PAKISTAN-UNITED STATES RELATIONS DURING THE NAWAZ SHARIF PERIOD (2013-2016)

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Abstract:
In the aftermath of 9/11, the relationship between Pakistan-United States has flourished in the war against terrorism, lasted till the first decade of the 21st century. Due to a number of bilateral issues the relations between these two countries plunge into crisis in the years 2011-2012. Relations were at its lowest-ebb when the government of Nawaz Sharif was established. Fewer efforts were made from both sides to recover their relations to normalization. The withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan, Pak-China new horizon, and increase US tilt policy and forging strategic partnership with India, etc. were the main issues that shaped Pakistan-United States relations during the government of Nawaz Sharif. With all the above problems in bilateral relations, Pakistan continued to remain a key country and ally in the policy makers of the US, cooperation with which is especially necessary in the light of the ongoing US military presence in Afghanistan. In this article an attempt has been made to analyze Pakistan-United States relation during the government of Nawaz Sharif.

Introduction:
For almost six decades the relations between Pakistan and the United States has been based on “quid pro quo policies with short goals and no long-term strategy”.

From both sides the leaderships have failed to strengthen a sustainable and long-term relationship. Over the course of history, the relationship between these two countries remained both cooperative as well
as conflictual. Both countries have maintained a favorable disposition towards each other but their interactions have not always progressed smoothly. They have been close friends, allies and partners in the cold war, but at the same time they have sharp differences and trust-deficit. The convergence and divergence of their national interests on certain policy issues produces ups and downs in their relations. National interests, diplomatic differences, divergence of perceptions on regional and international realities etc., are responsible for the inconsistence and transnational character of their relations.

Currently, Pakistan is more clearly entering into the orbit of China's politics, which is viewed by many scholars as its proxy in a key regional confrontation with another so-called “Rising Power”, India. Bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and China has increased in the past few years whereas China has become the largest trade and economic partner of Pakistan; cooperation also includes in the areas of military-technical cooperation, nuclear energy, and infrastructure development. However, this does not means that Pakistan has lost its role as an ally of the United States in the war against terrorism in Afghanistan, but in recent years there have been considerable difficulties, in this direction. The current difficulties in Pak-US relations are seem to be similar to its past experiences of roller-coaster character of their relations.

The rapprochement between US and India in the first decade and strategic engagement especially marked in the second decade of the current century, and the above-mentioned rapprochement of Pakistan with China, along with the factors caused by Washington's policy in the Middle East, which led to the growth of anti-American sentiments throughout the Muslim world etc., are few reasons that marked Pak-US relations deteriorated. Along with the US interference policy in the internal affairs of Pakistan, the unilateral actions and the violation of its sovereignty are few other reasons that make the relationship between Pakistan and the United States complicated. Internal factors are also superimposed on interstate relations; neither in the United States, nor even more in Pakistan, do there exist unanimity of views on how the
interaction between Washington and Islamabad should be built.⁵ Thus, US-Pakistan relations cannot be considered as a simple one, but a more complicated, complex and transnational nature. The internal and external situations of both countries, the regional and international factors as a whole affected these relations, have been examined in this article.

**Pakistani-United States Relations during Nawaz Sharif Regime:**

Deterioration of Pakistan-United States relations started under previous governments of Pakistan. The cooling-off of Pak-US relations began with the government of Pervez Musharraf, since the very beginning of the US and NATO operation in neighboring Afghanistan in the post 9/11. The government of Pakistan was one of three states (along with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates), who recognized the government of Taliban as the legitimate authority in Afghanistan.⁶ Following the events of 9/11, and the US pressure compelled Pakistan to become the ally US in the war against terrorism. The government of Musharraf supported the actions of the United States and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.⁷ However, this support turned into an increase anti-government and in anti-American sentiments inside Pakistan, which resulted in the increased street activity of masses, whereas the rightest religious-political arranged protests and agitations were organized, solidarity with the government of Taliban and people of Afghanistan were acknowledged. As a result, the government was forced to maneuver between the need to maintain its main strategic ally and the desire to maintain support for its own population. These efforts failed to succeed, and in August 2008 President Musharraf was soon removed from power. This led to a number of other factors, but there is no doubt that support for US and NATO actions in Afghanistan played an important role in the rise and the fall of the president Musharraf popularity.⁸

