

## **Redefining the Indian Factor in China-Pakistan Relations in post-Cold War Era**

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A qualitative shift in the international and regional power structures has been observed in the aftermath of the Cold War. These changing paradigms of international and regional power arrangements compelled the regional and global actors to re-examine and re-interpret their foreign policy pursuits in the light of their foreign policy goals. The dismemberment of the Soviet Union and subsequently the emergence of the U.S.A. as the sole superpower of the world, have reshaped the contours of the world power structure. The bipolar international power structure of the Cold War era vanished in consequence of the end of the Cold War and paved the way for the new world order of unipolarity. By the same token, at the regional level, the power equations of the Cold War times also lost their significance; as a result, new sets of bilateral and multilateral strategic arrangements surfaced, for instance:

- The U.S.-China strategic cooperation of the Cold War era—meant to check Soviet hegemonic designs—became irrelevant proposition because of growing strategic cooperation between Russia and China in the post-Cold War time.
- Similarly, the Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty—intended to use India as a counter weight against China by the Soviet Union—also lost its validity because of Sino-Indian enchantment and multilateral strategic cooperation between Russia and the Central Asian Republics (C.A. Rs.).
- And the Sino-Pakistan strategic partnership of the Cold War period—aimed to check Indian hegemonism and Soviet strategic moves in the region—also became a feeble strategic budge because of emerging Sino-Russian and Sino-Indian rapprochements.

The purpose of this article is to examine the last proposition in general and with particular reference to China-Pakistan-India triangular relations, focusing on Indian factor as a determinant in Sino-Pakistan bilateral relations. Historical analysis of the Sino-Pakistan relations reveals that during the Cold War epoch, the Indian factor remained a

major determinant in China-Pakistan relations. The common rivalry of China and Pakistan with India worked as a catalyst in Sino-Pakistan cordiality during the Cold War era. One of the objectives of the article is to re-investigate and re-interpret the validity of the Indian factor in Sino-Pakistan relations in the changed realities of the post-Cold War era.

### **Sino-Pakistan Relations before 1962**

Uptill 1962 the tide of Sino-Pakistan relations was on the ebb. G. W. Choudhry has correctly maintained that prior to 1962 China and Pakistan were 'neither friends nor enemies but strangers'.<sup>1</sup> The main reason for the lukewarm relations between the two neighbouring countries was Pakistan's endeavours to achieve foreign policy goals through ideological bickering. In early years, Pakistani policy makers tried to use religion as the tool to achieve their foreign policy objectives. Consequently, they approached the Muslim states in the name of Muslim brotherhood to meet the security threat from India and to prop crippling economy. S. M. Burke has maintained that for the founding fathers of Pakistan the purpose of the creation of a Muslim state in South Asia was not limited only to the cause of Indian Muslims but 'it was a necessary milestone on the journey towards the ultimate goal of universal Muslim solidarity'.<sup>2</sup> The first Prime Minister of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan wanted to see Muslim brotherhood as a 'living reality'.<sup>3</sup> The third Governor General of Pakistan, Ghulam Muhammad was ambitious to forge a bloc of Muslim states with the objective to build 'a system of collective bargaining and collective security'.<sup>4</sup> Ayub Khan's main thrust was on equipping Pakistan to fight against the dual ideological menace of Communism and Hinduism.<sup>5</sup>

The unfolding events of the late 40s and early 50s suggest that the response of the Muslim countries towards Pakistan's cry for Muslim solidarity was very disappointing. It was the time when several Muslim

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<sup>1</sup> G.W. Choudhry, *India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Major Powers: Politics of Divided Subcontinent* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), p.49.

<sup>2</sup> S.M. Burke and Lawrence Ziring, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: An Historical Analysis*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.65.

<sup>3</sup> M.S. Agwani, 'Pakistan and Pan-Islamism', appeared in K. Arif, (ed.), *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: Indian Perspective* (Lahore: Vanguard, 1984), p.291.

<sup>4</sup> *Dawn*, 26 November 1949.

<sup>5</sup> Amanullah Memon, *The Altaf Gauhar Papers: Documents Towards the Making of 1962 Constitution* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1995), p.27

states emerged on the world map not on the basis of religious ideology but on the ideological bedrock of territorial and ethnic nationalism. 'Arab nationalists in the Middle East or in Indonesia' says K. B. Sayeed, 'did not attach as great an importance to Islam as the Pakistanis did'.<sup>6</sup> Muslim world's cold-shoulder to Pakistan's endeavour of building the Muslim bloc, compelled the policy-makers of Pakistan to search for alternatives. Consequently, they approached the capitalist world again on the ideological grounds.

