

71 Years of Pakistan and China Strategic and Economic Cooperation

Strategic and Economic Dimensions of Pakistan-China Relations Amid Deepening Global Geopolitical Divide

**Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great honour for me to participate today in the conference organized by Center for International Strategic Studies Sindh (CISSS) to express my views on future prospects of Strategic and Economic cooperation between Pakistan and China.

Distinguished Guests,

Longevity, resilience and trust best describe Pakistan-China friendship. There is no relationship like ours which so deeply touches the soul of our peoples and evokes such strong emotions. Poetic expressions with imaginative diction are used to capture the essence of this fabulous friendship. There is a famous Chinese saying that:

‘As distance tests stamina of horse, so time reveals the sincerity of a friend’

Seen from this perspective, the seed of bilateral friendship sown 71 years ago has blossomed into an evergreen tree with deep roots and strong branches.

Dear Friends,

Pakistan China friendship is rooted in strategic trust, mutual understanding and bilateral respect. Over last seven decades, our bilateral friendship has been elevated to All Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership which finds no parallels in the history of modern interstate relationship. What began as convergence of political interests has now expended to ever growing ties in all spheres of bilateral relationship.

One of the most important features of Pakistan-China friendship is continued salience of our strategic ties despite transformation in international political landscape. Pakistan and China have maintained closer coordination and communication at all levels to maximize their legitimate interest in the changing scenario to ensure peace and stability in the region and beyond.

Our two countries are mindful of realignment in international politics and resurgence of bloc politics which could strain international relations

and shift focus from pressing issues like post-covid global economic recovery, climate change and peace and development.

It is with this aim in mind that Pakistan has partnered with China in BRI and GDI initiatives for sustainable growth and prosperity of developing countries and take our region away from ideological dogmatism.

During the recent visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to China last month, Pakistani and Chinese leadership discussed in detail the global strategic situation, expressed satisfaction at commonality of their global vision and agreed to work together for an inclusive global system which is free of exploitation, uncertainty and injustice.

As strategic partner, and iron brother and major muslim country, Pakistan has always acted as a bridge between China and muslim world. It is heartening to note that due to Pakistan's efforts, China has been expanding its influence in the muslim countries and raising its development and economic profile in the region. China's renewed focus in the Middle East augurs well for Pakistan to enhance its strategic profile and reap benefits from immense economic possibilities therein.

Distinguished guests,

In today's world, economics and politics have become deeply intertwined. The healthy development of bilateral relations is now rooted in strong economic cooperation.

Realizing this fact, Pakistan and China have aggressively expanded their economic cooperation in recent years. After the advent of CPEC in 2013, Pakistan has been a major recipient of Chinese investment in energy, transport infrastructure and connectivity projects which have provided a strong foundation for Pakistan economic transformation.

After the operationalization of second phase of CPFTA in 2020, Pakistan- China bilateral trade has witnessed exponential growth and reached record levels in 2022. Our two countries are working on number of proposals to enhance Pakistan's exports to China which would bear fruits in coming years.

We are also making efforts to attract Chinese investment in Pakistan's energy, oil and gas, industrial, agricultural and technological sectors to continue this march of progress and prosperity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In shaping the contours of international relations, diplomacy, no doubt, plays a leading role. It is the force multiplier which galvanises the genesis of bilateral ties, builds upon the commonality of interests and oversees the gradual strengthening of international relations on sound footings.

But diplomacy could not perform such gigantic task alone.

In today's world, when international ties have become more complex, academic and research work has assumed a greater significance. The role of think tanks and academic circles to make a faithful record of bilateral ties, identify new areas of international cooperation and explore deftly the complex matrix between politics, economics and culture, can never be underestimated.

My dear Friends,

Pakistan and China would therefore always need the advice and input of their think tanks and academia to highlight strength of our bilateral ties, its significance for progress and prosperity of our nations, and indeed, its indispensability for peace and stability in our region.

I am confident that they would keep enlightening us with their guidance and wisdom.

I thank you all.