The deterioration of relations between Pakistan and the United States continued with the subsequent government of
Asif Ali Zardari and reached a low point in 2011. The main factor that constantly caused and continues to evoke the tension in relations and the irritation of the Pakistani side, were the incessant violations of Pakistan's airspace and its sovereignty by the US drones (unmanned aerial vehicles) strikes against terrorists, in the Pak-Afghan border region, FATA (Federal Administered Tribal Areas), that resulted in the killing of some terrorists along with caused hundreds of civilians death including children and women. On this routine background, isolated events were superimposed, which aroused particular resentment of both the Pakistani civilian elites, military and society.

First, in January 2011 employee of the private security organization Raymond Davis, who worked under contract with the CIA, shot two people in Lahore, who allegedly tried to curtail him. Although Davis was acquitted and released later, the incident is still hotly debated and has complicates bilateral relations between Pakistan and US.

Second, on May 2, 2011 the US Special Forces conducted a secret operation inside Pakistan in the district of Abbottabad and killed of Osama bin Laden. In this case, the operation of the US Special Forces was carried out without prior notification to the Pakistani authorities. Though the most wanted person Osama bin Laden was killed in the operation, but this provoked sharp differences between Pakistan and the US. The violating the Pakistan sovereignty was immensely portrayed in the media talk shows and Pakistan’s military inability was questioned at public levels.

Finally, on November 26, 2011 the incident of Salalah resulted in the killing of 24 soldiers by US-NATO strikes on a Pakistani Check post, also generated differences between Pakistan and US, at military circles. In response, army Chief General Ashfaq Pervez Kiyani, ordered its troops to shoot down American combat aircraft and the Pakistani authorities blocked the southern route used for supplying the US and NATO troops in Afghanistan for several months - the route was reopened only in July 2012.
However the relationship between Pakistan and the United States suffered to the level of rupture and fewer efforts were done from both sides to recover to its normalization. Such deteriorated characters of Pak-US have been presented in the newspapers headline of that time. With all the above problems in bilateral relations, Pakistan continued to remain a key country and ally in the policy makers of the US, cooperation with which is especially necessary in the light of the ongoing US military presence in Afghanistan. Thus when elections were held in Pakistan in May 2013 and the new government of Nawaz Sharif was made, the relationship between Pakistan and United States were at the lowest ebb. The new government had to exert efforts for the improvement of relationship between Pakistan and United States.

When Nawaz Sharif took office in May 2013, he started his efforts to improve bilateral relations between Pakistan and the United States, and within short time there was a certain improvement in the relationship between Pakistan and the United States. This was reflected in the publications from both Pakistan and US sides. The media reports were also seems to be favorable in both countries. So, despite the fact that the official representative of the White House in October 2013 issued a statement defending the US right to use drones in the airspace of Pakistan, and although the attacks from the drone over the territory of Pakistan continue. However, this issue clearly ceased to be a priority for local media, and even did not stop Sharif from making a visit to Washington.\(^{14}\)

On October 20-23 Nawaz Sharif paid a visit to US to create new beginning with the US leadership. The US was looking for close alignment with Pakistan on its strategies in the Afghanistan, after the combat troops of US were to leave Afghanistan soon. Though he met with President Obama and vice President Biden but economic ties, his visit did not remain productive, and left crucial matters unresolved with the United States. The most important issues that erupted bilateral relations were the US drone strikes inside Pakistan. The issue of US reliability was at stake in Pakistan. Many Pakistanis considered that once US objectives fulfilled in Afghanistan, the
US would no longer needed Pakistan’ support in its broader policies of South and Central Asian region. Fear was also there that the growing Indo-US strategic ties “will relegate them to a minor place in U.S. security calculation”.  

