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REVOCATION OF THE INDUS WATERS TREATY: IMPLICATIONS

ASMA YAQOOB*

Introduction

A possible Indian withdrawal or unilateral termination of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) has a number of legal and political impracticalities, besides several plausible economic implications and environmental disruptions in the shared river basin. The IWT, like many other international treaties, has its own specific provisions to govern its operation and could only be terminated by being replaced with another treaty on a similar subject between India and Pakistan.¹ Legally speaking, the treaty is a non-exit partnership with wide-ranging international commitments and customary bindings. Politically too, a breach of international commitments is tantamount to earning a worldwide disgrace. By focusing on these two important legal and political aspects of the debate, this study seeks to answer the question as to why it is not workable for India to annul the IWT. In doing so, the study also delineates some of the likely implications for the region in case of a possible treaty breach by India.

Background

Indian pressure tactics to scrap the 56-year-old bilateral Indus Waters Treaty are not new. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement that "water and blood cannot flow together" needs to be seen in light of the past and current Indian attempts to revoke the treaty. Persistent media campaigns had been launched in the past as well to abrogate the treaty. Technical assessments and statements from high government officials to revise or terminate the treaty

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have been widely publicized through the print and electronic media of India. A former Indian high commissioner to Pakistan G. Parthasarathy reportedly stated, “Should we not consider measures to deprive the Pakistanis of the water they need to quench their thirst and grow their crops. Should we not seriously consider whether it is necessary for us to adhere to the provisions of the Indus Waters Treaty.... extraordinary circumstances demand extraordinary responses.”²

Earlier calls to abrogate the treaty were mainly based on allegations about its unfair division of waters and limitations in building storage reservoirs on the Chenab and Jhelum flowing through Indian-held Kashmir (IHK) to meet its growing power needs. Regarding the allegation of under-resourced IHK due to the treaty’s limitation of only 3.6 million acre-feet (MAF) of Indian storage over western rivers,³ it is necessary to identify one of the major issues involved here that seemed missing from the media coverage: IHK’s conflict with Indian government over the ‘royalty issue’. The Northern Grid—covering Chandigarh, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, IHK, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttaranchal—is the biggest source of power supply in IHK. All the centre-led hydropower stations built in IHK provide only 20 per cent electricity to the region, whereas 80 per cent of the power generated is being supplied to the other states covered by the Northern Grid. This is because IHK does not have enough financial resources to invest in hydropower generation.⁴ The IHK pretext of Indian government in order to dispense with the IWT is thus rendered groundless.

The issue of Indian threats to annul the IWT got recently hyped again on a different pretext: The Uri incident that left 18 Indian soldiers dead after skirmishes with freedom fighters in IHK. Using the allegation of terrorism to punish Pakistan by abandoning the most revered water-sharing pact between the two nations, India is grossly mistaken on many grounds. All the past and current Indian attempts to annul the IWT under different pretexts reveal the mischievous Indian ploy to deprive Pakistan of its due share in international waters—an act showing the short-sightedness of Indian leadership about regional and international security paradigms, in addition to the intended breach of international law.

Implications

It would suffice to discuss the important political and legal aspects—besides environmental and economic implications—of repeated Indian intentions vis-à-vis a possible withdrawal from the IWT.

Political implications

Politically, India is in a bad bargaining position when it comes to a unilateral withdrawal from the treaty. As a bilateral water sharing pact, the treaty has been hailed across time and space as a test case for ‘successful mediation’,⁵ a mechanism to ‘insure compliance’,⁶ and a ‘significant confidence-building measure’⁷ between India and Pakistan. India will likely gain a bad reputation at home and abroad because this is the only water treaty between the two arch-rival

countries of South Asia that has withstood the tests of diplomatic crises and wars.

Following are some of the most important questions that arise after reflecting on Indian threats to annul the treaty:

- How the international community would react to Indian scrapping of the treaty?
- What would be the effects of Indian exit from the treaty on regional peace and security situation?

Scanning through the regional and international media, the reaction of international community is already critical of Indian threats of unilateral abrogation of the treaty in the wake of the Uri incident. A number of countries, including China and the US, have asked India and Pakistan to mutually resolve the issue conveying their disapproval of termination of the treaty. The IWT is the first and only existing model of conciliation between India and Pakistan since the bloody partition of the subcontinent in 1947. One of the biggest feats of the IWT has been conflict management between India and Pakistan over sharing of international river waters for more than five decades.

The partition of 1947 rendered the two countries vulnerable to potential water wars until the mediated agreement in 1960, which ensured the regulation of divided waters through the creation of the Permanent Indus Commission (PIC) with representation from both the countries. Over the years, bilateral water disputes were resolved at the level of PIC, with more serious ones being referred to third parties for mediation or to the International Court of Arbitration (ICA), which is another successful example of dispute resolution mechanism within the framework of the IWT. Had it not been the IWT, India and Pakistan would have gone to several water wars affecting regional peace and security periodically.

An important political implication of Indian withdrawal from the IWT would be setting a precedent for other countries in the region to follow suit. China shares eight per cent of the total Indus River Basin.⁸ Both Indus and Sutlej rivers have their headwaters originating from China providing a total inflow to India in the Indus Basin system at 181.62 km³.⁹ The great Brahmaputra River of India, known as Yarlung Tsangpo in China, originates from the latter, making it an upper riparian in relation to India. Not only do China and India lack a bilateral institutional mechanism for dispute resolution over the shared waters of Brahmaputra, they are also in conflict about the ownership of South Tibet (known as Arunachal Pradesh in India). India also has concerns about Chinese diversion plans of Brahmaputra River upstream.¹⁰ Any Indian act of withholding Pakistan's share of water from upstream or abandonment of water sharing pact with the lower riparian will likely set a precedent for other upper riparian states in the region like China to replicate the practice when their own interests demand. According to an Indian expert on NDTV, "The Indus originates in China.... Should China decide to divert the Indus, India could lose as much as 36% of river water."¹¹

In an article about the role of China in the Indus Basin, one Indian expert candidly warned about Chinese reaction over Indian plans of abrogating the treaty in the following words:

“If China decides to shut off water from Tibet that feeds the Sutlej river, huge swathes of north India would be plunged into darkness and deprived of power: water from this river flows into the Bhakra dam, the Karcham Wangtoo hydro-electric project and the Nathpa Jhakri dam which together generate at least 3,600 megawatts of electricity which lights up large parts of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh and Delhi.”¹²

It would also be a bad precedent for those countries in the region with whom India is already in agreement on sharing international waters, including Bangladesh and Nepal. After the 1996 bilateral treaty on Ganges River, India is in the process of concluding a water sharing pact with Bangladesh on Teesta River, which has become an emotive issue between the two countries after Bangladesh's demand of equal allocation of water under the treaty against the Indian proposal of 25/75 ratio of water sharing in the pact. As a lower riparian, Bangladesh has long been conveying feelings of injustice in water sharing agreements on each of the 54 trans-boundary rivers with India.¹³ Nepal, with which India has signed two bilateral water sharing agreements, Mahakali and Gandak, is an upper riparian state. It greatly disagrees with Indian plans of irrigation and flood control downstream and insists on developing major long-proposed hydropower projects including Pancheswor and Arun III to resolve power shortages in Nepal.¹⁴ As an upper riparian state, rivers of Nepal provide 80 per cent of water to Indian Ganges River during the dry season.¹⁵ Indian bullying water politics with its lower riparian in the region could become disastrous for its own future water sharing as a lower riparian vis-à-vis China and Nepal. Although Nepal is a small country to ever become a threat to India in its international waters, Indian future water agreements with countries in the region would likely suffer from the bad impression left by the latter through a unilateral withdrawal from the IWT.

There have been discussions in the regional and international media over the issue, but more candid analyses rely on the proof of history that Indian government is only involved in using threats and pressures to bow down Pakistan on the issues of Kashmir and terrorism. Real abrogation is not an easy step, and India is well aware of the political implications of such a move. It would attract a lot of criticism from world powers, besides weakening Indian position in relation to other riparian states in the region.

Legal implications

The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (VCLT), established as customary international law, does not provide for a unilateral right to withdraw from international treaties. Although India is not a signatory to the convention,¹⁶ many of its provisions have been used by both the High Courts and Supreme Court of India with reference to customary international law. In *Ram Jethmalani v. Union of India* in 2011, the Supreme Court of India recognized that the Vienna Convention contained many principles of customary international law.¹⁷ The court specifically referred to Article 31, ‘General Rule

of Interpretation’, of the VCLT 1969, which stipulates that a “treaty shall be interpreted in good faith in accordance with the ordinary meaning to be given to the terms of the treaty in their context and in the light of its object and purpose.”¹⁸

Another important Indian recognition of the VCLT as customary international law regarding treaties was made in 2015 by the Delhi High Court in *AWAS Ireland v. Directorate General of Civil Aviation*. The High Court judgement is particularly relevant here because of its special reference to Articles 26, 27, and 31 of the VCLT, again as a matter of customary international law. Article 26 of the VCLT establishes the principle of *pacta sunt servanda*, i.e., “Every treaty in force is binding upon the parties to it and must be performed by them in good faith.”¹⁹ By applying the provisions of Articles 26 and 27 of the VCLT—which oblige a state not only to remain bound by the terms of the treaty in operation, but also not to invoke internal law as a justification for its failure to abide by a treaty—the Delhi High Court set a benchmark to embrace customary international law *vis-à-vis* treaties.

Considering past practices of the Indian government with regard to application of the VCLT and several of its provisions in matters relating to international treaties, the following discussion on rules of the VCLT regarding “termination, denunciation or unilateral right of withdrawal from a treaty” is quite pertinent within the context of the IWT.

The convention only provides limited circumstances for the exercise of such a right. There are three ‘grounds to invoke’ as specified in Articles 42 to 62:²⁰

1. Right of withdrawal provided by the treaty itself or decided by the mutual consent of all parties at any time;
2. Termination or suspension of the treaty by the contracting parties; and
3. Termination as a result of a legal rule independent of parties’ intentions (for instance, inconsistency with a fundamental internal law, possibility of error in the treaty, treaty inducement through fraud, corruption or coercion of a state’s representative, treaty conflicting with general international law, conclusion of a later treaty, material breach of treaty by one of the parties, impossibility of performance,²¹ and change of circumstances).²²

Rejecting unilateral right of withdrawal at will, the International Law Commission (ILC) further clarified invoking certain grounds to terminate or depart from a treaty in an official commentary:

“The formula ‘invoke as a ground’ is intended to underline that the right arising under the article is not a right arbitrarily to pronounce the treaty terminated.”²³

Articles 65 to 67 of the VCLT also stipulate several provisions with regard to the procedure of termination, invalidity, withdrawal, or suspension of an international treaty. Article 65 requires a party that “invokes either a defect in its consent to be bound by a treaty or a ground for impeaching the validity of a

treaty, terminating it, withdrawing from it or suspending its operation, must notify the other parties of its claim. The notification shall indicate the measure proposed to be taken with respect to the treaty and the reasons therefor.”²⁴ Under Article 66, if no solution reaches within twelve months after the objection and notification were raised, any one of the concerned parties could submit a written application to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for a decision.²⁵

Considering the exit clauses of the VCLT, the first two grounds including the right of withdrawal under the treaty and suspension of treaty by the contracting parties are not relevant in case of the IWT. Article XII of the Indus Waters Treaty says, “The provisions of this Treaty, or, the provisions of this Treaty as modified under the provisions of Paragraph (3), shall continue in force until terminated by a duly ratified treaty concluded for that purpose between the two governments.”²⁶

Only ground three that covers Articles 46 to 62 of the VCLT could be invoked pertaining to different reasons. An analysis of some of the relevant articles leads to an interesting deduction. Invoking Article 46 means²⁷ that India would have to provide adequate justification, if any, of the IWT provisions that violate its internal law of fundamental importance. Question could be raised over any Indian attempt to use this ground as to why India has been planning and utilizing water works under the same provisions for more than five decades if a violation was manifest in application of her significant internal laws. Moreover, none of the IWT provisions could be used to justify a violation of her internal law vis-à-vis the territory of IHK, which is a disputed territory as recognized by the UN Security Council. A number of writings have appeared in the Indian media justifying the use of Articles 61 and 62 of the VCLT as a withdrawal ground. The ‘impossibility of performance’ clause cannot be applied in case of the IWT, as Article 61 requires impossibility to “result from the permanent disappearance or destruction of an object indispensable for the execution of the treaty.”²⁸ The IWT is not dependent upon any object to-date for her continued performance. The change of circumstances pretext cannot be used by India for an exit under Article 62 either, because the IWT establishes a boundary vis-à-vis the Indus Basin between the two countries. Article 62 of the VCLT reads:

“A fundamental change of circumstances may not be invoked as a ground for terminating or withdrawing from a treaty: (a) If the treaty establishes a boundary; or (b) If the fundamental change is the result of a breach by the party invoking it either of an obligation under the treaty or of any other international obligation owed to any other party to the treaty.”²⁹

India cannot stop water for Pakistan under customary international law even after an attempted withdrawal from the treaty because the VCLT (Article 43), as a major source of customary international law regarding international treaties, obliges a state to “refrain from fulfilling any of her duties defined under customary international law.”³⁰ The principle of equitable utilization is also well-recognized in customary international law as mentioned in Articles 5, 6,

and 7 of the UN Watercourses Convention, which not only calls for equitable and reasonable utilization of trans-boundary water courses and stipulates factors relevant to such utilization, but also obliges states not to cause significant harm to other watercourse states.³¹ The practical application of these rights has been witnessed in one recent example—the Gabcíkovo-Nagymaros Case (1997-98)—where the ICJ declared the unilateral diversion of the Danube River by Czechoslovakia (extracting 90 per cent of water for its exclusive use) as illegal for its breach of ‘joint ownership’ principle of the project under a bilateral treaty with Hungary.³² A special reference was made by the court to the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses by the United Nations General Assembly to conclude:

“Czechoslovakia, by unilaterally assuming control of a shared resource, and thereby depriving Hungary of its right to an equitable and reasonable share of the natural resource of the Danube... failed to respect the proportionality which is required by international law.”³³

The court also rejected Hungary’s termination of the 1977 bilateral treaty regarding the said project as illegal declining all reasons Hungary gave to terminate the treaty such as ‘state of emergency’, ‘impossibility of performing duties’, ‘fundamental change of circumstances’, ‘material breach of the treaty by Czechoslovakia’, and ‘development of new norms in international environmental law’. The court asked the two parties to consider the treaty as being a joint investment project for many purposes and made protection of environment a key issue in its rulings.³⁴ India must also not forget the political debate over legal rights of Pakistan in the Indus Basin much before the conclusion of the IWT. Emphasis on peace and prosperity through finding a solution to water discords arose immediately after partition between India and Pakistan. David Lilienthal, in his famous 1951 article ‘Another Korea in the Making’,³⁵ acknowledged Pakistan’s legal position in these words:

“Pakistan’s position that she has the legal right to the uninterrupted flow of water, a right to a share of waters stored by India’s dams upstream, is quite inadequate for this great issue, however sound her legal claim might be if the dispute were between the two farmers asserting their private rights. The International Court of Justice might decide the legal issue in Pakistan’s favor if India agreed to submit it.”

Given the international standards and practices, Indian abrogation of the IWT or blockage of water flow to Pakistan to the extent of leaving a detrimental impact on population and environment downstream will likely contradict the established rules of law, an act that Pakistan could challenge within the context of customary international law.

Economic implications

Niranjan D. Gulhati, India's chief negotiator, has reportedly stated after the signing of the treaty, "We had to keep in view the interests of the other side: they must live; we must live. They must have water; we must have water."³⁶ Both India and Pakistan have gained a lot in the field of irrigation as the allocation of water under the IWT ensured reliable supplies for the agricultural development in the two parts of Punjab divided between India and Pakistan in 1947. The green revolution of the 1960s across Indian and Pakistani Punjab owe gratitude to the IWT. The settlement aimed at irrigating 30 million acres in India and Pakistan.³⁷ If India tries to annul the treaty now, the whole economic project established to assist the irrigation infrastructure in the two parts of Punjab would be dealt a blow.

In order to understand the economic benefits of the IWT, one needs to go through the historic developments of 1948-60 that led to the making of a water treaty between India and Pakistan. In his 1951 report to the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD, now the World Bank), David Lilienthal has exclusively pointed out the economic significance of Indus Basin waters for Pakistan in these words:

"The Partition gave the major part of the irrigated lands of the Punjab and Sind to Pakistan; but the headwaters of some of the largest irrigation canals that feed Pakistan were left with India or Kashmir....Why the flow of the Punjab's lifeblood was so carelessly handled in the partition no one seems to know. Pakistan includes some of the productive food-growing lands in the world in western Punjab (the Kipling country) and the Sind. But without water for irrigation this would be desert. 20,000,000 acres would dry up in a week, tens of millions would starve."

