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## U.S. Pakistan Relations during the Cold War Lubna Sunawar<sup>1</sup>, Tatiana Coutto<sup>2</sup>

### Introduction

Since the end of British India's colonial rule in 1947 and the subsequent partition of the South Asian subcontinent, Pakistan's foreign policy has been driven largely by geopolitical and ideological concerns. Located at the crossroads of the Middle East and South Asia, and relatively close to the Soviet Union (USSR) and Europe, Pakistan emerged not only as a potential bridge between the oil-rich Persian Gulf, energy-hungry East Asia, and the West<sup>3</sup>, but also as a channel to 'the Muslim World'. Such potential, however, has never been fulfilled: unsettled territorial disputes with India, along with irreconcilable national identity claims, weak intra-regional trade and fragile democratic structures have all prevented Pakistan from escaping the security dilemma it has faced since its inception.

The role of the U.S. in Pakistan's foreign policy throughout the Cold War, the 'war against the USSR' in Afghanistan – regarded as the first test case for Pakistan during the Cold war as a frontline ally of the U.S - and, currently, the fight against terrorism should not be understated. Nevertheless, Pakistan-U.S. relations have been described as 'a tale of exaggerated expectations, broken promises, and disastrous misunderstandings'.<sup>4</sup> In this love-hate relationship, attempts to establish cordial ties and periods of economic and military assistance and cooperation have been interspersed with phases characterized by friction and mutual distrust. As stated by Haqqani, U.S. motivations for seeking an alliance with Pakistan have been different from Islamabad's reasons for accepting it. As a consequence, Pakistan has been repeatedly disappointed that the U.S. does not share its fears of Indian hegemony on the subcontinent, while Washington has been expecting further engagement from Pakistan in the fight against Communism and terrorism, rather than diverting economic and military assistance to address India's hard power capabilities.<sup>5</sup>

Following the partition of the subcontinent, the Truman administration adopted a somewhat conflicting strategy to build 'the most constructive possible bilateral relationship' with both India and Pakistan. Assuming that the region would remain under British influence, Washington hoped that the newly-born states would be interdependent, stable (formally or informally), aligned with the West, and resistant to domestic and external Communist threats.<sup>6</sup> U.S. enthusiasm for India, however, was curtailed by Jawaharlal Nehru's politics of non-alignment, while Pakistan was seen by Washington analysts as a 'potential valuable strategic asset' that Americans could not afford to alienate.<sup>7</sup> Rather than an alliance based on shared values, interactions between the two countries were largely driven by Pakistan's need to counter-balance India, combined with strong U.S. will to contain Soviet influence.

This paper seeks to analyze the determinants of Pakistan's foreign policy strategy during the Cold War. From Pakistanis' leaders standpoint, what were the country's geopolitical options and bargaining tools during that period? While Pakistan's preferences remained stable throughout that period, its foreign policy strategies were constrained by the regional and global geopolitical context, as

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<sup>3</sup>H.C. Arya, "A Study of Some Aspects of the Relations of the U.S. with Pakistan,"(Ph.D Thesis), Indian School of International Studies. New Delhi, 1966, p. 2

<sup>4</sup>Husain Haqqani, *Magnificent Delusions: Pakistan, the United States, and an Epic History of Misunderstanding*, New York: Public Affairs, 2013, p.6.

<sup>5</sup> Id, p.3

<sup>6</sup>Robert J. McMahon. *The Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India and Pakistan*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

<sup>7</sup> Id, p. 37.

well as by internal power struggles. This article does not reject structural realists' analyses of South Asian geopolitics; rather, we take it as a point of departure to explore the mechanisms and processes that have shaped Pakistan's international behavior by following a historical approach based on both Western and Pakistani sources.

### **South Asia and the Hobbesian image of international relations**

Persistent security dilemmas, nuclear issues, and ethnical and religious differences limit the possibilities for stable peace in South Asia and reinforce the Hobbesian image of international relations in the region. From the academic standpoint, a large body of research has drawn on Structural Realism to explain the connection between the involvement of Cold War superpowers in South Asia and the enduring struggle for power in the region.<sup>8</sup> With the development of International Relations as a field of study, other approaches have allowed for a greater understanding of the region's security issues. By opening the black-box of states' preferences, the English school has shed light on the impact of superpowers' support for certain political groups in the region (through arms transfers, for example).<sup>9</sup> Constructivists have focused on how beliefs and knowledge have influenced states' preferences, shaped religious-nationalist ideologies and accounted for the formation of national identities, thereby establishing boundaries between 'US' and 'the Others'.<sup>10</sup> A broader conceptualization of security threats and a focus on the regional level have also allowed for a better understanding of the *enjeux* and the patterns of amity and enmity within the South Asian 'security complex'.<sup>11</sup>

