

CPEC: Shifting Sands in Pakistan's Foreign Policy

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Abstract: This paper is about the dramatic shifts in Pakistan's diplomatic stance since its inception. The paper argues that Pakistan is unusual in having to depend upon short-term diplomacy to achieve the stability that other countries enjoy through long-term diplomacy. The article argues that this short-term diplomacy is the result of Pakistan being forced to improvise radically different diplomatic responses in the face of different and severe challenges in its international relations. Whilst the overriding challenge in Pakistan's international relations has always been the existential threat posed by India, the shifting sands of alliances in its region between the U.S, China, Russia and India, wars and civil strife have prompted Pakistan to pivot alliances alternately between the U.S. and China whilst maintaining a difficult balancing act between them. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is the latest shift in the sands of Pakistan's Foreign Policy in recent times.

Keywords: Foreign Policy, Pakistan, CPEC, China, India, U.S., Soviet Union, Afghanistan.

INTRODUCTION

How a country deals with other countries according to diplomatic standards is typically called its foreign policy. All big and small countries make specific foreign policies that adhere to their national interests. However, historically it is observed that the big and powerful first world countries manipulate and influence the foreign policies of the small and weak Third World countries. With military or financial assistance or threats to the vulnerable countries, the big and powerful countries use these countries in their interests. Hence, the third world countries try to improve their relations with the big powers to minimize their vulnerability (Thomas, 1987). Without these kinds of manoeuvres, it is not possible to survive.

The Foreign Policy of Pakistan has undergone several changes at different times. This is primarily because of the different kinds of obligations, pressures, and threats from big countries and sometimes the challenges that arise within the country. Through dramatic shifts in foreign policy stance, Pakistan has survived the tides of time; however, it has faced different kinds of challenges as a result of these shifts later on.

The current development in Pakistan's Foreign Policy in the form of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is the latest one, which shows the will of Pakistan's establishment not to play into the hands of external powers. Instead, it would focus on its economy, making it stand honourably in the world nations. CPEC also plays an important role in China's foreign policy, connecting Central and South Asia through advanced land route infrastructures and a Maritime Sea route through the Indian Ocean. The routes join at Gwadar port in Pakistan, which is under China's administration for many years for development purposes (Wagner, 2016).

With the accession of President Xi Jinping to power in 2013, China has been going through strong, dynamic, and crucial changes, especially in foreign policy. China's Belt and Road Initiative project is a vast and ambitious project of China, and its foreign policy revolves around it (Zhang, 2016). BRI has brought massive changes to China's foreign policy and thus to Pakistan's foreign policy because Pakistan is an ally and partner of China in BRI.

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There is a significant shared interest between China, Pakistan and other neighbouring countries, who can benefit from each other if they respect each other's national interests and cooperate in a peaceful and friendly environment. On the contrary, if they oppose each other, every country will suffer. In other words, China and its neighbours will sail or sink together (Yunling, 2016).

The China Pakistan Economic Corridor, the flagship project of BRI, has brought the two countries closer than ever before. The two countries are heavily dependent on the success of CPEC and its parent project, the Belt and Road Initiative. This model project of BRI, will ensure the trust of other countries to join the project and get the maximum benefit from a win-win situation like Pakistan.

However, the U.S., which has long had a complicated relationship with Pakistan, may not like this idea. It would be a complex situation for Pakistan to balance the relationship between the U.S. and China, because the former sees Pakistan with suspicions of shifting its policies and dependence increasingly in favour of China. Previously the cooperation between China and Pakistan was based on defence and military, i.e. strategic in nature. However, with time, as China's vision has broadened to cooperate and trade with other countries through BRI, the cooperation between Pakistan and China deepened from the military to trade and multi-billion-dollar economic projects under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (Bai & Hyder, 2021). This is a remarkable milestone in Pakistan's Foreign Policy. With this development Pakistan is shifting its focus from a dominant military and security perspective to financial and economic prosperity, because the policy makers have realized a strong economy is key for strong national defence.

