

US SINUSOID POLICIES TOWARDS PAKISTAN: INFLUENCING PAK-CHINA RELATIONS

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Abstract

Asia has been benefiting enormously from globalization but also encapsulates many of the world's problems. Pakistan being strategically positioned in Asia has become a lucrative platform for moulding economic and strategic gains on any corner, where the competition of becoming superpower has its own objectives and goals. China being influenced by a strong economic boost has a hard-hitting impact across the globe, thus, making market competitors worried about their investment. There are vital signs that this vibrant and diverse region can work together and rise to offer some of the solutions. The US being a global economic power cannot afford to lose its dominance and hegemony, particularly, in Asia; however, it finds imbalances in terms of trade, market competition, and enormous economic threat from China. There is a need of putting a rest situation in Kabul for which the US cannot wish away the geopolitical importance of Pakistan. This paper, therefore, looks deeply into the blending policies of the US towards Pakistan amid China's growing economic influence worldwide. It also highlights that Pakistan needs to create a balance by defining a formula for having a sound relationship internationally without compromising its national interest.

Keywords: Pakistan, China, CPEC, Economy, Globalization.

Introduction

The potential economic race between the US and China has made the South Asian region a lucrative platform for the series of investments in terms of diplomatic and trade relations. Pakistan being the 5th largest country in terms of population and strategically positioned in the subcontinent with a powerful army having nuclear capability, becomes significant for the US in terms of economic and diplomatic relations. Pakistan claims to be the US largest export hub, whereas, China is Pakistan's largest import partner. The US considers Pakistan as a favorable market place for various types of investment due to favorable demographics, low labor costs, and natural resources; however, mutual trust and real trade investment barriers are the signs which create a halt in terms of economic development into the Asian markets and growing businesses in Pakistan.

The Chinese economy in the last four decades has considerably shifted from agriculture to industrial power and showing an upward trend. With China's incredible economic development, average income has grown nine-fold since 1990 and around 800

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million people were taken out of poverty. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Chinese contribution to global growth will reach 28% by 2023.¹ This has become a reason for worries of competitors across the world as China has not only established a strong foothold in Asia but its market worth is also being acknowledged all over the international markets. Pakistan considers China her strong ally and it has proven on many occasions where China unilaterally supported Pakistan, especially, when Pakistan expecting more support from the rest of the world. In the context of close ties between Pakistan and China, US policies come up with the drastic shift as it may create a challenge for the US to cease their investment in the subcontinent.²

Since the last two decades, the relationship between the US and Pakistan has been on fixation and mismanagement mode. The basis of this mismanagement rooted in the incident of 9/11. Many occasions where the efforts of Pakistan for the fight against terrorism have been recognized by the US and suddenly abrupt change of statements came out from White House. The US must recognize that Pakistan has been seriously affected and facing security and economic challenges due to the Afghan war. The US Department of Trade 2018-statistics shows that the US-Pakistan trade reached out a long record of \$6.6 billion and this is an increase of about 4 percent as compared to previous years.³ In the past, when relations between Pakistan and the US worsened, the diplomatic dialogues between both countries kept moving. There is a need for the realization that the US policy is always in the best interest of no one except the US herself.

After the 9/11 incident, the US initiated a war against terrorism and used the land of Pakistan for administrative support to its armed forces stationed in Afghanistan.⁴ However, the relationship between Pakistan and the US became more complicated over time.⁵ The US frequent acknowledgment to fight against terrorism and sometimes do more policies created the destabilizing situation for Pakistan and tend Pakistan to realize that these ups and downs will be a constant factor unless there is a need to draw boundaries. China's close ties with Pakistan and initialization of various projects in Pakistan have become a source of worry for the US to revive her policy again, which is a sudden shift. Although there is a vast space in terms of Pak-US relations, this relationship cannot end. It is one of the complex relationships that occur bilaterally, regionally, and globally.

