

The top half of the cover features the flag of China, with a red field and five golden-yellow stars in the canton. The stars are arranged in an arc, with one large star on the left and four smaller stars to its right.

Assessing China's Influence in Pakistan

The bottom half of the cover features the flag of Pakistan, with a green field and a white crescent and star. The flag is shown with a wavy, smoke-like texture.

TSV Ramana and KK Agnihotri

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Assessing China's Influence in Pakistan

Captain (IN) TSV Ramana (Retd.) & Captain (IN) KK Agnihotri (Retd.)



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Executive Summary

Chinese activities in countries in India's immediate neighbourhood have always attracted attention. This is due to the assessment that these activities generate 'influence.' Analysts feel that this 'influence' provides China with leverage, which it utilises to further its interests, and in some cases, it will use it to encash the same at a future date, at an appropriate time. Further, it is felt that there is a need for India to be wary of this and to take remedial actions to protect its own interests.

The need to respond to these Chinese activities results in a situation in which India's Comprehensive National Power (CNP) collides with China's. However, given the wide differential between the CNPs of the two countries, it is not considered practical for India to counter each and every activity of China. Hence, there is a need to identify the metrics that could serve as indicators of influence. Further, once a clearer understanding of the nature and extent of China's influence becomes apparent, it may become easier to work out the way ahead.

Friendly relations between Pakistan and China are well known and can almost be considered axiomatic. The relations between the two countries persist despite the fact that the two countries do not share any ethnic, linguistic, cultural, social or political commonality. Similarly, India and China also do not have any linguistic, cultural, social or political commonality. However, both countries have a tense relationship that sees regular ups and downs. Incidentally, both India and Pakistan have commonalities with respect to language, culture and ethnicity. Further, all three countries are each other's neighbours and also possess nuclear weapons. The one factor that is common to both Pakistan and China is the existence of territorial and sovereignty disputes with India.

However, unlike other neighbouring countries of India, there is no contestation between Chinese and Indian influence in Pakistan. The question here is, just how much influence China wields in Pakistan? The aspect of Chinese influence has been assessed under 15 broad metrics. However, there is no need to assess how China and India fare relative to each other under each metric.

The China-Pakistan nexus appears to be primarily based on a shared enmity with India. China has, on a sustained basis, propped up Pakistan politically, economically, and, more importantly, militarily to contain India. China's presence in the Aksai Chin dispute, in addition to its claim to Arunachal Pradesh, increases India's vulnerability on the Western and Eastern fronts. If India continues to substantially lag behind China in its Comprehensive National Power (CNP), this nexus is likely to grow stronger and further marginalise India's status in the region.

Chinese Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance systems provided real-time data, situational awareness, and surveillance capabilities to Pakistani forces during OP-Sindoor. China's BeiDou satellite navigation system played a critical role, including in missile guidance for the PL-15, thereby reaffirming the direct integration of Chinese systems into Pakistani battlefield operations.

It is interesting to note that, by design or by default, manifestos of the major political parties of Pakistan seem to be indicative of the fact that, for Pakistan, China is a lifeline for survival in all fields, not as a matter of choice, but as a matter of compulsion.

An anomaly appears between Pakistan's official statistics and data from China's National Bureau of Statistics regarding the overall loans and grants China has provided to Pakistan. According to China's official statistics, the value of turnover fulfilled for contracted projects in Pakistan from 2007 to 2024 is US\$ 74.6 billion. However, Pakistan's official statistics indicate it received a cumulative loan of US\$ 27.45 billion from 2007 to 2026 (February) and a cumulative grant of US\$ 0.139 billion during the same period. China's official statistics indicate that it has spent US\$ 47 billion in excess of what is being shown in the official statistics of Pakistan. However, there is currently no breakdown of this expenditure or explanation for this discrepancy.

The advantage for Pakistan is that China is unlikely to take punitive action against it, even when differences arise between them, unlike the US, which may be prone to measures such as sanctions. The advantage for China is that Pakistan is willing to play the role of a near vassal state that will blindly support China, especially against India. Further, Pakistan's proximity to the United States accords it its own advantages.

It is clear that both China and Pakistan are mutually benefiting from this relationship. If the benefits accrued to only one side, this relationship would not have endured. The China-Pakistan nexus is likely to continue and grow stronger, notwithstanding any resistance from the local population or political entities.



Assessing China's Influence in Pakistan

by Captain (IN) TSV Ramana (Retd.) & Captain (IN) KK Agnihotri (Retd.)

Introduction

Chinese activities in countries in India's immediate neighbourhood have always attracted attention. This is due to the assessment that these activities generate 'influence.' Analysts feel that this 'influence' provides China with leverage, which it utilises to further its interests, and in some cases, it will use it to encash the same at a future date, at an appropriate time. Further, it is felt that there is a need for India to be wary of this and to take remedial actions to protect its own interests.

The need to respond to these Chinese activities results in a situation in which India's Comprehensive National Power (CNP) collides with China's. However, given the wide power differential between the CNPs of the two countries, it is not considered practical for India to counter each and every activity of China..

Hence, there is a need to identify metrics that could serve as indicators of influence. Further, once a clearer understanding of the nature and extent of China's influence becomes apparent, then it may become easier to work out the way ahead.

Friendly relations between Pakistan and China are well known and can almost be considered axiomatic. The relations between the two countries persist despite the fact that the two countries do not share any ethnic, linguistic, cultural, social or political commonality. Similarly, India and China also do not have any linguistic, cultural, social or political commonality. However, both countries have a tense relationship that sees regular ups and downs. Incidentally, both India and Pakistan share commonalities with respect to language, culture and ethnicity. Further, all three countries are each other's neighbours and also possess nuclear weapons. The one factor that is common to both Pakistan and China is the existence of territorial and sovereignty disputes with India.

This paper therefore aims to assess the extent of China's influence in Pakistan.

However, unlike other neighbouring countries of India, there is no contestation between Chinese and Indian influence in Pakistan. The question here is, just how much influence China wields in Pakistan? There is, however, no need to assess how China and India fare relative to each other under each metric.

Methodology. This analysis attempts to understand the extent of China's influence across 15 broad areas. These 15 areas are as enumerated below: -

- (a) Diplomacy and Bilateral Relations.
- (b) Internal Politics of Pakistan.
- (c) Economy.
- (d) China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

- (e) External Debt and Liabilities.
- (f) Anomaly in Chinese External Loans and Grants.
- (g) Pakistan-China Military Relations.
- (h) Pakistan-China Marine Research Cooperation.
- (j) Pakistan-China Civil Nuclear Cooperation.
- (k) Pakistan-China Nuclear Weapons Cooperation.
- (l) Pakistan-China Space Cooperation.
- (m) Telecommunication and Digital Infrastructure.
- (n) Historical and Civilisational Ties.
- (p) People-to-People Contacts.

I. Diplomacy and Bilateral Relations

Establishment of Diplomatic Relations.

Pakistan and China established diplomatic relations on 21 May 1951.¹ Incidentally, in September 1949, India had devalued its currency. This devaluation led to a freeze on bilateral trade between India and Pakistan. Following this, the Chinese offer of a ‘coal for cotton barter deal’ during 1949-1950 helped Pakistan. Subsequently, Pakistan became the first Muslim country to recognise the People’s Republic of China.² Further, Pakistan had signed two major military pacts with the United States, i.e., the Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO) in September 1954, and later, the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO)—earlier known as the Baghdad Pact—in February 1955.³ The Bandung Conference of 1955 led to confidence-building between China and Pakistan in view of the fact that the Chinese Premier Chou Enlai reiterated Pakistan’s position that it had signed the military pacts of SEATO and CENTO only due to its security compulsions against India, and this was not directed at China.⁴

- *Comments:* Pakistan could not claim neutrality as it had joined the US-supported alliances. However, China appears to have assessed that Pakistan joined Western alliances to ensure its own security vis-à-vis India, not to counter China.

China-Pakistan Boundary Agreement-02 March 1963

Indian territory under the occupation of China in Jammu & Kashmir is approximately 38,000 sq. kms. In addition, under the so-called China-Pakistan “Boundary Agreement” signed between China and Pakistan on 02 March 1963, Pakistan illegally ceded 5,180 sq. kms of Indian territory in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir to China.⁵

Article 6 of this agreement states that “*The two Parties have agreed that after the settlement of the Kashmir dispute between Pakistan and India, the sovereign authority concerned will reopen*

¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan, “China”, <https://mofa.gov.pk/china>

² Umbreen Javaid & Asifa Jahangir, Pakistan-China Strategic Relationship: A Glorious Journey of 55 Years”, *University of the Punjab, JRSP, Vol. 52, No. 1, January-June, 2015*, https://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/history/Pdf-Files/9-%20PC%20Umbreen%20Javaid_52-1-15.pdf#

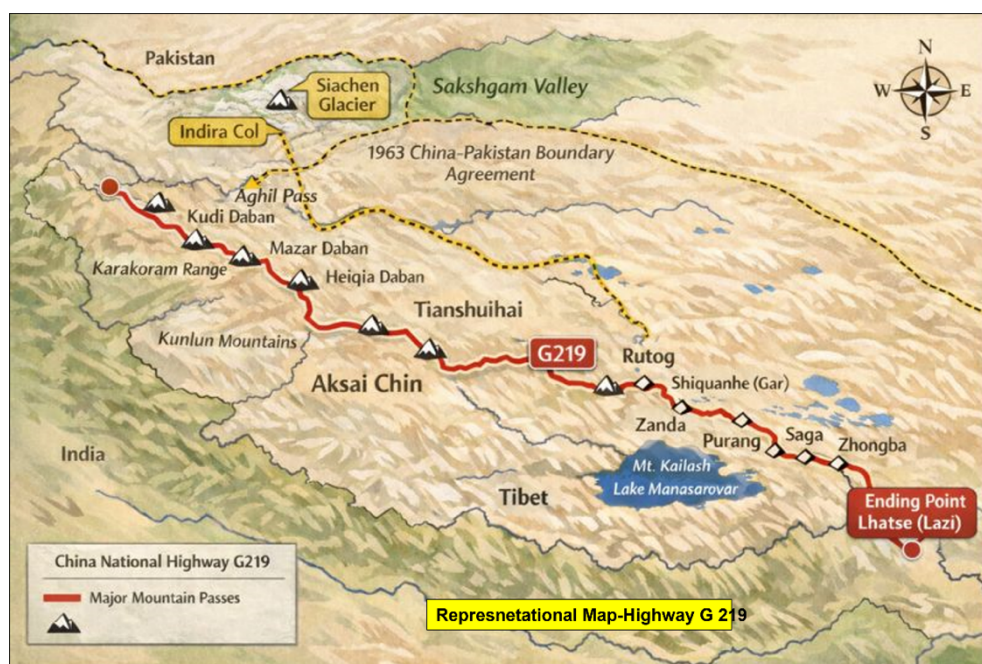
³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, “Annexure-Border Disputes with Neighbouring Countries”, <https://www.mea.gov.in/Images/attach/ans22.pdf>

*negotiations with the Government of the People's Republic of China on the boundary, as described in Article Two of the present Agreement, so as to sign a formal boundary treaty to replace the present Agreement, provided that, in the event of that sovereign authority being Pakistan, the provisions of the present Agreement and of the aforesaid Protocol shall be maintained in the formal Boundary Treaty to be signed between the People's Republic of China and Pakistan.”*⁶

As part of the 1963 boundary agreement, Pakistan provisionally ceded control of the Shaksgam Valley to China, pending a final resolution of the Kashmir dispute. In 2026, Indian media reported significant infrastructure development by China in the Shaksgam Valley.⁷ China has reportedly built a road that branches off Highway G 219, passes through the Aghil Pass into the Sakshgam Valley, and “disappears into the mountains” about 50 km north of India’s northernmost point, Indira Col, on the Siachen Glacier.⁸



(Fig 1-Representational Map-Highway G 219)⁹

- *Comments: The Chinese infrastructure build-up in the Sakshgam Valley is a direct violation of Article 6 of the 1963 boundary agreement between China and Pakistan, and therefore a direct challenge to India’s sovereignty.*

⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People’s Republic of China, “Agreement Between the Government of the People’s Republic of China and the Government of Pakistan on the Boundary Between China’s Sinkiang and the Contiguous Areas the Defence of Which is Under the Actual Control of Pakistan”, 02 March 1963, <https://treaty.mfa.gov.cn/tykfiles/20180718/1531876411689.pdf>

⁷ Daniel Markey, “The Shaksgam Valley in China’s Borderlands”, *The National Bureau of Asian Research, Mapping China’s Strategic Space*, March 5 2026, <https://strategicspace.nbr.org/the-shaksgam-valley-in-chinas-borderlands/>

⁸ Claude Arpi, “New Chinese Road in Shaksgam Valley: A Brief Historical Background”, *Shiv Nadar University, Centre of Excellence for Himalayan Studies*, 10 June 2024, <https://snu.edu.in/centres/centre-of-excellence-for-himalayan-studies/research/new-chinese-road-in-shaksgam-valley-a-brief-historical-background/en/>

⁹ Map created by authors using Gemini AI

1965 India-Pakistan War

Chinese support for Pakistan during the India-Pakistan war of 1965 helped cement ties between China and Pakistan. China's image improved exponentially after the war, and it had a positive impact on the Pakistani psyche. On the other hand, the US lost goodwill in Pakistan through its punitive action of halting military supplies.¹⁰

Pakistan's Role in US-China Rapprochement

In July 1971, Pakistan played a seminal role in facilitating US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's secret visit to China, which led to the rapprochement between China and the US. Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai urged Kissinger not to forget the "bridge (Pakistan)" that had brought the US and China closer. The US tilt towards Pakistan during the 1971 India-Pakistan war was apparently a result of this.¹¹

1971 India-Pakistan War

China gave diplomatic and political support to Pakistan in 1971. However, its internal situation prevented it from intervening militarily on Pakistan's behalf. Incidentally, China exercised its first veto in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in 1972, in Pakistan's favour, when the question of Bangladesh's admission was considered. China made membership conditional on the safe return of Pakistani prisoners of war from India.¹² On 25 August 1972, China vetoed Bangladesh's application for UN membership.¹³ China finally recognised Bangladesh on 31 August 1975.¹⁴

- *Comments:* China seems to have done everything to help Pakistan, short of committing its troops against India.

India's Peaceful Nuclear Explosion (PNE)-1974

China vehemently disagreed with India's assertion that its maiden nuclear explosion in 1974 was for peaceful purposes. China was also miffed that it had not been informed about the test.¹⁵

¹⁰ Masood Khalid, "Pakistan-China Relations in a Changing Geopolitical Environment", *National University of Singapore, Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS)*, 30 November 2021, <https://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/papers/pakistan-china-relations-in-a-changing-geopolitical-environment/>

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid

¹³ *Security Council Report*, "2026, No.1, Living with the Veto", 23 March 2026, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Veto_report_2026_F.pdf,

¹⁴ *Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Beijing, China*, "History of Bangladesh-China Bilateral Relations", Wednesday, February 18, 2026, <https://beijing.mofa.gov.bd/pages/static-pages/history-of-bangladesh-china-bilateral-relations-2jo8xx-699563c51636f464399b8f6a#:~:text=China%20recognized%20the%20independent%20Bangladesh,%2Dto%2DPeople%20Exchanges'>

¹⁵ *The Economic Times*, "1974 N-test for peaceful purposes nonsense: Chinese diplomat", April 10, 2013, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/1974-n-test-for-peaceful-purposes-nonsense-chinese-diplomat/articleshow/19478402.cms?from=mdr>

Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan (24 Dec 1979- 15 Feb 1989)

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan lasted from 24 Dec 1979 to 15 Feb 1989.¹⁶ China and Pakistan were deeply involved in a joint endeavour to help the Afghan Mujahideen. China supplied a large share of the guns and ammunition to the Mujahideen. It was paid for by the United States and Saudi Arabia and managed by Pakistan. Incidentally, Pakistani intelligence services ran the campaign, trained the fighters and mostly controlled who received the weapons. The Afghanistan campaign was a means to “prepare the ground” for a larger conflict in Kashmir.¹⁷

Terrorism in Kashmir

In the early 1980s, Gen Zia-ul-Haq, along with Maulana Abdul Bari, the leader of the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), devised a strategy to use the Afghan campaign to prepare for a larger conflict in Kashmir. Resources from Afghanistan, controlled by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Hizb-e-Islami, provided the initial flow of terrorists into Kashmir. Incidentally, the weapons were Chinese.¹⁸

- *Comments:* China’s role in the onset of terrorism in Kashmir cannot be wished away.

Tiananmen incident (05 Jun 1989)

Pakistan was one of only two United Nations member states (along with Cuba) to support China following the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident.¹⁹

Pakistan-China Relations (1990s-2000s)

The 1990s and early 2000s saw the strategic partnership between China and Pakistan consolidate. Shared concerns, including regional stability and counterterrorism, brought the two nations even closer. Economic collaboration gained prominence.²⁰

India and Pakistan (Nuclear Tests-1998)

China’s White Paper on National Defence 1998 stated that *“In May 1998, in defiance of strong opposition by the international community, India flagrantly carried out nuclear tests, thus provoking a nuclear arms race in South Asia. Then Pakistan followed suit, in response to India’s nuclear tests. The nuclear tests successively conducted by India and Pakistan have seriously impeded the international non-nuclear arms proliferation efforts and produced grave consequences on peace and stability in the South Asian region and the rest of the world. The task for the international community to strengthen non-proliferation mechanisms has become even more pressing now.”*²¹

¹⁶ Major Henry C. Perry Jr, “Soviet-Afghan War (December 1979 to September 1989): Success Leads to Failure”, *United States Marine Corps, Command and Staff College, Marine Corps University*, 25 April 2008, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA491668.pdf>

¹⁷ Andrew Small, “The China-Pakistan Axis -Asia’s New Geopolitics” (Hurst & Company, London, 2015), 77-78.

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Raymond Lee, “The Strategic Importance of Chinese-Pakistani Relations”, *Al Jazeera Centre for Studies*, 3 August 2016, <https://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2016/08/strategic-importance-chinese-pakistani-relations-160803101555719.html>

²⁰ Syed Jazib Shamim et al, “China Pakistan Relations: Historical Evolution, Challenges, Opportunities and Way Forward”, *SSRN*, 13 Dec 2023, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4656190,

²¹ *China.org.cn*, “China’s Defense White Paper: China’s National Defense, July 1998”, <http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/5/index.htm>.

- *Comments:* The Chinese White Paper on National Défense 1998 s put the entire blame on India for the 1998 nuclear tests and projected Pakistan as a country that was forced to follow suit.

China's Support to Pakistan During Kargil Conflict (1999)

China openly refrained from taking sides in the India-Pakistan Kargil conflict. On 12 June 1999, during the visit of Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Sartaz Aziz, to Beijing to seek Chinese support, China reportedly told Pakistan to "settle its disputes with India peacefully through dialogue and negotiations". However, China never blamed Pakistan for infiltrating militants across the Line of Control (LOC).²²

- *Comments:* As far as India was concerned, China did not take any action that could have negatively impacted the Indian military operations. However, this may have simply been a direct outcome of its military capability then, and a cost-benefit analysis of its role in the conflict. However, it is also important to note that China did not explicitly condemn Pakistan or support India.

Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Good Neighbourly Relations (2005)

China and Pakistan signed the Treaty of Good-Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation on 05 April 2005 in Istanbul. The treaty entered into force on 04 January 2006.²³ Its essence was to restrain both countries from "joining any alliance or bloc which infringes upon the sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of the other side". Additionally, there was a "clear and unambiguous, categorical assurance by China to defend Pakistan's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity."²⁴

- *Comments:* The categorical assurance by China to defend Pakistan's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity is clearly aimed against India.

Membership of Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)

The Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) is a group of 48 nuclear supplier countries that seeks to contribute to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons by implementing two sets of Guidelines for nuclear and nuclear-related exports.²⁵ In a landmark bilateral agreement in 2005, forged by the George W. Bush administration, the United States committed to "work to achieve full civil nuclear energy cooperation with India". In 2008, the Bush administration secured a "waiver" for India, allowing the NSG to depart from its existing rules, which barred non-NPT signatories from engaging in nuclear trade with NSG members.²⁶ At the June 2016 NSG meeting, the United States and India pushed for acceptance of India's membership

²² Bhartendu Kumar Singh, "Chinese Views on the Kargil Conflict", *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS)*, 25 June 1999, https://ipcs.org/comm_select.php?articleNo=211

²³ *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People's Republic of China*, "China and Pakistan Exchange the Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation", January 04, 2006, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zy/gb/202405/t20240531_11367158.html

²⁴ Muhammad Abdullah Saeed, "The Complete Guide to Sino-Pak Bilateral Relations (1951-2018)", *Courting the Law*, August 4, 2018, [https://courtingthelaw.com/2018/08/04/commentary/the-complete-guide-to-sino-pak-bilateral-relations-1951-](https://courtingthelaw.com/2018/08/04/commentary/the-complete-guide-to-sino-pak-bilateral-relations-1951-2018/#:~:text=On%20the%205th%20of%20April%2C%202005%2C%20Pakistan%20and%20China,%5B81%5D)

[2018/#:~:text=On%20the%205th%20of%20April%2C%202005%2C%20Pakistan%20and%20China,%5B81%5D](https://courtingthelaw.com/2018/08/04/commentary/the-complete-guide-to-sino-pak-bilateral-relations-1951-2018/#:~:text=On%20the%205th%20of%20April%2C%202005%2C%20Pakistan%20and%20China,%5B81%5D)

²⁵ *Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)*, <https://www.nuclearsuppliersgroup.org/index.php/en/about/about-the-nsg>

²⁶ Narayan Subramanian, "An 'Elite' Nuclear Club Keeps India Out... For Now", *New America*, July 21, 2016, <https://www.newamerica.org/insights/elite-nuclear-club-keeps-india-out-now/>

bid. All participating states, except China, supported India's inclusion in the NSG without India signing the NPT. China objected, arguing that India should not receive an exclusive exemption.²⁷

Osama Bin Laden's Killing

China's stance (post-killing of Osama Bin Laden on 02 May 2011) indicated uncertainty. China, however, congratulated the US and appreciated Pakistan's commitment to international anti-terrorism.²⁸

- *Comments:* China's strategic calculus disregarded the presence of Osama Bin Laden in Pakistan, and it continued to support Pakistan.

Xi Jinping's Visit to Pakistan (20-21 April 2015)

Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Pakistan from 20 to 21 April 2015.²⁹ Pakistan and China signed 51 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) during President Xi's visit.³⁰ Incidentally, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, worth US\$ 46 billion, was also launched on 20 April 2015 during the visit of President Xi to Pakistan.³¹

Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR)³²

The Pakistani reaction to the Uyghur issue has been ambivalent at best. In September 2018, Pakistan reportedly urged China to relax its heavy-handed approach towards the Uyghurs. However, when Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan was asked about the Uyghur issue in a media interview, he downplayed it and said he did not know much about the problem. The Pakistani Government does not appear to have either the will or the capacity to become embroiled in the Uyghur issue.

- *Comments:* The Uyghur issue is a tricky one for Pakistan to handle and has the potential to cause trouble in China-Pakistan relations if it is not handled adroitly.

Masood Azhar Issue

Jaish-i-Mohammed (JiM) is an extremist group based in Pakistan, founded by Masood Azhar upon his release from prison in India in 1999, in exchange for 155 hostages held on an Indian Airlines flight that had been hijacked to Kandahar, Afghanistan. Azhar formed JiM with support from Usama bin Laden (deceased), the Taliban, and several other extremist organisations. Jaish-i-

²⁷ Arms Control Association, "The Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) at a Glance-Fact Sheets and Briefs", <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/nuclear-suppliers-group-nsg-glance#:~:text=At%20the%20June%202016%20NSG,need%20for%20raw%20nuclear%20materials>.

