

Mobilizing People's power

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Athar Javid presenting *INDUS-Mobilizing People's Power* at an event hosted by the Woodrow Wilson Center on March 20, 2017, in Washington, DC.

Pakistan-China-Russia: An Emerging Coalition?

Relations among Pakistan, China, and Russia are growing. Regional developments, uncertain U.S. policy, and Afghanistan's ongoing challenges increase the possibility of convergence among these three regional states.

On March 20, 2017, **INDUS – Mobilizing People's Power**, in collaboration with the Woodrow Wilson Center, organized a discussion on this geopolitical development in the heart of Eurasia. **Michael Kugelman**, Asia Program Deputy Director and Senior Associate for South Asia, moderated a discussion by regional experts on recent developments and what might take place in the future. Mr. Kugelman requested Mr. Athar Javid, President of INDUS, to introduce his organization to the audience. The main discussion started following this brief introduction.



Speaking first, **Arif Rafiq**, President, Vizier Consulting, LLC, explained the recent era of Pakistan-U.S. relations, citing the Raymond Davis and Salala incidents and the Osama Bin Laden operation as harmful to the relationship and producing a consensus within the civil-military leadership in Islamabad that Pakistan needed to diversify its foreign relations and reduce its dependence on the United States. Pakistan began looking for other partners.

With China's encouragement, Islamabad extended an opening to Russia and other neighboring states like Iran. The Pakistan-Russia relationship is developing. Late last year, the two countries held their first joint military exercises in Pakistan, and Pakistan will receive four Russian-made Mi-35M attack helicopters later this year. Earlier, in 2014, Moscow ended its decades-old arms embargo on Islamabad, and by 2015, there were signs of a convergence in Russo-Pakistan views on Afghanistan along with rumors of Russian talks with the Taliban. In 2016, these were formally acknowledged. (Afghan officials alleged that Russia was supplying or even training the Afghan Taliban.) Most recently, Moscow hosted talks with Beijing and Islamabad on the future of Afghanistan. The United States did not participate.

The realignment of Pakistan's international relationships, according to Rafiq, suggests the following: a) the U.S. is limited in its ability to generate behavioral change in Pakistan; b) the U.S. underestimated Pakistan's ability to engage diplomatically; c) the Taliban are a reality and only reconciliation among all the Afghans can bring a durable peace to the country; and d) there is no

solution to the conflict in Afghanistan without involving regional states.

Andrew Small, Senior Trans-Atlantic Fellow, Asia Program, The German Marshall Fund, stated that the China-Pakistan relationship is continuing to grow. At the same time, the relationship is shifting from its historical focus on security issues to include a larger economic component, evidenced by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Driving China's new approach is, first, its intensifying strategic competition with the United States. Pakistan, a country short of alliances, serves as a willing partner. Small noted that the Sino-Russian relationship, albeit at a lesser level, is also on a positive and friendly long-term trajectory. Second, China is also concerned about instability in Xinjiang, its northwestern province, and believes that development there, and regionally, will engender greater stability for itself and its neighbors. Beijing is also pursuing this through security cooperation with other actors in the region. Third, China sees the U.S.-India relationship as much more of a settled strategic fact and, relatedly, an opportunity arising from the weakened U.S.-Pakistan relationship. Fourth, risks to China's economy have necessitated the push to find markets and investment opportunities abroad, and CPEC has ended up as a flagship project for both countries. As a result, China is helping Pakistan move closer to Russia and has helped facilitate their relationship. Beijing has also encouraged other states to support Pakistan and is in favor of a close Pakistan-U.S. relationship.

China is also expanding its security relationship with Russia, and with Russia's blessing, China is helping Pakistan access Central Asian states. Regarding a Russian role in CPEC, Small said the critical element is not if the Russian role is formalized; what matters most is whether Russia is helping build ports and pipelines that support Pakistan's energy needs.

Small maintained that South Asia is not an area of competition between the U.S. and China; it is an area of convergence. Both encourage support for Pakistan in various aspects: China backs the U.S.-Pakistan relationship, and the U.S. encourages Chinese investment in Pakistan. There is also convergence on Afghanistan. Both China and the U.S. would have a central role in peace building in Afghanistan. It is presented differently in public, however, and many people may not believe the U.S. supports CPEC, but this is an area where U.S. and Chinese intelligence agencies have worked with Pakistan in the 1980s. There is also convergence in the U.S. and China in promoting a peace process between Pakistan and India. Thus far, the Pakistan-China-Russia relationship has yet to cross the threshold of a significant trilateral grouping. However, South Asia is a region where the U.S.-China relationship could become more competitive.

