

A Study of Pakistan-China Defense Relations (2000-2012)

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Abstract

Pakistan and China have cordial bilateral relations right from the very beginning. Pakistan being the most significant Muslim country located at a geo-strategically important juncture and equipped with nuclear deterrent while China being the most emergent economic and technological giant have remained the focus of attention for regional and international political actors. Owing to the strategically complex regional location and the obvious involvement of major political actors of international community herein, both countries have to strengthen the mutual defense ties. Both countries are currently working jointly in all fields related to defense including nuclear cooperation and development of conventional and non-conventional weaponries. Gawadar Port is a geo-strategically important project which is being developed jointly by both countries. The said port and the respective region are constantly under attack by the countries which do not want Pak-China collaboration to flourish. In the context of War Against Terrorism, it is quite significant to examine the quantum of defense collaboration between both countries to conclude that whether Pakistan-China defense relations have been affected by the said war positively or negatively. The present study finds that in spite of various hurdles being present between both countries to improve their geostrategic relationship; both are still managing to strengthen their bilateral defense collaboration.

Keywords: Pakistan, China, defense, geostrategic, relationship, War Against Terrorism,

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Pakistan was one of the few countries of the world which recognized an independent China at a very early stage. On May 21, 1951, the two countries officially established diplomatic relations. However, in the initial phase, both countries did not have much cordial relations because Pakistan slanted towards Western Block due to SEATO and CENTO (Amin, 2010). Bandung (Indonesia) Conference of 1955 provided both countries an opportunity to expand their bilateral relations but some later events disturbed it. The said events included the arrival of Hajj Mission in 1959 from Taiwan (Ibid), proposal of common defense to India by President Ayub (Sharif-al-Mujahid, 1964) and border clashes between Islamabad and Beijing in Hunza sector in summer of 1959. (Sharma, 1967) Besides, the McMahon Line boundary conflict was at the heart of relations between China and India. (Global Security, December 16, 2013) There were two main reasons of the said conflict: the territorial dispute over Aksai Chin (Kashmir) and Arunachal Pradesh (the disputed area is almost 90,000 square kilometre) and Indian assistance to the exiled Dalai Lama rule of Tibet. (Chu, April 01, 2007) China-India war of 1962 and border accord amid Pakistan and China in 1963 consequently started a new era of strategic cooperation between the two countries. (Choudhry, 1975)

In February 1964, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai visited Pakistan and, in turn, President Ayub Khan visited China in December of the same year. The bilateral relations strengthened during the visit of President Ayub to China. (Bhutto, 1967) India attacked Pakistan in September 1965 wherein China openly supported Pakistan against India not only diplomatically but also supplied weapons. After the war, defense collaboration started between two countries. (Hussain, 1974) During the war of 1971 with India, China again supported Pakistan and supplied weapons to her. (Nixon, 1972) On request of Pakistan, it used the veto power for the first time in order to block entry of Bangladesh into United Nations. (Ibid) At that stage, the defense cooperation between two countries was restricted to a relatively small scale. The cooperation reached to a higher level when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto became the new President of Pakistan who paid his first foreign visit to China which boosted the relations of both countries. According to Bhutto, the visit enhanced the cooperation between two countries in all sectors. (Bhutto, 1977)

DEFENSE RELATIONS (2000-2012)

An Overview of the Current Bilateral Diplomatic Ties

On April 5, 2005, Islamabad and Beijing signed “Treaty of Good Neighborliness and Friendly Collaboration” which stated “each Contracting Party shall not join any alliance or bloc which infringes upon the sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of the other Contracting Party, nor shall it take any action of this nature including the conclusion of treaties of this nature with a third country”. (Dawn, April 06, 2005). On the same day, both

countries signed ten other documents related to bilateral cooperation which, inter alia, included the Cooperation on Fighting against Terrorism, Separatism and Radicalism, the Agreement on common issues like Customs, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, the Agreement on Financial and Technical Collaboration and the "Early Harvest" plan of Bilateral Free Trade Agreement. (China embassy, April 06, 2013)

