

## The Region of Pakistan, China, and India: Geopolitical Currents after the Cold War Till 9/11



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- Vol. II, No. I (2017)
- Pages: 90 – 98
- DOI: 10.31703/gpr.2017(II-I).10
- p- ISSN: 2521-2982
- e-ISSN: 2707-4587
- ISSN-L: 2521-2982

### Key Words

Pakistan, India, China, Geopolitics, Agreement, Bilateral, Dispute, Cold War, Region.

### Abstract

*After the Cold War Pakistan, China and India had opportunities to adjust each other according to the geopolitical trends of the time. In the post-Cold War era, there was no Soviet Union to influence relations between India and China. On the other side, Pakistan did not lose its Cold War ally, United States; to make independent relations in the region on its choices. American sanctions would turn Pakistan into a 'self-assumed' path of foreign policy. The resultant regional geopolitical scenario, after the Cold War, may best be explained by applying the theoretical model of Saul B. Cohen- Shatterbelt. The shatterbelt means such volatile areas that would not allow the states to go for friendly relations. The study is qualitative in nature. The data is secondary which is interpreted through Thematic Approach.*

### Introduction

The international dimension of regional geopolitics of Pakistan, China and India changed as the Cold War came to an end, formally, in 1991. The power structure of the world went through fundamental changes: Bipolar world converted into unipolar one after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Cold War politics had its impacts on regional politics. The independence of the Indian subcontinent and then the creation of the People's Republic of China coincided with the Containment Policy of the United States. Militarily weak Pakistan sided with the West that had domestic and international repercussions in return. India though non-aligned at the start, drifted into Soviet camp in the 1970s. China struggled between ideological obligations and national priorities. The end of bloc politics meant a redefinition of regional geopolitics. The focus shifted towards new shatterbelts and gateways in and around the region.

China started cashing the opportunity created as a result of Soviet Union disintegration (Blanchard, 2010). The influence of the Soviet Union was no more there to dictate India against China for its relations. China also became free from the burden of Cold War politics and therefore, could easily opt according to its own needs and priorities. It had already taken an encouraging start through mutual visits and dialogues with Indians that created an environment of mutual trust and understanding. They also had pledged to get free their politics from traditional track jackets of disputes that had stopped all types of cooperation between them.

The end of Cold was helpful in setting aside contentious politics caused by territorial disputes, between China and India. Both felt ready for developing mutual cooperation. For the kind of change, China's dynamics were contextual (Chung, 1998). Firstly, its strategic complex got altered after the disintegration of the Soviet Union that had impacted Chinese security throughout the years, thus; India was no more a 'harsh' shatterbelt for China. Secondly, the Tiananmen Square crisis and a pro-democracy surge in 1989 hinted a political crisis in making that might cause 'instability' from within China. Thirdly, China could not

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remain away from the changing global economic imperatives that put a challenge, as well as the opportunity for China to integrate into the global system. All this demanded transformation in China's behavior. Deng Xiaoping had already started an economic openness program that could integrate the Chinese economy in the world market.

To ease its relations with China in an uncertain world was a compulsion then for India, as she had lost an ally and good friend- Soviet Union. The improvement in Sino-India relations was thus feasible and easy in many ways (Chung, 1998). Firstly, India was deprived of a worthy friend who had helped her in defending and advancing militarily. Secondly, India was to improve relations with China as she was needed doing so in the absence of the Soviet Union. Thirdly, India had lost a big market for its trade after the Soviet Union split into pieces and India had to search for an alternative. Fourthly, the openness of China's economy and market attracted India to benefits and therefore relaxed relations with China.

China and India developed official contacts, and exchange visits were made. Indian president Venkataram made a visit to China in May 1992 and discussed issues of mutual interests with Chinese leadership (Shah, 2017). They reaffirmed faith in the principles of Panchsheel. They also committed to the promotion of Confidence Building Measures (Shah, 2017). In July 1992, the Indian Defence Minister had a visit to Beijing and discussed strategic matters with his Chinese counterpart. Rationality, in their relationship, was re-designed in the light of new demands and trends of the time.

