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# Preface

The state of Pakistan met with a new history in May 2018. Second time since independence an elected government has successfully transferred the power to another elected majority party through internationally monitored election. This occasion is a matter of pleasure and great satisfaction for a country which has been ruled by army almost half of its existence. At the same time, it is a matter of pleasure for the international community because Pakistan and Afghanistan remain den of international terrorism and this smooth democratic transition of power could be detrimental for all serious problems Pakistan face today, at least in perception. The focal question here is that; Does newly elected PTI government has political will power to solve the terrorism related issues? It is one of the most pertinent research questions of this issue as well.

In the backdrop of Pulwama terror attack which was executed by the JeM, and Indian retaliation in Balakot in February 2019, eminent Pakistani Journalist, Zahid Hussain stated

“Where the JeM is concerned, this outlawed group has been blamed for militant attacks across the LoC including the one on the Pathankot airbase three years ago. There were claims of a crackdown on the madressahs allegedly run by the group then but afterwards this action seemed to have petered out. The group has come into international focus once again in the latest Pakistan-India military stand-off”.<sup>1</sup>

“Any arbitrary decision about mainstreaming militancy could be extremely damaging. Allowing the banned groups to turn into political parties would be a dangerous move. There has to be a process through which the former jihadis are strictly scrutinised before being reintegrated into society. The success of the latest operation depends on whether we have learnt any lessons from our past policy failures”.<sup>2</sup>

This statement is self-explanatory and indicating that PTI government has not been serious to deal with the terror networks. After November 2008 Mumbai terror attack also, Pakistan pledged to take action but after few months all suspected terror leaders were free to propel their nefarious agenda. Even just after 2001 Parliament attack, it was the course of action taken by Pakistan.

In 2018 election, Pakistan Tehrik-a-Insaf (PTI) emerged victorious and has got 181 seats in the National Assembly of 342 (including reserved seats for women & minorities) . Imran Khan has become Prime Minister of the country.

The ruling Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) was ousted due to non performance mainly but there are other factors which proved detrimental for the electoral marginalization of the PML-N. However, the PPP has retained its stronghold of Sindh province and got some additional national assembly seats in Punjab as well and overall enhanced its number as compared to 2013 election. In 1997 election PML-N had two third majorities and the PPP had been reduced to merely 19 NA seats. In May 2018 election the PPP has secured 53 (Including reserved seats for women and the minorities) National Assembly mostly from the Sindh province but with its strong presence in the Senate. The PPP has also sustained its provincial government third time in row since 2008. The PPP shall remain important power for consensual democratic governance. In Kyber-Pakhtunwah province the ruling Pakistan Tehrik-A-Insaf( PTI) has emerged single largest party again. It has also emerged as single largest party in politically important Punjab province although by a narrow margin formed provincial government and by an alliance in Baluchistan with like-minded regional parties.

How far this electoral mandate will be transforming in action, be it is India, America, Afghanistan, military, mullah, nuclear safety; welfare compliance. As of now just after 8 months of PTI rule, it is very tough to make any judgment. PTI leader Imran Khan has pledged a 'Naya Pakistan' and insisted to ensure the compliance of welfare state. These issues will be properly investigated in this issue.

### **Strong Federal Structure is Good for Pakistan**

Pakistan was bifurcated in 1971 only due to unitary nature of the governance. The 18th Amendment has indeed been the most radical step in turning the country into a federation in line with the 1973 Constitution.

Asif Ali Zardari led PPP government was instrumental to ensure cooperative federalism and thus implemented salient features of 1973 constitution. Unanimously adopted by parliament in 2010 after two years of deliberations by a parliamentary committee that was represented by all the major parties, the 18th Amendment virtually overhauled the 1973 Constitution. The amendment includes 102 important articles and has made the 1973 Constitution more democratic.

It struck down the 17th Amendment imposed by Gen Musharraf's government that had undermined parliament and democratic procedure. It returned the powers from the president to the parliament by removing Article 58(2)(b) that gave the power to sack an elected Prime Minister. In another terms this amendment ensures the democratic procedure in principle.

There is prevailing debate within PTI circle to repeal 18<sup>th</sup> amendment. It has been opined that present economic crisis is due to this amendment. PTI must take some lessons from history and sustain federal structure in the format ensured by the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment. The inherent message of the mandate is to strengthen the democratic process. If PTI is scrapping 18<sup>th</sup> amendment then the allegation of its manoeuvring with the army will come true.

### **Alarming Situation**

At this juncture of time Pakistan is not only confronting with gamut of odds but also facing the alarming situation. The entire surroundings of Pakistan have remained volatile (Minus India). Pakistan-Afghanistan still remains as the global leader of terror export. According to variety of sources since the assassination of former PM Benazir Bhutto in December 2007 till December 2018 more than 90,000 civilian and security personnel have already lost their precious lives in Pakistan. Pakistan use to keep Afghanistan under its own suzerainty since last many decades and it resulted into unbearable violence. It is needless to say that the withdrawal of the NATO led forces have further pushed Afghanistan towards Hobbesian state of nature. Due to prevailing violence, 4,000 civilians lost their precious lives in Afghanistan only in 2018. Already Tehrik-A-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has threatened the writ of the state since last many years and intended to sustain the process till the rule of the Prophet will not established over Pakistan. Needless to say, that terrorists fighting in Afghanistan and against Indian forces in India are monitored by the Pakistani army. Imran Khan has to break this nexus otherwise his slogan of 'Naya Pakistan' will remain on paper only.

Although military professional reputation has been dented by the sustainability of internal threats but it has been able to safeguard their interests through hypothetical threats. Sectarian violence is also on rampage and over 20,000 thousand people have been killed. The health of the economy has also been critical and need special treatment at urgent basis. The situation in Baluchistan is also critical and threatening the unity of the country. The situation in financial hub Karachi is not

much better and every year huge number of people are killed by rival groups.

It is an uphill task to cope with the prevailing situation. PML-N had two third majority in its second regime (1997-1999) but it could not change the game and thrown out of power by the military. Challenges are so grim that it requires plenty of remedies to cope with the situation. First of all, Imran Khan must understand reconciliation policies from former President Zardari and emulate it. Nawaz Sharif had signed Charter of Democracy (CoD) with Benazir Bhutto in May 2006, when both were in exile in London along with other parties. Sharif has given due respect not to cross decency line while in opposition but it must also be reflected from Imran Khan policies when he is in power. Imran Khan is known for not attending parliamentary session, he must differentiate between remaining in opposition and remaining in power. Imran Khan must understand that strengthening of democratic process will only be able to embolden the process of the welfare state and really help him to create 'Naya Pakistan' as he had pledged during his election campaign. Imran Khan must forge a working relationship with all opponents and pursues the things accordingly. Since last 8 months it has been observed that he is not willingly attending parliamentary proceedings and therefore undermined the democratic process. The threatening language of Imran Khan and his cabinet members for the opposition leaders is bound to dent democratic process. It has been extremely popular allegation against the PTI that 2018 election was managed by the army because it was not willing to the return of Nawaz Shairf led PML-N or PML-N and the PPP alliance. PTI must shed this perception while taking cooperation from the opposition while dealing serious national issues.

For India/America and Afghanistan Imran Khan must be extremely cautious and does not need to confront the military. He needs to take military in confidence before taking crucial steps. In post Pulwama/Balakot unfolding of events he took military in confidence and acted swiftly to de-escalate the looming war climate. Interestingly present Chief of the Army Staff, General Bajwa is going to retire in November 2019 and may try for another term so military tacit understanding with PTI government could not be sustainable after November 2019. Pakistan is going through the worst crisis of history in terms of economic growth, it may also be a important reason of army cooperation with PTI government in post Balakot crisis. Since last four decades Pakistan has witnessed the devastation of Afghan war on its own soil. Stability and autonomy of Afghanistan is in the larger interests of Pakistan and it

must be reflected by Imran led PTI government policies. Imran Khan must understand that till Afghanistan will not stabilize it will also sustain bloodshed in Pakistan.

The successive PPP and PML-N governments had already given much needed twist to India-Pakistan relations despite the deadly intervention of many terror attacks right from 2008 Mumbai terror attack to 2019 Pulwama. Imran must pursue the same formula. Pakistan and India must emulate India-China model where thorny issue of boundary has not been resolved despite 21 rounds of high voltage negotiations but economic relationship is quite well. They can keep Kashmir issue like that and must go ahead in another cooperative arena. On 14 February 2019, Pulwama terror attack has taken place which consumed 44 CRPF jawans. On 26<sup>th</sup> February, Indian Air Force targeted Balakot, the largest training center of the Jaish-E-Mohammad, which has taken the responsibility of the Pulwama attack. According to gamut of sources over 300 terrorists were eliminated during this attack. Next day Indian Air Force had a dogfight with the Pakistani F-16 and subsequently both had been crashed. Indian pilot, Abhinandan has been ejected towards Pakistan occupied Kashmir. Abhinandan was released within 48 hours and that has eased the tension but relations remained turbulent.

The Pak-U.S relationship has been dented a lot since the elimination of Bin Laden in May 2011 from Abbottabad. It has exposed the double game of the Pakistani military. The year 2019 will be crucial for both Pakistan and America. Imran Khan government must remember that pursuance of military agenda is all set to embolden prominence of the army and reduce the role of the civilian government. These are the issues which will determine Pak-U.S relationship in foreseeable future.

Pakistan is at the crossroads of destiny. Its geo-strategical location could put it as emerging economy. Since 1947, it has not utilized its geographical and demographical leverage for its all-round development. In its landmark report, Pakistan@100: Shaping the Future, the World Bank projects two scenarios. One would take Pakistan to a \$2 trillion economy by the year 2047, placing the country in the middle-income Second World group. This is a highly optimistic scenario that requires the country to achieve sustainably high economic growth rates for approximately the next three decades.

“The second scenario is extremely depressing. Failing to change the country will cause it to slide further into the abyss of poverty. Pakistan today is standing at a crossroads and, as the report warns, decisions over the next decade will decide Pakistan’s future. It all depends on

whether we are willing to change the extractive nature of the state institutions that mainly serve the interests of a small ruling elite, and so remove the fetters that prevent the country from embarking on the path of economic growth and social progress.”<sup>3</sup>

If Imran government will be able to foster average to good relations with India and U.S as well as Afghanistan, it will be moving towards the first prediction of the world bank which is quite positive. PTI slogan of ‘Naya Pakistan” will remain only slogan if it does not accommodate all regional aspirations at the domestic level.

In first week of April 2019, Imran Khan government inducted former intelligence bureau chief, Ijaz Shah , who allegedly aided Osama Bin Laden in Pakistan, as minister for parliamentary affairs. The move has put the Imran government and the opposition, especially the Pakistan People’s Party, (PPP) at odds as ex-PM, Benazir Bhutto had alleged that Shah was among the people who had hatched conspiracy to kill her.<sup>4</sup> It is further vindicating the charge of the opposition that Imran Khan is ‘selected’ rather elected prime minister. This appointment is indicating that Imran government is working under the dictates of all-powerful military establishment.

The mandate of 2018 is a clear message for Imran. This mandate is for welfare democratic regime. If Imran government will work under the duress of the military establishment then they will not be fulfilling the aspirations of the masses and in longer terms it will pave the path to another spell of military dictatorship.

Only mainstreaming regional aspirations will ensure domestic success of the government. It will also helpful to contain sectarian violence which has emerged as serious menace. Baluch situation is beyond the debate of autonomy therefore it needs special care. Economic situation also connected by and larger from these policies and its compliance. Needless to say, that challenges are of Himalayan size but better policies with the strong will power could ensure better result for Pakistan. It is a situation which demand durable action of the nature of now or never style. Given the power structure of Pakistan, army role in this process will be indispensable. Till date, army has not perceived it. The 2018 mandate has given an opportunity, Imran Khan led PTI must seize this opportunity and must move towards positive and accommodative agenda.

**Sudhir Singh**

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# 2018 General Elections in Pakistan: Attenuation of Peace Process in Afghanistan

Alok Kumar Gupta & Vandana Mishra

## Introduction

Afghanistan today is a crossroads of the national interests of US, Russia, Pakistan, India, Iran, and China. Ever since Taliban took over the reins of Afghanistan, the internal situation in Afghanistan has been shattered and political institutions devastated with peace being a far cry for the people. It has been facing several challenges since then. Today it is the battle ground for settling political scores of major regional and global players. Taliban being the brainchild of Pakistan, the state of Pakistan gains a huge leverage in any peace process in Afghanistan. Afghanistan which is often termed as 'graveyard of empires' has been facing turmoil over the last four decades. It has provided Pakistan extraordinary strategic gains and imposed huge political costs. Pakistan's room for strategic manoeuvre with India has grown or shrunk along with its political fortunes in Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup>

It is in this backdrop that a new political dispensation has come to power in Pakistan promising the people of Pakistan a "New Pakistan" (*Naya Pakistan*), where justice in all walks of nation's life would prevail, even though it may be easier said than done. Pakistan underwent its General Elections the most controversial so far in the country's democratic history for recurring direct and indirect interference by the powerful military. The 'deep state' within Pakistan has always been an 'invisible hand' that has been often termed by some observers and political analysts as 'creeping coup'. Pakistan has been governed by direct military rule for almost half of its 70 years of existence as an independent state. The other half has customarily witnessed the Army's bid to ensure that its preferred players run the civilian government, guaranteeing that military leadership maintains its stranglehold over policymaking.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, Pakistan democracy has been largely hostage to its Army in one way or the other since it came into existence in 1947. It has either been directly governed by Army through usurpation of

power or through military stooges which were largely designed to cut popularly elected civilian leaders down to size. This makes it obvious under given military dominance over political leadership in Pakistan; how far the new leadership would be instrumental towards playing a role of its own choice in the peace process of Afghanistan.

However, with the rise of Imran Khan, a former Cricketer as Prime Minister of Pakistan there has been a new and unexpected dynamism in the international diplomacy on Afghanistan. His rise has added another dimension to the unfolding diplomatic drama that puts Taliban back at the center stage within the political and diplomatic parleys in Afghanistan.<sup>3</sup> It is in this backdrop of last elections in Pakistan and imperatives for peace in Afghanistan that the authors have made an endeavor to decipher the implications of new political dispensations in the peace process of Afghanistan. Authors have also tried to explore a different dimension of the role of Pakistan thus far and prospects of peace in the future under the 'New Pakistan'.

### **How July 25, 2018 election was different?**

The 13<sup>th</sup> General Elections that took place on July 25, 2018 in Pakistan were different in many senses: Firstly, unlike the past where military used to pack elected governments through direct interference or pick and choose by acting behind the scenes, this time it was the top judiciary and the accountability department—the National Accountability Bureau (NAB)—standing in the front row and believed to be targeting some, while sparing others.<sup>4</sup> The country's top brass has a long history of intervening in Pakistani democracy. Pakistan's generals have run the nation several times over the past seven decades; and when they are not in power, they have exerted control from outside over foreign policy, the economy, and local politics.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, prima facie it seems that the military may not have been instrumental this time like the way it used to be earlier. Therefore, independence autonomy in decision-making may be available to the new government of Imran Khan in an increased manner.

Secondly, Nawaz Sharif's vendetta with the military on issues pertaining to relations with India and Afghanistan and his objections to the security establishment's policy regarding armed networks and groups made him a *persona non grata* for the military.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, this is a new dynamic that has emerged in the political process of Pakistan. The political party of Nawaz Sharif that was detested by military establishment was defeated and most probably at the behest of defence establishment. One may conclude that army may have been more interested in

facilitating the exit of Nawaz Sharif than ensuring the victory of Imran Khan.

Thirdly, the armed forces were staying behind the country's top judiciary to keep the pressure on Sharif and his close associates.<sup>7</sup> Though according to some media reports Judiciary too made its efforts to keep the top brass in check and did not allow to influence and intervene in the judicial process against Nawaz. It makes it obvious again a new dynamic where Judiciary was being supported by military establishment to make sure that Nawaz Sharif is shunted out finally from the political process within Pakistan.

Fourthly, this time a new kind of political leadership has assumed power in Pakistan. The new leader is not a seasoned politician, but a widely acclaimed cricketer and a celebrity in his own right. History is a witness of the fact that when in 1996 Imran Khan launched his party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) translated as 'Movement for Justice' no one would have predicted that 20 years down the line, his party would be forming a government in 2018. However, the party as well as its leader Imran Khan continued to raise the aspirations of the people of Pakistan that one day Imran would change the face of Pakistani politics by rooting out corruption from its ranks. Therefore, his winning was unprecedented and largely unexpected. His rise to highest post within the political set up of Pakistan is a new happening with the promise of a 'New Pakistan' for which the regional and global actors will have to wait and watch.

