

Pakistan-US Relations: Transactional-Transformational Debate

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Abstract

This paper is divided into two parts; the first part is about the Transactional approach which mainly dominates the major period of Pakistan-US relations initially. The second section has analyzed the approach of the Transformational phenomenon, which is based on skepticism. Pakistan in its relation with the US 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 towards the East for Russo-Chinese support. This changing alignment in the region provides an opportunity for Pakistan to readjust its policies in order to address its critical defence and economic needs. Thereby, has expanded the narrative of the Transformation both at the state and public levels. In this context, the study argues that Russo-Chinese active support for Pakistan could create a paradigm shift in the coming years.

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TRANSACTIONAL VIEWPOINT

Pakistan's major portion of history was influenced by the Transactional approach as Pakistan needed massive US support to develop its military muscle and stabilize its economy to counter Indian designs of regional hegemony. By definition, the Transactional school of thought suggests 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 US 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, Zulifqar Ali Bhutto, the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, is considered one of the earliest Transactionalists who preferred bilateralism over close alliance with any pole and supported the status-quo in Pak-US cooperation, over the course of history.

A. 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 the rising threat of Soviet communist expansion in the region. To counter this threat, the United States signed two hallmark defence pacts with the regional states: Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), and South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO), against the Soviet Union. Pakistan joined both pacts and made use of the generous offers to establish conventional deterrence against its military and political

arc-rival, India.² Military aid from the US was taken as the capacity building for Pakistan's armed forces, and for 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, yet the Transactional group maintains that China would not have been able to fulfill what Pakistan had achieved from the US support in the past. China could not have eased its dependence on the US.³

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, once again provided an opportunity for Pakistan. Pakistan got military aid from the US; Islamabad also lived up to the expectations of US in helping 'Afghan *Mujahedeen*' to effectively counter the Soviet expansionist plans in and beyond Afghanistan.

The events of 9/11 and US' plans to eradicate the Al-Qaida and then the *Taliban's* regime in Kabul, which provided safe havens to the global *jihadists*, once again provided chance for Pakistan to underline its significance 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, was well appreciated in the US. In fact, maintaining secure logistics, and deploying them in the battle zone was critical in the country like Afghanistan. Although, the US and allied NATO forces were unable to achieve the goals they expected in Afghanistan, and they only occasionally appreciated Pakistan for its role. There had never been a formal recognition by US, and in fact, had been

²Muhammad Ayoub Khan, "The Pakistan-American Alliance: Stresses and Strains," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 42, no.2(1964), 195-209, available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/1964-01-01/pakistan-american-alliance>

³C. Christine Fair "Pakistan Can't Afford China's 'Friendship,'" *Foreign Policy*, July 3, 2017, available at:<http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/07/03/pakistan-cant-afford-chinas-friendship/> (Accessed on: Dcember20 2017).

more demanding that Pakistan should do more. For its part, Pakistan launched numerous military operations in FATA. Pakistani military met with myriad of challenges to accomplish its goals, as it had to launch a whole range of counterterrorism operations to eliminate militancy from Swat valley to the rugged terrain of Waziristan agencies.

As a long desire of the US, to launch a military operation in North Waziristan Agency, which was considered as the hub of trans-national *jihadists*, Pakistan initiated Operation *Zarb-e-Azb* in 2014. To manage the challenge of displacing local population away from the battle zone, to settle areas by launching military operation was a daunting task. Military was able to solve it quickly,⁴ and accomplished the objective with great prowess.

