



Examining Alliance through Walt's Balance of Power: Weak States Aligning with Strong Ones: A Case Study of China and Pakistan

Fakhr ul Munir

PhD Scholar, Department of Political Science, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan

*Email: fakhar.munir@awkum.edu.pk

Abstract: States function better when they work together rather than compete against each other. It is in the world affairs that major powers form alliances with weaker states to consolidate their interests in that specific region. The weaker or smaller states are also at the receiving end in terms of financial, social and political assistance but it is within the framework that the major powers form such alliances to sustain their hegemonic status (Kondapalli, 2004). According to Walt's logic, Pakistan's alliance with China occurred instead of the Soviet Union because of its apprehensions and strategic interests (Waltz & Fearon, 2012). Pakistan's ties with China have grown stronger after a long period of development in the 1960s. Beijing's attitude towards Kashmir softened over this time period. Graver was a part of a wave of positive change that occurred in India in the 1990s. Chinese-Pakistani entente cordiale "fundamental strategic purpose and component have not altered," according to a statement. This paper aims to (i) explore balance of power concept and then (ii) apply it on Chinese South Asian dominance model (iii) by exploring how alliance with small states like Pakistan is significant for China hegemonic model. The paper provides grounds for bridging together how strong states align with small states for their interests and how it benefits the small states as well.

Keywords: Balance of power, Alliance, Dominance model, Hegemonic model, National interest

1. Introduction

The concept of balance of power has been used to explain the actions of certain states in international affairs. According to Ken Waltz's, some believe the Balance of Power is a natural rule, while others opine it is a standard to avoid. According to scholars, it is a guide for politicians, while others consider it as an excuse for their imperialist goals over the globe. According to scholars the best way to keep a country and the globe safe is to maintain a balance of power in its affairs (Crittchett-Christoph et al., 2006). However, researchers opine that it has been responsible for downfall of states by igniting most conflicts among states. Balance of power occurs when "force is spread out across the system's states in such a way that no single state or existing coalition has an overwhelming or preponderant level of strength". When two states have similar interests, they are less likely to engage in conflict with one another, according to the balance of power hypothesis. In this paper Pakistan-China relations are viewed through Waltz's balance of power theory. In *Origins of Alliances*, Stephen Walt examined thirty-six different alliances formed over past 24 years in international affairs (Lee, 2014). For more than four decades, China and Pakistan have been close partners despite being fundamentally distinctive because of balance of power. This paper sheds light on how China has maintained cordial relations with Pakistan by providing assistance in social, political, economic and nuclear cooperation's.

This paper aims to (i) explore balance of power concept and then (ii) apply it on Chinese South Asian dominance model (iii) by exploring how alliance with small states like Pakistan is significant for China hegemonic model. The paper shall provide grounds for bridging together how strong states align with small states for their interests and how it benefits the small states as well.

2. Literature Review

According to Morgenthau, governments and state elites are doomed to failure. Instead, they're the ones who started it (Naz, 2018). Many factors contribute to the spontaneous occurrence of power balances without the necessity of human involvement. It is this sort of end in mind that states are constantly striving for. Waltz's position is very different from Morgenthau's. Both Morgenthau's and Waltz's ideas are in direct opposition to one another. Analyzing patterns of balance and bandwagoning is easiest and most effective with this method (Ali, and Sultana, 2021). He described it as follows: Because power is a method of attaining it, anarchy necessitates a sense of security. For this, states try to associate themselves with the weaker of the two alliances rather than as an end in itself.

In this scenario, instead of establishing checks and balances, a global hegemony emerges. A sense of equilibrium rather than a hasty embrace of a new idea prevent this from happening. States do not want to be the ones who make the most money under the current arrangement not only to keep their jobs, but also to keep their power inside the system (Halim & Syawfi, 2020). In Waltz's view, countries tend to be distrustful of one another, preferring relative profits over absolute ones, and collaborating less when there is anarchy present (Garver, 2014). In a result, states are less likely to join together in international affairs and more likely to seek a middle ground. States function better when they work together rather than compete against each other. It is in the world affairs that major powers form alliance with weaker states to consolidate their interests in that specific region. The weaker or smaller states are also at the receiving end in terms of financial, social and political assistance but it is within the framework that the major powers form such alliances to sustain their hegemonic status (Kondapalli, 2004).

