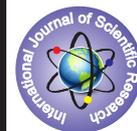


Implications of a Sino-Pakistan Strategic alliance for India



History

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ABSTRACT

The Sino-Pak relationship is a comprehensive friendship that spans across a vast canvas including political, military, nuclear and economic. China has had a long history of civil, military and nuclear cooperation with Pakistan. India is the only country in the world to share borders with two nuclear armed neighbours with both of whom it has unresolved disputes. The ongoing low intensity war spearheaded by Pakistan is a manifestation of the ideological dispute that has roots in the partition of 1947. China is in occupation of vast areas of India's territory and lays claim to more. China has settled its border disputes with 12 out of 14 countries. Its borders with only India and Bhutan remain unresolved. On the other hand, China and Pakistan share a very close relationship. There is therefore a need to study the Sino-Pak strategic relationship and its implications on India's security. The study looks at the fundamental issues straining the relations between India and the other two. It attempts to analyse the major security related components of the Sino-Pakistani strategic relationship and proposes a way ahead for India to meet the challenge.

Introduction

“Sino-Pakistani friendship is higher than the Himalayas, deeper than the Indian Ocean and sweeter than honey”
President Hu Jintao

The relationship between China and Pakistan has stood the test of time with anti India sentiment acting as the strong glue that binds them. However, in 1947 China was apprehensive and uncomfortable with the emergence of Pakistan. The establishment of a separate Muslim homeland sculpted out of the British India was viewed with suspicion because such a precedent could have had an invigorating effect on the aspirations of the predominantly Muslim population of the Chinese province of Xinjiang who had revolted on many occasions to shake off the yoke of Han domination. Furthermore, given Pakistan's proclivity to speak for the Muslim world being the first Islamic state and home to the largest Muslim population, it was not surprising that China refused Pakistan's request for stationing of its Consul General in a sensitive area as Xinjiang.

Religion forms the core of its ideology and existence for Pakistan while it is antithetical in communist China. The idea of Pakistan is a relatively recent one while China has existed as a nation for thousands of years. Pakistan breeds terrorism while China classifies terrorism, separatism (splitism), and religious extremism as the three evils. Despite such ignominious beginnings and stark contrasts, the Sino-Pakistan strategic relationship today has scaled new heights and is perhaps the most outstanding example of cold-blooded real politic based on mutualism. The dynamics of interaction between the India, China and Pakistan has been one of enduring antagonism between India and Pakistan, ambivalent friendship and discord between India and China and close cooperation and strong friendship between China and Pakistan. It would thus be in order to take a look at the macro level issues that fuel the Sino-Pak nexus against India.

Pakistan was assisted, equipped, nuclearised, and emboldened given its special relationship with China to repeatedly taunt India with its obstinate and unrealistic stance. It precipitated wars in 1965, 1971 and 1999 and has since 1985 resorted to terrorism and subversion to wrest the state from India. There is a tendency in India to gloat about a shift in China's position on the Kashmir problem. From its earlier partisan approach of unconditionally supporting Pakistan's legally untenable claims and criticizing India, China now appreciates that the “Kashmir issue is a complicated affair with a long history and advocates resolution of the problem peacefully through consultations and negotiations”. The changed stance may not have occurred out of goodwill for or fear of New Delhi or even from India's rising stature and power. China's shift seems superficial and rather nuanced so as to assuage India. Proclaiming that disputes should be

resolved peacefully is stating the obvious as enshrined in the UN charter. Despite India's objections, China has no hesitation in undertaking strategic infrastructure development projects in POK and Gilgit-Baltistan including construction of roads, hydel projects and also a feasibility study for the construction of a railway line between Pakistan and Xinjiang (using about 11000 PLA troops) while it has recently commenced issuing stapled visas to Indian citizens of J&K who wish to visit China. This amounts to tacit acceptance of Pakistan's sovereignty over the illegally occupied territory whilst questioning India's locus standi even in that part of the state which is de facto and de jure in India's possession. China employs dubious ploys to question India's status in J&K. It has also not agreed to Indian Pilgrims' using the Leh-Demchok-Kailash Mansarovar route since it passes through the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Sino-Pakistan Relations

