



Pak-China Relations: The Eras of Military Regimes of Pakistan

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Abstract

Since it gained its independence from the British Empire, Pakistan has been subject to a succession of military governments, and the state of democracy in the nation has never been stable. On the other hand, China is seen as a growing power in the modern period, and it plays a significant part in the international relations of the current day. Since the beginning of diplomatic ties between the two nations, a tight relationship has existed between them, and the breadth of those links has expanded in many different ways. The focus of the research is on the diplomatic ties that have existed between Pakistan and China ever since the birth of both nations, with particular attention paid to the diplomatic ties that existed throughout Pakistan's many military governments. Within the scope of this research are the administrations of Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan, Zia-ul-Haq, and Parvez Musharraf. The scope of this study includes diplomatic and military relations between China and Pakistan.

Keywords: Pakistan, China, relations, diplomacy, military

Introduction

Given that the Pakistani military has held power for 36 years (from 1947 to 2008), it is not surprising that the country's democratic framework is in disarray. From 1947 until 2008 is covered. Since gaining independence in 1947, the nation has been governed by a series of military dictators, followed by political authoritarianism and brief periods of democracy. Former Prime Ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif oversaw a period of increased electoral politics, but they were unable to construct a fully functional democratic government (Croissant, 2013). After Pakistan's independence, the imperial model of civilian leadership over the army and military indifference to governance disintegrated (Rizvi, 2009). Pakistan



gained its independence from British colonial authority in 1971, and in the decades that followed, the country's military forces grew in prominence and were institutionalised into government. The bureaucracy has been downgraded in favour of the military in a power delegating paradigm and governing process owing to a broad variety of apparent domestic and foreign risks and concerns throughout the course of time. Some civilian control was restored under the presidency of the democratically elected Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1971–1977), although this was really simply another kind of power delegation between civilians (in this case, elected ones) and the military forces of the nation (Rais 1988). The political structure that developed in tandem with the expanding army was hampered by a lack of development as a consequence of inadequate institutionalisation and persistent instability (Nawaz 2008). The power dynamic was skewed in favour of the military forces as a result of this new reality. At the same time, this diminished the voice of the common man in political decision-making. General Zia ul-Haq (1977–1988) seemed to personify the military's absolute hegemony over civilian rule in the years that followed. From 1977 to 1988, he served as president. In 1991, (Burki and Baxter). A prime example of this is the unorthodox path taken from 1988 to 1999 when the country transitioned from military to civilian control. At this time, civilian officials seemed to be fighting for their political life in the face of formidable military forces (Shafqat 1997). During the years when Nawaz Sharif was president of Pakistan (1997–1999), civilian leaders entertained the possibility that they would be able to change the rules of the game. In the end, however, the military staged a coup, and under the leadership of General Pervez Musharraf, they maintained their hold on power from 1999 until 2008. One would think that civilian rule would be on the upswing in Pakistan after the country's historic general elections in 2013, which witnessed the first transfer of power between two elected civilian governments. Civilians in government posts were granted voting rights for the first time in the 2013 elections.

Despite having an elected government led by a civilian president (traditionally, the military used the position of president to exercise formal influence over the government as, a civilian proxy), the military continues to exert significant influence over the political process, and civilians have failed to significantly alter civil-military relations. There has been a peaceful transition to an elected administration headed by a civilian president, but the military continues to have significant influence over political decisions (Croissant 2013).

To counteract the enmity of India and to keep a delicate balance with the United States, the military rulers of Pakistan have traditionally depended on close strategic relationships with China. These alliances have allowed them to maintain a careful balancing act. As important strategic partners, Pakistan and China share a common worry about the increasing instability in the area. Both countries are opposed to the idea of hegemony and favour finding peaceful solutions to their disagreements via diplomatic channels. The importance of Pakistan and China's relationship has risen as a direct result of this development. Pakistan views China as a voice of moderation and moderation in international issues, and it turns to China for guidance. Both countries have come to the conclusion that it is to their best advantage to



work together in order to advance their mutual goals. This unique and special partnership has endured the test of time and will continue to be a positive influence in promoting peace and safety in the area. (Khalid, 2021)

Ayub's Era

In 1951, not long after China gained its independence, diplomatic contacts between Pakistan and China were established. Since then, these connections have flourished and expanded in every way. Pakistan recognised the Chinese People's Republic as the third nation overall and the first Muslim country to do so, and the two countries have been close allies ever since. When Beijing was cut off from the rest of the world in the 1960s and 1970s, Pakistan was the only country it could turn to for help. However, China has consistently offered Pakistan the military, economic, and technological support it needs. These aids have been problematic in general, but especially in regard to nuclear projects and defensive armaments. It's been very clear that China favours Pakistan above any other regional power, a perception that's been bolstered by the United States' preference for India. An increasing insurrection of terrorist wings on the Pak-China border has been the actual concern in Pak-China ties thus far (Haider, 2005).