Sixthly, the new Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan justified the Taliban's war against the United States military in Afghanistan. This notion of Imran has led to allegation that he and his party is the beneficiary of the military's manipulation and that he is seen as the military's favoured candidate. Imran has vociferously denied this allegation saying, "When you have poor-quality leadership without moral standing, you have a void and someone will always fill it." He said it in an interview referring to the military's track record of coups and political interference.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, to what extent Imran Khan will be able to exercise his autonomy in decision-making without taking any dictates from the Army, the world and other stakeholders will have to wait and watch especially in the Afghanistan peace process. This is more so in view of the fact that former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had run afoul with the military early on by trying to assert control over foreign and defence policy, which is seen as the army's domain. He also tried to improve ties with India, opposed the military's embrace of the terrorist groups. This led to not only his exit from Prime Minister's office but he was also jailed and had to proceed in exile. He finally lost

the July 2018 General Elections.<sup>9</sup>

Last but not least, this election marked the third consecutive transition of power from one civilian government to another. This is a great success story from Pakistani standard as it signalled the strengthening of democracy within Pakistan. Democracy in Pakistan has always remained vulnerable to military takeover.<sup>10</sup> Otherwise also democracy in Pakistan has the fingerprints of military meddling all over it. Thus, it may sound positive in terms of strengthening of democracy, but it may also look dangerous given Imran Khan's nationalistic fervour and soft corner for Afghan Taliban.

### **New Prime Minister with New Hope: Imran Khan**

Imran Khan is the new political face of Pakistan. He has been dubbed as a nationalist political leader.<sup>11</sup> He needs to build his image in the broader comity of nations both for himself as well as for Pakistan as a state. He is also in need of creating a wider acceptance among the international community. Personal prestige and image of Imran would depend on: his India policy; his efforts towards containment of terrorism in its vicinity; his vision of shedding the erstwhile image of Pakistan as a rogue state on account of it being the manufacturing industry of terrorism; the way he deals with peace process in Afghanistan; the way he addresses the problems of corruption in Pakistan; the way he contributes towards strengthening the economy of Pakistan alongside host of other issues. Undoubtedly, he has a daunting task before him.

His performance in the domestic arena is outside the scope of this paper therefore, authors wish to evaluate his role in context with political and peace process in Afghanistan. Imran Khan is often referred to as 'Taliban Khan' in Pakistan's circuit of secularists. The situation in Pakistan's tribal areas for Imran essentially resembles a rebellion against colonial occupation. His sympathies towards the Taliban were made evident on several occasions in his twenty-year old political career. In June 2002, he addressed a workers' convention in Pakistan stating that he was inspired by the Taliban system of justice and that he would establish the same system in the country after assuming power. More recently, in 2013 he stirred up controversy when he described a top Taliban leader, Wali-ur-Rehman as 'pro-peace'. Later in the same year, he suggested that the Taliban should be allowed to open an office in Pakistan.<sup>12</sup>

Khan is a Pathan of Afghan origin and Imran's tribal sympathies were characteristic of him even in the late 1980s when he was a cricketer

legend. Imran said to William Dalrymple, “My family came to the subcontinent from Afghanistan about 500 years ago, but we kept our identity legend by refusing to marry outside the tribe. That pride of race is deeply ingrained in every Pathan child.”<sup>13</sup> This reawakening of Imran to Islam and his tribal origins went on to shape his future political ideology. Therefore, his sympathies with Taliban and his political ideologies should be understood in this context.

Imran Khan has been accused of being close to military figures. Both Khan and military have been aiding each other on a number of occasions. General Zia-ul-Haq called him out of his retirement from Cricket. It was General Hamid Gul, the former ISI chief often dubbed as the ‘Father of Taliban’ and Muhammad Ali Durrani, the then head of Jamaat-e-Islami youth wing, who encouraged Khan to enter politics and assisted him. Further, when Pervez Musharraf came to power in a coup, Khan supported him and when the US launched a raid to assassinate Osama Bin Laden, he rebuked the civilian government, all the while avoiding the question on how Laden managed to take refuge in an army garrison town.<sup>14</sup> All such evidence may also be interpreted to mean that Imran Khan may have the support of the Army so far as his softness on Taliban is concerned and would thus not support any peace process in Afghanistan in which Pakistan supported Taliban would not have a substantial and dominant share. Moreover, military establishment would also be rest assured given his sympathies and Pakistan’s erstwhile ‘Afghanistan Policy’ that Imran would not resort to anything which would be to the displeasure of the military. Imran Khan in the seat of political authority in Pakistan as Prime Minister, yet the military like past would insist on curbing his government’s ability to shape defence and foreign policy, risking Pakistan’s further international isolation.

### **US-Pakistan Relations: Root of Afghanistan Peace Process**

US-Pakistan relations have been that of a blow-hot-blow-cold game in the recent past especially on Afghanistan. Afghan war has been the basic cause of the tension between Pakistan and America; it has also been a reason for the two estranged allies to stay together.<sup>15</sup> Now US under Trump has sought Pakistan’s help in the Afghan peace negotiations and is serious about finding a political solution to the crisis. Zalmay Khalilzad, the special US envoy, has been instrumental and had rounds of shuttle diplomacy to arrange negotiation for peace process in Afghanistan. Being Afghan by origin Khalilzad might have secured more confidence. However, the situation was much different earlier.

Pakistan's role in Afghanistan is directly dependent upon its relations with United States. The reason is that America wants to withdraw its military from Afghanistan and for that, it is trying to negotiate a deal with Taliban to bring them into political mainstream within Afghanistan. Pakistan's role could be instrumental towards facilitating a negotiated peace with Taliban. Taliban which is an active extremist group in Afghanistan is largely controlled by Pakistan and hence without the considerable help from Pakistan it may be next to impossible to negotiate a successful deal with Taliban. The rise of new political dispensation under the leadership of Imran Khan has given rise to a complex relation with America. The relations between Trump's America and the Islamic nation of Pakistan were exacerbated in January 2018 when the Trump administration suspended nearly all American security aid to Pakistan.<sup>16</sup> Trump also went direct on twitter in his displeasure towards Pakistan quoting that Pakistan had given us nothing but lies and deceit and accused it of providing safe haven to the terrorists that Americans hunt in Afghanistan.<sup>17</sup>

US-Pakistan relations got further strained when Imran Khan voiced past support for the Taliban's fight in the 17-year conflict in Afghanistan, calling it justified. He further accused the United States of recklessness in its use of drone strikes on suspected extremists in Pakistan. Basically, this was voiced to signal the US to stop all such drone attacks.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, amidst offensive from both sides the relations between the two cold-war allies became strained and at once the peace process in Afghanistan seemed to be going haywire and derailed.

Pakistan role of a spoiler becomes more relevant in view of the fact that United States has recently reversed its longstanding policy of involving Afghanistan government in most of the negotiations with Taliban or all such other talks on Afghanistan. American diplomats held face-to-face talks with Taliban representatives in Qatar without Afghan government officials present. Americans so far have been stating a position that the peace talks must be "Afghan-led and Afghan-owned". However, America clarified that the talks were of a preliminary nature to focus on creating conditions conducive for direct talks between Afghanistan and the Taliban. This change of American strategy could complicate the peace process with Pakistan playing the role of a spoiler. It is quite obvious that Pakistan will always want to have a very strong role in shaping Afghanistan's future. However, there is also a contrary opinion that the ascension of Imran Khan may not have much impact on Afghanistan peace process as the situation in Afghanistan and nuclear issues as well as security related matters are largely and tightly

controlled by the military establishment. Therefore, the current international interest in negotiating political compromises with the Taliban is certainly a major triumph for the Pakistan army. However, as discussed above, given the close nexus between Imran and military establishment there is not going to be much change in Pakistan's 'Afghan policy' except 'hoping against hope'.

As mentioned above, another development in the post-election Pakistan has been that Imran Khan was accorded with the moniker, "Taliban Khan", on the basis of his repeated calls for engaging the Islamist insurgents in both Afghanistan and Pakistan and his vigorous criticism of the US war on terror and Pakistan's support for it.<sup>19</sup> Getting Taliban on the negotiating table is now being seen as the only way forward to peace in Afghanistan, which was otherwise a taboo till the arrival of Imran Khan. Therefore, one needs to wait and watch as to how and in what manner the peace process progresses? Whether Pakistan would allow Taliban to participate in the political process of Afghanistan? If yes, at what terms and conditions?

Therefore, it makes it obvious that much depends upon the US-Pakistan bilateral engagement in future and to what extent American leadership and diplomats are able to bail out Pakistan and cajole Taliban or force Taliban on the negotiating table. Peace process in Afghanistan would otherwise remain alluded.

### **Role of Afghanistan Government**

Situations within Afghanistan political leadership is however different at present. The Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has been anxious to begin talks with the Taliban. Taliban leadership on the other hand brands current government in Afghanistan as illegitimate and refused to engage with it to which Ghani has been reluctant and has expressed willingness to sit and talk anytime and anyplace that suits Taliban.<sup>20</sup> Ghani also made an effort to smoothen his relationship with Pakistan and became one of the first international leaders to extend his congratulations to Imran Khan on his electoral success and also tried to make use of this opportunity to impress upon Pakistan leadership for strengthening peace process with Taliban.

It makes it obvious that Afghan leadership is now well educated about the dynamics of peace in their country. They understand that it cannot be made possible without the constructive and positive role of Pakistan. They have also realised that it could be possible only when American leadership is able to prevail over the Pakistani leadership.

### ***Naya Pakistan: Changing Narratives***

Generally, Pakistan has been critical of India's role in Afghanistan. Using the instrumentalities of Taliban, Pakistan has been trying to dislodge India from the on-going reconstruction works in Afghanistan. However, recently under the new political dispensation, Pakistan has revealed its intentions that India's cooperation is needed to bring peace in Afghanistan. Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said in December 2018 that although Pakistan was committed to facilitate a negotiated end to the 17-year old Afghan war, it could not do the task alone and that other regional countries, including India, needed to play their part.<sup>21</sup> He further reiterated that Afghanistan was a 'shared responsibility' of regional countries including India, Iran, Tajikistan, and China. He was of the opinion that since India is physically present in Afghanistan through its number of on-going economic projects; its cooperation in this regard will also be required. He quoted his Prime Minister Imran Khan and said that according to him peace could not be established in Afghanistan through military power. Today the US, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Taliban also want a solution through dialogue. However, India was skeptical of the sincerity of Pakistan's statement and perceived it as Pakistan's bait under international pressure like Kartarpur corridor.<sup>22</sup> The important point to be noted here is that in September 2017, Pakistan has objected to the US plan seeking greater role of India in Afghanistan and accused India of playing the role of a spoiler in the war-torn country. Pakistan also accused India that under the garb of development assistance India had used the Afghan soil to carry out subversive activities inside Pakistan, a charge that India has so far vehemently denied.

### **Conclusion**

Imran Khan has inherited a raft of problems: domestic terrorism; terrible relationship with neighbouring India; huge mess in Afghanistan; deteriorating ties with the United States, once a major ally; a sputtering economy; loss of face within the Islamic countries; shrinking funds from the international donors; and international isolation being the major ones. Pakistan Military believes that it can weather the storm by turning to China, which is spending about \$65 billion on infrastructure and other projects in Pakistan, as well as doling out billions in loans. The problem of the future would be that Pakistan may end up in debt-trap like Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Malaysia. Pakistan today is in a chaotic mess. How far it would be able to play a constructive role in the peace process in Afghanistan remains a pertinent question.



Afghanistan has seen the worst of the violence and crime. Pakistan has been responsible to a great extent for transforming its polity under Taliban and now it alone can help Afghanistan towards ushering into an era of peace. America under the garb of multinational forces got Afghanistan rid of Taliban regime and decimated the Mulla Omar's regime to establish democracy. Even today American forces are present and trying to help Afghanistan forces to stand on their feet and consolidate their political institutions. However, Taliban still continues to be a force to be reckoned with within Afghanistan. America has announced to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan. There is a long way to go before one can hope to see the end to the longest war the United States has ever been engaged in. Diplomatic efforts are on and yet war has been intensifying with toll on both sides. Under such circumstance, exit of American forces would further strengthen Pakistan's hold on Taliban and it will continue to create nuisance for political leadership of Afghanistan. Therefore, onus lies both on America and the new dispensation of Pakistan to strike a deal with Taliban so that they are brought into the mainstream of Afghanistan's politics.

Pakistan's role in Afghan reconciliation is extremely important, but it seems that it is difficult for Pakistan to come up to America's expectations of making the talks work. It will certainly be in Pakistan's own interest to help facilitate a negotiated settlement. But there is a big question mark over its capacity to deliver its promises. Pakistan's security establishment has often been accused of using double standards in fighting terrorists, a charge vehemently refused by the Pakistani authorities. This is prominent in view of the fact that Pakistan hardly ever means what it says or promises to the regional and global communities. Taliban which was declared as a terrorist group in the past, are now recognised as an important military and political force in Afghanistan. Therefore, turning a Nelson's eye towards Taliban would lead to disaster in the future thereby further contributing towards unmaking of Afghanistan's policy.

All efforts at political engineering towards strengthening democratically elected governments have failed thus far and could not survive for long. An actual government where parliamentary supremacy prevails would entail the control over security and foreign policy. Presently, the Jihadist assets are undergoing an Army-led mainstreaming process, where their political fronts will be accommodated in the Parliament, while the militants, the 'good Taliban', remain under the military's control to be used at will. This arrangement is still in the process of negotiation. For now, one can only wait and watch the role that the

new dispensation of Pakistan intends to play. Given soft corner of Imran Khan for Taliban on the one hand, and its willingness being revealed for peace in Afghanistan, the situation, for now, seems to be quite complex. *Naya Pakistan* for now seems to be its Army's stooge, and hence nothing much could be expected of it in terms of initiating a peace process in Afghanistan, or allow it to proceed in Afghan-led and Afghan-owned manner. Essentially the peace process in Afghanistan stands attenuated.

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# Emerging Sino-Pak Relations: Its Strategic Implications for India

**Bibhuti Bhusan Biswas**

China-Pakistan relations have been cordial after 1962 India-China war. Just after independence, Pakistan joined into American orbit and had apprehensions about China. Tibet issue was raised first by Pakistan in the United Nations. Indeed, in 1951, Pakistan became the first Muslim country to recognise communist China (People's Republic of China or PRC). But before that, Pakistan had also set up diplomatic relations with the Republic of China (ROC) which was formed by the defeated Chinese nationalists and would be known as Taiwan.

It was the ROC that was recognised by the US, and a majority of Western governments kept the PRC out of the United Nations for over a decade. Yet, it was India which had recognised communist China almost a year before Pakistan did so. What's more, India was also one of the first countries to snap ties with the ROC, something Pakistan would do a year later.<sup>1</sup>

In March 1963, Bhutto visited China and signed a 'boundary agreement.' According to Iqbal and Sher, the agreement gave Pakistan 750 square miles of disputed land, while 2,050 square miles of the same area was given to China. This further deteriorated relations between India and China and Pakistan and India. The US too wasn't happy.<sup>3</sup>

But Pakistan had finally found an ally to counterbalance Indian influence in the area. It was Ayub era foreign minister of Pakistan, Z.A. Bhutto was becoming the architect of present status of deepening relationship between Pakistan and China.

After 1962 war, China understood two facts that India has been its durable competitor and due to its geo-strategic location, Pakistan could be an asset for its containment of India policy particularly in South Asia. In 1963, Pakistan ceded huge Indian claimed territory to China and after that it has sustained its claim over Aksai Chin. During Afghan war (1979) China took unique turn in foreign policy and extended its support to American led block to contain invading red army of the USSR. Pakistan became base of that American led block war against

the invading red army. Through this turn, the Chinese have vindicated the Kautilyan notion of realism in foreign policy. Kautilya opined that convergences of ideology and other aspect cannot remain determinant of foreign policy. It is extraordinarily important because it was the peak of the cold war and both China and USSR were from the ideology of communism.

However, the mandate of this paper is to dwell upon contemporary trends of Sino-Pakistan relations and its implications for India. Since 1979 till today, Sino-Pakistan relations have been cordial and have been termed as 'all weathered friendship'. Former Pakistani PM, Yusuf Raza Gillani had termed once that 'Sino-Pakistan relations are deeper than sea, bigger than Himalayas and sweeter than honey.' It could be also understood by the fact that since 2006 till date every Chinese PM or President has visited Pakistan compulsorily while visiting India. The maiden visit of every Pakistani ruler is also compulsorily Beijing. It is a candid message to India that Pakistan is a special friend.

