

United States-Pakistan Relations in the backdrop of Doha Agreement

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During the cold war era, Pakistan and the United States were all-weather friends. In 1963 Pakistan inked a border agreement with China and gave 20% of undivided Kashmir to it. Since then, China and Pakistan remain all-weather friends. Their friendship is tied with the common thread of international relations and that is very simple algebra of foreign policy. It is your enemy's enemy is my friend. During the cold war era, India adopted nonaligned policy which was perceived by the United States as tilted towards Soviet Union. Due to this fact, United States remain apprehensive about India during the whole period of the cold war. In the midst of the cold war, United States was willing to bring China into their fold to weaken the communist bloc. It is strange that Soviet Union and the China both were communist but due to their thorny border conflict and trust deficit they were not good friends. Here Kautilya is correct when he stated that foreign policy is determined with the convergences of interests not on convergences of ideologies and religion. United States took the good office services of Pakistan and established high profile link with the Chinese leadership in 1971 when secretly US secretary of state, Henry Kissinger visited Beijing and both United States and China started cooperating on many issues despite their ideological differences.

In the post-cold war scenario, India adopted LPG process and it gave required momentum to Indian economy and India has also marked its presence at the global table of governance in due course. This has enhanced Pakistan status in the perception of the Chinese. China wants to be Asian hegemon and perceives India as real competitor. China wants that India should be confined into the region of South Asia only. Pakistan was more than eager to contain Indian hegemony within South Asia. Pakistan has happily agreed to become a pawn in the Chinese diplomacy to contain India within South Asia. The economic rise of India is all set to be sustainable in foreseeable future and that has also put Chinese to sustain Pakistan as a counter balance of India within South Asia.

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Important to mention here that CPEC launched as signature project of the Chinese president Xi, passes through the disputed territory of Kashmir which was ceded to China by Pakistan in 1960's illegally. Indian parliament has already passed a resolution that disputed entire Kashmir is ours and we have to take back every inch of its lands occupied by Pakistan and China illegally.

In the backdrop of WTC attack in September 2001, United States led NATO launched a full-blown war against the Taliban due to its tacit understanding with the Al-Qaeda which had taken the accountability of the terror attack on the WTC. Pakistan was under military rule led by General Pervez Musharraf. United States delivered a stern message to Pakistan in the backdrop of the WTC attack 'that you are with us or with the enemy, there is no grey area'. Pakistan took the line to be part of the US led war against the Taliban. At that point of time also, Pakistan took this painful decision only to prevent India to come closer to the United States. In the backdrop of the WTC attack, India under PM A.B. Vajpayee had declared that it is ready for all round cooperation with the United States to mitigate challenges posed by the terrorists.

Afghan Factor

It was strategically very smart move given the fact that Taliban was created by the Pakistani army and nurtured although indirectly. Pakistan provided shelter to exile Taliban government in the backdrop of 'Operation Enduring freedom'. The killing of many Taliban leaders on Pakistani soil since last two decades vindicates this point. Pakistan was perceived as part of the Afghan problem and could not be part of the solution. Pakistan wanted a weak, submissive Afghan establishment who could be used as a pawn against India and also remain breeding ground of international terrorism.

Historically any stable Afghan government have been against Pakistan and even raised the issue of the legality of the 'Durand Line' which demarcates border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. In 1893 British Empire deliberately demarcated Pakhtun belt and forced Afghanistan to accept this forcible demarcation. When partition took place in 1947 and Pakistan was created, Afghanistan took the legal line that since British has left therefore an agreement with the Britishers have not remained valid with the new creation called Pakistan. Afghan government also argued that British Empire had coerced it to accept 'Durand Line' and any international agreement signed under duress is no more valid. Afghanistan opposed Pakistani demand of plebiscite in

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Kashmir at the United Nations on the plea that it has denied the same to Pakhtuns in frontier province.

The issue of Pakhtunistan remains an apple of discord between Pakistan and Afghanistan till 1979 Soviet entry into Afghanistan. This has remained a sour factor between both countries even today. There are other factors which sustains trust deficit between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Water sharing of common waters, use of Karachi port for trade purpose by Afghanistan and ISI sustainable support to the Taliban are some of them. Since the ouster of the Taliban regime in 2001, Afghanistan has remained under relative stability. Pakistan tried since 2001 to play double role in Afghanistan. It became 'NATO ally to join international fight against the tentacles of terror but under the carpet it sustained tacit support to all sheds of terror elements who are fighting against the NATO forces.