It was the time when the world was divided into two blocs—communist and capitalist. Pakistani political elite decided to join the latter and tried to justify their decision in the light of ideological compulsions. Liaquat Ali Khan, during his U.S. visit, tried to comport Pakistan's internal and external policy pursuits with the U. S. by saying that both countries consider Communism an antithesis to their ideologies and both utterly respect 'the rights of private ownership, and private enterprises'. Liaquat Ali Khan, during his Washington visit, presented his country's case for American military and economic assistance solely on the basis of potential threat of communist Soviet Union and China. According to Venkatramani:

He (Liaquat Ali Khan) said that highly organized and well-financed communist groups inspired by Soviet Union were seeking to mount acts of terrorism, including assassination of leaders. The aim, Liaquat Ali said, was to create disorder and demoralization – conditions under which coup could be engineered. He expressed regrets that while the United States had moved with admirable determination to help Western Europe, it had failed to provide adequate assistance to Chiang Kai-shek. After China, it was likely that India would fall a victim to Communism because of its dissension, poverty and ignorance. Pakistan then be the last bulwark between the Middle East and the Communists. The Western powers should strengthen Pakistan militarily and economically to enable it to meet whatever dangers the future might bring.<sup>7</sup>

These perceptions of Pakistani leadership safely convinced West and the U. S. to regard Pakistan as 'more realistic than India about the danger from Communism'.<sup>8</sup> The U. S. Secretary of State, Dulles,

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<sup>6</sup> Khalid B. Sayeed, *The Political System of Pakistan*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, p.284.

<sup>7</sup> M.S. Venkatramani, *The American Role in Pakistan 1947-1958* (Lahore Vanguard Books, 1984), p.74.

<sup>8</sup> *U.S. News and World Report*, 30 October 1953.

reporting to the U. S. Congress, portrayed people of Pakistan as ‘very strong in their Islamic faith which is absolutely opposed as our faith is, to the views of Soviet Communism...’<sup>9</sup> This synonymity of the views between Pakistan and the western powers facilitated Pakistan’s entry in the western system of security alliances. In 1954 Pakistan joined SEATO and after one year it entered into another western pact—the Baghdad pact later known as CENTO.

### **China-Pakistan relations after 1962**

In the late 50s a dramatic change had been observed in China-India relations. The cordiality of the early fifties<sup>10</sup> between the two countries transformed into bitter rivalry due to border conflict between the two countries. In 1959 China started constructing a road link between the Xinjiang Autonomous Region and Tibet through Aksai chin. Indian claimed Aksai chin as India territory and proclaimed China’s act as aggression. Indian Prime Minister, Jawahar Lal Nehru, conveyed to the Chinese ‘not to underestimate India’s firm resolve to defend its integrity against any aggression...’<sup>11</sup>

Pakistan’s immediate reaction to the Sino-Indian dispute was against the communist China and in favour of its archrival India. Pakistan’s military ruler Ayub Khan condemned communist China for invading Indian territory and depicted China as a mutual threat for India and Pakistan. He further ‘emphasized necessity of India and Pakistan coming together to meet the danger’.<sup>12</sup> Ayub Khan’s offer of joining

<sup>9</sup> Brian Cloughley, *History of Pakistan Army*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.33.

<sup>10</sup> On 29 April 1954, India and China signed an agreement which recognized Tibet as the integral part of China. Further more, both countries mutually agreed to develop their relations on the basis of five principles of called *Panchsheel*. These five principles are: Mutual respect for each others integrity and sovereignty, Mutual non-aggression, Non-interference in the internal affairs, Equality and Mutual benefits, Peaceful coexistence. For the further study see S. M. Burke, *Mainsprings of India and Pakistan Foreign Policies* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1975), p.144; S.M. Burke and Lawrence Ziring, *Pakistan’s Foreign Policy: An Historical Analysis, op.cit.*, pp.224-25, also see Farida J. Aziz, *New World Order –The 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Islamabad: Moiz Corporation, 1992), p.192.

<sup>11</sup> Stanley Wolpert, *Zulfi Bhutto of Pakistan* (..... Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 73

<sup>12</sup> Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, *The Third World New Karachi Direction* (London: Quartet Books, 1977), pp. 44, 110-12. Also see S.M. Burke and Lawrence Ziring, *op. cit.*, p.232.

hands against China was turned down by the Indian leadership, which caused anxiety among the Pakistani leadership. This anxiety further aggravated when in 1962 Sino-Indian scuffle culminated into a battle. Pakistan's uneasiness reached its height when its western allies supported India without taking into account Pakistan's security concerns.

