

# Security Estimations in South Asia: Alliance Formation or Balance of Power

Farhan Hanif Siddiqi\*

## Abstract

*The article seeks to investigate how alliance formation and balance of power patterns will unfold in South Asia in the wake of an intensifying geopolitical rivalry between the United States and China. Both the United States (US) and China form an intrinsic part of South Asia's geopolitical security architecture through their embeddedness with both Pakistan and India. Historically, Pakistan relied on both American and Chinese security assistance in balancing against India while India relied more on the former Soviet Union and the US in its balancing game against Pakistan. As current geopolitical dynamics unfold with the US pivot to Asia, the rivalry and competition between the US and China is intensifying, bringing with it a similar dynamic in South Asia as Pakistan moves closer to China and India consolidates its alliance with the US. The paper concludes that, keeping current global security dynamics into perspective, the relational dynamics between Pakistan and India stands to unfold in a competitive and adversarial balance of power scenario.*

**Keywords:** Balance of Power, Alliances, Regional Security, South Asia, Pakistan, India, China.

## Introduction

The present article is a theoretical and analytical venture into the dynamics of regional geopolitics in South Asia in the wake of a developing Sino-American geo-strategic rivalry. The US rebalancing strategy in East Asia, including President Obama's assertion in 2013 that the 'war on terror is over,'<sup>1</sup> is leading to increased tensions between the United States and China. The intensity of American and Chinese discourse can be gauged with respect to developments in the South

---

\*The author is Associate Professor at the School of Politics and International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

<sup>1</sup> Peter Bergen, "Bush's war on terror is over," *CNN*, May 26, 2013, <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/05/24/opinion/bergen-end-of-terror-war/>.

China Sea with China warning the US that it should “not act blindly or make trouble out of nothing” and the US warning China not to “elbow aside” regional states that it is in conflict with.<sup>2</sup>

This relational dynamic between the status quo power (US) and revisionist power (China) is bound to have a key impact on the South Asian region, especially Pakistan and India. This is so because both Pakistan and India are bound in their relations with both China and the US. Although India and Pakistan harbour relations with both China and the US, political tensions between Pakistan and the US and between India and China are apparent. Despite being a US ally, Pakistan and the US have endured a difficult relationship as evidenced over the Raymond Davis affair, capture and killing of Osama bin Laden, the Salala check post attack besides American concerns over Pakistan’s nuclear weapons programme and its safety. On the other hand, relations between India and China despite their economic cooperation are marred by territorial disputes and India’s recent foray into the Indian Ocean as a naval power which China views with suspicion.

The article invokes the following arguments relative to balance of power and alliance patterns in South Asia in the future:

1. The regional balance of power in South Asia does not function autonomously of the global polar configuration. Regional states are assessing strategies of great powers and adjusting their own foreign policies accordingly.
2. Balance of power, whether regional or global, is not determined mainly and/or only through structural dynamics of the international system, such as anarchy.
3. The balance of threat theory explains best why states tend to balance against some and not all states — the rising power of China, for example, is not deemed a threat by Pakistan.
4. As China-US tense relations intensify in Asia-Pacific, and perhaps on a global scale, the regional balance of power and alliance patterns in South Asia will be shaped accordingly.
5. In terms of balance of power in South Asia, the following scenarios are possible:

---

<sup>2</sup> “Q&A: South China Sea Dispute,” *BBC News*, October 27, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-13748349>

- a. Pakistan balancing India via both China and the US (traditional Pakistan's foreign policy)
- b. Pakistan balancing India only via China not the US
- c. India balancing Pakistan via US

Two addendums can be made here:

- i. India cannot balance Pakistan via China (mainly due to durable Pakistan-China relations)
  - ii. Pakistan cannot balance India through US (mainly due to durable India-US relations)
6. In terms of alliance formation, the following scenarios are possible:
- a. Pakistan-China alliance against India
  - b. Pakistan-China alliance against the US
  - c. India-US alliance against Pakistan
  - d. India-US alliance against China

The major addendum here is:

- i. Pakistan-India alliance against China is a distinct possibility (mainly due to enduring rivalry between Pakistan and India)
- ii. Pakistan-India alliance against the US is a distinct possibility (mainly due to enduring rivalry between Pakistan and India)

