

Political, Economic and Cultural Relations between Pakistan and China during Ayub Era

M. Iqbal*
Falak Sher**

Abstract

This article deals with political, socio-economic and cultural relations between Pakistan and China under Ayub Khan. It highlights all the events and circumstances about Pak-China relationship during this phase (1958-1969). In the beginning, Ayub Khan adopted pro-American policies. His bilateral agreement with America was considered against China. Ayub Khan's offer of joint defense against India, China felt threatened. Some atmosphere turned in the right direction when Pakistan offered China for border proposal. In drawing up the agreement the two sides relied on the customary boundary line, following the principles of the main watershed. Ayub showed soft corner for China and voted in favour of China's membership of the United Nations in December 1961. Pakistan aimed at an alliance with Peking (now Beijing) for the treaty of friendship and non-aggression. Relations between China and Pakistan remained on the highest peak from 1963 to 1969. After the Sino-India War, Ayub Khan announced the bilateral policy and as a result Pakistan received military and economic assistance from

* Works in Education Department, Government of the Punjab.

** Lecturer, Department of Economics, University of Sargodha, Sargodha.

China. The present study is an effort to analyse Pak-China relations during Ayub era.

Introduction

President Ayub Khan took over the reign of power in October, 1958. He adopted pro-American policies which were considered as against China, in the early period of 1959. Ayub Khan signed a bilateral agreement with America in March 1959, so China felt threatened. In reaction China criticized that agreement by Ayub Khan which allowed the United States to establish military bases in Pakistan. Ayub Khan also offered India a joint defense agreement in April 1959. That offer meant the joint defense of India and Pakistan against external threats.¹ This offer was criticized by China that was against its national integrity.²

The relations between China and Pakistan reached at the lowest ebb, when a group of Chinese Muslim pilgrims to Mecca stopped over at Karachi in July, 1959 for a few days. Pakistani Foreign Minister Manzoor Qadir personally received that delegation which also met Pakistani religious leaders. That delegation made statements and speeches. Pakistani press defamed China by covering the negative statements of that group relevant to China.³ The government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) therefore lodged a strong protest against Pakistan's government and its actions.⁴ Farhat Mahmood, commented on this situation: "in the past few months the Pakistan government has been stepping up its following of the US plot to create two Chinas and has made repeated utterances flagrantly interfering into China's internal affairs against China's sovereignty and territorial integrity."⁵

1 Farhat Mahmud, *A History of US-Pakistan Relations* (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1991), 245.

2 Mahmud, *A History of US-Pakistan Relations*, 245.

3 Anwar Hussain Syed, *China & Pakistan: Diplomacy of an Entente Cordiale* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1974), 77.

4 Syed, *China & Pakistan: Diplomacy of an Entente Cordiale*, 76.

5 Mahmud, *A History of US-Pakistan Relations*, 53.

On October 23, 1959 Ayub Khan disclosed at a press conference that the Pakistani foreign office had received a map showing certain areas of Pakistan as part of China. Pakistan wanted to approach China for peaceful settlement of the border. However, he warned that if the Chinese penetrate Pakistani territory, Pakistan would defend itself with every means at its disposal.⁶ Pakistani Foreign Minister also stated that the maps were being studied by the government of Pakistan, but the Chinese government denied this statement by saying that “this had not made any reference in any official communication to any map or any territory of Pakistan to which they might lay claim.”⁷

Ayub Khan offered China in November 1959 for a border settlement. China analyzed Ayub’s anti-Chinese policies on the one hand and his proposal on the other hand.⁸ In 1961, Pakistan’s relation with China improved, when Pakistani Foreign Minister, Manzoor Qadir announced that China has agreed to demarcate borders.⁹ A host of interrelated developments also contributed to the restructuring of the regional alliance. At the same time, Pakistani newspapers also started advocating closer ties with China as it was in the interest of both the countries to live peacefully being a next door neighbour. Pakistan also voted for China’s membership to the United Nations in December 1961. Pakistan aimed at an alliance with Peking for the treaty of friendship and non-aggression, because China was a greater potential friend of Pakistan and an alliance with a neighbour was more logical.¹⁰ Ayub Khan writes in his autobiography:

...on my return from the United States in December 1961, the Chinese ambassador came to see me. He asked for our support for the proposition that the Chinese entry into the United Nations should be decided on the basis of simple majority rather than a two-third majority. I asked him about our suggestions of demarcating the

6 *Dawn*, October 24, 1959.