Looking at India's irrigation and water power development programme, Lilienthal also took into account the irrigation needs of India in the Indus Basin region:

"The Partition gave India almost none of the canals and irrigation systems, and little irrigated land compared with her needs. Out of 22,000,000 acres now irrigated in the Indus Basin, Pakistan has 18,000,000 India about 5,000,000; yet India has 20,000,000 people in the Indus Basin, almost as many as Pakistan's 22,000,000. There are 35,000,000 more acres in India's part of the Indus Basin which if irrigated could raise food and do a good job of it."

Thus it was primarily to solve the joint irrigation issues of both India and Pakistan—affected by continuous wastage of water in the Arabian Sea, and controversy over legal rights of a lower riparian state—that Lilienthal suggested a constructive engineering programme for the efficient use of Indus waters, which soon drew attention from the IBRD and other major powers of the world. Lilienthal was convinced on treating the whole of Indus system as a unit on the

basis of the model of the seven states—Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) system—built and designed by him in 1933 as a community service project providing flood control, navigation, and land management for the Tennessee River system in the US.³⁸ Focusing on engineering and professional principles to work on a common project for human need, Lilienthal explicitly rejected the political descent to tap into the river basin.³⁹

It was this consideration of human need for water and food production on both sides that an international consortium was created to finance water development infrastructures in India and Pakistan after the conclusion of the IWT on 19 September 1960. The Indus Basin Development Fund was created with initial funds from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, West Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. To strengthen the consortium, Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Japan, and the Netherlands made joint financial commitments to the Indian and Pakistani Five-Year Plans.⁴⁰ Collectively, these six countries provided \$800 million in the form of grants and loans to India and Pakistan.⁴¹ Therefore, the IWT could be called an international joint investment project created to support food production and protect the environment in the two countries.

The treaty partitioned the Indus Basin between the two parts of Punjab in India and Pakistan, and three out of the total six major rivers of the basin (i.e., Beas, Sutlej, and Ravi) were given to India for her exclusive use while binding India to let flow the water of the other three (i.e., Chenab, Indus, and Jhelum) for unrestricted use of Pakistan with minor rights for India. India constructed major canals and dams on the three western rivers of the Indus system to feed Chandigarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, IHK, Punjab, and Rajasthan.

Within Indian Punjab, multipurpose projects were undertaken to expand the irrigation and storage infrastructure in the post-independence period (Table 1). The new system of Indus canals led to a growth of the irrigated area in the Indian part of the Indus Basin from 22 million hectares (ha) in 1947 to 55 million ha in 2000.⁴² In the immediate post-IWT period, the Indian government embarked upon interlinking of its eastern rivers—Beas, Ravi, and Sutlej—through canal networking and diversion projects. The idea to transfer surplus water of River Beas into Sutlej River led to the conception of Beas-Sutlej Link Project, the largest tunnelling project in the country.⁴³ Huge investments in canal networking and inter-basin transfer projects resulted in a popular green revolution, which transformed India from a nation facing frequent famines in 1950s and 1960s to a self-sufficient and food exporting country. Indian hydropower projects on both eastern and western rivers are another success story of the Indus Basin system.

Table 1
Post-independence canal infrastructure of India

Sr. No.	Project Name	Year	River	Location
1.	Bhakra Dam	1963	Satlej	Bhakara (H.P.)
2.	Nangal Dam	1948	Satlej	Downstream (Bhakra Dam)
3.	Nangal Hydrel Channel	1954	Satlej	Nangal Dam
4.	Bhakra Main Line	1950-54	Satlej	Extension of Nangal Hydrel

	Canal			Channel
5.	Old Sirhind Canal System	1952-54	Satlej	Ropar Headworks
6.	Harike Headwork	1954-55	Satlej-Beas	Harike
7.	Madhopur Beas link	1955-57	Beas-Satlej	Madhopur
8.	Rajasthan canal	1958-1961	Satlej-Beas	Harike Headworks
9.	Ferozepur Feeder	1952-53	Ravi-Beas	Harike Headwork
10.	Pong Dam	1974	Beas	Pong
11.	Beas Satlej Link	1977	Beas-Satlej	Pandoh (H.P.)
12.	Shanedar Headwork	1983	Beas	Downstream of Pong Dam
13.	Mukerian Hydel Channel	1982	Beas	Shanchar Headwork
14.	Ranjit Sagar Dam	2000	Ravi	Downstream of Madhopur Headworks
15.	Shahpur Kandi dam	2006-07	Ravi	Downstream of Ranjit Sagar Dam

Source: Inderjeet Singh and Kesar Singh Bhangoo, 201344

Pakistan has similarly taken steps with external investment to build an extensive network of canals. Besides other large-scale schemes to interlink canal irrigation in the country, three major storage reservoirs namely Chashma and Tarbela on River Indus, and Mangla on River Jhelum were built (see Table 2) to fulfil the requirements for those areas earlier irrigated from supplies of the rivers that went to India under the IWT.

Table 2

Salient features of the irrigation network on the Indus Basin (Pakistan)

Land	
Total cropped area	21.35 million hectares (ha)
Canals commanded area	13.96 million ha
Annual irrigated area	16.19 million ha

Water	
Annual average flow in the Indus River system	162.1 billion cubic meters (bcm)
Extraction from Indus Aquifer	60.0 bcm
Storage capacity in reservoirs	19.2 bcm

Infrastructure	
Major storage sites	3
Barrages (diversion dams)	18
Inter-river link canals	16
Irrigation canals	64,000 km long
Irrigation water courses	100,000
Irrigation tubewells (private)	700,000 (estimated)

Source: Shams ul Mulk, 2009⁴⁵

Massive investments in building water infrastructure led to growth of irrigated areas in the Indus Basin (see Table 3), which subsequently provided a boost to agricultural economies of the two countries. Introduction of tube-wells and rural electrification encouraged the development of groundwater resources in both countries. This has accelerated crop outputs in India and Pakistan, the latter experiencing high growth in terms of agriculture production but low water productivity as compared to India. The overall water productivity was reported to be 0.5 kg/m³ for Pakistani Punjab and 1.0 kg/m³ for the Bhakra system of the Indian Punjab.⁴⁶

Table 3
Growth of irrigated area in the Indus Basin in million ha

Year	India	Pakistan
1947	22.0 (70)*	10.75 (68)
1950	22.0 (70)	9.45 (68)
1955	23.45 (70)	10.60 (68)
1960	26.52 (70)	12.04(67)
1965	31.25 (70)	12.95 (56)
1970	32.30 (70)	14.30 (56)
1975	39.35 (69.7)	13.83 (54)
1985	41.77 (68.1)	15.76 (52)
1990	43.05 (65)	16.30 (69.7)
1995	53.0 (61.9)	17.20 (49.4)
2000	55.0 (60)	18.00 (47)

* Figures in parenthesis show the percentage of population in agriculture for the country.

Source: H. Fahlbusch, et al.⁴⁷

Regulation of surface water supplies to support food and power production needs of Indian and Pakistani Punjab were the major objectives of Lilienthal’s constructive plan, well supported by the World Bank and other countries in the Indus Basin. Although major water user insufficiencies and lack of adequate canal maintenance have recently been reported in both India and Pakistan, the existing irrigation and hydropower infrastructure in the basin is well placed only due to the 1960 treaty. Dissolution of which would again put the two countries’ water resource systems in conflict with each other where feeding only one’s own population would mean the starvation for another and electrifying one’s area would result in loss of energy for the other.

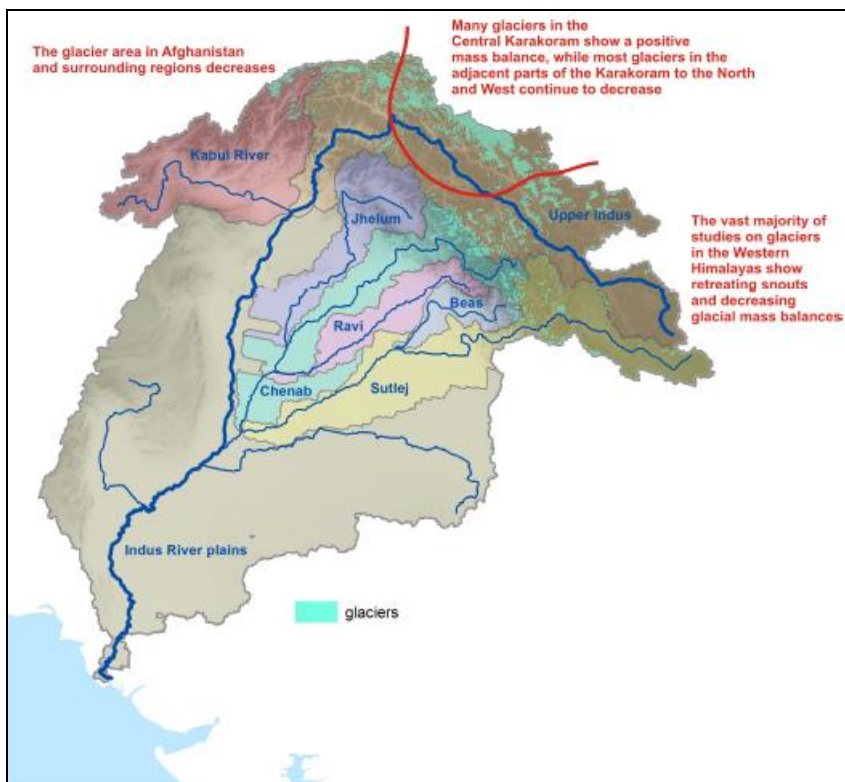
Environmental implications

According to experts, Indian desire to convert Pakistan into a desert by withholding water supplies to the latter will inundate lands in IHK and Indian Punjab. The environmental fallout would hit both the countries displacing millions of people and inviting an unquestionable international reaction.⁴⁸ The Indian desire to seek unilateral development of the Indus Basin by building huge

dams upstream and utilizing full hydropower potential of Chenab, Indus, and Jhelum would destroy the ecology of the whole region. Massive engineering structures as planned by India across the basin to divert water from Pakistan will disturb natural hydrological cycles of rainfall and glacial melt. Furthermore, without a trans-boundary exchange of knowledge about climate change and its effects on water resources, ecology of the basin will remain threatened. The IWT already lacks a proper framework to deal with environmental issues in the region. Any Indian attempt to thwart existing bilateral cooperation on shared water resources will prove detrimental to her own interests too besides hurting Pakistan.

Many other important present and imminent environmental subjects in the Indus Basin require the two countries to adhere to trans-boundary cooperation instead of withdrawing from it. The Karakoram glaciers are one such subject. This region is lucky enough to be recently reported as having stable glaciers on the Karakoram mountains in contrast to shrinking glaciers in the neighbouring mountains—the Himalayas (Nepal and Bhutan). This phenomenon is famously known as the Karakoram Anomaly⁴⁹ due to its unusual glacier behaviour as compared to a worldwide retreat of glaciers. According to an environmental journalist, “The area designated as the Central Karakoram National Park in Pakistan has around 711 glaciers, which is double the number of glaciers in the Alps.”⁵⁰ The expansion of glaciers in the central Karakoram (see Figure 1) indicates an increased water supply in the short-term, followed by a decrease in upstream water supply in the region surrounding both parts of Kashmir across the border. A hurried Indian withdrawal from the only bilateral water treaty ever concluded between the two countries would only disrupt the management of environmental flows in the predictable long term.

Figure 1



Source: A.N. Leghari et al., 2012.51

Another important issue of bilateral concern is environmental pollution in the Indus Basin. The burning of fossil fuels and industrial emissions in South Asia have already started to affect glacier masses and rainfall patterns—major sources of water flow in the Indus Basin. Known as the Asian Brown Cloud, this layer of pollution was observed under the first phase of the Indian Ocean Experiment campaign in 1999 which substantiated the link between surface heating and change of hydrological cycle.⁵² In its 2002 report on the Asian Brown Cloud, CNN cited scientists warning about erratic weather patterns such as flash flooding in one part of the Indian subcontinent (i.e., Bangladesh, Nepal, and north-eastern India) but drought elsewhere (i.e., Pakistan and north-western India).⁵³ Recent environmental trends have lent credence to these warnings with catastrophic floods of 2010 being the largest in recorded history. Similarly, since 2000, a series of monsoon droughts has affected the Indus Basin region in north-western India and Pakistan.⁵⁴ According to a 2015 Times of India report, droughts have hit grain bowl states of Punjab and Haryana five and six times, respectively, in the past 11 years.⁵⁵ Food production in the Indus region is thus at stake as monsoon rains are becoming deficient gradually. An Indian retreat from the IWT would only add to the environmental problems caused by trans-

boundary flow variations in the wet and dry seasons as neither country could fully control hydrological cycles of river waters even after building large dams.

In recent decades, the Indus Basin region has become vulnerable to environmental changes, which the treaty essentially fails to address. Article IV (10) of the IWT prohibits water pollution but does not provide a mechanism to control such an environmental problem. Similarly, the treaty is silent about variations in water flow after absolute allocation from western and eastern rivers of the Indus Basin to the concerned parties. One should not forget that like many other international treaties, the IWT has its own limitations. Although the treaty provides an effective conflict resolution mechanism vis-à-vis trans-boundary waters between India and Pakistan, many of the existing environmental issues were not present at the time of the conclusion of the treaty. Therefore, a solution to the existing and future environmental problems in the region is not a withdrawal from a water-sharing accord, but a sustainable institutional response either by adjusting the existing framework to new needs of bilateral cooperation or through creating opportunities for other innovative institutional measures.

Conclusion

The Indian desire to arm-twist Pakistan by terminating the five-decade-old bilateral water accord has often been expressed through print and electronic media. But looking through the prism of analytical investigations, such a plan is easier said than done. The infeasibility of this Indian wish spans political, legal, economic, and environmental aspects of bilateral relations. Legally, the IWT is a non-exit route, which India itself agreed to by abiding to its provisions at the time of signing of the treaty. Furthermore, customary international law also establishes many rules governing the rights and duties between riparian states, thereby protecting the lower riparian (in this case, Pakistan) from any harm in the sharing of international river waters. Being itself a lower riparian in relation to China, India is not in a position to set a wrong precedent of breaching the treaty or diverting Pakistan's share of waters upstream.

The IWT has rendered a number of economic benefits to the region in terms of ensuring water supply for the irrigation needs of both India and Pakistan. Many of the existing hydropower generation plants of both India and Pakistan are being installed and operated under the IWT framework. Revocation of the IWT would mean a considerable loss of investment in irrigation and hydropower infrastructure. Any future environmental cooperation would also face a serious setback before any start.

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THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACTS BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN

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Introduction

People-to-people contacts between adversarial groups, using the contact hypothesis¹ premise, have been employed over the years to promote peace-building in different conflict regions throughout the world. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus, Georgia-Abkhazia, Israel-Palestine, Northern Ireland, Somalia, South Africa, and Sri Lanka are a few major examples. Scholarly research shows that in some conflict regions people-to-people contacts have been very helpful in promoting peace and understanding between adversarial groups, while in other regions such steps have achieved limited success.

In the case of India-Pakistan conflict, the term people-to-people contacts became famous only after the establishment of Pakistan India Peoples' Forum for Peace and Democracy (PIPFPD) in 1994. But from the name of PIPFPD it is obvious that it was formed as a forum or an umbrella platform for promotion of peace between India and Pakistan. This indicates that certain people-to-people contact groups existed before the formation of PIPFPD in 1994.

According to Yunas Samad, the origin of people-to-people contact initiatives dates back to the 1960s when H.T. Parekh organized 'small seminars' and lobbied the authorities for a 'common South Asia economic area'.² But that

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was just a lone attempt, which could never take off because the 1960s were too turbulent for the success of any such attempt. People-to-people contact initiatives took an organized shape only in the 1980s when several alumni, workers, trade, track-two, and cultural links were formalized by like-minded groups in the two countries.

This research is an attempt to document the work of those institutions, organizations, and individuals who were instrumental in building people-to-people contacts between the people of India and Pakistan in that early stage. The web approach model for people-to-people contacts is used to identify eight ‘anchor points’ that were established before the launching of PIPFPD. The eight anchor points identified in this study are alumni, trade, track-two, research, women, art and culture, workers, and intelligentsia networks.

Literature on India-Pakistan people-to-people contacts

People-to-people contact initiatives have existed between India and Pakistan since the 1980s, but very limited scholarly research was done on this aspect in both countries before 2010. Among international scholars, Behera³ was the most prolific scholar on people-to-people contacts between India and Pakistan in this early phase. Through her work, Behera helped in mapping and understanding the structure of people-to-people contacts between India and Pakistan. Apart from her, Sewak⁴ and Faiz⁵ attempted to connect India-Pakistan people-to-people contacts through the theory of peacebuilding.

Since 2010, people-to-people contacts are gaining more attention of journalists and scholars, as more and more literature is pouring in on the topic now. Kothari and Mian⁶ edited a book containing accounts of peace activists, directly involved in people-to-people related activities on both sides of the border. Then Akhtar,⁷ Khan,⁸ and Shahid et.al.⁹ made India-Pakistan people-to-people contacts a topic of their research. However, despite all this literature on people-to-people contacts, no attempt has been made to trace the origins of the contact initiatives and consolidation work done by different peace groups in the 1980s. Behera provides a brief introduction to some of the peace groups working in the 1980s and a few others also talk about some of the initiatives in that phase, but no proper research is available on the origin and development of people-to-people contacts in the 1980s. This paper is an attempt to fill that gap in the academic literature.

