

Pak-US Relations: Transactional-Transformational Debate

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Abstract

The arrival of the new Republican President Donald Trump in Oval Office White House wrought a paradigm shift in Pak-US relations. This shift, albeit, not abrupt as the strong geopolitical forces have compelled the United States of America to do which suits to its grand strategy. The paper is divided in two segments, first is oriented to transactional approach which mainly dominated the major portion of Pak-US relations over the course of history. This approach pertains the ideals that Pak-US mutual cooperation has benefited both partners in all spheres. To support its narrative, this school has presented the partnership between them in defence and other areas specifically in the Cold War era. While the second section of paper has analyzed the approach of transformational prism which though, had existed since partition, but with little influence over foreign policy. As the United States invaded Afghanistan and requested Pakistan to support its war against terror, the transformational school got hype. Following their counterterrorism cooperation in this era, both Pakistan and the US became antagonist, instead close allies. That situation ultimately had energized the transformations and laid the ground for Pakistan to search for alternatives like Russia and China given their rising importance in the global politics. Another phenomena of the rising religious political

forces, like Tehreek-e-Lubaik Party (TLP) and Milli Muslim League (MML) in the Pakistan's political sphere presented a new political shift. Hence, Pakistan will not capitulate to follow a binary approach of "extreme oppose or extreme closeness" given its varied and convoluted interests. Pakistan's readjustment in its policy regarding war against terrorism and rising US-Indian partnership in the region has compelled it to look toward East for Russo-Chinese support; presently the rising regional powers emerging as counter-weight to sole super power of 21st century. This changing alignment in the region provides an opportunity for Pakistan to readjust its policies to address its critical defence and economic needs. This tendency has expanded the narrative of transformation both at state and public levels. In this context, this study argues that the Russo-Chinese active support for Pakistan could create a paradigm shift in the coming years.

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1. TRANSACTIONAL VIEWPOINT

Pakistan's major portion of history is influenced by the transactional approach as it was needed massive US support to develop its military muscle and stabilize its economy to counter Indian designs of regional hegemony expected most likely through military aggressions. By definition, transactional school of thought propagates neither total alienation nor close alliance with the US;

rather argues that-bi-lateral relations for mutual benefits are in the larger interest of Pakistan. This school of thought advocated United States of America's super-power status and military support as an integral part not only in defence and economic assistance but also as a bulwark for the promotion of democratic and liberal values in a traditionally religious country. By and large, this group supported status-quo in Pak-US cooperation over the course of history.

1.1 Pak-US Military Cooperation: Proportional Phenomenon

If history is a prism, then the entire Cold War era can be termed as Pak-US defence cooperation in the face of rising threat of Soviet communist expansion in the region. To counter this threat, the United States signed two hallmark defence pacts--Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), and South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) with the regional weaker states as a bulwark against Soviet Union. Pakistan joined both the pacts and utilized these magnanimous offers to establish conventional deterrence against too superior arc-rival, India.⁴² Military aid from the US envisaged as capacity building of Pakistan's armed forces and making it capable of maintaining deterrence against India. Although, US did not live up to the expectations of Pakistan during the Indo-Pak war of 1965 and 1971, even then the Transactional group maintains that China would not have been able to fulfill what Pakistan had achieved from the US support in the past; maintenance of its F-16 fighter jets while China could not ease its dependence on the US.⁴³

Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, once again provided an opportunity for Pakistan to get military aid from the US and Islamabad also lived up to the expectations of US in helping

⁴² Muhammad Ayoub Khan, "The Pakistan-American Alliance," *Foreign Affairs* June 1964, Available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/1964-01-01/pakistan-american-alliance>

⁴³ C. Christine Fair "Pakistan Can't Afford China's 'Friendship,'" *Foreign Policy*, July 3, 2017. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/07/03/pakistan-cant-afford-chinas-friendship/> (Accessed on: December 20 2017).

Afghan mujahedeen to counter effectively the Soviet plans in and beyond Afghanistan.

