

US Foreign Policy towards Pakistan in new Strategic Environment of South Asia

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ABSTRACT

The United States of America has always extended its economic, military and diplomatic support towards Pakistan since her independence. However, this cooperation and relationship has never been single sided. Pakistan has also delivered skillful jobs for America and hence this relationship has often been regarded as trade like. With the new strategic adjustments taking place in Asian region, this relationship demands scrupulous adjustments on either side. Inevitable, yet avoidable can be the status of both countries for each other in changing interest and behavior of regional and global players. The US has announced new policy of Asia “Pivot” that has an ambivalent effect on US foreign policy projection towards Pakistan, China and India. This research paper attempts to sketch out Pakistan’s position within purview of “Pivot” in particular and position of China and India in general.

Key Words: U.S Foreign Policy, Pakistan, Pivot, China.

Historical Background

The United States of America (USA), a federation of fifty two states in North America was a former colony of the Great Britain that got independence in late sixteenth century. Given its heterogeneous configuration, the founding fathers stream lined conglomerate states into a strong federation when an ostensible attempt failed to consolidate it into a confederation. From early seventeenth century to last twentieth century, the American role in world politics has been passive and they deliberately avoided involvement in international affairs.

The early nineteenth century Europe witnessed bloody wars within the continent as well as downwards Africa. It was the time when the Americans prudently developed their economy and became by keeping themselves aloof from the politics that was taking place in the rest of the world. In view of its proximity to Latin America, it only raised voice against Europeans when found engage craving their interest in the continent. The Monroe Doctrine (1823) was only limited attempt to protect geographical contingencies.

However, political role of the United States emerged onto world politics when it internally became enough strong in terms of unity, economic and political stability. Another indicator for right time appearance in world politics was the eruption of bloody First World War (1914) that on the one hand proved fragility of colonial masters and on the other hand proved a right moment to play role for the USA as a world power. Reluctance still prevailed in minds of American leaders

that they avoided to take part as a member of the League of Nations although, Woodrow Wilson, the then American president himself architected the blue print of the League. Failure of the collective security system that laid its foundation in Europe resulted into another catastrophe and it marked the history of world with a new chapter. By the end of WWII, the US apprehended the vulnerability of the Great powers and foresaw its power as a major dominant player. Strength acquired during long isolation now was to pay for America. Nuclear attack on Allied powers played a dual role. It deterred the European Great Powers and ended the war into Allies front. Emerging as a victorious player, the US vigorously attempted to consolidate the foundation of the World Organization that was to pay her during the days to come.

Successful federation at home with piles of nuclear arsenals coupled with sophisticated technological economy crystallized the vent of democracy as an ideological motivational scramble towards the war torn nations of the third world. It was the historical point from where the Americans considered themselves the proponents of liberty having the torch of freedom as bacon of light to all the peoples of the world.

Like all countries of Asia, Pakistan was a country where spread of democracy and aversion of communism was the main goal of the US during her first international intervention and competition. Given its geographical position and inclination of leaders towards Western leanings, the US left no stone unturned to ensure spread of democracy in newly born Pakistan. It provided financial, military and diplomatic support to Pakistan whenever it needed. However, US policy towards Pakistan has never been without criticism from politicians, intellectuals and many others people from various fields of life.

US Foreign Policy towards Pakistan: A Chronological Explanation

Pakistan came into existence during a period that marked the struggle of ideological rivalries between the Capitalism and the Communism. The US being the champion of the capitalist block stretched her wings from Western Europe to South Asia. It found Pakistan quite compatible to be assisted for future prospects of regional struggle. Pakistan, being a nascent and weak country was indeed in need of an ally that could protect and ensure provision of military, financial and diplomatic support. The Indian attitude that triggered longstanding hostility further necessitated alliance with the US (Sattar, 2012).

