

Geopolitics in South Asia and Foreign Policy of Pakistan; an Analysis of Challenges and Opportunities in “Stress and Strain” Framework

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ABSTRACT

The geopolitical environment of South Asia has significantly changed in last two decades. This change essentially poses various challenges and brings opportunities for Pakistan in the region. The prime focus of this paper is to give an insight into challenges faced by Pakistan in a historical narration and to critically evaluate the implications of emerging geopolitical environment for Pakistan’s foreign policy. Therefore, this study, by adopting realist perspective, develops “stress and strain” framework to analyses the impacts of regional geopolitics on foreign policy of Pakistan. This historical analysis reveals that the interest of great powers in the region changes with passage of time and thus changes their alliances with regional states. This shifting of alliances modifies the way of interaction among regional states. The study concludes with suggestions that the articulation of national interest and foreign policy of Pakistan needs to be reviewed continuously in order to overcome the emerging challenges and to find the best possible way of engagement at regional and international level.

Keywords: **Geopolitics, Foreign policy, National Interest, Foreign Policy Stress and Strain.**

Introduction

Foreign policy is a set of principles and objectives mainly guided by national interest of a country. It is a set of tool that enables a particular nation to deal with other nations in the world. Historically, it is proven that none of nations can survive without interacting with outside world for that the search of security and economy makes interaction inevitable among nations of the world. Since the early days of diplomatic history of the world, relations among nations evolve on different levels. In the modern world, foreign policy has been the sole instrument for all nations to conduct diplomatic relations with other nations ranging from defence diplomacy, economic diplomacy, and cultural diplomacy and so on. However, the method and scope each state adopts varies. Therefore, foreign policy represents a dynamic set of determinants and objectives adopted with respect to time and space. The dynamism in determinants represents the internal conditions of a country that are bound to change. The economic condition, internal stability and overall development of a country change with passage of time. Similarly, foreign policy objectives also change with respect to basic determinants. Given

this interdependence between determinants and objectives, foreign policy represents a dynamic way to follow for nations in the world. According to realist paradigm in international relations, there is 'no permanent friend or foe' in world politics. States conduct relations with other states based on national interest and the determination of a nation's interest outlines the course of foreign policy. States being rational actors rely on various methods such as hard power, soft powers and smart power to achieve objectives of foreign policy. Therefore, the basic objective of foreign policy of a country in modern world is to safeguard the national interest through various methods of diplomacy so as to ensure survival and development of the nation.

The dynamic patterns of national interest and changing moods of relations among states in the world form the bases for geopolitics. In a particular region, relations among regional powers and their relations with major powers of the world provide the foundations of geopolitics. The most significant aspect of geopolitics in the world is its dynamic nature. There is consistent change among states' relations. Every state is in continuous struggle to enter into relations that benefit her in terms of securing national interest. In international relations, there is nothing permanent except change. Pursuance of national interest results into formation of new alliances and its consequent impact alters the status of a given country. This shifting alliance in a region altogether change the existing patterns of geopolitics and each state require to rethink its terms of relations with other states. Foreign policy; a tool of conducting relations, therefore, gets continuous input from external environment. This input can be an aggregate of foreign policy "stress and strain". In order to secure national interest, foreign policy needs to be reviewed scrupulously with respect to changing patterns of geopolitical alliances. Understanding of geopolitics and articulation of national interest necessarily results into continuous recalibration of foreign policy. Pursuance of traditional foreign policy will maximize foreign policy stress and minimize foreign policy strain for policy makers in emerging geopolitical environment of South Asia.

