



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Sino-Pak Geo- Strategic Interdependence: Post 9/11 Determinants**

Sobia Jamil <sup>1</sup> Muhammad Jawad Hashmi <sup>2</sup> Dr. Ashfaq Ahmed <sup>3</sup>

1. Ph. D Scholar, Department of Law and International Relations, University Sultan Zainal Abidin, Terengganu, Malaysia
2. Lecturer, Department of Political Science and International Relations, University of Gujrat, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Assistant Professor, Department of Politics and International Relations (DPIR), University of Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan

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**ABSTRACT**

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**Corresponding**

**Author:**

Danalyst@hotmail.com

Chinese President Xi Jinping referred to China's partnership with Pakistan as "higher than the mountains, deeper than the oceans, sweeter than honey." Pakistan-China relations are usually described by 'Two Alls' and 'Four Goods.' The 'Two Alls' are 'all-weather friendship' and 'all-round cooperation' and 'Four Goods' includes good neighbours, good friends, good partners, and good brothers. To understand Sino-Pak-China relations, it is essential to confer the determinants and the environment that led to the consolidation of their strategic interdependence in the post 9/11 period. This research study has employed the qualitative method in which secondary sources of data have taken from existing literature, published and unpublished research works and primary data was collected by conducting interviews of International Relations experts' to analyze the factors behind Sino-Pak geo-strategic interdependence in the post 9/11 period. It focuses on China's importance and engagement in the emerging dynamics of South Asia, especially India's efforts for regional superiority and its partnerships with major powers, particularly with the US. The outcome of discussion reflects that in the post 9/11 period, the Indo-US strategic cooperation added new dimensions to the China and Pakistan partnership

**Introduction**

Before the 9/11 incident, the security dynamics of South Asia were mainly based on inter-state relations, especially interactions among Pakistan, India, and China, wherein at the time, extra-regional and global powers played their significant role directly or indirectly in the regional affairs. Security of South Asia was all about India-Pakistan relations, India-China relations, and nuclear

proliferation during the cold war. In the post 9/11 period, there are many factors such as US presence in Afghanistan, PAK-US alliance, growing Indo-US strategic partnership (as the US thinks India has an important role to play to contain China), Pak-US mistrust over the issue of terrorism, Sino-Pak strategic cooperation, Sino-India competition and rapprochement and US-China competition in South Asia have changed not only global politics but also regional politics of South Asia and made South Asian Security environment security more complex.

Due to the rise in terrorism across the world, strategic interdependence has been increased along with economic interdependence in the post 9/11 era. In this period, global powers have built strategic relations even with developing states. Post 9/11 period has been witnessing re-alignments and re-adjustments in bilateral and multilateral partnerships among global powers and between major powers and developing nations as well. In the current geostrategic scenario, China's relationship with Pakistan is vital for both countries. In the 1990s, so many events such as the disintegration of Soviet Union, the civil war in Afghanistan, nuclear tests conducted by Pakistan and India, Indo-Pak Kargil war, 9/11 attacks on the US resulting in US invasion in Afghanistan and the 2001-02 Indo-Pak military standoff affected regional security of South Asia (Muzaffar, et. al, 2018)

As a result of these developments in geopolitical affairs, there were re-adjustments and re-alignments in strategic partnerships. Pakistan joined the US led war on terror. US and India aligned based on their common interests. India and China enhanced their economic cooperation by keeping their border conflict aside. Pakistan-India once again faced a tensed relationship due to 26/11 Mumbai attacks; All these developments altered the conceptual geographical paradigm of the region(Ahmad, 2013).In the post 9/11 era, due to regional developments, Pakistan faced enormous security challenges that affected its sovereignty and territorial integrity(Ahmad, 2013).In this hour of need, China extended its support to Pakistan in various fields, especially the economy and defense(Sattar, 2015).As many International politics experts argue that historically, the relations between Pakistan and China were mainly Indian-centric, but there is no doubt that with time, many new dimensions have also been added in the strategic partnership between the two countries. Some of the new factors are;

- i. Emergence of China as rising power and growing Indo-US strategic partnership to contain China's influence.
- ii. Xinjiang factor in Pakistan-China relations as China wants to develop its western province and fight against religious extremism with the help of Pakistan.
- iii. Indo-Pak kargil war, military standoff in 2001-02 and military standoff in the wake of Pulwama attack in Kashmir.
- iv. Nuclear arm race between India and Pakistan and China's role in maintaining balance of power in the region.

