

Pak-china relations

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Since establishing diplomatic ties in 1951, China and Pakistan have enjoyed a close and mutually beneficial relationship. Pakistan was one of the first countries to recognize the People's Republic of China in 1950 and remained a steadfast ally during Beijing's period of international isolation in the 1960s and early 1970s. China has long provided Pakistan with major military, technical, and economic assistance, including the transfer of sensitive nuclear technology and equipment. Some experts predict growing relations between the United States and rival India will ultimately prompt Pakistan to push for even closer ties with its longtime strategic security partner, China. Others say China's increased concern about Pakistan-based insurgency groups may cause Beijing to proceed with the relationship in a more cautious manner.

The India Question China and Pakistan have traditionally valued one another as a strategic hedge against India. " For China, Pakistan is a low-cost secondary deterrent to India," current Pakistani ambassador to the United States Husain Haqqani told CFR. org in 2006, when he was a visiting scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. " For Pakistan," he said, " China is a high-value guarantor of security against India." Mutual enmity between India and Pakistan dates to partition in August 1947, when Britain relinquished its claim over the Indian subcontinent and divided its former colony into two states. Since then Pakistan and India have fought three wars and a number of low-level conflicts. Tensions remain high over the disputed territory of Kashmir with periodic military posturing on both sides of the border.

India has long been perturbed by China's military aid to Pakistan. K. Alan Kronstadt, a specialist in South Asian affairs at the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service, writes that observers in India see Chinese support for Pakistan as " a key aspect of Beijing's perceived policy of 'encirclement' or constraint of India as a means of preventing or delaying New Delhi's ability to challenge Beijing's region-wide influence." China and India fought a border war in 1962, and both still claim the other is occupying large portions of their territory. " The 1962 Sino-Indian border conflict was a watershed moment for the region," says John W. Garver, professor of international relations at the Georgia Institute of Technology. " Both China and India incurred heavy costs on their economic development, and both sides shifted their policy over time to become more accommodating to growth."

A Deepening Military Bond China's role as a major arms supplier for Pakistan began in the 1960s and included assistance in building a number of arms factories in Pakistan and supplying complete weapons systems. " Until about 1990," write South Asia experts Elizabeth G. M. Parker and Teresita C. Schaffer in a July 2008 , " Beijing clearly sought to build up Pakistan to keep India off balance." After the 1990 imposition of U. S. sanctions on Pakistan, China became the country's leading arms supplier. Collaboration now includes personnel training, joint military exercises, intelligence sharing, and counterterrorism efforts. While the relationship is not quite balanced, it has been critically important to Pakistan.

" Pakistan needs China more than China needs Pakistan," says Huang Jing, a China expert at the National University of Singapore. Pakistan has benefited from China's assistance with the following defense capabilities:

- **Missile:** Pakistan's army has both short- and medium-range ballistic missiles, such as the Shaheen missile series, that experts say are modifications of Chinese imports.
- **Aircraft:** The current fleet of the Pakistani Air Force includes Chinese interceptor and advanced trainer aircraft, as well as an Airborne Early Warning and Control radar system used to detect aircraft. Pakistan is producing the JF-17 Thunder multi-role combat aircraft jointly with China. The K-8 Karakorum light attack aircraft was also coproduced.
- **Nuclear Program:** China supplies Pakistan with nuclear technology and assistance, including what many experts suspect was the blueprint for Pakistan's nuclear bomb. Some news reports suggest Chinese security agencies knew about Pakistani transfers of nuclear technology to Iran, North Korea, and Libya. China was also accused of having long-standing ties with Abdul Qadeer Khan (A. Q. Khan), known as the father of the Pakistani nuclear program and head of an international black market nuclear network.

Bolstering Ties Since the late 1990s, economic concerns have gained prominence alongside the military-strategic aspect of the relationship; specifically, trade and energy have taken precedence. Over the years, frequent exchanges of high-level visits and contacts between the two countries have resulted in a number of bilateral trade agreements and investment commitments. Trade relations began shortly after the establishment of diplomatic ties in the early 1950s, and the two countries signed their first formal trade agreement in 1963. A comprehensive free

trade agreement was signed in 2008, giving each country unprecedented market access to the other. Trade between Islamabad and Beijing now hovers around \$7 billion a year, and both sides are set on raising the figure to \$15 billion by 2010.

The two countries have cooperated on a variety of large-scale infrastructure projects in Pakistan, including highways, gold and copper mines, major electricity complexes and power plants, and numerous nuclear power projects. With roughly ten thousand Chinese workers engaged in 120 projects in Pakistan, total Chinese investment--which includes heavy engineering, power generation, mining, and telecommunications--was valued at \$4 billion in 2007 and is expected to rise to \$15 billion by 2010. One of the most significant joint development projects of recent years is the major port complex at the naval base of Gwadar, located in the Pakistani province of Balochistan. The complex, inaugurated in December 2008 and now fully operational, provides a deep-sea port, warehouses, and industrial facilities for more than twenty countries. China provided much of the technical assistance and 80 percent of the funds for the construction of the port.

