

Perils of China – Pakistan Nexus and South Asian Stability: Some Observations

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Abstract: Throughout history individuals, communities and nations have collaborated and cooperated with partners to pursue common goals, protect self-interest and ally against common foes – forging agreements, treaties and organizations. These alliances were based on kinship, ideology, trade and commerce, security and even religion and have been an enduring feature of war and conflict across ages. Alliances give a formal context to the basic phenomenon of alignment which amounts to a set of mutual expectations between two or more states that they will have each other's support in disputes or conflicts with other states (Snyder n.d.). However, it has been leaders – without doubt, altruistic or otherwise, who have forged the path to pursue national interest of their state whether determined through popular consensus or by individual ambitions. Nevertheless, the impact and outcome of the policies and methods adopted by these leaders is shared not only by their own country but also by the neighbouring states and at times even the entire world. The relationship between China and Pakistan has not taken shape of a formal alliance but the collaboration and collusion between them has all the elements that expound the alignment of interests of both countries. In the ever evolving dynamic precept of international relations formal alliances have given way to informal partnerships and complicity between nations to further their interests. The relation between China and Pakistan has flourished despite no common ideological or cultural affinity and has primarily been driven by mutual dependence and practical benefits. Not only has the Chinese backing deprived the people of Pakistan of their rightful development but also has created conditions that make Pakistan an ever existential threat to peace and security in South Asia.

Keywords: China-Pakistan relations, South Asia, Regional Security, Economic Aid, Nuclear Proliferation.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between China and Pakistan has grown from that of initial neutrality and even hostility to being “all weather friends” and has been remarkably resilient ever since. Despite lack of cultural affinity or common political and religious ideology the two countries have collaborated militarily, diplomatically, politically and economically. Pakistan has been a central part of China's transition from a regional to global power [1]. For Pakistan, relation with China has been a strong pillar of its foreign policy and for China; Pakistan has been a crucial component of its South Asia policy [2]. Beijing's support to Pakistan has grown stronger with its emergence as a global power since the 1980s with its own strategic calculations in mind. China's all out backing of Pakistan has not only allowed Pakistan to reduce its reliance on the USA but also strengthened its will to carry out proxy war with India, without the fear of a decisive military response [3]. However, these bilateral and individual strategic aspirations of both these countries have far reaching security implications for South Asia and also tend to alter the regional and international alliance framework of international relations. On one hand the proximity to China has alleviated the international pressure on Pakistan but on the other it has brought home the highest means of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and a shield against sanctions due to its support to terrorist and fundamentalist activities. China-Pakistan relations are also influenced in a major way by their respective relations with India and independent strategic calculations of both countries. Although relations between China and India are defined by competition in the context of great power politics, China also regards India as a potential

overseas market for future expansion whereas Pakistan has an important role in ensuring a stable regional order in Central and South Asia and preventing the spread of terrorism to China [4].

Statement of the Problem

It is reasonable to understand that all nations endeavor to align their domestic and foreign policies to secure the goals of their national interest. However, the unilateral or bilateral engagement between certain nations to progress their national interest at the cost of another state or the adoption and promulgation of policies inimical to other states may lead to a regional or international conflict. The engagement between China and Pakistan is one such example wherein the common underlying theme appears to be containment of India. Despite the fact that both China and Pakistan have fought wars with India in the past, basing of current policies on historical enmity is not only counter-productive but may lead to a regional conflict having global repercussions. The 'enemy of my enemy' approach is especially detrimental to the weakest nation amongst the three – Pakistan, wherein the ruling elite has pushed the country toward economic crisis, internal destabilization and isolation at the international stage for consolidation of power in their own hands with the tacit support of China.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to analyze the impact of China-Pakistan collaboration and collusion on security aspects in South Asia with special focus on its impact on Pakistan's internal situation and its regional integration in South Asia. The paper intends to bring out the long term impact of Chinese support to Pakistan, intentions and aspirations of both countries and how the China factor has influenced the policies adopted by Pakistan internally and externally. It also becomes incumbent to inspect the role of other global powers to counter Chinese growing influence and the impact on security in South Asia.

