

## **Trump So-Called South Asia Strategy: Policy Option for Pakistan:**

By

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### **Abstract:**

*US administration always looks down upon Pakistan suspecting its action in eliminating terrorist networks and their sanctuaries. Pakistan has repeatedly denied allegations and has announced stronger counter-terrorism measures in the form of military operations and stepping up border management along the shared border with Afghanistan and Iran. Despite all these, US President Donald Trump in his August 21, 2017 policy speech warned Pakistan to eradicate alleged terrorist safe havens from its soil or be ready for the consequences. The new US policy heap blame on Pakistan and draw India deeper into Afghanistan without addressing the competing interests of several other regional powers. In a firm and comprehensive response to America's new strategy, Pakistan has outright rejected Trump's allegations and insinuations that ignore its sacrifices in the war against terror and belittle its efforts for peace in Afghanistan. Recounting Pakistan efforts to fight terrorism, promote peace in Afghanistan and endure the blowback effects of the conflict in Afghanistan, it rightly called for the elimination of safe havens in Afghanistan where terrorist attacks were being launched against Pakistan. It must understand that a solution to the Afghan conundrum is not possible without the unqualified support of Pakistan. Nevertheless, Pakistan must strive to avoid a strategic collision with the world's only superpower.*

**Keywords:** Pakistan, Afghanistan, US, Taliban, India, terrorism, war on terror, Taliban, operations, peace.

### **Introduction:**

It remains disgusting that US administration always looks down upon Pakistan suspecting its action in eliminating terrorist networks and their sanctuaries. (Habib Yasir) Pakistan has repeatedly denied allegations that it

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has supported Haqqani militants, and has announced stronger counter-terrorism measures in the form of military operations and stepping up border management along the shared border with Afghanistan and Iran. Pakistan launched lethal operations including Rah-e-Nijat, Rah-e-Rast, Zarb-e-Azb, Khyber 1-through-4 and on-going Radd-ul-Fassad reclaiming its land from TTP and their allied groups. (Ibid) These ground offensive and air strikes worked well in booting out senior leadership of TTP from FATA and other parts of the country. (Ibid) IDPs surged as a result of these operations which created a humanitarian crisis in Pakistan. Despite all these, the Trump administration, in June, reportedly discussed expansion of drone strikes, redirecting or withholding some aid to Pakistan, and perhaps eventually downgrading its status as a major non-Nato ally. Although Pak-US relations were already tense, the tensions worsened after US President Donald Trump's Aug 21 policy speech in which he warned Pakistan to eradicate alleged terrorist safe havens from its soil or be ready for the consequences. The new US policy is certainly unfair in its characterization of the Afghan war, with its readiness to heap blame on Pakistan and its willingness to draw India deeper into Afghanistan without addressing the competing interests of several other regional powers. Merely labelling something a South Asia strategy does not automatically make it so. Indeed, it is Pakistan that appears to be seeking a true regional solution with its articulation of specific concerns, while the US approach amounts to something akin to a minus-Pakistan formula for peace. Pakistan, meanwhile, remains concerned about the destabilising effects of US meddling in the region, which could manifest in several ways: growing Indian influence in Afghanistan; an increasingly dysfunctional and hostile government in Kabul; entrenched sanctuaries for anti-Pakistan militant groups such as Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA) and the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) across the Durand Line; and regional designs against CPEC. (Yusuf Huma) There are tangible questions that Pakistan needs to table everywhere to design new foreign policy. Consultations with candid friends like China, Russia, Turkey, Iran and others will help to shape it better. (Habib Yasir) These points should also be conversed with world community seeking its point of view.

### **Backdrop of the Trump New Strategy:**

Pakistan joined the US led Capitalist bloc and became a signatory of the SEATO and CENTO to counter the hostility of its neighboring states, India and Afghanistan. (Hafiz Adnan) After this alignment, Pakistan became a vital strategic asset for the US in containing the spread of communism and emerged as its 'most allied ally'. (Ibid) In exchange,

Pakistan began to receive substantial economic and military aid from the US. (Ibid)

Following the 9/11 incident, Pakistan's geostrategic position once again became of vital importance for US government. (Ibid) Pakistan assumed the role of front line state in the War on Terror and Bush administration declared Pakistan a non-NATO ally. (Ibid) Economic sanctions and military embargos were lifted and a considerable aid package was provisioned. Furthermore, the IMF restructured Pakistan's international liabilities, which created ample fiscal space for the state. The US generosity towards Pakistan stemmed from US geo-strategic objectives.