1. Pakistan's Ideological Chasm and Sponsorship of Terrorism -
The very idea of Pakistan is based on the premise that Muslim population is a separate nation and thus requires a separate political state. This has amply been disproved in secular India wherein religion has not prevented Muslims (or for that matters other minorities) from holding coveted public offices and achieving a largely harmonious social mosaic. Following its failed attempt to fully annex the state of Jammu and Kashmir in 1947/48, Pakistan joined military alliances such as SEATO, CENTO and later embraced China to seek “parity” with India. The military repeatedly intervened to usurp power thus stifling the growth of democracy. With a view to consolidate their hold on power, Prime Minister ZA Bhutto and later President General Zia ul Haq encouraged the religious radicalization of the society including the professional defence services. The narrative amongst the population even in school curriculum is anti-Hindu, anti-Sikh, anti-Buddhist and also anti-Christian. Pakistan adopted a state policy of employing and supporting terrorism resulting in the exodus of Hindu community from the Kashmir valley. Sponsoring terrorist attacks across India, it has tried to wreck the social fabric of India by attempting to engender religious polarization and also to engage in a sort of blackmail. It has deliberately strived to obliterate its sub-continental civilizational identity and forge a pan Islamic identity as is evident for example from the nomenclature of its missiles. Given such an ideological fault-line, even if all the problems existing between India and Pakistan were to be resolved, Pakistan can be expected to continue its confrontationist subversive approach towards India at least so long as democracy which is free of religious extremism and a overbearing military, does not return to the polity. China shrewdly realized the permanence of such Indo-Pak divergence and cunningly invested in cultivating Pakistan as a quasi ally.

2. Tibet - Mao termed Tibet as the palm of a hand with its five fingers

as Ladakh, Sikkim, Nepal, Bhutan, and NEFA all of which he claimed were Chinese territories that needed to be 'liberated'. The essence of the Tibetan factor in Indian-Chinese relations is that this large, ethnically distinct, and strategically located region, which historically was not subject to direct Chinese administration has since 1951 been precisely brought under such Chinese control giving Han society, for the first time in history, a contiguous frontier with India, Myanmar, Bhutan and Nepal.

Tibet had traditionally acted as a buffer between British India, Czarist Russia and China with a nominal Chinese suzerainty. The Tibetans, like Koreans or Vietnamese are indisputably non Chinese. They do not speak Chinese. Tibet's basic beliefs and institutions are distinct from those of Confucian China, being influenced more by the Indian civilization. In this regard, the gulf between Tibet and China is far greater than that between Korea or Vietnam and China. Historically, Tibet's relationship with China in terms of tribute-paying system was not much different from Korea's or Vietnam's relations with the Middle Kingdom. Yet the other two countries are independent (not "liberated" by China) while Tibet has been assimilated by China.

The motivations for China's takeover of Tibet can be explained more easily in Strategic terms, rather than historical claims or ideological compatibilities. China felt that Tibet could be used by counter revolutionaries or imperialists to threaten the interior regions such as Sichuan and Yunnan which would become insecure. China's grip on Xinjiang would also become tenuous given that the region was connected only by the narrow Gansu corridor. Furthermore, Tibet has one of the largest and most diverse deposits of minerals in China. The Tibetan Glaciers often called the third pole are sources of the largest river systems in the world including international rivers such as Mekong, Salween, Irrawaddy, Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra), Indus, Sutlej etc.

India, obsessed by ideals of non alignment declined the US offer about the possibility of cooperating to support Tibetan resistance to Chinese advance. According to the Sino-Indian Agreement of 1954, India voluntarily gave up in Tibet its military, communication and postal and other rights which New Delhi had inherited from the British in accordance with the Anglo-Tibetan Treaty of 1904 and recognized China's suzerainty over Tibet in the hope that Tibetan culture would be protected and the region accorded great autonomy. However, that was not to be and following the brutal suppression of the Tibetan Uprising in 1959, His Holiness the Dalai Lama fled to India and has been living here ever since along with about 1,50,000 Tibetan refugees. China has since then attempted to obliterate Tibetan culture, interfered with religion and undertaken massive infrastructural development resulting in Han inundation in Tibet which has altered the demography. Ethnic Tibetans by and large remain suppressed, discontent and aspire to shake off the yoke of Chinese domination but remain constrained in the face of Chinese brutality and power. China feels rather insecure and anxious about Tibet and is apprehensive about the potential threat that exists in the form of Tibetan refugees living in India.

