two countries but also to provoke trouble across the border in the north-eastern region of India.⁴

Pakistan's defeat in the war of 1971 which gave a severe jolt to the prestige of the army compelled the Junta to transfer power to politicians, the most eligible of them then being Z. A. Bhutto, president of the Pakistan People's Party. Bhutto was sworn-in on 20 December 1971. As he had always been on good terms with the Chinese, Chou En-lai took the first opportunity to congratulate him on his accession to power and hoped for better relations between the two countries. Bhutto, for his turn, preferred to pay his compliments in person through a visit which was arranged at his own initiative in February 1972. Bhutto briefed Chou about how his country was left weakened both militarily as well as politically and how to retrieve Pakistan's lost prestige in the sub-continent. China's ready-made suggestion to him was to adopt a tough line against India. The Chinese media warned about the endless struggle in South Asia in plying that China would continue to foment trouble on Sino-Indian frontier.⁵

Bhutto was reported to have also proposed a defence pact between the two countries but Chou was not amenable to such an idea on the plea that China's defence pact with Russia did not work well and the one with Pakistan would meet the same fate. In his view, what really mattered was common interest and not defence pact. Though China did not agree to sign the pact with Pakistan it offered in lieu thereof to supply liberally arms and equipment needed by Pakistan. This was in return for the role played by Pakistan "as an advance party" for Nixon's trip to China which itself was arranged through Pakistan.⁶

Thereafter followed a series of visits by the dignitaries of one country to the other and vice versa, the chief being that of A. H. Pirzada, Bhutto's special envoy, followed by Aziz Ahmad secretary general, foreign affairs ministry. China's vice foreign affairs minister ChiaoKunan-hu was in Pakistan on a return visit in the month of August. Bhutto tried to give a personal touch to Pakistan's relations with China by sending his children on a merry-making visit of a fortnight in July 1972.⁷ His wife visited China in February 1973. Chinese foreign affairs minister Chi PengFei was in Pakistan in June 1973 with a message from Mao and Chou for Bhutto. Pakistan remained so dependent on China that for any initiative it sought to take relating to the developments in the sub-continent it had to take China into confidence. The occasions of mutual visits undertaken by the leaders of the two countries were always utilised for carrying on discussions on how and to what extent, the relations should be normalised between India and Pakistan. For instance, Aziz Ahmad, foreign secretary was sent to China before Bhutto signed the Simla Agreement with Mrs. Gandhi on 2 July 1972. A little later Chinese vice-foreign minister ChiaoKuan-hua paid a state visit to Pakistan to take stock of the situation in the sub-continent with regard to normalisations.⁸

After the Simla Agreement, another Pakistani dignitary to visit China was Aziz Ahmad, foreign minister, in August-September 1973. He told his hosts that their pressure had been instrumental in softening India's attitude towards Pakistan. He also sought China's support for barring Bangladesh's admission to the forthcoming session of the UN General Assembly. China agreed to the suggestion of Pakistan and much before it could go to the General Assembly, the Chinese representative used China's first ever veto in the Security Council barring Bangladesh's admission to the UN. In defence of this step he said that the refusal of Bangladesh authorities to implement the UN resolution regarding the release of Pakistan prisoners of war indicated that it was not able or willing to carry out the objectives contained in the UN Charter. Later in November when China agreed to support the case of Bangladesh the Chinese spokesman said that it was conditional upon Bangladesh's willingness to implement the UN resolution and reach a "reasonable settlement of the other issues between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh".⁹

Bhutto's quest for Chinese arms continued. He again went to Beijing in 1974 and 1976 on the same mission and he could succeed in persuading the Chinese leaders to include Pakistan's requirements in China's long term defence production plans. During Zia ul Haq's regime, though Sino-Pak friendship lost some lustre, cooperation in military matters continued. On the eve of Huang

Hua's visit to Pakistan in January 1980, when Zia was asked by some newsmen whether Pakistan would ask for Chinese arms, he said "we do not have to ask Chinese friends for military assistance, they have already been giving us enough of it".¹⁰ During Zia's visit to Peking, he told a television interview on 1 March 1980 that China had helped Pakistan with the supply of Mig 19s, tanks and gun boats. The Chinese had also set up two large complexes, one for reconditioning tanks and the other to renovate MIGs. He also referred to the Karakoram highway which, built, with the blood of Chinese and Pakistani engineers, had great potentiality of developing Pakistani resources. As a result of these negotiations China became a major supplier of arms to Pakistan. Between 1970 and 1992 China supplied Pakistan 800 tanks, 25 naval vessels and about 300 planes and various other items such as air missiles. By this time, the Chinese weapons constituted 75 percent of Pakistan's total armament and 65 percent of air crafts. In terms of money the defence related material supplied by China to Pakistan between 1965 and 1983 amounted to \$2.87 billion.¹¹