Structural Realism posits that the behavior of sovereign states can be explained by constraints imposed by the anarchic structure of the international system on the pursuit of their national interest.<sup>12</sup> In the absence of a central government capable of enforcing rules of behavior, power (and not morality) is the central arbiter of international relations.<sup>13</sup> Caught in a dilemma inherent to the structure of the international system, states must adopt foreign policy strategies that increase their security and ensure their survival. Neorealism associates this quest for security with the increment of power attributes such as regional hegemony, wealth, and nuclear/technological capacity.<sup>14</sup> The end of the Cold War and the development of information technologies have led to a more interdependent world where states no longer have the monopoly of the foreign policy agenda: one has witnessed an increasing participation of private actors, in addition to the development of a complex multilevel governance architecture.<sup>15</sup> Notwithstanding the emergence of a liberal view of international politics, the traditional security-driven logic of self-help that shapes the interactions among nation states still prevails.<sup>16</sup> In line with rationalist approaches to IR (Structural Realism included), this article draws on the assumption that states are rational actors, and that national preferences remained stable during that period of time. Pakistan's preferences included: a) survival of the state and the impossibility of

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<sup>8</sup>Mohammed Ayoob, "India, Pakistan and Superpower Rivalry". *The World Today*, Vol. 38, No 5 (May 1982), pp. 194-202. For a comprehensive review of the underlying factors and dynamics of India-Pakistan relations, see: T.V. Paul (ed.), *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Gregory S. Sanjian, 'Cold War Imperatives and Quarrelsome Clients: Modelling U.S. and USSR Arms Transfers to India and Pakistan'. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (Feb., 1998), pp. 97-127.

<sup>10</sup> Jutta Weldes (ed.), *Cultures of Insecurity: States, Communities, and the Production of Danger*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

<sup>11</sup> Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post Cold War Era*. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1991. Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Security*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*. New York: Random House, 1979.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Gilpin, "The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism," in Robert O. Keohane, ed. *Neorealism and Its Critics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, p. 304.

<sup>14</sup> John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Keohane, Joseph Nye, *Power and Interdependence*. Boston: Longman, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., 2012.

<sup>16</sup> Kenneth Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War", *International Security*, Vol. 25, No 1, 2000, pp.5-41.

reunification with India, and b) an improvement of its status vis-à-vis the US, as Pakistan emerged as ‘the Eastern bastion against Communism’, with Turkey the Western bastion. Assuming that these interests remain stable, however, does not exclude variation in terms of foreign policy behavior, as preferences are constrained by domestic and external factors. In order to analyze the different strategies adopted by Pakistan to promote its security, it is necessary to look at the interplay between national, regional and global factors that have shaped the calculations and threat perceptions of Pakistani leaders over time. The basis of the article is the Cold War period. Data stems from both Western and South Asian sources, as well as press records and interviews with academics and Pakistani foreign policy practitioners carried out in France in 2013.

### **Pakistan’s security concerns during the Cold War**

Established in August 1947 in Karachi, the Pakistani government immediately faced an enormous challenge: to ensure its survival and cope with the power asymmetries in the region while lacking ‘resources, files, equipment or any of the necessities required to operate’.<sup>17</sup> This need for economic assistance compelled Pakistan to reach out to the United States, which was then trying to curb Soviet influence by promoting a strategic alliance of Asian states.<sup>18</sup> The U.S. strengthened Pakistan’s military profile and provided aid for development, but at the same time encouraged undemocratic and conservative tendencies in the country, including Islamists. At the time, Pakistan’s religious profile was of little concern; in fact, it suited Washington’s interests in the region as the religion itself became a powerful element of a nascent national identity and internal stability, and a defense against Communism.<sup>19</sup>

In the years that followed its emergence as an independent state, Pakistan faced a number of security challenges, including a huge influx of Muslim refugees from India, weak economic structures inherited from the British Raj, a lack of administrative capacity and, most importantly of all, the possibility of Indian hegemony in the region. In order to tackle these problems, Pakistan first explored the possibility of receiving relief from the British Commonwealth. This option, however, was not feasible due to the latter’s poor economic condition after the Second World War and its clear tilt towards India.<sup>20</sup>

