The Development of China-Pakistan Diplomatic Relations

Zhao Jing¹, Li Zhao¹, GuoYaling¹

¹Department of Foreign Languages Teaching and Research, Hebei Normal university, Shijiazhuang, China

Email: zhaojing@hebtu.edu.cn, lizhao1218@hebtu.edu.cn, prc@hebtu.edu.cn

Abstract: The conditions of China and Pakistan are different, but the friendly relationship has lasted for more than 70 years, which has enlightening significance for international relations in the world. Since the formal establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries on May 21, 1951, the development of relations between two countries can be divided into four stages: the first stage, known as the "adaptation stage", is in the 1950s. The exchanges between the two sides were mostly ceremonial and non-governmental. In the second stage, from the 1960s to the 1980s, China-Pakistan relations showed two characteristics: frequent high-level visits between the two countries and mutual support on international issues, which means China-Pakistan relations entered a "stable development". The third is in the 1990s, the "tested and sustained development stage", when the world situation has undergone drastic changes, and the friendly and cooperative relations between China and Pakistan have withstood the test and continued to develop. In the fourth stage, China-Pakistan relations have entered the "comprehensive stage in the new century", and the "all-weather" strategic cooperative partnership has been further strengthened and deepened.

Keywords: China-Pakistan diplomatic relations, all-weather strategic cooperative partners, four stages

Introduction

Introduction

China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperative partners. Though the two countries are quite different in ideology, social system, cultural tradition and economic development (as demonstrated in [1]), their diplomatic relations have not disturbed by international or domestic changes but steadily moved forward. Nearly 70 years after the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan on May 21, 1951, the two countries enjoy “all-weather friendship and all-round cooperation” which is the essence of the bilateral relations. Pakistanis describe this relationship as “higher than the mountains, deeper than the sea, sweeter than honey, and harder than steel”. Chinese regard Pakistan as s “iron brothers”. The close relationship between China and Pakistan is regarded as a model on the international stage. The development of close friendship between two countries with distinct characteristics has great implications for international relations. To summarize the essence of the relations, we divide the diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan into 4 stages: Adaptation, Stable Development, Tested and Sustained Development and Comprehensive Development in the New Century.

Adaptation: China-Pakistan Diplomatic Relations in the Early Days (1950s)

In August 1947, Pakistan became an independent country. On October 1, 1949, the People's Republic of China was established. Before independence, both countries had faced the historical task of anti-imperialism and anti-colonization and both people had the desire of peaceful and friendly exchanges with other people around the world. Chairman Mao Zedong said that there is a long-term friendship between people of the two countries. China and Pakistan were striving for lasting peace in Asia and the world and promoting economic and cultural cooperation. The establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan not only enhanced and consolidated their friendship, but also contributed to peace and stability worldwide.

On January 5, 1950, Mr. Shuaib Qureshi, Pakistan's ambassador to the Soviet Union, called Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai, announcing the recognition of the government of the people's Republic of China as the only legitimate government of China. (as demonstrated in [2]). Pakistan was the first Islamic country to recognize PRC China. On May 21, 1951, China and Pakistan established formal diplomatic relations after negotiation. At the beginning of the establishment of diplomatic relations, both countries attached great importance to the China-Pakistan friendship. On October 1, 1951, the first National Day of China after the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan, Pakistan's Governor General Sir Khawaja Nazimuddinand Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan sent a congratulatory message to Chairman Mao Zedong and Premier Zhou Enlai respectively. In the following years , Pakistan has sent congratulatory messages on China's National Day. On August 14, 1951, the first independence anniversary of Pakistan after the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan, Chairman Mao
Zedong of the Central People's government and Premier Zhou Enlai sent congratulatory messages to Nazimuddin, the Governor of Pakistan, and Ali Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, respectively. In the next few years, on Pakistan's Independent Day, the Chinese government and leaders also sent congratulatory messages.