Pakistan's Nuclear Programme

Pakistan's desire to develop its nuclear arsenal arose out of the defeat of its forces in the war of 1971. It felt convinced that in order to face India's challenge of conventional arms, the only option at its disposal was to attain nuclear weapon status. This it started doing in 1972 under the guidance from Bhutto, though for reasons of financial constraints and diplomatic pressure, it could not make any headway. India's nuclear experiment at Pokhran in May 1974 infuriated Bhutto so much that he was reported to have pledged that Pakistan would even eat grass but make a bomb.¹²

Tending to his Chinese companions, Bhutto called it a shakedown with respect to India which Pakistan would not stand. He sent Pakistan's foreign secretary to Beijing with sincere requests to Mao and Chou to guarantee Pakistan of a "nuclear umbrella" in the event of an assault by India. For reasons of their own, the Chinese leaders didn't respond right away. They were on a transition to discover how far India was helped by the Soviet Union in its development of nuclear energy for hazardous purposes. To them it was futile to censure India for its activity except if they could find the thought process behind it and how it was aided by some nuclear power, which as indicated by their perusing could be the Soviet Union alone. Be that as it may, it added to the strength of Pakistan's contention to receive nuclear aid from China.

China's vice foreign minister had a brief stopover in Pakistan on his way to New York for the annual session of the UN General Assembly. In his meeting with Bhutto he conveyed the message of assurance of Chou and told him that what he had written to the Chinese leaders was kept in view for necessary action when the occasion arose. Chinese delegation supported the Pakistan proposal in the UN for establishment of a nuclear free zone in South Asia.¹³

At home, Bhutto started sounding out Pakistan scientists on how they could face India's challenge. With a good deal of homework, he proceeded to China carrying with him a number of scientists to strike a deal with Beijing. This he did in May 1976 with clear understanding that China, now onwards would help Pakistan in its efforts to develop nuclear weapons. In June, a high ranking Chinese scientist team visited Pakistan to have preliminary discussions with their Pakistani counterparts on how to proceed with the plans suggested by them. This team again came in March 1977 to select the sites and discuss other matters related to the implementation of the Chinese plans.¹⁴ In the interim, on 29 January 1977 the two countries consented to an agreement on scientific and technological cooperation, including help to Pakistan to develop nuclear energy.

Regardless of China's persevering denial that it didn't support nuclear proliferation, the reality of the situation was that Peking had been a steady provider of an assortment of nuclear products and services to Pakistan going from uranium advancement to research and power reactors. In 1983 China supplied Pakistan the complete design of a .25 kiloton nuclear bomb. China allegedly arrived at an arrangement with Pakistan to supply heavy water to the Kanupp facility yet the deal was postponed for some technical reasons. For the Chashma compressed water reactor under International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA), the entire blueprint was designed and completed with the Chinese help.

In 1986 China finished up a far reaching nuclear agreement with Pakistan and around the same year they began helping Islamabad with the improved weapon grade uranium. China likewise moved a unique kind of gas to Pakistan which was sufficient for ten nuclear weapons. In 1989 China was accounted for to have involved a few Pakistani scientists in an nuclear test at the Lopnu test site. China had additionally provided Pakistan, heavy water which was required both for defending the Kanupp facility just as for working a few reactors like the Khushab facility to be utilized for delivering plutonium for nuclear weapons.

The Chinese collaboration with Pakistan in acquiring nuclear capability had gone so far that, according to American sources, Pakistan had in June 1985 carried out a non-nuclear explosion without various subsystems. Pakistan had followed the American example of non-nuclear tests in which various component subsystems of the Hiroshima type of bomb had been satisfactorily tested to give the confidence that as a total system the bomb would be effective. In September 1985, the American columnist Jack Anderson confirmed on the basis of CIA reports that the technology exchange with China had brought Pakistan to the point where it could have a small nuclear arsenal in less than two years.¹⁵The assertion was additionally upheld by the report of the Howard Schaffar, deputy secretary of state that there existed, "nuclear relationship between China and Pakistan".

