

# The US-India Nexus In South Asia Against China: A Case Study Of Sponsoring Terrorism In Pakistan And Afghanistan

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## Abstract

*This study navigates the complex labyrinth of geopolitics in South Asia while zeroing in on the dynamic interplay between United States and India. It also analyses its ripple effects on Pakistan and Afghanistan, all while China's influence looms large. A spotlight is cast on the strategic machinations employed by US and India to exert control over events in these countries. Special focus is on the use of terrorism as a tool to counter Chinese ascendancy. Through in-depth case studies of key terrorist organizations, this research sheds light on the intricate dance of interests, proxies, and power struggles that shape the regional landscape. Will the US-India nexus successfully thwart China's advances? Or will the house of cards come tumbling down? Only time and foresight will answer these questions that seeks deliberation.*

**Keywords:** *US-India partnership, China's rise, terrorism, proxy warfare, South Asia, Pakistan, Afghanistan.*

## 1.1 Introduction

The strategic partnership between United States and India is a holds critical role in South Asia, bearing the goal to counterbalance China's growing influence. This study examines the intricate web of complexities and underlying intentions of this partnership and its impact on Pakistan and Afghanistan. The historical perspectives evolving overtime in context of relations between United States and China, the evolving relations between US and India and the complexity of India-China relations is explored. The study also probes into the deep-seated rivalry between Pakistan-India and concerns of South Asian emerging super power, China, regarding the US-India pact.

Through case studies of specific terrorist groups and entities, the use of terrorism as a strategic tool by US-India is also examined. The aim of this study is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamic and evolving ecosystem at the core of the US-India alliance and how it impacts the balance of power in the region with regards to terrorist activities in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The intricate nature of US-India nexus calling in for varied factors in play is highlighted under the umbrella of use of terrorism and ethically questionable activities in the region in order to achieve the goals that are neither long term sustainable nor in the biggest favour of the region and its prosperity.

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## **1.2 A Historical Synopsis of the US-India Nexus's Convergence in South Asia**

The emergence of South Asia, as a decisive battleground in the global battle for hegemony and dominance between United States and China. In order to counter the growing influence of China in the region, US has strategically fortified its relations with India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Nonetheless, the partnership between US and India has this partnership has also ushered in the power maximizing paradigm by using terrorism in order to sabotage China's growing footprint and influence in South Asia.

With the aim to impair political and economic interests of China, The US-India nexus has been alleged to support terrorist organizations in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. This has created a intricate puzzle of overlapping interest between united states and India leading to use of terrorism as a means of countering China's rising influence in the region.

There will be profound implications of rivalry between US and China in South Asian region as well as the whole world. The strong presence of US in South Asia will help US to shape the future of the region according to its own political and economic gains and interest. In case China becomes the dominant power in this region, it will be a major setback for US in its claim as super power of the entire world.

It is crucial to deeply analyse and dissect the global strategic dynamics at play in South Asian region in context of prevailing terrorism that may be supported by key players who benefit from unrest in the area. This calls for an intricate approach towards addressing these terrorist activities and their major supporters taking into account the major motivations and interests that act as a catalyst.

### **1.2.1 US Interests in Afghanistan**

The mineral resources, the trade routes and most of all the ability to counter China's rise in the region, US holds many key strategic interests in Afghanistan. Washington has risen concerns over China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and multiple infrastructure projects in Central Asia, including Afghanistan. These may give China, the access to Afghan mineral resources as well as political influence in the region.

The support of US-India nexus to terrorist organizations and entities in Pakistan and Afghanistan have been claimed at multiple occasions. This sheds light on the subterranean concerns connected to sabotage China's prosperity as progress to being an economic power that pose threats to US-India nexus and their agendas. It is highly crucial to address these claims and it remains crucial to address these claims and to gauge the role of terrorism in the geographical and political dynamics of South Asia.

US has been accused of supporting terrorism in the region in effort to limit the influence of China in the region meanwhile balancing its interest on Afghanistan. These allegations require subtle examination keeping the intricate involvement of motivations and interest that underpin policy of US. A comprehensive approach is needed to tackle terrorism and factors providing the scaffolding to strengthen their own interest and motives, encompassing dimensions of global and regional perspectives

### **1.2.2 US-China Relations: A Historical and Contemporary Perspective**

Having common as well as competing interest, US and China relationship can be categorized as a very complex one. China views US as the biggest obstacle in way of its international ascendancy and dominance. US had been accused of trying to use multiple ways and platforms to limit China's influence and growth. The Quad alliance and presence of US military on Asia-Pacific is also seen as an endeavour to encircle China. US has also reported the human rights issues in China in a perspective that has been highly criticised

where China has viewed such acts as interference in its internal issues that are more of political and inhouse nature.

