

## Pakistan-US Relations Under Trump Administration: Opportunities and Challenges for Pakistan

Khurram Abbas & Muhammad Nawaz Khan \*

### Abstract

*Since 9/11, the US' policies towards Pakistan are constituted under organizational process. Continuation of drone strikes in the Pak-Afghan border areas is one of such examples of this organizational process. Trump's cognitive approach towards Pakistan seems relatively positive, as it has been observed through his books, speeches and initial executive orders. This paper largely predicts that state specific approach, i.e., conditional engagement with Pakistan, will gradually overwhelm the actor specific approach, i.e., cordial relationship with active stable role in the region. The paper will comprehensively address variables such as War on Terror, trade policy, relations with India as a balancer to China and Afghanistan war, etc. The study examines that factors like Afghanistan, counter-terrorism, geo-politics offer both opportunities and challenges due to different policies of leadership and state institutions. The hypothesis of the study is that though actor-specific approach is offering some opportunities to Pakistan, yet the organizational process will keep posing challenges in the strategic relationship between Pakistan and the US. The paper concludes that the future of Pakistan-US relations will be largely depending upon Pakistan's security policies and the terms of re-engagement, with wider geopolitical realities weighing in on the calculations by both countries. The study finds that*

---

\*Khurram Abbas is PhD scholar at Center for International Peace and Stability (CIPS), NUST, and works at Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI). Muhammad Nawaz Khan is Researcher at Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI).

*there will be more challenges than opportunities for Pakistan under the Trump administration.*

**Keywords:** Pakistan-US Relations, Donald Trump, Cooperation, Challenges, Foreign Policy.

## Introduction

The 45<sup>th</sup> President of the U.S, Donald Trump assumed office on January 20, 2017. Unlike his predecessors, Trump has shown that he owns his words and often wants to fulfill promises, which he had pledged during his election campaign.<sup>1</sup> In the first month as President, he had decided to withdraw from the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement,<sup>2</sup> devised new border security measures,<sup>3</sup> and repealed the healthcare system popularly known as Obamacare<sup>4</sup> (introduced by his predecessor) through executive orders. His firmness on the one hand has raised concerns among many states, for instance, Mexico and Iran etc, while some are looking into prospects of improvement of their bilateral relationship under the Trump administration, such as Pakistan, Russia and India etc. Donald Trump's strategy "Buy American" and "Hire American" has also raised various questions among academics about the US radical policy shift from globalization to protectionism. Trump's inauguration speech largely indicated to a strongly nationalistic approach and anti-globalization. His pledges to eradicate radical Islam<sup>5</sup> and eagerness to

---

<sup>1</sup> Donald J. Trump, *Great Again: How to Fix our Crippled America*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016), 66.

<sup>2</sup> "Trump withdraws US from Trans Pacific Partnership deal," Al-Jazeera, January 24, 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/01/trump-withdraws-trans-pacific-partnership-tpp-deal-170123170334145.html> (accessed January 26, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> "Executive Order: Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements," White House, January 25, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/25/executive-order-border-security-and-immigration-enforcement-improvements> (accessed January 26, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> "Executive Order Minimizing the Economic Burden of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act Pending Repeal," White House, January 20, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/20/executive-order-minimizing-economic-burden-patient-protection-and> (accessed January 26, 2017)

<sup>5</sup> Robert Einhorn, *Non-Proliferation Challenges Facing the Trump Administration*, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation Series Paper 15 (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2017), 6. )

renegotiate North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)<sup>6</sup> will have broader security and economic implications around the world. Perhaps, his foreign policy issues, which would likely be linked with national impact targeting his white constituency such as trade, immigration, terrorism that he termed as Islamic extremism, Iranian nuclear deal, and relations with Israel. However, the remaining foreign policy endeavors, such as geopolitics and strategic issues, which would possibly have an institutional tang with overall influence of Trump on the whole range of foreign policy.

Pakistan and the US have had a fluctuating relationship, which has witnessed cordiality largely due to Pakistan's role in Cold War alliances including South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) 1954, Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) 1955, Afghan '*Jihad*' 1979 and sourness due to Pakistan's nuclear programme. The two countries have diverse cooperation in various fields, ranging from energy to trade and economic to security assistance. During Fiscal Year 2016, US provided US\$255 million in terms of Foreign Military Funding (FMF) programme,<sup>7</sup> and US\$5 million under International Military Education and Training (IMET) programme.<sup>8</sup> According to the Pakistan Economic Survey 2015-16, the US is Pakistan's biggest export market, with a share of around 17 per cent of total exports and 4 per cent of total imports originating from the US. Pakistan enjoys a surplus balance of trade with imports from the US at US \$1.3bn against exports of US \$2.6bn in 2015-16.<sup>9</sup>

The Scholars have already predicted that Pakistan-US relations will likely be the same under Trump administration. For example, "Moeed Yusuf, Associate Vice President of the Asia Centre at the United States

<sup>6</sup> Donald Trump Poised to Pressure Mexico on Trade, Wall Street Journal, November 21, 2016; Trump says he is ready to renegotiate NAFTA, R.T world, January 23, 2017. For details see <https://www.rt.com/usa/374733-trump-nafta-agreement-negotiations-mexico-canada/> (Accessed January 26, 2017)

<sup>7</sup> US Relations with Pakistan, US Department of State, January 24, 2017. For details see <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3453.htm> (Accessed January 26, 2017)

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Afshan Subohi, "The ostrich in global concerns," Dawn, February 6, 2017, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1312954> (accessed February 21, 2017).

Institute of Peace, views the trajectory of Pakistan's relations with the US will likely remain the same for keeping the former as a partner in South Asia despite of the challenges.<sup>10</sup> In this context, "Daniel Markey, Senior Research Professor, Johns Hopkins University confirms this view as Pakistan is still important to the US, and a new administration would want to have engagement with it if it has a reasonable expectation that doing so would advance the US goals."<sup>11</sup> In addition, Dr. Rabia Akhtar, Director of the Centre for Security, Strategy and Policy Research, University of Lahore, indicates that "Trump administration will not likely disengage with Islamabad because geopolitics and its compulsions do not change with the change in administration."<sup>12</sup> However, this paper argues that the new regime's policies will likely be under state-specific approach-tougher and more conditional-under the Trump administration as indicated during President Trump's speech on August 21, 2017, while announcing the new strategy for South Asia and especially for Afghanistan. According to him, "the next pillar of our new strategy is to change the approach towards Pakistan and how to deal with it."<sup>13</sup> In fact, many believe that there is nothing new in his speech except to keep the US forces in Afghanistan for an 'indefinite' period. Rather, his policies will likely continue in the same manner without any sharp divergence in the favor of Pakistan.

How then will Trump engage with Pakistan during his presence in the White House? What sort of potential opportunities and challenges will Pakistan face during Trump administration? What type of role would the US would seek from Pakistan in the region generally and in Afghanistan particularly? What will be the future of bilateral trade, military and economic assistance? These questions are largely relying on Trump's perception about Pakistan and South Asia. As discussed earlier, Donald

---

<sup>10</sup> Raza Rumi, "US Elections: What can Pakistan expect?" *Dawn*, November 8, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1294177> (accessed November 21, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> "Full texts of Donald Trump's speech on South Asia policy," *TheHindu*, August 22, 2017, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/full-texts-of-donald-trumps-speech-on-south-asia-policy/article19538424.ece> (accessed November 20, 2017).

