

# **The Status and Influence of Bi-lateral Exchanges between Xinjiang and Pakistan**

**Li Jingfeng<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>School of History and Culture, Sichuan University, Chengdu, 610000, China

**Keywords:** Xinjiang; Pakistan; CPEC; economy

**Abstract:** This paper explores the three aspects of the history, the status quo, and influence of the opening of China's Xinjiang to Pakistan, and conducts historical and theoretical reflections on the contemporary history and future development of China's Xinjiang and Pakistan's bi-lateral contacts. At the same time, some countermeasures are taken based on the impact on southern Xinjiang. The paper believes that when Xinjiang in China is opened to Pakistan, the big country's gaming area can be bypassed and bilateral cooperation is used to open up a way to sea from western China. On the other hand, the opening can consolidate the regional security of Western China, and build "an important security barrier in the northwest", which not only expands new developments and space, but also avoids direct conflicts with other countries.

## **1. Introduction**

As a hub for the communication between East and West, Xinjiang is "a place where four civilizations converge." Xinjiang is an important trade route for the ancient Silk Road, and it is also the gateway between China and Pakistan. The "Gemstone Road" that appeared around 1000-2000 BC has witnessed the origin of trade in the region. The Pakistan's Baltistan region of Pakistan during the Tang Dynasty is closely related to China's Xinjiang. The first truck transport fleet from Kashgar in November 2016 arrived in Gwadar, marking the pioneering connection between the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

## **2. The Practical Basis of Xinjiang's Contact and Opening to Pakistan**

Xinjiang's in history is an important channel to South Asia. Its geographical location and transportation advantages for Pakistan are unique. Xinjiang should not only become an important gateway and base for China's openness to Pakistan, but also become a channel for other provinces and regions to participate in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

The opening up of Xinjiang, especially in southern Xinjiang, is a gradual process. It is not only related to the level of local economic development and requirements, but also related to the international and domestic environment. Kashgar in Xinjiang was opened as a bridgehead to Pakistan in 2010. Established as a special economic zone, in the context of the "One Belt and One Road" initiative, Xinjiang's opening to the outside world has entered into substantive stage of implementation.

### **2.1 Xinjiang as a bridgehead for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor**

Xinjiang's opening to the outside world is based on the diplomatic relations between China and neighboring countries. Given the "two perfections and four good relations" between China and Pakistan, Pakistan is naturally one of the important directions for Xinjiang's opening to the outside world, and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. It is the starting point for Xinjiang to open up to Pakistan.

In April 2016, Mr. Zhang Chunxian, the then Party Secretary of Xinjiang led the delegation to visit Pakistan and held the meeting with Pakistani Prime Minister Sharif. Mr. Zhang said that the visit to Pakistan was to deepen the cooperation arrangement centered on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and to further strengthen Xinjiang's cooperation with Pakistan in various fields.

[1]

### **2.1.1 CPEC is the "flagship" of international political and security cooperation between Xinjiang and the world**

As a close neighbor with mountains and rivers, in addition to border trade and personnel exchanges between Pakistan and Xinjiang in China, political, social and cultural personnel also are frequently exchanged. In 2008, Chairman of the Muslim League of Pakistan, Chaudhry Shujat Hussein, Pakistani ambassador to China, Salman Basil, Pakistani President Musharraf, and Pakistani Muslim League (Leadership) National Assembly MP Marvin. Mei Meng successively led a delegation to visit Xinjiang; In 2012, Pakistan's Frontline Force Engineering Director Jawid Mohammed Bukari, Governor Gilgit Baltistan's Pierre Ali Xia, President of the Pakistan Foundation, Mohamed Mustafa Khan Retired generals also led a delegation to visit Xinjiang.

### **2.1.2 CPEC is the Xinjiang's "Flagship" of External Connectivity**

Interconnection is an important aspect of the construction of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Although the China-Pakistan border region is at a high altitude and its natural conditions are harsh, the interconnection between China and Pakistan is truly all-encompassing and interoperable, including land, aviation, and power grids, optical fiber, railway, and energy. These are unique among China's interconnected countries and neighboring countries. Therefore, it is the flagship of Xinjiang's external interconnection and interoperability.