7 *Dawn*, October 22, 1959.

8 Mahmud, *A History of US-Pakistan Relations*, 247.

9 *Dawn*, January 16, 1961.

10 *Dawn*, December 20, 1961.

undefined border between China and Pakistan. He said that it was a very complicated matter. I told him that if border demarcation was a very complicated matter, China's admission to the United Nations was even more complicated. I suggested him that problems of both countries China and Pakistan. He also said that we were supporting China's case for admission to the United Nation not to please China but we felt genuinely that China had a right to be in the United Nations. I think the Chinese Ambassador was impressed by what I told him.¹¹

Pakistan changed its attitude towards China and also moved quickly to settle the border issue. They could not overlook the fact that having a treaty with Pakistan was quite beneficial for them. Both countries showed willingness to solve boundary problem and issued joint communiqué on May 3, 1962. According to that Communiqué, "Both the countries agreed to develop good neighbourly relations and also conduct negotiations for the understanding of location and alignment of boundary. The two sides have also agreed to the settlement of dispute over Kashmir, between India and Pakistan."¹²

Ayub Khan stated on the Sino-Indian War on November 5, 1962, "I have told in lengthy discussions with appropriate experts and advisers over the situation that has arisen through the recent conflict between the two neighbours, China and India and its repercussions on our security and relationships."¹³

He communicated with the President of the United States of America, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and the Prime Minister of India' and replied:

We are seriously disturbed that the differences between India and China have erupted into an armed conflict. However, unfortunately that situation may be, we hope that our two neighbors will be able to settle their dispute peacefully and

11 Muhammad Ayub Khan, *Friends Not Master: A Political Autobiography* (Lahore: Oxford University Press, 1967), 162.

12 *Dawn*, Karachi, May 5, 1962.

13 K. Arif, *China-Pakistan Relations 1947-1980* (Lahore: Vanguard Books Ltd, 1984), 28.

amicably. Our policy has been based on peace at large, especially peace with our neighbours.¹⁴

On November 22, 1962 Ayub Khan in the National Assembly session, discussed that Pakistan was facing a critical situation, and disturbed over the outbreak of hostilities between two neighbouring countries. During discussion, it was decided that our sincere desire is that the present border conflict between India and China should be settled peacefully and by the internationally accepted methods of conciliation rather than by resort to brute force.¹⁵ Pakistan and China issued a joint communiqué on December 26, 1962 that two sides reached a complete agreement on the issue of the location and alignment of the boundary.¹⁶

Foreign Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto visited China with a delegation and final agreement was signed between the two countries on March 2, 1963. According to that agreement Pakistan got 750 square miles of disputed land from which Pakistan got territory beyond the main watershed of the Karakoram Range, comprising the Oprang valley and the Darband-Darwaza including its salt ranges. While 2050 square miles of the same area was given to China. Pakistan surrendered no part of the territory under her control. In drawing up the agreement the two sides relied on the customary boundary line, following the principles of the main watershed. Waters draining into the Indus system remained with Pakistan, while China's waters draining into the Tarim system.¹⁷

On this occasion, Ayub said, "...we are happy that the people of all circles of our capital are assembled here to attend the celebration". He assured to Pakistani delegation that Chinese people also fully supported this agreement. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto appealed to India and China to begin

14 Arif, *China-Pakistan Relations 1947-1980*.

15 *Dawn*, Karachi, November 23, 1962.