Research Questions

The research questions generated from the objectives of the study to guide the researcher are as follows:-

- i) What are the underlying motives of China-Pakistan collaboration?
- ii) What are the security implications of China-Pakistan collusion in South Asia?
- iii) Has the Chinese support to Pakistan manifested in real progress of Pakistan?
- iv) What would be the response of India to meet the challenge of China-Pakistan collusion?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The qualitative research methodology has been adopted to carry out the study involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the subject matter. Deductive reasoning has been used while carrying out primarily a documentary analysis. Some of the literatures which were used to form the background of this study include; i) The China Pakistan Axis – Asia's New Geopolitics by Andrew Small examine the historical relationship between China and Pakistan and its current trajectory. It explores the military and economic collaboration between the two countries and the underlying reasons for both countries in this symbiotic relationship. ii) On China by Henry Kissinger is a seminal work by the former National Security Advisor and Secretary of State of US in which he focuses on history of China and its foreign policies of realpolitik. The book also throws light on economic reforms by China and its transformation from a poor uneducated nation to an economic powerhouse. The author gives a detailed account of China's pragmatic self-interest policies of its interaction with the outside world. iii) Military Inc. – Inside Pakistan's Military Economy by Ayesha Siddiqi explores the factors of dominance of Pakistan's Military in the country's affairs and the use of military capital by the military leaders in Pakistan. The military's involvement in politics has given rise to 'Milbus' or military business which in turn promotes military interest to stay in power or to control the government. This acts as a tool for the military to gain economic and governing influence thereby preventing the democratic institutions to flourish. iv) China Pakistan Relations – A Historical Analysis by Ghulam Ali traces the historic growth of China-Pak alliance and the internal, regional and international factors underlying the relationship. The book examines the nature of the relationship between the two countries from 1950 to 2015 and comments on the durability of friendship between them. The author provides a historic and strategic analysis of the origins, evolution, consolidation and expansion of the bilateral ties between China and Pakistan.

Genesis and Evolution of China-Pakistan Relations

Pakistan was the first Muslim country to recognize People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1950 after the Chinese Communist Party had driven out the Kuomintang's Nationalist Government out of mainland China during the civil war and established PRC on 01 Oct 1949. Pakistan was still in a state of consolidation after the Indo-Pak war of 1947-48 over Kashmir immediately after partition of Pakistan from India in 1947 and probably intended to manipulate China as a counter weight to India. India had already recognized PRC in 1949 and taken first steps to stabilize relations with the newly formed government. China gravitated towards the larger neighbor and signed Panchsheel Treaty with India in 1954 – diplomatic relations based on five principles of peaceful co-existence. Though Pakistan had established diplomatic relations with China on 01 Jul 1951, it was only after a decade that cooperation began in the earnest between

the two countries. Initially it was Pakistan who had territorial issues with China in the Hunza principality, where the rulers - Mirs traditionally accepted Chinese suzerainty, but acceded to Pakistan. Pakistan also provided transit facilities to US aircrafts sending supplies to Tibetan rebels in 1950 when China occupies Tibet. During the 1950's Pakistan opted to be a formal ally of the United States of America (USA) and became part of two organizations – South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954 and Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) in 1955, the former instituted with a clear intent to contain the influence of communism from China. Moreover, as part of SEATO Pakistan agreed to set up a listening post at Badaber near Peshawar for the USA to spy on Chinese and Soviet communications [1].

Relations between India and China began to sour during late 1950's when a 112 mile road stretch constructed by China across Aksai Chin in Ladakh was belatedly discovered by India in 1958. There was a shift in China's stance towards India after India's changed outlook towards Tibet and in 1959 when Dalai Lama escaped Tibet and was given asylum by India, China suspected India of supporting the Tibetan rebellion. Zhou Enlai proposed "East-West swap" for the disputed territories in Ladakh with those in Eastern Himalayas, which was unequivocally rejected by Nehru. The 1962 Sino-India war proved to be the watershed in India-China relations and resultantly in China's softening of stance towards Pakistan. Sino-Soviet split by 1961 resulting from differences in perception and interpretation of Marxism and belligerent stance of China towards Western bloc influenced its foreign policy with regards to India and Pakistan. US and Soviet military assistance to India during the 1962 war convinced China to transfer its preference towards Pakistan and thus began the journey of 'all weather friendship' between China and Pakistan based on a common cause – mutual hostility towards India.