In September 1993, China and India signed a landmark agreement titled, Agreement on Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the India-China Border Areas. The agreement is an example that how China and India desired for maximizing their interest through cooperation. Article 1 of the agreement called for the resolution of border disputes peacefully and through friendly consultations (Lall, 2009). The same article suggested positive steps with regard to the Line of Actual Control. The agreement also called for reduction of forces along LAC, compatible with mutual security and the number of forces was to be determined through mutual consultation. Confidence Building Measures were proposed along LAC and any military exercise was conducted with prior notification. If any contingency evolved along LAC, both countries were to deal with them through meetings and consultations. The agreement also explained the working of the Joint Working Group, comprised of military and diplomatic experts to deal with the problems related to LAC (Chung, 1998).

The agreement of 1993 was instrumental in improving relations between two neighbors, India and China. It depicted that both of the countries wanted to change their behavior towards each other, pragmatically. The agreement shows that both states had reached to 'maturity' as they decided not to allow any impediments in improving neighborly relations. The agreement laid down foundations for future relations. As world politics changed so the neighborly relations between China and India were being established after the realization that the 'neighbors cannot be changed'.

### **Increasing Isolation of Pakistan in Post-Cold War South Asia**

The end of the Cold War also witnessed the political isolation of Pakistan. There were two main reasons that the world started ignoring Pakistan; its nuclear program, and Talibanization in Afghanistan and Pakistan's role in it.

Pressler Amendment was passed by the US Congress in 1985, empowering the president to review Pakistan nuclear program yearly and certify whether it had any nuclear weapons. If Pakistan failed to yield according to the Amendment, the aid of the United States of America could be suspended. The Amendment did not affect Pakistan and its nuclear program till 1990 as President Reagan and Bush 'falsely' testified that Pakistan does not have it- despite the intelligence reports that used to testify otherwise (Hersh, 1993). Instead, US Congress approved 480 million dollars aid to Pakistan in 1987 despite 'everybody in Congress' knew that Pakistan is pursuing the atomic program. But they could not cut off aid to Pakistan due to Soviet forces' presence in Afghanistan. However, the situation had changed by 1989. Pressler Amendment was activated and financial and military bans were imposed on Pakistan including, the stoppage

of the sale of F-16 aircraft as well as the billion dollars that Pakistan had paid already for buying them (Sattar, 2007). The US acted according to the decreasing importance of Pakistan

US- Pak relations deteriorated in the 1990s coinciding with the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan's controversial role of supporting them. The mujahedeen movement in Afghanistan was supported by the West and America against the Soviet Union. Pakistan backed certain mujahedeen factions i.e. Gulbadin Hikmatyar. Afghanistan drifted into a civil war amongst various regional warlords after the world left the country without ensuring a stable government. Soon the Pakistani backed factions emerged victorious by capturing large areas in Afghanistan. The role in launching Taliban movement is ambiguous but its stakes became clear as the movement was getting successes on the ground. One of the ministers in Benazir Bhutto's cabinet, Naseerullah Babar openly called Taliban as 'Pakistani boys' (Taj, 2011). Taliban were provided with enough support and resources by Pakistan through its intelligence agencies. They were also recruited and trained under the auspices of the Pakistani military. "Pakistan government at times even tried to represent the Taliban's interests overseas" (Byman, 2005). In 1997, Pakistan provided 30 million dollars to Taliban government, including 10 million dollars for payment of official's salaries (Byman, & Pollack, 2007).

Pakistan did not bother that supporting Taliban would invoke international reactions; as it was dubbed the 'creator of Taliban' (Sattar, 2007). It was the only option, Pakistan thought as suitable for its foreign policy to secure itself from the shatterbelts on its western side. The neighboring countries of Afghanistan especially, Uzbekistan and Iran openly criticized Pakistan. Pakistan tried to persuade friendly countries to recognize Taliban but could not succeed. Though United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia recognized Taliban but rejected its strict interpretation of Islam. United Nation Organization (UNO), Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) did not accept Taliban and its regime. Iran denounced Taliban and also provides support and assistance to its resistance in Afghanistan. The United States' criticism of supporting Taliban became harsh when they provided refuge to Osama bin Laden, Al-Qaeda chief as he was involved in attacking US interests throughout the world. India feared that Taliban might become a serious challenge for controlling the resistance movements in Kashmir because of their common ideology and struggle pattern therefore; it supported Northern Alliance against Taliban. Likewise, China feared Taliban because of the Muslim populated province, Xinxiang, that connected it with Pakistan's Taliban infested areas.