Pakistan's Foreign Policy Stress and Strain

The geopolitics of South Asia has changed and it is still changing. In context of increasing role of major powers in the region and shifting interest of regional powers, the geopolitical environment around Pakistan is much more complex and competitive. Therefore, analyzing the foreign policy options for Pakistan is becoming harder for both policy makers and analysts. For an academic discussion of Pakistan's foreign policy analysis in context of emerging geopolitical environment of South Asia, this study employ "stress and strain" framework. Foreign policy stress refers to foreign policy imperative associated with international and regional political structure. The structure represents geopolitical components of the 'context' within which international relations and foreign policy operates (H Starr 1991). The geopolitical context is not thus static and it changes with respect to each state's strategic calculations and consequent alliances

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states make with each other. Foreign policy stress therefore refers to foreign policy inputs for a particular country from great powers and regional powers. It is indicative of foreign policy compulsions for a particular state posed by great and regional powers and this stress is an independent variable. Foreign policy strain refers to inherent character, quality or disposition of a nation that indicates how foreign policy stress is managed, responded or mitigated. In other words, foreign policy strain refers to resilience of a country to face emerging challenges for its foreign policy. Foreign policy stress for Pakistan can be viewed in two broad strands: security and strategic. First, the “security stress” for foreign policy of Pakistan is manifested in external threat perception (Ahmed N 2010). The external security implications emanate from Eastern and Western borders where Durand Line conflict from Afghanistan and Kashmir dispute with India constitutes a continual security stress. To mitigate this stress and to ensure workable ‘security strain’ Pakistan follows a dependent path on American alliance and installing a friendly government in Afghanistan. Secondly, “strategic stress” refers to foreign policy imperatives associated with international political structure. Over the “strategic stress” Pakistan has little control and it indicates the implications of major powers relations with Pakistan. Compliance of Pakistan to join the US led war against terror and to remold its foreign policy towards regional states is the outcome of strategic stress. To mitigate the strategic stress, there is “strategic strain” that refers to alternate strategic options which enables Pakistan to acquire strategic balance in the region (Hasnat, 2011). The strategic rivalry between great powers has had deep influence on foreign policy projection in Pakistan. The growing strategic competition between the US and China, for example, deeply affects Pakistan foreign policy and China’s inclination towards Pakistan strengthens the “strategic strain” for Pakistan. The foreign policy “stress and strain” framework provides an insight into security and strategic implications for foreign policy projection in Pakistan.

Pakistan and South Asian Geopolitics

The geopolitical environment of South Asia has dramatically changed after the event of 9/11 and consequent intervention in Afghanistan by the United States and NATO forces in search of hunting terrorists. The Pak-US relations had gone sour after the end of Cold War and India Pakistan nuclear tests in 1998 (Krepon, N. 2008). These relations once again became warmer when Pakistan agreed to join war against terror in Afghanistan. The Eastern border of Pakistan has been less conflicting and irritating during the Taliban regime but the US-led war against terror turned it quite challenging for Pakistan. The decade long war diametrically changed whole course of regional geopolitics where one could find growing interest of India and China engaging in multitudes of projects in Afghanistan. Indian involvement in Afghanistan multiplies the security stress for foreign policy

of Pakistan (Javaid, U & Javaid, R. 2016) where as China's rise and engagement in South Asia results into both challenges and opportunities for Pakistan. These regional geopolitical changes coupled with challenges of terrorism and possible US withdrawal from Afghanistan attracts other great powers in the region and increase possibility of renewed relations between Pakistan and Russia. The traditional geopolitical matrix of South Asian region has entirely changed due to growing interest and involvement of world major powers. Similarly, the regional powers, such as India, have also shifted their interest and search for new alliances. This change of interest in regional and global power politics implies deep implications for foreign policy in Pakistan.

Security Stress and Strain

The 'security stress' for Pakistan's foreign policy is an aggregate threat perception inherited from the partition and independence in 1947. The partition plan did not work well and consequent invasion on Kashmir by both India and Pakistan drew a red line of persistent threat in the region. In addition to this, the Durand line at western border has also been contested by Afghanistan at political and diplomatic levels. This border is porous and infiltration from Afghan soil poses consistent threat to Pakistan. Given to this situation, territorial integrity stands at first within Pakistan's foreign policy objectives and for its assurance a workable 'security strain' in terms of military empowerment has always been at top priority (Shah A, 2014). Apart from external threats to territorial integrity, Pakistan fears secessionist tendencies in Baluchistan since the early stage of nation formation. Accession of Princely states in North West Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) had also heightened the 'security stress' in Pakistan. For security establishment in Pakistan, these threat perceptions contextualize a regional security scenario where one can find Indian spying supporting Baloch militant outfits (Khetran, M.S. 2017). A daunting challenge for foreign policy of Pakistan has therefore been to ensure 'security strain' in regional and national security paradigm.