²⁸ Elzbieta Maria Pron, "The Killing of Bin Laden: Policy Implications for China", *The University of Nottingham, China Policy Institute, Briefing Series – Issue 69*, May 2011, <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/iaps/documents/cpi/briefings/briefing-69-bin-laden-chinapolicy.pdf>

²⁹ Gabriel Domínguez, "Xi in Pakistan", *DW.com*, 04/21/2015, <https://www.dw.com/en/xi-visit-takes-sino-pakistani-ties-to-new-level/a-18396165>

³⁰ Irfan Haider, "Details of Agreements Signed During Xi's Visit to Pakistan", *Dawn, E-Paper*, April 20, 2015, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1177129>

³¹ Pakistan Muslim League (N) (PML(N)), "China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)", <https://pmln.org/main/cpec/>

³² Umer Karim, Royal "Pakistan's Foreign Policy Outlook: Islamic Solidarity and the Uyghur Question" *United Services Institute (RUSI)*, 8 June 2021, <https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/pakistans-foreign-policy-outlook-islamic-solidarity-and-uyghur-question#:~:text=Yet%20the%20reaction%20in%20Pakistan,them%20towards%20violence%20and%20extremism>

Mohammed was listed on 17 October 2001, pursuant to paragraph 8(c) of resolution 1333 (2000), as being associated with Al-Qaida, Usama bin Laden, or the Taliban.³³

The chronology of events leading to the designation of JiM chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist is as tabulated below: -³⁴

Ser	Date/Year	Remarks
(a)	2009	India moves a proposal by itself to designate Masood Azhar as a global terrorist, a listing that will subject him to global travel ban, asset freeze and arms embargo. China blocks the move
(b)	2016	India again moves the proposal with the backing of the P3 - the United States, the United Kingdom and France in the UN's 1267 Sanctions Committee to ban Masood Azhar
(c)	2017	The P3 nations move a similar proposal again. China, a veto-wielding permanent member of the Security Council, blocks the proposal from being adopted
(d)	27 February 2019	The US, the UK and France move a fresh proposal in the UN Security Council to designate Masood Azhar as a global terrorist
(e)	13 March 2019	China puts the hold on the proposal scuttling yet another attempt to blacklist the JeM chief. The proposal was the fourth such bid at the UN in the last 10 years to list Masood Azhar as a global terrorist
(f)	28 March 2019	The US, supported by France and the UK, directly moves a draft resolution in the UN Security Council to blacklist the Pakistan-based terror group's chief
(g)	03 April 2019	China says "some progress" has been achieved on designating Masood Azhar as a global terrorist by the UN and hopes that the vexed issue will be "properly resolved"
(h)	01 May 2019	he 1267 Sanctions Committee designates Masood Azhar as a global terrorist after China lifts the hold on the proposal of the US, the UK and France

(Table-1- Designation of Masood Azhar as Global Terrorist-Chronology of Events)

China's decision to support a United Nations measure to sanction Masood Azhar, after a decade of opposition, followed rising international pressure in the wake of a deadly terrorist attack in India earlier in 2019. Analysts linked China's climbdown to growing concerns about diplomatic isolation amid heightened global concern about terrorism.³⁵ China likely changed its stance because it realised it was displeasing not just India, but also other UNSC members. When China realised it might have to publicly defend Masood Azhar, it decided to let the designation pass.³⁶

³³ United Nations Security Council (UNSC), "Jaish-I-Mohammed", https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/sanctions/1267/aq_sanctions_list/summaries/entity/jaish-i-mohammed

³⁴ India Today, Press Trust of India, "Chronology of major events leading to Masood Azhar's designation as global terrorist", May 1, 2019, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/masood-azhar-designated-global-terrorist-jaish-jem-pulwama-china-1514687-2019-05-01>,

³⁵ Sarah Zheng, "Why China dropped its opposition to UN blacklisting of Pakistan-based terror chief Masood Azhar", *South China Morning Post*, 2 May 2019, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3008614/why-china-dropped-its-opposition-un-blacklisting-pakistan>

³⁶ Naman Bhatt and Madhu Parki, "How China was cornered on Masood Azhar", *Observer Research Foundation*, May 31, 2019, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/how-china-was-cornered-on-masood-azhar-51462>

- *Comments:* The issue of China's blocking the designation of Masood Azhar as a global terrorist is one of the clearest indications of its support for Pakistan, even at the expense of tarnishing its image in the world.

Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) leads global action to tackle money laundering, terrorist financing, and proliferation financing. The FATF researches how money is laundered and terrorism is funded, promotes global standards to mitigate these risks, and assesses whether countries are taking effective action. Money laundering, terrorist financing, and the financing of weapons of mass destruction are enduring concerns for the integrity of the financial system and require sustained political commitment to combat these threats.³⁷

A summary of Pakistan's history with the FATF is tabulated below: -³⁸

Ser	Date/Year	Remarks
(a)	28 February 2008	Pakistan first placed on grey list
(b)	June 2010	Pakistan exits grey list
(c)	16 Feb 2012	Pakistan placed on grey list
(d)	26 Feb 2015	Pakistan removed from grey list
(e)	28 June 2018	Pakistan placed on grey list
(f)	18 October 2019	FATF retains Pakistan on grey list
(g)	21 February 2020	The FATF keeps Pakistan on its grey list until June 2020
(h)	23 October 2020	FATF finds that Pakistan has successfully complied with 21 out of 27 points of action but decided to keep the country on its 'grey list' until February 2021 until the implementation on the plan to the core
(j)	25 February 2021	Pakistan remains on the grey list as the watchdog claims the country failed to complete three out of 27 unmet action plan targets on anti-money laundering and combating financing terror
(k)	25 June 2021	A single unmet action plan keeps Pakistan on the grey list
(l)	04 March 2022	The FATF retains Pakistan on its terrorism financing grey list and asks the country to address the remaining deficiencies in its financial system
(m)	21 October 2022	Pakistan is removed from the FATF's enhanced monitoring list after meeting 34 action items in two concurrent action plans over a period of four years

(Table 2- Pakistan's History with FATF)

China and Pakistan's Tryst with Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

China, along with Malaysia and Turkey, has frequently supported Pakistan in FATF discussions, including when Pakistan was blacklisted. Although China publicly professes to uphold global anti-terror norms, its support for Pakistan has been evident at FATF plenary meetings. China has two reasons for this. First, an economically weak or isolated Pakistan is detrimental to Chinese interests, particularly to the success of CPEC. Second, blacklisting could prompt Pakistan to seek more Western or Gulf financing, thereby weakening Chinese leverage in Islamabad. China would

³⁷ *Financial Action Task Force (FATF)*, <https://www.fatf-gafi.org/en/the-fatf/what-we-do.html>

³⁸ *Dawn*, "There and back again: A timeline of Pakistan's journey out of the FATF 'grey list'", October 21, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1694958>

rather maintain Pakistan's reliance on Chinese credit lines and infrastructure financing. Further, China views the FATF as an instrument of Western powers, especially the United States and its allies, to exert pressure on nations under the pretext of financial regulation. In backing Pakistan, China indirectly defies Western hegemony in global financial monitoring organisations.³⁹ Incidentally, at a press conference on 31 October 2019, China's Foreign Ministry Spokesman, Geng Shuang, stated that China supports Pakistan's efforts to improve its counter-terrorism financing system and will work with other FATF members to provide more constructive support and assistance to Pakistan.⁴⁰ Further, on the same day, the Deputy Director General for Policy Planning at the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that "China does not want the FATF to be politicised by any single country. There are some countries which want to include Pakistan in the blacklist. We consider (them as having) political designs. That is something China is against. China stands for justice." Speaking to a group of visiting Pakistani journalists yesterday, he (Yao) said that China stands with Pakistan and would block any attempt to include Pakistan in the FATF blacklist. He also stated that "We made it clear to the United States and India that we cannot do it. It goes beyond the purpose of the FATF."⁴¹

- Comments: China's diplomatic support for Pakistan appears unequivocal and in denial of Pakistan's role as a terror hub.

China's Policy on Kashmir Issue⁴²

China's policy towards Jammu and Kashmir has been primarily shaped by its close ties with Pakistan, its strategic competition with India, and its broader regional aspirations. China's stance on the Jammu and Kashmir dispute has also been reactive to shifting geopolitical realities, such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Sino-Indian Line of Actual Control (LAC) tensions, and India's abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019. Moreover, China has used its permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to signal support for Pakistan's narrative.

The abrogation of Article 370 and 35A, which revoked Jammu and Kashmir's special status, marked a turning point in China's policy. The revocation of Article 370 and 35A created Ladakh as a separate Union Territory in 2019, which China strongly objected to. China considers parts of Ladakh, particularly Aksai Chin, to be disputed territory and therefore views India's move as a direct challenge to its territorial claims. China has raised the issue multiple times at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), reflecting its willingness to internationalise the dispute in line with Pakistan's concerns. As part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) passes through Gilgit-Baltistan, linking China's economic interests directly to the wider Jammu and Kashmir dispute. Any Indian attempt to challenge Pakistan's

³⁹ Bharat Raju, Why China Stands by Pakistan: A Strategic Alliance in the Making", *Nepal Institute for International Cooperation and Engagement (NIICE)*, "NIICE Commentary 10932, 16 May 2025, <https://niice.org.np/archives/10932>

⁴⁰ *Consulate General of People's Republic of China in San Francisco*, "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang's Regular Press Conference on October 31, 2019", 2019-10-31, https://sanfrancisco.china-consulate.gov.cn/eng/xw/fyrth/201910/t20191031_9541939.htm

⁴¹ *Gulf Times*, "China criticises anti-Pakistan moves at FATF", 30 October 2019, <https://www.gulf-times.com/story/646001/china-criticises-anti-pakistan-moves-at-fatf>

⁴² Samra Khaksar, "China's Policy Towards Jammu and Kashmir Dispute", *Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI)*, *Issue Brief*, December 29, 2025, <https://issi.org.pk/issue-brief-on-chinas-policy-towards-jammu-and-kashmir-dispute/>

sovereignty in this region is therefore perceived by China as a threat to its multi-billion-dollar investments.

- *Comments:* China is likely to continue to support Pakistan's position on Kashmir, and more so in view of the fact that it went ahead with CPEC, ignoring India's sensitivities.

Agreements, Treaties and MOUs

Major agreements, treaties and MOUs that were signed between Pakistan and China are as tabulated below: ⁴³

Ser	Date/Year	Agreement/Treaty/MOU	Remarks
(a)	02 March 1963	Agreement between the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of Pakistan on the boundary between China's Sinkiang and the contiguous areas, the defense of which is under actual control of Pakistan	
(b)	25 March 1965	Cultural Cooperation Agreement	
(c)	30 May 1976	Agreement on Scientific and Technical Cooperation	
(d)	1983	MOU on educational exchanges	
(e)	11 November 1988	Protocol Between the Governments of the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for Scientific and Technical Cooperation in Surveying and Mapping	
(f)	12 December 1989	Agreement Between the Government of the People's Republic of China and The Government of The Islamic Republic of Pakistan on the Reciprocal Encouragement And Protection of Investments	

⁴³ Authors compilation of data from *Karakorum International University*, "Pakistan China Diplomatic Relations", <https://csc.kiu.edu.pk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/CP-2.pdf> & *Embassy of People's Republic of China, Islamabad*, "Scientific and Technical Cooperation Between China and Pakistan, 2013-03-27", https://pk.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zbqx/scientechcooperation/200504/t20050411_1270206.htm & *Pakistan Embassy ,Beijing*, "Pakistan-China-65 Years Diplomatic Relations", <https://www.pakbj.org/bilateralrelations/11.htm> & *EDIT- Electronic Database of Investment Treaties*, <https://edit.wti.org/document/investment-treaty/search> & *Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF)*, https://psf.gov.pk/il_china.aspx & *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan*, <https://mofa.gov.pk/central-asia#:~:text=Pakistan%2C%20China%2C%20Kyrgyz%20Republic%2C,facilitating%20transit%20traffic%20and%20trade> & *Dawn*, "PTA to boost trade with China", January 6,2004 , <https://www.dawn.com/news/346981/pta-to-boost-trade-with-china>, & *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People's Republic of China*, "China Ratifies the Accord between the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on Criminal Judicial Assistance", August 29,2008, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/gjhdq_665435/2675_665437/2757_663518/2759_663522/202406/t20240607_11411732.html, & *Embassy of People's Republic of China in the Democratic Republic of Sri Lanka*, "China and Pakistan Exchange the Instruments of Approval of the Cooperation Agreement between China and Pakistan on Combating Three Forces", 2006-12-12, https://lk.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zgxw/200612/t20061212_1391062.htm, & *Ministry of Planning Development & Reform*, <https://www.pc.gov.pk/web/cpec#:~:text=Pak%20China%20Friendship%20is%20spread,Western%20China%20with%20Gwadar%2C%20Pakistan> & *Kamran Yousaf*, , "China ink pact on defence cooperation", *The Express Tribune*, November 30,2020, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2274130/pakistan-china-ink-pact-on-defence-cooperation>

Ser	Date/Year	Agreement/Treaty/MOU	Remarks
(g)	30 October 1992	Agreement on Scientific Cooperation Between the Pakistan Science Foundation and the National Natural Science Foundation of China	MoU was revived in 2015
(h)	28 December 1993	Memorandum of Understanding on Scientific Cooperation Between Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources and the International Research & Training Centre on Erosion and Sedimentation, People's Republic of China	
(j)	2001	Agreement on Tourism Cooperation	
(k)	20 December 2001	Memorandum of Understanding Between the Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of the People's Republic of China and the Ministry of Science and Technology of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on the Establishment of the Fund for Joint Research and Development	
(l)	03 November 2003	Extradition Treaty between the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan	
(m)	2005	Bilateral MoU on Cooperation in Information Technology	
(n)	05 April 2005	Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Good Neighbourly Relations	Signed in Istanbul
(p)	05 April 2005	Cooperation Agreement between the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism	
(q)	24 November 2006	Free Trade Agreement	
(r)	05 July 2013	MOU on China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)	
(s)	20 April 2015	Joint Statement between the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on Establishing an All-weather Strategic Partnership of Cooperation	
(t)	28 April 2019	Protocol to Amend the Free Trade Agreement between China and Pakistan	

(Table 3- China-Pakistan-Agreements, Treaties and MOUs)

- *Comments: The 1963 boundary agreement and the 2013 MoU on CPEC are clearly anti-India in nature and show an utter disregard on the part of China for India's sovereignty concerns.*

Consultation Mechanisms

Pakistan and China have the following consultation mechanisms as tabulated below: -⁴⁴

Ser	Consultation Mechanisms
(a)	China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Dialogue
(b)	2+2 (Afghanistan, Pakistan, and China, the US)
(c)	Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) of Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States and China
(d)	Quadrilateral Coordination & Cooperation Mechanism (QCCM)- China, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan
(e)	Pakistan-China Bilateral Consultations on Arms Control, Non-Proliferation, and Disarmament
(f)	Pakistan-China Dialogue on Maritime Cooperation
(g)	China-Pakistan Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue
(h)	China-Pakistan Consultation on Human Rights
(j)	China-Pakistan border joint inspection preparatory committee meeting
(k)	China Pakistan Economic Corridor's Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC)
(l)	Pakistan-China Director General Level Consultations on South Asia
(m)	China-Pakistan Consultations on the United Nations Affairs
(n)	Pakistan-China Consular Consultations

(Table 4- China-Pakistan-Consultation Mechanisms)

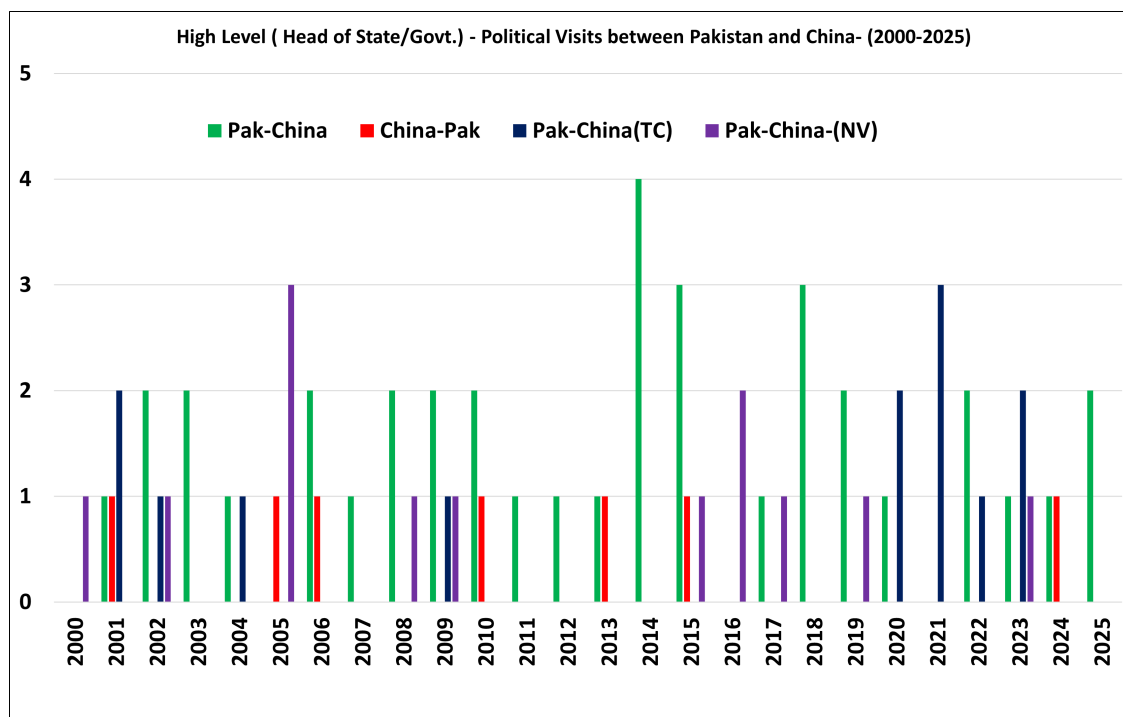
- Comments: There are at least four consultation mechanisms between China and Pakistan on Afghanistan. This indicates a congruence of interests and the ability to work in tandem on complex issues.

High Level Visits (Head of State/Head of Government) -(2000-2025)

here have been a total of 71 high-level interactions between Pakistan and China for the period 2000-2025. There have been 38 visits from Pakistan to China and seven from China to Pakistan. Further, there have been 13 telephonic conversations (TC) and 13 meetings at neutral venues. The year-wise breakdown is shown below:-⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Authors compilation of data from *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan*, <https://mofa.gov.pk/china#:~:text=Pakistan%20and%20China%20have%20several,management%20consultations%20and%20Consular%20affairs> & *China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA)*, http://en.cidca.gov.cn/2019-09/08/c_407236.htm & *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People's Republic of China*, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/gjhdq_665435/3376_665447/3432_664920/3435_664926/202406/t20240612_11427659.html & Raffaello Pantucci, "Testimony Before the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission", *US-China Economic & Security Review Commission*, May 12, 2022, https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/Raffaello_Pantucci_Testimony.pdf & *CPEC Secretariat, Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives*, <https://cpec.gov.pk/gallery-details/193>

⁴⁵ *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People's Republic of China*, "Home Countries and Regions Asia Pakistan Activities", https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/gjhdq_665435/2675_665437/2757_663518/2759_663522/ & *Dawn*, July 4, 2012, <https://www.dawn.com/news/731670/timelinehistory-of-us-pakistan-relations>



(Fig 2-China-Pakistan-High Level Visits-2000-2025)

Incidentally, there have been 42 interactions between Pakistan and the USA in the same period. Of these, 22 were visits from Pakistan to the USA and 20 from the USA to Pakistan.⁴⁶

- *Comments:* High-level exchanges of visits between countries usually follow the principle of reciprocity. In the case of Pakistan and the USA, this seems to have been observed. However, in the case of Pakistan and China, the 38 visits from Pakistan to China, as opposed to just seven from China to Pakistan, indicate that Pakistan is the ‘supplicant’ in this relationship.

China’s Support to Pakistan During OP Sindoor⁴⁷

China’s official responses to the 22 April 2025 Pahalgam terrorist attack mirrored Pakistan’s narrative. China advocated a “quick and fair investigation” into the Pahalgam attack and expressed “full understanding” of Islamabad’s ‘legitimate security concerns’. The Chinese Foreign Office spokesperson termed India’s 07 May 2025 response regarding terrorist targets in Pakistan as “regrettable”. Further, China collaborated with Pakistan to dilute the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Press Statement, removing any direct reference to the ‘Resistance Front’, the group behind the Pahalgam attack. It also prevented the inclusion of the terrorist attack in the draft SCO communique, resulting in Defence Minister Shri Rajnath Singh refusing to sign the document on 25 Jun 2025, as it would have weakened India’s position on terrorism and regional security.

⁴⁶ Department of State, United States of America, “Pakistan”, <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/president/pakistan> & Department of State, United States of America, “Visits By Foreign Leaders of Pakistan”, <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/visits/pakistan>

⁴⁷ United Service Institution of India (USI), “Pakistan – China Collusivity as Witnessed in Operation Sindoor”, 14 July 2025, https://usiofindia.org/pdf/Spfile_68.pdf

The Chinese media also played an active role in shaping perceptions, amplifying Pakistan's propaganda. The digital landscape also underscored China's active alignment with Pakistan's strategic messaging, including celebrating the alleged success of Chinese-origin military platforms deployed by Pakistan.

Chinese Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance systems provided Pakistani forces with real-time data, situational awareness, and surveillance capabilities. China's BeiDou satellite navigation system played a critical role, including in missile guidance for the PL-15, reaffirming the direct integration of Chinese systems into Pakistani battlefield operations.

II. Internal Politics of Pakistan

The final party position in the Pakistan National Assembly, post-2024 election, is tabulated below:-

48

Ser	Side	Party	Acronym	No. of Seats
(a)	Government	Pakistan Muslim League (N) (PML (N))	PML (N)	123
(b)	Government	Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP)	PPPP	74
(c)	Government	Muttahida Qomi Movement Pakistan (MQM)	MQM (P)	22
(d)	Government	Pakistan Muslim League	PML	5
(e)	Government	Ishtekam-e-Pakistan Party	IPP	4
(f)	Government	Pakistan Muslim League Zia	PML (Z)	1
(g)	Government	Balochiathan Awami Party	BAP	1
(h)	Government	National Party	NP	1
(j)	Government	Independents	IND	4
	Government	Total		235
(k)	Opposition	Sunni Itehad Council	SIC	80
	Opposition	Jamiat Ulema e Islam Pakistan	JUIP	10
(l)	Opposition	Independents (Opposition)	IND (Opp)	5
(m)	Opposition	Balochiathan National Party	BNP	1
(n)	Opposition	Majlis Wahdaat e Muslimeen	MWM (P)	1
(p)	Opposition	Pakhtoonwa Milli Awami Party	PKMAP	1
(q)	Opposition	Total		98
		Overall Total		333

(Table 5- Final Party Position in Pakistan Assembly-Post 2024 Election)

⁴⁸ Irfan Sadozai, "Ruling coalition given two-thirds majority as ECP distributes reserved seats", *Dawn*, July 2, 2025, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1921643>

The **final party position in the Pakistan Senate**, post-2024 election, is tabulated below:-⁴⁹

Ser	Side	Party	Acronym	No. of Seats
(a)	Government	Pakistan People's Party Parliamentary (PPPP)	PPPP	26
(b)	Government	Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz Group)	PML (N)	20
(c)	Government	Balochistan Awami Party (BAP)	BAP	4
(d)	Government	Muttahidda Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P)	MQM(P)	3
(e)	Government	National Party (NP)	NP	1
(f)	Government	Pakistan Muslim League (PML)	PML	1
	Government	Total		55
(g)	Opposition	Pakistan Tehreek-E-Insaf (PTI)	PTI	14
(h)	Opposition	Jamiatul-Ulema-E-Islam Pakistan	JUIP	7
(j)	Opposition	Awami National Party (ANP)	ANP	3
(k)	Opposition	Majlis Wahdat-E-Muslimeen Pakistan	MWMP	1
	Opposition	Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC)	SIC	1
	Opposition	Total		26
(l)	Independent	Independents	IND	15
	Independent	Total		15
		Overall Total		96

(Table 6- Final Party Position in Pakistan Senate-Post 2024 Election)

Given China's continuous and substantial diplomatic support for Pakistan, it is worth examining the foreign policy positions of Pakistan's major political parties in the current National Assembly and Senate.

(a) **PML (N)**: The 2024 election manifesto of the PML(N) has a section on diplomatic ties with Iran, Turkiye, GCC States with special focus on Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar, Palestine, Afghanistan, Russia, the US, the EU and UK, Africa and Latin America and the United Nations. Interestingly, the section on 'diplomatic ties' does not mention China. On diplomatic ties with the US, the Manifesto states that "Pakistan's ties with the United States will continue to occupy a vital and consequential place in Pakistan's foreign policy." China is only mentioned under the section titled "*Optimising Dividends of CPEC.*" The Manifesto states that "*PMLN will work to forge even closer the historic deep-rooted ties between Pakistan and the People's Republic of China. PMLN will ensure that the next phase of CPEC projects is delivered on time and in line with the vision of the two leaderships.*" Under the sub-section

⁴⁹ Senate of Pakistan, https://senate.gov.pk/en/current_members.php

*“Defence & Strategic Prowess”, the Manifesto states that “Our government will ensure that Pakistan’s strong and impregnable defense is strengthened even further, through our continued and robust cooperation with our all-weather friend. Continue to lend our full support to China on international and multilateral fronts, particularly in areas of mutual convergence and shared interests.”*⁵⁰

- *Comments:* PML (N) is the largest party in the National Assembly with 123 seats. It is worth noting that, by design or by default, the PML (N) manifesto seems to indicate that, for Pakistan, China is a lifeline for survival across all fields, not as a matter of choice but as a matter of compulsion.

(b) **Pakistan People’s Party (PPP):** Under the section titled ‘Rebooting Pakistan’s Foreign Policy’, the PPP manifesto mentions Afghanistan, India, Kashmir, Middle East, GCC, Muslim world, EU, and the US. Further, it states that *“Pakistan’s partnership with the United States remains a crucial node of our foreign policy, and we will move forward on a trade-based relationship, given that the USA remains one of our principle commercial partners with a thriving market for Pakistani goods.”* China is not mentioned under this section. As far as China is concerned, the Manifesto states that *“It was our Party that spearheaded a quantum leap forward by placing Pakistan as a key player in China’s Belt and Road Initiative and paving the way for China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).”*⁵¹

- *Comments:* PPP is the second-largest party with 74 seats in the National Assembly. Once again, the focus of foreign policy seems to be on the US, with China seen as relevant only in terms of CPEC.