The web approach model for people-to-people contacts and eight anchor points

The web approach model for people-to-people contacts was adopted by the author¹⁰ in his unpublished doctoral thesis using Lederach’s ‘pyramid of approaches to peacebuilding’—formulated in his seminal work *Building Peace*¹¹ and later improved in *The Moral Imagination*¹²—to assess the impact of people-to-people contacts on overall peacebuilding between conflicting parties. The web approach model provides a theoretical framework for creating a

comprehensive network of people-to-people contacts integrating all the three levels (top, middle range, and grassroots) among the conflicting parties.¹³ This complex network of people-to-people contacts is created with the support of the anchor points (cross-cultural networks) established by civil society groups among the conflicting communities.

Hence, to achieve peacebuilding at all three levels, it is important to identify and connect anchor points that may link not so like-minded but necessarily interdependent sections of the society.¹⁴ The inter-group linkages amongst journalists, traders, artists, scholars, academics, students, sportsmen, and women activists are considered inter-dependent because they share their professional and other interests but may not be so like-minded because they all have their own opinions, ideological leanings, and political affiliations. Once stronger links between anchor points are established, they have the responsibility to take peacebuilding to other sections of the society and sustain the peace movement.

In this study, people-to-people contacts based anchor points between Indian and Pakistani communities that had emerged before the formation of PIPFPD are explored. The eight people-to-people networks or anchor points, which emerged before the formation of PIPFPD were alumni, trade, track-two, research, women, art and culture, workers, and intelligentsia links. It is important to study these anchor points in detail, as they provide the base on which people-to-people contacts based peace movement later emerged in both India and Pakistan.

The alumni anchor point

As a result of the partition of the sub-continent in 1947, the alumni of several prime institutions of British India were divided between India and Pakistan, as people from far-flung areas used to study in those high-profile institutions. The Indian and Pakistani alumni later rose to higher positions in their respective countries and kept in touch despite their countries often at odds with each other. In the 1980s alumni links were revived, and frequent alumni visits to each other's country were arranged. These alumni links are important because they were the first organized people-to-people contact initiatives between India and Pakistan.

Royal Indian Military College (RIMC) Dehradun

After the partition of the sub-continent, the Indian alumni of Royal Indian Military College (RIMC) were the first to establish an alumni link with their Pakistani counterparts. The RIMC Old Boys Association was formally established in Delhi in 1949 and its counterpart in Pakistan was founded by 12 Pakistani RIMC alumni in Lahore on 20 February 1954.¹⁵ Delegations' visits to each other's countries were not reported until the 1980s though. Mehta¹⁶ reports two visits of Pakistani alumni in 1983 and 1989. Kanwar¹⁷ reports a delegation's visit in 1990 as well. Nothing substantive came out of those meetings vis-à-vis India-Pakistan relations, but still they were important as the first people-to-people initiatives.

Doon School Old Boys Society

Like the RIMC alumni association, since the late 1950s Doon School Old Boys Society (DSOBS) in India had contacts with DoscOs (pupils of Doon) in Pakistan, but a trip of Pakistani Old Boys could not be arranged until the golden jubilee celebrations of the school in 1985. On a special invitation of the then prime minister of India Rajiv Gandhi, himself a Doon alumnus, about 50 Pakistani DoscOs visited India to attend the golden jubilee celebrations of the school.¹⁸ On their return to Pakistan, they decided to build Doon School in Pakistan. They inaugurated the 'Chand Bagh School' in Muridke on the outskirts of Lahore in 1998 on the Doon model. The Indian delegation had participated in the inauguration of the Chand Bagh School. The contacts of Doon and Chand Bagh schools and Doon Old Boys Society in Pakistan and India have remained intact, and they have visited each other on a regular basis.

Kinnaird College OAKS

The Indian alumni of Kinnaird College formed the Indian Kinnaird Society under the banner of Old Associates of Kinnaird Society (OAKS), and established a strong link with Kinnaird College administration in Lahore, Pakistan.¹⁹ In the mid-1980s, Indian OAKS visited Kinnaird for the first time on a special invitation of the then principal Mira Phailbus to participate in the Old Students' Day celebrations. Later on, more OAKS came to visit Kinnaird in 1986 and even more attended the 75th anniversary of Kinnaird in 1988.²⁰ In February 1989, OAKS from Pakistan visited India. These visits have continued over the years and, as a result, OAKS links have strengthened.

Alumni links were important international people-to-people contact initiatives, considering that they were the first people-to-people initiatives between India and Pakistan. They established their initial contacts across borders in the 1950s when wounds of partition were still fresh. However, they could only cross borders in the 1980s, which shows that the time was not ripe for such initiatives until then.

The trade anchor point

The basic purpose of this section is to study the linkages that emerged between the trading communities of India and Pakistan. However, it will also look briefly at the history of trade relations between India and Pakistan to understand the historic scope and evolution of their bilateral trade. According to Kumar and Desai,²¹ before partition, trade between areas that became India and Pakistan was immense, as Indian territories heavily relied on Pakistani territories for agricultural products, and Pakistani areas on Indian territories for consumer goods. Sangani and Schaffer²² have reported that at the time of independence three-fifths of Pakistan's exports went to and one-third of its imports came from India. This trend continued for some time even after the independence. According to one estimate, 70 per cent of Pakistan's trade during the year 1948-49 was with India.²³

The situation drastically changed when Pakistan declined to devalue its currency in 1949 after the devaluation of the Indian currency, and imposed

import restrictions on India.²⁴ Bilateral trade declined sharply after the devaluation crisis in 1949, and further dipped in 1954-55 when Pakistan joined Western alliances, and India became the ally of former Soviet Union. Moreover, after India-Pakistan war in 1965, bilateral trade between India and Pakistan almost ceased to exist up to 1976.²⁵ India-Pakistan bilateral trade started again in the late 1970s. It picked up only a little after formation of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 1985. Despite possessing immense potential, trade between India and Pakistan has remained minimal over the years because of their conflict.

Some private trade links started to develop between the two countries in the early 1980s. In 1981, the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) and the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) visited India. During the visit, they signed an agreement with India's Peace, Harmony, and Development (PHD) Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) to promote trade between them.²⁶ Then in 1982, PHD Chambers' delegation from India visited Pakistan for the first time, wherein the Indo-Pak Joint Business Commission was set up. In 1982, PHD Chambers of Commerce and Industry also established a separate India-Pakistan desk in New Delhi to promote trade between the two countries. Subsequently, the Indo-Pak Joint Business Commission commenced its regular meetings in both Islamabad and New Delhi. Those contacts ultimately led to a trade agreement between India and Pakistan in January 1986, in which a limited number of listed items were allowed to be imported in Pakistan. However, despite all those efforts and the trade agreement, business activity between the two countries could not flourish. Bhatia termed India and Pakistan 'residual trading partners', as exports from India in 1988-89 accounted for 0.179 per cent of the total imports into Pakistan, and the exports from Pakistan accounted for 0.257 per cent of the total imports into India during the same year.²⁷

Hence, by the time PIPFPD was created in 1994, trade relations between India and Pakistan, and links between trading communities in the two countries, were still in their embryonic phase. Nevertheless, initial links between leading chambers of commerce and industry of the two countries were developed. In terms of promoting horizontal integration between trade and business communities of India and Pakistan, initial links were established, but these links were not strong enough to create any meaningful impact on the overall situation.

India and Pakistan, despite being natural trade partners, could not develop stronger trade relations. The first step towards a free trade agreement between South Asian countries was taken from the SAARC platform with the signing of the SAARC Preferential Trading Agreement (SAPTA) in April 1993. But because of the India-Pakistan conflict, SAARC could not attain the level of intra-regional trade achieved by the European Union (EU), the Association of South East Asian (ASEAN), and other regional organizations.

The track-two conferences/dialogues anchor point

The term track-two diplomacy means different things to different people. Some include all kinds of unofficial contacts in track-two, whereas some others, like Diamond and Macdonald,²⁸ consider track-two just one track in the multi-track diplomacy. For the purpose of this study, the author has used the latter definition of track-two, which only includes conferences/dialogues among professionals/experts aiming at providing an unofficial platform to analyze, discuss, and formulate recommendations for conflict management or conflict resolution.

A problem-solving workshop organized by third-party scholar practitioners Herbert Kelman and Stephen Cohen in 1972—involving citizens of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh—was the first unofficial track-two initiative involving Indians and Pakistanis.²⁹ This workshop was organized in the backdrop of the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war, and the separation of East Pakistan to become Bangladesh. Then in 1976, Ronald Fisher organized a pilot problem-solving workshop on India-Pakistan conflict.³⁰ These two one-off events failed to create any impetus for more track-two activities between India and Pakistan. Similarly, India-Pakistan Friendship Society—which was launched in New Delhi in 1987 by Kewel Singh, a former Indian foreign secretary—proved to be a non-starter.

Finally, it was the drought at the top level and the danger of a nuclear war in South Asia that pushed the introduction of a series of track-two dialogues between the two countries. But the real impetus came from outside, especially from the United States. In 1990, the United States Information Service (USIS) arranged a series of WORLDNET dialogues between Indian and Pakistani experts, in which issues like nuclear non-proliferation, confidence-building measures (CBMs), and regional economic cooperation were discussed.³¹ WORLDNET dialogues proved to be the precursor of Neemrana dialogue, which is the only track-two initiative between India and Pakistan surviving to-date since its inception in 1991.

Neemrana dialogue got its name from Neemrana Fort in Rajasthan, India, where the first meeting of the dialogue series took place in 1991. Like WORLDNET dialogues, initial meetings of Neemrana were supported by the USIS, and the focus also remained on nuclear and non-nuclear CBMs. Later on, Kashmir, nuclear proliferation, arms race, and economic cooperation topped the agenda, while some other issues, like visa regime, cultural exchanges, trade, and media and industrial cooperation were also discussed.³²

To a large extent, Neemrana followed interactive conflict resolution (ICR) approach or problem-solving approach. Like ICR, the participants were selected for their expertise and their access to the top level so that the input from track-two could easily reach the official track-one. The talks were kept secret from the glare of the media to facilitate open and candid discussion. Moreover, the participants were instructed not to refer to any aspect of Indo-Pakistan relations in terms of its history because they feared that discussing the controversial history of the sub-continent could hamper progress.³³

In Neemrana, one of the most important characteristics of problem-solving workshops was missing. Unlike ICR, where third-party scholar practitioners had facilitated the dialogue, in the case of Neemrana, two seasoned diplomats—one each from India (M.K. Rasgotra) and Pakistan (Niaz A. Naik)—had co-chaired the meetings. Therefore, on the whole, problem-solving approach techniques were not followed despite having a similar kind of structure.

Nonetheless, Neemrana provided a much needed unofficial platform that could operate even when the official track-one channels were closed because of the ups and downs in the relationship between the two countries. Since their first meeting in 1991, the Neemrana dialogues have been arranged without a major break over the years. Blum³⁴ points out that at times it was the only channel of communication available to the Indian and Pakistani governments. Although the USIS had helped in launching Neemrana, over the years it has grown as an independent forum.³⁵

Apart from Neemrana, in the early 1990s quite a few other seminars and conferences were arranged between Indians and Pakistanis. Time Magazine and the Lahore office of the Frontier Post organized a conference on security and strategic issues in South Asia. The US Institute of Peace (USIP) organized two well-structured track-two workshops in Washington D.C. on Kashmir titled, ‘Conflict Resolution in South Asia: Creative Approaches to Kashmir’, involving Kashmiris from both sides of the border and some American conflict resolution experts.³⁶ Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies also organized a seminar on bilateral relations between India and Pakistan in April 1994 to develop a better mutual understanding of issues of common concern.

Track-two forms an important part of the web approach. It connects the middle-range leadership to the top-level leadership because it is far closer to the track-one official negotiations. The track-two in India and Pakistan developed different ideas and dialogues over nuclear and non-nuclear CBMs, which were later negotiated and adopted as policies by the two governments.

If we look at the composition of track-two between India and Pakistan, however, it was far too elitist. Most of the participants were very close to the track-one, in fact, retired track-one practitioners. Moreover, all proceedings were kept away from the media, shared only with the two governments. But this is a problem with track-two everywhere in the world; it is generally far too elitist for being useful in the web approach. Despite being unofficial, track-two is basically an extension of track-one, as most of its participants despite being unofficial are essentially top level actors having little or no connection with the larger middle range. Track-two initiatives must be open to the larger middle range so that they can help in integrating middle range leadership with the top-level leadership.

The academic and research anchor point

Research and academic side has remained a weak link in South Asia in general, and Pakistan in particular. Zaidi³⁷ reported ‘a conspicuous silence’ on India in Pakistan’s institutions of research and teaching in his detailed survey of social science research and teaching on India in Pakistan. Perhaps,

understanding the significance of knowing the adversarial neighbour well and realizing the huge gap in this regard, in March 1982, the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) was established on special instructions of the then president of Pakistan General Zia-ul-Haq to study South Asia with a special emphasis on India. Over the years, IRS has produced several reports and research papers on Indian elections, Indian internal affairs, Indian foreign policy, and India-Pakistan peace process. IRS also produces a fortnightly publication *Selections* from Regional Press based on clippings, mainly from the Indian newspapers and periodicals. Apart from IRS, by 1994, the Pakistan Institute of International Affairs (PIIA), established in 1948, was the only other institution in Pakistan doing research on international affairs including India and Pakistan.

The Indian case was not much different either. Relatively speaking, however, India had more research institutions involved in conducting research on Pakistan. The Centre for Policy Research (CPR), established in 1973, the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) inaugurated in 1963, and the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA), registered in 1965, were involved in conducting research on Pakistan. However, there was little collaborative research produced by the Indian and Pakistani research institutions then, and most of the research institutions, except CPR and CSDS in India, were closely associated with the governments in Islamabad and New Delhi. Only noteworthy institutional academic collaboration in that period was the 'working relationship' between CPR and Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) on promoting regional cooperation.³⁸

However, as far as promotion of new researchers, networking, and collaborative research in South Asia is concerned, the inception of Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS) in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 1993, was a major development. Prof. Shelton U. Kodikara was the founding Executive Director and the spirit behind the establishment of RCSS. Since 1993, RCSS has facilitated several dialogues between Indian and Pakistani researchers, and has produced several well-researched individual and collaborative research monographs on India-Pakistan conflict.

Moreover, on the research side, two new South Asian journals came out in the early 1990s. An influential Congress leader, Dinesh Singh, established the Indian Council for South Asian Cooperation, which led to the publication of *South Asia Journal* in the early 1990s that was renamed *South Asian Survey* in 1994.³⁹ On the other hand, Gowher Rizvi, then an Oxford-based Bangladeshi scholar, launched *Contemporary South Asia* in 1992.

Outside South Asia, especially in the United States, several research initiatives were launched on peace and security in South Asia in the 1980s and early 1990s. In 1982, in the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, US, the South Asian leg of its famous programme Arms Control, Disarmament, and International Security (ACDIS), was launched.⁴⁰ Several Indian and Pakistani scholars, journalists, and academics received training under this programme and their research was published under the ACDIS occasional paper series. Moreover, Chris Smith, George Perkovich, and Stephen P. Cohen, organized

three summer school workshops on arms control and conflict resolution in both India (one) and Pakistan (two) in the early 1990s.⁴¹

Hence, academic and research collaboration between Indian and Pakistani scholars was minimal by the 1990s. Research was taking place on issues concerning peace in South Asia, but there was little collaboration between the researchers of the two countries. Especially research on people-to-people contacts was completely missing. The whole focus of research was on addressing nuclear deterrence issues, pushing for CBMs at official level, and promoting disarmament. At the most, Kashmir conflict sometimes came into the picture, but people of India and Pakistan, civil society, and research collaboration was a missing link.

The women activists anchor point

Women have been at the forefront of the peace movement in both India and Pakistan. Women are visible on prominent positions in most of the peace groups and peacebuilding organizations. Their role in peacebuilding, most of the times, is not gender-based. Gender, however, surely influences their actions, and shapes their choices. Since the 1980s, Indian and Pakistani women have been establishing contacts and sustaining working relationships with each other in different fields like art, theatre, music, film, academia, and human rights. This section, however, focuses on links between women-only organizations on the basis of gender.

In reaction to General Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization and discriminatory laws against women promulgated in 1979, urbanized professional women and feminist women groups in Pakistan jointly launched the mass-based Women's Action Forum (WAF) in 1981. WAF established its chapters in Islamabad, Karachi, and Lahore, and organized public protests, symposiums, and debates against the discriminatory laws of the military government.⁴² Later on, in the 1990s, WAF associated itself with the peace movement, especially peace with India, based on demilitarization and denuclearization of India and Pakistan. The founding members of WAF included Asma Jahangir, Hina Jilani, Nighat Said Khan, Anis Haroon, and Madeeha Gauhar, who were later at the forefront of the PIPFPD and other peace links with India.

