

## **TURNING POINTS FOR PAK-CHINA WARM RELATIONS IN EARLY 1960S: CHINA'S DETERMINANTS**

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### **Abstract**

*Throughout the decade of fifties, there had been ups and downs in Sino-Pakistan relations. Pakistan had been a member of US-led alliances but China deliberately ignored the Pakistan's West-leaning and some of its provocative statements. China had long been awaited for Pakistan's gestures to start an era of friendship and mutual trust. Beijing had been pursued a realist policy and threw away all ideological tenets in the critical times. The Chinese security scenario and its surrounding geopolitical and geo-strategic environment were changing so fast to its disadvantage. The events in the end of fifties and start of sixties, such as; the Sino-Indian growing hostility, Sino-Soviet rift, US-USSR help of India during the latter's war with PRC and the Pakistan's disillusionment with the West etc, cleared the dust from the roadmap which China had developed so far, for good and correct relationship with Pakistan. This paper aims to analyze the turning points for China's starting of good relations with Pakistan.*

**Keywords:** China, Pakistan, Tibet, Hostility, Mao Zedong

## 1. Introduction

Events in late 1950s and early 1960s pushed China for readjustment of its foreign policy regarding South Asia in general and Pakistan in particular. China's friendship with India was changing into a hostile relationship. The Sino-Indian hostility was formed by their mutual differences on the common border by exchanging the protest notes from both sides, turned later into skirmishes and then, war. It was added by the Tibet problem and Indian involvement in Tibetan affairs by giving political asylum to Dalai Lama and his thousands of followers. The already strained Sino-Soviet relationship was another factor where Soviet Union was ready to support India in her claims and conflicts with China. United States was too willing to help New Delhi in all its confrontations with Beijing. It was later proved by the Washington's military, economic and diplomatic help in the Sino-Indian border war. In all these circumstances, Pakistan was the state which provided best option for China to befriend in coming years. It was the Indian enduring rivalry with Pakistan, Islamabad's disenchantment with Washington and Pak-Soviet worse relationship which leveled the ground to take start of Sino-Pakistan friendship and drafting of Pakistan's bilateralism.

## 2. Sino-Indian Hostility:

Beijing's control on Tibet in 1950 brought India and China physically close for the first time which resulted in the Chinese victory over India in October 1962 border war (Malik, 2003). The two countries started their relations in a normal way, changed to a friendship in mid-fifties and reached to hostility in late 50s. Since then, the two had been uncomfortable neighbors. With the revolt in Tibet on 10 March 1959, Indian parliamentarians including Nehru sympathized with the Tibetan rebels. Beijing condemned the Indian actions of encouraging the rebellion "including the Indian Consul General in Lhasa's meeting with demonstrating Tibetans in the early days of the Lhasa uprising" (Garver, 2006).

Basically the Indian policy regarding her northern border was to maximize its control over the areas which were already under the Chinese rule. As the matter was historical in nature, Nehru's policy was that first bring those areas under administrative control and then if China complained, it would be bound by the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. According to New Delhi, serious disagreements aroused over the demarcation of the border, with Chinese incursions in Indian soil. The Chinese had considerably increased garrisons in Tibet, followed by the Indian garrisons with a purpose to warily watch that what was going on in Tibet. In 1958, the

Indian Government was disturbed by the Chinese authorities' construction of a road linking Tibet with Xinjiang, passing through by Aksai Chin, an area claimed by India (Boquerat, 2007). Indian Government sent troops to Aksai Chin (area to the north-west of India). The New Delhi wrote to Beijing that the territory had been a part of the Ladakh region of India for centuries and that the Chinese authorities had constructed a road without the permission and information of the Indian authorities. The Beijing replied by stating that the area through which the road had been passed, was Chinese area and it was a surprise for China to see the Indian personnel intruded in the territory.