Though a Treaty of Friendship had been signed between China and Pakistan in 1956, the breakthrough in mutual harmony was achieved in 1963 after the Sino-India war when a provisional border agreement was signed between the respective foreign ministers – Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Chen Yi. The border agreement resolved the boundary issue between the two nations wherein China yielded 142 square km to Pakistan and Pakistan ceded the Trans Karakoram Tract including Shaksgam Valley and Raksam to China – 5180 square km area in Pakistan occupied Kashmir. This informal alliance of mutual opposition to India evolved into a complex, sustained and strategic partnership between China and Pakistan. During the 1965 Indo-Pak war China supported Pakistan by providing militarily, diplomatically and economically. It supported Pakistan's stance on Kashmir issue, criticized India's 'criminal aggression' and also threatened India of dire consequences. US, an ally of SEATO and CENTO, on the other hand placed embargo on both countries indicating to Pakistan, the reliability difference between US and China. Pakistan realized that common antagonism, geographical proximity and common border along Kashmir made China its only dependable counter weight to India. China has been instrumental in breaking Pakistan's isolation and bridging its military capability gap with India – its key rival [5].

After 1965 both countries expanded their cooperation in economic and military domains along with continued diplomatic support for each other. China supplied machinery worth 15 million rupees for the establishment of Heavy Mechanical Complex in Taxila in 1968 and provided around \$ 445 million in aid between 1965 and 1971. After China became the fifth nuclear power in 1964, Pakistan looked up to China not only for protection against India but also as a means to provide it the ultimate weapon of self-defence – the atomic bomb. Military relationship lies at the heart of China-Pakistan ties and nuclear weapons lie at the heart of the military relationship [1]. Chinese collusion with the A.Q. Khan nuclear proliferation network and supply of Highly Enriched Uranium ultimately led to Pakistan achieving a nuclear status signaling its daunting military status. China never committed direct military support in terms of troops on ground to Pakistan in its subsequent conflicts with India in 1971 or 1999 but proved to be its essential military supplier giving material and technological support to its military-industrial infrastructure. The two countries did not have defense treaties, security guarantees or joint military response mechanisms and had diverse military cultures but the collaboration between them has been nothing short of an alliance. In 1999 both countries signed a contract to jointly develop and produce JF-17 aircraft which was a landmark event for Pakistan defense industry and was inducted in Pakistan Air Force in 2010. Between 2000 and 2010 China and Pakistan signed several agreements on tourism cooperation, trade and information technology. In 2005 both countries signed a 'Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Good Neighbourly Relations'. In 2013 Pakistan signed the MoU for Long Term Plan on China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) – a mega investment initiative by China. In 2018 Pakistan launched Remote Sensing Satellite-1 from China's Jiuquan Satellite Centre enabling Pakistan entry into the prestigious Space Club. In 2019 Pakistan hosted the China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Foreign Ministers Dialogue in Islamabad in a breakthrough towards resolving the Afghan crisis thus creating a sphere of influence in the region in coalition with China [6].