As Pakistan eliminated NWA-based militancy, their capacity to launch terrorist attacks in the settled areas by the terrorists also decreased considerably. The Americans were also convinced by this development since the terrorist's capacity to re-group to attack on American forces in Afghanistan was destroyed. Meanwhile, the recovery of Canadian couple from terrorist's captivity by Pakistan's Special Forces in October 2017, also offered a positive message of thaw in the Pak-US growing tension. Donald Trump praised Pakistan especially for its efforts to help complete this mission. It was an obvious manifestation of the American assistance in intelligence sharing with Pakistan

⁴Umbreen Javaid, "Zarb-e-Azb and the State of Security in Pakistan," *JRSP*, Vol. 53. no.1(2016), 159-170, available at: http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/history/PDF-FILES/12%20Paper_v53_1_16.pdf (Accessed on: September8, 2019).

about terrorist hideouts. The Transactional narrative, thereby, gained more significance in arguing for Pak-US ties.⁵

In order to have a smooth withdrawal of its forces from Afghanistan, the US has always desired to initiate a peace-process with the Afghan Taliban. It has at last, realized that no peaceful withdrawal is possible without Pakistan's assistance. On the other hand, Islamabad has also facilitated numerous rounds of talks and convinced the Afghan Taliban to come to the negotiating table. Ever since the Afghan *Taliban* are directly involved in many rounds of talks with the US, Pakistan's role has been justified even more in the resolution of the Afghan issue.⁶ 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 him, the American strategic community and societies were already convinced that Pakistan has the key to ultimately solve the Afghan issue.⁷

With these facts in mind, the Transactionalists argue that Pakistan should have taken part in this peace process earlier, by convincing the Taliban to negotiate. The Transactional school of thought is of the view that, if Pakistan mishandles the existing situation in Afghanistan by either failing to convince the Taliban for peace-process or does not cooperate with the US in other

⁵“Donald 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: September6, 2019).

⁶ Saeed Shah and Bill Spindle, “Pakistan Works with Trump to Plod Taliban in Afghan Peace Talks,” *Wall Street Journal*, July19, 2019, available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/pakistan-works-with-trump-to-prod-taliban-in-afghan-peace-talks-11563553895> (Accessed on: September8, 2019).

⁷ “No victory in Afghanistan without Pakistan's support: US military chief,” *Dawn*, July 26, 2017, available at: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1347693> (Accessed on: September5, 2019).

areas, the resultant vacuum would be filled by other actors like India. It could also deprive Pakistan from the critical defence support of the US. Its national security could be easily compromised under the circumstances.⁸

Undoubtedly, President Donald Trump has been reluctant on Pakistan's role in Afghanistan for quite some time, but the security establishment of Pakistan persistently remained cooperative to counter terrorism in the region. Consequently, the Trump administration developed confidence in Pakistan, and in his recent meetings with the Prime Minister Imran Khan, showed his willingness to mediate between Pak-India dispute over Jammu and Kashmir, contrary to the US administrations' earlier stance. The US has always been reluctant to get involved in the issue. This has added yet another dimension to Pakistan's importance in the region. The Transactionalists attribute this development to Pakistan's persistent role of cooperation.

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

Frequent military coups have damaged the process of democratic culture in Pakistan. With the start of military dictatorial rule in Pakistan during 1950s, the pace of the US cooperation slowed down from the course of collaboration started in 1947. The frequent military interventions largely interrupted the relationship. Given this observation, some Transactionlists believe that the restricted support given by America during 1965 and 1971 wars was due to the military rules of General Ayub Khan and General Yahya Khan, respectively. This downward swing in the

⁸Dietrich Reetz "What does the new US policy on Afghanistan mean for India and Pakistan?" *World Economic Forum*, September 12, 2017, available at:<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).

US-Pak relationship could not even be addressed by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto who was a popular democrat and was an elected Prime Minister of Pakistan. He failed to completely break this continuity of military interventions in civilian affairs. Soon General Zia-ul-Haq overthrew the system and crippled the democratic process once more, in 1977. This wave was extended to General Pervez Musharraf as the last military dictator in Pakistan.⁹

