



## Pakistan-China Journey of Brotherhood

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**Abstract:** The Pakistan-China relationship can trace back to more than 2,000 years ago when famous Chinese monks like Fa Xian and Xuan Zang travelled to South Asia- (modern day Pakistan) to study Buddhism. The two countries officially established diplomatic relations on 21 May 1951. This relationship has been built on the strength of its successive achievements, and has become formidable with each passing day and year. The leadership of both countries is committed to taking this relationship forward. Such partnership is unparalleled among inter-state relations. The history of our friendship is a unique account of unwavering mutual support, mutual trust and mutual respect. Nurtured by successive generations of the leadership and peoples for the past seven decades, this iron-brotherhood has blossomed into a strong and vibrant All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership. This paper aims to bring the readers a historical review of the Pakistan-China journey of brotherhood by introducing the history briefly, and then analyzed the tie between the two countries on trade and investment with detailed data. While developing a close economic relations, the two countries are working closely in the fields of security section as well. However, to enhance this relation to a higher level, the author proposes that there are challenges to face: 1. both countries need to work to promote bilateral understanding of economic, governance and cultural systems. 2. Pakistan-China needs to be vigilant to avert the USA and allies' propaganda. 3. Political parties of Pakistan must stop the credit game among themselves. They need to understand that China's relationship is with State of Pakistan and People of Pakistan. 4. Pakistan-China also needs to be aware of nexus of think-tanks and media. It can be inferred from the above discussion that Pakistan-China relationship are multidimensional and all-inclusiveness. The relationship is deeply based in the hearts of the people. Therefore, relationship is sustainable and can face any adversary. World is cognizant of this fact; thus, they keep changing their tactics. So, Pakistan-China needs to be extra conscious.

**Key words:** Pakistan; China, Relation, trade, history, cooperation

### Introduction

Pak-China relationship cannot be understood by applying traditional theories and concepts of international relation. Relationship has been developed on the basis of mutual respect, inclusiveness and principles of brotherhood. Brotherhood is a unique model of international relationship, which have no precedent. The relationship started as business as usual but meeting of Prime Minister Muhammad Ali Bogra and Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai in 1955, changed the whole dynamics.

Since then, relationship got stronger with every passing moment and successive generations carried the message of brotherhood. The history is full of examples, where both

countries stood shoulder to shoulder to face all challenges. China never compromised on core interests of Pakistan and Pakistan never compromised on the core interests of China. Along the time, both countries explored all options to strengthen the relationship and established trusted and deep linkages in all fields including defence, trade, culture, science and technology.

### Brief History

The journey of relationships started with formal recognition of China by Pakistan, as Pakistan was among first few countries which recognized the new state of China. Diplomatic relationship was established on 21 May 1951. In the first phase of 1950s, relationship was shaky due to confusion and Pakistan's initial stance on Taiwan and Tibet.

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However, both countries worked together to sort the confusion and paved the way for sustainable relationship. The relationship started to flourish from 1957 onward. The major breakthrough happened in 1963 after the signing the boundary treaty<sup>[1]</sup>.

Leadership of both countries continued to invest on strengthening the relationship. Pakistan provided air corridor to China to facilitate Chinese linkages with global market. Pakistan also helped to break the ice between China and USA. It was Pakistan, which led the initial contacts and facilitated both countries to meet for further discussion. It led to breakthrough in China-USA relationship, which opened the world for China. Pakistan also led the campaign for restoration of seat of China in UN security Council. During the Korean war, Conflict with USSR and USA negative campaign, Pakistan stood with China. Pakistan also helped China to fight the natural disasters during 1960s and 1970s.

On other hand, China was also gracious to deal with Pakistan. China assisted Pakistan to overcome the shocks of 1965 and 1971 wars. China gave Pakistan first grant in 1965 of US\$ 60 million. Later on, an interest free loan of US\$ 217 million was also provided during the 1971-1975. There are rumors that after the breaking of Pakistan 1971, China write off a loan of US\$ 1.2 billion<sup>[2]</sup>. However, we cannot find any official document, which can substantiate this claim.

