

dynamism in the regional geopolitics of pakistan, china and india: geography and internal politics as factors

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Abstract: *Geography and internal politics of the three countries, Pakistan, China and India has always influenced geopolitical tendencies of their comprised region. Internal geographic makeup and the surrounding countries and coastline are deeply impacting geopolitical behavior of any country towards the other two. Likewise internal politics and change in it also determine the direction of geopolitics of each country. This paper tries to find out that how the mentioned two factors influence any change in the regional geopolitics. The study applies Shatterbelt and Gateways theory of an eminent scholar, Saul B. Cohen. The theory is aligned with qualitative approach to gather data and analyze it under the principles of Thematic Techniques. The findings point out that geography and internal politics provide direction to currents of geopolitics in the region.*

Keywords: Region, Geopolitics, Internal Politics, Shatterbelts and Gateways

Geopolitics and Regional Geography

The total area of the region of Pakistan, China and India is (796096+3287263+9596960) 13680319 square km. The region borders twenty one countries in total; other than the three countries bordering themselves. The coastline of the three countries is approximately 23112 km. The region has exposure in the largest Pacific Ocean and the third largest Indian Ocean. All the three countries in the region are amongst the most populous top ten countries in the world (Done, 2011). The area has some attributes that always have been central in deciding geopolitical priorities (Small, 2015). Geographically the region is impassable due to various natural hurdles of mountains, jungles, rivers and oceans. Culturally, historically and politically China is different from Indian Subcontinent.

China's southern border is almost impassable except its border with Vietnam that may provide a way for landing army. Connecting Burma through road with China in WWII, failed (Song, 2006). As a whole, China is safe. Its southwestern border connects countries like India, Bhutan and Nepal. The border runs in an arc form towards west, connecting Pakistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. There have been trade routes to China in Himalaya range but as a whole the area proved as an impasse for moving large army as like what happened to Mongol army. A section of border with Kazakhstan is passable and may become a transport channel to Eurasia. The problem with the passage is that it has a 1000 mile distance from Han's China and passing through troubled Xinjiang province and therefore, peace in the area is pre-requisite (Song, 2006). China has problem on its north as its border with Russia and Mongolia is open and passable. Overall, the area is full of shatterbelts and gateways.

Pacific Ocean is a dilemma for China and its security as a naval invasion may happen through the coastline. China did not have a maritime tradition and program in its history, as it never felt a need for it (Ju, 2015). Till 19th Century she never had a maritime enemy that could challenge its security and therefore, China had taken little interest to spend big amount on naval preparedness. The ignorance led

China into sufferings in mid 19th and 20th Centuries. European powers used limited naval force against China for commercial means. In 1930s Japan occupied parts of China near Manchuria while using naval force. Japan could not subdue China because of its vastness and huge population density. But today's world is different now as the technological advancement may easily surpass the difficulties that protected China throughout history.

Today's India had been part of Indian Subcontinent of which Bangladesh Nepal, Bhutan and Pakistan used to be the parts. India is now an independent biggest part of the Subcontinent. The subcontinent has virtually been an island surrounded by traditionally impermeable Himalayan Mountains, Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean (Kale, 2014). Pakistan is located in the western section of the continent and areas of Punjab, Sindh and disputed Pakistani controlled Kashmir. Southern Afghanistan and Southwestern Iran the adjoining territories of Pakistan today, had been main outlets for the invaders to India. Bhutan and Nepal are Himalayan countries, the highest of the region, bordering with India. An east-west strip of land, passing between Bangladesh and Nepal, connects Indian northeastern states with mainland India. In this region India has territorial problem of Arunachal Pradesh with China (Kale, 2014). Majority of India's population resides in its northern plain, which is the densest part of India- host to above 500 people per square mile (Balliett, 2016). The population density runs to Lahore and Afghanistan and in east spreading to Bangladesh and Myanmar. The population factor has turned the region into an Indian heartland- surrounded by shatterbelts and gateways. Indian population distributions have been important in determining its geopolitics.

India's demography and population distribution is according to its river system. Its major cities are lying around the Narmada, the Ganges and the Brahmaputra (Roy, 2009). It has evolved different cultures in India i.e. Gujratis, Punjabis, Tamils, Marhatas and others (Roy, 2009). Today's sub nationalistic feelings in India is the result of the different cultures that have been designed to be pacified through secular ideology and balanced government system of center and regions.

