

In Praise of China: China in the Eyes of Pakistani Diplomats

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Abstract

This article reviews the writings on China by four former ambassadors of Pakistan, three of them ambassadors to China. Their writings display a remarkably positive image of China. Although written usually after retirement of their diplomatic service, their views of China have long been shaped when they were in the service. In this sense, these writings portrayed, and indicated, at least among a section of the professional diplomatic corps of Pakistan, how Pakistani elite understand China. In turn, this also reflects, at a wider level, the positive discourse on China among the influential opinion makers in Pakistan. This article adopts the constructivist approach, which gives theoretical importance to ideational factors in the understanding of a country's foreign policy. Pakistan's China policy, while on the one hand driven by realist and geopolitical factors, is also shaped by a positive discourse on China, in which this article examines through the writings of several former diplomats of Pakistan.

Keywords: *Diplomats, Pakistan-China relations, constructivist approach, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor*

1. Introduction

Apart from the somewhat questionable "alliance" relationship with North Korea (based on the 1961 Sino-North Korean Mutual Aid and Cooperation Friendship Treaty), China maintains a policy of no alliance, which is in contrast to the extensive alliance systems that the United States has constructed since the end of the Second World War. However, that does not mean China does not have close relationships with several countries that can be seen as "allies", perhaps not in a purely military sense, but in an overall political and strategic sense, in which the foreign policies of China and these "allies" are closely aligned for a sustained period of time. Russia and

Cambodia can count at the moment as some of China's closest friends and "allies". But both came to be seen so only in the past decade or two, in which the strategic, and sometimes also economic, interests between these countries and China largely converged. In the case of Pakistan, another country generally seen as an "ally" of China, it has maintained a very positive, one can even say an unusually positive, relationship with China, spanning for almost more than half a century. Relations between Pakistan and China constitute what is known as "All-Weather Strategic Partnership". In Pakistan, no matter whichever government is in power (military or civilian, or whichever political party), China remains the topmost priority for Pakistani foreign policy. For China, whether it was the Maoist period or the era of "Reform and Opening Up" since late 1970s, there has always been very close strategic relationship with Pakistan. In recent years, the relationship has moved beyond purely the strategic dimension; economic cooperation now has also intensified. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a huge bilateral economic development project that will be crucially important for the economic take-off of Pakistan.

Most existing studies of Pakistan-China relations utilize a geopolitical or realist perspective (for instance, see Syed, 1974; Small, 2015; Ali, 2017), focusing on India – the common adversary of China and Pakistan – as the major factor in explaining China-Pakistan strategic relationship. While the "India Factor" is undeniably the most important consideration in understanding this relationship, it is to be suggested here that this realist perspective is to be supplemented by a constructivist perspective, in which influences of ideational factors such as identities, discourses, narratives, worldviews, and others also matter in the formulation and shaping of foreign policy. It is to be contended here, by examining the writings on China by some of Pakistani eminent professional diplomats, that their very positive views of China reinforce Pakistan's China policy. Geopolitical and ideational factors are mutually constitutive in the shaping of Pakistan-China relations.

2. Pakistani Ambassadors to China

From 1951 until present, a total of twenty Pakistani diplomats have served as ambassadors to China (see Table 1). Three of them: Ambassador Mohammad Yunus, Ambassador M. Akram Zaki and Ambassador Riaz Mohammad Khan, have written extensively about China after retiring from diplomatic services. In addition, Ambassador Syed Hasan Javed, who served as Ambassador to Germany and High Commissioner to Singapore and Mauritius in his career, was posted twice to the Pakistani Embassy in Beijing (1980-1987, 2001-2003). After retirement Javed has also been active in promoting studies of China and the Chinese language in Pakistan, and has written extensively on China.

Table 1 Pakistani Ambassadors to China (1951-2017)

| <i>No.</i> | <i>Name of Ambassador</i> | <i>Serving Period</i> |
|------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | Maj. Gen. N.A.M. Raza | 1951-1954 |
| 2. | Mr. Sultanuddin Ahmad | 1954-1957 |
| 3. | Dr. A.M. Malik | 1958-1961 |
| 4. | Mr. P. A. M. Rashidi | 1961-1962 |
| 5. | Maj. Gen. N.A.M. Raza | 1962-1966 |
| 6. | Mr. Sultan M. Khan | 1966-1968 |
| 7. | Mr. K.M. Kaisar | 1969-1972 |
| 8. | Mr. Agha Shahi | 1972-1973 |
| 9. | Mr. Mumtaz A. Alvie | 1973-1978 |
| 10. | Mr. Mohammad Yunus | 1978-1982 |
| 11. | Dr. M.A. Bhattay | 1982-1986 |
| 12. | Mr. M. Akram Zaki | 1987-1991 |
| 13. | Mr. Khalid Mahmood | 1991-1994 |
| 14. | Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi | 1994-1997 |
| 15. | Mr. Inam Ul Haque | 1997-1999 |
| 16. | Mr. Riaz M. Khokhar | 1999-2002 |
| 17. | Mr. Riaz Mohammad Khan | 2002-2005 |
| 18. | Mr. Salman Bashir | 2005-2008 |
| 19. | Mr. Masood Khan | 2008-2012 |
| 20. | Mr. Masood Khalid | 2013-present |

