

## **Changing Geo-Strategic Environment in South Asia: Pakistan's Foreign Policy Adjustments**

**Nasir Ali**

*PhD Scholar*

*Centre for South Asian Studies,  
University of the Punjab, Lahore*

### **ABSTRACT**

The geo-strategic environment around Pakistan has changed entirely after the event of 9/11. This incident has triggered a series of changes in the geo-strategic environment around Pakistan with far-reaching effects on its foreign policy projection. The changing interest and behavior of regional and global players in post 9/11 scenario has an ambivalent effect on Pakistan's foreign policy projection in the form of new challenges and incentives. To acclimatize to the newly evolved dynamics of regional environment, there is dire need to introduce necessary changes in foreign policy projection to cope with challenges and to reap the incentives.

**Keywords:** *Geo-strategic, South Asia, Pakistan's Foreign Policy*

### **Introduction**

The geo-strategic environment of a country is formed basically on two elements: 1) its geographical location and relations with neighbouring countries, 2) the global structure or international political system and relations of regional countries with those of major/global powers. Depending on regional politics; the bound of relations with neighbouring countries, foreign policy of a country is influenced by these two basic elements. In contemporary international relations, relations of a particular country with its neighbours depend on relations of her neighbours with other countries especially with global and regional powers. These relations; bilateral and multilateral, are interconnected with each other. A dynamic relation between these two factors prevails that play a continuous role shaping the entire geo strategic environment of a country. Sovereignty, of varying degrees in exercise, enables all states to evaluate their foreign policy choices and constraints. Preferences, therefore, are mostly dependent on regional and global political environment. Internal matters of a country e.g state of rule of law, economic condition and political culture, no doubt, play crucial role in foreign policy formulation but we will discuss external determinants/ foreign elements that define geo-strategic environment of Pakistan in contemporary global politics.

Projection of Pakistan's foreign policy, since her inception, has remained operational within the rule stated above. Development of foreign policy in following years has been dependent on its intensified relations with neighbouring India at regional level. Whereas, at global level, struggle between Capitalism and Communism engulfed the newly born militarily weak country into spirals of security mazes. Pursuit of military alliances for cause of ensured security and search for economic quest shape a zigzag history of Pakistan's foreign policy narrative. To mention the recent developments, the incident of 9/11 has triggered a

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series of changes in the geo-strategic environment around Pakistan with far-reaching effects on its foreign policy projection. The changing interest and behavior of regional and global players in post 9/11 scenario has an ambivalent effect on Pakistan's foreign policy projection in the form of new challenges and incentives. To acclimatize to the newly evolved dynamics of regional environment, there is dire need to introduce necessary changes in foreign policy projection to cope with challenges and to reap the incentives.

This research paper attempts to examine the foreign policy challenges of Pakistan in changing geo-strategic environment around Pakistan (South Asia) in particular and its relations with the regional countries. For an in depth understanding, it is necessary that we shall look a glimpse into the history of Pakistan's relations with foreign countries so that a chronological picture will illuminate the course of Pakistan foreign policy.

### **Historical Background**

Historically, the foreign policy of Pakistan has been a composition of compulsions and constraints. For instance, in its initial phases, the foreign policy was focused on purely defensive imperatives. This compulsion dragged the country into defense alliances with United States of America known as SEATO (1954) and CENTO (1959). However, this period could not last longer due to some developments which reared in Pakistan's relations with US: U2 incident, ICBM development by US and her tilt toward India to counter China by using the latter as counter weight (Burke). Realizing the US attitude towards India and its effects on Pakistan's relations, the Pakistani establishment decided to review its relations with US and look forward towards Russia. (Sattar, 2012). The Russian government welcomed Pakistan with warmth and extended its cooperation in various fields from textile to oil exploration and in cultural exchange. It played a balanced role in Pak-Indian conflict over Kashmir issue and facilitated negotiations known as Tashkan declaration of 1966. During the same period Pak-China relations also developed. This improved relationship benefitted both countries in short and long term perspective. Various trade agreements, P.I.A's resumption of its flights to china and China's support to Pakistan's position on Kashmir issue heralded new era of Pak-china relations (Malik, Feb. 2001). Pakistan reciprocated china's overtures by voicing in favor of Chinese permanent seat in the Security Council and subsequently by facilitating moralization of China's relations with United States. Last but not least was amicable conclusion of boundary accord between China and Pakistan.