The decision of the western powers and the U.S.A. to assist India in strengthening its military power was a major turning point in Pakistan's foreign policy behaviour. The massive material support to India was, indeed, a matter of great concern for Pakistan. Ayub Khan in a statement said that 'the serious concern' existed 'in the minds of our people that these weapons' might 'well be used against them in the absence of an over all settlement (of Pakistan's disputes) with India'.<sup>13</sup>

On 29 December 1962, long after the cease-fire on the India-China border, the United States and Britain decided to continue to supply India, on an emergency basis with up to 120 million dollars worth military aid. The programme included a variety of military equipment but its central feature was the arming of six Indian divisions for mountain warfare.<sup>14</sup>

It was apparent that such a substantial military aid to India would upset the military balance in the region. The irony was that despite the ceasefire and withdrawal of the Chinese forces, the western and U. S. military support for India continued even after the ceasefire between India and China. Confronted with a situation in which the U. S. had at best only a lukewarm interest in Pakistan's security vis-à-vis India, Ayub's government began to look elsewhere for international support. Ayub's decision to end Pakistan's past reliance on essentially one country for its security was a clear message to Washington that Pakistan was becoming increasingly disenchanted with America's poor stance on Kashmir. Even Foreign Minister Muhammad Ali Bogra—traditionally a staunch advocate of the U.S. declared that 'there could be no eternal friends nor could there be eternal enemies. The only thing eternal was national interest'.<sup>15</sup> So Ayub decided to pursue a policy of 'bilateralism'—to 'establish normal relations

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<sup>13</sup> Based on the statement of President Ayub Khan issued from Rawalpindi on 5 November 1962. See Muhammed Ayub. Khan, (n.d.), *Speeches and Statements*, v. 5, July 1962-June 1963 (n.p.), p. 53; Mohammad Ayub Khan, *Friends not Masters: A Political Autobiography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p.134.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Burke and Ziring, *op cit.*, p. 288. On the authority of *National Assembly Debates*, 22 November 1962.

with the three major powers (U.S.A., U.S.S.R. and P.R.C.) involved in Asia without antagonizing any of them'.<sup>16</sup>

Pakistan's post-1962 foreign policy pursuits adequately represent a shift in Pakistan's policy. Now, Pakistan began to develop its relations with the communist countries—China and the Soviet Union—and re-strengthened its relations with the Muslim states purely on bilateral grounds without playing ideological overtones. In consequence of the post-1962 shift in Pakistan's foreign policy, Sino-Pakistan relations entered into a new phase. The Pakistani and Chinese convergence of interests had been developing over several years but it suddenly gathered strength in the aftermath of the 1962 Sino-Indian border clash. For their own reasons, both countries strongly condemned the increased American and Soviet military aid to India during and after the 1962 Sino-India border clash. On the one hand, China correctly assessed support for India as an effort by the U. S. and USSR to contain the P.R.C. On the other hand, Pakistan considered that development not only as an American betrayal of its past assurances regarding the supply of weapons to India, but also viewed the delivery of weapons to India as strengthening India's military position vis-à-vis Pakistan. The mutual antagonism of China and Pakistan against India facilitated their rapprochement. Moreover, they could benefit from closer ties with one another. China was seen as an alternative source of military and diplomatic support, and Pakistan as a potential outlet for Chinese desire to improve relations with Asia and the Muslim World.<sup>17</sup>

On 18 November 1960, Pakistani cabinet in a special meeting decided, 'not (to) adopt rigid posture to Russia (Soviet Union) and China'. In that meeting it was also resolved, that if the 'U.S., for its reasons, did not support us against India...' then we should 'fend for ourselves in this field'. In that meeting, the cabinet resolved to inform the U.S. that Pakistan had decided to support P.R.C's case in the next session of the United Nations.<sup>18</sup> Later on, Pakistan took an initiative and approached China for mutually agreed demarcation of the border between the two countries. In this regard, the Government of Pakistan sent a formal note to China on 28 March 1961, expressing the desire to demarcate the boundary of Chinese Xinjiang with

<sup>16</sup> Muhammad Ayub Khan, *Friends not Masters*, *op.cit.*, p. 118. These three powers were the U.S., the U.S.S.R. and the P.R.C.

<sup>17</sup> G.W. Choudhry, *op.cit.*, pp. 35-6.