Source: <http://www.pakbj.org/index.php?m=content&c=index&a=show&catid=29&id=32>

Together, these four ambassadors: Mohammad Yunus, Akram Zaki, Riaz Mohammad Khan and Syed Hasan Javed have written extensively about China, reflecting on China’s developmental experiences, economic growth, governance and politics, culture, religion, philosophical worldview, strategic outlook, foreign policy, China’s role in South Asia and Pakistan-China relations. Some have published their memoirs about their China experience, but Pakistan, despite being the “All-Weather Strategic Partner” of China, actually still lacks adequate China expertise in its academia and think tanks, and their writings on China can also be seen as an important “indigenous” source for Pakistani public and elite to understand and know about China, the Chinese people, Chinese culture and China’s foreign policy.

3. Ambassador Mohammad Yunus

3.1. Brief Biography

Ambassador Mohammad Yunus did his Masters in Philosophy and Diploma in Law from Aligarh Muslim University in the year 1948. He started his

career in teaching at Sind Muslim College in Karachi – the former capital of Pakistan, from 1948-1950. He was then selected for ICSUN (Internal Civil Services United Nations) and posted at the UN Secretariat before joining the FSP (Foreign Service of Pakistan). He had an active diplomatic career, from 1952 to 1982, with three different stints in the Pakistani Embassy in Beijing, and also postings in Tehran and the United Nations. His final position before early retirement was as Ambassador to China. After getting his early retirement, Yunus migrated to Canada, did a doctorate in Political Science, and taught for many years at Calgary University.

3.2. *Writings on China*

Ambassador Mohammad Yunus is a prolific writer not just on China but on a number of political, philosophical, and strategic topics, such as Marxism, Islam, Pakistani politics, international relations, and theories of foreign relations. He published three books on China: *Reflections on China: An Ambassador's View from Beijing* (1986); *China: Emergence of a World Power* (1989); and *Awakened China Shakes the World and is Now Pakistan's Mainstay: Memoirs of a Diplomat* (2015). The first two books, however, are hard to acquire and the authors have not been able to obtain them, so the main discussion here is based on the third book (Yunus, 2015), which is partly a memoir, recording his experiences related to China, but also his ideas, analysis and observation about China's rise and implications for Pakistan.

Ambassador Yunus has had extensive diplomatic experiences in China. He was first posted to Beijing in 1953 as a Third Secretary in which he served until 1955. During his first assignment, he worked closely with and earned the trust of the first Pakistani Ambassador to China, Gen. N.A.M. Raza. He recorded his observations of growing China's diplomatic and military confidence, as a newly established power after years of upheaval, in events such as the Korean War, China's growing influence in the Indo-China area and the Geneva Conference in 1954, and the Bandung Conference in 1955 (Yunus, 2015: 30-36). During his first stint in Beijing, he was obviously impressed by the vitality of the New China, and was particularly in awe of the diplomatic wisdom and skills of Chinese leaders such as Zhou Enlai, in which he praised as an "unmatched genius [who] was the product of an exceptionally brilliant mind" (Yunus, 2015: 43). He also declared that "no single statesman did so much for Pakistan in fair and foul weather as Premier Zhou Enlai did" (Yunus, 2015: XV). This was in contrast to Yunus' very critical assessment of American policy, especially American policy towards China, which he saw as self-defeating.

An important bilateral episode during Yunus's first assignment concerned Pakistan's membership in the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO).

The memoir revealed that much to the appreciation of Pakistan, China did not hold any grudge in Pakistani membership in this military alliance, with the understanding that the membership was meant to target India rather than China. China also accepted Pakistan's stand on the Kashmir issue, despite India-China relations being buoyant with the rhetoric of *Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai* at that time (Yunus, 2015: 36-38).

