

US Afghan Strategy: Policy Responses of China and Pakistan (2001-2017)

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Abstract

This paper attempts to explore the level of variations in the pattern of foreign policies of Pakistan and China to US Afghan strategy. To investigate this question, the paper examines US strategy in Afghanistan. The current administration under Trump and announcement of China Pakistan Economic Corridor further complicated the US presence in Afghanistan. The study analyses the factors that are responsible for differences between Pakistani and Chinese stance. About the results, China's response was an outcome of their foreign policy principles, that is not to indulge in direct clash with the US and Western world. The interests of China in Afghanistan are linked to that of Pakistan, South and Central Asia. China does not want to wage unilateral talks with Taliban at the cost of Pakistan's interests. While on the other hand, post 9/11 2001, Pakistan could not resist the pressure of US policies in Afghanistan because it was heavily dependent on the US, economically, militarily, politically and diplomatically. The respective Political structure and culture; their foreign policy priorities, goals, and tradition; perception of threat and resulting priorities; political and economic dependence; location, policy options and decision-making and professional capabilities of decision making were jointly responsible for their differences.

Key Words: Strategy, USA, China, Pakistan, CPEC, Policy Response.

Introduction

It is an intriguing question for many political scientists that why two states come up with different policies on the same or similar issues? To answer this question, we have to understand the political alignment and factors at any given point of time between these states. After 9/11 2001, US invaded Afghanistan to contain the threat expected from Al-Qaeda/Taliban and remained there until now with ever shifting objectives in strategy. (Jones, 2009)

The control of Taliban in Afghanistan is closely associated with the last stage of the Cold War when the Soviets installed a Pro- Moscow government in Kabul through a military coup in 1978. To protect its communist oriented regime

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in Kabul, the Soviets applied every political formula but failed and intervened in Afghanistan on December 27, 1979. The World community including the local Pakhtoon Mujahedeen resisted and got the help of CIA that defeated communism in Afghanistan. (Katzman, 2010) With the defeat of Soviets, the US also shifted their foreign policy priorities from Afghanistan to the newly born states of Eastern Europe and Central Asian Republics. Post-Soviet Afghanistan was in severe crises when a tug of war started between different political leaders to impose their own conceived government which led them to chaos and anarchy. As a result Taliban controlled 90% of Afghanistan in 1996 and only three countries including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and UAE recognized the new state of Taliban. The US and Western community condemned the Taliban regime for keeping liaison with Al-Qaeda, violation of Human Rights. The US particularly had a clash of interests with Taliban on supporting Al-Qaeda in a series of incidents started from 1983 till Sep 2001. (Lansford, 2009)

This study examined the US strategy in Afghanistan post 9/11 issue wise, starting from the Elimination of Taliban from Afghanistan, reconstruction of Afghanistan post US invasion, the use of Drone, Osama operation inside Pakistan and Dialogue with Taliban in Afghanistan. Well-coordinated hijacked aircraft attack on September 11, 2001 on the World Trade Center, the symbol of world economic system, and pentagon, the symbol of world most secure place on September 9, 2001, that resulted, in the killing of 3000 people from around 78 countries. The economic cost of the World trade Center estimated at 83 billion dollars. The world leaders deemed the attack on World Trade center and Pentagon as an attack on a civilization. Bush administration reiterated Al-Qaida's 9/11 assaults is not a crime against the US but attack against the whole humanity. (Perl, 2001)

Pakistan and China having closely linked regional interests adopted diverged policies with each US step. This study examined diversity in the responses of China and Pakistan to the US presence in Afghanistan and identified the factors that caused these differences. With this academic endeavor we understood Pak-China relations, South Asian politics, Afghanistan affairs and a number of other related fields came into light with fresh and different perspectives. (Jabeen M. , 2012)

