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**THE TRIANGULAR DYNAMICS: ANALYZING PAKISTAN,
CHINA, AND US RELATIONS THROUGH STRATEGIC,
ECONOMIC, AND REALIST LENSES**

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ABSTRACT

This article will explore about relation among three countries i.e. Pakistan, china and US. It reveals the reason of mistrust between Pakistan and America although they had good relations initially and shows how incidents like cold war, indo Pak war, Bangladesh separation and soviet union attack on Afghanistan, 9/11 attack, fall of Taliban government and rising GDP of china falling GDP of USSR and the growing competition between superpower for dominance and power impacts the relations among countries. Moreover, this will explore the expanding relation between Pakistan and china on different aspects like military, strategy, geography, politics, security, technology, trading and economy also showcasing reason of good relation of Pak-China since 1951 and about big projects and investments. This will examine deeply the foreign policy of Pakistan that how Pakistan should maintain good relations with these core countries focusing their own personal national interests.

Keywords: *9/11Attack, Pak-China Relations, Strategic Relationship, CPEC, US-China*

Introduction

The association between china and Pakistan is commendable since 1951 as both countries cooperate and collaborate for regional, dynamic, political and strategic stability in this article I aim to emphasize on reason behind the deepened relation with china and mistrust between Pakistan and America. Initially after the establishment of Pakistan it had good relations with US and Pakistan diplomats decide to make relation with superpower America hence avoiding Russia and as both were against the communist expansion and also Pakistan joined SEATO and SENTO in 1954 and 1955 against the countries like India for its protection but as after Sino Ind-Pak war where America supported

India and halted every assistance to Pakistan and also the 9/11 attack US decide to fall Taliban government but despite Pakistan sacrifices US imposed sanctions on it and doubted its intentions after this Pakistan prefer to make relations with china .China – Pakistan has good relations despite the complex Geo political environment. In this research I preferred to highlight that how CPEC impact two countries to work more closely on diplomatic and strategic studies, defense policies, regional dynamics, power rivalries and global forums because CPEC strengthens China's position on Indian ocean due to Gawader port. China and Pakistan always backed each other but relation deepened after 1955 as Pakistan was the first Islamic and second south Asian country to accept china after its establishment and also acted as a bridge between china and US. Pakistan also backed china in Tiananmen Square incident in 1989. Where china also supported Pakistan in getting UN membership, obstruct Bangladesh from separation and warned it to use a Veto against it and was against India in Sino Ind-Pak war. Hence, the relation is based on mutual support. It represents the dynamically global shift towards china (Lee 2007).

This research shows that relation between Pakistan, china and US that how rising economy of china effects America and how change in their alliances changes global dynamics

As Initially US supports Pakistan for its own interests like war against USSR but after this it shifted her interests towards India while Pakistan ties with china because of which trade between Pak- china increased and trade with US staggered but this closeness causes security threats in various ways hence forming instability in social relations of Pakistan (Murad et al. 2019)

moreover in this article I will try to give insight to implication of strategic policies like CPEC and their long term effect on the relations between Pakistan and china also concerns about the global shift. Moreover it talks about power balance theory, literature review, Pak china relation, Pak- US relations and analysis on this triangular relationship by taking strategic problems.

Furthermore, the article throw a shadow on the triangular relation of country in view of offensive realism which shows that that after the drop down of USSR US consider her as a uni -polar superpower but after china rise realists remember US "the potential threat" and according to report china will overcome the US in next

20-30 years in this a political scientist John Mearsheimer, “The rise of China will not be peaceful at all.” so this article explore the relations in view of realism

Pakistan’s history and origin

Pakistan is rich in cultures and political events as it begins from the earliest Indus valley civilization, Vedic periods to British colonial era to the establishment of Pakistan. After the establishment to till now Pakistan has faced many economical and regional dynamics but still plays crucial role in navigating issues and stands potent in South Asia. Since after establishment of Pakistan has fronted many challenges including First Indo-Pak war (1947) because of Mahraja Hari Singh rebellion afterword, it included the second Ind-Pak war (1965), Bangladesh liberation war (1971), the Kargil war (1999) and many conflicts that comprises Siachen glacier and line of control (LOC). Pakistan shares border with four countries comprising Pak- indo border that begins at LOC that separates AJK and Jammu Kashmir and ends at Wagah border that separates the Indian and Pakistan’s Punjab while Pak- Afghan border separates two countries Darund line that passes through Pashtun and Balochi tribes separating them on either side furthermore the Pak- Iran border separates Sistan and Baluchistan province and border wall was made by Iran to restrain the illegal crossings in Pak-china border Karakorum highways connects the two countries through Khunjeerab pass. On the west of Pakistan Iran and Afghanistan, on east is India while china is in north of Pakistan. Pakistan is geographically significant because at crossroads it plays crucial role in security dynamics and global trade for examples CPEC connects the countries for trade and industrial initiatives.

