

GRAND STRATEGIC PEACE IN CHINA-INDIA-PAKISTAN TRIANGLE

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Abstract

India, China and Pakistan are interlocked in a 'Strategic Triangle' of regional security paradigm. The three stake-holders have tremendous opportunities for furtherance of their national interests but also have a plethora of intertwined compulsions, vulnerabilities and fault-lines which in a way compel them to explore convergences in their grand strategies. The triangular relationship amongst the three qualifies the essential conditions as defined by the 'Triangular Relationship Theory'. The divergence and convergence of interests can make them find themselves in mutually hurting stalemate. The prospects of grand strategic stability and peace in this triangle rest on India's grand strategic option which is considered to be the core driver of the Asian security landscape. Pakistan and China will respond according to the resultant dynamics. The geo-political and geo-strategic environment is also creating space for manoeuvre and liberty of action for Russia to position itself favourably for the rediscovery of its lost global stature. However; Russia appears to be bogged down in the identity crisis of 'whether it belonged to Asia or Europe'; thus marring Russia's aims and objectives with ambiguity and uncertainty.

Key Words: *Strategic triangle, triangular relationship theory, mutually hurting stalemate, regional security paradigm, national interest.*

The triangular relationship amongst India, China and Pakistan almost qualify the three essential conditions as defined by the 'Triangular Relationship Theory'.¹

First Condition is that all the three countries of the strategic triangle should be global or regional powers or key strategic players in

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1 Liu Zongyi, "The China-India-US Relationship: Where it will Go?" Shanghai Institute for International Studies, 2011, accessed on May 21, 2012, http://www.siis.org.cn/en/zhuanli_view_en.aspx?id=10145.

their own right. Both China and India are the regional powers without any ambiguity. While Pakistan does not qualify to be a regional power in academic sense but certainly is a key strategic player of the regional security paradigm. Pakistan's strategic location in the Arabian sea; its relevance as a gateway to the Middle East, South Asia, China and the land-logged Central Asia; its potential to act as an energy grid or corridor from the Middle East and Central Asia as well as its status of being the only Islamic state with nuclear power status does make Pakistan a key strategic player of the Asian security landscape in its own right.

Second Condition is that the growth of each party's national power should not only be different in magnitude and direction but also in perception of the respective national interests, particularly with regard to national security. China's rapid growth and rising political clout in the region causes worries to India. China does not want India to grow strong enough and threaten China's leadership role in Asia. Similarly, the security of Pakistan is so crucial to China for its energy-security that it could be ready to walk extra miles in enabling Pakistan to safeguard its territorial integrity but certainly there would be limits to Chinese support. Therefore, China has invested heavily in Pakistan to keep India embroiled in a proxy conflict, albeit at the cost of regional development. Similarly Pakistan wants to continue strengthening its strategic relationship with China so that it could mitigate its security challenges emanating from India.

Third Condition is that each state should have a different attitude and mindset towards the other state in terms of history, ideology, culture and political system. In this regard, China and India represent altogether different civilization and culture as well as different economic and political systems (i.e. communism Vs capitalism and single-party Vs democracy). Similarly Pakistan was carved out of the Indian subcontinent on the basis of 'Two Nation Theory'.

Fourth Condition is that each bilateral relationship should have direct, indirect, covert or overt consequences for the third state. As for India-China relations, the most important aspects are the border problem, China-Pakistan relations and the Dalai Lama issue. Therefore, China-Pakistan relations have strategic implications for India-China as well as India-Pakistan relations. Similarly, a rapprochement between India and Pakistan will impinge upon the strategic relevance of Pakistan to China. On the other hand a strategic accommodation of national aspirations and interests between China and India would have strategic implications for Pakistan.

Therefore, the triangular relationship amongst the three states is not only complex but projects a sixty-years old China-Pakistan nexus

against India.² The nexus is expanding from strength to strength as elucidated by China's strategic co-operations with Pakistan in the field of conventional-military, nuclear and missile capabilities as well as from a host of strategic projects that China has undertaken in Pakistan, particularly the development of Gwadar port. The port is strategically located at the mouth of Arabian Gulf and world's energy life-line and has immense significance in the calculus of China's energy security and trade. Therefore the security of Pakistan is crucial to China who may be willing to reverse any strategic ill-design against the state of Pakistan provided Pakistan keeps itself viable and strategically relevant to China.