Howbeit, many people argue that bilateral relation took a new turn after the speech of President Jiang Zemin in 1996. He emphasized on strengthening the economic linkages and expand our relation in every field. President Musharraf in 2000 also echoed the same and asked China, lets draw new framework of economic linkages. After that Prime Minister Zhu Rongji made a special visit to Pakistan during 2001, to celebrate 50 years of friendship. President Hu Jintao took the mental of friendship to new height and started to enhance bilateral relationship. President Musharraf again visited China in 2003, which led to formulation of concrete framework for cooperation. President Hu Jintao and Musharraf signed Beijing Declaration, which paved the way for landmark initiatives in coming years. Beijing Declaration focused on following areas

- Economy
- Trade
- Investment

- Agriculture,
- Science and technology
- Tourism

Moreover, it was agreed that both countries will work to strengthen relationship in the fields of field telecommunication, water conservancy, electric power, aviation and space technology, computer, automation, metallurgy, IT, medicine and health, petrochemistry, biotechnology and peaceful utilization of nuclear power, industrial zone, human resource and export zones etc. in coming years<sup>[3]</sup>.

It is also widely believed that Beijing Declaration provides us blueprint of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. The argument can be strengthened by analyzing the agreements signed in 2006, 1) Free Trade Agreement and 2) Framework Agreement on Energy Cooperation<sup>[4]</sup>, during the visit of President Hu Jintao to Pakistan. President Zardari also continued the momentum and visited China many times to further enhance cooperation. Prime minister Nawaz Sharif followed his predecessor and signed the landmark agreement on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). In the conclusion, it is pertinent to highlight that China-Pakistan brotherhood is result of continuous engagement. Although, CPEC is final product of historical cooperation between two countries, but two kept on signing bilateral agreements to strengthen the relationship (Table-1)<sup>[5]</sup>.

