

## **Pak-China Geostrategic Interdependence: Impact on Rising Economies of Asia**

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### **ABSTRACT**

China and Pakistan have enjoyed a close and mutually beneficial relationship during the last seven decades. Both the nations' leadership pronounced the bilateral relationship between China and Pakistan as the "All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership" and "Iron Brother." The strategic partnership between China and Pakistan has a significant impact on the Asian strategic environment in particular and global politics. The Indian strategic enclave regards China-Pakistan's multifaceted relationship as a substantial obstacle for India's rise as a Great Power within the regional context. The study's primary objective is to critically examine impact on Asia's main actors such as India and Russia. So that one can profess about the dynamics of this relationship and implications of China and Pakistan's geo-strategic relations on the rising economies. A qualitative study with qualitative interviews and thematic analysis was applied to conduct this study. The analysis reveals that South Asian RSC has no change in the patterns of amity and enmity. The region continues to be conflictive, where their enduring rivalry and continued distrust shape enmity patterns between Pakistan and India. On the contrary, Pakistan and China's amity patterns can be seen growing in the longstanding strategic relationship and deep-rooted cooperation. The investigation discovers that on a bilateral level, several new factors in the post-9/11 era have molded Pakistan-China Strategic relations, which have intricate linkages with the regional and global security complexion.

**Keywords:** China, Geo-Economic, Pakistan, Geo-strategic, National Interest, Russia, India

### **Introduction**

China and Pakistan have enjoyed a close and mutually beneficial relationship during the last seven decades. both the nations' leadership pronounced the bilateral relationship between China and Pakistan as the "All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership" and "Iron Brothers." the strategic partnership between China and Pakistan has a significant impact on the south Asian strategic environment in particular and global politics (Masood, 2008). During the last seven decades, both countries have strengthened their political, strategic, military and economic ties based on mutual understandings, making them a balancer in power and geo-strategic game of the South Asian Region. Owing to India's aggressive and regional dominance-model foreign policy, both Pakistan and China counties have come closer over the years to counter Indian offence and keep a geo-

strategic balance in the region. In the past, Pakistan and the Soviet Union both viewed each other through the eyes of either the United States or India, which left little room for autonomous foreign policy decision-making or even extended strategic maneuvering. In the midst of the New Cold War, their orbit of relationship is now experiencing significant alterations (Chaliha, 2021). Due to Pakistan's strategic location, it is considered as a "Pivot of Asia" and embraces a tremendous geo-strategic position in the region (Hongdo, Khaskheli, Rasheed & Mukhtar, 2019).

## **Background**

Historically, both Pakistan and China have enjoyed cordial ties since the 1950s. Still, the relations got a massive push during the 1960s when both sides resolved their border issues, and Pakistan played the role of a bridge between China and the western countries (Javaid & Javaid, 2016). The border issues between both the countries were fixed in 1963, military ties started in 1966, the bilateral strategic coalition was shaped in 1972, and the economic relations reached a peak in 1979 (Akbar & Adnan, 2018; Rahman & Ahmed, 2020). China has always supported Pakistan's stance on Kashmir, while Pakistan has extended its support to China on Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang. Over time, the military and economic cooperation have increased immensely between both sides. The projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and fighter jet JF-17 Thunder are significant examples of the cordial ties between the two (Saud & Arif, 2017).

While it is also believed that Pak-China geo-strategic ties are based on countering India and the US (Faisal, 2020). This kind of strategic balance is rather suitable for South Asia's nuclear countries as it will maintain the balanced ties and establish deterrence among them (Rahman & Ahmed, 2020). Due to the US's divergent interest, Pakistan moved towards China's block, forming India as a joint strategic enemy of both countries (Masood, Farooq & Hussain, 2016). Due to geographical and geopolitical location, Pakistan is dealing with a hostile neighbor on its eastern border and facing India's issues on the western border by the US's support, India making its presence in Afghanistan (Mazhar & Goraya, 2019). Asia is a nuclear power's region, and retaliation is not in any state's favor. By India's deterrent attitude, both countries are forming closer allies in the area (Latif & Mengal, 2020).