16 *Dawn*, Karachi, December 23, 1962.

17 *Dawn*, Karachi, March 3, 1963.

negotiations to resolve their border dispute. He also said, "Peaceful negotiations are the only method to civilized nations to pursue in solving their difficulties." He assured to Chinese leaders that Pakistan wanted to live in peace with its neighbours.¹⁸

After this agreement a joint communiqué was issued on March 4, 1963. The representatives reviewed the development of friendly relations between China and Pakistan. Ayub Khan also thanked the Chinese Chairman, Lio Shao-Chi, on the Sino-Pakistan boundary agreement by telegram. He said, "The conclusion of this agreement has given deep satisfaction to the people of Pakistan."¹⁹

Pakistan and China signed an air agreement on August 29, 1963. According to that agreement both countries agreed to provide the permission to airlines to operate across each other's territories and all necessary facilities to ensure the smooth flow of traffic. It was announced by the Pakistani authorities after signing the agreement that the scheduled flights by Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) and the Civil Aviation Administration of China would connect Pakistan with Canton and Shanghai. Subject to Japan's approval, the PIA flights would be extended to Tokyo. It was expressed with strong hope that the air links between Pakistan and China would strengthen the ties between the two countries.²⁰

American official stated in Washington that Pakistan was playing with fire by inviting a militant communist nation to the doorstep. America also stopped Pakistan's aid. American President Kennedy sent George Ball, Secretary of State to Pakistan to ask Ayub to avoid relations with China but Ayub refused to do so. When America stopped Pakistani Air base aid, Pakistan operated the base with its own funds. China appreciated Pakistan.²¹

18 Dawn, March 3, 1963.

19 Dawn, March 5, 1963.

20 Dawn, August 30, 1963.

21 Syed, *China & Pakistan: Diplomacy*, 94-95.

Pakistan and China also signed a Barter Trade Agreement on September 30, 1963 covering the import of 100,000 tons of Chinese cement in exchange of raw jute. The total value of commodities to be exchanged on each would be Rs. 75 Lacs. It was decided in the agreement that the supply of cement will start from January next year, and it will be completed before the end of May, 1964. That agreement was signed in Karachi by Ejaz Ahmad Nail, Pakistan's Joint Secretary in Ministry of Commerce and Liu Shu, Commerce Chancellor.²²

During September-October 1963, Pakistan continued its efforts to improve relations with Peking. The leader of Pro-China National Awami Party, Maulana Bhashani went to China as the head of a delegation, comprising Industrialists and members of the National Assembly of Pakistan. Maulana condemned the profit-seeking US imperialist policies and other imperialist countries that had done their best since the last world war to destroy Afro-Asian solidarity by establishing the machinery of oppression. He praised the Chinese by saying that the Chinese are standing for equality among nations, sympathized with the oppressed, help them to become strong and had no territorial ambitions at the expense of other countries.²³

The Chinese premier Chou-En-Lai visited Pakistan as the head of 48-member delegation on February 18, 1964. The delegation was welcomed by the government of Pakistan cordially. Chou En Lai said, "the historic Sino-Pakistan boundary agreement and trade agreement not only mark a new development in the friendly relations between China and Pakistan but also constitute an important contribution of promotion of Asian-African solidarity and the defense with peace in Asia and the world."²⁴

Ayub Khan said on February 20, 1964:

22 *Dawn*, October 1, 1963.

23 Mahmud, *A History of US-Pakistan Relations*, 252.

24 *Dawn*, February 19, 1964.