Since the US has entered into a sheer ideological competition, it required as much as possible allies that could embrace capitalist democracy. The US showed a friendly disposition by sending a warm message on Pakistan's independence. President Truman Said "I wish to assure you that the new Dominion embarks on its course with the firm friendship and good will of the US of America"(Sattar, 2012). Soon after independence, Pakistan received an invitation and the then Prime Minister Late Liaqat Ali Khan visited Washington to establish the foundations of alliance. Satisfied with commitments made with regards to democracy,

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fundamental human rights, rights of private ownership and equality before the law, the US posed a friendly gesture merely up a diplomatic sight at first stage. However, after the assassination of Liaqat Ali Khan, internal situation of Pakistan deteriorated and the economic position and security dilemma made Pakistani leaders less hesitant to seek help from US. Given the strategic importance Pakistan has had, the US provided first aid of \$15 million for wheat purchase. \$10 million worth arms along with technical and economic assistance was also sold to Pakistan. It is interesting to note that the military assistance provided to Pakistan was subjected not to be used against India (Rizvi, 2005). This provision indicates the US pattern of future relations with India in particular and South Asian region in general. It is in this context that such military aid did not reach to Pakistan during 1971 war even the later had been close ally and was promised with extension of military aid in case of aggression on its integrity. The US policy has never hopefully been satisfactory towards India as the later formed non-aligned movement and showed a passive shrug towards either pole. In spite of sore disposition on Indian part, the US has never kept the importance of India underestimated and it never worsened relations for sake of Pakistan. In case of 1971 war, US never provided military help to Pakistan but it did not remain salient and not allowed India to invade Pakistan. The US warned India be limited in war as much as possible. This policy of keeping both India and Pakistan cordial towards Washington shows that both the countries have worth mentioning status in South Asia for the US. Later on arms embargo was imposed on both countries to minimize arms race and possible damages in case of war.

In succeeding days, Pakistan facilitated normalization of relations between China and US in 1971. This mediation contributed to develop confidence in relation with US. After the Soviet incursion into Afghanistan, relations between the US and Pakistan again developed that resulted into long lasting results at regional level. Financial and military aid extended during this coalition enabled Pakistan to expel communist forces from Afghanistan and the same situation facilitated Pakistan in becoming nuclear power.

However, the clandestine nuclear adventure of Pakistan perturbed US Congress but the Regan Administration turned a blind eye to it. This blind optimism towards Pakistan's nuclear adventure was nothing more to drive the Soviet out of Afghanistan and it added trust deficit in 1989 when the evacuation was completed. In the following days Afghanistan faced civil war and Afghan Mujahedeen; that were product of war against Soviet, took control of Afghanistan and Pakistan favored Taliban backed by Saudi Arab and Arab Emirates. Pakistan now was between deep sea and dwell as it could never retreat from backing Mujahedeen nor it could get continued help from the US in manipulating the evil forces that were created to fight against the so called 'Evil Empire' of Communism (Hussain, 2012). However, Pakistan optimistically favored a Taliban regime in Afghanistan sensing a soft corner for strategic dept from Taliban regime. But after short period of three years, the Taliban regime ended in fiasco and again civil war

took place in Kabul. Up till now Pak-US relations were badly deteriorated due to nuclear test by Pakistan in May 1998.

Following Pakistan's nuclear test, the US imposed strict economic sanctions and boycotted with Pakistan in all fields of life. The US attitude towards India over nuclear issue has also remained harsh however, when General Mushraf took over government by throwing elected government of Nawaz Sharif, the US showed more hostile policy towards Pakistan than towards India. The Kargil skirmishes added fuel into fire and the Indian government had democratic posture that could help her restore a soft image. The US mediated the issue when Pakistani authorities sought her help for resolution of Kargil dispute. However, in days to come Pakistan lost help of the US over Kashmir issue and India got credentials for its democratic bearing before the US. This standstill in Pak-US relations continued until the incident of 9/11 occurred. This event once again made Pakistan indispensable for US in its declared war against terrorism. The changing scenario left no choice for Pakistan except to join hands with the US in this war (Mushraf, 2006). Bush administration declared that Pakistan was its biggest ally in war against terror. This alliance brought Pakistan two dynamic changes: initially economic help boost up Mushraf regime that resulted into an artificial boom and the second, spread of extremism as a matter of sectarian divide emerged in national politics of Pakistan. So far Pakistani society is entangled in this menace. Ideologically some groups associated with Taliban considered war against terrorism as crusade against Islam and began taking revenge through suicide bombings in public places across the Pakistan. Moreover, Pakistan army has been associated as an evil force and military camps and installations have mostly been targeted. The clash between terrorist organization like Al-Qaida, Mujahedeen and Taliban with Pak army worsen when Americans demanded handover of Taliban leaders from Pakistan. However, the later remained reluctant to obey the orders in this connection. The Abbotabad raid was in this context and it further aggravated Pak-US relations.