The incident of 9/11 and US' plans to eradicate Al-Qaida and then Taliban's regime in Kabul once again highlighted Pakistan's importance in the region. Pakistan's acceptance to allow the US and allied forces to use its designated air and land routes to operate in Afghanistan well appreciated in the US. But the US and allied NATO forces remained unable to achieve the goals they envisaged in Afghanistan and have been sometime appreciating but most of the time demanded that Pakistan should do more. For its part, Pakistan launched numerous military operations in FATA. From Swat valley to the rugged terrain of Waziristan agencies, therefore, Pakistani military met with myriad challenges in the way of accomplishing its goals. Being the last sanctuary of militants along with historic desire of US to launch operation in North Waziristan Agency, Pakistan initiated Operation-Zarb-e-Azb there in 2014. Either it was the hype in domestic terrorism planned or actually happening in NWA, or was the US' desire, Islamabad accomplished it with great prowess. To manage the challenge of displacing local population away from battle zone to settle areas amid of launching military operation was also a daunting job, but military solved it quickly.⁴⁴

As Pakistan had eradicated NWA-based militants, latter's capacity of launching terrorist attacks in settled areas considerably waned. The Americans were also convinced about this development because the terrorist's capacity of re-grouping to attack on ISAF forces in Afghanistan had been destroyed.

⁴⁴Dr. AmbreenJaved, "Zarb-e-Azb and the State of Security in Pakistan," *JSRP*, Vol, 53. No.1, January-June, 2016, Available at:http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/history/PDF-FILES/12%20Paper_v53_1_16.pdf (Accessed on: September8, 2019)

Fortunately, in the meanwhile recovery of Canadian couple from terrorist's captivity by Pakistan's Special Forces in October 2017 offered a positive sign in bringing thaw in Pak-US growing tension. Donald Trump especially praised Pakistan for its efforts to help complete this mission. It was the manifestation of American assistance in sharing intelligence with Pakistan about terrorist hideouts. Keeping in view such development the transactional narrative again gained pace with regard to Pak-US ties.⁴⁵

To initiate a peace-process with the Afghan Taliban, on the other hand, has become a permanent desire of US to pave the way for smooth withdrawal of its forces.

While the Americans have come on the point that such peace-full withdrawal could only be accomplished with Pakistan's assistance, the important regional stakeholder.

For that, Islamabad has arranged numerous rounds of talks and convinced the Afghan Taliban to come on the table. And now especially when the Afghan Taliban has been frequently involved in many rounds of talks directly with the US, it has been justified that Pakistan's role has always a critical when it comes to resolving the Afghan issue.⁴⁶ In July 2017, the US Military chief, Gen Joseph Dunford, also acknowledged that the US will not succeed in Afghanistan without Pakistan's support. According to

⁴⁵Donald Trump hails Pakistan's role in rescue of kidnapped family," *Daily Mail*, October 12, 2017. Available at:<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/pa/article-4974470/Donald-Trump-hails-Pakistan-s-role-rescue-kidnapped-family.html> (Accessed on: September 6, 2019)

⁴⁶Saeed Shah and Bill Spindle, "Pakistan Works with Trump to Prod Taliban in Afghan Peace Talks," *Wall Street Journal*, July 19, 2019, Available at:<https://www.wsj.com/articles/pakistan-works-with-trump-to-prod-taliban-in-afghan-peace-talks-11563553895> (Accessed on: September 8, 2019)

him, the American strategic community and societies were already convinced that Pakistan has the key to ultimately solve the Afghan issue.⁴⁷

With these facts in mind, the Transactionalists propagate that Pakistan should already have taken part in this peace process-meaning to convince the Taliban for table talk. Transactional school of thought views that if Pakistan would not handle the existing situation in Afghanistan either failing to entice the Taliban for peace-process or not cooperating with US on other areas, the resultant vacuum would be filled by other actors rival to Islamabad as a nightmare for Pakistan's national security.⁴⁸

No doubt, the Trump's aggressive approach towards Pakistan on its allegedly 'suspicious role in Afghanistan fluctuated during his tenure, but the security establishment of Pakistan remained cooperative to the US counterterrorism policy in the region. Recently, the Trump administration showed a serious willingness to mediate on Pak-India dispute over Jammu and Kashmir despite previous US administrations' reluctance to involve in the issue. Further benefiting Pakistan, Trump's offer to Imran Khan to mediate in resolving Kashmir dispute when he was meeting with US president in the White House, has indeed augmented Pakistan's importance in the region. While it is all about the

⁴⁷ "No victory in Afghanistan without Pakistan's support: US military chief," *Dawn News*, July 26, 2017: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1347693> (Accessed on: September 5, 2019)

⁴⁸ Dietrich Reetz "What does the new US policy on Afghanistan mean for India and Pakistan?" *World Economic Forum*, September 12, 2017. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/09/for-india-and-pakistan-us-policy-on-afghanistan-could-be-a-contradiction-in-terms/> (Accessed on: December 21 2017).

outcome of Islamabad's cooperation with Washington according to transactionalists.