The next section illuminates the article's main arguments through a theoretical exposition of the realist and neorealist schools of thought including the works of Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz, and Stephen Walt. The third section puts forth arguments relative to balance of power and alliance patterns in South Asia as they developed historically and are manifesting themselves in the contemporary era. The fourth section puts into perspective the implications of increased Sino-American hostility on the balance of power and alliance patterns in South Asia. The article concludes, rather pessimistically, that the South Asian regional geopolitics will be marred by an evolving dynamics of hostility between India and Pakistan where balance of power considerations will dominate and both the states will seek to maintain extra regional alliances in order to balance and contain each other.

### **Theoretical Discourse**

The study highlights two key theoretical traditions in International Relations, realism and neo-realism, in determining whether two states will ally or balance against each other.

Both realism and neo-realism privilege balance of power as an essential component of state's behaviour in international politics. Waltz goes on to assert that 'if there is any distinctively political theory of international politics, it is balance-of-power theory.'<sup>3</sup> However, realism and neo-realism differ in terms of their respective causalities, that is, what is it that causes a balance of power scenario to come about? Realism, with its theoretical emphasis on human agency (leaders, statesmen) argues that 'the aspiration for power on the part of several nations, each trying either to maintain or overthrow the status quo, leads of necessity to a constellation which is called balance of power and to policies which aim at preserving it.'<sup>4</sup> Morgenthau asserts that 'the balance of power and policies aiming at its preservation are not only inevitable, but an essential stabilising factor in a society of sovereign nations.'<sup>5</sup>

For Waltz, on the other hand, balance of power is not a conscious making of states or state elites, as Morgenthau contends, but it arises out of state's initial disposition to achieve security and survival. Waltz reasons that balance of power scenarios emerge automatically without the intention of states being necessarily of such nature. In this sense, Waltz's reasoning differs significantly from that of Morgenthau. Waltz's perspective on patterns of balancing and bandwagoning are best explained by him as:

In anarchy security is the highest end....because power is a means and not an end, states prefer to join the weaker of the two coalitions... if states wished to maximise power, they would join the stronger side, and we would not see balances forming but a world hegemony forged. This does not happen because balancing, not bandwagoning, is the behaviour induced by the system. The first concern of states is not to maximise power but to maintain their positions in the system.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup>Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979): 117.

<sup>4</sup>Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948): 125.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 125.

<sup>6</sup>Waltz, 126.

According to Waltz, since anarchy is the structural determinant, the behaviour of states tends to be suspicious leading to the dominance of relative gains over absolute gains and the inhibition of cooperation. In international relations, then, states tend not to bandwagon but balance against each other. When cooperating with each other, states are compelled to ask not, 'will both of us gain?' but 'who will gain more?'<sup>7</sup> According to Waltz, 'even the prospect of large absolute gains for both parties does not elicit their cooperation so long as each fears how the other will use its increased capabilities.'<sup>8</sup> In Waltz's reasoning then, balance of power is the primary perspective shaping state's foreign policies not because they choose to do so but that they are essentially conditioned to act that way by the structure of international anarchy.

If it is the structure of international anarchy that determines balance of power, it is worth exploring what effect it could have at the regional level. This leads to investigate whether it is merely anarchy (structural property) determining regional states' foreign policy calculations or global actors (behaviour of superpowers) which determine balance of power considerations at the regional level. Interestingly, both Morgenthau and Waltz portend an exclusivist analysis of foreign policy behaviour and balance of power which is mainly concerned with acts and policies of great powers. Since it is international politics that is the purview of both realist and neorealist theory, states besides the great powers are conveniently excluded from both theoretical and empirical purview. Waltz argues that it 'would be ridiculous to construct a theory of international politics based on Malaysia and Costa Rica' while Morgenthau argues that states relate to international politics only by way of power and only those states matter that are in the 'forefront of the power struggle.'<sup>9</sup> This raises the question about the status of regional powers and balance of power at the regional level.

Morgenthau, as opposed to Waltz, deliberates on local balance of power sub-systems ingrained in a global balance of power system. As to how this local (regional) balance of power system develops depends on

---

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 105.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 105.