In later developments, Therik Taliban Pakistan (TTP) emerged as anti-establishment group. The Pak army took punitive action against them but since their presence was strong within Pakistani territory, the army could not be able to smash out these groups completely. More recently, with installations of the democratic elected government of Pakistan Muslim League (PML), the Taliban groups demanded imposition of Sharia in Pakistan. The government proposed negotiations and several rounds were taken place but in vain. Now the war against terror, that was initiated by the US and Pakistan was an ally to it, had turned to be wholly and solely a war of Pakistan and the TTP leaders turned out to be bona fides of Pakistan.

All these events could not mitigate the basic apprehension of US ties with Pakistan as the former blamed the later of having targeted select terrorist groups operating in Swat and South Waziristan, leaving some groups in North Waziristan and elsewhere upon whom Pakistan allegedly had trust. On the other side, Pakistani establishment and other think tanks have trepidations of India and US

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backing of Taliban groups who have been mostly involved in suicide attacks within Pakistan (Hanif, 2009).

So far, relations of the US with Pakistan have been marked with several vicissitudes and there is no parameter that could define the standard or allegiance but it seems that the US foreign policy towards Pakistan has been a composition of choices and alternatives as it marks whole history of US foreign policy. So it would not be false to assume that the US will continue her relations with Pakistan as long as it find the things turn in her favor by doing so. This US approach has developed a specific perception in minds of Pakistani people that they demonstrate by and now. Anti-US sentiments in religious political parties and in general public is an example of this tendency. It is therefore important that we shall look a glimpse into the perceptions of Pakistan towards US and US responses in this regard.

Pakistan's Grievances and Us Responses

It is widespread perception that the US has its own vested interests in Pakistan. The list of selfish motives ranges from security of nuclear weapons to counterterrorism, geo-strategic importance and proxy status of the country. Some Pakistani believes that the US presence in Pakistan made its border areas more vulnerable as prior to US intervention the situation was quite calm. Moreover, the strategic question of Pakistan and its sovereignty has also been questioned in hands of the US army. In presence of such underlying facts, the Pakistani people believe that the US has less interest in social and economic development of Pakistan. In regards to provision of financial aid, the critiques are of the view that it was mere contribution to develop corruption and environment of pathetic tendency among the nation. Moreover, the army intelligence has also been critical towards US role during last few years. In a closed door briefing in Pakistan parliament, the ISI chief is said to have told that the America was an unreliable ally. Pointing to the US policy he mentioned that Osama's killing and escape of Raymond Davis have hurt military's ego (Aamer, 2011).

On the other side the US mostly reminds its sacrifices that it has made for Pakistan. The US authorities frequently mention that they have provided Pakistan with necessary aid in its nascent stage. They mention transfer of billions of dollars in military aid that range from conventional weapons to civil nuclear technology. Furthermore, in regards to economy, the US and World Bank brokered the Indus Water Treaty (1968) and donated for construction of Mangla and Tarbela dam. The USAID program invested hundreds of millions dollar in agriculture in that fuji fertilizer plans were also installed. At present Pakistan stands at third position among the countries which receive US foreign aid. In short, the list of donations from the US and the list of grievance from Pakistan range to incalculable height. However, the common thing is that both the countries have inevitable relations with each other and mutual cooperation can lead to a better future.

US Foreign Policy towards Pakistan: in new Strategic Environment

A state beset with fear of terrorist attacks and economic defeat can avoid harboring extremist dispositions and maneuvering hard power tactics to maintain its dominance in South Asia. Failure to manipulate extremism in Pakistan and elsewhere has brought home in US new techniques of economic engagements that are evident in relations with China, India and more recently with Iran.