- v. Geo-strategic significance of Pakistan as China is getting an alternate trade route through Gwadar.
- vi. Peace in Afghanistan: China-Pakistan cooperation for creating stability in the country.
- vii. China-Pakistan's cooperation to make multilateral institutions such as SAARC and SCO effective (Munir, 2018).

To reinforce friendship and mutually beneficial cooperation, a "treaty of friendship, cooperation and good Neighborly, relations" was signed by both countries on 5th April 2005. Both countries believed that this cooperation is not just favorable for the prosperity of people in Pakistan and China. Still, it is also crucial for maintaining balance in the region, which is conducive to regional peace. According to the agreement, Pakistan and China declared that any of them would not join any formal alliance or bloc, which violates territorial integrity, sovereignty, and security of China or Pakistan. According to the treaty, they also declared that they would not sign this sort of agreement with any other state. (Daily, April 8, 2005)

According to Wang Shida, an Assistant Director at the Institute of South & Southeast Asia, "We have been witnessing many tangible transformations in Pakistan-China strategic relations since the beginning. In the cold war era, world politics revolved around alliance formation, confrontation, and power balancing. After the disintegration of the USSR, World became unipolar, and the focus was shifted on mutual development, shared destiny, and admiration of responsibilities. After 9/11, new dimensions have been added and in this era, the objectives of China-Pakistan strategic cooperation are to achieve peace, to encounter non-traditional security challenges such as terrorism and extremism, to ensure human security and human development in the region ." (Shida, Personal Communication January 20, 2019)

China firmly believes that the militant elements which are creating unrest in Xinjiang are directly linked to Afghanistan. China understands this fact very well that an amicable solution of Afghan conflict could not be possible without Pakistan and Pakistan can play an important role in the process of stabilization and bringing peace in Afghanistan. Pakistan and China are cooperating in Afghan reconciliation process as peace in Afghanistan serves interests of both China and Pakistan. In the changing scenario, Pakistan-China strategic cooperation is a need of both countries not only for the development of the region but also for countering terrorism. (M. K. Afridi & Khalid, 2016) After 9/11, due to various factors such as formation of new external alliances, strategic partnership between India and United States, Indo-Israel alliance, India's strategic partnerships with major global powers and nuclear arm race in South Asia, Pakistan- China strategic interdependence has been increased. In the subsequent section, a critical overview of these major factors is presented in detail.

### **Re-Alignments and Re-Adjustment: Shifting Alliances and Relationships**

In the Cold war era, Pakistan joined US bloc and at the same time, it established close relations with China. As Pakistan and India were rivals, India joined USSR bloc and received massive military assistance from Soviet Union but in 1980's there was suspension of military aid from Soviets for a brief time of period. During 1990s Soviet Union restored the transfer of military technology to enhance India's military capabilities but as Pakistan initiated its nuclear and missile program, its relations with America fell to the lowest point. (Jones, 2004)

After 9/11 attacks, America and Pakistan came closer once again as Pakistan became a front line state in US led war on terror in Afghanistan. However, Pakistan was apprehensive over growing Indo-US strategic partnership. US increased its interest in developing close strategic ties with India as India aspired to become a regional power (Javaid & Fatima, 2012). It affected Pakistan's relations with US as Pakistan believed that the US's transfer of technology to India would increase instability and marginalizes its role in South Asia. However, after 9/11, Pakistan and China have consolidated their strategic relations and at the same time, India and China also strengthened their bilateral relationship through negotiations over border dispute, economic cooperation and signing various MOUs to minimize hostility between the two countries (Jones, 2004).

The US defense support to India helped it to have an upper hand in defense capabilities over Pakistan which actually disturbed conventional balance of power in the region. However, in the past, along with supporting India, United States has also acknowledged Pakistan's sacrifices and efforts in fighting against terrorism in order to balance its relations with both countries. U.S relations with any of the countries actually depend on its agenda and national interests in the region. Presently, Indo-US strategic partnership is growing and there are great chances of strong collaboration between the two countries in different areas of their strategic interests in future (Jones, 2004).