There was even a report which was subsequently denied by the Chinese authority representative, that Pakistan planned to do its first nuclear test in the Chinese nuclear range in northern Sinkiang. India stayed stressed. In October 1985, Rajiv Gandhi, while on a visit to New York to address the UN General Assembly session made a move to see the American president Reagan and advise him to consider the China-Pakistan joint effort in nuclear matters. Reagan appeared to have known about this turn of events; however as he was more keen on looking for Pakistan collaboration with American policies in the region, he didn't feel inclined to share India's anxiety.

Chinese Argument

In supplying war material to Pakistan on a liberal scale, China had some arguments to offer. It held that it had to meet the requirements of Pakistan to maintain its credibility as an ally. Ever since 1962, India had maintained the attitude of hostility towards it so much so that at times when it was engaged in a tussle with the USA India always sided with the latter much at the cost of China whereas Pakistan utilised its friendship with the USA in arranging contacts between Beijing and Washington. Again in matters related to Sino-Soviet relations, India preferred to remain with the Soviet Union even though Beijing was fair and reasonable in its dialogues with Moscow. Pakistan, on the other hand, maintained a position of discreet neutrality in all Sino-Soviet disputes.¹⁶

As regards the cooperation in the nuclear sphere, Peking realised that when Pakistan was getting nuclear apparatus from other countries there was no point in not offering what China could spare. The difference lay only in the extent to which China could go. The other nuclear powers observed some reservations in their dealings and China tried to bridge the gap which they left unattended. In return, China found in Pakistan an ally who was prepared to go a long way in helping it with all diplomatic support on issues on which it often found itself isolated. Moreover, China was the only nuclear power which was not barred by and of the conditions that governed nuclear exports. Also China was not a member of the London-based nuclear suppliers group, nor was it a party to the non-proliferation treaty.¹⁷

During the Afghan crisis, both China and Pakistan believed that it was a move on the part of Moscow to bring the entire Persian Gulf area under the sphere of its influence. A little after the entry of the Soviet troops in Afghanistan the Chinese foreign minister Huang Huavisited Islamabad to chalk out a common strategy to face the challenge. China felt "encircled" by a hostile communist power. To forestall any further move on the part of the Soviet Union, China agreed to give arms aid to the rebels who were fighting Soviet forces in the north eastern province of Afghanistan. China's objective was to see that Afghanistan became a burden on the Soviet Union; in other words, to make it what Vietnam had been to the USA.¹⁸

Pakistan was likewise benefited by China taking on an aggressive demeanour towards the Soviet Union in that the quantum and nature of war weapons provided by Beijing to Islamabad were also increased. Notwithstanding the material previously given, the Chinese had begun building an aircraft manufacturing plant alongside 12 new air bases in Pakistan which could be utilized against India. China likewise gave Pakistan help to build up an aeronautical complex at Kamore around 75 km from Islamabad where among others; a factory to make modern planes like T-76 was located. Pakistan had lost in the war with India in 1965 a significant load of Patton tanks provided by the USA; China needed to supplant them by the native products known as T54 and T59 tanks for that Chinese to set up a factory at Amalpur. Presently the Chinese target was not to let Pakistan stay subordinate even on provisions from Beijing however to have its own manufacturing plants to produce different sorts of war articles. Plus, the trading of perspectives through regular visits by army personnel faculty turned into a question of normal events. Somewhere in the range of 1972 and 1980 twenty-five military delegations were traded between Pakistan and China, 17 from Pakistan to China and eight from China.

Karakoram Road

The highway which links China with Pakistan through the Pak-occupied Kashmir gives China land access to the Arabian Sea in the event of a Soviet blockade of its coastlines. Quite interestingly, the first foreigner who was allowed to travel parts of the Pakistan length of the highway was an American Seymour Topping of New York and his wife. Li Xiannian, a deputy prime minister of China said while on a visit to the US, that the Karakoram highway would "allow us to give military aid to Pakistan".¹⁹ China's conflict was that it was an interval game plan in that after the settlement of the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan the sovereign authority concerned will return negotiations with China on the boundary as indicated in the agreement. The agreement likewise gave that on the occasion if the sovereign authority stayed with Pakistan, the agreement of the present understanding would be kept up with and a formal boundary treaty signed.