To better understand Pakistan's current foreign policy, we must look into the past and evaluate the historical developments and paradigm shifts in Pakistan's foreign policy. This paper discusses all meaningful Shifting Sands in Pakistan's Foreign Policy, the causes behind them, and the future indications and directions of Pakistan's Foreign Policy in terms of CPEC. It also emphasizes peace and security issues with particular reference to its past and future prospects. Without understanding its past, neither the country's current situation nor its future can be considered.

Historical Perspective

Since the beginning of Pakistan, its foreign policy has undergone significant changes. There have been several factors involved in the shifts of Pakistan's foreign policy throughout its history. This article briefly analyses the factors that have been the cause of the shift of Pakistan's foreign policy.

There are several factors involved in the making and changing of Pakistan's foreign policy; including peace and security, national interests, ideology, geopolitics and strategy, economic interest, regional and international situations, and domestic conditions. These are some of the essential elements of Pakistan's foreign policy, which are intertwined but sometimes act independently. Pakistan's geographical importance has made it relevant for the superpowers but in order to get the maximum benefit, Pakistan needs to improve 1) internal stability and political system, 2) economic sustainability and conducive environment for foreign investment, 3) knowledge, academics and technology.

Foreign policy process is generally spread over three levels in terms of its fulfilment: short-term, medium-term, and long-term. These objectives sometimes overlap, creating quite complicated situations. Although having a steady long-term foreign policy is considered the best way to ensure stability and benefits for a country, in the case of Pakistan, whose security dilemma was far more significant than any other issue, this has not been possible. That is why Pakistan has adopted short-term foreign policy manoeuvres through challenging situations at different times. This strategy has proven to be beneficial for Pakistan.

Big and small countries alike tackle similar issues, though there is always a clear difference in their capacities to deal with them. This, however, does not mean that the role played by a small state is less critical and always insignificant vis-à-vis a big power. Many opportunities come to small states, which, if adequately availed, give them breathing space and provide enough room for an honourable and respectful position among the community of nations. On the other hand, sometimes even a great country commits huge blunders. In fact, particularly in this nuclear age, the safety and perhaps even the survival of nations depends upon the skilful conduct of foreign affairs (Bagby, 1983).

However, every country has to follow the basic principles of foreign policy, including peaceful coexistence and non-interference in each other's affairs. The most essential desired objectives of a country's foreign policy are political stability, economic prosperity, and sovereignty. Through challenging experiences and harsh realities, many countries have understood that wars do not eradicate conflicts. They have learned how to coexist in peace despite religious and ideological differences. There is no doubt that this state cannot be achieved overnight. It requires political will, patience and persistence. Countries cannot live in isolation. Especially neighbouring countries must have good relations to survive, grow, develop and move forward together and face the shared challenges of poverty, hunger, disease, natural disasters and environmental problems of the world today.

Moreover, developing and keeping pace with modern innovations and inventions in science and technology is also very important. Countries cannot change their neighbours; therefore, all goals mentioned above can only be achieved when peace and harmony exists between countries. Unfortunately, Pakistan has been struggling to achieve these goals from day one of Pakistan's existence on the world map. This is mainly because of the existential threat from India since day one of Pakistan's creation. Therefore, the majority of Pakistan's Foreign Policy revolves around its security and sovereignty. However, against this backdrop of constant security threats, the most significant countries that have directly or indirectly influenced Pakistan's Foreign Policy are: India, USA, Soviet Union (Russia), Afghanistan, Arab Gulf Countries, Iran and China.

Indian Factor

Since its inception, Pakistan has been confronted with the persistent security danger of regional hostility. Indian antagonism on its Eastern front and an unstable and unfriendly Afghanistan towards the West shaped Pakistan's security paradigm in which the military has always played a predominant role. In fact, it is mainly because of India that Pakistan has had to adopt a defence-oriented foreign policy right from the beginning.