Both countries strategic interests in Afghanistan have divergence goals. Both countries want a stable independent Afghanistan, however, the US was pushing for an increase role of India, while Pakistan was consistent on its strategic depth policy. On the eve of the withdrawal of the main forces of the international coalition from Afghanistan, the role of Pakistan as the closest neighbor of this country, which also has powerful leverage over intra-Afghan forces was increase in the policy circle of Washington. It would also be preserved in the near future, when there would remain a small US military contingent in Afghanistan, the relationship with Pakistan cannot be undermined and is clearly not in the interest of the United States. In turn, for Pakistan, rapprochement with the United States is a guarantee of continuing to receive massive financial assistance, which Washington repeatedly resorted to freezing in previous years. On the eve of Nawaz Sharif's visit to the US in October 2013, Obama administration decided to unfreeze a $1.6 billion package of military and economic assistance to Pakistan. 

Although there are forces in the US Congress that oppose assistance to Pakistan, but the US was compelled by the circumstances to release its assistance package to Pakistan, allocated for the sequent years. The US move forward policy on security assistance to Pakistan was welcome in Islamabad. 

On the other hand, the US welcome Pakistan’s “assurance that they favored some post-2014 U.S. non-combat military presence” in Afghanistan, its disagreement on the return of Taliban in power and non-interference in the Afghan affairs by the neighbors. Nawaz visit was succeeded to some extend to convince the Obama administration for strengthening bilateral economic ties. The joint statement of Nawaz Sharif and Obama was on “joint action plane to expand bilateral trade and investment flows over the next five years.”
On his return to Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif followed a policy of negotiations with the Tahreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), to end domestic terrorist’s incidents. Even few days before the general election, Sharif said that Pakistan should reconsider its attitude to participating in the American war on terrorism, and called for negotiations with militants of the Taliban (Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan) movement. On May 2013, speaking to the newly elected members of the national and provincial assemblies of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, Nawaz Sharif told that Pakistan have faced many challenges to its security, and Taliban have been involved in a bloody insurgency against Pakistan for years, resulted in the killing of thousands civilian and security personnel. They want to introduce Islamic sharia in the country and to end Pakistan’s alliances with the US against terrorism. He told that negotiation with Taliban should be taken seriously. A bloody he Taliban He said: “All options should be tried, and guns are not a solution to all problems… why shouldn’t we sit and talk, engage in dialogue.” However, his efforts were failed with the TTP terrorist attack on Karachi International airport in June 2014. Within days the government of Nawaz Sharif launched Zar-e-Azb, a comprehensive military operation against local and foreign terrorists in North Waziristan agency of FATA.

From the US perspective there were few bilateral issues that caused irritant between Pakistan and the United States relations, i.e. Pakistan’s peace talks with Taliban, the militant sanctuary inside tribal region, its rapidly increased nuclear weapons, and worsening relations with India. There was tremendous pressure from the US side that Pakistan needs to act against the Haqqani Network operating in North Waziristan. There were other misperceptions that Pakistan was backing Afghan Taliban to destabilize Ashraf Ghani government, in Afghanistan.

For years Pakistan was accused by US and Afghan authorities of providing support to insurgents groups including Haqqani Network. Since then the Pakistan’s military were engaged in a number of operations against terrorists. However in June 2014 the starting of operation Zarb-e-Azb in North
Waziristan remained the most affective, in remote areas of FATA near Afghan border. The operation resulted in the death of more than 1200 militants/terrorists and disrupted the Haqqani Network, a long-standing bilateral issue between Pakistan and the United States. Such efforts of Pakistan once again maintain the confidence of Washington in Islamabad’s cooperation with the major US interest of stabilizing Afghanistan. Pakistan’s efforts were appreciated by the US government and have insisted the continuation of the operation till to the lasting success that the Haqqani Network, be prevented for resettlement in the region in future.

The successful operation of Pakistan military resulted in the improvement of relationship between Pakistan and the United States since 2011. The US officials showed their confidence on Pakistan military operation against terrorist near the Af-Pak border region. Senior commander of US/NATO troops in Afghanistan Lt. Gen. Joseph Andrew stated that a Pakistan-based Afghan militant group, the Haqqani Network “has very much disrupted”, by the Pakistan’s military operations and “has caused them to be less effective in terms of their ability to pull off an attack here in Kabul”.