Though, both General Zia-ul-Haq and General Pervez Musharraf worked in close cooperation with the US, the latter did not solely rely on these military rulers, given their limited public support. Notwithstanding, Islamabad still officially supported the US War on Terror (WoT) during the military rule of President Pervez Musharraf. However, Washington always viewed Pakistan's actions with suspicion given the delayed actions in dealing with militancy in Afghanistan. Even after the restoration of the democratic government in Pakistan, the dominant role of military in dealing with the Afghan policy further strengthened the growing trust deficit between them. Seeing itself as the global leader in promoting democratic and liberal values, the US has always declared its support for democracy in Pakistan. The Transactionlists believe that by strengthening 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 the US support in other sectors as well, in addition to the security aid which opened the doors for Pakistan to expand its cooperation world-wide. To some extent, civilians were more

⁹Munwar Hussain, "Pak-US Relations: An Historical Overview," *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, 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: Sep8, 2019).

cooperative with India as compared to military regimes with their view as India-centric, as seen by the world at large. This dilemma also generated skepticism for the US support. As a result, most of the time during the military regimes, Pakistan generally suffered from isolation, globally, and sanctions from the US particularly.¹⁰

Compared to the past, Pak-US cooperation in non-military areas has increased due to the restoration of democratic process in the country. Services of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), for instance, expanded country-wide, during democratic eras. The organization's main focus is social sector, development of the deprived areas of Pakistan by improving education, health, and other social aspects. Moreover, Transactionalists are of the view that the USAID-led activities are a countervailing force to counter extremism and militancy nationwide. This has consequently empowered the most deprived class susceptible to extremism. For supporting democratic and liberal values, the US cooperation merits appreciation. The Transactional approach remains favourable to the US, as one of the founding forces of liberalism in the world.¹¹

It is very important for a country like Pakistan to engage in global trade and financial activities. Given the US' dominant role in the global trade and supply chain management, along with having the main portion of global finance managed by the West, Pakistan needs the US cooperation in this regard.¹² Both to

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Zia Mian, Sharon K. Weiner, "America's Pakistan," *Middle East Research and Information Project*, March 28, 2012, available at: <http://www.merip.org/mero/interventions/americas-pakistan>. (Accessed on: December 21, 2017).

¹²S. 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).

secure ideal export destinations and to get favorable tariffs, the western nations' support could be rewarding. Pakistan's democratic restoration has played an important role¹³ in getting Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) or GSP plus status and free trade benefits.

Similarly, to empower an already crippling economy, Pakistan needed external loans. For this also the US role remains crucial, given its influence over global monetary institutions like the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

Realistically speaking, such benefits inherent in global integration would not be possible under any military rule in Pakistan. Whenever military overthrew a democratic government, Pakistan had to face heavy military and economic challenges, both at domestic as well as at international level. On the other hand, India is economically better placed than Pakistan. It is also more successful in projecting its soft power, world-wide, which significantly helps India to attract investment. Given its stronger democracy, India has been able to attract major global business giants, while Pakistan's democratic life still lags behind. In so doing, Islamabad needs to manage a balance in civil-military relations in order to pursue its long-term goals under the umbrella of democracy.

Regrettably, the tussle of civil-military relations continues despite the fact that Pakistan has been able to manage the democratic system specifically since the onset of twenty first century. Disqualification of Nawaz Sharif, the former Prime

¹³ Yousaf H Shirazi, "Pakistan and GSP 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).

Minister, due to Panama Papers leaks, and opening of other interlinking corruption cases have been allegedly affiliated with this tussle. Although, neither the Pakistani military nor any other state institution has any involvement in the disclosure of these Papers, yet some hardcore supporters of democracy accused the military as the vanguard of this entire propaganda against the democratic government, which is relatively at its embryonic stages in Pakistan.¹⁴ Some in Transactional school attribute these cases to the weakening Pak-US relations.¹⁵ Nevertheless, a peaceful transition of power from the Pakistan Muslim League-N to Pakistan *Tehreek-e-Insaf* in the general elections of 2018, presents a good sign for democracy. The Panama Papers and its related anti-corruption wave have also benefited Imran's PTI to some extent. 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.¹⁶ It has also helped Pakistan to improve overall image of the country's politics. Pakistan has earned admiration from the international community, specifically with regard to strengthening democracy.