Indian geography has caused important geopolitical imperatives for the country and cannot ignore it in its political priorities. The fertility of the Ganges basin has a massive population and India therefore, ought to have prime control over the area as a heartland. The basis is therefore, important to keep safe from any foreign invasion. India requires a 'forward policy' in its 'periphery' to safeguard the 'core' (Parker, 2014). Ganges basin and Indus river basin are in easy reach of each other and it is the easiest way to reach India. Another imperative is Indian Ocean that may be the Achilles heel for Indian security and its control through a strong navy is the viable option- which India lacks. China, India's traditional rival, has been making strong presence in the Ocean.

Looking upon Indian history provides us with information that it had been under foreign occupation due to its internal conditions and instability. Internal weaknesses stemmed from its geography which is vast, rather isolated, and culturally divergent and mostly less controlled. The history is full of political shifting, coalitions and divisions and sometime quislings that created chances for foreign invasions.

Foreign occupiers had entered India through passes from Afghanistan and waters. The threats have guided India for an accommodative approach rather than a conflicting one. Its foreign policy has been coupled with its internal spaces of population diversity and geographical isolation. Modern India's politics is based on Gandhi's thoughts of non-violence and broad based non-partisan approach e.g. non-alignment (Kesselman, Krieger, & Joseph, 2015). Active participation in Cold War could have caused existential threats to India as the threats from both sides would have been difficult for her to cope with. Maintaining independent foreign policy is an Indian compulsion. The historical shatterbelts- Afghanistan and Indian Ocean- has been guiding her foreign policy.

Quitting India by British government was a decision made according to geopolitical calculations of the time, while holding India for a long time was possible on its broad based geopolitical control of the world that it could afford at a high time of prosperity. World War II made Britain weaker enough to

provide control to the routes needed for supply to its colonies. United States of America as world super power and naval power replaced Britain. America was not ready to provide security to British channels and routes at the expense of its own security. Apart from this, the resistance movements in India became strong enough that Britain could not afford to control and suppress.

India was divided into India and Pakistan in 1947, creating two heartlands; Ganges and Indus. Both started opposing each other. India has been working to address its geopolitical vulnerability after the creation of Pakistan out of the territory of the once united Indian Sub-continent. Pakistan also has doubted India for its intentions against the existence of Pakistan. The resultant mutual hate and threat perception between the two countries caused four wars, revolving around the geopolitical questions. .

The geopolitics of Pakistan has been different from the two regional neighbors, China and India. Pakistan has been receptive to the opportunities, created by world and regional politics, unlike China and India who have been assertive in this regard. Geopolitical imperatives and compulsions of Pakistan are great while its size and capacity is much smaller. The geo-economics of the Indian Ocean is the biggest logic of Pakistan for getting international and regional attraction even if, its geo-strategic and geopolitical realities have been much harsh (Kumar, 2000). The ocean therefore, is a vital gateway for the country. Protecting its shores and coastline need a huge naval buildup and of course Pakistan is far behind to afford. The wars of 1965 and 1971 between India and Pakistan exposed Pakistan naval power (Rais, 1987). Best option for Pakistan to counter threat of Indian naval dominance, is to get support of strong naval power i.e. China. During Cold War Pakistan remained unsuccessful to get any such support but in post Cold War era, China has been assisting Pakistan in this regard.

Internal politics of Pakistan has been at the mercy of geopolitical apprehensions. Threat perception from India led Pakistani decision makers to frame a policy that was meant for its safeguard and protection. Security agencies have repeatedly doubted the capabilities and efficiencies of political forces and democratic institutions for coping with Indian threat. Lack of charismatic leadership after the death of Quaid-e-Azam, the founder of Pakistan, made situation favorable for military to directly or indirectly influence the foreign policy of the country. Security dilemma of a weaker Pakistan had its decision makers to making odd decisions and policies. Meager economic resources and backward military technology directed the whole foreign policy at the expense of internal development. Therefore, the political forces in favor of spending over masses became conflicting to the security mind. The mismatch led to military coups into the country politics. The saga of military intervention in the politics of Pakistan became chronic enough that some believe that in 'Pakistan, army has a country'.