Indian human rights activist Kamla Bhasin was the first Indian peace activist who was invited as a family planning trainer by Ferida Sher of Family Planning Association of Pakistan in 1984. In 1985, Ferida Sher also brought another Indian trainer Madhu Sarin to Pakistan. However, the major initial links between Indian and Pakistani women were established during the International Women's Conference at Nairobi in 1985.⁴³ From there onwards, they started developing their links on offshore venues, especially Kathmandu and Colombo.

In 1988, Shirkat Gah—a women's resource centre based in Karachi, Lahore, and Peshawar—sent a women delegation from Pakistan to India to study the environment-friendly Chipko (hug the trees) movement. These contacts led to the first India-Pakistan conference on environment, jointly organized by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Pakistan, and the Centre for Science and Environment, India.⁴⁴ This conference provided a good

opportunity to NGOs, and community and media groups from India and Pakistan to interact. They continued their deliberations in a month-long video training workshop in Bangalore in August 1989, and then in a similar workshop in Lahore.⁴⁵ However, despite a strong desire on both sides, these contacts could not become a regular feature because of the draconian visa regime between India and Pakistan.

As opposed to the alumni, trade, track-two, and research links, middle range leadership was far more visible in women links because women groups were not restricted to the horizontal integration of the elite in the two countries. Women groups represented the civil society in both India and Pakistan. Therefore, they had more access to the larger middle class and the grassroots. The same women later emerged as leaders of peace movements in both the countries.

The drama, music, art, and cultural anchor point

Hindi and Urdu, the official languages of India and Pakistan, respectively, are so similar in spoken form that even for the native speakers, sometimes it becomes difficult to differentiate between them. According to Gumperz,⁴⁶ Hindi and Urdu are in fact two styles of the same language. They were constructed as two different languages during the Hindi-Urdu controversy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when politics led to more Persianized Urdu and more Sanskritized Hindi.⁴⁷ This similarity of Hindi and Urdu is more evident in drama, music, art, film, and culture of the two countries, as both nations enjoy the same music, theatre, art, and culture. Considering this, it can be said that music, art, and culture have the potential of being used as a powerful catalyst for peace promotion between the two countries. In this section those initiatives are discussed which had established their professional links across the border.

Sheema Kermani's Tehrik-i-Niswan

Sheema Kermani's Tehrik-i-Niswan (women's movement), established in 1980, was the first group in Pakistan that started using theatre for raising gender issues, and the peace movement between India and Pakistan. Kermani—a professional classical dancer with a graduate degree in Fine Arts from the UK, and a left-oriented political activist—used dance, music, and performing arts to raise awareness among masses, especially the neglected working class labour women of Pakistan.⁴⁸ Since its creation in 1980, Tehrik-i-Niswan has been performing all over Pakistan to raise voice for working-class women and the neglected classes.

Tehrik-i-Niswan's first performance was an adaptation of India's famous theatre artist Safdar Hashmi's *Aurat* (woman) in 1980. Then in 1981, Kermani dramatized another Indian writer Amrita Pritam's short story titled *Dard* key Fasley.⁴⁹ Kermani told the author that the selection of stories of Indian authors was intended to bring the people of India and Pakistan closer by showing them cultural similarities between the two countries.⁵⁰ Finally in 1989, Kermani was able to take her play *Raaz-o-Niaz* (secret talk), set in a houseboat

in Kashmir, to the India International Centre in Delhi. Since that time, Kermani has been a regular performer in India.

Ajoka: theatre for social change

Famous TV artist Madeeha Gauhar and her playwright husband Shahid Nadeem launched Ajoka in 1984 as what they termed as ‘theatre for social change’.⁵¹ Ajoka’s first play, *Jaloos* (the procession) was an adaptation of the famous Indian playwright Badal Sircar’s *Panjwan Chiragh* (the fifth lamp). Initially Ajoka had performed its plays on private house lawns because theatre hall owners were scared of the military government. Later on, however, they were able to get a permanent base in Goethe Institute, Lahore.⁵²

Ajoka’s first Indian trip came in 1989, when a very influential voice in political theatre in India Safdar Hashmi was murdered in Delhi while he was performing in his street play *Halla Bol* (raise your voice). On a special invitation of Safdar Hashmi’s theatre group *Jana Natya Manch*, Ajoka attended the theatre festival, organized to pay tribute to Hashmi, and performed its play on bonded labour called *Itt* in Delhi’s *Mandi House*.⁵³ The next day, *The Times of India* declared on its front page that India-Pakistan theatre collaboration had arrived.⁵⁴

Ajoka has produced several plays on the partition and peace themes. In 1992, Ajoka adapted Sadat Hassan Manto’s *Toba Tek Singh*, which depicted the pain, misery, and agony of the people of the sub-continent at the time of the partition in 1947. In 1993, Shahid Nadeem wrote *Aik thi Nani* (once there was a grandmother) for Ajoka, which was based on a real life story of the acting careers of two sisters Zohra Sehgal (famous Indian actress) and Uzra Butt (Pakistani theatre artist) who were separated because of the partition. Ajoka has regularly staged plays in all major cities of India and Pakistan.

The ASR and Punjab Lok RaHS

Nighat Said Khan established the Applied Socio-economic Research Resource Centre (ASR) in 1983 in Lahore to provide training and research resource to women organizations, theatre groups, peasants, and trade unions. In 1988, ASR brought six famous theatre personalities from India to conduct a ten-day theatre skills workshop in Lahore. The *Punjab Lok RaHS* (established in 1986) and Ajoka were the Pakistani participants. These initial contacts led to a theatre festival in February 1989 in Pakistan where four theatre groups from India performed—the first Indian theatre performance in Pakistan since 1947.⁵⁵ Later in the same year, four members of the *Punjab Lok RaHS* participated in the National Theatre Festival in Delhi.⁵⁶ This helped it to further develop its contacts with theatre groups in India.

Music and art have tremendous transformative power to heal wounds, build peace, and bridge differences across communities. The theatre of *Tehrik-i-Niswan* and Ajoka brought people in the peace discourse, as it was the theatre of the masses. Both theatre groups not only took up issues of the common man, but also tried to reach the grassroots by performing in the localities of the neglected

classes. More importantly, these initial linkages between theatre groups proved to be long-lasting relationships that continue to the present day.

The worker, labour, and trade union anchor point

Worker, labour, and trade unions were active in India and Pakistan since partition, but links between the two only became active in the 1980s. Initial links between the labour and trade union leaders of the two countries were established outside the sub-continent. Karamat Ali, a prominent labour activist of Pakistan, told the author that they had formed Pakistani Workers' Association in England in 1980, and had established close links with the Indian Workers' Association in the UK.⁵⁷ Direct contact between trade unionists of India and Pakistan were established in 1987 when Ali led a labour delegation to India on the special invitation of his London and Hague colleagues.⁵⁸

Ali, with the support of his comrades from trade unions and labour movements, founded Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER) on 1 May 1982 with a goal "to equip the working class with proper awareness of their rights and ways to promote and protect them, through education and training."⁵⁹ PILER was launched with a modest funding from the United Workers Association in a two-room residential-cum-office apartment in Karachi, but over the years it grew as "Pakistan's premier labour research (and training) centre."⁶⁰

Over the last three decades PILER has remained at the forefront of the peace movement with India and the anti-nuclear movement in Pakistan. In March 1992, PILER, in collaboration with the New Delhi-based Forum for Workers Solidarity, organized a meeting of plant-level workers and trade unionists in Delhi. The trade unionists from multi-national companies like Unilever, Siemens, Parke Davis, Philips etc. in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka participated along with a large number of labour researchers and labour activists in this conference.⁶¹ PILER gradually strengthened its linkages with the labour and worker organizations in India.

Apart from PILER, South Asia Partnership (SAP) Pakistan was the other labour-based organization which had links with Indian NGOs working on labour. SAP existed in India since 1981, while SAP Pakistan was launched in 1987 with the help of SAP Canada under its Pakistan NGO Support Programme (PNSP). The Deputy Director of SAP Pakistan Irfan Mufti told the author that SAP Pakistan was in touch with SAP India since its inception in 1987, and that they were working on the common agenda of creating a South Asian community by working on people's rights specially the marginalized poor people.⁶²

These initial labour contacts across the border were important in the context of building the web process, as they were the only horizontal grassroots inter-group interventions then. These links were important from vertical integration perspective as well because both PILER and SAP Pakistan worked with workers in Pakistan at the grassroots, connecting grassroots labour communities to the leadership at the top. These worker and labourer contacts later played a key role in the peace movement using both PIPFPD and other platforms.

The intelligentsia anchor point

The intelligentsia links are different from academic, research, and track-two ones, even though some of the members involved in those links can be part of the intelligentsia links as well. Academic and research links focus on connecting researchers and producing collaborative research, while track-two links try to facilitate the work of negotiators by providing neutral forums to former diplomats and other experts for discussing contentious issues. On the other hand, intelligentsia links try to connect the educated and intellectual elite of India and Pakistan on one platform. They are involved in peace advocacy and try to create pressure on governments to show restraint and talk peace. Intelligentsia groups are rooted in the middle range, and they have far stronger links with the grassroots workers and researchers in their respective fields.

The Indian and Pakistani intelligentsia—including former judges, technocrats, journalists, writers, and some politicians—had started developing their own sphere of influence by the late 1980s, and started pushing for peace. This all started with a conference in April 1984 organized by the Pakistani English-language newspaper *The Muslim*. The *Muslim* invited a good number of Indian journalists, writers, politicians, and retired civil and military bureaucrats to Islamabad for a frank dialogue on India-Pakistan relations. Then in September 1987, the writers of the two countries also met in New Delhi on the initiative of the Academy of Fine Arts and Literature.

In 1989, when a full-blown insurgency broke out in Kashmir and relations between India and Pakistan deteriorated to a level where many feared the outbreak of a war, a campaign based on joint statements of ‘eminent’ (the term they used for themselves) Indians and Pakistanis was started to pressurize governments on both sides of the border to show restraint. The first of this kind of statements was issued by Indian intelligentsia on 9 April 1990 in India, urging pro-peace groups in India and Pakistan to form a ‘united front’ and push for an amicable resolution of all conflicts, including Kashmir, following the spirit of the Simla Agreement.⁶³ This followed two more joint statements from India: one was published in the *Hindustan Times* on 16 April 1990, and the other was issued on 25 April 1990 containing signatures of seventy-eight Indian intellectuals along with the signature of Eqbal Ahmed, the famous Pakistani scholar.

After these three joint statements emanating from the Indian intelligentsia in a span of just one month, Pakistani scholars and intellectuals also decided to be counted. On 13 May 1990, as many as fifty ‘eminent’ Pakistanis issued a joint statement seeking restraint from the two governments and calling for a negotiated settlement of the Kashmir dispute. Later on, by the end of May, some of the signatories—which included Eqbal Ahmed, Mubashir Hassan, Nisar Osmani, Asma Jahangir, and Nasim Zehra—embarked on a private trip to India. During their four-day trip, they had fifteen sessions with top-level organizations in Delhi. They also met with former Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi and even addressed a public meeting.⁶⁴

The most tangible outcome of this trip was the first ever joint statement by 54 Indian and Pakistani intellectuals, together urging their two governments

to move towards peace. The statement was widely published simultaneously in Indian and Pakistani press on 27 June 1990. Daily The Statesman in India termed this statement a “plea to avoid Indo-Pak conflict.”⁶⁵ Mubashir Hassan, and V.A. Pai Panandiker, then director of the CPR in New Delhi, had collaborated for several days to secure the signatures of 25 Pakistani and 29 Indian eminent citizens.⁶⁶

Mubashir Hassan and Panandiker kept up their links intact and collaborated with their colleagues to produce the second joint statement of the Indian and Pakistani eminent citizens on 2 August 1992. The second joint statement was not a major achievement from the point of view of the numbers of signatures, as the number just increased from 54 to 59 and most of the signatories were the same. But it was surely a great achievement from the perspective of the content of the statement they agreed upon. The second statement centred more on promoting people-to-people contacts and called for removing restrictions on the movement of people, goods, ideas, and communication links between India and Pakistan.

In September 1990, encouraged by the success of the joint statements, a series of South Asian dialogues was conceived in a seminar at Goa. It was decided that for the next five years, a South Asian conference will be held once a year to discuss the issues of ‘peace, development, and cooperation’ amongst South Asian countries.⁶⁷ These dialogues helped in bringing Indian and Pakistani peace activists much closer to each other, as they recognized that people’s concerns, interests, and agendas had much more points of similarity than points of difference.⁶⁸

The intelligentsia links proved to be the precursors of the PIPFPD, as for the first time a need to unite all pro-peace people of both the countries on one platform was realized during those interactions. The joint statements were the first serious effort to influence decision-making at the top by building pressure from the bottom. These intelligentsia links were very important for middle range horizontal integration because they were, to some extent, representative of their respective professional groups, as all ‘eminent’ signatories enjoyed good reputation among their peers and colleagues.

Conclusion

By the 1980s, it was evident to the concerned citizens on both sides of the border that their governments might not be capable of resolving their disputes amicably on their own. This pushed them to do something to build peace and harmony between their warring nations. By the early 1990s, the belief that the two governments were incapable of resolving their disputes on their own became far stronger, which explains the increase in people-to-people contact interventions in this phase.

The people-to-people contact initiatives launched in this phase were not big enough to make any visible impact on their own, but they certainly laid the foundations for future interventions. They all contributed towards building new anchor points for the people-to-people contacts based peacebuilding between India and Pakistan. They deserve credit for slowly developing the workforce or

the peace lobby, which was essential for the launching of major initiatives like PIPFPD. These initiatives did the necessary groundwork without which peace movement and peace discourse could not be conceived in India and Pakistan. In fact, the bulk of the workforce and the leadership of PIPFPD came from these initiatives. The birth of PIPFPD should be seen as a by-product of the process started by those early initiatives.

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GENEROUS YET UNPOPULAR: DEVELOPMENTAL VERSUS POLITICAL ROLE OF POST-9/11 US AID IN PAKISTAN

MURAD ALI,* GLENN BANKS, AND NIGEL PARSONS*****

Introduction

During their alliance in the ‘war on terror’ era, the United States has provided Pakistan a total of over \$11 billion in economic assistance. Analyzing US aid data and projects funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the US government agency responsible for the delivery of majority of development aid to developing countries, this research shows that due to the political nature of US aid and on account of somewhat divergent foreign policy goals of the two countries, the developmental role of US aid in Pakistan has been rarely explored. The developmental significance of US aid has been mostly overshadowed by thorny bilateral issues related to the ‘war on terror’ such as unabated drone attacks inside Pakistani territory and the overt manipulation of foreign aid as a political tool to coerce Pakistan. Consequently, a large majority of Pakistanis believe that US aid has been least effective and has done nothing of value in the country. This research posits that although the US is not a popular donor in Pakistan, like China or Japan, the reality is that it is the largest aid-provider to the country and has carried out numerous projects in various sectors including health, education, energy, agriculture, economic growth, and post-conflict and post-disaster reconstruction. Contrary to the overall public perception—instead of China, Japan, Saudi Arabia, or any other

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donor—the US was the largest donor to Pakistan during three devastating natural and man-made disasters. These include the 2005 Kashmir earthquake that killed 74,000 people, the 2009 militants' insurgency and humanitarian crisis in Malakand Division in which over 3 million people were displaced, and the unprecedented 2010 floods that affected 20 million people across the country. On these three occasions, the US played an active role in the rescue, relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction efforts. It provided 17 per cent, 41 per cent, and 28 per cent of the total aid Pakistan received from the international donor community during Kashmir earthquake, Malakand Division militancy, and 2010 floods, respectively. The paper attempts at highlighting what USAID has done in various sectors in Pakistan and how US aid has played a critical role in enabling the victims to stand on their own feet. In view of its developmental vis-à-vis political role, the paper argues that if the US has not been able to win the hearts and minds of ordinary Pakistanis despite a generous aid programme, it is because of the overall US foreign policy towards Pakistan and also its role in the larger Muslim world, particularly the Middle East. The findings of the study and subsequent analysis could be of interest to academics, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers in diverse fields including international relations, politics, strategic studies, and development studies.

Birth of the alliance and the nature of US economic aid

Pakistan, since its independence in 1947, has mostly remained a close ally of the US. Therefore, it has also remained one of the largest recipients of US assistance from time to time. However, the relationship between the two countries has witnessed several ups and downs during the Cold War, the post-Cold War, and the 'war on terror' periods. The recent alliance has undergone similar ups and downs that are the hallmark of the US-Pakistan relations over the last more than six decades. During this honeymoon period, as USAID data in Table 1 illustrates, Pakistan became one of the largest US aid recipients. But instead of a smooth and cordial relationship, it has been a love-hate one. Time and again, the US has used aid as a veritable arm of foreign policy, threatening to cut it off in times of Pakistan's non-compliance with its foreign policy objectives.