Liaquat Ali Khan, the first Prime Minister of Pakistan, was an Oxford-educated supporter of parliamentarism, albeit sympathetic to the non-aligned movement (NAM). These elements explain his attempt to pursue a neutral foreign policy, rather than aligning with either of the superpowers,<sup>21</sup> while India rebuffed any formal alliance with the West. The possibility of providing access to warm waters may have motivated the Soviets to approach Pakistan in the years following independence,<sup>22</sup> thereby expanding the influence, authority and economic supremacy of the USSR in the region. Moscow’s pro-India attitude, the general incompatibility between Islam and Communism, and weak diplomatic channels – Pakistan did not have an embassy at Moscow impeded the concretization of a visit to the USSR. This episode has been described as a ‘grave diplomatic blunder by Pakistan from every perspective,’ as Pakistan’s regional role would have been better appreciated by America and the

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with David Newson, Information Officer, USIS, Karachi (1947-1950). *Moments in U.S. Diplomatic History Establishing Ties with Pakistan - 1947*. Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. Available at <http://adst.org/2013/10/establishing-ties-with-pakistan-1947/> Accessed 17 May 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Melvin Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992.

<sup>19</sup> Touqir Hussain, “The US-Pakistan Engagement: The War on Terrorism and Beyond,” *United States Institute of Peace*, (Autumn 2005): p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Massarrat Sohail, *Partition and Anglo-Pakistan Relations, 1947-1951*, (Lahore: Vanguard Books Ltd, 199) pp. 37-55

<sup>21</sup> *Pakistan Times*, 10 March 1951. PM Liaquat’s speech

<sup>22</sup> *Opcit.*

Russian attitude could have been more conciliatory towards Pakistan.<sup>23</sup> Eventually Khrushchev would openly support India in the United Nations (UN), by vetoing all resolutions on Kashmir favorable to Pakistan, while Delhi refused to vote for a resolution regarding USSR intervention in Hungary in 1956.<sup>24</sup>

Following a formal invitation from Washington, Liaquat visited the U.S. in 1950. His efforts to persuade the U.S. to take the initiative in solving the Kashmir dispute did not bear fruit, as the U.S. was more interested in containing Soviet influence in the region<sup>25</sup> by using the Karachi-Lahore area of Pakistan as a base for air operations against the USSR and a staging area for forces engaged in the defense or recapture of Middle Eastern oil areas.<sup>26</sup> Global geopolitical considerations allowed Pakistan to receive aid from the U.S., free from obligation such as joining US-led security pacts to encumber China, for example.<sup>27</sup> In the 1950s Pakistan became 'America's most allied ally' when it came to containing Soviet expansion.<sup>28</sup>

Regional geopolitical factors also played a crucial role in Pakistan's foreign policy. Bordering the USSR, the People's Republic of China (with whom diplomatic ties were established in 1951), and India, there seemed to be "no other small country which has the somewhat dubious distinction of having three such mighty neighbors"<sup>29</sup>. Pakistan's geography until 1971 was unique: comprised of two sections, West and East (now Bangladesh), separated by one thousand miles of Indian Territory which eventually played its part in the war of 1971. This 'truncated power asymmetry' led Pakistan to spend more on defense than any other developing country, and to systematically turn to the U.S. as a means to increase its hard power capabilities.<sup>30</sup>

### **The most allied ally': military co-operation with the U.S.**

In May 1954, Pakistan and the U.S. signed a Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement, which was followed by Pakistan becoming a member of the South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO), an alliance sponsored by the U.S. The calculated objective of signing this treaty was the containment of Communism. On the other hand, there was no guarantee for Pakistan of any collective action against non-communist attack on its soil, i.e. from India. Pakistan, left with no other viable option, started moving itself from a position of qualified neutrality to one of unqualified alliance with the West.

The Pakistani elite, heavily influenced by the Western democratic system and drawn mainly from the feudal and military classes trained in Western education, was paramount to the establishment of an ever-closer alliance with the U.S.<sup>31</sup> In 1955, political power in Pakistan was assumed by a "small group of British-trained administrators and military leaders centering around Governor-General Ghulam Mohammed and his principal associates, Generals Iskander Mirza and Ayub Khan," who

<sup>23</sup>Mushtaq Ahmed, *Government and Politics*. Space Publishers; 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 1970.p. 107.

<sup>24</sup>VojtechMastny, 'The Soviet Union's Partnership with India', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 12, No 3, Summer 2010, pp. 50-90.