In May 1998, regional geopolitics took another turn when in India went for nuclear tests and Pakistan 'rationally', responded with detonating its own nuclear arsenals. Thus finally, nuclearization of South Asia took place. Now all the three; Pakistan, China and India acquired nuclear bomb technology. Under the International Nuclear Order, patronized by Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), China is a recognized legitimate nuclear power while Pakistan and India challenged the nuclear order. Though Pakistan and India did not violate the law- not being the members of NPT- the spirit of non-proliferation was violated as it was respected by other states. Sanctions were put upon both the countries that pushed Pakistan towards further isolation. International pressure increased to the level that Pakistan and India went for dialogues and negotiations for the first time after the 1989 uprising in Kashmir.

Kashmir's issue in the 1990s created problems for Indo-Pak relations. Already in the process of rapprochement with China, India was in passive mood vis-a-vis Pakistan because of tense relations since the end of the Cold War. After Brasstack's exercise, an uprising took place in India Held Kashmir in 1989 against its troops' presence (Wirsing, 1998). India blamed Pakistan for 'involvement' in the uprising. Pakistan denied Indian charges and dubbed it an indigenous uprising. Indo-Pak relations became tense and fears were created about another war over the subject of Kashmir. Finally the tension subsided because of United States involvement as a moderator. The nuclearization of Pakistan and India in 1998 once again caused tension in South Asia that led to negotiations between the two countries.

India and Pakistan resumed dialogues in 1997 at the foreign secretary's level in Islamabad and they expressed for the commencement of the stalled dialogue and agreed upon working groups (Sattar, 2007).

In the same year the prime ministers of the two countries met at the sideline of United Nations summit and expressed mutual willingness for resumption of dialogue for the peaceful solution of issues. In the continuation of the commitment, the Indian Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee visited Lahore in Delhi-Lahore bus service and stayed in Pakistan for two days-20-21 February 1999. He held a summit meeting with his Pakistani counterpart, Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif. It was a rational diplomatic move pressed by the fears of nuclear war.

Lahore Summit was successful in concluding three documents. In a mutual declaration, Pakistan and India reiterated their commitment for peaceful resolution of political disputes. They also shared vision for the progress and development of their people and mutual cooperation for the purpose. They agreed to act responsibly in presence of nuclear weapons and to refrain from conflicts. They committed themselves to the principles of cooperation and peaceful co-existence as mentioned in UN Charter. According to the declaration both states are to implement Simla Agreement in its spirit. CBMs were proposed for institutionalizing relations.

Vajpayee's visit got tremendous appreciation all around as it was taking place exactly one year after the nuclear detonations of India and Pakistan. He was the first prime minister of India who visited by bus. His visit was equated with that of Nixon's visit to China in 1971 and Gorbachev's famous visit to Berlin Wall. Vajpayee's commitment can best be inferred from his speech to the citizens in Governor House in Lahore, "We have suffered enmity so long now is the time for friendship. I know how to win this friendship; difficult decision would have to be made, a solution of Kashmir problem would have to be found, but we are ready" (Magsi, 2013). The meeting was very positive initiative and it showed a strong commitment for a rapprochement, but the hopes and expectations proved short-lived.