To India it mattered because around 2100 sq. miles of Indian Territory in Kashmir was ceded to China. When the road was completed in 1978 India drew the attention of the Chinese government to the illegality of road construction. China did not take it seriously as what they had done was in the territory which was in de facto possession of Pakistan. Again when in 1980 India protested against Pakistan decision to open the Khungerate pass to nationals of third countries, china's spokesman merely stated that it was entirely the normal affair between China and Pakistan in which no other country had the right to interfere.²⁰

In 1984, the official media reported about a trade agreement for exchange of goods between the merchants in Pakistan's northern area and China's Sinkiang provinces. When India pointed out the contradiction between the official stand and news media publicity, the official spokesman clarified that the media reference was only in the context of trade and that there was no change in China's stand that the final status of Jammu and Kashmir was yet to be determined through peaceful negotiations between India and Pakistan. Till then the practice that was being followed would continue to remain in force.²¹

On another comparative issue China stayed non-committed India knew why Pakistan had urged China to consent to the border agreement in 1963 and why the latter reacted so promptly, however it was unlawful since it was being done on a disputed territory. The redeeming quality was that the Chinese maps didn't show any part of the Pak-occupied territory as the territory of Pakistan. Indeed, even the agreement observed Chinese stand that the territory was in dispute and its final status would be dictated by the settlement between the two countries.

With the loss of Bangladesh, Chinese attitude towards Kashmir acquired further stringency. With great vehemence it started supporting the right of self-determination to the people of Kashmir. This led to an unpleasant incident when at the banquet hosted in honour of Bhutto in 1972; the Chinese vice-premier reiterated the Chinese support to Pakistan's demand for the freedom of Kashmiri people to exercise their right of self-determination. India's Charge d' Affaires, had to leave the banquet hall in protest. Following this

incident the Chinese media went to the extent of saying that India had “stolen” Kashmir from Pakistan, it also accused the Indian leaders of deceiving the people that the accord reached between the government of India and Sheikh Abdulla was a domestic issue.²²

Indian popular assessment got much upset by this kind of deception broadcast by the Chinese media. Naturally, Indian responses were similarly serious and extended, Rajiv Gandhi, during his visit to China in December 1988, needed to tell the Chinese leaders how unfavourable would be the effect of such purposeful publicity on the Sino-Indian relations. He reminded them that India was resolved to address the issue through bilateral dialogue with Pakistan under Simla Agreement and the entire issue was under steady conference between the leaders of the two countries. Any interference by a third party would just motivate defer and create new problems in the on-going process of negotiations.

Conclusion

As regards Pakistan, China started realising that its interests would be better served, if it adopted a non-partisan policy. China was itself worried about the threat of fundamentalists in Sinkiang province bordering Pakistan. China had to deploy a strong military force there to deal with the militants who challenged the state authorities. Incidentally the fundamentalist's threat was mounted exactly three weeks after the Chinese foreign minister Qian Qichen's visit to India in April 1990 to establish the first ministerial level contacts with the National Front government. Another encouraging factor was that the Chinese media did not give any publicity to statements on Kashmir given by Nusrat Bhutto during her visit to China in May 1990 in her capacity as the president of the ruling Pakistan People's Party.²³

The foreign minister of China told Solanki that the Kashmir issue be settled by India and Pakistan through bilateral negotiations and peacefully within the framework of the Simla Agreement and UN resolution. But on the fourth day of the talks when ambassador Chen Ruisheng addressed the press conference he omitted any reference to the UN implying that China wanted India and Pakistan to settle the problem peacefully through negotiations and in accordance with the Simla Agreement.²⁴

The genesis of the situation in the Kashmir valley and Tibet may be different but there were common points of concern for the two countries. India was sore with Pakistan's occasional attempts to internationalise the Kashmir problem either through third party mediation or by bringing the UN in the picture. That precisely was China's worry in regard to Tibet as it found powerful reactions in the west focussing on the Dalai Lama to prepare the ground for outside interference. India and China had another common source of trouble-the Muslim fundamentalism. Just as Pakistan sought to exploit the religion in Kashmir, to create problems for India, China had a similar experience of the activities of the Muslim fundamentalists in the Sinkiang region, close to the Central Asian republics of the Soviet Union.²⁵

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