

# American Imperialism in Post 9/11 Era: Perspective from Pakistan

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## Abstract

*This paper examines the theory of structural imperialism advanced by Johan Galtung which has remarkable relevance for relations between United States and Pakistan. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, economically and militarily powerful European states had huge empires across the globe and exercised considerable political and economic influence over Africa and Asia. After World War II, imperial powers lost their control over their empires and the nation states became independent political entities. The world in the post war era was divided between the East, spearheaded by the Soviet Union, and the West led by the United States, giving birth to the cold war between both the super powers. The United States and the USSR began to dominate the divided world primarily due to military and economic superiority. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US became the sole power and it continues to pursue imperialistic dominance in the world. This paper examines American imperialism in the post 9/11 scenario and discusses the perspective of Pakistan in the light of centre-periphery facet argued by Johan Galtung in his structural theory of imperialism.*

**Keywords:** Pakistan, United States, Imperialism, Structural Theory

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## Introduction

Imperialism largely refers to the relationship among the states in which some of the states acquire stronger political, diplomatic and economic clout and some do not enjoy relative stronger position in economic and political terms. Consequently, the states at the position of strength expand their political and economic influence over the weaker states. Imperialism, thus, refers to a relationship of domination and subordination that exists between stronger states and weaker states. A noted scholar Edward Said argues in his work “Culture and Imperialism” that imperialism is a practice or attitude of a dominating or influential stronger centre over a distant territory. This domination may not be a direct domination, but it carries cultural, political, ideological, and social impacts for the dominated nation.<sup>1</sup> Imperialism therefore refers to unequal relationship that may have a direct or less direct control or influence by the dominating state. American imperialism is no exception to it.

Thomas Weisskopf in his article “Theories of American Imperialism: A Critical Evaluation” identifies various motives behind American imperialistic designs. There are, in his view, motives that the United States pursues for imperialistic influence around the world and national security and macroeconomic prosperity top the list. In order to safeguard national and economic interests, the United States has consistently confronted potential rivals in the world. American military interventions and diplomatic accesses around the globe are justified on the pretext of national security and economic interests. In fact, American national security interests promote its macroeconomic interests in the world. Though many scholars in America think that imperialism is not the only way to prosperity, but imperialist activities will potentially remain motivated by economic interests and that will continue to drive the United States towards imperialistic policies to pursue national interests.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (Vintage, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Weisskopf, “Theories of American Imperialism: A Critical Evaluation,” *Review of Radical Political Economics* 6, no. 3 (1974): 41–60.

The origin of American imperialism dates back to the late 19th century, when the US had developed economic clout but could not militarily assert it overseas. The US military power did not match that of the British who had five times bigger army and 10 times bigger Navy than the US. In fact, the US in the beginning was not very keen to expand its influence overseas for ideological reasons. There existed a different opinion in the American thought process. Moralists in America thought it was not fair to violate a principle of consent and the US should not interfere in the affairs of sovereign states. On the contrary, the younger generation believed that the US had a responsibility to expand its sphere of influence and carry out the duty of uplifting the societies of the world. Again, the European initiative in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century of capturing nearly 10 million square miles of land in Africa and Asia sparked expansionist desire in policy making circles in America.

In America's quest for imperialism, there are four schools of thought. One of the proponents of the first school of thought is Henry Cabot Lodge who said: 'United States must expand to compete.' The 'America should become a power of peace' is the second school of thought and one of the leading figures of this school is Carl Schurz. The third school of thought is based on Josiah Strong's assertion that 'America should spread Anglo-Saxon civilization' and the fourth school of thought led by Alfred Mahan, stated that 'the US must become a great Sea power.'

<sup>3</sup> In all four schools of thought, expansion is an underlying assertion.

The US is an example of imperialist power today. With a view to achieve ascendancy over the world, it maintains huge military arsenals and maintains nearly 400 military bases around the globe. With the display of military prowess, the US coerces smaller and weaker countries to see the world through their lenses and agree to the US world view. As a global leader or policeman, the US believes that it has the legitimacy to mobilise forces on foreign lands at will with a view to secure its national

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth C. Davis, *Don't Know Much about History: Everything You Need to Know about American History but Never Learned* (Harper Collins, 2003).

interests. Dominant imperialistic powers want every other country to fear them. As already mentioned, imperialistic influence and super power syndrome gives birth to unequal relations among states. This aspect has been highlighted by Johan Galtung in his theory of structural imperialism. He also refers to inequality and its persistence that divides the world into centre and periphery regions. The US-Pakistan relations shall also be analysed in view of centre-periphery facet advanced by Galtung.

