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Beyond Diplomacy:
Pakistan–China Strategic Partnership in the Era of Regional
Connectivity



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Pakistan and China relations have been evolved from diplomatic friendship into a strategic partnership that basically centered on economic integration, and their future depends on turning the China Pakistan Economic Corridor into broader platform for the regional connectivity, stability and trade. CPEC became the cornerstone of the all weather strategic cooperative partnership of Pakistan and China after 2013. Pakistan recognized China in 1950 and diplomatic relations were established in 1951, relationship has been expanded from politics and security into trade, energy, infrastructure and long term regional planning, growth and stability. This relationship is just not about the friendship between two states. It is about that how two countries with huge population use their relationship to achieve national goals: like Pakistan seeks investment ,development, energy, and connectivity, while China seeks economic integration, secure routes and regional influence. Over time, the relationship between China and Pakistan deepened because both states found benefits in cooperation despite of different political systems, regional tussle and regional pressures.



The most significant feature of this partnership was consistency, many states have amiable relationships but after sometime they become enemies why? Because they lack consistency, but the beauty of such relations like Pakistan and China have, even when regional alignments got changed, the relationships remained stable and mutually useful. Post World wars and in Era of Cold war, Pakistan want a reliable regional partner, so Pakistan viewed China as a reliable strategic partner, while China saw Pakistan as a bridge to South Asia and the Muslim world and significant neighbour. All of this created a strong political foundation that later, supported economic cooperation and strategic partnership. This cordial relationship gradually moved beyond symbolic friendship into practical cooperation in trade, energy ,defense, diplomacy and development.

Strategic partnership symbolize that this relationship is not just temporary or issue based or to help each other in worse times but it is built around on long term geopolitical interests. For Pakistan, China have significant role, as China provides military cooperation, diplomatic support and an alternative major power partnership in a difficult regional environment, where Pakistan have hostile relations with some neighbours . For China, Pakistan provides regional

access, strategic depth and dependable partner in South Asia. Pakistan and China's partnership has remained durable because it is based on converging interests rather than emotional rhetoric alone, it is reliable and pragmatic. Relationships between states become strongest when it serves concrete goals like regional influence, security cooperation and infrastructure building.

China Pakistan economic corridor is the most significant modern development in contemporary times between Pakistan and China relations. Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Pakistan describes China Pakistan economic corridor as the cornerstone of the all weather strategic cooperative partnership, as launched in 2013. It changed the relationship



dimension from mainly focus on political and military cooperation into large scale economic development and infrastructure collaboration. China Pakistan economic corridor includes ports, projects, roads, energy and mainly industrial cooperation, but on ground level pragmatic approach describes its deeper significance as it links Pakistan's geography to wider regional trade flows and that is the plus point for Pakistan. In my opinion , China Pakistan economic corridor can become a regional connector for the Middle East and South Asia , creating opportunities for transport , energy, trade, markets, and shared prosperity. As it connects diplomacy with development goals. Regional connectivity means creating links between countries through different ways like, transport, communication, energy, trade, and human exchange. In the Pakistan and China case, China Pakistan economic corridor can help to connect Pakistan not only to China, but also to Central Asia, Afghanistan, Iran and the broader regional chain. This lens is more inspiring dimension than a simple bilateral relations. Regional connectivity matters more, one of the significant reason is that, the isolated economies grow slowly, while connected economies can trade more, attract more investment and reduce transport costs. China Pakistan economic corridor is most beneficial for Pakistan as, if managed well, it can helps to improve Pakistan's logistics, access to external markets and energy supply.

In Economic dimension , which is the core of this relationship includes trade industrial cooperation, investment and development financing, it is not just about diplomacy but energy projects, infrastructure, industrial zones, and trade expansion under China Pakistan economic corridor. Economic cooperation has brought visible benefits, economic cooperation is like a

backbone in developing country like Pakistan. Economic cooperation helps to build infrastructure, industries , energy sources but Pakistan ensure that projects are transparent, locally beneficial and productive. Some recent studies shed light on deepening the partnership sustainably requires more transparency, strategic diversification and local inclusion.

In Challenges and criticism the main concerns in my opinion include security risks, debt sustainability, political uncertainty , uneven local benefits and administrative delays. These challenges do not mean the partnership has hidden politics or it is used as a tool for regional hegemony but in actual they mean the partnership needs more better management. One of the main challenge in contemporary times is regional geopolitics is changing.

As competition increases around the South Asia and the broader Indo Pacific, Pakistan and China must adjust accordingly their cooperation to new realities. The future of the relationship will depend not only on goodwill or cordiality, but also on how effectively both sides solve practical problems in pragmatic way. Future of Pakistan and China relations lies in changing and expanding from bilateral projects to regional integration. If China Pakistan economic corridor is linked to trade, industrial development, facilitation, education, science, and cross border connectivity, it can become a sustainable long term growth engine as it moves from strategic partnership to the future of regional connectivity.

In my opinion I divide future in three layers: First one is deepening infrastructure and energy cooperation. Second one is improving industrial and technological collaboration. And the last one is turning Pakistan into a connectivity hub linking to multiple regions.



Pakistan and China relations are among the most durable partnerships in Asia, and their next stage must focus on inclusive development, sustainable economic cooperation rather than symbolic diplomacy alone and regional integration. I saw this relationship as zero -sum alliance, but as a practical partnership it is shaped by geography, development needs and security. Pakistan China relationship have moved on from early diplomatic recognition to an all weather strategic partnership, and the next phase of this partnership will depend on China Pakistan economic corridor can evolve into a wider framework for regional connectivity, stable economic integration and shared prosperity.



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