China has taken substantial measures to be economically independent and boost its diplomatic ties as well as military capabilities. The competition arising the region raises the concerns of proxy groups trying to advance their interest by use of terrorism or like activities that are rated as unethical. This signifies the need of regional cooperation and collaboration with a shared vested interest of sustaining regional stability.

US has been accused by China for unwanted support of terrorism in China, particularly in the Uyghur-majority region of Xinjiang. Using the tool of human rights and rule of democracy, US has been accused of meddling in the affairs of the Uyghur people for decades. With genuinely non-existent concern for the Uyghur people and their rights, US shows support for them only for its own interests. It is important to mention that Xinjiang is not only rich in oil and mineral resources but it is also China's largest natural gas-producing region. By supporting Uyghur separatist movement, US wants to exploit the resources of the province and weaken China.

US has also been encouraging a terrorist group in China named East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) that aims to create an independent state of East Turkestan in Xinjiang. ETIM was removed by US from its list of terrorist organizations in 2018 to show its support to the movement although the organization has been responsible for many violent attacks in Xinjiang and other parts of China

The Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act, passed by US, calls for Sanctions against China and highly reproaches China's policy in Xinjiang. Using this Act, funding is provided to Uyghur groups and media outlets. Uyghur refugees and asylum seekers are also encouraged by US under this Act. Based on accusations of blatant meddling, China has rejected the act and called it interference in its internal affairs violating the international law.

US interference in Hong Kong claiming it to be supporting the movement of democracy has also been seen as an interference by China. This movement started as a pro-democracy movement in 2019 with a stance against the proposed extradition bill allowing suspects to be sent for trials to mainland China. This movement later added on its demands of having democracy, more autonomy for Hong Kong.

China has been criticized by US for its actions in Hong Kong and has supported the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong. Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act was signed in 2019 by US President Donald Trump that imposes sanctions on entities or countries that undermine Hong Kong's autonomy and requires annual review of Hong Kong's autonomy. This Act supports the right to protest and freedom of expression. China, flourishing under its authoritarian rule, has rejected the Act as flagrant involvement in its sovereignty and a serious provocation. As per this Act, Asset freezes and Visa restrictions are imposed on those involved in weakening Hong Kong's autonomy and freedom.

An executive order was issued in 2020 by US President Joe Biden which banned export of any kind of sensitive US technology to Hong Kong and revoked the preferential trade status of Hong Kong. China, in return, imposed sanctions on US officials and lawmakers and also on organizations supporting the Hong Kong issues.

The US-China rivalry is likely to be one of the most defining geopolitical relationships of the 21st century. The two countries have a number of shared interests, but they also have a number of competing interests. The relationship is likely to be characterized by both cooperation and competition in the years to come.

### 1.2.3 India-China Relations: A Complex History

The complex relationship between India and China consists of harmony as well as conflict with military confrontations at several occasions, territorial disputes and contending interest in South Asia and also in Indian Ocean. India's interest and status is challenged by emergence of China as a global superpower while China also supports development and security of Pakistan. China also supports Pakistan on its stance on Kashmir issue. The growing presence of China is seen as a threat by India and in order to fortify its own position and status in the region, India has made some strategic moves. These include making relations with other countries stronger, multilateral forum participations and also increasing its investments in military capabilities and development of infrastructures. China and India have history of war and the prevailing tensions pose danger of escalation keeping in mind the nuclear weapon capabilities of both countries.

Apart from cross-border tensions with China, India also remains cautious of the ambitious strategic plans of China in the region along with its nuclear assets and capabilities. India sees China's economic support to Pakistan particularly in China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and also in its military support to Pakistan as a threat to its interest and security. China's security interactions with Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Burma and Nepal are also seen by India as a great concern in diminish<sup>9</sup>njg its influence in the region. China investing in infrastructure projects in these countries along with port facilities especially in Sri Lanka makes India fearful of potential dual-use implications and threats.

The future of India China relations rests on the constructive resolutions of conflicts between both countries. They should respect sensitivities of each other along with respecting core interest meanwhile nurturing a respectful and beneficial relationship.

### 1.2.4 Pakistan-India Relations

Originating back to the partition of India and Pakistan from British Rule, the historical backdrop of both countries is bulging with resentment and animosity. Marked by enduring suspicion and hostility, Pakistan India partition is tarnished by three wars between the two countries..

Pakistan posits that India supports and sponsors the terrorist organizations and groups in Pakistan in efforts to destabilize the country. Pakistan has claimed that India funds these in-border terrorist groups including Baloch separatists and the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and also puts forth evidence that points to involvement of India in terrorism on Pakistan's soil.