To conclude, one may argue that the history of civil-military relations in Pakistan is in great flux since 1960s, but its nature has

¹⁴ M Ilyas Khan, "Panama Papers: Controversy behind ousting of Pakistan PM Nawaz Sharif," *BBC News*, July 28, 2018, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-40756071> (Accessed on: January 22, 2020).

¹⁵ Imad Zafar, "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).

¹⁶ "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: September 8, 2019).

changed over time. In the post-General Musharraf's rule, the military has been undoubtedly reluctant to overthrow the democratic system. But the nature of civil-military relations still requires to be strengthened by reciprocal confidence building. This scenario has presented an opportunity in promoting democratic and liberal values in the country, by the US civilian cooperation. The Transactionalists view this era as a new paradigm shift which will again benefit Pakistan in all its spheres. They are of the view that if democracy and a transparent electoral system gain strength in the country, the future will be defined by a close Pak-US cooperation, with more mutual benefits.

TRANSFORMATIONAL VIEWPOINT

The narrative of anti-Americanism persisted in the past but with limited pace as Pakistan's core defence requirements resisted such forces at home. That pace, however, has hyped during the last decade because of many new developments in the region. Transformational school maintains that the US is no more a reliable partner of Pakistan, given its ambiguous behaviour over the course of history. This school comprises specifically on main-stream Islamists and some entities active in the decision-making process ever since the Afghan War. They argue that there should be a total Transformation from the status-quo of Pak-US relations, which is less beneficial and more harmful for Pakistan. As the US is in a defensive position, not only in its battle zone, but also from its limiting heavy global engagement, the Transformationalists have acquired outreach. This has affected Pakistan's main-stream intelligentsia. And thus, this narrative has led to pivotal transformative dynamics in academic debates about Pak-US relations.

The rise of China, along with the resurgence of Russia, has 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. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), especially, has emerged as one of the outstanding multi-billion dollars projects.

The penetration of secular forces in the country having close Western linkages and agenda has antagonized the religious sector in Pakistan. They were compelled by opposing circumstances to convert into political parties, as in the case of the *Milli Muslim League (MML)*, the *Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP)* and others. The more secularism prevails in the country, the lesser the religious class will be able to get and keep in terms of both charity and political base. Anti-Americanism, however, can prevail if sponsored by religio-politics. This is in addition to already existing US skepticism on Pakistan's role in Afghanistan. While the Afghan Taliban have agreed to negotiate a peaceful solution with the help of the timetable provided for the US troop's withdrawal, the US still wants to maintain an intelligence infrastructure in the region-much to the chagrin of the Taliban and Pakistan. Similarly, on the Kashmir issue, President Trump has given lip-service to mediate between India and Pakistan, but it depends on India's acceptance of the offer. India, on the other hand, is unable to accept for its own well-known reasons. Majority of Transformationalists believe that the US only needs face saving in Afghanistan and has no concern with other regional issues like Kashmir. Pakistan's frequent requests for mediation ultimately paved the way of strengthening the transformational narrative in the intelligentsia.

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

There is no doubt that historically the American support has been provided only to strengthen the US grand strategy to contain the former Soviet expansionism and not to resolve the member states regional issues. When it came to deal with the Kashmir issue, the entire American approach was based on ambiguity much to the chagrin of the Transformational school of thought. In both wars of 1965 and 1971, Pakistan could not convince its ally, the United States of America, to help it against India. On the other hand, New Delhi enjoyed much support from the Soviet Union, both in the battle zone and at the diplomatic front by vetoing each UN resolution on Kashmir. Faced with the grim reality of losing its eastern part, notwithstanding its American alliance, Pakistan was pushed to 'alter its old addiction' and tried to drift away towards other poles of power: China and Russia.¹⁷