### **Trade and Investment**

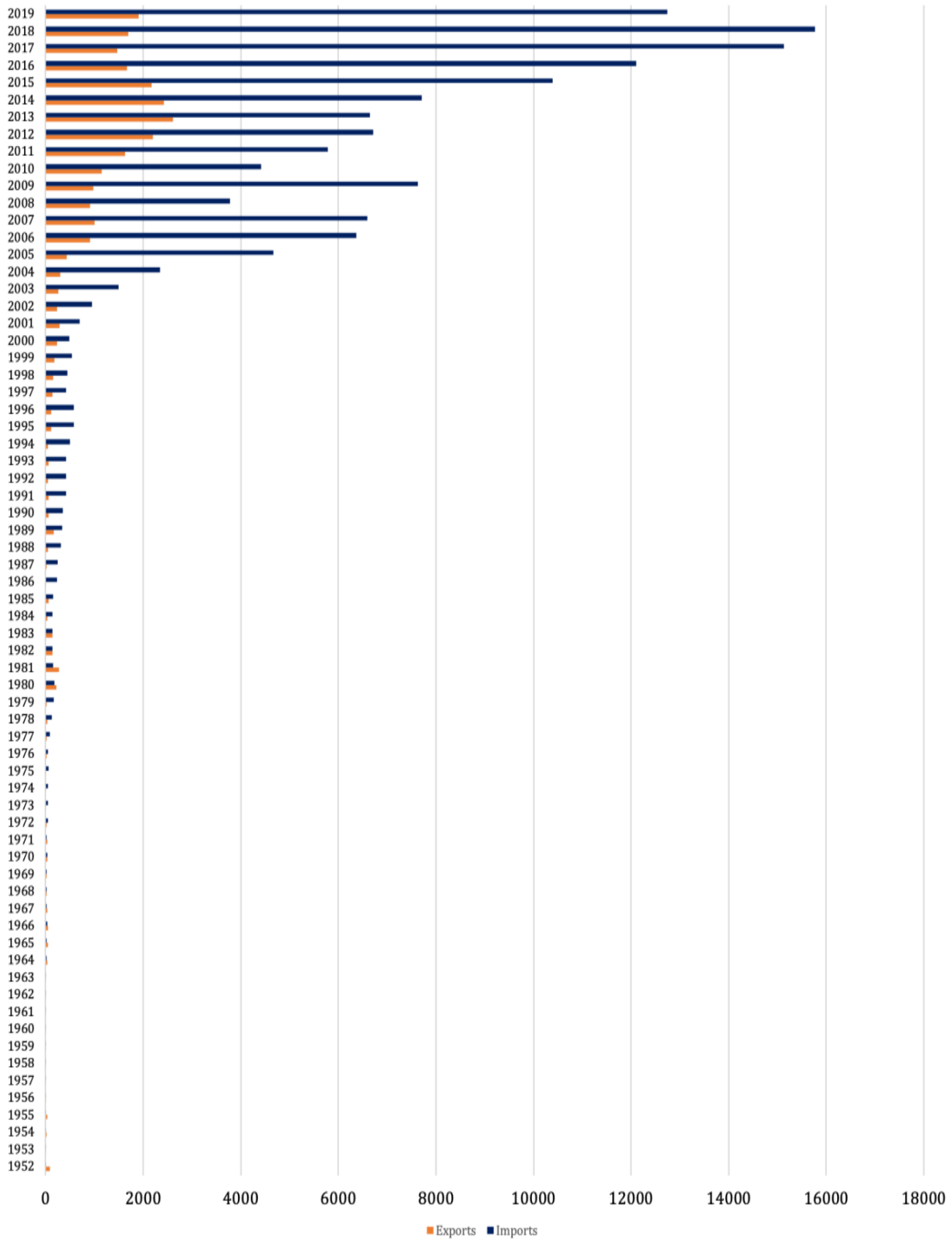
Despite, initial confusion, Pakistan and China made serious efforts to strengthen economic linkages. Therefore, we can see that first trade transaction happened in 1952 of US\$ 86 million worth. It is interesting to note here that trade balance was heavily biased in favor of Pakistan. Pakistan exported goods of US\$ 84 million and imported goods of worth of US\$ 2 million<sup>[6]</sup>. However, Pakistan could not maintain the momentum and trade balance started to shift in favor of China (Graph-1). There can be many reasons of this decline, but major reasons were;

1. Pakistan's economic linkages with western countries, especially during the industrial boom and green revolution
2. After going for reforms, China underwent a rapid growth period, which led to enhance surplus and trade