Beginning in 1951, under Ayub Khan's tenure, the military played an increasingly major role in civilian governance. This trend continued until his death in 1964. Ayub was able to overthrow the puppet government and take control of the Martial Law Administration in 1958. This victory came after years of arduous struggle on his part. Ayub's plan was to build tighter relations with the Soviet Union and the fast-rising Chinese economy almost as soon as he took office as president. He believed that the Soviets had dealt him a bad hand, so he concentrated his attention on strengthening connections with China as it emerged from its period of isolation. The United States of America and Ayub had cordial ties, which made it possible to establish a deterrent against India (Rizvi, 2000). Islamabad was chosen to replace Karachi as the nation's capital because of its location in closer proximity to China's borders. This choice was met with approval in Beijing. Ayub was successful in eliminating the black marketeers and hoarders who posed a danger to his political position thanks to the implementation of martial law. Ayub's seizure of property from the aristocracy and subsequent redistribution of that land to the middle class was patterned after a policy implemented by the Chinese government. The peasants had access to a far smaller amount of land, which was the primary distinction.

In the 1950s, Pakistan showed an early readiness to cooperate with Western nations by signing both the CEATO and SENTO treaties. Because of this, there was a significant danger to the growing communist coalition in South and Central Asia, which was a serious challenge. On the other hand, China's annoyance with Pakistan's newly discovered ties to the West was just as clear to see. The United States of America possessed regional interests that were



valuable to China, and as a result, it allied itself with Taiwan in order to prevent the Soviet Union from expanding its influence (Levi, 1962). Beijing was dissatisfied with Pakistan's participation since it considered Pakistan to be a partner in the construction of China's regional strategic position. The sole mission of Pakistan's diplomatic mission to the Manila Conference was to reassure China that despite the country's signature of CEATO and SENTO, Sino-Pakistani ties would continue to thrive and that Pakistan will not permit the use of its territory in any aggressive offensive against China. This was the only goal of Pakistan's diplomatic mission to the Manila Conference. The Chinese ambassador called Pakistan's foreign ministry over the phone while the Afro-Asian leaders were getting together in Bandung. As a result of this summit, connections between Pakistan and China were reinforced, and it was decided that the two countries may coexist peacefully with one another (Dobell, 1964). China has recognised Pakistan's importance as a regional partner as a direct outcome of these diplomatic efforts, which were focused on the region. The unfavourable opinion of the Chinese leadership over the prominent engagement of Indian diplomats at the summit planted the roots of future territorial confrontations between the two Asian heavyweights.

The most notable conflict took place during the rule of Ayub when he openly supported the actions taking place in Tibet and the Taiwanese mission's embracement in Karachi, which was the major city of Pakistan at the time. On the other hand, this move stunned Chinese authorities, and the speech that Ayub gave was roundly criticised in Chinese media (Kondapalli, 2007). The repeated warning from Pakistan's foreign minister that the country must avoid antagonising China and undermining bilateral relations was received with significant condemnation inside the country. It was urged to Ayub that he bring China to the negotiation table as a way to temper the US, which was providing India with technology that was desperately required. During this time, China and India were experiencing tensions along their border due to India's decision to harbour the Dalai Lama. Ayub made the decision to mend deteriorating relations with China after doing a hasty analysis of the situation. In this context, Pakistan and China have reached an agreement to demarcate their respective territory clearly. After China had completed its mapping of the border, Pakistan made a commitment to support China unequivocally at the UN. India has accused China of violating its borders in Kashmir and the northern areas on several occasions. This is a very important issue (Sharma, 1965). In the meanwhile, India continued to violate the Line of Control in the Rann of Kutch despite receiving support from both the US and the USSR (Liu, 1994). Pakistan's criticism of India's purchase of arms from the United States was spurred by the discovery that India had made such a purchase. It should come as no surprise that China shared India's displeasure with its territorial policy. Pakistan and China achieved a border agreement in the early 1960s, which not only delivered a blow to the Indian-American alliance but also reaped strategic and economic advantages for both countries. This agreement dealt a blow to the alliance between India and the United States.