Security pressure of huge geopolitical liabilities made Pakistan to exploit the opportunities whenever the world politics took a turn. Its geographical location has helped the country throughout its existence. Pakistan locations provide an easy link to Afghanistan and Central Asian States. Crisis in these countries increased importance of Pakistan (Krause & Mallory, 2014). Cold War politics highlighted Pakistan as an effective barrier to Soviet expansionism. Therefore, Pakistan was helped in military and economics through alliances and bilateral arrangements and in return Pakistan paid in terms of geopolitics. Whenever the need of its geopolitics for world powers minimized, so the pressure increased for 'correcting the wrongs' of its security apparatus e.g. its nuclearization program.

Pakistan has always welcomed any arrangement that led to sandwiching the 'strong' India. Handling India alone has been unnatural for 'weaker' Pakistan. Any type of anti-Indian regional geopolitics has always been allied by Pakistan or at least it has tried to be a better alternative for neutralizing Indian factor. In China therefore, Pakistan has sought a permanent and long lasting friend. Pakistan has combined its geopolitics with China to counter Indian regional supremacy. China has been rational in this regard as it has been soft in bringing accommodative alterations what the situations demand. China has changed its stance towards Indo-Pak issues according to its needs and interests.

3.3 Political Systems and National Priorities of the Regional States

States behave according to their political structures and design. The region of Pakistan, China and India is divided into three different political ideologies and thus have different official systems and political grooming.. Political history of the three countries gives us the picture of their current internal political make up. Current national institutions of each state represent what its history has been in term of struggle and movement. China is fundamentally different from both, Pakistan and India.

People's Republic of China came into existence as a result of a long struggle of Mao Zedong against imperialist powers on one side and anti-socialist, nationalist forces of China on another side. His struggle was against class system as written by Karl Marx. Philosophy of his struggle is known as, Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. His socialist movement was China based according to the imperatives of the society and geography of China i.e. Sinification of Marxism (Mackerras, & Night, 2015). His rise as hero was in the background of anarchy and turmoil in China. Mao solution for the disorganized Chinese society was based on his proclaimed Communist ideology that suggested strict and close organization, control and centralism. His movement gathered enough support that made him successful.

China is a unitary form of government but political map is not even as it is broadly distributed into three types of units; Chinese provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities. The division is administrative, historical and under geopolitical imperatives. Its political system is responsive to China's internal shatterbelts and gateways. Provinces are designed on the bases of sub-cultural priorities and people emotionally associated themselves with their provinces (Goodman, 2002). The provinces are administered through provincial committee. The secretary of the committee is the chief administrator of the province. Non-Hans areas are administered through a special arrangement called autonomous regions (Warikoo, 2016). The regions are five in number; Xinjiang, Tibet, Ningxia, Inner Mongolia and Guangxi. These regions are allowed to frame their own laws as per Chinese constitution. The governors are from the same region, belonging to the ethnic group there. Municipalities are under the direct control of the central government and the administrators are appointed by the government. Administrative division of the People's Republic of China is according to its geopolitical considerations based on Han vs. non-Han distribution of population and ethnicity.

After a successful movement and struggle, Mao Zedong established China, based on the teachings of communism. One party system was allowed to represent China in all its institutions. Thus every leader is to follow and practice Communist ideology in China. Mao had been very conscience in implementing his ideology. His Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution depicts that he wanted speedy transformation of Chinese society (Shinde, 1991). During his era, China remained the member of Communist world, though not strictly a member of communist bloc. Main pillars of its foreign policy were derived from the teachings of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and rationalized according to Chinese national needs and interests. In 1950s it received support and assistance from Soviet Union while USA opposed China diplomatically for its membership in international institutions for being a socialist country. During initial years, China developed friendly relations with India, mainly because of the socialist oriented leadership of India and being a country with the same colonial history.

For China, only one country is important and that is China itself. Though being follower of communist ideology, it has ignored ideology when it was to choose between China and ideology after the death of Stalin (Chong, 2000). Prioritizing its interests, China parted its ways from Soviet Union during Khrushchev time that is known as Sino-Soviet split in history. The split shows that China had been different from Soviet Union in its version of foreign policy as China has never practiced expansionism as Sinicization- Chinese political culture that is historically and geopolitically, non-missionary. During the era, China's relations with India spoiled and ultimately resulted into Sino-India war, 1962. As a whole the time period was dominated by the geopolitical imperatives of China.