(c) **Muttahida Qomi Movement Pakistan (MQM):** On foreign policy, the MQM’s 2018 manifesto states that *“MQM wants an independent foreign policy for Pakistan and wants to promote close, friendly and honourable relations with all the countries, especially with the neighbouring countries. MQM encourages confidence-building measures (CBMs) and a dialogue process with India.”* On China, the Manifesto states that *“Even the devaluation of rupee (Pakistani rupee) is not boosting the exports, mainly due to cheaper imports from China that is sapping the local industrial growth.”*⁵²

- *Comments:* MQM is the third-largest party with 22 seats in the National Assembly. There is no mention of China, except in a negative sense.

Joint Consultation Mechanism for China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

Established in 2019, the JCM of Political Parties on CPEC is a regular consultation mechanism between the Communist Party of China and the political parties of Pakistan. The JCM brought together nine political parties, including Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), the Pakistan People’s Party, the Balochistan Awami Party, the National Party, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, the Awami National Party, the Jamaat-e-Islami, and Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, as well as leading officials from relevant government departments and representatives from the business communities of the two countries. The first JCM was organised in Beijing in March 2019, and this JCM has now taken shape as the institutional mechanism between the CPC and

⁵⁰ Paksitan Muslim League Nawaz, PML(N), “Manifesto”, <https://clr.org.pk/docs/Manifestos%202024/PML%20N%20Manifesto.pdf>

⁵¹ Pakistan People’s Party (PPP), “Manifesto 2024”, <https://ppp.org.pk/manifesto/>

⁵² Empowered Pakistan, https://rtepakistan.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/rtepakistan_manifesto_MQM_2018.pdf

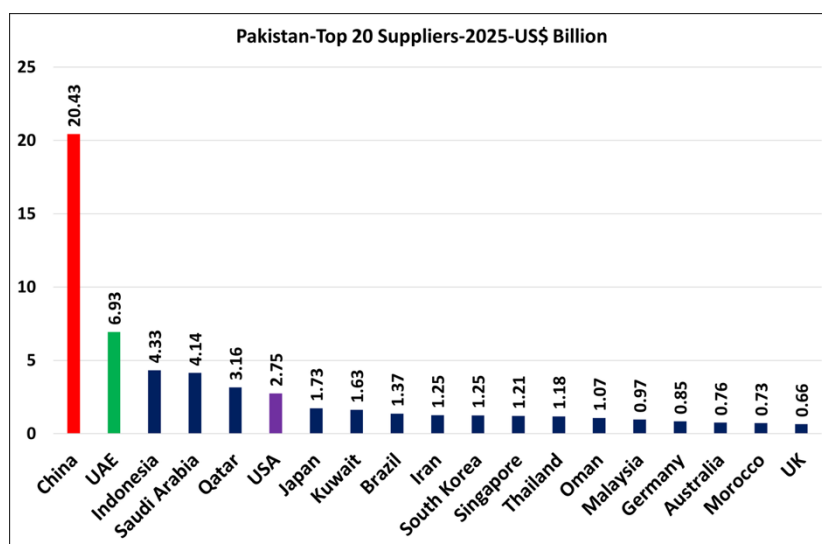
Pakistani political parties for CPEC coordination and communication. This online conference of nine political parties, representing both the government and the opposition, was the first of its kind in Pakistan and agreed to preserve, protect and promote CPEC, above party lines, since they all view CPEC as a game changer.⁵³

- *Comments:* Four ruling parties, namely PML (N), PPP, BAP and NP, and two opposition parties, namely JUIP and PKMAP, of the present National Assembly of Pakistan are part of the JCM on CPEC.

III. Economy

Trade (Imports)⁵⁴

Imports by Value (US\$ billion). Pakistan imported commodities worth US\$ 64.98 billion in 2025. The top 20 suppliers to Pakistan in 2025 are as shown below: -

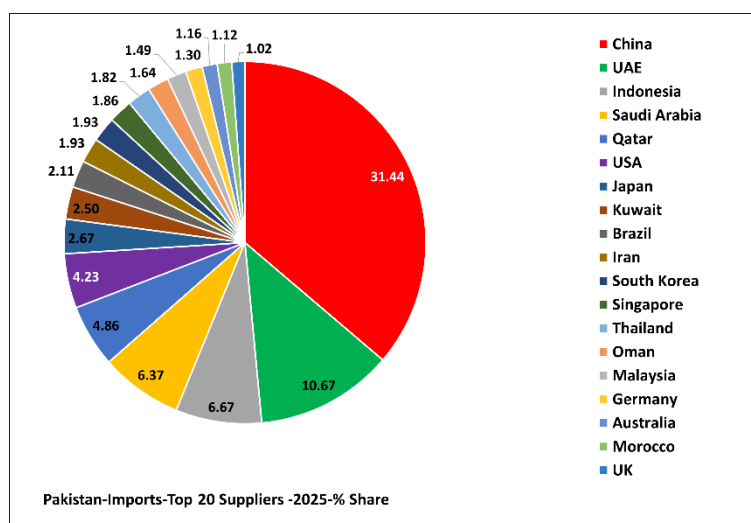


(Fig 3- Pakistan Imports-Top 20 Suppliers -2025)

Imports by Value (% Share). The top 20 suppliers to Pakistan in 2025, terms of percentage (%) share are as shown below: -

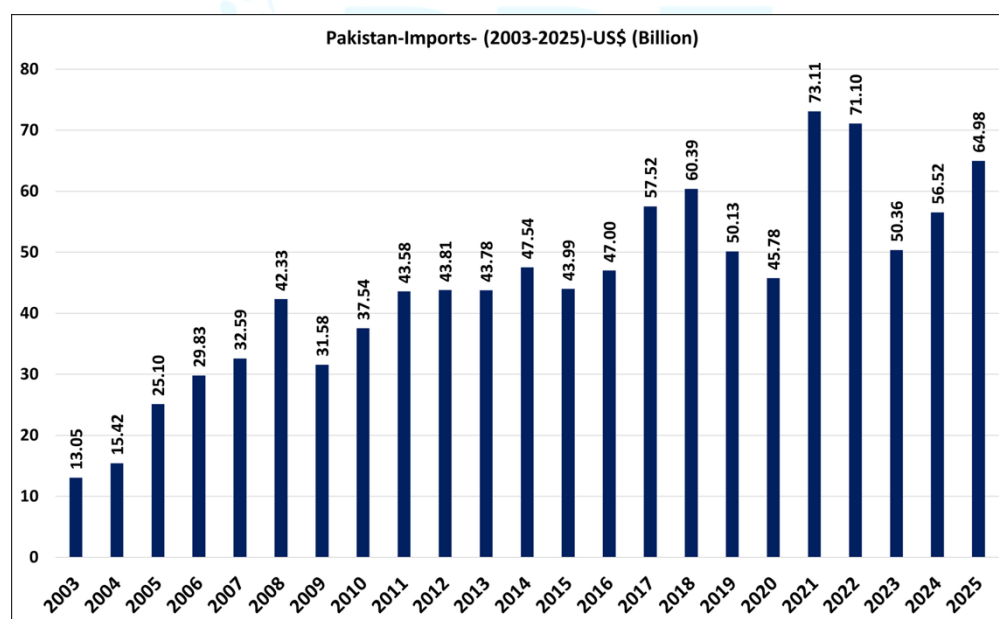
⁵³ Dawn, “Rare political unity witnessed as China stresses internal stability essential for Pakistan’s development”, June 21, 2024, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1841045>

⁵⁴ Authors analysis of data from International Trade Centre (Intracen), https://www.trademap.org/Country_SelProductCountry_TS.aspx?nvpm=1%7c586%7c%7c%7cTOTAL%7c%7c%7c2%7c1%7c1%7c1%7c2%7c1%7c2%7c1%7c1%7c1



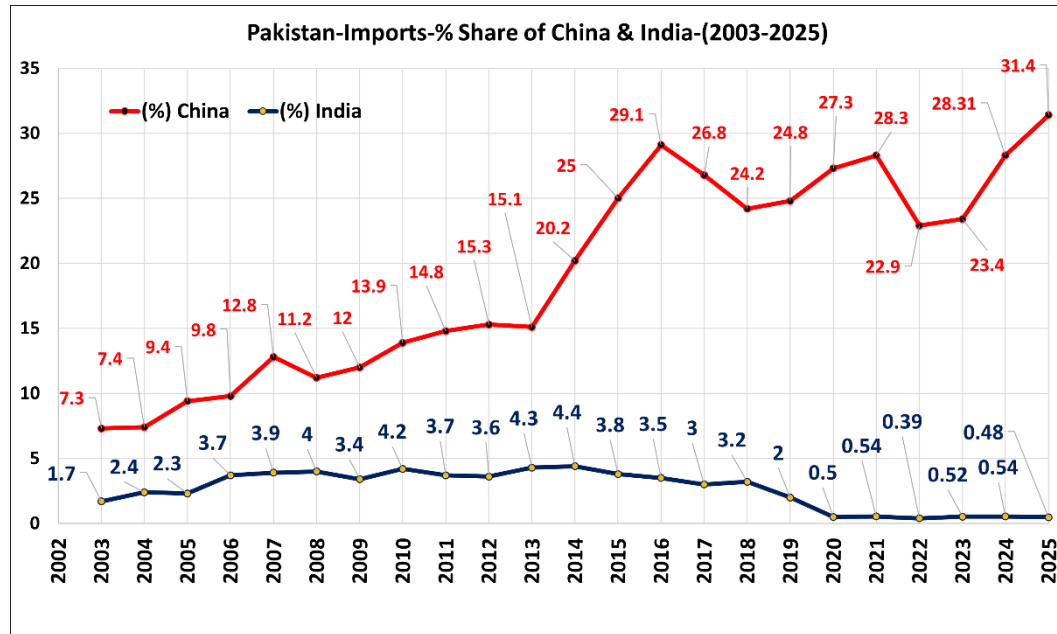
(Fig 4- Pakistan Imports-Top 20 Suppliers-(%) Share -2025)

Imports (by Value) (2003-2025). Pakistan imported commodities worth US\$ 13.05 billion in 2003, and this grew to US\$ 64.98 billion in 2025. Pakistan's imports by country for the period 2003-2025 are shown below: -



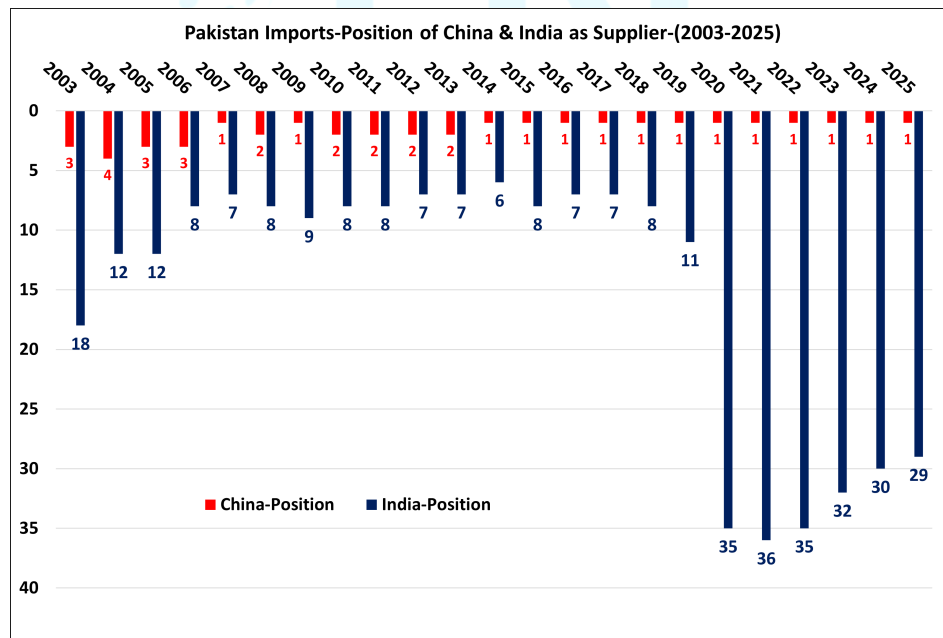
(Fig 5- Pakistan Imports- US\$ billion-2003-2025)

China and India's % Share as Suppliers to Pakistan (2003-2025). The position of China and India, in the hierarchy of suppliers to Pakistan, in terms of % share, from 2003 to 2025 is shown in the graph below: -



(Fig 6- Share of China-Hong Kong-India- Pakistan-Imports- 2003- 2025)

China and India's Position as Suppliers to Pakistan (2003-2025). The positions of China and India in the hierarchy of suppliers to Pakistan from 2003 to 2025 are shown in the graph below:



(Fig 7- Positions of China-India as Suppliers - Pakistan-Imports- 2003- 2025)

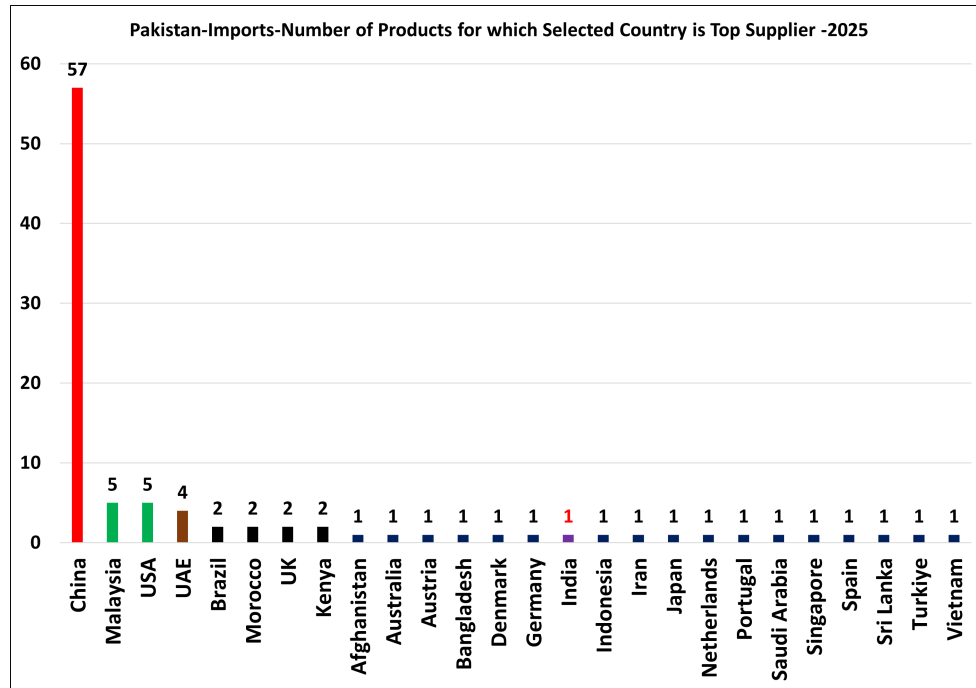
Products Imported by Pakistan in 2025. Pakistan imported 97 types of products in 2025. The list of the top 10 products is tabulated below: -

Ser	Code	Product label	Imported value in 2025 (US\$ Billion)	% Share	Top Supplier
(a)	'27	Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral ...	16.68	25.66	UAE
(b)	'85	Electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof; sound recorders and reproducers, television ...	6.45	9.93	China
(c)	'15	Animal, vegetable or microbial fats and oils and their cleavage products; prepared edible fats; ...	4.35	6.70	Indonesia
(d)	'84	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof	4.27	6.56	China
(e)	'72	Iron and steel	4.12	6.33	China
(f)	'87	Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling stock, and parts and accessories thereof	3.17	4.88	China
(g)	'39	Plastics and articles thereof	2.77	4.27	China
(h)	'29	Organic chemicals	2.74	4.22	China
(j)	'52	Cotton	2.07	3.18	Brazil
(k)	'12	Oil seeds and oleaginous fruits; miscellaneous grains, seeds and fruit; industrial or medicinal ...	1.58	2.43	Brazil

(Table 7- Top 10 Products Imported by Pakistan-2025)

- *Comments:* Pakistan's imports were US\$ 13.05 billion in 2003, and this grew to US\$ 64.98 billion in 2025. China was the top supplier of goods to Pakistan in 2025, with a 31.44% share of overall imports. India was the 29th-largest supplier, with a 0.48% share. In 2003, China was the 3rd-largest supplier to Pakistan and has been the top supplier since 2014. The percentage (%) share of China in Pakistan's imports grew from 7.3 % in 2003 to 31.44% in 2025. While China may be Pakistan's top supplier, Pakistan is China's 34th-largest export destination, with an overall share of 0.59%. Pakistan imported 97 types of products (based on HS4 classification) in 2025. Of these, China is the top supplier for 57 products and India

for one product. There are other countries which are the top suppliers of certain products to Pakistan. China, is therefore a significant entity in Pakistan's imports. The countries and the number of products for which they are the top suppliers are as shown below: -

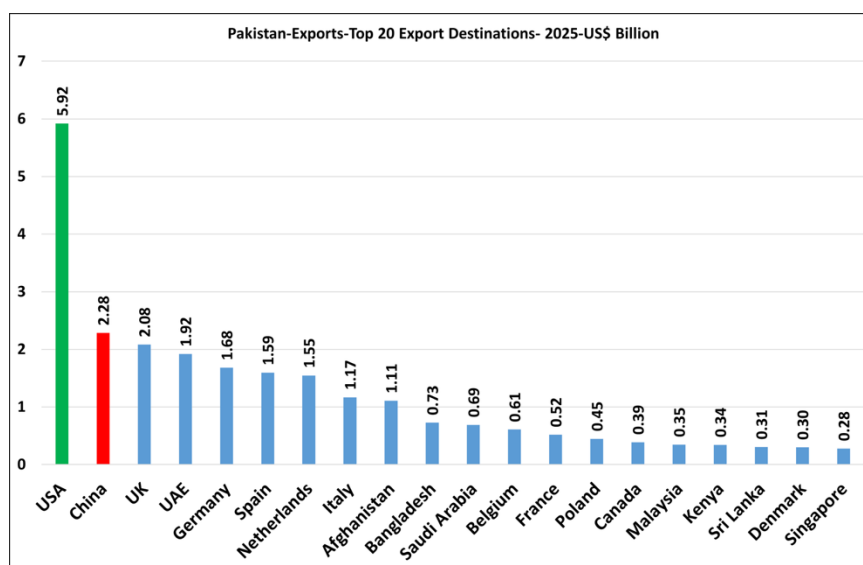


(Fig 8- Top Suppliers vs Number of Products-Pakistan's Imports-2025)

Trade (Exports)⁵⁵

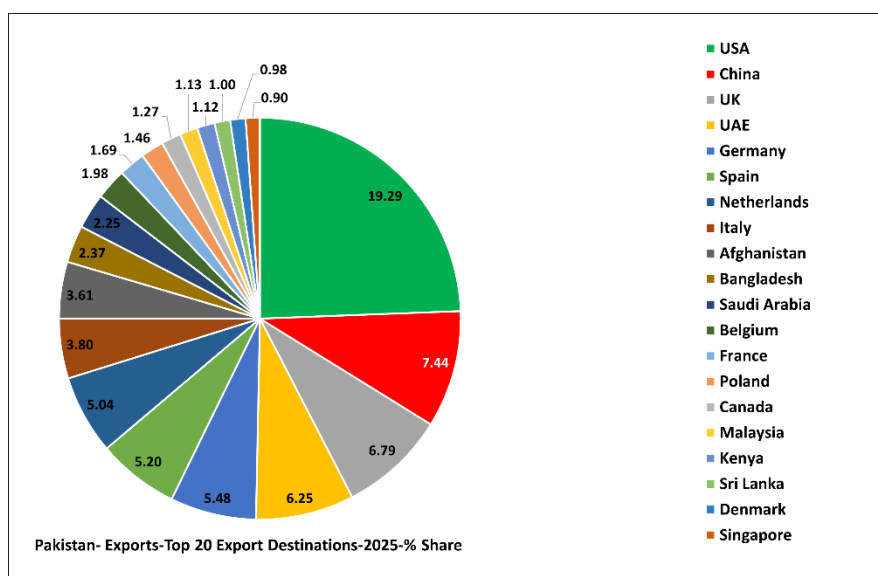
Exports (by Value). Pakistan exported commodities worth US\$ 30.67 billion in 2025. The top 20 export destinations of Pakistan in 2025, are as shown below: -

⁵⁵ Authors analysis of data from *International Trade Centre (Intracen)*, https://www.trademap.org/Country_SelProductCountry_TS.aspx?nvpm=1%7c586%7c%7c%7cTOTAL%7c%7c%7c2%7c1%7c1%7c2%7c2%7c1%7c2%7c1%7c1%7c1



(Fig 9- Pakistan Exports-Top 20 Export Destinations-2025)

Exports (% Share). The top 20 export destinations of Pakistan in 2025, in terms of % share, are as shown below:-



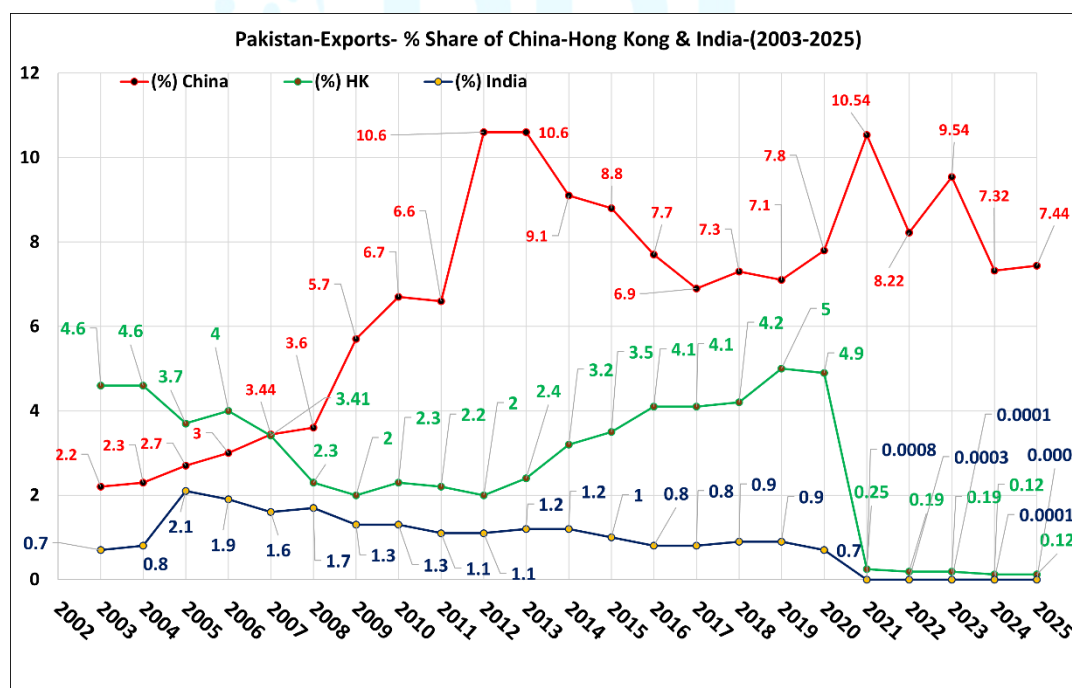
(Fig 10- Pakistan Exports-Top 20 Export Destinations-(%) Share-2025)

Exports (by Value) (2003-2025). Pakistan exported commodities worth US\$ 11.93 billion in 2003, and this figure was US\$ 30.67 billion in 2025. Pakistan's exports by Pakistan for the period 2003-2025 are as shown below: -