1.2. Pak-US Estrangement: A Threat to Democratic and Liberal Order

Frequent military coups have subsequently damaged the process of democratic culture in Pakistan. With the start of military dictatorial rule in Pakistan during 1960s, the pace of United States' cooperation was slowed down from the trajectory which started in 1947 and further made the US reluctant to cooperate in the future. Given this situation, some transactionlists claim that limited American support in both wars of 1965 and 1971 was due to the military coups of General Ayoub Khan and Yahya Khan respectively. Following these military regimes, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the popular democrat even being the Prime Minister of Pakistan, also failed to completely break this chain of military interventions in civilian affairs. Again General Zia-ul-Haq overthrew the system and crippled the democratic process once again, while this wave has been extended to General Pervez Musharraf, the last military dictator in Pakistan.⁴⁹

Though both General Zia-ul-Haq and Pervez Musharraf worked in close cooperation with the US, the later did not solely relay on these military rulers, given their limited public support. Notwithstanding, Islamabad officially fully supported US war against terror but Washington always viewed it with suspicion given the military's ambiguous approach rather delayed action to deal with militancy in Afghanistan. Even after the restoration of

⁴⁹ Munwar Hussain, "Pak-US relations: An Historical Overview," *Pakistan Journal of History and Cultural*, Vol. XXXVII, No. 2 (2016), Available at: http://www.nihcr.edu.pk/Latest_English_Journal/Jul-Dec%202016%20No.2/5.%20Pak-US%20Relations%20a%20%20Historical%20Review,%20Munawar%20Hussain%20footnotes%20corrected.pdf (Accessed on Sep. 8, 2019)

democratic government in Pakistan, dominant role of military in dealing with Afghan policy further enhanced the growing trust deficit between them. Being the global leader in promoting democratic and liberal values, the US has always declared supporting democracy in Pakistan. The transactionalists believe that with strengthening of democracy Pakistan can cope with its problems in all walks of life with the generous support of the US. They argue that democratic regimes always got US support in other sectors in addition to security aid and mostly opened the doors for Pakistan to expand its cooperation world-wide. While, during the military regimes Pakistan generally faced isolation globally and sanctions from the US particularly.⁵⁰

From previous half quarter of century, Pak-US cooperation in non-military means has been increased due to the restoration of democratic process in the country. Services of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), for instance, have expanded country-wide, in this democratic era uplifting deprived areas of Pakistan, improving education, health, and other social aspects. Further benefiting the country, transactionalists are of the view that USAID-led activities have succeeded being a countervailing force to countering extremism and militancy nation-wide. This in due part, empowered most deprived class--susceptible to extremism, and to support the democratic and liberal values. Thanks to US cooperation, the transactional approach remains favourable to US being one of founding forces of liberalism in the world.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Zia Mian, Sharon K. Weiner, "America's Pakistan," *Middle East Research and Information Project*, March 2012.

<http://www.merip.org/mero/interventions/americas-pakistan>. (Accessed on: December 21 2017).

To attach itself with global trade and financial activities is crucial especially for a country like Pakistan. Given the US dominant role in global trade and supply chain management along with having main portion of global finance managed by the West, Pakistan needs its cooperation in this regard.⁵² As discussed earlier, either to secure ideal export destinations or to evade from tariffs, the western nations' support could be a reward. To get a status of General System of Preferences or GSP plus in fueling free trade activities, Pakistan's democratic restoration has played an important role.⁵³ Likewise, to empower an already crippling economy, Pakistan needed loans and aids. For this to work, again the US' role is very much crucial given its influence over global monetary institutions like International Monetary Fund and World Bank etc.

It is far from imagination whether such leverages provided by global integration would be available under any military rule in Pakistan. Whenever military overthrew the democratic government, Pakistan had to face security and economic challenges both at domestic and international levels. If a country were to project soft power world-wide, meaning to attract investment and economic growth, then India has an upper hand over Pakistan. Given its stronger democracy, the Indians have been able to attract major global business giants, while Pakistan is still lagged behind to accomplish the goal of having mature democratic system. In so doing, Islamabad is needed to manage a

⁵² S. Akbar Zaidi, "Who Benefits from US Aid to Pakistan?," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, September 21, 2011, Available at: https://carnegieendowment.org/files/pakistan_aid2011.pdf (Accessed on: September 8, 2019)

⁵³ Yousaf H Shirazi, "Pakistan and GPS Plus," *The News International*, May 8, 2018, Available at: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/313959-pakistan-and-gsp-plus> (Accessed on: September 6, 2019)

balance in civil-military relations first, and then it should pursue its long-term goals under the umbrella of democracy.