The Eastern Border

The 'foreign policy stress' in terms of security in Pakistan is a part and parcel of British pullout policy from the Indian sub-continent. The course of partition witnessed an exodus overwhelmed by riots and violence. The plan for annexation of former princely states and their status after partition remained ambiguous. There was less equity in distribution of military power between the two states. India retained most of war equipment and industry (Sayeed, K.B. 1964). Its military personnel and geographic vastness had no match with Pakistan. Newly born countries; India and Pakistan, fought over Kashmir within few months after the partition has taken place. The first war between India and Pakistan ended with confusions and misconceptions about Maharaja's accession to India. However, a

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promised plebiscite in Kashmir territory under UN auspicious suspends the war. Threat perceptions prevail on both side and measures for holding promised plebiscite yet to be seen. Pakistan at its nascent stage faces threats to territorial integrity and searches for an effective ‘security strain’. Sooner the Cold War alliance began to form Pakistan signed a mutual defense assistance agreement with the United States in May, 1954 (Alavi, H 1998). This agreement further proceeded towards entering Pakistan into defence treaty with the nations of East Asia, Europe and America (SEATO, 1954). The security agreement and defence treaty organization enabled Pakistan to develop a significant “security strain”. Further in that search, Pakistan entered into Baghdad Pact a year later. This pact brought into alliance Pakistan with the nations of Middle East and Britain. Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Britain had promised to bring peace in Middle East. However, Iraq withdrew from the pact after four years and the Baghdad Pact became Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). The remaining members of treaty entered into defence pact discretely with the United States to strengthen defensive mechanism. The bilateral agreement between US and Pakistan assured the latter that in case of aggression from any side the US will be assisting Pakistan in her defence. The treaty alliances enable Pakistan to ensure deterrence against Indian possible aggression and hence the policies of entering into alliances secured an effective ‘security strain’ for a decade and half.

However, ‘security strain’ secured initially did not last long. In succeeding years, Pakistan witnessed more critical ‘security stress’ when war with India broke out at different borders. The conflict starts in April, 1965 at the Rann of Kutch and gradually escalates and stretches towards other parts with Indian army crossing the international border at Lahore on 6th September 1965 (Malik M. S., 2019). The Sailkot sector turned into largest engagement and Pakistan army could defend its territory until UN mandated ceasefire agreement reached on September 22nd. In order to reach a permanent settlement of the dispute the President of Pakistan Ayub Khan and Prime Minister of India Lal Bahadur Shastri signed Tashkent agreement on 10th January, 1966 wherein they agreed to withdraw from the territories they held during the war. The leaders at Tashkent also agreed to restore diplomatic relations for mutual interest.

Moreover, the internal political instability in Pakistan during the 1970s elections posed a blowing ‘security stress’ to Pakistan. In East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), Awami League had won the elections and their disagreement over power sharing with West Pakistan (Pakistan) turned into civil war. The central government of Pakistan launched military crackdown to overcome the situation but this strategy did not work. Resultantly, security instability in East Pakistan gradually deteriorated with Indian intervention into the conflict (Blarel, N Ebert H 2015). Now the Eastern border security stress merged with internal civil war in Pakistan and a full scale war erupted with India. The 1971 war was the third full scale war fought by Pakistan and India. This war left Pakistan to its half and a

serious military defeat accentuated for a reliable 'security strain' for Pakistan. Worsening than that, in the succeeding years, India went nuclear by testing its first nuclear device in 1974. For Pakistan, the Eastern border 'security stress' reached at its worst level. It was the Eastern security stress that made ZA Bhutto announces "We will eat grass even go hungry, but we will have our own" (Khan Y, 2015). The democratic government in Pakistan under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto strives hard to achieve 'security strain' by boosting relations with China and developing nuclear technology in Pakistan. After an effective 'security strain' has been achieved, the nature of conflict emanating from the eastern border changed to limited skirmishes as it can be observed in case of Siachen Glacier conflict in 1984. The 'security strain' that Pakistan had achieved till then successfully eased the threat perception and it enabled Pakistan to step ahead in internal development and progress.