Convergence of Interests in China-India-Pakistan Triangle

In order to evaluate the prospects of Grand Strategic Peace in China-India-Pakistan Strategic Triangle, it is essential to focus on the convergence of interests, particularly between China and India-the two rivals for the leadership role in Asia. According to Mukul Sanwal, the difficulties between China and India reflect continuing attitudes rather than conflicting strategic goals; and the common interests between the two Asian giants outweigh their differences.³ The geographical issues that have been defining the strategic orientation of the relationship so far are now fading away, and are incrementally shifting towards a cooperative and accommodative framework. In the emerging multi-polar world, both China and India would have to find ways to accommodate each other, especially under the effect of three strategic shifts that are taking place in the contemporary global environment.

First Strategic Shift of power is happening from the U.S. to Asia as one of the driver of contemporary geopolitics. It is now up to India to collaborate with China and influence the future of Asia or be a strategic ally of the U.S.-NATO-Japan-Australia alliance to 'Contain China'.⁴

Second Strategic Shift is happening from the size of militaries to the growth of economies.⁵ This shift is obviously on the Asian side of the calculus. Chinese and Indian economies are not only demonstrating an impressive growth but they are becoming more and more

2 Brahma Chellaney, "The China-India-Pakistan Triangle: Scenarios for the 21st Century," *Ceri Strategy Paper*, no. 8 (Paris: SciencesPo, September 17, 2010), 1-2, accessed on March 3, 2013, http://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/sites/sciencespo.fr.ceri/files/n8_17092010.pdf

3 Mukul Sanwal, "The India-versus-China Debate: Asian Giants' Common Interests Outweigh Differences," *The Economic Times* (Indianapolis-USA), February 17, 2012, accessed on May 21, 2012, <http://www.defence.pk/forums/indian-defence/159695-india-versus-china-debate-asian-giants-common-interests-outweigh-diff.html>

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

complimentary. China is now India's largest partner in terms of trade. Trade volume between China and India has increased from only US \$5 billion in 2002 to the tune of US \$75.5 billion in 2011-12 and with an intended expansion to a figure of \$100 billion by the year 2015.⁶ Although there is a large difference between the Chinese and Indian economies but with an estimated addition of 110 million in India's workforce by the year 2020 as compared to only 20 million in China, (due to aging population) the growth of Indian economy could get closer to that of China's thus making the two as peers rather than rivals. The drivers of the peer relationship would also be shaped by water and energy for which both China and India would feel compelled to develop a joint strategic doctrine to secure their energy supplies through the Indian Ocean, develop a common approach to establish an Asian oil, gas and transportation grid rather than construing encirclement or containment of each other.⁷ Similarly, Tibet which was a barrier to a region and kept the Chinese and Indian civilization apart for thousands of the years is now linking China and India together.⁸ According to George Yeo, "Tibet is a part of a much larger Asian drama that is changing the world; Tibet is both an opportunity and an issue; the economic opportunity is obvious. Today, there are good roads connecting Tibet to Xinjiang, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan".⁹

Third Strategic Shift is about closer understanding, enhanced coordination and joint efforts that India and China have demonstrated at several international forums in order to seek reforms in global rules applicable to climate change, finance and trade; thus displaying a shared-vision for the global issues and to an extent for a multi-polar order.¹⁰

There are many areas in the triangular relationship where convergence of interest exists but statesmanship is needed for their realization. Pakistan could provide India a land access to Afghanistan and Central Asia and open up vast and untapped opportunities India had long-dreamed. Pakistan could also act as an energy-corridor for the energy-starved India, China and beyond. Indian economy is facing economic stagnation since 2008 and efforts to bring in Foreign Direct Investments have made no headway. Chinese Foreign Direct Investment could be an answer.

6 "China's Defence Minister visits India," *Daily Times* (Islamabad), September 3, 2012.

7 Ibid., Mukul Sanwal, "The India-versus-China Debate: Asian Giants' Common Interests Outweigh Differences,".

8 George Yeo, "Between China and India: Is Tibet the Wedge or Link?" *Yale Global* (New Heaven: Centre for Study of Globalization, September 8, 2009).

9 Ibid.

10 Sanwal.

Similarly, China has built 770 Km long railway network in Tibet; connecting Lhasa to Nepal, and plans to extend it to the mountain pass of Nathu La at the Tibetan border with India.¹¹ India could offer China a secure transit route through an Indian port in Karnatka, Gujrat or West Bengal; from where Chinese cargo could be transported to mainland China through Nathu La or Nepal or from Jammu & Kashmir.¹² Pakistan could also link its rail-road infrastructure with the said corridor. Therefore, China, India and Pakistan would have to demonstrate statesmanship for the uninterrupted growth and development and realize their aspirations.