Trump seems a practical and a straightforward person in nature.<sup>14</sup> His executive orders in the very first week of presidency depict that his team had carefully drafted Trump's electoral campaign's pledges. The 58-page Republican Party manifesto mentioned Pakistan's name four times.<sup>15</sup> Unlike his previous rhetoric, the party seems friendly towards Pakistan.<sup>16</sup> It also stressed the need to continue a cordial relationship in order to secure the region.<sup>17</sup> However, the party manifesto clearly indicates that the future relationship between Pakistan and the US will be based on the security policies of Pakistan.

### **Theoretical Foundation of the Study**

International relations are often constituted according to specific domestic, regional and international structure. There are three levels of approaches, including actor-specific approach, state-specific approach and system-level approach, which often influence these bilateral or multilateral relations of states.<sup>18</sup> This study will rely on two (theoretical approaches) levels of analysis, including actor-specific approach and state-specific approach. For actor specific approach, it is pertinent to highlight that sometimes leadership deeply affects the policies of a state. It strengthens the state through its strong leadership abilities, such as Abraham Lincoln, Lenin, Mao, etc. On the contrary, sometimes policies of leadership have led nations into chaos and instability in the past, such as Hitler, Gorbachev, etc. Actor-specific approach is often dealt by cognitive analysis. It considers the role of beliefs and images in the policies of a leader.<sup>19</sup> However, sometimes, state structure, commonly known as organizational process, overcomes the leadership and affects the bilateral

<sup>14</sup> Donald J. Trump, *Great Again: How to Fix our Crippled America*, 66.

<sup>15</sup> Republican Platform 2016, GOP, [https://prod-static-ngop-pbl.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/DRAFT\\_12\\_FINAL\[1\]-ben\\_1468872234.pdf](https://prod-static-ngop-pbl.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/DRAFT_12_FINAL[1]-ben_1468872234.pdf) (accessed January 30, 2017).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid,

<sup>17</sup> Ibid,

<sup>18</sup> Valerie M. Huson, "Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 1, no. 1 (2005): 1-30.

<sup>19</sup> J.A. Rosati, "A Cognitive Approach to the Study of Foreign Policy", in *Foreign Policy Analysis: Continuity and Change in its Second Generation*, eds. L. Neack, J.A.K. Hey and P.J. Haney (Cambridge: Prentice Hall, 1995), 49.

or multilateral relationship.<sup>20</sup> In organizational process, the foreign policy of a state is often influenced by the organizational process or bureaucratic process.<sup>21</sup> It does not change with the leadership; rather it evolves according to national and international environment and interests. Sometimes, the world has witnessed difference in policy perspectives between leadership (actors) and institutions (organizations). For instance, former American President Clinton had signed Kyoto Protocol despite the fact that the US Senate had passed the Byrd–Hagel resolution<sup>22</sup>, and Obama’s veto of Restoring Americans’ Healthcare Freedom Reconciliation Act of 2015<sup>23</sup> are some glaring examples of difference in policies of individuals and state institutions. It usually happens due to weak leadership, strong institutions and international environment.

Donald Trump’s personality and American state structure will be the test case for academia to understand how the image and character of a leadership affects the organizational process or vice versa. US President Trump has claimed several times that he is different from his predecessor both in policies as well as in actions.<sup>24</sup> Most of his policies towards South Asia are not popular in Pentagon and State Department. For instance, he wants to reduce American overseas military commitments,<sup>25</sup> while

<sup>20</sup> Ibid; M. Weber, “The Theory of Social and Economic Organizations”, translated by A. M. Henderson and T. Parsons, edited by T. Parsons. New York: Free Press 1964.

<sup>21</sup> M. Weber, “The Theory of Social and Economic Organizations”, translated by A. M. Henderson and T. Parsons, edited by T. Parsons. New York: Free Press 1964; Valerie M. Huson, “Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 1, no. 1 (2005): 1-30.

<sup>22</sup> Jon Hovi, Detlef F. Sprinz & Guri Bang, “Why the United States did not become a party to the Kyoto Protocol: German, Norwegian, and US perspectives”, *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2010): 129-150.

<sup>23</sup> “Restoring Americans’ Healthcare Freedom Reconciliation Act of 2015”, Bill no, H.R 3762, United States Senate, <https://www.senate.gov/reference/Legislation/Vetoes/ObamaBH.htm> (accessed May 31, 2017).

<sup>24</sup> Donald J. Trump, *Great Again: How to Fix our Crippled America*, 83. .

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 25.

recently the Commander of American-led coalition forces Gen. John W. Nicholson requested for troops surge in Afghanistan.<sup>26</sup> How will Trump deal with such kinds of policy differences? He hails from an economic background and has successfully built a business empire. Through his writings, speeches and actions, he has portrayed himself a strong candidate who can individually affect (either positively or negatively) the foreign policy of the US. However, he will have to face the state's approaches on various foreign policy matters towards South Asia. The impact of these two levels on Pakistan will be analyzed in this study. Largely, the focus of study will be on the question as to how the actor-specific and state-specific approaches will affect the Pakistan-US bilateral relationship under the Trump administration? In this backdrop, opportunities and challenges for Pakistan are as under:-

### **Actor-Specific Approach and Emerging Opportunities for Pakistan**

#### *Trump on Afghan Peace and Reconciliation Process*

Trump's predecessor had shown reluctance in resolving the Afghan issue through reconciliation. He had launched an offense against Afghan Taliban by sending 30,000 more troops in Afghanistan in 2009.<sup>27</sup> Later, the killing of Mullah Akhtar Mansour, leader of Afghan Taliban by a US drone strike during the Quad-lateral peace process, were two major indicators of Obama administration's unwillingness to see reconciliation in Afghanistan;<sup>28</sup> rather, he wanted continuation of a political government at centre. However, his policies prolonged the Afghan issue. Unlike his predecessor, during the election campaign, Trump stressed the reduction of US overseas military commitments. He time and again reiterated that

---

<sup>26</sup> Micheal R. Gordon, "U.S. General Seeks 'a Few Thousand' More Troops in Afghanistan", New York Times, February 9, 2017.

<sup>27</sup> Tom Lansford, "9/11 and the Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq: A Chronology and Reference Guide", Santa Barbara: California, 2012, p. 184.

<sup>28</sup> Mansour's death message for Taliban, says Obama, Dawn News, May 24, 2016. For details see [http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=24\\_05\\_2016\\_003\\_004](http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=24_05_2016_003_004) (Accessed January 30, 2017)

his administration will end 'intervention and chaos' overseas.<sup>29</sup> Currently, 8400 US military troops are residing in Afghanistan.<sup>30</sup> Despite Over 15 years of military and security investments by the US, Afghanistan's grim security situation calls for national reconciliation. The politically fragile unity government of Afghanistan has remained unable to resolve security, economic and governance crisis in the country. On the other hand, the world community in general and major stakeholders in particular have shown their confidence in Pakistan's role in the Afghan national reconciliation process. The Quad lateral dialogue (the US, China, Afghanistan and Pakistan),<sup>31</sup> trilateral dialogue (Russia, China and Pakistan)<sup>32</sup> and trilateral strategic dialogue (China, Afghanistan and Pakistan)<sup>33</sup> etc have confirmed that Pakistan can play an active role in developing a channel between the warring parties of Afghanistan.