<sup>9</sup>Farhan Hanif Siddiqi, "Pakistan and Singapore as Small Powers: Comparative Thematic Evaluation and Policy Imperatives," *African and Asian Studies* 13 (2014): 188.

whether the local system is based on the periphery, or otherwise, of the international system. According to Morgenthau, 'the more intimately a local balance of power is connected with the dominant one, the less opportunity it has to operate autonomously and the more it tends to become merely a localised manifestation of the dominant balance of power.'<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, balance of power scenarios, when they come to operate in terms of two separate blocs of states, tend to not only perpetuate their respective power against one another but also serve to 'defend the independence of their members against the imperialistic aspirations of the other coalition.'<sup>11</sup>

Stephen Walt makes a similar argument when he reiterates that states balance because they want to preserve their independence. Stephen Walt like Waltz reiterates that balancing is more common than bandwagoning but argues that states do not balance against power alone but they do so against threats. Walt thus proposes the balance of threat as a better alternative than balance of power theory.<sup>12</sup> However, Walt has a distinctive perspective on what shapes threat perception and whether it is material considerations such as the rise in military power of an adversary state. According to Walt, an alliance is a formal or informal arrangement for security cooperation between two or more states.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, balancing is defined as allying with others against the prevailing threat: and bandwagoning refers to alignment with the source of danger.<sup>14</sup>

Walt offers two explanations on why states balance: first, states balance because if they do not, they place their survival and independence at risk. Second, joining a weaker state or alliance against a hegemonic power increases a state's influence within the alliance because the weaker side has greater need for assistance.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, states also bandwagon which implies, according to Walt, that they are attracted to strength. The more powerful a state is and the more clearly its power is demonstrated, the more likely others are to ally with

---

<sup>10</sup>Morgenthau, 147.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 139.

<sup>12</sup>Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 5.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 18-19.

it.<sup>16</sup> This leads to investigate what is the source of a state's decision to ally and bandwagon with a powerful state. Walt reasons that bandwagoning can be chosen for defensive reasons, that is, as a means of preserving one's independence on the face of a potential threat and it can also be for offensive reasons, in which a state wants to share the spoils of victory by aligning with the hegemonic power/alliance.<sup>17</sup> 'Weak states can be expected to balance when threatened by states with roughly equal capabilities but they will be tempted to bandwagon when threatened by a great power.'<sup>18</sup>

In reconsidering Walt's analysis, it may be argued that balancing and bandwagoning are not two alternative strategies that states pursue but both balancing and bandwagoning are embedded in each other. Thus in reality, states tend to both balance and bandwagon. That is, they bandwagon in order to balance against another state/coalition and they maintain a balance of power by bandwagoning. Hence, Pakistan's military strategy was predicated on bandwagoning with the US in order to balance against India. Walt makes a distinction between balancing amongst the global powers as opposite to balancing by regional states. While global powers are predisposed to balancing against each other by taking into consideration aggregate power of the other side, regional states tend to balance against what they perceive are *threats* from other regional powers.<sup>19</sup> Hence, regional states are less concerned about how the global balance of power is manifesting itself even if it does it is with respect to the impact that it has on the state, which it considers as a regional threat. Walt asserts that 'concern for the global balance of power has played little or no role in the alliance choices of the regional states' and 'when regional states choose to enter an alliance (either with another regional state or with one of the superpowers), it is almost always in response to a threat from another regional power.'<sup>20</sup>

While Walt is right in asserting that for regional states the most imminent threat comes from their neighbours, not from superpowers, the latter are a determining element in regional balance of power scenarios.

---

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 21.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 30.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 153.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 158.

Paul argues rightly that ‘regional powers are less autonomous than great powers, and often it is the latter that undertake policies that preserve or upset regional balances.’<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, for regional states, the global power diffusion defines the choice of who to ally with internationally in order to balance against the regional adversary. The global balance of power is more apt to be taken into consideration when new global power formations are being established. For example, regional states and regional alliances went a significant change with the collapse of the Soviet Union as bandwagoning remained the only relevant choice for states. India, for example, fully embraced the United States while previously its foreign policy was more of non-aligned in nature and closer to the Soviet Union as it balanced against a US-allied Pakistan. Similarly, the present global configuration, the intensification of global geopolitics between the US and China, provides for the establishment of a new global superpower dynamic that will determine the choices and constraints for regional states in South Asia and in other regions.