Relations between Pakistan and the People's Republic of China have happily been always cordial. History and geography have provided our two countries with links, which provide a sound basis for good neighborly relations in the interests of our people of two countries. Not only is there no evidence of any wars or disputes between our two countries but also we have inherited rich traditions of goodwill and friendship on which to lay the foundations of our relationship today.²⁵

Ayub Khan also expressed willingness for Pakistan-China trade policy and other contracts between the two countries. He assured to support in Bandung Second Conference of Asian and African countries.²⁶

Premier Chou En-Lai guaranteed that China would give total support for Pakistan's position on the issue of Kashmir. The Sino-Pakistan Joint Communiqué issued on February 24, 1964, in which both countries agreed to work together for preserving peace not only in the region but also all over the world. Premier Chou en-Lai supported Pakistan on Kashmir issue for the first time, and invited Ayub Khan to visit China. Ayub accepted that invitation.²⁷

On July 30 1964, China offered Pakistan an interest free loan of US\$ 60 Million. It was payable over a period of thirty to forty years.²⁸ On February 19, 1965 an agreement was signed between Pakistan and China. According to this Pakistan would get loan for imports of commodities from China and for financing projects in Pakistan. It would be returned by Pakistan over a period of 20 years, including a grace period of 10 years. Pakistan would also obtain machinery for textile mills and sugar factories, cement plants, railway steel tracks, coaches and wagons.²⁹

Ayub Khan visited China first time in March, 1965. He was warmly welcomed. Both Countries discussed the international situation. The President of Pakistan reaffirmed

25 Arif, *China-Pakistan Relations*.

26 Arif, *China-Pakistan Relations*, 45.

27 *Dawn*, February 24, 1964.

28 *Dawn*, August 1, 1964.

29 *Pakistan Times*, February 20, 1965.

his support to the immediate restoration of the legitimate rights of China in the United Nations. At the conclusion of his tour, Chinese government reaffirmed that the Kashmir dispute should be settled in accordance with wishes of the people of Kashmir in the light of U.N. Resolution. It was noted with concern in the joint communiqué that the Kashmir dispute remained unresolved and considered its continued existence as a threat to peace and security in the region.³⁰

Ayub Khan on his return, on March 9, 1965 conveyed to the nation that all points of common interests and each other's position on vital issues were discussed and China assured its favour for the solution of Kashmir problem according to the wishes of the People of Kashmir. China considered that the Kashmir dispute should be a matter of concern for the world.³¹

On March 22, 1965 Pakistani folklore troupe headed by Shamsul Huda Chaudhary visited China. It was first of its kind to visit China. Ting Nsi Nin, Minister for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, inaugurated the performance. On the occasion, the minister said; "the magnificent image of the life of people in friendly Pakistan would promote greater understanding and friendship between the two nations."³²

On March 26, 1965 Pakistan and China signed a cultural agreement, according to which both countries would facilitate each other by exchanging the educationists, scientists, scholars and experts by awarding them the scholarships to enable students of one country to pursue studies in other country. The agreement further encouraged co-operation between the mass media and contacts of journalists broadcasting, television and the film institutions of the two countries.³³

30 *Dawn*, March 8, 1965.

31 *Dawn*, March 10, 1965.

32 *Pakistan Times*, March 23, 28, 1965.

33 *Pakistan Times*, March 27, 1965.

Both countries also agreed on April, 14, 1965 for the operation of monthly shipping service and the first ship was due to leave on the same day.³⁴ On June 16, 1965 Pakistan and China signed a banking agreement for accounting procedures in respect of the transactions of 60 million dollars.³⁵ The Chinese Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister, Chen Yi, passing through Karachi Airport on September 4, 1965 assured Pakistan the support and all sympathy to the people of Kashmir. He also said, "If India attacked on Pakistan China will support Pakistan."³⁶

The Indian armed forces crossed the international border on September 6, 1965 and extended the war from Kashmir to Pakistan. China extended support to Pakistan by stating, "The Indian Government's armed attack on Pakistan is an act of naked aggression. It is not only a crude violation of all principles guiding international relations, but also constitutes a grave threat to peace in this part of Asia."³⁷ During the war, United States did not support Pakistan. Ayub Khan appealed China for help.