After getting the "Most Favoured Nation," both countries' economic relations have not grown while defense cooperation reached its height (Bashir, Rashid, Ikram, & Tanveer, 2018). In 1982, the "China-Pakistan Joint Committee of Economy, Trade, and Technology" was set up. Moreover, in 1989, both countries signed a "Bilateral Investment Protection Treaty," and another on "Avoidance of Double Taxation and Prevention of Fiscal Evasion" agreement signed for the promotion of investment and trade (Basit, Torjesen & Macfarlane, 2019). China's

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drastic economic growth as an economic superpower has opened numerous opportunities for Pakistan.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The transformation in global politics derived new strategic alignments in Asia and increased strategic competition between the United States and China, which have decisive implications for the Asian strategic environment. China's essence in the South Asian region depends on its political and financial interests. The Chinese legislature is fundamental to ensuring the security of its energy, for which the strategy of "One Belt, One Road" is evident. "The large economies of Europe, South Asia, West Asia, and even Africa can only be approached via the Indian Ocean. To maintain its influence in the Indian Ocean, China's OBOR has both geo-economics and geo-strategic prospects which are possible by utilizing the land of Pakistan. In today's unipolar world, China plays a key role in making other global needs dependent on equal opportunities for all. This strategy can only be followed if China can maintain its influence in the Indian Ocean through strategic ties with Pakistan.

### **Objective of the Study**

The study's primary objective is to critically examine geostrategic interdependence of Pakistan and China, so that one can profess about the dynamics of this relationship and implications of China and Pakistan's geo-strategic relations on rising economies of Asia.

### **Research Questions**

To meet the objectives of the study, the main research question to guide this study is, "What are the impacts of Pakistan-China multifaceted relations on Rising Economies of Asia?" in addition to this, the sub research questions are mentioned below:

1. How significant are the strategic, political, and economic relations between Pakistan and China?
2. Why have Rising Economies of Asia been agitated due to the growing geo-strategic collaboration between Pakistan and China?
3. What will be the implications of China-Pakistan relations on hegemonic designs in Asia?
4. Is CPEC an obstacle to emergence of Rising Economies such as India or Russia as a Great Power in the region?

## **Significance of the Study**

The study highlights importance of China and Pakistan relations and requirements in South Asia's geopolitical and strategic environment and their implications on the region. During these years, China and Pakistan progressively and significantly stood with each other, mainly cooperating in defense, socio-economic, trade, and culture through diplomacy at the government and public levels. This study will be a unique contribution to the literature by providing a detailed analysis of Pakistan and China's strategic relationship and its impact on rising economies of Asia.

## **Literature Review**

It is considered that the Port of Gwadar has a strategic location in the Indian Ocean (Hussain, 2019). According to Hussain and Cheema (2017), to regulate the trade in the region, the Gwadar port can be considered the central port with numerous positive impacts on Pakistan. One of the significant factors is that it will transform Pakistan into an energy-proficient country from energy deficiency situations (Ishaq, Ping & Ahmed, 2017). If the CPEC project is implemented successfully, it will have a higher level of positive economic impacts. This project will revive Pakistan's economy, supported by China strategically and economically, to secure its geo-strategic and geopolitical interests.

Pakistan's strategic location had attained more significance when China became the "second-largest importer of oil in the world." Both countries have shared a relationship that has verified the higher level of significance to promote their geo-strategic and permanent aims (Ali, 2019). In this context of Pakistan's economic diversification program, economic relations with China assume importance (Attiq-ur-Rehman, 2018). In the initial years, Pakistan and China had been primarily political and defence relations, not economic. Both countries established trade and commercial connections in 1963 when China and Pakistan signed the first two-sided long-term trade agreement (Kumar, 2018). Energy cooperation is an area where China has investments in Pakistan, including collaboration in conventional energy, new energy, and civilian energy. The conventional energy arena comprises a building of hydropower and thermal power stations. Chinese companies have contracted many hydro station construction projects in Pakistan, which are the most significant hydropower projects that Chinese firms have contracted externally (Paul & Underwood, 2019).