**Table-1: Major Agreements Signed between China-Pakistan**

<i>Agreement</i>	<i>Date</i>
<b>Barter Trade Agreement</b>	September 30 1963
<b>Banking Agreement</b>	June 16 1965
<b>Four loans covering trade and military aid</b>	Year, 1965
<b>Machinery and Technical Support</b>	June 23 1966
<b>Raw cotton, Jute, Surgical instruments and others</b>	July 4 1966
<b>100,000 Tons of Rice from China</b>	August 1 1966
<b>150,000 Tons of Rice from China</b>	January 17 1967
<b>100,000 Tons of Rice from China</b>	August 2 1967
<b>50,000 Tuna from China</b>	August 12 1967
<b>Barter Agreement (Exchange of goods)</b>	April, 1968
<b>Barter Agreement (Exchange of goods)</b>	May, 1970
<b>Interest Free Loan (From China)</b>	November, 1970
<b>Trade Agreement</b>	July, 1971
<b>Three Year Commodity Agreement</b>	Year 1972
<b>Trade Agreement (Xinjiang-Gilgit)</b>	May, 1972
<b>Trade Agreement</b>	June, 1972
<b>Agreement to Export Cotton Yarn and Textiles (to China)</b>	December, 1972
<b>Trade Protocol Signed</b>	October 25 1975
<b>Agreement Signed where China Provided Textile Machinery</b>	November, 1975
<b>China granted Pakistan credit worth \$4.293 million</b>	Year 1976
<b>Barter Agreement</b>	July, 1984
<b>China-Pakistan Border Trade Agreement</b>	November, 1985
<b>Nuclear Cooperation Agreement (4 Power Reactors)</b>	September, 1986
<b>Joint Venture to build TV Assembly/Manufacturing Factory</b>	Year 1987
<b>China provides technical and financial assistance to Saindak Mining Project</b>	October, 1988
<b>Four agreements signed between Pak-China (IFL)</b>	November 14 1989
<b>Agreement for a Nuclear Power Reactor from China</b>	Year 1990
<b>Agreement for Assistance in Building Reactor</b>	Year 2000
<b>MOU through PTCL and ZTE</b>	May 12 2001
<b>Financial Assistance in Building Gwadar Port</b>	March 22 2002
<b>Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Good-neighbourly Relations</b>	April 5 2005
<b>Free Trade Agreement</b>	November, 2006
<b>27 Agreements and MOUs</b>	April 17 2007
<b>Construction of Neelam-Jhelum Hydroelectric Project</b>	December 19 2007
<b>Agreement for Nuclear Cooperation (Reactor Building)</b>	June, 2010
<b>Currency Swap Agreement</b>	December 23 2011

**Graph-1: Historical Data of Trade Pak-China Trade (US\$ Million)**



## Trade and Investment

Despite, initial confusion, Pakistan and China made serious efforts to strengthen economic linkages. Therefore, we can see that first trade transaction happened in 1952 of US\$ 86 million worth. It is interesting to note here that trade balance was heavily biased in favor of Pakistan. Pakistan exported goods of US\$ 84 million and imported goods of worth of US\$ 2 million<sup>[7]</sup>. However, Pakistan could not maintain the momentum and trade balance started to shift in favor of China (Graph-1). There can be many reasons of this decline, but major reasons were;

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Despite, challenges Pakistan-China always looked for avenues to give a boost to trade and investment and continued to sign the agreement. Owing to this importance, both countries signed a comprehensive trade and economic linkages agreement right after signing the boundary agreement in 1963<sup>[8]</sup>. Apart from other agreements, Pakistan-China signed a comprehensive agreement to strengthen and protect bilateral investment in 1989. It led to flow of investment from China to Pakistan. Many private and state-owned enterprises started to venture in Pakistani markets. Huawei, Haier and Zong were the early birds, which came with huge investment.

Huawei started its operation in 1998. It is now leader in technology field in Pakistan. It paid almost US\$ 43 million in taxes in 2018, which shows the strengthen of its operation in Pakistan. Huawei is providing a good number of jobs (16000 direct and 25000 indirect). It is also investing on talent and human resource development through the Huawei ICT Academies, Huawei ICT competition and Seed for Future<sup>[9]</sup>. Haier is leading brand in home appliances in Pakistan. It started with US\$ 45 million and now its operations stand at US\$ 1 billion<sup>[10]</sup>. Zong helped to revolutionized telecom sector. It is biggest data provider with 55 percent share in market<sup>[11]</sup>. It was estimated that total investment of Zong in Pakistan was US\$ 2.2 billion<sup>[12]</sup>. Pakistan-China also signed Free Trade Agreement in 2006 to further strengthen bilateral trade (Table-2).