<sup>18</sup> K. Arif, *China Pakistan Relations: Documents* (Lahore: Vanguard, 1984), p.26.

the Gilgit-Hunza-Baltistan territory<sup>19</sup> China took a long time to reply Pakistan's request. Ayub Khan in his autobiography has mentioned that in December 1961, on his return from the U. S., Chinese Ambassador came to see him and asked Pakistan's support for Chinese seat for P.R.C. in the U.N. Ayub Khan asked him about Pakistan's proposal regarding the demarcation of the boundary between the two countries. The Ambassador's reply to Ayub Khan was that it was 'a very complicated matter'. Ayub Khan responded: 'If the border issue was a very complicated matter, China's admission to the United Nations was even more complicated'. This encounter paved the way for the solution of the 'very complicated matter'<sup>20</sup>—demarcation of boundary line between China and Pakistan. Later on, on 28 December 1962, a joint communiqué was issued by China and Pakistan regarding the attainment of the border agreement between the two countries. Finally, the long awaited border agreement was signed between China and Pakistan on 2 March 1963.<sup>21</sup> Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Minister of External Affairs signed the agreement on behalf of the Government of Pakistan and Chen Yi, Minister of Foreign Affairs was the signatory for the Government of P.R.C. According to article one, two parties agreed to delimit 'the boundaries between China's Sinkiang (Xinjiang) and the contiguous area, the defence of which is under the actual control of Pakistan, ... on the basis of the traditional customary boundary line including natural features and in spirit of equality, mutual benefit and friendly cooperation'.<sup>22</sup> By virtue of the border agreement, 'Pakistan got 1,350 square miles, including 750 square miles under Chinese control, while China was left with 250 square miles which were already under its occupation'.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, Pakistan's decision to support P. R. C's membership in the United Nations led to China's decision to back Pakistan's demand for a plebiscite in Kashmir. Zhou Enlai, even went as far as to declare that his country 'would defend Pakistan throughout the

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<sup>19</sup> Mujtaba Razvi, *The Frontiers of Pakistan: A Study of Frontier Problems in Pakistan's Foreign Policy* (Karachi: National Publishing House, 1971), p.173.

<sup>20</sup> Mohammad Ayub Khan, *Friends not Masters*, *op.cit.*, p.162.

<sup>21</sup> According the communiqué the two parties were 'highly satisfied with the speedy attainment of agreement of boundary question left over by history...' See Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Joint Communiqués: January, 1958-December, 1967* (Rawalpindi: Ferozsons, 1975), pp.95-6.

<sup>22</sup> See the 'Boundary Agreement Between China and Pakistan', reproduced in *Pakistan Horizon*, Karachi: 16:2 (1963), pp.177-81.

<sup>23</sup> Mujtaba Razvi, *op.cit.*, p.176.

world'.<sup>24</sup> Thus, by the time the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war erupted, Sino-Pakistan relations were well established, not on the basis of friendship, but because of the fact that the 'national interests' of the two countries coincided. The Indian reaction to Sino-Pakistan agreement was a bitter one. It proclaimed that Pakistan had no right to sign any agreement regarding the boundaries of Kashmir, which according to them, was the integral part of the Indian Union. The U. S. response to Sino-Pakistan border agreement was also critical, who declared that Pakistan had weakened its loyalty to SEATO by signing the border agreement with China.<sup>25</sup>

The future course of events witnessed a close strategic cooperation between China and Pakistan against the Indian moves in the region. In 1965 war between India and Pakistan, China did not stand aside instead it strongly condemned Indian act of aggression against Pakistan. On 7<sup>th</sup> September 1965, China strongly condemned Indian belligerence and called it a 'naked aggression' intended to spoil the peace of the region. It further warned India for the consequences of that criminal aggression.<sup>26</sup> Besides strong verbal condemnations and warnings China made its forces alert on Sino-Indian border and issued an ultimatum to the Indian government to dismantle all the Indian military works on the Chinese side of China-Sikkim border.<sup>27</sup> Such bold steps by the Chinese leadership strengthened Pakistan's position against India. During the war, Ayub Khan visited China along with Z.A. Bhutto for the purpose to seek Chinese help against India. During the talks Ayub Khan expressed his worries about the numerical superiority of India. Chinese leaders were of the opinion that 'numerical superiority would be of no avail to the Indians in a prolonged war. Even if one or two major cities were lost, the Pakistani forces, supported by the patriotic people, could inflict crippling blows on the invaders'.<sup>28</sup> But the Pakistani leadership was not ready for a prolonged 'people's war' against India, contrary they were desperately looking for easy escape. 'The whole foreign office strategy was designated as a quick-fix to force the Indians to the negotiating table'.<sup>29</sup> Despite the fact that China was not happy with Pakistan's war strategy yet they boldly supported Pakistan during the difficult hours.

<sup>24</sup> *Dawn*, 18 June 1963. See also, Burke and Ziring, *op.cit.*, p.293.

<sup>25</sup> Mujtaba Razvi, *op.cit.*, p.177.