Pakistan has several times reiterated that its security and development are highly linked with Afghanistan's security and development. In this backdrop, Afghan national reconciliation process has become inevitable objective for both countries. Considering Pakistan's active role in facilitation of this process, it is most likely that Pakistan's significance will improve in the Trump administration due to the common goal of achieving peace and stability in Afghanistan. The US led NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan has created a security vacuum in the country. There might be a realization in Washington that this vacuum

---

<sup>29</sup> Trump vows to end overseas 'intervention & chaos,' rebuild 'depleted' US military, RT World, December 07, 2017. For details see <https://www.rt.com/usa/369439-trump-military-plan-tour/> (Accessed January 30, 2017)

<sup>30</sup> Obama Says He Will Keep More Troops in Afghanistan Than Planned, New York Times, July 6, 2016. For details see <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/07/world/asia/obama-afghanistan-troops.html> (Accessed January 30, 2017)

<sup>31</sup> Tahir Khan, "Afghan peace talks: implications for Pakistan-Afghanistan relations," Conflict and Peace Studies, vol. 8, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 50.

<sup>32</sup> Russia-China-Pakistan: Third trilateral dialogue on Afghanistan, Daily Times, January 18, 2017. For details see <http://dailytimes.com.pk/blog/18-Jan-17/russia-china-pakistanthird-trilateral-dialogue-on-afghanistan> (Accessed January 30, 2017)

<sup>33</sup> First Round of China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Strategic Dialogue Held in Kabul, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People's Republic of China, October 02, 2015. For details see [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjbxw/t1236606.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/t1236606.shtml) (Accessed January 30, 2017)



could be filled by Pakistani forces, mainly by eliminating the terrorists' sanctuaries along the Pakistan and Afghanistan border. Hence, bilateral military cooperation between the two countries under Trump administration will increase. Furthermore, this realization has been strengthened due to Pakistan Army's successful military campaign in North Waziristan Agency (NWA). President Trump will likely see continuation in counter-terrorism efforts by Islamabad along Pakistan and Afghanistan border. In October, Pakistan rescued American-Canadian family from Pakistan-Afghanistan border,<sup>34</sup> which was hailed by Donald Trump.<sup>35</sup> Such kinds of 'positive incidents' may likely improve the bilateral relationship based on actor specific approach. The suspension of quadrilateral dialogue due to killing of Mullah Mansour hampered the national reconciliation process. Currently, Afghan government is unwilling to resume this reconciliation process.<sup>36</sup> However, it is Trump's political manifestation to see the end of Afghanistan's political reconciliation. Hence, the world has witnessed that Quad-lateral Cooperation Group (QCG) meeting has been resumed after a long break. It is more likely that the Trump administration will likely facilitate a successful outcome of QCG meetings, which will ensure protection of its interests in the region and beyond.

#### *Trump's Willingness for Mediation in the Kashmir Dispute*

The Kashmir dispute has long been portrayed as a security threat to regional and international peace. The two nuclear powers are wary over this land with difference of approaches in solving this dispute. India wants to solve this dispute through bilateral dialogue with Pakistan, while Pakistan wants mediation of the US or any other major power. It

---

<sup>34</sup> Ashifa Kassam and Haroon Janjua, "Canadian-American family rescued after five years as captives in Afghanistan", The Guardian, October 12, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/12/pakistan-rescues-canadian-american-family-hostages-haqqani> (accessed November 20, 2017)

<sup>35</sup> Dawn, "Trump hails recovery of Canadian-American family as 'positive moment' in Pak-US relations", October 12, 2017. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1363378> (accessed November 20, 2017)

<sup>36</sup> Mateen Haider, "No plans to revive peace talks with Taliban, says Afghan govt", Dawn, July 14, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1270797> (Accessed January 30, 2017)

considers that the Indian approach for resolving Kashmir dispute bilaterally is a tactic for prolonging the conflict. However, the US has also been inconsistent towards mediation over Kashmir dispute between the two nuclear neighbours. During Cold War, it had supported “Third Party”, but the US has always supported the Indian approach, i.e. the resolution of Kashmir dispute through bilateral dialogue.<sup>37</sup>

However, an unexpected breath of fresh air came when Donald Trump showed his willingness to resolve the longstanding territorial dispute between the two South Asian giants. He expressed twice his willingness for mediation over Kashmir dispute. Firstly, he had given an interview to “Hindustan Times”, and informed that he wants to see peace in the South Asian region. Therefore, he is ready “to play a mediatory role in addressing the “very, very hot tinderbox” of Kashmir between India and Pakistan.”<sup>38</sup> Pakistan welcomed Trump’s offer<sup>39</sup> as it had long raised voices for Kashmiris at international forums. Trump’s offer for mediation over Kashmir dispute did not restrict itself to his interaction with Indian media. In his telephonic conversation with Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif, he reiterated his stance, which was again welcomed by Pakistan.<sup>40</sup> Trump has fulfilled a longstanding desire of Pakistan, i.e.

<sup>37</sup> Shahzada Ashraf Maqbool, “Key Determinants of US policy towards Kashmir under President George W. Bush,” *Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*, vol. 1, issue 5 (May 2016): 9-10, <http://www.ijrdo.org/International-Journal-of-Research-&-Development-Organisation-pdf/Journal%20of%20Social%20Sciences%20and%20Humanities%20Research/May-2016/Social%20Sciences%20and%20Humanities-2.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> Would love to see Pakistan and India get along: Donald Trump, *Hindustan Times*, October 16, 2016. For details see <http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/would-love-to-see-pakistan-and-india-get-along-donald-trump/story-n2DJQzBsLIVxXkTTjBt7DJ.html> (Accessed January 30, 2017)

<sup>39</sup> Pakistan welcomes US president-elect Trump’s offer to mediate on Kashmir issue, *Hindustan Times*, November 11, 2016. For details see <http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/pakistan-welcomes-us-president-elect-trump-s-offer-to-mediate-on-kashmir-issue/story-D2M5bM6Oppe6QEA8hNhPxL.html> (Accessed January 30, 2017)

<sup>40</sup> Trump willing to play any role to help fantastic Pakistan, *CNBC News*, December 01, 2016. For details see <http://www.cnn.com/2016/12/01/trump-willing-to-play-any-role-to-help-pakistan-pm-sharifs-office-claims.html?view=story&%24DEVICE%24=native-android-mobile> (Accessed January 30, 2017)

showing willingness for mediation over Kashmir dispute. Donald Trump had emerged a strong leader with strong stance over various national and international issues. US Vice President Mike Pence further extended his hopes by saying that 'deal-making skills of Trump' can start a new era of peace between India and Pakistan.<sup>41</sup> Trump's willingness at mediation between India and Pakistan over Kashmir dispute offers an opportunity, which can strengthen bilateral relationship between the US and Pakistan and can strengthen regional peace. The history of brokering deals from Trump tower reflects that Trump has expertise in negotiating tough deals with clever and experienced businessmen.<sup>42</sup> Though difficult, yet it is hoped that his offer of brokering deal between the two countries will positively affect relations of the two major South Asian rivals.