However, the main security concern for Pakistan has been the Kashmir conflict. It is the regional point of contestation in South Asia that outlines the South Asian geopolitical pie and it continues to reshape conflict in the region. Pakistan tries to raise the issue at international level and has continuously rallied against human rights violation in Kashmir (Bhat, S.A. 2019). India blames Pakistan for projected terrorism through jihadi militants to destabilize peace in Kashmir. This contestation often escalates to border skirmishes and often armed conflict as one can see Kargil war in 1999. One year before the Kargil war, India and Pakistan had tested their nuclear devices and long-range missiles. These tests were severely criticized in west and resulted into international sanctions on both countries. The security analysts in Pakistan believed that nuclear parity with India averted any potential conflict by establishing deterrence against Indian hegemonic designs. The 'security strain' in terms of nuclear deterrence prevented any full scale war since then. Apart from nuclear strategy of deterrence, Pakistan has been willing to establish dialogue process in order to reduce 'security stress' from Indian side. President Musharraf hold direct talks with Vajpayee at 12th SAARC summit conference held at Islamabad. Foreign secretaries of both countries agreed to initiate Composite dialogues process and bilateral meetings of officials from both side ensured coordination and cooperation between the two counties (Padder, S. 2012). Unfortunately, this peace process could not continue for long due to terrorist attacks on Samjhauta Express and Taj Mahal Palace. The Indian authorities blamed Pakistan for facilitating and plotting these terrorist attacks. Pakistan has denied of assisting or plotting but it admitted that terrorists may have used Pakistani soil to reach out India. These incidents deteriorated the peace process and Indian authorities continued oppressive actions in Kashmir. The fundamental question of plebiscite under UN resolution to determine the will of Kashmiri people is yet to be held. Until referendum is held and Kashmir issue is resolved permanently Pakistan's security stress on eastern border is likely to prevail.

The Western Border

The western border of Pakistan is also one of the colonial geopolitical architects in South Asia. The Durand Line was drawn on 12th November, 1893 by the British to demarcate the area of influence in the western part of the region. The Pashtuns disagree with this partition from the day one because they considered it was vivisection of their ethnic brethren (Rais, R.B. 2019). After the partition of Indian Sub-continent in 1947, Afghanistan refused to recognize Pakistan and objected its membership in the United Nations Organization (UNO). The Afghan government at that time did not consider Pakistan as legitimate successor of British India and started political maneuvering to incite the Baluch and Pushtoons for creation of Pashtunistan. The Baluch and Pashtun nationalist within Pakistan resorted to violence posing a stringent ‘security stress’ for Pakistan. The territorial insecurities multiplied for Pakistan from Eastern and Western borders. After loose of East Pakistan in 1971, Pakistan was much concerned about the territorial integrity and border safety.

The year 1979 witnessed Soviet invasion in Afghanistan which was a major security threat for Pakistan. Now the western border had turned more volatile and dangerous for Pakistan and the security situation at eastern border had deteriorated altogether and Pakistan had to look forward for an anti-communist partner-the US-the Cold War ally, to ensure ‘security strain’ in succeeding years. Coincidentally, the government in Pakistan was in hands of military dictator Zia ul Haq who was a staunch supporter of Islamists and an anti-communist in his overture. The US approached Pakistan for assistance against Soviet invasion which was accepted and a new decade of security engagement in western border starts. The war against Soviet invasion in Afghanistan diametrically changed the nature of western border for Pakistan. Pakistan and Afghanistan remained central points of Cold War until it concluded with the demise of Soviet Union in 1989.