Although Pakistan-United States relations partially recovered from the crisis that erupted following the killing of Osama bin Laden by US in a unilateral action inside Pakistan, but the congress imposition of conditions on foreign assistance to Pakistan remained active. Since 2011, on certain non-humanitarian assistance, the congress waived off those conditions in the large national security interest of the US. Although some members of Congress were not willing for any assistance to Pakistan and they were in favor of more punitive approach “outright cutoff aid” and considered that Pakistan has “failed to combat terrorists”. It was commonly believed in Washington that the most wanted terrorists and enemies of the US, Ayman al Zawahiri, Mullah Omar, Siraj-uddin Haqqani, were residing in Pakistan.

It was commonly believed that the relationship between Pakistan, United States and Afghanistan were improving
because Karzai was replaced by Ashraf Ghani, as the president of Afghanistan. Commenting on Pak-US relations, US Ambassador to Pakistan said ‘Both countries are aware of this historical moment and are taking steps to seize this moment.’ The newly elected President of Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani paid an official visit to Pakistan, and met with Prime Minsiter Nawaz Sharif and Gen. Raheel Sharif. During his visit the bilateral talks were improved and both countries wish to have a new era of friendship between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Commenting on Ashraf Ghani visit an analyst noted that both countries are genuinely working for improving bilateral relations, however ‘there is still a lot of debris lying around from the last 10 years both in terms of Pakistan-U.S. ties and Pakistan-Afghanistan, but the attempt is now there’.

In November 2014, the Pakistani Chief of Army Staff visit to US further strengthens the bilateral defence relation between these two countries, which was soon followed by the session of bilateral Defence Consultation Group in Washington, where both countries delegates held extensive negotiations on the security situation of Afghanistan as well as Pakistan ongoing military operations.24

Although Pakistan have launched numerous operations against terrorists and militants in the FATA, which resulted in the death of hundreds of insurgents including al-Qaeda members, but still didn’t satisfied the US government. The claims of US government and think tanks about Afghan Taliban sanctuary in FATA and Quetta remained persistent. The US government considered Pakistan a key stabilizer of Afghanistan and a crucial partner in the Afghan stability and the region. However, the longstanding hostility between Islamabad and New Delhi, Indian increased influence in Afghanistan, Pakistan policy of strategic depth and its support to Taliban before 9/11, are issues of frustration for the Washington that have generated trust-deficit between Pakistan and the United States. Such frustrations of US government can be seen in the pentagon report to congress in October 2014: “Afghan- and Indian-focused militants continue to operate from Pakistan territory to the detriment of Afghan and regional
stability. Pakistan uses these proxy forces to hedge against the loss of influence in Afghanistan and to counter India’s superior military. These relationships run counter to Pakistan’s public commitment to support Afghan-led reconciliation… Pakistan also seeks sufficient Pashtun representation in the Afghan government to prevent Pashtun discontent along the Afghan-Pakistan border and limit India’s influence.”

During 2014-2015, the government of Pakistan faced incredible difficulties to control the spread of domestic terrorism. Insufficient attention, lack of organizational setup, resources deficiencies and poor intelligence resulted in the tragic event of December 2014, and the massacre of 148 people including 132 children by the Tahreek-e-Taliban Pakistan. The event have fueled outrage widespread not only inside Pakistan but at regional and international levels. The US president Obama has condemned the accident and announces its commitment to support Pakistan antiterrorism efforts. The Pakistani government established the National Internal Security Policy in 2014, while the national assembly passed Protection of Pakistan Bill, in 2014. The counter-terrorism operations and efforts were further strengthened by establishing military courts and almost 3000 convicts of terrorism were hanged. The extension of judicial power, establishment of military courts and exestuation procedures were criticized by Human rights organizations including New York based Human Rights Watch and considered it “vengeful blood-lust”.

