



RCAS TALK

How the Political Tensions in Pakistan Affected Sino-Pakistan Relations?

Speaker:



Dr. Amjad Magsi, Institute of Belt and Road, Punjab University, Pakistan

Presenter:



Dr. Nian Peng, Director of RCAS, China

Nian Peng: Hello Professor! Thanks very much for accepting our interview. Today, we will invite Professor Amjad Magsi from the Punjab University to give us a short talk on the recent political tensions in Pakistan. So the first question is what are the main reasons of the recent political upheaval in Pakistan as we know that the prime minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan, was dismissed by the parliament recently. And a new prime minister will be elected soon. So, what are the main reasons, Professor?

Amjad Magsi: Thank you very much for inviting me and giving me this opportunity to talk to you. Basically, this was going on for quite some time in Pakistan. Even since the elections of 2018 were held, the opposition parties led by Shehbaz Sharif and People's Party, they were not accepting this and they were holding some processions and long march and something was going on. And then they were-because the government which came into power if the party of Imran Khan did not have the majority in the parliament, it has some coalition government because some kind of working relationship with some other smaller parties and with them who gave the support, they formed the government. Now, what happened that was the previous six, eight months ago, one party after the other party and then those-the allied parties of the PPA

government, they were parted from the government. And now the party of Imran Khan, they were short of the majority in the parliament. So they did not have the majority. It's a constitutional provision in Pakistani constitution that if you cannot hold 172 votes out of 342 total votes, you cannot remain the prime minister.

So this happened. The parliament vote and the Imran Khan could not secure 172 votes and that's why he was out of the government. And now today, we are having to do elections in the parliament for making new prime minister. And Shahbaz Sharif is the candidate and the other side, the Imran Khan has nominated some other person. His other party's leader, not himself, is contesting the election inside the parliament. Only the parliament members they will vote for the prime minister. Today, we are going to have the elections and the same is the case with the Punjab, which is the largest province of Pakistan. The vote is going to take place in the parliament very soon where the Shahbaz Sharif's son, Hamza, is the candidate for chief minister. So we are hoping that that elections take place very soon and this change of government will be also in the Punjab as well. Yes.

Nian Peng: So how's the situation develops in the last few months and even many years as the other countries worries about the political tensions in Pakistan? So what are your opinions on this issue?

Amjad Magsi: I think that now when the Shehbaz Sharif government there takes control they will be managing the situation because they have the experience of running the government. And they have very successfully run previous governments and in the Punjab province and in the Islamabad. So I am very hopeful that this edition will be better because the Shehbaz Sharif government and they're allied with Pakistan People's Party and they are having the largest votes in Pakistan. So I'm very much hopeful that the situation will be better in the near future because the Shehbaz Sharif government, they have very strong, as you can say, orientation with economy and the economic development has been the major contribution of their government in the previous period. And Pakistan is in dire need of economic stability at this time and we are hopeful that the PMLN and Pakistan government and with the support of Pakistan People's Party, they will be able to get Pakistan out of this economic problems. Yes.

Nian Peng: So what is US factor in the recent political tensions in Pakistan as we know that the prime minister Imran Khan claimed that they have secret letter and they want to provide some evidence to the public? So what are your opinions?

Amjad Magsi: Basically, this is kind of a politics going on in Pakistan because when Imran Khan was losing his support in the parliament, first, he tried to attack his political opponents in some other political programs. But finally, he came and he told that because the anti-American slogan is popular in Pakistan and people like this. So that's why as a political mileage, he used

this. Otherwise, the letter is not something that is big. It is a normal correspondence from the ambassador to the government which just usually takes place. When joining as ambassadors, they send their correspondence to their government and this is kind of that's why they cannot show it because this is kind of an official secret. In other words, this was kind of comments and the observations of the ambassador. It's not any letter sent by the Americans and you know that America has not been very happy with Pakistan, especially it's relation with China. Even during Nawaz Sharif government, they have been quite opposing the CPEC but they know that Shehbaz Sharif and Nawaz Sharif government, they went ahead with the China Pakistan Economic Corridor.

And they did not take into consideration the American factor. Even in 2018, when the Imran Khan government came into power, there were a lot of news. There were a lot of, you can say, things were in the air and the American, they also exercised more pressure on Pakistan regarding the Pakistan-China relations. And you know, there was some kind of slowdown in the work on the China Pakistan Economic Corridor but the Nawaz Sharif, Shehbaz Sharif government and the PMLN government, they are used to how to counter the American pressure on the CPEC. And that's why during the period of Nawaz Sharif from 2013 to 2018, we saw very successful completion, very extensive work on the CPEC and we both succeeded in completion of many projects. And some of the projects, they were partly even completed during Imran Khan government but they were started in the Sharif government.

And you know that Shehbaz Sharif, he was at that time, the chief minister of Punjab, and now he will become the prime minister. So he was himself very much personally involved in the agreements and the execution and implementation of the budgets we co-signed with the Chinese companies and China's government. So I am very hopeful that this kind of relation between China and this will grow more. And we will see new heights and with new excitement and new, you can say, energy, in the relation between Pakistan and China if Shehbaz Sharif comes into power and his son, he also takes government in the Punjab. We are hopeful that this will become good for Pakistan-China relations. More opportunities will emerge. Yes.

Nian Peng: Okay. I do agree with you that the China-Pakistan relations will have a bright future even if there is big political changes in the Pakistan. Okay. Our talk is closed and thanks very much, Professor Amjad Magsi, see you later. See you again. Bye-bye.

Amjad Magsi: One thing I want to add, if you like, that the Pakistan-China relations are basically state to state relations. There's not a lot of difference when who is in the power and who is not but you can see that because the Sharif, the CPEC, China Pakistan Economic Corridor were conceived and started when President Xi visited Pakistan. That's why I'm very much hopeful that if it coming up Sharif in the government, this Pakistan China relation will be more, you can say, on successful. Yes.

Nian Peng: Yes. I do agree with you. I think that the China-Pakistan relations will become a closer relationship in the near future no matter what changes in the both sides, China and Pakistan. So thanks very much, Professor Amjad Magsi. Thank you. See you. See you later.

Amjad Magsi: Thank you.

About Research Centre for Asian Studies (RCAS)

RCAS is a non-profit research organization focusing on the maritime issues and regional integration in the Indo-Pacific region. It is a newly-established institution founded in February 2022 by Dr. Nian Peng, Associate Professor of the School of Foreign Studies at Hainan Normal University, Haikou, China. We, at the moment, have an international research team with resident/non-resident researchers from China and other Asian states. We welcome scholars and experts who are interested in Asian affairs to join us!

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