On the boundary line, Chinese contended that the traditional line of boundary "could not be based on any abstract geographical principle. The line adopted different geographical principles in different situations. The Indian side had challenged the basis of such an argument and held that in mountainous areas, which were unaffected by political changes, natural boundaries tended to follow the watershed line of the mountain ranges" (Rao, 1968). The dispute was unknown to public until Nehru wrote a letter to his Chinese counterpart in December 1958. Then exchange of letters continued. In 1959, both the countries moved the troops and some clashes occurred at Ladakh and NEFA. Some Indian border police killed at Kongka Pass in the western sector. The case was projected to label as China an aggressor, "though Nehru knew that the clash was the result of a deliberate provocation arranged by his own intelligence chief" (Maxwell, 1981). India adopted the forward policy by expansion and Beijing decided on a pre-emptive attack (Murty, 1983). In a letter to the leaders of Asia and Africa, Zhou En-lai expressed the Chinese concerns about the Indian advancement. "Making a series of miscalculations concerning China, India not only turned down China's peaceable proposals, but finally embarked on the road of military adventure" (En-Lai, 1974). On 20 October 1962, China launched major attacks on many points at Ladakh and NEFA. The Indian troops defeated with heavy losses and China regained all of its territory within three weeks. The war lasted for about one month when on 21 November 1962, PLA announced the unilateral withdrawal.

"In a spontaneous upsurge the press, the public opinion and the members of the National Assembly accused and condemned India, in no uncertain terms, for having launched the aggression against China. But the official reaction in Pakistan accused India in a roundabout manner of pursuing policies which resulted in the armed conflict with China" (Singh, 1987). By supporting the Chinese position in Sino-Indian conflict, Pakistan was trying to improve her image to China, for what, in the past; Ayub Khan had done with help of the US. According to Ye Hailin (2008), the Sino-Indian rivalry deeply affected the Sino-Pakistan bilateral contacts. Their friendship in Cold War period has been strengthened by their enmity with India. An interesting fact is that,

Pakistan had been a West-camp member and China belonged to East-camp. The weakness of their bilateral relations in fifties was caused by the Pakistan's jumping into the US-led security pacts. At the start of sixties, Pakistan was still a West-aligned state, but the two countries started showing their willingness for stable relations. The main reason was a common enemy 'India', in term of the Sino-Indian and Indo-Pakistan rivalry. "The 1962 war thrust China into alignment with Pakistan, thereby creating one of the most durable elements of Asian international politics" (Garver, 2004).

Early in 1961, when the Sino-Indian opened rivalry growing with a much speed, Pakistan gained an opportunity to get her border delineated with China. It should be noted that Pakistan had long before offered China the demarcation of their mutual boundary but there was a silence from the Chinese side until the Indian-Chinese enmity heated up. On May 3, 1962, China announced negotiations with Pakistan on its border (Ram, 1978). Pakistan attempted for China to lobby that there was no danger from Beijing, as India had been professing to label China as a threat for the region. "At the height of the Sino-Indian crisis in 1962, Pakistan took the position that China did not pose a threat to the security of subcontinent. This was followed by a statement of the Pakistani Foreign Minister that an act of aggression by India against Pakistan would involve the largest state in Asia, meaning China" (Hussain, 1971). Both China and Pakistan were forced by the geo-strategic compulsions and security needs. China had already concluded its border negotiations with Nepal, Burma and Mongolia. Pakistan wanted to demarcate its border to avoid misunderstandings and future vulnerabilities with China. China had experienced too, the position of India and her claims regarding the boundary. For China, the differences with India were costly, with Pakistan she wanted to resolve their common border without reaching to the stage of a deadlock and later, to a war.

### 3. The Superpowers and West's Help of India:

Both The superpowers, United States and the Soviet Union, collaborated closely with India against China in her border war of 1962. The Soviet Union had always been friendly with India, more generous to New Delhi since the Sino-Soviet rift and Sino-Indian differences had occurred. Since the 1959 Sino-Indian clashes, to some degree, the Soviet Union remained away from the conflict but clearly signaled for Indian support against Chinese. Although the Soviet Union was involved in the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Indian Government had gratitude for Soviet Union's aid during the war and "it was repeatedly reasserted that India anticipated the delivery of Soviet MIGs" (Retzlaff, 1963). After the MIGs contract, the Soviet Union signed with India many