### **Indo-US Strategic Partnership: Nuclear Deal and Security Cooperation**

India-US strategic partnership is not a sudden phenomenon. United States came closer to India for achieving its objective to contain China in Asia Pacific region. In post 9/11 period, America adopted new policy approach towards South Asia and made re-alignments and re-adjustments in its South Asia strategy. Shen Qiang; Director of Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs argued that, "the rapid transformation of the US-India relationship from "the strategic crossroads" toward a "natural partnership" is not only motivated from the US side, but also from the choice of both sides out of their respective needs to maximize their strategic interests." (Shabbir, 2017) There are few factors which have brought the two countries closer.

Firstly, China's emergence as a strong power compelled India and United States to enhance their strategic cooperation. China's growth was perceived as a threat to their interests in the region. President Bush stated, "China is a strategic competitor not a strategic partner." (Shabbir, 2017) According to President Obama, the relationship between the United States and China will shape the 21st century (Telegraph, July 27, 2009). Rise of China and United States complex relationship with this rising power compels it to pursue closer military ties not only with India but also with other states in South East Asia to contain China's influence. United States understand that only its military power is not enough to achieve its strategic motives in the region but it needs strong strategic allies too like India. The India-China border conflict also makes their relationship uncomfortable to some extent. In addition to this, India also has aspirations to acquire hegemonic status in the region for which it needs to be collaborated with not only US but also with other global players as China's growing influence and strategic partnership with Pakistan is hurting India's ambitions.

Secondly, India is also a growing economy and one of the largest markets in the world. India's economic potential also compels United States to pursue closer economic partnership with India. Both countries want to maximize their gains through trade and investment.

Thirdly, nontraditional security threats are also one of the factors that brought these two states close to fight against these evils. Pakistan-China believes that states should enhance their cooperation to combat terrorism as it is dangerous for their national security.

Fourthly, India and United are also concerned regarding China's greater access to energy resources in the Middle East and Central Asia and its Belt and Road initiative. Both countries believe that China's more influential role in these rich resource regions can affect their energy supplies. Therefore India and United States are enhancing their maritime cooperation for greater influence in Indian Ocean and Asia Pacific to secure their energy routes. In the view of Jabin T Jacob; an Associate Professor, Department of International Relations and Governance Studies, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Shiv Nadar University, India; "India and United States have consolidated their strategic relations because China's global ambitions, its economic growth and growing influences are matters of concern not only for US but also for India. In addition to that, US can get an access to Indian markets which are huge and for India, it is beneficial because they can enhance their capabilities by acquiring advance military technology from America. (Jacob, Personal Communication March 4, 2019)

When President Bush was elected for his second term, he was determined to pursue closer strategic partnership with India. On 28<sup>th</sup> June 2005, India and America signed 123 Agreement to enhance bilateral civil nuclear relations. (Fani, 2009) United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated, "The United States was proposed to help India become a major power in 21<sup>st</sup> century" (Fani, 2009).

This agreement was a clear indication of United States new policy approach towards India and South Asia. On 31<sup>st</sup> May 2003, President Bush launched proliferation security initiative (PSI) which authorized all the members of this coalition to deter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and related components via air and sea space (Gentleman, 2005) and made India partner in PSI.

In September 2008, Indo-US civil nuclear agreement was given approval by Nuclear Supplier group and in October 2008 by US congress. Since the approval of this agreement, India has purchased defense supplies from US worth US\$ 15 billion (Iqbal, 2017). As a result, China enhanced its strategic and economic cooperation with South Asian states. Just after two days of Indo-US agreement, an agreement was signed by China and Pakistan for building two new nuclear reactors. Indian and US strategist thinkers take this deal is a balancing strategy by China to encounter Indian threat and marginalize its role in the region. Pakistan's military establishment was quite apprehensive over Indo-US strategic cooperation and according to them; traditional strategic balance would be disturbed if both Pakistan and India keep increasing their defense budgets for arms build ups. Chinese sees this cooperation as an effort to encircle it by aligning with its neighboring states. The indo-US civil nuclear had broader repercussions for India-Pakistan relations as treaty gives India a legitimate status of nuclear power.