Pakistan, India and China in a Mutually Hurting Stalemate

The questions; whether the discords amongst India, Pakistan and China have reached a state of 'Mutually Hurting Stalemate' (MHS), and how could they crawl out of the MHS, are important to be addressed before exploring various strategic options for achieving Grand Strategic Peace. If the 'Ripeness Theory' and the MHS concept are applied to China-India-Pakistan Strategic triangle, the short answer is a 'resounding yes'. The concept of a ripe-moment is tightly coupled and would rest on the perception of Mutually Hurting Stalemate.¹³ Zartman, advocating the 'Ripeness theory' says;

Parties resolve their conflict only when they are ready to do so – when alternative, usually unilateral means of achieving a satisfactory result are blocked and the parties feel that they are in an uncomfortable and costly predicament. At that moment they grab on to proposals that usually have been in the air for a long time and that only now appear attractive.¹⁴

In the case of India and Pakistan, Mutually Hurting Stalemate is evident from: four wars (1948-1971), nuclearization-event (1998), Kargil crisis (1999), eye ball to eye ball military stand-off (2001-2002) for almost one year;¹⁵ and also from the freedom struggle that is continuing

11 Ritvij Parrikkh, "India and China can do the Unthinkable," *Asia Times* (Hong Kong), April 20, 2012.

12 Ibid.

13 William Zartman, "Ripeness: The Hurting Stalemate and Beyond," in *International Conflict Resolution after the Cold War*, ed. Paul C. Stern & Daniel Druckman (Washington: National Academy Press, 2000), 228-243.

14 "Timing of Peace Initiative: Hurting Stalemate and Ripe Moments," *The Global Review of Ethno-Politics*, vol., no. 1, (September 2001): 8.

15 Rajesh M. Basrur and Stephen Philip Cohen, "Bombs in Search of a Mission: India's Uncertain Nuclear Future," in Michael R. Chambers, ed., *South Asia in 2020: Future Strategic Balances and Alliances*, (Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, 2002), 128.

in Indian Held Kashmir for the last many decades despite Indian high handedness and extreme repressive measures. India finds itself belittled when it gets hyphenated or bracketed with Pakistan. Such hyphenation severely curtails India's liberty of action and space for exploiting its full power potential in the comity of nations and global affairs. India and Pakistan probably have realized that a military solution is not a doable option for the resolution of Kashmir, water, Siachen and Sir Creek disputes and other issues that are haunting the two nuclear states. Adding national, regional and global aspirations to the equation; the two rivals find themselves in a black-hole of the Mutually Hurting Stalemate (MHS).

Similarly, both China and India are somewhere on the spectrum of an MHS which is evident from: China-India War (1962); a host of mutual vulnerabilities including energy, water and sea lines of communication, India's inaccessibility to Central Asia through Southern Tibet, need for Chinese Direct Investment in stagnated Indian economy; and above all heartburns against each other's grand strategic postures i.e. 'Containment of China vs. Encirclement of India' etc. Therefore the said predicaments and the cost of lost- opportunities have intertwined China-India and Pakistan in a vicious circle of the Mutually Hurting Stalemate.

Would China like India to become a genuine strategic partner of the U.S.-Vietnam-Japan-Australia alliance? 'No'. Would India like China to keep India bogged down in a proxy-confrontation and hyphenated with Pakistan in the calculus of Asian Security? 'No'. Would Pakistan like to keep playing the China-card and remain strangled in confrontation with India when it is being torn apart with the daunting challenges, such as: extremism, terrorism, dysfunctional society, deep-rooted poverty, collapsing economy; and to top it all- food, water and energy insecurities? Certainly the answer is a 'resounding No'. As the three states are nuclear powers as well as geographical neighbours, therefore no party alone can afford to settle its disputes with other with application of decisive force. The time is ripe for the three states to mitigate the mutual insecurities and vulnerabilities and seize the dawning opportunities that are promising a prosperous future for them as well as for the entire Asian region and its proximities. Grand Strategic Peace in China-India-Pakistan is not only achievable but is a win-win scenario for all the stake-holders.

Resurgence of Russia and Impact on Asian Security

The geo-political and geo-strategic environment is incrementally creating space for manoeuvre and liberty of action for Russia to position itself favourably for the rediscovery of its lost global stature. However; Russia appears to be bogged down in the identity crisis of 'whether it belonged to Asia or Europe'; thus marring Russia's aims and objectives with ambiguity and uncertainty.