Pak-US relations adversely worsened due to former's continued efforts to improve its relations with China. The cleavages between two states further widened when in 1965 Pakistan failed to invoke security assistance from US. USA imposed arms embargo on South Asia which continued till 1971 with a little relaxation in between 1965-1971 (Rizvi, 2005). Pakistan, therefore, altered its foreign policy from alignment to an independent and pluralist paradigm on foreign relation. It withdrew from the Common Wealth and the SEATO in January and November 1972 respectively. Pakistan now diverted its attention towards developing countries in Asia, Eastern Europe and South and Central America and in 1979 it joined Non-aligned Movement (Burke). During the same period, Pakistan pursuing its pluralist approach succeeded to signing Shimla Agreement on July 2, 1972

dealing with 1971 war related issues. Bangladesh was recognized on February 1974. These developments produce noticeable developments in regional politics. Bilateralism remained the main focus in relations with major powers. The cordial relations that developed with China in 1970s now strengthened up to high level civil and military leader exchange and China's policy of South Asia envisioned a stable and secure Pakistan (Malik, Feb. 2001). Contributions in economic, technological, scientific and cultural fields were the main features of Pak-China friendship. Moreover, ZA Bhutto's visit to Soviet Union in 1972 and 1974 helped both sides remove apprehensions on regional affairs.

In 1976 Pakistan's nuclear technological adventure rose sharp differences with USA (Ziring). Suspension of economic assistance, refusal of military sales and withdrawal of A-7 aircraft were the steps towards hindering Pakistan become nuclear power. However, this period too ended with experience of simmering disagreements but again the divergent states came again closer when Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan on December 27, 1979. Pakistan viewed Soviet invasion as violation of independence of brotherly neighbouring non-aligned state. Pakistan extended its support to Afghanistan in her bid to dislodge the Soviets (Burke). Viewing the Soviet expansion as ideological threat, US tried to mitigate its differences with Pakistan thereby to extract help to curtail and avert Communist expansion in South Asia. This historical international political development opened new vistas in political, economic and security ties between Pakistan and USA. The new relations amounted to transfer of billions of dollars from US to Pakistan and the former sold forty F-16 aircrafts to later on a low cost. Exchange of intelligence agencies, joint military ventures and continues and unexhausted resistance against common enemy made US to downplay and forget Pakistan's nuclear issue (Sattar, 2012). During the same period, Pakistan's relations with China remain steady and wide range cooperation took place including China's positive role towards Pakistan over Indo-Pak antagonism. Transfer of nuclear technology, heavy industry of defense and trade via Karakoram High way got paramount importance. Pak-India relations had developed in a paradoxical nature in period 1980-90. The dialogues that took place were although based on good will but short-lived. Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited Pakistan in December 1988 to participate in the SAARC Summit Conference and another official visit in 1989 was paid by him which resulted in considerable improvements of relations between the two states.

Relations with Soviet Union during 1990s were marred at earlier invasion of Afghanistan, however, with the signing of Geneva Accords and withdrawal of Soviet armies, Pakistan was charged with attack on returning Soviet armies and that was reciprocated in air and land strikes on Pakistani territory by the Soviet armies. However, with complete withdrawal from Afghanistan, Soviet Foreign Minister under took his first ever visit to Pakistan in 1989 to explore new prospects of relations. However, such efforts remain suspended with succeeding events that took place in regional politics (Sattar, 2012).