Moreover, in November 2006, the president of China Hu Jintao visited Pakistan on the invitation of General Pervez Musharraf, the President of Pakistan. During this tour, 18 new agreements were signed between two countries (China ECCO, December 21, 2006). It was commented that friendly relations and collaboration between two countries became a fine example generally for 3rd world countries and particularly for regional countries. (Ibid)

Premier of China, Wen Jiabao, visited Pakistan in 2010. It was the first visit of any high ranking official since President Hu Jintao visited Pakistan in 2006. Before Wen's address to Parliament of Pakistan, the audiences resounded in loud and clear voice enchanting the slogan of "Long live Pakistan-China friendship (Khan, December 20, 2010). Wen started his speech with "Assalam o Alaikum Bhayio". (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, December 19, 2010) He mentioned that "You say in Pakistan, "A good neighbor is a blessing." We say in China, "A close neighbor means more than a distant relative." (Ibid) While talking about terrorism, he said "Pakistan is at the forefront of the international counter-terrorism campaign. It has paid a heavy price and made important contributions. This is a well-known fact. The international community must fully recognize and support Pakistan's efforts and truly respect Pakistan's independent choice of the development path. The fight against terrorism should not be linked with any particular religion or ethnic group and there should be no double standards." (Ibid) He further stressed that collectively the indications and root causes of terrorist elements should be eliminated from its basis. The Chinese approach and position on this question was crystal clear. According to him, they were willing to make diligent efforts and strengthen coordination and collaboration with Pakistan and global community. (Ibid) The Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Gillani announced that the Parliament of Pakistan will celebrate year 2011 as the friendship year with China. During that tour, seventeen treaties, four MoUs and a combined project were signed in major areas of cooperation. (Ibid) The contract for cooperation between Pakistan Space Institution (SUPARCO) and China Space Administration (CNSA) was also signed. The deals concluded during the tour worth almost \$35 billion.

In May 2011, Pakistani Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani paid four-day visit to China and met there with Chinese President and Prime Minister. The said visit had two important aspects: first was to elaborate 60 years of diplomatic relation between two countries while the other was to discuss the situation emerged after the death of Al Qaeda's head Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad on May 2. (Krishnan, May 17, 2011) In the backdrop of Mr. Gillani's visit, the spokesperson of Foreign Ministry of China, Mr. Jiang Yu addressed a press briefing. Responding to informations that China had said the US to respect the sovereignty of Pakistan after the Bin Laden's death operation, Spokesperson of the Chinese Foreign Ministry Jiang Yu reiterated Beijing's unconditional insist that the "sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan must be respected." (Tarpley, May 30, 2011)

On 18 May 2011, Mr. Gillani reached Beijing to request China for assistance. He was given 50 JF-17 fighter jets to secure his country against any probable attack from the US or India. According to the Pakistani diplomatic sources, China warned in clear terms that any strike on Pakistan would be considered as an attack on China. (Ibid) The Chinese warning to Washington emanated after the Gillani's statement to the Parliament of Pakistan proclaiming: "Let no one draw any wrong conclusions. Any attack against Pakistan's strategic assets, whether overt or covert, will find a matching response.... Pakistan reserves the right to retaliate with full force. No one should underestimate the resolve and capability of our nation and armed forces to defend our sacred homeland." (Ibid) Through this statement, Pakistan sent a strong warning of full-force retaliation to US in case of any attack on its strategic assets. (Ibid)

During the tour, Mr. Gillani met Chinese Premier, Mr. Wen Jiabao who said "I wish to stress here that no matter what changes might take place in the international landscape, China and Pakistan will remain forever good neighbours, good friends, good partners and good brothers." (Shahid, May 19, 2011) Pakistani Premier Gillani said "Our all-weather friendship and strategic cooperative partnership has stood the test of time and the changes in the international and regional situation." He further said "we have stood by each other at all times and under all circumstances." Hu said "visit of Prime Minister of Pakistan would certainly give a strong boost to the good neighbourly friendship and mutually beneficial cooperation between the two sides." According to the joint statement issued during the visit, China believed "Pakistan's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity should be respected." The said statement also added that "China recognized the tremendous efforts and the great sacrifice that Pakistan has made in fighting terrorism." (Ibid) During that tour, Beijing decided to speed up delivery of a subsequent consignment of 50 mutually developed JF-17 fighter jets to Pakistan, within the next six months. (Ibid) In response to that agreement, Defense Minister of India, Mr. A.K. Antony, was reported to have articulated severe apprehension about the increasing China-Pakistan defense relations. Consequently, he asserted that India was also enhancing her capability to build up its own military arsenal. (Ibid)