The decades of 1960s, 1970s and 1980s are full of the events that helped in promoting and molding

China's internal and external behavior according to the needs and realities of the time, rather than the traditional communist ideology as followed by Soviet Union. Worsening of relations with India, China searched alternative in Pakistan, an ally of the West, a capitalist bloc. Pakistan then helped China in establishing relations with United States in 1970s. The decade of 1970s witnessed two important developments for China; establishing of full diplomatic relations with USA (January 1, 1979) and reestablishment of diplomatic relations with India in 1979. The developments coincided with internal transformation of China and its changing world view, given by Deng Xiaoping, the new leader of China. China went through huge transformation under Deng.

For opening up China to benefit from global market, Deng Xiaoping introduced some internal reforms in the institutions, both political and non-political. The purpose was to open its gateways of economic cooperation to the world. He was having a different vision for China from that of Chairman Mao's 'egalitarianism'. His vision was to transform China to make it adaptable to world's requirements and standards. He opted for good training in Chinese universities for youth. He allowed Coca-Cola for opening its branch in Shanghai and signed a deal with Boeing 747 aircraft. He also revisited the legal system and opened new courts and re-established the Ministry of Justice. He rehabilitated those legal professionals who were purged during Cultural Revolution and invited US legal experts for lectures on Law. By 1980s, criticism of Mao was allowed for his 'errors' at his old age. Deng allowed religious freedom and restored many Catholic churches.

Chinese Communist Party was following Marxism-Leninism as its official ideology and continued as a party of the people and masses. Deng made changes to the party by opening it up to the educated and graduated youths. During Mao's era very few were educated within the party as not more than 25 % while by mid 1980s the number increased to 75 % (Goodman, 2015). The party was adapted to the needs of the society and the workers were trained to that end. Military presence was minimized and political slots were offered to the young educated. Reforms in farming were introduced and collective farming was allowed only if people wish while they may harvest individually also. People were also allowed for owning small industries. His reforms finally were fruitful in boasting Chinese economy.

When it comes to domestic and international politics, China adapted its domestic environment according to world's standards under the vision and leadership of Deng Xiaoping. He tried to create attraction for world powers and countries to come towards China through the available gateways. His Open Door China policy was successful as he went for improving relations with neighbors and world to getting maximum benefits. After becoming the leader of China in 1978, Deng Xiaoping improved relations with India and started a normalization process that resulted into long processes of peaceful coexistence. During the era China also improved relations with United States of America. Geopolitics was played rationally that could meet China's interests as redefined by Deng by setting new standards for its development and progress.

If compared with Mao Zedong era, Deng Xiaoping relaxed Chinese society and politics as the changes in the world politics and economy demanded. Mao policies were strict and close as he thought them essential at the first stage of making China stable but he could not sense the world transformation at his end days. After his death, the stage was set for new leadership under Deng. He led the country according to what he deemed necessary. The geopolitical priorities were settled accordingly. The Deng agenda was taken forward and finally resulted into Chinese regional assertion i.e. regionalization.

India has a different political system than that of China because of its history, culture, geography and ideology. Indian freedom movement was led by Gandhi and Nehru against British government and Muslim separatist movement, Muslim League. The ideology of Congress led movement was of One Nation; defining Indian nationalism under geography and culture. After independence, India built its political and national institutions in accordance with its needs and ideology. The country did not recognize any religion as official and followed a secular political system.

Divergent cultures and sub-regional differences are manifested in Indian constitution and system. Indian government system is federal form but with confused and uneven power distribution between centre and various units/states. The powers make the central government very powerful and federating units weak (Ghosh, 2012). Centre can carve out new states and merge older ones. The federation is a designed one and not the outcome of an agreement as a federation requires. Federating units are required to recognize Indian president as their chief executive. There is a single citizenship and Central government may alter rules and laws for states' government. Central government may impose emergency and governor *raj* in states and may make special laws. All these federal arrangements depict Indian apprehensions of uprising and separation of the states. The system depicts that how India is sensitive towards its shatterbelts. Indian constitution has granted special autonomous status to Indian Held Kashmir to appease the population and therefore, to keep it integral with federation (Miller, 2012).