Yunus came back to China in 1962 for his second assignment that lasted until 1966, in which he again teamed up with his favourite superior, General Raza, who again returned as Pakistani Ambassador to China in 1962. Both Yunus and Raza were to personally involve and participate in two major events in the middle of 1960s: the China-Pakistan border issue, and the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965. On the border issue, Yunus and Raza were vice-chairman and chairman of the Sino-Pakistan Boundary Commission, the negotiating team created by the Pakistani cabinet, which reached a conclusion with China on Sino-Pakistani border in December 1962, just months after the 1962 India-China border war, and the negotiation was rather smooth and was concluded in less than two months. Yunus, in particular, sensed the eagerness of China to reach an agreement in the wake of the India-China border war, "to show to the world that all border agreements defining the southern fringe of China, including the ones reached with Nepal and Burma, had been amicably finalized except with India implying that India was the only country that was not prepared to be reasonable" (Yunus, 2015: 80). The Sino-Pakistani Boundary Agreement was eventually signed in March 1963, during a visit by Pakistani Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to Beijing. According to Yunus' memoir, despite the fledgling relationship with China, Pakistani President Ayub Khan instructed Bhutto to take a "moderate tone" as Pakistan was still a defence partner of the United States and wished not to upset US President Kennedy (Yunus, 2015: 95). However, Bhutto very much disregarded the instruction and "launched into a zealous and warm-hearted speech, praising the revolutionary leaders of China and promising an expanding vista of cooperation between Pakistan and China to cover all fields of activity" (Yunus, 2015: 99). After the visit, Yunus observed that "China opened wider the door of cooperation with Pakistan. It was as if the gushing relationship with India under the slogan *Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai* has been replaced by the new slogan 'Long Live China-Pakistan friendship'" (Yunus, 2015: 99-101).

It was the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965 that cemented further the blooming Sino-Pakistani relationship, a relationship characterized as "unwritten alliance" by Yunus. It was this war that disillusioned the Pakistani elite's belief in the military alliance with the United States, and firmly established China as the most reliable partner. Yunus (2015: 84-85) wrote:

I must put here on record the fact that none of its formal treaty allies ever came to Pakistan's help when it needed it most against India. Most friends

looked the other way. That applies particularly to Pakistan's so-called defence alliance with the United States that, when the test came, sought to protect India more than Pakistan.... Pakistan must never rely on the United States siding with Pakistan against India....

By contrast, China's strategic interests have remained quite close to those of Pakistan ever since the Sino-Indian border war in 1962. Pakistan's unwritten alliance with China has come to its support both at crucial junctures and more importantly in the strategic assessment of its adversaries, particularly that of India, Pakistan's main strategic adversary.

Because of the sense of betrayal by the United States, President Ayub Khan came to reassess the strategic importance of China, and undertook a secret trip to Beijing after the war, in October 1965 (still in fear of alarming the United States). Ambassador Raza, Yunus, and a military attaché were the only three embassy personnel who were involved in the planning and execution of this secret visit, without any entourage at all. Khan met with Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, and it was also from this secret visit that military cooperation between the two countries began. China offered to freely supply arms to Pakistan for almost a quarter of a century, and provided technical assistance in building Pakistan's defence sectors, which lasts until today.

Yunus left China just when China was starting to engulf itself in the destructive Cultural Revolution, but Yunus continued to observe China from afar, noting the political and foreign policy developments of China such as Mao's power struggles with other leaders, US-China rapprochement, the eventual demise of Mao and his radical followers, the death of Premier Zhou Enlai, and the rise of a new generation of pragmatic leadership under Deng Xiaoping. Yunus was appointed Pakistani Ambassador to China just when China was opening up, in 1978, which provided a big contrast to his earlier experiences in the 1950s and 1960s.

While Pakistan and China remained as close friends and partners, notwithstanding the transition of Chinese leadership from Mao Zedong-Zhou Enlai, to Hua Guofeng, and to Deng Xiaoping, in the late 1970s, it was clear that there would be changes that affected the bilateral relationship too. For instance, under Mao's socialist and revolutionary ideology, China supplied arms and ammunitions to Pakistan, free of charge, for at least two decades, but one of the very first challenges for Yunus as an Ambassador was to handle the requests by China that for now such supplies would no longer be free of charge, and China would charge according to international market rate. Pakistan being a poor country would not be able to suddenly pay for the arms supplied by China, and that Pakistan would also feel apprehensive about whether this signalled a gradual change of strategic direction by China. Ambassador Yunus was able to convince the Pakistani leadership that it was due to Deng's extensive reorganization of the way China did business, rather

than any intention from China to shift its strategic relationship with Pakistan. Both countries eventually agreed to a method of payment instalments by Pakistan (Yunus, 2015: 174-175). Furthermore, to underscore the continuity and strategic nature of the relationship, China and Pakistan worked closely with each other in dealing with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, with Pakistan playing a crucial role in funnelling Chinese weapons to the resistance fighters in Afghanistan.

