



## RESEARCH PAPER

### Pakistan-China Partnership to Countering Terrorism: Issues and Challenges

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#### ABSTRACT

The partnership of Pakistan and China in combating terrorism offers many benefits, but the challenges are immense. This study, therefore, attempts to probe the dynamics of such a relationship, especially in terms of the kinds of collaborative efforts both nations have invoked as regards strategies and initiatives in response to terrorism. It also looks at the historical context of this particular collaboration-that is, how it came into being and which important events and agreements have determined the nature of partnership in this area-and analyzes how well the two countries have pursued joint counter terrorism measures while identifying shortfalls. Historically, the relationship between Pakistan and China has evolved a strategic partnership through multifaceted cooperation. China and Pakistan have strengthened their teamwork to fight terrorism over the last few decades. In the 1980s and 1990s, they didn't work together much, but now they have a strong partnership that covers many areas. Both countries worry about the same security issues groups that want to break away or cause trouble in their lands. After the 9/11 attacks, they started working together even more. Big projects like CPEC have made it even more important for them to join forces to stop terrorism and keep the area safe. The areas in which this partnership extends include military cooperation, intelligence sharing, and diplomatic channels of coordination. This paper particularly highlighted areas of cooperation between Pakistan and China to address their growing concerns about terrorism.

**KEYWORDS** China, Counter Terrorism, Extremism, Mutual Cooperation, Pakistan

#### Introduction

Mutual cooperation, strategic interests and diplomatic friendship brings the historical relationship Pakistan shares with China to a real foundation. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Pakistan was one of the early few nations to recognize the country. Diplomatic ties between the two countries were formalised in 1951. With the passage of time, Pakistan and China have developed a very strong military and strategic bond. China has been a leading supplier of military hardware to Pakistan including fighter aircraft, submarines and missile technology. Sometimes, the two countries hold joint military exercises for improving interoperability and defense cooperation (Hameed, 2017).

Exist both of you in the challenges regarding the extremist groups of such type operating in regions with links to separatist movements in Xinjiang province like East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM). In the last few decades, the economic collaboration between Pakistan and China is increasing fast. Through a network of highways, railways and pipelines, CPEC, a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative in China, will eventually connect Gwadar port in Pakistan with today's Xinjiang region of China. CPEC is expected to bring in huge investment, infrastructure development, and economic opportunities to the

country. China has consistently supported Pakistan in all international forums, including in the United Nations Security Council, especially on Kashmir and Afghanistan-related issues. Counter-terrorism cooperation has been on the borderlands (Cunningham, 2012).

Both countries have had their own share of security concerns from terrorist organizations such as the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other militias. China expressed concern over the possible spillover of terrorism from Pakistani territory into its territory. Counter-terrorism operations and intelligence sharing were held between Pakistan and China. Besides, China has trained and equipped Pakistan for counter-terrorism. Pakistan and China have a historical relationship with the political and military bear in addition to the financial dimension. The cooperation between the two countries is within all possible fronts, which include the counter-terrorism front to narrow down the common threats before both nations. This would very difficult for both nations in future preparedness and enhancing capabilities to meet terrorism threats.

### **Literature Review**

The aspects concerning Pakistan that have surfaced as a result of 9/11 attacks almost reflected into all the images. Sino-Pak relations have been deep-rooted since long, and terrorism has largely driven them. The wave of terrorism was fierce and virulent against Pakistan, and like this, China was also anxious about this western border, the dividing province of Xinjiang from the tumultuous region. Beijing also worried about arms protection with many countries, especially Pakistan. Thus on these parameters, China and Pakistan could further their collaboration against terrorism and make it stronger. The goal of the present study is to evaluate the counterterrorism relation of China with Pakistan regarding its challenges and the possibilities which this cooperation may hold. Consequently, results indicate that even greater effective counterterrorism efforts between China and Pakistan should reduce terrorist activity further, potentially along the way yielding geopolitical, economic, and security advantage (Ahmad & Hashmi, 2024).