China-Pak Nexus in South Asia Context

The strategic but transactional relationship between China and Pakistan has had profound impact on the security situation in South Asia. South Asia is the most populous geographic region of the world accounting for one fourth of the world's population in about 3.5% of total area. South Asia is home to a wide variety of ethnicity and religions and also one of the most conflict prone areas on earth. Due to widespread poverty, anti-state rebellions and insurgency, terrorism

and inter-state rivalries South Asia is also one of the least integrated and poor regions in the world where regional trade accounts for only 5% of the total trade of South Asian countries. Adding uncertainty to this politically unstable regional situation is the perpetual Indo-Pak rivalry which has resulted in three wars between them in 1947, 1965 and 1971 and a limited conflict in 1999. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and involvement of US and China against Soviet expansion through Pakistan led to a decisive defeat for the Russians in the next ten years but also plunged Afghanistan in a state of political disarray and instability culminating in a civil war. The fallout of growing Chinese assertiveness and shifting regional alliances among the South Asian countries has further complicated the regional situation along with growing religious fundamentalism, right wing nationalism and regional insurgencies. China-Pak collaboration and collusion has encouraged both countries to pursue their own agenda with little concern for long term ramifications on regional peace and stability in South Asia.

China-Pak Symbiotic Relationship

Pakistan's ambassador to China has described China-Pak relationship as 'deeper than oceans, higher than mountains, sweeter than honey.' This hyperbole is a diplomatic statement intended more for public consumption and appeasement of its stronger partner – the real relationship between the two countries is primarily transactional in nature. Both countries have unabashedly sided with each other even against world opinion to further their own interests. China has been the largest provider of military aid to Pakistan over last six decades and is also the largest investor in Pakistan. China has supported Pakistan on the diplomatic front in international forums even at the cost of its own reputation when it vetoed resolutions against known terrorists in Pakistan, denounced US raid killing Osama bin Laden and stood staunchly with Pakistan during the atrocities committed by Pakistan Army in East Pakistan in 1971 and brutal suppression of Baloch people. China is the de-facto 'veto' power of Pakistan against world pressure in United Nations. Pakistan on the other hand has been instrumental in breaking the isolation of China in the initial years by acting as a bridge with the Islamic countries in the Gulf. The role played by Pakistan in conducting secret diplomacy and to arrange the visit of Henry Kissinger to China in 1971 which opened up bilateral relations between China and US is probably the most influential support provided by Pakistan to China which actually integrated China with the developed countries of the Western bloc. Pakistan also proved to be instrumental to contain Russia in Afghanistan without any overt presence of China thus playing a crucial role to veil Chinese intentions against Russia. Pakistan also addressed Chinese concerns about the growing insurgency in the muslim dominated Xinjiang province through its intelligence agency the Inter Service Intelligence (ISI) and Taliban contacts depriving the Uighur insurgents of material and military support. Pakistan was the only country to stand staunchly by Chinese side after the Tiananmen Square massacre and the Tibet issue despite adverse world opinion. China has provided military hardware to Pakistan military but Pakistan has been instrumental in providing China access to sophisticated and advanced US military technology which has been reverse engineered by China and also provided to Pakistan. There have been numerous joint military projects between the two countries despite no formal alliance or commitment to provide active military support to each other.

China has bailed out Pakistan in dire circumstances when its economy was in shambles and has provided economic assistance to avoid default. Chinese investment in mega projects in Pakistan is the backbone of its power, infrastructure and military industry. The economic corridor through Pakistan has not only enhanced Pakistan's rail and road infrastructure but will also boost Pakistan economy. On the other hand Pakistan has provided China with access to Arabian Sea through the Gwadar Port giving it shorter access to Gulf and African markets and alternative routes for energy supply avoiding the Malacca straits. Gwadar will also be used by China for basing its military facilities thus increasing its military presence and growing footprint in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The collaboration between China and Pakistan enhances both countries' ability to contain India. Military posturing by both countries keeps the Indian forces tied up and compels India to increase expenditure on defense thereby slowing its economic growth. This assists China in its goal of regional dominance in South Asia and also encourages Pakistan to keep attempting for a military solution for Kashmir.

This mutually beneficial relationship between China and Pakistan has in fact exacerbated the problems of security and stability inside Pakistan and also in the neighbouring region. Since this relationship does not exist between two democratic governments but only the ruling regimes – the Communist Party of China (CPC) and Pakistan military, it does not benefit the people of both countries, especially Pakistan. Not only the Chinese military and economic support has encouraged Pakistan to wage futile wars with India and get humiliated in the bargain but has also strengthened the position of Pakistan military in political affairs of the country.