The Karakorum Highway (KKH)

It is the maximum paved international highway in the world which joins China and Pakistan across the Karakoram mountainous series, all the way through the Khunjerab Pass, linking China's Xinjiang areas with Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan. Karakoram Highway is also recognized as the "Friendship Highway" which was constructed jointly by Pakistan and China having economic and strategic significance for both countries. Its construction was started in 1959 and completed in 1979. (Historyofkkh, 2010) To further secure its strategic and economic goals in Afghanistan, the Indian Oceanic Region (IOR), the Persian Gulf, the Middle East and Africa, China, later, made an agreement with Pakistan to expand and re-integrate Karakoram Highway. (Ibid)

The Gilgit-Baltistan region is strategically significant because, in addition to Xinjiang and Tibet, it has Afghanistan, Tajikistan and India in its proximity. Only because of this 1300 km long KKH, China can now easily access to Strait of Hormuz and the Suez Canal. The Indian view about the construction of Karakoram Highway was that it was "a military sinister movement directed against India." Earlier, with the construction of the Karakoram Highway and connecting the Xinjiang region with northern parts of Pakistan, China's reservations of greater radicalization of Uighur community were also augmented. Consequently, Pakistan took all actions to alleviate Chinese concerns and to counter Indian allegations about any outside support to Uighur militants from extremist Islamist political parties operational within Pakistan. (Chu, April 01, 2007).

Pakistan and China signed \$325 million agreement in 2006 for construction of an additional 200km part of Karakoram Highway from Rai Kot to Sazeen. The Chairman of China Road and Bridge Company, Chen Yu Sheng, said that the company would send 200 engineers and surveyors to Pakistan in February 2007 and the construction would start by March 2007. He said "the construction of the KKH is a big challenge but we will complete it in the minimum possible time." The Chinese firm would also have to construct a sports complex, children parks, dispensaries and restaurants along the highway. (Dawn, Nov 25, 2006)

Cooperation in Nuclear Sector

Pak-China cooperation in nuclear sector was started in 1996 during the visit of Chinese President Jiang Zemin to Pakistan. In that visit, China made an agreement to build a nuclear reactor in Pakistan. (Narayanan, Oct 24, 1999). The subsequent completion of 300 MW Chashma Nuclear Power Plant in 2000 was a new milestone in nuclear relations between Pakistan and China. (Haq, April 11, 2005) Although the China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC) and Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) had signed an agreement for the export of a 300 MW nuclear power plant to Pakistan in 1991 but its commercial operation started in 2000. The successful functioning of Chashma Nuclear Power Plant was an excellent manifestation of south-south cooperation. (Ibid) Since 10 February 2006, China is also constructing a 96 MW Hydropower Project at Jinnah Barrage located very near to Chashma which was initially expected to be completed in October 2013 but is still under progress. (Wapda, 14 August, 2014).

Pakistan was negotiating with China to buy eight nuclear power reactors worth between 7 to 10 billion dollars. A senior Pakistani official said that construction of the said plants could start by 2015 and would complete almost after ten years. The new power stations would add 4,800 MW of electricity using a series of 600 MW reactors. On 28 December 2005, Pakistan's PM Shaukat Aziz formally launched construction of a Chinese-supplied nuclear plant at Chashma known as Chashma Nuclear Power Plant II with China as the largest investor. (IPCS, January 06, 2006).