Trump Vision for South Asian Region

In August 2019, President Donald Trump described the US policy for South Asia which involved more US troops for Afghanistan while pressurizing Pakistan to “do more” or facing the consequences.⁶ The ultimate aim of this policy was to extricate NATO forces from Afghanistan but the US knew that it would create uncertainty in the region. India and Afghanistan welcomed the policy, however, it led Pakistan to be portrayed as a safe haven for terrorists and enhancing the role of India for the peace process in Afghanistan. India and Afghanistan have also signed various agreements of a strategic partnership with the assistance of the US which became a concern for Pak-US relations. The US put constant pressure on Pakistan through the United Nations

Security Council Resolutions for taking concrete measures against terrorism, whereas, Pakistan played a significant role in holding US-Taliban talks in Doha for the extrication of US troops and making Afghanistan free from terrorism. However, all these efforts of Pakistan bringing the Afghan Taliban on the negotiating table remained unacknowledged.

Indian Perspective in South Asian

On the other hand, India has become the arch-rival of Pakistan and left no way to ditch or let down Pakistan at any stage. The underlying bone of contention between India and Pakistan remains the dispute of Kashmir. On August 5, 2019, the Government of India abrogated Articles 370 and 35(A) in respect of the Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK). Article 35A of the Indian Constitution was to empower the Jammu and Kashmir state's legislature to define "permanent residents" of the state and provided special rights and privileges to them. This constitutional order (application to Jammu and Kashmir) was issued by the President of India on May 14, 1954 under Article 370. The state of Jammu and Kashmir defined these privileges to include the ability to purchase land and unmovable property, the ability to vote and contest elections, seeking government employment, and availing other state benefits, such as higher education and healthcare. Non-permanent residents of the state, even if they were Indian citizens, were not entitled to these privileges⁷. The abrogation of Article 370 heated the crisis between Pakistan and India. China also condemned the atrocities imposed on IOJK as it was against human rights.

India is more inclined towards the US policies, and thinks of becoming a regional power in Asia and for that matter US-India bilateral trade is quite sound than any other country in Asia. India feels to create dominance in the region by offering full support to the US irrespective it poses a threat to other countries. The Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan, while giving an interview to Aljazeera TV channel said that if the dispute of Kashmir will not be resolved, it will end up in a devastating war between Pakistan and India.⁸ Pakistan ruled out the possibility of dialogues and downgraded the bilateral trade with India. The US role in this long-awaited dispute between Pakistan and India has always come up with passive posture in resolving the issue.

The US policies have been always hybrid in nature towards Pakistan. Pakistan proved to be one of the strongest allies for the US but the unknown mistrust from the US side always let India intervene for gaining trust and putting endeavor for spoiling Pakistan's reputation in the international community. The prime goal of Trump administration is that every policy should serve the interests of the US directly. The strategic partnership of the US and India poses a serious threat to Pakistan and China in the region and further leading to the polarization in the Middle East. The fact cannot be denied that Central Asia and South Asia is the continuous evolution of alliances. In terms of US invasion in Afghanistan, a series of alliances was made to protect sovereignty in Asia. Hence, the US assumes that the shift of economic supremacy is being inclined in the Asian continent.

CPEC- Strategic Ties between Pakistan and China

The US thinks of China as an emerging strategic stakeholder in the geopolitical environment of the world. Another alarming issue for the US is the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) agreement, which is opening the new economic doors not only for Pakistan but for the entire region in a considerable size. It has great economic potential for Pakistan regionally as far as globally. CPEC is a part of China's "One Belt, One Road" project and connection of two major economic corridors, the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Southeast Asian Maritime. It includes infrastructure development, energy projects, industrialization, and the extension and upturn of Gwadar Port.⁹

China and Pakistan have a significant relationship with each other, though, the national interest could not be denied. China is stepping up to stand with Pakistan in its rivalry of becoming an economic superpower. Therefore, CPEC is a megaproject that will make ease for both countries to trade. It is one of the most significant economic projects launched in Pakistan to hold the hegemony on the economy of the whole world. India being a rival of Pakistan has never intended to be a good well-wisher for this project and never appreciated this project. However, in the longer run, it will undoubtedly serve a good means of economic trade for India as well. India assumes that this project carries negative implications for her and the US, which is contributing a mere reason for Indo-US relations stronger at a considerable high rate. With the development of CPEC, India signed an agreement with Iran. On the other end, the US is also against the CPEC progression and claims that the area of CPEC is disputed. Russia is also in the favor of CPEC as Russians are endeavoring to enter the world stage for its national interest and overall security of the region. It is considered as a mere need of Pakistan to develop good relations with the international community but this cannot be done without any strong ally like China, the US and Russia. It is also a reality that the US and India are not in the favor of CPEC development. The US knows the fact that china's economy is growing day by day and Chinese products are capturing markets worldwide. CPEC is, therefore, an excellent opportunity for Pakistan's economic progression with overall regional development. The US government should realize that its acceptance to the CPEC project can transform this belt beneficial for all stakeholders and so on.