Due to differences with the military government in Pakistan, Yunus eventually opted for early retirement, in 1982, after thirty years of distinguished diplomatic career. He left China with a deep appreciation of the “unwritten alliance” between China and Pakistan, and with the confidence that China was following the correct policies implemented by Deng Xiaoping. Contrary to many who see Deng was only reintroducing capitalist policies, Yunus took seriously the claim by China that China has been practicing “socialism with Chinese characteristics.” He was impressed with the way China adopted and refined Marxism to fit Chinese national conditions, creating a hybrid system of socialism and capitalism. In the book, he took note of the performance of China in handling the Global Financial Crisis in 2008-2009, writing that:

China’s resistance against the effects of the global crisis was the direct result of national planning, state-owned enterprises, state-owned banking and the policy decisions of the Chinese Communist Party. In China, socialist planning took precedence over the prevalent anarchy of private production caused by the laws of the world market. That is an indication that the socialist side of the economic foundation remains dominant in China. China has succeeded while the world handled various kinds of setbacks because the socialist sector has succeeded in containing domestic capitalism and foreign investment within the framework of the national economic goals of the leadership (Yunus, 2015: 282).

4. Ambassador Akram Zaki

4.1. Brief Biography

M. Akram Zaki was born in 1931 in Gujranwala. Gujranwala was part of Punjab before the establishment of Pakistan. He pursued his education at Forman Christian College, Punjab University, and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. His career as a diplomat spanned close to four decades, from 1954 to 1993, during which he served as Ambassador to several countries, including China, Nigeria, the Philippines, and the United States, and represented Pakistan in several international organizations and multilateral fora, such as United Nations General Assembly, UN Human Rights Commission, Organization of Islamic Conference, Asian Development Bank and UN Conference on Trade and Development. He also once served

as Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After retiring from the diplomatic service, he participated in politics and became a Senator for the Pakistan Muslim League, a major political party, rising to the rank of Chairman of the Standing Committee of Senate on Foreign Affairs, Kashmir Affairs and Northern Affairs. He was also affiliated with the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), a major Islamabad-based nongovernmental think tank. Zaki passed away recently in 2017 (*The Nation*, 2017).

4.2. Writings on China

Ambassador M. Akram Zaki published a short book on China, titled *China of Today and Tomorrow: Dynamics of Relations with Pakistan* (Zaki, 2010), which is based on a lecture he delivered at IPS. The short book provides a survey of China's development since the founding of the People's Republic, comprehensively reviews China's relations with almost all major powers (Russia, Japan, the United States, etc.) in different regions (East Asia, Central Asia, etc.), and also offers an account of the past, present and future prospects of China-Pakistan relations.

In the book, Zaki expressed his admiration of the tremendous transformation of China, from a "war-ravaged, poor and feudal-colonial society" to the then third largest economic power of the world (Zaki, 2010: 23). In giving praises to Deng Xiaoping's successful political and economic transition, he also gave credit to Mao's leadership, who "laid emphasis on meeting the basic needs of the people, like education, health, housing, employment, and domestically and externally safeguarding national independence, territorial integrity, and national dignity" (Zaki, 2010: 17). He also traced the continuity from Deng Xiaoping to Jiang Zemin to Hu Jintao, giving credit to all these leaders for innovating on China's official ideology (Deng Xiaoping Theory, Theory of Three Represents and Scientific Development Perspective) that guided China's development well and met the challenges brought by the economic transformation. He also defended China's decision to crackdown on the student demonstrators in 1989 (he was Pakistani Ambassador in that year, so must have personally witnessed the episode), believing that the demonstration was an attempt made to destabilize China, and "the Chinese leadership boldly met the challenge, maintained political stability, and continued its economic progress with greater determination" (Zaki, 2010: 18). With strong confidence in the Chinese leadership, he wrote that "power, in China, no longer flew from the barrel of the gun, but from the moving wheels of industry and the creative urge of its people to harness new technology for the service of man and mankind" (Zaki, 2010: 23).

On the foreign policy front, Zaki was of the view that China pursues an "independent foreign policy of peace" (which eschews formal military

alliance) and promotes a multipolar world order that can constrain unilateralism. Most of the security challenges facing China came from the efforts by the US and its allies (such as Japan) to contain China and interfere in China's domestic affairs (Zaki, 2010: 27-28). Nevertheless, China will continue its "independent foreign policy of peace," which is "largely shaped by the requirements of the economic reform process." In line with this, Zaki said that China generally does not want to get involved or embroiled in controversies or take an extreme position (Zaki, 2010: 30). In reviewing China's foreign relations, his basic perspective was more or less aligned with China's official view, that China's foreign policy has been aimed for safeguarding its own interests while maintaining and contributing to peace and security in different regions.