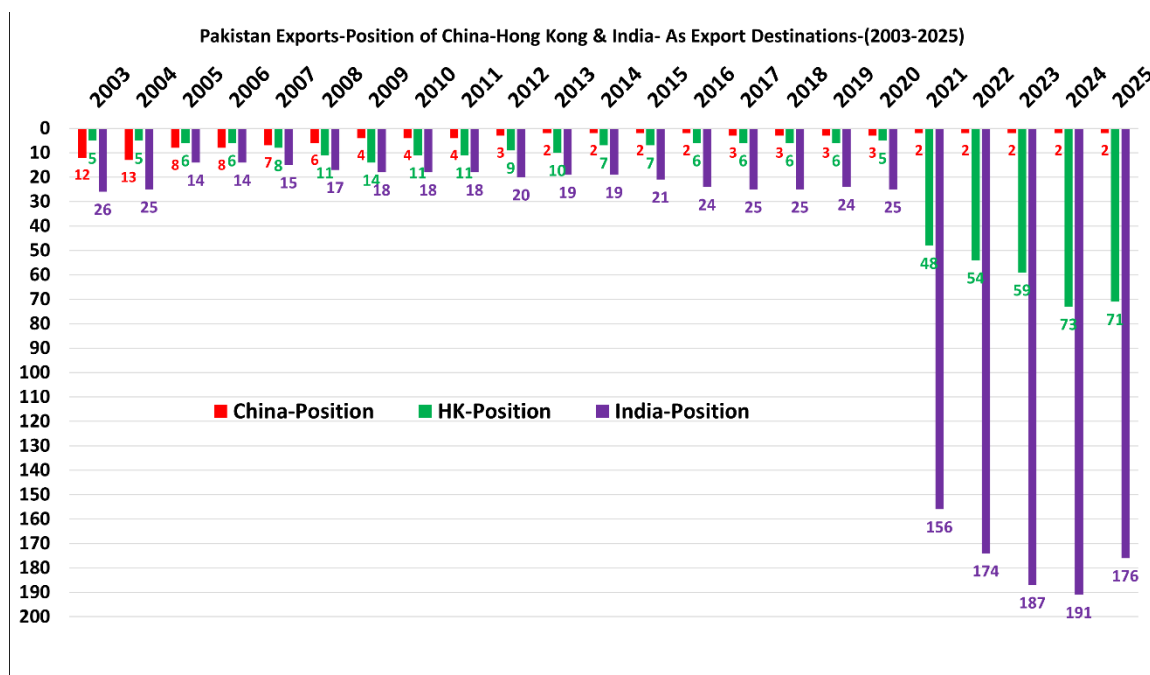
(Fig 11- Pakistan Exports-US\$ billion- 2003- 2025)

China -Hong Kong and India's % Share as Export Destinations of Pakistan (2003-2025). Position of China, Hong Kong and India in the hierarchy of export destinations of Pakistan, in terms of % share, from 2003 to 2025 is shown in the graph below: -



(Fig 12- China-Hong Kong-India-% Share- Pakistan Exports-US\$ billion- 2003- 2025)

China -Hong Kong and India's Position as Export Destinations of Pakistan (2003-2025). The position of China, Hong Kong and India in the hierarchy of export destinations of Pakistan, from 2003 to 2025, is shown in the graph below: -



(Fig 13- Positions of China-Hong Kong-India-Share-Pakistan - Exports-2003-2025)

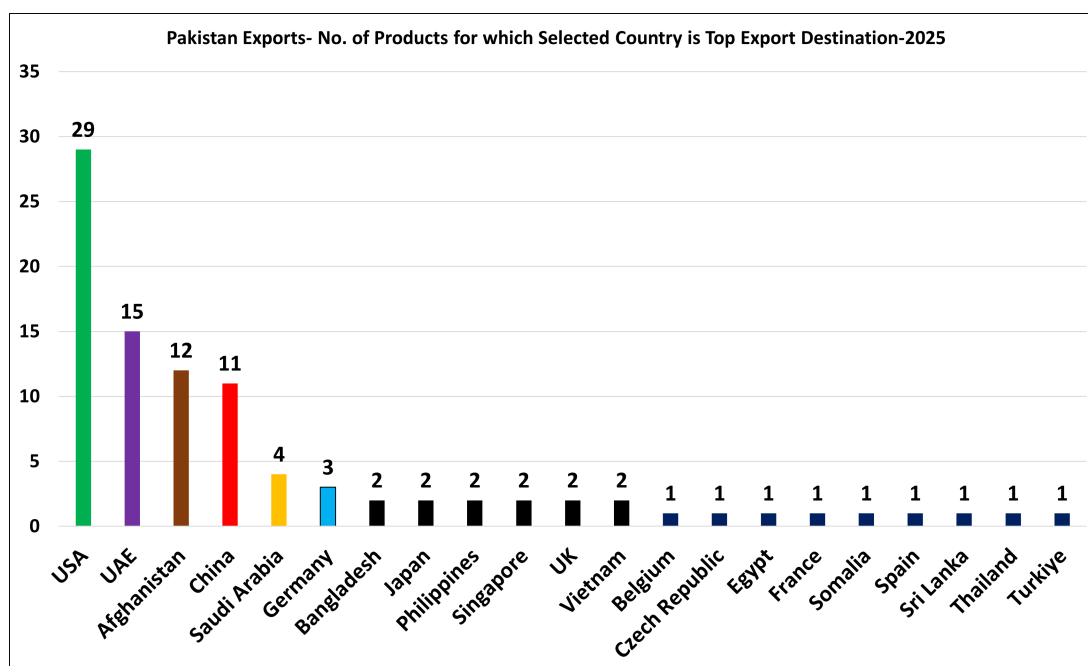
Products Exported by Pakistan in 2025. Sri Lanka exported 95 types of products in 2025. The list of top 10 products is tabulated below: -

Ser	Code	Product label	Exported Value US\$ Billion	% Share	Top Export Destination
(a)	'63	Other made-up textile articles; sets; worn clothing and worn textile articles; rags	5.687153	18.54	USA
(b)	'61	Articles of apparel and clothing accessories, knitted or crocheted	5.101926	16.63	USA
(c)	'62	Articles of apparel and clothing accessories, not knitted or crocheted	4.217808	13.75	USA
(d)	'10	Cereals	2.530683	8.25	Afghanistan
(e)	'52	Cotton	2.373052	7.74	Bangladesh
(f)	'74	Copper and articles thereof	0.817636	2.67	China
Ser	Code	Product label	Exported Value US\$ Billion	% Share	Top Export Destination

Ser	Code	Product label	Exported Value US\$ Billion	% Share	Top Export Destination
(g)	'27	Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral ...	0.743691	2.42	UAE
(h)	'42	Articles of leather; saddlery and harness; travel goods, handbags and similar containers; articles ...	0.667899	2.18	USA
(j)	'25	Salt; sulphur; earths and stone; plastering materials, lime and cement	0.570765	1.86	USA
(k)	'02	Meat and edible meat offal	0.488959	1.59	UAE

(Table 8- Top 10 Products Exported by Pakistan-2025)

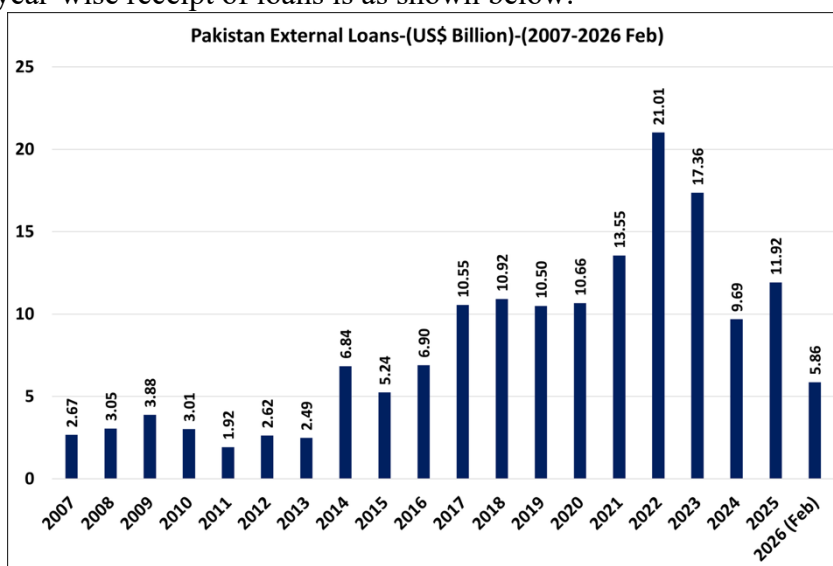
- *Comments:* Exports from Pakistan were worth US\$ 11.93 billion in 2003. This rose to an all-time high of US\$ 32.46 billion in 2024 and was valued at US\$ 30.67 billion in 2025. China was the second-largest export destination for Pakistan in 2025, receiving goods worth US\$ 2.28 billion. In 2003, China was the 12th-largest export destination for Pakistan and rose to 2nd position by 2025. The percentage (%) share of China as an export destination for Pakistan was 2.2% in 2003. This rose to an all-time high of 10.6% in 2012 and 2013 and eventually settled at 7.44% in 2025. While China was the 2nd-largest export destination for Pakistan in 2025, Pakistan was the 68th-largest supplier to China, with a share of 0.11% of Chinese imports. India was the 176th-largest export destination for Pakistan, with a 0.0003% share. Pakistan exported 95 types of products (based on HS4 classification) in 2025. Of these, the USA was the top export destination for 29 products, and China for 11 products. There are other countries that are the top export destinations for certain products of Pakistan. China does not play a significant role as an export destination for Pakistan, whereas India's role is negligible. The countries and the number of products for which they are the export destinations of Pakistan are as shown below: -



(Fig 14- Top Export Destinations vs Number of Products -Pakistan - Exports-2003-2025)

External Loans ⁵⁶

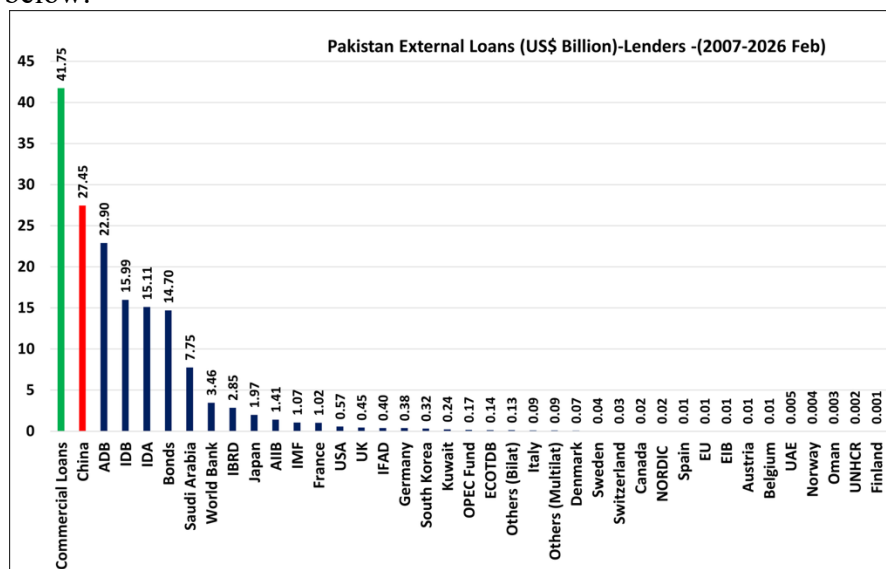
Pakistan received a cumulative external loan of US\$ 160.65 billion between 2007 and 2026 (February). The year-wise receipt of loans is as shown below: -



(Fig 15- Pakistan-External Loans- 2007-2026 (Feb))

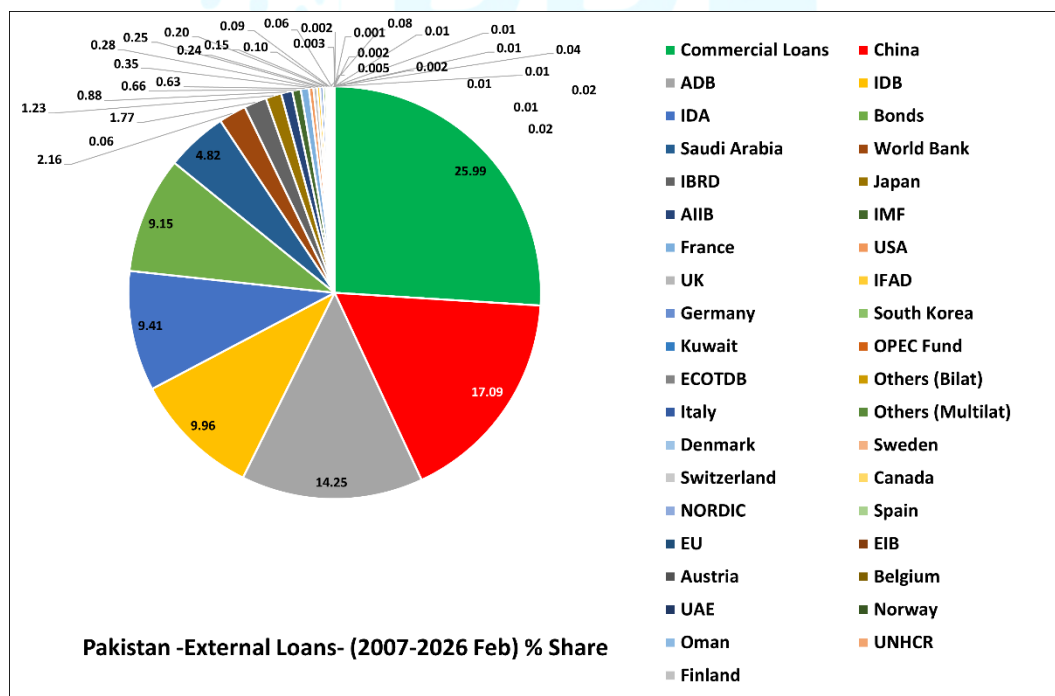
⁵⁶ Authors compilation and analysis of data from *Ministry of Economic Affairs, Economic Affairs Division, Government of Pakistan*, “Annual Reports, monthly reports & Yearbooks”, <https://www.ead.gov.pk/Detail/NzVkMzdIYmEtOTYxNy00ZmExLWJkMmEtN2FkNDEwY2Y0MDMx->

Details of cumulative loans from 39 bilateral and multilateral entities from 2007 to 2026 (Feb) are as shown below:-



(Fig 16- Pakistan-External Loans- by Lender- 2007-2026 (Feb))

External loans received by Pakistan from 2007 to 2026 (February) in terms of percentage share are as shown below: -

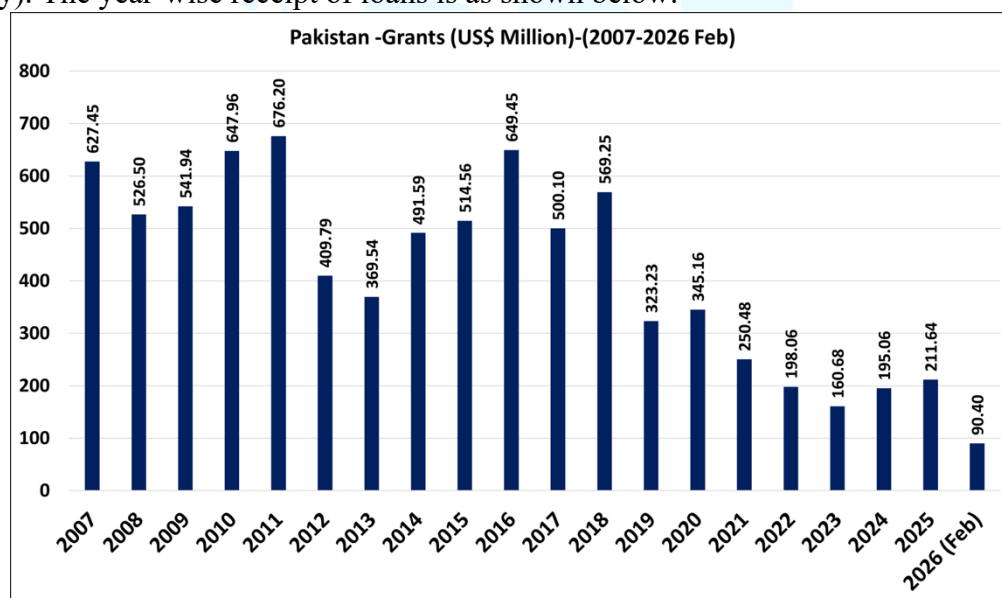


(Fig 17- Pakistan-External Loans- by Lender-(%) Share 2007-2026 (Feb))

- Comments:* The largest provider of external loans to Pakistan for the period 2007 to 2026 (February) is classified as ‘commercial loans’ in Pakistan’s official statistics. These commercial loans are from various entities, namely Ajman Bank, Suisse Bank, Dubai Bank, Noor Bank, Standard Chartered London, CITI Bank, Naya Pakistan Certificates (NPCs), time deposits and other unidentified banks. These loans totalled US\$ 41.75 billion and comprised 25.9% of the loans received during this period. China is the single largest lender, with a cumulative loan of US\$ 27.45 billion, comprising 17.09% of the overall loans provided to Pakistan. Chinese entities that provided loans to Pakistan include the Government of China, CATIC (China National Aero-Technology Import & Export Corporation), Bank of China, Sovereign/Regional Business Development, China Development Bank, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), China EXIM Bank and China’s State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE). Further, the second-largest individual provider of loans is the Asian Development Bank (ADB), which provided a cumulative loan of US\$ 22.9 billion, comprising 14.25% of the overall loans. China is the most significant provider of loans to Pakistan.

External Grants⁵⁷

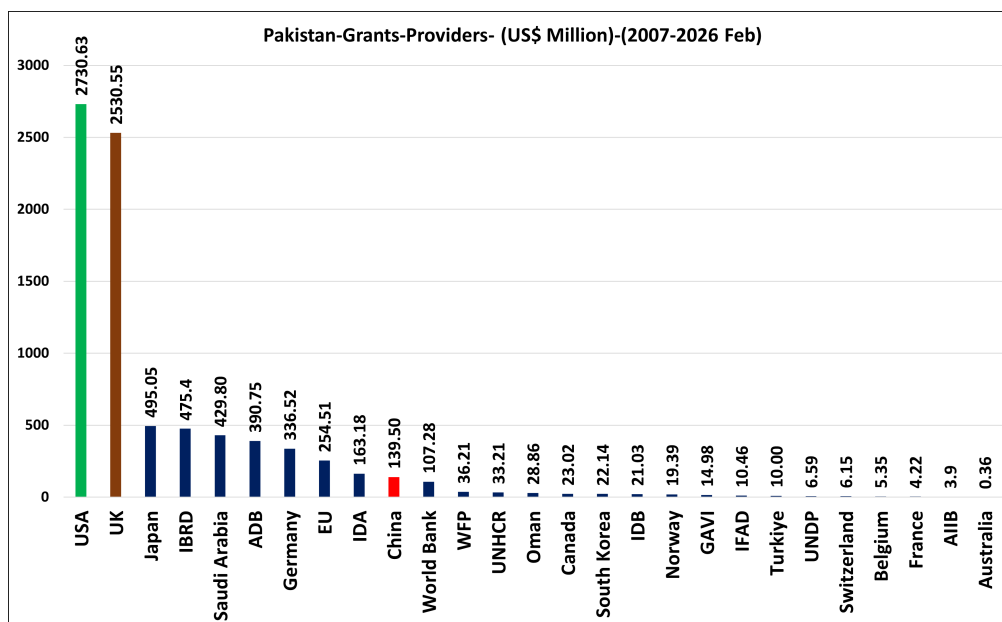
Pakistan received cumulative external grants of US\$ 8299.04 million between 2007 and 2026 (February). The year-wise receipt of loans is as shown below: -



(Fig 18- Pakistan-External Grants-US\$ million- 2007-2026 (Feb))

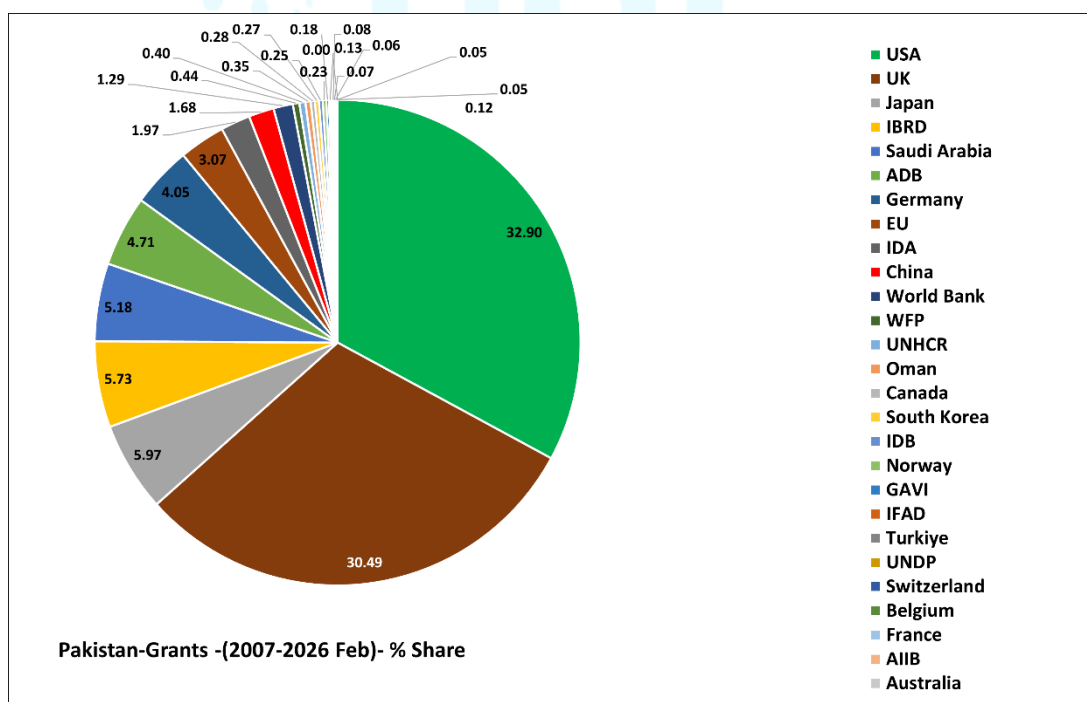
Details of cumulative grants from 27 bilateral and multilateral entities from 2007 to 2026 (Feb) are as shown below: -

⁵⁷ Ibid



(Fig 19- Pakistan-External Grants- by Provider-US\$ million- 2007-2026 (Feb))

External grants received by Pakistan from 2007 to 2026 (February) in terms of percentage share are as shown below: -



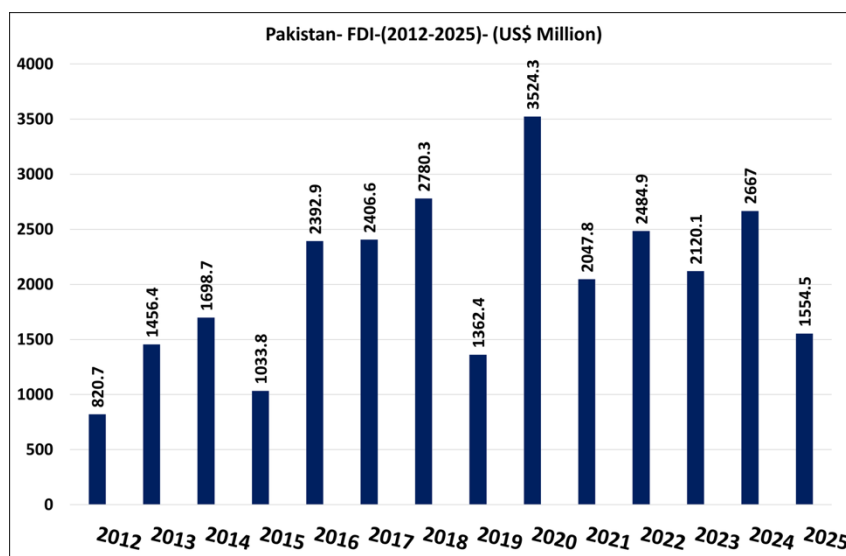
[Fig 20- Pakistan-External Grants- by Provider-(%) Share- 2007-2026 (Feb)]

- *Comments:* The United States was the largest provider of external grants to Pakistan for the period 2007 to February 2026, with a cumulative grant of US\$ 2730.63 million, comprising 32.9% of the overall grants. The UK, with a total grant of US\$ 2530.55

million (30.49%), was the second-largest provider. China was the 10th-largest provider of grants to Pakistan. It provided a cumulative grant of US\$ 139.5 million, with a 1.68% share of the overall grants for the period. China is not a major provider of grants to Pakistan.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)⁵⁸

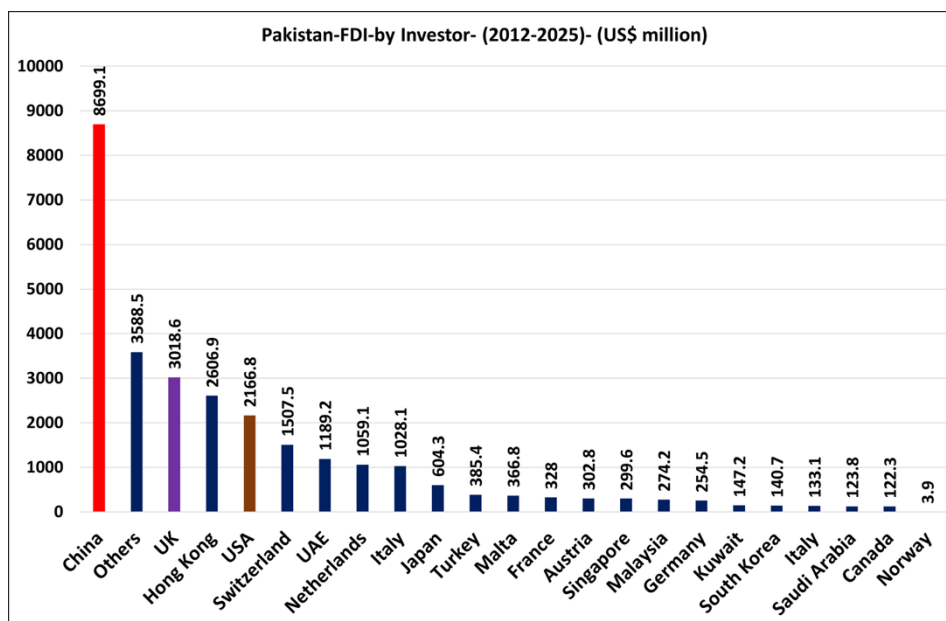
Pakistan received FDI worth US\$ 28350.4 million (US\$ 28.35 billion) between 2012 and 2025. The year-wise receipt of FDI is as shown in the graph below: -



(Fig 21-Pakistan-FDI- 2012-2025-US\$ million)

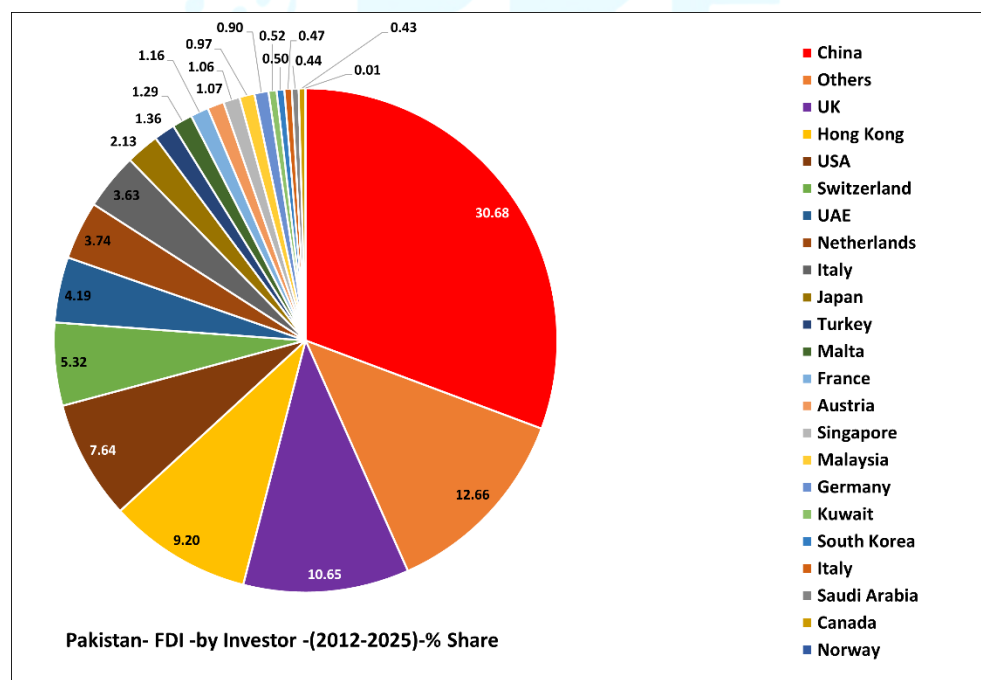
FDI into Pakistan was received from the following 23 countries, as shown below: -

⁵⁸ Authors analysis of data from *Board of Investment, Pakistan*, <https://invest.gov.pk/statistics> and *Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce & Industry (OICCI)*, “Pakistan’s FDI Pulse-OICCI Insights”, March 25, <https://www.oicci.org/app/media/2025/04/FDI-Mar-25.pdf>



(Fig 22-Pakistan-FDI-by Investor- 2012-2025-US\$ million)

FDI into Pakistan received from countries, in terms of percentage (%) share from the following 23 countries as shown below: -



(Fig 23-Pakistan-FDI-by Investor (% Share)- 2012-2025-US\$ million)

Comments: China was the largest source of FDI into Pakistan from 2012 to 2025, investing US\$ 8699.1 million and accounting for 30.68% of overall FDI during this period.