**Table-2: Pak-China FTA**

FTA Phase-I	Pakistan's Offer List for China	China's Utilization of FTA	China's Offer List for Pakistan	Pakistan's Utilization of FAT
<b>100% reduction (3 Years)</b>	2423	1332	2681	169
<b>0-5% (5 Years)</b>	1338	747	2604	72
<b>Reduction on Margin of Preference of 50% (5 Years)</b>	157	92	604	31
<b>Reduction on Margin of Preference of 20% (3 Years)</b>	1768	1174	529	29
<b>No Concession (Sensitive List)</b>	1026	556	1132	49
<b>Exclusion (Not to be Imported)</b>	92	8	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>6804</b>	<b>3909</b>	<b>7550</b>	<b>350</b>

It is unfortunate that Pakistan could not capitalize on the concessions offered under the FTA<sup>[13]</sup>. There are many reasons, but the major reasons are as following;

1. Pakistan included things in the FTA, where Pakistan did not comparative advantage over China
2. Pakistan did not study China-ASEAN free trade agreement, before signing Pak-China free trade agreement. It was observed that China was offering better concessions to ASEAN countries (Table-3)<sup>[14]</sup>.
3. War on terror also impacted the production capacity of Pakistan, which also affected the trade of Pakistan, and trade with China was no exception

of agreed lines<sup>[15]</sup>. Owing to this, we have witnessed an improvement and Pakistan's export showed a rising trend. It is good sign, but there is need to do more concrete efforts to fully benefit from the FTA-2.

**Table-3: Comparison of Pak-China FTA with China-ASEAN FTA**

Chapter	Description of Item	MFN Rate	FTA Pakistan	ASEAN FTA
1		10%	6.70%	0
2	Meat	12-15%	8%	0
3	Fist etc.	10-16%	5-14.8 some zero	0
4	Dairy produce	10-15%	6.7-13%	0
7	Edible vegetable and certain roots and tubers	7-13%	0-8.7%	0
8	Fruits	10-30%	6.7-16.5% Zero on mangoes, oranges and dates	0
11	Cereals	5-18%	6.7-15.7%	0
12	Oil Seeds	6-15%	5.3-8%	0
16	Meat/Fish preparation	5-15%	5.3-8%	0
27	Mineral fuels	3-11%	0-5.7%	0
29	Organic chemicals	2-5.6%	5.50%	0
32	Dyes, paints/varnishes	6.5-10%	5.5-6.7%	0
33	Perfumery, cosmetic or toilet preparation	10-15%	6.7-13%	0
39	Plastic	6.5-10%	5.5-6.7%	0
41	Raw hides/skins & leather	5-14%	5-12.2% few zero	0
42	Article of Leather	10-20%	6.7-14%	0
51	Wool	5-10%	5.3-6.7%	0
52	Cotton	5-10%	0-4.5%	0
57	Carpets	10-14%	6.7-12.2%	0
61	Articles of apparel knitted or crocheted	14-17.5%	9.4-13.9%	0
62	Articles of apparel not knitted/crocheted	14-16%	9.4-15.2% some zero	0
63	Textile made up articles	14-16%	9.4-13.9%	0
68	Articles of	8-24%	0-13%	0
69	Ceramic products	8-15%	6-13%	0
70	Glass and glassware	8-17.5%	6-15.2%	0
72	Iron and Steels	2-10%	0-5.7%	0
73	Articles of iron/steel		Up to 8%	0
82	Tools/Cutlery, Spoon/forks of base metal	8-18%	6-16.2%	0
84	Machinery & Equipment	4-15%	0-18.2%	0
94	Furniture	10-12%	6.7-25.2%	0

However, Pakistan has tried to mend the shortcomings of first FTA in second FTA. Pakistan secured zero duty on 3707 lines in total agreed lines of 8283 lines. It is almost 45 percent

In the conclusion, it is pertinent to mention here that till 2010 Chinese investment in Pakistan crossed the US\$ 15 billion

mark<sup>[16]</sup>. It shows that even before the CPEC, Chinese investment in Pakistan was on the rise.

### China Pakistan Economic Corridor

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is sign of strength of bilateral relation and result of trust, which is spread over 7 decades. Although, Pakistan-China was working together for decades but introduction of CPEC changed whole dynamics. CPEC started at a time, when Pakistan was going through worst part of its history. On one hand, Pakistan was fighting war on terror as frontline ally of USA and Western coalition. Pakistan had to face worst impact of this engagement. The war costed Pakistan more than US\$ 100 billion. Infrastructure was deteriorated. On top of everything Pakistan lost 70000 precious lives.