After the withdrawal of Soviet Union from Afghanistan, the US left Pakistan alone to face the challenges related to settlement of new Afghanistan government and refugees. It soon became clear that the US did not like Pakistan to develop nuclear power and ostensibly promulgated Pressler Amendment of 1985 that invoke economic sanctions. With this abrupt change in Pak-US relations, the history of

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Pakistan's foreign policy entered into a new phase highlighted with post-Cold War era of 1990-2001. In this period Pakistan was destined to face four major issues: Afghan problem, nuclear explosion, Kashmir insurgency and a new drift in Pak-US relations. Now, the US was no more stand with Pakistan in aforesaid circumstance because the later had lost its strategic relevance. For that there was no more threat from communist Soviet Union and it was declining rapidly. Now the US had shifted her interest from curtailing communism to consolidating Capitalism in Europe and elsewhere. The US interest in South Asia shifted towards non-proliferation and repairing relations with India that had damaged during 1980s adventures. In pursuance of non-proliferation agenda, US imposed severe economic sanctions on Pakistan on the pretext of 1998 explosions and subsequent military takeover by General Mushraf on October 12, 1999. The changing attitude of US towards Pakistan dramatically increased that it disdained blaming Pakistan harboring terrorist elements in its territory that launch attacks in Indian held Kashmir. Pakistan's support to Taliban regime from 1996 to 2001 was another issue of contention that US alleged to and on this pretext, delivery of F-16 aircraft was also retained for which the US has got paid by Pakistan earlier (Rizvi, 2005).

While relations with US remained cold, Pak-Afghan policy of Taliban regime continued to be an uphill task for Pakistan. Support for Taliban government in Afghanistan rest futile when Taliban regime incurred the displeasure of international community and lost its fame by anti social and anti democratic moves. The Al-Qaeda safe heavens worsened relations of Pakistan with India and Iran and insurgency in Kashmir was also an extended result. Pakistan made unsuccessful attempts to moderate Taliban regime and eventually civil strife paved way for another huge transformation of geo-strategic environment of Pakistan in days to come. The Islamic militant groups who were active in Afghanistan resorted to induce help over Kashmir issue and Pakistan considered this move as to make India kneel down over Kashmir issue but India succeeded to restore its position and defamed Pakistan before international community for terrorist harboring (Rizvi, 2005). Such developments alongwith nuclear competition in 1998 triggered a limited war in Kargil region of Baltistan in 1999. The Indian government refused to initiate talks with Pakistan in Mushraf era by pursuing a policy of no contact with military government until July, 2001. However, relations with India suspended and there was no noticeable development either initiating peace process or triggering another conflict. Pakistan after being involved as a front line ally in global war against terror could not be able to pursue its case with India over Kashmir issue. However, minor terrorist attacks took place within India were blamed to Pakistan that arose intense debates over world media. The democratic government of PPP has also failed to develop considerable relations with India and hence there is no any development and the relations are considered to be oblivious with India so for.

### **Global War on Terror and Geo-Strategic Adjustments**

The vicious and spectacular terrorist attacks in US on Sep.11, 2001 dramatically brought changes in international politics that the academicians in politics call international relations in terms of before and after 9/11. This sudden and terrible occurrence significantly brought home the challenges of transnational terrorism especially driven by Taliban and Al-Qaida based in Afghanistan. The Great

Powers took effective measures to counter terrorism across the globe on first priority basis. The UN General Assembly passed a resolution and called upon its members to join hands against war on terror. The USA, Russia, China and other Western countries decided to take retaliatory measures against Al-Qaida when it was discovered to be based in Afghanistan. Pakistan's help was considered inevitable given the geographical position it holds and the linkages it has had with Taliban regime. Considering the dynamic changes in international politics and the UN General Assembly resolution, Pakistan joined hands with US and its allies in launching war against terrorism in Afghanistan and turned its back towards Taliban Mujahideen groups including Al-Qaida. The Pakistani government since then continued her support to an extent that it provided bases for NATO troops and opened road for supplies. The participation of Pakistan resulted into violation of sovereignty by militants and forces of alliance (Singh, 2004).