### **Imperialism: Theoretical Construct**

Though this paper would primarily focus on Johan Galtung's theory of imperialism, it would also look at works of scholars who explained imperialism in their writings, so that a wider view is obtained. While explaining the theory of imperialism, important works by John Atkinson Hobson (1858-1940) and Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) are worth reviewing as they explained outlines of imperialism. Both are considered the leading thinkers and pioneers of the concept of imperialism. These writers have analysed imperialism from their own perspectives and gave out explanations to prove their viewpoints. Hobson argues that "financial motivation" is an important factor for imperialism. He thinks that the logic of expansionism, which is the hallmark of imperialism, is constructed through controlled media. And media as a matter of fact creates justifications for the conquest or expansion. At the end, yields of conquest go to the elites who have the benefits of higher returns.<sup>4</sup> Imperialism, therefore, remains to be an expansionist and exploitative array. While explaining Hobson's imperialism, Herman Schwartz refers to it as a competition among the states and the states pursue expansion of their power to gain control of existing or new market potentials. Opposed to colonialism, it affects existing nations and does not create new ones.<sup>5</sup>

When Hobson was compiling his work on imperialism, there were

<sup>4</sup> John Atkinson Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study*, vol. 3 (Spokesman Books, 1938),

<sup>5</sup> Herman Schwartz, "Hobson's Voice: American Internationalism, Asian Development, and Global Macroeconomic Imbalances," *Journal of Post Keynesian Economics* 25, no. 2 (2002): 331–51.

two major features of international politics. First, there existed several empires, essentially European empires which were in competition with one another, and which stretched across the world. Secondly, there was predominance of finance capital over mercantile capital.<sup>6</sup> His work was largely influenced by the way various forms of imperialism worked across the world. His description of various forms of imperialism manifest that he had keenly observed the way imperial powers exploited the weaker states. Hobson described four forms of imperialism which include colonialism (expansion of nation and state), formal imperialism (expansion of state's political power without simultaneous expansion of the nation), informal imperialism (internationalism or a conflict between firms and individuals mediated through markets) and imperialism (state expanding power for control over markets in anarchic environments).<sup>7</sup>

Lenin referred to Hobson's work and was greatly influenced by him, but their viewpoints were diverse as were their worldviews. There is a general belief that Hobson and Lenin shared common viewpoint on imperialism and its exploitative nature, but they did not. Hobson was not a Marxist and never considered imperialism as an ultimate phase of capitalism the way Lenin did. Lenin views imperialism as "monopoly capitalism, parasitic, or decaying capitalism, and moribund capitalism."<sup>8</sup> In his opinion, the period from 1898 to 1914 was significant for imperialism to take shape. These were the times of wars and economic crisis, i.e. the Spanish-American War (1898), the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902), the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05) and the economic crisis in Europe in 1900 were major developments of the time. These were the landmarks for history and imperialism.<sup>9</sup> The turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in his view, was the time when capitalism's transition went into the final stage that he argued

<sup>6</sup> Joel Krieger and Margaret E. Crahan, *The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World* (Oxford University Press, 2001),

<sup>7</sup> Schwartz, "Hobson's Voice."

<sup>8</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism and the Split in Socialism*. *Marxists Internet Archive*. Retrieved April 19, 2011, 1916.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

in his works.<sup>10</sup>

Galtung's work on imperialism is of enormous significance. He focused on the structure of imperialism. Inequality, he argues is the basis of imperialism. Inequality among the individuals and nations is the central theme of Galtung's structural theory of imperialism. He talks of inequality within and between the nations.<sup>11</sup> The similar argument was advanced by Dr. Mahbub ul Haq when he said that describing the world as one global society was inappropriate. There existed two entities and two different worlds. One is "embarrassingly rich" and the other is "desperately poor."<sup>12</sup> Galtung talks of inequality within and between the nations where as Dr. Mahbub ul Haq refers to inequality between the nations that has divided the world in two different planets, two dissimilar humanities and two diverse global societies being different from each other.