Since 9/11, Pakistan-China relations have developed a high level of understanding for the expansion of mutually beneficial strategic and defence cooperation. There was a complete understanding and a convergence of views between the two countries which has raised the level of frequency of their high-level exchanges and shared identical views on all major issues and developments that took place at the global and regional levels.<sup>4</sup> Pakistan-China defence cooperation has always been the most important component of their overall bilateral relations since 9/11. The exchange of high-level of visits of the armed forces of the two countries further improved their bilateral military-to-military and strategic relations between the two countries.

Chinese President Xi has launched OBOR initiative as one of the most ambitious projects of his tenure. He came in power in March 2012 and asserted that it has to ensure sea lanes of communications. Since last three decades, China has sustained its growth saga with a huge growth rate of over 9%. However the growth of the Chinese economy has been slowed down but still it has maintained around 7%. For sustaining the speed of Chinese growth, they have to sustain their energy supplies. However, the Chinese have diversified their energy supply but still they have been puzzled with the challenges of Malacca Dilemma. The deepening Indo-U.S relations have further complicated the security architecture for China in the Indian Ocean Region and adjoin Oceans. In the backdrop of South China Sea dispute and Hague based international tribunal decision (July 2016) against China it has been vindicated that it has no respect for the international law.

China has adopted 'offensive realism' which was coined by John Mearsheimer. In the case of South China and East China Sea, it is vindicated. China is willing to transcend its new earned economic might into the strategic domain therefore defiance of international law will be sustainable features of Chinese foreign policy in coming decades. China has finally abandoned Deng Xiaoping's mantra of "hide your strength, bide your time" in order to adopt a more proactive role in global affairs.<sup>5</sup> India, having discarded the lethargy of the "Hindu rate of growth" and nonaligned foreign policy, has also adopted a proactive stance. The arrival of Modi government in 2014 has further propelled this process. Modi govt. has adopted proactive foreign policy and has adopted Kautilyan notion of alignment with the countries of Southeast and East Asia, which are the immediate neighbours of China. Rising levels of nationalism accompany the growing international clout of both countries. This situation is exacerbated by unresolved core grievances including long-standing territorial, trade and other disputes. Both countries are facing serious problem of trust deficit. This is set to widen further in the anticipation of Asian century.

The core interests of both the countries are different therefore trust deficit has widened and set to sustain in coming decades. This mindset of China has promoted to act in favor of Pakistan. United States has understood the fact that Pakistan could not be a part of solution of the Afghan tango because it is a part of Afghan problem. Due to Pakistan's double game in Afghanistan, the United States has become neutral for Pakistan. China is willing to fill the blanks because in the prevailing security architecture of Asia, she will not be happy to witness erosion of Pakistan's arc of influence from South Asia. It has promoted China to block India's move to declare Maulana Azhar thrice as global terrorist in the United Nations 4 times even after Pulwama terror attack in February 2019. It is significant in the backdrop of the spreading terror network in Chinese turbulent western province of Xingjiang in tacit understanding with Pakistan based terror launching pads. China has almost decided to use Pakistan as an instrument to encircle India in South Asia in particular and in larger Arab world in general.

The discord in Sino-Indian relationship is more evident in the unresolved territorial disputes along the 4,000 km border in Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh.<sup>6</sup> Tibetan spiritual guru, Dalai Lama has visited Arunachal Pradesh in March 2017. This announcement was condemned by the Chinese on the basis that it is a disputed territory in southern Tibet therefore Dalai Lama should not visit the state. In October 2016, American Ambassador to India, Richard Verma visited the state and it

was also condemned by the Chinese on the same grounds. In February 2019, PM Modi visited Arunachal to launch many schemes, China opposed his visit as well. Under special representative's framework since 2003 to till date and 21 round of high voltage meetings, there has been hardly any progress in resolving the territorial dispute. Meanwhile, the dispute has mutated due to both a change in strategic significance and the expanded instruments available to both the countries.

In 2013, China launched CPEC to expand its connectivity with Pakistan and extended it up to Gwadar, which is situated at the mouth of the Persian Gulf just 60 KM east to the Iranian border town port of Chabahar. CPEC however is an infrastructure project. According to the Chinese it is intended to upgrade its linkage with Pakistan and through Persian Gulf with the wider spectrum of the Islamic world. President Xi has insisted during his 2016 Islamabad visit that CPEC is an ambitious project which will bring economic prosperity in the region. It is an open secret that it has economic component as its declared aims and objectives but its strategic aspects are also visible.

CPEC will however reduce Chinese 'Malacca Dilemma' and ensure free and early flow of energy supply to the Chinese. It will also propel Chinese engagement in Africa. But its strategic component is India centric. In the last few months right from Masood Azhar issue till NSG, Chinese have shown their open inclination towards Pakistan. During September 2016 surgical strike in Pakistan, Chinese have tacitly supported Pakistan. During Kargil incursion (1999) the Chinese had openly advised Pakistan to resolve the matter amicably through dialogue despite the fact that both the PMs and then COAS, Nawaz Sharif and General Pervez Musharraf had visited Beijing during Kargil crisis to garner Chinese support.

### **Post Balakot Pakistan-China Changing Relations**

The deepening of Indo-U.S relations have alarmed China. During her term as secretary of State in Obama administration, Hillary Clinton stated that the United States is going to adopt 'Pivot Asia' policy and she expressed her desire that India must play pro-active role in the Indo-Pacific region. As secretary of State, she understood the changing contours of security architecture in Asia and will pursue her policies based on her experience and Chinese defiance of international tribunal decision on South China Sea.

Our relationship with ASEAN countries has huge imprint of our overall foreign policy. Modi government has converted 'Look East Policy' into 'Act East Policy' and extended it to East Asia as well.

China is concerned of India's look east policy and calls it as being borne out of a misguided "fear of China," reflecting "a lack of understanding of the (Peoples Liberation Army's) PLA's strategic ambitions."<sup>7</sup>

Compliance of the norms of international law has remained core concern of ASEAN & East Asian countries in South & East China Sea. China has declared both the Sea's as their backyard lakes and unwilling to obey the norms of the UNCLOS (1982). Despite high profile trade relations with China, ASEAN & East Asian countries are concerned very much for the compliance of international law in this dispute. The Philippines is also a disputant country against China over South China Sea. Its President's concern about it is worth mentioning here

Philippines President Benigno S. Aquino III called for nations around the world to do more to support the Philippines in resisting China's assertive claims to the seas near his country, drawing a comparison to the West's failure to support Czechoslovakia against Hitler's demands for Czech land in 1938. Like Czechoslovakia, the Philippines face demands to surrender territory piecemeal to a much stronger foreign power and needs more robust foreign support for the rule of international law if it is to resist.

If we say yes to something we believe is wrong now, what guarantee is there that the wrong will not be further exacerbated down the line?"

He said. "At what point do you say, 'Enough is enough'? Well, the world has to say it — remember that the Sudetenland was given in an attempt to appease Hitler to prevent World War II.<sup>4</sup> Tokyo and Manila are even more expressive about their willingness to uphold territorial claims, no matter the cost. On many occasions, Japanese PM Sinzo Abe has vowed publicly that he will 'never make concessions' over the sovereignty of the Diaoyus/ Sankakus and will defend 'Japanese territory at all costs.'<sup>8</sup>

South China Sea has emerged as a bitter global flashpoint between China and the disputant countries of ASEAN. It has emerged as potential global battleground. The Nation of Bangkok warns in an editorial that:

"If the current tension continues in South China Sea, especially between the Philippines and China, it could lead to an all-out war. This is not an alarmist's warning but a real concern. With poisonous rhetoric and growing tension, there is a possibility that conflicting parties would cross the line. This could be a result of miscalculation."<sup>9</sup>



Chinese behavior in the back drop of their acquisition of economic power has become unruly which is bound to create conflicts. China wanted to dominate Asia as America is dominating the globe but wanted multiple power structures at the global level. For Mearsheimer, rising powers tend to seek regional hegemony and China is heading in this direction.<sup>10</sup> The Chinese have refused to be adhered by international law to resolve South China Sea and East China Sea disputes with ASEAN and Japan respectively. It is vindicated by the Chinese defiance of international tribunal decisions in favour of the Philippines in June 2016. In Tibet case too, China has violated all the norms of international standards to respect human rights.

### **CPEC: New Milestone of Sino-Pakistan Relations**

President Xi has been declared 'core leader' recently. He became 4<sup>th</sup> Chinese leader to attain this prestigious title. It simply means extraordinary powerful and he is going to be boss till his survival on the planet. After coming into power in March 2013, he has declared his ambitious plan to expand infrastructure. It is popularly known as 'One Belt, One Road' (OBOR). Within the ambit of this plan, he has declared China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). It is intended to connect western Chinese town of Kashgar of turbulent Xingjinag province to Gwador, which is situated into the turbulent Pakistani province of Baluchistan. It will provide strategic naval post to China in the western Indian Ocean and in the Gulf. The work has already started on this project. This corridor has strategic implications for India also particularly for our maritime interests in the Indian Ocean Region.

In November 2016, NSG meeting is going to take place. China has openly declared that it will sustain its opposition to Indian membership in this elite global group. China has also blocked many Indian attempts to designate Pakistan based terror icon, Masood Azhar as international terrorist. Although China is aware that Pakistan based terror groups are behind Xinjiang turbulence but due to their increasing urge to contain India within South Asia, they are supporting Pakistan. This Chinese attitude is also going to be sustainable due to changing contours of security architecture of the Asia-Pacific. This all round Chinese support to Pakistan is bound to sustain because India's rise has remain sustainable. India has gamut of challenges arising through this nexus. Through its proactive foreign policy in Asia-Pacific, India could meet these emerging challenges and ensure our national interests.

## **Sino-Pak Nuclear Cooperation**

The nuclear cooperation between the two countries became more strengthened & intensified after the conclusion of Indo-US Civilian Nuclear Deal of 2008. The Indo-US Deal is a clear manifestation of the US' ultimate desire to recognize India as the leading power in the region, despite the fact, that Pakistan is a close partner of the US in the war against global terrorism, and major non-NATO ally.

India emerged as a major beneficiary of the deal. The deal accomplished India's geopolitical and geo-strategic objectives, its nuclear and missile predominance, and its ambitious and evil designs in the region. The deal turns out to be unfair and discriminatory in the sense that it has bestowed India with all the benefits of a nuclear weapons state without any international obligations. The qualitative and quantitative improvement of India's nuclear arsenal placed Pakistan in severe awkward position in the region. As a result, Pakistan explores a number of options that would preserve and safeguard its security interests in the region. The first option of Pakistan is to acquire the same nuclear and missile capability in order to counter-force India and to save itself from utter humiliation and defeat in the face of major conflict. The main concern for Pakistan is the Indian intention to convert its civilian nuclear program into clandestine nuclear arms, which will have serious security implications for Pakistan. Moreover, the deal will compel Pakistan to pursue a qualitative approach to increase its deterrence stability. Since 9/11, US changed its policy towards China from friendship to competition. The ultimate objective of President Bush was to make India a major regional power of South-Asia to contain China. Pakistan and China took it seriously and working together to contain Indian might. Chinese opposition to the NSG and demand for equal status to Pakistan is coming out from that particular mindset. More significantly, China has contributed a great deal to the development of Pakistan's nuclear capability to counter India's supremacy and hegemony in the region.<sup>11</sup>

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 also has positive implications on Sino-Pak military collaboration. According to an expert, "the preservation of Pakistan's security was the major feature of China's Afghan policy as manifest from the fact that the securities of two countries are mutually interlinked and indivisible."<sup>12</sup>

The resurgent Chinese behaviour towards India is further vindicated by eminent Pakistani strategic thinker Hoodbhoy "the international situation has changed hugely from when the United States loomed large

over Pakistan. US pressure after 9/11 forced Pakistan to end its support to the Taliban and LeT, albeit only formally. But today China — not America — is Pakistan's principal economic benefactor as well as its supplier of military hardware.

China, in spite of its problematic Muslim Uighur movement, does not mind much the extra-state actors that keep India off balance in Kashmir. It has repeatedly vetoed India's efforts to get Maulana Masood Azhar onto a UN list of individual leaders linked to Al Qaeda. While China is a signatory to the BRICS declaration against militant groups allegedly harboured in Pakistan, for Pakistan to now give America the finger appears reasonably safe."<sup>13</sup>

### **Concluding Remarks**

It seems logical to conclude that the India factor might well have played a role in strengthening Sino-Pakistan relations, though growing Indo-US relations were also of immense importance in bringing the two countries closer to each other. China's relations with Pakistan will continue to flourish, and, China will be in a better position to exhort India to moderate its policy towards Pakistan. In essence, Chinese support to Pakistan is a constant factor in as much as the core Pakistani and Chinese interests are concerned. China must continue to strengthen Pakistani state's resilience and its revival so as to play once again, a dynamic role at the cross roads of regions. Through CPEC China has vindicated its mindset. Right now, convergence of interests between China and Pakistan are common and this is to contain India. It is bound to be sustainable in foreseeable future as well given the growth trajectory that India has achieved. India has also marked its presence at the global table of governance. The deepening Pakistani and Chinese nexus is not only detrimental for our interests in South Asia but at the global level also.

However, Wuhan dialogue still remains one of the levels playing field between India and China. Modi government has adopted proactive foreign policy. We must remember that diplomacy is an art to make impossible possible. China has many weak points. We could score points to contain china within its backyard through deepening ties with Southeast and East Asian countries. South China and East China Sea disputes have evoked gamut of dissent among these countries against China. We have to take a principle stand to adherence with relevant international laws in these disputes by all concerned parties which will serve our larger purposes.

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# **“Democracy at Next Door: Are We Dreaming Too Much”: An Understanding of the Significance of Pakistan Election to Indian Democracy**

**S Marcellin Pushpa**

## **Introduction**

The history of democracy evidences that democratic institutions and democratic practices are nurtured only with a democratic culture. Many of the developing societies face the shortage of the cultural component of democracy and become fragile-both in practice and institutions(Kanwal, 2017). One of the major stumbling blocks in these countries is the absence of secularism and political autonomy. Political parties are largely controlled by quasi-political pressures. The state of Pakistan has met many political crises and failed to establish a stable and vibrant democratic system. The military and other extra political institutions play a larger role in politics of Pakistan. However, like many of the democratic counterparts in the region the state is trying to shift to a strong and sustainable democratic pattern.

The General election 2018 in Pakistan is a significant event as it occurred in a time of great regional power struggles. China is trying to become a regional and global power and India is trying to counter it by regional alliances. The Indo-Pak borders have become a venue of constant struggle and the Indian government is keen to fight against cross border terrorism at any cost. The Afghan policy of Pakistan made heavy tolls on Pak-US relations and US has become more critical of the intentions of Pakistani government. In the matter of terrorism, Pakistan faces internal and external pressures. The world and particularly the neighbors are keen about the way in which a new government in Pakistan is going to tackle these pressing issues.

## **Constitutional Provisions of Democracy**

During its early period of its independence, Pakistan was theoretically a parliamentary democracy but practically it was governed by

bureaucrats and military. Pakistan's founding party, the Muslim League, failed to transform itself from an independence movement into a political force. So, they were forced to rely on civil-military bureaucracy to retain hold over government. The government's weaknesses enabled bureaucracies and military to annex the powers of state and to impede democratic development.

In 1956, Pakistan adopted its first constitution. The constitution provided for elections to national and provincial assemblies on the basis of universal adult franchise. Although the constitution prescribed a federal parliamentary form of government, it nevertheless gave the President the power to dismiss the Prime Minister.

The Constitution of Pakistan by its preamble affirms that the state is a democracy. It believes in freedom, equality and social justice and also assures a government of the people. The preamble reads;

*“And whereas it is the will of people of Pakistan to establish an order:*

*Wherein the state shall exercise the power and authority through the chosen representatives of the people:*

*Wherein the principles of democracy, freedom equality and social justice as enunciated by Islam shall be fully observed”*

The preamble also guarantees an elaborate set of fundamental rights to citizen and also provide for the protection of minorities. The democratic dreams of the constitution makers are well reflected in the conclusion part of the preamble which acknowledges the people as the authors and custodians of the constitution. Article 8-28 of the constitution contains a set of fundamental human rights. These rights range from right to speech to right to information and establishes a firm ground for a sustainable democratic order. The Majlis-e-Shoora (parliament) provides a deliberative platform of democracy to the nation. Article 213 to 26 of the constitution exclusively deals with elections. It provides a mechanism for free and fair elections. It establishes a strong electoral institution which obtains its independence and sanction from the constitution itself.