Pakistan and India formally ended war and signed a peace agreement at Tashkent in January, 1966. The Chinese had apprehensions of Soviet mediation, however, China did not oppose Ayub's visit to Tashkent. China supplied military equipment to Pakistan during and after the war of 1965. The agreement to provide arms to Pakistan was negotiated, during Bhutto's secret visit to China just a week after the end of the war. Pakistan's Minister of Commerce Ghulam Faruque also visited Peking as the head of a 'Friendship Mission' from Pakistan to attend China's National Day celebrations. China assured that it would not leave Pakistan in difficult situation.³⁸

34 *Dawn*, May 15, 1965.

35 *Pakistan Times*, June 17, 1965.

36 *Dawn*, September 5, 1965.

37 *Dawn*, September 7, 1965.

38 Mahmud, *A History of US-Pakistan Relations*, 301.

On March 23, 1966 Pakistan disclosed that its armed forces were equipped with China-made tanks and jets. On the Pakistan Day Parade in Rawalpindi, the Pakistan Army displayed 200 T-59 tanks and a fly-past included MIG-19 fighters also MIG-15 aircraft.³⁹ In May, 1966 China provided Pakistan 3000 assault guns, 100 60mm mortars and T-29 tanks as well as small arms and signal equipment.⁴⁰ Pakistani poets and writers, during and after the war thanked China for its support and praised it as: “mighty power devoted to the maintenance of peace and justice in Asia”.⁴¹

An agreement was signed on June 23, 1966 in which China agreed to supply machinery and technical support for the complex in Taxila. In July 4, 1966 a trade protocol signed for the export of raw cotton and jute, cotton yarn, jute goods and surgical instruments, chemicals dyes, and steel instruments. Another agreement was signed on August 1, 1966 for the supply of 100,000 tons of rice by China to East Pakistan.⁴²

China and Pakistan relations further improved on January 17, 1967, when China agreed to supply 150,000 tons of rice to Pakistan. On August 2, 1967, 100,000 tons of rice to Pakistan and on August 12, 1967, the Chinese Red Cross donated 50,000 tunas to the Pakistan Red Cross for the relief of Karachi’s flood-stricken people.⁴³ On October 21, 1967 Pakistan and China signed an agreement in this regard to build and restart this route.⁴⁴

Relations between Pakistan and China were at the highest peak from 1963 to 1969. Ayub Khan after the Sino-Indian war announced the bilateral policy and as a result, Ayub Khan received military and economic assistance from

39 Rasul Bux Rais, *China and Pakistan: A Political Analysis of Mutual Relations* (Lahore: Progressive Publishers, 1977), 102.

40 *Pakistan Times*, February 8, 1968.

41 Syed, *China & Pakistan: Diplomacy*, 123.

42 Mahmud, *A History of US-Pakistan Relations*, 311.

43 Mahmud, *A History of US-Pakistan Relations*, 311.

44 *Pakistan Times*, October 22, 1967.

China.” Pakistan and China had made progress in the various fields of science and technology in the field of Industry and agriculture from 1962 to 1969.”⁴⁵ President Ayub Khan lost control of his government when he fell ill with a heart ailment towards the end of 1967 and beginning of 1968. After about six months of demonstrations, he was forced to resign in March 1969.⁴⁶

Conclusion

During the early period of Ayub Khan some misunderstanding was found between Pakistan and China. The phase of friendship started in 1963.

During his whole era, Ayub Khan remained successful in getting military and economic aid from China. So under first military ruler Pakistan and China signed many political, cultural and economic pacts. Relations between China and Pakistan remained on the highest peak from the period of 1963 to 1969. Ayub Khan after the Sino-India war announced the bilateral policy and as a result Ayub Khan received much military and economic assistance from China. During this era China proved a great friend of Pakistan.

45 Rais, *China and Pakistan*, 113.

46 Rais, *China and Pakistan*, 113.