Boundaries are manifestations of national identity and they can be trip-wires of war as has been India's experience with China and Pakistan. The genesis of the boundary dispute lies in the changed status of Tibet. The traditional boundary between India and Tibet was mutually agreed according to the Simla conference in 1914 between British India and Tibet. China has refused to accept this agreement. The dispute over the boundary resulted in 1962 China-India war. While India's "Forward Policy" is cited as the immediate trigger to the war, it must not be overlooked that such a policy in itself was a result of China building the Tibet Xinjiang road through Indian Territory of Aksai Chin which came to light in 1957. The 1200 Km road was strategically important being the only one providing a relatively easy all weather access to Tibet from Kashgar in Xinjiang and considered crucial so as to maintain hold over newly garrisoned Tibet.

Since India's defeat in 1962 war, China is in occupation of approximately 38,000 Sq Kms of Indian Territory in Aksai Chin. On 12th October 1962, just a week prior to China's invasion of India, China and Pakistan commenced talks in Peking on delimiting the border. Tying up of Pakistan in formal border talks was China's reinsurance against Pakistan's involvement under the aegis of western powers, on the side of India in the imminent Sino-Indian conflict. The border agreement that followed in 1963 was a master stroke of Chinese diplomacy to drive a wedge between India and Pakistan. Under the agreement, Pakistan ceded 5,180 Sq Kms of illegally occupied Indian Territory to China. In 1987 a Sino-Pakistani protocol formalized demarcation of their boundary. The termination of this boundary at the Karakoram Pass on the Chinese line of control suggests that Pakistan recognizes Chinese sovereignty over Aksai Chin, which India claims as being part of the former Princely State of Kashmir. The manner in which the settlement was reached is in keeping with Mao's doctrine of "exploiting the contradictions in the opponent's side".

Given the strategic indispensability of the Aksai Chin road, China has an interest in perpetuating the Indo-Pak rivalry and preventing settlement of the Kashmir dispute in India's favour. Furthermore, China claims approximately 90,000 Sq Km of Indian Territory in Arunachal Pradesh and about 2000 Sq Kms in the Middle Sector of the boundary. Beijing does not recognise Arunachal Pradesh to be a part of India. It has become more vociferous since 2008 Beijing Olympics and expressed dissatisfaction when the Prime Minister visited the state in 2009.

3. China's Strategic Interest in Helping Pakistan - From a Chinese perspective, a politically stable, economically prosperous, militarily strong and a diplomatically capable India asserting herself on the international stage would be an undesirable competitor in Asia and also at the global level given India's size, antiquity and moral stature. After all, there is no danger that any instability in India would spread to China given the massive Himalayan range that insulates the two peoples. On the other hand, a confident India would be yet another factor that would affect China's security calculus which is largely oriented towards the east. China has longstanding rivalries with Japan, Taiwan and South Korea all of whom have anchored their security framework to military relationships with the USA which maintains a forward posture in the western Pacific. In addition, China also has ongoing disputes in the South China Sea with the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei and Indonesia. The "re-subordination of Taiwan" which was one of the dreams of the founding fathers of the Communist state continues to remain unfulfilled and remains high on China's priorities as any move towards declaration of independence or intention to do so by Taiwan is China's worst nightmare that would place insurmountable demands on her military. China's humiliation during by the imperialist powers during the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century was a result of her weakness to defend the east. The economically booming coastal areas of China are the Clausewitzian "Centers of Gravity" of the Chinese state that need to be defended. China would therefore not like to see another security challenge on the western front in the form of a resurgent India that is bold enough to question China's conduct in Tibet or seeks to reclaim the territories occupied by China. If India could be tied down to the South Asian quagmire in perpetuity, it would largely free China to concentrate on the east and also emerge as the only global power from Asia. China sees a pliable Pakistan that is hostile to India as a sure and cost effective way to trump India.

4. Competition for Stature - Both China and India are ancient civilizations. There are ample accounts of India's civilizational influences on China while the reverse is not as evident. Hu Shih, former ambassador of China to the USA had once stated, "India conquered and dominated China culturally for 20 centuries without ever having to send a single soldier across her border." Given their ancient legacies, they understandably clamoured for recognition and leadership status amongst the third world soon after they both

emerged as republics in mid twentieth century. It was natural for such aspirations to lead to subtle rivalry particularly as India emerged as a leading voice in the Non-Aligned Movement and also received international admiration for its role in Korea. Though China, with its economic miracle seems to have stolen the march to gain higher stature and material wealth, India's moral appeal remains strong. The desire for influence is a source of friction and is evident in China's wooing of India's neighbours much to India's discomfort.