### **2.1.3 CPEC is the "Flagship" of Xinjiang's Foreign Trade**

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project is a flagship project of the "Belt and Road Initiative", and Kashgar is also an end point of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, so Xinjiang has the inherent advantage of participating in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Xinjiang's active participation in the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor can enhance the mutual trust and relationships and promote tangible economic interests in Xinjiang and Pakistan. The two-way connection of cargo transportation between Kashgar and Gwadar port also indicates that the land passage of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor already has operating conditions, which will make Kashgar in Xinjiang and Gwadar in Pakistan become important cargo transit bases in the region and open up and create free access to Xinjiang, Western Asia, and the Middle East. Therefore, the China-Pakistan economic corridor is also expected to make Xinjiang open to Pakistan and become the "flagship" of Xinjiang's opening to the outside world.

### **2.1.4 Xinjiang's advantages over Pakistan under the framework of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor**

Xinjiang has more favorable conditions for Pakistan:

Firstly, it promoted the stability and opening up of Xinjiang and strengthened the harmonious coexistence and common development of all ethnic groups in southern Xinjiang. The geographical location of southern Xinjiang is relatively closed, and the level of economic development is relatively low. Therefore, the promotion of Xinjiang's opening to Pakistan is of great significance for consolidating the border areas and promoting long-term peace and stability in southern Xinjiang. Opening Xinjiang to Pakistan is also conducive to making Xinjiang a window opening to the outside world and a base that is opened up to the west, and accelerating Xinjiang's economic cooperation with countries in other surrounding regions.

In the second place, Kashgar has been an important trade hub to Pakistan since ancient times. The opening of Xinjiang to Pakistan can promote the development of border trade in southern Xinjiang and Pakistan, and then further strengthen the cooperation among western China, Pakistan, West Asia, and Central Asia.

In addition, Xinjiang's opening to Pakistan can promote the construction of infrastructure in southern Xinjiang. In general, Xinjiang's implementation of the construction of access roads such as Pakistan's Karakoram Highway 2, China-Pakistan Railway, energy, fiber optics, and aviation will lead to the construction of a series of supporting infrastructure in southern Xinjiang and even in western China.

## **2.2 The historical process of the construction of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor**

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor was put forward on May 23, 2013. On May 22, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang first visited Pakistan. In April 2015, when Chinese President Xi Jinping paid a state visit to Pakistan, the two countries determined the “1+4” cooperation model with the economic corridor as the center and the Gwadar port, industrial park, energy, and transportation infrastructure as the focus. In November 2016, the freight fleet from Kashgar arrived in Gwadar, marking the land-based integration of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as a flagship project of the “One Belt and One Road” initiative.

China proposed that the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is based on a deep Sino-Pakistani relationship. Pakistan’s foreign secretary Akram said to Zhou Gang, the former Chinese ambassador to Pakistan, “China’s concern is also Pakistan’s concern. If the parties can cooperate, please tell us directly. [2] First of all, politically, Pakistan is our best neighboring country (all-weather, all-round, good friends, good brothers, good partners, good neighbors). Secondly, economically, China-Pakistan economic cooperation originated from the Sino-Pakistani Karakoram highway that began in the 1960s. Later, large-scale Sino-Pakistani cooperation projects continued to emerge. This is the economic prerequisite for the development of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

## **3. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Proposal and Progress**

The opening of China’s Xinjiang region to Pakistan is a historical choice. Mainly reflected in the following areas:

(1) With unique geographical advantages. Xinjiang’s Tashkulgan borders on Pakistan, which makes Xinjiang open to Pakistan and participate in the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Compared with other provinces and regions, Xinjiang has a unique geographical advantage.

(2) For Pakistan, the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is a great historical opportunity in its national development process. The construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor can be said to be an intrepid agent for the economic development of Pakistan. Many insightful people in Pakistan have stated that the economic corridor project is a historical opportunity for Pakistan and a game changer. The construction of the corridors can also bring tangible benefits to Pakistani friends. At the same time, it is also a major strategic layout of China and Pakistan.