Relations between US and Pakistan were rejuvenating after hiatus of past decade in shape of military alliance on war against terror. As we have mentioned in historical background that the US has remain close with Pakistan as and when its interest appears in doing so. For general understanding, the dictum that there is no permanent friend or foe in international relations seems to be relevant when it comes to national interest of the countries. Contrary to the results of past vicissitudes in relations, the coalition on war on terror not only changed the course of relations of Pakistan with US but also put serious and considerable questions in relations with neighboring countries; the shrinking geo-strategic environment around Pakistan. In geographical terms, Pakistan stands in most complex strategic position among the Asian nations. In the north, there is China, an emerging economic giant who seeks market around the globe. Towards its East, there is India, a state with vast resources and inherits conflicts with Pakistan over several issues including Kashmir. In the west, lies Iran and Afghanistan who never been friendly rather source of internal tension and instability. To mention that relations with China have earlier been termed sweeter than honey and higher the Hamalayas seems not more relevant yet. Because of several reasons e.g China has started investment in Afghanistan and it has developed relations with India while the former erstwhile had remained reluctant to establish relations with these two countries. Moreover, rise of extremism in Xian Jaing province of China has also reduced the credibility of friendship with Pakistan. Come to other country, Afghanistan. The doctrine of strategic depth is now converted into the strategic vulnerability (Gul, 2013). Growing influence of China, Iran, India and USA has severely undermined the influence of Pakistan in Afghanistan. The same equation can be applied for Iran and India; both have trust deficit, boundary issues and transnational infiltration of terrorist elements. In short, the phenomenon of terrorism and war against it has a paradoxical impact on Pakistan; on the one hand Pakistan is considered as forefront ally in this war by the international community while on the other hand terrorism is associated with Pakistan by its neighboring countries. In the same time, the terrorist elements of Taliban and Al-Qaida also take revenge from Pakistan for its participation on war against them.

For Pakistan, its borders have always remained in great risk and above all the possible active relations between and among its neighbours; (bilateral) India-China, China-Afghanistan, Iran-India and Afghanistan with India, can place Pakistan into a vulnerable strategic position and its geo-strategic environment can

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grow against Pakistan. Apart from this, the multi-lateral relation of the region: relations of the US and Russia along with Western Powers with regional powers i.e China, India and Iran amounts high extend implications in formation of future discourse of Pakistan foreign policy. Therefore, it bears paramount importance that Pakistan should re-shape its foreign policy to respond to the changes that take place in respect to strategic environment. To develop cordial relations with neighboring countries it is necessary that pursuance of peaceful and cooperative regional politics be followed as it would reduce trust deficit among neighbors. In following paragraphs we will separately see the interest and objectives of each neighbor country in relations with other countries of the region and its interest in South Asian region. Along with analyzing the regional countries, US foreign policy interests in regional countries and specifically in Pakistan will also be highlighted so that a colorful picture of evolving geo-strategic environment could be drawn to elucidate foreign policy alternatives and options for Pakistan in near future.

### **India; Emerging South Asian Tiger**

As we have mentioned in introductory note that the foreign policy of Pakistan, since her inception, has remained 'Indian centric' due to its security implications. It is unavoidable that one must consider the security balances while explaining the new strategic adjustments. So it bears utmost importance that the role of India in new strategic appraisal around Pakistan carefully be studied while investigating the new foreign policy adjustments.