Pakistani political leaders were quoting the ties of Pakistan with China, at that time when the US raided the compound of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan in May 2011. This was used as a tool to promote Beijing as an alternative partner to Washington. However, concerns of China regarding the future stability of Pakistan will, in all likelihood, limit the extent of its support to that country in times of economic difficulties. Although China is keen on strong security links with Pakistan, it does not have a very substantial economy accord between the two countries, and therefore, it is unrealistic for the links of China to substitute those of the US. Instead of wringing United States hands over Chinese influence in a country, the United States should work with Beijing to promote a more stable, rich Pakistan-an arrangement that would be beneficial to all concerned (Curtis & Scissors, 2012).

The report looks at the participation of Pakistan in and costs of the global War on Terror. This study aims at analyzing the different effects, both positive and negative, suffered by Pakistan as one of the front-line allied countries in the war against terrorism. The context highlights the challenges and complications encumbering such protracted strife while giving the overall historical arena of Pakistan in partnership with the United States as well as its role in combating terrorism. methodology requisition comprised systematic analysis of existing literature and publications, government reports. Findings of the study make policy prescription for dealing with the aftermath of the conflict and issues of protracted stability, counterterrorism strategy improvement, and international cooperation against similar future occurrences (Rashid et al., 2023).

Counter-terrorism cooperation is probably the most significant aspect of the bilateral security partnership between China and Pakistan. It began with the identification by China of the threat that Uygur separatism posed to China, but now includes the TTP and Baloch extremists who target Chinese residents in Pakistan as well as CPEC projects. However, there have been two changes in the dynamics of counter-terrorism cooperation due to Beijing's

increasing economic clout in Pakistan with the BRI and US withdrawal from Afghanistan (Iqbal et al., 2024).

Foundations of strategic partnership between China and Pakistan, multi-faceted bilateral cooperation in various areas. This cooperation, in response to new challenges and strategic needs, has been developing and widening in the last 60 years in new fields necessary for peace and security in the region and for development and prosperity of both countries. It also includes counter terrorism, with both having collaborated for more than ten years in this area. By focusing on joint efforts concerning terrorism, separatism, and extremism, both countries seek to reinforce their close cooperation on the immediate and long-term fronts. Recently, President Asif Ali Zardari visited Xinjiang province of China and made pledges to deepen relations with China in the fight against terrorism (Khan, 2012).

Pakistan and China have very good working relationships on all levels including local, regional and global. The democratic transition in Pakistan, that took off in 2008, also brought several opportunities and problems. Throughout the study period, there was a significant increase and expansion of Pakistan's relations with China in various fields, such as the political, economic, military and cultural areas. Major issues faced by the two nations included terrorism, regional militancy and power play, political instability in Pakistan, counterweight tactics and propaganda as well the targeting of Chinese and their interests in Pakistan by the US and India (Irfan & Khan, 2021).

President Xi Jinping visit the country in April 2015, he also hailed Pakistan's genuine struggle against terrorism. His remarks unambiguously committed to furthering support on the front of increasing security and prosperity in the region. The very fact underlines that there is a global dimension to terrorism and that China itself is struggling with extremism, especially in its Xinjiang province. Accusations directed against the U.S., Pakistan, and Afghanistan are leveled as if all three are partly involved in the formulation of the Taliban; they subtly unravel the multifaceted geopolitics that direct the Chinese approach to counterterrorism (Haq & Khan, 2011).

## **Material and Methods**

This study employs qualitative and descriptive methodologies to analyze collaborative measures taken by China and Pakistan toward eradicating terrorism while drawing data from various credible sources. Qualitative method bring clearer illumination on the various intricacies involved in their collaborations. On broad evidence, therefore, it would serve to ensure this study contributes greatly to understanding this strategic partnership.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Recognition and Establishment of Diplomatic Relations**

China-Pakistan established the groundwork for their long-lasting relationship, one of the most intimate and vital alliances in the planet. After its formation in 1949, Pakistan was one of the first nations to acknowledge the People's Republic of China, therefore deviating from Taiwan's prior acceptance. Formal diplomatic connection between Pakistan and China were stipulated on May 21, 1951, starting a friendship that has lasted for years. Early diplomatic links between China and Pakistan were based on shared ideals and shared needs. Both nations were where new independent countries were claiming their sovereignty and independence on the world scene.