The post-9/11 crisis in Afghanistan brought significant modification in the policies of Pakistan. Pakistan decided to side with US-led coalition forces while China assured Pakistan through special envoy that it would resolutely support Pakistan. (Shah, Jan 04, 2013). The China's support to Pakistan was evident from its succeeding cooperation and collaboration which added new chapter in the relationship of two countries. (Ibid)

President Zardari visited China in 2010. During that tour, both countries agreed to build new power plant in Chashma. (Aziz, November 13, 2010) The nuclear cooperation between two countries became problematic for US and India. It further irritated both countries when China declared that it will carry on with the installation of two new nuclear-powered devices of 650 MW in Chashma. Reuters reported a spokesperson of US State Department stating "US is seeking clarification from China on its deal earlier this year to build two new civilian nuclear reactors for Pakistan." The spokesperson also said "We believe that such cooperation would require a specific exemption approved by consensus of the Nuclear Suppliers Group." (Iqbal, July 04, 2010) Wang Baodong, the spokesman of Chinese Embassy, said "the project goes well along with the international obligations China and Pakistan carry in relation to the international nuclear non-proliferation regime." China argued that the said deal was an addition of the general agreement concluded long previous to joining Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) in 2004. China had already helped Pakistan in installing two civilian nuclear reactors at Chashma under the said agreements and that the deal consequently did not fall under NSG rules. (Ibid) One of the leading newspapers in China published article about nuclear cooperation between China and Pakistan wherein it mentioned that "double standards in nuke [nuclear] cooperation are not maintainable and strategic cooperative endeavor between two countries is not intended at targeting any third party." (Ibid) President Zardari

said “to honour the agreement within the framework of their obligations towards non-proliferation was a demonstration of the strength of their relationship.” (Ibid) The President’s spokesperson Farhatullah Babar said “agreement between China and Pakistan goes well along with international non-proliferation obligations.” (Ibid) Both sides also decided to enhance the commercial cooperation, enlarge people-to-people level contacts and increase collaboration in counter terrorism. (Ibid)

In 2011, new milestone was achieved when Chashma Nuclear Power Plant II was completed with the help of China. It was officially inaugurated by former Prime Minister Gillani who said “it is yet another illustrious example of the Pakistan-China cooperation in the field of nuclear science and technology.” (Naqvi, May 13, 2011) The Nuclear Power Plant had the capacity of producing 300 MW of electricity. It helped Pakistan to control the energy crisis and elevated the relationship of two countries to new horizons. (Ibid)

Al-Khalid Tank

In the field of defense, another landmark was achieved in 2001 in the shape of MBT-2000 i.e. Al-Khalid Tank. Rehman, F. (Jan 12, 2011). A development deal between Pakistan and China regarding Al-Khalid Tank was signed in 1990 while the Tank was delivered to Pakistan Army in 2001. Al-Khalid was equitably lightweight as compared to other modern tanks. It was equipped with an Inertial Navigation System (INS) and a Satellite Navigation System (GPS). Other modern equipment was installed in that tank such as active thermal burn producer, inner fervor extinguisher, explosion-suppression system and laser finding structure. Many countries expressed interest in purchasing that tank while Bangladesh Army ordered 44 MBT-2000. (Ibid)

JF-17 Thunder Warplane

Pakistan required newfangled combatant to substitute its armada of old Mirage III/5s, Chengdu F-7s, and Nanchang A-5s. Islamabad and Beijing signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 1995 for cooperative project and expansion of a new fighter which would have to be completed within next few years. (Dawn, February 19, 2010) That target accomplished in the shape of JF-17 Thunder (FC-1 Fierce Dragon) in 2007. It was the joint-ventured multi-role fighter jet developed by Pakistan and China. (Ibid) Although the first test flight of JF-17 Thunder was made in May 2006 during the visit of Pakistan Air Chief to China but it was formally rolled out in 2007. The launching ceremony regarding the construction plan of the multi-role combatant airplane was held in Kamra. General Pervez Musharraf told there that it would help Pakistan in strengthening its Air Force and would substitute the old fleet of Mirage plane of Pakistan in 2015. (Adnan, May 24, 2011) Its 1st squadron was initiated in the Pakistan Air Force. It had single engine and was light in weight multipurpose war plane as compared to other devices of similar nature. It had the ability to transport a verity of weaponries and grenades, as well as air-to-air and air-to-surface missiles. (Ibid)