During 2012-14, India acquired military weapons worth US \$ 5.4 billion from America (Siddiqi, 2016). In 2016 United States signed Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) with India to give the militaries of both countries an access to each other's facilities for defense supplies and maintenance (Panda, 2016). India also signed S-400 deal with Russia and believes that acquiring S-400 anti aircraft defense System will help them to maintain balance of power with China as previously China signed S-400 deal with Russia without any fear of sanctions from US under Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). US supported India's stance by stating that CAATSA is not for destructing defense capabilities of our allies. (Times, October 5, 2018). It also shows that India is successfully influencing America's policies towards South Asia and has leverage over US. After signing LEMOA, in 2018 India and United States have gone one step ahead in consolidating strategic ties by signing communications, Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) which will provide India an access to secure intelligence and data sharing equipment about combat situation. After LEMOA, COMCASA is the second defense agreement out of four foundational defense agreements which United States signs with close partners to enhance defense capabilities (Smith, 2018).

Most of the scholars and security experts believe that Indo-US growing strategic cooperation which includes transfer of technology, security dialogues, joint military exercises, defense agreements etc is actually disturbing conventional balance and it is destabilizing the region. According to Guo Suiyan; an Associate Professor at Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences, US needs India because India can

be a very good tool for them to contain China and US' involvement is complicating and destabilising the region".(Suiyan, Personal Communication 2019)Containing China's rise is the primary motivation behind Indo-US strategic partnership and it does affect the security situation in South Asia.

In the view of Dr, Ghulam Ali: "This is true that primary motivation of Indo-US strategic cooperation is to contain China as US wants to maintain its influence in the region which is actually decreasing and India has its own ambitions to become a greater power but India will not go out of its way to fulfill US's agenda in the region. They are engaging both US and China. But yes undoubtedly, Indo-US cooperation is disturbing traditional balance of power that is why China is enhancing its defense and economic cooperation with Pakistan. China is concerned regarding Indo-US strategic cooperation but not as much as compare to Pakistan because China is a big power. We need to understand Chinese policies that they do not react to external situation. Their policy is to just become internally strong. For example; in post 9/11 era, United States directly became a neighbor of China by sitting in Afghanistan, by sitting in Central Asian states and expanding its presence in Asia Pacific ocean but instead of directly confronting the US and draining its own resources and energy to making a counter strategy, China just focused on its economic growth."(Ali, Personal Communication January 12, 2019)

India is profoundly increasing its defense capabilities by purchasing sophisticated defense supplies not only from its old ally Russia but also from USA, France and other western countries which is a disturbing factor for Pakistan. America's principle interest is to contain and restrict China through India because US sees India as a great strategic partner in the region to contain China. This situation has given India a greater chance to exploit this partnership to implement its own grand strategy to establish a security architecture where it can maintain its dominance. US is supporting India in applying its strategy towards Pakistan but For USA target is not Pakistan. But at the same time, India's target is not China and it is not capable to fight against China and in fact there is no possibility of any large scale conflict between India and China. The main target is Pakistan. Brigadier (Retired) Naeem Saalik; a research fellow at Centre for International Strategic Studies argued that; "Yes, because of India-US strategic cooperation, traditional balance has been disturbed. If you look at the latest statistics you will find that India is the largest arm importer in the world so obviously it is upsetting the strategic equation in South Asia and that is not a good thing for anybody who wants to see peace and satiability in this region. Chinese are also mindful of that and Pakistan also knows that up to some extent it can compete with India but it would not like to stretch its already limited economic resources for arm race with India. India's is acquiring advance technologies from France and a lot of advance technologies from US for instance anti-submarine warfare draft and then p8 aircraft and S 400 from Russia , these are game changers and very significant pieces of advance technologies which will definitely change the balance. This should be realized by the powers that if they continue to provide advance technologies

without having any consideration of disturbing balance of power, then consequences will be very dangerous. The problem is that these great powers always come out with the argument that India is facing threat from china, whereas if you talk to the Chinese they don't even talk about India as a threat and they don't look at India as a competitor. Their main thrust is Pakistan although they keep posing the china as threat and US believe that India will act as strategic counter weight to china but once it comes to the crunch, India will look for its own national interest rather than going for American preferences, I don't think so India will get any dictation from US, because India is a big country. They won't listen to America if it is against India's national interest." (Saalik, Personal Communication November 12, 2018)