agreements of military supply. "Khrushchev had moved well beyond his public neutral posture in the 1959 Sino-Indian clashes" (Whiting, 1995). During his last year in office, Khrushchev did not hesitate to support India against the P.R. China. With the passage of time when the Sino-Soviet split was going from "bad to worse", Khrushchev did not withdraw from its commitment of help but later on, more supported India (Ruthermund, 1969). Commenting on the Sino-Indian border clash in 1959 and 1960, Khrushchev told the leader of the delegation of the Chinese Communist Party during the Bucharest meeting: "I know what war is. Since Indians were killed, this meant that China attacked India" (Beijing Review, 1963). The United States' case was different. The US was not close to India until the late fifties and especially, when the Kennedy Administration came to power. John F. Kennedy remarked: "Chinese Communists have been moving ahead the last 10 years. India has been making some progress, but if India does not succeed with her 450 million people, if she can't make freedom work, then people around the world are going to determine, particularly in the underdeveloped world, that the only way they can develop their resources is through the Communist system". The Kennedy appointed then the known friends of India to important chairs in his Administration, including Chester Bowles, who was a former ambassador of the US to India, as Under Secretary of State. The US cooperation with India against China was the reciprocity of India's support to US against China. "Mao Zedong was convinced that India was actively and deliberately colluding with the United States to weaken and undermine China's rule in Tibet. While the CIA was recruiting, training, organizing, and otherwise supporting armed Tibetan resistance to Chinese rule in Tibet, India was demanding Chinese cession of the Aksai Chin plateau over which ran vital Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) supply lines into Tibet" (Garver, 2004). India wanted to be powerful enough with the outsiders' help against mainly Pakistan and China. China had already proposed India for a peaceful solution of the border problem but "Nehru has refused a peaceful settlement of the dispute with China in order to derive from it the maximum advantage in the form of the massive arms aid rushed to India by the Western Powers (Bhutto, 1964).

Soon after the outbreak of Sino-Indian war, the situation was indicating the fact that India could not defend herself against a powerful Chinese army without the assistance of external powers. Six days after the start of war, Nehru appealed for 'support and sympathy' to all heads of government in the world (except Portugal and South Africa) and he tried to convince the world by stating that the real issue in Sino-Indian war was 'whether the world will allow the principle of might is right to prevail in international relations' (Burke, 1973). While making appeals for the US aid, Nehru had also asked for transport planes and that part of his appeal was fulfilled with the dispatch to India of 12 C-130 planes. These planes were staffed with Americans and

were used to transport Indian troops and equipment to the front. Each plane was capable of transporting up to ninety two fully armed soldiers or seventeen tons of cargo. President Kennedy wrote to Nehru: "Our sympathy in the situation is whole heartedly with you. You have displayed an impressive degree of forbearance and patience in dealing with the Chinese. You have put into practice what all great religious leaders have urged, and so few of their followers have been able to do (Nayar, 1971). The 20<sup>th</sup> October Chinese attack shocked the United States and offered India aid as sympathy. The America and Britain decided to help India by providing her arms on lend-lease basis. West Germany, Australia, Canada and France promised India to supply weapons for the pushing back of People's Liberation Army (Singh, 1987). The British Prime Minister, Macmillan sent a letter of sympathy to New Delhi and ordered the immediate shipment of small arms, automatic rifles and ammunition to India. Nehru was grateful to them and more determined to stop the Communist China's expansion (Brecher, 1980).

The Kennedy regime offered India all possible help. The magnitude of the US concern to arm India against China could be measured in economic terms. Up to 30 June 1959, the total American economic aid to India since its independence was officially valued at somewhat over \$1,705 million, which included \$931 million in agriculture commodities. Against this amount, in a short period of less than four years, from 1959 to 1963, India received \$4 billion from the US (Ali, 2003). The Nehru's cabinet approved immediately. It was first time in Indian history since its independence that it sought large-scale military assistance from a superpower, which she earlier declined any such offer, exposing herself as a nonaligned country (Ibid, p. 614). These developments made a wide gap between Pakistan and the US. Z.A. Bhutto acknowledged this fact: "The changes in the sub-continent and on the Himalayan front had erased with a single stroke both the services of Pakistan and the antagonisms against India" (Bhutto, 1969). Pakistan was concerned about the US aid to India against China. The President Ayub Khan's visit to the US in July 1961 failed to convince the United States for not providing the weapons to India. Z. A. Bhutto had correctly stated the Pakistan's concerns over the developments in South Asia: "The People's Republic of China is the only country, which will be sympathetic to Pakistan's real requirements. This is so because that country's interests in the sub-continent coincide with those of Pakistan. It is strictly a question of mutuality of interests. If we look around us the only Great Power whose objective interests coincide with Pakistan's and the only country capable of assisting Pakistan is the People's Republic of China. That country alone is capable of reducing the imbalance, either by the supply of military equipment or by political means or both. It is the immediate neighbor of India

and Pakistan and has a territorial dispute with India, which Pakistan cannot ignore” (Bhutto, 1968).

