

PAKISTAN AND GERMANY - 70 YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP

By
Muhammad Taimur Fahad Khan
Research Associate
Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP), ISSI

Edited by
Dr Neelum Nigar

November 24, 2021

(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)



The year 2021 marked the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Germany that commenced in 1951. In the month of October this year, bilateral relations between Pakistan and Germany were celebrated in spectacular fashion by both countries. Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs organised a flagship commemorative event on October 14, 2021 to celebrate seven decades of Pak-German relations, hosted by the Honourable Foreign Minister of Pakistan Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi.¹

Political and Diplomatic Relations

The dynamic relations between Pakistan and Germany are a cause for celebration for both countries. Since establishment, both countries have enjoyed a significantly close and diverse bond of friendship. As stated by the Ambassador of Germany to Pakistan, H.E. Bernhard Schlagheck during a public talk on October 21, 2021, Pak-German relations are good and based on mutual trust.

For Pakistan, relations with Europe in general and Germany in particular hold great historical, political, economic and socio-cultural significance. For a greater part of modern human history, Europe has remained at the core of it and Germany in turn has been the nucleus of this 'resilient'

¹ "Foreign Minister's Address on the flagship event on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of Pakistan-Germany diplomatic relations", Press Release, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan, published on October 14, 2021. <https://mofa.gov.pk/foreign-ministers-address-on-the-flagship-event-on-the-occasion-of-the-70th-anniversary-of-pakistan-germany-diplomatic-relations-14-october-2021/>

continent. According to Germany's Foreign Minister H.E. Heiko Mass, "for the last 70 years, Pakistan and Germany have been building and shaping their close and friendly political ties. These diverse ties bear witness to the solid foundation underpinning our relations".² These sentiments about Pak-German relations were reciprocated by FM Qureshi in his statement that said, "like all good long term friendships, ours has never been transactional. Our ties are underpinned by shared values of democracy, pluralism, diversity, peace and security."³

Besides sharing political and societal affinities, Pakistan and Germany have had interesting historical similarities as well. Being relatively young countries, both were founded within two years of one another (Pakistan in 1947 and Germany in 1949) following World War 2 and ensuing political realignment. Owing to the prevailing geopolitical situation and existing regional circumstances at that time, Pakistan and Germany were born under extreme duress which greatly influenced their future political and strategic discourses.

Over the course of seventy years, Pakistan and Germany have come a long way, founding a relationship grounded in mutual trust, respect and symbiotic cooperation.

The density of political relations has always remained high and is progressing uniformly. Despite COVID-19 restrictions, political exchanges continued across the board, often digitally. The 5th Session of Pakistan-Germany Strategic Dialogue that took place last year was also conducted via video conference.⁴ FM Qureshi visited Berlin in April 2021,⁵ followed by two visits of the German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas to Pakistan in 2021 (April and August).⁶

Pakistan's Army Chief General Bajwa also made an official visit to Germany in June of 2021 and met with German Army's Chief of Defence.⁷ Furthermore, last month in September, Prime Minister's Special Assistant on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam visited Berlin to sign a significant partnership

2 "Twitter Post", German Foreign Office (@GermanyDiplo), Twitter, posted on October 15, 2021.<https://twitter.com/GermanyDiplo/status/1448923472214757385?s=20>

3 "Foreign Minister's Address on the flagship event on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of Pakistan-Germany diplomatic relations", Press Release, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan, published on October 14, 2021.<https://mofa.gov.pk/foreign-ministers-address-on-the-flagship-event-on-the-occasion-of-the-70th-anniversary-of-pakistan-germany-diplomatic-relations-14-october-2021/>

4 "Pakistan-Germany hold 5th session of strategic dialogue through video conference", Associated Press of Pakistan (APP), published on September 10, 2020.<https://www.app.com.pk/top-news/pakistan-germany-hold-5th-session-of-strategic-dialogue-through-video-conference/>

5 "FM arrives in Berlin on two-day official visit", DAWN, published on April 12, 2021.<https://www.dawn.com/news/1617725/fm-arrives-in-berlin-on-two-day-official-visit>

6 Mateen Haider, "German FM arrives on two-day visit to Pakistan", The Nation, published on August 31, 2021.<https://nation.com.pk/31-Aug-2021/german-fm-arrives-on-two-day-visit-to-pakistan>

7 "Pakistan, Germany vow to enhance 'defence, security ties at all levels", Express Tribune, published on June 25, 2021.<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2307246/pakistan-germany-vow-to-enhance-defence-security-ties-at-all-levels>

agreement on climate change and green initiatives.⁸ This initiative known as Pakistan-German Climate & Energy Initiative was co-launched by Pakistan and Germany on the sidelines of UN Climate Change Conference that took place in Glasgow this year.