The Gawadar Port

In 2007, completion of Gawadar Port was a major landmark for Pak-China relationship which was made with huge investment from China. Gawadar Port, the third deep-sea port of Pakistan, seemed to be of no major use to Pakistan as there was no requirement of a feeder port in Balochistan deserts. (Noor-ul-Haq, July 31, 2011) Furthermore, the two existing seaports in Karachi (Karachi port and Bin Qasim port) were also mounting their business. The contract for construction of Phase I was given to a Chinese firm. The port was accomplished in 2006 and inaugurated by General Musharraf in 2007. The cost of first phase of the port was \$248 million out of which \$198 million was financed by China. (Ibid) After the completion of phase I, the Government of Pakistan decided to hand over its operational control to Port of Singapore Authority (PSA) International on 1st February 2007. Both parties signed forty year contract for expansion of the port. The port would have to be tax-free and duty-free trade zone. Its phase II would cost \$932 million out of which \$526 million were to be financed by China to add nine more berths and terminals in Gawadar Port. (Ibid) China’s decision to funding the construction of Gawadar Port and Coastal Highway, connecting the port to Karachi, would help its strategies to develop Western China. The distance from Kashgar to Chinese eastern coastal ports was 3,500 km, whereas the distance from Kashgar to Gawadar was only 1,500 km. (Ibid) The cost-benefits to China of using Gawadar as the port for Western China’s imports and exports might suggest the long-term economic incentives to Pakistan. (Shahid, March 21, 2007)

Moreover, the strategic significance of Gawadar could not be ignored for both Pakistan and China. It would make Pakistan enable to enjoy a strategic depth southwest from its naval base in Karachi that had long been susceptible to obstruction by the Indian Navy. The establishment of Naval Bases at Gawadar and Ormara by Pakistan along with the existence of Chinese Naval installations there would be helpful to check the domination of U.S Naval Fleet at Persian Gulf and Indian ambition to emerge as a Blue Water Navy. It would also establish Pak-China naval nexus to reject maneuvering space to Indian Navy and would make maritime communications safer for commercial transportation in Indian sea. (Ibid) Gawadar could also serve as an outlet for transportation once China tried to develop Aynak copper deposits or any other large-scale mining activity be carried out in southern Afghanistan. China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan including Uzbekistan planned to develop wide-ranging road and rail links from Central Asia and the Chinese province of Xinjiang to the Arabian Sea coastline. In strategic terms, China was attracted in construction of an overland energy bridge from Iran across

Central Asia into Western China. Such a bridge would be out of reach for both the U.S. and Indian navies, if Beijing's relations with those powers would turn sour. Government of China was already working on the project. An agreement was also signed between Pakistan and China in that regard. It would increase its energy links that already supply it with oil from Kazakhstan and natural gas from Turkmenistan. (Blank, April, 2011)

Moreover, in order to counter the Gawadar port that was also named as the Chinese Gibraltar by US, India built Chabahar port in Sistan-Balochistan province of Iran just adjoining to Gawadar. India was also assisting to Iran for constructing a 200 km road that would hook up Chabahar with Afghanistan. It would provide land access to the port for the imports and exports to and from Central Asia. At that time, India was in imperative need of a shorter transportation route to swiftly ship its trade supplies to Afghanistan and Central Asia. However, Gawadar had an edge over Chabahar which was a seasonal port and could not work in the monsoon season whereas Gawadar could be used in all seasons. (Ibid)

Gawadar was rightly said to be Pakistan's immense boom town, a place of unbelievable beauty and unparalleled opportunity. As far as air borne travelling is concerned there was a requirement for the extension of the Gawadar airport and magnification of its runway to facilitate the landing of extensive body aero-planes. With the help of Oman, Pakistan government and the local Civil Aviation Authority is looking forward to massively invest to upgrade the Gawadar Airport. Gawadar could emerge as a focal shipping point, bringing Pakistan a good deal of needed income, and when shared with the adjacent areas, could become a trade hub, once road and rail links connect it to the rest of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia. Gawadar's distance from India was significant. The value of said distance becomes apparent when one considers the vulnerability of the Karachi port which handled maximum of Pakistan's sea borne trade. Pakistan today is a country of enormous potential and political uncertainty. By having such God gifted Gawadar Bay no wonder Pakistan might be considered among Asian tigers in the near future. (Niazi, (February 28, 2005)