The shared history of Pakistan and India cultivates the claims of Pakistan on involvement of India in supporting Pakistan's enemies in their shared history. In 1971, East Bengal separatist movement in East Pakistan was supported by India leading to the birth of Bangladesh. India's role in initiating Kargil war in 1999 was also claimed by Pakistan although Pakistani forces occupied Indian territory in Kashmir.

India has also allegedly supported Baloch Separatist Movement which is a struggle of independence within Balochistan province of Pakistan. Numerous attacks have been made on Security forces of Pakistan, Civilians and on Chinese Funded projects. These Chinese funded projects are part of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) comprising of road networks, railway lines and pipelines all connecting China to Arabian Sea which India categorizes as a threat to its regional interests. It has been repeatedly asserted by Pakistan that India wants to disrupt CPEC projects by supporting Baloch separatists.

The solid evidence of India's support in finances and materials to various regional terrorist organizations has been presented by Pakistan at various platforms. Pakistan has claimed

that India has funded terrorist organizations like Jamaat ul Ahrar, Bloch Liberation Army, and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan for its own vested interests. Among many pieces of evidences are details of contacts between fugitive Pakistani militants operating from Afghanistan and Indian intelligence operatives and diplomats, banking transactions, documents and audio recordings all proving India's involvement in terrorist activities in Pakistan. Indian Intelligence operations via network of Indian missions across southern and eastern Afghanistan were also unveiled.

India's alleged backing of terrorism in Pakistan provides the basis for tension between two countries and Pakistan has shown credible evidence to substantiate its claim against India. In contrast, India's concerns and claims are viewed as unjustified and unfounded on its involvement in Balochistan.

The objectives of Indian in supporting and cultivating show the desperation and intensity of its concern in favour of rendering its own interests. The unrest in Pakistan helps India divert attention from in-house problems and issues like farmer's protest or human right violations in Kashmir. India's main agenda of action revolves around sabotaging China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that signifies improved relations and ties between Pakistan and China building a strong partnership between the two. India is also aiming to isolate Pakistan by perusing diplomatic pressure on neighbouring nations like Afghanistan, Iran and Sri Lanka and covert operations in these countries. India is ready to support any entity if it holds a promise of creating unrest in Pakistan and control China's growing regional influence.

### **1.3 US-India Nexus**

India and United States share a plethora of values and interest focusing on enlarging the pie and reaping the mutual benefits. United States categorizes India as an important partner keeping in view India's rapid economic growth, standing in future of South Asian region and large demographic footprint. The infrastructure development, military collaborations, energy and economic cooperation drives the partnership between India and China.

The joint military exercises, sharing of Intelligence and important information and agreements like COMCASA (Communication Compatibility and security agreement), BECA (Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geospatial Intelligence) and GSOMIA (General Security of Military Information Agreement) act as mechanisms to foster the collaboration between two countries, enhancing defence capabilities and staying updates on security issues.

The major motivation of India in the partnership with United States is to maintain a competitive edge in the region with boosted economic growth. The political benefits that come with alliance grants India with increased influence in Indo-Pacific region and in global affairs too. Although there are much benefits that India can reap out of this alliance yet the risk of dependence on economy of united states and decline of domestic industries may be crucial risks involved, pressing India to tread carefully in this partnership to ensure safekeeping of its own interest.

Several factors come into play in evaluating the motivations subsidiary to the support for terrorist activities in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and China, The pursuit for seeking access to valuable resources, geographical and political rivalries, domestic political scenarios, ideological differences, and economic interests compositely influence involvement of India and the United States' in this arena.

The conflicting counter interest of India and Pakistan, both being Nuclear powers, may feed to motivate India in supporting terrorism as a means of advancing own interest and agendas and weakening the rival. The biggest source of attraction for such acts are the rich soils of

Pakistan and Afghanistan pregnant with oil, gas and minerals, In this context, the role of public opinion and support, domestic political scenarios, elections and spreading extremism poses a concern.

The global power struggle with China is a crucial instigator for India and US as both want to counter China's influence in the region. China's rapid growth in economic as well as military terms has made US and India alert and cautious feeding to heighten the tendency to their involvement in dynamics of region.

### **1.3.1 Pakistan on US-India Nexus**

The growing partnership between India and United States has developed concerns on Pakistan's front who takes it as an endeavour to surround and compromise its sovereignty. Pakistan's suspicion is further exacerbated by the evidence-based concern of US-India nexus being found supporting and funding terrorist activities within its borders.

The underlying reasons of unease at Pakistan's end are complex and multidimensional. The strategic partnership between US and India signifies a 'significant power player' which poses threat to Pakistan's sovereignty and security. This alliance between both is also seen as standing right in parallel to China which creates a complex situation for Pakistan placing it on crossroads given its close ties with China and also being member of Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

US-India nexus has also been accused by Pakistan to be supporting and backing the separatists groups within its borders with persistent claims that India supports the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) which is a dissident faction operating in Baluchistan province of Pakistan. The accusations of provision of intelligence and funding to BLA by US have also been made.