Indian hostility towards Pakistan can be traced back to the Indian Muslims who refused to live under the suppression of India's Hindu majority upon independence from the British Empire. They struggled for a separate homeland from the British rulers, who after World War II could not keep hold of India as a colony. The Muslims of India were concerned that after British rule finished in India, the majority of Hindus would manipulate the minority rights of the Muslims and Muslims would be forced to live as second-class citizens under the Hindus. Muslims believed that they were different from the Hindus in religion, culture, food, clothes, in fact, every aspect of life. Therefore, the Muslims refused to live in a Hindu dominated country. The Muslim leaders presented a two-nation theory and demanded a separate country. Despite the strong opposition from Hindus, Muslims managed to get a separate country, called Pakistan, on the ideological basis of Islam.

After much bloodshed, Pakistan was formed in 1947 but with a partition in the middle occupied by India. There was an East and West Pakistan with one government of both in the west. This proved to be an unwieldy administrative system because the Indians were relentless in their efforts to cut the two parts off from each other. They infiltrated the smaller East Pakistan to sow the seeds of dissent and made communication and trade between east and west Pakistan as difficult as possible. Also, besides India, Pakistan was surrounded in its initial period of independence by the unfriendly, if not outright hostile, countries of the Soviet Union, China, and Afghanistan. At this time, only Iran, to some extent, was a friendly neighbouring country of Pakistan.

Although Pakistan received its international recognition in 1947, in the beginning years it remained isolated from the world, and struggled for its survival against hostile India, which annexed Hyderabad and Jammu and Kashmir by force, in addition to a big part of Kashmir (Bhutto, 1964). India and Pakistan were already involved in an undeclared war in Kashmir from May 1948 until January 1949. During the spring of 1950 and the summer of 1951, all-out war nearly broke out between them twice (Brecher, 1977).

The crises of 1951 finally convinced the Pakistani leadership that if Pakistan hoped to survive as an independent nation, it must procure arms for itself and look for powerful friends to back it up. Its early hopes in the Commonwealth and initial moves to forge a Muslim bloc had not brought about the desired results. Close links with Russia and China at this stage were ideologically unattractive and, in any case, would have been of little help materially because neither of these communist giants was yet in a position to assist others to any substantial degree. There were three options for Pakistan: alliance with Western powers, alliance with the communist states, or disjointed fraternization with the neutralist countries (Burke, 1974). It was a challenging point in Pakistan's foreign policy to decide to choose a complicated path with vague destination.

The U.S. and the Soviet Union's Cold War

Capitalism and Communism were the two opposing ideologies of the Cold War era. The US and the Soviet Union were two giants and champions of the two, respectively (Naz, 2020). Pakistan had no choice but to go along with one of them. This superpower rivalry on world reached into every corner of global politics and international relations. Other countries particularly Asian and African, were studied in terms of the influences of the superpower policies upon them. These states struggled to autonomously formulate and realize their own policies in the face of Cold-War politics. (Rizvi, 1993)

During that time, Pakistan's foreign policy primarily focused on external threats, especially India, which had close ties with the Soviet Union. Later on, the intention of the Soviet Union became clearer to Pakistan. Pakistani policymakers came to suspect that the warm waters of Pakistan were to be the Soviets' next target if its invasion of Afghanistan had been successful.

During the Cold War, conflict and competition for dominance were at their peak. Different countries joined forces either with the western bloc led by the U.S. or the communist bloc led by the Soviet Union. In the formative phase of Pakistan's international relations, ideology was of utmost importance and translated into policy; this meant a strong preference for the Western states and a dislike of Communism. Communism in the early years of that period was no less uncompromising. The communist bloc believed that unless a newly independent country underwent a communist revolution, it remained bourgeois, capitalist dominated, and a tool of imperialism.

Pakistan's policy makers realized that it was tough to remain neutral, nor could it afford non-alignment at that point and time in its history in the face of a leader of the non-aligned movement, the menace of India. Moreover, they also believed that in so far as the champions of nonalignment themselves were concerned (i.e., India, Egypt, Indonesia, etc.), they had been leaning towards an alliance with the U.S. or the Soviet Union for all practical purposes, economic and military needs.

