

Rattled by Quad, Pakistan PM Imran Khan Rules Out Rethink on China Ties Amid US 'Pressure'

On Tuesday, Pakistan PM Imran Khan claimed to have resisted pressure from US and other Western nations to downgrade ties with its "all-weather friend" China.

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*On Tuesday, Pakistan **PM Imran Khan** claimed to have resisted pressure from the US and other Western nations to downgrade ties with its "all-weather friend" China. Speaking exclusively to China's English-language state broadcaster China Global Television Network (CGTN), he admitted that Pakistan was rattled by the growing clout of the Quad. India, Australia, the US and Japan have formed the 'Quad' coalition to counter China's aggressive behaviour in the Indo-Pacific region.*

Weighing in on the special relationship with China, Imran Khan stated, "Whenever Pakistan was in trouble politically, internationally, when we had conflicts with our neighbour, China always stood with us. So, the people of China have a special place in the hearts of the people of Pakistan". Asserting that the bilateral ties have strengthened, he added, "And now, when you talk about the region, there is a strange great power rivalry taking place. You see, the United States is wary of China".

"What the United States has done is form this regional alliance called the Quad which is India, the US and a couple of other countries. So from that point of view, Pakistan thinks that it is very unfair for the US or other Western powers (to expect that) countries like us will take sides. Why should we take sides? We should have a good relationship with everyone," the Pakistan PM opined.

Ruling out a rethink on his country's ties with China, the 1992 Cricket World Cup-winning captain affirmed,

"If there is pressure put on Pakistan to change its relationship or downgrade its relationship with China, it won't happen. Because the relationship between Pakistan and China is very deep. And it's not just the governments, it is the people-to-people relationship. To sum up, the relationship between the two countries no matter what

pressure is put on us is not going to change.”

CPEC’s role in Pakistan-China ties

Launched in 2015, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is the flagship project of China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). It was expected to bring in massive investment from China, creating thousands of job opportunities for the people of Pakistan. When **Nawaz Sharif** was the PM, several projects were close to completion. However, Imran Khan’s regime has witnessed the stalling of the CPEC projects owing to the dire economic situation and non-cooperation of the bureaucracy due to the prevailing fear of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB).

Political instability has also hindered progress as the NAB has been regularly arresting leading opposition leaders in Pakistan. On his part, Khan has repeatedly assured that the timely completion of CPEC projects is a top priority for the Pakistan government. Recently, debt-ridden Pakistan requested Beijing to forgive debt liabilities owed to China-funded energy projects established under the CPEC.

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