### **Kargil War (1999): Continuation of Geopolitical Tensions Between India and Pakistan**

Prime Minister Vajpayee commented, "I had gone with a message of peace to Lahore. But it is another thing that the bus to Lahore met with an accident on the peaks of Kargil ... And what an accident it was the bus was shattered to smithereens and even the Prime Minister of Pakistan had to quit" (Bhushan, 2003). Kargil war was fought in the District Kargil of Kashmir along the Line of Control (LOC) between May and June 1999. In India, the conflict is also referred to as 'Operation Vijay'. The war started when India knew that the heights of Kargil were occupied by pro-Pakistan mujahedeen. Pakistan, at first rejected Indian allegations in the involvement of Kargil Crisis but later on, the situational evidences showed that Pakistani paramilitary troops, headed by General Ashraf Rashid, were involved (Nawaz, 2008). The occupiers had gone across the LOC and captured the high peaks of 15,000 ft. The heights were strategically important for monitoring the road between Ladakh and Kashmir valley. The main aim was to cut the Indian supply line and force out Indian forces from Siachin Glacier that was occupied in 1984. The war caused the derailment of the negotiation process that had created high hopes after the Lahore Declaration. Vajpayee emotionally commented, "I had traveled to Pakistan with such a sincerity ... the real casualty of the crisis is the trust between the two countries" (Magsi, (2013).

United States president, Bill Clinton made phone calls to the prime ministers of both the countries and advised for restraining. Clinton called on Pakistan Prime Minister, asking him to use his influence over mujahedeen for withdrawing. It showed that America knew that the fighters were under Pakistan's influence and control. Washington, sensing the seriousness of the situation, sent military and civil officials to Pakistan and had meetings with the prime minister and chief of army staff. Though no positive outcome happened, the US officials visited Delhi and had met there. All this resulted in an engagement process that did delay a direct all-out war in the region. If it had taken place, the war would have been disastrous for two nuclear states.

Kargil crisis proved a storm in a cup for regional geopolitics that created serious fears all over the world as it might have an all-out-war might possibly, with nuclear weapons. The crises suggested that in the face of nuclearization, the regional politics might go irrational, if not systematically managed. Pakistani forces

involvement in the Kargil war was a dilemma situation for Pakistan; to go for war might finally lead to a solution of Kashmir issue or the status quo was to be accepted. And finally, the gambled discredited Pakistan that harmed its struggle for Kashmir. "Misconceived policies and actions not only isolated Pakistan internationally but they also gravely damaged the heroic freedom struggle of the Kashmiri people" (Sattar, 2007). If one of the objectives of war was to instigate the Kashmiri population against India, that surely failed. Though the issue was highlighted to the international community in the context of nuclear weapons, that even was short-lived as India, at the end of the crisis, propagated against Pakistan misadventure and that turned the situations in favor of India for getting international support. If it was an ill-conceived geopolitical move, why Pakistan committed it?

Musharraf assessed: BJP government as very weak- look its threats as a verbosity only; India may not retaliate the occupation of territory in the presence of Pakistan's missile system; the nuclear weapons may finally involve Western powers for the solution of Kashmir issue; and Pakistan would agree to ceasefire on its own terms and would not allow the return of the occupied territory (Dixit, 2003). Feeling pressurized, PM Nawaz Sharif rushed to Washington on July 4, 1999, for an urgent meeting with President Clinton. Clinton kept Vajpayee on call and informed him about the progress made in dialogue with the prime minister of Pakistan. At the end of the meeting, Nawaz Sharif and Bill Clinton issued the Washington Declaration (Farooq, 2016). The declaration called for the immediate cessation of hostilities in Kargil. The statement also said for resolution of border disputes along the Line of Control under the spirit of Simla agreement. Clinton also urged on the resumption of dialogue process that was initiated in Lahore (Lahore Declaration). Finally, mujahedeen and Pakistani forces withdrew from Kargil.

Chief of the Army Staff, General Pervez Musharraf toppled the democratic government of Nawaz Sharif on 12 October 1999 and imposed martial law. He later on, during his tenure, blamed Nawaz Sharif for the failure of Kargil War at diplomatic level (Lavoy, 2009). Nawaz Sharif is of the view that Kargil operation was launched under the auspices of General Musharraf without informing him (Pakistan's Prime Minister). If the other sources are consulted, General Musharraf along with three other generals was the actual people behind the war. No one knew about the plan other than Gen Musharraf, Lt Gen Muhammad Aziz, Lt Gen Javed Hassan and Lt Gen Mehmood Ahmad.