Indian internal political structure has created many stakeholders as represented in its political system. There is multi-party system including various regional and nationalist parties. On regional levels in India there has been some separatists movements as well, demanding freedom e.g. Khalistan movement and Maoist movements. Religious extremist parties are another characteristic of India political culture. Shiv Sena and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have been anti-Pakistani and have always pressurized Indian government for harsh treatment with Pakistan. Such political parties have thwarted peace dialogues with Pakistan e.g. Agra Summit of 2004. Some of the political parties have undergone changes after being into government. BJP in power in 1990s unexpectedly made good efforts for peace with Pakistan (McGuire & Coperland, 2007). Its main reason is that such forces in India want to take India to world status and for that reason resolution of disputes with Pakistan is a need and requirement. Therefore, a change has been witnessed in their attitudes and approaches with the changing dynamics of political situation.

Continuous democratic process of India unlike that of Pakistan has attained a level of maturity and respect. It has resulted into grooming the population and their world view. They understand the fruits of peace and peaceful process in the region.

Pakistan's geopolitics is having close relationship with its internal political developments and society. Ideologies and programs of political parties in Pakistan are based on their view about security, foreign policy, patriotism, sub-nationalism and regional geopolitics (Chiriyankandath, 2016). A category of political forces in Pakistan have strict views regarding country's security, India, Kashmir, ideology, democracy and security agencies. They are called right wing. They believe in strong military power of the country. Such forces are very strict regarding Kashmir and other issues with India. They are in close affiliation with security agencies of Pakistan and therefore, support each other (Mahmood, 2001). The political parties have supported military intervention in politics and in return military support them. Various religious political parties and factions of Pakistan Muslim League are in this category.

Second group of political forces is the opposite side of rightists. They are dubbed as leftists, liberals and progressive. Their views regarding country's politics is people focused and oppose all that affects the lives of Pakistanis. To them approaches to security issues should be different and rational in terms of cost and benefits for people (Twiss, Simon, & Peterson, 2015). They are of the view that policies ought to be made by the institutions, representing people rather than non-representative institutions. This group has been at struggle against the rightists especially, state hegemonic non-democratic institutions. The take of this category on regional geopolitics is different and disagree with huge military buildup at cost of public development. Regarding India and Afghanistan the group of parties has very cautious stance and call for good relations with the two countries. This school of thought includes political party's i.e. regional and nationalist political parties and Pakistan People's Party.

The leftist's political parties have been the prime target of security establishment in Pakistan for a different narrative over regional geopolitics. Awami National Party (ANP), Pashtun nationalist party

has been at troubles because of its different stance over Afghanistan and Durand Line. Its leadership has been mostly in jails for being termed as traitors and anti-Pakistan and pro-Afghanistan and pro-India. These political forces have been struggling for promotion of democracy in the country and have always opposed military interventions.

Kashmir has been at top of almost every government in Pakistan and the whole structure of Pakistani politics revolves around to secure the status of Kashmir. The state of Kashmir is a protectorate of Pakistan; internally autonomous while its defence, currency, communication and foreign policy is vested in Islamabad. The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Council is a supreme body for dealing with the matters of Kashmir. The council consists of 14 members; 8 representing the territory while 6 Pakistan. The Prime Minister of Pakistan is the head of the council. There is also a Parliamentary Special Committee on Kashmir in Pakistan. It includes members of both, Senate and National Assembly of Pakistan. The Chairman of the committee is usually an experienced politician. The job of the committee is to highlight Kashmir issue on national and international forums. AJK is not a formal part of Pakistan as the issue is a disputed area under international law. Article 257 of Pakistan's constitution is reserved for prospective joining of Pakistan. The article says that Kashmir may become the part of Pakistan according to the wishes of the people of Kashmir.

CONCLUSION:

Pakistan, China and India defines the largest region that is very much interactive and important amidst the geopolitics of the world. The geography is quite unique encompassing three largest and nuclear armed countries. Largely speaking the region is virtually landlocked with comparatively less exposure to international waters that significantly limit its political choices. The region is also surrounded by politically volatile countries that in return impact the geopolitical priorities of the three states. Likewise the internal politics of the three regional countries is different from each other as per their constitutions and political orders. The incompatibility restricts mutual cooperation at large. Local disputes of ethnic and political nature also determine the nature of the flow of geopolitics of the region.

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