Threat of Foreign Intervention

China's rapid economic growth is increasing its competition with technology exporters across the globe but its domestic market has been acknowledged and reflected in the production of previously imported components. China also perceives a serious threat from India jeopardizing the CPEC project and senses the alignment of many extra-regional powers to target this project. Chinese believe that the foreign intervention in CPEC is only the intent of making this project impotent to finally create a deadlock for the progression of the Chinese fast-growing economy. The US is using World Bank and IMF as means to put its political hegemony and pressure on Pakistan, which has been a common practice of the US to put all on board with her terms and

conditions. The Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has cautioned against any IMF bailout for Pakistan that would pay off Chinese loans to Pakistan. Categorically, they instructed not to release funds that have any direct or indirect linkage with CPEC or with China.¹⁰ The US wants Pakistan to guarantee that there will not be any transfer of funds to China. The Pak-US relations always remain in hot water. Both countries remain cooperative and conflictive at the same time. The reason behind this uncertainty in bilateral relations could be a keen eye of Indian diplomats. However, the recent years have witnessed a better relationship between both countries as the US is looking at its policies toward Pakistan separately.¹¹

US Assistance to Pakistan

The end of the Cold War left terrorism as an aftershock and it was used as an instrument by non-state actors to achieve their objectives. The strategies of the US after the Cold War were aggressive instead of addressing the causes of frustration. In 2017, after a continuous failure to produce victory in Afghan crises, President Donald Trump gave remarks in his speech on the strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia that “our nation must seek an honorable and enduring outcome worthy of tremendous sacrifices that have been made especially sacrifices of lives deserve a plan of the victor to fight and win.”¹² The US delineated the strategy for Afghanistan and South Asia and gave a high-flying role to India putting Pakistan passive in all means and accusing Pakistan to let the terrorists play their game from the land of Pakistan.

A similar case is found regarding Pak-US relations as the main characteristic of bilateralism is to ensure the country’s national interest. The foremost things that take place in any bilateral relationship are economic alliances, security, industrial, and political matters but in the case of Pakistan, it has been denied full US-support despite backing US policies in the region. The US showed a dual face in many cases and this goes to worst now. The Center for Global Development shows that nearly \$67 billion were obligated to Pakistan from 1951 to 2011. This debt has shifted the geopolitical interests in the region. In the 1990s, the US stopped aid entirely and closed all the doors of USAID offices.

Financial aid by the US rose higher in three eras: first, it was after independence related to mutual defense agreement; second, during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; and third, after 9/11 when it flew high with a \$ 1 billion debt relief. In between, when the US found Pakistan against the implementation of her policies, they exerted heavy pressure on Pakistan to move forward.¹³ In 2009, the US renewed the program of the enhanced partnership for Pakistan from military to civil reforms aid, which was known as the Kerry Lugar bill. This act was forwarded by the Obama administration to convince Congress to authorize \$ 7.5 billion over five years in order to improve Pakistan economic condition and invest in its people.¹⁴

According to a report published on January 2, 2018, the US Foreign Assistance to Pakistan had stood at \$ 653 million in 2013, \$ 630 million in 2014, \$ 691 million in 2015, \$ 687 million in 2016, \$ 392 million in 2017 and \$ 345 million in 2018.¹⁶ The US State Department report (2014) highlighted that Pakistan was only concerned about its

national security rather than focusing on Afghan crisis by targeting only those militants who are operating in Pakistan.¹⁷ The Salala incident was also a clear indication, which proved the widened gap between Pakistan and the US for not having on one page. Targeting of two Pakistani check posts by NATO forces created a deadlock between Pakistan and the US which outraged Pakistan for shutting down supply lines of NATO forces for a couple of months demanding an apology.¹⁸ There is an abrupt change of policies in the US. On one hand, the US assumes that Pakistan is equally responsible for terrorism and on the other, Pakistan is considered to be the most famous export country. However, Pakistan is a favorable market for US companies, though, there are investment barriers for US companies to enter Pakistani markets and grow their businesses. China is also Pakistan's largest import partner but due to the rapid economic growth of China in the region, the policies of the US seem to be hardened soon.¹⁹