As Pakistan has been able to manage the democratic system specifically since the onset of twenty first century, it is still here to stay in a tussle of civil-military relations. Keeping in view this rivalry, the disqualification of Nawaz Sharif, the former Prime Minister, due to Panama Papers leaks, and opening of other interlinking corruption cases have proved to be a culmination of this tussle. Neither Pakistani military nor any other state institution having any involvement in these Papers' discovery, but some hardcore supporters of democracy accused military as the vanguard of this entire game. From the standpoint of democratic survival which is still in its embryonic stage, some in transactional school believe that these cases are weakening Pak-US relations.⁵⁴ Therefore, peaceful transition of power from Pakistan Muslim League-N to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf in general elections of 2018, has presented a good sign for democracy. Having immense impacts on Pakistani politics, nevertheless, the Panama Papers and its related anti-corruption wave have to some extent benefited Imran's PTI. But as illustrated earlier, smooth conduct of elections and transfer of power in a peaceful environment is considered as an achievement in promoting and strengthening the democratic system in Pakistan.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ImadZafar, "Panama Papers case will damage democracy regardless of the final verdict," *The Nation*, April 7, 2017, Available at:<http://nation.com.pk/07-Apr-2017/panama-papers-case-will-damage-democracy-regardless-of-the-final-verdict> (Accessed on: September 6, 2019)

⁵⁵ "Transition of Power Marks Milestone for Pakistan's fragile democracy," *Quantara.de*. June 1, 2019, Available at:<https://en.quantara.de/content/transition-of-power-marks-milestone-for-pakistans-fragile-democracy> (Accessed on Sep. 8, 2019)

However, some political rivals accuse PTI having support from military, but overall image of country's politics has been admired by the international community.

Simply put, one can argue that history of civil-military relations in Pakistan is in great flux since 1960s, but its nature has been changed over time. Since the demise of Musharraf's era, no doubt, military has reluctant to overthrow the democratic system but nature of civil-military relations is still accused of having lack of confidence between the two forces. This scenario, notwithstanding, has presented an opportunity in promoting democratic and liberal values in the country thanks to Pak-US civilian cooperation. Transactionalists view this era with new paradigm shift which will again benefit Pakistan in all spheres. They speculate that if this curse of democracy will strengthen in the country, the future will be defined by a close Pak-US cooperation where both partners have more mutual gains.

2. TRANSFORMATIONAL VIEWPOINT

The narrative of anti-Americanism persisted in the past history but with limited pace. That pace, therefore, has acquired hype over the course of last decade. Transformational school maintains that the US is no more a reliable partner of Pakistan, given its ambiguous behavior over the course of history. They propagate that there should be a transformation from the status-quo of Pak-US relations which is less beneficial if not fully harmful for Pakistan. As the US is in defensive position, not only in its battle zone but also from limiting heavy global engagement, this school of thought has acquired outreach in Pakistan's main-stream intelligentsia. And thus, this narrative has also led to a pivotal transformative dynamics in academic debates about Pak-US relations.

The rise of China along with the resurgence of Russia have forced the ground realities to change in South Asia especially when

it comes to Pak-US relations. Given this scenario, China has been quickly replacing the US by initiating close cooperation with Pakistan in all spheres especially China Pakistan Economic Corridor, the one of dominant and multi-billion dollars project.

With the penetration of secular forces in the country having their close western linkages and agenda has antagonized the religious societies in Pakistan and forced themselves to convert into political parties what was seen in the making of Milli Muslim League (MML) and Tehreek-i-Labaik Pakistan (TLP). Away from changing domestic sentiments, the US has not wholly convinced of Pakistan's approach in Afghanistan, either suspecting over Islamabad's relations with militants or not fulfilling Pakistan's core demands in the region. Even the Afghan Taliban has agreed to negotiate a peaceful solution with the help of Pakistan provided a timetable of troops withdrawal is given but the US still wanted to maintain an intelligence infrastructure in the region with much to the chagrin of Taliban and Pakistan. Although, President Trump given lip service to mediate Kashmir issue but provided India accepts it as mediator—the condition which India will never accept. Majority believes that the US only needs face saving in Afghanistan and has no concern with other regional issues like Kashmir notwithstanding, Pakistan's frequent requests to mediate which ultimately paved the way of strengthening the transformational narrative in the intelligentsia.