Both China and Pakistan also signed a contract for the development of 12 dams in Pakistan. "Chinese Import-Export Bank" provided US\$700 million for these projects (Ali, 2010). "According to Pakistan 2025, a blueprint for economic development published in 2014 by Pakistan's Ministry of Planning, Development, and Reform, Pakistan aims to advance from being a lower-middle-income nation to an upper-middle-income nation by 2025" (Chaziza, 2016). In hindsight of the India-US nuclear deal, China and Pakistan have increased their nuclear

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cooperation targeting the energy sector in Pakistan, which will also play a strategic balancer tool against New Delhi (Robinson, 2016). It is considered that China may be a great challenge for the existence of the US in the Asian region because of development and progress achieved by China (Kumar, Dwivedi & Hussain, 2016). This is also considered to be the main reason for China to help Pakistan to build its Gwadar Port so that it can replace the existence of the US in the region (Kumar, 2018).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study encompasses a theoretical framework that explains the cooperative behaviors and relational dynamics of both China and Pakistan. For a critical analysis of the data, the 'Power Balance Theory' and the 'Regional Security Complex Theory' are adopted. Both theories support Pakistan and China's strategic relationship and explain their strategic relations implications on Asian states. The China and Pakistan partnership is not far from being within 'the pattern of competition' under the balance of power. Morgenthau's two general principles of an alliance better explain the Pakistani motive of allying with China. Islamabad elevated itself in power by being at Beijing's side and this partnership was formed fundamentally against India in the region as it is a threat for China and Pakistan. Such alliances rarely result in a zero-sum game (Friedrichs, 2016). Indulging in cooperative efforts yields maximum influence for both sides without one side gaining at the other's expense.

### **Research Methodology**

The methodology of the study would be based on a qualitative research method to validate the hypothesis. The 'Onion Research Approach' by Mark Saunders (2009) is adopted. The techniques or procedures in this study would be descriptive and explanatory. Both the primary and secondary sources are used, including interviews, books, journals, and literature on the Internet and relevant newspapers. In-depth and thorough interviews have been utilised during this research data collection process because it is based on the qualitative research design. In the same way, the thematic analysis is applied for the data analysis technique.

### **Findings and Analysis**

The collected data through qualitative interviews is analyzed through thematic Analysis. In this procedure, the ethical values of the research have been strictly followed. According to the results, it can be analyzed that the competition between the US and China has fostered some countries into taking sides in the South Asian region. The US alliance with India has forced Pakistan to take sides with China and Russia into the opposite team in the New Great Game. A Chinese counterweight responds to Pakistan's fragility about India as a spiral of insecurity

has come into being. As China's strategic and financial investments in Pakistan have grown, it aims to prevent India's rise.

### **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Game Changer**

“China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)” is considered to be a significant effort of China in order to increase the Asian Economy and also the promotion of Asian economic growth by implementing the “One Belt and One Road Strategy,” is a new approach of China to build a harmonious Asia and innovation in China's global strategy (Khetran, 2019). CPEC's big multibillion-dollar investment program highlights “an intensified and expanded bilateral cooperation at a time of rising Chinese geopolitical ambitions and persistent concerns about Pakistan security and development” (Jahangir & Khan, 2020). CPEC is the central point of the China-Pakistan relationship in the present scenario and has been involved in China's 13th five-year plan (Ali, 2019). In 2015, both countries had distinguished plans for CPEC, when China and Pakistan signed fifty-one agreements and Memoranda of Understanding on Chinese investment, totaling \$46 billion over the next ten to fifteen years (Lalwani & Byrne, 2019).

