
Reviewed by
Gohar Ali Iftikhar
M.Phil Scholar
Department of History
Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan

Andrew Small’s *The China Pakistan Axis: Asia’s New Geopolitics* is a brief but meaningful account of the bilateral ties between China and Pakistan and its implications on the geopolitics of the region. Small is a British writer and currently he is working with the Asia program at the German Marshall Fund of the United States. He also contributed in the several newspapers and journals. Primarily, the book addressed the two substantial issues. First, it is an attempt to unfold the basis of China-Pakistan relations from the time of cold war until 2015 and second, it also examines the geopolitics of South Asia in the context of China-Pakistan relations.

Generally, it is considered that China-Pakistan relations are too simple and there is win, win situation. In Pakistan the narrative having some catchy metaphors is propagated among the masses that the friendship of China-Pakistan is “deeper than the ocean, higher than the Himalaya and sweeter than honey”. On the other side, in reality it is far more complicated, complex and unconventional in nature. Small traced the crucial entente of Beijing and Islamabad during 1960s. In the beginning of introduction the author labels the China-Pakistan relations as: “Pakistan is China’s Israel”. This small but decisive line sets the tone of the book. Cold War era has its own complexities and dynamics. In 1960s there was a rift between the US and China. Pakistan had played the role of mediator to established legitimate diplomatic relations between US and China. During the crisis of 1971 China supported Pakistan diplomatically,
Gohar Ali Iftikhar

In 2008, after the Mumbai attacks, China gave a clear indication to Pakistan that China would not continue the unconditional support. The point is, why Pakistan needs China’s support? Small is of the opinion that China is assisting Pakistan in upgrading their nuclear and defence capacity. The other important aspect is that China has made some major investments like Gwadar port and Karakoram Highway. Therefore China wants to expand its trade which would not be possible by excluding Pakistan. So, Pakistan-China axis revolves around the mutual interests. In international relations right and wrong has never been a question of importance rather what is important is the practical and impractical of mutual decisions and concerns. In short, Pakistan is in a state of euphoria regarding China and is over depending on China.

In the politics of South Asia, three key players are China, India and Pakistan. Both India and Pakistan are developing and growing economics and on the other hand, China is a developed economy. Therefore, without political stability and peace in India and Pakistan, it would be difficult for China to sustain its position both at regional and International level. Small argued that China aim to have decisive and dominant in the region of South Asia and India is an emerging challenge for China. Consequently, China is strengthening and assisting Pakistan mainly in the field of defence, infrastructure and economy with the motive to curtail India. Furthermore, many of the economic and strategic interests are directly linked to the Pakistan. In the recent years, Afghanistan has also emerged as an influential player in South Asia. Pakistan and Afghanistan relations are a matter of great concern for China. China is putting its utmost efforts to bridge the gulf between Pakistan and Afghanistan. As economic prosperity is directly connected with peace and stability, therefore China is playing an effective role in the talk with the Taliban. Pakistan as collaborator of China is creating tough challenges to the China's opponent due to its strategic importance. In a nutshell, China wants to create a balance of
power in South Asia by marginalizing India and strengthening Pakistan and which would ultimately beneficial for China. In the epilogue author writes:

“China-Pakistan are almost ready to step out of the shadows”.

“It is China that is behaving more and more like a normal great power, and doing so in a fashion that presents a huge opportunity for Pakistan”.

In the arena, politics, whether it is international or regional, there are no permanent friends and no permanent enemies. Predominantly, it is all about to maximize and achieve strategic objectives. In other words, politics is bargaining---you earn and you return. Andrew Small’s *The China Pakistan Axis: Asia’s New Geopolitics* is written in a lucid manner, but it is more journalistic rather than academic work. Overall, Small’s work creates a space to for new discourses and research in the context of geopolitics of South Asia. The present would be fruitful for the students of South Asian politics and international politics, academics, especially historians, political scientists and economists.