Galtung refers to the pattern of inequality in the world that divides the world into centre and periphery and each of them has a centre and periphery in them. Five prepositions emerge from this pattern. There is an inequality between the centre of the centre and the centre of the periphery. There is an inequality between the centre of the centre and the periphery of the centre. There is an inequality between the centre of the periphery and the periphery of the periphery. There also exist disparity between the periphery of the centre and the periphery of the periphery. Both the peripheries have common status in their own spheres.

Before examining American imperialism with specific reference to developments taking place after the events of 9/11, it is appropriate to analyse various aspects of Galtung's structural theory of imperialism that are related to the scope of this paper. Galtung is of the view that the conception of dominant relations between various collectivities are due to the tremendous inequality that exists within and between the nations.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Johan Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Imperialism," *Journal of Peace Research*, 1971, 81–117.

<sup>12</sup> Dr. Mahbub ul Haq, "Towards a More Compassionate Society," in *Global Issues*, 1997.

He refers to it as “sophisticated” relation<sup>13</sup> that divides a nation into two collectivities or two virtual entities that confront each other. These entities begin to have disharmony of interests that result in a structure of exploitation of the weaker entity by the stronger. The sophisticated relation creates an exploitative array in which the stronger entity exploits the weaker entity.

Harmony of interests and disharmony of interests that stem from this relationship are differentiated by living conditions. If the living condition gap between the two collectivities increases it will be called disharmony of interests and if the living condition gap among the entities decreases, it will be termed as harmony of interests. The dominance relation there is characterised by the living condition of a collectivity. Collectivity having a superior living condition will be referred to as dominant collectivity. Imperialism is a relation between centre and periphery nations that may be described in these assumptions: 1) “there is harmony of interest between the centre in the centre and the centre in the periphery nation; 2) there is more disharmony of interests within the periphery nation than within the centre nation; and 3) there is disharmony of interest between the periphery in the centre nation and the periphery in the periphery nation.”<sup>14</sup> These assumptions shall explain the relation of two states.

Core and periphery regions have also been referred to by Immanuel Wallerstein in his world system theory. According to the world system theory, division of labour brings into being, two mutually interdependent regions. These regions are “core” and “periphery.” Advanced and wealthy nations are “core,” whereas, weak and poor nations fall in the category of “periphery.”<sup>15</sup> Galtung too structures his theory of imperialism on centre and periphery. The model that emerges out of Galtung’s theory is centre-periphery relations. There exists a structure of centre and periphery

<sup>13</sup> Galtung, “A Structural Theory of Imperialism.”

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Carlos A. Martínez-Vela, “World Systems Theory,” *Engineering System Division* 83 (2001): 1–5.

in which elite or policy makers in stronger nation (centre) form part of “centre” whereas those who are not part of ruling elite or policymakers or who do not have impact on decisions of the centre are part of “periphery.” Similar kind of structure exists in the weaker nation (periphery). There too exist elite and policymakers referred to as centre of the periphery and a large segment of the periphery nation are not part of policy making process and are the periphery of periphery.

For a clearer understanding of Galtung’s facets of imperialism’s structure, the US in this paper shall be referred to as “centre” and Pakistan shall be referred to as “periphery.” The US ruling elite forms “centre” of the “centre” and the US general public or masses are “periphery” of the ‘centre.’ Whereas, the Pakistani ruling elite is “centre” of the “periphery” and general public is “periphery” of the “periphery.” Galtung’s three assumptions reflect three different frameworks. Firstly, the harmony of interests between centre of the centre and centre of the periphery means there is a harmony between the US ruling elites and Pakistani ruling elites. Secondly, there exists more disharmony of interests within the periphery nation (Pakistan) than within the centre nation (US). Thirdly, disharmony of interests between periphery (masses or general public in the US) in the centre nation and periphery (masses or general public in Pakistan) in the periphery nation exists. The centre-periphery facets of this theory and above referred assumptions shall be substantiated with several evidences in the subsequent sections of the paper.

