

DOCTORAL THESIS

An analysis of Pakistan's foreign policy towards Peoples Republic of China: a strengthening alignment (2005 onwards)

Hassan, Syeda Kanwal

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ABSTRACT

The problem driving this research stems from the lack of a systematic and theoretically, informed framework to identify the dynamics of Pakistan's strengthening alignment with China. Pakistan developed close defence and strategic ties with China during the Cold War period as both states balanced against a common adversary i.e. India.

However, Pakistan has attempted to bolster and expand its' links with China in the aftermath of U.S. military presence in Afghanistan due to a host of regional and global developments that widened the cracks and increased the mistrust that has existed between Pakistan and U.S. This study hypothesises that Pakistan has maintained a policy of alignment with China prior to 2005 however; from 2005 onwards, Pakistan has attempted to diversify its scope of relations with China as in response to external changes and circumstances in the geopolitical and geo-economic sphere.

Therefore, the objective of this research is to analyse why Pakistan has attempted to strengthen its' alignment towards China from 2005 onwards.

The existing literature on the subject is outdated, rigorously descriptive and is void of conceptual connections. To address these gaps; this research adopts a theoretical framework of analysis that is informed by neoclassical realist theory of foreign policy analysis to help analyse Pakistan's China policy. This framework offers a two-level analysis of Pakistan's behaviour. The independent variable is the set of system-level drivers such as international power relations, external threat perceptions and international economic interdependencies. The intervening variable, which affects the way Pakistan's decision-makers perceive the system-level developments, is the strategic culture at the unit level.

This study suggests that the principle driver of Pakistan's accelerated alignment policy towards China during this period is Pakistan's perceptions of international systemic/structure drivers, which are; the external developments that have occurred in its region. In addition, how Pakistan perceives those external developments is determined by its' strategic culture; which an intervening role. The strategic culture, the author argues, is dominated by Pakistan's distrust of India and, it narrowly confines the idea of Pakistan's national interest to military security whilst neglecting the economic aspect of it. The thesis finds that Pakistan has actively tried to cultivate a

broader and robust relationship with China to limit its' dependency on U.S. for strategic, economic and diplomatic support.

Pakistan has become increasingly sceptic of the U.S. for its carrots-and-stick approach towards Pakistan. Whereas China has enabled Pakistan to continue in its' revisionist agendas which to some extent are tolerable for China. It finds that growth in China's economic and military power has provided Pakistan with an alternate patron from whom it can procure weapons, conventional and non-conventional and it can seek financial support. This study also finds that although there is evidence of a deeper relationship beyond the traditional security-centric one, however; it is developing into more of a client-patron relationship, given, that Pakistan is increasingly becoming a country highly indebted to China.

Keywords: Pakistan, China, foreign policy analysis, alignment, neoclassical realism

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