In addition to the above exchanges, in March 1952, the Chinese delegation participated in the International Industrial Exhibition held in Pakistan; in 1953, the first trade agreement was signed with Pakistan (as demonstrated in[1]). China has made great efforts to develop relations and friendship between the two countries. Pakistan supported PRC China in restoring legitimate seat in the United Nations (as demonstrated in[1]). On May 17-18, 1952, Pakistan held a National Peace Conference in Lahore and passed a resolution on China, which said: "without the representative of China's 500 million people, who accounts for a quarter of the world's population, the decisions and resolutions of the United Nations are illegal and invalid since they are undemocratic and against the Charter." On July 15, 1954, Pakistan's Prime Minister, Mohammad Ali Bogra, said at a press conference in Karachi, Pakistan will support the People's Republic of China's entry into the UN. During this period, the high-level leaders of the two countries also conducted friendly exchanges and mutual visits. During the Bandung Conference in April 1955, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai held two friendly talks with Pakistani Prime Minister Mohammad Ali Bogra who promised that those military agreements signed by the Pakistani government did not mean any hostility to China. In October 1956, Prime Minister Suhrawardy of Pakistan was invited to pay an official visit to China. In December, Premier Zhou Enlai visited Pakistan. The successful mutual visits of the two prime ministers greatly promoted the development of friendly cooperative relations and friendship between the two countries.

**Stable Development : The Rapid Growth of China-Pakistan Diplomatic Relations (1960s-1980s)**

In the 1960s, historical changes took place in the relations between the two countries, opening a new chapter in China-Pakistan relations. From 1957 to 1960, Pakistan followed Western opinions on the restoration of China's legal status in the United Nations, as well as Taiwan Issue and Tibet Issue, which caused setbacks in political relations between the two countries. An important step in China-Pakistan relations was taken when the UN General Assembly voted to restore China's legal rights to the United Nations. In the Sino-Indian border conflict in 1962, Pakistan, according to Huaxing Times(as demonstrated in[3]), supported China's position in the belief that the responsibility for the border conflict lay in India and China was solely out of self-defense. During the Sino-Indian War, the United States signed the US-India Arms Agreement and provided a large amount of military assistance to India. In May 1962, China and Pakistan announced negotiations on border issues. On March 2, 1963, Chinese Chairman Liu Shaoqi and Premier Zhou Enlai attended the ceremony of signing the "Agreement Between the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of Pakistan on Border between China's Xinjiang and Various Areas where Pakistan Actually Controls Their Defense" by Chinese Vice Premier and Foreign Minister Chen Yi and Pakistani Foreign Minister Z.A.Bhutto at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

In September 1965, war broke out again between India and Pakistan due to the Kashmir dispute. On the one hand, the Indian army crossed the ceasefire line and launched an attack against Pakistan-controlled Kashmir. On the other hand, it crossed the India-Pakistan border and attacked Lahore of Pakistan. Regarding the conflict between India and Pakistan, China adheres to the standpoint of not being involved, but morally supports Pakistan and condemns the expansion of the Indian army. With request, China provided Pakistan with a batch of weapons and military assemblies as quickly as possible. In addition, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs addressed the Indian embassy in China three times in a row, protesting strongly against the invasion of the Chinese territory by the Indian army, demanding that India remove all its fortifications on China of the Sino-Ceylon border and stop all incursions on the border. India, worried that China would be involved in the India-Pakistan conflict, quickly withdrew all its troops on China of the China-Ceylon border and demolished the fortifications as required by China. After the war, Pakistan expressed sincere gratitude to China for its various support.

From 1965 to 1971, Pakistan has been a sponsor in successive United Nations General Assemblies, supporting the restoration of China's legal rights in the United Nations. Pakistan also played an important role in the process of Sino-US reconciliation. In August 1969, US President Nixon visited Pakistan and asked Pakistani President Yahya Khan to inform Chinese leaders his willingness to talk to China and improve relations between the two countries. Since then, President Yahya Khan has repeatedly sent letters to Chinese and American leaders, and carefully arranged the successful secret visit to China by Kissinger in 1971 and Nixon's visit to China in 1972.


In November 1971, India launched an aggressive attack on East Pakistan with the excuse of helping the East Pakistani people to achieve national autonomy. As a result, the third India-Pakistan war broke out. China gave Pakistan unconditional moral support on this issue, warning India of "serious consequences". By linking the China-India conflict with the India-Pakistan conflict, China has cultivated a sense of urgency between the major powers to end the India-Pakistan war, inhibiting some large powers from publicly supporting India and exerting as much pressure on Pakistan as they might have preferred. PRC China helped to achieve a ceasefire under conditions acceptable to Pakistan (as demonstrated in [5]). China resolutely stood by Pakistan and opposed India's unprovoked aggression against a sovereign state. On December 4, Huang Hua, the Permanent Representative of China to the UN Security Council, addressed an emergency meeting of the Security Council, stating that "The East Pakistan issue is purely Pakistan's internal affairs and no one has the right to interfere. The Indian government is using the East Pakistan issue as an excuse to invade Pakistan. It is intolerable."