Relations with Pakistan also indicate such prospects where policies of feeding Taliban have brazenly failed. In the wake of new economic challenges, the US would never continue its policies of training, supporting and backing Taliban and such other extremist outfits rather it would prefer to engage economically with these groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan. So it is in this context that Pakistan can sustain its relations with US by providing economic prospects and technical manipulation of resources including human resource that is abundant in Pakistan.

Apparently, the US has targeted its objective against elimination of terrorist groups across the globe yet it has never shunned her Cold War legacy of harboring terrorist outfits in the world. This assumption can be proved true as in case of Syria and Egypt where so called regime change struggle is put forth. However, due to its economic debacle, the US may not be able to continue such ambitions in South Asian region because China and India have surpassed in economic race and at the same time the US would not like to bear more burden of economic defeat. If we peep into history of Cold War, the United States has often opened two fields of competition at a same time. It has to initially test its muscles in Vietnam and then shifted it to Africa and lastly moved towards Afghanistan where ideological factor dominated the scramble. In its last period, we find prevalence of Cold War in South Asia only in Afghanistan. The 21st century new global challenge of terrorism has also found to be fought in the same region. However, by the end of first decade of this century, the US and her allies declared their withdrawal from Afghanistan and by the end of 2014 they are supposed to evacuate whole region keeping things turn in favor of democracy. The new shift in this struggle is vivid in engagements with Middle East, where economic factor dominates other considerations. Since the US is facing economic difficulties, it would continue economic struggle across the globe. The economic adventure in Middle East can provoke use of military power whereas, in South Asian region use of military force sounds futile. As we have seen that the economic challenges that arise in the region necessarily demands use of soft power. The US will never alter the economic pie into bloodshed. We can take example of economic engagements with China, Russia, India and Western Europe that the US has recently made.

Asia Pacific Policy

As we have mentioned, in previous pages, that the US relations with Pakistan have been marked with several vicissitudes because of mutual interest and distrust. The breakdown of these relations during 2011-12 was the result of breach of

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sovereignty of Pakistan by the US. However, relations begin to rejuvenate after when newly elected government of Nawaz Sharif in Pakistan manage to arrange a meeting with US president in Washington. The Washington announced that it had arranged a meeting that would highlight the resilience of the US-Pakistan relationship. Furthermore, trade and economic development and counter insurgency and regional stability were supposed to be the main focus of the meeting (Burki, Nov. 2013). Although this meeting was aimed to re-establishing relationship with Pakistan yet its geneses can be traced in an announcement earlier in Nov. 2011 by the Obama administration. The announcement of new policy was aimed at rebalancing US position in the Asia Pacific region as well as to extricate it from conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan. This was the first time that the US president turned his attention to Asia after having dealt with the crisis at home that brought his country close to a default on its debt obligations.

On Nov. 17, 2011, the US president while addressing Australian parliament announced a new strategic approach to make Asia Pacific region as the new “Pivot” of the US global engagement (Muni, 2012). In his announcement Obama declared that the US would play a larger role in shaping the region considering the US principles of foreign policy in close partnership with allies and friends. He further mentioned that the US had ended wars; however, peace and prosperity were based on security of the region. The new element in Obamas policy towards Asia seemed to be economic engagement that was less emphasized during the previous years. After the end of 2nd WW, the US has been engaged in military alliance and power competition while the new policy focus is on economic aspect. In his speech to the Australian parliament Obama clearly mentioned that the Asia Pacific region had more than half of Worlds economy and he would engage his country in economic affairs (Muni, 2012). The present policy shift looks like an attempt to preserve US global role which seems to slide down with China’s economic rise. The economic burden at home at abroad compelled the US to withdraw from military engagements saving the face and giving an impression that the US can no longer afford such involvements. The wide context of the new policy can be seen, in geographical terms, stretch from South Asia to East Asia. This approach in policy seems comprehensive in terms of alliances, new partners and new strategic adjustment. Japan, Australia and South Korea and even Philippine and Thailand have been mentioned by Obama in reshaping traditional alliance. Apart from that, president Obama attended ASEAN summit conference and in history he has been the first ever American president to attend such summit. The American interest in the South East Asian region can influence its foreign policy towards South Asia and Pakistan as well. So it is important that we should look towards China’s aspect in new US policy to evaluate Pakistan’s position because US relations with China and Pakistan will greatly be determined by US-Pakistan relations. Regarding China’s status in new American policy, the US is careful and has acknowledged the fact that the “Pivot” strategy has been driven considering China’s rise as economic player at global level. Therefore, president Obama assure that the US continue efforts to build a cooperative relationship with