South Asia has always been pivotal for global powers. The region of South Asia has a strong influence for China (Rimmer, 2017). One of the most important regions on the earth due to its strategic importance is South Asia. China's peaceful alliance with small states and its dominance over South Asian state have met with different degrees of success in the recent several years. As a result, the balance of power in South Asia is very competitive. This phenomenon has been dubbed as "China's String of Pearls." While China has built a network of ports in the Indian Ocean center, the international big powers consider it as a great threat to their hegemony. Using these ports, China has strengthened its naval presence in South Asia. This century has seen China become an active participant in South Asia's power dynamic rebalance strengthened (Kondapalli, 2004). China has been able to form alliances with small states of South Asia by expanding economic and commercial ties with other state (Suleri, 2019). All of it has been a human enormous. Gawadar, Hambantota, Chittagong, and Kyaukpyu, all ports under China's "string of pearls" strategy in the Indian Ocean, are all doing well in cargo traffic (Myanmar). The conflict in South Asia between India and China has captured and continues to capture the world's attention in recent years. South Asia is today more dominated by China than by India. Most of its neighbors have welcomed China by deepening its economic ties with the country to India's detriment. China may construct a ring around India by acquiring die's current dominance over the Indian Ocean port chain (Sahibzada, 2021). An added benefit is that China will soon be able to access Gawadar and Kyaukpyu through rail and pipeline, thanks to state assistance. China has made doing business in South Asia simpler for its enterprises due to its significant humanitarian support, with Pakistan being the most generous recipient (Halim & Syawfi, 2020). This alliance has benefitted both states; it has given economic sustainability to Pakistan while for China access to international market and exertion of influence in the region has been the major take away.

3. Examining China-Pakistan Relations through Balance of Power Lens

Pakistan-China relations can be viewed in three distinctive phrases i.e. (i) starting from the boundary agreement in 1963 to end of Chinese isolationism in 1973, (ii) from 1973 Soviet expansionism to cold war and (iii) from end of cold war till present case scenario. Two countries with starkly opposite political beliefs convened in Beijing in 1950: communist China and the United States ideology. Pakistan agreed with China's assessment of the situation (Suleri, 2019). Countries with dramatically different social systems can coexist peacefully despite the fact that they have quite different social systems. However, According to Syed, the two states began to split in 1957 (Naz, 2018). While security ties have changed significantly since the end of the war, there are still a few areas that haven't. The 1962 Sino-Indian border war pushed Pakistan and China closer together. When it comes to their shared beliefs, they've become more comfortable with each other. Friendship has come a long way since that time. President Liu Zetian of China's time as head of state is recalled (Asghar Khan, 2021). While visiting Pakistan in the 1960s, Shao-Chi conducted interviews with locals to learn more about the country's historical

ties to China in the fight for justice, as a sign of solidarity. They have a cause for being on the list although the two countries have radically opposite ideologies, China's entry into the South Asian balance of power matrix has helped Pakistan retain political and military stability.

According to Walt's logic, Pakistan alliance with China occurred instead of the Soviet Union because of its apprehensions and strategic interests (Waltz & Fearon, 2012). Pakistan's ties with China have grown stronger after a long period of development 1960s. Beijing's attitude towards Kashmir softened over this time period. Graver was a part of a wave of positive change that occurred in India in the 1990s. Chinese-Pakistani entente cordiale "fundamental strategic purpose and component have not altered," according to a statement.