China is swift to moderate geostrategic encouragement overdue the CPEC (Dwivedi and Hussain, 2016). Many experts have distinguished that over the long run, an overland connection across Pakistan to the Arabian Sea could support ease the “Malacca dilemma,” Chinese weakness to the fact that approximately 85 percent of China's oil imports transportable through the individual chokepoint of the Strait of Malacca (Burgess, 2019). Beijing realizes the USA “Pivot to Asia” plan against its vital interests. Beijing believes that the US wants to hamper its progress and expansion by refining collaboration and associating with growing powers like India, Singapore, Malaysia, North Korea, and other East-Asian countries (Kumar, 2018). The Chinese government and military know very well about their expansionist changes in the South China Sea (Latif & Mengal, 2020) or China's antagonistic posturing on the boundary dispute with India and may at some point in time bring them in conflict with either of these powers (ÇAKIR, 2020). China can save its strategic link with Pakistan and energy-related areas with this corridor (Hussain, 2017). On the other side, Pakistani Minister Bawale said that “India will not derail any process that is for the betterment of Pakistan,” however, he acknowledged that his country has protested against the CPEC route (due to unequal distribution of projects under CPEC) (ÇAKIR, 2020). All this Chinese activeness and engagement with neighbors demonstrates Chinese determination to exercise its impact far beyond its boundaries to endure its security interests (Javaid and Javaid, 2016), as well as consolidate its relationship with its old ally Pakistan by mega joint developments (Kumar, Dwivedi & Hussain, 2016; Warikoo, 2016; Rai, 2019).

## **Interdependence of Pakistan-China Relations**

The strategic cooperation between China and Pakistan has always been an eternal relationship in the region (Miro, Marlier, and Girven, 2019). This cooperation is making progress consistently and becoming more robust at the international and regional levels, especially when witnessing a few variations (Mohan & Abraham, 2020). To develop a better understanding of the joint development phase will also help identify and explain the changes behind the integration of strategic relations between China and Pakistan in the Cold War Post-Cold War and post-9/11 stages (Mishra, 2019).

The strategic interdependence of Pakistan-China was multiplying mainly due to the US involvement in Afghanistan and the strengthening of strategic cooperation between Indo-US (Sehgal, Ahmad, Pandey and Saini, 2020). The essential improvements in this sequence have included the interchange of high-level visits and the signing on 5 April 2005 of the "Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Good Neighborly Relations," wherein the two nations agreed that they would stay away from joining "any alliance or bloc, which infringes upon the sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of either nation, while simultaneously positing that both parties would not conclude treaties of this nature with any third party" (Kaura, 2018) Both China and Pakistan work collaboratively in supporting global peace and stability, particularly about Afghanistan (Kamble & Jagtap, 2019). Stabilization in Afghanistan is essential for both China and Pakistan, as their border is shared with a war-ravaged country, and their peace and stability are threatened by the existence of terrorist safe havens on the border of the Afghan side (Kamdar, 2019).

## **Shifting Alliances**

In the beginning periods of regional alliances, the contemporaneous military equilibrium between Pakistan and India started to shift (Wolf, 2019). The post-9/11 period enabled military cooperation between Pakistan and the United States following the US funded international war on terrorism (Warikoo, 2016). Nevertheless, the close relationship between the United States and India has also impacted the overall relationship between them. India's potential capacity to improve itself as a regional player and its cooperative behavior have led the US to become more interested in India's safety parameters (Wani, 2019). While the friendship between China and Pakistan is increasing over time, India and China's neighboring countries are also strengthening their bilateral ties and attempting to engage in productive negotiations to resolve the ongoing border dispute between Arunachal Pradesh and Aksai Chin (Talib, Sajjad, Shahid & Xiaocong, 2019).