China’s history and origin

China fronted many the rise and fall of its dynasties during its early history including shang, zhou, qin and the golden period of tang and then leading to the independent people’s republic of china in 1949 under a communist party headed by Mao Zedong and now it becomes a global economic power that reflects the unity. China first and second opium war against Britain and France over trade while in 20 century the Chinese civil war is most prominent after that the conflicts between the nationalist and communist’s party ends with the establishment of china on the other hand the Sino-Japanese war was against the Japanese imperial expansion.

Research questions

1. To what extent Pakistan and china relations effect US?

2. What interests Pakistan, china and US find in one another?

Theory

Pak- china relations historical view

Initially Pakistan alliances with US there was a conflict between Pakistan and china over the territory of Gilgit as china consider it its own. but after the conference of Ben-dung in Indonesia in 1955 relations became better but it has a threat to china as Pakistan signed SEATO AND SENTO but after assigning the agreement regarding the disputed territory their relation enhanced their relation become more better after 1970s as in 1974 India launches its nuclear power so Pakistan and china also cooperate for their defensive system while china also backed Pakistan when U imposed sanction on Pakistan due to its nuclear power appearance in 1998.

Because it focuses on Neo-realism theory that states can attack each other. it states that international system is anarchic so without the central authority the main concern of a state is to prioritize security, power and survival to protect the state interests against other states whose intentions are uncertain for example in the case of Pakistan and china they collaborate to protect and balance the power in south Asia against US and India (John J. Mearsheimer,).

It is expected that chin would suppress US as is is growing economically and called as “ factory of world” produces all kinds of items moreover, it shows its aggressive behaviour through “wolf warriors” across the border of India to show the power dominance moreover it implemented its security law on Hong Kong and withdraw its supplies from US during pandemic due to some conflicts and because of this it causes a drawback to US and hence the “decoupled” with her but china still remains an attractive market for trading because of BRI and CPEC as it is called a ‘ flagship project”.

Current Pak-china relations

China is the second largest economy and focus on geopolitics dynamics having relations with her neighboring countries like From 1989 to1998 USSR economy collapsed and almost drop to zero also 50% death (Popov 2007). Rate increased while at that time china’s economy was rising due to economic reforms. Its main goal is to form peace and regional stability and security and to protect its personal interests from other powers . As CPEC,

MSR and BRI are big investments in south Asia and SREB in central Asia.

As CPEC outlines a long-term relation between and it aims to eliminate poverty, boost IT, agriculture and tourism, transport, connectivity and creation of (SEZs) special economic zones till now in this project \$28 billion are used (Irtaza, 2019),.

US sees CPEC project critically because it is present in the disputed territory claim by both INDIA and Pakistan also because of its strategic location like on north Afghanistan and on south Gulf countries are present.

while it impacts on Pak-china relations that are commendable and involves at different level china supports Pakistan on Kashmir issue and says that it should be resolve according to UN and opinion of Kashmiri people and stance of Pakistan since 1947 moreover it helped Pakistan in withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan and pak- afghan peace.