There are diplomatic ties between China and Pakistan. The entente cordiale is gaining strength with each passing day, and China remains a member. Pakistan's most important international ally and business partner (Amna Ali, Prof. Dr. Samar Sultana, 2021). A large amount of nuclear, missile, and other technologies is held by Pakistan. Sanctions imposed on Iran by the United States were not felt by the country's Islamic Republic. Although it could have been applied to Pakistan, the United States chose not to use Presser Amendment. In spite of Pakistan's efforts to develop nuclear weapons, China continues to supply it under strong confidentiality agreements, nuclear technology (Nighat, 2021).

In recent years, Pakistan's relationship with China, which had been important in the past, has evolved. As a result of this shift, oriented techniques have entered the commercial arena. The name of the project is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and it will cost \$46 billion to build. A large investment of \$1 billion was made by China in 2015, which at the time was considered noteworthy (Amna Ali, Prof. Dr. Samar Sultana, 2021). The Port of Gwadar will be able to operate to its full potential thanks to the construction of the Corridor less than a third of the distance that oil tankers must cover. As of the time of this writing, a supply line from the Middle East to China is active. An ocean route that stretches approximately 10,000 kilometers from Dubai to Shanghai and ultimately to Urumqi is available. How it relates to Dubai's maritime and land routes -Gwadar-Urumqi. It is 3,600 miles long. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is China's Suez Canal, if you think about it. It was designed to help travelers save money and time on their travels. India is opposed to the corridor because it believes it will allow China to implement its "string of pearls" plan (Naz, 2018).

The concept of counterbalancing each other's strengths and weaknesses is at the heart of India's balance of power policy. Pakistan and China's creation and deepening of ties is a crucial stage in their relationship's development. Other countries have ties to the United States on a variety of levels, including political, military, and economic (Crits-Christoph et al., 2006). Indeed, at the moment, the United States is trying to push India to become a major military player on the world stage. A person or entity in the Indian Ocean that China does not recognize is a source of concern for the country. The A.K. Antony, the former Indian defense minister, echoed the same sentiment in 2009. The author claims that "military ties between China and Pakistan are becoming stronger. "Despite this, the general public continues to be concerned about it. At all times, we must be ready to battle our actions and words are influenced by China's military power correspondingly (Amna Ali, Prof. Dr. Samar Sultana, 2021)." Therefore, it is significant to analyze that Pakistan-China alliance is not shaping balance of power within the region but also globally. It is due to that US, an arch rival of China, came into foreplay by signing strategic alliances with India, which has animosity with Pakistan. This alliance substantiates Waltz balance of power in his alliance theory on how strong states operate through proxies.

4. Exploring Balance of Power and Balance of threat in South Asia: Quasi Alliance of US-India vs Sino-Pakistan alliance

The Balancer Function is widely used in China to keep everything in check. For China to counterbalance these tensions, which is an enemy of India and a staunch ally of Pakistan, it must (Fangyin, 2016). Because China wants to limit India's regional strength, the Chinese state believes it is in its best interest to keep the Indian army focused on Pakistan rather than the Chinese frontier. China is pursuing two more essential objectives in its alliance with Pakistan. Starting with a trade and energy corridor linking the Gulf to Africa, it hopes to facilitate trade and energy supply. Secondly, the Uighur separatist movement must be put out of its misery (Amna Ali, Prof. Dr. Samar Sultana, 2021). A long-standing rivalry between Pakistan and India means that Pakistan has a significant military presence and actively supports Islamic militants in the region fighting against India.

Despite China's increasing support for Pakistan, the animosity between Pakistan and India originates from their shared history, not from China. As a result of China's supply of nuclear technology and military weapons to Pakistan and India, tensions between the two states have risen (Halim & Syawfi, 2020). Because China wants to compete with both India and the United States in the geopolitical arena of the world, it sends military aid to

Pakistan. The military might of Pakistan benefits from China's penchant for close cooperation with the country's armed forces. The Uroosa Ishfaq, Kashif Ashfaq, and Palwasha Behram communities were also founded due to this. According to the Global Regional Review (GRR), security is examined both internally and internationally for Pakistan (Amna Ali, Prof. Dr. Samar Sultana, 2021). China's promise to supply Pakistan with two new nuclear reactors in 2010 shows that the country's strategic support is being used to counter the United States' alliance with India.