5. Revisionist (Expansionist) Powers - China and Pakistan - Both China and Pakistan are territorially revisionist powers while India is a status quo state. Pakistan has attempted to alter the territorial status quo by force repeatedly vis a vis India in 1948, 1965, 1971 and 1999. China too has on many occasions resorted to using force to alter the status quo as seen during the annexing Tibet in 1950, 1962 war with India, 1969 border clashes with the USSR at Usuri River, bullying the smaller claimants to take possession of disputed islands in the Paracel group (1974) and Spratly group (1988) of islands in the South China Sea, 1979 war with Vietnam and the various crises in the Taiwan Straits. Both these expansionist powers have unresolved disputes with India and in view of their track record; India should be prepared to expect China and Pakistan attempting to change the status quo when conditions are suitable. Such apprehensions are a perennial source of dissonance between the India and the other two antagonists.

The defence ties between China and Pakistan form the cornerstone of their strategic relationship. Starting from modest beginnings in the 1960s, it has grown manifold so much so that today, China has become the most dependable source of military hardware and technological assistance to Pakistan. For Pakistan, this has been an exceptionally rewarding relationship as China's aid comes without any strings attached, at subsidised "special" prices, is not affected by sanctions of any nature and is not contingent upon considerations of Pakistan's good domestic or international behaviour, respect for democracy, nuclear proliferation, curbing terrorism emanating from its soil etc. For example, Pakistan's befriending China paid off in the aftermath of the 1965 Indo-Pak war, when the US and European powers stopped all economic and military aid China came to Pakistan's rescue to supply military equipment.

6. India Centric Defence Cooperation - Pakistan considers India to be the predominant threat. Its military priorities are India centric with the armament acquisition focused on this perception. Though the military has often seized political power to dabble in governance and has also been used extensively in Baluchistan, Sind, NWFP etc, these are domestic issues. Even the ongoing involvement of the military in its western theatre is not of its own choosing as Pakistan has been a reluctant US ally in the Global War on Terror and as the Wikileaks reveal has adopted a strategy of "running with the hare and hunting with the hound". The present scenario can at best be termed as a minor squint in Pakistan military focus towards the Afghan border while India continues to be the topmost priority for the defence establishment as well as the civil society brought up on a hate India diet. Therefore, it would not be incorrect to conclude that all Sino-Pak defence cooperation is primarily directed against India. Throughout the 1950s when India was at the forefront in championing the cause of China at regional and global forums, Pakistan having joined the CENTO and SEATO was the centrepiece of "anti-Communist" alliances sponsored by China's arch enemy - the USA. Despite such contradictions, it is ironical that by the last year of that decade, China had become acutely suspicious of India while its relationship with Pakistan was already on an upward path. Though that was the era of Sino- Soviet friendship, Pakistan was able to convince China that its membership of "anti-communist" military alliances with the US was not anti-China.

The tempo of Sino-Pakistan ties gathered momentum immediately after the Sino-Indian war of 1962 thus implying that both the countries who had fought wars with India were cementing their friendship and ever since, Pakistan has always looked up to or run to

Beijing during every crisis with India. Apart from concluding a border agreement the relationship also resulted in supply of military hardware from China to Pakistan. Pakistan surmised that given Sino-Indian rivalry, China was a far better bet to cultivate even at the cost of displeasing its ally the USA. In 1961, Pakistan supported communist China's bid for taking over the UN seat in place of Taiwan much to the consternation of the US.

India has been unable to prevent and learnt to live with the quasi alliance between China and Pakistan. After 1965 and again after 1971 China helped rebuild Pakistan's shattered military power and morale. China's actions were guided less by considerations of commerce but more by realpolitik with a view to prop up Pakistan as a permanent and unfailing anti-India arrow in its quiver. After 1974 India again watched helplessly as evidence mounted of covert Chinese assistance to Pakistan's nuclear and missile programmes. This continues to date and General Liang Guanglie, the Defence Minister of China in early 2010 said that "Pakistan and China are not only good neighbours and friends but also reliable partners. This relationship is time tested and would always remain stable irrespective of any developments. Our friendship is not only beneficial for both the countries but also for the stability and development of the region".