Analysis of Ramifications of Chinese Support to Pakistan

Impact on Internal Situation of Pakistan

Since its creation as a dominion in 1947, Pakistan has been under military rule for several decades – from 1958-71, 1977-88 and 1999-2008. Pakistan adopted a Constitution and became an Islamic Republic in 1956. Army's interference in constitutional process and political affairs in Pakistan began in 1953 when the Governor General Ghulam

Mohammad dismissed the government of Prime Minister Khwaja Nazimuddin despite enjoying the support of the Constituent Assembly with the support of General Ayub Khan to prevent amendment of the Constitution to restrict the powers of the Governor General. The Federal Court of Pakistan failed to support the Constituent Assembly based on a 'Doctrine of Necessity' which set a precedent for future military intervention against elected governments in Pakistan. In 1958 the first President of Pakistan Major General Iskander Mirza dismissed the Constituent Assembly and appointed Army Commander-in-Chief Ayub Khan as the Chief Martial Law Administrator. Ayub Khan exiled Mirza and declared himself President after 13 days. Since inception democratic process in Pakistan could not hold roots and was sabotaged from and early stage thereby preventing the institutions of democracy to adopt and develop strong and stable system of governance. It is in this background that relations between China and Pakistan began to flourish after the China-India war when Pakistan adopted a Presidential system under Ayub Khan by amending the Constitution in 1962. The first military collaboration and foundation of the nuclear cooperation between China and Pakistan was laid during General Ayub Khan's regime based on the factor of common enmity towards India. The military aid by China during this time and envisaged direct military intervention by China prompted Ayub Khan's 1965 misadventure of starting war with India. China did not intervene directly but provided military and diplomatic support to Pakistan during the war – primarily with the intent to tie down India. Despite a military defeat, Chinese support assisted in the consolidation of military rule in Pakistan and prevented democratic institutions to flourish. The popular discourse promoted by successive regimes about Ayub Khan's era has been that of economic growth and prosperity and enhanced status of Pakistan on the world stage but the realities are starkly different. It gave rise to models of military dictatorship, dependence on foreign aid and over centralization of government. Ayub Khan's motive, like any other dictator was to sustain and prolong his rule. He sowed the seeds of Islamic fundamentalism by supporting religious ulema against Fatima Jinnah, younger sister of Mohammad Ali Jinnah. The economic growth of Pakistan during that period was actually driven by foreign aid and led to the rise of twenty influential families who established control over the majority of country's resources and wealth leading to wide economic disparity.

When General Yahya Khan took over from Ayub Khan and cracked down upon the Awami League and people of East Pakistan China did not utilize its considerable clout in Pakistan to stop the genocide in East Pakistan and rather continued to side with Pakistan militarily and diplomatically despite adverse world view. These actions of non-interference which are hailed by Pakistan (read Pakistan Army) as respect for internal issues of Pakistan, did not prove to be beneficial to Pakistan as the situation in East Pakistan escalated in the Indo-Pak war of 1971 leading to dismemberment of Pakistan and creation of Bangladesh. Pakistan suffered international humiliation and the Pakistan Army surrendered with more than 90,000 prisoners of war. China exercised no positive influence on the ruling government to respect the democratic process in East Pakistan and allow Awami League to form government despite electoral majority. This support of an authoritarian military regime in Pakistan by and authoritarian regime in China might have ideological symmetry but only for the purpose of ease of bilateral cooperation – not the diplomatic maturity of a growing power to promote regional peace and security. Moreover, when Pakistan requested China's support by threatening India with a two-front war, China backed out for a second time. It did provide diplomatic support and raised a draft resolution at UN and strongly condemned India's act of subverting, dismembering and committing aggression against Pakistan and also denounced Soviet Union for its support to India. China also vetoed on the admission of Bangladesh in UN. The war led to the downfall of the military regime and Yahya Khan turned over his presidency to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto as President with control of Military. Bhutto was a wily politician who had survived and flourished in the military era as Foreign Minister. On assuming Presidency he attempted to restructure the Pakistan military to avoid another military coup but before the democratic process could stabilize another coup by General Zia-ul-Haq deposed Bhutto, who was tried and executed in 1979 for the murder of a political opponent – a case in which he had formerly been acquitted. Again, despite a considerable clout on military leadership China made only half-hearted attempts to stop the execution – on the pretext of non-interference in internal matters of a friendly nation. Despite the contributions of Bhutto to Sino-Pak relations and facilitation of the US-China impasse, and the fact that Pakistan had acquired the capability to build a nuclear weapon, China opted for calm indifference and continued to cooperate with the next military regime of Zia-ul-Haq. China's support to Pakistan has been based on its own strategic calculations aimed at containing other powers in its neighbourhood – US influence in Pakistan, Russia's in Afghanistan and India's influence in South Asia. Since Pakistan military played an important role in China's calculations and it was easier to coordinate with a military regime on interventionist foreign policy issues, China actually promoted authoritarian dictatorship in Pakistan for its own benefit by making the Pakistan military stronger by its military and economic aid – thereby making the democratic process weaker.