Andrew Kuchins, Senior Fellow, Center for Eurasian, Russian, and East European Studies, Georgetown University, argued that a lot has changed in regional relations over the last 25 years, illustrating how dynamic geopolitics and geo-economics are today in the Eurasian heartland.

Regarding the U.S.-Russian relationship, Kuchins pointed to a public interview with Zamir Kabulov, a high-ranking intelligence officer in the Russian government with significant experience in Afghanistan. Kabulov revealed in his interview that Russia is talking to the Taliban, which Kuchins said represented a big change in Russian rhetoric about Afghanistan. Kabulov stated to the interviewer that, "We expect Donald Trump to tailor a new American approach to Afghanistan" that considers Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan and others. He also railed against U.S. military bases in Afghanistan, saying, "We know the reasons

for the ongoing U.S. military presence in Afghanistan. Russia will not tolerate this.”

Kuchins believes that Russia wants to be in the Afghan political game, and the change in the Russia-Pakistan relationship advances that goal. The ties may also be driven by closer U.S.-Indian relations, but, according to Kuchins, Russian arms sales to Pakistan are not a direct result, as Russia sells arms frequently. Russia refused Indian requests that it cancel its joint military training with Pakistan. In return, according to Kuchins, Pakistan offered Russia use of Gwadar Port, but Russia was not interested because Baluchistan is unstable and the port is underdeveloped. Kuchins believes Russia will be careful about its investments and trade with Pakistan as not to alienate India or China, the two largest purchasers of Russian arms over the last two decades.

As far as U.S. policy, Kuchins concluded that the Trump administration does not have an Afghanistan policy. Nor does it have a policy toward Russia.

The event concluded with questions from the audience and a moderated discussion. **More information and a [video recording](#) of the event are available [here](#).**



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Fighting on Three Fronts

Touqir Hussain

Pakistan has very able diplomats but an underperforming diplomacy. Quality of diplomacy largely depends on policies. But diplomats do not make policies, the leadership does. And our leadership is still trapped in old assumptions about the world, about ourselves and other countries. In some ways, we are still trying to preserve the fiction of the old world.

Foreign policy involves making difficult choices, often between imperfect options. The worst choice you can make is not to make any choice. That is what we have done most of the times. We have let others make choices for us. Yes, the relations with China enjoy a national consensus and remain a success

story but largely because the Chinese laid down the terms of engagement and drew up its broad parameters. And they did it so shrewdly it gave Pakistan an illusion of being an equal partner.

As for our other two "friends", Saudi Arabia and the US, they have tried to buy our friendship. And this does not work, especially when you are dealing with a superpower, as it demands too much and does not take no for an answer. The fact is that US-Pakistan relations have been sporadic, focused on limited interests, and have operated in the context of the two countries' differing interests, priorities and policies. And that is a recipe for recurring tensions.

The Saudis however have no such compunctions. They operate insidiously, and buy the friendship not only of the country but of its rulers as well. That is why the Saudi-Pakistan relationship has survived and prospered.

These two and a half relationships have enabled Pakistan to maintain a complaisant foreign policy and given enough margin of error to continue to live dangerously. You take away these status quo relationships and what are you left with? A whole lot of countries, especially in the region, with whom we have varying degrees of tension and conflict. Of course you cannot blame it all on Pakistan. It does after all live in a tough neighbourhood and has legitimate security concerns.

But Pakistan's fixed and unchanging position on India and Afghanistan, and its inability or reluctance to deal with what threatens these countries, like non state actors and the Afghan Taliban, has come to calcify Pakistan's foreign policy. And both India and Afghanistan have taken advantage of this apparent inertia and wrested the initiative from Pakistan. They have now ganged up and taken the fight to Pakistan. Pakistan is thus ending up having to fight on three fronts — grappling with serious internal security challenges and meeting the historical two front external threat.

You cannot handle serious domestic and external problems simultaneously. In this situation countries usually end up prioritizing domestic challenges and focus on such foreign policy issues that are aggravating the internal threats.