Recently, Russian President skipped G-8 Summit in Camp David, and also launched Russia's 'Pivot to Asia' strategy from the economic forum of 20th APEC Meeting held in September, 2012 in Vladivostok.¹⁶ Russian President Vladimir Putin had only a customary meeting with U.S. Secretary of State who was representing the 'empty-chair of President Obama' but held 'full-fledged contacts' with the leaders of China, Japan, New Zealand, Canada, Peru, Malaysia, Brunei, Thailand, Indonesia, South Korea and IMF etc.; thus sending multitude of messages to the region.¹⁷

Russia and China both seem to have been closely coordinating their geo-political manoeuvres and diplomatic efforts in limiting the liberty of action of the U.S. camp; particularly in the Middle East. Russia and China jointly-vetoed a resolution on Syrian situation and flexed muscles at the Western powers in a SCO summit; sending a political message of an unequivocal 'No' to the bombing of Iran and an unambiguous 'No' to a regime-change in Syria through a Western style bombing.¹⁸ Russia had recently asked USAID to leave Russia by October 1, 2012 after accusing them of meddling in Russian domestic politics.¹⁹ Similarly, Uzbekistan Upper House has passed a bill on August 30, 2012 banning foreign military bases in Uzbekistan; thus creating serious difficulties for the U.S to find replacement of Manas Air Base in Kyrgyzstan which is due to close in 2014.²⁰ Passing of the Bill on foreign military bases speaks clearly of the Russian political leverages it still exercises in Central Asia as well as the growing Chinese influence.

There has been an unprecedented exchange of high-level visits between Russia and Pakistan. Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Ground Forces Colonel General Alexander Postnikov visited Pakistan in May 2011-a first ever visit by a senior Russian military commander to Pakistan in many years.²¹ Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff General Ashfaq Pervaiz Kayani also visited Russia from 4-7 October 2012- a first ever visit by the Pakistan Army Chief in decades where he also met the

16 Yu Bin, "A Tale of Two Pivots to Asia Pacific," *Dawn* (Karachi), September 16, 2012. Vladivostok is a Far Eastern Russian city of underdeveloped Siberia. Russia spent US \$ 21 billion (\$ 6 billion more than the London Olympics-2012) to uplift Vladivostok for Meeting.

17 Ibid.

18 Brendan O' Reilly, "China and Russia Flex Muscle at the West," *Daily Times* (Karachi/Islmabad), June 7, 2012.

19 AFP, "Russia Expelled USAID for Political Meddling," *Dawn* (Karachi), September 20, 2012.

20 Abduljalil Abdurasulov, "Why did Uzbekistan Ban Foreign Military Bases?" *Daily Times* (Islamabad/Karachi), September 3, 2012.

21 Ibid.

Russian President Putin.²² President Putin was also scheduled to attend a quadrilateral summit of Russia, Tajikistan, Pakistan and Afghanistan in Islamabad on 2-3 October 2012 but the same was called off and is now being rescheduled.²³ It appears that some 'mutual-mistrust' does exist at the strategic level which needs to be addressed before Pakistan and Russia could get into any form of strategic partnership. Putin's visit, if and when materialized, would be the first visit of any Russian top leadership since Pakistan got independence in 1947.

There are some serious implications of Pakistan's strategic relations with Russia. Russia's role in the contemporary geo-politics appears to be a bit dubious and requires a caution from the 'Hug from the Russian Bear'.²⁴ The outcome of Cold War that culminated in the demise of former Soviet Union was decisively sealed in favour of the U.S. camp once Pakistan facilitated opening of 'China-Gate' to the U.S. The Grand Strategic balance got titled decisively against the former Soviet Union. Pakistan's role in Afghanistan War turned out to be the last nail in USSR coffin. Russia has been allegedly found to be providing vital intelligence support to the U.S. in reviving the dormant Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA) as well as supporting some of the militants groups operating in Pakistan. So Pakistan has to carefully read strategic direction of the Russian initiatives in the region, particularly after the drawdown of U.S.-NATO troops from Afghanistan.

Similarly, China would also have to correctly read Russia's move in the Asia-Pacific, particularly in relation to Japan. Russian collaboration with the U.S. and invitation to NATO for the extension of its stay in Afghanistan; Gazprom collaboration with Vietnam for the oil and gas exploration in South China Sea despite Chinese protests; preference to Japan over China for linking the Siberian oil fields with the Japanese port of Nakhodna;²⁵ and above all Russia's inclination for the 'voluntary transfer' of Kuril Islands to Japan as well as seeking Japanese investments in joint economic ventures in Eastern Siberia and South Kuril Islands etc. are some of the indicators calling for a caution while forging strategic partnership with Russia.²⁶

22 Wasim Iqbal and Ali Hassan, "Kayani Arrives in Moscow," *Business Recorder* (Karachi), October 4, 2012. Details of the discussions between the two leaders are not known.