Unlike the past, Trump's way forward singles Pakistan out for the mess in Afghanistan. Trump's convenient but unsurprising scapegoating of Pakistan for American failures in Afghanistan is unfortunate. (Basit Abdul) Instead of blaming Pakistan, the US needs a reality check and serious introspection. It is not Pakistan's but America's inconsistent policies and impatient approach that have destabilized Afghanistan. (Ibid) Since 2009, the US policy in Afghanistan has changed every year.

1. In 2009, the Obama administration opted for troop surge arguing there were not enough boots on the ground to win the war. (Ibid)
2. In 2010, the US focus shifted to poppy eradication, which was deemed as the main factor that fueled the Taliban insurgency. (Ibid)
3. In 2011, the US developed an obsession with the rampant corruption in Kabul that undermined the US nation-building efforts. (Ibid)
4. In 2012, unable to break the deadlock of the Afghan conflict militarily, the US reached out to Pakistan to pursue political reconciliation with the Taliban. The then Pakistan army chief, Gen Ashfaq Pervez Kayani, handed over his White Paper to President Obama as a blue print for Afghan reconciliation. (Ibid)
5. In 2013, the US paradoxically adopted the policy of fight-and-talk simultaneously. (Ibid)
6. In 2014, the US and NATO forces started pulling out from Afghanistan and handed over the security responsibilities to the Afghan forces. (Ibid)
7. In 2015 and 2016, as opposed to his original plan of keeping 1,000 US troops in Afghanistan, President Obama stationed 8,000 US and 4,000 NATO troops under the Resolute Support Mission. (Ibid)
8. Trump with his Afghan policy, has revived the fight-fight approach as the war in Afghanistan comes full circle.

It is not hard to imagine that 15,000 foreign troops would not be able to gain what 150,000 international troops failed to achieve. It will give the Taliban all the more reasons to continue their armed struggle. Trump will deny the Taliban an outright military victory with 15,000 troops, but he is unlikely to gain a position of strength to force the Taliban to the negotiation table. Notwithstanding Pakistan's efforts to facilitate Afghan political reconciliation, on the US insistence, it was backstabbed twice.

1. In 2015, the disclosure of Mullah Umar's death during the Murree Peace talks between the representatives of the Taliban and Afghan government derailed the peace process, which had been looking promising. The jury is still out on who leaked the news and who benefited from it.
2. On the second occasion, Islamabad was betrayed when the US droned Mullah Umar's successor Akhtar Mansour to death in Balochistan when he was returning from Iran. Following Mansour's death, the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG)-led peace process – comprising China, Pakistan, US and Afghanistan – crashed.

The American demand of increased cooperation from Pakistan while ignoring the latter's legitimate security concerns in Afghanistan is foolhardy. Washington's backing for New Delhi to play a larger security role in Afghanistan will fuel the India-Pakistan proxy war.

It is said that Indian Prime Minister Modi played a crucial role in hardening Trump's stance on Pakistan during his June 2017 visit to Washington as an essential first step towards containing China in Central and South Asia and in the Indian Ocean. (Jahangir Ashraf) In the joint statement of June 27, 2017, Trump and Modi "called on Pakistan to ensure that its territory is not used to launch terror attacks on other countries. They further called on Pakistan to expeditiously bring to justice the perpetrators of the 26/11 Mumbai, Pathankot and other cross-border terrorist attacks perpetrated by Pakistan-based groups". (Ibid) On Afghanistan, the statement said "the increasing instability, due to terrorism [read Pakistan] in Afghanistan is one of our common concerns" and "in order to attain our objectives for peace and stability in Afghanistan we will maintain close consultation and communication to enhance coordination between our two countries". (Ibid) Pakistan poses "a threat to the region and beyond". (Ibid) All this is echoed in Trump's latest warning to Pakistan.