Given its geographical size, location and power potentials, India remains a predominant power in South Asian region. Along with regional politics, India strives for long term aspiration of playing a major role in global politics. In order to remain a major regional player, India gives impetus to boost its regional relations within a framework of cooperative environment (Rajshree, 2010). She has also been actively involved in South East Asian region to secure strategically vital region in terms of economic interest and maritime considerations. India's 'Look East' policy is a significant example in this regard. The ASEAN countries have also extended their cooperation towards India to cultivate extensive technological and economic benefits (Rajshree, 2010). The India's thrust of becoming a regional power would inevitably demand a cooperative foreign policy in years to come and given the demands the latter will opt for an inclusive adventure in its immediate as well as distant neighboring lands. This policy on India's behalf will leave Pakistan scarce in finding friendly neighbors. Pakistan has seen China as a counter balancing power in terms of Indian equation and at the same time Pakistan has also played same role for China in threatening India over Sino-Indian border clashes (Chander, 2004). Since India is looking towards a peaceful strategic environment it has abandoned active rivalry with China and has mitigated the differences recognizing the new strategic requirements in post 9/11 era. Both the countries China and India have succeeded in casting off their historic baggage and have begun a new journey of pragmatic competition and cooperation (Lohdi, 2014). Actualization of this motivational partnership can be possible in establishment of a peaceful environment that is helpful to achieve their economic and technological advancement thereby acquiring a major regional and global role. Moreover, both countries are convinced that cooperation could work for mutual

benefit and conflict can jeopardize regional peace along with making vulnerable their national security.

Indian quest for regional cooperation especially with China has entirely changed the Pakistani narrative of Pak-China friendship (Shahid, 2000). China, as a rational actor, will not subordinate its international and regional goals for Pakistan by continuing its previous policy of building the later against Indian threat. There is no more threat imminent towards its sovereignty from India because same perceptions have already developed among Indian leaders as we discussed in above paragraph. The foreign policy of Pakistan towards China requires to be reassessed in terms of Indian growing relations with China. India has not only altered the Pakistani strategic balance at North but it has also put serious implication towards West. Although India had no historical relations with Afghanistan yet it has abandoned its persistent policy of aloofness. However, Delhi's strategic policy took a drastic change following the US invasion of 2001. First India sought a policy of active posture in wake of war against terrorism in collaboration with US and its allies and then after 2009 it tailors a regional policy that reflects prudent adjustments to geopolitical realities on her part. In short India has diverted the relations of Pakistan with China, Afghanistan and USA. It implies that before 9/11 Pakistan has different expectation from these neighboring countries and now after 9/11 these expectations cannot be achieved. Because the interest of these regional countries have drastically shifted from one dimension to another and this alteration has direct effect on Pakistan being the regional player.

### **Afghan Conundrum; Epicenter of Strategic Tremble**

As we have observed that the foreign policy of Pakistan has remained Indian centric but the neighboring Afghanistan has also been the matter of most concerned in this regard. Historically speaking, the invasion of USSR in 1979 brought unexpected shifts in foreign relation of Pakistan and it was the event that shifted US alliance towards Pakistan after the nuclear issue. Whenever Pakistan has been compelled to take part in global pull and haul, the Indian and Afghan factor has been convincing agents behind the scene. The US invasion of Afghanistan and war against terrorism are the 21st Century developments that altered Pakistan's foreign policy from Kashmir to Terrorism and extremism. The Afghan quagmire dragged not only Pakistan but also other regional powers like India, Iran and China. This involvement has been a matter of concern for Pakistan because its tense relations with neighbouring countries especially with India and Iran. The Indian active role in Afghanistan has been a matter of concern for Pakistani authorities (Hanif, 2009). Pakistan has been accusing India for terrorist harboring and establishment of Indian terrorist training camps along Afghan border. Islamabad believes that these Indian activities are aimed at creating disability and sabotage development of peace process with Afghanistan and Talibans (Hussain, 2012). Pakistan's pattern of conflict and competition with India prior to 2001 was mostly focused on Kashmir, water etc issues but the squabble now turns in competing for establishing relations with neighbor countries. India has lessened China's cooperative approach towards Pakistan and then it embarks to mash the Pakistani interest in Afghanistan. Hence we can argue that the weight of strategic balance of China and Afghanistan has lessened in favour of Pakistan. So, policies adopted and expectation adhered with these neighbor countries prior to 2001 would necessarily demand a scruples re-

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assessment. If not, traditional dogmatic approach would result into a mess scramble in foreign policy adventure.