### *Trump's Aspiration to Eliminate IS*

Islamic State (IS) has dominated the European and American security apparatus in 2016. The Obama administration failed to develop a long term and well organized strategy against the IS. During election campaign, Donald Trump severely criticized Obama's policy in Middle East. He also reiterated to deal with IS through a well-planned strategy.<sup>43</sup> In this regard, after assuming his office, Donald Trump's eagerness led to an order to security officials to form a strategy against IS in one month.<sup>44</sup> Recently, dropping of Mother of All Bombs (MOAB)<sup>45</sup> in Nangarhar, Afghanistan to eliminate IS presence in the Afghan province is a staunch example of his eagerness to curb this menace. He has also called Russian

<sup>41</sup> Trump's 'deal-making skills' can help resolve Kashmir: US VP-elect Mike Pence, Hindustan Times, December 05, 2016. For details see <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/trump-s-deal-making-skills-can-help-resolve-kashmir-vp-elect-mike-pence/story-H6qB6nAbTsus2mdoF0uIbL.html> (Accessed January 30, 2017)

<sup>42</sup> Donald J. Trump, *Great Again: How to Fix our Crippled America*, 36.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p. 37

<sup>44</sup> Christopher M. Blanchard & Carla E. Humud, *The Islamic State and U.S. Policy*, Congressional Research Service report (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service), i, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R43612.pdf>

<sup>45</sup> Al-Jazeera, "US says 'mother of all bombs' hits ISIL in Afghanistan", April 15, 2017. For details see <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/04/drops-mother-bombs-isil-afghanistan-170413174730383.html> (Accessed May 22, 2017)

President Vladimir Putin to form a joint strategy against IS.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, IS is making its inroads into Afghanistan. Many terrorist groups and individuals have allegedly shown their allegiance to IS.<sup>47</sup> Spread of IS in Afghanistan will have larger security impact on Pakistan's security, particularly in Pakistan Afghanistan border area. Hence, a commonality of interest can be witnessed between Pakistan and Trump's apparent policies towards curbing terrorism in general and IS in particular. Furthermore, Donald Trump's approach to work with Vladimir Putin is also an encouraging signal for Pakistan, which provides a broader opportunity to Pakistan for cooperation with Russia in Afghanistan, against the IS and other extremist militant groups in Central and South Asia. The recent trilateral dialogue (Russia, China and Pakistan) had an objective to engage Afghan Taliban in Afghanistan in order to curb the threat of IS in the country.

#### *Trump's Policy Shift towards Russia*

Pakistan has always associated with the American alliance, ranging from South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO), Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), cooperation in Afghan 'Jihad', and Non-NATO ally in war against terrorism. In these almost seven decades, Pakistan could not enlist cooperation with Russia in the larger South Asian security complex. Security analysts believe that the major hindrance in cordial relations between Pakistan and Russia was largely the opposing policies of Russia and America in Afghanistan. The overt Pakistani and American support to Afghan *Mujahedeen* in Afghanistan 'Jihad' against Soviet Union widened the gap between their interests in Afghanistan and the region. However, fifteen years after the American invasion in Afghanistan, the emergence of new radical groups (particularly the IS) and American inability to establish peace and stability in Afghanistan has

---

<sup>46</sup> Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin ready to hold Summit following historic call, The Telegraph, January 28, 2017. For details see <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/01/28/donald-trump-vladimir-putin-hold-historic-telephone-call/> (Accessed January 30, 2017)

<sup>47</sup> Maryam Nazir, "Daesh in South Asia," *Journal of Current Affairs*, vol. 1, nos.1&2 (2016): 1-17.

radically changed the security picture in the region and compelled America and Russia to cooperate with each other in Afghanistan. In the first call Trump made to his Russian counterpart, he was highlighting three factors including countering IS, enhancing trade and finding common solution in Ukraine.<sup>48</sup> Since, IS is increasing its influence in Afghanistan, which is a common enemy of the US and Russia, there is a possibility that both countries could work together in eliminating the IS factor in Afghanistan. Currently, Afghanistan's solution lies in a national agreement between the warring parties, i.e. Afghan government and radical groups (Taliban in particular). The future of IS in Afghanistan is also largely based on the failure or success of national reconciliation. On the other hand, Russian assertive approach in Eastern Europe and enhanced interest in Afghanistan shows its resurgence in world affairs. Russian interests in Central Asia and enhanced interests in Iran are also further broadening its stakes in Afghan stability. Hence, the US will likely not to have any concern in growing cooperation between Pakistan and Russia in Afghanistan. Thus, the convergence of interests between Russia and America in Afghanistan will likely promote Pak-Russia ties.

### *Prospects of CPEC and Trump Administration*

To larger extent, Pakistan's policies and politics are currently revolving around Pakistan-China Economic Corridor (CPEC). Robust economic and development activities are continuing under CPEC, which is a pilot project of Chinese One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative. Pakistan has always desired to increase stakes of regional and extra regional countries into this mega trade corridor.<sup>49</sup> The projecting economic activities will not only serve Pakistan and China but it will be highly lucrative for regional and international countries.<sup>50</sup> However, this corridor will require a peaceful regional environment with strong support of major powers in

<sup>48</sup> Putin & Trump signal new Russia-US partnership with 1st phone call on ISIS, trade & Ukraine, RT World, January 28, 2017; <https://www.rt.com/news/375416-putin-trump-telephone-call/> (accessed February 6, 2017).

<sup>49</sup> Ambassador (ret'd) Sohail Amin Muhammad Hanif & Khurram Abbas, "Preface," in *CEPC: Macro and Micro Economic Dividends for Pakistan and the Region* (Islamabad: Islamabad Policy Research Institute), ix.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid,

general and the US in particular. China has diplomatically maneuvered through Russia to restrain negative activities of India to sabotage CPEC.<sup>51</sup> Pakistan's dream of regional connectivity can offer lucrative ventures for the US business sector. Currently, trade deficit of the US with Pakistan stands at US\$1.3 billion.<sup>52</sup> Trump's slogan "America First" and "strong again" will likely stimulate American manufacturing industry, CPEC will offer it a competitive route to export manufacturing items to South Asia, Central Asia and West Asia. It will also help in decreasing trade deficit between the two countries. Trump's business mindset will also promote America economic relationship with other countries in the world. It is highly likely that Trump administration will not oppose CPEC and OBOR initiative as it would provide more markets to American businessmen, which is inherent in Trump's political slogans mentioned above.

### **State Specific Approach and Perceived Challenges for Pakistan**

#### *Afghan Conundrum*

Unlike, Trump's cognitive approach towards Afghanistan, the US' state institutions have different perceptions and approaches to the Afghan conundrum. During the Obama administration, the relations between Pakistan and the US were not warm<sup>53</sup> on issues such as the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani Network, and the depth and extent of counter insurgency and counter terrorism struggle.<sup>54</sup> The former President stated that "it was always difficult to negotiate with Islamabad because the latter "would just repeat the same answers year after year without

---

<sup>51</sup>Panos Mourdoukoutas , 'China Wants Russia To Calm India And Save CPEC', Forbes, January 08, 2017. For details see

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/panosmourdoukoutas/2017/01/08/china-wants-russia-to-calm-india-and-save-cpec/#22a29eeb240f> (Accessed February 6, 2017)

<sup>52</sup>Afshan Subohi , "The ostrich in global concerns," Dawn, February 6, 2017, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1312954> (accessed February 21, 2017).