Moreover, sections of the US media have reported that one of the reasons Trump had decided to stay militarily engaged in Afghanistan instead of withdrawing US troops as promised by him in his election campaign was the prospect of American companies making money by getting contracts to exploit the mineral resources lying buried in northern and southern parts of the country. For that to happen, he would have to make Afghanistan stable and peaceful, but this is unlikely to happen by using more force in an open-ended war. (Ibid)

The Afghan government and U.S policymakers see Taliban resilience as the result of Pakistan's insistence on a power-sharing arrangement in Kabul. (Jahangir Ashraf) At one time it appeared the US was on board with Pakistan's strategy if not its tactics. However, PM Narendra Modi, President Ashraf Ghani and the US establishment have convinced Trump this would be fatal for the Kabul government and for US and Indian strategic interests in an emerging China- and Russia-centric political, economic and security order in Eurasia. The 'losses of Afghanistan could lead to the loss of the Eurasian heartland and that would be fatal for Trump's presidency. The strategic targeting of China is obvious. Indian aggression in Doklam with the US fully backing India against China confirms that Indo-US coordination regarding Pakistan and Afghanistan is part of a much larger theatre of strategic cooperation, competition and confrontation. India is playing for high stakes. Also interestingly, Trump referred to South Asia "and the broader Indo-Pacific region" in which, as in Afghanistan, the US and India share objectives for peace and security. Indo-US pressures on Pakistan are set to build. A normally cautious China and Russia have sprung to the defense of Pakistan after Trump's accusations against Pakistan. The global strategic lines for the 21st century are being drawn.

**Trump New Strategy: Main Pillars:**

Trump observed in his speech that American strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia will change dramatically in the following ways:

1. A core pillar of Trump new strategy is a shift from a time-based approach to one based on conditions. (Magazine Politico)The first pillar of the Trump policy has explicitly given a big no to deadlines. While there is nothing new about this conditions-based approach – Obama had done the same not putting an expiration date to the American commitments is a fundamental departure from the earlier strategy. The element of surprise incorporated into the new American strategy has been summed up by Trump this way: "America's enemies must never know our plans, or believe they can wait us out. I will not say when we are going to attack, but attack we will".

2. Dealing with Pakistan makes up the other fundamental pillar of the Trump strategy. Upping the ante against Pakistan, Trump was vocal in his speech that we can no longer be silent about Pakistan's safe havens for terrorist organizations, the Taliban, and other groups that pose a threat to the region and beyond. Pakistan has much to gain from partnering with our effort in Afghanistan. It has much to lose by continuing to harbor criminals and terrorists. In the past, Pakistan has been a valued partner. Our militaries have worked together against common enemies. The Pakistani people have suffered greatly from terrorism and extremism. We recognize those contributions and those sacrifices. But Pakistan has also sheltered the same organizations that try every single day to kill our people. We have been paying Pakistan billions and billions of dollars at the same time they are housing the very terrorists that we are fighting. But that will have to change, and that will change immediately. No partnership can survive a country's harboring of militants and terrorists who target U.S. service members and officials. It is time for Pakistan to demonstrate its commitment to civilization, order, and to peace.
3. Another critical part of the South Asia strategy for America is to further develop its strategic partnership with India -- the world's largest democracy and a key security and economic partner of the United States. Trump said that we appreciate India's important contributions to stability in Afghanistan, but India makes billions of dollars in trade with the United States, and we want them to help us more with Afghanistan, especially in the area of economic assistance and development. We are committed to pursuing our shared objectives for peace and security in South Asia and the broader Indo-Pacific region.
4. NATO allies and global partners will be asked to support the new strategy with additional troop and funding. Trump said that we will no longer use American military might to construct democracies in faraway lands, or try to rebuild other countries in our own image. Those days are now over. Instead, we will work with allies and partners to protect our shared interests. We are not asking others to change their way of life, but to pursue common goals that allow our children to live better and safer lives. This principled realism will guide our decisions moving forward.
5. The other important pillar, ostensibly, is the withdrawal of US administration from "micro-managing" the situation in Afghanistan. (Saxena Chayanika) Micromanagement from Washington, D.C. does not win battles. They are won in the field drawing upon the judgment