It is found that the Pakistan constitution is basically a democratic document and it affirms the position of the individual in the state. The individual citizen is given all avenues to develop his potentials and to

keep his dignity. He is also to actively take part in the affairs of the state and is bestowed with ultimate sovereign powers.

The military in Pakistan is playing an influential role in mainstream politics. Military governments were led by (in the 1960s) General Ayyub Khan and General Yahya Khan, (in the late 1970s and 1980s) General Zia-ul-Haq, and (from 1999 to 2008), General Pervez Musharraf. In total, military or military backed civilian regimes have been in power for half of the years of the country's existence.

The influence of the military extends far beyond its constitutional role even in times of civilian rule. The military high command has on occasion acted as a mediator between the government and other state actors, and between political leaders. In addition, it has exerted strong influence behind the scene in the making of foreign policy.

### **Electoral democracy in Pakistan**

Elections and electoral politics are a sine-qua-non of every democracy. Pakistan became an independent state in 1947. Between 1947 and 1958, at the national level there were no direct elections held. The first direct elections held in the country after independence were for the provincial Assembly of the Punjab in 1951.

In the year 1977, the general elections were held to the national legislature. However, owing to political violence martial law was declared. In the 1988 general elections PPP came into power but after two years the ruling party was dismissed following the grave lawlessness situation in the country. In 1990, another general election took place and the right-wing alliance formed a government, which was subsequently dismissed in 1993 after the alliance collapse. The 1997 general elections saw the Centre-right, PML(N), gaining the exclusive mandate in the country and supermajority in the parliament. The government was also met with a short life and the president was prosecuted. A military government under General Musharraf took charge. In the year 2002 the supreme court ordered a general election. A new government came into power. The government also failed to complete the full term and the Musharraf government was forced to resign after an unsuccessful attempt to undermine the higher judiciary in the state.

The 2008 general elections allowed the PPP, assisted with the left-wing alliance, to come into power. In the elections held in 2013, the PML(N) won the majority seats in the elections and formed government.

## General elections 2018

The 2018 elections in Pakistan was a crucial event as far as Pakistan democracy is concerned. Elections were held for 270 constituencies in the national parliament and to four Provincial Assemblies. The result of the elections was in favour of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) which became the single largest party both in terms of popular vote and seats. PTI made a net gain with 31.82% of the vote. However, the opposition raised allegation of large-scale vote rigging and administrative malpractices. This argument was rejected by the Election Commission of Pakistan. The fair pattern of elections was also endorsed by an international electoral watchdog, Free and Fair Election Network and also by the European Union Election Observation Mission. These appreciations of independence and fair practice is a positive turn towards democratization of electoral practices in Pakistan. This argument becomes significant in the background of large-scale criticism of electoral malpractices in the earlier elections.

The electoral reforms in Pakistan in 2017 and earlier also supported free electoral practice. One of the most notable initiative in this context is the automatic registration of citizen as voters when they reach the age of 18 and apply for computerized National Identity Card issued by Pakistan's National Database and Registration Authority. The card has now become mandatory for voting. It means that there is no separate electoral registration and citizen will acquire voting privileges automatically.

A major indicator of democracy in a country is the level of political tolerance. The absence of electoral violence ensures smooth democratic transactions. But in Pakistan, unfortunately the 2018 elections were met with many violent incidents. The national and international media reported around a dozen serious pre-electoral violent incidents and four serious electoral day violence. These include the July 10<sup>th</sup> suicide bombing attack on political rally of Awami National Party with a death toll of twenty people, 13<sup>th</sup> July, bombings on election rallies in Mastung and Bannu which killed 154 people. On the polling day a bombing attack at Quetta, killed 31 people.

This electoral violence is not in tune with the Pakistan elections commissions claim of 'a peaceful and fair election'. There are many elements in the state which are trying to hijack the democratic development and political modernization of the state. Pakistani political leaders should be aware about these elements.



**Table 1.** Pakistan elections 2018 overview

Sl No	Item	Number	Percentage
1	Total Seats in national assembly	342	
2	Total Votes Polled	53,123,733	51.6
3	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (Votes Polled)	16,903,702	31.82
4	Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz)	12,934,589	24.35
5	Pakistan People's Party	6,924,356	13.03

(Source: Different News report and Official data of Pakistan election commission)

A positive dimension of the 2018 election is the increasing number of contestants in the elections. From among the 182 registered political parties

### **Dreaming too much?**

The elections in Pakistan was closely observed by the global powers as the state is a nuclear-armed onewith a population of more than 193 million. It is also accused as a close ally of terrorist organizations. The 2018 is marked by the appearance of electoral candidates with evident back up from the militant groups. During elections armed groups have carried out a series of deadly attacks intended to destabilize the election, leaving citizens concerned about security. In the current scenario Pakistan is having disintegrating relationship with the US. On the other hand, the Chinese factor is highly evident in the regional political interactions. With the road and belt initiative, China has many advantages over India has established closer links with Pakistan. This has made the Pakistan elections a great concern for India.

It is perceived that any democratic initiative in the neighborhood is always taken as a positive sign by Indian policy circles. India, being a democracy, always look for like minded partners in the region. Moreover, a democratic transformation of Pakistan is the best solution to ease India -Pak relations. The situation in the borders has made complicated and hostile by the intervention of terrorist groups and their supporters over the border. These infiltrations are largely supported by the political regimes in Pakistan, since Pakistani politics is first and foremost a play ground for the army. A political change in Pakistan towards democracy will alter the political equations altogether.

Moreover, it will also solve many of the internal problems of the country. This is one of the major postulates behind the democratization theory.

With regard to India, the most noteworthy outcome of the recent Pakistan elections is the evident rise of the far-right parties. As per the election estimates 5.25 million votes were bagged by the religious parties. In 2013 elections the vote share of religious parties was a nominal five percent. This cast a great shadow over the democratic dreams of Pakistan. Various mainstream political parties have tried to use religious actors for their own short-term electoral objectives. Unfortunately, this quest for short-term political gains will deepen Pakistan's long-range challenges of extremism, militancy and intolerance.

Pakistan has often been branded as a safe haven for terror outfits and insurgents. The frequent terror attacks on Indian soil and cross-border ceasefire violations often seen as supported and funded by Pakistan have proved to be a roadblock in the bilateral relations. India is now hoping for a better relation with Pakistan with the new government in power. After the Pakistani release of Indian soldier Abhinandan, India pins much hopes on the new power centres in Islamabad.

Even though much had not changed between India and Pakistan after the arrival of Imran Khan in power, there are slight rays of hope. During the press conference conducted by Imran Khan after the electoral victory, he asked both the countries to end the political blame-game. He also stated that Pakistan is willing to take two steps forward if India is willing to take one. Even though, there is skepticism within the Indian political class, India would welcome any move that helps in fostering the relations between the neighboring countries.

## **Conclusion**

Elections are always a positive step towards democratization. It should be welcomed as a tool of modernization and as an attempt to enlarge civic sphere. As such Pakistan election is to be taken positively by India. However, the signals are not too much hopeful. The 2018 elections, again proved that Pakistan politics cannot be easily changed.

Throughout the history of Pakistan, the military has always held a powerful role in government. The 2018 elections were the first one in which the country witnessed a peaceful civilian transfer of power. However, the elected government should work hard to establish its democratic credentials. It has to fight in many fronts-internal and

external. It has to take a test with military, terrorism and religion. Many scholars of South Asian politics find terrorism as the single most significant cause for the lack of improvement in bilateral relation (Happymon,2016).Pakistan should understand this reality and has to deal with it effectively to win a significant role in the region. A democratically elected government in Pakistan gives a ray of hope in this direction. It should also face challenges in the relation with China and has to normalize US affiliations. With regard to India, democracy in Pakistan is the best dream it can have for a peaceful border and also for a leading role in the region.

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# India, Pakistan, China and US: The National Security Predicament in Asia Pacific

Rakhee Viswambharan and Suresh R

A glimpse into the history of international politics shows that there were various methods adopted by nation states to protect and promote their national interests. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century it was the policy of imperialism and colonialism. However, with the end of Second World War and the establishment of the United Nations Organization marked the end to the policy of colonialism and imperialism as a means to promote national interests. The cold war period witnessed the dominance of power politics in international politics. In fact, international politics had become synonym with military power and its predominance. It was known as the period of political realism and the consequent role of military power. The realists focus was on the role of states in international politics, and how the behaviour of states is motivated by power considerations. However, without the use of military power, either conventional or nuclear weapons, the cold war has ended. This development poses a major question regarding the dependence of military power as the sole means to protection and promotion the national interests.

India, Pakistan, China and US are the major players in Asia. In the cold war period Pakistan was a satellite state of the US whereas India followed a pro-Russia foreign policy. However, the post-cold war period shows an upward trend in India – US relations on many areas of mutual concerns and also they are sharing certain common national security concerns, especially on the threat posed by international terrorism. Though the India – US relations at time shows upward and downward trends, they also share many common values including democracy and human rights. Pakistan, though presently a democratic nation, has been under the indirect control of the armed forces and the civil government in power often sidetracked on all decisions making concerned with its national security. Further the improved India – US relation and the recent developments in Afghanistan and West Asia are not in tune with the Pakistan strategy to use the US as a counterweight to India.

Ultimately, Pakistan depend more on China, in its national security strategy. The security predicament of China in the South Asia region is that the more it leans towards Pakistan, and takes an anti-India posture the more it leads to external power involvement, especially the US, in the region. In the long run the external power involvement in South Asian region would be detrimental to China. For such a development will lead an arms race in the region which would adversely affect the domestic growth momentum of Chinese economy, the only justification before the totalitarian system for its continued existence, in the era of growing significance of democratic values and system. Thus the security predicament in the Asia Pacific region is more complex in the post-cold war period.

### **India and the US: Common Security Concerns in Asia Pacific**

The growing threat posed by international terrorism, which is strongly rooted in and nourished by Pakistan government, not only strengthened the India – US ties but also helped them to forge an alliance of all democratic and peace loving nations against its international terror network. The Pakistan-China nexus and the recent Chinese overt support to the international terror mechanism stationed in Pakistan, again reflect the need for a democratic nations alliance against the sponsors of international terrorism. This had been emphasized by K Subramaiyam, the Indian strategic thinker, that the gravest threat before India is the challenge posed by jihadism and totalitarianism.

### **The US Policy in the Asia Pacific**

The Asia Pacific region is important in international politics because two-third of the world's population lives in the region. The maximum number of conflicts since the 1990s has been witnessed in this region though some of them are very old. The Asia Pacific region also accounts for more than 20 per cent of the land on the globe. It is in this changed context of security threat from international terror network with the overt and covert support of totalitarian regimes, the US policy towards the Asia Pacific region need to be analysed.

The US has had powerful national interests in the Asia-Pacific region since World War II and was deeply engaged in the region – militarily, economically, and diplomatically – throughout the Cold War. The Post-Cold War administrations of Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush were actively engaged in Asia. The defence report of Feb 2006 clearly stated the US intention in the Asia pacific region. The US aims

with the active support of major players in the region including Russia, China and India the defeat of terror networks and to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by state as well as non-state actor. The report specifically stated that it was the US aim to encourage China to play a constructive and peaceful role in Asia Pacific region to serve as a partner in addressing common security challenges including terrorism, proliferation, narcotics and piracy. However, the recent development in the region shows that China has its own policy priorities in addressing the international terror networkbased in and operating from Pakistan.

During the period of President Barrack Obama administration, the US policy toward the Asia-Pacific region has gone through two distinct phases. When the policy was first rolled out in 2011-12, much of the emphasis was placed on military initiatives in the region. However, due to opposition from dominant players in the region the Obama administration adjusted its approach in late 2012, playing down the significance of military initiatives, emphasizing economic and diplomatic elements, and calling for closer U.S. engagement with China.

The US policy of rebalancing in Asia Pacific has been driven by a much broader set of strategic, economic, and political considerations. The rebalance is a region-wide, multidimensional policy initiative. In regional terms, the shift includes a stronger emphasis on Southeast Asia and South Asia to complement traditionally strong US attention to East Asia. In policy terms, the rebalance entails three sets of initiatives – security, economic, and diplomatic elements.

The fundamental goals of the US policy are to broaden areas of cooperation beneficial to the US with regional states and institutions; strengthen relations with American allies and partners, including great powers such as China and India as well as important regional powers such as Indonesia; and develop regional norms and rules compatible with the international security, economic, and political order supported by the US. Thus rebalancing matters not only with regards to military presence, but also as “an effort that harnesses all elements of US power – military, political, trade and investment, development and our values”. The Secretary of State Kerry put forth President Obama’s four principles of growth – “strong growth, fair growth, smart growth, and just growth” – at his visit in Asia, highlighting the aim for development in the rebalancing strategy.

A major change that has been effected by the present US President Donald Trump administration in its Asia Pacific policy is that of giving

a new shape the US strategic initiative in the region. Though Trump administration had abandoned the 'Pivot to Asia' initiated by Obama, it continues to emphasize the strategic significance of Asia Pacific region. Instead of announcing a comprehensive policy declaration the Trump administration follows an issue based approach in the region. This has been well reflected in the US policy on the North Korean nuclear and missile technology proliferation issue. The Trump administration was successful in altering the behaviour the North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un and leading to a peaceful settlement of the issue through deliberations.

Similarly on the issues related to international terrorism also a friction between the US and China is visible as the two have taken divergent stand to impose ban on the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) head through a resolution at the UN Security Council 1267 Committee. The Chinese move in the UNSC 1267 committee through a technical hold once again reflect that the totalitarian regime in China pay less heed to democratic nations plea for action against international terrorism, the major threat before the intentional community. The US stand on the issue by piloting another resolution in the 1267 committee along with France and the UK to ban the Pakistan based terrorist organization again manifest the convergence of India- US interest in the elimination of international terrorism.

Again, in the realm of trade, Trump administration had also announced withdrawal of the US from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) immediately after taking office and claimed to replace it with multiple bilateral trade agreements. As a follow up of this policy he had addressed the US-China trade deficit issue. The on-going trade war between US and China appears to be an after effect of this new initiative. Thus in stark contrast to Obama's broad "internationalism," Trump advocates "America First". It appears that the US Asia-Pacific policy under the Trump administration prioritizes the interests of the US over those of its allies. It also reflected the US initiative to address the issues through bilateral interactions on a case by case basis.

### **Perceptions on the US policy in Asia Pacific**

There are divergent perceptions regarding the US policy towards the Asia Pacific region. With regard to the rationale of the rebalancing policy and the more recent 'America first' policy, it is viewed that these policies aimed at containment of China, the growing great power in the global scenario. Another perspective is that such an initiative aims at harnessing maximum benefits from growing strategic, economic and

military importance of the Asia Pacific region. This region possesses abundant human and natural resources. It is also the most significant sea borne international trade route. All these factors appear to have influenced the rebalancing policy as well as the more recent 'America first' policy. However, the containment of communism in China seems to be of lesser role in these policy initiatives. Though the US – China relation is conditioned by lack of mutual trust, the on-going globalisation process has tied them together in balancing the economic interests. Despite the on-going trade war between US and China the volume of trade interaction between these two global economic powers is the testimony to this perspective.

The US policy of protecting the interest of its strong supporters in the Asia Pacific region also appears to have prompted for such an initiative. Thus the rebalancing policy and the more recent 'America first' policy also appears to have aims at the protection of various interests including the security interests of Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, and Philipppians against any China supported offensive measures. The maintenance of power equilibrium in the region is sine quo non, especially in the context of an unresolved South China Sea dispute exist in the region. None of the Asian countries could singlehandedly meet the military power of China. Therefore, the US presence in the region not only helps to maintain power balance in Asia but also pre-empt any aggressive move on the part of non-democratic countries in the region.

The US presence in the region is also advantageous to India as long as it helps to ensure the protection and promotion of democratic regimes in the region, especially in the context of democratic transitions that takes place in the neighbouring countries. India cannot and should not afford to spend more on arms race and militarisation of the region mainly on two counts. Firstly, the human security issues confronted by India are multifarious and any further delay in addressing these problems like poverty and infrastructure development in the so far neglected area would jeopardise the internal security situation. Secondly, the possession of nuclear weapon by its immediate neighbour having an unstable regime, not only pose a direct threat to its national security but also necessitate the external power presence inevitable to maintain some kind of discipline among the players in the region.