<sup>25</sup>Liaquat Ali Khan, *Pakistan: The Heart of Asia*. London: Oxford Printing Press, 1951. pp. 15-16

<sup>26</sup>Robert J. McMahon, 'United States Cold War Strategy in South Asia: Making a Military Commitment to Pakistan, 1947-1954'. *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 75, No. 3, 1988. pp. 812-840.

<sup>27</sup>Latif, ASherwani, (1967). *India, China and Pakistan*. Feroz Sons' Publishers, Karachi. p.65

<sup>28</sup>Robert G. Wirsing, "Precarious Partnership: Pakistan's Response to U.S. Security Policies," *Asian Affairs, an American Review*, Summer 2003, p. 70.

<sup>29</sup>Ayub Khan, *Friends Not Masters*, p. 114.

<sup>30</sup>T. V. Paul, 'Why has the India-Pakistan Rivalry Been so Enduring? Power Asymmetry and an Intractable Conflict'. *Security Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 4, 2006, pp. 600-630.

<sup>31</sup>ShaheenIrshad, *Rejection Alliances: A Case Study of US-Pak Relations (1947-1967)* (Lahore: Ferozsons, 1972) p.28



avored a policy of economic development through austerity and foreign aid, and close alignment with the U.S.<sup>32</sup>

In 1955, Pakistan joined the Baghdad Pact, later known as the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). Although firmly and officially on the Western side of the fence, the perception that the U.S. took Pakistan for granted began to grow among Pakistani officials.<sup>33</sup> In 1959, a cooperation agreement was signed between the two states: the U.S. would be required to assist Pakistan if it became the victim of aggression from any other country (and particularly countries in the region).<sup>34</sup> Pakistan's signing of the Mutual Defense Assistance Agreements, SEATO and CENTO, has been justified by its hostile relations with both India and Afghanistan, and the need to remediate extremely poor socio-economic conditions. The basic purpose of the Pakistani leadership in signing these defense pacts was quite obvious: to improve the country's defense capability against India.<sup>35</sup> Pakistan also wanted to develop positive and friendly relations with the Muslim world, and signing CENTO provided Pakistan with an opportunity to become closer to Iran and Turkey. From the U.S. perspective, Pakistan's new Middle Eastern focus offered the potential to promote American interests in the region.

By 1957 the U.S. had provided substantial aid for the development of Pakistan's infra-structure and agriculture, in addition to supplying a wide range of military hardware, including Patton tanks, artillery, helicopters, bombers, high-level long distance radars, frigates and a Ghazi submarine. The U.S. also supported the development of nuclear research infrastructure.<sup>36</sup> In return the U.S. gained extraterritorial rights, allowing it to set up a secret intelligence base under the guise of a 'communication center' at Badaber, near Peshawar.<sup>37</sup> This also served as the base for high-level U-2 'spy in the sky' surveillance aircraft for illegal flights over the Soviet Union. From the Badaber base in Peshawar, the U.S. could follow the Soviet and Chinese activities.<sup>38</sup>

Pakistan paid a heavy price for this alliance, as it began to be regarded as a 'messenger of imperialist powers' by Muslim countries, particularly Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan.<sup>39</sup> It also antagonized the two communist giants, the USSR and China. On the top of that, the alignment did not have a large amount of public support within Pakistan, for people feared that it would jeopardize their freedom and sovereignty in the years to come. Lastly, the pact would prove to be a fatal mistake, as it led to a stalemate on the Kashmir.<sup>40</sup> In 1958, a coup d'état brought General Ayub Khan to power with U.S. support. Ayub would remain in office until his resignation in 1969, when he was succeeded by general Agha Yahya Khan.

<sup>32</sup> U.S. National Intelligence Estimate, Washington (NIE 52-55), 15 March 1955. Available at <http://images.library.wisc.edu/FRUS/EFacs2/1955-57v08/reference/frus.frus195557v08.i0011.pdf> Accessed 10 Mar 2014.

<sup>33</sup> Ayub Khan, *Friends Not Masters*, p.132

<sup>34</sup> *Dawn*, 31 January 1957, cited by Shahid M. Amin, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy*, p.43

<sup>35</sup> Sayeed, Khalid B., *Politics in Pakistan The Nature and Direction of Change*. New York: Praeger. p.269

<sup>36</sup> Air Mar. Ayaz Ahmed Khan. *Pak-U.S. in Historical Perspective*. Available at Bhutto.org <http://sixhour.com/pak-us%20ties%20in%20historical%20perspective.htm> Accessed 20 Mar 2014.