US Stance on Kashmir Issue

It has been 72 years that the dispute of Kashmir is still unresolved. There is no importance of the Kashmir issue for the US but this issue involves two nations (Pakistan and India) having strategic interest for the US. This is not wrongly said that the US itself does not want to resolve this issue due to several reasons as US security policy fluctuated from time to time in the region.²⁰ In 1993, when Clinton became the President of the US, the US policy on Kashmir changed dramatically, which neglected the rights of Kashmiri people. During the Bush era, a more conservative approach towards the Kashmir issue was adopted. The policy of Trump administration on Kashmir is still hanging out. The Kashmir dispute has caused a serious deadlock between India and Pakistan which should be resolved as soon as possible. This issue needs to be raised consistently at international forums and requires an all-inclusive diplomatic approach. It must be addressed based on fundamental human rights. On July 22, 2019, President Trump offered to act as a mediator for the Kashmir dispute while meeting with the Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan in Washington. Pakistan must urge the US to actively play its part and resist India to seize the atrocities in Kashmir, which will surely bring peace into the region.

A controversial step taken by the Indian government on August 5, 2019, found significant changes in the Indian constitution regarding the status of IOJK.²¹ The BJP-led Indian government's decision of abrogating Articles 370 and 35(A) is not acceptable to Pakistan at any cost as this issue supersedes all the endeavors done in the past and will further heat the situation. There are certain responsibilities of the UN regarding this issue as Prime Minister Imran Khan highlighted during his speech at the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly and was acknowledged by millions all over the world. He addressed the issue of genocide in IOJK by showing the actual face of the Indian government and urged global leaders to stand up against the brutalities faced by the Kashmiris.²² It is assumed that the US has a dual policy in this case. At one end, the US involves Pakistan to bring the Afghan Taliban on the negotiating table for peace talks and pretends to mediate the Kashmir issue between Pakistan and India but on the other side, it encourages India to play its (dubious) role in Kashmir as well as in

Afghanistan which is unacceptable to regional players. The US, undoubtedly, has a good alliance with India and adapts a Hippocratic position in this matter.

Reasons for Freezing US Financial Aid

Pak-China close ties, especially in the economic outlook, have an impact on the Pak-US relationship. As a reaction, the US decided to stop the military financing to Pakistan for the reason that Pakistan is supporting the Afghan Taliban against NATO forces.²³ Furthermore, putting blame on the Pakistan that it has deep relations with different militant groups.²⁴ India, for that reason, got the opportunity to influence the western world by portraying Pakistan as a hub of terrorism. However, due to the need of time, both Pakistan and the US remain in a strategic alliance to attain national interest. Therefore, this strategic alliance is always used by the US as a carrot-and-stick policy without considering Pakistan's national interest. Whenever US political interest is higher within the South Asian region, they give military aid and other incentives to gain the support of Pakistan but in case of low political interest, they put sanctions and stop providing aid to Pakistan. This game of interest becomes a point of contention in the Pak-US relationship, which has become more complex after a reliable and friendly Pak-China relationship.

Another reason for US inconsistent policies towards Pakistan is the Pak-china military relationship. China is all set for the supply of modern weapons which includes advanced warship and fighter jets under the defense agreement between the two neighboring countries. Undoubtedly, it will improve Pakistan's naval defense and combat power of surface fleet. On the other hand, US media reported that Chinese are planning to build and develop fighter jets and other military hardware in Pakistan. Chinese Foreign Ministry has strongly denied these reports and clarified that the Belt and Road initiative is primarily focused on economic projects with peaceful intent.²⁵ With this denial, the China-Pakistan Joint Coordination Forum decided to expand the industrial support for various fields and handsome investment for specific economic zones. Hence, the military weapon deals with China is also the reason for suspension of US military aid which works anti-Pakistani rhetoric; this made the US unreliable for Pakistan and China as a dependable contact.