- and expertise of wartime commanders and frontline soldiers acting in real time, with real authority, and with a clear mission to defeat the enemy. That's why, said Trump, we will also expand authority for American armed forces to target the terrorist and criminal networks that sow violence and chaos throughout Afghanistan. These killers need to know they have nowhere to hide; that no place is beyond the reach of American might and Americans arms. Retribution will be fast and powerful. We will also maximize sanctions and other financial and law enforcement actions against these networks to eliminate their ability to export terror.
6. Another fundamental pillar of the new strategy is the integration of all instruments of American power diplomatic, economic, and military -- toward a successful outcome. Trump said that someday, after an effective military effort, perhaps it will be possible to have a political settlement that includes elements of the Taliban in Afghanistan, but nobody knows if or when that will ever happen. America will continue its support for the Afghan government and the Afghan military as they confront the Taliban in the field. Ultimately, it is up to the people of Afghanistan to take ownership of their future, to govern their society, and to achieve an everlasting peace. We are a partner and a friend, but we will not dictate to the Afghan people how to live, or how to govern their own complex society. We are not nation-building again. We are killing terrorists.
  7. Finally, in this struggle, Trump said that the heaviest burden will continue to be borne by the good people of Afghanistan and their courageous armed forces. As the prime minister of Afghanistan has promised, we are going to participate in economic development to help defray the cost of this war to us. Afghanistan is fighting to defend and secure their country against the same enemies who threaten us. The stronger the Afghan security forces become, the less we will have to do. Afghans will secure and build their own nation and define their own future. We want them to succeed. Military power alone will not bring peace to Afghanistan or stop the terrorist threat arising in that country. But strategically applied force aims to create the conditions for a political process to achieve a lasting peace. America will work with the Afghan government as long as we see determination and progress. However, our commitment is not unlimited, and our support is not a blank check. The government of Afghanistan must carry their share of the military, political, and economic burden. The American people expect to see real reforms, real progress, and real results. Our patience is not unlimited. We will keep our eyes wide open.

**Trump New Strategy: Confused & Flawed Policy:**

After months of internal debate, President Donald Trump has unveiled his administration's strategy in Afghanistan; it is a mixture of the familiar, the tested and the failed. (Dawn, 2017) There is nothing in the new US policy laid out by President Donald Trump that can bring the 16-year-long Afghan war to an end. (Hussain Zahid) The much-awaited strategy that links Afghanistan with the US South Asia policy is likely to only deepen regional tensions. The toughening stance on Pakistan may have serious repercussions for an already troubled relationship between Islamabad and Washington. For Pakistan, the message was unambiguous with words like "change of approach," "a break with the status quo," and "no partnership can survive a country's tolerance of militants and terrorists." Pakistan has leveraged its centrality in America's Afghanistan policy for decades now, securing billions of dollars in US civilian and military aid. (Pant) Given the geographical constraints facing the US supply lines, reliance on Pakistan has been a constant. Indeed, during previous tensions between Washington and Islamabad, Pakistan has restricted the movement of trucks carrying supplies to US forces in landlocked Afghanistan. Confronting Pakistan is, therefore, easier said than done but Trump has put Pakistan on notice by placing it alongside North Korea and Iran, countries which are being watched closely by his administration.

Although Trump has said that US troops would not stay in Afghanistan for long, there is certainly no clear exit plan. As in the past, the emphasis is on the military solution that may keep the US involved in the Afghan war forever. Trump has not specified the number of additional US forces being deployed there, but he has already given the Pentagon approval for 3,900 soldiers thus bringing the total American troop presence in the country close to 10,000. (Hussain Zahid) This marks a complete turnaround in Trump's election promise to pull out US troops from Afghanistan. He seems to be getting the US more deeply engaged in what he had earlier described as a futile war. It is apparent that he has given in to the pressure from the American military establishment, though one tends to agree with him that complete military withdrawal would have disastrous consequences for regional security.