The United States offered Pakistan its military and economic assistance in 1953, in return for joining in the military alliances against rising international communist powers (Mohanty, 2013). Because India pursued the non-aligned movement, the U.S. turned towards Pakistan, which desperately needed defence requirements. The U.S. foresaw the strategic importance of Pakistan as a potential ally in the region. Though formal ties were not forged until 1954, informal cooperation began in 1952. On September 8, 1954, and September 23, 1955, Pakistan had joined the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), respectively. However, Pakistan had joined the two military alliances to strengthen its security vis-à-vis India (Burke, 1974). It was Pakistan's ideological and bureaucratic preference, coupled with the sense of insecurity, which obliged it to choose the U.S. over the communist Soviet Union as a strategic balancer against India amid an intensifying Cold War.

In this connection, during a foreign policy address to students on December 9, 1956, at Dacca, Prime Minister Suhrawardy stated: "The Cold War was due to the communists' attempt to impose their ideology on the rest of the world. Pakistan had been able to attain freedom from British control but should it become a satellite of Russia; we shall never be able to get out of the control of our master. We have seen how East Germany suffered, Poland suffered, and in which Hungary has suffered" (Burke & Ziring, 1990).

Indeed, this was a turning point in Pakistan's foreign policy, the high mark of which was the signing of the Pak-U.S. Bilateral Agreement of March 1959. It was a significant move in Pakistan's foreign policy that benefited Pakistan in the short-term. No doubt Pakistan's military and economic power increased because of its alliance with the U.S. General Ayub Khan, the then ruler of Pakistan, who previously had deplored Pakistan's military helplessness, said confidently that Pakistani forces could now defend every inch of Pakistan.

Thus, Pakistan perceived the U.S. as its protector against regional threats, especially India. However, Washington did not wholly share this Pakistani viewpoint, regarding India as a potentially more valuable regional partner. Consequently, despite Indian inclination towards the Soviet Union, the U.S. still regarded an Indian role as vital in containing the spread of Communism. The simplistic assertion of Pakistani leaders, considering the U.S. as a "protector and friend", emanated due to a complex structure of global politics where "interest" transcended "friendships" and inter-state relationships were sought to safeguard national interest through astute use of statecraft, diplomacy and politics.

Nevertheless, in the long-term, Pakistan had to pay a heavy price through adopting policies according to U.S. wishes in important international developments of the period such as the Colombo Conference, the Asian-African Conference at Bandung, the Suez crisis, the crisis of Hungary, the Middle East crises, the U-2 incident, the question of Tibet, the Laotian crisis, representation of China in the United Nations and the question of two Chinas, in addition to opposition to the Soviet Union and its allies. In return the USSR and its allies supported India against Pakistan. During all this process, Pakistan's relations with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, the Soviet Union, and China became further strained, (Burke & Ziring, 1990) which in turn resulted in sharp criticism of Pakistan's foreign policy by a growing number of people inside the country, particularly by those belonging to the extreme left and right of the political divide.

Soon Pakistan learnt a painful lesson; it was not an easy task to be aligned to any of the two groups, and it could not trust the U.S., which was supporting India through trade. The U.S. did not want India, a bigger country than Pakistan, to join the Soviet bloc and sought to tempt India away from that bloc through economic aid. The U.S. tried to establish a special relationship with India and its arms supply to Pakistan through this. The U.S. tried to balance its support of Pakistan with India. Pakistan knew that sole dependence on the U.S. would not be wise.

After U.S. military assistance to India commenced in 1959, the U-2 incident of 1960 and the Sino-India war in 1962 convinced Pakistan it was necessary to shift its foreign policy to bilateralism with the signing of a boundary agreement with China in March 2, 1963.

Pakistani authorities were also disappointed by the inability of the U.S. to change the status quo in Kashmir. Ayub Khan explained that the force of circumstances had compelled Pakistan to reappraise its policy of complete identification with the West. He started the argument by taking Pakistan's geographical location, which had the dubious distinction of having three big neighbours: The Soviet Union, China and India. The prospects of establishing normal relations with India were dim; the best thing to do was understand the remaining two countries. In addition, it was necessary to have satisfactory relations with the U.S. It was like walking on a tightrope (Brecher, 1977).