Another major threat that India has confronted in the post-cold war period is cross border terrorism. A solution to this problem is possible only with the involvement of external powers, especially the US. Similarly, it is the anti-terrorism moves in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 in 2001 which brought together the world's largest democracy



and powerful democracy to a common platform. Since one of the major components of the US Asia Pacific policy is anti-terrorism measures there is ample scope for collaboration and joint action between India and the US against the menace of international terrorism.

However, one of the major security predicaments in the region is that any closer interaction between India and the US will be viewed by China as part of a move towards containment of China. And any close China and the US interaction would be viewed by India as move against its national interest. Though there is balance of interests of these three major players of the Asia Pacific region, India, China and the US, at the bilateral level they lack mutual trust. In the absence of mutual trust any minor issue may aggravate to a major national security issue. In such a scenario it would be interesting to look into India's maritime security concerns.

### **India's Maritime Security Concerns in the Post-Cold War Period**

The maritime security is very important to India's military, economic, energy, environment, and human security. India has a coast line of 7516 kms and an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of 2 million sq kms. The significance of the maritime domain has long been recognized. The famous words of Alfred Tyler Mahan testifies this "whosoever control Indian Ocean dominates Asia. This Ocean is important in the seven seas, in the twenty first century the destiny of the world will be determined in its waters."

India occupies a central position in the Indian Ocean region, a fact that exercises an increasingly profound influence on India's security environment. Writing in the 1940s, K. M. Pannikar, noted the importance of the Ocean to India that "while to other countries the Indian Ocean is only one of the important oceanic areas, to India it is a vital sea. Her lifelines are concentrated in that area, her freedom is dependent on the freedom of that water surface. No industrial development, no commercial growth, no stable political structure is possible for her unless her shores are protected." In tune with the above observations the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru observed "History has shown that whatever power controls the Indian Ocean has, in the first instance, India's sea borne trade at her mercy and, in the second, India's very independence itself..." The significance of the Indian Ocean to India has also been emphasized in the Annual Report (2004-2005) of India's Defense Ministry, which noted that "India

is strategically located vis-a-vis both continental Asia as well as the Indian Ocean Region.”

Again the Indian Maritime Doctrine asserts: “All major powers of this century will seek a toehold in the Indian Ocean Region. Thus, Japan, the EU, and China, and a reinvigorated Russia can be expected to show presence in these waters either independently or through politico-security arrangements.” There is, moreover, “an increasing tendency of extra regional powers of military intervention in [IO] littoral countries to contain what they see as a conflict situation.” Thus the Indian Ocean and its littoral and hinterland area have a direct bearing in safeguarding India’s maritime security interests which is closely connected to national security.

### **India’s maritime security policy in the Post-Cold War Period**

India’s maritime security policy also underwent a sea change in the post-cold war period. The policy of exclusive engagement and elimination of outside powers has given place to overt engagement with extra regional powers. This has been well reflected in India’s joint military exercises along with the US, Japan, France, and Australia. India no longer considers the external power presence as a threat to its security. Rather it considers a joint effort is required to wipe out the major threat to India and international community posed by terrorism. It is not possible for any single nation whatsoever powerful to address the menace of international terrorism singlehandedly. India began to realize the importance of major amendments in framing its security policy objectives and pursuing it through increased naval power and active collaboration with extra regional as well as intra-regional powers. This policy shift in India’s stand is visible in the maritime doctrine as well as in the Navy’s vision document published by the Indian Navy.

It essentially encompasses:

- (i) Shaping a favorable maritime environment in the IOR for operations in peace as well as during conflict.
- (ii) Preventing incursions by powers inimical to India’s national interests by actively engaging countries in the IOR littoral, and rendering speedy and quality assistance in fields of interest to them.
- (iii) Engaging extra-regional powers and regional navies in mutually beneficial activities to ensure the security of India’s maritime interests.

- (iv) Projecting the Indian Navy as a professional, credible force and the primary tool for maritime cooperation.

India has also earmarked the area which falls within its immediate concern. “India’s growing international stature gives it strategic relevance in the area ranging from the Persian Gulf to the Strait of Malacca....” India’s post-cold war maritime policy had stated: “India has exploited the fluidities of the emerging world order to forge new links through a combination of diplomatic repositioning, economic resurgence and military firmness.”

It appears that India has adopted a three-pronged strategy to protect and promote its national interests. Firstly, through diplomatic means, India has pursued a policy of cooperation with all major players in the Indian Ocean, including extra regional powers. This policy would help India to increase further its international stature. The Indo US civilian nuclear agreement can also be viewed as an attempt to do away with nuclear isolation. The process of globalization has also accelerated better and cordial interaction with outside powers as the movement of people as well as commodities would further cement relation between nations.

India has developed a friendly and cordial relation not only by bilateral exchange with nations but also strengthened the bilateral cooperation through interactions in regional organizations, such as ASEAN, EAS, SCO, BRICS, ASEM, IBSA, APTA, and IOR ARC. India is vigorously pursuing the objective to become a developed nation by 2020. This requires the Indian economy to maintain an annual average growth rate of 8 per cent per annum.

India has adopted “Look East” followed by ‘Act East Policy’ in pursuance of this objective. Now the look east policy and act east policy are a vital part of India’s foreign policy. More than an external economic policy or a political slogan, the look east policy and act east policy show a strategic shift in India’s vision of the world and its place in the evolving global economy. It was also a manifestation of India’s belief that developments in East Asia are of direct consequence to its security and development. Therefore, India actively engaged in creating a bond of friendship and cooperation with East Asia that has a strong economic foundation and a cooperative paradigm of positive inter-connectedness of security interests. India becomes a member of the ARF in 1996 and considers it as an experiment in fashioning a pluralistic, cooperative security order reflective of the diversity of the Asia Pacific region. India has also successfully clinched a free trade agreement with the ASEAN which had come into force on 1 January 2010. India is also a member

of the East Asia Summit (EAS) which includes the ASEAN members and India, China, Japan, Republic of Korea, Australia, and New Zealand. It focuses on energy, environment, climate change, and sustainable development. The look east policy of India has included not only vigorous interaction with ASEAN but also improved relation with China. The ultimate objective, it appears, is to evolve an Asian Economic Community on the lines of EU.

India has also pursued a policy of strengthening its economic and military power. It appears that in order to increase the national power India had not only declared itself as a nuclear weapon power but also augmented its non-nuclear defense capabilities manifold. India is the largest importer of weapons as per the SIPRI reports. Again, the maritime doctrine of India focuses mainly on building blue water navy. India's role in ensuring the security of Indian Ocean region has been recognized by major players in the region mainly because of the major shift in its external policy through a pragmatic approach. As a result, India was not hesitant to cooperate with any regional and extra regional powers. India has undertaken several innovative steps towards economic resurgence of the country. India's initiative to interact with nations at the bilateral and multilateral levels through various regional groupings appears to be based on this policy initiative. The existence of non-traditional threat to India's security also demands multilateral approach towards security with the involvement of regional and extra regional countries. The NDA II government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, had taken several initiatives to improve India's relation with neighbouring countries and also with major powers through bilateral and multilateral engagements. The initiative to strengthen the economic and military power and also special focus on the maritime security of India are policies in the right direction.

Thus, a closer look into the divergent approach followed by the US in the Asia Pacific region and India's post-cold war maritime security policy shows convergence of interests. However, with regard to the means to be applied for the achievement of these objectives there is divergence. The US as a global power has all means to achieve its stated objectives, including use of coercive power, however, India as a functional democratic developing country having a hostile border with a totalitarian and a military dominated democratic nuclear weapon neighbours have only limited options to achieve its objectives. In such a situation, it appears that, the external power presence, especially the US presence in the Asia Pacific region is advantageous to India.

The collusion between sponsors of international terrorism and totalitarianism in the region is detrimental to the regional peace and development. Therefore, it is imperative to all democratic nations in the region to join together and built a common front against international terrorism, the gravest menace to international peace and security. It appears that the major concern of China is to preserve its own totalitarian system by any means and they pay less heed to values such as peace, human rights and democracy. Thus the national security predicament in the Asia Pacific region is very difficult to comprehend. It seems to be the clashes of democratic values and totalitarian traditions and the divergent means adopted by them in addressing their respective national security concerns rooted in their domestic political tradition.

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# Indo-Pak Relations: Post Pulwama Challenges

Sudhir Singh

PM Modi invited his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif in his swearing in ceremony in May 2014. It was an unexpected move from Modi, who has been considered a hardliner. PM Modi gave candid signal through this gesture to Pakistan that he was intended to take positive steps to resolve thorny Indo-Pak relations. Both the PMs met many times elsewhere and in December 2015, PM Modi had surprised the entire globe when he landed at Lahore to wish happy birthday to his Pakistani counterpart. These moves could not establish cordial relations between both traditional rivals of South Asia.

Within days PM Modi's gesture was reciprocated through Pathankot attack. In September 2016, 19 Indian military soldiers were killed in terror attack at Uri, in Kashmir valley. In response, first time after 1971, Indian army retaliated across the border and this strike was instrumental to eliminate many terrorist launching pads eliminating number of terrorists. This is an unprecedented move by Modi government. Modi government has also been successful to convince to the whole world that terror factory is being run from Pakistan. This diplomatic success however could not convince China. It had not only blocked designation of Massod Azhar as global terrorist fourth times but also blocked one of the tributaries of the river Brahmaputra, which is bound to impact negatively in lower riparian countries namely India and Bangladesh.

SAARC progress has been halted within this prevailing security trust deficit between India and Pakistan. After that dialogue between traditional foes of South Asia has been limited and bound to bring no results. On 14 February 2019, 41 CRPF personnel were assassinated in a fedayeen attack at Pulwama. PM Modi pledged retaliation and maiden time after 1971 war, on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2019, Indian Air Force bombed Balakot, Khyber Pakhtunwah province. Jaish-e-Mohammad which had taken responsibility of Pulwama had a sprawling training facility at Balakot that could be hosting over 650 terrorists. It is maiden occasion when IAF has targeted in deep Pakistan. Next day in air dog fight one Mig-21 of the IAF has been crashed but it had also shot down

sophisticated F-16. Indian pilot, Abhinandan has been captured because he ejected towards POK. Within 48 hours, Pakistan was forced to release him. On diplomatic front entire important countries extended their unilateral support to India but most surprisingly, Pakistan's all-weather friend, China maintained neutrality and advised both India and Pakistan to keep calm to deescalate. Pakistan has facilitated Taliban-United States talk to resolve turbulent Afghan problem much before Pulwama terror attack and hopeful that the US will support it. The US has not only disappointed but NSA John Bolton has asserted that India has the right of self- defense.

But just after Pulwama attack it was estimated by security analysts that India will retaliate. Pakistan issues a statement and warned that any act of aggression will not only jeopardise Indo-Pak relations but derail Afghan peace process as well. Afghan foreign ministry reacted sharply and summoned Pakistan's Ambassador to Kabul. In a statement issued after the meeting with Ambassador Zahid Nasrullah, the Foreign Ministry (Afghan) said it deemed his comments to be "in contradiction with Pakistan's commitments with regards to realising peace in Afghanistan".

Nasrullah said that any attack by India would "affect the stability of the entire region and impact the momentum" of the Afghan peace effort.

At the same time, a former deputy Afghan defense minister stated that Nasrullah's remarks would anger local government officials, saying it played into fears that the country's long-running civil war is a proxy for rivalries by regional powers.<sup>1</sup>

Pakistan felt that its longest ally, the United States has aligned with India. It is vindicated with the confession of Ambassador Munir Akram, an eminent Pakistani strategic thinker,<sup>2</sup>

"Although its positions are tendentious, India is likely to secure selective support for its demands because of its size and the general desire of major powers to placate it after its self-inflicted military and political debacle. The US in particular can be expected to press for several of India's demands. In fact, National Security Adviser John Bolton's reference to India's "right of self-defence" after Pulwama virtually endorsed India's ensuing military aggression.

Pakistan will have to work hard to persuade Washington to adopt a more balanced posture. No doubt the US is now aligned with India in the context of its rivalry with China. But, the US is also reliant on Pakistan's facilitation to secure respectable agreement with the Afghan

Taliban. Its recent signals of friendship towards Pakistan were missing in the Pulwama crisis. Islamabad needs to establish a stronger reciprocal linkage between its facilitation of US-Taliban talks and the US posture on Pakistan-India issues.”

In the backdrop of Balakot strike by IAF, although climate of war has evaded but diplomatic war is on with its full might. In post Pulwama and Balakot, the United States has extended support to Indian stand. On 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019, Indian foreign secretary, met US foreign secretary of State, Mike Pompeo. A statement issued after foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale’s meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019 with US secretary of State, Mike Pompeo reflected continued skepticism about Pakistan’s claim that it was acting against home -grown terror groups that have been internationally proscribed. ‘Foreign secretary conveyed appreciation to the US government and to secretary Pompeo personally for the firm support that India received from the US in the aftermath of the terrorist attack in Pulwama’ a statement from the Indian Embassy said.<sup>3</sup>

Saudi Arabia has been considered very close to Pakistan due to gamut of convergences. In post Pulwama and Balakot scenario, Saudi Arabia supported India. Saudi junior foreign minister met Indian foreign minister, Sushma Swaraj three times in the backdrop of terror attack and high voltage tensions between traditional foes of South Asia. Saudi junior minister also met PM Modi in March 2019. In his meeting with Al-Jubeir, Modi thanked the leadership of Saudi Arabia for expressing solidarity with India in the fight against terrorism. The government said in a press release, which didn’t name Pakistan, that it was agreed that Saudi Arabia and India should work together for ‘irreversible, verifiable and credible steps against all terrorists without any discrimination.’<sup>4</sup>

There are claims and counter claims about the number of terrorists killed during IAF strike at Jaish-e-Mohammad training facility in Balakot. According to the Times Now ‘ a total of four missiles were dropped at the Balakot JeM camp by IAF Mirage 2000 fighter jets. As per the details available, the presence of 263 terrorists at the JeM camp was established by Indian intelligence agencies. The top leadership of the JeM had assembled at the Balakot facility in the run up to several terror training courses that were due to start on February 25, 2019.’<sup>5</sup>

This paper is intended to dwell upon the challenges of India in the backdrop of Pulwama and the consequent ariel surgical strike in Balakot.

India and Pakistan were one country before partition in 1947, they are biggest countries of South Asia as well. Like India Pakistan inherited a



secular state ruled through a bureaucracy led by a civil service elite recruited and organized on merit. There is little evidence that Jinnah wanted to effect major changes on many of these fronts.<sup>6</sup> Both its founding leaders, Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan used religion to garner political support and thus created third stake holders popularly known as Mullah. The troika of military, bureaucracy and the Mullah captured the canvass of national building process and instead of egalitarian state they formed a theocratic state which was detrimental for the minorities in particular and development in general. General Zia-Ul-Haq (1977-1988) military regime further consolidated the power of this narrative over the destiny of the country. This troika has become so much powerful that even an elected government has been unable to change the direction which leads the country on the path of destruction. This particular mindset has been a breeding grounds for terrorism in Pakistan. 2018 elections however have been the third in the row and has provided stability to the democratic process but the case of Pakistan is unique where military has captured the corridor of power given the structure of power since its inception. In 2018 election, Imran Khan led PTI emerged victorious amidst allegations of scientific rigging. Pakistani military wants that even in case of compulsive necessity, civilian regime must be weak. Military is meticulous enough to ensure this whenever civilian governments are ruling. Imran Khan led PTI government is working on the same stipulated line which has been drawn by the army after 1988 elections which was necessitated by the sudden assassination of General Zia in a plane crash in August 1988. Although Imran Khan has pledged to construct the narrative of 'Naya Pakistan' but it is not visible even after 8 months of his regime.

India and Pakistan have fought three and half war since independence. Since its inception as different nations they have been confronting a turbulent relationship.

The post Pokhran (1998) situation has enhanced the status of India in the global map. Boosted with sustainable economic development, India has achieved good progress at the strategic level as well. The end of the cold war and post 9/11 situation has further brought Asia as a dominating continent at the global table of governance.

In the backdrop of surgical air strike (February 2019) situation how India could reformulate its Pakistan policy? There are many divergences and fewer convergences between both traditional rivals of South Asia. How diplomacy could be used to reduce divergences and increase convergences? This focal point will be widely debated within the ambit of this paper. Afghan situation is interconnected with prevailing Indo-

Pak tensions. Afghan government was one of the earliest governments to criticize Pulwama terror attack and appreciated Indian surgical strike on Balakot based terror training facility.