Most US defense analysts agree that a surge in troops can only help in maintaining the existing stalemate. The Pentagon deems such a move necessary to avoid the collapse of the US-backed government in Kabul but it would hardly be a force capable of dramatically changing facts on the ground a few years after a surge to some 100,000 American troops at the beginning of Obama presidency failed to do so. There still seems to be no realization in the Trump administration about the seriousness of the



Afghan situation. It will not be easy for the US forces to contain the Taliban advance and to maintain the status quo for a longer period. What is most alarming is the spread of the insurgency even to regions in north Afghanistan that were previously considered secure. Moreover, the rising specters of the militant Islamic State group and daring terrorist attacks, claimed by the network, have worsened the security situation. The surge in US troops is not likely to shift the balance in the war significantly. The surge is more of a patchwork effort than a serious attempt at exploring the possibility of a political solution to the Afghan conflict.

Trump's so-called regional approach to solving the Afghan puzzle is full of contradictions. That regional approach has so far elicited a strong reaction from Pakistan, without whose help as even former American military leaders acknowledge the US cannot win. While assigning India a greater role, there is no plan to engage other neighboring and surrounding countries in the effort to resolve the Afghan conflict. Pakistan's concerns about India's economic and strategic cooperation with Kabul may be exaggerated, but the previous US administrations were careful not to encourage Delhi to expand its role in Afghanistan. The lever of a US tilt to India will exacerbate and not calm Pakistan's paranoia about its giant neighbor. (Ullman) Iran, Russia and China will follow their own interests in Afghanistan. Indeed, Russia will draw a certain ironic pleasure in supporting the Taliban as the US did for the Mujahedin.

Diplomacy and political options are clearly not a priority for the Trump administration, though there has been a fleeting mention of the administration's willingness to begin talks with the Afghan Taliban insurgents. (Hussain Zahid) There is certainly no road map for peace. Like his predecessor Barack Obama, Trump has made it clear that the United States will not be engaged in nation-building in Afghanistan. But there is also no plan to stabilize the political and economic situation in Afghanistan. The danger is that a confused and flawed policy may push the United States much deeper into the Afghan quagmire and fuel regional tensions.

### **Trump Strategy: Pakistan Response:**

The new US policy is certainly unfair in its characterization of the Afghan war, with its readiness to heap blame on Pakistan and its willingness to draw India deeper into Afghanistan without addressing the competing interests of several other regional powers. (Dawn, 2017)

It is over-simplistic to assume that the US lost the war in Afghanistan because of Taliban sanctuaries in Pakistan. (Basit Abdul) The cross-border sanctuaries are not a game changer for the Taliban's battlefield victories in Afghanistan. Today, more than more than 40 percent of Afghan territory is under the Taliban's control and they do not need safe havens in Pakistan to continue the war. In addition, the Taliban have diversified their regional links with Tehran, Moscow, Beijing and Qatar to minimize their sole reliance on Pakistan. Given this evolving regional dynamics of the Afghan conflict, expanding Afghanistan's war inside Pakistan will be counterproductive.

An uncharacteristically stern response by the National Security Committee to US President Donald Trump's so-called South Asia strategy is a worrying indication of the strategic chasm between Pakistan and the US. (Dawn, 2017) With words and phrases such as "out rightly rejected", "scapegoat", "grave challenge", "Afghan war cannot be fought in Pakistan" and "India cannot be a net provider of security" sprinkled across the statement, the NSC has conveyed its unhappiness, perhaps even alarm, at the Trump strategy. From the NSC response, two key concerns of Pakistan can be gleaned.

1. First, the Trump strategy appears to be an endorsement of perpetual war in Afghanistan, when it has long been clear that only "a politically negotiated outcome", in the NSC's words, can work.
2. Second, the so-called South Asia strategy puts the onus on Pakistan to act without offering to address any of this country's regional security concerns. Specifically, the Trump administration's silence on anti-Pakistan militant sanctuaries in eastern Afghanistan and its encouragement of India to play a greater role in Afghanistan amount to a puzzling disregard of Pakistan's concerns. Why is Pakistan expected to act first to advance other powers' interests and only then its own?