On Pakistan-China relations, Zaki also traced the foundation of the long-lasting relations to the 1960s, in which the peaceful resolution of the boundary issues and the changed geopolitical dynamics resulting from the India-China Border War in 1962 and India-Pakistan War of 1965, created a strong commonality of interests between the two countries, in spite of the fact that there is a great divergence of political, cultural, religious and ideological spheres. With the foundation of strategic trust, gradually more practical, functional, and economic cooperative activities were undertaken over the years as well. China was instrumental in helping Pakistan's efforts to industrialize, notwithstanding China's own backwardness before it became the major economic power in the late 1990s. For instance, he recounted the many major industrial and infrastructure projects in Pakistan that China assisted since the 1970s, such as Heavy Mechanical Complex, Heavy Forge and Foundry, the Karokoram Highway, Islamabad Sports Complex, Heavy Electrical Complex, F-6 Rebuild Factory, Rocket Propellant Plant, Ghuddu Thermal Power Plant, Chasma Nuclear Power Plant, and others (as Pakistani Ambassador from 1987 to 1991, Zaki personally witnessed the undertaking some of these projects) (Zaki, 2010: 47). Of course, the relations were not only beneficial to Pakistan but to China as well. Pakistan provided the crucial outlet to the world when China was isolated, facilitated the Sino-US rapprochement, and has always been a strong supporter of China's position in many international issues.

Despite the improvement of China-India relations in the 1990s, Zaki believed that this would not affect the close relationship between Pakistan and China. In fact, with improved relations with India, China could play a better role in defusing some crises between Pakistan and India, as was the case during the Kargil conflict in 1999 and the military standoff between India and Pakistan in 2001-2002 (Zaki, 2010: 49). Looking forward, he believed that both countries can further develop economic and commercial dimensions, which can further "strengthen and sustain" the political friendship

as well (Zaki, 2010: 58). The developments of CPEC later, therefore, must have come as a major boost to Zaki's optimistic assessment of the bilateral ties. In a separate paper he wrote in 2015, Zaki took note of the increased investments by China into Pakistan, and urged Pakistan to learn from China's developmental experiences, such as the establishment of Special Economic Zones, in which China can offer assistance (Zaki, 2015). In addition, China could also help in the areas of agriculture, infrastructure, water management, alternative energy, and so forth. He proposed that "the vision for the future is that Karakorum Highway and the Gwadar Port should be linked and Pakistan should be the energy and trade corridor to the Middle East and beyond, for China" (Zaki, 2015: 11). This is exactly the vision of CPEC.

5. Syed Hasan Javed

5.1. Brief Biography

A generation younger than Ambassadors Muhammad Yunus and Akram Zaki, Ambassador Syed Hasan Javed was born in 1955. He did his B.A. and M.A. in economics at the University of Karachi, and afterwards joined the Foreign Service of Pakistan, beginning a diplomatic career that lasted more than thirty years. He has served as Pakistani Ambassador/High Commissioner to Mauritius, Singapore, and Germany, but not China, despite his life-long admiration for and passion about China. However, he did serve in China for almost a decade, in two different assignments (1980-1987, 2001-2003). In the 1980s he served as Third and the Second Secretary, while in the early 2000s he was the Deputy Chief of Mission/Minister in the Pakistani Embassy in Beijing. His diplomatic career in Beijing crossed path with two of the Ambassadors also discussed in this article: Muhammad Yunus and M. Akram Zaki. During his time in Beijing, he attended the Beijing Language Institute (today is known as Beijing Language and Culture University) and eventually picked up the difficult Chinese language. He has written five books within a relatively short period of time. They are: *Chinese Made Easy: Spoken Chinese in 100 Lessons* (2012), *Chinese Soft Power Code* (2014), *Dictionary of Chinese-English-Urdu Languages* (2016), *Rise of China and the Asian Century* (2016) and *Nation Building: Paradoxes in India and Pakistan* (2018). After recently retiring from diplomatic service (in 2015), Ambassador Javed has been actively participating in promoting studies of China in Pakistan. Currently, he is serving as the Director of the China Studies Centre of Excellence at the National University of Science and Technology in Islamabad. Being one of the most prominent China scholars in Pakistan, Javed also actively and frequently interacts with Chinese think tanks and academic institutions.

5.2. Writings on China

Ambassador Javed is a fluent Chinese speaker and is eager to promote the Chinese language in Pakistani society and schools. Keenly aware of the growing relations between China and Pakistan, it is necessary for the people in Pakistan to be equipped with some basic Chinese to interact with the Chinese people, and he has written two books to introduce the Chinese language, which are meant to inform about how ordinary Pakistanis can learn the Chinese language in a simple way. Moreover, he also wishes that his dictionary can inspire more Chinese to learn the Urdu language, although that book is not widely available in China.