Pakistan wanted that Afghanistan should be unstable so it can play its decisive role in an excellent manner. Ouster of the Taliban regime weakened Pakistan in Afghanistan. Since 2001 all successive Afghan governments have been cooperative with India. India has also contributed \$ 3 billiondollar since last 19 years in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. As per variety of surveys, India remains most liked countries among the Afghans due to its reconstruction projects. It has even been appreciated by eminent Pakistani security expert, Ahmed Rashid

“After 9/11 (India) found many allies (in Afghanistan) among secular and educated Pashtuns, who rejected the Taliban and were sick of ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) manipulation. India swiftly developed an extremely well-conceived aid program ... that speared Indian projects and largesse across all ethnic groups, built key infrastructure projects, set up the transport system in Kabul and contributed to important social program like health. Unlike western aid agencies, 80 percent of Indian money was actually spent on projects as Indian NGOs had low expenditures.”¹⁷

In contrast historically, AfghanistanIndia relations have been cordial. Due to its dual policy, Pakistan has become extremely unpopular and due to its huge investment of over \$3 billion, India is well-respected among all sections of Afghans. According to former Pakistani NSA, Mahmud Ali Durrani, “Hamid Karzai mistrusted us, I blame Pervez Musharraf also, Once I told Musharraf, you should invite him here, but he disagreed. He said he is a third-class chap. The Afghan people, by and large, have far greater respect for India than they have for us.”²

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Afghanistan's chief peace envoy Dr. Abdullah Abdullah said after visiting New Delhi in the second week of October 2020. that India's civil and military leaderships are supportive of an inclusive, peaceful settlement of the Afghan peace process and that Kabul's interactions with New Delhi are expected to further deepen in the coming weeks and months.³

In the last week of February 2020, much awaited peace deal has been inked between the Taliban and the United States which is intended to bring peace and stability in war torn Afghanistan. How this deal will be different from the Geneva Agreement (1988) inked between contemporary USSR and resistant forces. Geneva agreement was also intended to bring peace and stability in Afghanistan along with the withdrawal of the Soviet forces. We all know that it was utterly failed. It was failed due to the open secret that Pakistani army was not willing to allow any stability in Afghanistan and wishes to keep it volatile.

In the backdrop of the Geneva Agreement the organisation who fought against the communist left overs led by President Nazibullah was known as the Taliban. Eminent Pakistani author, Ahmed Rashid wrote a lot about this close proximity between the Taliban and Pakistani establishment. Pakistan was among only 3 global countries which gave recognition to the Taliban regime in Kabul in the backdrop of the assassination and collapse of the Nazibullah regime.

There are number of conditions which has to be abided by the Taliban and Afghan government. Of course, United States will be facilitator and guarantor of this agreement. Since the Doha deal, prevailing trends vindicates that the Taliban is partially adhered with the provisions of the deal. What will be final outcome. Peace and stability will arrive finally in war torn unfortunate Afghanistan after four decade of death and destruction or Hobbesian state of conflict will sustain for decades. How far it will be impacting strategic architecture of South Asia. It is now well-established fact that till Afghanistan will not stabilise, Pakistan could not be peaceful and stable. Stability of Afghanistan has also been connected with the global terror movements. How United States will recalibrate its policies to cope up with this new situation, it will be significant to observe. All these prevailing issues will be the mandate of this paper.

Trump Administration and Pakistan-US Relations; Early Phase

President Donald Trump in its initial phase was not positive for Pakistan. In his January 2018 tweet, President Trump lambasted Pakistan

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mercilessly. During last 19 years United States led NATO forces lost 3500 soldiers in Afghanistan and during this stipulated period, Pakistani ISI had been tacitly extended all possible support to the Taliban. It was accepted by American security leaders⁵