On the pretext of terrorist attacks on 11th September, 2001, the US launched a full-fledged military operation in Afghanistan in order to topple the Taliban regime and to put an end to Al-Qaida's sanctuaries in Afghanistan for terrorist's operations both inside and outside Afghanistan. (Conetta, 2002) The US led operation quickly achieved short term objectives such as ending the Taliban regime, halting the land of Afghanistan and eventually to disrupt Al-Qaida once for all. With the elimination of Taliban from Afghanistan, the US started to reconstruct Afghanistan post its invasion along with the international community. The US shifted its strategy from reconstruction to tackle the insurgents using drone

technology. The war on terror extended its mandate to the neighboring state, Pakistan where the US conducted a unilateral operation against Osama bin Laden in May 2011. Lastly the US realized the importance of dialogue with Taliban in Afghanistan although they opposed the suggestion of Pakistan about dialogue with Pakistani Taliban.

In response to the US post 9/11 policies, both China and Pakistan formulated and implemented their policies on the basis of their own approaches and power perceptions. In this analytical study we tried to find out the differences between the two states policy responses to the US policy in the post 9/11 era. Our main objective is to point out how two states, formulated different policies for the same issue? Our main contention is that there is a huge difference between the two states policy responses to the US (policies). The difference is there due to China's strong economic, political and military position and its regional consideration and priorities, and Pakistan being economically poor state and politically unstable one could not formulate the same response to the US policies. (Yang & Siddiqi, 2011)

Theoretical Framework

Being a qualitative study, theoretical framework has designed in order to explain two basic themes. First part focused on the literature and concepts about the related theory and theoretical question. Secondly, it focused on the related Theory that can be used as a foundation of the study. By starting with literature and concepts, we need to highlight the theoretical and research questions before applying a relevant theory on it. The questions are:

1. Why two states come up with a different policy on the same or similar issue?
2. What are the policy responses of China and Pakistan to the US strategy in Afghanistan?
3. What are the differences in their policies responses and why?

Keeping in mind these questions, there are so many theories one can apply on it but the study main question closely linked to the foreign policy responses and the decision making theory. Here an attempt has been made to clarify its main terms and concepts.

In International Relations, Foreign Policy Analysis can also be considered a sub-field, which aims to understand the process behind foreign policy response or action. The most eminent scholars in this field of study include James Rousseau, Graham Allison, Richard Snyder, Irving Janis and Alexander George (Garrison, 2003). Studies of decision making process have embodied an important part in International Relations literature since 1960's, it deliberates a trend towards the variation of political enquiry since termination of world war second, such studies have likely form a positive addition to rather a negative aspersion from the general

knowledge of Political Science (Koni, 2010). Analyzing of decision making like those of in organizations have not been confined to a single approach but have exercised diverse methods and techniques to probe the processes by which policy is made (Kohl, 1975).

Decision making that leads to policy response assesses a course of action which has important outcomes, decisions are implicit in policy making in execution of policy strategies. The most important decisions are referred to leadership at the top level; various personnel's of decision makers are needed in all institutional frameworks. In international Relations decisions are made regarding foreign policies which compose directions for socio-economic activities and defense needs of individual states. In international Relations decisions can be located within historical and methodological frameworks (Kohl, 1975).

To select the relevant theory, in this regard the Decision making theory has more links to our study and an answer to our theoretical question. Decision making is a complex phenomenon, it involves different contradictory aims like one man's food is another man's poison, better conclusion in one may be worse conclusion in another. The decision makers refer to people or a group of people liable for making the choice of an appropriate course of activity amongst the convenient courses of activities (Fishburn, 1972).

So to conclude the debate about theoretical question it is the decision making theory that divert states in its responses to the same or similar issue. Beijing has completely different domestic structure and dynamics along with its authoritative decision making process that put opposite to that of Islamabad which has more dependency on Washington than China (Markman & Philip, 2000).

The US strategy in Afghanistan

The US strategy in Afghanistan after 9/11 consisted of two phases. In phase I the US decided to invade Afghanistan so as to eliminate Taliban/Al-Qaeda in order to stop the use of Afghan land by the international terrorists against the interests of US and the West. In this first phase all efforts were circled around counter-terrorism activities. (Perl R. F., 2001) The second phase, dubbed as the Operation Enduring Freedom, aimed at overthrowing the Taliban government and to establish *permanent* US and NATO bases in Afghanistan. Both phases and entailing actions were welcomed by the world community especially Pakistan, China, majority of the Muslim World including, Saudi Arabia and UAE. Almost the whole Muslim World showed the condolence with the people of America for the victims of these attacks but they indirectly linked it with the Arab-Israel issue in the region (Office, 2006).