<sup>53</sup>Shahrbano Tadjbakhsh, *South Asia and Afghanistan: The Robust India-Pakistan Rivalry*, PRIO paper 2 (Oslo: Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2011), 35, <https://www.prio.org/utility/DownloadFile.ashx?id=389&type=publicationfile>

<sup>54</sup>Yousaf Rafiq, "The Trump era: implications for Pakistan," *Daily Times*, January 29, 2016, <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/29-Jan-17/the-trump-era-implications-for-pakistan> (accessed February 27, 2017).

quantifying much.”<sup>55</sup> Under the new administration, it seems that Pakistan will face similar questions throughout the Trump administration as he has already indicated in his speech that “we can no longer be silent about Pakistan’s safe havens for terrorist organizations, the Taliban, and other groups that pose a threat to the region and beyond.”<sup>56</sup> Rather, his speech is an old rhetoric of blame game against Pakistan while accusing the latter for providing a safe heavens to the militants. This policy indicates that the institutional factor overcomes the personal cognitive approach of Trump. Hence, a radical shift can be seen in Trump’s approach based on the institutional input.

Earlier, President Trump while speaking to former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, considered Pakistan a great nation and talked high about Pakistan and its citizens. The US institutional approach towards Pakistan has always remained conditional. For instance, the US Congress imposed conditionality by tying up the release of US \$400 million aid to Pakistan government’s prompt action against the Haqqani network, reflecting the US establishment’s hard and close fisted approach towards Pakistan.<sup>57</sup> Most recently, the US Congress has approved reimbursement of up to US\$ 700 million in Coalition Support Fund (CSF) to Pakistan. According to that the latter will get US\$ 350 million of US\$ 700 million after the US Defence Secretary James Mattis certifies that Pakistan has taken demonstrable steps against the Haqqani network.<sup>58</sup> It seems that the Republican-dominated Congress is a little unhappier with Pakistan than usual owing to the non-fulfilment of the US ‘do more’ demands.

---

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> “Full texts of Donald Trump's speech on South Asia policy,” *TheHindu*.

<sup>57</sup> S Qamar Afzal Rizvi, “Trump’s optimism: Retuning Pak-US ties?” *Pakistan Observer*, December 15, 2016, <http://pakobserver.net/trumps-optimism-retuning-pak-us-ties/> (accessed January 6, 2017).

<sup>58</sup> “US Congress approves \$700m CSF for Pakistan,” *Pakistan Today*, November 11, 2017, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/11/11/us-congress-approves-700m-csf-for-pakistan/> (accessed November 20, 2017).

Therefore, it has 'stopped the latter's F16 subsidy,'<sup>59</sup> 'reduced future military and economic aid and made Coalition Support Funds (CSF) for counter-terrorism cooperation conditional to certification,'<sup>60</sup> — with the potential to affect Pakistan's war effort — and even debated in the House whether Pakistan was a friend or foe.<sup>61</sup> The statement of James Mattis, Secretary of Defence in this regard is an open hint of US hard policies towards Pakistan's military assistance as he "warned that putting conditions on US security assistance to Pakistan has not always produced the desired results."<sup>62</sup> The US military assistance to Pakistan is likely to continue with a question mark under Trump's administration. In spite of Pakistan playing a glaring and prompt role in terminating terrorist networks, it seems that Trump administration will focus more on actions by Pakistan on dismantling the terrorist networks and cleaning infrastructure of jihadi organisations particularly against Haqqani network on its soil and less on spilling the beans. Consequently, there could be severe concern among military establishment of Pakistan over the continuation and sustainability of military assistance and release of defence equipment.

Keeping in view the organizational behaviour and perceptions towards Pakistan, one could estimate that Trump administration will probably continue its inherited policy coupled by more demands and conditionalities towards Pakistan in the context of Afghanistan. It is evident in his moderated stance by October 2015 that Trump has admitted the retaining of 9,800 US military personnel in Afghanistan. However, he asserted that these troops need to quit Afghanistan

<sup>59</sup> Fatima Raza, *Fresh Tensions in Pakistan-US Relations: The F-16 Conundrum*, issue brief (Islamabad: Institute of Strategic Studies, 2016), 2-5, [http://issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Final\\_IB\\_Fatima\\_dated\\_03-6-2016.pdf](http://issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Final_IB_Fatima_dated_03-6-2016.pdf)

<sup>60</sup> Abdul Basit, "Trump's Victory: Future of US-Pakistan Relations," Report no. 291, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, November 29, 2016, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/CO16291.pdf> (accessed December 21, 2016).

<sup>61</sup> Rafiq, "The Trump era: implications for Pakistan."

<sup>62</sup> Anwar Iqbal, "Conditions on security assistance to Pakistan failed to yield results: Mattis," *Dawn*, January 15, 2017, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1308504> (accessed January 15, 2017).



building aims and emphasize on fighting more looming security concerns. Furthermore, on the US SA policy, it is assumed that Moscow Conference on Afghanistan Peace on April 14, 2017<sup>63</sup> and especially the Beijing conference on "Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) on May 14-15, 2017"<sup>64</sup> could be a tipping point to the US not only to retain its forces for 'indefinite period' in Afghanistan but also to the US troops surge in Afghanistan. This is reflected in Trump's Afghanistan strategy which looks like it aims to "keep an indefinite US military presence in the country indefinitely,"<sup>65</sup> thereby generating a concern to the geopolitical outlook of Pakistan with the US keeping an eye on CPEC and Pakistan's Nuclear programme.

In particular, Trump believes that the residual US military presence in Afghanistan is an effective check on Pakistan's nuclear weapons capabilities.<sup>66</sup> While responding in a Republican presidential debate, Trump indicated that "I think you have to stay in Afghanistan for a while, because of the fact that you are right next to Pakistan, which has nuclear weapons and we have to protect that."<sup>67</sup> In this context, in his radio address (during his election campaign) in September 2016, he "suggested the involvement of India in efforts to de-nuclearise Pakistan as he stated 'You have to get India involved. India's the check to Pakistan.'"<sup>68</sup> That is why he has intended an expansion of Afghanistan's security partnership

<sup>63</sup> "International Afghanistan Peace Conference starts in Moscow," Express Tribune, April 14, 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1383473/international-afghanistan-peace-conference-starts-moscow/> (accessed November 20, 2017).

<sup>64</sup> Yamei, "Full text of President Xi's speech at opening of Belt and Road forum," Xinhua, May 14, 2017, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/14/c\\_136282982.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/14/c_136282982.htm) (accessed November 20, 2017).

<sup>65</sup> "US Afghanistan policy is centered against Pakistan-China: Russian experts," *Times of Islamabad*, August 25, 2017, <https://timesofislamabad.com/us-afghanistan-policy-is-centered-against-pakistan-china-russian-experts/2017/08/25/> (accessed November 20, 2017).

<sup>66</sup> Samuel Ramani, "What a Trump Presidency Would Mean for Afghanistan," *Diplomat*, August 2, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/08/what-a-trump-presidency-would-mean-for-afghanistan/> (accessed December 27, 2016).