Where the Afghan question has changes the course of relations with China and India, at the same time it has marred the previous course of Iran in regional politics. Like India, Iran has also felt threatening from terrorist uprising in her borders along with Pakistan and Afghanistan. During the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Iran has received serious treats of active engagement of terrorist activities (Chaudat, 2012). It has blamed Pakistan for inciting terrorist element of Jahndola group operating inside Iran. Iran, however, following a policy of regional cooperation signed "Good Neighbor Declaration" with Afghanistan in Dec.2002 and both the countries were appeased of ensured territorial integrity from either side. Iran in pursuit of aforesaid declaration extended humanitarian help amounting to 600 million Dollars between the year 2001 and 2009. Presently there are more than 2000 Iranian firms operating within Afghanistan especially its eastern part of Heart; strategically important part bordering with Iran (Hussain, 2012). Moreover, another reason that Iran extends its relations with Afghanistan and other Asian countries can be seen in the fact that the US and her allies; pro-American, encircle Iran e.g American presence in Iraq, Arabian Peninsula and its alliance with Pakistan. Hence Tehran's approach toward post 2014 Afghanistan deem pragmatic where it could find secure borders. The assumption that Iran seeks to establish an independent and strong economic Afghanistan can be supported by looking towards the Iranian official policy during the 1st conference on "Islamic Reawakening" held in Tehran on 17th Sep. 2011. Seven hundreds participants were present from eighty countries who spoke about the consequences and implications of Arab Spring. Iran invited representatives from Afghanistan and two delegations participated one on behalf of Karazi government and another representing the influential Taliban group of Mullah Omar (Chaudet, 2012). Such a policy on Iran's part obviously meant to engage in future Afghanistan in cordial terms regardless of religious or other differences. This policy does not necessarily mean that Tehran has malicious intentions towards Afghan stability rather it can be translated into what America, Pakistan and India find their interest craving. The growing influence of neighboring countries in desperate Afghanistan would result in joining hands by different fictions of Talibans with regional countries. In such a competitive scenario Iran could succeed in obtaining confidence of at least one or some groups. As in past, notwithstanding the differences, Iran seek policy of backing Gulbudin Hikmatyar as a main source against US presence in 2002 (Hussain, 2012). Difference among Talibans operating within Afghanistan and with those of active in Pakistan would result into convergence of interest of both countries and emergence of radical extremism is more imminent. The present elections in Afghanistan do not explain any decisive position of any party. However, it is a generally accepted and agreed upon rule that new governments put forth either democratically or otherwise, change the course of foreign relations; if not entirely but with certain changes. In this emerging scenario Pakistan needs to calibrate prudent policies toward Afghanistan particularly and towards Iran and India generally. In relations with Afghanistan, it is explicit that the policy adopted before 9/11 had failed to achieve its targets. Strengthening Taliban with a view to promote strategic depth was no more than fiasco. Another intention that worked behind the policy of baking Taliban was to install a friendly regime that would not



question the validity of Durand Line. However, after the US invasion situations took a u-turn where Pakistan was compelled to show its back towards Taliban. Similar developments are more relevant when we talk about post American withdrawal of Afghanistan. Because, now the Afghanistan is not more an independent country where policies spring entirely from indigenous sources, foreign influence would never allow Pakistan to achieve its targets. Therefore, it is the need of time that Pakistan should bear in mind that India and Iran in Afghanistan were passive earlier and hence after their oblivion is not constant more.