Yahya's Era

On March 25, 1969, Yahya Khan became President. Pakistan received not just political support but also practical assistance in the shape of weaponry and financial assistance from its allies in the fight against India in the Kashmir issue. This state underwent a change around the second part of 1969 and into the first few months of 1970. The moderates in China rapidly won power and began attempting to heal bridges with India after India and China were at odds for a long time. As a consequence of the encouraging outcomes brought about by these actions, the Chinese government began moving away from its "Pakistan-centric" approach. As part of its "new" policy for South Asia, the Chinese government reduced the amount of help it provided to Pakistan. However, when the Indian government made moves toward dismembering Pakistan with assistance from the Soviet Union at the end of 1971, the Chinese government put its "new" South Asian strategy on hold and began supporting Pakistan against India. This was done in an effort to prevent the Indian government from achieving its goal. The partitioning of Pakistan created a situation in which China was forced to maintain its support for Pakistan. Due to its political, economic, and military woes in the immediate aftermath of the dismemberment, Pakistan is seen as vulnerable to Soviet influence. As a result, Pakistan is seen as having weakened Beijing's position. At the moment, Pakistan is the only South Asian country that is not under the influence of the Soviet Union. Beijing provided Pakistan with its full support because it believed that Pakistan's "tilt" toward the Soviet Union would completely prohibit Chinese influence from reaching its southwestern boundaries. (Howard, 1976)

In 1971, for instance, when East Pakistan was going through a crisis, the Chinese government did not approve of how the Yahya administration was handling matters in the region's eastern part. This was due to the fact that East Pakistan was governed by Yahya. It was also not ignorant of the reality that, if allowed to continue unchecked, the events unfolding in Bangladesh may very well result in the installation of an oppressive government there. In light of this, it came to the conclusion that it would only provide Pakistan with highly qualified assistance in its fight against Indian attempts to take advantage of the situation in East Pakistan, in spite of Pakistan's aspirations and professions to the contrary. In a similar vein, Beijing's vehement support for Pakistan at the United Nations was partially motivated by an effort to reassure other Third World governments that, in contrast to the Soviet Union, the Chinese Government was committed to the principle and had no intention of promoting secessionism. This was done in an effort to reassure other Third World governments that Beijing's vehement support for Pakistan at the United Nations was partially motivated by an effort to reassure other Third World governments.

Despite this, Islamabad was the primary recipient of Chinese assistance throughout the entirety of the period under review following the partition of Pakistan on December 16, 1971. Leaders in China have been quite clear that they do not want Bangladesh to become a member



of the United Nations until all of the decisions that were made by the organisation during the Indo-Pakistani war have been carried out in their entirety (1971). Because of this, India was unable to use the 93,000 Pakistani hostages it had and its occupation of 5,000 square miles of Pakistani land as leverage to compel Pakistan to settle the Kashmir conflict on New Delhi's terms. India was eager for Dhaka to become a member of the United Nations. In addition to providing Pakistan with approximately 400 T-59 tanks and 70 MIG-19 aircraft for its air force and army, Beijing has also agreed to assist Pakistan in establishing its own tank and aircraft repairing and rebuilding facilities. This comes on the heels of Beijing's decision to provide Pakistan with these types of weapons. The fact that Pakistan was able to acquire these weapons at the precise moment when they were needed the most significantly raises the value of those weapons. China's assistance to Pakistan in the amount of 82.70 per cent of the total expenditure in 1971 served as a concrete example of China's support for Pakistan at a crucial juncture in the nation's life and history. (Harmala, 1977)

The military administration of President Yahya received strong assistance from the government of the United States. According to the American author Gary Bass, who wrote *The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger, and a Forgotten Genocide*, President Richard Nixon's affection for General Yahya Khan was one of the few things that he had in his life. The communication channel between the United States and China that was used to organise the trip of President Nixon to China in 1972 had been built in part owing to personal steps taken by President Yahya. The trip of President Nixon to China was a success because of this communication line. (FitzGerald, 1972)