Through empowering India to take a proactive role in the Asia Pacific region, the US strategy of developing a strategic partnership with India is motivated by its desire to reduce China's role in South and South-East Asia (Bashir, Rashid, Ikram

& Tanveer, 2018). This would be helpful to marginalize Pakistan and will not be useful in promoting regional security. Defence and nuclear cooperation between the United States and India, especially the nuclear deal of Indo-US was a matter of concern for Pakistan that. Pakistan had made enormous sacrifices in combating terrorism and extremism, unlike India (Basit, Torjesen and Macfarlane, 2019). However, India struggled one setback in joining the “Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG)”, as it ultimately failed two times at the NSG Plenary session conducted in Vienna and Seoul on 23-24 June 2016 and 11 November 2016 respectively (Bhatnagar & Shahab Ahmed, 2020). Besides, as India had also strongly associated itself with Japan, it is unlikely that China will support India 's bid to become a regular member of the UNSC (Kumar, 2018). After all, China will not endorse Indian participation regarding India's membership of the NSG till it does not fulfill the requirement, such as, signing the Non- Proliferation Treaty (NPT) or the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) (Lalwani & Byrne, 2019). Currently, BRICS' collective efforts, as mentioned in the BRICS summit 2022, to establish an alternative non-dollar financial system have the potential to completely immunize participants from both exchange and sanction risks stemming from the dollar's dominance and US hegemonic position. This creates shifting of Alliances against Pakistan and China in favour of India, China and Russia. The state's active policy interventions for resource mobilisation, trade policies, public procurement, the encouragement of public demand, and the provision of financial support have been a common thread throughout the diverse economic development experiences of these countries to their position as high-performers (Santiago, 2020).

### **Contemporary Situation and Pakistan-China Strategic Cooperation**

The working relationship was always viewed by two or more nations as a long-term commitment in which they maintained a strong bond within their core strategies (Abbassi, 2020). In this partnership, their long-term involvement is essential for promoting common goals (Abbasi & Khan, 2019). In nature, bilateral strategic alliances are interrelated and all members advance the interests of one another in one manner or the other, based on the reciprocity.

Nowadays for different reasons, Pakistan is becoming economically beneficial for China (Afridi, Khan and Jamil, 2017). It could provide China with a safe source for the advancement of its western provinces and, in this regard, Gwadar port advancement is essential for both nations (Ahanger, 2019). China has encountered various obstacles in the South China Sea following Obama's Asia Pivot policy, which have been further enhanced (Ahmad, 2019). China also recognises Pakistan's capability in the maintaining peace in Afghanistan (Ahmed, Ahmed & Bhatnagar, 2019). Therefore, good coordination between Islamabad and Beijing is a necessity of the moment. American forces' lengthy-term existence in Afghanistan is regarded with suspicion in China and is therefore aware of the



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importance that Pakistan can play in stabilising the nation (Akbar and Adnan, 2018). China had believed that the unrest in its Xinjiang region is due to destabilization in Afghanistan (Akhtar, 2019).

Numerous energy and trade routes connect Western Asia and Central Asia with the South Asian region pass via Pakistan (Chaziza, 2016). China's and Middle East-Africa linkage via Gwadar port would enable it to remain competitive with Indian expansion in the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea (Durrani, Bilal & Kalim, 2017). US and India's strategic coordination has directly negative impacts on the strategic coordination of China and Pakistan (Burgess, 2019). Therefore, the same level of cooperation between the US and India is the significant reason why China and Pakistan enhance their cooperation for the civilian Nuclear Energy (ÇAKIR, 2020). In the same scenario, the nexus between the US and India has increased Pakistan's significance for the China. This scenario has given more prospects to both nations for the enhanced strategic relationship between them at the bilateral and multilateral level (Hussain, 2017). In this way, this whole situation indicates that the strategic cooperation between China and Pakistan will not only give reasons for their cooperation to continue for several years in the future but also it will enable them to increase the new dimensions of cooperation, for example, their cooperation for the development of new infrastructure, energy, agriculture and industry (Hussain & Jamali, 2019; Hussain, Jalal & Bilal, 2018).

### **Impact on the Regional States**

Relations between China and Pakistan prospered from 1990 to 2016 because of both the nations' common interests, and they can be linked-to in three cases. In the first case, Indian supremacy and its political influence in the area and beyond were wanted by both nations (Ahmad, 2019). Second, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and several events occurring in the post-Soviet-Afghan war, China needed Pakistan to contain militancy in China's western Xinjiang province, which was assumed to be cultivated in tribal regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Third, China would have to use this geographical advantage to expand its commercial and trade objectives in Central Asia, South Asia, and the Persian Gulf due to Pakistan's important geopolitical location.