Warmth in Pak-German political relations can be gauged from the fact that Germany was the first country visited by FM Qureshi (physically) after the pandemic.

Pakistan and Germany also enjoy long standing military-to-military relations. Besides interactions among their militaries' top brass, Pakistan and Germany have mutual cooperation in defence and security domain including: mutual staff college attendance/exchanges; technical assistance and exchanges; and joint military drills/exercises.

In August this year, Pakistan Navy's PNS Zulfiqar visited Hamburg as part of its overseas deployment.⁹ This was followed by German Navy ship FGS BAYERN's visit to Karachi in September the following month¹⁰, besides conducting a joint naval exercise (in the same month) in the Arabian Sea along with Pakistan and the US.¹¹

Pak-German Economic Relations

On the economic front, Germany is Pakistan's largest trading partner in the European Union (EU). It continues to play an important role in Pakistan's sustainable economic and social development. In the development cooperation that began in 1961, Germany has pledged €3.8 billion in project support. As per 2019 estimates, German exports to Pakistan were worth €1.8 billion (machinery, chemical and electrical goods, motor vehicles and iron goods) while that of Pakistan to Germany amounted to €1.1 billion (textiles, leather goods, sports goods, footwear and medical instruments).

With Pakistan, Germany has a trade surplus which is a rarity. There are roughly forty German businesses represented in Pakistan with an impeccable record and reputation. Despite Pakistan being a relatively challenging market, German companies and businesses continue to invest in Pakistan, thanks to the efforts of the diplomatic missions of Pakistan and Germany.

⁸ Noman Ahmed, "Pakistan and Germany sign first-of-its-kind climate partnership", 24/7 News, published on September 13, 2021.<https://247news.com.pk/pakistan-and-germany-sign-first-of-its-kind-climate-partnership/>

⁹ "PN ship Zulfiqar visits Hamburg", DAWN, published on August 06, 2021.<https://www.dawn.com/news/1639050>

¹⁰ "German ship visits Karachi to commemorate 70 years of bilateral relations", The News, published on September 14, 2021.<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/892176-german-ship-visits-karachi-to-commemorate-70-years-of-bilateral-relations>

¹¹ "Navies of Pakistan, Germany, US hold exercise in Arabian Sea", DAWN, published on September 08, 2021.<https://www.dawn.com/news/1645137>

Germany has also played an important role in helping Pakistan acquire the GSP+ status. Without Germany's support, Pakistan could not have achieved this status which substantially helped in increasing Pakistan's exports to the EU.

Furthermore, both states have long established cultural relations that are underpinned by effective academic and scientific exchanges. German higher education institutes remain one of the most sought after study choices for Pakistani students. Currently, almost four thousand Pakistani students are studying in various German universities while there is a decent number of German students studying in multiple universities in Lahore and Karachi.

Moreover, major German social organisations such as Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom and the Hanns Seidel Foundation are all working in Pakistan and doing a remarkable job for the strengthening of democracy, promotion of human rights, education and climate change to name a few. The Pakistani Diaspora in Germany has also been playing its constructive role, all the while consistently and positively contributing to the economic development of Germany in various fields.

Conclusion

The diverse nature of Pak-German relations are a testament to the solid foundation that supports their strong ties. There is no doubt that there is great room for improvement and a lot needs to be done, especially in terms of economic cooperation and in dealing with multiple non-traditional challenges. However, the bilateral relationship is on a positive trajectory and future prospects for further improving the relationship look bright. And with the upcoming change of leadership in Germany, there is hope that Pakistan-Germany bilateral relationship will reach new heights of progress and cooperation.