In 2006 china signed an agreement name (FTA) which boost trade between two countries also BRI connects the underdeveloped areas of china to the rest of world

China wants to connect Central Asia, Europe and Middle East by short routes for capital market and major export. Also it wanted to avoid US dominated financial system and created its own institution that is (AIIB) Asian infrastructure investment bank for promoting its own currency Chinese Yuan. China also wants to shift its economic style from manufacturing modeling to big tech inventions and investments like making highways but big investments also prove helpful for Pakistan in improving its infrastructure to stabilize it economically (KUO, 2018) and according to china this economic development will help Pakistan to backtalk the extremism and terror attacks.(Gul 2017)

Mutual developments

Two alliances have appeared in recent year in south Asia including Pakistan and china and us and India partnerships where US reinforces India for its military exercise and strategic collaboration to resist china influence on Indian ocean while India ties with US for technical and technological purposes. As because the relation between India and china distress because of border competition such as 2017 Dolan pass while on the other hand Pakistan and china both countries aims to balance power in region as china interests in Pakistan for routes that is important for its trade and provide a strategic location for military operations while china's accompanying for Pakistan to strengthens its military power to

counter India and it also play vital role in pak- afghan peace. (Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan,)

Bilateral relationships is to safeguard the and it is related to conflicts, domestic affairs and china influence that is increased over the recent years as the Us took out its military out of Afghanistan that consequently distress the western region of Beijing so to build peace china reconcile Pakistan and Afghanistan providing facilitation and political faction to Afghanistan for peace and stability but because of air strikes of America on Afghanistan the leader of Taliban Mullah Akhtar Mansoor was killed so it did not work and Taliban refused for reconciliation for stability china also joined quidelateral coordination group) and held trilateral dialogue for peace in Islamabad between china, Pakistan and Afghanistan and also play role to resolve indo-pak tensions. China says that Kashmir dispute should be resolve according to UN, UN Security Council and Kashmir people opinion while after attacking the Indian army forces and capturing their pilot and the crisis between the countries escalated. on august 2019 India bifurcated the Ladakh region and suspend bilateral trade and combine Kashmir with the UN of Delhi to centrally control the Kashmir region so, overall partnership with china really benefited Pakistan as it was desperate and disgruntled as America embargo and halt the military assistance at the time of need in indo-pak war.(Maria Golovkina, 2015).

China backed Pakistan at global and multilateral forums like it opposed the membership of Bangladesh in UN and also opposed sanction commission (as it was formed against al- qaeda) against lashkare tayiba (LeT) and jaish e Muhammad leader Massod Azhar but after the terror attacks in India in November 2008. However, its alliance was not illegitimate and was limited after the crisis of Pulwama china allowed UN to include Masood Azhar in terrorist list.

It shows the deep Pakistan and china partnership as balancing and countering the indo-US relationship and power relation n. (Hussain & Heritiana, 2015)and focuses that Pakistan imports 70% of china export and it was on peak in 2016 not only this Pakistan imports 35% armed exports of china so Pakistan mainly depends on china for military assistance

Pakistan mainly depends on china for its defense modernization, technological purposes, production and strategic readiness for example it collaborates to make J-1 air crafts, and navy modernization I.e. Azmat class missile boat, yuan class

submarines(to enhance naval nuclear capabilities), type 054A frigates (reinforces security and defensive system0, LY80(Franz-Stefan Gady,2018), Chinese tanks like VT4 (Samuel Cranny-Evans,2018)and 48 wing Loong2 armed drones.

Pak- china collaborate and regularly conducted armed exercises for strategic readiness for example in air force: PAF, PLAF and SHAHEEN-viii also special forces like SSG and PLA forces also called “ warrior series” moreover the naval cooperation conducted five bilateral exercises in Arabian sea and Waters of Shanghai (East china)(Pakistan Observer,2018).

China has backed Pakistan on international level and cooperate in developing nuclear technology as it helped to establish two power plants K-2 and K-3 in Karachi of 5000MWs base on ACP1000 designs and 5th power plant in chashmma in 2017. As US reinforces India for its nuclear power development Pakistan alliances with china

NSG (nuclear supplier group) is an organization for the trade of Nuclear energy internationally to control the nuclear weapon trade. In this 45 countries are presents including superpowers these countries also sign the NPT (nuclear nonproliferation treaty) while pak-India also wanted to become the part of this (Khan 2017a, b). Whereas without signing (NPT) nonproliferation treaty which says that “ the use of weapon for the peace and stability” but both the pak- India did not sign it and produce the nuclear power in their own regime where US supports India and china supports Pakistan for its membership and persist impasse against NGS

The cooperation of Pakistan and china also spread in science and technology field. As in 2012 SPRCO and CNSA cooperated for lunching program. In 2013 Pakistan adopted BEIDOU that provides the navigation for military operations, imagine territory access and tracking the enemy forces also a base structure is constructed in Karachi. In November 2018 chin BEIDOU-3 launched that counters the US GPS. In 2016 Pakistan and china signed agreement to launch PRSS-1while 2018 PAKTES-1A launched through china assistance. In march 2018 SUPARCO concluded agreement with CGWIC to launch joint and communication satellite (PAKSAT-MMI) by all this it helps in space development for security reasons(Sabena Siddiqui,2017).