Even active Pakistani partnership in the Afghan Jihad, was little appreciated in Washington D.C. It was the support of the *Mujahideens* by local forces and *Pakistani* critical statecraft assistance (by Pakistan) that caused the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. After Soviet conventional forces faced defeat by the *Mujahideen*, the US abruptly abandoned Afghanistan, leaving Pakistan alone to mop up the mess. On the other hand, the militants who fought under the single umbrella of the Northern Alliance against the former USSR were also no more a single entity. They got divided and clashed with one another to gain control over Kabul in a civil war. This civil war, in turn, had made

¹⁷Lubna Sanawar and Tatiana Coutto, "US Pakistan Relations during the Cold War," *The Journal of International Relations, Peace Studies, and Development*, Vol. 1, no.1, (2015), available at: https://scholarworks.arcadia.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=ags_journal (Accessed on August 13, 2019).

matters worse for the Transformational school of thought about the limits of American partnership and its credibility. Furthermore, the launching of the Pressler Amendment and consequent ban on the supply of F-16 fighter jets and other military assistance to Pakistan was the manifestation of the US dubious approach towards Pakistan.¹⁸

The Transformationalists think that the dubious approach or double standard remained in action till the occurrence of the American 9/11 2001 terrorist attacks when the US once again needed Pakistan in its war against terrorism. The US war against Taliban brought for Pakistan serious security, political, economic and social problems. Keeping in view the main ideals of the Transformational school of thought, the entire American partnership with Pakistan became contingent upon the former's national interests. The US only approached Pakistan under compulsion.¹⁹

The *Zarb-e-Azb* military action gained tactical advantages in Afghanistan for the US, as some militants from North Waziristan had attacked the US military operations in eastern Afghanistan. The Americans neither supported it nor showed any concern about the new challenges it brought for Pakistan. When the operation *Zarb-e-Azb* pushed out the militants to search other safe havens, some went to Afghanistan and the remaining scattered over the settled areas of Pakistan. In order to consolidate the outcomes of the *Zarb-e-Azb*, a Special Operation named *Radd-ul-Fasaad* was considered necessary. It was an

¹⁸ Amanda 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).

¹⁹ Ibid.

intelligence-based military operation aimed at eliminating terrorist sleeper cells within the state boundaries. Thus, the Pakistan army launched country-wide joint operations along with other law enforcement agencies.²⁰ Even having benefitted from this campaign, the US did not support Pakistan. The US again started to accuse Pakistan of not targeting the militants of the *Haqqani Network*; the US' perceived enemy in Afghanistan that certainly affected the all-out and sincere counter-terrorism efforts.²¹ The US President Donald Trump's speech at Fort Myer Military Academy in August 2017, was the hallmark of American criticism against Pakistan's counter-terrorism efforts. He said that the US could initiate economic sanctions against Pakistan if the latter deviated from the US agenda in Afghanistan i.e. prolonged stay, limiting Russo-Chinese influence, and exploitation of minerals in Afghanistan.²² Thus, Pakistan was not in a position to follow the "Do More." Transformative forces have acquired ground country-wide coupled with the changing geopolitical constraints with the potential to challenge the historical status-quo in Pak-US relations.

The US' self-contradictory partnership has not remained limited to counter-terrorism but has expanded to other regional

²⁰ Hanna Johnsrud and Frederick W. Kagan, "Pakistan's Counter-Militant Offensive: Operation *Radd ul Fasaad*," *The Critical Threats Project*, August 25, 2017, available at: : <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/pakistans-counter-militant-offensive-operation-raddul-fasaad> (Accessed on: September7, 2019).

²¹ Marvin G. Weinbaum and Meher Babber, "The Tenacious, Toxic *Haqqani Network*," *Middle East Institute*, Policy Focus Series, September2016, available at: https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/publications/PF23_WeinbaumBabbar_Haqqani_web_0.pdf (Accessed on: September7, 2019).