<sup>26</sup> *Peking Review*, No.37, 10 September 1965, pp.5-7

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, No.39, 24 September 1965, p.8-9

<sup>28</sup> Altaf Gauhar, *Ayub Khan Pakistan's First Military Ruler* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 1993), p.352-53.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*



In 1971, despite China's strong reservations regarding Pakistan's handling of the East Pakistan crisis, China once again supported Pakistan in its war with India. China opposed Pakistan's policy of resolving the East Pakistan crisis by military means instead it wanted Pakistan to resolve the question through meaningful political dialogues with the Awami League leadership.<sup>30</sup> In April 1971, Pakistan's representative, Sultan M. Khan visited Beijing and met the Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai. During the meeting the former got impression that the Chinese leadership had strong reservations about Pakistan's policy of using force against the Bengalis. According to Sultan M. Khan, during the talks, Zhou Enlai expressed his concerns about the brutalities committed by the Pakistan Army in East Pakistan and described the situation as 'a time of turmoil'.<sup>31</sup> The Chinese leadership was of the opinion that use of force by Pakistan against Bengalis would lead to rebellion and the growing rebellion in East Pakistan would create favourable conditions for India and Soviet Union to intervene.<sup>32</sup> Analysing the genesis of the East Pakistan crisis Zhou 'remarked that historical reasons were responsible for the psychological estrangement between East and West Pakistan and he could not say what measures would be appropriate, but recent actions had obviously only deepened the psychological differences'.<sup>33</sup> He further suggested to the Pakistani leadership 'To hold the army tightly, improve relations with the masses, take impressive economic measures and commence political work'. China, he added, was ready to render economic help, as an example to others and to discourage interference by international agencies, China was ready to hand over the economic assistance to be managed internally by Pakistan.<sup>34</sup>

Notwithstanding these divergent approaches on the East Pakistan crisis, China did not let Pakistan down in difficult hours and promised strong support of the Chinese people and government against Indian aggression.<sup>35</sup> China used all diplomatic forums to support Pakistan and condemned India for its militarism. Talking to the U. N. Security Council, China's representative slammed Indian act of hostility against

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<sup>30</sup> *Peking Review*, No.5 (4 February 1972), p.8.

<sup>31</sup> Sultan M. Khan, 1997, *Memories and Reflections of a Pakistani Diplomat* (London: The London Centre Pakistan Studies, 1997), p.304-05.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Peking Review*, No.5, *op.cit.*, p.8.

Pakistan and interpreted it as gross interference in the internal affairs of Pakistan.<sup>36</sup>

Concluding the above argument, one can safely establish that during the Cold War times, particularly after the Sino-Indian border conflict, the Indian factor remained a determining factor in China-Pakistan relations. The mutual enmity with India led China-Pakistan relations to a new phase of strategic partnership with the overt objectives to check Indian moves in the region.

### **Indian factor in Sino-Pakistan relations during the post-Cold War era**

After the end of the Cold War, the Soviet Union lost its superpower status. Consequently, the bipolar world power structure cease to exist and the United States has emerged as the sole superpower of the world with overt hegemonic designs. In the changed circumstances of the post-Cold War era, a significant shift has been observed in Sino-Pakistan relations with particular reference to Kashmir issue. This shift may be interpreted in different ways but the apparent reason for the change is China's quest to avoid constraints with India. This shift in China's approach towards India has generated curiosity among the scholars to re-examine and re-interpret China's foreign policy behaviour in the region in general and with particular reference to Pakistan.

During the Cold War era, Indo-Soviet strategic partnership played a significant role in shaping the Sino-Indian relations. India's close defence ties with China's archrival—the former Soviet Union—were meant to strengthen Indian defence for the purpose to enable the latter to act as a counter weight against China. Besides the border dispute between India and China, the Indo-Soviet strategic equation prevented the possibility of initiating the confidence building measures between the P. R. C. and India. The heart of Indo-Soviet relations was the defence cooperation between the two. A significant chunk of India's military hardware was supplied by the former Soviet Union. According to J. Mohan Malik, the Soviet hardware constituted '60-70 percent of Indian weaponry'.<sup>37</sup> A. I. Nikolaev, the Chairman of Russian Duma's Committee on Defence, once said that Russia needed India as much as India needed Russia. He further maintained: 'We understand perfectly well that in strengthening the defense of India we

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, No.50 (10 December 1971), pp.7-8.

<sup>37</sup> J. Mohan Malik, 'India copes With the Kremlin's fall'. *Orbis: A Journal of World Affairs*, 37/1 (Winter 1993), p.69.

thereby strengthen our own security'.<sup>38</sup> Such a close defence cooperation of India with China's arch enemy—the U.S.S.R.—sabotaged China's efforts to improve its relations with India.