Pak-china relations expands extensively in aspects of military, defense, social, economic and technological cooperation. As CPEC shifts the focus toward trading and causes tensions in India as it is present over the region of Gawader that provides a chin

route from where it can influence its charge on India furthermore seeks Pakistan's help to counter US-India cooperation (Yufan Huang,, 2018) but it is cautious at international levels and will never let Pakistan ahead of its own personal interests prioritize its security first.

Hussein (2017) concerns in his article about CPEC that this investment is to counterbalance India which serves the Pakistan interests first which in puts a debit burden on Pakistan.

Khan (2016) talks about the shifting of a trading center from Europe and Middle East towards central and south Asia or in a wider view there is a global dynamic shift at political and economic level.

Ahmer (2015) he talks about CPEC and its long term effect and also stresses about the success of this big projects due to the insecurity, instability and terror attack of Baluchistan

Irshad (2015) he concerns about the mismanagement, corruption and regional difficulties regarding this project moreover he says that expand this collaboration on wide range including tourism, education and border connections.

India's perspective

Bhatarjee (2015) in his article "China Pakistan Economic Corridor" says that India fears about CPEC because it increase their economy and trade with those countries which has good relations with India already like Srilanka and Maldives which in turn decreases the India's trade in that region moreover it objects CPEC because it it present in disputed Kashmir area route which is strategically very important while Bhatarjee seems it in positive sense because it provides international economic integration and promote peaceful dialogue between the conflicted areas.

Main point

In this section to explain this triangular relationship I use power and balance theory which explain that to maintain the power in region there are two strategies to take means by "balance" and "bandwagoning" by power means to make alliances with other countries to for power balance and bandwagoning means to make relations with that country you have threats to avoid conflicts in this case all three countries strategically use balance policy to counterbalance the threats of other countries a. (The Moscow Times, 2014). Pakistan is navigating the issues by maintain relation with both countries US and China so this foreign policy

made it easy for Pakistan to maintain balance but it should not rely too much on one country.

Pak–USA relations

Pakistan after its independence found many complications and as it was isolated geographically so Pakistani prime minister Liaquat Ali Khan preferred to make relation with US. (CSS Forum, 2011) as being a new country there were many issues like security threats, economy instability, and poor infrastructure so Pakistan alliances with US for its interests but as in 1990s USSR (Soviet Union) invade Afghanistan and America wants its control over this territory Pakistan helped US as was against communism by attacking against USSR Pakistan helped because it also wanted military assistance including weapons and armed forces from US but soon its mission completed by dismissing the Soviet Union from Afghanistan it break ties with Pakistan and labeled it as terror country from the start of this relation US took it as master slave relation. (Dawn, 2012).

During the Cold War and Post-Cold War

From start to end the relation between Pakistan and US was complex as after the separation of Pakistan India US focused more on Pakistan and initially the relation base on mutual support. During the whole cold war Pakistan was alliance with US and also joint SEATO and CENTO to counter Soviet union and in turn taking military and economic aid the relation became complex after the 1965 Pakistan India war where US imposed sanctions on Pakistan but support India and also after the withdrawal of Soviet Union from Afghanistan US halt all type of aid to Pakistan making a limited influence leading Pakistan to make relations with other countries

Pak–US relations; Post 9/11-2001

The relation between Pakistan and US was strained but after the 9/11 attack the relation completely changed US needed Pakistan help for counter attack now it was up to Pakistan whether to help or not so Pakistan choose to help America and share its airbase, logistics and intelligence and in turn US lifted sanctions , provide military and economic aid ,lifted sanctions from Pakistan and recognize it as “non NATO ally” thus Pakistan appeared as a front-line ally in US-led (WOT). (Malik and Khan 2018).