The 2015 US-India nuclear deal began to emerge from India's waiver from the 2008 Vienna NSG meeting. China saw this agreement as a possible anti-China move or containment of hard work and a new version of the Indo-US alliance (Khan, Ullah & Mahsud, 2019). India had made enormous attempts in June 2016 to achieve Western support to decide in favour of NSG membership (Javaid and Javaid, 2016). However, again, China had prevented India's efforts and some other nations (Munir, 2018). India's reluctance to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the foundation of the NSG strategy, was the main obstacle that was faced by India (Abbassi and Khan, 2019). Afterward, the India-Pakistan conflict was just another bottleneck for India during the NSG's plenary session. The opposition of

China to the membership of India's NSG was pursued as promoting Pakistan's reservation to get India in the group (Kalim, 2018).

Where regional imperatives have kept Pakistan and China on the same page, like permitting India only enough space to maneuver its influence in regional politics, China has also helped Pakistan make a massive front on Western forces to make Pakistan a weak state. For two purposes, the post-Cold War era was significant: the dissolution of the Soviet Union and establishing a unipolar world order headed by the United States (Hussain and Cheema, 2017). This was the time which was an end of a decade-long bonhomie for Pakistan with the United States and a litany of sanctions for providing Pakistan with the punishment for its nuclear ambitions (Hussain, Jalal & Bilal, 2018).

It is also a fact that the strategic cooperation of China and Pakistan is directly related with India and India is the main target of this cooperation in any form, it can be Karakorum Highway, the nuclear weapons or the other conventional weapons (Awasthi, 2018). In the same way, there are some areas of Jammu and Kashmir, which are occupied by China according to India's claims, and it is also a fact. However, China changes its positions according to the convenience of its own by claiming it as the bilateral dispute between both countries India and China according to the mentioned in the history and trying to maintain the position of Pro-Pakistan (Baig, 2018; Qadri & Qadri, 2016; Rahman, 2018; Ramzan, 2019; Kumar, 2012; Rawan, Hussain & Khurshid, 2018).

Pakistan's membership in the SCO had once again given the trilateral (Russia-Pakistan-China) alliance another platform to bolster their trade and economic ties and work together to fight terrorism. The SCO also gave the majority of the competing parties—China, India, and Pakistan—a forum where they could put aside their animosities and differences through multilateral dialogue processes that would serve not only their own interests but also those of maintaining a balanced resource distribution and countering transnational threats at the regional level with the participation of Russia and the Central Asian member states. Additionally, it would provide Russia the opportunity to leverage its ties to Pakistan to strengthen its influence in the SCO (Chaliha, 2021).

Pakistan has always viewed Afghanistan as a vital balancer against Indian policies to get an upper hand and dominate geostrategic South Asia (Banerjee, 2018). Afghanistan is critical for Pakistan because an unstable and Indian dominant Afghanistan will create uncertainty for Islamabad on its western border, as the eastern border is already hostile due to India (Ashraf, 2018). A cordial presence in Kabul is seen by Pakistan as necessary to avoid the strategic dilemma of being stuck between two opposing sides (Chihaiia, 2014). The India presence in Afghanistan is also to counter the Chinese influence in South Asia and Kabul (Dutt & Bansal, 2013). Therefore, it has been focusing on its aid policy. As all the central South Asian regional states tend to use the territory of other states by different means and methods, New Delhi is trying to achieve it through intervention in Afghanistan against China (Chandio & Khuhro, 2019; Ghose,

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2009; Jahangir, 2019; Rizvi & Behuria, 2016). A geostrategic race is underway between China and India in the region, and Afghanistan is one of the main battlegrounds for their interests. China is an emerging regional and global power, and it is way ahead of India both economically and militarily, but some Indian scholars and policy makers believe that India can counter Chinese influence, hence, the Kabul dominance battle is underway (Dwivedi, 2011).