China and China could be a helpful partner in efforts reducing tension in East Asian region especially those of Korean Peninsula and those of nuclear proliferations issue (Ahmed, 2011).

This policy clearly elucidates the apprehensions that the US has in dealing with China in the region. Hence, the new policy revolves around the newly emerging economic power of Asia. In order to address security dilemmas in the region, the US has installed maritime forces with help of Australian navy at Pacific. This plan aimed at sustaining US maritime forces presence in Asia-Pacific region and to reduce political pressure associated with US presence over there. The US is now planning to raise missile defense shield in Asia in view of the reported Chinese development of new missiles. Apart from the economic aspects, the US has security dilemmas in dealing with China and other Asian countries.

So it is evident that along with economic adventures the US has conspicuously entered into military campaign sensing future threats from the regional countries. Formation of alliances, and economic partners however, would reduce military combat because economic interdependence and mutual interest sharing are the best tools the US put forth dealing with states where it consider use of military force or coercive means futile. The status of Pakistan in above stated policy can be like that played with respect to Afghanistan. Therefore, for Pakistan still there is prospect of military alliance with the US after end of Afghan question. The war against terrorism and insurgency has dragged this alliance for one and half decade and in future need for such alliance to US may again emerge in wake of hostile competition in East Asia. As recently the Chinese President Xi Xing ping has announced that the Asian matters would be resolved within Asia by its own countries and he has further proposed a regional organization comprising Russia, Iran, Pakistan and other Asian countries (Shinghai, ANN). Such recent developments indicate that the Chinese leadership considers its role in the region as an emerging global power that could lead the region in near future without involvement of the US and the Europeans.

In presence of such competition, the role of Pakistan for the US can be more important as it had served US interest as a proxy during war against USSR and terrorism. The US interest has never remained consistent with reference to Pakistan rather it had been changing with reference to regional political developments. Apart from China, the immediate neighbor of Pakistan, India is now to play a crucial role in US foreign policy towards Pakistan. So will see where India stands in new policy of US and whether the US-India relations have enough flexibility to give chance for US Asian policy implementation.

The status of India in US “Pivot” policy can be judged in president Obama’s statement to Indian Parliament in 2010 where he asked India not only to “Look East” but ‘engage east’(Burki, Nov. 2013). Given its geographical position and economic strength, India has framed policy of “Look East” basically aimed at playing important and leading regional player role. To this policy, the US not only favored but also encouraged the Indian to play its role regionally. The US-Indo strategic partnership was also projected in 2010. The US considered that India

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would help to shape a positive future Asia-Pacific policy. In 2012, the US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, in a visit to India addressing at Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis New Delhi mentioned that the US was expanding military partnership with India and it was expanding from West Pacific and East Asia into Indian ocean region and South Asia (Muni, 2012). To ensure this military partnership, US established defense trade relations from buyer-seller relation to that of joint research and expeditions. The US new strategic adjustment policy with India is mostly driven by the concerns arising out of China's rising influence in Asia-Pacific region. Although, the US has carefully calibrated in official projection specific policies engaging with China as has been discussed above. India is also concerning about the rise of Chinese influence in the region and take it for granted that the US role will counter China and enable India to establish its hegemony over Asia Pacific region. Even before the US Pivot policy was announced, India was aware about the Chinese influence and they engaged China in thriving stable regional balance in East Asia. The US-China mutual deal leaves uncertainties over Indian aspirations in Asia Pacific. It may be possible that both the countries may define their area of interest by creating influence and alliance that could lead to another cold war. The Indian apprehension over such possible division may create a sense of dissatisfaction over American policy of Asia Pacific. So, the triangular came out of US-China and US-Indian equation has great deal in shaping the politics of near future in Asia.