### **China's 21st Century South Asian Policy**

There has been no more than two decades than China entered into world economic and political competition. Since her early independence, the founding fathers of China abstain from active intervention in World politics. However, during 1970s the new leader Deng Xopin took a policy of active politics. The global transformation in 1990s broke the backbone of strict communism and a paradigm shift took place in foreign policy of China. Democratic socialism then took place of strict and isolationist communism was given up. Since relations of China with Pakistan have been friendly and both have peacefully mitigated their difference over boarder issue. Relations between China and Pakistan have stood a mark of longevity and persistence, often termed as "sweeter than honey" and "higher than Hamalayas". As has been mentioned that Pak-Sino alliance have sustained firmly in an anti-Indian construe, the Afghan conflict has now given rise to deeper concerns for China in South Asia. The global war against terrorism and rise of extremism in Pakistan has made China's Xinjian province vulnerable that borders with Pakistan from where China feels threat of extremist infiltrations. As the rise of extremism has shaped the global politics into a combined struggle against terrorism, it has shaken the Pak-China relations as well. China has clearly presented its concerns over linkages of extremists operating in Pakistan with those of Xinjiang (Jetly, 2012). However, China has limited its allegations towards Pakistan and abstained from deteriorating relations with Pakistan. And Pakistan has also reciprocated by assuring the China of alienating extremist groups to its utmost. Controversy over exchange of terrorism has to some extent created misperceptions in bilateral relations. However, both the countries, for cause of mutual benefit, managed to lessen the misperception and sustained their cooperation. Cooperation on China's part towards Pakistan speaks louder its search for an ally that could avert US influence in South Asian region as China has entered into global competition with USA (Rajshree, 2010). China believes that the US interests are more than the war against terrorism and that can be achieved through cooperation of regional powers like India and Pakistan. Hence, keeping in view the above US interest articulation, China has developed friendly relations with India along with holding hand of Pakistan to her side. For China, loss of either country in South Asian region would mean to give space for US to put her feet firmly. Strong presence of US army in Afghanistan has re-configured the strategic environment for China which hitherto lacked any presence of superpower. It is no more obscure that China has refrained from active participation in Afghanistan yet it does not mean that it has remained oblivious of the developments that took place after 9/11. It has a clear distinction between the extremist groups who could impact upon is security situation in Xinjiang province

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and those that it has less fear from. It has contacts with the terrorist groups whom it rely to be beneficial in future contestation. It has deep concerns over spread of radical Islam that in future may cause rise of extremism in Xinjiang province. In order to keep check on rise of extremism in Asian region and its infiltration to China, it has to keep good relations with Pakistan and India along with those people of Afghanistan who are able to change the course of operation taking place under the control of extremist groups. For cause of a peaceful region where China could achieve her ambitions demands her balanced approach towards the regional powers. So historic balance of relations with Pakistan seems disappear where India has got impetus for China in near future. The Afghan issue has multi-dimensional impacts on Pakistan. It has changed the relations of Pakistan with India, China and Iran. All these regional countries have to consider the neighboring Afghanistan as a challenge as well as opportunity for their future ambitions in the region. So in presence of such competition, Pakistan cannot easily draw a map of its foreign policy towards Afghanistan and other countries and there is much need of analysis for successful bilateral and multilateral relations.

### **US Ambitions and expectations in South Asia**

Being the most powerful economic and military global power, the USA has played most influential role in shaping geo-strategic environment in South Asia. Pakistan's relations have seen several vicissitudes due to several reasons explained in historical background. The recent improvement of relations between the two countries was the result of war against terrorism that destined the US not only to improve its relations with Pakistan but also with India and China. Because the adventure that US and her allies took in South Asia necessarily demanded collaboration of countries located in the region in generally and adjacent to Afghanistan in particularly. Being the World super power country, USA has its own defined objectives in South Asian region that determines the course of her relations with regional powers (Markey, 2014). It is evident from the fact that when Pakistan and India entered into race of nuclear proliferation, the US played a partial role towards India by allowing her to develop its nuclear arsenals. While towards Pakistan its mood was off and declarations of economic sanction were the norm of the day in Washington. Although Pakistan has rejuvenated its relations with US becoming an ally in war against terrorism yet it has to remember the role of the later after the Soviet withdrawal and fear of similar faith anticipates after US withdrawal from Afghanistan. Even a huge amount of money and arms were provided to Pakistan that enhanced its security capability and economic condition but at the same time US intentions in doing so seems to be self-interested and motivated by opportunist agenda that has used Pakistan at its own will (Markey, 2014). Apart from alliance with Pakistan, USA has drawn deep and credible influence in the region through India. Indo-US strategic dialogue has given to India an influential status in the region and that is necessarily bound to play its role in days to come. Even during the Cold War period India had less interest in US and her allies but after the end of Cold War US herself showed friendly gestures towards India by allowing her develop nuclear power. Recognition of India as nuclear power in 2003 by US ultimately rose the influence of India in the region which was at any cost not acceptable to China and Pakistan. Given the prejudicial role played by the US, China and Pakistan predictably reacted by contributing in security areas. The primary US interest in Asia is to get friendly powerful states