23 Ibid.

24 MK Bhadrakumar, "Pakistan Gets a Cuddle and a Hug," *Daily Times* (Karachi), June 2, 2012.

25 "China Japan Rival Giants: Economic Competition," *BBC News* (Online), accessed on September 16, 2012, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/asia_pac/05/china_japan/html/economic_competition.stm

26 Victor Sukovitsyn, "What Makes Japan Cling to Russia's Kuril Islands?" *English Pravda* (Moscow), January 26, 2012, accessed on September 16,

Therefore, Russia could become a valuable strategic partner and a stake holder of 'Grand Strategic Peace' in China-India-Pakistan triangle, adding her clout to the Asian security calculus particularly in terms of strategic parity and retribution; which could be a win-win proposition for the region. Nevertheless, Russia would have to set aside its burden of history and feel contended with a shared-leadership position in the emerging new global order, and wait for the next rung of geo-politics to dawn new strategic opportunities for Russia.

Russian partnership could help shifting the global leadership towards Asia with a set of new centres of powers. In a cooperative relationship, Russia could be given access to warm waters through Afghanistan and Pakistan and major stakes in the energy-grid of the Caspian Sea and Middle East, particularly in the construction of Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) and Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipelines and other giant projects. As Russia has been India's strategic partner and a major supplier of defence equipment, it could limit India's strategic leaning towards the U.S. and modify India's behaviour towards grand strategic peace in the region. Therefore the contemporary geo-economics and geo-politics are expected to accentuate the MHS in India-China-Pakistan triangle and create additional space for the three states to transform their relations into 'Grand Strategic Peace.'

India's Grand Strategic Options towards Pakistan and China

The prospects of grand strategic stability and peace in India-China-Pakistan triangle rest on India's grand strategic option which is considered to be the core driver of the Asian security landscape. Pakistan and China will respond according to the resultant dynamics. India has following six grand strategic options for furtherance of its core interests in relation to Pakistan and China.

Option-I: Strategic Confrontation with Pakistan and Competition with China

Strategic Confrontation with Pakistan and Competition is more or less a 'Status Quo' option which implies that India would follow offensive and aggressive policies to settle its disputes with Pakistan; and struggle for fair competition with China in terms of economic growth, regional leadership and a compatible stature in the comity of nations. This option depicts the scenario of the yesteryears wherein both India and Pakistan fought four wars, endured a number of military stand-offs and are still engaged in proxy-wars in the form of insurgencies, subversion, coercions,

intimidation and containment etc. If India continues to follow the same policy option, the future of South Asia will remain hostage to politics, short term situational gains and losses at the cost of one another; consequently strangulating the socio-economic development of South Asia. Nevertheless, such option does offer China significant advantage as it ties down a part of Indian resources and energies towards strategic confrontation with Pakistan. The option also extends substantial freedom of action to extra regional players for furthering their interests in the region.

Nevertheless, the option of strategic confrontation not only hyphenates India with Pakistan rather it impinges upon Indian national image, especially when India is unable to unleash its military prowess against Pakistan to settle disputes or further its national objectives. Certainly, India realizes its socio-economic and political fault lines as well as credibility of Pakistan's nuclear deterrence. Despite Indian blame-game and offensive diplomacy against Pakistan over a number of terrorist attacks, India failed to militarily coerce or dissuade Pakistan from pursuing its stance on Kashmir and other issues. It would be imprudent for India to follow an approach of 'one-step-forward and two-steps-back.'

With regard to China, India could continue to compete but would not be able to exploit its full potential especially when it (India) was to remain bogged down in strategic confrontation with Pakistan. Therefore, this option is discarded on the ground that sanity would prevail in India and Pakistan and the forces of change would finally drive the two countries to overcome the status quo. The ongoing 'India-Pakistan Composite Dialogue' gives some credence to such optimism.

Option-II: Strategic Confrontation with Pakistan and China

Strategic Confrontation with Pakistan and China is a dangerous and suicidal option for India as implies a two front conflict scenario. India could ill-afford to get into confrontation with China and Pakistan at the same time. Even in case of Pakistan, the nuclear factor has changed the fundamental parameters and dynamics of conventional deterrence and diplomacy which were to India's exclusive advantage in the 1990s. Restoration of strategic balance and nuclear parity makes it impracticable for India to contemplate any confrontationist scenario with Pakistan. Certainly in case of China it would be imprudent for India to get into any overt or covert strategic confrontation. While such grand-strategic course could impinge heavily on China's peaceful rise, endanger Pakistan's survival as a state but would amount to India committing strategic suicide or a self-destruct course. Moreover the South Asian countries, such as Bangladesh and Sri Lanka now have a strategic leaning and cooperation with China. Therefore; the option is discarded for being too unrealistic.