²² Mark 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).

dynamics as well. This has significantly affected Pakistan's 'non-NATO ally' status with the US. Moreover, it could not help Pakistan to check disproportionate Indian influence in Kabul. In fact, US favoured India more because of Indo-US alliance against China. Similarly, American silence over Indo-Iran cooperation, an archrival of the US, over the construction of Chahbahar port in the Arabian Sea has spurred the Transformational school in Pakistan. Foreseeably, Chahbahar provides India to bypass Pakistan and use alternative route via Iran and Afghanistan to the energy rich Central Asian region. On the contrary, 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, it is also in the larger benefit of the regional integration.²³

Keeping in view the deteriorating nature of Pak-US relations, the timing and the way President Trump offered conditional help to mediate in the Kashmir issue, seems to aim at defusing the crisis, rather than to resolve it. The rising US-Indian closeness is evident from the fact that when Modi's Hindu extremist administration in New Delhi changed the special status of the disputed Jammu & Kashmir region, by abrogating Article 370 and 35A, the US failed to even condemn the illegal action as annexation. To pacify the dismay of the Transformationalists in Islamabad, Washington did not condemn the human rights violations by India in the Valley. The Transformationalists stance is that the US would always side India even if Pakistan makes

²³ Andrew 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).

every effort to appease the US and shows its readiness to bargain over Kashmir.²⁴

b. The Rise of Religious Politics and Transformation

The reemergence of religious forces with a political intent has motivated secular forces in the country. Given its majority Muslim population, Pakistan's political history has experienced a great influence of religious politics, especially in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the *Islamists* along with their political elites, had enjoyed patronage from various sectarian factions in Pakistan. In the past some of these religious forces had lesser anti-Americanism views, being more focused on implementing '*Sharia*' in the country. This approach continued even after the withdrawal of the Soviet Union and American decreased interest in Afghanistan.²⁵

The religious forces adopted more anti-American sentiments in the post-9/11 scenario manifested in the US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. The US aggression against the Muslim states proved to be instrumental in establishing links of religious political groups with wider global Islamic movements. This phenomenon can be divided into two periods: From 1970s to 2000, and from 2001 till date. Given the nature of the issue, the latter era needs to be explored as anti-Americanism being on the rise during this period. Moreover, the dominant religious political movements before 2001 could not succeed in attaining their objective of *Islamization* as parties like *Jamat-i-Islami (JI)*, *Jamiat*

²⁴ "India revokes Kashmir's Special Status," *Al Jazeera*, September 4, 2019, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/09/india-revokes-kashmir-special-status-190904143838166.html> (Accessed on: September 8, 2019).

²⁵ Shamil Shams, "Pakistan's Islamization-before and after dictator Zia-ul-Haq," *DW*, Aug 17, 2016, Available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/pakistans-islamization-before-and-after-dictator-zia-ul-haq/a-19480315> (Accessed on: September 8, 2019)

Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), and *Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP)*, were active in supporting the Kashmir cause, promoting Islamic ideology and *jihad* etc. They, however, could not emerge as an integrated force.²⁶

The above stated differences were ultimately filled by other like-minded religious parties like, *Milli Muslim League (MML)* of Hafiz Muhammad Saeed and *Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP)* of Khadim Hussain Rizvi. Their political certainty is unpredictable at this stage, yet their support at the grassroots level cannot be denied. The votes cast in favour of MML and TLP in the general elections of 2018 is especially worrisome.²⁷ Similarly, the *TLP Dharna* (sit in) in Islamabad on religious issue, their ability to be a cohesive political force was clearly exhibited as it easily survived the police-led crackdown in severe winter weather for four weeks. The reaction to the police-led crackdown spilled over the entire country with strikes and mobs against the ruling party of PML-N. Consequently, in the general elections of July 25, 2018, the TLP won seats in some constituencies and gave a tough contest, especially to the PML-N and other secular parties who opposed the active religious involvement in politics. The TLP publicly opposed the policies of secularism and Pakistan's close alliance with America. It supported the demand of getting Dr. Afia Siddiqui released from the American prison. Furthermore, the party manifesto is based on anti-Americanism and anti-liberalism,

²⁶ Farhan Hanif Siddiqui, "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).

