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Pakistan–China Relations at 75:
From Ancient Civilizational Exchanges to a Comprehensive
Strategic Partnership



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The historical evolution of Pakistan–China relations extends far beyond the establishment of formal diplomatic ties in 1951. Their relationship is rooted in centuries of cultural, commercial, and religious exchanges that flourished along the ancient Silk Road. As historian Xie Milin



observes in *China–Pakistan: A History of Cultural Exchanges* (Chīn–Pākistān Saqāfatī Tabādulon kī Tārīkh), these cultural exchanges created long-term goodwill between the people of both regions. This historical perspective echoes former Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai’s observation that friendly exchanges between the Chinese and Pakistani peoples date back to the dawn of history.

In contemporary diplomacy, Pakistan–China relations are widely described as an “all-weather friendship,” a term that highlights the resilience of their strategic and political partnership. However, this diplomatic expression alone does not fully capture the broader historical evolution of the relationship, which has been shaped by centuries of cultural interaction and strengthened by seventy-five years of formal diplomatic engagement. As Pakistan and China celebrate this milestone, greater public understanding and people-to-people engagement are essential to sustaining the partnership, reinforcing the cultural and historical bonds that have long connected the two nations beyond political and strategic cooperation.

Edward Hallett Carr argued in his book *What Is History?* That history is an ongoing dialogue between the past and the present. According to Carr, historians inevitably interpret the past through the questions and concerns of their own time. The significance of these 75 years of diplomatic relations lies not merely in commemorating a historical milestone but in understanding how decades of political trust, strategic cooperation, and economic partnership continue to shape current bilateral relations.

The relationship of Pakistan and China is now entering a new era of unprecedented cooperation which is marked by the series of agreements between both states. Pakistan came into existence as an independent state on 14 August 1947. During its

formative years the country faced immense political, economic and security challenges, including the need to cultivate trusted allies and to respond to the regional and international adversaries.

Pakistan's recognition of the People's Republic of China on 4 January 1950 was a significant diplomatic step that reflected its pragmatic foreign policy and paved the way for the establishment of formal diplomatic relations on 21 May 1951. Since then, Pakistan-China relations have evolved into a unique comprehensive strategic partnership founded on mutual trust, respect, and cooperation.

From ancient times to the present, this region had developed a rich and complex cultural heritage through Silk Road, served as the bridge of civilizational exchange across the region. Today this legacy finds modern expression in CPEC.

Historically, Pakistan and China have shared common strategic concerns related to India, which resulted in gradual development of close and trustworthy relationship. Chinese Consul General in Karachi, Mr. Yang Yundong, described the 75th anniversary of the establishment



of diplomatic relations as a significant milestone in the history of Pakistan-China relations. He noted that the foresight of the early leaders of both countries laid the foundation for a partnership that has remained resilient and time-tested over the past seven decades. He further emphasized that the anniversary provides an opportunity to reflect on the historical evolution of bilateral ties while serving as a platform to deepen future cooperation. The historical evolution of Pakistan-China relations reached a new phase with the start-up of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), is China's flagship global connectivity strategy and central to the foreign policy of People's Republic of China, seeks to enhance global trade, infrastructure, and technological cooperation. A key component of this connectivity is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which has been under implementation in Pakistan since 2015. CPEC is representing an evolutionary milestone in Pakistan-China relations, building upon centuries of historical interaction and transforming their traditional friendship into a comprehensive strategic

economic partnership. Pakistan is traditionally an agriculture-based economy, with agriculture playing a central role in employment, food security, and economic development. In recent years, this sector has been undergoing gradual modernization through cooperation with China in agricultural technology, agro-industry, and innovation. This advancement and transformation has been facilitated by the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which has created new opportunities for technology transfer, investment, and capacity building, contributing to the vision of a greener and more productive agricultural sector in Pakistan. Pakistan and China are now reaffirming their commitment to strengthening bilateral military cooperation and strategic coordination. The “iron-clad” friendship between Pakistan and China has been reflected in China’s consistent diplomatic, political, and defense cooperation with Pakistan. This close friendship has enabled China to support Pakistan on numerous regional and international forums, particularly in matters related to security and defense. Reflecting the strategic dimension of bilateral relations, Chinese defense officials have reiterated their commitment to enhancing military cooperation with Pakistan through regular joint exercises, technological collaboration, and high-level exchanges. The continuation of exercises such as Warriors, Ocean Guards, and Eagles demonstrates the institutionalization of defense cooperation, while official references to the enduring “iron-clad” friendship underscore the importance of long-term strategic trust and people-to-people goodwill to both governments.

The 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between both nations marks a milestone in the history of bilateral cooperation. It clarifies that the Pakistan–China friendship is not merely



rooted in a rich historical legacy but continues to evolve with renewed dynamism and strategic relevance. From diplomatic and defense cooperation to economic integration through the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), agricultural modernization, and technological collaboration, this cooperation and friendship have expanded into multiple dimensions. As both countries navigate an increasingly complex



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international environment, their enduring friendship, shared commitment to mutual development and shared future plan are likely to remain important pillars of regional stability and prosperity. The celebration of this anniversary, therefore, is not only a reflection on past achievements but also a reaffirmation of a shared vision for the future.