Chinese Soft Power Code (Javed, 2014) is a record of how Javed understood the advantages possessed by the Chinese in terms of culture. He uses the term “soft power” differently from the international relations and foreign policy literature. Rather than being a foreign policy resource, “soft power” for Javed denotes more like cultural resources, thought process, and values that have given China and the Chinese people a tremendous advantage over other countries in building up comprehensive national power. In his own words, he described “soft power” as “the ability of a State to use its non-tangible and non-physical assets to achieve its national policy objectives and enhance its national and international power profile” (Javed, 2014: xxiv). Javed derived what he called as “soft power code” from his direct observation and daily life experiences when he was posted in China. The book is more a personal reflection rather than a serious analytical study, and aimed for enriching the understanding of Chinese culture by the Pakistani public. This can be seen by the subjects included in the book, which covers the introduction of traditional Chinese philosophical schools, a glossary of common Chinese terms, a collection of sayings by Chinese philosophers and leaders from Confucius to Mao Zedong, a chapter devoted to Chinese Horoscope as a form of “natural soft power,” and a list of cultural attributes that Javed contended that Chinese people possess. He claims that the contemporary Chinese soft power is a combination of Chinese classical traditions including Confucianism, Taoism and Mohism, and imported philosophies such as Buddhism, Western Thought, and Marxism-Leninism (Javed, 2014: 81). The result is a highly adaptive and pragmatic culture and thought process that has enabled China to become the great power it is.

The book is highly positive of everything Chinese. Aiming for popular understanding, the book is not a very sophisticated analysis of Chinese culture, but the most novel part is the listing of a total of 88 cultural attributes. These attributes include integrity, humility, discipline, kindness, faith, trust, caution, common sense, patience, courage, frugality, determination, tenacity, truthfulness, rationality, calmness, solidarity, and so on. It is remarkable that

Javed collected so many positive attributes of human beings and ascribed all of them to the Chinese culture. For instance, in illustrating the attribute of “truthfulness”, Javed (2014: 161) wrote:

The Chinese are however uniquely blessed with a remarkable attitude towards the facts. The Chinese family values system and educational syllabi attach critical importance to truthfulness. The earliest slogan during Deng Xiaoping’s open door policy was “not to ignore facts and ground realities”. One has to only look, where China is today and where it was in 1980.

Although one may criticize Javed’s excessively positive appraisal of almost everything Chinese as bordering on hagiography, he however was fully convinced that he derived his conclusions based on close observations of and interactions with the Chinese people throughout his career. Inspired by the tremendous transformation in China, he suggested that Pakistan should cultivate a similar set of soft power attributes that could enable her to develop accordingly. Development of Pakistan is of an uneven nature and the elites are not pro-development, and henceforth Pakistanis should learn from the Chinese.

A more substantive book, *Rise of China and the Asian Century*, is part memoir and part of his analysis of the global politics of China’s rise. In the memoir part (Javed, 2016: 141-171), he discussed his fascination of all things Chinese, in particular the laborious work he had to go through in learning the language, and his work experience with different Pakistani ambassadors, but the memoir part did not capture the historical events in the way the memoirs written by Muhammad Yunus.

The main part of the book however is Javed’s analysis of China’s rise. Continuing with the theme of *Chinese Soft Power Code*, Javed felt that “it is utmost importance for the global community to study the Chinese mind and their cultural thought process” (Javed, 2016: xxi), and declared that “China is the least understood, but the richest country in Soft Power in the world” (Javed, 2016: 19), but the emphasis of this book is more about the developmental experiences and policies of China and the strategic importance of China-Pakistan ties, especially the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, in the context of the impending arrival of an Asian Century. For Javed, the Asian Century is fuelled by different forces but the most important of which is the emergence of China as an economic superpower. He confidently wrote that “China is going to be greatest game changer in the 21st Century” (Javed, 2016: 15). In the book, he attempted to explain to Pakistani readers what the secrets to China’s success are. While fundamentally “soft power” or the set of cultural values Javed listed is always given the primary importance in his writings, he also discussed concrete policies during the Reform and Opening Up Era that made China successful, such as promoting and consolidating a

core group of reformist leadership, devolution of administrative power to encourage local growth, tapping in and mobilizing the capital and resources of the overseas Chinese, encouragement of private enterprises and foreign direct investment, joining the World Trade Organization, administrative reforms that separated regulatory and revenue-generation functions from the government ministries, taxation reforms, the use of mass media to promote positive values among the public, modernization of a civil service to serve the market economy, and a foreign policy that seeks to avoid controversies, conflicts, crises and confrontations (Javed, 2016: 39-72). Although Javed's analysis offered no new theories and perspectives and many other factors were not captured, it provided a basic and adequate account of China's developmental experience for average readers in Pakistan, and to this he particularly emphasized the need for Pakistan to learn from China's developmental lessons (Javed, 2016: 84).