The Indian government under Narendra Modi decided to modernize their military and enhance defense capabilities. It provides opportunities to United States to enhance its military cooperation with India. Other than this, China's rise and its growing assertiveness in South China Sea compel US to expand its partnership with India. US is supporting India in its conventional and nuclear arms buildup which is compelling Pakistan to enhance its own capabilities. US's and other western powers support make India an aggressive player in the region which is a disturbing factor. There are very few chances of normalization of Indo-Pak relations due to their past baggage and blame games as both countries are not ready to make any compromise particularly over Kashmir issue. According to many analysts, India is a very smart player and it is quite successful in implementing its own strategy and does not care much for international community's concerns. It is US's false hope that India would act according to its wishes because when it comes to India's own national interest, it acts accordingly.

Dr. Salma Malik; an assistant professor in Department of Defense and Strategic studies Quaid-e-Azam University said: "Yes of course, this cooperation has strongly affected the conventional balance as well as the strategic balance. India is now more or less recognized as a legitimate nuclear weapon state but what Americans doesn't realize that India is not exactly very complying actor like Pakistan was. China is going to help Pakistan as much as it can but the very truth is America is still valuable. China is the upcoming power and American power is declining. It is the end of American's power century but still America has a lot of potential. It has a lot of cloud and leverage in the international politics so definitely, its tilt towards India is a major security concern for Pakistan." (Malik, Personal Communication November 19, 2018)

Pakistan needs an out of box thinking to deal with this existential conflict with India as India is far ahead in utilizing its media and lobbying tools for its interests and Pakistan is lacking in these skills and is not successful to show true picture of India at global level. India is quite successful in maintaining its relations and has developed closer economic ties with China, Pakistan is not sure of China's any direct support in the wake of any serious conflict with India in the future. Dr. Muhammad Khan, An associate professor at International Islamic University

Islamabad expressed his views regarding Indo-US strategic cooperation. He said; "India-US strategic cooperation is affecting the security balance. USA and Russia have been providing defense supplies and sophisticated technology to India which means that there is an armed race in south Asia and it is creating serious security concerns for Pakistan." (Khan, Personal Communication October 23, 2018)

In a personal interview with former Ambassador to United Nations and Executive Director of Centre for International Strategic Studies, Ali Sarwar Naqvi argue that; "The close relations between US and India has disturbed the balance of power in this region and that is a matter of concern for Pakistan because of its hostile relations with India. I think the relationship of Pakistan with china has now becoming handy for Pakistan, useful for Pakistan to regress that strategic imbalance that has now developed." (Naqvi, Personal Communication November 14, 2018). In the view of Dr. Manzoor Afridi; "Undoubtedly, India-US security agreements especially nuclear deal has disturbed the traditional balance and it will further deteriorate the security environment in future if they keep signing such agreements." (D. M. Afridi, Personal Communication October 24, 2018) According to Dr. Muhammad Munir; India is behaving arrogantly and it is not even ready to having dialogue with Pakistan. Since the Narendra Modi came into power in 2014, there has been no regular dialogue between the two countries and even the SAARC is not working properly. Americans are under influence of Indians as Indian lobbies and think tanks are playing very important role in influencing and Pakistan should also focus on its diplomacy to safeguard its own national interests." (Munir, Personal Communication January 11, 2019)

Indo-US strategic partnership has raised serious security concerns for Pakistan. Because of its alliance with USA in war on terror, Pakistan was not expecting a discriminatory approach from USA. President Obama visited India in 2010 and 2015. In December 2014, Pakistan lost 132 lives in the wake of terrorist attack at a school in Peshawar but President Obama chose to visit India in the following year but not Pakistan. During the visits, both countries signed several agreements to enhance their strategic cooperation. U.S is continuously supporting India's proposal of its permanent membership at UNSC and NSG.

Pakistan has lost thousands of lives in war on terror and expected that in return, America would play a positive role for the peace and stability in the region but the way America adopted this approach of giving a special status to India, it is against Pakistan's expectations from the US. But both Pakistan and USA know that USA cannot let go Pakistan completely out of his hands due to its strategic value.