Instead of fighting both India and Afghanistan we ought to put the relations with India on the back burner. Pakistan can hold itself up against India. With a good professional army and the nuclear capability Pakistan need not worry about military threat from India. Pakistan's problems with India are mainly political and diplomatic.

It is dangerous for Pakistan to compete with India by supporting the Afghan Taliban and Haqqani Network because it will keep Afghanistan destabilised. And an unstable Afghanistan means unstable Pakistan. Has Pakistan thought of its implications for CPEC?

The solution is to focus on Afghanistan not on India. India is there in Afghanistan because it serves Kabul's purposes. There is a long bitter history of Pak-Afghan relations whose roots go back to centuries. Afghanistan has an identity problem with Pakistan. The two countries have a whole border that Kabul does not recognise and has irredentist claims. They may be providing sanctuaries to terrorists and insurgents operating against the other now but have harbored each other's dissidents for decades.

For the past four decades, Afghanistan has seen nothing but conflict and strife in which Pakistan has been both a part of the problem as well as solution. It is a badly messed up country. A report by the International Crisis Group some time ago had this to say: "Afghanistan operates as a complex system of multi-layered fiefdoms in which insurgents control parallel justice and security organs in many if not most rural areas, while Kabul's kleptocratic elites control the engines of graft and international contracts countrywide. The inflow of billions in international funds has cemented the linkages between corrupt members of the Afghan government and violent local commanders — insurgent and criminal, alike".

For Kabul to say that Taliban sanctuaries in Pakistan alone have caused Afghanistan's failure is thus not true. Afghanistan needs to understand that. Yet the sanctuaries have been a big part of the problem. And Pakistan needs to acknowledge that.

Afghanistan has its problems and Pakistan its own and they have brought them on themselves. But problems of each are now tied to policies and conditions in the other country. And these can only be addressed by fundamentally changing the Pak-Afghan relations which, as someone said, is the mother of all the problems.

Not since the opening to China in 1963 has Pakistan shown any creativity in foreign policy. Now is the moment. Show some creativity in dealing with this headache called the Afghan Taliban. Ask yourself if you would like to have the Taliban rule in Pakistan. Why do you wish for Afghans what you don't wish

for yourself?

Pakistan should not expect the Taliban to look after its interests in Afghanistan. They might do so but at a prohibitive cost to us. They will not only like to rule part of Afghanistan but also part of Pakistan as well. Or at least help the radical fraternity in Pakistan that will give them "strategic depth".

Pakistan needs to get Afghanistan on its side. It will improve Pakistan's relations with the US making it less receptive to the Indian propaganda. Pakistan of course cannot throw the Taliban under the bus just to please Kabul. But the two countries need to have a heart to heart talk, put their cards on the table and start thinking about each other in fundamentally different ways. This dialogue obviously will have to be brokered by someone both can trust. And who else but the two most concerned powers — China and the US — one putting pressure on Pakistan, and the other on Afghanistan. Don't rely on Russia; it is just fishing in troubled waters, using it as a card against Washington.

Meanwhile neither the border closure is a solution nor is any pious and perfunctory talk that has gone on for too long and does no good in a relationship as troubled and complicated as this one.

Pakistan has great strengths and enormous potential. Why is it jeopardizing it by following obsolescent and self-limiting policies?

Touqir Hussain, a former Ambassador of Pakistan and Diplomatic Adviser to the Prime Minister, teaches at Johns Hopkins and Georgetown University. He is an INDUS Founding Charter Member and a Member of the INDUS Academia Panel. Originally published in [The Express Tribune on March 21, 2017](#).



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Creating campus-based, strictly nonpolitical Student Government Associations that offer Executive, Legislative & Judiciary functions experience within the campus environment. Elected student representatives, as Members of Parliament, Senators and judges manage all aspects of student affairs, in conjunction with campus administration.

Pakistan Civil Liberties Union

Civil liberties are personal guarantees and freedoms that the government cannot abridge, either by law or by judicial interpretation. However in today's Pakistan, rising violence, intolerance, weak rule of law, endemic corruption, lack of social and economic justice, and religious freedom, social exclusion of the vulnerable and the marginalized are a common phenomenon that the people of Pakistan face on a daily basis. Pakistan Civil Liberties Union

– PCLU is a watchdog organization intended to combat all the above issues at every cross section of our society.