Before examining the impact of certain USAID programmes, it is important to briefly elaborate the twin objectives of US economic assistance to Pakistan. The very idea of foreign aid is political in nature: the US and other donors have utilized aid to make alliances with friendly countries to further their multifaceted foreign policy goals. Valentine foretold more than six decades ago that aid "shall be part of American foreign policy—a policy which is and must be primarily political."¹ What Valentine stated decades back, former USAID administrator Andrew Natsios reiterated in the 21st century. The history of foreign aid clearly illustrates that "politics is part and parcel of aid delivery in all donor countries, in Europe as well as in America," he said.² Hence, it must be acknowledged that the US foreign aid policy towards Pakistan has been guided by two objectives: achieving US geo-strategic goals, and helping Pakistan in addressing its developmental challenges. According to USAID, one of the key

objectives of US foreign aid is “supporting U.S. geostrategic interests.” Interestingly, when USAID document mentions US geostrategic interests, it also mentions Pakistan.³ For example, “While it is vital that the U.S. government helps keep Pakistan allied with the United States in the war on terrorism, the United States must also help Pakistanis move toward a more stable, prosperous, and democratic society.”⁴ USAID returned to Pakistan in 2002 with an overall mission “to tangibly improve the well-being of Pakistanis and to support the Government of Pakistan in fulfilling its vision of a moderate, democratic, and prosperous country...to address needs in economic growth, education, health, good governance, earthquake reconstruction assistance, as well as humanitarian assistance.”⁵

Hence, key motivations of US aid are both to further US interests as well as to support Pakistan in achieving its developmental goals. Instead of striking a balance between these two objectives, a series of events such as drone attacks inside Pakistani territory, the Raymond Davis incident, the US military operation inside Pakistan killing Osama bin Laden, the Salala incident (a Pakistani check-post attacked by US helicopters), and US threats of cutting off aid to Pakistan in case of reciprocal actions by the latter clearly reveal that US aid is often overtly political in its objectives. Time and again, the US has asked Pakistan to do more in the ‘war on terror’ and has questioned whether Pakistan is an ally or a foe. Thus, it mars the overall developmental impact of US aid in the country despite the fact that the US has provided a significant amount of aid (as shown in Table 1).

Table 1:

US economic assistance to Pakistan in the post-9/11 years

Year	Economic assistance (constant 2008 \$)
2002	921.41
2003	371.75
2004	399.32
2005	482.47
2006	681.94
2007	678.8
2008	605.36
2009	930.7
2010	1,068.5
2011	2,117.2
2012	767.7
2013	743.5
2014	955.4
2015	678.8

Total	11,402.8
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Source: USAID. 2016. *Foreign Aid Explorer: Country Detail Pakistan 2016*.⁶

Where have the billions gone? Perceptions in Pakistan about the impact of US aid

As shown by the USAID data, although the US has allocated substantial aid to Pakistan, the overall developmental role of USAID in the country is not visible to most Pakistanis. It is commonly pointed out that though the US has been allocating billions of dollars in aid, it has not produced tangible or visible impacts. Even laymen argue that they are unable to see any noticeable impacts of US aid in Pakistan in the form of a modern hospital, university, dam, road, or industry that has been built with US money. This perception has been summarized by Farrukh Saleem. In an August 2010 newspaper column, he wrote about the impacts and results of recent US aid in Pakistan. An extract from his write-up is reproduced:

“Where have all the billions gone? ...92 percent of all USAID projects go to US NGOs [non-government organizations]. Research Triangle Institute, one of American government’s favourite aid recipients, consumed \$83 million for the education-sector reform. Impact on the ground: near zero. Chemonics International got \$90 million to ‘Empower Pakistan’. Development Alternatives Inc was furnished a \$17 million purse for ‘Pakistan Legislative Strengthening Project’. Winrock International is spending \$150 million on ‘Community Rehabilitation Infrastructure Support Programme’ (whatever that means!). Where have all the billions gone? Has anyone heard of the Maternal & Child Health Integrated Programme or Pakistan Health Management Information Systems Reform Project or Pakistan Initiative for Mothers and Newborns [PAIMAN] or Reproductive Health Response in Conflict? Does anyone know who has really benefited from all the billions doled out? Imagine; the US Agency for International Development’s \$150 million initiative called FATA Livelihood Development Programme. For \$150 million they trained two-dozen truck drivers to read road signs. For \$150 million they transported cattle from central Punjab to improve the breed in FATA. Imagine; for \$150 million they distributed 278 Ravi Piaggio motorcycles, 10 tractors, 12 threshers, nine reapers, 10 trolleys, six MB Ploughs, six cultivators, 210 spray pumps and 20 auto sprayers. Imagine; with a \$3.3 million wallet Pakistan HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care Project, according to its own Pakistan Final Report, has ‘provided services to 78 HIV-positive individuals and their 276 family members.’”⁷

A few days later, USAID’s clarification was also published by the same newspaper sent by its Mission Director. The rebuttal contradicted most of what the columnist had reported:

“The fact is that Pakistani organisations received more than 70 percent of USAID funding from 2002 to 2008—including more than half directly to the government of Pakistan. The op-ed ironically singled out USAID’s successful PAIMAN project as ‘unheard of’ when, in fact, the programme has trained more than 10,000 health workers—82 percent women—to the benefit of more than 12 million women and children around the country. Skilled birth attendance is up 33 percent, and utilization of obstetric facilities by 50 percent – and this project helped make it happen...We are aware that the visibility and popularity of US assistance are not as high as all of us would like, but we beg to differ that our programmes have made no discernible positive impact on millions of Pakistanis.”⁸

Similar opinions were expressed by numerous USAID officials interviewed by the first author in 2009-10 and again in 2014-15. It was pointed out that impact could be measured at the micro-level but it would take time to get the actual impact regarding what benefits or changes USAID has brought. A USAID official working in the health sector stated that maternal mortality rate (MMR) or child mortality rate (CMR) could not be decreased in a short time.⁹ For example, at the concluding ceremony of the US-funded PAIMAN, a six-year (2004-10) \$93 million project in the health sector, USAID Senior Deputy Mission Director claimed that the initiative had reduced neonatal mortality by 23 per cent in the targeted areas.¹⁰ The USAID news release pointed out that the programme achieved these results by focusing on training health workers and upgrading basic health facilities.

In Pakistan, however, the opinion expressed by the columnist quoted earlier is a dominant perception. A number of academics, independent analysts, and members of different Islamabad-based think tanks interviewed by the first author stated that US aid was less effective, and that its impacts and results were not known or visible in comparison to the works of other donors (such as China and Japan). For instance, in its survey about the impact of US aid on perceptions in Pakistan, Pew Research Center found that nearly four-in-ten Pakistanis believed that American economic and military aid was actually having a negative impact on their country, while only about one-in-ten thought the impact was positive.¹¹ Keeping aside the political role of the US or its overall foreign policy, this paper challenges the dominant assumption concerning the impact of US aid in Pakistan and argues that this is somewhat unfair to say that all US aid to Pakistan has been least effective and has achieved nothing. Key USAID interventions and their role in socio-economic development in Pakistan are examined below.

USAID in education sector

Since its return to Pakistan in 2002, USAID has provided substantial funds for the education sector including basic, secondary, and higher education. Between 2002 and 2009, USAID invested \$404 million to reform and revitalize Pakistan’s education system.¹² During this period, more than 600,000 children and 60,000 teachers benefited from various USAID-funded education

programmes. Since the approval of the Kerry-Lugar-Berman Act in 2010, in collaboration with Higher Education Commission (HEC), USAID has provided more than 15,400 scholarships, which include 7,354 for deserving temporarily displaced students, to enable them to attend Pakistani universities.¹³ Similarly, USAID is financing the construction of 17 Faculty of Education buildings (several of these have been completed) across Pakistan. Besides providing financial assistance to students within the country, USAID has been offering various scholarship opportunities to Pakistani students for obtaining higher education from US universities. Moreover, the agency, in consultation with the government of Pakistan, has built or repaired over 1,000 schools across Pakistan that had been destroyed or damaged in various man-made and natural disasters including the 2005 earthquake, the 2009 militancy in Malakand Division, and the 2010 floods.

USAID in energy sector

The US government has invested more than \$800 million in Pakistan's energy sector. With the financial and technical assistance of USAID, major repairs and renovations have been undertaken in Jamshoro Power Station, Tarbela Dam, and Mangla Dam. Similarly, with the help of over \$80 million, Gomal Zam Dam in South Waziristan Agency has been completed, which is a multipurpose dam generating electricity as well as storing and providing water for irrigation.¹⁴ According to a USAID fact sheet on energy sector in Pakistan, more than 2,400 MW electricity has been added to the national grid with the help of various projects carried out with US assistance.¹⁵ This includes 1,013 MW from new or rehabilitated dams and thermal power plants, and 1,447 MW from improvements in the existing transmission and distribution system. According to the same USAID report, over 28 million people have benefited from USAID interventions in energy sector since 2011.

The 2005 earthquake in Kashmir and role of USAID in post-disaster reconstruction

The October 2005 earthquake in Kashmir was a natural disaster of unprecedented proportion in Pakistan's history. In no time, 74,000 people were killed, 70,000 injured, and more than 2.8 million people became homeless in the earthquake.¹⁶ Due to the enormity of the situation, the response of the international community was swift and generous. Over 85 bilateral and multilateral agencies, and more than 100 international NGOs participated in the rescue, relief, and reconstruction phase. The list of top ten donors (given in Table 2) shows that the US was the largest donor providing over 17 per cent of the total aid (over \$200 million) Pakistan received following the earthquake.

Table 2:
Top ten donors following the 2005 Kashmir earthquake

Donor	Amount of aid (in \$ million)	Per cent of total aid
US	204	17.4
Private (individuals & organisations)	194	16.6
United Kingdom	111	9.5
Funds from Red Cross/Red Crescent	70	6.0
Turkey	66	5.7
European Commission	63	5.4
Norway	58	5.0
Japan	42	3.6
The Netherlands	34	2.9
Germany	32	2.8

Source: UNOCHA, 2016, Pakistan Emergencies for 2005: Total Humanitarian Funding per Donor in 2005 as of 2016.17

Based on primary data collected during fieldwork and interaction with a large number of government officials in different departments as well as local beneficiaries in the affected areas, there is no doubt that USAID has funded a number of reconstruction initiatives. It has rebuilt numerous education and health facilities in the earthquake affected districts of Mansehra in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province of Pakistan, and Bagh in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). Robert Macleod, Team Leader of USAID Reconstruction Unit, stated in an interview that spending over \$200 million, USAID has built 56 High Schools, 19 health facilities including 15 Basic Health Units (BHUs), three regional health centres (RHCs), and one district headquarters hospital.¹⁸ Similarly, according to a USAID report, it has established classroom libraries, and science and computer laboratories in all government-run schools it has reconstructed. About 18,000 students, both boys and girls, from 556 villages having a population of 800,000 people are benefiting from these new educational facilities.¹⁹ The same report adds that health units rebuilt with US funds serve more than 300,000 people in disaster-affected areas. These facts and figures indicate that contrary to common public perceptions, USAID played a critical role in post-earthquake rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.

Role of USAID in post-militancy restoration of economy

Pakistan was faced with another serious humanitarian crisis in 2009 when the Taliban continuously challenged the writ of the government in Swat and other parts of Malakand Division in KP. Under the leadership of Mullah Fazlullah, the Taliban continued to strengthen their position during the government of Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), a coalition of religious parties that ruled KP from 2002 to 2007. After the end of the MMA government, the Taliban carried out numerous acts of violence to intimidate and terrorize local population between 2007 and 2009. In April 2009, they moved to neighbouring

Buner district, which was portrayed by national and international media “as being on the verge of a siege of Islamabad.”²⁰ Eventually, under heavy pressure from the international community, Pakistan’s army started an intense operation against militants in the following month. After launching the military offensive, about three million people from Malakand Division (comprising Buner, Chitral, Dir Lower, Dir Upper, Malakand, Shangla, and Swat districts) fled their homes and became internally displaced persons (IDPs), leading to one of the biggest humanitarian crises in the history of Pakistan.²¹

The militancy crisis and subsequent military operation affected every segment of the society in the affected area. For example, “More than 400 hotels and restaurants were shut down after the militants moved into the district in 2007.”²² As a result, tourism in Swat “ceased entirely because of security concerns.” It affected not only those directly dependent on the tourism industry but also the ones whose livelihood was linked to tourism indirectly such as transporters, shopkeepers, farmers, and fruit growers.²³ During the crisis, public infrastructure was also severely affected. About 664 schools, 63 health facilities, and 58 bridges were destroyed or damaged in the Malakand region.²⁴ According to the post-conflict survey conducted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank (WB) in collaboration with the government of Pakistan, the Malakand region suffered more than one billion US dollars in losses due to militant insurgency.²⁵

After the end of the military operation in July 2009, most of the IDPs started returning to their homes. To address their immediate needs as well as to restore their confidence in the government, the government of Pakistan spearheaded an early recovery process by facilitating the return of the IDPs through provision of Rs.25,000 cash grants, transport, and basic food and non-food items. As the data in Table 3 shows, among a host of bilateral and multilateral donors, the US was once again the largest donor and provided over 41 per cent of the total aid Pakistan received during the humanitarian crisis. Besides this early emergency cash assistance, with the aid funds provided by the US as well as other donors (such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE) in the form of the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF), the government of Pakistan also provided assistance to the IDPs in resettlement. Under this plan, the government of Pakistan provided a uniform package to all the affected house-owners consisting of Rs.400,000 for completely damaged, and Rs.160,000 for partially damaged housing units.²⁶ As mentioned earlier, the cash grant enabled the affected population to reconstruct houses keeping in view their own needs and priorities. It was a “homeowner-driven reconstruction through a cash grant-based, homeowner-driven model,” putting the homeowners in full command to rebuild or repair their houses where and how they wanted.²⁷ Hence, the funds provided by the US and other donors played an important role in enabling the people to resettle and restart their lives after they had been displaced during the crisis.

Table 3:
Top ten donors during the 2009 humanitarian crisis

Donor	Amount of aid (in \$ million)	Per cent of total aid
US	328	41.9
United Arab Emirates	101	13.0
European Commission	72	9.2
United Kingdom	32	4.2
Japan	28	3.7
Germany	27	3.5
Norway	24	3.1
Canada	23	3.0
Australia	21	2.7
Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)	17	2.2

Source: UNOCHA, 2014, Pakistan emergencies for 2009: Total Humanitarian Funding per Donor in 2009 as of 2014.28

The 2010 floods, its aftermath, and response of the international donor community

Among various natural disasters, floods have been the most recurring hazard in Pakistan. However, the 2010 floods broke all the previous records as these were the worst in the history of the country. The unprecedented torrential rains and flash floods of July and August 2010 not only resulted in the loss of numerous precious lives but also caused significant destruction to livestock, crops, and infrastructure throughout the country. Across the country, the floods affected 20 million people, damaged 1.6 million homes, and rendered 7.3 million people homeless.²⁹ While the overall loss of life was nearly 2,000, destruction of property, livelihood, and infrastructure was far worse. The disaster caused heavy losses to agriculture, and extensive damage to roads, bridges, irrigation, railways, electricity, and gas pipelines. It also severely damaged facilities related to education, health, water, and sanitation. Submerging around 160,000 square kilometres of land, about one-fifth of Pakistan's total land area,³⁰ the floods surpassed the physical destruction ever caused by any disaster in Pakistan.³¹

This was the second major natural disaster in Pakistan following the 2005 earthquake. Although the loss of life was lower in it as compared to the 2005 earthquake, women and children were exposed to high health risks by floods because of large scale destruction of infrastructure throughout the country. Despite the fact that Pakistan is vulnerable to a range of natural hazards, the country lacks an effective and efficient disaster risk management system. That is why "the extensive damages in both these disasters are being partly attributed to poor disaster risk management."³² This is one of the reasons that the floods caused unparalleled damage to infrastructure and affected almost every sector of the economy. The education sector was one of the worst hit, as 10,348 schools, 23 colleges, and 21 vocational training centres were fully or partially damaged.³³ Consequently, nearly seven million school-going children were affected, for

whom temporary tent schools were established. To sum it up, the floods inflicted a damage of \$10 billion on the country's economy.³⁴

In such a situation, the need for aid was acute and the response of the international donor community was swift and generous. A number of bilateral and multilateral donors provided substantial aid both in grants as well as in terms of relief items including tents, water filtration plants, food items, medicine, and blankets. More than 80 bilateral and multilateral donors provided a total of \$3.042 billion in aid; both in in-kind assistance as well as in grants either directly to the government of Pakistan or through UN agencies and other organizations.³⁵ As data in Table 4 shows, the US was the largest donor once again.