Viewing the geopolitics of the region in the form of Pakistan’s dissatisfaction with the Western commitments and the rapid flow of the Western aid to India during the war, the leadership of China and Pakistan realized the sensitivity and focused on meeting grounds for their friendly relationship. The climate was against of both countries’ security, and Pakistan had remained the only possible and logical alternative for China along its southern flank, to be aligned with informal setting. Pakistan had committed itself for this role, by alignment with the West, now was looking toward China.

#### 4. Third World Dimension:

The PRC took start as a revolutionary state in 1949 and promoted then the International Communist Movement throughout the world. Since its inception, China had been involved in Korean War, Indo-China conflicts, Tibet issue, and border dispute with India. An image of power-seeking China was emerging which was severely damaging its peace-loving stance in international politics. Chairman Mao Zedong’s pronouncements about the inevitability of the Third World War and his statements like “Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun”, were further making doubts about the China’s future ambitions. Although China was struggling to lead the newly independent Afro-Asian states, by participating at Bandung Conference of Asian-African countries in 1955, however, the political scenario of the world during 1958-62 had made it imperative for China to change the growing superpowers-controlled world order and make better her image as a leading peaceful state. In a discussion with Zambian President, Kenneth David Kaunda, Chairman Mao had divided the world into three zones. The First World was richer and consisted of United States and the Soviet Union, the Second World was rich and consisted of Japan, Europe, Australia and Canada, and the rest of the countries belonged to the Third World. Mao analyzed that the Third World had a large population and hoped for the unification of the Third World countries (MOFA China, 1998).

In 1958, Mao described that imperialism was still alive in Asia, Africa and Latin America. He was calling for change to end the suppression of these people and further hoped for rising of more than 90 per cent population of the world against the imperialists-created exploitation (Piao, 1966). For the purpose, China concluded successfully the border problems with Burma (1960) and Nepal (1961), and was ready to peacefully demarcate its boundaries with Outer Mongolia, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In this framework, Pakistan was an ideal state which also belonged to the Third World. Pakistan too was wishful to perform a role in Third World politics. Bhutto once remarked, "China, being a member of Afro-Asian community, we wish to have good relations with it" (Bhutto, 1994). The importance of Pakistan further increased its position for Communist China due to its geo-strategic location, permanent rivalry with India, common border and exploitation by the superpowers. China was eager to use a Muslim Pakistan as a bridge between itself and other Islamic countries, especially the Middle East, where the two superpowers had alarming influence (Shisheng, 2008). It was also in interest of Beijing to cultivate relations with Pakistan on more firm grounds because of the both countries' differences with the Soviet Union and India, and Pakistan's vote for China's leadership of the Third World as compared to India. The notion was clear to Chinese policy makers on the basis that the Moscow was competing with Beijing to gain the support of newly-freed countries of Afro-Asia and Latin America. "Between Bandung and the de-Stalinisation speech in 1956, Khrushchev and Bulganin fitted in a fairly active diplomatic tour of the Asian and West Asian countries extending the hand of Soviet friendship to various governments" (Satyamurthy, 1978). The South Asia was not excluded from their competition. On the one hand, China's desire to get its own security and the leadership of the Third World countries, further complicated by the Soviet support to India and on the other hand, the Indian wish to lead these countries with the slogan of Non-alignment.

"Increasing Soviet support for India only heightened Chinese security sensitivities, and Nehru's aspirations to Third World leadership directly conflicted with China's own bid for that title" (Faust and Komberg, 1995).

## 5. Conclusion

A multiple number of reasons were held responsible for Sino-Indian differences and adversary, like the diverging views on regional and global issues, leadership of the Afro-Asian world, their respective relations with the two superpowers etc. But the most important reasons were the issue of Tibet, later the Indian granting of political asylum to Dalai Lama and his followers and finally, the border problem. Before, the US was stressing India for collective security to check the Chinese power and influence in South Asia and beyond, but India had refused to do so. The Sino-Indian war led to great shifts in Indo-US relations and their views changed from diversion to conversion. During the war, it seemed like an informal alliance between them, when the America lavishly helped India. Keeping in mind the importance of the Third World Afro-Asian and Latin American states, China decided to have excellent bonds with these countries and organize them against the two superpowers. The PRC supported the freedom

movements in all Third World countries and condemned the imperialists and reactionaries for colonialism, and exploitation of the colonized states' resources, like in Pakistan.

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