²⁷ Amjad Mahmood, "Two religious parties candidates bag 11pc of vote in NA-120," *Dawn*, September 19, 2017, available at: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1358574> (Accessed on: December 22, 2017).

despite its supposedly soft outlook as a *Barelvi* Muslim political party.²⁸

Despite not having substantive seats, the TLP still has the ability to influence the political arena by demonstrating its street power. If one analyzes the constituency wise vote cast, it reveals that the TLP lost with a very low margin in some cases. This indicates a wide acceptance of its ideology among the masses. In this age of social media, the TLP might not be a dominant political force in the near future but its offensive propaganda by using web-world specifically the social media platforms, could substantively work to build a narrative towards the Transformation when it comes to Pak-US relations.

Over the course of last decade, the US has regularly criticized Pakistan for its failure to dismantle the Pakistan based voluntary organization *Jamat-ul-Dawa (JD)*, believed to have Jihadi inclination. Aimed at gaining acceptance in the system, the TLP softened its stance and forged ties with a political party, named *Milli Muslim League (MML)*. Primarily, it is an offshoot of the 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-Indian and anti-American thrust. An alliance of these parties, and some other like-minded ones could affect the secular vote-bank, country-wide. It has proved that the Transactional forces are in a defensive mode in changing the political structure in Pakistan.²⁹

²⁸ Ahmed Yousaf, "What is behind the sudden rise of TLP, *Dawn*, Aug 5, 2018, available at: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1425085>

²⁹ 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: September8, 2019).

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

c. Prospects for Pakistan: The Russo-Chinese Collaboration

In recent times, as compared to the US, the cooperation between China and Pakistan has strengthened in all spheres of life. A single project, the CPEC, has the ability to change the course of history, if the project is completed. Given the viability of the CPEC to Pakistan's strategic and economic interests, it will usher in a new era of development in the region. With the wrestling of various great powers in the Indo-Pacific, the naval importance of Gwadar and Jiwani seaports has increased manifold as an alternative land-and-sea-based trade route to the South China Sea for regional maritime stability and global trade. Furthermore, the inclusion of Saudi Arabia and other actors in the project has enhanced its credibility especially where the Chinese are out rightly on-board. Being an integral part of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, CPEC will connect Pakistan with the global supply chain. It will further benefit the country to link land-locked Central Asia with the Arabian Sea routes nearer the Strait of Hormuz.³⁰ This situation ultimately strengthens the Transformational argument even further.

The Chinese stance on Kashmir has always remained supportive of the case that if Beijing maintains its control over Aksai Chin, the rest of Kashmir should be part of Pakistan. This

³⁰ 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).

serves the mutual interests of both the countries. This paradigm shift will further reward Pakistan futuristically. India has joined the US while Pakistan has preferred the Russo-China axis in a balancing act. Kashmir policy is likely to be relaxed from its erstwhile restraints. The Russian stance, in particular, has been more favorable on Kashmir in the recent past. The credit may go to Indo-US close strategic cooperation. Russian support for Pakistan in the Security Council is also more positively looked forward to.³¹

The Russo-Chinese growing partnership with Pakistan has an impact on the regional affairs, as well. For example, Russia allegedly limits 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 delegations' visit to China enhanced its political influence on a conciliatory approach of resolving the issue.³² The regional powers will have to appease the Afghan Taliban which have become a formidable power in Afghanistan, controlling over 40% of its territory. Since the recent past, the Afghan Taliban have presented themselves as an effective and much credible force, both in the battle zone and in diplomacy. The more the operational environment favours the Taliban militants, the better their bargaining position will beat the diplomatic level.³³ To get things done, these militants have expanded their diplomatic

³¹ Muhammad 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).

³² "China Hosts Afghan Taliban Delegation, Says Report," *News 18*, March 7, 2017, available at: <http://www.news18.com/news/world/storm-tembin-lashes-philippines-almost-200-dead-40000-in-relief-camps-1613307.html> (Accessed on December 3, 2017).