Keeping the security objective in high profile post 9/11, the US had two important strategic objectives in Afghanistan. Its first objective was to diminish the risk of terrorist attack on US. In other words, to stop Afghanistan by not becoming safe

haven for the terrorists that could impinge US security. The second objective was to contain the conflict in Afghanistan, and to stop the expansion of this menace to the regions of Central and South Asia (Burrough, 2009).

For that purpose they launched the Operation Enduring Freedom and achieved the immediate objectives that include eliminating the Taliban from the ruling state by force and not supporting the Al-Qaeda network to terrorize the world. They also achieved the objective to liberate the people of Afghanistan from the clutches of Taliban but they could not provide peace and stability to the Afghan society and still most of the Afghan considered the American as another foreign intervention force coming with new ideologies and disrupting the Afghanistan original traditions and culture. They failed to make Afghanistan capable becoming a responsible actor in international community. They also failed to stop the spreading of these elements to the region of South Asia and Central Asia (Jan, 2006).

The Operation Enduring Freedom damaged Afghanistan heavily in all spheres of life including political, economic and social development. To reconstruct Afghanistan, the US along with international community initiated multi-faceted rebuilding and rehabilitation strategy to reform the Afghan society in different aspects. The international community was convinced that a peaceful and stable Afghanistan is in the best interest of every country. They all reiterated that if Afghanistan is not rebuilt after the withdrawal of the US and NATO forces, then it was certain that it will again face civil war and will become a nursery of terrorism once again. The US and international community expressed the need to provide proper political, administrative, legal and stable security systems for Afghanistan. It was realized by the US and the international community that after the intrusion of Afghanistan, war is not the only solution to win hearts and minds of Afghans and achieve the long term objectives in the country (Yousaf S. , 2012).

The US administration involved most of the major powers in the process of reconstruction including Western developed states, Russia, China and India. The major hurdles in the reconstruction were Afghan society, which was not understood by the international community to address their grievances. The next important factor was the dearth of assistance because there was huge hiatus between the supplied and demanded aid. Some scholars also believe that the factor of insurgency from the neighboring country, Pakistan also played it greater role as a hurdle in the process of reconstruction by targeting the foreign investors and workers especially to reduce the influence of India for its strategic depth policy in Afghanistan. Moreover, corruption, nepotism, cronyism, political polarization, and deteriorating law and order were the obstacles which hampered the reconstruction process (Yousaf.S, 2012).

However after the fresh engagement of US and NATO troops in Iraq War (March 2003) the local and foreign Taliban and Al-Qaeda members got new vigor to fight against US for two reasons. First and foremost, US and NATO now had

little time to focus on Afghanistan, and second, the ideological thesis of Al-Qaida proved valid, at least for its followers, that US and NATO are at war just against Islam. Having special propaganda value, this perspective once presented through media proved a very important tool for Jihadi organizations in collection of human and capital resources (Shah, 2010).

At that stage of anxiety, to counter the insurgency in Afghanistan, and partly to test and perfect its new war technology, the US introduced the Drones. This technology was employed for targeting of high value Al-Qaeda and Taliban individuals and groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This was new war technology the world reaction and legalities has to tackle. The Washington came up with a justification for its use that in Afghanistan they are in a state of war with Al-Qaeda, while in Pakistan they referred to the article 5 of the UN charter and also the authorization of the Congress. However, US faced a huge pressure about the legal and moral justification of violating the sovereignty of independent states and using Drones inside Pakistan and Afghanistan (Sarwar, 2009).

On technical grounds this technology proved useful and introduced a new weapon which in turn started a new international race. However its use still raises big legal and moral questions and nations and United Nations is still debating over its legal and authorized use. Americans are committed to continue the Drone attacks inside Pakistan by the time these lines are being written.

