**Real friend and benefactor**

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Pakistan and China signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the construction of a 1200 MW Chashma-5 nuclear power project worth $ 4.8 billion on 20th June marking the revival of this stalled venture which was conceived in 2017-18 but put on the back burner by the PTI regime. Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif speaking on the occasion revealed that Keeping in view higher international inflation, the project cost would have been much higher than that determined in 2017-18 but the Chinese government not only agreed to execute the project at the same cost but also gave a discount of around Rs30 billion. It is a great friendly gesture indeed. Not only that, but China has also stood by Pakistan at a difficult time when it is facing an impasse with IMF and its economy is in pretty bad shape. China has renewed commercial and sovereign loans during the last few months. It has also indicated building a rail link between Kashghar and Gwadar for $ 58 billion.

Chinese foreign minister who visited Pakistan for tri-lateral talks involving Pakistan China and Afghanistan while addressing a joint presser with his Pakistani counterpart in the context of bilateral relations between the two countries expressed firm support for Pakistan’s sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity as well as its unity, stability and economic prosperity and said that China would as always work with Pakistan through the platform of CPEC, align development strategies of both countries and share China’s development opportunities and build an even closer China-Pakistan Community with a shared future.

[Elton John’s Glastonbury triumph attracts 7.3 million TV viewers](https://www.nation.com.pk/27-Jun-2023/elton-john-s-glastonbury-triumph-attracts-7-3-million-tv-viewers)

It may be recalled that earlier China had also provided $2 billion to tide over the financial crisis that Pakistan faced. Both leaders also acknowledged the need for a mass-transit project in Karachi and agreed to finalize all formalities for the early launch of the Karachi Circular Railway. China has played a significant role in the economic progress of Pakistan. The construction of the KKH Highway, the Heavy Mechanical Complex at Taxila, Pakistan Aeronautical Complex (PAC) and Chashma Nuclear Plants are the monuments of the ever-spiking relationship. In the backdrop of the US-India deal for the transfer of civilian nuclear technology which Pakistan regarded as a discriminatory act, China exhibited the strength of friendship between the two countries by agreeing to help Pakistan in building Chashma IV and V. It has also been extending support to Pakistan regarding its stance for criteria-based admittance of new members to the prestigious Nuclear Suppliers Group. It also helped in saving Pakistan from being pushed into the blacklist by FATF.

[Mitsotakis’s conservatives clinch landslide Greece election win](https://www.nation.com.pk/27-Jun-2023/mitsotakis-s-conservatives-clinch-landslide-greece-election-win)

Pakistan and China also have very strong defence ties. In early March 2017 Chinese-built Low to Medium altitude Air Defence System was inducted into the air defence system of the Pakistan Army that would considerably enhance its response capability to current and emerging threats as the Chinese Mobile Air Defence system is capable of tracking and destroying a variety of aerial targets at longer ranges flying at low and medium altitudes. The co-production of the JF-17 Thunder aircraft at PAC is yet another milestone in defence relations between the two countries. China fully understands the challenges being faced by Pakistan, its geo-political relevance, and its contributions towards regional peace and stability and has repeatedly assured full-spectrum support for Pakistan in grappling with those challenges. It has always appreciated Pakistan’s efforts to deal with the phenomenon of terrorism urging the world as well to acknowledge those achievements. CPEC, a flagship project of BRI has undoubtedly added eternity to the infallible relations between the two states and their people. By becoming part of the CPEC, Pakistan is poised not only to make up for the lost opportunities but also to become an economic powerhouse within the next two decades. Apart from radically changing the dynamics of regional connectivity and trade, it is going to act as a catalyst in the process of Pakistan’s transition from an agricultural economy to an industrial economy. CPEC is a mix of infrastructure projects, energy-producing units and industrial zones along the corridor routes. The development of infrastructure under the CPEC will lay a firm foundation for the industrialization of Pakistan. The CPEC has been acknowledged as a perfect recipe for lifting the economic profile of the countries which are part of the initiative worldwide. Even the UN has recognized its economic potential and the collateral outcome of promoting peace through economic interdependence. CPEC is a win-win initiative for China, Pakistan and the entire region. China has also shown remarkable flexibility by expanding the scope of CPEC to the social sectors earlier, particularly alleviation of poverty and made commitments to rectify the trade imbalance between the two countries by taking steps to enhance Pakistani exports to China, proving her credentials as a time-tested friend of Pakistan. Only a real friend and benefactor could do what China has done for Pakistan. Pakistan’s economic and security interests are inextricably linked to the region it belongs to. Therefore, its focus on recalibrating relations with the countries of the region and taking its relations with China to a higher trajectory is the right thing to do without getting involved in dynamics of the global politics and rivalry between the US and China.