Zia-ul-Haq's Era

Despite the fact that the majority of Bhutto's cabinet members had been dismissed from their positions, President Fazal Ilahi Chaudhry was permitted to remain in office in a symbolic capacity. Zia requested that Chaudhry continues in his role as President beyond the end of his own term, but Chaudhry rejected it, and as a result, Zia was sworn in as Pakistan's president on September 16, 1978. Zia's military regime had significant support from the United States, particularly from the Reagan Administration, and enjoyed the close friendship of Pakistan's ruling military elite, which has a tendency to adhere to conservative ideals. The government of Ronald Reagan recognised the Zia regime as a "first line" friend because they considered it to be an essential collaborator in the fight against communism. The Prime Ministers of Pakistan and China have made many trips, during which time they have stressed their shared interests and longstanding friendship. In a statement to General Zia-ul-Haq sent from China in July 1977, Deputy Premier Deng Xiao-Ping expressed optimism that the longstanding friendship and cooperation between Pakistan and China will only strengthen over time. By travelling to China in December 1977, General Zia-ul-Haq showed his appreciation for Deng Tsio-hospitality. Ping's In June 1978, President of Pakistan General Zia-ul-Haq opened the Karakoram Highway (KKH) with the help of Chinese Vice Premier Geng Biao. The Vice



Premier of China lauded the finished KKH as a culmination and remarkable example of the two nations' strong friendship and cooperative spirit during the state dinner. (Harmala, 1977)

It is generally known that Pakistan is currently receiving fifty T-59 tanks on an annual basis, out of a total order of one thousand tanks that were placed in 1975. By the year 1980, Pakistan had been given possession of all 65 of the F-6 fighter planes that it had bought the previous year. As a result of a purchase made in 1979, Pakistan received 20 CSA-1 (SAM batteries) in the year 1980. Additionally, in 1980, two submarines of the Romeo class were handed over to their owners. Additionally, in the year 1980, Pakistan was presented with two FAC (guns) of the Hoka class. In addition, Pakistan was provided with a total of sixty Q-5 Fantan A fighters ground attack (FGA) aircraft between the years 1982 and 1984. It is anticipated that Pakistan would get one hundred more Q-5 FGA over the years 1986–1987. In 1984, China sent 16 Hai Ying missiles, also known as Sh Sh M/S Sh M, to Pakistan. In 1984, Pakistan was successful in acquiring four FACs of the Huangfan class. While military assistance was still being provided, an undetermined number of artillery pieces and rounds of ammunition were supplied. The provision of military assistance has not been disrupted in either of the two most recent years. The fact that China has supplied such military assistance is made abundantly obvious by the document titled "Military Balance 1985-1986," which describes the essential components of the Chinese component of the armament. The Chinese have provided Pakistan's Air Force with 170 F-6 fighters, which are sufficient to outfit 9 squadrons. Additionally, Pakistan's Army Q-5 planes have access to 1100 T-59 tanks, which are used in ground assault operations. In the same line, the primary components of the Pakistani Navy's fleet of 24 naval ships are comprised of 12 Shanghai-class, 4 Chuwan-class hydrofoils, 4 Huangfen-class (4 HY2 SSM), and 4 Hoku-class warships (2 HY-2). China assists Pakistan in the modernization of its military in a number of other ways as well, including the provision of training and assistance with the modernization of defence industrial facilities and infrastructure. This, in turn, enables Pakistan to repair and refurbish aircraft, tanks, and artillery. Additionally, China contributes to the manufacturing of a significant number of the industry's replacement components. 1985 saw the beginning of production of 12.7 mm anti-aircraft guns at the Pakistan Ordnance Factory in Wah, which was assisted in its efforts by China. Both the Heavy Rebuild Factory and the Kamra Aeronautical Complex were developed with aid from the Chinese government. The expansion of these two programmes is being done with the goal of assisting Pakistan in becoming more independent in the area of its defence sector. Over a dozen delegations consisting of high-ranking military commanders each made their way back and forth between the two countries over the course of the negotiations. (Howard, 1976)

After the military takeover, it wasn't long before the world found out about the secret nuclear energy programme that the government had been doing. In order to divert the focus of an already taxed international community, he deliberately promoted anti-Western governments' pursuit of nuclear proliferation as a means of assisting such regimes in achieving their own



nuclear ambitions. This was done as a distraction. Zia reached an agreement with China in 1981 to build a centrifuge facility and transport weapon-grade uranium, both of which contributed to the strengthening of China's nuclear programme.

