

## **Pakistan's Strategic Issues**

In the arena of international politics, alliance most often comes with a hefty price. The norm of coalition with fellow states has deep roots in the political evolution of the world hence, till date this practice though much more complex, still serves as an important element in making friends and foes. The prime rationale for proposing the idea of alliance was to maintain harmony with neighboring countries but during the two world wars, entente meant fighting your brother's war. The aftermath of both the wars is inked in bloodshed and fewer lessons were learned and taught to the next generation of governmental elites.

Pakistan's acceptance by the world was relatively slower, making the task of looking for "friends" in the political play-land much tricky. The country immediately looked around for those who could assist in meeting the internal and external challenges hence leaving it with fewer options to choose from. Though the country's constitution espouses the fostering of friendly relations among and with all nations of the world, the aspect in reality begs to differ. Alliance is not formed blindly but Pakistan's vision at certain points has been blurry and it has failed to comprehend the long term corollary of any alliance. Mostly, events and individual preferences have been given more consideration over logical and feasible options of forming a coalition. The lack of competent visionaries in the ministry of foreign dealings made Pakistan pay the ultimate price, first in countering the Soviet invasion and later in the name of war on terror which obstructed its exploration in the clever ring of global politics. The compliance to the United States of America backfired at many occasions which gradually made Pakistan withdraw from its up-close position with the U.S.

### **Re-adjusting alliance:**

As the notion of U.S as a world power started to deteriorate, its spell on Pakistan lifted. This was the time when Pakistan started to mend its ties with China and other safe bets were played. Regional comradeship became more essential for maintaining peace and order in the country and reimbursement for lost economic ties with Asian countries saw a fresh start. National interests are a core to a country's survival hence every country befriends a state that benefits the nation as a whole. The U.S – Indo intimacy and the duo's mutual aversion for Pakistan have done some unintentional favors to the country. Though Pakistan is yet to cheer up Putin, the military dealings have seen a major breakthrough. A formal meeting between the two head of states seals the pact of union, both on verbal and visual fronts of the world; this however, is yet to be

experienced by Pakistan. Pakistan needs to send a warm invitation to the Russian president and move beyond past remorse. But Pakistan needs to keep in mind that if the invitation is responded in a positive, the U.S. whimpering and treats of cutting off ties with Pakistan will be like writing on the wall. If the later mentioned scenario unfolds, it will test Pakistan's true ability to withstand external pressure and uphold its right as a sovereign state to guest any other nation on its soil. Exercising the "friends-with- benefit" rule, Pakistan to a certain extent, can neutralize the growing and mischievous influence of India and the U.S. while returning China and Russia the favor.

This re-adjustment of alliance by Pakistan, if maintained will have a significant impact on the international image of the country. By having China and Russia at its side, Pakistan can put up a stronger front in United Nations over the long pending issue of Kashmir and matters of cross broader interference. More passion on part of the Pakistani establishment is required to rekindle its ties with SAARC members and the European nations. Although, not much can be expected by such visits, it facilitates the normal flow of diplomatic functions between the countries and acts as a ventilator in times of misunderstandings. Pakistan is located in the paradise of the region, from the warm seas to the highest peaks; the China- Pak- Soviet trio can connect most of the regional states together in all terms. The odds of reaping the fruits of such a formation can attract other countries to socialize with Pakistan.

#### **Afghanistan – a troubled neighbor:**

After the NATO – U.S. forces made their exit from Afghanistan, the country has seen a staggering dysfunction of the newly elected government. Pakistan welcomed the new in-charge of the neighbor and extended the hand of cooperation at all levels. The internal turmoil of Kabul is still a challenge that the Afghan establishment is struggling to cope with. This has become a headache for Pakistan, as the land is still being used as a safe haven by the terrorists that are being aided by India. Pakistan still hosts a number of Afghan citizens, something that the Afghan government has never been thankful for and instead has returned this brotherly gesture by shaking hands with the enemy, while Pakistan's only motive was to help in the rehabilitation of the country. Pakistan needs to see a stable Afghanistan, on which the government can rely on in terms of stopping the export of Indian trained terrorists and groups like ISIS. The Afghans need to guarantee that their closeness with India will not be used against Pakistan which unfortunately has not been the case so far.

**The Dull Cuban knot:**

Since, Pakistan was a close ally to the U.S, its relation with Cuba has been rather a dull one. But in the recent news, the United States and Cuba have started anew; Pakistan too, needs to revisit the country and work towards additional diplomatic cooperation and visits. It is very essential for Pakistan to learn from the past mistakes of cutting away other options in the name of loyalty. The normalization with Cuba will not only send the U.S a message, but will also display Pakistan's maturity in terms of its foreign dealings.

**Why Iran needs to be kept in check?**

While the U.S opened up to Cuba, it also revisited its "death-to-America" chanting mate. This should really wake Pakistan up in regards of never letting its diplomatic side sleepy. One wrong and late decision by Pakistan can later become an increased worry for Pakistan. Though the relationship between the two countries is not that pressured, Pakistan needs to keep a check on Iran from time to time. The once promised gas pipe-line is one such example of lost interest between both the states. This lack of foreseeing the circumstances by Pakistan makes one question the hype created regarding the Pak – China economic corridor. This is a visible flaw in Pakistani establishment that needs urgent repair. Similar to the case of Afghanistan, Pakistan needs to take the necessary precautionary measures to ensure that Iran does not get involved with those who wish to harm Pakistan. A slightest hint of easiness by Pakistan in such matters will result in another internal sectarian dilemma, which is already fueled by few Arab states.

The past mistakes made by Pakistan have already cost the country heavy losses. The strategic challenges faced by Pakistan can be defeated if the government pays serious attention to the ever changing political scenarios of the world. The military cooperation between states is just one aspect of foreign dealings, but still most of the responsibility lies with the civil government's alertness and those in it, to plan and implement sound and long lasting alliance with other countries.