### **Imperialism: An Overview**

To begin with, imperialism gives an identical impression of an empire, but these two expressions have different shades of undertone. The word empire is derived from Latin term “imperium” that means “sovereignty or rule” and in Roman the word refers to waging of war, making of laws and implementing them.<sup>16</sup> This implies the state’s capacity to make laws within a territory. With expansion in the size of the state, imperium

<sup>16</sup> Stephen Howe, *Empire: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2002),



became Imperium, denoting “rule over extensive, far flung territories, far beyond the original home land of rulers.”<sup>17</sup> In the light of this explanation, imperialism is about “processes” whereas empire is “maintained and expanded.” The term imperialism thus came to be used in the 19<sup>th</sup> century for policies of expansionism advanced by France and Britain. Imperialism therefore refers to direct conquest of a territory or through political or economic influence that amount to similar kind of domination.<sup>18</sup> On occasions, the terms colonialism and imperialism are also used in the similar meaning or interchangeably, but in fact, they are not the same. Imperialism refers to the control of the weak by the rich and powerful, not necessarily by means of the exercise of direct authority.<sup>19</sup> Colonialism however refers to the process of acquiring and maintaining the territories and goods through conquest.<sup>20</sup>

The scholars have different viewpoints as to how imperialism works. Some scholars evaluate imperialism in economic terms in international economic order whereas others call it a politico-military phrase. In order to understand the concept of imperialism, it is appropriate to refer to various writers and scholars. David Robertson explains imperialism as a “policy or goal of extending the power and rule of government beyond the boundaries of its original state and taking into one political unit.”<sup>21</sup> It is the relationship between the stronger states and the weaker states on the terms decided by the powerful states. The imperial states pursue their policies effectively dominating the weaker for various domestic, regional and international objectives. Most of the time, the weaker states find themselves unable to act for their concerns or attain their national objectives. The ability of weaker states to pursue their national interests

<sup>17</sup> Ray Kiely, *Rethinking Imperialism* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010),

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Jeffrey C. Stone, “Imperialism, Colonialism and Cartography,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 1988, 57–64.

<sup>20</sup> Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/postcolonialism* (Routledge, 2015),

<sup>21</sup> David Robertson, *A Dictionary of Modern Politics* (Psychology Press, 2002),

becomes limited or restricted.<sup>22</sup> Even if powerful states do not extend their physical control over weaker states beyond their original territories, they exercise substantial economic and political influence over the weaker states.

International politics, as we know, is marked by the relations of the states. The relations are described in terms of stronger or weaker countries and defined by economic, political and military strength the states enjoy. During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, various global powers particularly European states, strived to gain domination over poor and weaker states. The states attained this influence through military means and subsequently exercised their influence by affecting internal as well as foreign policies of weaker states. It gave rise to a kind of relations in which the powerful state emerged as dominant and the weaker states became subservient. The nature of dominance varied from political to military to economic to cultural. In this context, it is important to understand the two distinct imperialistic models. One is British imperialistic model and the other is American imperialistic model. The British Empire for which a famous phrase “the empire on which the sun never sets” was coined, traces its imperialistic origin to 16<sup>th</sup> century. In contrast, the American empire which was different in character from that of the British Empire dates back to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

The British imperialistic model was in vogue in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries when the British Empire extended across the world. In 1900, the British Empire was spread over one fifth of the globe and 400 million people belonging to various faiths and ethnicities were subjects of the British Empire. The British Empire had 60 dependencies with 3.2 million square miles of area with the Indian sub-continent consisting of two million square miles and 322 million people. Additionally, the British Empire had five dominions covering 7.6 million square miles of area and

<sup>22</sup> Tony Smith, *The Pattern of Imperialism: The United States, Great Britain and the Late-Industrializing World Since 1815* (CUP Archive, 1981), [http://books.google.com.pk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=-DM4AAAAIAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=Smith,+Tony.+The+Pattern+of+Imperialism:&ots=S\\_DWJP9Lbz&sig=2L2t6F15-t4hO USS EhcWm-8V6r4](http://books.google.com.pk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=-DM4AAAAIAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=Smith,+Tony.+The+Pattern+of+Imperialism:&ots=S_DWJP9Lbz&sig=2L2t6F15-t4hO USS EhcWm-8V6r4).