To counter the US-India nexus, Pakistan has taken some important measures and strategic movements. Firstly, Pakistan had strengthened its relationship with China by placing economic and security agreements, CPEC being a part of these agreements. Secondly, Pakistan has tried to sourish the ties with other regional powers like Russia and Iran in order to keep the option open and reduce dependence solely on US and meanwhile mitigating pressure coming from external powers.

Pakistan has enhanced its defefnse budget by a marked number in order to augment its military capabilities meanwhile deploying its army on borders with India and Afghanziatn both. The latest rule of Visa for Afghan nationals and increased security and scrutiny of foreigners functions as preventive measure against any possible aggression from India on the borders and use of Afghan land by US-India nexus as launch pad for attacks in Pakistan

Pakistan has to tread carefully and find a precarious equilibrium to protect its safety and interests against the challenge and threat posed by US-India nexus. It is important that Pakistan analysis its position in the region carefully and plans its strategies and policies keeping long term interest in mind meanwhile ensuring regional stability and peace.

### **1.3.2 China's Concerns Over the US-India Nexus**

The growing bond between United States and India has evoked apprehension in China. This alliance poses threats to China's economic and strategic plans both short and long term. Manifested and nourished through military build ups, economic rivalry and territorial disputes, the coalition between two countries will not only heighten tensions between US and China will also intensify stress between China and India. China sees the security agreement between US and India as an effort to undermine China's military advantage in the region and create hurdles of novel nature. This agreement leads to joint military exercises, weapon sales, intelligence sharing which can be major security threat to China.

China's dominance in South Asia in terms of trade and investment might decrease due to economic cooperation between US and India effecting China's economic as well as political standing in region and the world overall. US and India, by strengthening their ties, may become more influential and powerful in sharing policies of the region at China's expense leading to exclusion of China from major regional and global decision making processes

As per China, The US-India partnership is seen as an attempt to obstruct its ambitions and goals in Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This large scale infrastructure development initiative will lead to globally expand China's economic and geopolitical influence. The US-India nexus is perceived by China as a threat to its plans for regional economic integration. The support of US-India nexus for anti-China forces puts a stamp on apprehensions of China as the nexus has been supportive of Vietnam and Philippines and activists within China.

Several measures have been taken by China as precaution against effects of US-India collusion including strengthening relations with Pakistan, Improving ties with Russia. Increasing military budgets and deploying its army on borders with India. The Quad formed by US-India nexus has been accused by China to be formed for mere reason of containing China's rise and supporting rivals of China in region challenging authoritarian political system of China. Significant challenges are posed by US-India partnership for China's national interests and regional influence which cannot be unseen.

### **1.3.3 Afghanistan's Complex Relationship with the US-India Nexus**

Afghanistan has also shown concerns on growing ties between India and United States. Afghanistan's government has accused US and India of threatening regional peace and stability for their own interest. US and India have also been accused by Afghan government for supporting Afghanistan's terrorist groups that include Taliban.

By examining the varied perspectives of Afghan people, the complexity and gravity of situation becomes apparent. There is a divide among Afghan population among which some believe US-India nexus may bring stability and prosperity yet the others view it as a threat to sovereignty and stability in Afghanistan.

US and India have been accused of Conspiring against Afghanistan by Taliban and this act has been condemned by them many times. It is important to remember that Taliban has not only attacked Afghan Security Forces and civilians multiple times but also have targeted interest of China in Afghanistan, Afghanistan has accused US of turning a 'blind eye' to Taliban and their activities after fleeing from the country and if not taken care of, will lead to resurgence of Taliban threatening China's BRI project in Afghanistan.

Claims of funding and training of Taliban by India have been made by Afghanistan but are denied by India. In 2023, bombing of the Wazir Akbar Khan Mosque in Kabul, in which six people were killed and several others were injured, was also attributed to Indian involvement.

It is worth noting that there are reports of USAID-funded NGOs being used as spys for CIA in Afghanistan. Concerns and criticisms from various quarters have been raised about these reports stressing the sensitive nature of international cooperation and need for transparency and accountability in humanitarian funded projects too.

Partnership between US and India remains a disputed and controversial subject in Afghanistan. There are multiple and diverse perspectives and opinions related to this partnership and its impact on country. The accusations by Afghan government as well as Taliban gives way to a challenge of balancing national sovereignty with international cooperation. Open dialogue and collaborative efforts towards trust building and developing shared vision of regional stability is the only way to address these concerns and challenges.