The dismemberment of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, exposed India to a severe isolation and insecurity. The former Soviet Union, which was considered to be a reliable friend of India and main adversary of China, lost its status as a superpower. These circumstances caused a dreadful discomfort for India and a tangible ease for China to manoeuvre. Consequently, these two powers of the Asia—China and India—were compelled to restructure their old policy stances of the Cold War times and rationalized them according to the changed realities.

The end of the Cold War and the subsequent disintegration of the Soviet Union created a power vacuum in Asia. China, which was considered a 'less influential actor' in the regional and international affairs during the Cold War time, emerged as a potential dominant power of the region in the post-Cold War era. China's transformation from 'a less influential actor' to a potential regional power with 'global strategic significance'<sup>39</sup> manifests its desire to fill the power vacuum created by the Soviet Union. A Malaysian defence analyst has maintained that the dismemberment of the Soviet Union has created favourable geo-strategic circumstances for China. He maintains:

With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the main military threat from the north, which had plagued the country for decades, has been greatly reduced.... The US had withdrawn from the Philippines and reduced its presence in the South China Sea, thereby reducing the superpower military confrontation in the Asia Pacific region. Besides, tension along China's borders, such as Kampuchean issue, the Afghanistan War, and the China-India border dispute has eased.<sup>40</sup>

These favourable circumstances paved the way for better security environment, and conducive atmosphere for economic development. Some experts interpret that China's pursuits of rapid economic growth and the

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<sup>38</sup> Dasu Kishnamoorthy, 'Towards Closer Delhi-Moscow Ties'. Pravda online. 2 December 2002. [enlish.provda.ru/world/2002/12/02/40266.html](http://enlish.provda.ru/world/2002/12/02/40266.html).

<sup>39</sup> Hao Yufan and Huan Guocang, (eds.), *The Chinese View of the World* (New York: Pantheon Book, 1998), p.xxix.

<sup>40</sup> Gen. Nik Mohamed, 'China's Strategic Interests and Policies in South Asia', *National Defence College Papers*, New Delhi: 3/99, n.d., pp.47-52.

modernization of its military are destined 'to provide Beijing with the wherewithal for attempting regional domination'.<sup>41</sup>

For the purpose to achieve two pronged goal of economic development and strategic dominance in the region China adopted the policy of neutrality in the intrastate disputes and advocated the doctrine of setting all 'disputes and conflicts through peaceful consultations'. According to the *People's Daily*

China will continue to concentrate on implementing the development strategy and continue to develop itself to constructing an internal and external environment conducive to develop, strengthening cooperation and collaboration with various countries around the world making itself an example of not going in for confrontation, reducing conflicts and the eruption of crisis to the maximum.<sup>42</sup>

These policy pursuits manifest China's desire to emerge as the undisputed power of the region. In pursuance of these objectives, China has adopted independent and bilateral approach to India. Consequently, the Indian factor has emerged as a frail variable in triangular relations of China-Pakistan-India.

India, which was exposed to severe isolation in the aftermath of the demise of the Soviet Union, wanted to break that isolation by improving its relations with neighbouring countries particularly China. Such motives geared India to take a bold step by giving up its old rigid stance of the 'settlement of the border problem as a prior condition for general improvement of relations with China'.<sup>43</sup> The mutual desire on both sides to improve relations paved the way for a new phase of enchantment between the P. R. C. and India. China's rapprochement with India and a shift in Kashmir policy is the manifestation of these policy pursuits. In order to win over Indian confidence, China switched over from its traditional pro-Pakistani stance on Kashmir issue to a neutral and noncommittal posture. Supporting the above argument Michael Yahuda, a Professor of International Relations, London School of

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<sup>41</sup> Steve Chan, 'Chinese Perspectives on World Order', T.V. Paul and John A. Hall, (eds.), *International Order and the Future of World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.207-8. Also see Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro, *The Coming Conflict with China* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997).

<sup>42</sup> Peoples Daily online, 19 March 2003. [peoplesdaily.com/everyday\\_files/eng200330319\\_113553.html](http://peoplesdaily.com/everyday_files/eng200330319_113553.html).

<sup>43</sup> Surjit Mansingh, 'India-China Relations in the Post Cold War Era'. *Asian Survey*, 34/3, March 1994), p. 289.