(3) The overwhelming majority of Pakistani people are welcoming the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the opening of China’s Xinjiang to Pakistan has a public opinion basis.

From an economic point of view, Pakistan should also be one of the first choices for Xinjiang's opening to the outside world. Pakistan’s strategic position for itself is the trade, energy, and transportation corridors that lead to energy-rich area like Central Asia, West Asia, South Asia. This strategic position also reflects the uniqueness of Pakistan compared to other countries and regions. The advantages are:

Firstly, Pakistan has a large amount of manpower, experienced engineers, bankers, lawyers, and other professionals. Pakistan's consumer market has grown at a very fast pace, reflecting the fact that the telephone population has reached 125 million.

Secondly, Pakistan’s economy has shown flexibility in the global financial crisis in 2008, and it performed better than some neighboring countries. On February 7, 2017, PricewaterhouseCoopers Certified Public Accountants (PWC) issued a forecast report on “How the Global Economic Order Changes in 2050”, reporting on the 32 largest economies that currently account for 85% of the global economy since 2016. Year-to-date 2050 economic development forecast. PricewaterhouseCoopers predicts that the purchasing power parity (PPP) will be used as the calculation standard by 2050. Pakistan will surpass South Korea, Australia, Italy, Canada and other countries, and the world ranking will rise to the 16th place. [3]

Third, Pakistan’s foreign investment policy aims to provide a comprehensive framework. It

hopes to create a favorable business environment for investors and increase the attractiveness of foreign direct investment (FDI). Liberalization, deregulation, privatization, and facilitation are the most important. Important ideas.

Fourthly, in order to better attract international investment, especially investment and trade from China, Pakistan hopes to set up special economic zones to meet the challenges of global challenges and increase productivity and reduce business costs by providing investment facilitation services to create industrial agglomerations.

### **3.1 Energy Project**

Energy cooperation and infrastructure construction are the focus of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Many well-known domestic companies participate in the project, which not only enhances the company's own international level, but also brings good economic and social benefits to Pakistan. China Eastern Group has set up a joint energy group in Hong Kong in response to the country's "going out" strategy and is mainly engaged in the development and operation of oil and natural gas. In September 2011, Union Energy took over BP's equity in Pakistan's entire oil and gas assets and achieved an annual increase of more than 40% for three consecutive years. Pakistani Prime Minister Sharif said: "Union Energy Group is China's largest private investment company in Pakistan. The successful operation of enterprises and Pakistan projects has become a model for Pakistan-China economic and trade cooperation." [4] In 2016, Shanghai Electric Power acquired Pakistan's Karachi Power Company, Pakistan's largest electric power company, which is engaged in power generation, transmission, distribution and sales, for the US\$1.77 billion. [5]

### **3.2 Park construction**

The construction of China-Pakistan Industrial Park has also progressed steadily. If the interconnection project of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is a line, then the industrial park project is the pearl scattered on this line. Only the development of an industrial park can drive the development of the nearby economy. Should take full advantage of Pakistan's relatively low labor force, cultivate Pakistani domestic industrial workers and upgrade the level of industrialization in Pakistan, thus improving China's trade with Pakistan, which often appears to be a problem of excessive China's trade surplus.

### **3.3 Corridor project to promote the development of Pakistan**

Through the construction of the Karakoram Highway and the implementation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, northern Pakistan has become the region with the highest enrollment rate for girls. [6]

On February 24, 2017, Moody, an internationally renowned rating agency, pointed out in its latest assessment that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor will continue to be a key driver of Pakistan's economic growth and promote the improvement of Pakistan's infrastructure and manufacturing industries. [7]

## **4. Xinjiang's Social Development in Contact and Opening to Pakistan**

If policies in Xinjiang is said to be a game of chess, then southern Xinjiang is an "opportunity". Whether it is the Silk Road Economic Belt or it's the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the importance of developing borders can't be overlooked. The key to the stability and development of Xinjiang is to balance the stability and development of Xinjiang. Stability is the goal of development and development is the guarantee of stability. The opening up of Pakistan by China's Xinjiang is also to promote the stability and development of Xinjiang.