Kargil war affected the delicate fabric of regional geopolitics, created by the terms of Simla Agreement. Both states committed to respect the Line of Control- almost a permanent boundary. The line was widely respected from 1972 to 1999 for 27 years. The agreement favored India that Ceasefire Line was converted into Line of Control, making traditional stance of Pakistan regarding Kashmir somehow changed that was tacitly unacceptable to some circles. The Kargil war primarily intended to change in the current status of Line of Control and Jammu and Kashmir in favor of Pakistan. The results of the war proved otherwise and were a political disaster for Pakistan.

China's policy on Kashmir changed after the relations started improving especially, in 1980s and 1990s. During India-China rivalry, China had supported Kashmiris in their struggle for self-determination. The latter became a dilemma for China, as it provided impetus to secessionist's movements in Tibet and Xinxiang. China had already started advising Pakistan for cooperation with India and peaceful settlement of disputes.

## **Geopolitical Tensions between Pakistan and India: Kargil to 9/11**

The last year of the 20th century witnessed important developments regarding Kashmir issue, which depicted that it was still central to Pak India relations and regional politics, as a shatterbelt. Bus Diplomacy, (1999) initiated by Prime Minister of India, Vajpayee, failed. The hopes for a durable solution of Kashmir problem dashed to the ground in the face of Kargil Crisis in 1999. Kargil war was almost an open war between Pakistan and India after the 1971 war. Both states were on the verge of nuclear confrontation that set off the alarm bells among major powers of the world. The war was finally averted, going into a full pledge one. The mistrust rose between Pakistan and India and the dialogue process came to a complete halt.

Indian Airline's Flight 814 was en route to Delhi from Katmandu, Nepal on December 24, 1999, when it was hijacked by *Harkat-ul-Mujahideen*, a Muslim resistance movement against India in Kashmir. The plane was hijacked in Indian air space. The hijackers ordered for landing in three different sites; Dubai, Amritsar and Lahore, and finally landed in Kandahar, Afghanistan, controlled by Taliban. The plane was made hostage for seven days and finally India agreed to the demands of the hijackers and released three militants; Ahmad Umar Saeed Sheikh, Mushtaq Ahmad Zargar and Maulana Masood Azhar. The hijacking episode further eroded trust between Pakistan and India as the hijackers belonged to pro-Pakistani militant groups, that India had repeatedly blamed Pakistan for supporting it. On January 4, 2000, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, accused Pakistan of the hijacking and asked the nations of the world for declaring Pakistan a terrorist state (Dugger, 2000). Pakistan had already rejected any involvement in the hijacking. The hijacking came to an end on December 31, 1999, when the world was ready to celebrate the millennium.

The opening year of the 21st Century was discouraging for the overall diplomatic engagement of Pakistan in the world, especially with regard to the Kashmir issue. In March 2000, President Clinton of America paid a visit to South Asia that got huge attention in the background of problematic relations between India and Pakistan. He stayed for five days in India and spent only ten hours in Pakistan. He was warmly received in the Indian Parliament with a welcoming note by Atal Bihari Vajpayee, calling the event "the beginning of a new voyage in the new century" (Markey, 2013). Clinton visited parts of India and met people with great intimacy. He visited Hyderabad, the hub of India's information technology and computer industries. Clinton and Vajpayee signed a statement of 'vision', stating for development of fruitful relationships between the two biggest democracies. The visit depicted that US is interested to develop warm relations with India as its new gateway in the region.

In contrast, Clinton's visit to Pakistan was very brief and short only 10 hours. At first, his visit to Islamabad was uncertain. The debate in Washington continued whether he should visit Pakistan or not. Finally, the US intelligence agencies approved his visit for good and longstanding relations with Pakistan (Symonds, 2000). Those who opposed Clinton's stopover in Pakistan were mainly because of Musharaf military regime and anti-democratic practices.