The war on terror took another turn when the most wanted man on earth for US and NATO, Osama bin Laden, was found and killed in Abbottabad near the capital Islamabad, in a commando operation conducted by USA apparently without taking the government of Pakistan into confidence. It raised many questions and brought challenges as well as opportunities for the US and for the Western world (Lansford, T, 2009).

Every war eventually has to end somewhere, and almost always this come through political negotiations. This *war on terror* also reached to its end when the new US administrations of Obama announced to talk to the good Taliban and to isolate them from the bad ones. The US strategy in Afghanistan is still unclear for its details on how to end the war. (Bew, 2013) The process of talks faced a number of ups and downs and still has not achieved its success because of the several reasons involved. The major reason for its failure is its frequent changing of actors for negotiating with Taliban. The U.S has never given a free hand to Afghan government to negotiate totally by its own and never took the negotiation process in an organized way. Continuous shifts in the policies of America took place which also affected the talks. Different actors tried to adopt the process of negotiations by their own different approaches as some wanted to divide the Taliban by negotiation and then defeat them while others wanted to reconcile with them. There had been never a common interest involved. Each actor tried to achieve its own end which includes the American interest of containing Al-Qaeda, the Pakistan interest of securing its geo-strategic interests and Afghan's government interest of

centralizing its power over Afghanistan. All these factors contained the negotiations in achieving its utmost end of peace and stability in Afghanistan (John, 2013).

But USA formally announced to leave Afghanistan in 2014. Their withdrawal at times appear to be full withdrawal in the backdrop of financial burden and US international engagements; and at times they appease NATO and Afghan allies that US aimed to just *draw down*. However one thing is certain that US policy makers feel that full evacuation from the region would hurt its economic and strategic interests. Thus it seems that they are reducing the troops to reduce the toll of human lives in the war; and will increase the use of more modern technology to safeguard their objectives.

The war in Afghanistan got more complexity and confusion not only for the American public but also for the international community and for those who are living around Afghanistan when Trump came to power in 2017 as a new president of the USA. Despite of Draw down its forces from Afghanistan in 2014, Trump administration increased its five thousand more troops to the already existence nine thousands. Prior to the Trump administration, Chinese launched Belt and Road Initiative under the Xi Jin Ping administration that also prolonged the US to stay in Afghanistan (Cronin, 2010).

Unlike the two previous presidents, Trump adopted more hostile policy towards both Pakistan and China in the context of US presence in Afghanistan. Washington blamed Islamabad for its double game in the War on terror and took tough steps to change the behavior of Pakistan towards US presence in Afghanistan. On the other hand its non-NATO ally, Pakistan rejected the US allegations and comprehended the US failure in Afghanistan war. By outlining the new strategy for Afghan war Trump stated that “*a hasty withdrawal would create a vacuum for terrorists, including ISIS and Al Qaeda.*” It shows that he has planned to prolong the war as their objectives are still in stakes as the Beijing also announced China Pakistan Economic Corridor in 2015, that is considered to the Game Changer for not only Pakistan for also for the regions surrounded including, Central, South Asia and Middle East that posed a serious threats to its interests in the region (Dale, 2011).

In its new strategy, Trump Administration also highlighted the Russian involvement by supporting Taliban against the US forces. Washington worries has increased when Pakistan clubbed itself with the Sino-Russian Multipolar World Order that has a clear threats to US Uni-polarity. In its new strategy the US focused on the increased role India in Afghanistan which further widen the gap between the Washington and Islamabad. The bottom line shows that a new alliance system has been developed in the region post Trump administration that will repeat the history in Afghanistan and will further strengthen the theory that marked Afghanistan is the Graveyard of Empires. Pakistan took strong and rigid stance to the US allegations and China also increased its diplomatic channels to secure its

economic and political interests in Afghanistan by not directly clashing to American (Innocent, 2009).