<sup>67</sup> Anwar Iqbal, "Trump says US troops needed in Afghanistan to protect Pak N-arms," *Dawn*, March 5, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1243642> (accessed January 30, 2017).

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

with India. This strategy could likely increase tensions between Islamabad and Washington. Whereas, Islamabad has repeatedly showed its concerns that US-Afghanistan-India security cooperation is not only meant at defaming the country but has negative implications for Pakistan's security,<sup>69</sup> which will ultimately and indirectly encourage the Afghanistan-based insurgent groups such as Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, etc. against Pakistan.

### **US Policies - Disequilibrium in South Asia**

During the Cold War, the US's institutional policy towards SA had mostly revolved around striking a balance between Pakistan and India. After the dismemberment of the former Soviet Union, the US' state institutions revisited their foreign policy focus in the region. Currently, successive American governments have been building India as a balancer to China, which has created an imbalance in the region. This disequilibrium in organizational behaviour of the US has directly affected Pakistan's security calculation. It is likely that the new administration will continue this organizational approach. Resultantly, Trump's tilt toward New Delhi will not make Washington able to adopt the balanced approach which Islamabad is seeking. It is likely that the Trump administration will further cement its relations with India showing the former's tilt towards New Delhi which Islamabad will have to deal with in the future. Keeping in view the US strategic interests in SA, the new regime will continue to see Pakistan through the Indian prism as evident in its new Afghanistan and SA policy after giving a larger role to India in Afghanistan at the cost of Pakistan's security concerns.<sup>70</sup> Like the Democrats, the Republican Party considers India as a geopolitical ally and a strategic trading partner.<sup>71</sup> The deepening US strategic partnership with New Delhi, especially in the

---

<sup>69</sup> Brig Asif H. Raja, "Evolving Regional Security Dynamics and Impact on Pakistan's Security," *Veterans today*, December 29, 2016, <http://www.veteranstoday.com/2016/12/29/evolving-regional-security-dynamics-and-impact-on-pakistans-security/> (accessed December 30, 2016).

<sup>70</sup> "Full texts of Donald Trump's speech on South Asia policy," *Hindu*.

<sup>71</sup> India a 'geopolitical ally' of US: Republicans, "*Economic Times*, July 19, 2016, <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-a-geopolitical-ally-of-us-republicans/articleshow/53281248.cms> (accessed November 30, 2016).

backdrop of Indo-US defence cooperation such as nuclear defence deal and, the waiver granted to India by the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) in 2008, has generated a serious concern in Islamabad because such a partnership has disturbed the balance of power in the region. Moreover, Islamabad understands that its historical leveraging of the Washington's alliance against New Delhi could now be no more.<sup>72</sup> Although, the US-India partnership may also have an economic component but it is the military component that causes widening asymmetry in military capability, which is the real concern for Pakistan. That is why Pakistan hopes that the US-India relations should not come at the expense of Pakistan's security and regional peace.

Currently, there is a bipartisan approach in the US establishment towards South Asian policy which is to interact with New Delhi and Islamabad separately or have a de-hyphenated engagement with Pakistan. In this scenario, it is likely that the new regime will maintain in future the Indian position high in the US foreign policy priority list due to the commonality of goals and interests between the two countries, such as defeating terrorism, containing China and enhancing economic ties. Therefore, the US will continue its diplomacy in convincing the international community for making India a member of the NSG and a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).<sup>73</sup> Consequently, the new US-SA policy under the new administration will directly add to India's hegemony and will contribute to a mistrust and classic security dilemma in the region, thus negatively impacting regional peace and cooperation. This will also enhance an unhealthy arms race, including nuclear weapons development between Pakistan and India. Accordingly, these moves would further expand Indian domination that would create a fear in the region of New Delhi's potential expansionism and unsolicited intrusion into their domestic affairs of the regional countries.<sup>74</sup> Eventually, the arms race will put further burden on

<sup>72</sup> Rumi, "US Elections: What can Pakistan expect?"

<sup>73</sup> Basit, "Trump's Victory: Future of US-Pakistan Relations."

<sup>74</sup> Kishore C. Dash, *Regionalism in South Asia: Negotiating Cooperation, Institutional Structures* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 199.

Pakistan's economy, as the country will also be compelled to deter Indian designs through improved arms capabilities.

### **Countering Terrorism – Common Objectives with Different Approaches**

Countering terrorism is a common goal of both Pakistan and the US, which they have realized, but the approaches to achieve that goal in handling the menace of terrorism could be different. Pakistan wants to take harsh measures against the miscreants according to its own priorities while keeping in view the security landscape and threat perception of the country. For this reason, it seems that it wants to adopt a step-by-step approach — instead of opening all fronts at a same time against all the terrorists — to avoid any severe backlash from the miscreants' side. The country had adopted this approach in the case of "Operation Rah-e-Rast (2009)," <sup>75</sup> and "Operation Rah-e-Nijat (2009)." <sup>76</sup> During the same period the US establishment had been pressurizing Islamabad to start another operation in North Waziristan against terrorists. This US demand had caused mistrust between them because the US considered that delay in launching the North Waziristan operation would undercut its anti-terror efforts. Eventually, Pakistan launched "Operation Zarb-e-Azb" in June 2014 <sup>77</sup> at a time when it felt that the previous two operations had achieved the desired results against the militants.

Moreover, the US establishment shows its concern regarding the Afghan Taliban, especially the Haqqani network, which it allegedly considers are enjoying sanctuary in areas along the Afghan border, whereas Pakistan reiterates time and again that Operation Zarb-e-Azb 2014 was launched in a bid to wipe out militant bases in North Waziristan

---

<sup>75</sup> Ahmad Rashid Malik, "The success of the Operation Rah-e-Rast," *Jakarta Post*, August 4, 2009, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/08/04/the-success-operation-raherast.html> (accessed January 27, 2017).

<sup>76</sup> Asif Haroon Raja, "Achievements of operation Rah-e-Nijat," *People of Pakistan*, January 29, 2010, <https://thepeopleofpakistan.wordpress.com/2010/01/29/achievements-of-operation-rah-e-nijat/> (accessed January 27, 2017).

<sup>77</sup> Saima Ghazanfar, "Operation Zarb-e-Azb: Two years of success," *Nation*, September 6, 2016, <http://nation.com.pk/national/06-Sep-2016/operation-zarb-e-azb-two-years-of-success> (accessed November 15, 2016).

without any discrimination between good or bad Taliban<sup>78</sup> and same in the case of Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad (2017). It seems that in the future also both countries would likely follow their same approaches in countering terrorism, which will be a cause in continuing their strained or mistrust relations even in the Trump administration. It is believed that what is happening today in Pakistan is the direct fallout of the extremist rise in Afghanistan, something that needs to be acknowledged by the US together with the fact that any change in Afghanistan will bring a simultaneous impact on Pakistan. However, Pakistan's future prospects are closely linked to the security situation in Afghanistan whereas for the US "trends in the regional and international politics indicate that great powers are least interested in restoring the peace in Afghanistan. They are more concerned about the transformation and realignment in the global politics and pursuit of their international strategic agendas."<sup>79</sup> Being a superpower, the US sees bilateral relations with Pakistan through the perspective of its global foreign policy priorities. Therefore, the former is probably using terrorism as an instrument of its foreign policy to improve its relations with the latter.<sup>\*\*\*</sup> While pursuing his global agenda of terrorism, Trump mentioned about cooperating closely with New Delhi to eradicate terrorism.<sup>80</sup> This counter terrorism cooperation between India and the US will enhance the former leverage on the US and India will exploit this leverage against Pakistan. It indicates that India will continue its efforts toward isolating Pakistan by spreading a narrative that Pakistan supports anti-India elements within the country. In such a

---

<sup>78</sup> "Zarb-i-Azb is war of survival, says ISPR chief," Pakistan Defence Blog, June 6, 2014, <http://www.defenceblog.org/2014/06/zarb-i-azb-is-war-of-survival-says-ispr.html> (accessed January 30, 2017).