Meanwhile, Pakistan's relationship with China had reached its peak point during the 1965 Indo-Pak war, and the relationship of Pakistan and the U.S. quickly deteriorated during the same period due to the latter's cessation of military aid to Pakistan. At the same time, in the Pak-China equation, there seemed to be a basis for a quid pro quo with the Sino-Pak border agreement, China's open support to Pakistan on the Kashmir issue, its moral and material support of Pakistan during the 1965 war, and the question of Chinese membership in the U.N. (Razvi, 1971). Pakistan sought to maximize its options by cultivating Asian countries, the socialist/communist states, especially China and the Soviet Union. Bilateralism and mutually beneficial considerations were emphasized in Pakistan's interaction with other states and it adopted an increasingly independent posture towards world affairs. These trends crystallized into nonalignment in the early seventies (Rizvi, 1993).

In simple words, this was a policy of balancing Pakistan's relations with the PRC, the USSR and the U.S. From this point onward, this was going to be a cardinal principle of Pakistan's foreign policy. Pakistan had been over-committed to the U.S. for about a decade, but it was also time to revisit Pakistan's foreign policy, another shift in the sands in Pakistan's foreign policy.

Pakistan's Ties with Arab Gulf Countries

In the initial years of Pakistan's joining of U.S.-led western treaties made the Arab Gulf countries sceptical of Pakistan. They questioned how a Muslim country could join the western colonial powers of the past, and maintain good relations with Arab countries at the same time (Rizvi, 1983). They did not appreciate the severity of India's threats to Pakistan. In its struggle with India, Pakistan had little choice but to align with the U.S. led western bloc against Communist bloc led by the Soviet Union.

The Pak-U.S. relationship started to deteriorate when the U.S. did not support Pakistan in 1971, when East Pakistan was lost in a conflict in which India was heavily involved. From that point Pakistan further distanced itself from the Western military alliance SEATO, as well as from the Commonwealth of Nations and later on from CENTO, though still maintaining some semblance of its traditional relationship with the U.S. and the West, generally speaking.

It was another major shift in Pakistan's foreign policy. During this crucial period, for strategic and economic reasons and religious affinity and sentimental attachment, Pakistan focused its attention more than ever before on the Islamic states of the Middle East. Prime minister Z.A. Bhutto played an active role in the establishment of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC.) He was very vocal over the issues faced by Muslim countries. "Pakistan," Bhutto declared, "was committed to a diplomatic initiative that focused on a united approach to the Middle East problem" (Burke & Ziring, 1990). The apex of Pakistan's solidarity with other Muslim states was hosting the second Islamic Summit in Lahore on February 22-24, 1974. Also, when the OIC condemned the Camp David Accords of September 1978 and the Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty of March 1979, Pakistan acted in solidarity with the Arab states that were opposed to these agreements (Shahi, 1988).

These actions from Pakistan were appreciated by the Arab Gulf countries, which showed support for Pakistan on many occasions, including the initiation of Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC), which Pakistan desired for a long time. In 1973-1974 oil embargos and petroleum price controls by the oil rich Arab countries made them realize their power of manipulating the West through oil. For the first time they realized that the West was also vulnerable (Rizvi, 1983). They could use their oil power for the betterment of the Muslim countries.

Moreover, during the same period, Pakistan started pursuing its nuclear program (around 1976) in the wake of India's nuclear explosion on May 18, 1974. The Arab countries supported Pakistan, because they wanted to strengthen the Muslim country Pakistan against the non-Muslim country India.

Foreign Policy on Nuclear Power

The clear involvement of India in the conspiracy against Pakistan, resulting in a devastating separation of East Pakistan, was confessed to by the sitting India Prime Minister Modi in a speech during his visit to Bangladesh, where he said Indians fought shoulder to shoulder with Mukti Bhani against Pakistani soldiers in East Pakistan (Modi, 2015).

