

## Early Relations and Background

Pakistan recognised the People's Republic of China in **1951**, becoming one of the first Muslim and non-communist countries to do so. Initially, relations were cautious due to Pakistan's alignment with the Western bloc and China's isolation from international politics. However, both countries gradually found common ground in their opposition to Indian dominance and their pursuit of independent foreign policies. This foundation paved the way for lasting friendship and cooperation.

## Strengthening Ties in the 1960s

The 1960s marked the **golden era** of Pakistan–China relations. The turning point came with the **Sino-Pakistan Border Agreement of 1963**, which peacefully settled their boundary disputes — a rare example of diplomacy in Asia. Pakistan also served as an intermediary between China and the United States, later helping facilitate the famous **1972 Nixon visit to Beijing**. During the 1965 Indo-Pak war, China strongly supported Pakistan politically and diplomatically, earning the reputation of being Pakistan's "all-weather friend."

## Trade and Economic Cooperation

In 1963, the two countries signed a **Trade Agreement** that boosted economic exchanges. China provided Pakistan with technical assistance, machinery, and equipment to promote industrial growth. Bilateral trade expanded rapidly, and both nations launched programmes in agriculture, science, and culture. These agreements not only strengthened economic ties but also built mutual trust and a sense of partnership that would endure for decades.

## Chinese Support on Kashmir

China consistently backed Pakistan's stance on **the Kashmir dispute**. It condemned India's actions in both the **1965 and 1971 wars** and called for peaceful settlement under the **UN resolutions**. At the international level, China used its diplomatic influence to defend Pakistan's position and criticised India's expansionist tendencies. This moral and political support further solidified Pakistan's reliance on China as a strategic ally, particularly as India drew closer to the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

## Loans and the Karakoram Highway

In the 1970s, China extended **economic loans** and **development assistance** to Pakistan. The most notable joint project was the **Karakoram Highway**, constructed between 1966 and 1978. This remarkable engineering achievement connected **Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan region** with **China's Xinjiang province**, symbolising the enduring friendship between the two nations. The highway not only improved trade and military mobility but also represented a physical and emotional bridge between the people of both countries.

## **Nuclear Cooperation and Strategic Alliance**

Under **Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's leadership**, Pakistan began pursuing a **nuclear programme** for peaceful and security purposes. China played a supportive role by providing technical expertise, scientific collaboration, and assistance in research. Although framed as peaceful cooperation, it also helped strengthen Pakistan's strategic deterrence capabilities. Over time, defence collaboration deepened through joint military exercises, technology exchange, and coordinated diplomacy in global forums. This cooperation established Pakistan–China relations as one of the strongest and most enduring partnerships in Asia.

## **Conclusion**

Pakistan–China relations evolved from cautious beginnings to a **deep, strategic partnership** built on trust, equality, and mutual interest. From the border agreement and economic collaboration of the 1960s to the infrastructure and nuclear cooperation of the 1970s, the relationship demonstrated remarkable continuity despite global shifts. China's consistent support on Kashmir, economic aid, and shared opposition to regional hegemony made it Pakistan's most reliable ally — a friendship often described as **“higher than the Himalayas, deeper than the oceans, and sweeter than honey.**