IV. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).⁵⁹

Definition. The official definition of CPEC describes it as a growth axis and a development belt featuring complementary advantages, collaboration, mutual benefit and common prosperity. With the comprehensive transportation corridor and industrial cooperation between China and Pakistan as the main axis, and with concrete economic and trade cooperation, and people-to-people exchange and cultural communications as the engine, CPEC is based on major collaborative projects for infrastructure construction, industrial development and livelihood improvement, aimed at socio-economic development, prosperity and security in the regions along it.

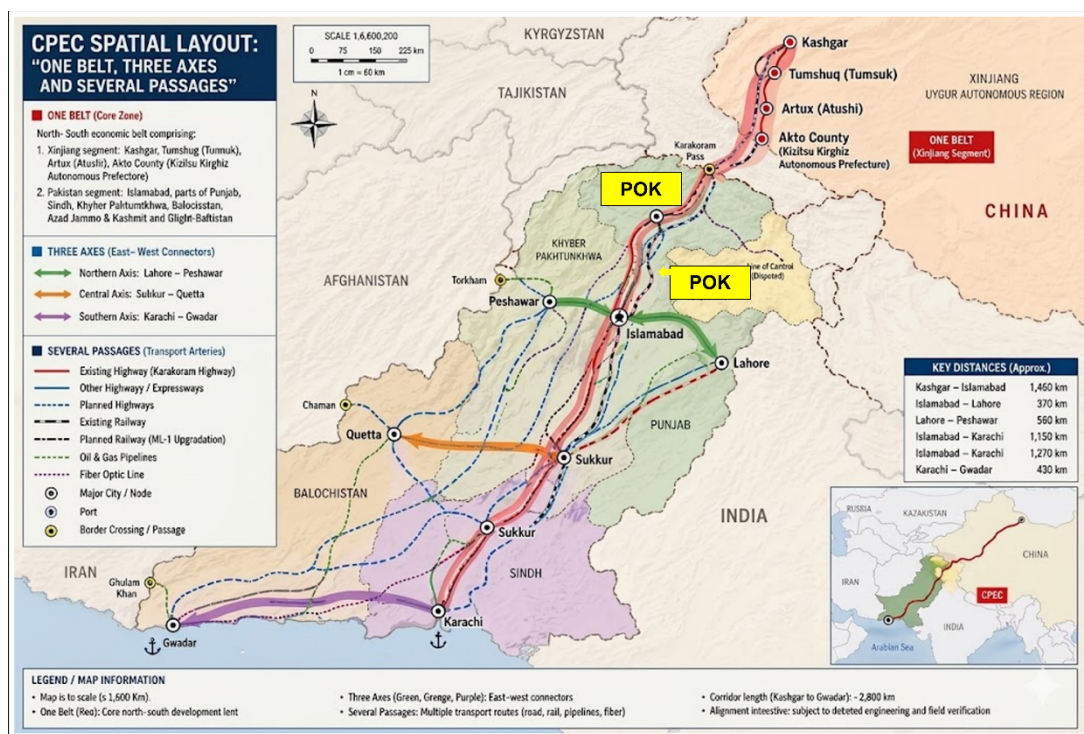
CPEC Coverage. The CPEC covers China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and ‘the whole territory of Pakistan.’ In order to reflect the level, scope and layout of the Corridor's construction and development, its coverage is divided into the core zone and the radiation zone.

- *Comments:* The phrase ‘whole territory of Pakistan’ seems to imply that all areas where CPEC activities are undertaken are the territories of Pakistan. Considering that CPEC also includes what Pakistan calls as Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK), this phrase is therefore, a direct challenge to the sovereignty of India and is indicative of China’s hostile intent towards India and its unqualified support to Pakistan.

Key nodes. The node cities that the corridor passes through include Kashgar, Atushi, Tumshuq, Shule, Shufu, Akto, Tashkurgan Tajik, Gilgit, Peshawar, Dera Ismail Khan, Islamabad, Lahore, Multan, Quetta, Sukkur, Hyderabad, Karachi and Gwadar.

Spatial layout. The CPEC's core zone and the radiation zone present the spatial layout of “one belt, three axes and several passages”. By “one belt” we mean the belt area composed of the CPEC's core zone, including Kashgar, Tumshuq city, Atushi city, and Akto county in Kizilsu Kirghiz Autonomous Prefecture of Xinjiang, China, as well as Islamabad, parts of Punjab, Sindh, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan. The “three axes” refer to three horizontal axes connecting Lahore and Peshawar, Sukkur and Quetta, and Karachi and Gwadar. The “several passages” refer to several railway and highway trunk lines from Islamabad to Karachi and Gwadar. A map of the same is shown below:-

⁵⁹ Authors analysis of data from *China Pakistan Economic Corridor Secretariat (CPEC Secretariat)*, <https://cpec.gov.pk/introduction/1#> and *Ministry of Planning Development & Reform*, <https://pc.gov.pk/web/cpec/map>



(Fig 24-CPEC Spatial Layout – For Map Source -See note 61)⁶⁰

Key functional zones. The CPEC is divided into the following five functional zones from north to south: the Xinjiang foreign economic zone, the northern border trade logistics and business corridor and ecological reserve, the eastern and central plain economic zone, the western logistics corridor business zone, and the southern coastal logistics business zone. Most of the node cities, transport corridors and industrial clusters are concentrated in these zones.

Long-Term Plan (LTP) for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (2017-2030). The Agreement on the Long-Term Plan (LTP) for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (2017-2030) between the National Development and Reform Commission of the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan was signed on 21 November 2017.

CPEC Projects

There are 95 projects that are presently part of CPEC. The details of these, based on the sector and status of the projects, is as tabulated below: -

⁶⁰ Map created by author with AI, based on the official description of CPEC Spatial Layout

Ser	Sector	Completed	In Progress	Not Yet Started	In Pipeline	Part of LTP	Total
(a)	Social and Economic Development (CPEC)	10	10		7		27
(b)	Transport	7	5		7	5	24
(c)	Energy	14	2	5			21
(d)	Gwadar	7	2		5		14
(e)	Industrial Cooperation/Special Economic Zone (SEZ)		4		5		9
	Total	38	23	5	24	5	95

(Table 9- Breakdown of CPEC Projects by Sector and Status)

The breakdown of the CPEC projects in terms of cost (US\$ million) is as tabulated below: -

Ser	Sector	Completed	In Progress	Not Yet Started	In Pipeline	Part of LTP	Total
(a)	Energy	15664.51	1843.32	5912.20			23420.03
(b)	Transport	6068.38	356.52		12268.44	1.90	18695.24
(c)	Gwadar	835.70	58.78		692.32		1586.80
(d)	Social and Economic Development (CPEC)						
(e)	Industrial Cooperation/Special Economic Zone (SEZ)						
	Total	22568.59	2258.62	5912.20	12960.76	1.90	43702.07

(Table 10- Breakdown of CPEC Projects by Cost and Status)

- *Comments:* 30 CPEC projects were completed between October 2015 and October 2024 at a total cost of US\$ 22568.59 million (US\$ 22.5 billion). Incidentally, the CPEC MOU was worth US\$ 46 billion. Hence, 48.9% of the CPEC commitment seems to have been fulfilled.

The number of projects based on their location as per provinces of Pakistan is as tabulated below:-

Ser	Province	Energy	Transport	Gwadar	Social and Economic Development (CPEC)	Industrial Cooperation /Special Economic Zone (SEZ)	Total
(a)	Not Designated		1		27		28
(b)	Balochistan	2	7	14		1	24
(c)	Sindh	12	1			2	15
(d)	Khyber Pakhtunwa (KP)	1	5			2	8
(e)	Punjab	2	1			1	4
(f)	POK (AJK)	1				1	2
(g)	Khyber Pakhtunwa & Punjab		2				2
(h)	Sindh & Punjab	1	1				2
(j)	Jhelum River	2					2
(k)	Khyber Pakhtunwa & POK (Gilgit Baltistan)		2				2
(l)	Sindh & Punjab & KP		1				1
(m)	POK (Gilgit Baltistan)					1	1
(n)	Islamabad					1	1
(p)	Khyber Pakhtunwa & POK (AJK)		1				1
(q)	Khyber Pakhtunwa & POK (Gilgit Baltistan) & Punjab		1				1
(r)	Khyber Pakhtunwa & Balochistan		1				1
	Total	21	24	14	27	9	95

(Table 11- Breakdown of CPEC Projects by Province)

- *Comments:* The majority of transport sector projects are spread across multiple provinces. Similarly, projects in the social sector are not necessarily province-specific. As for individual provinces, Balochistan has the highest number, with 24 projects, and Sindh is second with 15..

CPEC Projects in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK)

There are seven projects that are fully or partially situated in POK. The details are as tabulated below:-

Ser	Sector	Project Designation	Cost (US\$ Million)	Location	Status of Project
(a)	Transport	Cross Border Optical Fiber Cable (Khunjab - Rawalpindi)	44	POK (Gilgit Baltistan), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab	Completed (October 2015-July 2018) and Operational
(b)	Energy	Kohala Hydel Project (1100 MW)	2400	Jhelum River (Near Muzzafrabad)	Not yet Started (Land acquisition in progress)
(c)	Transport	KKH Alternative Route Gilgit-Shandur Road (213 km)	179.17	POK (Gilgit Baltistan), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	In pipeline
(d)	Transport	Realignment of KKH Phase-I Thakot - Raikot Section (250 km)		POK (Gilgit Baltistan), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	In pipeline
(e)	Industrial Cooperation/Special Economic Zones (SEZs)	Mirpur Industrial Zone		POK (AJK) Mirpur	In pipeline
(f)	Industrial Cooperation/Special Economic Zones (SEZs)	Moqpondass Special Economic Zone		Gilgit (POK) (Gilgit Baltistan)	In pipeline
(g)	Transport	Mirpur-Muzaffarabad-Mansehra Road (200 km)		POK (AJK), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	LTP
	Total		2579.17		

(Table 12- CPEC Projects in POK)

- *Comments:* The presence of seven CPEC projects, fully or partially located in POK, is a clear disregard for Indian sovereignty concerns.

Threats to CPEC

Despite the promises of economic growth, CPEC has also exposed Pakistan to new security challenges. Chinese nationals have frequently been targeted by various terrorist and insurgent groups. High-profile incidents, such as the 26 March 2024 attack on Chinese engineers in Shangla,

the July 2021 Dasu bus attack that killed nine Chinese engineers, and the April 2022 attack on Karachi University's Confucius Institute, have underscored the vulnerability of Chinese citizens working in Pakistan. These incidents have not only disrupted projects but have also compelled China to reconsider its level of involvement and safety in Pakistan.⁶¹

Chinese nationals and their interests in Pakistan are primarily targeted by Baloch separatist groups, with the Pakistani Taliban posing a secondary threat. Groups such as the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) oppose CPEC projects, arguing that China exploits local resources without benefiting the region's indigenous population. The BLA has twice warned China to leave Balochistan or face increased attacks. Meanwhile, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has also targeted Chinese interests.

Following repeated attacks on Chinese nationals, China has intensified its calls for more rigorous protection, even hinting at employing private security firms if Pakistan cannot guarantee their safety. Pakistan has pledged to improve the protection of Chinese nationals, but its capacity to meet these expectations has been disappointing so far.⁶²

In a rare public rebuff on 29 October 2024, the Chinese envoy to Pakistan stated that two deadly terrorist attacks within six months were unacceptable and that the Pakistani Government needed to launch a crackdown against all anti-China terrorist groups.⁶³

- *Comments:* Despite the security challenges, there are no indicators yet of any serious adverse impact on CPEC's progress. These issues can at best be seen as irritants.

IV. External Debt and Liabilities

Pakistan's external debt and liabilities (as of financial year 2025) stood at US\$ 134.9 billion.⁶⁴

- *Comments:* There is no data on the debt owed to China.

IMF Bailout Package. On July 3, 2019, the Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a 39-month extended arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) for Pakistan, amounting to SDR 4,268 million (about US\$6 billion or 210 percent of quota), to support the authorities' economic reform programme. The Executive Board's approval enabled an immediate disbursement of SDR 716 million (about US\$1 billion). The remaining amount was to

⁶¹ Osama Ahmad, "Pakistan's Security Challenges Threaten to Undermine Its Relationship with China", *Stimson*, November 20, 2024, <https://www.stimson.org/2024/pakistans-security-challenges-threaten-to-undermine-its-relationship-with-china/>

⁶² Ibid

⁶³ Shahbaz Rana, "Chinese envoy miffed at CPEC security lapses", *The Express Tribune*, October 30, 2024, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2506203/chinese-envoy-miffed-at-cpec-security-lapses>

⁶⁴ Authors analysis of data from *State Bank of Pakistan*, "Pakistan's Debt and Liabilities-Summary", https://www.sbp.org.pk/reports/stat_reviews/Bulletin/2025/Feb/Chap-5.pdf

be phased over the duration of the programme, subject to four quarterly and four semi-annual reviews.⁶⁵

Assistance from Saudi Arabia. On 04 December 2025, the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) extended the term of a US \$3 billion deposit with the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) for another year. The deposit, which was maturing on Dec. 8 2025, was initially signed with the SBP in 2021 and subsequently rolled over in 2022, 2023 and 2024. The deposit is crucial for cash-strapped Pakistan as it grapples with a prolonged economic crisis that has drained its reserves and triggered a balance-of-payments crisis.⁶⁶

However, the 2024-25 Annual Report on Foreign Economic Assistance indicates that Pakistan had an outstanding external debt of US\$ 91.79 billion, of which US\$ 04 billion were owed to China as part of safe deposits with the State Bank of Pakistan. Debt owed to the IMF is reflected as US\$ 9.2 billion, and debt owed to Saudi Arabia as US\$ 05 billion.⁶⁷

- *Comments:* There is no clear indication of the exact amount of debt Pakistan owes to China, other than the safe deposit with SBP.

V. Anomaly in Statistics -Chinese Loans and Grants

There appears to be an anomaly between the official statistics of Pakistan and the data from the National Bureau of Statistics of China, with respect to the overall loans and grants provided by China to Pakistan.

According to official statistics from China, the value of turnover achieved in respect of contracted projects in Pakistan from 2007 to 2024 is US\$ 74.6 billion.⁶⁸

However, official statistics for Pakistan indicate that it received a cumulative loan of US\$ 27.45 billion from 2007 to February 2026 and a cumulative grant of US\$ 0.139 billion during the same period.⁶⁹

- *Comments:* China's official statistics indicate that it has spent US\$47 billion more than is shown in Pakistan's official statistics. However, there is currently no breakdown of this expenditure or any explanation for this discrepancy.

⁶⁵ David Lipton, "IMF Executive Board Approves US\$6 billion 39-Month EFF Arrangement for Pakistan", *International Monetary Fund (IMF), Press Release 19/264*, "July 3, 2019, <https://www.imf.org/en/news/articles/2019/07/03/pr19264-pakistan-imf-executive-board-approves-39-month-eff-arrangement>

⁶⁶ Shahjahan Khurram, "Saudi Arabia extends term of \$3 billion deposit with Pakistan for another year", *Arab News*, 04 December 2025, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2624988/pakistan>

⁶⁷ Authors analysis of data from *Pakistan Ministry of Economic Affairs, Economic Affairs Division*, "2024-25 -Annual Report Foreign Economic Assistance", [https://www.ead.gov.pk/SiteImage/Misc/files/2026/Revised%20draft%20Annual%20Report%20on%20FEA%20July-June%202024-25%2013-2-26\(2\).pdf](https://www.ead.gov.pk/SiteImage/Misc/files/2026/Revised%20draft%20Annual%20Report%20on%20FEA%20July-June%202024-25%2013-2-26(2).pdf)

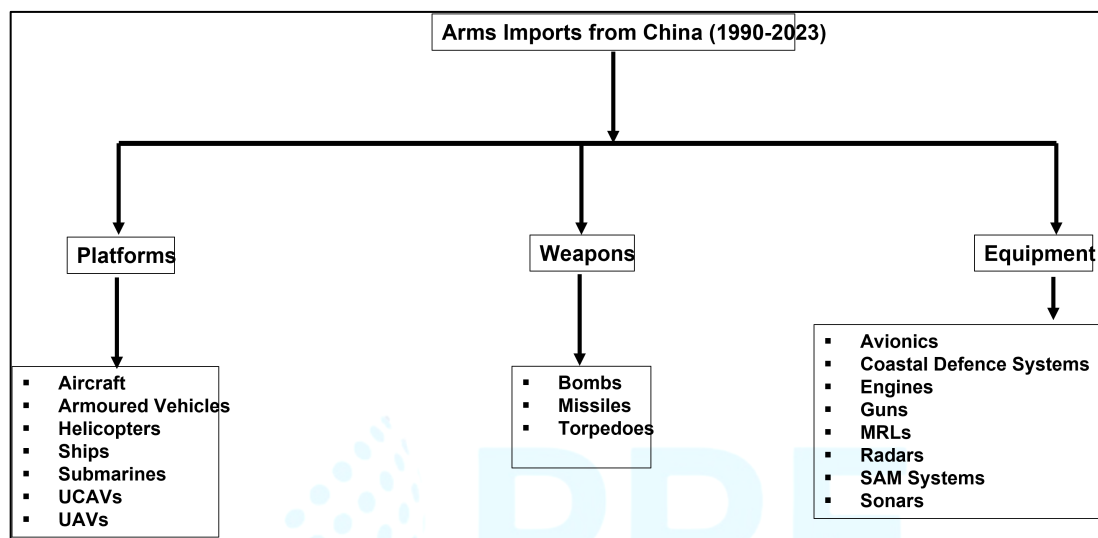
⁶⁸ *National Bureau of Statistics of China*, <https://www.stats.gov.cn/english/Statisticaldata/yearbook/>

⁶⁹ See notes 58 & 59

VI. Pakistan-China Military Relations

Arms Imports by Pakistan (1990 Onwards)⁷⁰

The types of arms transfers from China to Pakistan are shown below: -

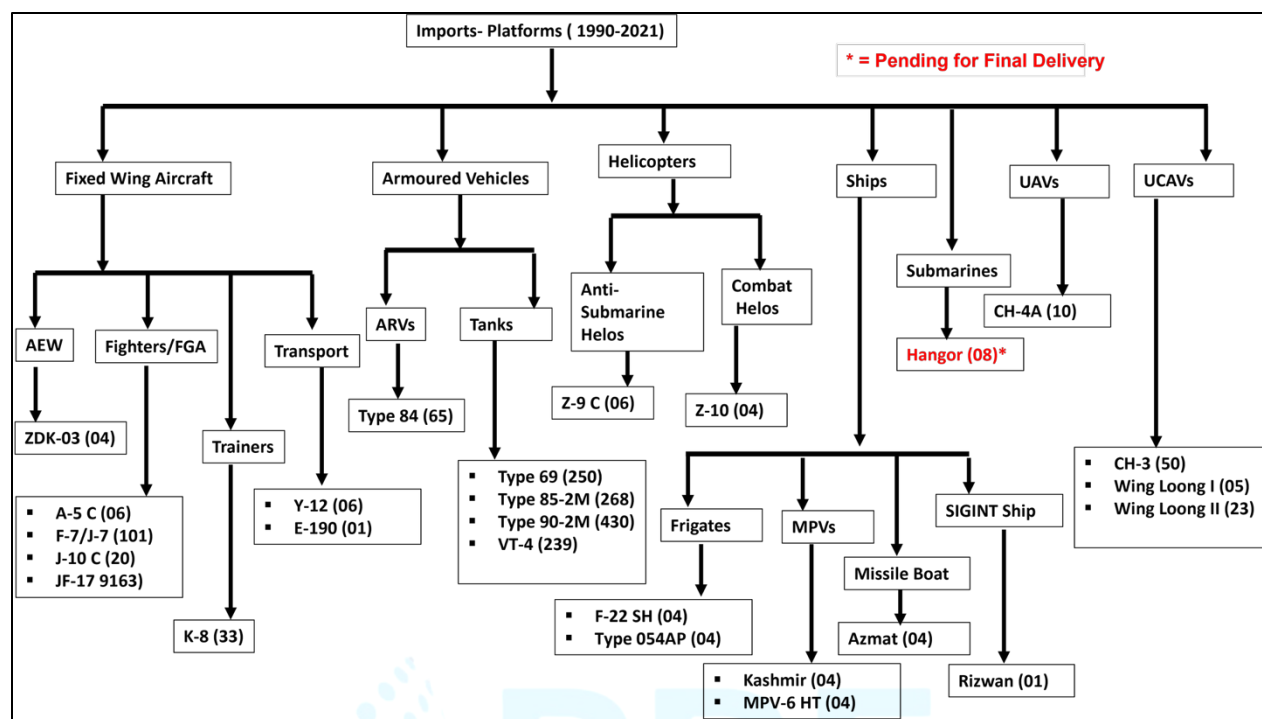


(Fig 25- Types of Arms Transfers from China to Pakistan -1990-2023)

- *Comments:* Arms transfers from China to Pakistan have been categorised into platforms, weapons and equipment. All the three types of transfers have taken place between the two countries.