Another assumption, which is a sign of danger for the US and pushes it to implement a firm policy against Pakistan, is the support of China in the development of Pakistan's nuclear weapons. As explained above that the relationship between China and Pakistan becomes stronger after CPEC, which influences the Pak-US relationship negatively. This economic corridor not only strengthens economic ties with China but it has also reduced the dependency of Pakistan on US aid.²⁶ These deeper ties with China not only influenced Pakistan's economy but also threatens the US global leadership, which pushes the US to shift its carrot-and-stick policy to another side. Initially, China and the US-supplied military aid with almost equal proportions of 38 percent and 39 percent but now, there is a vast difference. China is supporting Pakistan more than the US. The figure for China shifts from 38 percent to 63 percent and US-support shifts

from 39 percent to 19 percent.²⁷ It shows a gap that has occurred in Pak-US relationship and also the reason for US hard policies.

In the context of US military operations in Afghanistan, this is a hardline fact that the US cannot win in Afghanistan without the help of Pakistan. Therefore, the US wants to preserve its relationship with Pakistan to gain support for winning the Afghan war and facing its nation with the justified victory. However, the military balance of power within the South Asian region is diverting towards China, which was earlier presumed by former President Obama against US policy for Asia. China is not only strengthening its relations with Pakistan but also targeting to improve relationships with other countries of the region. It shows a decline in the US influence in this region, politically as well as economically.

This article, therefore, explains the impact of Pak-China relationship on the US in its policy implementation and security trends. The first shift could be seen as the Pak-china relationship challenging global leadership of the US by looking at the insular view of Trump administration.²⁸ Moreover, China's economic initiatives in Pakistan seem like making it a global economic leader which will affect the US economic role globally. Secondly, the shift in Pakistan's policy from the US to China regarding military supplies will also distress the Pak-US relations with less US aid and assistance.

Pakistan's Position to Maintain Balance in the Region

The economic condition of any country depends on the working force of a country. Constant dependency on US assistance is not a positive indicator for Pakistan. Instead of assuming rigid policies of the US at a time when Pakistan is facing a serious economic crisis, an attempt should be made to save the sinking boat of the economy. Fortunately, Pakistan is a country which has almost 60 percent young population. Therefore, it is a need of time to take specific steps empowering Pakistani youth not only in terms of employing them but also equip them with highly technical skills so that they can contribute towards the economy. Further to this, natural resources must be utilized efficiently as Pakistan is rich in terms of its agricultural production. New ways of production must be introduced in the country and farmers must be given the appropriate knowledge about modern farming practices. Moreover, industries must produce sufficiently via skilled labor force to enhance and strengthen the economy of Pakistan. Still, there is no such industrial policy in the country which can prepare Pakistan to cop up with the progressing world.²⁹

The relations between the US and Pakistan cannot be neglected but this relationship must not be at the cost of national integrity or compromising national security. Trust must prevail on both sides and diplomacy should work efficiently to make the ties secure. Inviting US private investment for the development of economic zones and privatization programs will bring new technologies in Pakistan. There are many issues but Pakistan must address these issues up to the level of significance.³⁰ If Pakistan has to develop a sound relationship with the US, it needs to devise a policy to resist Indo-US military and financial pressure. Pakistan must overcome its fiscal accounts deficits while inclining towards China and Russia as supplementary

arrangements. It will help to improve the economic conditions of Pakistan as well as to reduce the overstretched dependency on the US.

Conclusion

The US policy towards Pakistan in the context of Pak-China relationship is at shifting paradigm depending upon US interests in the region. It can be observed that US relations with Pakistan since independence are based on US interests alone and paying less attention to Pakistan's national interest. If the US has some specific interest in the region, it appears as a trusted partner with Pakistan and after fulfilling that interest, the US holds the rule of the stick. On other hand, China has also certain interests in Pakistan yet it has always supported Pakistan's national interests at both national and international levels. China supports Pakistan not only at the time of crisis but also support Pakistan's stance regarding the Kashmir issue globally.³¹ Undoubtedly, this deepens the relationship between China and Pakistan politically, economically and militarily. However, the US perceives it as a threat to its economic expansion and in reaction, it adopts rigid policies against Pakistan by implementing sanctions and stopping financial aid. In short, due to Chinese consistent support and help, the influence of the US in Pakistan is becoming weaker and reducing Pakistan's dependency on the US.

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