24 million subjects.<sup>23</sup> There was a racial aspect to imperialism too and it was projected by the expressions “the White Man’s Burden” advanced by a British novelist and poet Rudyard Kipling in an article published in February 1899 in McClure’s Magazine. J. A. Hobson also supports this racial argument when he states: “It is desirable that the earth should be peopled, governed, and developed, as far as possible, by the races which can do this work best, i.e. by the races of highest social efficiency.”<sup>24</sup>

When we refer to the British model, we in fact focus on the British colonial empire established by the Great Britain. However, imperialism in true sense of the word may not be confused with colonialism as the British Empire colonised large parts of the world and exercised influence through direct and indirect means. Imperialism “operates from the centre, it is a state policy and is developed for ideological as well as financial reasons whereas colonialism is nothing more than development for settlement or commercial intentions.”<sup>25</sup> Imperialism refers to dominance that does not necessitate the direct management of dominance, whereas colonialism refers to direct or physical involvement or establishing colonies to exercise control. So ideally, colonialism has the flavour of imperialism but imperial power does not necessarily require having a colony to exercise dominance or control where dominance has physical dimension.

In the contemporary times, we live in the world of American imperialism. There are various imperialistic models that are striving parallel to American model. China is economically and militarily rising and desires to dominate the regional and global politics. Russia is striving to reclaim its imperialistic grandeur that it once boasted. The European Union as a political dispensation looks forward to dominant sphere of influence. The developed countries are building up their capacity as military and economic powers to realise their imperialistic aspirations. The American imperialism, however, is visible and present. The US emerged as

<sup>23</sup> Rob Johnson, *British Imperialism* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002),

<sup>24</sup> Hobson, *Imperialism*.

<sup>25</sup> Carolyn Gallaher et al., *Key Concepts in Political Geography* (Sage, 2009),

imperial power after World War II and has assumed assertive clout after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The US has its “influence and power” that is making an economic, military and cultural impact on the globe. While many developed countries and rising economies are striving for powerful stature in order to expand spheres of influence, but American imperialism exists as a part of the world politics and a relevant concept of today’s international politics.

Imperialism has undoubtedly existed in one form or another for a long time, but it took deeper roots during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the US emerged as imperial powers. The World War II put heavy economic strains on the imperial powers that resulted in loss of their grip over colonies and states. After the war, a bipolar world emerged and then began a clash of spheres of influence between the West (US) and the East (USSR). With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US began to wield unipolar sphere of influence and continue striving to control the world through ruthless domination. The US spends huge sum of money to maintain forces worldwide. According to findings that have been substantiated by the Council on Foreign Relations, the US military spending stands at 39% of total global spending by 2015.<sup>26</sup> The presence of US military in 46 countries with 190,000 US troops and 115,000 civilian employees, manning 909 military facilities is a striking indicator of the extent of imperialism that the US advances.<sup>27</sup>

In the post-World War II era, the American empire has emerged in a peculiarly forceful way. The American economic, political and cultural imperialism has gripped not only the developing world but also the developed world. Being aware of the onslaught, a kind of resistance to American imperial ambitions has been making impact on political, economic, and cultural spheres. Rob Kroes argues that “political imperialism promotes economic imperialism and economic imperialism is

<sup>26</sup> Dinah Walker, “Trends in US Military Spending,” 2013, <http://www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/Trends%20in%20US%20Military%20Spending%202013.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> Catherine Lutz and Cynthia Enloe, *The Bases of Empire: The Global Struggle against US Military Posts* (NYU Press, 2009),

translated into cultural imperialism.”<sup>28</sup> The developing world has economic constraints and its economic constraints are exploited to strengthen the hold of political imperialism. The US has been using its imperialistic clout because of the superiority of political and economic stature and continues to exploit weaker states.

### **American imperialistic designs in Asia**

The 20<sup>th</sup> century marks the domination of European powers over world resources and political affairs. There was a commercial *raison d'être* of this domination besides, white man's burden and professed duty toward the less privileged and underdeveloped world. English imperialism dominated the vast foreign territories and had attained the status of biggest empire in political history. Events leading to World War II marked an end to classical imperialism. The war set the stage for the demise of European and specifically British imperialism and gave rise to nationalism in Asia where independent states emerged following the devastating war. The era of de-colonisation that began after the war was the era when the US began to increase its influence not only in Europe (owing to their economic hardship) but also in various other parts of the world including Asia. The Soviet Union was post war challenger of the US because it also began to form alliances and forge collaborations with states it could dominate or states having communist's penchant. The Soviet Union's proximity to South Asia was the reason that the region gained significance in the chess board of cold war.