Table 4:

Top ten donors after the 2010 floods

Donor	Amount of aid (in \$ million)	Per cent of total aid
US	911	28.8
Private (individuals & organizations)	357	11.3
Japan	335	10.6
United Kingdom	251	7.9
European Commission	234	7.4
Saudi Arabia	200	6.3
Australia	98	3.1
Canada	90	2.8
United Arab Emirates	77	2.4
Germany	60	1.9

Source: UNOCHA, 2014, Pakistan emergencies for 2010: Total Humanitarian Funding per Donor in 2010 as of 2014.³⁶

During the 2010 humanitarian crisis, numerous aircraft were sent by donors containing various kinds of relief items. A total of 316 aircraft containing a variety of food and non-food items were received by Pakistan from a number of international donors.³⁷ Similarly, more than 96 helicopters and 23 aircraft took part in the post-floods rescue and relief operations, including 24 US helicopters and five aircraft.³⁸ Engaging over 60,000 military personnel along with innumerable volunteers and workers of national and international organizations, a total of 1.4 million people were rescued, besides providing the affected people with 409,000 tonnes of foods rations, 488,000 tents, and 1.9 million blankets.³⁹ According to officials in the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in Islamabad and the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) in Peshawar, the role of the international community was commendable in the early rescue, relief, and recovery phase, as it helped the government of Pakistan in

responding to the crisis, which would not have been possible without its assistance.

Direct cash transfer: an effective reconstruction initiative and the role of USAID

Pakistan's government started various initiatives to rehabilitate the affected population, restore their means of livelihood, and enable them to stand on their own feet. While the successful example of aid package in the form of cash grants during the 2009 militancy crisis was in the mind of the government, it was decided to launch a similar initiative under the Citizens' Damage Compensation (CDC) scheme. In the first phase, the government provided cash assistance through Watan Cards to all heads of the flood-affected households. In order to enable the flood victims "to meet their immediate livelihood requirements," the government transferred Rs.20,000 (around \$200) to each household, a total of 27.7 billion rupees (around \$227 million) to 1.6 million households.⁴⁰ Alongside this early assistance, under the CDC programme for the reconstruction of houses damaged during the floods, the government offered Rs.100,000 (around \$1000) each for the 913,307 completely damaged and Rs.50,000 (around \$500) each for 697,878 partially damaged houses—a total of Rs.126 billion (around \$1.26 billion).⁴¹ All the cash grants were "distributed through Watan Cards to family heads, based on verification by provincial governments and authentication by the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) to ensure transparency."⁴²

With a total funding of \$580 million under the CDC, among over 80 donors, the US was the main contributor to this programme for which the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and the Italian government also provided funds.⁴³ The US directly provided \$190 million to the government for this scheme. According to a USAID report, money disbursed to the government-run CDC sponsored 400,000 families affected by the 2010 floods.⁴⁴ Another USAID report titled USAID in Pakistan: Strengthening our Partnership, Continuing our Progress adds, "In Pakistan, more than half of USAID-funded programs are implemented directly by Pakistani government institutions or Pakistani private sector organizations—more than any other USAID mission in the world."⁴⁵ USAID claims that a total of \$4,135 million was disbursed under the Kerry Lugar Act between 2009 and 2013, while \$549 million was given in cash transfers for different programmes launched by the government of Pakistan such as the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), CDC, and cash support for IDPs.⁴⁶ An analysis of the overall US aid data and the way most aid has been channelled reveals that not all but a significant amount of US aid has been disbursed and utilized via government departments in programmes launched by the government of Pakistan. As mentioned earlier, a total of over three billion US dollars were provided by various donors led by the US, Japan, UK, Saudi Arabia, Australia, Canada, Germany, and the UAE. Out of more than 80 bilateral and multilateral donors, the US provided the largest amount of aid in cash grants during the rehabilitation and reconstruction phase.

US funded KP Reconstruction Programme

Another major donor-funded reconstruction package implemented in Malakand Division was USAID-funded KP Reconstruction Programme. The main objective of the project was to revitalize and rebuild key public infrastructure damaged during the 2009 conflict, and 2010 floods. The aim was “to enhance the stabilization and development of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa by rebuilding public infrastructure for education, health, water and sanitation, and increasing the capacity of the provincial government.”⁴⁷ Working closely with the Provincial Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Settlement Authority (PaRRSA)/PDMA, a key disaster management body of the government of KP, this programme has played a tangible role in rebuilding government infrastructure throughout the Swat Valley, and the rest of Malakand Division.

Under this programme, USAID provided \$65 million (equalling around Rs.6.5 billion) for compensating the households whose houses had been destroyed or damaged by the 2010 floods. Flood victims were provided a uniform compensation of Rs.400,000 (around \$4,000) for fully damaged houses and Rs.160,000 (around \$1,600) for partially damaged houses in the already conflict-affected areas of KP. An official of the PDMA based in Swat stated during an interview with the first author that nearly all the amount had been disbursed, enabling more than 20,000 households to rebuild their houses damaged during the floods.⁴⁸

In the education component of this project, USAID provided funds to rebuild schools damaged during the conflict and floods in Malakand Division. A total of 117 schools have been reconstructed with the financial assistance of USAID. Amongst these, 79 were selected from Swat out of which 50 were completed, and 29 were in the final stage, particularly those in the far-flung hilly areas.⁴⁹ After the completion of work, nearly 16,000 children are going to receive education in these newly rebuilt educational facilities.⁵⁰ Besides the restoration of education, the KP Reconstruction Programme also targeted tourism sector in the Swat Valley. As discussed earlier, like education, health, and communication infrastructure, tourism was also badly affected during militancy and floods. While the sector had revived the hopes of the local population after peace was restored in the area following the military operation against militants in 2009, the 2010 floods dealt a severe blow to tourism, as rains completely washed away 24 hotels in Kalam and Madyan along with the destruction of roads and bridges. For the revival of the hotel industry in Swat, in close coordination and collaboration with the PDMA, USAID provided \$5.2 million in direct financial assistance, technical assistance, and in-kind support to tourism businesses affected during the conflict and floods. To this end, 239 hotels, and 22 fisheries were supplied with furniture, equipment, and other essential material along with financial assistance. As a result, according to a USAID report, these US-supported businesses increased revenues of the local hotel industry from \$454,000 in 2010 to \$4.8 million in 2012, generating over 2,000 new jobs.⁵¹ To sum it up, this programme played an important role in post-conflict post-disaster reconstruction efforts of the government, and helped the affected population in resettling and restarting their normal lives.

Factors overshadowing and undermining developmental impact of US aid

There is no doubt that the US has been allocating significant economic aid to Pakistan since 9/11 and USAID has funded numerous activities in various sectors, but on account of various divergent issues, the US-Pakistan alliance has witnessed several upheavals. These factors, discussed below, undermine the overall developmental role of US aid in Pakistan.

Unpleasant past and competing objectives behind US aid allocation

One of the key factors behind negative perceptions about the US or its unpopularity is its unpleasant past dealings with Pakistan, and its overt manipulation of development aid as a tool to pursue its foreign policy goals. During the course of the current alliance, the US has made it explicitly clear to suspend or cut off aid to Pakistan on several occasions. For instance, during the crisis created as a result of the Raymond Davis incident, following the killing of Osama bin Laden, and when Pakistan closed NATO supply lines passing through the country following the Salala attack. On all these occasions, a number of US officials made public threats that aid to Pakistan could be cut off if some US senators introduced a bill to this effect in the US Congress. Such statements underscore how US aid is clearly linked with geo-strategic and security interests in Pakistan, and how the US has been using aid as a foreign policy tool to accomplish those objectives. All this indicates that aid to Pakistan is linked with the country's compliance to do Washington's bidding in the 'war on terror'. In such a situation, the common perception among the majority of Pakistanis is reinforced that the way the US imposed sanctions on Pakistan in the 1990s after the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, it would again abandon its old ally once its mission in Afghanistan is accomplished. Concerning that particular desertion, even a report of the Congressional Research Service concurs that it "left a lasting effect on Pakistani perceptions of the United States,"⁵² because "like a used tissue," Pakistan was discarded when it no longer had geo-strategic significance for the US.⁵³

The role and influence of the US in Pakistan's internal politics

Another factor making the US unpopular is its role and influence in Pakistan's internal affairs. While other donors have normally tended to avoid getting overtly involved in the internal affairs of Pakistan, the case of the US is altogether different. Constrained by its geo-strategic and security compulsions, the US has mostly maintained good ties with military dictators in Pakistan in contrast to democratically elected rulers. For example, the US has provided Pakistan \$781 million in economic aid annually during military regimes, but during civilian rule the amount is \$297 million per year.⁵⁴ Consequently, it is rightly argued that US foreign aid policy has "influenced the internal dynamics of Pakistan negatively, bolstering its military's praetorian ambitions."⁵⁵ It is a dominant perception that "military coups in Pakistan are rarely, if ever,

organized without the tacit or explicit approval of the US embassy.”⁵⁶ Numerous documents released by WikiLeaks, the whistle-blower website, reveal that the US exercises enormous amount of leverage and power in Pakistan’s domestic affairs. In light of the foregoing, whether exaggerated or real, the US does influence internal policy-making to safeguard its foreign policy goals, and it is one of the factors of its unpopularity despite it being the largest aid-provider to Pakistan.

US drone strikes inside Pakistani territory and its impact on public perceptions

Another key factor that overshadows US developmental role is its policy of carrying out airstrikes inside Pakistan using unmanned air vehicles (UAVs) or drones. While the US aims to target Al-Qaeda and Taliban operatives inside Pakistani territory, these strikes have resulted in human losses to innocent civilians. Although Pakistan has deployed over 100,000 troops along the Pak-Afghan border and has carried out a number of military operations against militants, it has not been able to completely defeat them and clear all areas of the tribal belt so far. The US argues that cross-border infiltration emanating from the tribal belt of Pakistan has been a matter of grave concern as the Taliban ambush US and NATO forces in Afghanistan from there. Pakistan, on the other hand, perceives the US policy of using drones to hit targets inside Pakistani territory a violation of its sovereignty and argues that due to a significant number of innocent tribal people being killed, it leads to more and more domestic extremism and anti-Americanism.

There are conflicting claims and reports regarding the actual number of drone strikes, the resulting casualties, and the number of terrorists vis-à-vis innocent civilians killed. According to figures based on media reports compiled by the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) since 2005, there have been a total of 322 attacks by US drones inside Pakistani territory, killing 2,808 people.⁵⁷ Bureau of Investigative Journalism, a London-based organization, claims that so far a total of 2,499 to 4,001 people have been killed in 373 drone strikes in Pakistan, including 424 to 966 civilians and 172-207 children.⁵⁸ Pakistani officials and media reports claim that besides high value Al-Qaeda and Taliban figures, a large number of civilians also get killed in these strikes. For example, it was reported that of the 1,184 persons killed by US drones in 124 attacks in 2010, around 59 per cent were innocent civilians, while the remaining 41 per cent were terrorists belonging to various militant groups.⁵⁹ On the other hand, a report by the New America Foundation claims that of the 114 drone strikes inside Pakistani territory from 2004 to 2010, between 830 and 1,210 people have been killed.⁶⁰ The report says that of these, around 550 to 850 were militants, averaging two-thirds. In this way, these authors put the overall civilian casualty rate at about 32 per cent.

Whatever the level of precision, the fact is that drone attacks are extremely unpopular among Pakistanis. The country has repeatedly argued that such counter-terrorism strategies contribute to turning public opinion against the US and undermining Pakistan’s role in defeating extremism at home. According

to Gallup surveys, these are among the important causes of anti-Americanism in Pakistan. A majority of Pakistanis view them as a violation of national sovereignty, as only 9 per cent consider these to be effective in counterterrorism.⁶¹ Drone attacks get high coverage in Pakistani print and electronic media and undermine the efforts of the US to placate public sentiments through the provision of development aid. Only those people are aware of the role of USAID who are either intended primary beneficiaries of USAID or linked with USAID as employees or civil society. On the other hand, however, a huge majority of Pakistanis are aware of drone attacks and their repercussions. People believe that deteriorating law and order situation, and frequent bomb blasts and suicide attacks by the Taliban militants are consequences of Pakistan's role in the 'war on terror', and of US drone attacks. As a result of this, irrespective of the fact that the US has provided Pakistan billions of dollars in aid, a majority of Pakistanis think that the US-Pakistan alliance has done more harm to the country than good.

Overall cost-benefit analysis of the current alliance

Although the US cannot be blamed for all the internal security challenges, it is also a fact that Pakistan has paid a heavy price for joining the US-led 'war on terror'. It has suffered much more than what it has received from the US and the overall international community during the ongoing conflict. After the escalation of the conflict at the domestic front in Pakistan, more than 61,000 people have died in terrorist violence.⁶² Similarly, the war has cost Pakistan over \$118 billion, as it has affected Pakistan's exports, prevented the inflows of foreign investment, caused expenditure overruns owing to additional security spending, affected tourism industry, destroyed physical infrastructure, and resulted in migration of thousands of people from conflict affected areas.⁶³ Although alongside the \$11 billion in economic aid, the US has also provided Pakistan over \$7 billion in military aid and more than \$13 billion in Coalition Support Fund (CSF),⁶⁴ human and financial cost of the conflict has been too much for Pakistan. There has hardly been a city in the country which has not been targeted by terrorists during the ongoing conflict. People of all ages, professions, genders, and ethnicities have suffered. A dominant perception is that if Pakistan had not joined the US-led 'war on terror', the country would not have experienced such destruction.

Conclusion

The analysis of post-9/11 US aid illustrates that the US gave the largest amount of aid to Pakistan on three critical occasions when the country was faced with humanitarian crises. Overall, the US has assisted Pakistan's education, health, and energy sectors, and has helped it in post-conflict and post-disaster reconstruction initiatives. Therefore, although the common man fails to see tangible impacts of US aid in the form of large-scale public infrastructure such

as a rail transit system, a highway, or a dam, the reality is that USAID has sponsored a number of development initiatives in various parts of the country.

However, owing to unpleasant past experience with the US, its meddling in Pakistan's internal affairs, consistent violation of Pakistan's sovereignty on its part through airstrikes by drones, and also due to the fact that Pakistan has suffered enormously in this conflict, majority of Pakistanis believe that the total amount of US aid is insignificant in contrast to what the country has lost as a result of its alliance with the US. On account of these factors, the US is not viewed favourably in Pakistan, as it is believed that the US itself is part of the problem and a cause of militancy and extremism in the country. The presence of US and NATO troops in Afghanistan is often perceived "as part of a global offensive against Islam led by the US"⁶⁵ resulting in the deaths of countless innocent civilians, which in turn has resulted in the upsurge of militancy in Pakistan. Similarly, the overall US foreign policy towards Pakistan or in the broader Muslim world is also considered anti-Muslim. In this context, US foreign policy towards the Middle East and particularly its role in the Israel-Palestine conflict is severely criticized. While Israel's belligerence is not a secret and it has been extremely infamous on account of the Palestine conflict, the Muslim world, including Pakistan, considers the US equally responsible, as it has always supported the Jewish state materially and politically at all levels. Pakistan has openly criticized Israel's policies in the region, particularly its occupation of the Palestinian territories, and gross human rights violations.

In view of all this, US aid has failed to alter public perceptions in Pakistan. For example, according to a public opinion survey by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), about 64 per cent of Pakistanis doubt that the US can be a trusted ally.⁶⁶ In relation to cooperation on security and military matters between the two countries in the last few years, only one in four (27 per cent) Pakistanis thinks that it has brought any benefits to Pakistan. Overall, the survey shows that only 6 per cent in Pakistan believe that the US-Pakistan alliance has mostly benefited their country. In another survey four years later, Pew Research Center found that roughly three in four Pakistanis (74 per cent) consider the US an enemy rather than a trusted ally, up from 69 per cent in 2011 and 64 per cent in 2008.⁶⁷ This also indicates that majority of Pakistanis do not perceive the US as an ally because they fail to see a visible and tangible impact of US aid in the country in contrast to the losses it has suffered. Thus the impact of US aid is neither markedly visible in terms of socio-economic development nor in winning public support because the US engagement in Pakistan is overtly aimed at gaining political and security objectives, while development taking the back seat. The relationship has been myopic and very issue-specific: the main goal being the accomplishment of geo-strategic objectives. At the same time, however, to say that all US aid has been ineffective and has done no good in the country is unfair. In various sectors of the economy, US aid has contributed significantly and its role needs to be acknowledged in that context, rather than in the overall US foreign policy framework. To be viewed more favourably, the US needs to depoliticize its foreign aid policy and disconnect its development aid from the security and political objectives that are the hallmark of the overall US

foreign policy. For example, a recent audit report released by the Office of Inspector General USAID has stated that USAID failed to achieve the intended development outcomes in interventions funded under the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act (EPPA).⁶⁸ The report states that about 30 per cent of EPPA-funded projects did not meet intended goals, while another 55 per cent did so only partially. According to the report, the key reason of the failure is that “the State Department and USAID/Pakistan had competing priorities, and ultimately USAID/Pakistan had to integrate its long-term objectives with the State’s shorter-term priorities.”⁶⁹ Therefore, the reason for the failure of US-funded development initiatives in Pakistan is the entanglement of security and development policies that has led to a myriad of obstacles for development programmes. To be effective developmentally as well as in winning the hearts and minds of the common man, the US engagement with Pakistan needs to go beyond the ‘war on terror’.