The Chinese Policy Response to US Strategy

The Chinese response to the US strategy in Afghanistan was almost a continuation of its broader policy about its relations with US. Though during Mao's era both states toed a hostile policy towards each other, but when Deng came to power, he re-adjusted China's foreign relations with international community especially with the West and the US (Khan, 2009).

The response of China to the 9/11 attacks was very supportive and it strongly condemned the attacks but stressed that the US should take UN on board for any action beyond its borders. This response of China reflected fundamental principles of its foreign policy; as it was chalked out by the Ding's 16-word directive, issued after the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989. According to that Seven Phrases Policy, China must secure its fundamental interests at negligible charge, so not to detract from the main focus on domestic economic development. Following the principle China kept a low profile and refrained from offering any material aid or land as military base against the Taliban and Al-Qaida; as Russia, India and Pakistan did (Szonyi, 2002).

China was concerned with 9/11 and its aftermath in its economic terms. That's why they were not involved in the operation against the Taliban but they were actively engaged in the reconstruction of heavily devastated Afghanistan. Afghanistan's infrastructure, trade, economy and relations with other countries have been ruined due to the so called *war on terror* and preceding to that 10 years active Jihad against USSR. This ruined state when entered into the phase of reconstruction; China was the first one to extend its supportive hand towards Afghanistan (Zyck, 2002).

China's response to the US drone attacks inside Pakistan is very complex and kept intentionally vague due to its own priorities in relations with the US. The issue of drone attacks concerned China in so many aspects including the Uyghur separatist's movement of Western China, as well as the sale of drone in future as product of war industry (Qureshi, 2013).

Chinese leadership took the 9/11 and its aftermath both as a challenge and an opportunity. The Chinese adopted the Good Neighbor Policy that was designed for solving of all the border disputes; and pledge of friendly relations with neighbors so to minimize dependency on the Middle East oil and energy resources. For them the presence of American in Afghanistan was more challenging in nature than to term it as an opportunity. US establishment of bases in the Central Asian Republics was a threat for China that clearly could minimize the role of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) (Niloofer, 2013).

So broadly speaking during War on Terror keeping both the states, Pakistan and USA, in same degree of relations was a diplomatic success of China. At one hand that reflected policy principles of the Chinese foreign relations that avoids direct clash with the West and the US. On the other hand the spokesman also stated that the international community should do more to assist Pakistan in its efforts for the contribution in war on terror. China also emphasized that the world community should give more understanding and support to Pakistan (Khokhar, 2012).

Chinese interests in Afghanistan are numerous: including, political interests of Pakistan, South and Central Asia; the relations between US and China, Chinese counter-terrorism vision and policy; and lastly the commercial interests in natural resources of Afghanistan and its potential as energy trade rout. For this purpose, in matters related to Afghanistan, Beijing adopted a multi-nation's cooperation approach to stabilize Afghanistan. They avoided all the time any unilateral effort to negotiate with Taliban or any other group; and in this regard they are very sensitive to the interests and objectives of Pakistan. Beijing kept itself in a supportive point for the stability of Afghanistan through political, economic and diplomatic assistance that not only suit China but also the US and other regional actors including, Pakistan, Russia, Central Asians republics, Iran and India. (Jacob, 2013)

Pakistan's Policy Response to US Strategy

The response of Pakistan to the post 9/11 US decision to attacks was quick and positive because Pakistan had no other option to think due to political, economic, military and diplomatic dependence on the US coupled with diplomatic alternate of India to avail the offer. Yet another cause for quick acceptance of US policy was illegitimate government of General Pervez Musharraf, who wished to gain international legitimacy and support. This was granted and for next one decade, as long as Pakistan was front line state in War on Terror, the question of democracy and civil rights were never raised in the US or the West (Shahnaz, 2102).

Pakistan had important role as a front line state in the war on terror and did a lot to the Operation Enduring Freedom. It helped US lead NATO forces by allowing them to use ports and bases, shared intelligence and information, and captured top Al Qaeda leaders. To control the Pak-Afghan border Pakistan deployed more than one hundred thousand regular Army. Pakistan's contribution in overthrowing the Taliban regime in a very short time was evident. However Pakistan enormously suffered due to its contribution in War on Terror. Terrorist acts against civilians and military persons virtually hampered its economic growth. Extremist ideologies and hate speeches and acts torn the social fabric of Pakistan and the country still presents picture of a war devastated state (Choudhry, 2012).