Economics and Political Science, has maintained that 'Beijing has traditionally supported Pakistan against India, but now in the post-Cold War era, Chinese have distanced themselves some what from Pakistan in order to cultivate better relations with India'.<sup>44</sup>

The account of China's Kashmir policy reveals changing paradigms over time. Before 1962, China demonstrated its noncommittal posture on Kashmir issue. It interpreted Kashmir issue, nothing but a problem created by the imperialists and warned India and Pakistan not to even involve the U. N. because according to them U. S. intended to use U. N. as a tool to colonise Kashmir and establish its military base.<sup>45</sup> Zhou Enlai, during his visit to Pakistan maintained that the Kashmir dispute was the creation of the imperialists. He further emphasised to resolve the problem peacefully through bilateral negotiations.<sup>46</sup>

A substantial shift—from neutrality to cautious pro-Pakistani stance—can be observed in China's Kashmir policy in the aftermath of border skirmishes between India and China in 1962. During this phase China's policy emphasis was focussed on the right of self-determination for the Kashmiri people and accentuated to resolve the dispute 'according to the wishes of the people of Kashmir as pledged to them by India or Pakistan'.<sup>47</sup> China articulated its support for the right of the self-determination for the Kashmiri people in post-1962 time, which reflect a tilt towards Pakistan. In March 1965, Ayub Khan paid a visit to China. At the end of his visit, the Chinese government in clear words supported Pakistan's stand on Kashmir and demanded that 'the dispute should be resolved in accordance with the wishes of the people of Kashmir in the light of UN resolutions'.<sup>48</sup> Up till the 1970s China maintained its tilt towards Pakistan and advocated the right of self-determination for the people of Kashmir.

However, in the 1980s, a visible shift appeared in China's stand on Kashmir. In 1980, Deng Xiaoping in an interview to an Indian journalist depicted Kashmir as a bilateral problem between India and Pakistan. He further asked India and Pakistan to resolve their dispute

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<sup>44</sup> Michael Yahuda, 'China and the Kashmir Crisis'. B.B.C. News. 2 June 2003. <[news.bbc.com.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/2020788.stm](http://news.bbc.com.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/2020788.stm)>

<sup>45</sup> Hasan Askari Rizvi, 'China and the Kashmir Problem', *Regional Studies*, 12/3, Summer, 1994, p.91.

<sup>46</sup> *New China News Agency (NCNA)*, 25 December 1956.

<sup>47</sup> Rasul Bakhash Rais, *China and Pakistan: A Political Analysis of Mutual Relations* (Lahore: Progressive Publishers, 1977), p.45.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p.46.

amicably.<sup>49</sup> The obvious reason for the shift in China's Kashmir policy was improving relations between China and India. In 1976 China and India re-established their diplomatic relations. On 15 April 1976 the Indian Foreign Minister Y. B. Chavan announced that very soon India and China would nominate their ambassadors.<sup>50</sup> As we have already mentioned that since the beginning China adopted a very cautious policy on the Kashmir issue because it did not want to annoy India. These policy pursuits constrained China's Premier Zhao Ziyang to mention Kashmir issue in his banquet speech during his visit to Pakistan in June 1981. However, General Zia-ul-Haq raised the issue of Kashmir on that occasion.<sup>51</sup>

During this decade, China ceased to mention the right of self-determination for the people of Kashmir and also avoided stressing for the resolution of the Kashmir issue according to the U.N. resolutions. Instead, it portrayed Kashmir dispute as a bilateral problem and emphasised to resolve it through bilateral talks. These changes in China's Kashmir policy sent positive signals to the Indian leadership. According to an Indian research scholar of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, during the 1980s, the 'Chinese policy on Kashmir underwent a metamorphosis'. Elaborating the causes of that shift, he maintains:

China's rise as a great power, coupled with its acceptance by the international fraternity, led to a decline in its radical foreign policy. There was also a perceptible thaw in Sino-Indian relations, particularly after the visit of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to Beijing in 1988. Thereafter, China dropped the mention of the term 'self-determination' and the references to the UN resolutions on Kashmir.<sup>52</sup>

Analysing the shift in China's Kashmir policy, Bhartendu Kumar divulges that the growing demands for the self-determination in China's regions of Tibet and Xinjiang compelled China to disclaim the right self-determination for the Kashmiri people.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> R.K. Jain, 1981, (ed.), *Documents: China-South Asian Relations 1947-88*, vol.1 (New Delhi: Radiant Publisher, 1981), p.544.

<sup>50</sup> Samina Yasmeen, *Pakistan's Relations with China 1947-1979* (Islamabad: Institute of Strategic Studies, 1980), p.40.

<sup>51</sup> *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 12 June 1981.