The separation of East Pakistan made Pakistan obsessed with the question of its survival. It was at this point that Pakistan became determined to pursue a nuclear policy for defending its sovereignty. On the nuclear issue, Pakistan's foreign policy has by and large been highly consistent ever since the mid-1970s; despite all sorts of pressures exerted by both its foes and friends, Pakistan stood behind its nuclear program as its right to self-defence. Pakistan firmly believes that its rudimentary nuclear deterrence capacity has given it a decisive new edge against the much larger conventional arsenal of India (Munro, 1993).

On the other hand, after the demise of the Soviet Union, the U.S. started to distance itself from Pakistan and chose to rebalance its relations with India, which had deteriorated during the Afghanistan war against the Soviet Union. In order to please India, the U.S. policy towards Pakistan turned very harsh.

This motivated Pakistan more towards achieving nuclear power. The U.S. punished Pakistan for that through sanctions on military sales and economic aid to Pakistan. It could not stop Pakistan from testing its nuclear devices in response to India's test detonation of a nuclear weapon on May 11, 1998. The U.S. imposed even more sanctions on Pakistan as a reaction to its nuclear testing. There were a few more economic sanctions against Pakistan after that. The U.S. did not care that its strict policy towards Pakistan would push Pakistan further away from its influence.

Afghanistan and the Soviet Union

Afghanistan is a neighbouring country of Pakistan which has been in political turmoil for a long time and Afghan Jihad played a vital role in Pakistan's Foreign Policy which not only affected Pakistan but also affected two major powers of the Cold War, i.e. the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Pakistan's immediate geostrategic location has always been troublesome due to the scepticism and resentment that developed between Pakistan and India before and after the independence. Whereas, the Soviet and Indian support to Afghanistan's territorial claims in Pakistan, further deteriorated the situation on both sides of Pakistan's borders.

Furthermore, the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, threatened to remove Afghanistan as a buffer between Pakistan and the USSR altogether. The new relationship between the USSR and Pakistan worsened the external threats for Pakistan. A very strong resentment started in people of Pakistan against the Soviet Union, whereas a lot of sympathy arose for the Afghan people. Pakistan's government feared the Soviet Union would attempt to go through Pakistan to satisfy its historical desire to gain access to Arabian Sea's warm waters. Therefore, in conjunction with the West, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, and the Gulf States Pakistan played an important role in supporting the organization of Afghan Mujahideen. Recognizing this, China's opposition to the USSR's involvement in Afghanistan pushed it closer to Pakistan (Kasuri, 2015).

All these factors combined to bring about a major shift in Pakistan's foreign policy to handle the immediate threat from Soviet forces alongside some dissident groups from both sides of the border of Pakistan. With the support and training of CIA and ISI Muslim militants helped free Afghanistan from Soviet occupation, but this policy of the Zia regime proved to be beneficial only in the short-term. It brought drastic changes in Pakistan in the coming years. Radicalism and sectarianism in Pakistan resulted from this foreign policy. Besides, the effects of the war inside Afghanistan led to Pakistan being inundated with over three million Afghan refugees and Pakistani territory becoming the base of operations for some Afghan resistance groups. This did a lot of damage to Pakistan's security and economic development (Rizvi, 1993).

The situation further degenerated when the U.S. abandoned Afghanistan after the Geneva Accord of 1988, leaving Afghanistan in the turmoil of civil war and Pakistan with millions of helpless of refugees. In addition, the U.S. imposed embargos on Pakistan in the wake of its nuclear program in 1990. The U.S. did a lot of harm to its relationship with Pakistan by ignoring Pakistan's nuclear program while Pakistan was of use to it during the war in Afghanistan and then conveniently remembering it again and sanctioning Pakistan accordingly after the U.S. deemed there was no further use to be made of Pakistan (Kasuri, 2015).

Pakistan faced tremendous pressure on a host of foreign policy issues and crippling economic sanctions during this period. To ward off the destructive effects of sanctions on its economy and achieve the fruit of its contribution in the struggle against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan tried to avail itself of opportunities in the newly independent Central Asian Republics. It did not succeed in its attempts in this regard mainly because of the continuing turmoil in Afghanistan.