### **Discussion**

The analysis reveals that South Asian RSC has no change in the patterns of amity and enmity. The region continues to be conflictive in nature, where their enduring rivalry and continued distrust shape enmity patterns between Pakistan and India. On the contrary, the amity patterns between Pakistan and China can be seen growing in the longstanding strategic relationship and deep-rooted cooperation. China's interaction with the region has mainly been shaped by India's distrust and strategic enmity, which is orchestrated by a combination of cooperation and competition. In such circumstances, a pattern of amity between Beijing and Islamabad and that of tension, if not wholesale enmity between Beijing and New Delhi, can be seen in the region's security cum strategic complexion.

'Heart of Asia Model,' an honest and result-oriented establishment to encourage regional cooperation by placing Afghanistan as its center, functions on the objective of shortening the distance and mundane relationship between East Asia and West Asia countries up to the Yellow Sea. Following Russia and China's footsteps, former enemies, Pakistan and India, have also adopted effective bilateral and political relations. Despite the US-India bonds, Russia has resolved to an alliance between Pakistan-China-Russia. Russia seeks to protect its borders against the widespread Islamic recovery, strengthening its ties with Pakistan and China.

The analysis establishes that mutual threat perception is more acute on short distances than the far-flung territory. Long term unresolved bilateral territorial disputes determine the patterns of animosity amongst the states, such as Sino-Indian ties. Pakistan-China strategic relationship reflects the geo-strategic and security concerns of the two states within South Asian RSC where India has been continuously competing for a significant role in the region. For Pakistan, India is an arduous opponent and poses a persistent challenge to her security. With a narrow geographical depth and precarious western border, Islamabad has found a logical ally in China's shape. On the other hand, wary of increasing Indo-US strategic collaboration in East and South Asia, Beijing considers Pakistan a vital corridor providing credible geo-strategic and economic alternatives compared to contentious and security-wise precarious routes running through the Malacca Strait. More precisely strategic relationship of the two states exhibits the following significant features:

1. That Pakistan is providing a new outlet for China through establishing most needed connectivity between Xinjiang and the Arabian Sea through the deep-water port of Gwadar;

2. That China considers the presence of existential threat in the South China Sea even more aggravated in the Asia Pacific region, i.e., one of the most prioritized areas of US foreign policy; and
3. That China apprehends that its encirclement and containment have been intensified, and in this scenario, Pakistan can provide it with a safe and prompt outlet.

The research reveals that China is conscious of Pakistan's strategic significance and its capability for the peace-building process in Afghanistan, especially after the departure of the U.S. and NATO forces from Afghanistan. In this spectrum, the South Asian Regional Security Complex's growing integration with the East Asian Regional Security Complex is underlining the dynamics of Pakistan-China strategic relations. The research indicates that Pakistan-China strategic interdependence has become further deep-rooted in the post-9/11 arena, particularly after President Xi Belt and Road Initiative's initiative and declaring CPEC its flagship project.

## **Conclusion**

The investigation discovers that on a bilateral level, several new factors in the post-9/11 era have molded Pakistan-China Strategic relations, which have intricate linkages with the regional and global security complexion in keeping with the assumptions of RSC theory. These factors include a) India-US strategic partnership to curtail China's influence in Asia; b) China's role in Asia as the rising power of the globe; c) Xinjiang imbroglio resulting in both for Chinese Western Province Development Policy and policy of counter-terrorism against ETIM religious extremism; d) Pakistan-India military standoff in 2002; e) Nuclearisation of South Asia and China's factor as a source of strategic stability in South Asia; f) Geo-strategic significance of Pakistan as economic and energy corridor for Central Asia and South Asia; g) Pakistan's role as a stability factor in peace endeavors for war terror in Afghanistan mainly in the perspective of US forces withdrawal shortly; and h) the increasing role of Pakistan and China in regional such organizations as SCO, ASEAN, and SAARC. These factors indicate that the regional dynamics of the Pakistan-China strategic partnership have further strengthened.

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