Afghan theater has become violent and within January-July 2015 around 5,000 people have already lost their lives due to terror resurgence. Combined right from 2009 till July 2015, 16,874 people have been killed in terror related violence.<sup>7</sup> Right from January 2015 to July 2015 alone 4,921 people have been killed which is self-explanatory. In the year 2018 along more than 4,000 innocent people have been killed. This bloodshed has remained sustainable phenomenon even today.

In May 2014 after the general election, BJP in the leadership of Narendra Modi has taken over . The BJP and PM Modi are known for their nationalist temper. Modi invited all SAARC head of the state to participate in his swearing in ceremony on May 26, 2014. Pakistani PM, Nawaz Sharif had also participated along other SAARC leaders. Modi and Sharif had 50 minutes conversations and expressed their desire to resolve all outstanding issues. Till Nawaz Sharif was ousted in late 2017 in the backdrop of judicial decision, both PM met many times and expressed their desire to sustain dialogue but non state actors interventions prevented the pace of the dialogue. Both PM met at Ufa ( Russia) in July 2015.

After May 2018 general election the government has changed in Pakistan. Imran Khan led PTI has taken over. During election process, major political parties have refrained from their pet rhetoric of anti India megalomania. Imran, Sharif and Bilawal had promised during election campaign that if elected they will promote cordial relationships with India. In the backdrop of the release of Indian Pilot, Abhinandan, Imran Khan retreated for dialogue. He stressed that trust deficit should end and we both countries must settle all outstanding issues through dialogue and remain with peace and development.

Pakistani army has tacit understanding with the terror network and they use it as strategic asset. It is reflected with the statement of Ahmed Rashid, eminent Pakistani scholar of Afghan affairs

“As the US military surge got under way in early 2010 in Helmand and Kanadhar province , there was increasing US pressure for Pakistan to do more to ‘ capture of kill’ Afghan Taliban leaders. The Army , which was now fully convinced that it had to eliminate the Pakistani Taliban in FATA, and deployed 1,40,000 troops to do so , but it still refused to go after Haqqani’s base in North Waziristan.”<sup>8</sup> the Pakistani army and the Jehadi factory super headed by Haqqani’s have been interlinked

since the Soviet intervention era. These so called non state actors had been the masterminded for the Mumbai (2008) carnage and gamut of attacks made against the Indian interests in Afghanistan recently. Some elements of the jihadi umbrella have inflicted bloodshed in Pakistan also. Some are linked with the sectarian divide as well. Despite all those acts, Pakistan has yet not snapped ties with these groups.”

I must return on the focal issue now. What are the basic irritants between both traditional rivals of South Asia. It keeps on changing but more or less it has been sustainable. When Benazir Bhutto’s PPP took over in 1988 and became first women Prime Minister of Pakistan, the Pakistani army took three assurances from her, where she scammed not to intervene. Kashmir, Afghanistan and Nuclear issue were the three arenas, Terror has remained as an instrument of Pakistan’s foreign policy and since early 1980s Pakistan has extended support to cross border terror activities in India.

In May 2011 Osama Bin Laden was killed at Abbotabad, just few hundred meters away from prestigious Kakul military academy, which is also not far away from Islamabad. The Pakistani commission which was constituted for its investigation has revealed many things which proved the allegation that OBL had a protection from the army. It has also been revealed by the commission that OBL was in Pakistan since his ouster from Afghanistan.

Pakistani army perceives turbulent relations with India must for their sustainable dominance. Right from 1971 war, army has felt that they could not defeat India in conventional warfare due to asymmetrical military power structure. Due to this change in the mindset they adopted terror to inflict hundred wounds to India and army and terror networks are working as a dependent organ for this larger cause. Since 1979 , Afghanistan has been turbulent and it has given a strategic depth to Pakistani army. Kathmandu high jacking of Indian plane which ended at Kandahar in lieu of the release of three terrorists’ leaders including JeM chief, Masood Azhar has remained self-explanatory.

Afghanistan remains a hot spot not only between Pakistan and India or United States and Pakistan but entire globe has its genuine stakes in Afghanistan. It is producing over 80% of the global harvest of drugs. Drug trafficking has threatened the societies across the globe in general but adjoining to Afghanistan it has leased unprecedented harm to the younger generation. In the backdrop of NATO withdrawal Pakistan is trying its level best to maximize its interests. One must remember that whenever there was stability in Afghanistan, it had thorny relations

with Pakistan. Afghanistan was the first country to oppose Pakistani demand of plebiscite in Kashmir in the United Nations. The issue of Pakhtunistan is raking high with the stability in Afghanistan. Pakistan feel worried in this situation therefore intended to keep Afghanistan as its satellite country.

Another issue is Kashmir. Since last 71 years it has been the core issue between India and Pakistan. Pakistan is claiming over Kashmir due to its religious and geographical proximities. It is also an open secret that despite many wars and cross border terror in Kashmir, Pakistan has not been able to snatch Kashmir from India. This has helped to the Pakistani military to remain most important and powerful institutions of the country. In May 2014, COAS, Raheel Sharif had stated that the Kashmir is jaguar vein of Pakistan, this sentiment was retreated again by PM Nawaz Sharif in August 2016. Due to Kashmir the army will avail lion share within resource less Pakistani economy. This process has helped to militaries the country and thus negated fundamental freedom and human rights and has weakened the democratic process. 2018 election has elected Imran Khan but he is unable to break this hegemony of the military and bound to remain subordinate of the army on the realm of foreign policy.

Aysha Siddika, an eminent military expert of Pakistan has opined in her famous book '*Pakistan Military Inc*' that even if India will hand over Kashmir to Pakistan in a silver plate, there is hardly any guarantee that animosity between both rivals will end. For the time being both countries must sustain the dialogue process on Kashmir till its final resolution and in the meanwhile cooperate on the areas where there are hardly any divergences like trade and commerce.

Cross border terror in India has been supported by Pakistan. Pakistan has understood the reality that even after 3-1/2 war they could not gain the desired results therefore they have adopted the tactics of thousands cuts propelled first by Z.A.Bhutto. After Ajmal Kasab, another terrorist from Pakistan had been caught alive in July 2015 in Kashmir, which vindicates that Pakistan has tacit understanding with the terror groups based there and their terror attacks in India.

Till date the master mind of Mumbai attack, Hafiz Saeed and Pulwama, Masood Azhar and other terror mafias are enjoying full freedom and spreading hatred against India. Pakistan must understand that sustainability of its support to the terror groups has been proved detrimental for the stability of the country. In the backdrop of Pulwama attack, due to international pressure, Pakistan arrested some of the

terrorists, sealed their offices but experience of last two decades says that they will be released once the international attention will be diverted.

There may be terror incidents in future to derail any possibility of durable peace. Pakistani army will never like cordial relations with India. It could hamper its monopoly over the system which it has been availing since independence. Pulwama terror attack is vindicated this assertion. According to Wilke Boris “The people in charge—bureaucrat’s on the one side, army officer on the other—were at great pains in protecting and dominating the state field against adversaries from in and outside the official borders. Internally, they had to confine their effort to some ‘core’ state; secular and most essential rules inside narrowly drawn boundaries, they had to prepare for war, since Pakistan’s territorial status (if we include—as we must—following official ideology-Jammu & Kashmir) was not clearly determined. More importantly, external and internal matters were mixed right from the start, giving the army a key state building role.”<sup>9</sup>

Army is all powerful in Pakistan. In the words of former army chief, General Jehangir Karamat, “Whenever there is a breakdown in stability, as has happened frequently in Pakistan, the military translate its potential into the will to dominate, and we have military intervention flowed by military rule.”<sup>10</sup> Since independence out of 71 years of history, Pakistani army has ruled 32 years directly and even when it is not ruling it is shaping the policies related to core issues of foreign policy like Kashmir, Afghanistan, United States, China and Nuclear etc. when civilian regime is ruling over Pakistan our empirical experience vindicates that more anti Indian megalomania prevails in the Pakistani system in comparison with the periods directly ruled by the army.

### **Challenges in the backdrop of Pulwama terror attack**

Pulwama terror attack has created some new challenges for the Modi government. PM Modi has asserted after Pulwama attack that it will not go unpunished. Within days after the attack, Indian army executed Ariel surgical strike on terror launching pads based in Balakot. It was maiden Indian air attack in deep Pakistan after 1971 war. It has also shattered Pakistani nuclear blackmailing. They kept threatening us that they will use nuclear options once their territory will be under threat. After Balakot attack this blackmailing has lost its appeal.

The entire world has appreciated this move and accepted that India has also right of self defense. The million dollar question is the new

policies to cope up with the emerging situations. According to Sanjay Baru, former press secretary of former PM Manmohan Singh “ What all this means is that normal relations are unlikely to be restored between India and Pakistan in the near future. Pakistan has refused to establish normal trade relations with India, refused to adhere to the trade liberalization programme of the SAARC and has refused to provide transit rights for Indian goods and vehicles seeking access to Afghanistan and Central Asia. Given this hard reality it is only natural that the Indian government has decided to stay away from the SAARC Summit. More than the supportive decision of Afghanistan, the fact that the Bangladesh, SAARC founder country, has also decided to stay away from Islamabad Summit this November shows that SAARC has entered a cul de sac. With trade relations frozen in time , with diplomacy derailed by military –supported terrorism and Pakistan’s increasing resort to nuclear blackmail, a new era of India-Pakistan cold war has begun. Of course, there is always a risk of a “hot war” if Pakistan military becomes desperate or Islamic jihadists provoke both countries into direct conflict.”<sup>11</sup>

Baru talks about cold war, which has already begun. China has already launched its ambitious CPEC and vowed to support Pakistan. It will be an interesting situation because in previous wars, China had not extended its support to Pakistan. After Balakot attack, China was close to neutral. Indian profile has increased many rounds since last two decades and at this juncture many global powers including the United States has extended their support to India. But given the prevailing situation and long-term gain to India, it is advisable not to go for war. According to eminent strategic journalist, ChidanandRajghatta” Islamabad has only itself to blame for its downward spiral. Cleaved from the same geographic entity , India and Pakistan took different roads to nationhood. One going uphill through the tough path of democracy and empowerment and the other on freebies and rental money through security pacts, mainly with the U.S. the difference in the outcome is best illustrated by the effect of the U.S presidential elections on the two. It is a consequence of the choices Pakistan has made for itself with its embrace of toxic Islamist extremism. So India should prepare for war by all means, but without firing a shot in anger, it can watch Pakistan stumble along the road to perdition.”<sup>12</sup>

In the backdrop of Pulwama and Balakot , India has gained both strategic and diplomatic edge over Pakistan. Maiden time any India has proved that it is a bigger power and Pakistan could not blackmail it on the notion of nuclear deterrence. Modi government has taken sharp decision

and targeted JeM biggest headquarters and therefore has established its own indigenous mode of strategic response to Pakistan on the line of Israel. Surprisingly India has not only consolidated its diplomatic support from United States led European world but also from Islamic world as well. Despite Pakistan's boycott of the OIC summit, Indian foreign Minister, Sushma Swaraj delivered guest of Honor address and condemned any format of terrorism. Saudi Arabia, UAE and Iran all important cheer leaders of the Islamic world extended their support to India and convinced Pakistan to release Indian Pilot to deescalate. Chinese behavior has surprised strategic analysts. During Kargil (1999) China declined to support Pakistan and advised that they must resolve thorny issues through dialogue. Twenty years down the line, in 2019 Chinese were forced to take the same line. It is extraordinary in the aftermath of Doklam standoff. China has taken a balanced stance and when President Trump administration has opened a full-blown trade war against it, China could not dare to offend India because it could lose an alternative market. India growing middle class population has reached to 500 million and this populace is able to buy any MNC,s products and also major portion of outboard tourism in Asia and elsewhere. In contrast, economically Pakistan is a pathetic case. Pakistan's foreign reserves has gone down to % 8 billion dollor and trade wise also it had \$ 17 billion dollor bilateral trade in last FY with China. India-China had \$ 84.44 billion dollor bilateral trade in last FY and out of which trade surplus of \$ 62 billion dollor was tilted towards China. Secondly strategic ambience in Asia has remained turbulent. China wanted to dominate it. India and like-minded Asian countries including ASEAN, Japan, South Korea and Iran wanted to keep Asia multipolar. Interestingly the United States which still remains global hegemon wanted that Asia must be multipolar. Given this prevailing security architecture of Asia, China could not take the risk to antagonize India further. Chinese stance in post Balakot scenario has been to prevent India to enter into United States block fully.

Since last three years India has superseded China in terms of overall growth rate and according to World Bank and other global economic pundits India is slated to maintain the lead for decades. India needs to sustain this saga for the pursuance of larger national interests. In last two decades, India has marked its imprint on the global table of governance. India has also strengthened its performance on human development sector. India has also emerged as the fulcrum of Asian balance of power. The prevailing security architecture in Asia has further enhanced Indian position. The demand of the hour is to sustain our edge over Pakistan and garner global support further and in the

meanwhile we must ensure that we are an emerging and responsible global economic and strategic power.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Since its inception, Pakistan has perceived India as their immortal enemy. In recent years, Pakistan has witnessed killings of thousands of innocent citizens. This has triggered a smaller debate in Pakistan that its western border is more dangerous than its eastern border for national security. According to BBC, defence analyst Talat Masood “Pakistan army for the first time has admitted that the real threat is emanating internally and along the western borders and not from India, which was previously considered as number one enemy of the state.”<sup>13</sup>

Through emulating China-India model, Pakistan could earn the financial leverage to eradicate its fundamental problems. But again, all powerful army has prevented it to realize. There is a fear in Pakistan that due to huge in size India will be the ultimate beneficiary. But question remains that Pakistan has already accorded MFN status to China, which is superior economy than India. Pakistan can learn some lessons from this experience. It is an era of globalization and despite rhetoric it is clear that every country has to cooperate to sustain their developmental process. Pakistan could not ensure sustainable development without ensuring peace with India. As nuclear power both countries are aware about the consequences of conflict. As pointed out by E. Sridharan “Explicit nuclearization with a demonstrated missile capability has assured Pakistan’s security in a way that reduces the sensitivity to relative gains in the military sphere Pakistan is more secure vis-à-vis a possible Indian military threat than ever before Therefore, it has less to fear and much to gain from greater economic engagement with India.”<sup>14</sup>

India has emerged as an Asian power and aspiring for global power. India must shed its elder brother mentality within South Asia and must prove that it is a responsible and peace building country. Through this process India can not only sustain its developmental process but also convince the global community that despite all odds it is also abided by reconciliation and international norms in South Asia.

France and Germany fought many bitter wars and during both World War’s even they fought from different poles. But they have learnt a good lesson from their bitter experience. The youth of France and Germany have played a vital role to bridge the gaps between the two countries. Both countries exchanged six million youth, who got education in each other’s country. The Elysee Treaty of 1963 brought



the two rivals closer for progress and prosperity. Both are cooperating in a massive way under the framework of the EU. India and Pakistan share not only common border but common fate as well therefore they must forget the past and cooperate with emulating France-Germany model.

Pakistan civil- military conflict has been mainly accountable for the turbulent relationship and it has been sustainable either the country is ruled by the civilians or the generals in uniform. India remains scoring points for both and given the prevailing balance of power it is bound to sustain in foreseeable future as well. Since 1990's uprising in Kashmir, Pakistan has used terror as an instrument of its foreign policy. Kashmir remains as a core issue for them and it is not going to change until Pakistan is not disintegrated.

Post Pulwama situation has proved that India and Pakistan could not emulate France-Germany model at least in immediate future and despite gamut of divergences, India should not leave an impression that it is a war loving country. 2018 election has given some rays of hope but last 8 months of Imran Khan tenure has been nonstarter. Despite this prevailing reality, India has to sustain its pledge to have a cordial relation with Pakistan despite knowing the reality through past experience that it will be less possible. It will fulfill larger contours of India's foreign policy.

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# Post-2014 Afghanistan Situation: Imran Khan's Government Policy Options

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By the end of 2014, NATO forces withdrew from Afghanistan. NATO left trainer to impart military training to the Afghan National Army (ANA) and kept a good number of soldiers back in Afghanistan. The Bilateral Security Agreement between Kabul and Washington and the NATO Status of Forces Agreement were signed at the end of September 2014.<sup>1</sup> In January 2015, NATO launched the new non-combat Resolute Support Mission (RSM) to train and assist Afghan security personnel.<sup>2</sup> NATO has planned to hold alliance troop levels in Afghanistan about 12,000 through 2016 and launched a campaign to fund national forces.<sup>3</sup> Although since June 2013, the ANA has taken over the security operations in all 34 states, it is still unanswered question that how far it will be able to contain the increasing onslaught of the Taliban. The ANA has approximately 183,000 and Afghan National Police (ANP) has 151,000 and Afghan Air Force (AAF) has 6,700 personnel.<sup>4</sup> However, dissertations from the ANA have been quite large. The ANA lacks motivation and sufficient military equipment and suffers the phenomenon known as “ghost soldiering,” wherein a person is officially on active service but not actually present in the military.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the efforts to strengthen Afghan army, Afghanistan is doomed to remain the weakest link in the chain in terms of ensuring its national security. The spill-over of security problems is a serious concern for regional states. Military, political and economic security in Afghanistan has been strictly tied to the policies of global and regional powers, mainly India, Pakistan, China and the United States. The relations of India and Pakistan, two countries having mostly conflicting interests on Afghanistan play a determinant role for the future of this war-weary country. Analysing to what extent these countries may converge their interests over Afghanistan problematique may be key to assess whether a stable and secure Afghanistan in the post-2014 period is possible.