2.1. Pak-US Dubious Partnership and Changing Geopolitics in the Region

To be sure, the American support was subject to strengthening the US grand strategy to counter the former Soviet expansionism, not to resolve the member state's regional issues over the course of history. When it comes to dealing with Kashmir issue, the entire American approach was based on ambiguity and much to the chagrin of transformational school of thought. In both wars of 1965

and 1971, Pakistan could not appease its ally - the United States of America - to help it against India. On the other hand, New Delhi enjoyed much support of Soviet Union both in battle zone and at the diplomatic front vetoing each UN resolution on Kashmir. When Pakistan met with losing its eastern part, notwithstanding American alliance, it was pushed to 'alter its old addiction' and tried to drift away towards other poles of power; China and Russia.⁵⁶

Even active Pakistani partnership in Afghan Jihad, had less appreciated in Washington DC, where supporting jihad through local forces along with critical statecraft assistance (by Pakistan) made possible to disintegrate the Soviet Union. As the Soviet conventional forces had met with defeat in the face of myriad jihadi outfits, the United States abruptly left Afghanistan without less caring about the concerns of its partner Islamabad. The militants who fought under single umbrella against the former USSR were no more a single entity, rather splintered and clashed with one another to control over Kabul. This civil war, in turn, had made matter worse for transformational school of thought about the limits of American partnership and its credibility. Furthermore, the launching of Pressler Amendment and consequent ban on supply of F-16 fighter jets and other military assistance to Pakistan was the manifestation of US dubious approach towards Pakistan.⁵⁷

⁵⁶LubnaSanwar and Tatiana Coutto, "US Pakistan Relations during the Cold War," *The Journal of International Relations, Peace Studies, and Development*, Volume1, 2015, Available at:

https://scholarworks.arcadia.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=ags_journal (Accessed on August 13, 2019)

⁵⁷Amanda Erickson, "The Long History of Incredibly Fraught Relations between the US and Pakistan," *The Washington Post*, January 5, 2018, Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/01/05/the-long-history-of-incredibly-fraught-relations-between-the-u-s-and-pakistan/?noredirect=on> (Accessed on August 13, 2019)

The transformationalist view that dubious approach or double-standard remained in action till the occurrence of 9/11 terrorist attacks when the US once again needed Pakistan in its war against terror. The US war against Taliban brought for Pakistan serious security, political, economic and social problems. Keeping in view the main ideals of transformational school of thought, the entire American partnership with Pakistan was contingent to the former's national interests. The United States only approached Pakistan when it considered that having Islamabad's support would be too compulsory to attain.⁵⁸

Gaining tactical advantages in Afghanistan for the US, it was needed to support Zarb-e-Azb. But the Americans neither supported it nor shown any concern about the new challenges it brought for Pakistan. As the Operation Zarb-e-Azb pushed the militants to search other safe havens; some went to Afghanistan and remaining scattered into settled areas of Pakistan. Thus, preserving the outcomes of Zarb-e-Azb, Special Operation named Rad-ul-Fasad was considered necessary. Rad-ul-Fasad was an intelligence-based military operation aimed at eliminating terrorist sleeper cells within the state boundaries. Thus Pakistan army launched country-wide joint operations along with other law enforcement agencies.⁵⁹ Even having benefited from this campaign the US did not support Pakistan. The US again started to accuse Pakistan of not targeting militants of Haqqani Network, the US perceived its enemy in Afghanistan which certainly affected the all-out and sincere counterterrorism actions.⁶⁰ The US President

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Hanna Johnsrud and Frederick W. Kagan, "Pakistan's Counter-Militant Offensive: Operation RaddulFasaad," *The Critical Threats Project*, Feb-July 2017, Available at: <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/pakistans-counter-militant-offensive-operation-raddul-fasaad> (Accessed on: September 7, 2019).

⁶⁰ Marvin G. Weinbaum, and MeherBabber, "The Tenacious, Toxic Haqqani Network," *Middle East Institute*, September 2016, Available at:

Donald Trump's speech at Fort Myer military academy in August 2017 was the hallmark of American dissent against Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts. He said that US could initiate economic sanctions against Pakistan if the later would deviate from what US wants in Afghanistan: prolonged stay, limiting Russo-Chinese influence, and exploitation of minerals in Afghanistan.⁶¹

Thus, Pakistan was not in a position to "Do More" as the transformative forces have acquired ground country-wide coupled with changing geopolitical constraints; this could force the country to challenge the historical status-quo in Pak-US relations.

The US dubious partnership has not remained limited to counterterrorism but further expanded to other regional dynamics. Having non-NATO ally status, Pakistan could not stop the Indians from getting ground in Kabul in spite of its showing concerns to the US. Similarly, American silence with regard to close Indian cooperation with US rival Iran over the construction of ChahBahar port on Arabian Sea has galvanized the transformational school in Pakistan. Doing so, India could use an alternative route via Iran and Afghanistan to the energy rich Central Asian region. In contrast, the US has decided to oppose the CPEC which is considered to be vital not only for Pakistan's infrastructural development, industrial uplift, economic stability and energy security but also in the larger benefit of regional integration.⁶²

https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/publications/PF23_WeinbaumBabbarHaggani_web_0.pdf (Accessed on: September 7, 2019).