Government of Pakistan transferred the operational control of Gawadar from PSA International (2007-2012) to China Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC) on 18 February 2013. The PSA International showed least concern regarding the development of Gawadar Port. It was not acting upon terms and conditions of the agreement hence government of Pakistan took this step. However, Pakistan officially handed over operational control of Gawadar Port to China through an agreement. President Zardari, Ambassador of China Mr. Liu, several federal ministers and senior high ranking officials attended the ceremony. Under the contract, COPHC would be the operator of that port however it will remain property of Gawadar Port Authority. Indian Defense Minister A. K. Antony commented about the said development that "in one sentence, it is a matter of concern for us; my answer is very straightforward and simple." (Khan, March 30, 2013)

Apart from that, China was much enthusiast in taking charge of the Gawadar Port as "terms of agreement" of PSA International (Singapore) had been expired. Pakistan also wanted to end the term with PSA due to its least concern showed regarding management and developing of Gawadar Port. Pakistan's Defense Minister Ahmad Mukhtar said "We are grateful to the Chinese government for constructing Gawadar Port. However, we will be more grateful to the Chinese government if a naval base is being constructed at the site of Gawadar for Pakistan." The Chinese control over Gawadar port was being viewed by Indian policymakers and analysts as an attempt by the Chinese to enhance its military pressure in India's zone of influence. (Tourangbam, May 30, 2011)

PNS Zulfiquar

In 2009, Pakistan got the first frigate F-22p named PNS Zulfiquar from China. Pakistan had been negotiating with China for the provision of 4 frigates since the late 1990s. But the agreement was signed between both countries in 2006 when the negotiations for financing and transfer of technology had been finalized. That \$750 million contract also included anti-submarine warfare (ASW) helicopters as well as ammunition for the frigates. According to the contract, the first three were being constructed at the Hudong Zhonghua Shipyard in Shanghai, China while the last was manufacturing in Pakistan by Karachi Shipyard and Engineering Works (KSEW) to be accomplished in 2013. That cooperation further enhanced the defense relations between the two countries. (Aneja, 2006)

Joint Military Exercises

Pakistan and China started joint naval exercise in Karachi in 2003. It was for the first time that the Chinese Navy conducted joint maritime exercise with any foreign navy. The exercise included the joint search & rescue operations, patrolling and searching for suspected intruders. As Pakistan came closer to China, India extended its naval relations with Russia and held joint maneuvers in October at India's Visakhapatnam Port during the INDRA-05 exercise. (China mail, February 13, 2013) A Joint Sino-Pakistan Military Drill named YOUYI (Friendship) was started in July 2011. Both countries pointed that the purpose of these exercises was basically to eradicate terrorism in the region. The joint exercises were extended over a period of two weeks intended at common exchange of experiences and information through a inclusive training program in real time. The YOUYI-IV exercise was a Brigade level joint exercise between the two armed forces in which Special Forces

from both sides participated. Chinese Army, being well-equipped and highly technical in nature, was very scrupulous, enthusiastic and evenly proficient in its approach. During the previous joint exercise in China (2009), they established high sense of professionalism and acquaintance towards Pakistan. (Yousaf, November 15, 2011) Exercise YOUYI which meant “friendship” started in 2004. So far, both countries had jointly conducted three exercises in which two were conducted in China and one was in Pakistan. Joint Military Exercise YOUYI-IV had definitely paved the way for further strengthening the existing bilateral defense relations between the two countries. Senior Military headship from both sides attended the Exercise. The YOUYI-IV was a true demonstration of a famous Chinese saying “Pakistan-China friendship is higher than the mountains and deeper than oceans.” A senior official of Pakistan army said “this is the first time that brigade-level war games are being staged by Pakistan and China.” Mahmud Durrani, a defense-analyst, said “it’s an anti-terrorist drill for the region of South Asia and the larger region that includes China, Afghanistan and Central Asia. We have a very serious threat of terrorism, particularly in Pakistan, which is not a secret.” India showed its reservations on that military drill even before its start and described it as “dangerous for India.” One of the leading Indian newspapers wrote that the said joint military drill were India-centric and not related to terrorism. China also agreed to supply Pakistan a squad of innovative J-10B multi-role, all-season combatant airplane on 30 July 2011. The airplane had fortified with modern weaponries. (Ansari, August 03, 2011)

Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV)

In recent past, Pakistan announced that it would obtain armed Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) from China. Some details of the deal were revealed. China indicated that the UAV it offered could use several missiles, especially the Blue Arrow 7 and HJ-10 that were identical in size and performance to the American Hellfire. China had also been offering a UAV of similar shape, weight and performance as the US Predator called CH-4; that UAV was similar in shape to the larger American MQ-9 Reaper. The UAV would be able to carry a pair of Blue Arrow 7 missiles. Perhaps Pakistan was just waiting for some successful field tests before buying these technologies. (The News, November 25, 2013)

Over the last five years, Pakistan had used several types of UAVs along the Afghan and Indian borders. The most efficient of these, was the Italian Falco UAV which Pakistan had purchased six years ago. The said UAV could be taken off and landed on an air-strip and a catapult or parachute could be used for its take-off and landing. Pakistan had been using various Chinese UAVs for the previous decade or so. The 207 model had a maximum endurance of eight hours, but more generally was an endurance of four hours. Maximum range from the control van was 150 kilometers away and cruising speed was about 180 kilometers an hour (Akhtar, 2008). Pakistan was also manufacturing its own UAVs. Four years ago, it tested the “Uqaab”. These were smaller (under 250 kg or 550 pounds) UAVs for the government and commercial use that had been around since the late 1990s. The Uqaab was similar to the US Army RQ-7B Shadow 200. Recently, a Pakistani firm produced the 470 kg (1,034 pounds) “Shahpar” which could stay in the air for seven hours per sortie. That model was very similar to the Chinese CH-3. Pakistan had demanded Predators from the United States, which was turned down because they were frightened that the Chinese would be permitted to dissect the American UAV and could reveal too many manufacturing secrets since Pakistan and China had been congenial for decades. But European nations, like Italy and Germany, were eager to sell Pakistan the unarmed UAVs. (Ibid)

PNS Azmat

Pakistan Navy launched its first fast attack craft named PNS Azmat in 2012. It was manufactured jointly by China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation (CSOC) and Pakistan Navy. Its launching ceremony was held at Xingjian Shipyard in Tianjin. Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Muhammad Asif Sandila, was the chief guest there. While addressing the ceremony, he said “its immense firepower coupled with stealthy features makes it a real versatile platform which would not only prove vital for ensuring effective presence in our area of operations, but would bring a new dimension of operation of stealthy platform of this tonnage.” He further said “Pak-China relationship is unique and does not draw any parallel in the world. This relationship over the years has matured in all fields, particularly in defense.” (Express Tribune, April 24, 2012)

It was an enduring operational requirement of Pakistan Navy. Pakistan and China signed an agreement for development of two fast attack crafts on the basis of transfer of technology (ToT) in 2010. The first craft was to be manufactured in China and the second was at KSEW. These ships were named as AZMAT Class FAC (M). (Ibid) It was equipped with latest technology such as Surface-to-Surface Anti-Ship Missiles, latest stealthy features and high tech sensors that made it more effective as compared to others. Pakistan Navy was fully equipped to respond to any force challenging the country’s sovereignty or menacing the safety of its territorial waters. It would be helpful for Pakistan Navy to maintain balance of power in the region. (Ibid)