### **Political and Strategic Cooperation between India and Israel**

India and Israel established diplomatic relations in the year 1992. Now India, relationship with Israel is like never before. It is not merely cooperation in so many fields, but they consider themselves close friends. However, this relationship was not close like this since the beginning India was closer to Arab states and

Soviet Union and Israel was closer to America and Western Europe. The fact is that a large Muslim population in the India was also a hurdle in pursuing closer ties with Israel but currently, India is quite successful in developing strong ties with Israel without affecting its relationship with Arab Muslim countries. (Gul, Personal Communication October 29, 2018) There is a consensus in India under BJP government that it is necessary for India's national security to develop stronger strategic partnership with Israel. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi took keen interest in developing closer ties with Israel and de-hyphenated India's partnership with Israel from Palestine. India has become one of the biggest importers of Israel's defense supplies. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Israel in July 2017 and in January 2018. In return, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited India. These high level exchange visits showed their commitment to one another.

Israel has been a settler colonial state and India appears swiftly to be headed in the same direction. There are many similarities in Indo-Israel policies. For instance, there is an ideological nexus as both have same ideology against Muslims. Secondly, both consider their neighbors as a threat. Their territories are undefined as they both aspire to establish greater India and greater Israel. The cases of Kashmir and Palestine are also somehow similar. India has aspirations to become global power and getting support from United States and Israel for their own national interests. In other words, emergence of China as a major power has been perceived as a major threat to US global hegemony and in the view of Israel, Arab countries are threatening its national security. In order to achieve its objectives, India is aligning with these states.

Israel is also playing a major role and supporting India against Pakistan. In the wake of recent Pulwama attack in Kashmir, India launched an air attack on Pakistan in February 2019 claiming that they have targeted a training camp of Jaish-e Muhammad. While rejecting the claim, Pakistan's security experts believed that India and Israel are conspiring against our country and US is backing them. So this nexus is a strong reason behind China and Pakistan strategic partnership. In the prevailing situation, it is anticipated that both China and Pakistan would continue and enhance their strategic cooperation. US's tilt towards India and Indo-Israel strategic partnership encourage Pakistan and China to further consolidate their defense ties. (Fazal-ur-Rehman, Personal Communication January 22, 2019)

### **India and other Major Global Players**

During the Cold war period, India became the strategic ally of Soviet Union. In 1991, Soviet Union disintegrated and India continued its strategic partnership with the newly emerged Russian federation. In the current scenario, India is still one of the biggest importers of Russian defense supplies and most of its defence technology is Russian made. When India tilted towards United States, somehow it affected India's relationship with Russia but India is quite successful in balancing its relations with its old strategic partner Russia and USA. India signed

S-400 missile defense system deal with Russia worth US\$ 5.43 billion. This deal shows that India will not abandon its oldest strategic partner Russia because of US pressure and not afraid of sanctions from USA under Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). As India believes that acquiring S-400 anti aircraft defense System will help them to maintain balance as previously China signed S-400 deal with Russia as well. US supported India's stance by stating that CAATSA is not for destructing defense capabilities of our allies. (Times, October 5, 2018) It also shows that India is successfully influencing America's policies towards South Asia and has leverage over US.

Russia was trying to maintain a good relationship with Pakistan after India's tilt towards United States; it created a fear in India that Russia can drift towards Pakistan and establish a strategic Partnership. To counter this threat, India has engaged Russia through a successful S-400 deal as India knows that Russia is cash starved country and defense technology is the major exportable commodity that Russia owns. By engaging Russia successfully, India has restricted Pakistan's political potential.

India's has always maintained cordial relations with France. It acquired advance military technology in the form of Anti-tank guided missiles, training aircrafts such as Mirage 2000 which has a nuclear attack capability, AXM light tanks and electric submarines from France ("These Incredible Weapons Are Made In India," 2015). India and France enhanced their strategic cooperation particularly after India's successful acquisition of nuclear power status. France is also backing up India over the issue of its membership at UNSC as a permanent member. While discussing Indo-France strategic partnership, Raghvendra Pratap Singh explains;