There are many distinctive features about the South Asian balance of power which the traditional theories do not account for. Firstly, Morgenthau and Waltz’s theorisation, by its very nature, is relevant to international politics not to regional politics. However, both Morgenthau and Waltz’s theory can be applied at the regional level through estimating how balance of power between India and Pakistan comes out through systemic properties (anarchy) or through conscious policies of state elites bent on power maximisation (Morgenthau). Second, balance of power in South Asia with its own indigenous regional dynamics has to be seen in the context of the global balance of power played out by super powers. In this sense, regional states are seeking extra-regional allies for arms procurement and security in order to balance against their regional adversary. Regional states, it may be stated, are not concerned about losing their independence vis-à-vis great powers when they bandwagon with them. In fact, they are most concerned about their relative power vis-à-vis their regional competitor. Bandwagoning with superpowers allows for regional power to manifest their regional autonomy and independence even if the superpower subjects them to their own desires.

---

<sup>21</sup>T.V. Paul, “ Introduction: The Enduring Axioms of Balance of Power Theory and Their Contemporary Relevance,” in T.V. Paul, James J. Wirtz and Michael Fortmann, eds., *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 7.



Third, as hard balancing manifests itself globally between the US and China, the regional balance of power may well come to reflect the increasing global polarisation. In this case, the already hard balancing between India and Pakistan may well intensify as both the states consolidate their relative power position in competition with each other.

### **Balance of Power and Alliance Formation in South Asia: Historical Patterns and Contemporary Dynamics**

South Asian geopolitics has been characterised traditionally by hard balancing with threat perceptions between India and Pakistan the dominant, yet not permanent, feature of their securitisation dynamics since 1947. For Pakistan, regional threat perceptions came to be defined with India over the issue of Kashmir which was laden with shared experiences of the anti-colonial struggle where the Congress' propensity to keep India united was offset by the Muslim League's desire and determination to have a separate state for Muslims concentrated in the north-west and north-east India. With a weak institutional apparatus, Pakistan's bandwagoning with the US came as a direct response to the need to balance against India. Similarly, India pursuing a non-aligned foreign policy was a reaction to American alliance with Pakistan through bilateral defence arrangements, SEATO and CENTO, in the 1950s. Nehru adopted a policy of non-alignment between East and West but leaned heavily towards the Soviet Union for military support against the US-armed Pakistan.<sup>22</sup>

However, this configuration was not as neatly structured as the Anglophile post-colonial Indian and Pakistani states continued with their British-centric bureaucratic and military traditions. This meant that India was as tied to West as it was to the East through diplomatic and military engagements. Interestingly, the South Asian balance of power was upset more not with the India and Pakistan's bandwagoning with the two superpowers but with the entangling of China in the matrix of regional balance of power .

---

<sup>22</sup>Raju G. C. Thomas, "The South Asian Security Balance in a Western Dominant World," in T.V. Paul, James J. Wirtz and Michael Fortmann, eds., *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 312.

While Britain and the United States supported Pakistani positions in the United Nations, neither would extend their SEATO or CENTO commitments to include the defence of Pakistan in case of a war with India.<sup>23</sup> In China, opposite to the much reluctant United States, Pakistan found a worthy ally which was willing to aid it both materially and ideationally in its rivalry with India. Pakistan's courtship of China in the 1960s has led one commentator to dub the relationship as an 'opportunistic alliance' which developed mainly because of the Indian factor with no social or economic commonality.<sup>24</sup> However, even before the Sino-Indian border war, relations between Pakistan and China did not engender conflict and hostility despite Pakistan's firm security embeddedness with the US and its multilateral alliance structure in Middle East and Southeast Asia in the 1950s. Pakistan recognised Communist China in 1950 and, despite having a diametrically opposed ideology Pakistan accepted, the Chinese thesis that it was possible for nations with diverse social systems to co-exist peacefully.<sup>25</sup> However, according to Syed, the two states began to fall apart starting 1957 when the Pakistani Prime Minister Suhrawardy visited the United States and stood by John Foster Dulles in denouncing communist colonialism.<sup>26</sup>