Option-III: Strategic-Peace with Pakistan and Containment of China

The option of 'Strategic Peace with Pakistan and Containment of China' seems to be a kind of strategic brinkmanship. The option implies that while India would be looking forward to the peaceful resolution of its disputes with Pakistan; but with regard to China India could become a strategic partner of U.S.'s 'Contain China' policy. Conceptually, the option appears to be workable as it resolves disputes between India and Pakistan and de-links Pakistan from China to the advantage of India. It provides the desired freedom of action to the U.S. and other regional players in the 'Containment of China' and management of a range of global security concerns. The option reinforces India-Japan-South Korea-Australia security nexus and has the potential to also draw Russia; thus shaping a kind of 'Strategic Encirclement' of China.

However; the option being a strategic brinkmanship on the part of India could unnerve China, make the region a theatre of conflict and push the region into greater instability and uncertainty. Despite having peace with India, Pakistan could never contemplate becoming a part of the anti-China design or 'Strategic Encirclement'. Therefore, peace with India may not last long and the grand strategic dynamics could draw both India and Pakistan towards the old paradigm of conflict. China and India had gone into war in 1962. The threat of 'Strategic Encirclement' could force China to go for 'a preventive war' with India. Therefore; the option is discarded on the ground of being dangerous and fraught with a host of unintended consequences.

Option-IV: Strategic-Peace with Pakistan and Competition with China

The option of 'Strategic Peace with Pakistan and Competition with China' is a doable option but requires from India incisive statesmanship for its full manifestation. The option implies that India would be looking forward to settle its disputes and promote genuine peace in South Asia and willing to conclude a Non Aggression Pact with Pakistan. However, India would continue competing China in terms of economic growth, regional leadership and global stature in the comity of nations. It would avoid becoming a strategic ally or a pillar of U.S.'s 'Contain China' policy.

The option provides convergence of interests between India and Pakistan and weakens the strategic linkage between Pakistan and China's paradigms of grand strategies to the advantage of India. It does provide reasonable freedom of action to the U.S. and other regional players to remain relevant to the Asia-Pacific region for furtherance of their interests and management of security and economic concerns.

However, India would have to redefine and live with a new vision of 'Indian Strategic Unity and Political Autonomy' as well as genuinely accommodate Pakistan in its paradigm of grand strategy and ensure that

Pakistan felt strong in all dimensions of national power. Under such circumstances Pakistan's strategic leaning towards China would gradually mutate into secondary consideration. However, India would not be able to attract fast-track economic, military and technological support from the U.S. and the West, and would have to remain contended with a medium pace of growth and development in the short-term. Nevertheless, in the long-run such option could enable India to become self-made, self-confident and self-reliant in several elements of national power.

The prospects of adoption of such option by India are not very promising when viewed in the context of chequered-relationship, national psyche and burden of history that India could find difficult to shed. Expectation of incisive statesmanship from India could turn out to be merely a wishful thinking.

Option-V: Grand Strategic-Peace with Pakistan and China

The option of Grand Strategic Peace with Pakistan and China is a futuristic option based on optimism. The option implies that India, China and Pakistan would finally move towards amicable resolution of disputes, staying away from security alliances against each other, accommodating each other's core interests in an equitable manner, respecting the principle of sovereignty and equality, and above all building up a mutually beneficial economic relationship in true letter and spirit for the fulfilment of respective national aspirations and well being of their people.

The option, if materialized, is a win-win situation for all the stakeholders of the triangle. It offers maximisation of one's national power, and full exploitation of the resources and markets of the triangle and neighbouring regions. In short to medium term (15-20 years), such option temporarily impinges on Indian ambition of regional leadership and tilts the balance of power in favour of China, which India can easily write-off as 'opportunity cost' and trade off for Indian faster political integration, economic growth and relative peace in the Indian subcontinent. In the long run (after 20-25 years) India stands to gain substantially by virtue of its superiority in grand strategic orientation, demographic advantage and geographic ascendancy over China. Therefore, in the long-run, India could bridge the gap with China and secure a higher stature in the regional and global order.

By muting regional security dilemma for an uninterrupted long-period, India could also create conditions for the notion of 'South Asian Union' and on an optimistic note favourably shape the dynamics for the creation of a confederation of the 'United States of South Asia'. Sooner or later, India would recognise the window of opportunity extending her grand strategic advantages in the region; thus alluring her to align her national/ regional policies towards Grand Peace.