Right from the commencement of 'Operation Enduring Freedom' Pakistan has remained the recipient of largesse from the United States due to its participation in 'global war against terror'. Despite that it gave safe havens to Osama Bin Laden and Mullah Omar. More importantly, as the senior most US military officer in 2011, Admiral Mike Mullen, told the US Congress, the Haqqani network is a "veritable arm of the Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Agency."⁴ Pakistani military has sustained the unique Afghan policy since 1979 not to stabilize Afghanistan and use it as rear base have been its sustainable policy. Even civilian governments were unable to change any of these policies because military is all powerful in Pakistan particularly in the realm of foreign policy. In December 2014, NATO forces have started withdrawing from Afghanistan. Afghan President, Ashraf Ghani, has taken some conciliatory steps to garner Pakistani support for peace but since 2009 every year more than 2500 innocent people have been killed and Pakistani invisible hands are responsible for these deadly attacks. Right from 2009 till July 2015, 16,874 people have been killed in terror related violence;⁵from January 2015 to July 2015 alone 4,921 people have been killed which is self-explanatory. The Doha agreement was touted as the best opportunity for ending the war in Afghanistan that has cost lives of nearly 150,000 Afghans and over 2,400 American soldiers in addition to colossal economic cost of \$975 billion since launching of the 'Operation Enduring Freedom' in October 2001.⁶

President Ghani showed his will to cooperate with Pakistan but increasing number of casualties has forced him to change his mind. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani lambasted Pakistan over a recent wave of insurgent attacks in the capital Kabul that killed at least 56 people. "The last few days have shown that suicide bomber training camps and bomb-producing factories, which are killing our people are as active as before in Pakistan," Ghani told a news conference.

"We hoped for peace but we are receiving messages of war from Pakistan."⁷ President Ghani is now aware about the core motives of Pakistan.

It is crystal clear from the above indications that Pakistan is not going to permit and any real stabilization in Afghanistan and perceives it detrimental to its interests. Although it is doing lip services for peace

building but has maintained tacit understanding with the terror groups accountable for acceleration of violence in Afghanistan, including Taliban and Haqqani. This situation is creating a dangerous situation for Indian security. As I have already insisted that sustainability of 'Hobbesian State of Nature' in Afghanistan had proved negative for our security in the past, it may replicate in future as well if Pakistan-fostered terror groups will have control over power in Kabul. According to Michael Kugelman, Deputy Director, Asia Programme, and South Asia Senior Associate at the Woodrow Wilson Centre in Washington, DC, and a leading specialist on India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and their relationship with the United States, "India is a perfect security ally for the US — and an Afghan political settlement that leaves the Taliban in a position of power would be a blow to Indian strategic interests. But it would not necessarily pose as grave a security threat for India as some commentators may fear."⁸

President Trump began 2018 with a New Year day Tweet stating, *The United States has foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years. No more!*⁹. Trump threatened to block the funds and aid Pakistan was receiving from the USA. This was followed by a bill passed in Congress in February 2018 that banned all non-defence aid to Pakistan. The Trump administration decided to frame a "condition and issue based" approach, and military aid worth \$ 255 million from foreign military financing (FMF) in January 2018 was reprogrammed. Later within the same week, the entire coalition support fund (CSF) worth \$ 700 million was suspended.¹⁰ The last nail on the coffin was placing Pakistan on CPC (countries of particular concern) watch list for religious freedom violations in January 2018.¹¹ These initial actions were aimed at pushing Pakistan to do more in its operations and take decisive action against terrorist havens on its soil and the Haqqani network, which is believed to be based in Waziristan.¹²

July 2019 Imran Khan Washington Visit

However, the clock seems to have turned a full circle with the personal letter from Donald Trump to Imran Khan in December 2018, seeking cooperation of Pakistan in the Afghanistan peace process and political reconciliation. The suspension of both military and non-military aid is unlikely to have a major effect on Pakistan. According to Michael Kugelman, a leading specialist on Pakistan, aid cuts were not new in the US-Pakistan relationship and such actions had failed earlier to achieve similar objectives. Pakistan would always prefer to have a Pakistan-inclined, if not puppet, regime in Afghanistan and hence would

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not give in to such periodic pressures such as aid cuts or suspension¹³. Hasan Askari Rizvi, a Pakistanist strategic thinker, commented that such actions would hurt both sides as USA only talked about terrorism emanating from Pakistan side and Pakistan talked of taking actions against Taliban sitting in Afghanistan.¹⁴

In February 2019, CRPF convoy was targeted by the terrorists and Pakistan based JeM took the responsibility. India took the revenge within weeks and targeted JeM training centre based at Balakot. Balakot is in Khyber Pakhtunbah province and this aerial attack was only maiden attack after 1971 Indo-Pak war. United States NSA, John Bolton had stated that India has the right to retaliate and US supports India in its fight against terrorism. According to Munir Akram, Pakistan's representative in the United Nations General Assembly

“Pakistan is near if not in the eye of the brewing Sino-US storm. Neutrality is not an option for Pakistan. The US has already chosen India as its strategic partner to counter China across the ‘Indo-Pacific’ and South Asia. The announced US South Asia policy is based on Indian domination of the subcontinent. Notwithstanding India's trade squabbles with Donald Trump, the US establishment is committed to building up India militarily to counter China.