Impact of Chinese Economic Aid to Pakistan

Bilateral commercial relationship between China and Pakistan could not be as strong as the strategic and military relationship due to several factors like limited geographical contiguity, different structure of trade economy of the two countries, lack of credible transport infrastructure between the two countries and lack of complementarity between China and Pakistan in commercial relationship. Notwithstanding the same, China has been a major investor and aid provider to Pakistan since 1962. Initially in the 1950's the trade between the two countries was limited to a barter of

‘cotton for coal’ but after the 1963 border agreement, bilateral trade between the two countries expanded. Pakistan signed its first trade agreement with China in 1963 giving it the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status and a civil aviation agreement allowed either country’s aircrafts to land in their country giving China easy access to Middle East. A Chinese Trade Exhibition was conducted in Karachi in 1966 and an agreement in 1966 also permitted vessels of both countries to anchor in their harbors. Due to shortage of hard currency barter trade between the two countries continued and increased to \$ 14.5 mn in 1968 and further to \$ 48 mn in 1979. China assisted Pakistan in the mega project of the Karakoram Highway (KKH) to enhance the connectivity between both nations which was opened through the Khunjerab Pass in 1978. China provided \$ 620 mn to Pakistan in aid from 1956-79. This prompted Pakistan to reduce dependence on US aid and diversify its sources of foreign aid. Chinese aid was preferred by Pakistan due to its negligible or very low interest rates and payment was not required to be made in reserve currency. China provided its first loan of \$ 60mn to Pakistan in 1964 which was interest free and was intended half for purchase of goods and half for projects. It also gave a \$ 25 mn loan in 1968 and also provided an interest free loan of \$ 200 mn in 1970 for 20 years. After the 1971 Indo-Pak war China converted first four loans to grants waiving a repayment of about \$ 140 mn. Apart from economic aid China has provided technical know-how and equipment to Pakistan for heavy industry, development and exploitation of natural resources and hydro power projects. Pakistan completed the construction of Taxila Heavy Engineering Complex in 1977 with China’s help [7]. However, the economic cooperation between both countries could still be termed as sluggish at best which could be attributed primarily to the nature of the Chinese economy rather than to any Pakistan-specific factors. China was a socialist, state-controlled economy until Deng Xiaoping took over the reins of the republic and started implementing economic reforms in 1978 to integrate his country with the global economy. China started producing surplus for export at a mass level only in the 1980s when American, European and South East Asian companies first relocated their factories to China to take advantage of the extremely low cost of manufacturing there. Initially, the impact of these developments on Pakistan-China trade was not as big as that on China’s trade with Western countries. While Chinese goods had swarmed markets in the West by the early 2000s, the value of trade between Pakistan and China reached only 800 million US dollars in 2000. This certainly did not reflect the close ties between Islamabad and Beijing, particularly in diplomatic and military fields [8]. Bilateral trade between the two countries stood at \$ 1.5 bn in 2002 and increased to \$ 19.8 bn in 2018 but with a massive trade deficit in favour of China. Imports from China stood at \$ 12.7 bn in 2019 whereas exports from Pakistan to China stood at just \$ 1.85 bn. Under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) China’s investments in Pakistan infrastructure projects has crossed \$ 60 bn in 2020.