<sup>79</sup> Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, "Afghan quagmire: Options for Pakistan," Global Village Space, November 16, 2017, <https://www.globalvillagespace.com/afghan-quagmire-options-for-pakistan/> (accessed November 20, 2017).

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Whereas, on Pakistan's foreign policy priorities list, the US is on significant position because Pakistan seeks bilateral relations with the US.

<sup>80</sup> Dr Ahmad Rashid Malik, "Trump's impact on relations with Pakistan," Pakistan Today, November 15, 2016, <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/11/15/trumps-impact-on-relations-with-pakistan/> (accessed November 6, 2016).

scenario, the US might continue its policy of do more to further disturb Pakistan-US relations.<sup>81</sup>

In fact, India defames Islamabad of being an “epicenter of terrorism”<sup>82</sup>, and blames the latter in sponsoring terrorism in the country without producing any concrete evidence.<sup>83</sup> Rather, India has been involved in exporting terrorism to Pakistan through its RAW agents, specifically in Balochistan and Karachi. For instance, Pakistan’s intelligent operatives had arrested Kulbhushan Yadav who was involved in “imparting Naval fighting training to Baloch separatists in an attempt to target Pakistani ports.”<sup>84</sup> Therefore, it would be obvious that New Delhi will likely play a ‘negative-sum-game’ and it could try to pressurize Trump’s anti-terrorism policy by encircling Pakistan, which would have implications for Pakistan. Undoubtedly, South Asia is a serious victim of terrorism and out of that Pakistan is the most victim of it. The latter has to pay a huge price more than any other country in the world. It has suffered a total loss of US \$188 billion from 2001 to 2016.<sup>85</sup> In addition, it also suffered more than 80000 killings of civilian and armed forces personnel so far.<sup>86</sup> These sacrifices of Pakistan need to be acknowledged by the international community and that the former also needs

<sup>81</sup> Hassan Shahjehan, “Pak-US relations under the Trump administration,” *Pakistan Today*, January 25, 2017, <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/01/25/pak-us-relations-under-the-trump-administration/> (accessed 3, 2016).

<sup>82</sup> Dr. Sridhar Krishnaswami, “Pakistan To Be Major Foreign Policy Challenge For Trump Presidency,” *Eurasia Review*, January 25, 2017, <http://www.eurasiareview.com/25012017-pakistan-to-be-major-foreign-policy-challenge-for-trump-presidency-analysis/> (accessed January 30, 2017).

<sup>83</sup> “India Is Blaming Pakistan For Uri Attacks Without Any Concrete Evidence, Says Pak Home Minister,” *India Times*, September 24, 2016, <http://www.indiatimes.com/news/world/india-is-blaming-pakistan-for-uri-attacks-without-any-concrete-evidence-says-pak-home-minister-262299.html> (accessed January 30, 2017).

<sup>84</sup> Syed Ali Shah, “Arrested 'RAW agent' trained separatists to target Pakistani ports: security official,” *Dawn*, March 27, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1248254> (accessed February 27, 2017).

<sup>85</sup> “Pakistan suffered loss of \$188bn during war on terror, says Dar,” *Dawn*, June 4, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1262750> (accessed January 30, 2017).

<sup>86</sup> “80,000 Pakistanis killed in US 'War on Terror': report,” *Express Tribune*, March 29, 2015, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/860790/80000-pakistanis-killed-in-us-war-on-terror-report>

cooperation from the international community to eliminate the menace of terrorism from SA.

### **Pakistan-China Bilateral Relations' Factor**

In addition to military hardware, Pakistan has been seeking the US support for economic aid and for persuading the IMF for getting loans. It decided to leave the IMF programme, when the former's US \$6.7 billion three-year IMF programme ended in September 2016,<sup>87</sup> probably due to two reasons: a) Pakistan has made considerable improvement in fixing the economy which is why government of Pakistan does not want another package, b) it is reported that after launching the CPEC, there might be a possibility that China may likely replace the US as Pakistan's major strategic, economic and diplomatic partner,<sup>88</sup> which in fact has already been evolving since the beginning of the bilateral relations between Islamabad and Beijing.<sup>89</sup> In this regard, while Pakistan's relationship with the US keep fluctuating, the former has been actively transforming its defence-centric engagement with China into an economic and infrastructure development partnership under the CPEC, which connects Kashgar and Gwadar ports and has been considered as a game changer for the region.

Moreover, the construction of Gwadar Port has further increased the geostrategic importance of Pakistan in the Asia Pacific region. Although the US establishment has welcomed the CPEC but meanwhile it considers that the CPEC will increase Chinese influence in Pakistan that

<sup>87</sup> "IMF says Pakistan ready to go it alone when programme ends," *Dawn*, April 28, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1254986> (accessed December 15, 2016).

<sup>88</sup> Rumi, "US Elections: What can Pakistan expect?"

<sup>89</sup> Pakistan-China friendly relations are constantly moving on an ascending trajectory and gaining strength since last 69 years. Pakistan has always sought to maintain strong and cordial relationship with the US and China simultaneously. In fact, it was Pakistan which had bridged the diplomatic gap between the US and China. Hence, linking Pakistan's growing relationship with China due to the cold relationship with the US is unjustified. Trump's presidency offers both, challenges and opportunities for Pakistan. Currently, Pakistan is cooperating with the US in counter-terrorism, defence, economy and regional stability. It is hoped that Pakistan and the US will continue their cooperation under Trump administration

could limit Washington's historic domination of the region,<sup>90</sup> and which Trump administration may not possibly want to lose its influence over Islamabad. Markey views that there would be mix approaches in Washington about China's presence in Gwadar, as it would be mixed clearly provide an opportunity in future to a growing Chinese naval presence in the Arabian Sea,<sup>91</sup> thus creating a new complexity in Pakistan-China and Indo-US relations.<sup>92</sup> Eventually, the US looks towards India as a counter-weight against China,<sup>93</sup> which could translate into an increase in Indian leverage on the US and resultantly India employing it against Pakistan.<sup>94</sup>

The Washington inclination towards New Delhi is a clear product of the growing power of Beijing, as Beijing might consider that the US's 'Pivot to Asia' policy is China centric. In the worst-case scenario of squeezing China in the South China Sea, it would have implications for the Arabian Sea. If Trump administration reconsiders its severe rhetoric of the campaign trail and adopts a more realistic approach, as it showed in the case of withdrawing the Trans-Pacific Partnership, it could be a step that will likely bring Beijing and Washington closer to each other. But if the new regime with the help of India will continuously try to provoke China in the South China Sea, in that scenario Pakistan's sea shores may not remain peaceful<sup>95</sup> because the struggle to contain China's trade in the South China Sea by the US could be shifted from the South China Sea to the Arabian Sea. Resultantly, this scenario will put tremendous pressure on Pakistan Navy mainly for protecting the Pakistani ports and the CPEC-related trade.