In the post war international scenario, American imperialism was for the most part vulnerable because of communist ideology. The communist ideology and aggressive behaviour of the Soviet leaders was a major US apprehension. During the cold war, the US policymakers seemed poised to lessen the power and influence of Soviet Union in order to limit its threat to international peace and stability. The US incessantly worked

<sup>28</sup> Rob Kroes, "American Empire and Cultural Imperialism: A View from the Receiving End," *Diplomatic History* 23, no. 3 (1999): 463–77.

to keep conduct of Soviet Union in accordance with the purposes of United Nations Charter. There is another aspect of US-USSR confrontation: Soviet communism was considered an alternating ideology to American capitalism. The Soviet Union, therefore was not only an economic or military rival of the US but it posed meaningful threat to the concept and practice of capitalism as an international social, economic and political order. Soviet Union's collapse changed international scenario. With the collapse of communism as an ideology and dismemberment of the Soviet Union, new coalitions, and political readjustment surfaced.

China, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, remains a credible challenge to American imperialism in the South Asian region. It is two decades from now that China is likely to outdo the US economy. Growing fast in attaining military potentials, China is expected to defy the US domination in the region. China is perceived as a threat to the US imperialism around the globe. Major indicators that substantiate this speculation are its significant geographical location, pace at which its economy is growing and increasing military strength. China has been very cautious in achieving its objectives. It does not seem to be hurriedly and aggressively pursuing its goals. Unlike the US, it has been successful in projecting itself as a benevolent and caring power in the world, working for mutual cooperation and benefit.

In view of its imperial ambitions in South Asia and beyond, the US has envisaged a stronger military presence in the region from where it can attain its objectives. 9/11 offered an opportunity and a sort of justification for intervention in South Asia and Muslim Arab world in particular. A swift conclusion that Al-Qaeda based in Afghanistan is responsible for the catastrophe of the 9/11 was reached by the US policymakers. In a way, Al-Qaeda did offer a helping hand, in the words of Ugo Mattei, for the "Construction of foe."<sup>29</sup> Mythical construction of foe was an imperative to take military measures and subsequent regime change in Afghanistan.

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<sup>29</sup> Ugo Mattei, "A Theory of Imperial Law: A Study on US Hegemony and the Latin Resistance," *Global Jurist Frontiers* 3, no. 2 (2003),

While explaining imperialism in the complex region, politics of regional and global players need to be analysed. There are three major stakeholders in the region - global and regional players and important states. Russia was a US competitor during the cold war and it still carries enormous political weight. China is now emerging as a fast-growing economy and US rival in global as well as regional spheres. India has regional stature but aspires to attain regional hegemony and become a global entity. Being a nuclear state, Pakistan poses challenge to Indian domination in the region. Oil and gas rich Central Asian Republics (CAR) are also significant for the Imperial power. The United States wants to dominate South Asia and Central Asia in order to contain China and limit the role of Russia. The US views Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) with deep concern. In US perspective, this alliance has been advanced by China, Russia, and the Central Asian states with a view to limit the US imperialism in the region. The US supports and befriends India to contain China's growing influence and assist in realising other objectives in the region. Pakistan is also a reluctant collaborator of the US imperialistic agenda.

### **American Imperialism: Pakistan's Perspective**

The purpose of giving a detailed account of imperialism was to have an understanding of how imperialism works at global and regional level. Though this paper does not focus on bilateral (US-Pakistan context) dimension of imperialism, it focuses on theoretical and conceptual dimension of imperialism, but it was necessary to have a larger picture in view. It focuses on how an imperial power engages with a state bilaterally to acquire its compliance to the set objectives. Following the catastrophe of 9/11, Pakistan became an important frontline ally in the war on terror. In order to get absolute compliance to the US goals, Pakistan was dubbed as fountainhead of terrorism and a country that provides safe sanctuaries to the most sought-after terrorists. Faced with the threat of becoming a terror sponsoring state, Pakistan fell in line with the US albeit

as a reluctant collaborator. A decade down the line, Pakistan is faced with two-fold dilemma. It has a relation of misgivings with the US and faces a severe domestic backlash for becoming US surrogate. Resultantly, public sentiment has enormously turned against the US. In the process, the US was able to achieve its imperialistic objectives of gaining a foothold in the region in general and in Afghanistan in particular. The US was able to limit Al-Qaeda and maintain strong military presence in an area from where it can oversee resource rich Central Asia, economically rising China and aspiring competitor Russia.