<sup>37</sup> Abdul Sattar, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy 1947-2005*, op. cit. p.49.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* p.50

<sup>39</sup> Selig S. Harrison, "India, Pakistan and U.S: Case History of a Mistake," *New Republic*, Vol. 141, Nos. 8-9, 10 August 1959

<sup>40</sup> Surendra Chopra, "U.S. Intervention in the Indo-Pakistan Dialogue 1953-1955," *Kurukshetra University Research Journal*, Vol. 4, Part 1-2, 1970, pp. 165-176.

### Implications of Sino-Pakistani relations

By the early 1950s, U.S. analysts had a good understanding that "when Pakistanis talk about defense, they talk about defense against India,"<sup>41</sup> which might have contributed to them taking their alliance with Pakistan for granted. Nevertheless, Pakistan was prepared to do anything to continue the supply of arms to counter Indian aggression, regardless of where they came from.<sup>42</sup>

The fragile balance of power in the region would be disturbed once more with the outbreak of the Sino-Indian War in 1962. Following a steep increase in U.S. military and economic aid to India, Pakistan sided with China, heralding a new period in the relationship between the two countries, focused more on strengthening bilateral relations and common interests. For China, Pakistan was a "low-cost secondary deterrent to India,"<sup>43</sup> but at the same time a key aspect of Beijing's policy of isolating the latter's regional rival.<sup>44</sup>

Beginning in the 1960s, China provided Pakistan with arms, supported the development of a Pakistani arms industry and improved its nuclear weapons delivery systems. They also equipped the Pakistani army with both short- and medium-range ballistic missiles, such as the Shaheen missile series. Today, Pakistan's air force and navy possess latest weapons coproduced with China. Pakistan's Air Force includes Chinese interceptor and advanced trainer aircraft, as well as an Airborne Early Warning and Control radar system used to detect aircraft. Pakistan is producing the JF-17 Thunder multi-role combat aircraft jointly with China. The K-8 Karakorum light attack aircraft was also coproduced.<sup>45</sup>

Meanwhile, the U.S.-Pakistan relationship deteriorated and did not transform into the long-term, workable and sustainable strategic partnership that the U.S. had envisaged.<sup>46</sup> The defense pacts were strongly questioned after the Second Kashmir War of 1965 when Pakistani leaders felt that the U.S. did not provide any significant assistance. Such a posture was perceived as 'unfair and unethical', and a serious hindrance to a workable and longstanding relationship with the U.S.<sup>47</sup> Although Pakistan's support from Muslim countries increased, the country became a target of U.S. sanctions during the 1965 War with India. While the U.S. cut the supply of military equipment and economic aid to Pakistan, the USSR continued providing India with military hardware and economic assistance to ensure Indian supremacy over Pakistan.<sup>48</sup> Pakistani civilian and military authorities in particular were aware of the fact that they could not prescind from America, but eventually realized that it would not be in their interests to rely exclusively on Western countries for support. Following this pragmatic view, President Ayub decided not to break with the U.S.-led alliance, but at the same time to maintain a sustainable balance of cordiality with the other major powers as well.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Telegram from the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan to the Department of State, Karachi, 30 March 1957. United States Department of State / Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957. South Asia (1955-1957). Available at <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=article&did=FRUS.FRUS195557v08.i0011&id=FRUS.FRUS195557v08&isize=text> Accessed 20 Mar 2014.

<sup>42</sup> Khalid B. Sayeed, "Preliminary Analysis of Pakistan's Foreign Policy" in S.P. Verma and K.P. Misra, ed., *Foreign Policies in South Asia*, (Bombay, 1969), p. 73 and p.102.

<sup>43</sup> Pakistani Ambassador to the U.S. Husain Haqqan, Council on Foreign Relations, 2006.

<sup>44</sup> Amal Afridi, and Jayshree Bajoria, *China-Pakistan Relations*, Council on Foreign Relations, 6 July 2010. Available at <http://i.cfr.org/china/china-pakistan-relations/p10070> Accessed 7 March 2014.

<sup>45</sup> [http://www.cfr.org/publication/10070/chinapakistani\\_relations.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/10070/chinapakistani_relations.html)

<sup>46</sup> Robert G. Wersing, "Precarious Relationship: Pakistan's Response to US Security Policies" *Asian Affairs*, (Autumn 2005): pp.65-70.