³³ "Afghanistan: Why the Taliban are Winning," *Stratfor Worldview*, September 1, 2010, available at: <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/afghanistan-why-taliban-are-winning>

reach from Pakistan to other regional powers: Turkey, Iran, China, and Russia. This is certainly to offset the superior American power.³⁴ The Russian approach, on the other hand, is more focused on strategic than economic gains. Kremlin envisions that the Afghan Taliban should become strong enough in order to crush the looming threat of the Islamic State (IS) in the north-eastern part of Afghanistan. Russian massive support to the Taliban is a manifestation of their aim; the elimination of IS and limitations on the American power in the region.³⁵ By and large, the Russo-Chinese approach in Afghanistan also suits Pakistan. Pakistan's full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) since June 9, 2017³⁶ is another manifestation of close and emerging alliance with Russo-Chinese group. This growing collaboration can work to stabilize Afghanistan according to the Transformational and other anti-American objectives. On the other hand, Russia has augmented its cooperation with Pakistan by exchanging Special Forces: DRUHZBA in 2016 and 2017, respectively. The understanding on cooperation has also been expanded.³⁷

In other words, geopolitical forces have encouraged Pakistan to reorient its alliance with the regional forces, rather

³⁴ "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>

³⁵ Damien Sharkov, "Russia is Arming Taliban in Afghanistan, Afghan Reports Say As New Videos of Russian Guns Emerge," *Newsweek*, July 25, 2017, available at: <http://www.newsweek.com/taliban-claim-russians-provided-their-guns-afghanistan-probes-reports-641426> (Accessed on December 24, 2017).

³⁶ "It is a historic day': Pakistan becomes full member of SCO at Astana summit," *Dawn News*, June 9, 2017, available at: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1338471> (Accessed on December 24, 2017).

³⁷ "New strategic cooperation between Russia, Pakistan," *TACSTRAT*, December 15, 2017, available at: <http://tacstrat.com/index.php/2017/12/15/new-strategic-cooperation-russia-pakistan/> (Accessed on December 24, 2017).

than keep depending on the US help only. The process of the Transformation by diversification is underway in Pak-US relations.

Conclusion

A large segment of Pakistan's history is undoubtedly oriented towards Pak-US close ties. Consequently, Pakistan has also enjoyed benefits both in the economic and defence sector. This period largely spans from the partition of the Sub-continent in 1947 to the War on Terror since 2001, during which the Transactional school was dominant. This school of thought still maintains the status-quo in the Pak-US cooperation, even though some misconceptions emanating from trust-deficit in counterterrorism and other areas between the two countries persist. However, some recent incidents, both at the domestic and the regional level, have given space to the Transformational school of thought. The reemergence of religious political parties and the perpetually growing mistrust in the Pak-US relations, especially over the last decade that has energized these forces to project power within a more potential bid at self-empowerment. By translating this power into politics, they have been able to gain influence over public opinion regarding Pak-US relations. Similarly, the rise of China and the reemergence of Russia to exert influence over regional issues have weakened, if not disabled the capacity of the US to counter them.

This situation, therefore, has presented Pakistan with an opportunity to diversify its foreign policy and look for alternatives, to expand from its sole dependence on the US. Keeping in view these developments, Islamabad has more options open due to changing alignments in the region. Its geo-strategic location still holds a vital placement supporting it with a better bargaining position. Pakistan finds itself closer to both the Asian giants. Moreover, both Russia and China find convergence over the Afghan

issue and terrorism in the region. It seems far-fetched that changing administrations in both Islamabad and Washington would transpose the existing course on which the Transformation phenomenon has been gaining grounds. Both have some common interests to cooperate. That monotonous situation, therefore, has presented an intermittent nature of transactional presence for now. Nevertheless, the transformational school of thought is likely to have a much more dominant position, given the changing nature of regional geopolitics, and forward flux in global affairs.