⁷⁰ Author's analysis of data from *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, SIPRI*, "Arms Transfer Database", <https://armstransfers.sipri.org/ArmsTransfer/CSVResult>

The platforms that were delivered by China to Pakistan from 1990 to 2021 is summarised in the picture below: -



(Fig 26- Transfer of Platforms from China to Pakistan -1990-2021)

Pakistan imported 15 different types of platforms from various countries, including China. A total of 6169 platforms were imported, of which 1706 (27.7%) were from China. The details of the imports of platforms, including those from China, are tabulated below: -

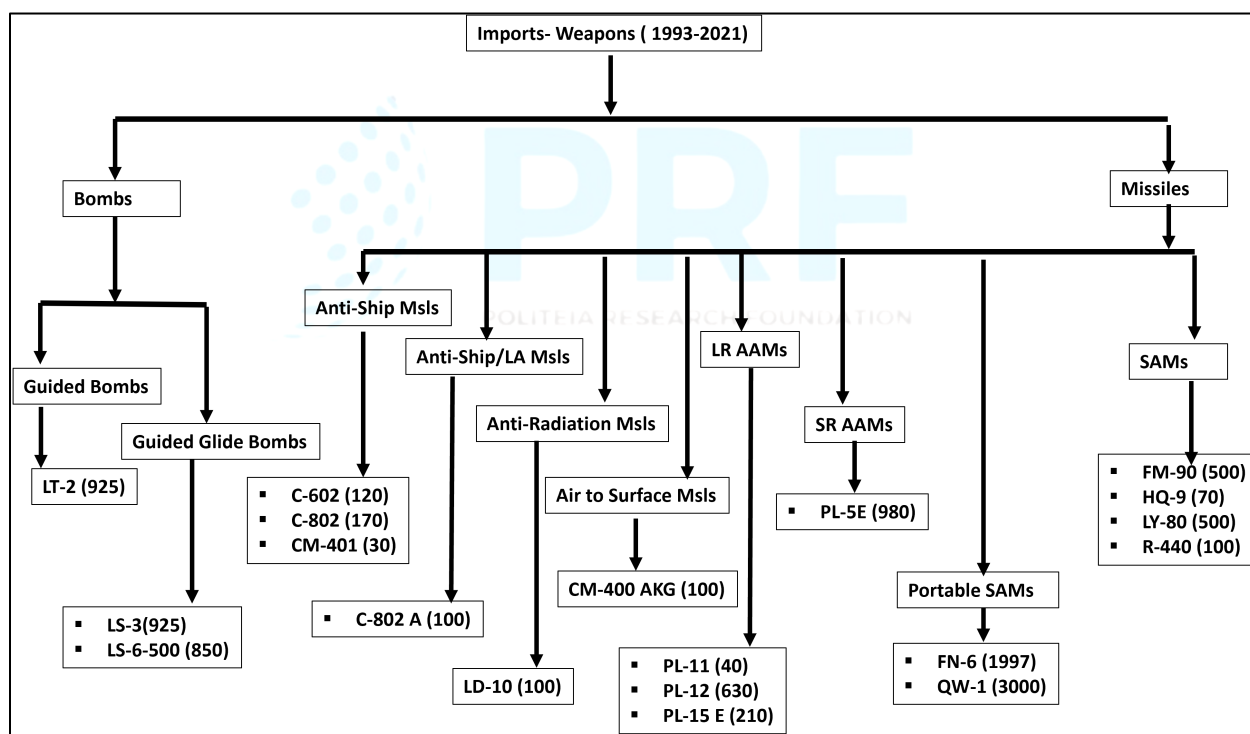
Ser	Platform	Total Imported	Imports from China	% From China	Remarks
(a)	APCs	3475	0	0.0	
(b)	Tanks	1507	1187	78.8	
(c)	Fighters/FGA	458	290	63.3	
(d)	Helos	244	10	4.1	
(e)	Trainer Aircraft	127	33	26.0	
(f)	UCAVs	90	73	81.1	
(g)	ARVs	65	65	100.0	
(h)	UAVs	60	10	16.7	
(j)	Transport Aircraft	55	7	12.7	
(k)	Ships	45	19	42.2	
(l)	Maritime Patrol Aircraft	12	0	0.0	
(m)	AEW Aircraft	11	4	36.4	

Ser	Platform	Total Imported	Imports from China	% From China	Remarks
(n)	Submarines	11	8	72.7	08 Hangor pending
(p)	Surveillance & Recce Aircraft	5	0	0.0	
(q)	AARs	4	0	0.0	
	Total	6169	1706	27.7	

(Table 13-Imports of Platforms by Pakistan -1990-2021)

- *Comments:* China was the most significant supplier of tanks, fighter aircraft, UCAVs, armoured recovery vehicles (ARVs), ships, and eventually of submarines.

Weapons delivered by China to Pakistan from 1993 to 2021 are summarised in the picture below:-



(Fig 27- Transfer of Weapons from China to Pakistan -1993-2021)

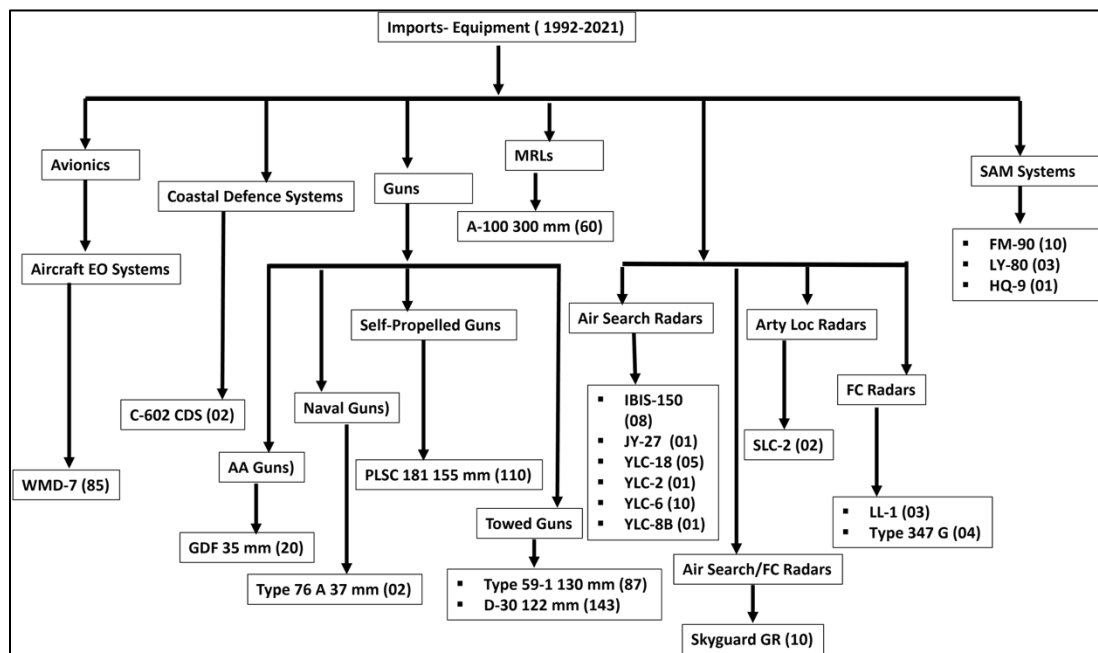
Pakistan imported 13 different types of weapons from various countries, including China. A total of 24337 weapons were imported, of which 10451 (42.9 %) were from China. The details of the imports of weapons, including those from China, are as tabulated below: -

Ser	Weapon	Total Imported	Imports from China	% From China
(a)	Anti-Tank Guided Missiles	8468	0	0.0
(b)	Portable SAMs	5097	4101	80.5
(c)	Guided Bombs	3125	925	29.6
(d)	Long Range Air to Air Missiles	2130	880	41.3
(e)	Guided Glide Bombs	1775	1775	100.0
(f)	Short Range Air to Air Missiles	1480	980	66.2
(g)	Surface to Air Missiles	1240	1170	94.4
(h)	Anti-Ship Missiles	363	320	88.2
(j)	Anti-Radiation Missiles	200	100	50.0
(k)	Anti-Ship/Land Attack Missiles	160	100	62.5
(l)	Universal Torpedoes	159	0	0.0
(m)	Air to Surface Missiles	100	100	100.0
(n)	Anti-Submarine Torpedoes	40	0	0.0
	Total	24337	10451	42.9

(Table 14-Imports of Weapons by Pakistan -1990-2021)

- *Comments:* China is a major supplier of weapons to Pakistan, particularly missiles and bombs of all types. China has not yet supplied any torpedoes to Pakistan; however, this could change once the eight Hangor-class submarines are delivered to Pakistan.

Equipment delivered by China to Pakistan from 1992 to 2021 is summarised in the picture below:-



(Fig 28- Transfer of Equipment from China to Pakistan -1992-2021)

Pakistan imported 21 different types of equipment from various countries, including China. A total of 2736 items were imported, of which 568 (20.8%) were from China. The details of the equipment imports, including those from China, are tabulated below: -

Ser	Equipment	Total Imported	Imports from China	% From China
(a)	Vehicle Engines	889	0	0.0
(b)	Aircraft Engines	396	0	0.0
(c)	Self-Propelled Guns	387	110	28.4
(d)	Towed Guns	302	230	76.2
(e)	Combat Aircraft Radars	237	0	0.0
(f)	Aircraft Electro-Optical Systems	168	85	50.6
(g)	Anti-Aircraft Guns	80	20	25.0
(h)	Multiple Rocket Launchers	60	60	100.0
(j)	Ship Engines	53	0	0.0
(k)	Air Search Radars	49	26	53.1
(l)	Air Search/ire Control Radars	40	10	25.0
(m)	Surface to Air Missile Systems	24	14	58.3

(n)	Fire Control Radars	11	7	63.6
(p)	Maritime Patrol Aircraft Radars	11	0	0.0
(q)	Aircraft Recce System	7	0	0.0
(r)	Artillery Locating Radars	6	2	33.3
(s)	Anti-Submarine Sonars	6	0	0.0
(t)	Naval Guns	4	2	50.0
(u)	Naval Coastal Defence System	2	2	100.0
(v)	Air/Sea Search Radars	2	0	0.0
(w)	Naval Surface to Air Missile Systems	2	0	0.0
	Total	2736	568	20.8

(Table 15-Imports of Equipment Pakistan -1992-2021)

- *Comments:* China was a major supplier of towed guns, multiple rocket launchers, air search radars, SAM systems and naval coastal defence systems.

Licensed Production in Pakistan. Pakistan has at least 22 local production licences for arms and equipment imported from foreign countries. Of these, 14 licences are for imports from China..

Ser	OEM	Category	Type	Description	Designation
(a)	China	Platform	Aircraft	Fighter/Ground Attack Aircraft	JF-17
(b)	China	Platform	Aircraft	Trainer Aircraft	K-8
(c)	China	Platform	Armoured Vehicles	Armoured Recovery Vehicles	Type-84 ARV
(d)	China	Platform	Armoured Vehicles	Main Battle Tank	Type-85-2M
(e)	China	Platform	Armoured Vehicles	Main Battle Tank	Type-69
(f)	China	Platform	Armoured Vehicles	Main Battle Tank	Type-90-2M
(g)	China	Platform	Armoured Vehicles	Main Battle Tank	VT-4
(h)	China	Platform	Ship	Frigate	F-22
(j)	China	Platform	Ship	Maritime Patrol Vessel	Kashmir Class
(k)	China	Platform	Ship	Maritime Patrol Vessel	6-HT

Ser	OEM	Category	Type	Description	Designation
(l)	China	Platform	Ship	Missile Boat	Azmat Class
(m)	China	Platform	UCAV	UCAV	CH-3
(n)	China	Weapon	SAM	Portable SAM	QW-1
(p)	China	Equipment	Multiple Rocket Launcher	MRL	A-100 300mm
(q)	France	Platform	Submarine	Submarine	Agosta-90 B
(r)	Italy	Platform	UAV	UAV	Falco
(s)	Italy	Equipment	Radar	Combat Aircraft Radar	Grifo
(t)	Thailand	Platform	Ship	Missile Boat	Jurrat Class
(u)	Turkiye	Platform	Ship	Tanker	Mowain
(v)	Turkiye	Platform	Ship	Frigate	MILGEM
(w)	Turkiye	Equipment	Gun	Towed Gun	Panther 155 mm
(y)	USA	Platform	Armoured Vehicles	APC	M-113A3

(Table 16- Licenced Production of Platforms, Weapons and Equipment in Pakistan)

- *Comments:* The strength of China-Pakistan military cooperation is indicated by the number of licences granted by China for local production of platforms, weapons and equipment in Pakistan.

Pakistan Army Order of Battle (Orbat)⁷¹

The Orbat of major equipment of the Pakistan Army, along with the percentage of Chinese-origin equipment, is as tabulated below:-

Ser	Category	Type	Total Nos.	No. of Chinese Origin Vehicles	% Chinese Origin
(a)	Armoured Vehicles	APCs	3320	100	3.0
(b)		Main Battle Tanks	2577	1762	68.4
(c)		ARVs	262	175	66.8
(d)		Protected Patrol Vehicles	225		0.0

⁷¹ Author's analysis of data from *The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IIIS)*, "The Military Balance 2026", 23 February 2026

Ser	Category	Type	Total Nos.	No. of Chinese Origin Vehicles	% Chinese Origin
(e)		Armoured Anti-Tank Vehicles	30		0.0
(f)		Armoured Utility Vehicle	10		0.0
		Total	6424	2037	31.7
(g)	Artillery	Self-Propelled Guns	552	54	9.8
(h)		Towed Guns	1890	980	51.9
(j)		MRLs	176	140	79.5
(k)		Mortars	2350		0.0
		Total	4968	1174	23.6
(l)	Army Aviation	Light Transport Aircraft	32	4	12.5
(m)		Trainer Aircraft	87		0.0
(n)		Helicopters	229	4	1.7
		Total	348	8	2.3

(Table 17- Pakistan Army Orbat- % of Chinese Origin Platforms and Equipment)

- *Comments:* 31.7% of armoured vehicles, 23.6% of artillery and 2.3% of Pakistan Army aviation comprise Chinese-origin equipment and platforms. Pakistan Army therefore has a major dependency on China with respect to Main Battle Tanks and Armoured Recovery Vehicles (ARVs).

Pakistan Air Force (PAF) Order of Battle (Orbat)⁷²

The major platforms of the PAF, along with the percentage of Chinese-origin equipment, are tabulated below: -

Ser	Category	Type	Total Nos.	No. of Chinese Origin	% Chinese Origin
(a)	Aircraft	Fighter/FGA Aircraft	374	223	59.6
(b)	Aircraft	Trainers	143	42	29.4
(c)	UCAVs	UCAVs	102	88	86.3
(d)	Helicopters	Multi Role Helos	35		0.0

⁷² Ibid

Ser	Category	Type	Total Nos.	No. of Chinese Origin	% Chinese Origin
(e)	Aircraft	Light Transport Aircraft	32	3	9.4
(f)	Aircraft	Transport Aircraft	22		0.0
(g)	Aircraft	AEW &C	12	4	33.3
(h)	Aircraft	ISR	10		0.0
(j)	Aircraft	Air to Air Refuellers	2		0.0
(k)	Aircraft	ELINT	2		0.0
	Total		734	360	49.0

(Table 18- PAF Orbat- % of Chinese Origin Platforms and Equipment)

- *Comments:* 49% of PAF platforms are currently of Chinese origin. PAF therefore has a major dependency on China.

Pakistan Navy (PN) Order of Battle (Orbat) ⁷³

The major platforms of the PN, along with the percentage of platforms of Chinese origin, are tabulated below: -

Ser	Category	Type	Displacement (tons)	Total Nos.	No. of Chinese Origin	% Chinese Origin
(a)	Ship	Fleet Tanker	21750	1	1	100.0
(b)	Ship	Fleet Tanker	16900	1		
(c)	Ship	SIGINT	5000	1	1	100.0
(d)	Ship	Frigate	4166	1		0.0
(e)	Ship	Frigate	4060	4	4	100.0
(f)	Ship	Frigate	2980	4	4	100.0
(g)	Ship	Survey Vessel	3000	1	1	100.0
(h)	Ship	OPV	2985	2		0.0
(j)	Ship	OPV	2300	2		0.0
(k)	Submarine	Submarine	1980	3		0.0
(l)	Submarine	Submarine	1740	2		0.0
(m)	Ship	STUS	1600	2		0.0
(n)	Ship	Coastal Tanker	1219	1		0.0
(p)	Ship	Survey Vessel	1202	1		0.0

⁷³ Author's analysis of data from *The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IIIS)*, "The Military Balance 2026", 23 February 2026 and *Janes Fighting Ships-2023-2024*

Ser	Category	Type	Displacement (tons)	Total Nos.	No. of Chinese Origin	% Chinese Origin
(q)	Ship	Coastal Tanker	844	3		0.0
(r)	Ship	MCMVs	614	3		0.0
(s)	Ship	FACs	566	4	4	100.0
(t)	Ship	Transport Ship	514	1	1	100.0
(u)	Ship	Sail Training Ship	493	1		0.0
(v)	Ship	FACs	250	2		0.0
(w)	Ship	FACs	185	2		0.0
(y)	Ship	Patrol Boat	180	1		0.0
(z)	Submarine	Midget Submarine	120	3		0.0
(aa)	Ship	Multi Role Tactical Platform	115	2		0.0
		Total		48	16	33.3

(Table 19- PN Orbat- % of Chinese Origin Platforms and Equipment)

Further, PN has 14 Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPAs), none of which are of Chinese origin. It also has 24 helicopters, of which five anti-submarine warfare (ASW) helicopters, namely the Z-9ECs, are of Chinese origin.

- *Comments:* While the data indicate that 33.3% of PN platforms are of Chinese origin, it is important to note that these include major combatants such as frigates, fleet tankers, SIGINT ships, and survey vessels, as well as important smaller units such as FACs. The pending induction of eight Hangor-class AIP submarines from China will significantly increase Pakistan's dependency. Presently, PN has no dependency on China for MPAs and only minor dependency for ASW helicopters.

Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) Order of Battle (Orbat)⁷⁴

Details of the PMSA orbat are set out in the table below: -

Ser	Type	Class	Force Level	Displacement (tons)	Origin
(a)	Maritime Patrol Vessel (MPV)	Hingol	4	615	China
(b)		Kashmir	2	1550	China
(c)		Barkat	4	442	China

⁷⁴ See note 73

Ser	Type	Class	Force Level	Displacement (tons)	Origin
Ser		Class	Force Level	Displacement (tons)	Origin
(d)		Island	2	154	USA
		Total	12		
(e)	Transport Aircraft	BN-2T Defender	3		UK

(Table20- PMSA Orbat- % of Chinese Origin Platforms and Equipment)

- *Comments:* 10/12, or 83.3%, of PMSA units are of Chinese origin. PMSA is almost entirely composed of Chinese platforms and has an extremely high dependence on China.

PMSA is part of the Strategic Maritime Dialogue under an MoU on Maritime Cooperation with China.⁷⁵ This Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Law Enforcement Cooperation and Exchange was signed in 2019.⁷⁶

Pakistan's Missile Programme

The inventory of missiles with Pakistan is tabulated below: -⁷⁷

Ser	Missile	Basing	Type	Fuel	No. of Launchers	Rang (km)	Warhead Yield	No. of Warheads
(a)	Shaheen-III	Land	MRBM	Solid		2750	1x 10-40 kt	
(b)	Ababeel	Land	MRBM	Solid		2200	MIRVs	
(c)	Raad (Hatf 8)	Air	ALCM	Solid Booster+ Turbojet	36	2100	Nuclear/Conv	36
(d)	Shaheen-II (Hatf-6)	Land	MRBM	Solid	24	1500	1x 10-40 kt/Conv	24
(e)	Ghauri (Hatf-5)	Land	MRBM	Solid	24	1250	1x 10-40 kt/Conv	24

⁷⁵ Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA), <https://pmsa.gov.pk/regional-and-international-linkages>

⁷⁶ Media Today, "2nd High-Level Meeting between Pakistan Maritime Security Agency and China Coast Guard", April 27, 2024, <https://mediaonlinetoday.com/2nd-high-level-meeting-between-pakistan-maritime-security-agency-and-china-coast-guard/>

⁷⁷ Authors compilation of data from Hans M. Kristensen, Matt Korda, Eliana Johns & Mackenzie Knight-Boyle (2025) "Pakistan nuclear weapons, 2025", *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 81:5, 386-408, DOI: 10.1080/00963402.2025.2543685, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00963402.2025.2543685> and *Missile Threat, CSIS Missile Defence Project*, Country : Pakistan, <https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/hatf-2/>

Ser	Missile	Basing	Type	Fuel	No. of Launchers	Rang (km)	Warhead Yield	No. of Warheads
(f)	Shaheen-I/A (Hatf-4)	Land	SRBM	Solid	16	750/900	1x 5-10 kt/Conv/Chemical	16
(g)	Babur-2 GLCM	Land	GLCM	Solid Booster+ Turbojet		700	?	
(h)	Babur-3	Sea	SLCM			450		
(j)	Babur-1A GLCM (Hatf-7)	Land	GLCM	Solid Booster+ Turbojet	12	350	1 x 5-12 kt	12
(k)	Ghaznavi (Hatf-3)	Land	SRBM	Solid	16	300	1x 5-10 kt/Conv	16
(l)	Abdali (Hatf-2)	Land	SRBM	Solid	10	200	1x 5-10 kt/Conv	10
(m)	Nasr (Hatf-9)	Land	SRBM	Solid	25	60-70	1 x 12 kt	24
	Total				163			162

(Table 21-Pakistan's Missile Inventory)

Chinese companies were first caught secretly selling Pakistan M-11 missile components in 1991. US intelligence spotted what appeared to be M-11 launch vehicles in Pakistan. One report said that China had already supplied the launchers, along with dummy missile frames for practice, and that Pakistani air force technicians were already training in China. By December 1992, the press was reporting that China had just shipped about two dozen M-11 missiles to Pakistan.⁷⁸ Both China and North Korea played a significant role in Pakistan's Hatf-1 and Hatf-2 missile development programmes. The Hatf-3, or Ghaznavi, missile is a variant of the Chinese DF-11 missile.⁷⁹

- *Comments:* China has played a major role in Pakistan's missile programme. There appears to be no logical reason for this support for Pakistan, other than to create a problem for India.

Military projects

Submarine Rebuild Complex (SRC). Pakistan will also build two types of submarines with Chinese assistance: the Project S-26 and Project S-30. The vessels are to be built at the Submarine Rebuild Complex (SRC) facility under development at Ormara, west of Karachi.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ *Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control*, "China's Missile Sales to Islamabad Worry Washington", May 1, 1995, <https://www.wisconsinproject.org/chinas-missile-sales-to-islamabad-worry-washington/#:~:text=At%20issue%20is%20the%20Chinese,transfers%20of%20missile%2Drelated%20equipment>

⁷⁹ Debalina Ghoshal, *Defence.info*, "Chinese Assistance in Pakistan's Missile Technology: Repercussion in Indo Pacific Region", 01/29/2025, <https://defense.info/global-dynamics/2025/01/chinese-assistance-in-pakistans-missile-technology-repercussion-in-indo-pacific-region/>

⁸⁰ *Global Security.org*, "Hangor New Submarines -Type 041 Yuan-class", <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/pakistan/ss-new.htm>

Very Low Frequency (VLF) Station. The construction of the Pakistan Navy VLF station under Project-333 had commenced at Turbat by PTI, China, in 2011.⁸¹ Pakistan commissioned the VLF station PNS Hameed on 16 Nov 16 2026.

- *Comments:* The SRC and VLF station projects may indicate a long-term game plan on the part of China. PN submarines, under the present operating envelope, do not really need VLF communication. These projects could be a precursor to either PLA Navy submarines operating from Pakistan in the near future or to PN itself acquiring possibly nuclear submarines.

Task Force-88 (TF-88). On 13 December 2016, Pakistan established a Task Force, designated as Task Force-88 (TF-88), exclusively for the maritime security of Gwadar port. The commissioning of TF-88, held at an International Maritime Conference on the CPEC, the first held at Gwadar, was accompanied by an announcement, as per Pakistani media reports, of the objective: “protection of associated sea lanes against both conventional and non-traditional threats”. TF-88 is to comprise ships, Fast Attack Craft, aircraft, drones (unmanned aerial vehicles), and surveillance assets. Additionally, marines would be deployed at sea and around Gwadar for security operations.⁸²

- *Comments:* The creation of TF-88 seems to indicate that China views Gwadar as more than a commercial venture.

Military Diplomacy

PLA Navy Port Calls. Open domain data indicates that PLA Navy units made at least 27 port calls to Karachi between 1985 and 2026. These include visits by both conventional and nuclear submarines.⁸³

- *Comments:* The actual number of port calls maybe higher, however, details are not available in the open domain.