However, material changes in the security relations as a result of the Sino-Indian border war of 1962 brought Pakistan and China closer to each other and their mutual perceptions have comfortably been placed within the ambit of amity since that time. When Chinese President Liu Shao-Chi visited Pakistan in the 1960s, he described Pak-China relations as friendship in righteous struggle (*mujahidana dosti*).<sup>27</sup> The addition of China into South Asia's balance of power matrix provided politico-military security to Pakistan despite the two states' distinct ideologies.

---

<sup>23</sup>Stephen P. Cohen, "Pakistan and the Cold War," in Chandra Chari, ed., *Superpower Rivalry and Conflict: The long shadow of the Cold War on the twenty-first century* (London: Routledge, 2010), 77.

<sup>24</sup>Sangit Sarita Dwivedi, "Exploring Strategies and Implications of an Opportunistic Alliance: A Case Study of Pakistan and China," *Asian Journal of Political Science* 21, no. 3 (2012): 307.

<sup>25</sup>Niloufer Mahdi, "Sino-Pakistan Relations: Historical Background," *Pakistan Horizon* 39, no. 4 (1986): 60.

<sup>26</sup>Anwar Hussain Syed, *China and Pakistan: Diplomacy of an Entente Cordiale* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1974), 72.

<sup>27</sup>Abdul Sattar, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy, 1947-2005: A Concise History* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2007), 105.

Walt's argument may be readily invoked that threat perceptions and their relevance defined why Pakistan moved closer to China, not to the Soviet Union. It was not about Communism as much as the fact that the Soviet Union was perceived as a threat by Pakistan's security apparatus.

Pakistan's bandwagoning with China has solidified since the 1960s. While Beijing modified its stance on the Kashmir issue and came close to India through greater economic linkages in the 1990s, Garver infers that 'the underlying strategic rationale and component of the Sino-Pakistan entente cordiale remains unchanged.'<sup>28</sup> The Sino-Pakistan entente cordiale continues to grow and solidify and China remains Pakistan's most trusted partner and ally. China has periodically supplied Pakistan with various forms of nuclear, missile and other related technology.<sup>29</sup> While the United States embarked on weapons sanctions against Pakistan through the Pressler Amendment and chose to contain its nuclear weapons program, China continued to supply Pakistan with sensitive nuclear technology.<sup>30</sup>

Recently, Pak-China relations which were traditionally strategically oriented have now moved into the economic domain. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) with an investment of US\$ 46 billion by Beijing in 2015 has been a most significant development.<sup>31</sup> The Corridor which entails the complete functioning of Gwadar Port will cut down by almost one-third the ocean distance that it takes to ship oil from the Middle East to China. At present, the supply line to China runs over the Dubai-Shanghai-Urumqi ocean route which is over 10,000 km as compared to ocean and land route through Dubai-Gwadar-Urumqi which spans 3,600 km.<sup>32</sup> In short, CPEC is the Suez Canal of China

---

<sup>28</sup>John W. Garver, "Sino-Indian Rapprochement and the Sino-Pakistan Entente," *Political Science Quarterly* 111, no. 2 (1996): 324.

<sup>29</sup>Paul J. Smith, "The China-Pakistan-United States Strategic Triangle: From Cold War to the War on Terrorism" *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 38, no. 4 (2011): 204.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.* 208.