#### **1.4 Chinese Interests and Engagement in Pakistan and Afghanistan**

The strategic interests of economic, security and political considerations drive involvement of China in Pakistan and Afghanistan. In economic terms, China considers Pakistan and Afghanistan as key partners in its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). BRI connects China with Asia, Africa and Europe. The flagship project of BRI in Pakistan named, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), involves an investment of \$62 billion in infrastructure, including roads, railways, power plants, and industrial zones in Pakistan enroute CPEC. The highlight of China's energy and trade strategy is development of Gwadar port, located on Arabian Sea, that will provide a secure route to oil and gas imports from Middle East to China.

Security concerns are also a source of motivation in China's engagement in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The ongoing conflict in Afghanistan and presence of terrorist groups like Taliban have been seen by China as a potential threat to stability in region. China's decided strategy to promote stability and security in reason calls for investing in infrastructure and industry in region meanwhile also expanding its own political influence and military power. Certain geopolitical considerations also drive China's engagement in Pakistan and Afghanistan. It is rather a counterbalancing effort by China against US-India nexus, by seeking strong partnership and relations with Pakistan and Afghanistan. China's involvement in the region provides it with a strategic foothold that is to be used in exerting pressure on India and other countries in the region.

Apart from the above-mentioned projects, China has also initiated other key projects in Pakistan and Afghanistan. These include development of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in Pakistan. These zones are developed in expectations to attract foreign investment and boost the country's economy. Other project include Hydropower, agriculture, Education projects in Pakistan, Lithium mining in Afghanistan, Oil and gas exploration in Afghanistan, Power projects and Infrastructure projects in Afghanistan, such as road construction, bridge construction, and airport construction.

A range of economic, security, and geopolitical interests is the driving force for China's engagement in Pakistan and Afghanistan. China, through its investments in infrastructure, industry and natural resources with hopes to not only promote stability and security in the region but also moving forward with its own strategic objectives.

#### **1.5 Chinese Engagement in Pakistan and Afghanistan: A Negative Sum-game for the US-India**

In connection to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the governments of China and Pakistan have raised concerns about the concentrated effort by US-India nexus to obstruct China's growing regional influence. These concerns are rooted in several interrelated factors that have caused apprehension.

Firstly, the major source of contention has been India's rather very vocal opposition to CPEC project of China. India posits that as CPEC traverses through Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, it being a disputed territory cannot be used by third party for any economic reasons. Also this belief is extended by claims of India that CPEC might empower China with an undue level of influence in Pakistan and the broader South Asian region

Secondly, China perceives the deepening partnership between the United States and India as a purposeful confinement approach by US and India against China's rise. The enhanced ties of US with India in diplomatic, economic and military terms has further nurtured the concern of China.

Moreover, US poses strong opposition against Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) calling it a manoeuvre of China to entrap the region in debt and expand its military influence. These



apprehensions have strengthened China's anxiety over growing confluence of interest of US-India nexus.

The 2017 joint declaration by the United States and India expressing their opposition to the CPEC, marking an official stance against the project, stands as substantial evidence for these concerns. Indo-Pacific strategy was launched in 2018 which has also been viewed as a 'coordinated response' against China's growing influence in region. US-India ties have been further enhanced through incorporating the sale of advanced weaponry and the signing of defence agreements.

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, commonly referred to as the Quad, adds another dimension to this evolving landscape of South Asian region. The Quad project was established in 2017 and revitalized in 2017, involving United States, India, Japan, and Australia. Quad is perceived as direct response to China's growing regional footprint and influence and its increase in military presence in region.

A series of terrorist activities in Pakistan, targeting Chinese nationals and Chinese projects, lies in the backdrop of these concerns. Some of these incidents have led to allegations of involvement by India or the India-US nexus such as Karachi suicide bombing in 2021 in which a suicide bomber targeted a bus carrying Chinese engineers in Karachi. This attack of terrorism resulted in nine fatalities and 13 injuries. Pakistan accused India of supporting the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) which was found to be the group responsible for the attack. United States also condemned the incident and encouraged to investigate the involvement of foreign actors.

In addition to Karachi attack in 2021, other events like the 2008 Gwadar bombing and the 2021 Dasu attack have further fueled suspicions of involvement of US-India nexus in terrorist activities in region. Gwadar bombing in 2008 claimed the lives of three Chinese engineers, and resulted in Pakistan accusing India of supporting the BLA. Dasu attack in 2021, where a bus carrying Chinese workers was targeted and resulted in death of 13 Chinese and nine Pakistanis. Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) took its responsibility and cited it as retaliation for China's support of the Pakistani government's crackdown on militants. Pakistan accused India of supporting the TTP.