Musharraf's Era

On 12 October 1999, Pervez Musharraf became the chief executive of Pakistan after disposing of the government of Nawaz Shareef. The Pakistani government saw a thawing of ties between India and China as a positive development that would help to stabilise the area and soften India's hostility toward its neighbours, hence they were unconcerned about the prospect. China has always stood behind Pakistan, and the two countries agreed on many international matters. There were no sour spots in the defence, economic, cultural, energy, etc., between Pakistan and China. The links that bound India and China together were mostly commercial. With the world's biggest market economy, India was able to entice not just China but also other major nations. The border dispute between India and China was an annoyance that had been pushed to the side for the time being but may flare up again at any moment. Although China and India had put aside their border dispute in favour of strengthening their economic relations, there were still other concerns that troubled both countries. The construction of the Gwadar port in Pakistan, the sale of weaponry to the nations bordering India, ties with Myanmar, and the transfer of missile technology to Pakistan were all things that caused India to feel anxious. China, on the other hand, was concerned about Indian efforts to encircle China. In light of the fact that adopting an antagonistic position towards India would bring that country closer to the United States, China has adopted a more conciliatory approach towards India. (Ayaz, 2014)

In order to find new ways to collaborate in the production of defence goods and strategic economic cooperation, there was not only an exchange of delegates but also of ideas and discussions on the regional and worldwide situation. This was done in order to find new ways to collaborate in the production of defence goods. There was a period when Pakistan was forced to depend only on the importation of foreign armaments, and China was the only ally that not only provided assistance to Pakistan without restrictions but also had to face threats and sanctions from the United States. Under the leadership of Musharraf, Pakistan made a noticeable transition away from exclusive dependence on the United States and toward collaborative collaborations with China on a range of defence programmes beginning in the seventies and continuing on into the present day. The first military team to visit Pakistan while the Musharraf government was in power discussed the possibility of constructing smaller and medium-sized ships there. Under the terms of a deal with China, Pakistan's navy will commission the construction of four F-22P frigates. It was imperative that a provision for the transfer of technology be included within this agreement. As part of the agreement, China would construct three frigates, while Pakistan would be responsible for the construction of the fourth vessel. This suggests that China wasn't only increasing Pakistan's military power;



rather, it was also providing the nation with the means it needed to start creating more of its own commodities, which is an important step toward becoming more economically independent. The year 2008 saw the arrival of Pakistan's very first frigate. Long-range submarine detection capabilities, applicable to both nuclear and conventional submarines, are a part of the frigate's toolkit for the F-22P. The second, the PNS Shamsheer, made its debut in January 2010, while the third, which was conducting sea testing at the time of its introduction, did not make its introduction until June 2011. Pakistan had requested an extra four frigates but had also proposed some modifications to be made to the existing batch, which China had agreed to do. To better compete with India's extensive naval expansion, the Pakistan Navy recently acquired these frigates to bolster their capabilities. In a nutshell, the years between 1999 and 2008 were fruitful ones for the strengthening of connections that exist between Pakistan and China. A common foe may have been the impetus for the beginning of this alliance, but they are no longer a significant factor in its development. Our relationship has developed into a friendship now that we are working for similarly strategic objectives. During the tenure of President Musharraf, China provided assistance to Pakistan in the effort to enhance both its military and its national security. It was decided to initiate a number of large-scale cooperative defence programmes with the twin objectives of improving the nation's overall safety and broadening the scope of available economic prospects. (Chakma, 2009)

Conclusion

Analysts and political scientists define the relationship as All-Weather Friendship which is higher than the mountains and sweeter than honey. China and Pakistan have been supportive of each other since the beginning of their diplomatic relations. Since the two nations first established diplomatic relations with one another, China's assistance to Pakistan has moved beyond the realm of the defence sector. We saw that Pakistan has also played a major role and went off its way to help the US in making ties with China. China has been a major weapon supplier for Pakistan and has helped Pakistan develop a bunch of strong-armed forces in the region. Pakistan has also used its ties with China to counter India and China has been using Pakistan to contain India's hegemonic influence in the region. The military regimes of Pakistan have always prioritised their relations with China according to our study and China has helped Pakistan move forward in many aspects of governance. In short, the two countries had provided unconditional diplomatic and military support for each other during military regimes and will still be doing so.



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