Xinjiang is located in the border town of northwest China. The first round of the western development policy did not effectively narrow the development gap between Xinjiang and the eastern coastal areas, nor did it effectively narrow the economic development gap within Xinjiang.

Equal income is crucial to social development and long-term peace and stability, and the income gap within Xinjiang is also an important factor affecting the stability thereto. This is also the reason

why South Xinjiang's stability pressure is greater than that of the northern Xinjiang.

The opening of southern Xinjiang to Pakistan is not only an opportunity for Pakistan's development, but also a historical opportunity for the development of southern Xinjiang. Moreover, it is also an outstanding chance to further narrow the development gap between southern and northern Xinjiang. Poverty alleviation in southern Xinjiang is one of the important goals of Xinjiang in opening up to Pakistan. Further expansion of agricultural trade in Pakistan by southern Xinjiang is a direct way to increase the income of farmers and herdsmen in southern Xinjiang.

## 5. Conclusion

Stability and public sentiment are especially important. This paper has examined the ways to promote Xinjiang's stability by opening up to Pakistan.

The primary responsibility for the development of frontiers is to comply with the overall interests of the country. It is necessary to regard stability as the fundamental goal. President Xi also repeatedly stressed that Xinjiang is "a security shield in the northwest of China." Therefore, Xinjiang's opening to Pakistan and development are not blind behaviors. Its core is stability. It promotes stability in development and promotes harmony in development. Also, it is necessary to do a good job of "community among the people".

Good public opinion and public atmosphere along the project are not only the guarantee of project safety, but also the guarantee of China's western frontier security. The opening of China's Xinjiang to Pakistan is a comprehensive, three-dimensional opening, in which interconnection is the basis and an important condition for Xinjiang's openness to Pakistan. It should be noted that the level of interconnection and progress between China's Xinjiang and Pakistan is smoother than that of China and other countries. However, the exchanges between China and Pakistan in the field of tourism, science and education is still relatively small, which is a space that needs to be filled.

Therefore, Xinjiang and Pakistan's "hardware liaison" must encourage and promote the "soft-link" in the implementation of the "hardware liaison" process, and must undertake some civic livelihood projects. In terms of education, Xinjiang students are encouraged to study in Xinjiang to study abroad. At present, Xinjiang Medical University has formed a scale of recruiting 150 Pakistani students each year, and it can also be appropriately scaled up in the future. [4]

## References

- [1] The People's Network, *Zhang Chunxian leads Xinjiang delegation to visit Pakistan*, April 8, 2016, <http://leaders.people.com.cn/n1/2016/0408/c58278-28260800.html>
- [2] Zhou Gang, *All-Weather Friendship All-Around Cooperation - A Four-year Experience in Pakistan*, Economic Daily Press, 2012, p32.
- [3] Pwc, *The Long View - How will the global economic order change by 2050?* February 2017, Page 10 of 14.
- [4] Xinjiang Energy Network, *United Energy Pakistan Company: Practitioners on the Belt and Road Initiative*, April 17, 2015, [http://xjny.ts.cn/content/2015-04/17/content\\_11208624.htm](http://xjny.ts.cn/content/2015-04/17/content_11208624.htm)
- [5] National Power Investment Corporation, *Shanghai Power plans to purchase Pakistan Power Company for US\$1.77 billion*, November 1, 2016, [http://www.spic.com.cn/mtbd/201610/t20161031\\_269103.htm](http://www.spic.com.cn/mtbd/201610/t20161031_269103.htm)
- [6] Government of Gilgit - Baltistan Planning & Development Department, *ADP 2016-17*, Page 35
- [7] The Nation, *Moody's lauds Pakistan's banking system*, February 24, 2017, <http://nation.com.pk/archives/Feb-24-2017>
- [7] Zhang Xiaogang, Ma Xiaolei, *The Possibility of Comparative Study of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language: A Case Study of Xinjiang, Pakistan and Central Asian Students*, Journal of Hetian Teachers College, No. 3 of 2012, 68.