7. Strategic Infrastructure - The Karakoram Highway linking Xinjiang to Pakistan and completed in 1986 is being widened to provide four lane all weather connectivity as China becomes the largest trading partner of Pakistan bypassing the European Union. The highway and the planned rail link to Gwadar are strategic force multipliers well suited for military manoeuvre or nuclear/missile/ arms proliferation without the fear of regimes such as the PSI and offer north-western China access to Arabian Sea.

8. Sino-Pak Nuclear Ties - The oft quoted adage in contemporary discourse that Allah, Army and America are the shapers of Pakistan's destiny needs to be remodelled to include China. Pakistan's single minded pursuit of nuclear weapons was a result of its desire for "parity" and a sense of helplessness in the face of India's superior conventional military power. Pakistan reckoned that nuclear weapons would provide the wherewithal to browbeat India into accepting its terms for solution to the Kashmir problem. In China's calculus, a nuclear armed Pakistan would be an immense strategic asset to keep India shackled to South Asia thus leaving China to emerge as the sole Asian power with a global aura.

China's motivation could not have been commercial because, the proliferation commenced during the Maoist era before Deng's reforms had given China a taste of profitable capitalist business enterprises. It could not have been ideological given their different political ideologies. In any case mere ideology does not drive nations to part with such sensitive technology as China's experience of being denied the bomb design by the USSR despite sharing the Communist ideology shows. The rationale could obviously not have had a religious or civilisational connotation given lack of any commonality. Another factor points to China's helping Pakistan being rooted in its desire to snub and tether India to the Pakistan factor permanently. China could not have been unaware that Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme was India specific unlike those of Israel or North Korea or for that matter any other country which cannot be said to be directed against any single adversary. Bhutto had passionately declared as early as 1965 that "Pakistan will eat grass or leaves, even go hungry in order to develop a programme (nuclear bomb) of its own if India did. Prior to China's accession to the NPT in 1992, the United States concluded that China had assisted Pakistan in developing nuclear explosives."

9. Strategic Response to Indo-US Nuclear Deal - In June 2010, China and Pakistan announced a deal to build two more nuclear plants CHASNUPP 3 and CHASNUPP 4 in violation of the provisions of the NSG which China joined in 2004. At that time, China had already completed CHASNUPP 1 and claimed that it was entitled to build a second one CHASNUPP 2 on the grounds that the project was

covered in its existing agreement with Pakistan (though that is highly unlikely given the circumstances in which China took over the uncompleted task at CHASMA 1). There was no declaration at that time of any intention to build additional nuclear power plants. Clearly, Chinese construction of additional nuclear power plants in Pakistan beyond what was grandfathered in 2004 would be inconsistent with NSG guidelines and China's commitments to the NSG.

China's willingness to violate the NSG guidelines for Pakistan's sake stems from its displeasure of the 2005 Indo-US Civilian Nuclear Deal following which, the 45 member NSG granted the waiver to India in September 2006 allowing access to nuclear fuel and technology from abroad. Given the sound state of her economy and overflowing foreign exchange reserves, China's actions could not be considered as being guided by economic considerations but significantly by anti-India motivations. Even Chinese analysts are quite clear that this is a "strategic tit-for-tat" in response to US-India Nuclear Deal. However, given the criticality of China's support to tame Iran's nuclear conduct China and Pakistan could yet again get away much to India's dissatisfaction.

The most obvious consequence of the Sino-Pak nexus on India's security stems from the danger of being hemmed in or subjected to creeping expansionism by virtue of sharing long borders with the two countries. This is already evident from the manner in which these countries lay claims to parts of Indian Territory in J&K and Arunachal Pradesh. Such a consequence has not only security implications but also socio-economic repercussions for India given the large expenditure on defence.

Furthermore, the "one versus two" nature of the adversarial relationship of this triad provides an element of reciprocal moral support between China and Pakistan in their quest to get the better of India. It is possible that India and Pakistan may have been able to resolve their differences to a somewhat acceptable degree had China not been such a towering factor in giving Pakistan the psychological, diplomatic, military, nuclear-strategic, scientific, and economic support with an anti-India agenda. Graver rightly concludes that among the extra-regional powers that have played a role in post 1947 South Asia – including the United Kingdom, the United States, the USSR, the Russian Federation, France, Portugal and the Netherlands – concerns with China's looming presence weighed most heavily with Indian leaders even if it was not always at the top of their explicit foreign policy agendas.