There is credible evidence and substance in concerns enunciated by China and Pakistan regarding US-India nexus merely designed to counter China's influence in the CPEC and the BRI. The official declarations and the formation of strategic partnerships like the Quad paves a way to strengthening the notion that this nexus is developed in response to China's expanding regional footprint. These developments in the ties in region have far-reaching implications for the complex regional dynamics with intersecting and competing interests.

### **1.6 The Diminishing Lines of Ethics**

In "The Prince," Niccolò Machiavelli famously argued that "the end justifies the means" when it comes to political power struggles. He placed the ultimate goal of politics to achieve stability and maintain, in fact, maximize power and in order to do so any means can be used even it needs to be resorting to morally and ethically questionable actions. According to Machiavelli, effectiveness precedes morality in case the outcomes of one's actions are in shape of maintaining one's power.

Throughout history, this line of thinking has been very influential in shaping the policies and practices of many countries and political leaders. United states, historically, has employed same strategy during cold war with Soviet Union and now is using the same against the emerging powers in South Asia that do not stand on its right side

### 1.6.1 Using NGOs as Spy

Questions about the ethics and legality have been raised for the controversial practice by US government making use of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for gathering information and promoting its own political interest. The highlights of the issue being the complex relationship between NGOs, governments, and international organizations with an example of case of Shakil Afridi who was a Pakistani doctor and aid worker who worked for the CIA to gather intelligence on Osama bin Laden's whereabouts.

Afridi was arrested by Pakistani authorities and sentenced to 33 years in prison for treason. He was part of this controversy for his involvement with CIA and USAID. His arrest sparked a diplomatic row between Islamabad and Washington while US government had previously denied its involvement in this case but later on did admit that Afridi had worked for them for sharing of information. This case raised concerns about the use of humanitarian aid and development projects as covers for gathering intelligence and political interference.

Another example of the US-Indian Nexus to use the local NGO's working in Pakistan for the collection of sensitive information in which the Author of the article was the eye witness himself. In 2012, the author was working with an NGO named "Muslim Aid" who's working on education project in Refugee camp situated in Jalozai area in Nowshera District. The Author was working as a Deputy Project Director with the NGO and the main task was to looking after the administrations of some 12 Schools running by the NGO for the children's of refugees belonged to Waziristan and Afghanistan. One fine day, in September 2012, I was called for a meeting to the head office with a delegation of the UNICEF team. It was very surprising for me to saw that the five member team of the UNICEF consisted of three US members and the other two members belonged to Indian origin and that during the entire meeting their focus were on the gathering of sensitive information regarding the refugees belonged to Waziristan Agency and Afghan refugees living at that time in the refugees Camp. They made it a necessary requirement and pre-condition to provide the information first and after that they will provide funds for the said education project.

Apart from the above two examples, there have also been other instances of NGOs working with the US government or receiving funding from USAID. The primary purpose of these activities was to gather intelligence or promote US interests abroad. For example, in 2019, it was reported that the US Agency for International Development (USAID) had awarded a \$49 million contract to a private company called "The Asia Foundation,". This company has been accused of working as a front organization previously for the CIA in past regime change operations.

In the relationships between NGOs, governments, and international organizations, it is importance to have transparency and accountability in the relationships between NGOs, governments, and international organizations. It must be ensured that humanitarian aid programs and development programs running under NGOs umbrella must not be used as covers for intelligence gathering or political interference. Also must be ensured that local communities be not put in danger or risk for political gains of some entity. The reputation of NGOs can be damaged on their use for illegal and unethical purposes and their ability to provide essential services to vulnerable populations will be undermined.

Using NGOs as tools for gaining political influence and for espionage raises many questions and concerns about US Foreign policy legitimacy and how it impacts global stability. The covert means employed by US government in order to achieve its interest can create mistrust. It can also create resentment among local populations and foreign governments thus harming interests of US and international cooperation.

The need for accountability and greater transparency in relationships between NGOs, governments, and international organizations is highlighted by cases of Shakil Afridi and

other NGOs working with the US government or USAID. Using humanitarian aid and development projects as cover for intelligence gathering and political interference raises ethical concerns and can have long term negative consequences for local communities and international relations. It is vital to ensure that such programs are used for their intended purpose and not exploited for political gains of political or economical powers.

### **1.6.2 Sponsoring Terrorism as a Tool**

Nations have employed the use of terrorism as means of power maximization in order to achieve diverse political objectives including weakening their adversaries, projecting greater influence, accessing more resources and coercing compliance. This strategy does involve directly supporting terrorist groups and organizations and providing them with resources and funds or providing them safe havens.

US-India Nexus symbolizes close alliance between United States and India. It has increasingly focused on leveraging terrorism to advance its geopolitical interests. These interest are vested particularly in countering China's growing influence in South Asia. Many allegations have arisen regarding their support for terrorist groups such as the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) as tools for power maximization and political gains.