Community Integration & Civic Promotion

When successful, the processes of community integration and civic promotion begin with the individual and, alongside support from Federal, State, and municipal programs, advance collectively, often through socialization with informal groups and professional and cultural associations. However, due to regional, organizational, and programmatic differences, the catalytic potential of civil society organizations is underutilized. Partnerships with local, regional, and national civil society organizations will advance community integration, promote the concept of citizenship, and highlight pathways to achieve the “American Dream.”

Policy Research – As It Happens

Campus-based political and social sciences research. Graduate Student and Faculty focusing on policy issues for possible social, cultural, and political reform, followed by advocacy action and awareness creation by the same researchers for the purposes of legislative reform as appropriate.

Cultivating Early Awareness

Aimed at increasing youngsters’ awareness of rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and building a national bond at a very impressionable age, leading to real benefits to the nation in evolving future leadership.

MEDIA REVIEW

US Concerned About India-Pakistan Situation; To Be Part of Efforts to Deescalate Tensions

Iftikhar Ali

After the US assumed the presidency of the United Nations Security Council in April, US Ambassador Nikki Haley said the Trump administration will try and “find its place to be a part” of efforts to deescalate tensions between India and Pakistan and indicated that President Trump may involve himself in the process. [[Views & News](#)]

How Pakistan is Planning to Fight a Nuclear War

Kyle Mizokami

“Pakistan is clearly developing a robust nuclear capability that can not only deter but fight a nuclear war. It is also dealing with internal security issues that could threaten the integrity of its nuclear arsenal.” Pakistan and India, in the midst of a nuclear arms race, are creating “absurdly high nuclear stockpiles reminiscent of the Cold War. It is clear that an arms-control agreement for the subcontinent is desperately needed.” Pakistan currently has a nuclear “triad” of nuclear delivery systems based on land, in the air and at sea to deter what it considers an economically, politically, and militarily stronger India. Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal and doctrine continue to evolve and to become resilient and capable of retaliatory strikes. Pakistan does not have a “no first use” doctrine. It reserves the right to use nuclear weapons, particularly low-yield tactical nuclear weapons, to offset India’s advantage in conventional forces. [[The National Interest](#)]

Saudi-Iranian Rivalry Fuels Potential Nuclear Race – Analysis

James M. Dorsey

Saudi Arabia is developing nuclear infrastructure, potentially in pursuit of a nuclear weapon capability and with Pakistan supplying “equipment, materials, and know-how,” according to a

recent report cited in the article. Its rivalry with Iran and concern that Iran will breach the JCPOA or emerge with a nuclear weapon in the future is a thought of as a driver. [[Eurasia Review](#)]

Pakistan In Hot Seat as General Takes Command of Saudi-led Alliance – Analysis

James M. Dorsey

General Raheel Sharif, Pakistan's recently retired military chief, is heading a 41-nation, Saudi-led coalition organized to fight terrorism, known as the Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism. Sharif's appointment can help avoid the perception that the largely Sunni coalition, which has yet to clearly define its mission, is not a vehicle for confronting Iran and its Shiite majority, and recent overtures toward mediating Saudi-Iranian dialogue by Kuwait and Oman may lead to greater communication between the rival states. [[Eurasia Review](#)]

NED startup builds house in 3 hours for under Rs250,000

Saba Khalid

Three NED University civil engineering students, Yaseen Khalid, Mohammed Saquib and Nabeel Siddiqui, designed a method for building houses that can last 10 years, cost less than \$3,000 to produce, and be completed in a few hours. They were motivated by the devastation in Syria and the alarming situation of internally displaced persons in their home country. [[The Express Tribune](#)]

Pakistani-American Doctor Wins Ellis Island Medal of Honor Award

Huma Nisar

Adil Haider, a Pakistani-American trauma surgeon, has been named a recipient of the prestigious Ellis Island Medal of Honor 2017 – the highest civilian award in the U.S. for immigrants. Born in the United States, Haider received medical education from the Aga Khan University- Medical College. "I am very humbled to have been bestowed this honor," he said in a Facebook post, while adding that there are certainly many others who deserve this far more than him. "Only in America is this possible," a jubilant Dr. Haider noted. The 2017 recipients will be honored at a May 13 event on Ellis Island in New York. [[Views & News](#)]

As always, thank you for reading, and thank you for your efforts. If you have questions or comments, or desire to participate in any way, please don't hesitate to contact us at induspk.usa@gmail.com.

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