CONCLUSION

Pakistan and China established their diplomatic relations in early 1950s. Initially there was a hiatus in the relations of both countries due to Pakistan’s tilt towards Western Block to overcome its defense necessities; but latter both affirmed importance of each other to maintain the balance of power in the region. India was a major

factor behind the cooperation of both countries as India-China war of 1962 and Pak-India war of 1965 forced both to feel insecure from it. Since the beginning of the new millennium, Pakistan-China relations turned into a higher level of strategic understanding. The two countries enhanced the level and frequency of their interactions. Besides, both shared equal views on all main issues and numerous developments which took place at international and regional levels. The focal point of their 'comprehensive partnership' was on the development of mutually beneficial strategic cooperation in the perspective of War Against Terrorism (WAT). Pakistan's choice to side with the US and to provide it the airbase facilities primarily raised anxieties in Chinese circles. However, the exchange of high-level visits illuminated Pakistan's view that under no conditions would it permit any attempt to destabilize Chinese strategic interests in the region. The Chinese side completely understood the constraints and obligations under which Pakistan made some critical decisions and in turn articulated its solidarity with Pakistan.

The long-term strategic partnership between Pakistan and China was further consolidated with the signing of the "Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Good Neighborly Relations" during the Chinese Premier's visit to Islamabad in 2005. The joint statement termed the treaty a step forward in promoting the strategic ties between China and Pakistan in future. Both the countries conducted joint military exercises which were the evidence of their continued strategic and defense partnership. Some negative events like the killing of Chinese engineers in Pakistan and the Xinjiang problem did not affect Pak-China defense relations adversely. Three Chinese engineers were killed in May 2004. National as well as international factors were responsible for the killing of Chinese engineers. Some countries in the region like India did not like the strong defense ties between two countries which would be a potential threat for them. In order to contain the strong bilateral defense ties between China and Pakistan, the rival countries tried to stain this relationship through such acts of terrorism. The Chinese engineers were killed in the tribal areas and Balochistan province. With foreign enticement, local groups committed this act in order to secure their political objectives from federal government. However, China being aware of all the international intrigues did not allow such individual incidents to affect its relations with Pakistan. China always tried to maintain permanent relations with its neighbors. It cooperates with other regional countries in thwarting the region from clutches of terrorists. It was forced to do this owing to situation of Xinjiang; that fidgety north-western province is strategically important to Beijing. The majority of Xinjiang people are called Uighur and their religion is Islam. The Uighur community is minority in China. They feel uncomfortable due to the migration of Han Chinese into their province. The cross-border movements of armaments, revolutionaries, tranquilizers and the religious stimulus of jihad were important reasons behind the insurgency in Xinjiang. These groups had also established contacts with other regional insurgents groups. Chinese people are being targeted by these rebels in recent years within the border areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. It was assumed that majority of the remaining Uighur fighters were based between the border regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan. But these adverse effects are removed with the help of cooperation between the two countries. Both states are working jointly in that regard.

The Government installed in Pakistan after the elections of 2008 was led by Pakistan People's Party. It adopted a pro-China policy and tried to strengthen the relations between two countries. A new episode of defense collaboration is started via joint military drills, manufacturing of JF-17 Thunder fighter, development of Gawadar Port and concluding agreements regarding the construction of two more nuclear plants at Chashma. Currently, collaboration between both countries has spread into all major fields. After 2008, there are 62 new agreements between both states, 61 Chinese companies are working in different fields in Pakistan and trade between two countries has reached \$2 billion. After the Musharraf regime, a fresh wave of cooperation is witnessed between both sides and their relationship is now more cordial. Pakistan-China defense relations have endured unrelentingly which is evident from the transfer of China-made weaponry to Pakistan such as shortrange Ballistic M-11 Missiles, JF-17 Aircraft, F-22P Frigates with Helicopters, K-8 Jet Trainer, T-85 Tanks, and F-7 Aircraft and Shaheen-1 Ballistic Missile.

Both Pakistan and China are conventionally pleasant neighbours. Since the establishment of political relations, both sides have always treated each other with common esteem and trust and established a versatile cooperative partnership. The Pakistan-China relations have been spread over four decades by now which are cemented in major fields of geo-politics, strategic, economics, civil and military infrastructural development and other related areas of bilateral cooperation and investment. It could be concluded in the nutshell that it is essential for Pakistan and China to maintain friendly relations with each other in future just like both countries had maintained in near and far past. It is the necessity of the region as well as for both countries themselves.

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