It is a perilous practice to use terrorism for power maximization. As it may result in widespread violence and instability. US-India Nexus must reconsider its support for such groups in South Asia in order to promote regional stability and engage in collaborative efforts with other nations.

#### **1.6.2.1 The Case of Kulbhushan Jadhav**

The case of Kulbhushan Jadhav, an Indian national, is a disputed matter between Pakistan and India. Pakistan arrested Jadhav in 2016 and charged him with sabotage, espionage and waging war against Pakistan on basis of which Pakistani military court sentenced him to death in 2017. Pakistan has provided evidence of Jadhav's confessions, but India denies all charges and claims he was kidnapped and subjected to a sham trial.

In 2019, India consular was granted access to Jadhav by Pakistan, to whom he reiterated his confession. Pakistan allowed Jadhav to file a review petition in the Islamabad High Court, but India declined to do so. Later another opportunity was offered to India to appoint a lawyer for Jadhav, but India did not respond. Pakistan views the Jadhav case as an example of Indian interference in Balochistan and has taken necessary and stringent steps to protect national security. Pakistan vows to resolve the case of Jhadav justly and fairly and urges India to cooperate and allow Jadhav a fair trial.

#### **1.6.2.2 Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) and Allegations of External Support**

Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), an armed separatist group striving for the independence of Balochistan, has been implicated in a series of terrorist attacks. These attacks include 2018 assault on the Chinese consulate in Karachi and the 2019 attack on a Pearl Continental hotel in Gwadar. Financial or logistical support to the BLA is denied by both India and the United States.

Nevertheless, various claims have surfaced that claim that India and the US are funding and supporting BLA. The evidence in support of these claims includes several noteworthy incidents:

In 2010, leaked US diplomatic cables indicated discussions among US officials about potentially supporting the BLA as a means to "balkanize" Pakistan and weaken its nuclear capabilities. In 2013, Richard Holbrooke, a former US diplomat and special envoy to

Afghanistan and Pakistan, asserted in his book "To End a War" that financial assistance to BLA has been extended by US since 2006. In the same year, the Pakistani military claimed to have intercepted and caught a shipment of Indian weapons and ammunition that were intended for supporting BLA.

Beyond these pieces of evidence, additional factors suggest the plausibility of India and US supporting the BLA. Both nations have a history of backing separatist and insurgent groups in Pakistan. India has faced accusations of supporting the Balochistan Republican Army (BRA) and the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) and US has been accused of aiding the BLA and the PTM.

It is apparent that both India and US have interests in potentially destabilizing Pakistan while India's enduring rivalry with Pakistan and US's perception of Pakistan as a regional threat contribute to this motivation. India and the US could aim to destabilize Pakistan and weaken its influence in the region, by backing BLA.

Another compelling factor is the desire to access Balochistan's abundant natural resources, including oil, gas, and minerals. Balochistan's resource wealth makes it an attractive proposition for both nations. By supporting the BLA and without relying on cooperation from the Pakistani government, India and the US could potentially secure access to these resources. Substantial implications for the conflict in Balochistan and the broader region are carried for allegations of Indian and US support for the BLA. If these allegations are substantiated, it would indicate that India and the US are actively engaged in undermining Pakistan's stability and regional standing. IT also signifies that both countries are willing to support violent separatist movements to further their geopolitical objectives. The conflict in Balochistan is likely to escalate leading to heightened violence and instability in the region.

a thorough investigation is warranted , given the gravity of these allegations which if proven true carry ramifications on the Balochistan conflict and the broader region that would be profound and far-reaching.

### **1.6.2.3 The Case of Tahreek Taliban Pakistan (TTP)**

Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is a terrorist group that has been attacking Pakistan since 2007. TTP has been held responsible for numerous fatalities and destruction, including attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul in 2009, Peshawar school massacre in 2014, and 2012 shooting of Malala Yousafzai.

India and the US have been accused of supporting the TTP by Pakistani officials. Many confessions are cited from militants and intelligence agency reports. Mullah Fazlullah was the former leader of the TTP. He, in 2015, admitted that the group was receiving funding and support from India and the US. Pakistan's Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif, in 2017, revealed that to destabilize Pakistan, India and the US were supporting the TTP and other militant groups in Afghanistan.

In addition, Ahsan Iqbal, Pakistan's Interior Minister, in 2018, said that India and the US were behind a suicide attack on a rally in Peshawar. This suicide attack killed a prominent politician along with 20 other civilians. He claimed that TTP carried out the attack with the help of foreign intelligence agencies.