**Tested and Sustained Development: China-Pakistan Diplomatic Relations (1990s-2000s)**

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the world situation has undergone tremendous changes: the international polar structure has ended, and peace and development have become the theme of the times. China-Pakistan friendly and cooperative relations that have stood the test of time have not been affected by the changes in the international situation and continue to move forward.


The most significant event in China-Pakistan relations in the 1990s was President Jiang Zemin's visit to Pakistan in 1996. The two sides decided to establish a comprehensive China-Pakistan cooperative partnership for the 21st century. President Jiang Zemin delivered an important speech entitled "Good-neighborly Friendship for Generations to Create a Better Future" in Pakistan, for the first time a comprehensive elaboration of China's South Asia policy. That is (1) Expanding exchanges and deepen traditional friendship; (2) Mutual respect and good neighborliness for generations; (3) Mutual benefit and reciprocity to promote common development; (4) Seeking common ground while reserving differences and properly handle differences; (5) cooperation for a better future. (as demonstrated in [6])

**Comprehensive Development: promotion and deepening of China-Pakistan Diplomatic Relations (the 21st century)**

Since the 21st century, comprehensive and cooperative partnership between China and Pakistan has further developed. The two countries have maintained frequent high-level exchange of visits and deepened political mutual trust.

The year of 2001 witnessed the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan, and a series of celebrations were held. In May, Premier Zhu Rongji was invited to visit Pakistan. In December, President Pervez Musharraf paid a state visit to China. In December 2001 and February 2002, President Jiang Zemin and President Musharraf spoke by telephone twice, and the two countries exchanged views on the international situation after the 911 attacks. In November 2003, President Musharraf paid a state visit to China after attending the second annual conference of Boao Forum for Asia in Hainan. The two heads of state signed the "Joint Declaration on the development direction of bilateral cooperation between China and Pakistan".

In April 2005, Wen Jiabao, Premier of the State Council, was interviewed by the Pakistan Associated Press in Beijing on the eve of his visit to four countries in South Asia. He made it clear that the Chinese government will, acting in accordance with the guiding principles and directions set forth in the China-Pakistan Joint Declaration on Directions of Bilateral Cooperation, work with Pakistan and take practical measures to expand and upgrade bilateral cooperation for the fundamental interests of the two countries and their peoples, as well as peace and development in the region. From April 5th to 7th, 2005, Premier Wen paid an official visit to Pakistan for three days. During this period, China and Pakistan signed more than 20 bilateral cooperation documents, covering various fields such as politics, economy and culture, among which the most striking one is the Treaty of good -Neighborliness and Friendly and Cooperation relations between China and Pakistan, which is considered as a milestone. China and Pakistan announced the establishment of closer strategic partnership.
In February 2006, President Musharraf paid another state visit to China. The two countries issued a joint statement, and Pakistan welcomed China as an observer of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). China welcomed Pakistan to become an observer of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and invited Pakistan to attend the SCO summit held in Shanghai in June. In return of the President Musharraf's formal visit, from November 23rd to 26th, President Hu Jintao paid an official visit to Pakistan, and it was the first visit by Chinese president in 10 years. On November 24th, President Hu Jintao delivered a speech at the Islamabad Convention Center on "carrying forward traditional friendship and deepening comprehensive cooperation". In his speech, President Hu said that “in 2003, we’ve signed the Joint Declaration on Directions of Bilateral Cooperation, which was followed by the signing of the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Good-neighborly Relations last year. This has brought our strategic partnership to a new stage. We should build on this momentum and enhance our cooperation in all areas to further strengthen our strategic partnership. China views its relations with Pakistan in strategic terms and from a long-term perspective. We will maintain close contacts between our leaders, expand exchanges and cooperation between the governments, legislatures, political parties and civic organizations of our countries, and maintain regular consultation and coordination on major issues of mutual concern through bilateral mechanisms in strategic, economic, technological, security and defense fields.” On November 29th, the two sides jointly issued Joint Statement Between the People’s Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Both sides agreed that the all-weather friendship and all-dimensional cooperation have become the defining features of China-Pakistan relations. China-Pakistan friendly relations and cooperation have become a fine example of friendly co-existence between developing countries and between neighboring countries.