Furthermore, there may be a consideration in the US establishment that Chinese growing relations with Pakistan could influence the latter's foreign policy. This is an unlikely scenario, as contrary to the US, China

---

<sup>90</sup> Rumi, "US Elections: What can Pakistan expect?"

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Shahjehan, "Pak-US relations under the Trump administration."

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ahmad, "How Trump will shape Pakistan-US ties."



believes in 'peaceful rise' and it never interferes into the internal affairs of any country. Rather, Beijing's growing role could stabilize SA.<sup>96</sup> There is a need to understand that the CPEC is mainly a commercial activity and, not a defence alliance against the US or a counterweight against an Indian threat. Rather, Islamabad's growing relations with Beijing is not a replacement for ties with the Washington. In fact, Pakistan adopts a balanced approach between Washington and Beijing. It would like to maximize its leverage that is offered by both allies for fulfilling its national interest instead of viewing its diplomatic relationships with Beijing on the basis of a zero-sum game.

### **Future of Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline Under Trump-Iran Relations**

Announcement of new sanctions by Trump against Tehran and punishing it for testing a ballistic missile programme<sup>97</sup> could be a step towards undoing the Iranian Nuclear deal, as Trump has criticized President Obama and John Kerry in his election campaign over the signing of the nuclear deal with Iran. He believes that the deal will not protect American interests and will be detrimental to the national security of Israel, the closest ally of America in the Middle East.<sup>98</sup> It seems that he will either undo the nuclear deal between Iran and P5+1 or pressurize the Iranian administration over the deal by threatening to undo it. Resultantly, this scenario will affect the Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline project, as it has already been delayed due to American sanctions on Iran. Currently both countries are hopeful of increasing their bilateral trade up to 5 billion dollars in next five years.<sup>99</sup> To meet this goal, Pakistan has already lifted all economic sanctions against Tehran during January

<sup>96</sup> Rumi, "US Elections: What can Pakistan expect?"

<sup>97</sup> Rachael Revesz, "New Iran sanctions announced by US Treasury department after ballistic missile test," Independent, February 3, 2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/new-iran-sanctions-announce-us-treasury-department-ballistic-missile-test-donald-trump-tweet-playing-a7561751.html> (accessed February 27, 2017).

<sup>98</sup> Donald J. Trump, *Great Again: How to Fix our Crippled America*, 31.

<sup>99</sup> Mehreen Zahra-Malik, "Pakistan, Iran aim to boost trade to \$5 billion," *Reuters*, March 26, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-iran-idUSKCN0WS0F5> (accessed February 21, 2017).

2017.<sup>100</sup> Owing to the uncertainty of imposition of international sanctions against Iran, it will affect Pakistan's prospects of bilateral trade with Iran in particular and the latter's trade with regional and international companies in general. Furthermore, in the recent US-Arab Summit, Trump has again criticized Iran and called for its isolation.<sup>101</sup> This announcement will have a long term impact on Iranian foreign relations and bilateral projects, particularly the IP gas pipeline. It is a fact that, without the consent of the US, no major international monetary institution and international company will enter into trade activities with Iran. This will negatively affect the trade activities between the two countries.

### **Trump's Protectionism and US-Pakistan Trade**

President Xi Jinping in his speech at Davos highlighted the necessity for free trade and globalisation. This speech has significance as the leader of a Communist state is speaking in favour of globalisation.<sup>102</sup> Contrarily, the newly elected leader of the "free world", President Donald Trump in his inauguration speech spoke of "America first", and the need to "buy American" and "hire American".<sup>103</sup> Pakistan stands at a critical juncture in global history. "With Brexit and Trump's election, the neo-liberal economic world order, to which the economy of Pakistan had grown so accustomed to, is being dismantled."<sup>104</sup> This economic world order believes in free movement of goods, free trade and free markets, limited protectionist pressure, and limited regulation of multinational enterprises; whereas, if high tariff barriers are imposed by the new administration, it will adversely impact Pakistani exports to the US. There is a deep concern among the Pakistani business community over the US

---

<sup>100</sup> "Pakistan lifts sanctions against Iran," *Dawn*, February 19, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1240603> (accessed November 3, 2016).

<sup>101</sup> The Nation, "Frontline state mortified at anti-terror summit", For details see <http://nation.com.pk/E-Paper/Lahore/2017-05-22/page-1/detail-4> (Accessed May 22, 2017)

<sup>102</sup> Yasser Latif Hamdani, "Pakistan's opportunities in the Trump-era," *Daily Times*, January 23, 2017, <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/23-Jan-17/pakistans-opportunities-in-the-trump-era> (accessed February 15, 2017).

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

policy shift under the new regime. They see Trump's shift towards protectionism could have serious ramifications for Pakistan's trade and economy. "According to the Pakistan Economic Survey 2015-16, the US is Pakistan's biggest export market, with a share of around 17 per cent of total exports and 4 per cent of total imports originating from the US. Pakistan enjoys a surplus balance of trade with imports from the US at US \$1.3bn against exports of US \$2.6bn in 2015-16."<sup>105</sup> It is assumed that owing to Trump's protectionist policies, the volume of bilateral trade with US may fall, which could hit Pakistan's exports to the US market.

### Conclusion

Pakistan is likely to face more challenges than opportunities. The low profile US-Pakistan relations is likely to continue without facing any immediate fracture or downgrading. The trajectory of Pakistan's engagement with the new regime could be more challengeable and trend of favoring Pakistan in terms of Kerry-Lugar Bill for military and economic assistance could be reduced. The reimbursement of the Coalition Support Fund (CSF) has already witnessed delays and tough scrutiny by the US Congress. Chiefly, the US' engagement with Islamabad may rely on the organizational process.. To sum up, it can be argued that the new regime's policy will, in all probability, be tougher and more conditional than before. Unlike his predecessor, Trump has adopted a proactive approach toward numerous national and international issues. His innovative approach and ability to take bold decisions has laid a solid ground of opportunities for Pakistan. The White House in its statement said that it is not extending visa ban to Pakistan.<sup>106</sup> This is a highly encouraging development, which is likely to set the tone of relationship between Washington and Islamabad. The anti-Iran rhetoric by Trump further stimulates Pakistan's position in the White House on the Afghan question. To conclude, Trump's presence in White House presents both

<sup>105</sup> AfshanSubohi , "The ostrich in global concerns," *Dawn*, February 6, 2017, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1312954> (accessed February 21, 2017).

<sup>106</sup> US not extending visa ban to Pakistan: White House, Samaa TV, February 03, 2017. For details see <https://www.samaa.tv/pakistan/2017/02/us-not-extending-visa-ban-to-pakistan-white-house/> (Accessed February 6, 2017)

opportunities and challenges to Pakistan. Thus, Pakistan's role on key international issues will also determine the future of Pakistan-US relations.