Pakistan's utility to China as a bridge with the outside world during the latter's period of isolation has had a bearing on India's security. For example, the US, which went to the extent of supplying military aid to India, to fend off the Chinese aggression in 1962 and which imposed arms sanctions against Pakistan in 1965 for using US supplied armament against India, willingly undertook coercive diplomacy against India in collusion with China and Pakistan during the 1971 Indo-Pak war. Deploying the aircraft carrier USS Enterprise to the Bay of Bengal was ostensibly to evacuate US citizens from the war zone but its intent to coerce India was obvious. Commenting on the deployment, Tom Wicker observed that Nixon's intent really was to solidify an American alignment with China, who is a supporter of Pakistan ... and "in order to gain face in China, did we really need to lose our shirt in India".

Pakistan's much vaunted desire to see the balkanization of India is regularly evident from the proclamations of state backed radical elements such as Hafiz Saeed of the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba and others who make no secret of such an expectation. Its policy of attempting to "bleed India by a thousand cuts" has been in operation since the early 1980s having set into motion first in Punjab, followed by Kashmir and gradually spreading to other parts of India to target the social/communal fabric, centers of economic and scientific activity, religious places, and military installations amongst many others. However, India has shown a resolute will and resilience to defeat the

Pakistani agenda thus far much to the latter's frustration. While China may maintain a degree on non-interference with limited diplomatic or threatening posture in any Indo-Pakistan adverse and war like situation, one cannot and should not expect a similar Pakistan stance in any such India-China situation. Pakistan will leave no stone unturned to exploit such an adverse situation ruthlessly to further its own objectives.

During the 1962 Sino-Indian war, Pakistan totally sided with China and Pakistani Ministers as well as the media openly expressed jubilation over the events that were humiliating for India. Pakistan blamed India for initiating the war and described the rushing of western supplies of arms to India as a hostile gesture against Pakistan. These actions reveal Pakistan's intentions to exploit India's precarious position and contrast with India's attitude following the grave provocation of Pakistan sponsored terrorist attacks on Mumbai in November 2008 when India assured the world that there was no risk of war thus giving Pakistan a free hand to deploy the army to its western front to fight the Taliban. Conversely, during the 1965 Indo-Pak war, China totally sided with Pakistan repeatedly issuing credible threats including a 72 hour ultimatum asking India to dismantle "aggressive military works" and was on the verge of opening up a second front in Sikkim against India when the USSR brokered a cease fire on 20 September.

Given such historical precedents, India would be correct to believe that the strategic partnership between China and Pakistan presents a two front threat in the event of confrontation with either. Even when there is no war, the adversarial relationships dictate that India needs to continuously be alert on both the fronts. The revelation by New York Times on 26th August 2010 of presence of about 7000-11000 PLA troops in Gilgit should be a reminder of grave threat that the Sino-Pak nexus poses. While China as expected issued denials calling it a conspiracy to derail Beijing's ties with New Delhi and Islamabad India stated it would independently verify the serious development indicating a trust deficit.

10. Support at Multilateral Organizations - The consequences of Sino-Pak nexus for India are not limited to their actions alone but also of other countries or organizations with which they wield influence. For example, during the 1971 war, Kissinger met with the Chinese ambassador to the UN to coordinate the Sino-US action at the UN and informed him that though barred by law, the administration had told Jordan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey to extend all assistance to Pakistan.

China being a permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC) and an economic power wields considerable influence particularly amongst the third world countries and can marshal their support for Pakistan's cause or against India. Pakistan can rely on China's Veto to block any anti-Pakistan resolutions in the context of India. After the 1971 war, China used her newly acquired seat at the UN to lend Pakistan vigorous diplomatic support exercising its first ever Veto to block the admission of Bangladesh into the UN until Pakistan concurred. China retains the capacity to use the Veto against India's interests during any Indo-Pak crises in future. This is evident from China's stance on reforming the UNSC wherein it indirectly hinders India's claim for a permanent seat with carefully crafted sophisticated arguments about ensuring equitable geographic distribution and consensus to decide the new members of a restructured UNSC. Pakistan's opposition to India's candidature and China's opposition to Japan mean a consensus cannot be reached.