On the other hand, strategic partnership with China is the bedrock of Pakistan's security and foreign policy. The Indo-US alliance will compel further intensification of the Pakistan-China partnership. Pakistan is the biggest impediment to Indian hegemony over South Asia and the success of the Indo-US grand strategy. Ergo, they will try to remove or neutralise this ‘impediment’.”¹⁵

Pakistani PM Imran Khan visited Washington in July 2019 and met United States president Trump. President Trump wrote a letter to PM Khan in early part of 2019 seeking Pakistan's support for a peace deal with the Taliban to bring peace and stability in Afghanistan. Imran Khan met president Trump again in September 2019 at New York for United Nations annual conclave. This meeting held in the backdrop of repeal of article 370 from Kashmir. President Trump pledged for conditional mediation offer on Kashmir if India also agrees. It was major demand of Imran Khan. Imran Khan government even failed to garner support from the Muslim countries of the Middle East on Kashmir and even at the midst of the crisis, UAE conferred highest honour of the nation award to PM Modi.

President Trump also met PM Modi many times and last one was his solo visit of India in February 2020. Pakistan burnt all available

diplomatic oil to convince the Americans to manage few hours stop over by President Trump in Islamabad during this visit but Americans declined to entertain this request.

Within days after President Trump successful New Delhi visit, United States inked a deal with the Taliban to bring peace and stability in Afghanistan. This deal has to be implemented now and many steps has to be taken by both the parties but due to outbreak of Chinese virus (Corona), process has been slowed down. President Trump had pledged during 2016 presidential election campaign that he will withdraw US army from Afghanistan. United States led NATO has lost over 3500 soldiers in Afghanistan since 2001 till date and also invested \$ 1 trilliondollar. Previous experience vindicates that Pakistan had played the spoiler role and time will tell us that how far it is going to contribute positively or negatively in bring peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Post Doha Agreement Scenario

In the last week of February 2020, an agreement was inked between the Taliban and the United States at Doha to bring peace and stability in Afghanistan. Both parties gave assurances to each other. United States pledged the release of 5000 Taliban fighters from Afghan prison and in return the Taliban will release 1000 Afghan soldiers from their control. This provision has been almost completed. There are also many conditions regarding intra Afghan dialogue etc. both Afghan government and Taliban has started the dialogue to complete the conditions mentioned in Doha agreement.

American interlocutor ZilmayKhalilzad in his interview with TOLA news praised Pakistan, saying that “they encouraged the Taliban to sit at the negotiation table with the Afghan government” and that “they helped the Taliban to come from there (Pakistan) and pushed them in a meeting that Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and we were in; they emphasised this and promised to cooperate in preparing the Taliban to sit at the negotiation table with the Afghan government”.¹⁶

According to the editorial of prestigious Pakistani daily ‘Dawn’

“The fact is that unless there is intra-Afghan understanding and reconciliation — both between the Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah blocs, as well as the Afghan government and the Taliban — IS and other militant groups that do not believe in the political process will be

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free to spread havoc. That is why a lasting peace agreement between various Afghan factions is essential. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was in Kabul in March 2020 to try and patch things up between the two factions, but had to fly back to Washington without achieving much. Unfortunately, the power struggle playing out currently in Kabul does not offer much hope. President Ghani and his chief rival Mr Abdullah has agreed to share power together in May 2020. Pompeo announced a cut of \$1bn in aid to Afghanistan as 'punishment', which is sure to hurt the cash-strapped country.¹⁷ Both factions agreed to cooperate after this threat.