President Clinton's visit to South Asia was equally significant with respect to Kashmir issue. Violent protests in Kashmir during the stay of US president in India further highlighted the matter. In a village in Kashmir, some 40 kilometers away from Srinagar, 40 Sikhs were massacred and India and Pakistan accused each other of the brutality. Clinton called it "horrible development" (Harding, 2000). India accused *Hizbul Mujahideen* and *Lashkar-e-Taiba*, two pro-Pakistan's Islamic militant organizations for the incident. Vajpayee said, "We and the international community reject the notion that *jihad* [holy war] can be a part of any civilized country's foreign policy. We have the means and will to eliminate this menace" (Harding, 2000). During his stay in Pakistan, Clinton warned and presses Pakistan for using its soil for terrorism against India in Kashmir (Markey, 2013). He delivered a direct and live speech to Pakistan's people and warned that Pakistan may go into further isolation. Thus, the regional politics in global context became a shatterbelt for Pakistan.

The succeeding months after Clinton's visit to South Asia, witnessed more active developments in Kashmir. *Hizbul Mujahideen*, a militant organization active in Kashmir, declared a unilateral ceasefire for three months against Indian security forces on July 24, 2000. Catching upon the opportunity, India went for dialogue with the representatives of the organization in August. The dialogue failed *Hizbul Mujahideen*, withdrew ceasefire after two weeks on August 8 on the pretext that India was not ready to involve Pakistan in the talks. India blamed Pakistan for the failure. A statement of the Indian government said, "Pakistan's object has been to derail the peace process by seeking to involve itself as a party in discussions between India and the *Hizbul Mujahideen*" (Abbas, 2000). Pakistan rejected the Indian blame.

In November 2000, the Indian Prime Minister announced the suspension of all military operations against the combatants in Kashmir in the holy month of Ramazan. The ceasefire started on November 27. It was a positive move though it could not remain successful as an attack took place on December 22,

2000, on Delhi's Red Fort allegedly by a Pakistan based Jihadist group, *Lashkar-e-Tayiba*. In the attack, three Indian soldiers lost their lives. Red Fort has been important for India for historical, cultural and political reasons. Every year on August 15, the fort hosts India Prime Minister. The attack derailed the India Pakistan negotiation process. Problems in the shatterbelt led to issues in Indo-Pak relations.

India called off unilateral ceasefire after six months on May 23, 2001, and offered open-ended dialogue to Pakistan. General Pervez Musharraf was invited for negotiations with India. The invitation was from Indian Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who talked for 'innovative' steps for the dialogue. He said, "India is willing and ready to seek a lasting solution to the Kashmir Problem. To this end we are prepared to commence talks with Pakistan at any level, provided Islamabad gives sufficient proof of its preparedness to create a conducive atmosphere for meaningful dialogue" (Dossani, & Rowen, 2005). Pakistan welcomed Indian offer for dialogue.

General Musharraf visited India (July 14-16, 2001) amid huge media coverage and international attention. The dialogue was directly between General Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan and Indian Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee at Agra therefore, it is called Agra Summit in history. The summit started with high hopes and catchy phrases both from Pakistan and Indian sides. Pervez Musharraf went to the summit with the stated intentions of, "open mindedness", "cautious optimism" and "flexibility" (Bahadur, 2003). India also desired for a "bold and innovative" solution of all issues ("Agra Summit", 2004). Various rounds of talks were held at the summit between Musharraf and Vajpayee. President Musharraf also held separate talks with Kashmiri separatist leadership. Vajpayee's enthusiasm for longstanding solution of core issue of Kashmir and lasting peace, could not sustain the pressure from conservatives and the summit failed to produce any result and consensus. Pakistan and India both blamed each other for the failure of the summit. Kashmir, being a shatter belt did not lead to successful dialogue.

After the Agra Summit, Kashmir once again went into the lap of violence. Militant groups went for a surge as they concluded that Kashmir issue could not be simply resolved through negotiations. A high profile militant in Kashmir, Abdul Hamid Tantray of *Hizbul Mujahedeen* was killed by Indian forces on July 24, 2001. The situation in Kashmir became worse enough after the killing of 11 people that India imposed an indefinite curfew on August 08. The attack was allegedly planned by *Jaish-e-Muhammads* three *fidayeen* suicide bombers. They hit the walls of the Kashmir Legislative Assembly with a car, loaded with bombs. In the attack, 38 people and the three attackers were killed. *Jaish-e-Muhammad* claimed the responsibility for the attack. One of the attackers was from Pakistan. Foreign Ministry of India issued a strong-worded warning to Pakistan and asked for stopping cross border terrorism. Chief Minister of India, Farooq Abdullah was harsher for calling a reprisal attack on Pakistan. He warned for "running out of time" (Dugger, 2001).

