



Pakistan-China Relationship & India

For Prelims: Policy of Panchsheel, Hunza-Gilgit region, Kargil conflict of 1999.

For Mains: Indian foreign policy, Pakistan-China Relationship, History of India-China ties.

Why in News?

Recently, the Government was questioned in **Parliament** on the **pretext of foreign policy**. The opposition has criticised the current policies as responsible for bringing Pakistan and China together.

- In response, the **External Affairs Minister** has asserted that the two countries were always close and shared a rich **history of cooperation on many fronts**.

What is the Background of the Pakistan-China Relationship?

- Initially, **Pakistan** was a member of two United States-led **anti-communist military pacts**, **SEATO and CENTO**, it was seen as part of the non-Soviet bloc - and China, under Mao Zedong, **was on the other side of the aisle**.
 - On the other hand, **India had a working relationship with China**. The two countries had the same **anti-colonial, non-aligned approach** and they together gave the **policy of Panchsheel**.
 - However, this relationship quickly changed due to the **war between India and China in 1962**.
- **1962 War:** The **India-China war of 1962** led to China developing closer ties with Pakistan. //



- In a boundary agreement in 1963, Pakistan ceded the [Shaksgam Valley](#) to China.
- The Shaksgam Valley or the Trans Karakoram Tract is part of the [Hunza-Gilgit region](#) of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and is a territory claimed by India but controlled by Pakistan.
- The agreement laid the foundation of the Karakoram highway, built jointly by China and Pakistan in the 1970s.
- **1965 War:** Pakistan got support from China diplomatically in the [1965 India-Pakistan war](#).
 - In fact, analysts say that Pakistan was emboldened into aggression after India's defeat against China in 1962.
- **US-China & Pakistan:** The real diplomatic bonhomie began in the 1970s when Pakistan facilitated the outreach between the **US-led by Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger and China's Mao and Zhou Enlai**.
- **Nuclear Cooperation:** The relationship between China and Pakistan developed over the 1970s and '80s. Nuclear cooperation was one of the key pillars, especially after India tested its nuclear device in 1974.
 - China has played a significant role in helping Pakistan develop its nuclear energy technology.
 - In September 1986, they signed an agreement to facilitate the **transfer of civil nuclear technology**.
 - In 1991, China agreed to supply Pakistan with its indigenously developed **Qinshan-1 nuclear power plant**.
 - After [India tested its nuclear device in 1998](#), Pakistan followed suit —largely due to help from China.

What is the History of India-China ties?

- The 1988 rapprochement between India and China with **Rajiv Gandhi's visit became a watershed moment**.
- There was a clear shift for China, where it saw ties with India **from an economic lens and focused on trade**, while separately talking to India on the border dispute.
 - From that point onwards China followed a cautious approach vis a vis India and Pakistan.
- During the [Kargil conflict of 1999](#), China advised Pakistan that they should withdraw troops and exercise self-control.
- China adopted a similarly cautious approach after the **Parliament attack in 2002**, the **Operation Parakram buildup**, as well as the **Mumbai terror attack in 2008**.
- This was also visible in the way China responded when the [Balakot air strikes](#) took place after the Pulwama attack in February 2019.

What is the Present Status of the India-China-Pakistan Triangle?

- The [US-India closeness started by the nuclear deal](#) in 2005-06 left both China and Pakistan worried.
- [China's Belt and Road Initiative](#) has manifested in the [China-Pakistan Economic Corridor \(CPEC\)](#) which passes through the disputed territory claimed by India.
 - From China's perspective, it offers access to the western Indian Ocean through the Gwadar port in Balochistan.
 - However, from India's perspective, the Gwadar port is a part of the String of Pearls Strategy, for the encirclement of India.
- India's August 2019 move to [abrogate Article 370](#) and revoke the special status of Jammu and Kashmir has brought China and Pakistan even closer.
- In 2020, China signed a **defence pact** with Pakistan to enhance defence cooperation between the Pakistan Army and the People's Liberation Army.
 - Pakistan has procured Chinese-made combat drones or unmanned combat aerial vehicles.
- Pakistan endorses China's position on its core issues including the [South China Sea](#), [Taiwan](#), [Xinjiang](#), and [Tibet](#).
- After the [Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan](#), China has now sensed an opportunity to get into Afghanistan for influence and resources with help from Pakistan.

What are the Implications of China-Pakistan Closeness For India?

- **Two Front War:** Convergence between the two countries raises the real specter of a 'two-front' war.
- **Negotiation of Lost Territory:** China now looks to negotiate to 'recover' Indian territories that it claims namely, Aksai Chin, Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim.
 - It also positions China to play a role in Kashmir and the region.
- **China's Rise to Global Power Status:** China and Pakistan both share a common objective to prevent India's rise.
 - With China's rise as a global power, India views its partnership with Pakistan as a greater concern than before.

Way Forward

- **Improving Relations in South Asian Neighbourhood:** To begin with, India should do well to improve relations with its neighbours.
 - It should not be caught in an unfriendly neighbourhood given how China and Pakistan will attempt to contain and constrain India in the region.
- **Improving Relations in Extended Neighbourhood:** The government's current engagement of the key powers in West Asia.
 - It should be further strengthened in order to ensure energy security, increase maritime cooperation and enhance goodwill in the extended neighbourhood.
- **Improving Relations With Russia:** India must also ensure that its relationship with Russia is not sacrificed in favour of India-United States relations given that Russia could play a key role in defusing the severity of a regional gang up against India.
- **Improving Condition in Kashmir:** From a long-view perspective, a political outreach to Kashmir aimed at pacifying the aggrieved citizens there would go a long way towards that end.
- **Improving Indo-Pacific Strategy:** For India, the [Indo-Pacific strategy](#) involving the US, Australia, Japan and European partners is a key bulwark against the axis.

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