In looking at China's foreign relations, Javed did not hold back in his criticisms of both India and the West. In several polemical statements, the West, Javed said, "is baffled, bruised and biased and shows a lack of respect and understanding...China has defeated the West in its own game and on their turf. And this is just the beginning of the struggle" (Javed, 2016: 12-13). India, on the other hand, "loves pampering by the West and excels in criticising as well as spilling venomous propaganda against China's role in the world" (Javed, 2016: 82). Both the West and India are accordingly cooperating to contain China, and to which Javed urged China to develop its military, especially naval power: "China would need a naval flotilla of at least a thousand ships to protect its maritime security interests just in South China Sea and the Indian Ocean alone by 2050" (Javed, 2016: 83). In contrast, Pakistanis "are glad to see the comeback of China on the global scene, which bodes well for peace, security, justice, balance and harmony. Indians make themselves look like 'jokers', once again erring in judgement of historical forces by siding with the exploitative Imperial Powers..." (Javed, 2016: 98-99).

Implicitly, Javed seemed to suggest that Sino-Pakistan friendship and strategic partnership are more than ever important given the collusion between India and the West. According to Javed, Sino-Pakistan relations are built on the foundation of these core principles: "common perception of regional and global developments; common interest in maintaining peace and security; common positions on major global development; and common enemies and common friends" (Javed, 2016: 101). The development of the gigantic CPEC project will further add momentum to the relationship. While Pakistan offers many benefits to China, including its strategic land route access to the Gulf through Gwadar, CPEC also contains a lot of benefits for Pakistan. It will enhance "connectivity and expansion of trade and investment through

a network of roads, rail, fibre optic cables, and energy pipelines. It also provides for the special economic zones, industrial parks and trade centres and development of energy and technical cooperation. The CPEC would connect the nodes of growth centre in such a manner that the fruits of the development would benefit all areas/provinces of Pakistan” (Javed, 2016: 119).

Clearly, Javed has high hopes for Sino-Pakistan relations and CPEC. However, he also warned that CPEC would remain only as potential and its full benefits never realized if Pakistan could not develop, modernize, and reform itself to harness the opportunities coming from China’s rise, especially if Pakistan continues to be trapped in “archaic anglicised culture, thought process, work ethics, legal, civil institutions” (Javed, 2016: 124). Instead, throughout his book and in many other writings he has been urging Pakistan to learn from China. He criticized that Pakistani elite still rely on western (biased) writings on China and cannot really handle “sinology.” Henceforth, after his retirement from diplomatic service, “developing local capacities in Sinology” has become his mission, because the acquisition for such capacities “is a life-long investment” for Pakistanis, “with high returns as China rises in stature” (Javed, 2016: 21).

6. Riaz Mohammad Khan

6.1. Brief Biography

Finally, this article will discuss briefly Ambassador Riaz Mohammad Khan, a well respected Pakistani diplomat, who is also an eloquent scholar on his own, and has produced two critically acclaimed books, *Untying the Afghan Knot: Negotiating Soviet Withdrawal* (1991) and *Afghanistan and Pakistan: Conflict, Extremism and Resistance to Modernity* (2011a), published by major university presses in the US. Trained as a mathematician, he once taught at Punjab University, before joining the diplomatic service in 1969. He served as Pakistan’s Ambassador to China from 2002 to 2005. The last post he held was Foreign Secretary until retirement in 2008. However, his association with China began much earlier. He was posted to China from 1970 to 1973, and after returning to Islamabad, headed the China desk at the Foreign Office until 1979.

6.2. Writings on China

Unlike the three other ambassadors reviewed in this article, the discussion here therefore focuses on an article on Pakistan-China relations that Ambassador Riaz Mohammad Khan wrote for the premier Pakistani strategic journal, *Pakistan Horizon* (Khan, 2011b).¹

The article provides an overview of the developments of relations between Pakistan and China since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1950. While much of the narrative about the strategic foundation of Pakistan-China relations, dating back to the fateful 1960s changes of geopolitical dynamics in the South Asian subcontinent, is familiar to any student of Pakistan-China relations, the article does raise several interesting observations and points. For instance, Khan discussed at length the sensitivity of how both countries deal with transnational terrorism and crimes because these issues touch upon the internal affairs of each other, which both countries want to avoid as much as possible. For Pakistan, the Xinjiang issue has from time to time been brought up, especially by western media, as something that could sour Pakistan-China relations, but Khan pointed out that Pakistan has always been “deeply conscious of Chinese concerns and has ongoing active cooperation with China” to eliminate the terrorist threats and militant groups originating from Xinjiang. Because of this issue, Khan also claimed that China started to show greater interests in the internal situation of Pakistan, especially as it is related to the rise of religious militancy. This was compounded by a real threat to the security of a large number of Chinese workers and engineers in Pakistan, a few of them were in fact killed or kidnapped by the militants. But China has so far still refrained from “prying into domestic situations and internal politics” of Pakistan (Khan, 2011b: 16). In addition, Khan opined that China had not shown any concern, in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attack, that US troops were present in Afghanistan and were using bases in Pakistan (Khan, 2011b: 17-18).