⁶¹Mark Landler and James Risen, "Trump Finds Reason for the US to Remain in Afghanistan: Minerals," *New York Times*, July25, 2017, Available at:<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/25/world/asia/afghanistan-trump-mineral-deposits.html> (Accessed on: September7, 2019)

⁶²Andrew Korybko, "Iran and the US-Indian Hybrid War on CPEC," *The Nation*, December 8, 2018, Available at:<https://nation.com.pk/08-Dec-2018/iran-and-the-us-indian-hybrid-war-on-cpec> (Accessed on: September 8, 2019)

Keeping in view the deteriorating nature of Pak-US relations and the timing and the way President Trump offered conditional help to mediate Kashmir issue it seems aimed at defusing the crisis not to resolve it. The rising US-Indian closeness is evident from the fact that the Modi's Hindu extremist administration in New Delhi changed the special status of disputed Kashmir by abrogating the Article 370 and 35A the US failed to condemn the illegal action. To amplify the dismay of transformationalists in Islamabad, Washington did not even advise the Indian administration to stop human rights violation in the Valley. Transformation list school is of the view that the US would only favour India even if Pakistan do all efforts to appease US and shows its readiness to bargain over Kashmir.⁶³

2.2. The Rise of Religious Politics and Transformation

The reemergence of religious forces with political intent has alarmed secular forces in the country. Given its majority Muslim population, Pakistan's political history has experienced great influence of religious politics especially in the last quarter of twentieth century. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Islamists along with their political elites had enjoyed sponsorship from various states in Pakistan. In their entire political survival, these religious forces had little anti-Americanism approach but more emphasis on implementing Sharia law in the country. This approach sustained even after the withdrawal of Soviet Union and American disinterest in Afghanistan.⁶⁴ The religious forces adopted more anti-American sentiments in the post-9/11 scenario because

⁶³ "India revokes Kashmir's Special Status," *Al Jazeera*, Sep4, 2019, Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/09/india-revokes-kashmir-special-status-190904143838166.html> (Accessed on: September 8, 2019)

⁶⁴ Shamil Shams "Pakistan's Islamization- before and after dictator Zia-ul-Haq," *DW*, Aug17, 2016, Available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/pakistans-islamization-before-and-after-dictator-zia-ul-haq/a-19480315> (Accessed on: September 8, 2019)

of US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. US aggression against Muslim states proved to be instrumental in establishing links of religious political groups with wider global Islamic movements. These phenomena can be divided in two phases; from 1970s to 2000 and 2001 till date. Given the nature of subject matter, the later era is needed to be explored as anti-Americanism was on the rise in this period. Moreover, the dominant religious political movements before 2001 could not succeeded in attaining their objective as parties like Jamat-i-Islami (JI), JamiatUlema-e-Islam (JUI), and JamiatUlema-e-Pakistan (JUP) were active in supporting Kashmir cause, promoting Islamic ideology and supporting jihad etc., but unfortunately they could not present themselves as an integrated force.⁶⁵

The above stated gapes were ultimately filled by other like-minded religious parties like Milli Muslim Leage (MML) of Hafiz Muhammad Saeed and Tehreek-i-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) of KhadimHussainRizvi. It is too early to imagine about their political future but they proved enjoying grassroots support. Especially the votes polled in favour of MML and TLP in the general elections of 2018 is worrisome.⁶⁶ Likewise, the TLP *Dharna* (sit in) in Islamabad for religious matters presented it a cohesive political force as it easily survived the police-led crackdown against it even after facing severe winter for four weeks. The reaction to police-led crackdown spread to the entire country with strikes and mobs against the ruling party of PML-N. Consequently, in the general elections of 25 July 2018, it has won seats in some constituencies and given very

⁶⁵FarhanHanifSiddiqui, "Pakistani Elections: The Radical Religious Right in Pakistan's electoral Politics," *South Asian Voices*, July 3, 2018, Available at:<https://southasianvoices.org/pakistani-elections-the-radical-religious-right-in-pakistans-electoral-politics/> (Accessed on: September 8, 2019)

⁶⁶AmjadMahmood, "Two religious parties candidates bag 11pc of vote in NA-120," *Dawn News*, Sep. 19, 2017.<https://www.dawn.com/news/1358574> (Accessed on: Dec.22, 2017).