into its allies so that it could further its economic interests. The Asian region is full of resource and it can provide better opportunities for US investment along with curtailing China's hegemony. US can boost her economy through International Financial Institutions and it has bigger trade relations with for Eastern Countries. After withdrawal from Afghanistan, US will reassess its policy towards the region and will see which country can be beneficial for her interest in the region. USA has its deep roots in Afghanistan and even after withdrawal it will never leave Afghanistan to act against her wishes. American basis in Afghanistan can help her intentions to be materialized. Pakistan, being a nuclear power state would not be out of US interest. However, the course of relations with Pakistan will highly depend on its internal security and stability. If Pakistan maintains peace and order within its territories, it can induce and influence her agenda in US foreign policy towards Asia. US relations with neighboring countries like Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan seem to be cooperative and focused on developmental basis while its relations with Iran are rather tense and anxious. Their conflict over nuclear issue can lead the region into a catastrophe and Pakistan needs to calibrate prudent foreign policy dealing with Iran and USA. For Pakistan, the terms of relations with America needs to be re-negotiated for a permanent solution towards regional affairs. A sense of blind allegiance towards USA would lead Pakistan into prolonged struggle with regional countries like it has with Taliban in Afghanistan and within its own territory.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, the analysis has shown that the geo-strategic environment of South Asian region has changed drastically after the event of 9/11. The new course of relations of regional countries depends on global Super Power competition between the USA and China. China has fully focused on South Asian region to establish alliances that could foster her economic adventure. It is eager to keep check on extremist infiltration to its own country. It has developed credentials with India and Afghanistan that in turn lessen importance of Pakistan for her in regional politics. Like the China, USA is also looking for regional cooperation and it has invested billions of dollars to sustain its presence in the region. As USA has never been an all-weather friend with Pakistan, it is expected to show her back at any time. India, being the emerging power in South Asian region has advantage of attracting both USA and China. It has developed cordial relations with both competitors along with maintaining its base in Afghanistan. This trajectory of USA, China and India has gravely affected Pakistan in its regional politics. Afghanistan is no more independent country which could exert her will on foreign relations rather its course is driven by the regional as well as super powers influence. There is no any solid foreign policy on its own behalf rather what can be input into regional politics is the extremist overture till a compact solution is drawn by installing a democratic government. The regional politics in South Asia would have a bigger effect from Iranian side. The course of relations Iran has followed still seem contrary to those of India and Pakistan especially in regards to the USA. The nuclear issue; although pacified now, would increase difference with USA and with her allies and it can lead to a US incursion like that of Iraq and Afghanistan.

The newly developed geo-strategic environment of Pakistan demands foreign policy adjustment that could succeed maintaining relations with China, decreasing

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hostility with India and engaging USA in developing economic sectors within Pakistan and reducing trust deficit with Afghanistan and Iran. For, how can such policy be adopted that depends on regional engagements i.e "Regionalism". So far Pakistan has trusted China as counter balance against India and now this assumption stands wrong. Permanent dependence on US has resulted in nothing but source of regional hatred. The concept of strategic depth is no more relevant in regards to Afghanistan. Therefore it is convenient that Pakistan should foster relations with neighbor countries and enter into regional organization where her differences with these countries could be mitigated and a collective effort be put against regional challenges like terrorism and re-habilitation of Afghanistan. A peaceful and stable Afghanistan is in favour of region and a strong regional organization including all regional countries would ensure the regional politics at all.

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