The mutual dependency on the settlement of disputes and maintenance of security and stability in South Asia among India, Pakistan and Afghanistan has been proved a good case study for the Regional Security Complex (RSC) theory. Buzan describes a RSC in his book published in 1983 as “a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot reasonably be considered apart from one another.”<sup>6</sup> In 1998, Buzan and his colleagues broadened the definition of the RSCs by taking into account different actors and different sectors of security. Therefore, a RSC is described as “a set of units whose major processes of securitization, desecuritization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another.”<sup>7</sup> In the South Asian RSC, Pakistan, Afghanistan and India have developed asymmetrical security interdependence. India is the militarily and economically strongest and largest country in this sub-continent while Pakistan lags behind India in all these terms. Both of these countries persistently compete to assert their influence on Afghanistan, the most fragile state of the region. Threat perceptions between New Delhi and Islamabad –these two declared four major/minor wars against each other since their independence, in 1947, 1965, 1971 and 1999- have intensified this competition, but overshadowed a genuine regional cooperation.

Buzan and his colleagues stress on some factors that determine a RSC as follows: “Historical hatreds and friendships, as well as specific issues that trigger conflict or cooperation, take part in the formation of an overall constellation of fears, threats, and friendships that define an RSC. These patterns of amity and enmity are influenced by various background factors such as history, culture, religion, and geography, but to a large extent they are path-dependent.”<sup>8</sup> It is certain that one of the most important factors that defines a RSC is the geographical proximity of the actors. “[Physical] adjacency is potent for security because many threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones”<sup>9</sup> and “most states historically have been concerned primarily with the capabilities and intentions of their neighbours.”<sup>10</sup> The central focus of the RSC is “security interdependence whether negative (conflict formation) or positive (security regime, security community).”<sup>11</sup>

The nuclear rivalry and identity politics between India and Pakistan have mutually reinforced threat perceptions and misunderstandings. The general pattern of hostility between New Delhi and Islamabad continues to shape South Asian regional security dynamics on the basis of conflict instead of cooperation and Afghanistan is not an exception for this general pattern. In fact, Afghanistan carries a considerable

potential for either security regime or conflict formation in South Asia. Security problems emanated from Afghanistan continue to be a destabilizing factor not only for major powers, notably India, Russia and China, but also for relatively weak ones such as Pakistan and Central Asian states. In this sense, any security regime emerged around Afghanistan may be beneficial for multiple actors and eradicate the potential of conflict formation.

Although Afghanistan has preserved its isolated position in the region until recently, however, in practice there are some promising developments not only for its future but also for the whole region. Shared interests on the fight against rising Islamic extremism, the possible membership of Afghanistan to Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), energy routes passing through Afghanistan and increasing inter-regional trade seem to be clear signs of this optimism. In this sense, for the future of Afghanistan, the things the regional states do or in other words, by what and how they practice will play a crucial role.<sup>12</sup>

Adler and Greve introduce four broad ways of thinking about security mechanism overlap: temporal/evolutionary; functional; spatial and relational. Notions of functional variety and overlap have also three different forms in it: across sectors or domains; across different parts of the (foreign) policy-making bureaucracies of states; and across issues.<sup>13</sup> Beyond the traditional geographical/geopolitical notion of regional boundaries and the social or cognitive notion of boundaries defined with reference to identity, Adler and Greve focus on overlapping mechanisms on the basis of practical notion of boundaries. For them, regional boundaries are determined by the practices across issues initiated and stimulated by the regional leader or leaders. However, for South Asia, it is difficult to overcome deep-rooted enmities. As the rivalry between India and Pakistan over Afghanistan has been perceived within the logic of zero-sum game and the historically unfriendly relations have caused huge trust deficits, it is difficult to create this kind of win-win situation for all parties.

In this paper, firstly, how Indian, Pakistani and Chinese authorities have preferred to formulate their policies towards Afghanistan will be examined within the framework of regional security. Secondly, it will be questioned to what extent the problematic relations and tensions between India and Pakistan may have an impact on the fate of post-2014 Afghanistan particularly in the backdrop of Imran Khan led PTI government's arrival after May 2018 elections. Finally, some concluding remarks and prospects will be provided.

## Indian relations with Afghanistan

India has traditionally deep-rooted relations with Afghanistan. Since 1950, through aid and infrastructure programs, India helped Afghans to improve their lives and by facilitating trade and investment flows encouraged Afghan authorities to economically integrate their country to the region. Although India's engagement to Afghanistan was interrupted in the years of Taliban rule, it has continued throughout 2000s. Since 2001 India has upgraded its presence in Afghanistan particularly in the reconstruction efforts and built many infrastructure assets. Today, India as the leading donor country in Afghanistan with its extensive developmental assistance programme reaching to \$3 billion became the 5<sup>th</sup> largest global contributor in the reconstruction of this war torn country.<sup>14</sup> Ahmed Rashid, an eminent Pakistani expert of Afghan affairs underlines the Indian influence in Afghanistan:

...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 spearheaded 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.<sup>15</sup>

India signed Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) in October 2011 with Afghanistan in order to cooperate with Kabul in the fight against terrorism, extremism, and criminality and to bolster the country's economic development and has trained to Afghan civilian and military personnel. Besides this, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) has provided 500 scholarships in a year for Afghan students. New Delhi also supports strategic infrastructure projects in Afghanistan such as building a transmission line to provide power to Kabul, a hydroelectric project in Herat, the Zaranj-Delaram road that connects the Ring Road in Afghanistan to the Iranian port in Chahbahar<sup>16</sup>The implementation of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline project which was first mooted in 1995 and has recently been revitalized is also likely to ensure Afghanistan's economic integration to the region.<sup>17</sup>

While Indian development assistance programs are appreciated by the international community, it is difficult to say the same for Indian contribution to the trainings of Afghan security personnel.<sup>18</sup> However,

during New Delhi visits in December 2013, President Karzai requested defence assistance in addition to growing number of training to the ANA officers in the backdrop of the withdrawal dates of the NATO forces are coming closer and the Taliban has propelled its violence against the Afghan government. Recently India has outsourced arm supply order to Russia for Afghanistan by conceding outgoing Afghan President's request. However, the "strategic partnership" between Afghanistan and India once again sends the wrong signal at a critical time, for all it does is reinforce Pakistani paranoia"<sup>19</sup> and that is why it was fiercely opposed by Islamabad. This can be vindicated from the editorial of leading Pakistani English newspaper, *Dawn*:

The reconciliation process with the Afghan Taliban has stalled not only because of the elections, but more crucially because the key players comprising the Afghan Taliban, Pakistan, the U.S. and Afghanistan have been unable to trust each other. In this unfriendly regional setting, the reported arms agreement between India and Russia is being viewed with misgivings. Initially, reports said, New Delhi would 'source' Russia for the supply of smaller weapons such as light artillery, but eventually this flow of arms paid for by India would include heavy artillery, tanks and helicopters. From India's point of view, such a deal would consolidate the influence New Delhi has already built up in post-Taliban Afghanistan. Hence it would be disastrous if regional states and outside powers were to adopt policies that could once again make Afghanistan an arena for proxy wars."<sup>20</sup>

India has sustained its all round support to Kabul even today. President Ghani met Indian PM Modi many times and both have visited each other capitals and inked gamut of deals to bolster bilateral ties. Since infrastructure projects of India have reduced the Afghan dependence on Pakistan for sea route, they have been seen detrimental for Pakistani interests. In 2018, India has connected Afghan roads to Chahabour port of Iran and not only sent huge goods but also import Afghan goods. In other words, the interests of India on Afghanistan have enraged Pakistan because Pakistani officials were committed to "securing strategic depth in Afghanistan, their regional backyard"<sup>21</sup> and Indian presence is a hurdle to sustain it. This strategic depth was shaped over historical, cultural and ethnic ties of Pakistan on Afghanistan as an instrument to contain the influence of India in the region. "In the eyes of Pakistan's security establishment, strategic depth is a genuine requirement for the country's security and survival, for it is now a security state

increasingly encircled by ‘enemies.’”<sup>22</sup> In post Pulwama [ February 2019], India has negated the dogma of nuclear deterrant by Pakistan by bombarding terror installation in Balakot which is in Khyber Pakhtunwah province.

The withdrawal of NATO and U.S. forces causes security vacuum in Afghanistan that challenges the interests of Delhi which needs more stable and secure Afghanistan. Unfortunately, India’s learned lessons from the past seem to signify a troublesome future. During the period of the Taliban rule in Afghanistan (1996-2001), India’s internal security had been badly hit due to sustainable cross border support. In 1999, an Indian Airlines plane was high jacked from Kathmandu and landed in Khandahar. After this crisis, New Delhi has paid greater attention to Afghanistan. Jaish-e-Mohammed (JM) has been increasingly seen one of the most dangerous terrorist groups in India that seriously threatens Delhi’s national security interests.<sup>23</sup> The attack on the Indian consulate in Jalalabad on March 2, 2016 became the last strong evidence on the dissatisfaction of Indian presence in Afghanistan.<sup>24</sup> Despite these developments, India tried to protect its personnel in Afghanistan. For instance, the deployment of the Indo-Tibetan Police Force (ITPF) and army commandos was an attempt to protect civilians with the Border Roads Organization (BRO) who were working on the southern portion of the Ring Road. The terrorist attacks, especially on Indian embassies, forced New Delhi to increase ITPF presence in Afghanistan to make the key Indian installations in this country safer.<sup>25</sup>

The situation of Afghanistan is highly problematic and has considerable repercussions for Indo-Pak relations. As mentioned above, Pakistan’s military and civil establishment has long sought to exert influence in Afghanistan in order to secure the strategic depth on its northern border and to limit Indian influence in the region. It is claimed that successive Pakistani governments have promoted radical Islamic groups for their ambitions in Afghanistan and even used the jihadist forces to increase their bargaining power in critical issues vis-a-vis India. It is argued that Islamist militants (e.g., Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (HUJI), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), and Harkat-ul-Mujahideen/ Harkat-ul-Ansar, among others) have been trained in Pakistan and Afghanistan.<sup>26</sup> For instance, LeT was implicated in plots like the terrorist attacks in New Delhi in October 2005; in Bangalore in December 2005; in Varanasi in March 2006; in Nagpur in June 2006; and in July 2007 train bombings in Mumbai, November 2008 Mumbai carnage, Pune in 2013 and Pathankot in January 2016.<sup>27</sup>



In December 2015, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi made supporters and opponents surprised with his sudden unscheduled Lahore trip, while coming back from Kabul. He had a meeting with Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and both pledged for peaceful resolution of all outstanding issues. But within days of this much hyped trip, Pathankot airbase near Pakistan border was attacked by terrorists. When Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Lahore in February 1999, Kargil took place. Pathankot was replica of the same trend. According to Farahnaz Ispahani, eminent expert and former Member of Parliament (Pakistan), "Jihadi groups organized by mosque-military alliance which owns everything now, they did Pathankot. Things were going well with Modi and Sharif. But these groups have no interests in good relations with India. Anyone who knows this, like me and my husband, saw something like Pathankot, coming."<sup>28</sup>As it can be seen, it is extremely difficult to ignore old hatreds and suspicions and open a new page between India and Pakistan. In both of these countries, there are some groups benefiting from the existence of a potential conflict.

### **Pakistani -Afghanistan Turbulent Relations**

We are aware about the fact that one of the most important factors for peace and stability in Afghanistan is Pakistan. Pakistan never had a peace with Afghanistan right from its inception until 1979 Soviet intervention. Pashtunistan remains a bone of contention between both countries. Since independence almost half of the time Pakistan was ruled by the military and even during the civilian rule, military enjoys autonomy to pursue its own policies on mainly three fronts: Kashmir, nuclear issue and Afghanistan. When Benazir Bhutto took over as the civilian ruler in December 1988, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Mirza Aslam Beg took three assurances where she promised not to intervene and it was again Kashmir, nuclear policy and Afghanistan.<sup>29</sup> Rest elected PM's have also toed on military line on Afghan issue.

Since the independence of Pakistan in August 1947, the U.S.-Pakistan relations have oscillated between "alliance intimacy and cordiality and times of friction and tension."<sup>30</sup> Some regional security problems made these ups and downs more visible and, without any doubts, the turmoil in Afghanistan is one of these issues. In the aftermath of 9/11 attacks, the U.S. decided to dismantle the Taliban and General Musharraf agreed on this decision, however it is claimed that some ISI officers did not welcome this idea and continued their support for the Taliban as well as for Kashmiri militants.<sup>31</sup> However, especially after 9/11, the relations of some Pakistani officials with the militants were declared unacceptable

by the U.S. and harsh criticisms were directed to the Pakistani government.

The U.S. has poured \$20 billion since Operation Enduring Freedom to Pakistan; however Pakistan has remained reluctant to assist the U.S. in the war on terror partly due to the “political uncertainty in Afghanistan, unwelcome American interference, and the trust deficit.”<sup>32</sup> The U.S. missed this “strategic chasm” in explaining the worsening relations with Pakistan,<sup>33</sup> however continued to accuse Pakistan of not cooperating adequately on the fight against terrorism.<sup>34</sup> It is discussed that Pakistan benefits from economic and military assistance which is needed to dismantle terrorist groups in Afghanistan and as long as this situation continues to be exploited by some Pakistani officers, the problems in Afghanistan cannot be solved. Pakistan has actually worried about the possibility that India may use Afghanistan as an instrument to create disturbance and turmoil inside Pakistan and wants to preserve its control over Kabul.

Under the presidency of Obama, the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009, known as the Kerry-Lugar-Berman Bill, provided a huge increase in the U.S. civilian assistance to Pakistan by tripling it to \$1.5 billion in a year.<sup>35</sup> Under this legislation, Pakistan received non-military financial aid and assistance to develop its state capabilities and continue its counterterrorism activities.<sup>36</sup> The most important element of the Obama administration’s policy towards the region was the Af-Pak strategy. The main objective of the Af-Pak strategy is the reconstruction of Afghanistan and the maintenance of security and stability. Those who formulated this policy seem to admit the fact that the resolution of the problems in either Afghanistan or Pakistan has been highly depended on each other.<sup>37</sup> However, this strategy that has underlined the importance of Pakistan in the Afghan reconciliation process could not be successfully accomplished.

The elimination of Osama Bin Laden in Pakistani city of Abbottabad on May 1, 2011 climbed tension between Washington and Islamabad and deepened doubts on the support of Pakistani army and ISI for Islamist militants.<sup>38</sup> On the one hand, the U.S. has appreciated the efforts of Pakistan for its commitment as well as its military and civilian losses in the war on terror. President Barack Obama said, “We have been able to kill more terrorists on Pakistani soil than just about anyplace else. We could not have done that without Pakistani cooperation.”<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, as underlined above, the U.S. has often blamed the Pakistani military and intelligence for supporting militant groups, particularly the Afghan Taliban and Haqqani Network.

The unstable nature of relations between Washington and Islamabad has created a status which could be termed as “trust deficit.” The U.S. mostly tends to consider the security issues at the global level. By doing so, Washington seems to undervalue the regional security concerns of Pakistan derived from the Indian strategic interests in South Asia.