⁸¹ Maj Gen Deepak K Mehta, “CHINA-PAKISTAN: Pakistan Totally Dependent on China”, *Indian Military Review*, September 20, 2020, <https://imrmedia.in/china-pakistan-pakistan-totally-dependent-on-china/>

⁸² Mahendra Ved, “Pakistan Navy’s New Task Force Has Serious Implications For Region – Analysis”, *Eurasia Review*, December 15, 2016, <https://www.eurasiareview.com/15122016-pakistan-navys-new-task-force-has-serious-implications-for-region-analysis/>

⁸³ Authors analysis of data from *National Defense University Press, Washington, DC*, <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/4222744/chinas-military-diplomacy/> and *Rajya Sabha*, “written answer to unstarred question 103”, https://rsdebate.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/651459/1/IQ_236_23072015_U369_p103_p103.pdf and *NDTV*, Jan 06, 2017, <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/chinese-nuclear-submarine-seen-at-karachi-too-close-for-comfort-1645798> - Shang 409 and Franz Stephen Gady, “Chinese Warships Visit Pakistan”, *The Diplomat*, June 12, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/06/chinese-warships-visit-pakistan/>, and *Ministry of National Defense of People’s Republic of China*, “China, Pakistan kick off “Sea Guardians-2020” naval drill in Karachi”, 2020-01-06, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/xb/News_213114/TopStories/4858081.html#:~:text=The%20Sea%20Guardians%2D2020%20bilateral%20naval%20exercise%20was,%20Port%20training%20*%20Maritime%20joint%20dril

Pakistan-China Bilateral Military Exercises. Pakistan and China have conducted following bilateral military exercises :-⁸⁴

Ser	Exercise Designation	Years	Total
(a)	Shaheen	2011,2013,2014,2015,2016, 2017 , 2018, 2019, 2020, 2023	10
(b)	Friendship/Youyi	20,102,011,201,520,100,000	5
(c)	Sea Guardian	2020,2022,2023, 2026	4
(d)	Not Named (Anti-Piracy) Exercises	2,009,201,020,112,010	4
(e)	Not Named (MOOTW) Exercises	2003,2017, 2017	3
(f)	Not Named (Anti-Terrorism) Exercises	200,420,062,021	3
(g)	Warrior	201,520,192,024	3
(h)	Combat Support Exercise	2016	1
(j)	Army Team Spirit Exercise	2017	1
(k)	Peace Angel	2014	1
(l)	Sharp Sword	2019	1
	Total		36

(Table 22-Pakistan China Bilateral Military Exercises)

- *Comments:* From 2002 to 2024, China has conducted the second-highest number of bilateral exercises with Pakistan, at 36. The highest number of bilateral exercises China has are with Russia, at 45.

Pakistan-China Multilateral Military Exercises. China has participated in the following multilateral exercises conducted by Pakistan: - ⁸⁵

Ser	Exercise Designation	Years	Total
(a)	AMAN	2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2023, 2025	09

⁸⁴ Authors analysis of data from *National Defense University Press, Washington, DC*, <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/4222744/chinas-military-diplomacy/> and *Dawn E-Paper*, “Pak-China Maritime Exercise Sea Guardian IV Concludes”, April 2,2026, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1987628>, and *Radio Pakistan*, “Pak-China Joint Exercise Warrior-VIII concludes”, December 11,2024, <https://radio.gov.pk/11-12-2024/pak-china-joint-exercise-warrior-viii-concludes> and *Pakistan Today*, “Sino-Pak Air Exercise Indus Shield Concludes”, November 6,2024, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2024/11/06/sino-pak-air-exercise-indus-shield-2024-concludes>

⁸⁵ Authors analysis of data from *National Defense University Press, Washington, DC*, <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/4222744/chinas-military-diplomacy/> and *The Express Tribune*, “AMAN-13: PN to lead 30-nation naval exercises today”, March 04,2013, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/515434/aman-13-pn-to-lead-30-nation-naval-exercises-today>, and Gao Dezheng and Wang Ningchuan, “Multinational Maritime Exercise AMAN-2025 wraps up”, *China Military Online*, 2025-02-12, http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/CHINA_209163/TopStories_209189/16369235.html

Ser	Exercise Designation	Years	Total
(b)	Warrior	2018,2019, 2024, 2025	04
(c)	International PACES Competition	2016, 2018	02
(d)	Shared Destiny	2021	01
	Total		16

(Table 23- Chinese Participation in Multilateral Military Exercises Conducted by Pakistan)

Exchange of High-Level Military Visits (2002-2024). 85 high-level visits by military delegations were exchanged between Pakistan and China, and vice versa. China hosted 57 visits, Pakistan hosted 27, and there was one virtual interaction. 71 of these exchanges were at the Central Military Commission (CMC) level, 11 at service level, and three at theatre level.⁸⁶

- *Comments:* 85 high-level exchanges between military delegations are the third highest for China. The highest number of exchanges, at 114, is with the United States, and the second highest, at 97, is with Russia.

VII. Pakistan-China Marine Research Cooperation

The Pakistan National Ocean Research Institute and the Nanhai Ocean Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) conducted a survey off the Makran Coast in January and February 2018. The survey involved a joint team of scientists from Pakistan and China and was carried out aboard the Chinese research vessel *Shiyan 3*.⁸⁷

An MoU on Cooperation in the field of Marine Sciences between the China Geological Survey (CGS), Ministry of Natural Resources of China, and the Pakistan Institute of Oceanography, Ministry of Science and Technology, was signed in April 2018.⁸⁸

In 2019, the China Geological Survey and the Geological Survey of Pakistan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to foster cooperation in marine science and research, particularly in exploring natural mineral and hydrocarbon resources within Pakistan's territorial waters.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Authors analysis of data from *National Defense University Press, Washington, DC*, <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/4222744/chinas-military-diplomacy/>

⁸⁷ *Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of Pakistan, National Institute of Oceanography*, 13 January 2018. <https://niopk.gov.pk/pcrc.html>.

⁸⁸ *CPEC Secretariat*, "Prime Minister Imran Khan's Meeting with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang in Beijing, China", 28 April 2019, <https://cpec.gov.pk/news/169>

⁸⁹ *CPEC Portal*, "China-Pakistan Joint Marine Geological Survey Data Handover Strengthens Bilateral Scientific Cooperation", 02 August 2023. <https://cpecinfo.com/china-pakistan-joint-marine-geological-survey-data-handover-strengthens-bilateral-scientific-cooperation/>

A second PN-China Geological Survey (CGS) scientific research cruise was undertaken from December 2019 to February 2020 to conduct systematic seismic and magnetic surveys to understand the geology of Pakistan's EEZ. The PNHD, on behalf of the PN, hosted the CGS research ship 'Hai Yang Di Zhi Jiu Hao' and provided full support at sea, in harbour, and in coastal areas for survey activities. Along with Chinese scientists, scientists from the National Institute of Oceanography, Pakistan Petroleum Limited, and the Pakistan Navy Hydrographic Department also participated.⁹⁰

The Pakistan Navy, through its National Hydrographic Office (NHO), actively supported a Pakistan–China Joint Oceanographic Cruise, conducted in January 2026 by the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) in partnership with China's Second Institute of Oceanography (SIO). The Pakistan Navy's survey vessel, PNS Behr Masah, was deployed to assist with this scientific mission, reflecting the Pakistan Navy's commitment to promoting maritime awareness and advancing marine scientific research within the country.⁹¹

- *Comments:* Oceanographic research cooperation activities between China and Pakistan are unlikely to face any challenges and are likely to continue well into the distant future.

VIII. Pakistan-China Civil Nuclear Cooperation ⁹²

The following are relevant:-

- (a) The Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) signed an agreement with Canadian General Electric Company in 1959 for the construction of a 137 megawatt electrical (MWe) nuclear reactor in Karachi.
- (b) The Karachi Nuclear Power Plant-1 (KANUPP-1 or K-1) began commercial operations in 1972 under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) facility-specific safeguards.
- (c) However, following India's peaceful nuclear explosion in 1974, which used plutonium from a Canadian-supplied CIRUS reactor, Canada began selling nuclear technology only to nations that had signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) or accepted full-scope safeguards—which allow the IAEA to inspect both civil and military nuclear facilities. India refused to meet these conditions, and Pakistan also followed suit. This led Canada to terminate its nuclear energy cooperation with New Delhi and Islamabad in 1976.
- (f) In September 1986, China and Pakistan signed an agreement to facilitate the transfer of civil nuclear technology. Under this agreement, China agreed to provide Pakistan

⁹⁰ *National Hydrographic Office, Pakistan*, 23 October 2020, <https://hydrography.paknavy.gov.pk/second-pn-china-geological-survey-cgs-scientific-research-cruise/>

⁹¹ *The Express Tribune*, 'PN facilitates Pakistan-China Joint Cruise', 07 January 2026, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2585866/pn-facilitates-pakistan-china-joint-cruise>

⁹² Asma Khalid, "China-Pakistan Nuclear Energy Cooperation: History and Key Debates", *STIMSON, South Asia Voices*, February 12, 2020, <https://southasianvoices.org/china-pakistan-nuclear-energy-cooperation/>

with power reactors and a range of nuclear-related products and services, including research and technical support for uranium enrichment.

- (g) Further, in 1991, China agreed to supply Pakistan with its indigenously developed Qinshan-1 nuclear power plant.
- (h) Construction on Chashma Nuclear Power Plant-1 (CHASNUPP-1 or C-1) began in 1993, and the 300 MWe reactor became operational in May 2000.
- (j) The Chashma C-2 reactor went critical in 2011 and reactors C-3 and C-4 have been operational since 2016 and 2017, respectively.
- (k) Some analysts have argued that the construction of the C-3 and C-4 reactors was in response to the 2008 U.S.–India civil nuclear agreement.
- (l) As a result of the U.S.–India nuclear deal, the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) issued an India-specific waiver permitting the transfer of civilian nuclear technology.
- (m) In this context, Pakistan was critical of the deal, arguing that the exclusive waiver was discriminatory and destabilising for South Asia.
- (n) In In 2013, China and Pakistan announced plans to construct two additional nuclear power plants at Karachi—Karachi Nuclear Power Plant-2 (K-2) and Karachi Nuclear Power Plant-3 (K-3).
- (p) The Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) agreed that China’s supply of the C-1 and C-2 nuclear reactors to Pakistan before China joined the NSG was not subject to the NSG’s trade guidelines.
- (q) However, a few NSG members raised concerns about China’s cooperation with Pakistan in constructing additional reactors. Therefore, the announcements that China would supply Pakistan with two additional reactors in 2010 and two more in 2013 led some NSG members to argue that China was violating the NSG’s trade guidelines by continuing to sell nuclear reactors to Pakistan.

Presently, Pakistan has six operational reactors, including C-1, C-2, C-3, C-4, K-2 and K-3. All these are Chinese reactors.⁹³

- *Comments:* China’s strong support for Pakistan in the NSG and the supply of nuclear reactors are clear indications that China’s support has strategic dimensions and is not merely transactional.

⁹³ Data compiled from, Afia Malik, “Pakistan’s Nuclear Energy Outlook”, *Pakistan Institute of Development Economics*, 2023, <https://file.pide.org.pk/pdfpideresearch/book-50-14-pakistans-nuclear-energy-outlook.pdf>, and IAEA, “Country Nuclear Power Profiles, Pakistan (Updated 2021)”, <https://www-pub.iaea.org/MTCD/Publications/PDF/CNPP-2021/countryprofiles/Pakistan/Pakistan.htm> and IAEA, “Power Reactor Information System, KANUPP-3”, <https://pris.iaea.org/pris/CountryStatistics/ReactorDetails.aspx?current=1068>

IX. Pakistan-China Nuclear Weapons Cooperation

China's illegal assistance to Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme is as tabulated below:-⁹⁴

Ser	Year	Items Sold	Relevance to Nuclear Weapons Programme
(a)	1982	China gave Pakistan 15 tons of uranium hexafluoride gas for production of bomb grade uranium, 50 kilograms of weapons-grade enriched uranium enough for two bombs, and a blue-print for a nuclear weapon that China already tested	China was an early recipient of the uranium enrichment technology using centrifuges that Khan had acquired in Europe and these items were in return for access to the European technology
(b)	1994	Plutonium producing reactor	Helped Pakistan to build an unsafeguarded, plutonium-producing reactor at Khushab
(c)	1996	5000 unsafeguarded ring magnets	China National Nuclear Corporation, a state-owned corporation, transferred to the A.Q. Khan Research Laboratory in Kahuta, Pakistan, 5,000 ring magnets that can be used in gas centrifuges to enrich uranium. Reportedly, intelligence experts believed that the magnets provided to Pakistan were to be used in special suspension bearings at the top of rotating cylinders in the centrifuges
(d)	1996	Special industrial furnace and High-tech diagnostic equipment	Transfer was intended for Pakistan's nuclear weapons program said that high temperature furnaces are used to mold uranium or plutonium
(e)	2000	Equipment	For Pakistan's secret heavy water production plant at Khushab
(f)	2010	High-performance coatings	PPG Paints Trading Company in Shanghai pled guilty in a U.S. court to illegally exporting high-performance coatings from the United States through the PRC to the Chashma-2 reactor in Pakistan

(Table 24- Chinese Illegal Sales of Items for Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Programme)

- *Comments:* The fact that China was/is willing to engage in illegal trade with Pakistan to supply materials used in the manufacture of nuclear weapons and/or to facilitate the nuclear

⁹⁴ Shirley A. Kan, *Eurasia Review*, "China's Nuclear Technology Sales To Pakistan – Analysis", March 25, 2011, <https://www.eurasiareview.com/25032011-chinas-nuclear-technology-sales-to-pakistan-analysis/>

weapons programme is itself indicative of the depth of the relationship between China and Pakistan.

X. Pakistan-China Space Cooperation

Details of Pakistan's satellites launched by China are as tabulated below: ⁹⁵

Ser	Satellite	International Designator	Role	Launch Date	Status
(a)	Badr-A	1990-059 A	Technology Demonstrator	16 July 1990	Not Operational
(b)	Badr-B	2001-056 C	Technology Demonstrator	10 December 2021	Not Operational
(c)	PAKSAT-1R	2011-042A	Communication	11 Aug 2011	Operational
(d)	PRSS-1	2018-056 B	Imaging	09 July 2018	Operational
(e)	PAK TES-1A	2018-056 A	Imaging	09 July 2018	Operational
(f)	I Cube-Q	2024-083 C	Lunar Nano Satellite	03 May 2024	Not Operational
(g)	PAKSAT-MM-1	2024-104 A	Communication	30 May 2024	Operational
(h)	PRSC-EO-1	2025-012 A	Imaging	17 January 2025	Operational
(j)	PRSC-HS-1	2025-234	Hyperspectral Imaging	19 October 2025	Operational
(k)	PRSC-EO-2	2026-027	Imaging	12 February 2026	Operational
(l)	PRSC-E-03	-	Imaging	25 April 2026	Operational

(Table 25-Satellites of Pakistan Launched by China)

Incidentally, the communication satellite PAKSAT-1 (1996-006 A) was launched by the United States for Pakistan on 10 February 1996.⁹⁶

China will also send a Pakistani astronaut on its lunar mission, as per the Pak-China Astronaut Cooperation Agreement. Pakistan is also the first country to deploy and benefit from the Chinese

⁹⁵ Authors compilation of data gleaned from Areesha Manzoor, “Pakistan-China Space Cooperation in the New Space Age”, *Center for International Strategic Studies (CISS) Pakistan*, April 19,2026, <https://ciiss.org.pk/pakistan-china-space-cooperation-in-the-new-space-age/>, and *Gunter's Space Page*, <https://space.skyrocket.de/index.html> and *N2YO.com*, <https://www.n2yo.com/?s=37779>

⁹⁶ Ibid

navigation system Beidou. Thus, space cooperation with China is an important pillar of friendly bilateral relations that has evolved over the decades.⁹⁷

Further, the PRSS-02 (PRSC-EO-2) satellite reportedly shares the ground-facility resources of the PRSS-01 (PRSC-EO-1), launched in 2018 from China's Jiuquan Satellite Centre. Two S-Band control stations operate in Karachi and Islamabad, while one fixed and one mobile X-Band data-receiving station operate from Islamabad and Karachi, respectively. The Chinese plan is to share PRSS-02 data through the Shanghai Academy, but to enable this cooperation, China asked Pakistan to engage the Singapore-based M/s Space Chain, a "community-based space platform that intends to build an open and neutral infrastructure for the New Space Economy by integrating space and blockchain technologies", according to its website. It is hard to believe that the Shanghai Academy's plan to share critical data from other satellites via the Singapore firm would proceed without direct supervision from the Chinese State. More likely, this partnership is set to exploit the private firm as a convenient hub for intelligence sharing.⁹⁸ Incidentally, China has a Telemetry, Tracking and Command (TT&C) station in Karachi.⁹⁹

- *Comments:* 11 out of 12 Pakistani satellites have been launched by China. Further, Pakistan has access to the Beidou satellite navigation system. Space cooperation has military dimensions, and China's help to Pakistan during OP Sindoor was a clear demonstration of collusion.

XI. Telecommunication and Digital Infrastructure

Telecommunication

Pakistan's digital transformation journey has been significantly influenced by China's active role in driving digital investment and successful partnerships. Three of China's IT giants, Huawei, Alibaba and China Mobile Pakistan (CMPak), are playing a leading role in this.¹⁰⁰

Huawei has been actively developing Pakistan's ICT talent ecosystem since it began operating in the region in 1998.¹⁰¹

China Mobile Pakistan, branded as Zong 4G, is a pioneer in mobile internet connectivity in Pakistan. It was the first network to launch 4G services in Pakistan in 2013. It also successfully conducted 5G tests in 2020. The company has invested over US \$3 billion in digital infrastructure.

⁹⁷ See note 102

⁹⁸ Di Vallerio Fabri, "Intelligence-sharing through space cooperation between China and Pakistan", *Geo Politica.info*, 02/11/2021, <https://geopolitica.info/china-pakistan/>

⁹⁹ Andrew Erickson and Amy Chang, China's Navigation in Space", *US Naval Institute*, April 2012, <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2012/april/chinas-navigation-space>

¹⁰⁰ Fatima Javed, "Years of investment and partnerships, Chinese tech giants drive innovation in Pakistan", *Gwadar Pro*, June 27, 2024, <https://gwadarpro.pk/1806332037629313025/years-of-investment-and-partnerships-chinese-tech-giants-drive-innovation-in-pakistan>

¹⁰¹ Ibid

Its extensive network of 14,000+ LTE-enabled sites ensures access to digital services across the nation.¹⁰²

Alibaba has made significant investments in Pakistan's e-commerce and technology sectors. In 2018, Alibaba acquired Pakistan's leading e-commerce platform, Daraz. Cainiao, Alibaba's logistics service, also operates two automated distribution centres in Karachi and Lahore.¹⁰³

Incidentally, Zong 4G has a 25.4% market share among mobile subscribers and a 26.2% share among broadband subscribers in Pakistan.¹⁰⁴

- *Comments:* Zong 4G's market penetration of approximately 1/3rd in Pakistan's mobile and broadband markets appears relatively low, given the state of relations between Pakistan and China. However, even this, coupled with the fact that three major Chinese telecom companies are operating in Pakistan, definitely gives China an edge in accessing a wide range of information.

Pakistan-China Optical Fibre Cable (PCOFC)

On 13 July 2018, Pakistan's Prime Minister, Nasirul Mulk, inaugurated the Pak-China Optical Fibre Cable (PCOFC) project, which serves as the first land-based communication link between Pakistan and China.¹⁰⁵

The Pak-China Optical Fibre Cable Project is a first of its kind under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), providing China with an alternative, shorter route for transit telecom traffic to Europe, the Middle East and Africa. The project features the development of around 820 km of underground OFC from Rawalpindi to Khunjerab and 172 km of aerial OFC from Karimabad to Khunjerab to supplement the network in landslide-prone areas. It provides 26 high-capacity microwave links as backup to the OFC network and 9 node centres at different locations along the Rawalpindi-Khunjerab belt. The work on the project was formally launched in 2016 and completed in two years. The project is a collaboration between Special Communications Organization, China Telecom Global, and Pakistan Telecommunication Company. The project was executed by Huawei Technology Co. Ltd.¹⁰⁶

- *Comments:* This project (PCOFC) is Pakistan's only land-based fibre optic cable and establishes a firm dependency on China.

Submarine Cables

The details of international submarine cables connecting Pakistan are as tabulated below: -¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Ibid

¹⁰³ Ibid

¹⁰⁴ *Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA)*, "Annual Report 2025", <https://www.pta.gov.pk/category/annual-reports-1432096911-2023-05-30>

¹⁰⁵ *Dawn E-Paper*, "Land Based Communication Link with China Opened", July 14, 2018 <https://www.dawn.com/news/1419971>

¹⁰⁶ *China Pakistan Economic Corridor*, "Telecommunication", <https://cpecinfo.com/telecommunication/>

¹⁰⁷ Author's compilation of data from *Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA)*, "Submarine Cable Landing Stations of Pakistan", https://www.pta.gov.pk/assets/media/sr11_list_cable_landing_stations_06102023.pdf and *Submarine Cable Networks*, <https://www.submarinenetworks.com/en/>

Ser	Licensee	Submarine Cable	Chinese Entities Part of Consortium	Indian Entities Part of Consortium
(a)	Pakistan Telecommunication Company Ltd (PTCL)	AAE-1	AAE-1 cable system terminates at diversified carrier neutral data centers in major regional hubs, including Telecom House in Hong Kong	
(b)		IMEWE		Bharti Airtel (India), Tata Communications (India)
(c)		SMW4		Bharti Infotel Limited, India, Tata Communications, India
		SMW3	Retired 02 December 2024	
(d)	Trans World Associates (Pvt.) Ltd	SMW5	China Mobile International, China Telecom Global, China Unicom	
(e)		TWA1		
(f)	Cyber Internet Services (Pvt.) Ltd	PEACE	PEACE is privately owned and invested by PEACE CABLE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK CO., LIMITED, a subsidiary of China-based HENG TONG Group, and supplied by HMN Tech (formerly Huawei Marine).	

(Table 26 -Pakistan-Submarine Cable Network)

- *Comments:* At least three submarine cables connecting Pakistan, namely AAE-1, SMW 5 and PEACE, include Chinese entities as part of the cable operating consortium. Hence, the possibility that these entities may use the available data on these cables for their own purposes cannot be ruled out.

China's Role in Pakistan's Digital Space ¹⁰⁸

5G Technology. China has played a crucial role in Pakistan's 5G rollout, particularly through Huawei's involvement. Chinese technological support has helped Pakistan leap into the 5G era.

Artificial Intelligence (AI). The integration of AI technologies into Pakistan's economy has been significantly influenced by China's investments. Chinese expertise in AI, coupled with technological support, has enabled Pakistan to advance in key sectors such as agriculture, healthcare, and education. AI applications, backed by Chinese technologies, are seen as critical to Pakistan's economic growth and productivity.

Cybersecurity. China's advanced cybersecurity infrastructure has benefited Pakistan, providing necessary support to safeguard critical digital infrastructure. However, scholars also emphasise concerns about the risks of surveillance and espionage associated with Chinese technology. Some studies have warned about potential backdoor access through Chinese equipment, raising questions about Pakistan's digital sovereignty.

One of the most significant concerns in Pakistan is the potential loss of digital sovereignty due to reliance on Chinese technology. The integration of Chinese-made equipment, especially in critical sectors such as telecommunications and cybersecurity, has raised alarms about national security risks and control over Pakistan's digital space.

Sino-Pak Centre of Artificial Intelligence (SPCAI) ¹⁰⁹

In July 2022, Pakistan had allocated Rs. 243 million (US\$ 0.86 million) for the establishment of the SINO-Pak Centre for Artificial Intelligence. The centre's core objective is to build national capacity for Research and Development in the emerging field of artificial intelligence by developing expertise through MS/Ph.D. programmes.

XII. Historical and Civilisational Ties

The website of the Embassy of Pakistan in Beijing states, "Cultural exchange has been a cornerstone of China-Pakistan's enduring friendship, fostering mutual understanding and strengthening the bond between the two nations. Our two countries share a rich history of interaction, dating back to the ancient Silk Road, which served as a conduit for trade, ideas and cultural practices."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Khan, S. U., Shah, I. U. Shah, K. ., & Iqbal, M. J. . (2025). "The Role of China-Pakistan Relations in the Global Tech Competition, Especially in Areas like 5G, AI, and Cybersecurity", *Review of Education, Administration & Law*, 8(1), 73-85, February 2025, <https://doi.org/10.47067/real.v8i1.404>, <https://real.spcrd.org/index.php/real/article/view/404/415>,

¹⁰⁹ *Associated Press of Pakistan*, "Govt. Allocates Rs. 243 Million to Establish SINO-Pak Center for Artificial Intelligence", July 2022, <https://www.app.com.pk/national/govt-allocates-rs-243-mln-to-establish-sino-pak-center-for-artificial-intelligence/>

¹¹⁰ *Pakistan Embassy, Beijing*, "Cultural Exchanges", <https://www.pakbj.org/culturalexchanges/index.htm>

- *Comments:* Highlighting historical linkages between Pakistan and China appears to be just an attempt to create a narrative, since Pakistan as a nation never existed prior to 1947. Interestingly, similar sentiments are not evident on the Chinese side.