<sup>52</sup> Bhartendu Kumar Singh, 'Chinese Perspective on the Kashmir Dispute'. Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi. 2002 <[www.ipcs.org/issues/newarticle/676-cr-bhartendu.html](http://www.ipcs.org/issues/newarticle/676-cr-bhartendu.html)>

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

In 1994 (February-March) session of the Human Rights Commission, Pakistan and Iran jointly presented a resolution to condemn human rights violation in the Indian held Kashmir. Later on, Pakistan withdrew its proposed resolution because of China's reluctance to support it. China's hesitant behaviour regarding Human Rights resolution on Kashmir can be interpreted in three ways. Firstly, China wanted to display its neutrality to India on Kashmir dispute. Secondly, China reinforced its principle stand on the human rights issue with particular reference to the U.S. and western criticism on China's human rights record. Rebuffing criticism, China declared U.S. and the western policy on human rights discriminatory and meant to interfere in internal affairs of the sovereign states. Once, responding to the U. S. President Bill Clinton's criticism on China's human right record, Chinese Premier Le Peng implied that human rights issue is purely the internal matter of China.<sup>54</sup> Thirdly, Indian and Chinese analogy on human rights issue drove China not to support Pakistan's resolution against India. China became the target of worldwide criticism on the basis of the April 1989 incident of Tiananmen Square in which the Chinese government used force against the anti-communist and pro-democracy demonstrators, while India became the target of human rights violation in Kashmir. This similarity was one of the reasons of China's refusal to support Pakistan's resolution against India about the human rights violation in Kashmir.

In 1996, a tangible shift—from partiality to neutrality—was observed in China's Kashmir policy. In December 1996, Chinese President Jiang Zemin visited Pakistan. During his visit he addressed the special session of Pakistan's upper house, Senate. In this address the Chinese President suggested India and Pakistan to shelve the Kashmir dispute.<sup>55</sup> Such developments in China-India relations along with the growing Muslim revivalism in the Xinjiang region further modified China's stance on Kashmir issue. Consequently, during the Kargil conflict China took a neutral stance, which further facilitated India and China to improve their bilateral relations.

The victory of Afghan *jihad* became the source of inspiration for the Kashmiris. Consequently, Kashmir struggle took a new turn and Islamic sentiments overshadowed the struggle of national self-determination of the Kashmiri people. The growing trends of Islamism in Kashmir made China apprehensive about the repercussions on its Muslim majority region of Xinjiang, which was already in the grip of Muslim revivalist movement, influenced by the Islamist movements of

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<sup>54</sup> *The News*, 18 May 1992.

<sup>55</sup> See the text of Chinese President's address in *The News*, 3 December 1996.

Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics of the former Soviet Union. There were reports of the violent campaign of the Muslims of Xinjiang for autonomy from the Beijing.<sup>56</sup> The Chinese government also acknowledge that its far-western province Xinjiang was influenced by the wave of Muslim nationalism spreading from the Central Asian Republics and this situation has affected the 'region's social stability'. The *Beijing Review* has reported the incident of April 1990 in the following words:

The event resulted from a plot by a number of national splitists bent on disrupting the country's unification under the guise of religion. Flaunting banners reading the 'Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkistan', the splitists besieged the township government, killed 10 people and seized firearms and ammunition. It goes without saying that the riot was quickly quelled.<sup>57</sup>

These facts compelled the Chinese leadership to change their Kashmir stance because they apprehended that the success of *jihadi* forces in Kashmir would become a launching pad for the Islamist movement in Chinese region of Xinjiang.

In the light of the above argument it can be concluded that one of the objectives of China's post-Cold War policy is to achieve the dual task of economic development and military modernization to attain the status of a leading regional power with 'global strategic significance'. In order to achieve these objectives, China has adopted the twin strategy of playing an impartial role in bilateral disputes between the regional actors and initiating the meaningful process of resolving disputes with the neighbouring countries. As a result, China has embarked on the policy of engagement with India and changed its stance on Kashmir issue from pro-Pakistan to neutrality. These policy shifts in Chinese policies have categorised Indian factor as a feeble variable in China-Pakistan relations. China's post-Cold War policy goals have driven Chinese policy-makers to embark on the two-pronged task of adopting independent and bilateral approach to Pakistan, and improving relations with India by initiating a meaningful course of dialogue to resolve the outstanding disputes. Hence, these objectives cannot be achieved by sticking to the Cold War times' policy of 'using Pakistan as the counter weight against India'. Consequently, a tangible shift in China-Pakistan relations has been observed. The Sino-Pakistan relations, which had been working as the dependent variable in China-Pakistan-India triangular relations during

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<sup>56</sup> *Frontier Post*, 10 March 1992.

<sup>57</sup> *Beijing Review*, 27:45 (November 1994), p.10.



the Cold War times, underwent a palpable change and emerged as the independent variable in the changed realities of the post-Cold War era.