The situation took a twist on December 13, 2001, when the Indian Parliament at Delhi was attacked; leaving 14 dead in total including 6 policemen and two parliament security personnel. The perpetrators of the attack allegedly belonged to *Jaish-e-Muhammad* and *Lashkar-e-Taiba*. The attack was executed exactly after the parliament's session was adjourned forty minutes earlier to the attack. The building still had some 100 politicians within. Delhi police said that instructions to the attackers were given from Pakistan, by ISI, the intelligence agency of Pakistan (Vishu, 2001).

The episode further damaged the already wounded relations between Pakistan and India and both the states headed towards military standoff. Four days after the attack, the Indian cabinet discussed options with the military chief. The commander suggested for full mobilization of Indian troops on the Indo-Pak border. Operation Parakram was initiated when Prime Minister Vajpayee approved the plan. The operation involved almost 500,000 Indian troops who were deployed alongside Pakistan's border. The objective of the mobilization was also stated: Pakistan is to withdraw its support to the insurgency in Kashmir and handover 20 terrorists allegedly, living in Pakistan (Bhardwaj, 2013). Indian move was equally responded by Pakistan that mobilized its military to counter India. The time was very sensitive for regional and world politics as two of the world's largest armies with nuclear weapons were facing each other and there was a possibility of a nuclear war. The time for Pakistan and India relations was more sensitive even than that of

Kargil wartime. George Fernandez, Indian Defence Minister floated, "Pakistan can't think of using nuclear weapons... We could take a strike, survive and then hit back. Pakistan would be finished" (Pamidi, 2012).

The developments were alarming for the world especially America who had been busy for two months by the time, in the war against terrorism in Afghanistan, another chronic shatterbelt of the time. For America, the Indo-Pak military standoff was relevant for regional stability as well for Pakistan's army that was needed in Afghanistan in the War against terrorism. Pakistan could not spare enough forces for American support in Afghanistan, as they were needed against India. The government of the USA went for diplomatic overtures between India and Pakistan.

## **Findings**

In the light of the study the following findings are reached:

1. The post-Cold War region had a mix map of tensions and improvements in the bilateral relations of Pakistan, China and India. China and India made groundbreaking agreements for their bilateral relations, while Pakistan and India failed to improve.
2. Relations between Pakistan and India deteriorated, even after their attempts for improvement. Kashmir proved a bone of unmanageable contention between them. The issue caused huge mistrust that finally led to their nuclearization.
3. There was no Soviet Union to haunt post-Cold War politics of the region to prevent China and India from improving bilateral ties. On the other side, the United States still impacted the politics and foreign policy of Pakistan. USA's behavior proved that she has timely interests in Pakistan and chose to punish Pakistan with sanctions after Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.

## **Conclusion**

The region of Pakistan, China and India witnessed certain developments in the region. China and India decided certain bold steps to ignore geopolitical issues for the future. Thanks to the demise of a hurdle, the Soviet Union, that used to play upon India's disputes with China to hijack their relations. After the Cold War, global and regional politics took a fundamental turn; the United States remained the only superpower. Afghanistan's role as a battleground state came to an end; leaving the surrounding region as a barren land for the interests of the United States. China and India, thus, felt free to work on their options freely to work out better relations. They remained successful in it by signing important bilateral relations. On the other hand, Pakistan is on cordial terms with China, failed to improve relations with India. Likewise, India couldn't realize to improve relations with Pakistan as it had chosen for a competitive attitude towards Pakistan. The United States pressed Pakistan hard for its nuclear program. The imposed sanctions isolated Pakistan that pushed it dangerous extreme. The sanctions proved counter-productive when Pakistan matured its nuclear program to detonate in reaction to India's nuclear explosions. A little thaw-phase in Indo-Pak relations was seen, but it couldn't go longer. The new century witnessed huge issues in Indo-Pak relations that would ultimately lead to the military stand-off.



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