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THE DIVERGENT PLANE OF INTERESTS: SECURITY AND COUNTER-TERRORISM DYNAMICS OF CENTRAL ASIA

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Introduction

The region involving the Central Asian Republics (CARs) has played host to various overt and covert rivalries and continues to be in the proverbial eye of the storm owing to its strategic location, a huge treasure of mines and minerals, and being the progeny of a once superpower. Herald Mackinder in his famous Heartland Theory declared Central Asia as the heart of international political structure. “Whoever controlled Central Asia would wield enormous power,” said Mackinder.¹ The oft theorized Great Game between the British India and Tsarist Russia reflects Mackinder’s approach. The Great Game was played primarily for geo-strategic interests in the Central Asian region. In the present era, it has been renamed as the New Great Game, which involves a myriad of geopolitical, geo-strategic, and geo-economic interests, involving energy security as well. It is a general understanding that the US has replaced Great Britain in the New Great Game. China and Russia, on the other hand, having keen interest in their neighbouring region, have also jumped into the complex strategic milieu.

These great powers have convoluted relationships with each other, which often overlap. They contradict, contrast, and cooperate with each other at the same time. The situation has been explained by Tahir Amin in *World Orders in Central Asia*.² He talks about Sinic, Slavic, Western liberal, Islamic, and residual socialist orders which are actively involved in the region. The West,

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primarily the US, is interested in hydrocarbons and containment of terrorism in the region, which is feared to be spreading across Afghanistan. Chinese interests are largely the same, but Beijing is very much interested in Central Asian markets as well. Russia, on the other hand, still considers the region as its backyard and an area of its historical influence.

Despite having contradicting interests, all of these countries consider terrorism a big threat for the region and want to counter it in strong terms. Therefore, all have charted out individual and joint strategies to counter it at different levels. Concurrently, Islamism is seen as a potential threat for regional as well as global peace and stability. Having close proximity to Afghanistan and presence of religious extremist/terrorist organizations in the form of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Hizb-ut-Tahrir, Islamic Jihad Union, and other smaller groups, the Central Asian Republics (CARs) are always under pressure from various geo-strategic directions. The CARs themselves are also worried about the rise of extremist elements and their transnational linkages, especially in Afghanistan and Syria. Therefore, they tend to welcome any initiatives taken by international and regional powers against extremist elements. Looking from the lenses of Mackinder and Tahir Amin, the Central Asian region seems to be extremely important in current and future international politics. Being landlocked, the CARs are heavily dependent on their neighbouring states—especially China and Russia—for their external linkages.

This paper attempts to analyze and understand the security and counter-terrorism efforts being carried out in the region by the major powers—China, Russia, and the US. The paper addresses various inter-related issues including multiple interests of the major powers and their varying degrees of convergence and divergence, the major extremist security concerns of the region, measures taken by the CARs at the national level to address extremist threats, and how the regional and global powers have cooperated in the recent past in order to improve security situation in the region.

Russia and its backyard: changing postures of the CARs

Seventy years of colonization by the Soviet Union connected Central Asia with mainland Russia in such strong ways that despite its utmost efforts and external support, Central Asia is unable to come out of Russian influence and dependence even after 25 years of independence. Most of the Central Asian oil and gas pipelines are connected to international markets through Russia. After independence, however, two alternative routes for hydrocarbons have been constructed: one through China, and the other through Iran.³ Nonetheless, the physical geography of the region does not let Central Asia reduce its dependence on Russia in this regard. Moreover, a large number of ethnic Russians still live in Central Asia, notably in Kazakhstan where they constitute the largest ethnic minority.

Another reason for CARs' dependence on Russia is their authoritative regimes. The regimes of Central Asia are the old socialist remnants that prefer Soviet style of government. Moscow can best support the regimes as they appear

willing to align themselves with the Russian interests in the region. The support and cooperation is not lopsided though. The CARs expect reciprocity based on a mutually agreed apparatus that includes cooperation on containment of terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking, and alien values.⁴

Russia has usually been supportive of regional leadership in order to block Western, especially US, influence in the region. Moscow will support even the non-democratic governments in the CARs if they are aligned with its interests. It does not want repetition of incidents like the ‘colour revolutions’ and the Andijon incident of 2005.⁵ Such incidents have led to the strengthening of regional security measures especially under the umbrella of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Central Asian states are both sceptical of and receptive towards Moscow. They know that without Russian support, they cannot handle their security issues. At the same time, they want minimum Russian involvement in their internal affairs. Therefore, arrangements like the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) can prove instrumental in enhancing intra-CARs security apparatus. The CSTO was established in May 2002. A major purpose of this organization was to improve collective security measures in the region. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan joined the security organization during its inaugural session, while Uzbekistan preferred to opt itself out due to various reasons. Primarily it appeared shy of the growing perception of Russian dominance in the region. Additionally, it disliked the perceived ‘negative’ role of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) during the events of 1999 and 2000 when IMU tried to make incursions into Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

However, after the Andijon incident of May 2005, Tashkent formally joined the CSTO in 2006. It was a tactical move primarily aimed at countering Western pressure on Tashkent to hold an international inquiry into the Andijon massacre and other human rights violations inside Uzbekistan.

Under pressure, the Uzbek administration asked the US to vacate the Karshi-Khanabad airbase in protest against Washington’s aggressive human rights policy towards Uzbekistan. Russia and other neighbouring states declared the decision brave and just. Not only the policy-makers but also the academics in Russia supported and lauded Uzbek President Islam Karimov’s decision. A Russian academic Migrayan stated, “It was in Uzbekistan that, for the first time in the post-Soviet world, Colored Revolutions received a short, sharp shock.”⁶ The CSTO declared that Andijon incident was an internal matter of Uzbekistan, therefore, demand for an international inquiry was unjust and unacceptable. Eventually, Uzbekistan succeeded in getting official Russian support on Andijon crisis when Russia declared that it was an internal issue of Uzbekistan which should be resolved according to the Uzbek laws.⁷

Later, Tashkent got further close to Moscow, leading to signing of a treaty between the two countries in November 2005. Even before the Andijon massacre, the two governments had concluded an agreement on strategic partnership in June 2004, which gave them rights to use the military facilities of each other.⁸ In an interview to a Russian newspaper in January 2005, Karimov

stated, “The partnership with Russia brings us, our people, and our countries, which are bound with thousands of ties, millions of human factors, closer.”⁹

Even after rejoining it in 2006, however, Uzbekistan never participated in any military exercises under the banner of the CSTO. According to Uzbek political analyst Farkhad Tolipov, “This is stipulated by the Uzbek legislation which prescribes a non-bloc or out-of-bloc foreign policy.”¹⁰ Nevertheless, it has been argued that Uzbekistan pursues a policy which makes it a dominant power in the Central Asian region.¹¹ By keeping itself outside of the military circle of the CSTO or any other Russian military apparatus, Tashkent wanted to contain Russian influence in the region. In June 2012, Uzbekistan once again quit its membership of the CSTO¹² and got inclined towards Beijing. Since the SCO is successful in resolving quite a few regional issues, especially the border disputes between China and rest of the SCO members, Tashkent considers it a good platform for resolving the water crisis in Central Asia.

Despite its recent slant towards Beijing, Tashkent knows the importance of Moscow as well. It cannot risk jeopardizing the interests of Russia in Uzbekistan. Russian support in containment of extremism and terrorism is a must for the CARs. Karimov once declared, “We have centuries-old relationship of friendship, brotherhood, and mutual assistance with that country [Russia] and its great people.”¹³ During a visit to Moscow in April 2013, Karimov stated, “Next year’s planned exit of NATO troops from Afghanistan will create dangerous conditions in Central Asia, and Russia’s presence will help maintain peace in the region.”¹⁴

Tajikistan is heavily dependent on Moscow for its internal as well as external security. Russian military support during the Tajik civil war illustrates this dependence. Tajikistan has limited options of military and security cooperation with international as well as regional powers. Having historical and cultural ties with Iran, Dushanbe expected Tehran to support it militarily. However, due to international political conditions in which Tehran had been facing economic sanctions, Iran could not offer any substantial help to Dushanbe. Chinese non-interference policy towards Central Asia has restricted Chinese-Tajik military cooperation as well.

At the same time, Dushanbe has had tense relations with Tashkent, despite its dependence on the former, especially for its energy needs. It is generally argued that the main reason for these stressed relations was the incident during early 2000s when Uzbek Islamic extremists fled to Tajikistan during the Tajik civil war and tried to export their own extremist version of Islam. Hence it is argued that the only option left for Tajikistan is Russia.

Security cooperation between Dushanbe and Moscow is quite strong. On 5 October 2012, the military base lease deal between Russia and Tajikistan not only allowed Moscow to station its 7,000 troops in Tajikistan up to 2043 but also exempted these personnel and their families from any possible legal prosecution.¹⁵ It was a point of concern not only for the Tajik human rights activists and civil society but also for the common citizens who are prosecuted for minor crimes. It is worth mentioning that before this deal was signed, Moscow signalled to put restrictions on the Tajik migrant workers in Russia who

contribute about forty per cent to the Tajik GDP. After the deal was signed, however, Moscow declared that Tajik migrant workers would get better treatment in Russia and their permits would be increased from one to three years. Besides concessions to the Tajik workers in Russia, Moscow also promised to give \$5 million to Dushanbe as an investment in energy sector and to counter narcotics trafficking in Tajikistan.¹⁶

Tajik border with Afghanistan is guarded by the CIS troops. During the Tajik civil war of 1992-97,¹⁷ Russia along with Uzbekistan targeted Islamist militants' hideouts through airstrikes. Supply of drugs to Russia from Afghanistan through Tajikistan is another area of concern for Russia. Russian troops regularly patrol the Tajik-Afghan border along with Tajik troops in order to control infiltration of militants, drugs, and arms.

Kyrgyzstan is another state of the region which is unable to pull out of Moscow's influence. Despite two 'democratic revolutions' of 2005 and 2010, Kyrgyzstan still looks towards Russia for military and economic assistance. Kyrgyzstan has a unique position in Central Asian politics. It has military bases of both Russia and the US and has very good relations (economic as well as political) with China. Despite this unique and important position, however, Bishkek still relies on Moscow for its security. The SCO demanded US withdrawal from the Manas base in Kyrgyzstan in 2005. It became possible for the SCO to demand it only after the Andijon crisis in Uzbekistan and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan in 2005. After the 2010 ethnic violence in Kyrgyzstan, Moscow wished to establish a military base under the CSTO umbrella near Osh, which was severely criticized by Tashkent on account that it would provide support to the ethnic Kyrgyz in south Kyrgyzstan against a substantial population of ethnic Uzbeks¹⁸ who are deemed as an asset by Tashkent to exert pressure on Bishkek.

In order to get rid of the Manas base of the US forces, Moscow pledged a \$2 billion aid package to Bishkek in early 2009. Similarly, in order to have influence on the newly established government after the 2010 revolution, Russia promised \$50 million to Kyrgyzstan as aid.¹⁹ Washington, however, managed to extend a deal with Bishkek for the use of the Manas base for a few more years. In order to keep a balance, Kyrgyz government succeeded in reaching a deal with Russia to extend its stay at Kant. The latest Russian-Kyrgyz deal regarding the basing rights to Russia in Kant was signed in September 2012, which extended Russian stay there for further 20 years.²⁰ It is said that in return Moscow agreed to invest in the construction of Kambarata-1, a hydro-electric power project, and to write off a debt of about \$500 million.²¹

Kazakhstan is the largest importer of Russian military equipment. Its military cooperation with Russia is stronger than any other state in the world.²² A major reason for this cooperation is the substantial ethnic Russian population in Kazakhstan. Moreover, Baikonur space station that is used by Russia is also located in Kazakhstan. In order to have close contacts with Russia, the capital of Kazakhstan was shifted to Astana in the north from Almaty in the south.

Major areas of concern for the CSTO are "border security, developing rapid reaction and peacekeeping capabilities, reforming its legal mechanisms to

act across a wider range of mission types and promoting its image as a genuinely strong political-military alliance.”²³ The most important security-related measure of the CSTO is the creation of the Collective Rapid Reaction Force (CRRF) which was established in June 2009. Major purpose of the CRRF is to counter any internal threat to the stability of any member state, if requested by the concerned state. It is feared that this force will be used against any possible political or religious opposition, or insurgency. According to Abduljalil Boymatov, President of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan (HRSU), “Most of the security measures taken by the Central Asian governments in general and Uzbekistan in particular to deal with the internal ‘crisis’ are fake and are to counter the opposition, both religious and secular.”²⁴

The CSTO is authorized to help its member states when they face internal crises. The organization is a strong tool for the regimes in the CARs to legitimize their prolonged rules. The CSTO is like a shield for these regimes against international criticism. But it is not a success story because it lacks mechanisms to carry out its operations, and has to cope with divergent and sometimes contradictory interest of the member states.

Russia wants to enhance the role of the CSTO for regional security especially in the wake of the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) under the umbrella of the SCO. During the May 2012 summit of the CSTO, Russian President Vladimir Putin urged an enhanced role of the organization for regional security.²⁵

The US and the hydrocarbons of Central Asia

Western support to the ‘colour revolutions’ in former Soviet republics brought a new era of distrust between Washington and Central Asian capitals. It also brought regional states closer to Moscow and Beijing especially under the umbrella of the SCO. The Andijon crisis annoyed the US administration to such an extent that it started demanding independent international inquiry into the civilian killings at the hands of the Uzbek security forces. This demand was rejected by the Karimov administration. Some of the Uzbek newspapers blamed Washington for the political instability in the region. Obviously, they were referring to the ‘colour revolutions’. The Andijon incident sparked so much distrust between Tashkent and Washington that the Uzbek authorities not only asked the US to vacate the Karshi-Khanabad base but also sacked or transferred many of the pro-US officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defence.²⁶

Initially, the US was more concerned with nuclear stockpiles and wastes in the Central Asia region left after Soviet disintegration. During the first decade of independence, the US extended little economic support to the Central Asian states. From 1992 to 2002, the US provided the whole region with merely \$3 billion in economic assistance.²⁷ Limited and slow help was provided for the civil society strengthening. However, during 1994-95, Washington got interested in the hydrocarbons of the region and started to chart out a strategy to diversify the transportation routes of these hydrocarbons to international markets. The US policymakers realized the importance of Uzbekistan and

Kazakhstan as potential leaders of the region due to their political and economic strength respectively.

Former assistant secretary of state for Central Asia Elizabeth Jones told Senate sub-committee on Central Asia on 13 December 2001 that the US wanted to see a prosperous, stable, and peaceful region which had accelerated in economic and democratic reforms, and in civil society and human rights respects. She added that the US wanted to see the region integrated into global markets and society as well.²⁸

While engaging with the US after 9/11, Tashkent was confident about huge inflows of dollars in the form of 'economic and political aid'.²⁹ It also expected that the US will help it to organize and update the Uzbek military on modern lines. It was disappointed, however, when the US shifted its attention towards Iraq in 2003. At the same time, the US authorities were not satisfied with improvement in human rights conditions in Uzbekistan. When Andijon crisis erupted in 2005, bilateral relations between the US and Uzbekistan reached to a point that the US had to vacate the bases in Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan signed a strategic partnership deal with the US in 2002, which focused more or less on Iran than any other potential threat to the US interests in Central Asia. However, this deal provided Tashkent a unique opportunity not only to curb its internal opposition (both secular and religious) but also to pressurize its neighbours like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to follow the Uzbek regional line. Through this strategic partnership, Tashkent eyed to pressurize Dushanbe in order to dissuade the latter from challenging its regional authority. Since Dushanbe and Tehran have very good relations, the US does not want any Iranian influence in other Central Asian states.

Washington's relationship with Tashkent cooled down after the Andijon crisis of 2005, but the creation of the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) for supply to the NATO troops based in Afghanistan brought Tashkent back into the limelight of the US Central Asian policy. A Pentagon official said that the time to criticize the Uzbek leadership for Andijon massacre had passed. "It's gone, get over it," he said.³⁰ In order to get the NDN routes, Washington lowered its tone against human rights violations by Central Asian regimes. Moreover, it also increased military supplies to Uzbekistan.³¹

Kazakhstan intends to become the commercial hub of the region. Having hydrocarbon resources in abundance, President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev has rightly calculated the strength of his country. He renegotiated the oil and gas contracts with the Western companies. The new contracts gave Kazakhstan higher revenues on the export of hydrocarbons.³² While renegotiating the contracts Nazarbayev stated, "What you are doing is not enough. We were asking for increased participation. This is a subject of more discussions and we will see together what is good for Kazakhstan and for you."³³

Central Asian leaders are also fearful of the free market economy. All of them, except Kyrgyzstan, favour gradual and slow market reforms. Nazarbayev thinks that revolutionizing the economy will not only slow down the growth rate and economic activities but will also bring disaster to the Central

Asian economies. The US has supported Kazakh initiatives to open up its economy to the international market.