Ehsanullah Ehsan, a former spokesperson of TTP, also confessed in 2020 that funds and other assistance to the TTP militants is provided by Indian and Afghan intelligence agencies to fight Pakistan. He said that, in 2014, after Pakistan's military launched a major military campaign against TTP , as a result the relations between TTP and the intelligence agencies grew. He also claimed that TTP is charged a price for each attack on the trget provided by intelligence agencies to TTP.

There are serious implications for Pakistan and the region on allegations of Indian and US support for the TTP. If these allegations are found to be true, they suggest that India and the US are actively working to destabilize Pakistan and undermine its regional influence. Any rise in conflict in Pakistan is likely to lead to increased violence and instability in the region.

#### **1.6.2.4 The Case of Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP)**

Active in Afghanistan since 2015, Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) is a terrorist organization now operating also in areas of Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. ISKP is accused of carrying out several attacks on civilians, security forces, and government officials. As per its interpretation of Islamic law, ISKP seeks for a global caliphate under a single leader.

There have been accusations against United States that it is supporting ISKP but US denies these allegations. However, there is some evidence to support these claims as US government report in 2019 disclosed that ISKP was receiving funds from USAID, and there have been reports of US forces collaborating with ISKP fighters in Afghanistan.

Former Afghan intelligence chief Rahmatullah Nabil had also claimed that the US is backing ISKP to legalize its presence in Afghanistan and to pressurize Taliban and Afghan government. He also claimed that ammunition, weaponry, and intelligence is supplied to ISKP by US.

Former Pakistani senator Rehman Malik has also claimed that in order to create chaos in Afghanistan and undermine Pakistan's interests, India is supporting ISKP. He also alleged that India is using its consulates in Afghanistan for funneling funds, training, and weapons to ISKP.

Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid has accused the US of staging an ISKP attack on Kabul airport that resulted in over 170 casualties that included 13 US soldiers. He criticized US drone strike that mistakenly targeted an innocent family in Kabul instead of ISKP.

These allegations have significant implications for the Afghan conflict and they suggest that US may be actively involved in destabilizing Afghanistan and also willing to back terrorist organizations to eventually further its geopolitical objectives, aims and goal.

#### **1.6.2.5 The Case of Uzbekistan Islamic Movement**

Uzbekistan Islamic Movement (UIM) stands as a formidable Sunni Islamist militant organization forged in the crucible of 1991. UIM is driven by an unrelenting quest to unseat Uzbekistan's secular government and institute an Islamic state. Throughout its existence, this group has orchestrated a litany of assaults not only on Uzbekistan. It has also done so in neighbouring nations including Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Russia. UIM has garnered the ominous designation of a terrorist organization by prominent global entities that include United States, European Union, and United Nations.

China perceives UIM as a menacing spectre lurking at its doorstep, with a discerning gaze toward regional stability and security. UIM's troubling connections to notorious terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda and the Taliban have set off alarm bells within the corridors of power in Beijing. China also harbours a deep-seated unease over the UIM's relentless recruitment efforts that target Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang which is a province in western China bearing a substantial Uyghur population.

China has articulated suspicions of external involvement in the machinations of the Uzbekistan Islamic Movement (UIM). China, in 2002, levelled accusations against the United States, contending that it was lending support to the UIM. The aim was to upend the stability of Central Asia. At the same time, India found itself in the crossroads of China's

assertions bombed with allegations that it was backing the UIM as a countermeasure to Pakistan's influence in the region.

### 1.7 Conclusion

Terrorism and unethical ways may feed uncertainty but are not going to bring long-term peace, sustainable and effective outcomes. In order to prevent the financing of terrorist organizations and promote peaceful conflict resolution, US, India, and China must work together. Pakistan's progress is critical to regional stability and international community must support its efforts to address challenges and promote sustainable development.

A trilateral dialogue between the US, India, and China could address common challenges and concerns. These include trade, investment, and security. Also adding to this effort, economic cooperation, joint ventures, and trade agreements can be increased, and regional infrastructure projects can also be worked on together. Counter-terrorism cooperation can also be strengthened, and Pakistan's development can be supported in a constructive manner keeping sustainability in view. These nations can promote regional stability, security, and growth by working together.

US, India, and China should explore emerging field collaboration, such as renewable energy, technology, and innovation and Joint research and development initiatives, exchange programs for students and professionals, and partnerships between start-ups and entrepreneurs can be established. Innovation and entrepreneurship can create new economic growth and development opportunities by addressing the current global challenges like climate change and sustainable development.

In conclusion, the complex issue of US-India partnership and its impact on Pakistan and Afghanistan requires careful consideration of multiple factors. US, India, and China must acknowledge China's contributions to the global economy and abstain from funding dangerous activities like terrorism. These power players and nations can work together to create a new paradigm for regional relations. This paradigm must promote stability, security, and prosperity for all. It is up to their leaders to make a concerted and coordinated efforts towards building a brighter future for the region and its people.

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