On January 13, 2015, the fifth ministerial level session of “Pakistan-U.S. Strategic Dialogue” was held in Islamabad. The US delegation was led by Secretary of State John Kerry, who met with Sartaj Aziz (Advisor to Prime Minister on National Security and Foreign Affairs) and held talk to review the progress of working groups in the areas of: counter terrorism and law enforcement; non-proliferation, security and strategic stability; defence; energy; financial and economic cooperation. Progresses in bilateral relations were also reviewed by two leaders and reaffirmed their commitment for durable partnership between Pakistan and US, which is essential for the stability and security of the region. John Kerry
conveyed its condolence on the tragic event of Army Public School in Peshawar, were innocent children were killed by terrorists on December 16, 2014. Pakistan’s military operation against terrorism, Zarb-e-Azb, was also appreciated by Kerry, and endorsed US assistance to Pakistan under legislation of “Kerry-Lugar-Berman” act. For relief and rehabilitations of temporary displaced person, he committed $250 million assistance to Pakistan.27 Pakistan was also agree to formally ban, the Haqqani Network, according to some US officials was operating from Pakistani territory and was involved in insurgent activities inside Afghanistan. Subsequently in April 2015, the US government approved the sale of $952 million “U.S.-built attack helicopters and missiles”, to strengthen Pakistan’s military capacity in countering terrorism efforts.28

For renewing of Pak-US defence and strategic ties, General Raheel Sharif paid five days visit to US in November, 2015. To follow up the bilateral defence and security issues those were discussed during Nawaz Sharif visit in October 2015, Raheel Sharif met with a number of US official including Secretary of State John Kerry, vice President Joe Biden. In his address to the Pakistani community he stated: Pakistan is absolutely determined to cope with the menaces posed by terrorism. Pakistan will not allow the sacrifices of our martyrs to go in vain; hence, the war against terrorism will be brought to its logical conclusion.29

In January 2015, Obama made a second visit to India, and failed to visit Pakistan. According to Indian point of view, the Indian Prime Minister Modi met with Obama, and resolves the impediments issues of the transfer of civil nuclear technology to India. On his telephonic conversation, with Nawaz Sharif, Obama appraised Sharif upcoming visit to India and insured his visit to Pakistan after the security situation became normalized. The move of Obama was considered by few as the “diplomatic failure” of the foreign policy of Pakistan.30

The coming of Donald Trump in power in the US, arose speculations in Pakistan that “what will happen with regard to
US policy towards South Asia, and what can Pakistan expect from the President Donald Trump?”. The administration of Nawaz Sharif was also looking for opportunities to review the bilateral relationship between Pakistan and the US. Pakistan was already under US pressure over its policy of countering terrorism and hosting militant groups that have been continuously abused by US and New Delhi for carrying attacks against India. However, on November 30, 2016 the US newly elected president Donald Trump in his telephonic conversation with Nawaz Sharif assured that “I am ready to play any role that you want to play to address and find solutions to the outstanding problems” with India.

In the war against terrorism, the US government persistently pressured Pakistani authorities on safe haven for Afghan insurgent in FATA. However, a “reverse infiltration” occurred in the recent years, those insurgent are currently residing in the eastern part of Afghanistan. Consequently, Pakistani government has now reproach US and Afghan authorities for “falling to intercept militants fleeing from Pakistan’s operations in the FATA” to Afghanistan.

The unilateral drone strikes in Pakistan, which has created frustration and harmed bilateral relations between Pakistan and the United States, continued during these years. The US officials considered it an important tactic instrument in hunting down al-Qaeda members and terrorists in the western region of Pakistan, while Pakistan measured it a violation of its sovereignty and international law, and considered it counterproductive. However, the rates of drone strikes inside Pakistan’s territory were subsequently decreased during the years. In 2010, it reached 122, while decreased to only 22 in 2014, and falls in the subsequent years.