In return for providing most of the labor and capital for the project, China gains strategic access to the Persian Gulf: the port is just 180 nautical miles from the Strait of Hormuz, through which 40 percent of all globally traded oil is shipped. This enables China to diversify and secure its crude oil import routes and provides the landlocked and oil and natural gas-rich Xinjiang Province with access to the Arabian Sea. As Pakistan continues to face economic woes with falling foreign investment, a weakening currency, and

an underperforming stock market, securing closer economic cooperation with Beijing is seen as vital. Pakistan currently faces a growing balance of payments deficit, and China's capacity as a creditor may be able to correct Islamabad's urgent predicament. " China's huge foreign-exchange reserves," writes Kronstadt, " are a potential source of a major cash infusion."

The Balancing Act Despite increased cooperation between the United States and Pakistan since 2001, Islamabad places greater value on its relationship with Beijing than vice versa, say analysts. " Pakistan thinks that both China and the United States are crucial for it," said Haqqani. " If push comes to shove, it would probably choose China--but for this moment, it doesn't look like there has to be a choice." Pakistan considers China a more reliable ally than the United States, citing years of diplomatic manipulation and neglect on the part of Washington. As this interactive timeline explains, Pakistan and China grew closer in the 1960s as Washington and Islamabad began to part ways over the handling of regional issues.

In particular, Pakistan felt betrayed when Washington cut off aid to Islamabad during its 1965 and 1971 wars with India. Pakistan played a pivotal role as an intermediary during the U. S.-China rapprochement in the early 1970s, but Pakistanis are still stung by what they see as U. S. indifference toward their country after using it to funnel aid to the Afghan mujahadeen to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan. The India-U. S. civilian nuclear agreement compounds Pakistan's distrust of the United States, spurring efforts by Pakistani officials to secure a similar deal with China. In April 2010, China announced its plan to build two new nuclear power

reactors in Pakistan. The deal is seen as a violation of the guidelines laid down by the Nuclear Suppliers Group of which China is a member.

In a CFR interview, Andrew Small of the German Marshall Fund of the United States, says " in private, Chinese analysts are quite clear that this is a strategic tit-for-tat [in response to U. S-India nuclear deal and it's a very worrying portent if this is going to be China's approach to the nonproliferation regime in future." Meanwhile, China is concerned over the increasing level of extremism inside Pakistan. Some experts say China is also concerned about Chinese Uighur separatists in the western province of Xinjiang finding a safe haven in Pakistan's tribal areas.

According to Ziad Haider in a 2005 Asian Survey article, Uighur militants were enrolled in Pakistani madrassas during the 1980s and fought the Soviets alongside the Taliban and later against the U. S.-led coalition in Afghanistan. Some of these madrassas, Haider writes, " provided an important site for the recruitment of [Uighur] fighters" who later returned to Xinjiang. China has also publicly expressed concern over the increased level of kidnappings and killings of Chinese citizens by Pakistani militants. China's ambassador in Islamabad urged Pakistan to " take effective measures to protect all the Chinese in Pakistan" after militants shot and killed three Chinese nationals in July 2007. Militants continue to target Chinese workers in Balochistan Province.

However, Beijing is wary of getting heavily involved in counterterrorism efforts. " China is well aware of the threat it faces if it becomes too involved in counterterrorism efforts within Pakistan," says Garver, " and that means

taking a more cautious and calculated approach--at least publicly--in strengthening Pakistan's secular institutions against the Islamist challenge. This may partly explain why China has been quite comfortable in encouraging the United States to engage more with Pakistan: to take the heat off of China."

Regional Cooperation Experts say all countries in the region are reevaluating their traditional positions. " Everyone in the region has learned to [develop] a relatively non-ideological set of policies," says Kenneth G. Lieberthal, a noted China expert and professor at the University of Michigan. As CSIS's Parker and Schaffer note, China has taken a more neutral position on India-Pakistan issues such as Kashmir in the past decade and a half, and has " begun to take the relationship with India more seriously." A case in point, they say, was China's dissatisfaction with Pakistani military action across the Line of Control, which separates India- and Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, during the 1999 Kargil conflict.

Pakistan is also not the only South Asian nation China is interested in strengthening ties with: Beijing has expanded its relations with Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and the Maldives. " China has a clear-cut strategy for using its leverage in the region," says Ganguly of Indiana University. " They're going to continue to work with India's neighbors as a strategic hedge against New Delhi, but Pakistan will remain central to this strategy." Experts believe that any confrontation between India and Pakistan is not in China's interest and would put Beijing in the position of having to choose between the two countries and draw the United States further into

the region. " In this sense," writes Kronstadt, " peace between India and Pakistan is in China's interest."