Pakistan's policy response to the reconstruction of Afghanistan was based on pro-active approach. Pakistan encouraged every international effort in this regard and proved that it wants a peaceful, stable Afghanistan. However at that stage Pakistan's efforts to ensure a Pro-Pakistani government in Afghanistan in future, resulted in somewhat backfire. Pakistan's explanations over these accusations were most of the time logical and rational. Pakistan's foreign office time and again made it clear that Pakistan is not economically sound enough to provide as huge assistance to Afghanistan as other powers like China, India and Russia did. Despite of all its domestic problems, Pakistan adjusted 30 million Afghan refugees and doing its best to make Afghanistan a stable state. The official policy statement over this issue also sound logical enough to accept that Pakistan could not afford another hostile, long border in the West with the existence of one in the East (Jabeen M. , 2010).

Pakistan's rejoinder over Drone Attacks is a bit complex diplomatic and military issue, debated by so many scholars and experts in US and Pakistan as well as international community and forums. Without going to any extreme views about Drones it is clear that though it was agreed by the government of Pakistan but it was not ready to accept in public, in fear of more violent response from extremist and terrorist groups active in Pakistan. This arrangement proved very successful as sharing of intelligence from Pakistan and use of Drones by US would have resulted in killing of common enemies. However, when US begin to extend its objectives in the region, and wished to gain fuller economic and strategic control; Pakistan like all other regional states tried to protect its primary interests. At that stage, largely coincided with reconstruction of Afghanistan, Pakistan was very much uncomfortable over unilateral use of Drones by US. The use of Drones at that stage not only were creating difficulties for Pakistan to keep poise with its supporting groups; but it also resulted in political mistrust and policy inconsistency at the level of decision-making bodies in Islamabad (Haider, 2014).

Pakistan, at that stage gets benefit of its previous official stance over Drones. Drones were termed as purely US operations and against the territorial integrity of Pakistan. It was also added that Drones result in casualties of civilians, largely true but never mentioned before in international forums. At that stage the legal, moral and strategic rationales as well as ethics were questioned around the globe about use of Drones.

This debate, still in vogue at academia, witnessed another turn when Pakistan's government yet another time sought US assistance in targeting some difficult hideouts through Drones, to kill common enemies necessary for smooth ending of War on Terror. However Pakistan's foreign office in very recent brief termed Drone Attacks inside Pakistan as the violation of sovereignty of an independent state.

Presence, detection and eventual targeted killing of Osama bin Laden by CIA inside Pakistan land gave new turn to Pak-US relations. Pakistan's exact role

was questioned by international community in war on terror. Internally the capabilities of military questioned on failure to detect hour's long air raid in Pakistan. This event pushed Pak-US relations to its freezing point (Yousaf A. , 2012).

However, the international realities and national interests forced both countries to go hand in hand for at least some more years to come. The major cause behind this change was internal analysis by policymakers in Pakistan that cost of the War on Terror is far greater than its benefits. A vivid move in this policy direction could be seen in Pakistan's cooperation with US in the dialogue with Taliban. It proved that Pakistan welcome all steps and reconciliatory policy that benefits Pakistan and help in the establishment of a stable, peaceful and pro-Islamabad government in Afghanistan (Sheikh, 2013).

Conclusion

After study of specific policy moves of US in Afghanistan post 9/11, and its response from China and Pakistan, now to generalize the outcome of the study here an attempt is made to answer the theoretical question that why two states adopts diverse policies on the same or similar issue? To conclude, multiple factors shape response of one state over another state. By examining the responses of China and Pakistan on the same or similar issue and policy of US, post 9/11 Afghanistan, it is obvious that below factors are counted for diversity in the policy response:

- Political structure along with political setting;
- Foreign policy objective, preferences, norms and tradition;
- Perception of threat and resulting priorities;
- Political and economic dependence; location;
- Policy choices and time available for decision-making;
- Professional capacities of decision making all do count.