tough contest especially to PML-N and other secular parties. The TLP openly opposed the policies of secularism and Pakistan's close alliance with America. It supported the idea of getting released Dr. Afia Siddiqui from American prison. Further, its party manifesto is based on anti-Americanism and anti-liberalism despite its supposedly soft outlook as a Bareilvi Muslim political party.⁶⁷

Despite having not substantive seats, TLP still has the ability to influence over existing political arena by demonstrating street power. If we analyze the constituency-wise vote cast, for example, TLP lost with very low margin in some cases, which indicates its massive acceptance among masses. In this age of social media, TLP might not be a dominant political force in the near-future but its propaganda warfare machine could substantively work to build narrative towards transformation when it comes to Pak-US relations.

Over the course of last decade one can postulate an aggressive American dismay to dismantle the Pakistani-based voluntary organization-Jamat-ul-Dawa (JD), given its Jihadi inclination. Aimed at gaining acceptance in the system it soften its stance and forged ties with a political party named Milli Muslim League (MML). Primarily, it is an offshoot of JUD of Hafiz Muhammad Saeed. Its land-mark vote ratio in 2017 by-election in NA-120 projected it as a new religious force in the political arena. Its entire election campaign was based on anti-India and anti-Americanism. The alliance of these parties and some other like-minded could affect the secular vote-bank country-wide. It has

⁶⁷ Ahmed Yousaf, "What is behind the sudden rise of TLP, *Dawn*, Aug, 5, 2018, Available at: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1425085>

proved that transactional forces are in a defensive mode in changing the political structure in Pakistan.⁶⁸

As-illustrated above, without having substantive political power MML or any other like-minded group can still project its narrative along with having the ability to disrupt the general status-quo oriented forces in Pak-US relations. In the coming elections, MML could forge an alliance with other like-minded parties, just to expand their political presence in the system.

2.3. The Russo-Chinese Collaboration and Prospects for Pakistan

Over the course of history Pak-China cooperation, for instance, strengthened in all spheres of life when one compares it with the US. Only a single project, named CPEC has the ability to change the course of history if it will be completed in time. Given the viability of CPEC to Pakistan's strategic and economic interests, it will recon a new era of development in the region. With the wrestling of various great powers in the Indo-Pacific, naval importance of Gwadar and Jiwani sea ports has increased manifold being an alternative land and sea-based trade route to South China Sea for regional maritime stability and global trade. Further the inclusion of Saudi Arabia and other actors in the project has enhanced its credibility where the Chinese are out-rightly on-board. Being an integral part of Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, CPEC will connect Pakistan with global supply chain; further benefiting the country to link land-locked Central Asia with Arabian Sea routes near to the Strait of Hormez.⁶⁹ That situation has ultimately strengthened the

⁶⁸ Alya Javed, "Election Shows why Pakistan Gets mainstreaming wrong," *Global Observatory*, Sep. 4, 2018, Available at:<https://theglobalobservatory.org/2018/09/election-shows-why-pakistan-mainstreaming-wrong/> (accessed on: Sept. 8, 2019)

⁶⁹ Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, "A New China Military Base in Pakistan," *The Diplomat*, February 9, 2019, Available at:<https://thediplomat.com/2018/02/a-new-china-military-base-in-pakistan/> (Accessed on September 7, 2019)

transformational stance that China is most preferred option than the US in this regard.

Chinese stance on Kashmir has always remained supportive for Pakistan that if Beijing desires to maintain its control over Aksai Chin, the rest of Kashmir should be part of Pakistan. This in turn, has made both countries in a relation of mutual interests. It will be further rewarding for Pakistan, as the old strategic alliances have been shifted, as India joined the US while Pakistan has preferred Russo-China pole, its Kashmir policy would be relaxed from the past restraints. The Russian stance, in particular, has been relaxing when it comes to Pakistan's right over Kashmir thanks to Indo-US close strategic cooperation.⁷⁰

The Russo-Chinese growing partnership with Pakistan has an impact on regional affairs too. For example, Russian ties allegedly its arms supply and support for Afghan Taliban whereas China has been providing political and diplomatic support to them. In mid-2017 the Afghan Taliban delegation visited China and enhanced their political clout.⁷¹ The regional powers will have to appease the Afghan Taliban which has become a formidable power in Afghanistan controlling over 40% of its territory. From recent past, the Afghan Taliban has presented itself being an effective and much credible force both in battle zone and in diplomacy. The more the operational environment would favour the Taliban militants,