Although the U.S. and Pakistan pretend to cooperate against the challenges in the region, actually their threat perceptions dramatically differ from each other. For Pakistan, the existential threat is not international terrorism, but India.<sup>40</sup> However, “by refraining from direct engagement in the Kashmir dispute, moving forward US-India civil nuclear cooperation and seeming to sympathize with New Delhi’s perspective on the root sources of regional terrorism,” the U.S. has remained indifferent to all regional security concerns of Pakistan.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, the ISI has seen Afghanistan war as “America’s war” and become “obsessed with preventing America’s new favourite friend, India, from gaining inroads there.”<sup>42</sup>

The U.S. has always used the economic and military aids and sanctions as carrots and sticks in its foreign policy towards Pakistan. During Afghanistan war, Pakistan received \$14,177 million military aid and \$6,536 million financial aid from 2002 to 2011.<sup>43</sup> However, “with military aid two or three times larger than economic aid, the U.S. has strengthened the hand of a military that often thwarts American counterterrorism objectives.”<sup>44</sup> Washington has not exerted considerable effort to improve the civilian infrastructure in Pakistan, instead wanted a “quick victory” in Afghanistan. As an author says, “If Pakistan’s foreign policy weakness is that it peers at the region through India-shaped glasses, a potential U.S. weakness is to look at Pakistan through Al-Qaeda or Afghan-shaped glasses.”<sup>45</sup>

Most of the Pakistanis consider that they have sacrificed more, but in return received less during their alliance with the U.S. Indeed, Pakistani army provided four airfields, two-thirds of Pakistan’s air space, and logical support for the U.S. cargos. Besides, Pakistan put itself under a serious risk by attacking the militants in its own territories and it became the target for these militant groups. Pervez Musharraf, the tenth President of Pakistan from 2001 to 2008, was labelled as “traitor” by Al Qaeda due to his decision to join U.S.-led war on terror.<sup>46</sup> Till date Pakistani army is fighting home grown insurgency particularly against Tehrik-a-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). It became highly fragile by losing approximately 50,000 people and 5,500 soldiers in their home grown insurgency. Furthermore, the Pakistani economy severely damaged during the Afghanistan war. Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood

Qureshi stated, "Pakistan has done its bit, the ordinary citizen in Pakistan has paid a price, now America needs to start delivering."<sup>47</sup>

The relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan had been marked by high tensions and accusations especially under the rule of the former Afghan President Hamid Karzai. Karzai blamed Pakistan for providing tacit support to the militants. However, Ashraf Ghani who was elected as the President of Afghanistan on September 21, 2014 has put reconciliation with Pakistan to the top of the agenda. In early 2015, Ghani announced his plans to repair relations with the Pakistanis and mitigate tension in order to guarantee Pakistan's facilitating role in the talks with the Taliban. However, these reconciliation efforts give huge political damage to Ghani as he has been the targets of harsh criticisms at home<sup>48</sup> and this process is so vulnerable to manipulation.

Ashraf Ghani in his speeches accused regional and international terrorist groups for the spread of violence in his country and seeks regional help to dismantle terrorism.<sup>49</sup> Ghani is aware of the fact that his country cannot deal with security problems derived from non-state actors unless Pakistan supports the resolution. Ghani tried to reassure Pakistan about decreasing Indian influence in Afghanistan by allowing a group of army cadets to receive education in a Pakistani academy and suspending the request of Karzai for Indian arms. Ghani made his first visit to Pakistan on November 14, 2014 and met Pakistani Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif.<sup>50</sup> In return, Sharif also visited Kabul on May 12, 2015. In this meeting, Sharif said to Ghani: "I assure you, Mr. President, that the enemies of Afghanistan cannot be friends of Pakistan" and continued, "Any effort by any militant or group to destabilize Afghanistan will be dealt with severely and such elements will be outlawed and hunted down."<sup>51</sup>

Lisa Curtis from the Heritage Foundation cautiously argued: "A transformation of Pakistan-Afghanistan ties can only take place in an overall context of improved Pakistani-Indian relations."<sup>52</sup> However, India and Pakistan have remained on different pages on Afghanistan throughout last 72 years due to divergences of interests. Some leading pundits of India-Pakistan relations are of the opinion that till Kashmir will not be resolved, Afghanistan tango will sustain. Being involved to two-front war -one is along the Durand Line with Afghanistan and the other is along the Line of Control with India- has always been nightmare for Pakistan.<sup>53</sup> As Zain says, "A country in conflict is most vulnerable when faced with a two-front-war. Till 9/11, 2001, Pakistan faced belligerency on its eastern border the Kashmir imbroglio involving India."<sup>54</sup>

The territories of today's two neighbouring countries in South Asia, India and Pakistan, were colonized by British Empire until the independence movements succeeded in the year of 1947. On August 14, 1947, Pakistan declared itself as an independent Muslim state. With this declaration, former Indian territories under British control were divided into two countries, India and Pakistan. Muslims of Pakistan finally achieved their ultimate goal: "a separate homeland."<sup>55</sup> However, separation does not mean the end of ethnic and religious conflicts in this region. Muslims and Hindus, two different religious identities living in the territories of India and Pakistan had been polarized under the control of Britain from 1858 to 1947. Even after the partition, the relations between India and Pakistan have remained hostile and tense under the shadow of old territorial and religious disputes.<sup>56</sup>

The fiercest territorial and religious conflict between Delhi and Islamabad has taken place in Kashmir. After the Indo-Pak war in 1947-1948, this region was fragmented between India and Pakistan. Pakistan has claimed that Kashmir with its large Muslim population was the extension of its territories and it should have been unified under its control.<sup>57</sup> However, India rejected to withdraw its forces from the territories of Kashmir and sought the ways to increase its influence in the region. For both Delhi and Islamabad, Kashmir is not only a territorial issue but it also represents the identities and cultures of their own people. Pakistan aims to use Muslim population in Kashmir as an advantage to increase its political influence in the region. As an expert says, "Pakistan has, through a variety of methods, sought to 'regain' the 'lost' Muslim-majority territory of Kashmir. India has consistently resisted Pakistan, while inadvertently stoking the fires of irredentism through its policies in Kashmir."<sup>58</sup> Feldman argues as follows:

"Kashmiri separatists, backed by Pakistan, are accused of terrorist attacks in India, including an attack on the Indian parliament; and Pakistan accuses India of oppressing and killing Kashmiri Muslims. The conflict is depicted in religious terms by Islamists within Pakistan: Hindu India against Muslim Pakistan for control over majority-Muslim Kashmir. Like most such conflicts, the Kashmir struggle is enormously complicated."<sup>59</sup>

But even in the situation when Kashmir will be resolved amicably there are many other issues beside Afghanistan which will sustain both countries relationship turbulent. Ambassador Munir Akram, an eminent Pakistani strategic thinker says:

“The hostility between Pakistan and India has deep historical and popular roots in both countries. Despite cultural, linguistic and ethnic affinities, the mutual hostility between Hindus and Muslims of the sub-continent is real and endemic. It was the *raison d'être* for the creation of Pakistan. The history of last fifty years has, if anything, further intensified this hostility and given a structural expression in the relationship between the two states. The Kashmir dispute, in essence, is but one expression of this divide and hostility, (Bangladesh relations with India displays the same dynamic). Thus, even if outside issues like Kashmir, are resolved, and some semblance of civility restored between Pakistan and India, their relationship will remain competitive for the foreseeable future. Those who argue that, with goodwill and conflict resolution, peace and harmony can descend on the sub-continent are either ignorant or self-serving.”<sup>60</sup>

From the eyes of Pakistanis, India pursuing its own strategic plans and national interests aims to preserve regional power status in South Asia and poses serious security challenges for Pakistan.<sup>61</sup> For many Pakistani authorities, India continuously challenges and attempts to weaken its neighbour. It is even argued that India has used warfare tactics, directed political and psychological weapons to the Pakistani state and tried to isolate Pakistan in the international area. Therefore, Pakistan has formed its foreign policy based on Indian fear and sought some allies outside the region to balance the power of its strongest neighbour.<sup>62</sup> Islamabad has inevitably needed to establish closer ties with Washington to balance Delhi's military and economic power and strengthen its hand in the fiercest competition over Kashmir issue.

### **China-Afghan Relations**

China is mostly involved in economic activities in Afghanistan and aims to increase the trade volumes with Kabul. Beijing invested in the Afghanistan's mining sector and developed projects on agriculture, hydroelectricity, irrigation, and infrastructure in this country. China's bigger telecom equipment manufacturers, Huawei and ZTE provided cell phone technologies and expanded Internet access in Afghan provinces. China also supported the Parwan irrigation project and contributed to build public hospitals in Kabul and Khandahar.<sup>63</sup> In addition, Afghanistan provides geographically the shortest way to reach energy resources which becomes increasingly important for energy-hungry China. However, these investments seem to remain insufficient

to increase soft power of China in Afghanistan which remains limited as compared to the Indian influence.

The Western view is that China adopting very pragmatic policy towards Afghanistan is a free-rider which benefits from relatively secure atmosphere in Afghanistan after 18 years-long war. As American journalist Robert D. Kaplan says in 2009: "The problem is that while America is sacrificing its blood and treasure, the Chinese will reap the benefits. The whole direction of America's military and diplomatic effort is toward an exit strategy, whereas the Chinese hope to stay and profit."<sup>64</sup> It is true that China has hesitated to take military responsibility in Afghanistan. There are several reasons behind this Chinese attitude towards Afghanistan. Firstly, China does not want to provoke separatist movements in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. The spill-over of terrorism and extremism from Afghanistan to this region is perceived as a serious threat to the territorial integrity of China. Secondly, China has long been disturbed from American presence in the region and reluctant to become a part of the Western policies. Ironically, the same reasons have recently forced Beijing to play a more pro-active role for building stable and secure Afghanistan.

9/11 attacks have accelerated the institutionalization process of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) of which China, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, India and Pakistan are members. The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) which was established as a unit of the SCO in 2004 was used by these countries to fight against three evils, separatism, extremism and terrorism.<sup>65</sup>In 2005, Afghanistan Contact Group was established under the SCO to cooperate with Afghanistan on economic development and fight against terrorism and drug trafficking.<sup>66</sup>In 2009, the organization and Afghanistan signed an action plan to increase security cooperation and improve Afghan security institutions. Afghanistan received observed status in the SCO in 2012.<sup>67</sup> In May 2015, Afghanistan signed a Protocol of Cooperation with the RATS in order to deal with security threats more efficiently.<sup>68</sup> Finally, Dmitry Mezentsev, the General Secretary of the SCO, confirmed the request of Afghanistan for full membership to the organization on October 9, 2015 which was actually declared several times by Afghan officials since 2011.<sup>69</sup>

India and Pakistan became members in 2016. Russia backs India's membership to the organization while China explicitly supports Pakistan.<sup>70</sup> Inclusion of both traditional South Asian adversaries to the SCO gives new hopes to solve regional security problems including those emanating from Afghanistan. On the other hand, this option also carries the risk of turning the SCO into a talking-shop.

Pakistan receiving support from China, its historical ally, tries to minimize the disadvantages caused by power asymmetry between India and itself. Pakistan recognized the Republic of China just after its establishment and established diplomatic relations in the 1950s. These relations deepened in the period of Sino-Indian conflict from 1962 to the late 1980s. China as the Pakistan's largest defence supplier has provided scientific expertise to Pakistan's nuclear program in the 1980s and 1990s and helped the country to modernize its army. Former Pakistan's Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani described the relationship between Pakistan and China as being "higher than mountains, deeper than oceans, stronger than steel and sweeter than honey."<sup>71</sup> Indian leaders have always been suspicious towards the long-standing strategic ties between China and Pakistan. OBOR has further cemented Sino-Pak relations. The increasing profile of India and its closeness to the US has further forced China to treat Pakistan at par with an exclusive ally.

China began to follow a more neutral policy in Kashmir issue, even tried to normalize India-Pakistan relations after 1999 Kargil war and established strong economic relations with India. Chinese have replicated the same module even in the backdrop of Pulwama/Balakot in February 2019. However, the fact that Chinese foreign policy towards India has been motivated by countering Indian power in the region does not change. Sustainable rise of India since last two and half decade has worried China therefore benefit is bound to go to Pakistan. India's rise on economic front, the changing security architecture in the Asia-Pacific and rise of China challenge U.S. hegemony. Mearsheimer argues that the rising powers aspire to be a regional hegemon.<sup>72</sup> Rising China is all set to dent American hegemony in Indo-Pacific region. But it is still unclear whether China has the capacity of replacing the U.S. for Pakistan or not. The answer lies in the future; however, this seems very difficult for now. Besides, the growing Indo-U.S. relationship has put China into the trap of the concept of 'security dilemma' and China-India-Pakistan emerging triangular relationship is a classic example.

The success of Chinese policy towards Afghanistan will be dependent on whether China can make more contributions to the reconstruction of this country and elimination of terrorism by cooperating with other regional and global players. China has recently encouraged the peace talks between representatives of Afghan President Ghani and members of the Taliban. The Afghan and U.S. governments expect that China will play a facilitating role during these critical talks.<sup>73</sup> Early 2015 talks were seen as an opportunity for dialogue between the Taliban and Afghan government after 13 years of war.<sup>74</sup> In 2018 again talks with



the Taliban started which was brokered by Pakistan, where much of the Taliban leadership is located. China also remains in the loop within this process of dialogue but till date even after PM Imran Khan open assertion to facilitate it , nothing has come out.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Although it is not so easy to turn all negative images and hostilities into peaceful and cooperative behaviour with a genuine and comprehensive leadership in the South Asian RSC, there are good reasons to do so in post-2014 Afghanistan by deriving learned lessons from the past. According to Jones, the “strategic altruism” in a regional security context is possible “when there is evidence of a consistent, long-term policy by an actor, or actors, to base their decision-making with respect to security issues concerning regional states on a belief that it is in their interest to systematically consider a regard for the views and needs of the other actors as a principle of action. ... An emerging or ongoing security relationship is more important than relative gain or loss in any single transaction.”<sup>75</sup> However, in South Asia, there is not any considerable attempt to assume this kind of leadership role yet. Each actor sees Afghanistan with different glasses and focuses on its own relative gains which makes reconciliation in Afghanistan much difficult.

Both Pakistani and Indian authorities should truly grasp the importance of the integration of Afghanistan to its west and south which would yield more economic and political benefits in the long-run as compared to the current impasse. Pakistan needs to be persuaded to take a proactive role in the future of Afghanistan and weed those who benefit from the turmoil and destabilization in Afghanistan out. Afghanistan can be perceived as a genuine cooperation area by New Delhi and Islamabad and both should stop acting as fiercest competitors. In this sense, Indian and Pakistani authorities should cease to accuse each other and focus on developing confidence-building measures in the region. China and Russia may facilitate this dialogue by using the SCO as a platform in the future.

There is hardly any Afghan family today which is not either headed by a widow or a disabled person. According to the Watson Institute from October 2001 to October 2018 more than 1,47,124 people have been killed in Afghan conflict.<sup>76</sup> It includes security forces and civilians.

The military measures in Afghanistan have remained insufficient so far. It is high time to establish peace and stability. Afghan people are

ready. International community must ensure that post-Soviet withdrawal shall not be repeated.

Pakistan has to reconcile with the fact that till peace and stability does not prevail in Afghanistan, Pakistan also cannot remain peaceful. Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said in June 2019 that Pakistan is resolute towards finding a peaceful solution to the Afghan conflict as “Pakistan supports an Afghanistan that is at peace with itself”. The comments were made while addressing the inaugural session of a conference on Afghan peace titled *Lahore Process* held at Bhurban, Pakistan.<sup>77</sup> The moot question with Imran Khan led PTI government is to reconcile with the military which never wanted a stable Afghanistan. Pakistani army believes that unstable Afghanistan is more able to serve their strategic interests. Due to this dominant mindset, army never supported NATO led offensive combat operations against the Taliban in Afghanistan and has had a tacit understanding with the terror groups active in Afghanistan. Pakistan kept denying that they are not aware about Osama Bin Laden’s whereabouts but he was killed by special American forces in May 2011 at Abbotabad which is hardly one KM away from one of the oldest military academy of the country (Kakul Academy). Due to this mindset Pakistan has not been a part of the solution of the Afghan tango because it is a part of the problem. Right from 2008 till date, Imran Khan led PTI government is third in row but whole world knows that they are toothless on strategic affairs. Military is almighty in Pakistan and it will never allow a stable Afghanistan therefore despite many solemn pledges, PTI government which came into power after May 2018 elections, is unable to take any transformative steps to resolve Afghan tango.

The regional states should develop a more comprehensive policy towards Afghanistan by combining and coordinating their efforts in the fields of infrastructure, health, education, energy and economic development. In this sense, India and China have potential to play a role like a “strategic altruism” in the formulation process and implementation of this policy.

Pakistan must understand that its tacit approval to the Afghan violence has proved detrimental for her as well. If Pakistan has to stabilise it should contribute to ensure peaceful and stable Afghanistan. One third of Afghan people have been killed since 1979 sustainable violence. Humanity is under severe crisis in Afghanistan. There is a severe need of interference by the international community in general and regional community in particular.

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