XIII. People-to-People Contacts

Education

China remains a preferred destination for Pakistani students pursuing higher education. Quality education, cost-effectiveness, a streamlined visa process, and the availability of a wide range of Chinese Government and institutional scholarships are key factors attracting Pakistani students to Chinese universities. As of December 2025, there were 29000 Pakistani students studying in China. Pakistani students are enrolled across a wide range of academic disciplines, including Engineering (various fields), Computer Science, Information Technology, Artificial Intelligence, Business Administration, Finance, Economics and Trade, International Relations, Agriculture-related Sciences, and Chinese language programmes.¹¹¹

The growth of economic ties between China and Pakistan has deepened partnerships in the education sector. The three main elements of Chinese educational support for Pakistan and other developing countries are university scholarships, vocational training programmes, and Chinese language courses. Many Pakistanis believe they are likely to gain economic benefits from learning Mandarin or studying at Chinese universities rather than in the West. There has been a rapid increase in the number of Pakistani urban residents learning Mandarin at all educational levels, including middle schools, high schools, colleges, and universities. While Pakistani elites continue to look to the West as the preferred destination for higher education, those in the country's middle class are increasingly opting to attend Chinese universities.¹¹²

Some Pakistani students studying at Chinese universities also positively contrast their treatment with that of their peers at Western universities. Making China an attractive destination for higher education offers opportunities to cultivate a generation of future Pakistani leaders and elites in both the public and private sectors, with a preference for China.¹¹³

- *Comments:* China appears to be the second choice for higher education for Pakistani students, primarily because of its lower cost compared with the West.

Confucius Institutes

In Pakistan, there are five major Confucius institutes operating, including those at the National University of Modern Languages (NUML), the University of Sargodha, the University of Punjab, the University of Agriculture, and the University of Karachi. Around thirty thousand students at these institutes are learning the Chinese language. The Confucius institutes are facilitating cultural exchanges for Pakistani students. Over time, these institutes have progressed beyond teaching the

¹¹¹ *Pakistan Embassy, Beijing*, "Education and Cooperation", <https://www.pakbj.org/educationcooperation/index.htm>

¹¹² Muhammad Tayyab Safdar, "The Local Roots of Chinese Engagement in Pakistan", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, June 2, 2021, <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2021/06/the-local-roots-of-chinese-engagement-in-pakistan1>

¹¹³ *Ibid*

Chinese language alone. For example, in 2018, the NUML Confucius Institute introduced an undergraduate programme called ‘BS Area Study China’. This programme offers a range of courses that enable students to gain knowledge of the multifaceted aspects of the Chinese language, arts, and culture. Moreover, students and faculty members from all these Confucius institutes are sent to China to experience Chinese culture more closely.¹¹⁴

- *Comments:* Considering the nature of China-Pakistan relations, Confucious Institutes may not be seen as instruments of propaganda by Pakistan.

Business Relations

There are 2013 Chinese companies operating in Pakistan across eight cities, including Islamabad (972), Lahore (503), Karachi (413), Faisalabad (40), Peshawar (24), Gilgit (POK) (25), Multan (18), and Quetta (18)).¹¹⁵

A new Gallup Pakistan survey shows that China’s economic presence in Pakistan is expanding beyond large-scale infrastructure projects into a wider network of private enterprises. Drawing on data from the Pakistan–China Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry (PCJCCI), the study highlights a significant rise in Chinese firms operating in trade, IT services, engineering, and small-scale manufacturing. The report challenges the perception that China’s role in Pakistan is dominated solely by CPEC megaprojects.¹¹⁶

Initiatives such as the China-Pakistan Management Initiative at the Lahore University of Management Sciences aim to develop joint research projects, training programmes, and other educational resources with Chinese universities. Importantly, these initiatives provide Chinese firms and professionals with training in Pakistani cultural traditions, Islamic values, local languages, business norms, and management techniques to help them adapt to local realities. Large Chinese firms, such as the consumer goods giant TCL and the China Machinery Engineering Corporation (CMEC), have sent senior managers to the Lahore University of Management Sciences to complete its executive master’s in business administration (MBA) programme. These large Chinese firms are incentivised to have their executives trained locally to ensure that their managers know local conditions, customs, laws, and business practices in Pakistan.¹¹⁷

- *Comments:* The presence of Chinese private-sector firms in Pakistan may make it difficult to propagate the narrative of predatory activities by Chinese state-owned enterprises and the Chinese Government.

¹¹⁴ Khuzaima Rehman Modern Diplomacy, China’s Sharp Power : The Confucious Institutes in Pakistan, <https://modern diplomacy.eu/2022/06/20/chinas-sharp-power-the-confucious-institutes-in-pakistan/>, June 20,2022

¹¹⁵ Author’s compilation of Data from *Pakistan–China Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry (PCJCCI)*, <https://pcjcci.org/>

¹¹⁶ *News Desk, The Daily CPEC*, “China’s Growing Economic Footprint in Pakistan”, December 1, 2025, <https://thedailycpec.com/chinas-growing-economic-footprint-in-pakistan/>

¹¹⁷ See note 119

Media Relationships Between China and Pakistan ¹¹⁸

Since the 2010s, China has developed relationships and entered into agreements with Pakistani media houses and journalists to more effectively communicate its message through traditional and social media.

Aside from the public diplomacy of Chinese diplomats, China's state-owned Xinhua News Agency, English-language newspapers such as the China Daily, and broadcasting organisations such as the China Global Television Network (CGTN) and China Radio International regularly highlight the positive effects of CPEC projects on Pakistan's economy and society. These outlets also counter negative perceptions of China in Pakistan and perceived propaganda against CPEC.

Xinhua launched a Xinhua Pakistan Service in October 2019, in partnership with Independent News Pakistan. Under the agreement, Independent News Pakistan translates Xinhua's English-language news into Urdu and disseminates these stories across the country's wider media ecosystem. The expansion of Xinhua's Urdu service is significant, as Urdu news audiences account for much of the domestic market. However, Pakistani viewership of Chinese state-run media channels such as CGTN remains limited. There is no Urdu version of the channel, so its broadcasts fail to reach a large percentage of the country's population.

Leading Pakistani media houses and outlets—including the Jang Group, the Daily Pakistan, Nawa-i-Waqt, the Associated Press of Pakistan, the Daily Times, Hum News, and Pakistan Today—have subscribed to Xinhua's services. Furthermore, the China Daily has prominently featured its newsfeed on Dawn's homepage. In addition to news on Pakistan, these outlets also highlight China's views on key global issues and its technological achievements.

Commercial considerations seem to be the main drivers of these bilateral news agreements. Xinhua's news reports and other resources cost much less than content from US and European services such as Reuters, the Associated Press, and Agence France-Presse.

In addition, the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan sponsors local Pakistani journalists to attend short-term training courses at leading Chinese universities, such as Renmin University of China. The growing interactions between Pakistani media houses and Chinese news agencies, along with training programmes for Pakistani journalists in China, have important implications for the broader China-Pakistan relationship. The objectivity of Pakistani media reporting on China becomes a question.

- *Comments:* The lack of linguistic commonality between China and Pakistan makes it difficult for Chinese efforts to integrate into Pakistani media.

Agreement on Media Cooperation. Incidentally, China and Pakistan signed an agreement in July 2025 to enhance media cooperation. It sets out plans to exchange content and information, co-produce media projects, and promote cultural awareness through shared storytelling. The partnership also includes training programmes, workshops, and journalist exchange initiatives.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ See note 119

¹¹⁹ *News Desk, The Daily CPEC*, "Pakistan, China sign media cooperation agreement", July 16, 2025, <https://thedailycpec.com/pakistan-china-sign-media-cooperation-agreement/>

Social Media

In January 2020, Pakistan adopted a new set of regulations under the Citizen Protection (Against-Online Harm) Rules, which include plans for the Ministry of Information Technology and Communication to appoint a national coordinator responsible for online content regulation. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists have denounced this move and argued that it is unconstitutional. The vague definitions of harmful content leave room for arbitrary removal of content. The new regulation requires all social media companies to open offices in Pakistan, where strict supervision of their ability to remove or block content will be enforced. It empowers the national coordinator to ask online platforms to surrender all information, whether private or public.¹²⁰

However, these new measures could help Chinese social media platforms to emerge as an alternative in the country. Chinese content censorship on its online platforms is uniformly applicable, irrespective of whether an application is used domestically or abroad. They could thus easily adapt to Pakistan's new regulations, and China could even work with Islamabad to define the extent of internet censorship in Pakistan.¹²¹

Chinese nationals living temporarily in Pakistan have produced and posted thousands of popular videos on Douyin, attracting wide viewership. Many of these videos highlight friendly, casual interactions with Pakistani locals. These interactions may appear random and apolitical, but in fact the videos are highly curated and replete with official Chinese state geopolitical discourse that highlights China's ability to develop Pakistan and improve the lives of Pakistanis.¹²²

XIV. Assessment of China's Extent of Influence with Pakistan

Friendly relations between Pakistan and China are well known and can almost be considered an axiomatic phenomenon. The relations between the two countries persist despite the fact that they do not share any ethnic, linguistic, cultural, social or political commonality. The one factor that is common to both Pakistan and China is the existence of territorial and sovereignty disputes with India.

Establishment of Diplomatic Relations. Pakistan and China established diplomatic relations on 21 May 1951. Incidentally, Pakistan signed two significant military pacts with the US, namely the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) in September 1954 and, later, the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO)—earlier known as the Baghdad Pact—in February 1955. Therefore, Pakistan could not claim neutrality, since it had joined US-supported alliances. However, this fact did not seem to be of any concern to China, since it appears to have assessed

¹²⁰ Nowamy Opalinski, "The China Factor in Pakistan's Media Landscape", *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS)*, 31 May 2020, https://www.ipcs.org/comm_select.php?articleNo=5695

¹²¹ Ibid

¹²² Zoppolato, D. G., & Culcasi, K. (2026). "Social Media Geopolitics: The "Unofficial Geopolitics" of Chinese Vloggers in Pakistan". *Geopolitics*, 31(1), 313–333. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2025.2499133>

that Pakistan had joined the Western alliances to ensure its own security vis-à-vis India, not to combat China.

China-Pakistan Boundary Agreement-02 March 1963. The signing of this agreement by itself is a direct challenge to India's sovereignty. Furthermore, the subsequent Chinese infrastructure build-up in the Sakshgam Valley is a direct violation of Article 6 of the 1963 boundary agreement between China and Pakistan and therefore aggravates this challenge to India's sovereignty.

1965 India-Pakistan War. The 1965 Indo-Pakistan war proved to be a catalyst in cementing these ties, as China fully supported Pakistan. China's image improved exponentially after the war, leaving a positive impact on the Pakistani psyche.

Pakistan's Role in US-China Rapprochement. In July 1971, Pakistan played a seminal role in facilitating US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's secret visit to China, which led to the rapprochement between the two antagonists.

1971 India-Pakistan War. China extended diplomatic and political support to Pakistan in 1971 and continued its military assistance. However, it could not intervene militarily to prevent Pakistan's breakup. Less than a year after assuming its UN seat (including as a permanent member of the Security Council) on 25 October 1971, the PRC vetoed Bangladesh's application for UN membership on 25 August 1972. China recognised Bangladesh's independence only on 31 August 1975. China seems to have done everything to help Pakistan, short of committing its troops against India.

Terrorism in Kashmir. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan lasted from 24 Dec 1979 to 15 Feb 1989. China and Pakistan were involved in a joint effort to support the Afghan Mujahideen. China supplied a large share of the guns and ammunition, paid for by the United States and Saudi Arabia and managed by Pakistan, whose intelligence services ran the campaign, trained the fighters and largely controlled who received the weapons. In the early 1980s, Gen Zia-ul-Haq, in conjunction with Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) leader Maulana Abdul Bari, created a strategy to use the Afghan campaign to prepare for a larger conflict in Kashmir. Resources from Afghanistan, controlled by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hizb-e-Islami, provided the initial flow of terrorists into Kashmir. The weapons were Chinese. China's role in the onset of terrorism in Kashmir cannot be wished away.

India and Pakistan (Nuclear Tests-1998). The Chinese White Paper on National Defense (1998) placed the entire blame on India for the 1998 nuclear test and portrayed Pakistan as a country that was forced to follow suit.

China's Support to Pakistan During Kargil Conflict (1999). In 1999, as far as India was concerned, China did not take any action that could have negatively impacted Indian military operations. However, this may have simply been a direct outcome of its military capability then, and a cost-benefit analysis of its role in the conflict. However, it is also important to note that China did not explicitly condemn Pakistan or support India.

Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Good Neighbourly Relations (2005). China's categorical assurance to defend Pakistan's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity is clearly aimed at India.

Osama Bin Laden's Killing. China's strategic calculus disregarded the presence of Osama Bin Laden in Pakistan, yet it continued to support Pakistan.

Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). The Uyghur issue is tricky for Pakistan to handle and could trouble China-Pakistan relations if it is not handled adroitly.

Masood Azhar Issue. The issue of China's blocks on designating Masood Azhar as a global terrorist is one of the clearest indications of its support for Pakistan, even at the expense of tarnishing its global image.

China and Pakistan's Tryst with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). China's diplomatic support for Pakistan seems to have been unequivocal and to deny Pakistan's role as a terror hub.

China's Policy on Kashmir Issue. China is likely to continue to support Pakistan's position on Kashmir, particularly given that it went ahead with CPEC despite India's sensitivities. The 1963 boundary agreement and the 2013 MoU on CPEC are clearly anti-India in nature and demonstrate an utter disregard on China's part for China's sovereignty concerns.

Consultation Mechanisms. There are at least four consultation mechanisms between China and Pakistan on Afghanistan. This indicates a congruence of interests and the capacity to work in tandem on complex issues.

High Level Visits (Head of State/Head of Government) -(2000-2025). High-level exchanges of visits between countries usually follow the principle of reciprocity. In the case of Pakistan and the USA, this seems to have been observed. However, in the case of Pakistan and China, the fact that there have been 38 visits from Pakistan to China, compared with just seven from China to Pakistan, indicates that Pakistan is the 'supplicant' in this relationship.

China's Support to Pakistan During OP Sindoor. Chinese Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance systems provided Pakistani forces with real-time data, situational awareness, and surveillance capabilities. China's BeiDou satellite navigation system played a critical role, including in missile guidance for the PL-15, thereby reaffirming the direct integration of Chinese systems into Pakistani battlefield operations.

It is interesting to note that, by design or by default, the manifestoes of the major political parties seem to indicate that, for Pakistan, China is a lifeline for survival in all fields, not a matter of choice but of compulsion.

Trade (Imports). China was the top supplier of goods to Pakistan in 2025, with a 31.44% share of overall imports. China's share of Pakistan's imports rose from 7.3% in 2003 to 31.44% in 2025. While China may be the top supplier to Pakistan, from China's perspective, Pakistan is the 34th-largest export destination for China, with an overall share of 0.59%. Pakistan imported 97 types

of products (based on HS4 classification) in 2025. Of these, China is the top supplier for 57 products.

Trade (Exports). China was the second-largest export destination for Pakistan in 2025, receiving goods worth US\$2.28 billion. In 2003, China ranked 12th among Pakistan's export destinations and rose to 2nd by 2025. The percentage share of China as an export destination for Pakistan was 2.2% in 2003. This rose to an all-time high of 10.6% in 2012 and 2013, and eventually settled at 7.44% in 2025. While China was the 2nd-largest export destination for Pakistan in 2025, Pakistan was the 68th-largest supplier to China, with a share of 0.11% of Chinese imports. Pakistan exported 95 product types (based on HS4 classification) in 2025. Of these, the USA was the top export destination for 29 products, and China for 11 products. China does not play a significant role as an export destination for Pakistan.

External Loans. The largest provider of external loans to Pakistan for the period 2007 to 2026 (February) is classified as 'commercial loans' in Pakistan's official statistics. These commercial loans are from various entities, namely Ajman Bank, Suisse Bank, Dubai Bank, Noor Bank, Standard Chartered London, CITI Bank, Naya Pakistan Certificates (NPCs), time deposits and other unidentified banks. These loans totalled US\$ 41.75 billion and comprised 25.9% of the loans received during this period. China is the single largest lender, with a cumulative loan of US\$ 27.45 billion, comprising 17.09% of the overall loans provided to Pakistan. Chinese entities that provided loans to Pakistan include the Government of China, CATIC (China National Aero-Technology Import & Export Corporation), Bank of China, Sovereign/Regional Business Development, China Development Bank, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), China EXIM Bank and China's State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE). Further, the second-largest individual provider of loans is the Asian Development Bank (ADB), which provided a cumulative loan of US\$ 22.9 billion, comprising 14.25% of the overall loans. China is the most significant provider of loans to Pakistan.

External Grants. The United States was the largest provider of external grants to Pakistan for the period 2007 to February 2026, with a cumulative grant of US\$ 2730.63 million, comprising 32.9% of the overall grants. The UK, with a total grant of US\$ 2530.55 million (30.49%), was the second-largest provider. China was the 10th-largest provider of grants to Pakistan. It provided a cumulative grant of US\$ 139.5 million, with a 1.68% share of the overall grants for the period. China is not a major provider of grants to Pakistan.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). China was the single largest source of FDI into Pakistan from 2012 to 2025, investing US\$8699.1 million and accounting for 30.68% of the overall FDI during this period.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). 30 CPEC projects were completed between October 2015 and October 2024 at a total cost of US\$ 22568.59 million (US\$ 22.5 billion). The MOU for CPEC was worth US\$ 46 billion. Hence, 48.9% of the commitment for CPEC seems to have been fulfilled. The majority of transport sector projects are spread across multiple provinces. Similarly, social sector projects are not necessarily province-specific. As for individual provinces, Balochistan has the highest number, with 24 projects, and Sindh is second with 15 projects. Seven CPEC projects, fully or partially located in POK, are a clear disregard for Indian sovereignty

concerns. Notwithstanding the security challenges to CPEC, there are no indicators yet of any serious adverse impact on the progress of CPEC. These issues can at best be seen as irritants.

External Debt and Liabilities. Pakistan's external debt and liabilities (as of the financial year 2025) stood at US\$ 134.9 billion. However, there is no data on the debt owed to China. The 2024-25 Annual Report on Foreign Economic Assistance indicates that Pakistan had an outstanding external debt of US\$ 91.79 billion, of which US\$ 04 billion were from China as part of safe deposits with the State Bank of Pakistan. Debt owed to the IMF is reflected as US\$ 9.2 billion, and debt owed to Saudi Arabia as US\$ 05 billion. There is no clear indication of the exact amount of debt owed by Pakistan to China, apart from the safe deposit with SBP.

Anomaly In Statistics -Chinese Loans and Grants. There appears to be an anomaly between the official statistics of Pakistan and the data from the National Bureau of Statistics of China regarding the overall loans and grants provided by China to Pakistan. According to China's official statistics, the value of turnover achieved for contracted projects in Pakistan from 2007 to 2024 is US\$ 74.6 billion. However, Pakistan's official statistics indicate that it received a cumulative loan of US\$ 27.45 billion from 2007 to 2026 (February) and a cumulative grant of US\$ 0.139 billion during the same period. China's official statistics indicate that it has spent US\$ 47 billion more than is shown in Pakistan's official statistics. However, there is currently no breakdown of this expenditure or any explanation for this discrepancy.

Arms Imports by Pakistan (1990 Onwards). China was the most significant supplier of tanks, fighter aircraft, UCAVs, Armoured Recovery Vehicles (ARVs), ships, and eventually submarines. China is a major supplier of weapons to Pakistan, particularly of all types of missiles and bombs. China has not yet supplied any torpedoes to Pakistan; however, this could change once the eight Hangor-class submarines are delivered to Pakistan. China was a major supplier of towed guns, multiple rocket launchers, air search radars, SAM systems, and naval coastal defence systems. The strength of China-Pakistan military cooperation is indicated by the 22 licences granted by China for local production of platforms, weapons, and equipment in Pakistan.

Pakistan Army Orbat. 31.7% of armoured vehicles, 23.6% of artillery and 2.3% of Pakistan Army aviation comprise Chinese-origin equipment and platforms. Pakistan Army therefore has a major dependency on China with respect to Main Battle Tanks and Armoured Recovery Vehicles (ARVs).

Pakistan Air Force (PAF) Orbat. 49% of PAF platforms are currently of Chinese origin. PAF therefore has a major dependency on China.

Pakistan Navy (PN) Orbat. While the data indicate that 33.3% of PN platforms are of Chinese origin, it is important to note that these include major combatants such as frigates, fleet tankers, SIGINT ships, and survey vessels, as well as important smaller units such as FACs. The pending induction of eight Hangor-class AIP submarines from China will significantly increase Pakistan's dependency. Presently, PN has no dependency on China for MPAs and only minor dependency for ASW helicopters.

Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) Orbat. 10/12, or 83.3%, of PMSA units are of Chinese origin. PMSA is almost entirely composed of Chinese platforms and has an extremely high dependence on China. Furthermore, PMSA is part of the Strategic Maritime Dialogue under an MoU on Maritime Cooperation with China.

Pakistan's Missile Programme. China has played a major role in Pakistan's missile programme. There appears to be no logical reason for this support for Pakistan, other than to create a problem for India.

Submarine Rebuild Complex (SRC and Very Low Frequency (VLF) Station. The SRC and VLF station projects may indicate a long-term game plan on the part of China. PN submarines, under the present operating envelope, do not really need VLF communication. These projects could be a precursor to either PLA Navy submarines operating from Pakistan in the near future or to PN itself acquiring possibly nuclear submarines.

Military Diplomacy. PLA Navy units made at least 27 port calls in Karachi between 1985 and 2026. These include visits by both conventional and nuclear submarines. From 2002 to 2024, China has conducted 36 bilateral exercises with Pakistan, the second-highest number. The highest number of bilateral exercises for China is with Russia, at 45. 85 high-level exchanges of military delegations are the third-highest for China. The highest number of exchanges, at 114, is with the United States, and the second-highest, at 97, is with Russia.

Pakistan-China-Marine Research Cooperation. Oceanographic research cooperation between China and Pakistan is unlikely to face challenges and will likely continue well into the future.

Pakistan-China Civil Nuclear Cooperation. China's strong support for Pakistan in the NSG and the supply of nuclear reactors are clear indications that China's support has strategic dimensions and is not merely transactional.

Pakistan-China-Nuclear Weapons Cooperation. The fact that China was/is willing to engage in an illegal trade with Pakistan for the supply of materials that are used for the manufacture of nuclear weapons and/or to facilitate the nuclear weapons programme is itself indicative of the depth of the relationship between China and Pakistan.

Pakistan-China Space Cooperation. 11 out of 12 Pakistani satellites have been launched by China. Further, Pakistan has access to the Beidou satellite navigation system. Space cooperation has military dimensions, and China's help to Pakistan during OP Sindoor was a clear demonstration of collusion.

Telecommunication and Digital Infrastructure. Zong's approximately 1/3 market share in Pakistan's mobile and broadband markets appears low, given the state of relations between Pakistan and China. However, even this, coupled with the fact that three major Chinese telecom companies are operating in Pakistan, gives China an edge in accessing a wide range of information. Pak-China Optical Fibre Cable (PCOFC) is the only land-based fibre optic cable for Pakistan and establishes a firm dependency of Pakistan on China. At least three submarine cables connecting Pakistan, namely AAE-1, SMW 5 and PEACE, have Chinese entities as part of the cable operating

consortium. Hence, the possibility that these entities may use the available data on these for their own purposes cannot be ruled out. One of the most significant concerns in Pakistan is the potential loss of digital sovereignty due to reliance on Chinese technology. The integration of Chinese-made equipment, especially in critical sectors like telecommunications and cybersecurity, raises alarms about national security risks and control over Pakistan's digital space.

Historical and Civilisational Ties. Highlighting historical linkages between Pakistan and China, Pakistan appears to be merely attempting to create a narrative, since Pakistan as a nation did not exist before 1947. Interestingly, similar sentiments are not evident on the Chinese side.

People-to-People Contacts. China appears to be the second option for Pakistani students seeking higher education, primarily because it is lower cost than the West. Given the nature of China-Pakistan relations, Confucius Institutes may not be perceived in Pakistan as instruments of propaganda. The presence of 2013 Chinese private-sector firms in Pakistan will make it difficult to propagate the narrative of predatory activities by Chinese state-owned enterprises and the Chinese Government. The lack of linguistic commonality between China and Pakistan makes it difficult for Chinese efforts to integrate into Pakistani media. However, Chinese social media is quite active in Pakistan and continually seeks to project a positive image of China.

Conclusion

The China-Pakistan nexus appears to be primarily based on a shared enmity with India. China has, on a sustained basis, propped up Pakistan politically, economically, and, more importantly, militarily to contain India. China's illegal presence in Aksai Chin, along with its claim on Arunachal Pradesh, increases India's vulnerability on the Western and eastern fronts. If India continues to lag substantially behind China in Comprehensive National Power (CNP), this nexus is likely to grow stronger and further marginalise India's status in the region.

Pakistan benefits because China is unlikely to take punitive action against it, even when differences crop up, unlike the US, which may be prone to measures like sanctions. The advantage for China is that Pakistan is willing to play the role of a near vassal state that will blindly support China, especially against India. Further, Pakistan's proximity to the United States accords it its own advantages. It is clear that both China and Pakistan are mutually benefiting from this relationship. If the benefits accrued to only one side, this relationship would not have sustained itself over time. The China-Pakistan nexus is likely to continue and grow stronger, notwithstanding any resistance from the local population or political entities.

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