Following the events of US forces unilateral operation in Abbottabad in 2011, and the US/NATO combat troops withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014, the US foreign assistance to Pakistan during the time of Nawaz Sharif also decreased. In 2011 the US aid to Pakistan was $3,581 million, which was decreased to $2,604 in 2012, $2,177 in 2014, $1,604
in 2015 and $1,098 in 2016. The US security related aid to Pakistan in 2011 was $1,277 million, which dropped to $849 in 2012, $361 in 2013, $371 in 2014, $343 in 2015, and $3 in 2016. The US economic aid to Pakistan in 2011 was $1,186 million, which dropped to $1067 in 201, $834 in 2013, $608 in 2014, $561 in 2015 and $226 in 2016. \(^{33}\)

The bilateral trade-economic relation between Pakistan and the United States was also affected and continued during the following years. The total trade in goods between these two countries was $5820.9 million in 2011, which declined to $5157.7 in 2012, $5334.3 in 2013, $5188.4 in 2014. Efforts were made from both sides to improve bilateral relations, so on bilateral trade start improvement, and in 2015 it was $5539.0 million, while in 2016 it remained, as $5551.1. However, it did not reach to the level as it was in 2010 and 2011. \(^{34}\)

The war against terrorism and Afghanistan are not only external factor affecting the relations between Pakistan and the United States but there were many other factors that shape the nature of their bilateral relations. Therefore, relations between the US and Pakistan cannot be considered outside the context of their relations China and India and it is much more serious how these relations are built into a complex set of regional relations in South Asia and the Asia-Pacific region. The deterioration of US-Pakistani relations after the Abbottabad event, took place against the backdrop of an obvious improvement in US-Indian relations which subsequently turned into the strategic engagement. On the other side, Pakistan’s relations with China have also strengthening within the same period, that to some extent affected bilateral relations between Pakistan and US.

For China, the role of Pakistan is determined by its geo-strategic position - it is through its territory that the shortest way of transporting goods from the region of the Middle East and East Africa to the northwest regions of China, projects was initiated between Pakistan and China. The Gwadar port of Pakistan was being built with Chinese aid, through an agreement between Pakistan and China in 2001. The cost of the
entire project is estimated at more than $1.2 billion. Within years, it becomes the most important elements of the Chinese strategy, to create naval bases network from southern China to Pakistan. The US strategic experts called it the “string of pearls”, which consists in strengthening the Chinese strategic presence in the Indian Ocean, to constrain India as well as US influence in the Indian Ocean.\textsuperscript{35}

The port of Gwadar is located on the shores of the Arabian Sea less away the border with Iran and in the immediate vicinity of the Hormuz Strait, connecting the Arabian Sea with the Persian Gulf, where the starting point of the world’s main hydrocarbon transportation routes is located. The first phase of construction of the deep-water port in Gwadar and the observation post of the Chinese Navy was launched in 2002 and completed in 2005.

Simultaneously, construction of a large port in Pasni is being carried out 120 km to the east. As expected, both ports will be connected by a high-speed motorway. The economic perspective of the ports in Gwadar and Pasni is connected with the possibility of constructing a transport (including pipeline) infrastructure linking the Arabian Sea to the northwestern regions of China - Xinjiang and Tibet, which would significantly speed up and reduce the cost of transportation of goods, avoid risks associated with passage through the Strait of Malacca and the Gulf of Oman. In addition, the port of Gwadar has an obvious military-strategic importance. The equipment located there allows China to monitor the actions of the US Navy, India and other countries in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea zone and track all sea freight traffic in the Strait of Hormuz. In addition, the deep-water parking lots for large ships can be fully used for the needs of the Chinese Navy, in particular, for refueling of warships and their repair.\textsuperscript{36}

The relationship between Pakistan and China are commonly known as all-weather friendship, based on mutual interests, trust and respect. Both countries enjoyed friendly relations for decades. Strong strategic relationship between these two neighbors’ countries consisted of Chinese assistance
to Pakistan nuclear program, arms transfer and joint military exercise. Though Chinese economic assistance to Pakistan as compare to US, remained low, but Chinese economic and military assistance to Pakistan remained active at the time when Pakistan was under US sanctions in the 1990’s. Currently both countries are actively engaged in CPEC, a mega project.

The US unilateral operation in Abbottabad in 2011, the drone attacks and the Raymond Davis case, and accusation of US authorities of providing shelter to terrorists, resulted in the strained relationship between Pakistan and United States, while on it encourage the strengthen of Pak-China relations. Within days after the event of Abbottabad in 2011, Prime Minster Yousaf Raza Gilani paid an official visit to China, where both countries agreed to turn Gwadar port in naval base. Thus the defence cooperation between Pakistan and China extended to maritime realm. Gwadar deep sea port offers “an excellent location for the stationing of SSNs” (New-generation nuclear attack submarine) and SSBNs (ballistic-missile submarine), that “could provide a robust deterrent against India and the US.”