11. Hydro-Politics - Notwithstanding the Indus Water Treaty which has stood the test of time since 1960, Pakistan has resorted to synthesizing water stealing accusations against India in order to obfuscate its mismanagement of rivers. While India is the upper riparian state on the Indus system, China is the upper riparian on the Brahmaputra. If China's controlling the waters of the Mekong River without consideration for the lower riparians is any indication, then

India could be in for a rude jolt given China's reported plans to divert the waters of the Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra). It is not inconceivable that China and Pakistan act in cohort for river Basin management to garner greater concessions on the Indus system whilst coercing India on the Brahmaputra.

Conclusion

The Sino-Pak strategic nexus stacked against India is unlikely to wither in the near future for the simple reason that it offers an excellent avenue to contain India and suits the "perceived" national interests of China and Pakistan. The incentive for them to abandon their anti India focus can come about only if they are willing to reshape their basic approach and discard suspicion of India.

For Pakistan, this would mean a redrawing of its ideological construct that would necessitate giving up the misplaced notion that religion alone can be a sufficient basis for nationhood. This of course in no way implies that partition needs to be undone. It needs to abandon the self ordained belief that it has somehow acquired a divine right to speak for the Muslims of India and particularly those belonging to the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

More importantly, its military which is the real power hub needs to come to terms with its strengths and weaknesses and jettison the grandiose illusions of shaping a caliphate from Delhi to Central Asia. This can happen only if a true democracy as envisaged by its founder returns to Pakistan. However, such a possibility is highly unlikely given the vested interests of the military which feeds on demonizing India and whipping up of the "India Threat". Nearly every day, in the Pakistani media there is either an article or an opinion piece blaming India for something, anything or everything.

Citing the rising trade between India and China and postulating that such economic embrace would resolve disputes can be erroneous. In a globalised world, political divergence between nations does not necessarily mean that they would remain economically insulated from each other and vice versa. China for example continues aiming hundreds of missiles across the Taiwan straits despite a thriving economic relationship with Taiwan. Japan too watches with great unease the rising power of China and the modernization of Chinese armed forces.

Similarly, rising Sino-Indian trade is not a definitive indicator of how China would choose to settle old disputes in the years ahead thus warranting a cautious approach by India. Japan and South Korea, who engage in a much higher volume of trade than China and India, are finding it hard to manage their prickly bilateral political relationship, despite both being military allies of the United States. History testifies that when strategic amoniosities remain unaddressed, interdependent commercial ties do not guarantee moderation. Therefore, even as trade with China continues to grow, India's strategic interests will increasingly lead New Delhi to search for ways to countervail Chinese power. It would be in India's interest to continue the dialogue for solutions to all outstanding problems peacefully without setting unrealistic timelines as the issues are complex and public opinions polarized. Maintaining a high level of defence preparedness and trying to improve relations need not be considered mutually exclusive. As President Roosevelt said, "Speak softly but carry a big stick." Favourably shaping the strategic neighbourhood needs to be pursued vigorously to blunt the Sino-Pak nexus as PLAN accesses the IOR and Pakistan reshapes its role to become China's spring board in the great game.

The creation of Pakistan and the effect of having China as a neighbour have had the most defining consequences on India's security. Having played its role during the Cold War, Pakistan now seems set to redefine itself in the great game as China's spring board to West Asia and the IOR where India has strategic interests. The lion's share of India's security concerns is hinged on the Sino-Pakistani strategic nexus.

It is myopic to postulate that nuclear weapons have made war

redundant. China and USSR were both nuclear powers when they fought on the Usuri River in 1969 as also were India and Pakistan in 1999 during the Kargil conflict. China's statements about non involvement in Pakistani nuclear programme, assurances about guarding Tibet's autonomy, not voicing any boundary dispute between India and Tibet even during the 1954 Panchsheel agreement and later excavating claims to Aksai Chin/Arunachal Pradesh have come to haunt India as will the shifting stance over J&K and planned water works on the Yarlung Tsangpo.

India would do well to remember that the Latin Dictum 'Sis vis pacem para bellum' holds true in this context. For India therefore, as KPS Gill suggests, "there is one general principle that must guide our explorations, perspectives, plans and projections: The primary and most effective strategy to avoid war is to prepare for it. It is one of the ironies of the human condition that, if you love peace, you must be ready and willing to fight for it. The weak, the vulnerable, the unprepared and the irresolute will always tempt the world and call misfortune and ruin upon themselves. This is tragic; but it is the inexorable lesson of history.

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