On economic front, electricity load shedding was playing havoc with national economy. Owing to load shedding industry started to shift from Pakistan. It hit the job creation capacity of country and hundreds of thousands of people lost their jobs. It was estimated that Pakistan was losing US\$ 4-5 billion on annual basis due to electricity shortages<sup>[17]</sup>. Pakistan was also in need US\$ 1.2 billion to rehabilitate road infrastructure, which was deteriorated due to NATO supply to Afghanistan. Pakistan was running pole to pole to overcome these challenges and looking for investment opportunities. Allies of war on terror turned back towards Pakistan. The most unfortunate part of the story was that our allies started to run malicious campaigns against Pakistan. They discouraged investment in Pakistan. USA and NATO allies were punishing Pakistan for the sacrifices to defeat terrorism and bring peace.

In these dire circumstances, China came forward and extended hand of help. CPEC was offered to Pakistan and President Xi Jinping travelled himself to sign the program. On the occasion, President Xi Jinping termed Pakistan-China as “iron brothers”. CPEC is a comprehensive and all-inclusiveness program which includes following areas of cooperations;

- Connectivity
- Energy
- Trade and industrial parks
- Agriculture development and poverty alleviation
  
- Tourism
- Cooperation in connecting people’s livelihoods and non-government exchanges
- Financial cooperation

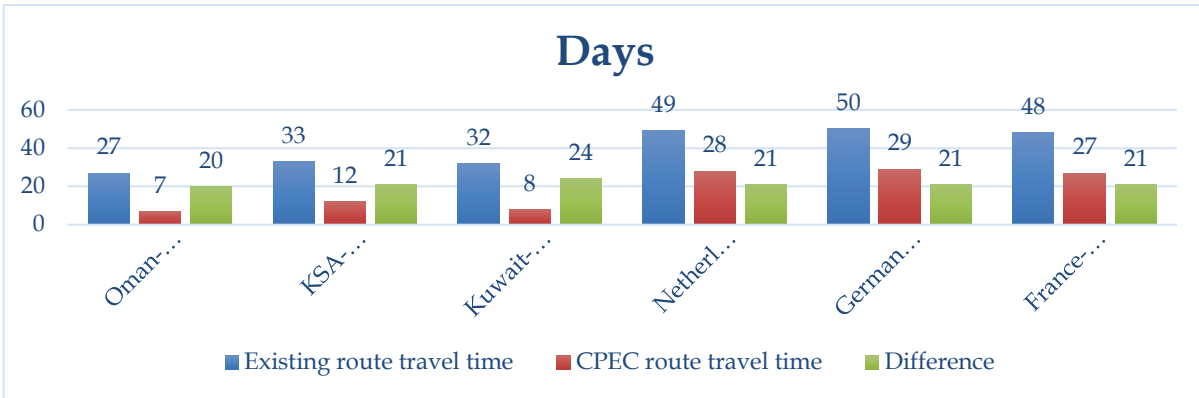
It was decided that first phase will look after urgent needs of Pakistan in the field of energy and road infrastructure. Thus, during first phase investment was diverted to these sectors, which helped Pakistan to overcome the challenges. Now Pakistan is reaping the benefits of successful execution of first phase. It has created more than 85000 jobs, even during COVID-19 it provided jobs to 23000 Pakistanis. It was estimated that more than 100 SMEs also benefited during first phase and created almost 200000 job indirectly<sup>[18][19]</sup>.

It is expected that Second Phase of CPEC will usher a new era of economic growth and sustainable development. As, we know second phase of CPEC is all about industrialization, agriculture and science and technology cooperation. World bank reports *Common Transport Infrastructure, A Quantitative Model and Estimates from the Belt and Road Initiative, The Belt and Road Initiative Economic, Poverty and Environmental Impacts, The Belt and Road Initiative Economic, Opportunities and Risks of Transport Corridors*, predicted that future benefits of CPEC and BRI would be enormous for Pakistan.