<sup>31</sup>"China's Xi Jinping agrees \$46 billion superhighway to Pakistan," *BBC News*, April 20, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32377088>

<sup>32</sup>Zafar Butta, "Gwadar Port: Pakistan, China all set to develop master plan," *Express Tribune*, 15 February 2014, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/671852/gwadar-port-pakistan-china-all-set-to-develop-master-plan/>

designed to reduce transportation costs and time. India has expressed its reservation and fears over the corridor charging that this puts in place China's famous 'string of pearls' strategy.<sup>33</sup>

India's balance of power strategy is premised on off-setting the growing Pak-China alliance through forging and strengthening its political, military and economic linkages with the United States. In fact, the US is now pushing India to assume the position of a pressing military actor in the Indian Ocean giving rise to fears on the part of China. The former Indian Defence Minister A.K. Antony in 2009 reiterated that, 'The increasing nexus between China and Pakistan in military sphere remains an area of serious concern. We have to carry out continuous appraisals of Chinese military capabilities and shape our responses accordingly. At the same time, we need to be vigilant at all times.'<sup>34</sup>

The Chinese have voiced apprehension over their encirclement in South East Asia as the United States pushes forth with its pivot strategy bent on forging military alliances and ties with China's neighbours in that region. According to Sood, 'The Chinese response to this encirclement has been to forge trade and military relationship with India's immediate neighbours, a reverse entrapment of India, strategically.'<sup>35</sup> Thus, while for decades, Washington and New Delhi were neither allies nor adversaries, but often found themselves on opposite sides of key issues. However, the rise of China is pushing the two states closer to each other and is the main driver of their improved relations.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup>Indrani Bagchi, "India irked as China gets Pakistan's strategic Gwadar Port," *Times of India*, February 2, 2013, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-irked-as-China-gets-Pakistans-strategic-Gwadar-port/articleshow/18299006.cms>

<sup>34</sup>*Dawn* (Karachi), November 28, 2009.

<sup>35</sup>Vikram Sood, "India and Regional Security Interests," in Alyssa Ayres and C. Raja Mohan, eds., *Power Realignment in Asia: China, India, and the United States* (London: Sage Publications, 2009), 260.

<sup>36</sup>Evan Braden Montgomery, "Competitive Strategies against Continental Powers: The Geopolitics of Sino-Indian-American Relations," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 36, no. 1 (2013): 91.

## **Sino-US Rivalry in Asia-Pacific: Implications for South Asian Balance of Power and Alliance Formation**

Varshney points out two discourses taking shape in the United States with respect to China: the economic discourse which seeks to engage China and the security discourse which seeks to contain it.<sup>37</sup> The security discourse is gaining momentum in the United States as evident in the “pivot” strategy which defines the growing US threat perception relative to China. The word “pivot” was adopted in 2011 in US policy statements on East Asia and gained wide credence when Secretary Clinton wrote an article for *Foreign Policy*, titled, “America’s Pacific Century.” In this article, “pivot” refers to a “strategic turn”, meaning substantially increasing US diplomatic, economic, strategic, and other investment in the Asia-Pacific Region as a counterweight to China.<sup>38</sup> Wong and Yue argue that after the disintegration of the former Soviet Union, the US containment policy has shifted towards China.<sup>39</sup> Interestingly, as the US containment strategy vis-à-vis China takes shape, US-India relations have undergone a radical improvement in South Asia due to mutual concerns over the rise of China.<sup>40</sup>

In 2005, the US signed a nuclear deal with India. According to Pant, ‘the Indo-US nuclear deal has virtually rewritten the rules of the global nuclear regime by underlining India’s credentials as a responsible nuclear state that should be integrated into the global nuclear order.’<sup>41</sup> Pant argues that the deal is ‘just a first step towards a future realignment of global power.’<sup>42</sup> According to the deal, ‘India has agreed that fourteen of its twenty-two nuclear reactors would be classified as civilian and

---

<sup>37</sup>Ashutosh Varshney, “A New Triangle: India, China and the US,” *Seminar* 557 (2006), <http://www.india-seminar.com/semframe.html>

<sup>38</sup>Ling, Wei, “Rebalancing or De-balancing: US Pivot and East Asian Order,” *American Foreign Policy Interests: The Journal of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy* 35, no. 3 (2013): 149.

<sup>39</sup>Pak Nung Wong and Wai Kay Ricky Yue, “US-China Containment and Counter-Containment in Southeast Asia: The “Battle” for Myanmar (Burma),” *African and Asian Studies* 13 (2014): 34.

<sup>40</sup>Montgomery, “Competitive Strategies against Continental Powers: The Geopolitics of Sino-Indian-American Relations,” 76.