Pakistan's Double Game

Since December 1979 when red army (Soviet) entered into Afghanistan, Pakistan has sustained the double game as far as Afghanistan is concerned. It wishes to keep Afghanistan submissive and weak so it could control it through puppet regimes. The ultimate motto of this policy has been to sustain the dominance of the army and play the game of 'Strategic Depth' against India in Afghanistan. It is historically correct that whenever there was stable government in Afghanistan it has negated Pakistani influence and nurture cordial relations with India. It has been extremely painful for the Pakistani army. We all know that Pakistani army is the real boss of foreign policy. Civilian transition has also been unable to break this dominance. When Benazir Bhutto took over in December 1988, then COAS, General Aslam Beg took three assurances from her where her government will respect military's autonomy. These issues were; Kashmir, Nuclear issue and Afghan issue.¹⁸ An American military investigation about Pakistan's double game came out with the conclusion in 2010

"The evidence is unequivocal that the government of Pakistan and the military leadership of Pakistan aids and abets (militant) sanctuaries. we have clear evidence to that fact. That's the reality. It's not a question of unable or unwilling."¹⁹ Haqqani network has been detrimental for the US led NATO forces in Afghanistan but it also has been alleged to conspire attack on US soil including the WTC in 2001. According to former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (US) Admiral Mike Mullen 'Haqqani network acts a veritable arm of Pakistan's Inter -Services Intelligence Agency has proven particularly destructive to US interests.'²⁰ Why Pakistan has been addicted to the double game despite gamut of pledge as all-weather friendship with the United States. Pakistan sustained this mischievous game due to certain inherent mindset. Pakistan's military establishment believe a unified and unfriendly Afghan

government might be tempted to 1- stir unrest among Pakistan's restive Pashtun population, 2- invite a greater role for India, which Pakistan believes is determined to encircle and dismantle it; and 3- challenge the legitimacy of the Durand Line, the Afghanistan-Pakistan border that no Afghan government has recognised, including the Taliban government of the 1990's. that is the ultimate reason of the army hatred against India. The United States gave over \$ 25 billion different aids to Pakistan since the launching of 'Operation Enduring Freedom' in October 2001. The arrival of Donald Trump in the white house and his candid threat to Pakistan has also not resulted into positive action. As long-time Pakistan watchers predicted, the Administration 's warning fell on deaf ears. ' No , I haven't seen any change yet in (Pakistan's) behaviour," General John Nicholson, America's top military commander in Afghanistan, admitted in November 2017. Instead, Pakistan returned to a familiar playbook of deflection, denial, conspiracy, and outright military threats.²¹ If president Trump "wants Pakistan to become a graveyard for US troops , let him do so." the chairman of Pakistan's Senate warned in August 2017. After US Ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley insisted Pakistan's game is not acceptable to this administration." A Pakistani military spokesman explained that Haley is of Indian origin and the 'current misunderstanding between Pakistan and the United States is created by India."²²

The IS-Haqqani cell was also behind a rocket attack that targeted the swearing-in ceremony of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, the intelligence agency said. The members of the cell had also killed several Afghan officials and fired rockets at Bagram, the US military's largest base in Afghanistan, the NDS said. Afghan officials have long accused the Haqqani network of carrying out major attacks claimed by or blamed on IS-K. this nexus also attacked on a Sikh temple April 2020 at Kabul and killed over 25 people.

According to an Afghan security official "There is undeniable evidence showing a strong link and cooperation between the Haqqani network and IS,".²³

In May 2020, Taliban killed many people including new born babies in an attack on the maternity hospital based at Kabul. In the backdrop of the Doha agreement, Afghan government has started to release Taliban prisoners as agreed in the agreement and the Taliban has to reciprocate. Once scare of corona virus will be finished, we will have ample amount of suspicion that Pakistan will really cooperating to build peace and stability in Afghanistan. Previous behaviour of the all-powerful Pakistani establishment indicates that Pakistan will never allow Afghanistan to

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stabilise. In post corona scenario, if Pakistan will be too much weak then it will be different situation otherwise its intention is to not allow peace and stability in Afghanistan. It is another reality that a stable Afghanistan could be positive for Pakistan but army is unable to understand this crystal-clear reality writing on the wall just to sustain its dominance over the power system. Corona virus has struck almost entire world and Pakistan is also one of the severetargets. Pakistan has negligible health infrastructure. Instead of arranging adequate equipment's to contain the Chinese virus, Pakistan has increased cross border infiltration in Kashmir. It believes that once NATO forces will be ejected from Afghanistan, it will be able to shift these terrorists to Kashmir and rest parts of India. It is not a new project but very old one of the Pakistani army. After the withdrawal of the Soviet army in 1990, Pakistani army did the same thing and one can recall the maiden resurgent terror activities in the Kashmir at that point of time

According to Ayesha Siddika eminent Pakistani security analyst 'even after the Kashmir issue is resolved, Indo-Pak relations is not going to be normal.²⁴General Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan's former military ruler, is on record saying that even if the Kashmir issue is resolved, India-Pakistan relations will not improve. Musharraf was telling the unvarnished truth.