In terms of terrorism specifically, diplomatic ties in this historical relationship between Pakistan and China have been a basis for their strategic cooperation; both countries have invariably supported one another on terrorism-related matters such as at the United Nations in various world venues. As it is known, Pakistan regards the Kashmir conflict with India as integral to its national security, China has backed Pakistan's position on such issues. Pakistan has also endorsed China's views on delicate matters including Taiwan and Tibet. Such

helps come from appreciating Pakistan's efforts to eradicate terrorist organizations running within its territory and also from understanding its security concerns. Pakistan has praised China's assistance in dealing with common security problems. China and Pakistan work to bring local players together in achieving cooperation in counter-terrorism activities, which includes participation in multilateral conferences concerning regional security and stability as well as diplomatic contacts with neighboring countries. Through working with local players, Pakistan and China intend to define consensus and group response to terrorism. The level of their strategic cooperation and their common pledge to tackling security issues in the area is portrayed by diplomatic support of terrorism between Pakistan and China. Thus, both nations use diplomatic means to strengthen partnership and together push for peace and stability.

### **Counter Terrorism Cooperation**

Counter-terrorism cooperation between Pakistan and China has been a vital. It has been a true reflection of their historical relationship, especially with commitment to countering terrorism and extremism. Pakistan and China share intelligence about terrorism as well as terrorist networks and threats. In some cases, both countries understand and respond better to security challenges that emanate specifically from volatile border regions. Conducted joint military exercises centered on counter terrorism operations would inter-operate between their armed forces in handling terrorist threats. Pakistan and China coordinate the measures of their shared border security in order to restrict infiltration by terrorists and the smuggling of arms as well as illicit goods. Such efforts would also include border patrols, surveillance, and intelligence-sharing mechanisms to monitor as well as disrupt activities related to terrorism. China provides assistance to Pakistan in building its counter terrorism capabilities, including training for law enforcement personnel, provision of equipment and technology, and support for infrastructure development. The assistance strengthens Pakistan's ability to battle against terrorism inside its boundaries as well as contributing towards security for the region. China diplomatically supports Pakistan in its fight against terrorism and all that concerns it by advancing Pakistan's cause over international platforms such as the United Nations. This diplomatic backing strengthens Pakistan's position and reinforces its counter terrorism efforts.

Still, regional stability was of interest to both nations and they both risked internal separatism. The most significant internal security threat for China during this era was the separatist movements, especially in Xinjiang and Tibet. Although there was no direct Pakistan cooperation on counter-terrorism at this time, the two nations still agreed in wishing to maintain internal steadiness and counter outside interference. In the 1980s, Pakistan became a central player in the U.S.-led efforts to resist Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Later, several of the militant groups working in Afghanistan including those that would one day be a Taliban component and others that would be expelled would become a standard security concern for both China and Pakistan.

Especially in reaction to growing security threats, the 1990s started more formalized counterterrorism cooperation between Pakistan and China. China started to experience growing dissatisfaction in its Xinjiang province, where the mostly Muslim Uyghurs live. Separately from groups like the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), others grew in power. China viewed these organizations as terrorists backed or sheltered by militant organizations in nearby territories including Afghanistan and Pakistan. In trying to stop the actions of these organizations, China asked Pakistan for help.

Pakistani society itself confronted growing intolerance and violence primarily after Afghan war. Numerous insurgent groups inside Pakistan set up links with transnational jihadist groups including Al-Qaeda, which amassed fused energies of Pakistan towards aggressive counter-terrorism action. So noting the requirement of institutionalizing mechanisms against extremism, intoxication, and terrorism, both the countries started working with a view to developing stronger security discourse. One major avenue opened for cooperation was on intelligence and assistance provided by Pakistan against Uyghur separatists.