<sup>41</sup>Harsh V. Pant, “The US-India nuclear deal: The beginning of a beautiful relationship,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 20 (2007): 455.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 471.

would be open to international safeguards. The other reactors, including the fast breeder reactors, will remain as military facilities, thereby not subject to international inspections.’<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, ‘India has accepted safeguards in perpetuity on its civilian nuclear reactor on the basis of a reciprocal commitment by the US to guarantee unlimited nuclear fuel supply to India for its civilian programme.’<sup>44</sup>

In response to the Indo-US nuclear deal, Pakistan and China signed a civilian nuclear agreement whereby China would assist Pakistan in building two nuclear power reactors in Karachi.<sup>45</sup> The US\$9.5 billion project seeks to enhance power generation in Karachi and, in some ways, signals a counterpoise to the developing nuclear axis between India and the US. Reacting to the deal, India raised the issue with China with Sushma Swaraj asserting in the Indian parliament that, ‘India is well prepared to deal with threats... we are fully alert... we will not allow any harm to happen to India.’<sup>46</sup>

One analysis points to the growing strategic competition between India and the US, on the one hand, and China, on the other hand, over the Indian Ocean region and asserts that the future scenario will resemble one of ‘dynamic and manageable competition’ not necessarily about conflict and rivalry. That is, India, China and the US have common interests in maintaining regional peace and stability in the Indian Ocean Region.<sup>47</sup> However, on the other hand, regional security complexes are intensifying in the South China Sea leading to portrayal of China as an aggressor with the other regional states mainly in a defensive posture. China and Indonesia had a recent sparring over the South China Sea with

---

<sup>43</sup>Harsh Pant, “The Indo-US nuclear deal,” *The RUSI Journal* 151 (2006): 61.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>45</sup>Mehreen Zahra-Malik, “Exclusive: China commits \$6.5 billion for Pakistan nuclear project,” *Reuters*, December 24, 2013, [www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-china-nuclear-idUSBRE9BN06220131224](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-china-nuclear-idUSBRE9BN06220131224)

<sup>46</sup>“Government concerned over China-Pakistan nuclear deal: SushmaSwaraj,” *Daily News and Analysis*, December 17, 2014, [www.dnaindia.com/india/report-government-concerned-over-china-pakistan-nuclear-deal-sushma-swaraj-2044736](http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-government-concerned-over-china-pakistan-nuclear-deal-sushma-swaraj-2044736)

<sup>47</sup>Chunhao Lou, “US-India-China Relations in the Indian Ocean: A Chinese Perspective,” *Strategic Analysis* 36, no. 4 (2012): 636.

the latter proclaiming that ‘Indonesia will deploy US made F-16 fighter jets to ward off ‘thieves’ in an apparent reference to China.’<sup>48</sup>

The conflict between China and the other regional states have taken on a new momentum since 2012 and it has led to the US intervening on behalf of the regional states opposed to what they believe is Chinese expansionism. While holding military exercises with the Philippines,<sup>49</sup> the US along with India and Japan plan to conduct joint naval exercises in the northern waters of the Philippine Sea, an area close to the East and South China Seas.<sup>50</sup> US Pacific Commander Adm. Harry Harris said that “on the security front we need India’s leadership in the Indo-Asia-Pacific.” He has also proposed a four-way security dialogue including India, Japan, Australia and the US.<sup>51</sup> China, in response, has categorically asked the US to be careful in the South China Sea and has slammed a newly signed agreement between Washington and the Philippines.<sup>52</sup>

At this point of the study, it needs to be accessed what impact, presumably, Sino-Indian rivalry will have on the South Asian balance of power and alliance patterns and also that whether Chinese-American divisions will cause intensification of Indo-Pakistan divisions. Moreover, it also needs to be evaluated whether China-Pakistan nexus opposed to Indo-US nexus is likely to emerge. Traditionally, Pakistan has relied on both Chinese and American assistance as it has sought to balance India, however, its history of relations with the US has been more prone to crises as opposed to China.