Bilateral framework of imperialism has an explanation in Galtung's structural theory of imperialism. The US-Pakistan relations in the context of centre-periphery relations also give some useful details. Galtung says that "imperialism is a dominance relation between collectivities particularly between nations."<sup>30</sup> The relation between the US and Pakistan can be described as a sort of patron-client relationship for large part of their bilateral relationship. Consequently, the economic, military, and cultural imperial onslaught of the US subsequently flooded in. 9/11 gave an impetus to the existing imperialism.

Soon after 9/11, the Pakistani leadership was coerced by the US officials to cooperate with its military forces that were set to launch an offensive against the defiant Taliban government. Pakistan readily agreed to extend all possible assistance required. Pakistan instantly made changes in its Afghan policy. It made a diplomatic reversal of what it was pursuing with regards to Afghanistan and re-aligned with the US imperialistic objectives. Regardless of what Pakistan did, there was an important foreign policy shift, and it was carried out under coercion by US. Pakistan made a swift transition from supporting Taliban regime in Afghanistan to facilitating the US forces to dislodge the Taliban regime.

The war in Afghanistan commenced on 7 October 2001, as the armed forces of the US, UK, Australia, and Afghan United Front comprising

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<sup>30</sup> Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Imperialism."



Taliban adversaries of Northern Alliance launched Operation “Enduring Freedom.” The primary driver of the invasion was 9/11, with the stated goal of dismantling terrorists belonging to the Al-Qaeda and ending the use of Afghanistan as its base of operations. The US made a commitment to free the world that it would remove the extremist Taliban regime from power and create a viable people friendly democratic state. After the overthrow of the Taliban regime in Kabul by NATO forces, Hamid Karzai was placed as the head of the Afghan government. More than a decade into the war, the NATO forces headed by the US continue to battle a widespread insurgency in Afghanistan. The war has now spilled over to Pakistan and its tribal areas. The war in Afghanistan has proved to be the longest war ever fought by the US. Though considerable reduction of the US and NATO forces has taken place, a viable Afghan democratic state is still a far cry.

In the post 9/11 era, the US imperialism has taken an assertive posture in Pakistani context. Various events of this period can be cited where the US forced Pakistan to act in accordance with their interests despite the fact that the action entailed harmful ramifications for Pakistan. These incidences have not only undermined Pakistan’s position as a sovereign state but has also exposed decadent nature of the US diplomacy. One of the contentious issues was drone attacks. Commencing in June 2004, till 2007, there were only nine attacks. In 2008, 33 strikes were launched. There was a major increase over previous years. After becoming President, Barack Obama substantially increased rate of drone strikes and 53 drone strikes were conducted in 2009. In 2010, there were 118 drone attacks and in 2011, there were 70 drone attacks.<sup>31</sup> Though these attacks aimed at defeating the Taliban and Al-Qaeda militants in Pakistan, but resulted in killing of 2,851 persons including 176 children. Large scales of protests were registered by political parties and the civil society over these drone attacks, causing immense collateral damage. Similar protests and frenzy was witnessed when in sheer violation of the sovereignty of Pakistan, US

<sup>31</sup> Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann, “The Year of the Drone,” *New America Foundation* 24 (2010), <http://kironmemo.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Waziristan.pdf>.

Navy SEAL carried out an action known as “Operation Geronimo” and attacked the Abbottabad compound where Osama Bin Ladin was allegedly hiding with his family. They killed him and took his body with them.<sup>32</sup>

Raymond Davis episode is another case in point. In January 2011, Raymond Allen Davis, a former US soldier and contractor with the CIA, killed two armed men in Lahore. Davis was jailed and charged by Pakistani authorities with double murder and the illegal possession of firearms. Later, the US officials began asserting that he was protected by immunity that he enjoyed being a diplomat due to his employment with the US Consulate in Lahore. A car that came to help Davis also killed a third Pakistani while speeding on the wrong side of the road. The Pakistani government came under immense pressure and on March 16, 2011, Davis was released after the families of the two men killed were paid \$2.3 million (in a form of monetary compensation or blood money). The judges acquitted him, and Davis was immediately deported. An official no less than President Obama himself intervened to get the employee back home.