The events of September 2001 brought about major changes in the security environment of China and Pakistan, and prompted even closer antiterrorism cooperation between them. After the September 11 attacks, Pakistan became a key ally of the United States in the international struggle against terrorism, especially in Afghanistan-this pitted it directly against many militant organizations, some of which had links to separatist movements within China. Consequently, it drove China into closer engagement with Pakistan on counter-terrorism efforts. China and Pakistan kept increasing their cooperation in intelligence sharing, especially regarding Uyghur separatists and other transnational terrorist groups. Pakistani authorities focused on groups such as the ETIM that were reportedly using Pakistan as a launch pad for operations against China. Such nationals of China engaged in doing work in Pakistan were particularly vulnerable when it came to infrastructure initiatives such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). While specifically neutral in the U.S.-launched war on terror, China was, however, increasing its counter-terrorism cooperation with Pakistan. Beijing has indeed endorsed Pakistan's principles of counter-terrorism and pointed towards the necessity of a more collective guideline in dealing with the underlying causes of radicalism. Both China and Pakistan are members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a regional security body designed as a mechanism for fighting separatism, extremism, and terrorism under a regional platform. Now, both China and Pakistan have yet another venue to synchronize their anti-terrorism efforts in Central Asia and work against ETIM and other transnational terrorist organizations. Since the inception of CPEC in 2013 and, most notably, the strategic infrastructure project connecting Gwadar Port in Pakistan with China's Xinjiang region, security cooperation has become far more important. The corridor has now become the epicenter of cooperation as both countries step up safety measures to protect Chinese nationals and properties related to its development. Thousands of Pakistani security forces have been deployed to guard the infrastructure; China has provided Pakistan counterterrorism support through technology, training, and technology.

Increasingly, China and Pakistan draw closer in their bilateral counterterrorism efforts. Interestingly, China's main concern is about Uyghur separatism, particularly in the wake of numerous attacks in Xinjiang. However, there is still much that depends on Pakistan stopping bands that function from its territory for countering these threats. Security is, thus, a very important concern for CPEC as it keeps growing. Intelligence-sharing and counter-terrorism activities have heightened both countries' engagement to fight against the threats posed by such organizations as the Pakistani Taliban (TTP), Baloch separatists, and so many more, while efforts by authority continue to ensure the safety of monuments related to CPEC. Joint counter-terrorism military exercises in the context of both countries have been organized in recent years, followed by conduction of training courses to enhance operational coordination. Emphasis has been laid on protection of critical systems, such as urban warfare and counterinsurgency.

Regional projects combating extremism and terrorism enjoy strong patronage from Pakistan and China. Both countries, for instance, are part of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which pulls upon partnerships with the other members states to establish common security solutions. The cooperation on fighting terrorism by Pakistan and China should indicate their mutual commitment to regional stability and safety. With the collaborative wealth opportunity of their respective assets, both countries will develop their collaboration, strengthen counterterrorism efforts and promote peace in the larger South Asian and Central Asian regions. Regional initiatives are cooperative frameworks or treaties between countries in a specified location for the resolution of common problems, fostering of economic development, and promotion of integration in a given geography-the eight South Asian countries making up SAARC are: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Regional cooperation and development are to be promoted by SAARC through projects in different sectors: trade, economic integration, and cultural exchange. ASEAN is a regional grouping made up of the ten Southeast Asian nations: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Among others, the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) were designed to accelerate the regional economic integration, stability, and peace among members including China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan,

and Uzbekistan, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is an economic, political, and security group from Europe with eight member countries. The SCO seeks to improve collaboration on border security, counterterrorism, and regional stability. CAREC is a collaboration of eleven nations and development partners aimed at fostering economic growth and development in Central Asia. The Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) provides support. Enhancing connectivity and encouraging regional integration, it concentrates on activities related to trade facilitation, energy, and economic policy reform to transport. Encouragement of collaboration, improvement of the ability, and economic advancement within their own areas all depend in great part from these regional projects. Regional integration and cooperation enable nations to tackle common issues, establish trust, and realize reciprocal benefits by collaborating on standard problems and opportunities.