---

<sup>48</sup>Chris Brummitt and Rieka Rahadiana, “Indonesia will defend South China Sea territory with F-16 fighter jets,” *Bloomberg*, April 01, 2016, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-03-31/indonesia-to-deploy-f-16s-to-guard-its-south-china-sea-territory>

<sup>49</sup>“US, Philippines to launch military drills near South China Sea,” *Press TV*, April 02, 2016, <http://presstv.ir/Detail/2016/04/02/458736/US-Philippines-China-military-war-games/>

<sup>50</sup>Niharika Mandhana, “US, India, Japan plan joint naval exercises near South China Sea,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 3, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-india-japan-plan-joint-naval-exercises-near-south-china-sea-1457010828>

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>“China to US: ‘Be Careful’ in South China Sea,” *Defense News*, March 31, 2016, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/2016/03/31/china-us-careful-south-china-sea/82495812/>

The United States, for example, failed to come to Pakistan's side during the 1965 war. It also displayed serious opposition, and still does, to Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme. The Pressler Amendment was invoked as soon as the Russians left Afghanistan, and Pakistan was no longer needed as a frontline state. However, after 9/11, the Americans once again rushed to Pakistan to help them deal with the threat of al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Even during the War on Terror, relations between the United States and Pakistan, at most times, have remained cold and frosty. Pakistani state elites contend that despite their sincere efforts to defeat extremism and losing the lives of 80,000 Pakistanis in the process (with civilians making up more than half of the casualties),<sup>53</sup> Washington still wants Islamabad to do more.

On the contrary, China always stood by Pakistan even during the time when Chinese engineers were kidnapped or killed in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and also when an alleged linkage, according to Hosenball and Cornwell, between Uighur separatists in Xinjiang belonging to the East Turkestan Islamic Movement and militants in the FATA region were found. Whereas the Americans have made public statements condemning Pakistan,<sup>54</sup> the Chinese have refrained from doing so and used official and private diplomatic channels to ensure their interests were respected. Second, with the CPEC project, Chinese investments in Pakistan are growing while the obverse is true for the United States, which is withdrawing a great deal of investments. .<sup>55</sup>

## Conclusion

As China consolidates its relations with Pakistan and the United States with India, amidst increasing tensions between the US and China over the South China Sea, it may be argued that traditional balance of power politics with hard balancing might manifest itself more stringently in

---

<sup>53</sup>“80,000 Pakistanis killed in US ‘War on Terror’: Report,” *Express Tribune*, March 29, 2015, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/860790/80000-pakistanis-killed-in-us-war-on-terror-report/>

<sup>54</sup>Mark Hosenball and Susan Cornwell, “US blames Pakistan agency in Kabul attack,” *Reuters*, September 22, 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-pakistan-idUSTRE78K7XA20110922>

<sup>55</sup>“China leads FDI inflow in Pakistan,” *Express Tribune*, February 17, 2016, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1048174/foreign-investment-china-leads-fdi-inflow-in-pakistan/>



South Asia. Pakistani threat perceptions are being shaped in a competitive dynamic with the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Raheel Sharif proclaiming, that ‘hostile intelligence agencies are averse to this grand project (CPEC)’ and ‘RAW is blatantly involved in attempts at destabilising Pakistan.’<sup>56</sup> India has expressed its fears and reservations relative to the CPEC specifically as it was announced last year and the Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj complained about the proposed corridor running through Pakistani Kashmir’s territory which India disputes.<sup>57</sup>

Both Pakistan and India are increasingly expressing hostility despite gaining some momentum towards a peaceful orientation of relations. This hostility is aided by an emerging global balance of power geopolitics that pits China against the United States. Pakistan and Chinese alliance is consolidating, at both political-strategic and economic levels, whereby balancing against India is the predominant interest. On the other hand, the closeness and affinity and a shared inter subjective understanding, real or imagined, drives India and the United States closer to each other. In this sense, Indian overtures towards the United States are designed to balance against Pakistan and China. Keeping current geopolitical dynamics into perspective, South Asian geopolitics stands to unfold in a competitive and adversarial relationship in the future mirroring similar trends at the global level.

---

<sup>56</sup>SaleemShahid, “India out to sabotage CPEC: Raheel,” *Dawn*, April 13, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1251784>

<sup>57</sup>“India’s objections to CPEC,” *Dawn*, June 3, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1185779>