The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan reduces the international involvement and great power military presence in Afghanistan. The whole story of communist invasion and eventual withdrawal left internal power structure shattered where various warlords and different Islamist guerrilla fighter control over different parts of Afghanistan. The military dictator in Pakistan had died by then and a democratic government under Benazir Bhutto had to tackle with the oxymoron eastern question. The Pakistani government wanted to form a unity government of different Islamists groups but failed owing to disunity among the groups. Afghanistan fell into a brutal civil war among different factions of Mujahideens. A destabilized and war torn Afghanistan was now a difficult challenge for Pakistan to tackle. However, Pakistan’s Afghan policy pursuit remained twofold: first, to help the Afghan establish a friendly government in Afghanistan that would not induce nationalist/separatist elements in Pakistan and the second: to seek military pursuit of ‘strategic depth’ in Afghanistan in case of military invasion from India (Ahmed Z.S & Bhatnagar S. 2007).

Out of the dissident Islamists groups in Afghanistan the Taliban group emerged more organized and powerful. This group conquered many other parts of Afghanistan and proclaimed a de-facto Islamic state in Afghanistan. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates recognized the Islamic state. Remaining factions of Islamists retreated to northern parts of Afghanistan and united under Northern Alliance and launched attacks to Taliban in Kabul and Kandhar. Pakistani government continued supporting Taliban while Central Asian states and India supported the Northern Alliance. Taliban and Northern Alliance fought a proxy war until the terrorist attacks of 11 September, 2001 took place. Now the chessboard of the geopolitical game changed entirely. The Pakistani government under General Musharraf joined the US in war against terror mainly due to 'security stress' posed by unrest in Afghanistan and possible US-Indian alliance (Tellis, A.J 2008). Pakistan facilitated US war against terror by providing military bases and supply route. The US forces with help of Northern Alliance overthrew the Taliban regime and controlled most parts of the Afghan territory. Most of the Taliban leaders were killed and remaining fled Afghanistan to neighboring countries especially Pakistan's tribal areas. These Taliban groups aligned with Al-Qaeda operatives in parts of Pakistan and carried out terrorist attacks in Pakistan. The Pakistani military launches operations against these operatives and the war against terror is fought within the territories of Pakistan. The policy of establishing a friendly government in Afghanistan and searing for Strategic depth therein seems elusive in face of war against terror at home.

The year 2008 marked the democratic transition in Pakistan and since then three consecutive democratic regimes adhere to rapprochement through a policy of non-intervention. The new government of Hamid Karzaian and Nawaz Sharif reached out to reset the relationship beyond the security focus. But continued acts of terrorism across border reduced the prospects of peaceful relations. As the new president of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani came to power he reiterated for peaceful settlement at border. He visited Pakistan and found to say "the hostility between Pakistan and Afghanistan has been buried in the past two days" (BBC Nov.14, 2014). However, soon after this declaration couple of attacks took place in Afghanistan and Ashraf Ghani alleged Pakistan for these incidents. The trust deficit among the two countries has widened gape for a possible peaceful settlement and negotiations on security prospective (Ahmed, 2010). Security forces on both sides often engage in skirmishes and blames exchanged for illegal border crossings.

Apart from mutual distrust and blame game between Afghanistan and Pakistan, increasing influence of India and presence of ISAF forces in Afghanistan multiplies irritants for Pakistan. India has concluded strategic partnership with Afghanistan that aims to provide-among others- training for Afghan security forces. In such case, 'security stress' at eastern and western border combines to form a severe threat blow and it may further proceed to encirclement of Pakistan. Moreover, increasing strategic investment of China and Iran in Afghanistan also contribute to complicate the geopolitical settings for Pakistan's foreign policy in

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near future. Therefore strategic calculations carried on before the event of 9/11 requires to be reviewed and a comprehensive reorientation in foreign policy is needed to relieve the ‘security stress’ and to broaden the ‘security strain’ in the region.

