

HIGHER THAN KARAKORAM: SEVEN DECADES OF PAKISTAN-CHINA PARTNERSHIP

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Pakistan and China have been trusted partners since 1950 despite diverse beliefs, cultures, and social systems. Pakistan was the first Muslim state that recognised China at the UN. The Pak-China friendship has witnessed several strategic, diplomatic, and economic pacts, strengthening their relationship. Earlier, the nature of the relationship was attentive to diplomacy and military; however, both states started promoting economic relations that led to the free trade agreement and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). They share the history of internal instability instigated by nefarious non-state actors, which provides both nations an insight into each other's problems incited by internal and external elements. Historically, China has never wanted India to establish its hegemony in the region. Therefore, the resilient nature of both states in the face of adversities and shared interests makes them natural allies.

The book “Higher than Karakoram: Seven Decades of Pakistan-China Partnership” is a compilation of Pakistani and Chinese authors' viewpoints, which have contributed to countering the growing challenges and understanding the relationship for future generations. It's a unique tribute to Pak-China Friendship, marking the 70th anniversary of the Pak-China relationship. The authors have provided valuable insights into the Pak-China relationship's past, present, and future in multiple dimensions. It helps the reader to understand the different scopes and depth of bilateral relations of Pakistan and China.

The book provides a detailed description of historical events that have shaped the current dynamics of the relationship. Both countries face hegemonic designs in the region created by a staunch rival and neighbour, i.e., India. Its hegemonic behaviour poses a severe threat to regions' peace and tranquillity by creating a strategic imbalance.

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For regional stability, China and Pakistan share a vision of One Belt One Road, which connects the region, thus bringing peace and prosperity. This struggle of regional hegemony has initiated a power struggle between the states to contain one another. However, through CPEC, China has led the region to become potentially stable, vibrant, and prosperous by creating trade opportunities and captivating international players.

The book highlights that since the outbreak of COVID-19 has posed severe challenges to the world, such as rising inflation, unemployment, and poverty, it has also provided opportunities to China and South Asian nations in medicine, vaccine development, economic recovery, and improvement in public health capacity. However, the future development of China-South Asia relations may face challenges. The complicated inter-state relations and fragile security environment would significantly impact the cooperation between China and South Asia, including connectivity projects. The bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and China under CPEC provides directions for further development, whereas the fourth industrial revolution, driven by AI, has taken the world by storm. Therefore, integrating technology and the economy has become the strategy for prosperity. Pakistan and China have agreements to fill technology gaps through trade programs, increased efficiency, and research activities.

Due to its strategic location, Pakistan has tremendous economic growth potential, witnessing an upward trend. The agriculture and service industry dominates the economy, while industrialisation is relatively low. CPEC has provided an essential foundation to Pakistan's economy to overcome this issue, emphasizing industrial development, including energy, transportation, and infrastructure. There are myriad opportunities for future cooperation in technology and economy, such as agriculture technology, marine science, earth science, information and communication technology. Lastly, tourism and culture are the main drivers of economic growth. The prospect of tourism needs attention, as it can promote cultural exchange between the two friendly states.

The book also counts on Covid-19 and its socio-economic impacts on people's lives around the globe. The lack of attention from world health institutions has further deepened the public health crisis. Meanwhile, the role of China has been resilient in dealing with the pandemic and managed to supply medical teams, vaccines, and equipment. However, Health Silk Road is a broad idea aiming to promote health awareness and safety consciousness in developing states with weak health systems. In a nutshell, this book gives insight into the relationship between Pakistan and China. It covers a wide range of regional factors, such as the hegemonic behaviour of a neighbouring state, the unstable situation of Afghanistan and under-stress Iran, and their impacts on the relations of Pakistan and China.