The "US-India Civil Nuclear Agreement" is the reason for this. When Pakistan and India resumed their composite conversations in 2011 and Pakistan was deemed India's most preferred foreign policy partner, relations between the two states began to improve. Before China is willing to ease tensions between India and Pakistan, it needs to consider a number of factors (Fangyin, 2016). Pakistan, a third-world country, is amidst a severe economic crisis. Many problems are plaguing the country, including inflation and unemployment and stagnant growth and a decline in foreign direct investment (FDI). Due to China's involvement in Pakistan's economy and substantial investments, trade between the two states has grown. In Pakistan, Chinese investment is becoming increasingly important. However, it is unclear whether it is beneficial or damaging to its growth and job creation and whether it decreases international pressure for reform and increases local worries.

The Gawadar port in Baluchistan, for example, is one of the most contentious investments made by China in the region, which is opposed by a significant number of people (Amna Ali, Prof. Dr. Samar Sultana, 2021). Rather than helping China achieve its strategic goals, it has increased tensions with India and infuriated the region's people (Sinha, 2004). To execute a vast project sponsored solely by the Chinese state, China-based contractors and procurement organizations were brought in. As a result, the neighboring community sees a slight advantage from the project. India was afraid that China was moving closer towards the Indian Ocean, which irritated Baluchi people and made Indians wary (Halim & Syawfi, 2020).

China and Pakistan inked a strategic cooperation agreement for the following reasons: There are significant differences between Pakistan's Deal and India's civil nuclear agreement. The civil nuclear accord between India and the US has upset the quasi-balance of power between India and Pakistan (Fangyin, 2016). To combat the Indo-US strategic alliance, China collaborates with Pakistan to maintain a healthy balance of power in the South Asian area, including India and Pakistan, as part of strategic cooperation. Throughout history, wars and warlike situations have occurred when the balance of power has been disrupted or when the shadow of war has been exceptionally severe (Halim & Syawfi, 2020). It would be far easier to prevent a nuclear war if China and Pakistan worked together on a comprehensive strategy.

Realists believe that "the most effective method of checking power is to fight back with a different technique from the one being utilized." "When confronted with other largest-developing state, even the most powerful state do not feel secure (Sinha, 2004). Their safety is a concern for them. According to the balance of power theory, powerful state would amass and deploy enough military forces to keep the most powerful from becoming too powerful. The core principle of the theory has been presented in various ways over the years, but it is always the same: Attempts to keep the system from being dominated by a single power are made by states. The theory holds that when a state has more power than its people, those people try to counterbalance that imbalance to keep a future threat at bay (Crits-Christoph et al., 2006).

The Karakoram motorway, a highly controversial project, is also being worked on by Chinese engineers. China's Xinjiang province and Pakistan are connected by this route (and includes plans for a train link) (Amna Ali, Prof. Dr. Samar Sultana, 2021). The fact that China could benefit from new markets and energy sources is also a source of concern in India. Gilgit Baltistan, which is part of the disputed Kashmir area and consequently a source of concern, serves as a gateway for both of these transportation routes (Sinha, 2004). India will probably be used as a conduit for China's trade due to this. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) poses a significant threat to India, which can penetrate the Indian Ocean boundary.

Pakistan's national security faced threats due to the agreement between India and the United States on civil nuclear cooperation (Suleri, 2019). This was true before creating nuclear weapons in South Asia, but it was no longer the case after they were constructed. To compound matters, India was ultimately successful in 1971 at dividing Pakistan, which has profoundly affected Pakistani strategic planning ever since. Since that time, India has posed a severe security threat to Pakistan's sovereignty. In an anarchic global system based on the balance of power theory, states want to gain more power to maintain their independence (Amna Ali, Prof. Dr. Samar Sultana, 2021).