Grand Strategic Peace in India-China-Pakistan triangle could also be an overstatement. The option requires the political leadership in India to set aside the notion of 'Indian Manifest Destiny', regional hegemony, moral realism and strategic [political] autonomy for the Indian subcontinent.²⁷ India would have to exercise greater resilience, resolve and patience. It would have to change its politico-military behaviour which had been partly 'Clausewitzian' or 'Chanakayan'; employing suzerainty, assassinations and intelligence operations as a part of state policy.²⁸ Similarly, the option also requires the leadership in Pakistan to finally settle the crisis of identity, societal dysfunction, collapsing economy and above all militancy and religious extremism. China will have to give confidence to India that China was genuinely interested in a cooperative framework for the shared-leadership of the region and also China's rise will be peaceful and incur no cost to India.

The option presents a 'wild card scenario' that could generate debilitating effects for U.S. and its New Great Game. The resultant dynamics could be tectonic with a potential to have a major impact on global balance of power. Therefore 'Road to Grand Strategic Peace' is expected to be rather long, thorny and laborious with periods of ups and downs. In the face of rival strategies, dialectics of opposing wills and compulsions of contemporary geo-politics the triangular relationship would have to first stage through an intermediary option of 'Crafted Peace for Pakistan and Subtle Containment of China'.

Option-VI: Crafted-Peace for Pakistan & Subtle-Containment of China

Crafted Peace for Pakistan and Subtle Containment of China is an option that India seemed to have adopted since 9/11 incident, and would continue to follow for next few years. Overtly, India had been projecting its option in a framework of Grand Strategic Peace but in real terms it has been a Crafted-Peace for Pakistan. Such orientation enabled India to remain a key ally in the calculus of U.S.-China rivalry and Pivot to Asia Strategy; and attract technological and military support from the West.

The option of 'Crafted- Peace' was also evident from the policies India followed in Afghanistan and from the investment it has made in Afghanistan; unfortunately against the core interests of Pakistan. India has been training and building the capacity of Afghan National Army and opened several Consulates in Afghanistan situated close to Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Indian intelligence agency RAW along with other had been suspected of massively funding, providing modern weapons and equipment as well as intelligence and training to several miscreant and

27 Manjeet Singh, "Deducing India's Grand Strategy of Regional Hegemony from Historical and Conceptual Perspectives," Working Paper No. 76 (Singapore: Institute of Defence & Strategic Studies, 2005), 47-49.

28 Ibid.

militants groups who have unleashed a reign of terror across Pakistan.²⁹ These agencies have also been supporting anti-Pakistan groups working for the separation of Baluchistan.³⁰

India's initial joining of Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project, then foot-dragging for years and finally opting out of the project is a clear signpost of Indian craftiness. There is growing perception that India is only interested in the growth of economic and friendly exchanges and is least interested in the resolution of the major issues as evident from the outcome of Composite Dialogue between India and Pakistan.³¹

The option of 'Crafted Peace' also explains the suspected India's tacit understanding with U.S over the agenda of internal implosion or dismemberment of Pakistan.³² This implosion was and is being funded, fuelled, abetted and triggered by accentuating ethnic, sectarian and linguistic fault-lines. The statement of Chuck Hagel, U.S. Defence Secretary bears testimony that India was behind the internal security mess created in Pakistan.³³

The option of 'Crafted Peace' did serve the U.S. and Indian strategies of the last decade as it almost kept Pakistan shackled in a uneasy relationship with the U.S and India which extended them the needed space, flexibility and freedom of action to accentuate the socio-economic and political fault-lines in Pakistan. Such nexus had seriously limited Pakistan's response option to the fire-fighting, controlling militancy and undertaking half-hearted counter-terror operations within Pakistan; albeit with a semblance of apparent success and severe blow-backs. Under such constraints, Pakistan could not afford meddling in Kashmir freedom movement or extend any meaningful support to the separatist movements and insurgencies being waged in India. Pakistani intelligence agencies and Jihadist groups could also ill-afford facing yet another allegation of terrorist attack inside India or Afghanistan, like that of Mumbai-attack.

Similarly, the last decade has also witnessed a double-faceted U.S. policy of Drone-attacks in the tribal areas of Pakistan. The crafty policy also smelled a nexus with India and ill-design for the implosion of Pakistan. Despite the availability of timely and accurate intelligence from Pakistan, U.S. displayed half-hearted interest in striking anti-Pakistan militants, whereas; U.S. went trigger-happy while striking the militants

29 Sajjad Shaukat, "Afghan War will Shift to India," *Pak Observer* (Islamabad), July 7, 2011.

30 Ibid.

31 Kamal Yousaf, "Composite Dialogue: India, Pakistan to Review Peace Progress in July," *Express Tribune* (Karachi), June 15, 2012.