Strategic Stress and Strain

In foreign policy, the ‘strategic stress and strain’ refer to foreign policy imperatives associated with international political structure. Over the “strategic stress” Pakistan has little control and it indicates the implications of major powers relations with Pakistan. Compliance of Pakistan to join the US-led war against terror and to remold its foreign policy towards regional states was the net outcome of ‘strategic stress’. To mitigate the strategic stress, there is “strategic strain” that refers to alternate strategic options the international political structure provides. The strategic rivalry between great powers has had deep influence on foreign policy projection in Pakistan. The growing strategic competition between the US and China, for example, provides alternate options for Pakistan to situate its foreign policy alternatives in newly emerging geopolitical environment of South Asia.

The international political structure at time of independence of Pakistan was characterized by bipolarity. The United States of America as a champion of capitalist world had emerged out of the Second World War ashes. On the other side, the socialist/communist Soviet Union had been consolidated and was trying spread over the Asia and Eastern Europe. The contradictory world views offered by these emerging super powers contested each other vociferously not only in philosophical terms but also in geopolitical maneuverings across the World. Thus, the bipolar structure characterized by geopolitical alliances offered the regional powers alternate options to be aligned with. During the period of Cold War, states like Pakistan had to position itself at one of the sides mainly because of regional security and strategic considerations. However, the Cold War rivalry at its last phase culminated into a military invasion in Afghanistan by USSR and this adventure dramatically changed the geopolitical considerations for Pakistan in South Asian region. The western border of Pakistan that hitherto was only ‘security stress’ for foreign policy abruptly turned into ‘strategic stress and strain’ for Pakistan. Zia ulHaq, the than military dictator in Pakistan sees opportunity in challenge-the security strain and strategic strain-offered by US alliance, was to be acclimatize in the best interest of the nation. The US provides millions of dollars to Pakistan to recruit train and arm the Islamist fighters who would eventually defeat the USSR in Afghanistan. The US achieved its goal as USSR disintegrated bringing end to the Cold War. The structural transformation of international politics basically depends on great powers’ shifting of geopolitical alliances while small powers have no or limited control over it.

The 2001 invasion of Afghanistan by the US is the second litmus test to gauge as to what extent great powers strategic decisions change the geopolitical environment in a region. The “strategic stress” over Pakistan was eloquent: “you are either with us or against us”. The US president GW Bush calls all allies to help in war against terror and he reiterated that there was no room for neutrality (CNN November, 6, 2001). Pakistan was the main ally to support in this war in terms of providing bases, supply route and intelligence sharing. The ‘security stress’ from Eastern border had reduced in aftermath of USSR withdrawal and installment of Taliban government in Afghanistan. But the event of 11th September, 2001 initially turned it into a high ‘strategic stress’ border for Pakistan. The US asked Pakistan for assistance in search of Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan. President Musharraf acquiesced to the demand partially with fear of US bombing on Pakistan in case of non-compliance. In addition to this, Musharraf hopes that Pakistan would be able enhance ‘strategic strain’ in terms of economic and military assistance from the US.

The US withdrew economic sanctions; imposed after nuclearization of country, and granted billions of aid in war against terror for Pakistan (Shah, 2007). Pakistan carried out her support to NATO forces in succeeding years. However, as time passed, terrorist elements infiltrated into Pakistan from the Afghan border and carried out terrorist attacks in Pakistan. The strategic calculations of Pakistan resulted into a mixed experience. ‘Security stress’ that was mitigated earlier at western border renewed with more sophistication- suicide attacks in big cities of Pakistan- and ‘strategic strain’ enhanced with help of the US assistance could not be sustained. Pakistan has to deal with internal ‘security stress’ posed by various factions of Islamists safe havened within the North West territories of Pakistan and in Afghanistan. In face of unabated terrorist attacks, National Action Plan called for military operations to eliminate the terrorists on Pakistani soil.(Khan 2019). Pakistan suffered heavy losses both in human and economic terms and the Eastern border security stress remains alarming.