As we have already mentioned that the US policy of military intervention has less prospects and economic engagement along with coalition reformation would play important role. In such competition, the status of Pakistan in South Asia for the US would be of no less importance. The US would try to maintain relations with Pakistan for explicit purposes. For example, Pakistan can play a better role if formation of alliance in Asia faces a competition. The nuclear weapons Pakistan has make US bother and the later has been conscious about its safety. Last but not least is the war against terrorism. As it has not yet come to an end and the situation in Afghanistan is still chaotic. The US is enough worried about the conspicuous resurgence of various fictions among terrorist groups. So in this context, the US will continue its help to Pakistan and this help may be economic as well as military. While addressing to Council on Foreign Relations in Karachi, US Ambassador to Pakistan on 13th Nov. 2013 said that the US has four broad areas that constitute foreign policy priorities towards Pakistan (powel). These were working together on war on terror, helping regional stability and adding Pakistan to strengthen its economic, political and social development. He appreciated Pakistan's role in war against terror and ensured US assistance in further as well. He also expressed some apprehensions over re-organization of banned organization in Pakistan with new identities. Regarding relations with India and Pakistan, the US ambassador said that his country was enjoying cordial relations with both countries and it was in favor of all three countries. There is no doubt that the US favors cordial relations with Asian Countries in wake of its new policy of Asia Pacific. However, success of US in achieving its policy is again dependent on

regional players and their level of confidence and relations with it. Negligence towards burning issues like rise of extremism, poverty and ignorance in any regional country can damaged the stability of the region and US interest.

In addition to above mentioned facts, the US foreign policy towards Pakistan is rooted in the question of Afghanistan and internal stability of Pakistan. The US withdrawal from Afghanistan at present stage seems to leave things chaotic similar that had prevailed after the end of war against Soviet Union in 1992. This situation raises serious questions for Pakistan's strategic stability as well as internal affairs. The US priority seems to leave behind a local Afghan government that could be stable enough to maintain peace and order in Afghanistan whereas, from the Pakistani prospective the stability in Afghanistan is directly linked with other regional countries whose covert inducement aggravate the situation that has direct effects in Pakistan. The Pakistani government has many times attempted to initiate talks with Taliban groups that are operating in Afghanistan and within Pakistan but so far no success has been achieved. For Pakistan, rise of Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan is an existential threat and it will be question of grave concern if these are not dealt technically by bringing them into main national stream.

The interest of the US and Pakistan in Afghanistan intersects in many ways. For Pakistan, the US remains a source of international legitimization and funding. Without this support it would be difficult for Pakistan to deal with these extremist groups. At regional level the US can play a decisive role when Pakistan's legitimacy is challenged in hands of other countries. For the US, Pakistan is the only key factor that can struggle against extremism and terrorism. Pakistan can also play a major role in US Asia Pacific policy as it is based on cooperation of the regional countries and if any regional power stray out the US will not be able to achieve its target easily.

Conclusion

The US foreign policy towards Pakistan has remained dependent upon regional and international politics. There is no sign of independent choice that US would opt while formulating its policy towards Pakistan. At present stage, there are so many challenges that the US faces in Asian Region. In order to accomplish these objectives, role of Pakistan would be important for US. Without taking Pakistan on board, US would remain unsuccessful to counter terrorism, implement its Asia "Pivot" policy and most of all the principals that are enunciated in US foreign policy would remain unattainable. In order to achieve long term economic objective, the US must consider its policy towards Afghanistan and Pakistan because these two countries have deep implication in determining stability of the region. A stable Afghanistan is interest of Pakistan and the whole Asian region and in turn stable Pakistan would ensure elimination of terrorism in the region. Without political, economic and social development the region cannot easily com out of social difficulties. A state entangled in difficulties would never be able to

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sustain cordial relations with US and any rupture in near future may cause great difficulties for the US and other international and regional players.

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