However, though China opened up its economy and restructured its development program starting with the agriculture reforms under Deng Xioping in 1978, Pakistan made no such reforms and it was not encouraged by China to do so too. It suits China to cultivate Pakistan as its ‘vassal’ state rather than an economic partner. The steady and timely aid from China has definitely helped Pakistan to avoid default several times but it has also encouraged reluctance of Pakistan to adhere to International Monetary Fund (IMF) guidelines and reduced the efficacy of global financial institutions to nudge Pakistan to carry out economic reforms. Resultantly, only the elite in Pakistan have benefited from the economic aid programs and the majority of population has been deprived of even the basic necessities of life like electricity and water supply. Pakistan has been given loans by IMF on 22 occasions and bailed out 13 times since its joining in 1958. Pakistan faced its worst balance of payment crisis in 2018 when its foreign reserves were only good enough for two months [9]. At this critical juncture too, it got friendly loans from China to avoid tough IMF conditions. Such financial aid has only exacerbated Pakistan’s economic health leading to massive corruption by the Pakistan political and administrative elite making it easier for the Pakistan Military to feed the narrative of weak civil political leadership to the people and thereby leading to strengthening the hold of Pakistani Military on the country’s governance. Economic aid from China has also impeded Pakistan’s trade expansion with its neighbouring countries in South Asia and West Asia as it is not in the interest of Pakistan Army. The massive Chinese investment in China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects has increased the military footprint in the name of security in civil areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan provinces of Pakistan, strengthening the hold of Pakistan Army.

Impact on Stability in South Asia

Chinese support and aid has been utilized by Pakistan primarily for militarization against India. Pakistan has been one of the principal arms importer in the world with China, US and Russia being its main source. As per the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) data China has supplied weapons worth \$ 6.4 bn to Pakistan from 2008-18. US comes a distant second with sales at \$ 2.5 bn. More than 50% of China’s arms exports go to Pakistan. Arms exports from China to Pakistan increased considerably after the sanctions imposed by US during its initial wars with India. By 1980s 75% of the tanks and 65% of the aircrafts used by Pakistan were of Chinese origin. China also had a vital role in technology transfer and development of Pakistan’s nuclear and missile programme [10]. In the past ten years apart from Pakistan, Myanmar and Bangladesh have been the prime recipients of Chinese arms. This has fueled an arms race kind of situation in South Asia where India and Pakistan being rivals are continuously engaged in acquiring superior weapons as also the smaller countries in the region are importing military hardware to consolidate their rule – like the Military Junta in Myanmar or to deal with internal situations. The prime benefactor in all cases is China whose strategic calculations are based on weakening and tying down its neighbours particularly India. China has calibrated its

support to Pakistan on Kashmir such that the tension so generated keeps India tied down militarily on its western front but does not lead to an all-out war or collapse of Pakistan [11]. Moreover, the increased military cooperation and agreements between China and Pakistan like anti-piracy missions near the Gulf and North Africa region, basing of naval assets in Gwadar and military exercises in the Arabian Sea have compelled elicited reaction from US and India in the IOR. However, this increased militarization of South Asia and India Ocean Region in the background of nuclear weapons under direct or indirect control of Pakistan Army is a serious cause of concern for the stability of South Asia and IOR.