Although Chinese projects, loans and investments in other countries have raise issues of debt (primarily in many other countries), Khan was of the opinion that the terms of the loans offered by China was a mixed package of “interest-free, soft, and commercial loans that are long term and entail far easier terms than those offered by other international sources” (Khan, 2011b: 22). In addition, turning loans into grants was not part of China’s philosophy of developmental aid. He recounted an interesting story in which in the 1970s, during a visit to Beijing, President Bhutto raised the issue of converting a 30-year, 500 million yuan interest-free loan into a grant to Premier Zhou Enlai, to which Premier Zhou responded that “in the Chinese view, extending grants was ‘inappropriate (unbecoming)’ for relations among friends. If Pakistan were not in a position to make the payment when it was due...China could agree to extend the grace period to another 30 years” (Khan, 2011b: 20). Another interesting discussion concerned the linkage between Karakoram Highway and Gwadar Port. Unlike most standard accounts in Pakistan, Khan in fact was sceptical about the utility of such linkage. He wrote that “the fact remains that most of China’s exports are generated in its eastern regions and their transportation through Pakistan makes little economic sense.” Even

the Karaokoram Highway-Gwadar Port route, which is often suggested as an alternative route to the Strait of Malacca should China want to avoid a chokepoint, could be unfeasible because “geography suggests more feasible routes through Myanmar” (Khan, 2011b: 25). However, this should not be read as Khan’s objection to CPEC but rather that Pakistan should make itself more attractive as an economic partner of China.

Overall, Khan differed from the other three ambassadors here, while still being very positive of Pakistan-China ties, his article has a more moderate tone and offers objective analysis, pointing out the differences and challenges that need to be met for the countries to move forward. But he was far more critical of his own county, citing security challenges and corruption as major factors hindering greater investment and tourism flows from China.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

This article reviews the writings on China by four former ambassadors, three of them ambassadors of Pakistan to China. Ambassadors Muhammad Yunus, M. Akram Zaki, Syed Hasan Javed, and Riaz Mohammad Khan, deriving from their own personal experiences during their postings in China, and based on their understanding of what is in the best interests of Pakistan in terms of foreign relations, all write positively about China. Some are overwhelmingly and even excessively positive about China, such as those of Javed, and some are more measured, such as Khan, but they all converge on the consensus about China.

Although most of these writings appeared after (or at the end stage) of their diplomatic career, it is clear that their positive views of China had long been shaped. In this sense, these writings reflected an ethos among at least a section of the professional diplomatic corps in Pakistan, which see China as an overwhelming positive country to the survival and prosperity of Pakistan. The rise of China, to a large extent, is cheered in Pakistan more than almost all other countries, and these Pakistani diplomats see China’s rise as critical to the destiny of Pakistan’s own fate. Their writings indeed display a remarkable supposition that the interests of China and the interests of Pakistan are almost identical. They also suggest the high level of distrust of the US among these diplomats. Pakistan once identified closely with the US, but the sense of betrayal by the US and other “friends” in 1965 and 1971 during its confrontation with India was so strong, that until today Pakistan does not trust the US.

From a realist perspective, the strategic partnership between Pakistan and China of course is largely driven by the geopolitical and geostrategic environment that binds the interests of these two countries together. While this is undeniable and fundamentally the basic driver of Pakistan’s China policy, from a constructivist point of view, it should also be understood that

such a policy is more easily pursued when it is supported overwhelmingly by the public and the elite, with a prevailing positive discourse on the nature of Pakistan-China relations. Influential opinion makers in Pakistan, including academics, think tank analysts, and diplomats, have been producing an overwhelmingly positive China discourse (see Mahesar forthcoming in 2019), that it is positive to hypothesize that this has become imbued in the psyche of Pakistani policymakers. Henceforth, even if sometimes there appear to be some issues between Pakistan and China, it is unlikely that Pakistan will reverse course on its China policy. Foreign observers of Pakistan-China relations, which generally seek to explain the relationship purely from the perspective of the converging national interests of the two countries, sometimes fail to understand the deep level of consensus about Pakistan's China policy. This article, by using a constructive perspective and by examining the writings on China by Pakistani diplomats, provides a different angle to understand the relationship.

Notes

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1. One of the authors has had a chance to interview Ambassador Khan, from which he revealed that he once co-authored a book on Chinese people's commune in the 1970s, published in Bangladesh, but that book is difficult to find today. Interview with Ambassador Riaz Mohammad Khan, conducted by Pervaiz Ali Mahesar, 7 March 2018.

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