In April 2007, Prime Minister Aziz of Pakistan paid an official visit to China and attended the Boao Forum for Asia annual meeting. In April 2008, Pakistani President Musharraf officially visited China and attended the Boao Forum for Asia annual meeting. In August and October, Pakistan’s new Prime Minister Gilani came to China to attend the Opening Ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games and the Asia Europe summit. In October, Pakistan’s new President Asif Zardari officially visited China for talks with President Hu Jintao, and the two countries issued a Joint Statement: “China will continue to view China-Pakistan relations from a strategic and long-term perspective, and make joint efforts with Pakistan to lift China-Pakistan strategic partnership of cooperation to a new high”. Pakistan stressed that Pakistan-China relationship is the cornerstone of its foreign policy, and friendship with China represents the common desire of all Pakistani people. Pakistan remained committed to continuing its policy of friendship towards China and making unremitting efforts to promote the healthy and steady growth of relations between the two countries.

On May 21, 2011, Chinese President Hu Jintao exchanged congratulatory messages with his Pakistani counterpart, Asif Ali Zardari, to mark the 60th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two countries. In his message, Hu said China cherishes its friendship with Pakistan and will always take the development of bilateral relations as one of its diplomatic priorities. China is willing to work with Pakistan to deepen the all-weather friendship and enhance all-dimensional cooperation to push the China-Pakistan strategic cooperative partnership to a new level. Pakistani President Zardari said in his message that although the two countries differ in size and economic and social systems, their profound relationship has withstood the tests of the changing times. He said the Pakistan-China relationship is good enough to serve as a model for other countries, adding that his country is proud of the friendship between the two countries.

From May 22 to 23, 2013, Premier Li Keqiang paid an official visit to Pakistan at invitation. The two sides issued the Joint Statement on Deepening China-Pakistan Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation. In July, Prime Minister Sharif of Pakistan paid an official visit to China, and the two sides issued the Common Vision for Deepening China-Pakistan Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation.

The two sides reaffirmed once again that should continue to actively promote the strategic partnership of cooperation and the tested all-weather friendship between China and Pakistan. China appreciated Pakistan’s long-term, staunch support on issues concerning China’s core interests. China would continue to extend its full support to Pakistan in the latter’s efforts to uphold its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, while respecting the development path chosen by the people according to its national priority, and support Pakistan in maintaining social stability and economic development. Pakistan reiterated that friendship with China was the cornerstone of its foreign policy, enjoying a national consensus. Pakistan appreciated the support and assistance of the Chinese government and people for Pakistan’s sovereignty and socio-economic development. Pakistan will continue to adhere to its one-China policy, oppose separatist activities in Taiwan and Tibet and support China’s efforts in combating the “Three Evils” of extremism, terrorism and separatism. We regard ETIM as our common threat and stand united in combating this menace.

On the 20-21 of April 2015, President Xi Jinping was invited to make an official visit to Pakistan and delivered an important speech in the Pakistan parliament entitled "Building a China-Pakistan Community of Shared Destiny to Pursue Closer Win-Win Cooperation". After the meeting with President Xi Jinping, President Hussain solemnly awarded the “Nishan-e-Pakistan”, “the country’s highest award for foreign leaders” to President Xi. This highest honor is full of appreciation and expectation for China and chairman Xi Jinping (as demonstrated in[7]). During the visit, China and Pakistan issued the Joint Statement on Building All-weather Strategic Partnership of Cooperation between the people’s Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. President Xi Jinping, President Hussain
and Prime Minister Sheriff agreed to elevate China-Pakistan relations to all-weather strategic cooperative partnership. It is the only one among the bilateral relations. President Xi Jinping commented: “This description of China-Pakistan partnership is a most appropriate one, as it aptly defines the all-weather friendship and all-round cooperation between China and Pakistan.”

In June, President Husein of Pakistan attended the Qingdao summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. In November, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan came to China to attend the first China International Import Expo, then paid an official visit to China. The two sides jointly issued the Joint Statement between the People’s Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on Strengthening China-Pakistan All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership and Building Closer China-Pakistan Community of Shared Future in the New Era. In the statement, the two sides reiterated that they continue to view China-Pakistan Relations from a strategic and long-term perspective. Both sides agreed to establish the mechanism of China-Pakistan Foreign Ministers’ Strategic Dialogue and rename the former Strategic Dialogue at Vice Foreign Minister-level to Political Consultations. In December 2018, the second China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Foreign Ministers’ Dialogue was held in Kabul, Afghanistan. State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani of Afghanistan and Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi of Pakistan were present. During the dialogue, the three sides signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Anti-terrorism Cooperation and jointly issued a joint statement.