Integration of Pakistan in South Asia

Since its creation Pakistan has not been able to follow an independent foreign policy and has always been part of alliances. The same could be attributable to seeking support in the initial stages for its security and economic concerns but this metamorphosed into a severe dependence on foreign aid in the succeeding years as the military grew stronger and the basic democratic institutions and development programmes could not take shape. Pakistan's opinion has been shaped by indulgence and inclination of major powers to play against each other in the region – China and US against Soviet Union in Afghanistan, China against US and India [12]. The ruling elite especially the Pakistan Army has been adept at manipulating the major powers' political and strategic motives against each other and has used this leverage for its sole agenda of rivaling India. This has prevented the integration of Pakistan in South Asian affairs and is responsible for the ineffectiveness of the SAARC. The collaboration with China has come at a cost of regional integration and has not only harmed regional trade and commerce but has severely compromised the security and stability in the region giving rise to terrorism, fundamentalism and rise of non-state actors.

Impact on Nuclear Proliferation

China, India and Pakistan are all nuclear states though China is the only one officially recognized and signatory to the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). China itself refuses to recognize India and Pakistan as nuclear states despite both countries having conducted nuclear tests. The origins of acquiring nuclear weapons by Pakistan lay in its rivalry with India. Pakistan began working on a nuclear program in the 1950s and established the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) in 1956. However, it was only after its defeat in the 1971 Indo-Pak war that the President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto issued a directive to the nuclear establishment to build a nuclear device in three years. The successful development of nuclear weapons by Pakistan is attributed to Abdul Qadir Khan, a metallurgist working at a URENCO enrichment corporation subsidiary in Netherlands, who stole centrifuge designs and returned to Pakistan to help the country's nuclear programme. China supported Pakistan's quest for nuclear weapons by providing it with centrifuge equipment, warhead designs, Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) and technical expertise throughout the 1970s. China even provided a blueprint of the complete nuclear weapons design to Pakistan which was later shared with Iran, Libya and North Korea by the AQ Khan network [13]. The clandestine support by China to proliferation of nuclear weapons in South Asia was based on its own strategic calculations of containment of India. In the process Chinese policies in South Asia have helped to undermine the effectiveness of the NPT and have decreased the possibility of India and Pakistan joining the regime as non-nuclear weapons states thereby weakening the legitimacy of NPT. This has further aggravated the race for acquiring more deadly and sophisticated conventional arms by both India and Pakistan, suiting Beijing's requirements but creating serious threat to peace and security in the region [14].

CONCLUSION

The continued and unqualified support by China to Pakistan, especially Pakistan Army, is primarily motivated by its strategic calculations in South Asia and economic interests in Gulf and African countries rather than regional integration and global security concerns. The underlying factor of common rivalry towards India has led China and Pakistan to collaborate and collude on such military scale as to create a situation of perpetual arms race and reduced regional integration in South Asia. The prime beneficiary of China's military and economic aid has been the Pakistan Army which has leveraged them to consolidate its hold on the Pakistan's politics and administration. China, on the other hand has benefited from the constant Indo-Pak rivalry thus tying down a competitor in South Asia, gaining access to markets of Gulf and African countries through Pakistan, limiting and reducing the influence of US in the region and enhancing its regional influence. Instead of reforming the country's policies, Pakistani leaders have constantly sought debt restructuring and waivers during the several economic crises on various pretexts, playing the global powers against one another. Expecting the international financial institutions to repeatedly bail Pakistan out from these crisis is unrealistic due to which IMF has been pushing Pakistan to raise taxes and power tariffs, effectively penalizing the Pakistani Public to foot the bill for China's rapacious practices and unequivocal support to the ruling elite in Pakistan. Massive military expenditure, deep rooted corruption and lack of accounting are at the heart of Pakistan's perennial and widening gulf between revenue and expenditure. The principal losers in this bargain are the people of Pakistan who have been deprived of their rights and aspirations due to weakened democratic institutions, poor industrial and economic infrastructure and backward social and security environment. By restraining the influence of global financial institutions like IMF to nudge Pakistan towards economic reforms, eroding the authority of global enforcement treaties and protocols like NPT and reducing the incentives for amicable resolution of disputes between India and Pakistan, China's

unequivocal support to Pakistan has amplified the threats to peace and security in South Asia for its unilateral, self-serving agenda.

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