The China factor in Pak–US relations

Beijing played important role in relations between Pakistan and America as these three countries are strategically connected while Pakistan acted as a bridge between America and china by

arranging a meeting between them on the other hand America was also concerned about Pakistan that it secretly help china by transferring it technology

Moreover, The competition between competition impact Pakistan because of its geographically strategic location on one side of which is Central Asia rich is resources and on the other side is BRI which is a part of CPEC so both countries want hold over this location in any cost like initially trade war between US-China over the tariffs (Shakil, 2017) these things may be done to to stop china investing in CPEC hence slowing down its growth.

Moreover despite the ups and downs pak-US relation Pakistan still have diplomatic relation with US and as it helps Pakistan through IMF in maintaining balance payment because Pakistan played a role in afghan war peace. (Sender, Bokhari, & Omran, 2019) so this competition help somehow Pakistan in gaining its own interests.

Pakistan in china –us global competition

The economic relationship of US and China has impacted Pakistan in my ways including investment, trade and foreign aid

Trade: Pakistan- china trade has increased in recent years that is from \$17.68 billion in 2008-2009 to \$23.2 billion in 2017-2018. But china export increased faster reaching \$60billion due to military weapons and CPEC so trade heavily benefits china (Pakistan Today 2019).

Pak-US trading is more balanced Pakistan's export to US is steady but its import toward Pakistan is decreased the trade between 2008 to 2017 is reached up to \$5.48 billion to \$6.3billions

Foreign direct investment (FDI)

Between pak-china initially it was low but now due to CPEC for energy and infrastructure it reached to \$1.21 billion in 2017-2018.

FDI from US is almost declined due to political issues and its only from \$869 million in 2007-2008 to just \$136 million in 2017-2018, but still it provides military aid.

Analysis

In this critical analysis I will examine the Impact of Pak-China relation on US. I believe as Pakistan plays an important role in connecting the routes for trade such as Qasim and gwader port moreover it's a part of organizations like SAARC,SCO and ECO that provides a world regional collaboration furthermore, as it is part of CPEC it provides an easy access for import export and

transportation providing short routes also Pakistan is rich in natural resources like natural gas, petroleum salt etc. it gives edge to Pakistan over the other countries so it can trade more widely as Gwader port as a part of CPEC is now becoming an economic trade hub as it connects the south Asia to central Asia and increases ocean trade two times and also decreases the route distances for trading moreover, an example of Pak- china friendship is Karakoram highways that spread along the entire route length of Pakistan now Pakistan and china are collaborating to make four new routes continue to this length passing through the khunjeerab region and upgrading it to eight also Pakistan make overall 5 % of total cotton and now it going to integrate with textile industry and upgrade it to international level such s trading with krgyzistn and Turkmenistan hence, As china is gaining the attraction of world due to its military and economic power for more development china interests in Pakistan that can be see through the projects like BRI and CPE furthermore, Pakistan, china and US represents as strategic triangle at different aspects where it impose both threats and opportunities. It shows as china invest in Pakistan to make it economically better and this idea was also boosted by Barak Obama but instead of standing with his stance trump made an ironic statement and mistrust both countries regarding china's investment but we should also examine the rivalry impact on relations like The rivalry between the countries is based on the global supremacy in power and economics while for US and according to their president Donald trump more military power is the name of supremacy while in view of china president Xi-jinping supremacy can be seen in more broad vision that it just not military power but also depends on economic influence and creating new norms however, this rivalry also based security and social aspect also The trade clashes between the countries effects the relations which mainly depends on the leadership, style of leadership and their personal or national interests for example US president Trump criticizes the trading practices of china and has more nationalist approach seeing his country interests first according to him china trading is unfair this norm is not only for US also spread across Europe another reason of rivalry between the countries is Global sovereignty clash as China power is growing day by day not only economically but also politically and that become a threat to US and its global dominance and some skeptics an analysts also said that if china become a global power it

would imply its own rules and values to world and that would limit the US global dominance while under Realism it's not only mean to gain power but also a want for hegemony and dominance in their region either by harming others for their survival so for this power gain china and America are rivals to each other.

Human rights violation in china

Another reason of rivalry and objection between the US and china is human rights violation in china in northwestern region of Xinjiang minorities Ugyhur, Turks and kzakhs are living, In Tibet government banned all rituals moreover they also violate the Sino-British declaration statement "speech of autonomy" while US exacerbate this situation for its own dominance.(Human rights watch 2018).