War on Terror and Pak-U.S. Relations

After the demise of the Soviet Union, when there was no more vested interest of America left in Afghanistan, and the U.S. decided to leave the country in turmoil amidst political conflicts and power struggles of the different Afghan forces. Ultimately, the Taliban took over the country and ruled for five years. But the U.S.'s sudden shift in priorities in

the aftermath of 9/11 made it renew its interest in Pakistan. Having spent more than a decade being treated by the U.S. and the international community as a pariah for its nuclear program, alleged support of the Taliban and the insurgents in Kashmir, Pakistan was converted into a key ally in America's war on terror (Hussain, 2007).

The situation worsened as the U.S. bombed indiscriminately, destroying infrastructure, which they never rebuilt, and killing hundreds of thousands of people on the ground. A great resentment arose among the Afghan people. Although the Taliban regime was dismantled, and they retreated for a time, they never surrendered. Despite the resentment of the majority of the Afghan people against America, an American backed regime was imposed upon Afghanistan. NATO forces on the ground backed this regime for more than a decade, and at the same time, the guerrilla campaign of the Taliban and against the American-backed Afghan government slowly intensified. These attacks of the Taliban were covered in the media as terror attacks.

As a frontline partner of the U.S. in its so-called War on Terror Pakistan faced many challenges. It has led Pakistan to an almost fatal condition, as the sitting Prime Minister Imran Khan said, in his speech to the General Assembly Seventy-Fourth session, ninth plenary meeting at United Nations: "By joining the war on terror, Pakistan went through one of its worst periods. We lost 70,000 people to the war, 150 billion dollars to our economy" (Khan, 2019).

Pakistan was a victim of terror attacks perpetrated by an organization that called itself Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). TTP came into being due to antipathy of Afghan forces to Pakistan for its support of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. Different groups manipulated this resentment among the people against Pakistan to form TTP.

The same Afghan militant groups who were the U.S.'s ally against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s became the U.S.'s enemies. They were funded and supported by the U.S. and trained in Pakistan to fight against the Soviet occupation. This war was called the "Afghan Jihad", its fighters came from all over the world and were called the Mujahedeen. "We joined the war against the Soviets in the 1980s. Pakistan trained the then "Mujahedeen" at the behest of the Americans. The Soviets called them terrorists; but the Americans called them freedom fighters" (Khan, 2019).

The real problem was that they had been trained and armed well and proved to be a formidable enemy. The U.S. had its vested interest in the war against its former allies because it coveted strategic territory and resources in Afghanistan and used the 9/11 terror attacks as a means of winning over its people and the global community to its adventures in this country. However, Pakistan had been dragged into the war by the U.S. as the price it had to pay for amicable relations with that powerful country and had nothing to gain from turning against a battle-hardened army that had mastered guerrilla war and was set to spread division and instability in Pakistan itself once provoked. Pakistan paid the heaviest price of any U.S. ally in its war on terror in the form of terrorism and loss to its economy. Pakistan even suffered from suspicion, accusation and sanctions from the U.S. as punishment for failures in the war.

In this climate the Pakistani establishment and political leaders started to reconsider its foreign policy and think of means to get Pakistan out of the mess created by joining in the war on terror. At this time China offered Pakistan a lifeline. China expressed willingness not only to offer Pakistan short term financial aid and investment poor but also invited Pakistan to become an integral part of its new foreign policy shift, its Belt and Road Initiative.

China and CPEC

China-Pakistan relations have been peaceful and cooperative throughout the 70 years history of their bilateral relations, however since 2000, the policy makers of both sides decided to enhance their economic cooperation to match the level of their deep rooted diplomatic and strategic relations. Although, the 9/11 incident hindered the process for several years, however in 2013 there was a substantial breakthrough in the form of signing an agreement to establish China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a much needed stepping stone for further enhancing the economic ties of the two countries.

CPEC is warmly welcomed by devastated and terrorism-hit Pakistan which lost billions of dollars to its economy in the U.S.'s war on terror. CPEC can lead Pakistan to better economic conditions. Pakistan's economy is severely suffering because of external debt and the current account deficit at the moment. The potential of this huge joint venture can reciprocate the aims and objectives of both the countries who both also aspire to reach other countries of the region for trade and economic cooperation.