The Pakistani motivation — at least for fundamental elements and the army - is *Gazwa e Hind*, (conquest of India), and not just 'liberation' of Kashmir. Army believes that it will be able to conquer India. They are using social media platforms to spread communal harmony in India and exploit the situation to defame it. In last week of May 2020, Pakistan moved motion against India in OIC United Nations groups to held India accountable for resurgent Islamophobia but denied by Maldives, UAE and Saudi Arabia. Even Malaysia supported India although indirectly. In the backdrop of the abrogation of article 370 from Kashmir, Malaysia was one of the leading harbingers against India.

The LeT is a virtual arm of the Pakistani military. Many conservative elements in Pakistan believe it is their religious duty to work for *Gazwa e Hind*. The ultimate goal of the Pakistani army has been to sustain the turbulent Indo-Pak relations and it keeps doing incidents which keeps status quo in this regard. Since inception, political Islam has been extremely powerful in Pakistan and Mullahs have also become more than willing partner of the Pakistani army in this project.

Saudi Arabia top clerics have appealed Muslims at the global level to offer their prayers from their homes in the backdrop of prevailing

Chinese virus which has consumed over 395 thousand people so far²⁵ but Pakistani clerics have been successful to succumb fragile Imran Khan government and govt. has agreed that prayers will be organised in mosques. Needless to say, that in the backdrop of the Chinese virus scenario, it is disastrous but Khan government is so mimic that they could not resist clerics even for most urgent matters.

“In the light of this persistent motivation, it is not unlikely that elements like the LeT may see the fight against the coronavirus as an opportunity of a lifetime.”²⁶

In April 2020, a Sikh gurdwara was attacked at Kabul resulted into the killing of over 30 people including four terrorists. Afghan officials and media adopted a harsh tone against Pakistan after the attack on a Sikh gurdwara in Kabul by the militant Islamic State group. Afghan intelligence arrested IS commander Aslam Farooqi. Afghanistan vice president and former intelligence chief Amrullah Saleh accused Pakistan of supporting the IS, and tweeted that the capture of the IS leader would prove to be a ‘treasure of intelligence’ on Pakistan.²⁷

Taliban has not kept the words for which they had agreed and frequently attacking Afghan security forces after the Doha agreement. The Taliban have killed at least 23 Afghan troops and nine civilians, as a fresh wave of violence grips Afghanistan despite a deal with the US and a worsening coronavirus crisis.²⁸

The outbreak of the corona virus has further aggravated the situation. Huge number of people are getting infected from this deadly virus. Due to weak health system, Afghan system is unable to contain it. If this virus infection will spread then situation will be going out of control and US forces exit may also be advanced. This is precisely the strategy of the Taliban and its bosses based in Rawalpindi. Pakistan army believes that they will capture the power and after throwing Ghani administration, Taliban will establish ‘Nizam A- Mustafa’ and Pakistan will be ultimate boss and it will increase their ‘strategic depth’ in Afghanistan against India.

Chinese Factor

In the backdrop of Pulwama terror attack (February 2019), India demanded that since JeM has taken the accountability of the carnage therefore he should be handed over to India which Pakistan refused. India took the matter to the United Nations where minus China all four permanent members of the Security Council supported Indian demand.

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China put deliberate blockage but finally yielded to global opinion and JeM chief Masood Azhar was included in the list of global terrorists. Pakistan was also put under FATF 'grey list' and its next meeting is due in June 2020. Repeal of article 370 from Kashmir was a master stock of Modi govt to finish Kashmir tango forever. Pakistan make it biggest diplomatic issue ever in history and sought support from the global community. China has started CPEC which will connect Kashgar from western China to Gwadar of western Pakistan in 2011. Pakistan also ceded huge territory to China of undivided Kashmir. CPEC passes through it and it was one of the serious reasons of India's opposition to OBOR.

