

Book Review

Ghulam Ali, *China-Pakistan Relations: A Historical Analysis*. Oxford University Press, 2017, 278 pages. ISBN 978-0199402496.

The shifting sands of power being transformed from the West to the East appears to be in favour of China. The changing regional dynamics coupled with China's economic rise; China being the "Factory of the World" and growing global inter-connectivity through the Maritime Silk Route and Belt and Road Initiative have given rise to a growing trend towards China studies among the China watchers. There is a profound influence of China around its periphery. Therefore, Pakistan is no exception. There is a growing scholarship on China and China-Pakistan relations from the Chinese, American or Indian perspective, yet it lacks a Pakistani scholarship over China and Pakistan-China relations. Thus, the current study on Pakistan-China relations can contribute to an existing body of literature.

The underlined study dilates upon the formative phase that begins from 1950-60; informs about how these relations were strengthened; looks into China's modernization agenda and relations with Pakistan; indicates how China has kept balance and stability through its policy. He further identifies China's renewed interests in Pakistan in the wake of post-9/11 horrendous terrorist attacks. It also sheds light on the recent China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and interestingly identifies various factors in Pakistan-China durable relations.

This book examines the relations between Pakistan and China with a historical perspective. Ghulam Ali, the author, begins his study with an argument that divergence in political, economic, social cultural and ideology could not deter China-Pakistan relations to strengthen further since the early 1960s. Ghulam Ali, while quoting John W. Garver, stated: "There is a consensus among analysts who have studied Sino-Pakistan relations that this partnership has consistently been of a truly special character" (p. 1).

Similar views were also given by William Brands and Rajshree Jetly. For example, Jetly opined that: "Sino-Pakistan relations stand out as one of the few enduring friendship that have withstood the pressures of time and shifting geostrategic conditions" (p. 2). The author's main argument is that previous studies on China-Pakistan relations have shown that the Indian factor was the dominant element that paved the way towards Pakistan-China ties. The author also shows the merits and demerits of this argument (p. 3).

His study adopts the qualitative approach. He has selected samples for his study from Pakistan, India and China. His chosen sampling size is: ten experts from Pakistan, five Indian experts and eleven Chinese experts. The author has interviewed scholars in 2011, 2014, 2015. More importantly, this study contributes to an existing scholarship on China-Pakistan relations by exploring the genesis of the alliance that is deeply intertwined by the domestic, regional and international factors.

This book consists of seven chapters. The first part reflects on the formative phase in Pakistan and China relations (p. 8). This part of the study concludes that sustained relations were partly due to lack of historical enmity and conflict of interests. The second part dilates upon strengthening and deepening of relations (1963-77) (p. 53). This study helps the readers to understand how China-Pakistan relations were strengthened. The author finds that the China-Pakistan entente cordial strengthened partly due to common factors like India. The author further finds that even after the normalization of India-China ties, it could not stop both Pakistan and China from cultivating friendly ties with strong economic and military support to the former in the difficult period.

The third chapter is about China's reforms and modernization and relations with Pakistan (1978-89) (p. 99). This part of the study identifies that in the post-Mao era of reforms and modernization, China expanded its scope of relations with its South Asian neighbours. This period also witnessed India-China rapprochement. China began its neutral policy as far as South Asian affairs were concerned. The author further points out that in the backdrop of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, US-Pakistan-China alliance became inevitable. However, this alliance could not last long due to Russian withdrawal from Afghanistan in May 1989. However, Pakistan became a strategic ally of China besides growing economic cooperation. Both Pakistan and China have mutually driven interests but Pakistan suffered in the post-Russian withdrawal from Afghanistan. The US-Pakistan-China alliance ended but resulted in more security and economic woes for Pakistan due to refugee influx from Afghanistan.