India closely ties with US in the leadership of prime minister Modi and signed several agreements regarding strategic partnerships, civil nuclear projects, security, trade, energy and defensive system. US supported India for membership of NSG but silent about human rights violation in India in some areas unlike in case of china

Economic support

In 2019 Pakistan's economy decreased due to corona virus IFI (international financial institute) like IMF and World Bank support Pakistan. While having negotiation with IMF Pakistan was suspicious that IMF may allow it to repayment this debt to china while US criticizes china for her "debt diplomacy" that taking loans from other countries to make her influence in region. In short for taking funds from IMF we need US support?

In view of realism

Countries while taking decision at international level must consider about anarchy in international system, military capabilities, survival and security, uncertainty of relation and rational actor. As every state has its own military power and there is no global governance to check the countries actions so the actions taken by each country are very uncertain and taken by their leaders so for the countries own survival it should be very active and alert to face these uncertain actions. For example china's growing influence in the region has become a threat for US. As china's economy become the second largest after Japan also making big projects like BRI where US and other countries also offer it an alternative I.e. B3W projects but it did not work due to war in Ukraine also china has been the part of (SCO) and BRICS

breaking US influence in middle east moreover, china has the largest navy approximately having around 2 million active troops in south china sea. Hence following the “string of pearl” strategy.

Thucydides traps:

Thucydides a historian says that when one power rises it causes fears in other countries as china’s rise causes threats to America. US realists believe in strategy to make alliances with neighbor countries of china that also fears from it to counter it some believe to ally with Russia but it does not work due to Ukraine war one example of which is “QUAD” coalition however there are counter arguments of some liberals that there won’t be any war because both countries have good trading relation moreover due to nuclear energy there will be power balance in the region but realists says against it by giving arguments that of past WW1 and WW2 examples and argues that there should be security measures to restrict these threats.

Global order

Global order is shifting towards china during cold war there were two super power US and USSR but now towards multi power like Middle East including BRICS while by making alliance with European Union and reuniting Taiwan china challenges the US influence and western values in the region

“Enemy of an enemy is a friend” goes fit for US. Now Pakistan rely on china for its aid and assistance but I think Pakistan should not completely rely on china because than Pakistan’s relation with IMF and US would be more stained in turn that could create difficulty regarding Kashmir issue and nuclear weapons so Pakistan should take a balance approach and follow foreign policy.

The triangular relation among Pakistan, china and US has evolved over the years like from china’s FTA agreement in 2007 to CPEC has made it a crucial partner on the other hand the overall relation between Pakistan and US remained stable except reduced trade and investment so Pakistan has strategic relation with these countries benefiting its own interests in all conditions.

In 21 century after the 9/11 attack the Geo politics of the world has changed means allies becomes the enemies although pak-china relations have seen many ups and downs but US pushing India aside despite alliances with it and urging Pakistan to take actions against war and terror attacks indeed Pakistan has goog relations with China but too closeness will upset its relation with US and IMF for its national funding so Pakistan should have balance international relations.

Literature Review

The triangular relationship between Pakistan, China, and the United States has been extensively analyzed in academic literature. The interplay of historical, political, and strategic dynamics shapes these relationships, with the global shift of power adding complexity. This review explores key scholarly perspectives on these dynamics, focusing on themes like historical alliances, the strategic relevance of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and the evolving balance of power.

Historical Alliances and Strategic Realignments

The relationship between Pakistan and the United States was initially cooperative, driven by shared interests in containing the spread of communism during the Cold War. Pakistan's alignment with the U.S. in the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) in the 1950s was pivotal in securing U.S. support (Hussain & Heritiana, 2015). However, this alliance frayed over time, particularly during the Indo-Pakistani wars and after the Soviet-Afghan War, when Pakistan felt betrayed by the U.S.'s withdrawal of support (Murad et al., 2019).

In contrast, Pakistan's relationship with China has been consistently robust since its inception in 1951. The Bandung Conference in 1955 marked a significant turning point, initiating mutual cooperation (Irtaza, 2019). While early disagreements over territorial boundaries existed, the 1963 border agreement resolved these disputes and fostered long-term collaboration (Khan, 2017).