⁷⁰Muhammad Muneer, "Pak-China Strategic Interdependence: Post 9/11 Imperative," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 2018, Available at: <http://issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/2-SS-Muhammad-Munir-No-2-2018.pdf> (Accessed on: September 7, 2019)

⁷¹"China Hosts Afghan Taliban Delegation, Says Report," *News 18*, March 7, 2017. <http://www.news18.com/news/world/storm-tembin-lashes-philippines-almost-200-dead-40000-in-relief-camps-1613307.html> (Accessed on December 3, 2017).

the better they will be in bargaining position at diplomatic level.⁷² To get things done, these militants have expanded their diplomatic reach away from Pakistan to other regional powers; Turkey, Iran, China, and Russia just to offsetting the too superior American power⁷³

The Russian approach, on the other hand, is more focused on strategic than economic gains. Kremlin has envisioned that the Afghan Taliban should become stronger enough in a way they will be able to crush the looming threat of Islamic State (IS) in the north-eastern part of Afghanistan. Russian massive support to the Taliban is a manifestation what it desires; the elimination of IS and limitation of American power in the region.⁷⁴ By and large, the Russo-Chinese approach in Afghanistan also suits what Pakistan desires. Pakistan's full membership in Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) since 9 June 2017 was another manifestation of close and emerging alliance with Russo-Chinese group. That growing collaboration can work to stabilize Afghanistan according to transformational and other anti-American ideals.⁷⁵ On the other hand, Russia has augmented its cooperation with Pakistan by exchanging Special Forces: *DRUZBA* in 2016 and 2017 respectively

⁷² "Afghanistan: Why the Taliban are Winning," *Stratfor Worldview*, September 1, 2010, Available at: <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/afghanistan-why-taliban-are-winning>

⁷³ "Afghanistan Heads Toward a Turning Point," *Stratfor Worldview*, July 31, 2019, Available at: <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/afghanistan-heads-toward-turning-point-us-taliban>

⁷⁴ Damien Sharkov, "Russia is Arming Taliban in Afghanistan, Afghan Reports Say As New Videos of Russian Guns Emerge," *Newsweek*, July 25, 2017. <http://www.newsweek.com/taliban-claim-russians-provided-their-guns-afghanistan-probes-reports-641426> (Accessed on December 24, 2017).

⁷⁵ "It is a historic day': Pakistan becomes full member of SCO at Astana summit," *Dawn News*, June 9, 2017. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1338471> (Accessed on December 24, 2017).

and that understanding has been expanded since then.⁷⁶ In other words, geopolitical forces have encouraged Pakistan to reorient its alliance with regional forces rather than keep depending on US help only; process of transformation is underway in Pak-US relations.

Conclusion

No doubt, Pakistan's major history is oriented to Pak-US close ties and it is not denying the fact that Islamabad has benefited enough stretching from defence to economic by aligning itself with Washington, that period had spanned from partition of Subcontinent (1947) to the war on terror (2001) in which transactional school dominated this era. This school still wanted to maintain the status-quo in Pak-US cooperation even though some misconceptions emanating from trust-deficit in counterterrorism and other areas between the two countries are persisting. But some incidents which took place in the meanwhile both domestically and on regional level specifically in recent one and half decade have empowered a new school of thought - the transformational which is gaining ground, given its stronger public support. At domestic level, the reemergence of religious political parties and the growing trust deficit in Pak-US relations especially from recent last decade has energized these forces to project their power with great potential. By translating this power into politics, they have been able to influence over public opinion regarding Pak-US relations. Externally no doubt, rise of China and reemergence of Russia specially to exert influence over regional issues has weakened if not crippled the capacity, the US could use to counterbalance them.

⁷⁶"New strategic cooperation between Russia, Pakistan," *TACSTRAT*, December 15, 2017. <http://tacstrat.com/index.php/2017/12/15/new-strategic-cooperation-russia-pakistan/> (Accessed on December 24, 2017).

This situation, therefore, has presented Pakistan with an opportunity to search alternatives away from its sole dependence on US. Keeping in view these developments, Islamabad has more options to utilize owing to its geo-strategic location along with having strong bargaining position in the region. Having a good sign for Islamabad, both Russia and China have converged with it over the Afghan issue and challenge of terrorism in the region. It seems far from imagining whether changing of administrations in both Islamabad and Washington would transpose the existing course on which transformation lists have been gaining ground. That monotonous situation, therefore, has presented an intermittent nature of transactional presence for now. Nevertheless, in the long run, the transformational school of thought will be in a dominant position, given the changing nature of regional geopolitics.