According to reports, Pakistan’s GDP will increase by 6.43% till 2030 and it can reach at 14.03%, if infrastructure investment is accompanied by reforms. Welfare impacts would be in the range of 5.18-10.51 percent. It will also help Pakistan to bring out 1.1 million people from poverty trap. It has also been predicted that the investment in infrastructure will create 4 million jobs till 2030<sup>[20][21]</sup>. If we include the industrialization, agriculture and science and technology, then the number of jobs will many more.

Besides, completion of CPEC route will also open new avenues of economic opportunities for Pakistan. Gwadar port will act as hub of regional and beyond the region economic connectivity. A study was published in *Advanced Journal of Transportation*<sup>[22]</sup> which came up with very encouraging figures of benefits from CPEC route. Study was conducted to analyze the potential benefits of China’s trade with 6 selected countries. It was predicted that use of CPEC route and Gwadar port, will immensely benefit China and trading partners. The results show that CPEC route will reduce travel time by 20 days for Oman, 21 days for KSA, 24 days for Kuwait, 2 days for Netherlands, 2 days for Germany and 21 days for France from China (Grap-2).

**Graph-2: Travel Difference**

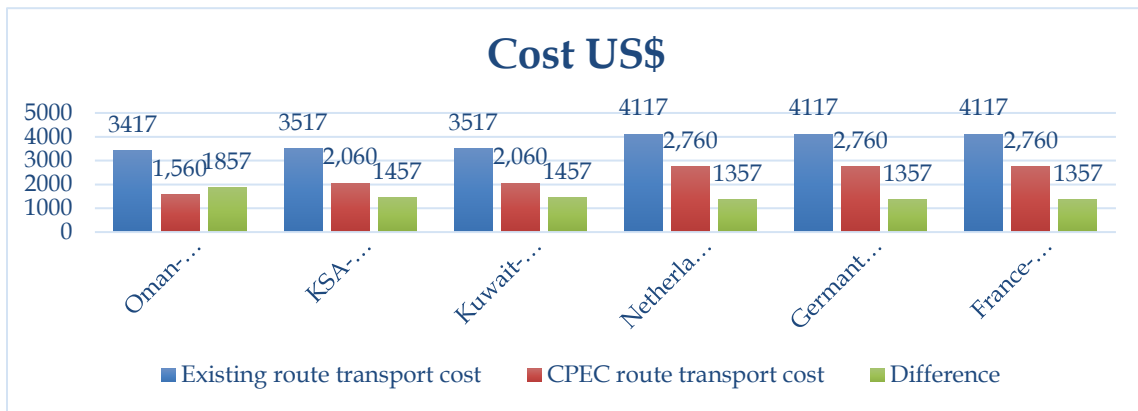


Source: Khalid Mahmood, Alam, et al, 2019

Study further explored the financial savings. It was pointed out that CPEC route will help to save US\$ 1857 for Oman, US\$ 1457 for KSA, US\$ 1457 for Kuwait, US\$ 1357 for Holland, US\$ 1357 for Germany and US\$ 1357 for France on per container (Graph-3). In this way, China will be able to save US\$ 71 billion on annual basis. Pakistan, being transit

country, will also benefit in terms of fees and other services. It was estimated that there would be additional income of US\$ 9-12 billion for Pakistan. This is really good news for Pakistan, as at this point of time Pakistan is looking for sustainable sources of income.

**Graph-3: Saving on Transportation**



Source: Khalid Mahmood, Alam, et al, 201

**Security Cooperation**

Pakistan-China have proved to be most reliable defence partners along the course of history. They always tried to stand shoulder to shoulder to protect each other's core interests. Pakistan never compromised on the issues of Taiwan, Hong Kong or Xinjiang. China also proved itself the most reliable friend and supported Pakistan issues like Kashmir etc. Both countries always work to strengthen the defence cooperation.