On April 2019, China’s President Xi Jinping, vice president Wang Qishan and Premier Li Keqiang met with Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan respectively. After the meeting, the two Prime Ministers witnessed the signing of a number of bilateral cooperation documents. In May 2019, vice president Wang Qishan visited Pakistan. He noted that China is willing to work with Pakistan to deepen high-level exchanges, enhance strategic communication and practical cooperation as well as closely coordinate in international and regional affairs. Prime Minister Imran Khan stressed that Pakistan will continue to strengthen coordination with China on international and regional affairs and enrich the connotations of the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership between Pakistan and China. After the meeting, President Arif Alvi conferred on Wang Qishan the Nishan-e-Pakistan.

On June 2019, Chinese President Xi Jinping met with Prime Minister Imran Khan of Pakistan in Bishkek. Xi pointed out that in the past eight months, Xi and Imran Khan had met for three times, fully reflecting the high level of China-Pakistan all-weather strategic cooperative partnership. Given the complex international and regional situation, China and Pakistan need to carry out closer coordination and cooperation to build a closer China-Pakistan community of shared future. China supports Pakistan and India in improving their relations.

On October 9, 2019, President Xi Jinping met with Prime Minister Imran Khan of Pakistan at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse. Xi Jinping emphasized that China and Pakistan are unique all-weather strategic cooperative partners. No matter how the international and regional situation changes, China-Pakistan friendship has always been unbreakable and rock-solid, and bilateral cooperation has always maintained strong vitality with continuous expansion. China has always taken Pakistan as a priority in its diplomacy, and will continue to firmly support Pakistan on issues concerning its core interests and major concerns. China is willing to work with Pakistan to strengthen strategic coordination and practical cooperation so as to forge a closer China-Pakistan community of shared future in the new era. Pakistan is grateful to China for always adhering to principles and upholding justice and for its firm support and selfless help to Pakistan. Facts have shown that China is Pakistan's all-weather strategic cooperative partner and bilateral friendship enjoys popular support. Pakistan looks forward to continuing to strengthen exchanges, coordination and cooperation with China and firmly advance the construction of the CPEC so as to make it a successful example of the Belt and Road Initiative. Pakistan will continue to firmly advance counter-terrorism efforts to safeguard security and stability.

**Influence and Significance of China-Pakistan Diplomatic Relations**

From 1951 to 2020, China-Pakistan relations have lasted for nearly 70 years. During this period, both China and Pakistan have experienced tremendous changes in various international and domestic situations and have experienced the changes of many heads of the government. The "all-weather friendship" has been established and tested by time. Closer cooperation between China and Pakistan has promoted regional and world peace and development. The two countries are sharing broad consensus and common interests in dealing with major international issues such as traditional and non-traditional security threats. Both countries maintain close communication, coordination, effective cooperation in international and regional affairs, reform of the United Nations and the Security Council and other issues (as demonstrated in [8]). China and Pakistan are both positive forces in maintaining world and regional peace. Unbreakable and rock-solid bilateral cooperation has made the relations between China and Pakistan remain vigorous, expanded and deepened. China has always placed Pakistan as a priority in its diplomacy, willing to work with Pakistan to strengthen strategic and practical cooperation and build a closer China-Pakistan community of shared future in the new era. Pakistan firmly supports China in safeguarding its own security and development interests around the world. The two sides are promoting construction of the CPEC with high standards, building energy and transportation infrastructure, industrial parks and livelihood projects. The two countries are trying to build CPEC as a demonstration project of the Belt and Road Initiative and actively promoting cooperation in many fields such as infrastructure construction, nuclear power, railway, agriculture, culture, and education, so as to promote mutual benefit and establish win-win cooperation.
**Conclusion**

China and Pakistan support each other politically, cooperate strategically and economically. They are known as "models of friendly coexistence between countries with different social systems and cultural backgrounds". Since the beginning of the 21st century, the international community has experienced turmoil, economic crisis and regional conflicts, but China and Pakistan share the same international interests, have common views on many international and regional issues, and need closer coordination and cooperation. The historical rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and the development and transformation of Pakistan need a stable surrounding environment. China and Pakistan should continue to strengthen exchanges and communication in regional and international affairs, continue to live in harmony, maintain good neighborly friendship, respect for multiple civilizations and unity and cooperation, jointly create a regional environment of peace and stability, equality, mutual trust, win-win cooperation, and make greater contributions to world peace and development.

Looking back on history, the visionary leaders of the older generation of the two countries have built up a solid China-Pakistan friendship. Looking forward into the future, the new generation of the two countries is confident to seize historical opportunities and continue to write a new chapter of China-Pakistan cooperation.

**Acknowledgments:**

This study was funded by “2022 Social Science Foundation Project of Hebei province of China”, No.HB22YY014.

**REFERENCES**