Pakistan had unprecedented hope from its all-weather friend China on Kashmir particularly after the repeal of article 370. After Pakistani foreign minister Beijing visit in August 2019 in the backdrop of scrapping of article 370, joint statement stressed "China recognizes that the Kashmir dispute must be properly resolved "based on the UN Charter, relevant UN Security Council resolutions and bilateral agreement".²⁹ It was normal statement and in the backdrop of Kashmir saga, Chinese president Xi came India for 2nd summit level talk with PM Modi in October 2019. It was a great reminder to Pakistan that China has its own limitations to oppose India and Pakistan could not force China beyond a level.

According to eminent strategic thinker Pervez Hood-boy, Pakistan status at the global stage has reduced a lot

"Third, patrons have their own interests. To call a friendship higher than the Himalayas, deeper than the oceans, and stronger than steel may be good poetry. But patrons act after a cold calculation of losses and gains. China's silence on Kashmir and its climb-down in May at the United Nations on Masood Azhar's blacklisting shows just how carefully it weighs things. Saudi Arabia, on which Pakistan pins its hopes, went along with India."³⁰

The editorial comment of the prestigious Pakistani daily 'Dawn' comments vindicated Pakistan's isolation on this issue.

"The crisis in India-held Kashmir could trigger global consequences, yet the world has not responded to Pakistan's urgent exhortations with the level of robustness as situation warrants. Instead of full-throated condemnation, there is a language of equivocation.

Indeed, some countries, most notably US and UAE, have even gone along with India's brazenly false assertion that stripping Kashmir, an

internationally recognised disputed territory, of its special status is an “internal matter”. Saudi Arabia’s bland reaction thus far avoids expressing any opinion whatsoever.”³¹

Despite Pakistan’s all round mobilization and British Member of Parliament protest, United Arab Emirates has conferred its highest national award to PM Modi. Pakistani diplomacy has been frustrated after it. It is vindicated with the following statement of Pakistani foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi³²

“International relations are above religious sentiments. The UAE and India have a history of relations in connection with investment. However, I will soon have a meeting with the UAE foreign minister to inform him about the prevailing situation in India-held Kashmir,” he said while responding to media queries regarding the grant of the UAE’s highest civilian award to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.”

This statement also vindicates that Pakistan’s appeal even within the Muslim world has reduced to bare minimum and these countries are also not taking interest in Pakistani version of the Kashmir saga.

Post corona virus scenario has narrowed down prospects of even modest economic development of developing countries. Pakistan is going to one of the worst hit due to this pandemic. During 2019-23, economic analysts estimate that Pakistan needs to pay about \$40 billion as interest on its external debt.³³ In the aftermath of Covid-19, declining foreign exchange earnings and rapid capital outflows, already under way, will severely constrain Pakistan’s ability to service its debt when debt-service payments peak later in the year. This prevailing status will reduce the bargaining power of Pakistan and it will be further vulnerable for arm twisting from the United States and other important international powers.

Concluding Remarks

Sino-Pakistan relations have further depended in the backdrop of the post-cold war. I believe that one of the silent reason responsible for Ladakah standoff (May-June 2020) have been to assure Pakistan that Chinese will not allow India to harass Pakistan further after the abrogation of article 370.

Growing Indian profile at the global table of governance has further complicated the matter. United States -India bilateral relations have also become cordial and has got bipartisan support in Washington DC and New Delhi. President Trump administration has further emboldened

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the concept of 'Indo-Pacific' and underlined growing Indian role to ensure compliance of the international laws. President Trump February 2020 New Delhi visit has further consolidated the process. In May 2020, president Trump has proposed the expansion of G-7 and include India as one of the new members. It has put China within the situation akin to the 'Prisoners Dilemma'. This has compelled to the Chinese to stich cooperative security structure within Asia. India and China bilateral trade has also gone up to \$ 85 billion which is much higher than Sino-Pak trade of \$ 15 billion in 2019. United States has bifurcated its Pakistan policy from its India policy despite Afghan situation and that has taught a diplomatic lesson to Pakistan that it has less strategic appeal for the United States in South Asia. Indian economy has seven round bigger than Pakistani economy and it is expected to be sixteen round bigger by 2030.³⁴China has also learnt from this unfolding situation and trying to address Indian concern although tacitly. Given the prevailing turbulence security architecture of Asia, it can be safely stated that Pakistan-China relations will be smooth and all set to grow further in post corona system but it has own limitations as far as India is concerned. In the meanwhile, deepening Indo-US relations are all set to strengthen this process.

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