32 Ibid.

33 Shubhajit Roy, "India Financed Pak's Problems in Afghanistan: Chuck Hagel," *Indian Express* (New Delhi), March 2, 2013.

suspected to be sympathetic to Pakistan that too with little regard for collateral damages and civilian casualties. The drone policy alienated the people and turned Pakistan's tribal areas into the nurseries for would-be-the-militants and suicide bombers. Under such precarious security threat, Pakistan could not afford any overt confrontation with India or with the U.S. as it could have provided the pretext for a three-front war on Pakistan; i.e. Indian threat from the East, U.S-NATO threat from the West and also from the sea in the South; and above all, the terrorist threat on the internal front.

On a positive note, the option of 'Crafted Peace' with Pakistan was also a reflection of Indian apprehension of 'what if U.S. and NATO left Afghanistan in disarray or failed in separating Balochistan from Pakistan. India knew it full well that the insurgency or a separatist movement in one country usually have devastating effects on the neighbouring countries as seen in the cases, such as: civil wars of Balkans, Yugoslavia, Somalia, Sudan, Darfur; and recent uprising in Tunis, Egypt, Libya and Syria. India is extremely vulnerable to such instability as it is a nation of minorities where ruling-elite have been dividing the people into small groups for centuries on the basis of class system etc.³⁴ India could not stay insulated from the fall-out of the implosion/ dismemberment of Pakistan and the war with Taliban and Al-Qaida could have shift to India as well. India's apprehension gets validated when seen in the context of on-going dialogue between Talibans and U.S-NATO camp that too with the sponsorship from Pakistan. The initiative implies the acceptance of Pakistan's interests and future role in Afghanistan after the drawdown of U.S.-NATO troops in 2013-14.

With regard to China, India has been following the option of 'Subtle-Containment' in the last decade and also acting as a 'Swing-State' hoping to attract fast track technological and military support from the West and also benefit from China. It must be kept in mind that India's capacity is not only limited to meet the U.S. expectations in Asia pacific but India can ill-afford to upset China by becoming a strategic partner of America's new game-plan for Asia; especially when there is a great danger of failure of U.S.'s 'Pivot to Asia' strategy.³⁵ Additionally, India's strategic relations with Russia and intent to join SCO as a full member would continue to modulate India's grand strategic behavior in favour of Grand Strategic Peace.

34 Meghnad Desai, "India-a Nation of Minorities", *Daily Times* (Islamabad/Karachi), September 3, 2012.

35 Christopher Clary, "Will India Ever Be America's Partner?: Ten Big Things Washington is Still Waiting on from New Delhi, *Foreign Policy*, (Washington), June 14, 2012.

Conclusion

India, China and Pakistan are interlocked in a 'Strategic Triangle' of regional security paradigm. Mutual compulsions, vulnerabilities and fault-lines states compel the three states to explore convergences in their grand strategies and finally accept the mutual need of 'Grand Strategic Peace', and to transform their relations into cooperation or competition rather than depleting their resources in a futile race for regional dominance, proxy confrontation or containment. The onus of first-move towards 'Grand Strategic Peace' rests on India's Grand Strategic Option which is considered to be the core driver of the Asian security paradigm.

The theatre of next would-be-the-global-conflict is getting shaped in Asia and the adjoining regions. Destructive strategies and associated lines of operations of the extra-regional players have not only accentuated the existing fault-lines in Asian region but have created new ones in a span of few decades. India with its too many fault-lines could ill-afford to become a strategic partner of the U.S-NATO's New Great Game or a pillar of "Pivot to Asia" strategy. By muting the regional security dilemma over a long period and making full use of the advantages India has over China in terms of demography, geography and superiority in strategic orientation, India could bridge the growth-gap with China and secure a rightful place in comity of nations.

India has a number of grand strategic options for furtherance of its national interests in relation to Pakistan and China. Despite crafty tactics, India still seems to be alive to the need of 'Strategic Peace with Pakistan and China'. It will be even truer after the drawdown of U.S.-NATO troops and likely accommodation of Pakistan's interests in Afghanistan; albeit causing some heartburn in India. However, if India continues with the status quo option, the future of South Asia will remain hostage to politics, short term situational gains and losses at the cost of one another; consequently strangulating the socio-economic development of South Asia.

Hopefully, prudence and statesmanship would eventually prevail and the three states would find no plausible option but to move towards long-term peace. The 'Strategic Economic Triangle' if formed, has the potential to attract South East Asia as its economic gateway as well as extend Triangle's sphere of influence to Central Asia, Middle East and beyond. The Triangle may also encourage Russia as a key partner and benefit from Russia's security umbrella for strategic parity or balance of power in the dialectics of opposing wills and dynamics. In the process, Russia may also find a window of opportunity to rediscover its lost global status. The 'Grand Strategic Peace', if and when achieved, could roll the ball for a new balance of power and global order.