Although, Pakistan has defence cooperation with many countries including USA and EU, but dynamics of Pak-China cooperation are entirely different. China never tried to create dependency, rather China always try to help Pakistan to achieve self-sufficiency. It is not a statement; it is hard reality. It can be supported by concrete data. China helped Pakistan to build Taxila Heavy Industries, Heavy Forge and Foundry, Heavy Mechanical Complex, Heavy Re-build Factory at Taxila, ordnance factories, maritime industries, missile developments, and the Kamra Aeronautical Complex<sup>[23]</sup>. JF-17 is new addition and is sign of technology transfer. It is helping Pakistan to become exporter of high-quality fighter jet and good thing is that Pakistan has already started to export it.

Pakistan and China are also working together in modernizing the Navy of Pakistan. They have signed agreement to build 8 submarines in coming years. Pakistan is also providing unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAVs), which are providing edge to Pakistan among the regional players<sup>[24]</sup>. A-

### **Future Challenges and Recommendations**

Although, relationship is built on strong footing but there are certain areas which require serious attention. A few areas have discussed below;

1. Both countries need to work to promote bilateral understanding of economic, governance and cultural systems. It is key to sustain the future shocks, as we know USA and allies are working to create rift between two countries. Lack of understanding, especially culture can create serious problems.
2. Pakistan-China needs to be vigilant to avert the USA and allies' propaganda. As, we know USA have applied all instruments of smear campaign. They want to create rift between Pakistan and China. Thus, there is need to establish permanent system to identify and combat such propaganda. There is proposal to create joint counter-propaganda body.
3. Political parties of Pakistan must stop the credit game among themselves. They need to understand that China's relationship is with State of Pakistan and People of Pakistan. This senseless competition some time creates problems.
4. Pakistan-China also needs to be aware of nexus of think-tanks and media. It is open secret that think tanks and media are assisting their governments to create negativity about China-Pakistan relationship. Think tanks try to produce studies with dubious attentions and media propagate the message of these think tanks. Thus, there is need to create

100 Multiple Rocket Launchers is a very sophisticated weapon, which has been provided to Pakistan. Pakistan was first country to receive this and technology to produce rockets at home. HQ-16 and VT-1A are among other sophisticated weapons, which were provided to Pakistan<sup>[25]</sup>.

However, the most recent addition of J-10C in 2022, shows the uniqueness of relationship. Again, Pakistan is first country to receive J-10C. China provided these machines by keeping in mind the senseless propaganda of Indian establishment after getting Rafael.

Pakistan-China has also joined hand to face global challenges. After the illegal occupation of Kashmir, China raised voice for the oppressed Kashmiris. Pakistan is helping China to combat propaganda on Xinjian region.

Thus, it can be concluded that Pak-China defence cooperation is following the real spirit of brotherhood.

joint think tanks and media outlets to counter the propaganda.

### **Conclusion**

It can be inferred from the above discussion that Pakistan-China relationship are multidimensional and all-inclusiveness. The relationship is deeply based in the hearts of the people. Therefore, relationship is sustainable and can face any adversary. World is cognizant of this fact; thus, they keep changing their tactics. So, Pakistan-China needs to be extra conscious.

### **About the author:**

Shakeel Ahmad is a political economist with strong background in policy research, political economy, economic forecasting, global diplomacy and changing dynamics of global governance. He has deep understanding of China, Belt & Road Initiative China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB) climate change, environmental problems, mitigation, and Shanghai Cooperation Organization). He also works on cultural diversity, and principles of ecological civilization. Eurasia, Central Asia, Gulf Council of Cooperation, governance, digital diplomacy, IFIs, Non-human Security Threats and Leadership with Imagination. He wrote papers and books on these subjects. The publications can be found on universities and UN websites.

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