In the light of Galtung’s theory of structural imperialism, certain conclusions are drawn with regards to above referred events. Galtung describes relations between centre and periphery as dominant relations. Centre (Elites and policy makers) of the centre (US) has powerful nexus with the centre (Elites and policy makers) of the periphery (Pakistan). This division turns out to be an exploitative mechanism, whereby, centre of the centre commands obedience of centre of the periphery. But this obedience is at the cost of periphery of the periphery. Raymond Davis commits a criminal offence and periphery of the periphery demanded a due process of law. Centre of the periphery in compliance to centre of centre let Davis go with total disregard to local laws and procedures. Similarly, periphery of the periphery protested drone attacks, causing collateral damage, but centre of the periphery subtly consented to the centre of the centre to

<sup>32</sup> S. Hussain Shaheed Soherwordi and Shahid Mi Khattak, “Operation Geronimo: Assassination of Osama Bin Laden and Its Implications on the US–Pakistan Relations, War on Terror, Pakistan and Al-Qaeda,” *South Asian Studies* 26, no. 2 (2011): 349.

carry out attacks as the attacks were serving the interest of the centre.

There are three key assumptions of Galtung's theory of imperialism. These have been discussed in the theoretical construct of the paper. These assumptions have significant relevance with regards to Pakistan-US bilateral relations. Firstly, there is harmony of interest between the centre in the centre and the centre in the periphery nation and we see a measure of cooperation, empathy or understanding between the US ruling elite and Pakistani ruling elite. This support is visible in some of the actions the states initiated in response to various events. Secondly, there is more disharmony of interests within the periphery nation than with the centre nation and we find that in case of Pakistan and the US. Thirdly, as opposed to harmony of interests between centre of the centre and centre of the periphery, there exists a disharmony of interest between the periphery in the centre nation and periphery in the periphery nation. The US public has different mind-set than that of the Pakistani public and their interests do not coincide.

Drone strikes, Osama Bin Laden raid and Raymond Davis issue are instances where there was not only a violation of certain ethics and morality but of international law. These instances are excesses committed by an imperial power to expand and maintain its influence. Again, there is a difference in public opinion and public policy. The major problem in the periphery nation is that public opinion and public policy are two different spheres. Public opinion is the voice of periphery in periphery whereas public policy is the domain of centre of the periphery. There exists a gap in public opinion and public policy in periphery nations. For instance, public opinion calls for an end to drone attacks, but public policy allows it silently. Since the centre of the periphery is the driving force behind public policy and it has an alignment with centre of the centre, it tends to disregard the aspirations and interests of the periphery of the periphery.

According to Galtung, there is structural imperialism or domination relation between the nations. Centre of periphery exists in

compliance to the centre of the centre. There is structural resistance to structural imperialism. It is due to this resistance mechanism that the US, despite initial successes in Iraq and Afghanistan, faced resistance or confrontation by the insurgents. This resistance mechanism has led the US to decide about quitting Afghanistan. In Pakistan's context, though the US apparently seems to have largely succeeded in commanding compliance of the centre, but resistance mechanism has clearly led to incidences of defiance. Resistance to operation against Haqqani group in FATA as Pakistan wanted to act in its own interests, delay in the release of Raymond Davis, resistance to Kerry Lugar Bill and suspension of NATO supply route were some occasions when imperial decree was not carried out, at least not right away. The resistance is becoming meaningful as the periphery is becoming aware, alert, responsive and sometimes even violent.

## **Conclusion**

The American imperialism began to exist in the current form after the World War II, when European imperialism waned and retreated. The cold war divided the world in two major blocks. One was led by the US for the capitalist world and the other was led by the USSR for communist world. Both the super powers had their sphere of influence and exercised imperialistic control in their respective domains. After the collapse of Soviet Union, US became sole imperial power and continues to make an impact across the globe. While American imperialism faces existential challenges, it maintains domination by being a superior military and economic power of the world and is likely to contain or limit any power that aspires to attain corresponding political, military or economic clout.

Imperialism is a system of domination that has existed for centuries and will continue to exist. It is likely that it will change its form as it did in the past. Structure of international politics today favours imperialism as domination can be referred to positively as it gives a balancing impact. Stronger states have the logic of power to command compliance of

weaker states. And weaker states or periphery nations are divided to serve the interest of imperial power or the centre. Centre-periphery facets of Galtung's theory are relevant to Pakistan-US relations. The relation of the powerful and weak will exist as stated. It will exist till the time centre's power wanes or diminishes, and periphery's position strengthens. As for the US, it will continue to dominate till the time its military might, and economic superiority is substantially challenged by a state or an alliance of states.