"Although, France signed the NPT in 1992, it did not affect Indo-French bilateral relations. In 2006, France signed an agreement expressing its desire for civil nuclear cooperation with India and finally in September 2008, France became the first country to sign a civil nuclear agreement with India, even before the United States Senate had approved US-India civil nuclear agreement. In June 2011, when NSG declared that it would not supply enrichment and reprocessing technology to countries that are non-signatories to the NPT, France declared that it would not affect its bilateral nuclear cooperation with India." (Singh, n.d)

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited France in April 2015 where both countries agreed to consolidate their strategic partnership by enhancing their cooperation in different spheres especially in maritime domain and civil nuclear cooperation, joint military exercises and trade. ("India-France Joint Statement during the visit of Prime Minister to France (April 9-11, 2015)," Ministry of External Affairs 2015) In the wake of Pulwama attack in Kashmir on 14 February 2019, France with US and UK backing made a move to declare Masood Azhar; Chief of Jaish-e-Muhammad, a global terrorist under the United Nations sanctions regime but for the fourth time China blocked the move. India's strategic partnerships with

US and other major global powers reflect Indian aspirations and their profound impacts on regional security.

### **India's Emerging Role in Asia-Pacific**

The main objective of India's 'Look East Policy' and America's 'Pivot to Asia' strategy is to contain China's growing influence in the region. While discussing Indo-US cooperation, America's defense secretary, Leon Panetta expounds; "Defense cooperation with India is a linchpin in US new Asia Pacific strategy." The motive behind India-US cooperation especially maritime cooperation is to contain China. (Rafi, November 26, 2015). India's "Look East Policy" got full support from America and it provided a discursive platform for trilateral dialogue among US, Japan and India and accredited India's stronghold in more politically integrated and economically independent South and Central Asia.

Indian Defense Minister Parnab Mukharjee and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Japan in 2006 and 2008 respectively. Both countries agreed to enhance cooperation in defense and security especially maritime communication and security and devise a joint action plan against menace of terrorism. In the same meeting, both sides agreed to consolidate their military relations and the idea of conducting joint military exercises was also exhorted. In 2009, Indian and Japanese Defense Ministers A.K Anthony and Toshimi Kitazawa arranged a meeting where they emphasized to enhance cooperation to fight against terrorism.

The second meeting of India-Japan 2 plus2 was held in 2012 where both countries emphasized on maritime, space and cyber security cooperation. Due to its conflict with China and to revive balance of power in the region, the Japanese premier Shinzo Abe stressed on strengthening security cooperation among US, Japan, India and Australia as these countries are much concerned about China's growth in indo-pacific region. After ten year gap, in November 2017, quadrilateral dialogue was re-initiated; delegation of US, Japan, India and Australia met to discuss emerging issues and stressed upon enhancement of security cooperation (Panda, 2017). It happened due to the fact that there is a shift in geopolitics of East Asia especially after the emergence of China as a rising power. China's massive economic growth has not only changed the geo-strategic landscape of the Asia but also has raised serious security concerns among its neighbors and major powers.

Japan along with USA is helping India in building strategic partnership in North East Asia. In September 2018, India held 2 plus2 Dialogue with USA and Japan for the enhancement of security cooperation (Unnithan, 2018) and in October 2018, ministerial level meeting was held between India and Japan. India is enhancing its presence not only in South China Sea but also North West Pacific by deploying its vessels. In November 2016, Japan and India signed a MOU for cooperation in nuclear energy and on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2017, this deal came into force (Affairs, 2017).

To contain China's growing influence, USA is pursuing closer partnerships with its neighbors especially India and Japan. Indo-US strategic partnership compels Pakistan to diversify its foreign relations especially with China. Australia made an exception in its policy regarding Uranium sale to Non-Signatories to Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and ended its embargo on Uranium sale to India (Davenport, 2017) which shows that India is getting support from all the major players for its hegemonic ambitions. Pakistan took it an unfair act from Australia against Pakistan on the basis that NPT has not signed by India like Pakistan. This uranium sale to India gives birth to certain doubts in Pakistan.

### **Conclusion**

Post 9/11 period has been witnessing re-alignments and re-adjustments in bilateral and multilateral partnerships among global powers and between major powers and developing states as well. In the context of South Asia, India has developed close partnerships with most of the major powers, especially with the US, Japan, and Australia, resulting in the expansion of Pakistan's strategic partnership with China.

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