CPEC and Economic Interdependence

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), is a cornerstone of the contemporary China-Pakistan partnership. Scholars argue that CPEC has strengthened economic and strategic ties between the two countries, with investments totaling \$28 billion to date (Irtaza, 2019). These investments span critical sectors, including infrastructure, energy, and technology, and are seen as a catalyst for regional connectivity and economic growth.

However, concerns over debt sustainability and mismanagement have been raised. Irshad (2015) highlights issues like corruption and inefficiencies that could impede the project's success, particularly in Baluchistan, a region plagued by instability and terrorism. Ahmer (2015) echoes these concerns, emphasizing the

importance of addressing security challenges to ensure the project's long-term viability.

From a strategic perspective, CPEC enhances China's access to the Indian Ocean via Gawadar Port, positioning it advantageously against U.S. and Indian influence in the region (Yufan, 2018). This has led to heightened tensions, with the U.S. viewing CPEC critically due to its location in disputed territories and its potential to strengthen China's regional dominance (Kuo, 2018).

Security and Military Collaboration

The military partnership between Pakistan and China has deepened over the years, with significant collaboration in defense production and technology. Pakistan relies on China for a substantial portion of its military imports, including advanced weaponry like JF-17 fighter jets, submarines, and missile systems (Cranny-Evans, 2018). Joint military exercises such as the "Shaheen" series further underscore the strategic importance of this relationship (Pakistan Observer, 2018).

China's support for Pakistan in multilateral forums, such as opposing Indian membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and backing Pakistan on Kashmir, further solidifies this alliance (Khan, 2017). However, scholars note that China's priorities remain rooted in its national interests. While it supports Pakistan strategically, it is cautious about becoming overly entangled in regional disputes (Siddiqui, 2017).

The U.S.-China Rivalry and Pakistan's Role

The rise of China as an economic superpower and the corresponding decline of the U.S.'s global dominance have introduced new complexities to the triangular relationship. Realist scholars like Mearsheimer (2001) argue that the rise of China will not be peaceful, as the U.S. seeks to maintain its position as the unipolar power. This competition has implications for Pakistan, which finds itself navigating between these two global powers.

Hussain (2017) highlights the shifting U.S. focus towards India, particularly through military and economic cooperation, as a counterbalance to China's influence. This has led to a growing Indo-U.S. partnership, further isolating Pakistan. In response, Pakistan has deepened its ties with China, as seen in their joint ventures in infrastructure and defense (Murad et al., 2019).

Challenges and Critiques

While the Pakistan-China partnership is celebrated for its mutual benefits, critiques have emerged regarding its sustainability and implications. Hussain (2017) warns of the debt burden imposed by

CPEC, which could compromise Pakistan's sovereignty. Additionally, concerns over transparency and governance in the execution of CPEC projects persist (Irshad, 2015).

On the other hand, Pakistan's relationship with the U.S. remains strained due to a history of mistrust and divergent interests. The U.S. continues to view Pakistan through the lens of counterterrorism, often ignoring broader economic and strategic considerations (Murad et al., 2019).

Future recommendations for Pakistan

Pakistan should ties with other countries like US, India and Russia to reduce reliance on china for example it should make good relations with US although mistrust remains high till now but it can help Pakistan regarding security issues and terror attacks while making good relations with India and other countries would attract them to offer big investment in projects like CPEC and make Pakistan position strong in central Asia that in return would be helpful for Pakistan making its infrastructure better and reduces reliance on china.

Conclusion

The triangular relationship between Pakistan, China, and the U.S. is shaped by historical alliances, strategic interests, and shifting global power dynamics. While Pakistan's alignment with China is driven by mutual benefits in economic and security domains, its relationship with the U.S. is characterized by mistrust and fluctuating priorities. The rise of China as a global power further complicates these dynamics, with Pakistan playing a pivotal role in the region's strategic balance. Future research must continue to explore these evolving relationships, particularly in the context of CPEC and the broader Belt and Road Initiative Global politics has reshaped the alliances in 21 century especially after 9/11 attack. Countries reshaped alliances in order to counter their rivalries for their own interests that is the global power and dominance in their region. As before US alliances with Pakistan but due to mistrust and diplomatic strategy and also because as china is growing globally and becoming a threat for superpower US ties between them strained now US preferred to alliance with India as Pakistan and china both are its enemy so strategically to fall the growing power of china first its alliances has to be counter. So the pro-phase

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