Washington provided Dushanbe with a clean chit on human rights violations after 9/11. It declared that Tajikistan had not harboured any international terrorists and was extremely critical of the Taliban regime. US aid to Tajikistan increased from merely \$12 million in 2000 to a substantial \$50 million in 2007.

It is very easy for the West to broker energy deals with the authoritative regimes than democratic ones though. "When the 2002 fraudulent presidential referendum extended the presidential term for the next couple of years in Uzbekistan, the US announced to increase the military aid to Tashkent three times, according to news reports."³⁴ Another area of concern for the US is terrorism. American political analyst Ariel Cohen stated, "Hizb [ut Tahrir] may launch terrorist attacks against U.S. targets and allies, operating either alone or in cooperation with other global terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda. A Hizb takeover of any Central Asian state could provide the global radical Islamist movement with a geographic base and access to the expertise and technology to manufacture weapons of mass destruction."³⁵

Under the umbrella of the Central Asia Counter-narcotics Initiative (CACI), a \$4.1 million initiative to combat drug trafficking in the region, the US wants to establish its centres in all the Central Asian states. However, both Russia and China suspect this move as the deployment of semi-military US forces in the region.³⁶

China and the SCO

Although China claims to have a non-military policy towards Central Asia, it has signed some security agreements with Central Asian states. Beijing and Bishkek have agreed on increased cooperation in the field of security. China is investing in several developmental projects of Central Asia. It pays special attention to the transport infrastructure development besides importing energy from the region. Beijing is eager to construct a railway line from China to Uzbekistan through Kyrgyzstan, which would connect China not only to the Central Asian region but to Russia and Europe as well. The proposed railway line could be extended to Afghanistan and Pakistan too. China is also involved in the construction of Dalka-Kemin transmission line to import electricity from Kyrgyzstan.³⁷

China has some bilateral and multilateral security arrangements with Central Asian states. Kazakhstan, for example, has close security relations with China. China has provided Kazakhstan with military equipment, besides training the Kazakh security forces. Both the states have also conducted joint exercises along with collaboration against drugs and arms smuggling.³⁸

China has heavy investments in Central Asian states. It is the largest source of imports for Kazakhstan.³⁹ Keeping in view the presence of a large ethnic Russian population in Kazakhstan and its close ties with Moscow, increased trade with Kazakhstan is the success of Chinese interests in Central Asia. Since 2002, China has been actively pursuing the creation of a free trade

zone among SCO member countries, but the rest of the members have reservations about it. At the same time, Beijing has developed strong bilateral economic relationship with the CARs.

China's trade volume with Central Asia has grown from a mere \$465 million in 1992 to \$7.7 billion in 2004 and \$29 billion in 2010. In comparison, Russia's trade volume with Central Asia in 2010 was \$22 billion, which depicts the ever-growing Chinese trade relations with the Central Asian region.⁴⁰ China has also constructed oil and gas pipelines from Central Asia to Xinjiang. In 2009, Atasu-Alashankou oil pipeline was completed, which is 962 km long.

The SCO is one of the most important regional security organizations, which aims to combat 'extremism, terrorism, and separatism' in the member states. Most of the separatist movements are linked to 'Islamic fundamentalism' by the SCO regimes.⁴¹ Joint military exercises under the SCO have been conducted several times. Such exercises not only involve regular troops of the member states but also paramilitary troops and intelligence agencies. The largest of such exercises was conducted during 2005.⁴² Uzbekistan remains outside of this military exercises network though. It just sends observers or a "few participants from the security services instead of regular armies."⁴³ Karimov regime is very careful towards every regional security organization and uses the SCO to resolve its energy-related issues and combat extremism and terrorism in the region, which are the most important problems for Uzbekistan.

In order to keep the populations of the member states away from the political and democratic developments at the international level and to keep the terrorist and extremist activities under check, the SCO has introduced strict internet surveillance. Most of the internet IPs in Central Asia have been provided by Russia and China.

The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) with its headquarters in Tashkent works under the umbrella of the SCO. The RATS was established in June 2004 to ensure exchange of all kinds of information amongst the member states to combat the three evils of extremism, terrorism, and separatism. It works as the advisory body to ensure regional security. The RATS is concerned mainly with correspondence among the member states besides the advisory role. It does not participate in any kind of operational activism. As an advisory unit, it is involved in the conduct of different seminars, workshops etc. for the exchange of ideas and experiences.

The RATS operates on the basis of the member states' contributions. Most of these contributions come from Beijing and Moscow. During recent years, however, Astana has also contributed a substantial portion of the SCO finances.⁴⁴ Combating drug trafficking is also high on the agenda of the RATS. "Drug trafficking is always a matter of concern for the SCO. It has not only plagued the Central Asian states but Russia and Europe as well, and the SCO wants to play its role to control this menace."⁴⁵ During the June 2009 SCO summit, China announced to create a fund of worth \$10 billion for the SCO members.⁴⁶

Despite its successes in different fields, the SCO still faces divergent interests and stances on several core issues like "the nature of terrorist threats

and their causes, diverging national definitions of terrorism, and national governments eager to maintain freedom of action in this sphere and limit encroachment on their national sovereignty.”⁴⁷ Similarly, cooperation between the CSTO and the SCO (all Central Asian states except Turkmenistan are members of both these security organizations) in this regard is almost non-existent.

China wants Russia to neutralize the US military and security influence in the region, which is necessary to achieve Chinese economic interest in the region. The draw-down of US forces in Afghanistan has brought new opportunities as well as challenges for the regional states. China and Russia being the major regional powers could be looking forward to and would have charted out their strategies for it. However, China would be having an upper hand in the region because it has invested a lot in the regional markets and economies, while Russia has been unable to secure the region militarily. This inability was seen during the Tajik civil war of 1992-1997. Similarly, Russian inability to resolve internal disputes of the Central Asian states, which are the legacy of former Soviet Union, has provided China leverage over Moscow in Central Asia.

Successful resolution of border disputes with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, and its non-involvement in regional politics has provided China a good opportunity to expand its soft influence in Central Asia. Former deputy secretary general of the SCO Mirzasharif Jalalov says, “It is not the mandate of the SCO to use force in the internal conflicts of the member states. However, as the charter of the organization states, it will carry out military actions against the forces which are a threat to the existing regimes.”⁴⁸ The statement clearly indicates how the SCO is used to counter opposition forces in the member states. This statement illustrates that authoritarianism will continue in the region for some time.

Analysis

Despite the regional cooperation mechanisms, differences among regional states have not been resolved completely. In fact, none of the regional cooperation mechanisms has been successful in Central Asia. The most important reason for this failure is lack of political will. Border disputes between Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, and so on have yet to be resolved. The fragile relations between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan due to water distribution issues are a major cause of the inability of regional organizations to work effectively. The under-construction Rogun Hydropower station is a major bone of contention between Tashkent and Dushanbe. Uzbekistan is also highly critical of the Central Asia-South Asia 1000 (CASA-1,000) project which will provide 1,000 megawatts of electricity to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Uzbekistan has always been critical of the pro-Moscow Kazakh policy, especially at times when Tashkent has closer relations with Washington. Tashkent is also critical of Astana’s relatively liberal economic policies. Nevertheless, in the field of anti-terrorism, both states have supported each other

most of the times. This support was evident after the Andijon crisis of 2005, when Kazakh government extradited several 'wanted' extremists to Uzbekistan.

The opposition political parties of Central Asian states are critical of the SCO and CSTO for their negligence of human rights issues. For example, the Social Democratic Party of Tajikistan (SDPT) is quite critical of the election observers of these organizations. The SDPT argues that their electoral reports contradict a lot of those of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). According to Rakhmatillah Zairov, head of the SDPT, "they do not observe the elections, but spend their time being wined and dined by representatives of governmental structures."⁴⁹ This allegation has sound grounds, as both these organizations have always supported authoritarian rulers of Central Asia. For example, after the Andijon incident of 2005, the CSTO and SCO supported Karimov's stance and strictly opposed international inquiry demand.

The SCO summit of July 2005 declared that every region and every state had its own parameters of human rights and civil liberties which could be different from other societies. Therefore, others must respect the social values and sovereign equality of the other nations.⁵⁰ This was a clear message to the international community as well as those states which were critical of human rights violations not only by the Uzbek regime but also other CIS and SCO member states. The 2005 SCO summit also demanded a timeframe from the US to withdraw its forces from the Manas airbase. These complex intra-regional political and economic issues have provided the non-Central Asian powers an opportunity to penetrate this region with positive and negative impacts on the region.

The US involvement has brought substantial investment into the region especially in the hydrocarbon sector and in the form of foreign aid. This investment has helped Central Asian regimes in improving physical infrastructure within the region.⁵¹ Since Russia is unable to compete with the US in the region because the costs are much more than Moscow can afford, it has strengthened its relationship with China in order to exert pressure on Central Asian regimes to have a balanced relationship with them as well as the US. Russia supported the US-led war on terrorism and cooperated with Washington in this regard. Russian support to the US-led war on terrorism helped it to carry out operations in Chechnya, which could have faced criticism otherwise. US presence, according to Moscow, is helpful in eliminating or at least weakening the militant groups and bringing stability to the region, which is ultimately beneficial for Moscow.

On the other hand, competing interests of regional and global actors involved in Central Asia has further pushed the region against the wall. The new great game has confused the regional leadership. It has, however, strengthened the autocratic and authoritative Central Asian regimes. The 'national interests' of the powers involved in the region has forced some major powers to close their eyes on human rights conditions. According to Stephen Blank, "Central Asia has become a cockpit not only of terrorism and of a renewed great game, but also of

ideological contestations.”⁵² Frederick Starr describes the new great game in the following words:

“As U.S. and European pressure increased in the area of democratization and human rights, both Russia and China were able to dangle before Tashkent alliances based on a less rigorous standard in these areas, yet promising greater rewards than were forthcoming from Washington. Both were pursuing long-term strategic objectives, which they could present as less threatening to Tashkent than the U.S.’ preoccupations.”⁵³

The SCO seems to be the best option for the CARs in the current scenario. It has given them more chances to chart out a relatively independent policy because both China and Russia are powerful members of the organization, which neutralizes any effort by one of them to influence the region. Although Russia and China have different kinds of interests in the region, i.e., geo-political and geo-economic respectively, all the members of the SCO follow the agenda of countering ‘extremism, terrorism, and separatism’. At the same time, since the SCO, according to Roy Allison, is a “pro-status quo authoritarian club,”⁵⁴ it is in the interest of the authoritarian leaderships of the CARs to stick tightly to this club in order to prolong their personal rules.

The SCO states are least interested in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) due to fear of Islamic influences in their respective states and societies. Moreover, they have cordial relations with Israel and are reluctant to support declarations from the forum of the OIC condemning Israeli actions against the Palestinians. Since the Central Asian regimes do not want any pressure on their political systems, they are more open towards regional organizations, which support the political status quo in Central Asia (like the CIS and the SCO). On the other hand, they are critical of the regional organizations that support or promote liberal democratic states (like the OSCE).

China wants to use the SCO for political and security objectives, while Uzbekistan intends to use it to balance the pressure coming from Moscow besides gaining advantages with respect to the water distribution crisis. On the other hand, Kazakhstan is more interested in the SCO’s economic aspect. Since Astana wants to promote its hydrocarbon exports and industry, it always supports the economic initiatives taken by China and Russia to promote regional trade. Expansion of regional trade will also provide Kazakhstan with the opportunity to act as a link between China and Russia.

Despite these divergent approaches within the SCO, most of the Central Asian regimes support the organization⁵⁵ as it provides a forum for China and Russia to resolve their political and economic differences peacefully, which is necessary for the CARs to fulfil their interests as well as to come out of Moscow’s influence. China is least threatened by the deployment of Russian military in the CARs for maintenance of peace and stability. In fact, it has given Beijing an opportunity to advance its trade objectives in the region. This

deployment also helps China in eradicating the possible sanctuaries of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) in Central Asia.

The Central Asian states are 'confused' regarding the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. They want the US forces to remain in Afghanistan for a longer period because their continued deployment will provide security assurance to the Central Asian regimes against terrorist infiltration from the latter, especially into Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Moreover, the US military presence in Afghanistan keeps the militants engaged beyond the Central Asian borders. However, the regional security apparatus has failed so far in bringing stability to the region.

All the three major actors involved in the region, i.e., China, Russia, and the US, are suspicious of each other. Cooperation between two is deemed as a step against the third power's interests in the region. This suspicion has led to the failure of any effective regional cooperation mechanism. China has been very successful so far in achieving its economic designs in Central Asia though.

Besides these three major actors, regional actors like India and Pakistan are very important. Although India has an upper hand on Pakistan with regard to Central Asian states because of its historical ties with the region, Pakistan is important for Central Asian trade and energy exports. New Delhi has invested considerably in Central Asian economies especially in the pharmaceutical industry. It has concluded deals with the CARs in energy sector as well. It is important to note that about 80 per cent of the energy consumed in India is imported. Therefore, Central Asia is extremely important for New Delhi in order to fulfil its energy needs. India and Uzbekistan struck an MoU in 2006, which declared, "Extracts from Uzbek oil and gas reserves would be split equally between the two countries."⁵⁶ But India does not share a border with CARs. It has to pass through Afghanistan and Pakistan to reach Central Asia. India joined the proposed Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India Pipeline (TAPI) project but is not keen now. Pakistan has similar problems in accessing Central Asia. It has to pass through war-torn and unstable Afghanistan in order to reach the CARs.

Besides energy interests, India has some political objectives in its foreign policy regarding Central Asia which, according to Raj Chhikara, include, "Growth as a regional power, permanent membership of the UN Security Council and counteracting adverse Pakistani propaganda."⁵⁷ Another prominent Indian expert on Central Asia Meena Singh Roy suggests that New Delhi should not get involved in the military game going on in the region; instead its major focus should be on trade and economic cooperation.⁵⁸

Conclusion

The complex geo-political, economic, and security situation of Central Asia has increased its importance not only for regional but global powers as well. Western plans to construct alternative oil pipelines (westwards) bypassing Russia have serious constraints. The alternative pipelines will have to cross the Caspian Sea in order to bypass Russia and of course Iran. Even if trans-Caspian pipelines are constructed, their operational cost would be much higher than the

existing ones. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline is operational but its cost is very high. The Western proposed TAPI is also in doldrums as security situation in Afghanistan is not conducive. The Iran-West nuclear deal may give the West a chance to import Central Asian hydrocarbons through Iran, but it is pre-mature to discuss the route at this stage.

China on the other hand is quite successful in its policy towards Central Asia. It has not only constructed oil and gas pipelines from Caspian to Xinjiang but has also invested heavily in the Central Asian economy. It has constructed transport infrastructure in the form of roads and tunnels, especially in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. It has also resolved its border disputes with Central Asian states as well as Russia. From the forum of the SCO, Beijing seems to be the future leader of the Central Asian region.

Russia, despite facing economic hardships, still possesses substantial influence in the region. Dependence on Russia to export their energy reserves to international markets and old socialist connectivity have given Moscow an edge over all other competing orders in Central Asia. Russia is very much involved in the security apparatus of the CARs in the form of the CSTO. It has military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and a space station in Kazakhstan. A large ethnic Russian population also lives in Central Asia. All these factors force Russia to be very active in the region and encourage it to counter moves by any regional or global player that could hamper Russian interests in the region.

All the major powers have divergent interests in the region and none wants others to challenge its interest. The tussle to secure energy and geo-strategic needs between China, Russia, and the US has brought a new kind of rivalry in the region where they cooperate with and contradict each other at the same time. Their cooperation in the field of countering terrorism, drug trafficking, and arms smuggling has been impressive. Through bilateral and multilateral agreements, all these states have worked hard to overcome these challenges.

From the forums of the SCO, CSTO, and NATO's Partner for Peace Programme or NATO-PFP, regional states are cooperating and assisting the major powers in combating terrorism. The SCO unconditionally supported Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan in order to counter terrorism in the region. However, Beijing and Moscow did have certain reservations regarding the NDN. There had also been certain voices within the region for US withdrawal, but the emergence of Islamic State (IS) and its increased recruitment from Central Asian states forced regional security pundits to re-think about US withdrawal from the region.

The potential strength of IS in Afghanistan forced these powers to start a process of negotiations with the Taliban. The US is proactive in this regard while Russia and China have also supported the move. Tri-nation cooperation against militants and terrorists will last long because China and Russia will try to use any means to crush militancy and separatism in Xinjiang and the Caucasus. The US cannot afford a possible spillover of IS in the rest of world either. Therefore, despite having differences and playing the New Great Game,

regional and global powers would remain engaged in partnership and cooperation against terrorism and extremism.

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- 55 One of the reasons for support of the SCO by the CARs is that Russia has failed to create an effective regional security or economic mechanism. It wants to maintain its hegemonic position in the Central Asian region, which is not acceptable to the regional regimes. Therefore, the SCO is an attractive forum for them to discuss their issues without any fear of domination by the powerful member(s).
- 56 Scott Moore, "Peril and Promise...", op.cit., p.286.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 Ibid., p.288.