States may be obliged to bow to powerful states in an anarchical society if they lack adequate strength to maintain their security and prosperity (Sherwani, 1980). Because power is needed to keep people safe and

prevent them from injuring themselves, anarchy serves as a driving force for states. Because of power struggles, conflicts between states are inevitable in international relations. Minor powers can't accomplish it independently because they can't defend themselves. "Internal balancing," in which they build up armaments to counteract the growing military threat from a larger country, is a possible strategy. As a result, according to the Pakistani Foreign Ministry, the two state are strengthening their strategic collaboration which shall not only strengthen them individually but shall be a silver lining for Pakistan to be a major ally for the future hegemon of the world (Sinha, 2004).

5. Conclusion

According to this analysis, China's economic relations with Pakistan appear to be of varying quality. Even while Pakistan desperately needs Chinese investment to grow its economy, China also needs Pakistan for fulfillment of its hegemonic model. This dependency of one state over another for its strategic fulfillment signifies the balance of power phenomenon presented by Waltz. States big or small at the end of the form alliances as no state can sustain on its own. It requires friendly status states, regional and global blocs as neutrality in international affairs is ominous. Therefore, it is the state big or small that need to prioritize its national interests and sovereignty while forming alliance.

References

- Amna Ali, Prof. Dr. Samar Sultana. (2021). CHINA – Pakistan Economic Corridor: Challenges and Opportunities for Pakistan.. *Pakistan Journal Of International Affairs*, 1(2), 234-248.
- Crits-Christoph, P., Gibbons, M., & Hearon, B. (2006). Does the alliance cause good outcome? Recommendations for future research on the alliance. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 43(3), 280-285. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-3204.43.3.280>
- Fangyin, Z. (2016). The U.S. Alliance System in Asia: A Chinese Perspective. *Asian Politics & Policy*, 8(1), 207-218. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.12231>
- Halim, V., & Syawfi, I. (2020). The Three Big Stages of the Reconceptualization of Japanese Pacifism: How Alliance Dilemma with the United States Plays a Major Role in Japan. *Jurnal Ilmiah Hubungan Internasional*, 16(1), 99-125. <https://doi.org/10.26593/jihi.v16i1.3615.99-125>
- Kondapalli, S. (2004). China and South Asia. *International Studies*, 41(4), 433-435. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002088170404100408>
- Lee, D. (2014). Alliance Restraint in the Sino-North Korean Alliance: Theory and Practice. *Journal Of International Politics*, 19(1), 5. <https://doi.org/10.18031/jip.2014.04.19.1.5>
- Naz, A. (2018). China-pakistan Relations and Regional Development in the Context of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). *Journal Of Business And Social Review In Emerging Economies*, 4(2), 163-172. <https://doi.org/10.26710/jbsee.v4i2.497>
- Nighat Firdous , Junaid Ahmed Zia , Muhammad Asghar Khan. (2021). FUTURE PROSPECTS OF PAKISTAN CHINA RELATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF CHINA-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (CPEC). *Pakistan Journal Of International Affairs*, 4(4), 123-155. <https://doi.org/10.52337/pjia.v4i4.330>
- Rimmer, M. (2017). The Alliance of Small Island States: Intellectual Property, Cultural Heritage, and Climate Change. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 23(II), 134-182. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2827478>
- Sahibzada, M. (2021). INFLUENCE AND CONTRIBUTION OF CHINA IN SOUTH ASIA. *Asia-Pacific - Annual Research Journal Of Far East & South East Asia*, 38, 221-236. <https://doi.org/10.47781/asia-pacific.vol38.iss0.1380>
- Sherwani, L. (1980). *Pakistan, China, and America* (pp. 47-66). Council for Pakistan Studies.
- Sinha, S. (2004). The Strategic Triangle: India- China -Pakistan. *China Report*, 40(2), 221-225. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000944550404000212>
- Suleri, A. (2019). *Shared Future under CPEC* (1st ed., pp. 34-79). Sustainable Development Policy Institute.
- Waltz, K., & Fearon, J. (2012). A Conversation with Kenneth Waltz. *Annual Review Of Political Science*, 15(1), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-020511-174136>