The fourth chapter explores how China has maintained its balance and stability through its policy in the 1990-2001 period (p. 134). The author finds that despite hardships, Pakistan-China friendship remained traditionally strong. Unfortunately, Pakistan could not reap the fruits of its friendly economic reforms, modernization and cooperation due to the lack of economic activism, frequent changes in governments, and India-centric policies. China maintained its neutrality in South Asian matters and Pakistan was sanctioned by the US due to its nuclear tests, yet these ups and downs could not deter Pakistan-China relations. The author finds that respect for each other's

policies, frequent exchange of visits and non-intervention policies further strengthened Pakistan's relations with China.

The fifth chapter explains China's renewed interests in Pakistan in the post-9/11 episode (p. 162). The author explores that with the change in security dynamics in the wake of 9/11 incident, relations between Pakistan and China remained stronger than before. In order to address issues related to terrorism, Pakistan shared its important information, conducted joint military exercises and consequently China supported Pakistan in counter terrorism efforts. In this way, Pakistan was able to provide security to Chinese workers and stronger measures were taken against the Uighur sanctuaries in Pakistan's tribal belt.

Pakistan's active support for China on the issues like Tibet, Taiwan and human rights, was reciprocated by China in the shape of FTA signing, establishing of JIC (Joint Investment Company), establishment of economic and industrial zones and joint economic ventures. This reciprocity resulted in an economic boom in Pakistan which in the long run culminated in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

The sixth chapter explains the CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) (p. 203). The author finds that the CPEC project is one of the largest investments by China in Pakistan. This mega investment shows that China has high stakes in Pakistan. This project, though part of OBOR, could complement China's Western region's modernization agenda. Consequently, Pakistan would be able to generate revenue through the royalties it earns. Further, the author argues that CPEC project has potential to increase Pakistan's stature and credibility in regional politics and increases integration of Pakistan with China. The author warns that the success of the project would determine the future course of Pakistan's relations with China.

The seventh chapter focuses on factors of durability in Pakistan and China relations (p. 213). The author finds different but important factors. Among these are geographical proximity, Pakistan's geostrategic location, the Indian factor, China's place in Pakistan's security strategy, early and mutually agreed border settlement, Islamic world factor, the US factor, trust and reliability, expansion of cooperation, two-way relationship, the role of armed forces, regular exchange of visits, and the role of media. The author finds that China's support for Pakistan in terms of diplomatic, economic and military has been remarkable in laying the foundation of Pakistan-China relations. Interestingly, Pakistan's reciprocal response to Beijing in terms of playing an important role in procuring a seat in the United Nations, breaking its isolation, and helping China to improve its relationship with the USA and the Muslim world have been widely acclaimed in China.

Ghulam Ali's conduct of qualitative data analysis and a historic approach in understanding China-Pakistan relations are important but they are not new

in Pakistan, China, and India. For instance, his argument that the “Indian factor is dominant in the context of China-Pakistan relations” (p.236). However, this argument is obvious even without the significant analysis done by the author in his book. The more interesting parts of his study are factors which have resulted in the durability of Pakistan and China relations in which the author has identified a few important factors which I have already mentioned above.

The author in his concluding chapter proposes a holistic approach in tackling issues and creating more understanding of China-Pakistan relationship (p. 241). Given the trajectory of regional dynamics, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is taken as a test case of how strong China-Pakistan friendship could remain in the future.

This study in fact helps us understand China-Pakistan relations in a historical perspective. However, this study is far from getting an entire picture of overall relations. There is little reference to civilization linkages in China and Pakistan relations as it begins with the 1950s. There is also less Pakistani perspective in a sense that those scholars from Pakistan chosen for interview for this study are not experts on China and China-Pakistan relations. Out of ten interviewees from the Pakistani side, one or two have expertise on China-Pakistan relations while the rest are out of this field. Moreover, there is an unequal sampling from the Indian, Pakistani and Chinese sides. I find less quotes from interviewees taken for this purpose. However, dragging India as a factor of strengthening Pakistan-China relations does not necessarily justify relations being historical. Therefore, in order to understand relations, it is important to conduct an in-depth study on China and China-Pakistan relations.

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