Different policy choices are vital results of differences in these important areas between any two states. These factors also dictate as how a state would react in time of emergency; and how much it would be able to take advantage of opportunities, political events offer in its region. To answer that general question, factor analysis method is used. The factors which are responsible for the differences in both the states are following:

- Policy responses are largely part of the type, history and trends of overall foreign policy of a certain state. Since both states have their own domestic structures, along with ideological construct and foreign policy history; thus this very structure for the greater part pre-determined their respective foreign policies options and actions.
- China and Pakistan have very different interests in Afghanistan. For China it is just another land of opportunity and trade corridor, and at most a land

that better be in hands of firm and safe government so it may not pose some possible threat to China. On the other hand for Pakistan it is question of its security, a battlefield of diplomatic race with its classic rival India and questions of integrity by discouraging any sub nationalist movement at other side of the boarder. Thus both states pursued different policy options with entirely different level of priorities.

- Both states have their own term of relations with US, which shaped their responses to the US post 9/11 policy in Afghanistan. Pakistan was old ally of US in war against USSR, and is greatly dependent economically as well as diplomatically on US. On other hand for China, US is a rival yet equal power. This difference reflected very well in policy response of the both countries.
- China and Pakistan are at different levels of power in social, political, cultural, economic, and military fields. This difference dictates very different set of actions to secure national interest; which very vividly explain the difference in policy over same or similar issue.
- Post 9/11 events in the region for Pakistan offered very little policy choice; on other hand due to geopolitical factors, China had a spectrum of choices to choose from. For China it was an opportunity with challenge. But for Pakistan all these events were something like destiny to face.
- Geographic location of Pakistan, along with its decades-long attachment with Jihadi projects, post 9/11 events resulted in bloody events of terrorism across the country. To ensure safety and security, Pakistan again has very little policy choice in dealing with US or its rival resistant groups. On other hand China had no physical threat by the events in Afghanistan and had no direct link with any rival party. Thus for China the decision making was most of the time risk free and comfortable, well thought process. On the other hand for Pakistan, most of the decisions were dictates of urgency and was a matter of life or death. This stress in decision making in Islamabad could easily be read in almost all decisions about Afghanistan.
- The reconstruction of Afghanistan becomes an investment venue for Chinese that promising in its economic and political gains. This not only comforted US and the West, as China stood shoulder to shoulder with them on this reconstruction project. While on the other hand Pakistan economically had no strength to invest in this strategic event; as India, China and Russia did.

- On drone attacks inside Pakistan, Chinese preferred not to comment due its own manufacturing and selling of drone technology; and possible use of it against the Uyghur separatist in the future. While Pakistan considered it a good deal of attacking common enemies without taking open responsibility and thus avoiding brutal and bloody retaliation from terrorist in Pakistan. However Pakistan stance changed over the issue when instead of common enemies, drones were used against friendly groups and strategic assets of Pakistan. At that state Pakistan termed it violation of sovereignty and demanded to stop the use of drone attacks within Pakistani land that kills innocent people including women and children.
- After the Osama Operation inside Pakistan, Chinese response was supportive and demanded from international community to not to isolate Pakistan, but it should be encouraged for its contribution in War on Terror. China also pressed international community to respect territorial integrity of Pakistan. On the other hand for Pakistani policymakers it was the hardest time to prove its noninvolvement of hideout of Osama bin Laden, to communicate its transparency over its intelligence sharing agreements, its protest over unilateral operation and to deal with extremist groups.
- In response to the US dialogue with Taliban in Afghanistan, Chinese welcomed in principle any steps taken by any party in Afghanistan that result in stability of Afghanistan due to its huge investment in the country. Indeed this principle also include that such efforts must not be in clash with the interests of its most reliable ally Pakistan. Pakistan considered this situation as an opportunity to reconciliation of its relations with US and Afghan Taliban as well as a chance to install pro-Pakistani elements in Afghanistan future political setup.

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