However, this economic blessing of China and Pakistan has attracted sharp criticism and concerns among some regional and extra-regional actors who deem it as a threat to their own geopolitical and strategic interests. These divergent and conflicting views can hinder the construction and progress of CPEC. One of the biggest challenges to CPEC is foreign funded terrorism in Pakistan. For the success of the project Pakistan has taken steps to tackle the

terrorism aggressively and has been successful so far. Pakistan needs to take proactive measures to deal with terrorism not only in the country but also needs to help the peace process in Afghanistan. In this way Pakistan can succeed in protecting the CPEC project from terrorist attacks of TTP on its western borders. But there is another threat to CPEC on its boarder, that is India. India has shown the will and ability to hamper the project by triggering border disputes. India is becoming increasingly belligerent in response to Pakistan's successful handling of domestic terrorism and the progress of CPEC. India is playing a dangerous game here. It wants to play as an American ally and hegemon in the region. The U.S. wants to use India to contain the economic and military progress of China.

China and Pakistan are trying to play smart to reconcile with opponents of CPEC by engaging them through diplomatic manoeuvres to promote understanding and regional peace. They should address the concerns of the aggrieved countries rationally and convince them to be partners in this mega project rather than enemies, to acquire maximum benefit. This is why China's leaders and media repeatedly emphasize the win-win orientation of BRI. This inclusive policy, if it succeeds, has the potential to uplift many countries in the region and beyond, through voluminous trade, seamless economic integration, interdependence and cooperation.

The success of CPEC would mean the success of Pakistan's foreign policy for the first time for the betterment of people of Pakistan without serious implications. On the other hand, the failure of CPEC as foreign policy of Pakistan, would not only have disastrous implications for Pakistan but also for all regional and extra regional actors involved.

CONCLUSION

Recent years have witnessed drastic global changes in geopolitics and geo-economics. China is one of the key players in these changes. Being an important ally of China, Pakistan will have to be very careful in its foreign policy in the coming new world order but there are signs that Pakistan's foreign policy may at last be beginning to settle down for a long-term arrangement. CPEC is a long-term commitment for Pakistan.

China's rise has increased the challenges and opportunities for confrontation and cooperation. The outcome of the contradictory partnership and rivalry of the U.S. and China has yet to come to fruition. Recent years with the trade war have put a damper on hopes for the U.S. and China to put differences aside and work together for global peace and prosperity. In the form of the success of CPEC, Pakistan can provide a better assistance to China as this country rises to become the leading economy in the world.

India is a constant threat. The U.S. has clearly chosen India as its ally in the region in a struggle against China and China has clearly chosen Pakistan as the gateway for the Belt and Road Initiative. It is reasonable to predict that tension between the U.S. and China will continue throughout BRI and that both of their regional allies will have no motivations to shift alliances while this tension persists. The strategic partnership of Pakistan with China is bringing Pakistan's painful and unfortunate dependence on the U.S. to a close. CPEC is the biggest shift in Pakistan's foreign policy in years. CPEC promises to make Pakistan Strong and independent not only economically but also strategically.

Pakistan has survived turbulent years of internal strife and regional insecurity since its inception partly because of its improvised, short-term alliances. For most of its history foreign policy makers have been unsatisfied with this short-termism. America's long-term high-handedness, duplicitousness and aggression in its dealings with Pakistan has eroded the high hopes held by Pakistani policymakers and its electorate that alliance with the U.S. would grant it the long-term security and prosperity it sought. Now Pakistan has turned away from that relationship, after the U.S. abandoned and attacked it when it deemed it of more use to cultivate a relationship with India. CPEC promises to be long term and, if it is successful, it will grant Pakistan the long-term diplomatic stability that has been denied it since its earliest days. However, the long-term threats remain, should India and the U.S. succeed in undermining CPEC Pakistan will have to prepare itself for new shifts in the sands of its foreign policy.

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