BRI and South Asian Geopolitics

The emerging South Asian geopolitical environment is characterized by strategic and economic alliances unlike the geopolitical environment during Cold War and the Pre-BRI period. The rules of players on chessboard in Pre-BRI period emanates mainly from ‘security stress’ calculations. However, rise of China and its Road and Belt Initiative (BRI) gives a nuance trend based on economic incentives. It reshapes the world geopolitics in general and in particular the emerging geopolitical environment in South Asian region. Although, there are security concerns for China in the South Asian region and Chinese Western Province of Xinxiang but the strategic program BRI provides is more economic in its tone and it offers the allies a win-win situation. For Pakistan, BRI and its flagship project China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) offers ‘strategic strain’ in terms of sustainable economic development. There is less or no ‘strategic stress’ for Pakistan in becoming partner with China in this project. It is an outcome of mutual

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understanding and acceptance of terms and condition with free will. However, someone may argue that Pakistan’s strategic calculations in this project may include ‘security stress’ emanating from the Western border where a common enemy; India, poses security threats to both the partners. In such case, Chinese approach towards India seems more engaging in dialogue unlike India-Pakistan security strategic engagement.

Shifting of alliances in contemporary international geopolitical structure is mainly guided by the fact that China has attained capabilities at global level to compete strategically with the United States. The announcement of BRI by Chinese Premier is criticized by the US particularly with reference to Pakistan’s participation in CPEC project. The strategic rivalry between the US and China shapes the South Asian emerging geopolitics and Pakistan finds itself in uneasy way to navigate in between without losing trust and pleasure on either side. Pakistan is much concerned at eastern border where US withdrawal and peace settlement with Taliban bears challenging security stress. While the US administration criticize Pakistan’s alliance with China, it reiterates the key role of Pakistan in peace process in Afghanistan and it makes US-Pakistan alliance necessary for peace development in the region. While retaining Pakistan’s assistance in Afghan peace process, the United States’ South Asian policy shifts towards India to counter the growing China-Pakistan strategic alliance. Security stress for Pakistan on its western border remains a looming threat and it continues to deteriorate with increasing US-Indian partnership. The geopolitical and geostrategic calculations for Pakistan’s foreign policy in wake of US-China rivalry demands to retain steadfast partnership with China while not losing US alliance in the region.

Conclusion

The emerging geopolitical environment in South Asian region and its implications for Pakistan’s Foreign policy in contemporary time represents a scenario that demands Pakistan to rearticulate the national interest and objectives of foreign policy. The fundamental challenge to foreign policy of Pakistan is to minimize its security stress at regional level and to increase its partnership with regional and international powers. The geopolitical alliances for multilateral engagements at international level will help Pakistan to balance between the United States and China avoiding a zero sum game. At regional level, foreign policy stress required to be minimized by promoting relations with neighbours and promoting regional peace. In its international engagements, Pakistan has entered into Chinese BRI project by providing opportunity for China to construct Economic Corridor. The CPEC project is development based project which requires restructuring of economic system in Pakistan. In order to reframe economy there is dire need of policy modifications that would allow greater number of business community to play their role. Moreover, the CPEC is basically aimed to increase investment in Pakistan and it gives access to new markets for both China and Pakistan through enhanced regional connectivity. In order to sustain connectivity safe there is need to improve security strain that will ensure the success of the project and eventually this will enhanced strategic and security strain for Pakistan. In order to promote peace at its eastern border, Pakistan needs to engage Afghan government

politically and help the United States in strengthening Afghan national government. Pakistan should play its role in negotiations with Taliban in a good faith and try to remove mistrust and develop a joint security mechanism to respond imminent threats of rising terrorist organization like Daesh. At western border, Pakistan needs to resume bilateral relations with India in commerce and trade initially and then a comprehensive dialogue over Kashmir issue under the auspicious of the United Nations Organization.

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