Parliament of Pakistan (National Assembly and Senate of Pakistan) passed separate resolutions rejecting the "hostile and threatening" statements made by US President Donald J. Trump and Gen John W. Nicholson the top US commander in Afghanistan. (Dawn, 2017) The resolutions denounced the "disregard of the immense sacrifices" made by Pakistan in the war on terror and condemned Washington's call for increased Indian

involvement in Afghanistan due to "[India's] known support to terrorists and destabilizing policies in the region".The Parliament not only disapproved of the "unacceptable targeting of Pakistan" by Trump but also rejected Trump's claim that billions of dollars in aid have been spent on Pakistan. It needs to be remembered that Pakistan received about \$14.50 billion from the US since 2001 following America's invasion of Afghanistan with full military and intelligence support by Islamabad. (Yusufzai) And in comparison, Pakistan claims to have suffered losses of \$120 billion during this period due to its partnership with the US in the war against terrorism. This is besides the losses Pakistan sustained by hosting Afghan refugees for an extended period, the influx of drugs and arms into Pakistan and the political, social, and economic fallout of the Afghanistan conflict.

The decision to postpone Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif's talks with his American counterpart, Rex Tillerson, in the US and embark on visits to China, Russia and Turkey first suggests a typically knee-jerk diplomatic reaction. Similarly, the visit of acting Assistant Secretary [Alice] Wells and a delegation led by senior White House National Security Council official Lisa Curtis has been postponed on Pakistan's request. (Iqbal Anwar)Mr Asif's mission as determined by the National Security Committee is to win support for Pakistan's official position on Afghanistan – that there can only be a political settlement with the Afghan Taliban for long-term peace – and Pakistan's concerns of regional destabilization that the Trump administration's so-called South Asia strategy will likely cause.

#### **Trump New Strategy: Way Forward for Pakistan:**

Pakistan has made relentless efforts to promote peace in the war-ravaged country through bilateral and multilateral channels and even facilitated the first-ever interface between the Afghan government and the Taliban which, unfortunately, could not continue following Mullah Omar's death. (Ashraf Malik) It is painful to note that instead of recognizing the sacrifices rendered by Pakistan, the US has chosen to target the country and neglect the tremendous role played by it in fighting militancy as a frontline state.

However, one must not gloss over our own policy debacle and not getting our concerns heard in Washington, and not putting our own house in order. (Hussain Zahid) It is a huge foreign policy failure that during the past seven months we could not establish meaningful contacts with the Trump administration. It also shows a crisis of leadership both in civil and military spheres that we could never formulate a clear Afghan policy. Our Afghan policy has largely been reactive and based on duplicity. We lost

the opportunity to improve relations with President Ashraf Ghani's government in Kabul. There is still no clarity on how we intend to deal with the new challenges arising from the toughening American stance. The political instability in the country has added to our foreign policy and national security problems. For Pakistan, the challenge will be twofold:

1. to not react emotionally to the American president's invitation, unreasonable though it is, to India to have a greater role in Afghanistan;
2. And to continue to focus on the national priority of progressively reducing the space for all manner of militancy, terrorism and extremism in the region.

Everyone wants peace in Afghanistan but on their own terms. (Basit Abdul) Pakistan believes the path to Afghan reconciliation goes through Islamabad and requires power sharing with the Taliban. The Trump administration believes it can kill its way to victory by ramping up the war effort and keep the Taliban out of power. Similarly, New Delhi and Kabul want peace in Afghanistan sans the Afghan Taliban. In such a situation, Afghanistan requires a new political vision at the local, regional and international levels. The Taliban are a hard reality that will not evaporate into thin air with Trump's Afghan policy. Eventually, Kabul and Washington will have to sit with them on the negotiation table. Conflict militarization is counterproductive and the mutual blame game will only embolden the peace spoilers in Afghanistan. All wars have ended with negotiations and the Afghan war is not an anomaly to this historical reality. Pakistan is left with tough policy choices in the current situation. (Rajpar) It is up to the Pakistani leadership, both military and civil; to opt the following steps which may ensure sustainable peace and security in the region:

1. While the strategic chasm between the US and Pakistan on Afghanistan is now public and undeniable, there is still space and time for constructive dialogue. The starting point must be a realization on both sides that absolute positions are neither helpful nor workable.
2. Pakistan should continue to push for common sense and reciprocal cooperation with Afghanistan. The banned TTP and other anti-Pakistan militant sanctuaries in eastern Afghanistan and the perception that the Afghan intelligence network may be sympathetic to such groups are problems that can be addressed. Meanwhile, the fight against ISIS is a unifying factor for all actors in Afghanistan and the region.