## **Conclusion**

However, terrorism cooperation between Pakistan and China is fraught with possibilities and challenges. It is an opportunity and a challenge in equilibrating the regional security dynamics with the future character of terrorism. The historical implications of two countries' ties, built on trust and mutual interests complemented by strategic cooperation, are expected to deepen further bilateral collaboration on issues addressing common security challenges in counter-terrorism.

Besides these, other impediments to effective counterterrorism cooperation include cross-border terrorism, extremist ideologies, regional conflicts, and geopolitical rivalries. There is the issue of democratic principles and civil liberties in relation to counter-terrorism since accountability, transparency, and human rights also need to be considered. Notwithstanding these challenges, the Pak-China anti-terrorism partnership remains pivotal for regional stability, bolstering security cooperation, and spurring economic growth. Through efficient use of their respective strengths, resources, and expertise, the countries may strengthen intelligence-sharing mechanisms, strengthen border security and interrupt terrorist networks, thus advancing peace and stability in the region.

## **Recommendations**

The partnership between Pakistan and China has turned out to be aimed at developing over the years, and one of the prime aspects of bilateral relations-focuses on issues related to terrorism. There are security issues common to both countries, while counter-terrorism measures are further errands of disbursement from neighboring states. Therefore, here are some suggestions

### **Intelligence Sharing and Coordination**

Establish joint counter-terror intelligence sharing mechanism between Pakistan and China that works on real time basis on terrorist activities, extremist networks and cross border threats. Establish a secure platform where they can share intelligence on terrorist groups and their operations. Such periodic joint intelligence meetings can be held to review evolving threats.

### **Joint Counter-terrorism Operations**

Conduct joint operations and exercises to counter terrorist groups in areas where both countries have security interests, along the border. They may lead to the formation of special units or task forces to counter terrorist cells that cross the Pakistan-China border.

### **Training and Capacity Building**

Establish joint training programs for law enforcement and military personnel of both countries on modern counter-terrorism strategies, counter-extremism and border security

management. Exchange through specific workshops, conferences and eft training exercises for the two countries to improve their evolving capabilities to address the threat.

### **Counter Terrorism Financing**

Adopt coordinated initiatives in fighting the financial networks behind terrorism through takedown activities against money laundering, within which the exchange of funds by terrorist organizations to both countries is difficult. Strengthening collaborative financial institutions with law enforcement agencies in tracking down and blocking terrorist financing channels.

### **Team Up to Boost Border Area Growth**

Join forces to improve life in areas hit by terrorism in Pakistan's Balochistan and China's Xinjiang. This aims to tackle what leads people to extremism. Launch shared projects in education, health, roads, and jobs to make terrorist groups less appealing.

### **Strengthen Regional Security Teams**

Support the cooperative efforts against terrorism by Pakistan and China to intensify the involvement of regional bodies like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in their efforts. This could be in terms of encouraging joint initiatives towards stiffer anti-terror regulations and common programs toward anti-terror and transnational crime actions.

### **Cooperation on Cyber Safety**

Both countries have to go jointly for cyber safety and stop online radicalization because the web would be the most significant source through which terrorists could acquire recruits and propagate messages. Establish a joint cyber team to find, watch, and fight the causes of extreme content online.

### **Joint Public Awareness Campaigns**

Joint campaigns to counter radical thoughts to create a common peace in both lands. TV, radio, and social media will be utilized to communicate these messages of unity and peace, which will undermine the attractiveness of the ideas posed by terrorist groups.

### **Improvement of Border Management Security Steps**

Both the nations should invest in such technologies, which are capable enough to provide sophisticated border security and prevent the movements of terrorists and weapons across international boundaries. Their movements could be prevented partly through the laser beam, satellite-based monitoring, and sonar systems at so-called vital border points to trace and prevent infiltration by terrorists.

### **Promoting Regional Dialogue on Counter-terrorism**

Encourage a dialogue between Pakistan, China, and other regional powers such as Afghanistan, Central Asian countries, and Russia to gain a collective effort in the region toward counter-terrorism. Organize regional summits and multilateral discussions to address the issues in an integrated manner, bringing in all relevant stakeholders.

These recommendations would make a good difference for Pakistan and China to deepen their joint effort against terrorism and bring in larger regional stability and security.



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