The actions of the government of Pakistan, which in January 2013 transferred the management of Gwadar port to China Overseas Port Holdings Company Limited (COPHCL Limited along with the CPEC project, also contributed to the increased strategic importance of Gwadar for China. Therefore, it is no coincidence that Prime Minister Sharif made his first foreign visit in July 2013 to China a few months before the visit to the United States. The main topic of discussion in Beijing was the projects related to the Gwadar port and the corresponding road and pipeline infrastructure that will connect this port with the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China, the commonly known CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor). The Chinese officials tried to reassure India that the construction of the corridor is not directed against third parties and does not conflict with the Indian position over Kashmir; however, it was not possible to dispel the doubts of the Indians on this issue.
The on-ground journey of CPEC project runs from Pakistan to China through Gilgit-Baltistan considered and claim by Indian as a part of Kashmir which according to India means that the creation of a joint Pakistani-Chinese infrastructure further consolidates the status quo of this territory. Moreover, according to India, several thousand Chinese servicemen are already deployed in the part of so called part of Kashmir, controlled by Pakistan. Such concern of India about CPEC related issues were reflected in the Indian official visits to China in the recent years.  

The United States has also certain types of reservation on the CPEC. A report of the Congressional Research Services noted that the US understands the leading role of Pakistan in the security situation of South Asia. However, Pakistan’s officials’ restrictions on trade relations with India and intransigence on Kashmir issue, could hamper not only the security situation in South Asian region, but also could hamper US policy of seeking linkage between Indian and Central Asian. It could boost Indian motives of developing Chabahar port of Iran, and “could risk U.S. opprobrium by engaging in mutually beneficial ties with a U.S. adversary, as well as reinforce the rivalry between India and China, Pakistan’s main international benefactor.”

The US saw the new engagement of Pakistan and China as a threat to its national interest in the region. In the US some analysts sharply criticized the Chinese intension in the region in general and plans related to the Gwadar port in particular. This criticism clearly shows the US strategic plans, which is extremely unprofitable to create an infrastructure that allows China to connect the shortest way with the oil-rich region of the Middle East, bypassing South and South-East Asia. To complicate the construction of the economic corridor, between Pakistan and China, various methods were used and still active from both side India and US.
Conclusion:

Though the United was looking for developing strategic partnership with India but the administration of Trump cannot ignore the crucial role of Pakistan in the region. The stability of Afghanistan and the region seems to be difficult without involving Pakistan. The hostility between Pakistan and India could damage long-term US interest in Afghanistan and Central Asia. The role of US in the resolving of outstanding issues between Pakistan and India including Kashmir always remained a challenging issue for the United States. However, for the stability of the region, the Trump administration needs a balance approach in its relations with both Pakistan and India. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), one belt one road initiative is an equally important opportunity for the US business community, to become a partner in the regional connectivity along and to get benefit from the new horizon of business opportunities. CPEC is similar to US project of new Silk Road, and consistent to the US national interest of interconnecting the regions of Central Asia and South Asia. Partnership between Pakistan, the US and China, is considered an important initiative for the successful operations of this project.

The development of Pak-US relations in the near future will depend on a number of factors, both bilateral and regional. The main determining factor is the degree of need for Pakistan to support US actions in Afghanistan. If Washington manages to secure its military bases on Afghan territory without the help of Pakistan or find more convenient and safe areas for their deployment—for example, by establishing its strategic presence in any Central Asian country, then the need for Pakistan as an alliance will fall away. In addition, the dynamics of relations in the triangle Washington-Beijing-Delhi will directly influence the nature of US-Pakistani relations. Along with if both the US and India manage their relations at least to the level at which they were in the first decade of 21st century and enlist the support of Delhi in the strategy of containing China, the stake
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in South Asia will again be made on India as the main strategic partner, and will ultimately decrease Pakistan position in US policy.
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