3. As there are increasing concentration of ISIS and other terrorist networks in Afghan provinces bordering Pakistan therefore, Pakistan should demand that Afghanistan, US and its allies close borders for leaders of terrorist groups carrying out acts of terrorism against Pakistan.
4. Pakistan must also recognize that the American and Afghan focus on the Haqqani network and Pakistan's alleged ties to the group is a problem that won't go away. Better, then, to identify areas of potential cooperation with Afghanistan and the US than to allow matters to further unravel.
5. It is critical for Pakistan to formulate and follow an integrated Afghanistan, India and Kashmir policy. Strategic coordination with China will be essential. China is, incidentally, a better interlocutor for peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region than the US.
6. A short-sighted India-centric Afghanistan policy will be disastrous for Pakistan-Afghan relations and for the strategic development of Pakistan-China relations. As a weak link in any strategic chain Pakistan will be of no use to anyone. However, the government should call for the US, NATO and Afghan government to ensure that India is denied use of Afghan territory to attack Pakistan. Moreover, a "regional diplomatic initiative" should be launched so that Pakistan's response to the US's Afghan policy can be presented after "consultation with friendly countries." (Guramani)
7. Pakistan needs to commence a diplomatic initiative, particularly in friendly countries in the region, to inform them of Pakistan's counter terrorism strategy and successes and the repercussions in the region of failed US policies while reiterating Pakistan's determination to strengthen control on borders with Afghanistan and demand cooperation and similar action from Afghanistan and ISAF. (Dawn, 2017)
8. There is a need for a mutually acceptable verification mechanism to look into acrimonious allegations of cross-border violations that emanate from both Kabul and Islamabad. (Guramani) The government should effectively highlight Indian interference in Pakistan and turn the spotlight on militants like Moulvi Fazlullah and others, who are hiding in Afghanistan and operating against Pakistan.
9. The government must endure to keep up diplomatic relations with the US as it is crucial for security in the region. Pakistan should work with the US in a constructive way on issues ranging from elimination of safe havens inside Afghanistan, better border management, and re-

invigoration of the peace process for political settlement in Afghanistan.

**Conclusion:**

In a firm and comprehensive response to America's new strategy, Pakistan has outright rejected Trump's allegations and insinuations that ignore its sacrifices in the war against terror and belittle its efforts for peace in Afghanistan. Recounting our efforts to fight terrorism, promote peace in Afghanistan and endure the blowback effects of the conflict in Afghanistan, it rightly called for the elimination of safe havens in Afghanistan where terrorist attacks were being launched against Pakistan. By re-opting for a military solution, the US has made a serious mistake. It cannot resolve the conflict in Afghanistan through bombs just as it couldn't in Vietnam or Iraq. It needs to revisit its strategy and engage regional countries, including Pakistan, to find a negotiated solution if it wants peace. It must understand that a solution to the Afghan conundrum is not possible without the unqualified support of Pakistan, as rightly pointed out by the Russian foreign minister. Nevertheless, Pakistan must strive to avoid a strategic collision with the world's only superpower. The US president's obvious discomfort with a U-turn from his campaign pledge to extricate the US from Afghanistan presents an opportunity. A true regional approach to the Afghan question necessarily includes Iran, China and Russia, countries that Mr Trump all but ignored in his strategy. For Pakistan, the challenge will be to pull together the diplomatic heft of those countries to cobble together a reasonable alternative to America's latest approach. Regional ought to mean regional a path to peace that allows Afghanistan peace and stability and balances the interests of outside powers in the immediate vicinity. Surely, helping develop a regional consensus and encouraging the US to reconsider its own flawed approach is a better alternative than the dismal possibility of endless war in Afghanistan and the severing of even a transactional relationship between Pakistan and the US. Imminent foreign policy should be built on the fundamental ideology of the founder of Pakistan to have a peace with everyone, including neighbors. With an upright image in the world, Pakistan should never let anything compromise its national interests. New foreign policy has greater chance to live up to aspirations of people of Pakistan if parliament is given greater role to thrash out dos and don'ts. When both houses of parliament who have the sound mandate of public will put their heads and action together, sanity always prevails.

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