<sup>47</sup> Safdar Mehmood, *Pakistan Political Roots and Development 1947-1999*, p. 200

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207

<sup>49</sup> Sayeed, Khalid B., *Politics in Pakistan The Nature and Direction of Change*. New York: Praeger. pp. 103-105

The suspension of U.S. military aid to both India and Pakistan after the Indo-Pakistani wars of 1965 and 1971 was regarded as a ‘stab in the back’ and a major setback for Pakistan’s economy, while India was advantaged by military and economic aid from western powers other than the U.S. Moreover, Moscow fully supported India against Pakistan and fueled tensions over the Pushtoonistan issue between Pakistan and Afghanistan on the western front, thus trying to manipulate the situation in its own favor by deliberately taking advantage of strained relations between Pakistan and the U.S.<sup>50</sup>

Pakistan also faced tensions in the domestic realm. Ayub’s resignation in 1969 opened an avenue for the arrival in power of the commander in chief of the Army, General Yahya Khan, who enforced martial law in the country. Despite these strict conditions, elections took place in 1970, allowing the People’s League (Awami League) to gain a political majority in East Pakistan. Yahya’s resistance to handing over power to the League fed independence claims in the province. In March 1971, the Pakistani Army began ‘Operation Searchlight’ to curb Bengali nationalist movements by targeting intellectuals, political activists, Hindus and other minorities.<sup>51</sup> Many Bengali policemen and soldiers mutinied and nationalists formed a guerrilla force, the MuktiBahini, with Indian and Soviet support. In December 1971, Bangladesh emerged as an independent state, and Yahya was forced to hand over power to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, former Foreign Minister and founder of the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP).

The loss of East Pakistan greatly affected Pakistan-U.S. relations, as the latter acknowledged India as a major regional power. Despite the official call for stability in South Asia, it was presumed in Indian circles that the U.S. would not do anything to foster an artificial parity of military strength between Pakistan and India.<sup>52</sup> The Indian nuclear explosions of 1974 led the U.S. to reconsider its 1965 arms embargo against Pakistan. In February 1975, following the visit of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto – then in his second term as Prime Minister (1973 – 1977)- to the U.S., the Nixon administration finally announced the end of its embargo on the supply of arms to Pakistan and India.

The American decision to supply arms to Pakistan was fiercely opposed and criticized by both India and Afghanistan, as well as by some U.S. Senators. This move would embitter Indo-U.S. relations and open the road for the Soviets to supply arms to India in order to reestablish equilibrium in the region.<sup>53</sup> The Pakistan-U.S. relationship started to deteriorate once again in 1976, when the Ford administration exerted unprecedented pressure on Pakistan to abandon the negotiations concerning the purchase of a nuclear reprocessing plant from France. Through pulling its aid strings (something it did relatively often), it threatened to block the supply of A-7 bombers to Pakistan. In 1979 President Carter cancelled American aid to Pakistan, having successfully pressed France to break this nuclear deal, which happened in 1976.<sup>54</sup>

From Bhutto’s perspective, the ‘unjustified [U.S.] policy of appeasing India’ led him to consider China as a potential ally, or at the very least a supplier of nuclear material and technology. Ideological differences were ignored for the sake of military improvement, leading to some degree of understanding and reconciliation on their most important issues.<sup>55</sup> In approaching China, Pakistan was

<sup>50</sup> Abdul Sattar, *Pakistan’s Foreign Policy 1947-2005*, op.cit.p.57

<sup>51</sup> Sarmila Bose. Economic and Political Weekly Special Articles, 8 October 2005.

<sup>52</sup> D.C. Jha, “U.S. Policy Towards India,” *Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 37, No. 1, Jan-March 1976, pp. 67-71.

<sup>53</sup> *Indian Nation*, 3 March, 1975.

<sup>54</sup> A.Q. Khan, Chairman, Khan Research Laboratories, ‘The Journey to our Tests,’ *The News*, Islamabad, Special Issue, 28 May 1999.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*



attempting to disturb the regional balance of power by mastering the nuclear fuel cycle. Becoming a nuclear power remained a tantalizing possibility, as this capability would strongly deter India.<sup>56</sup> By 1976 a nuclear deal had been signed by Bhutto and Mao Zedong, which provided Pakistan with assistance for a civilian nuclear energy program, possibly the design of a nuclear weapon, and 50 kilograms of highly enriched uranium.<sup>57</sup> This meeting (as well as subsequent visits from Chinese nuclear authorities after Mao's death) increased U.S. attention towards Pakistan, which translated into several meetings between Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Bhutto.

Two key international developments occurred subsequently that persuaded the U.S. to revise its policy towards Pakistan: the Islamic revolution in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. In need of a strong foothold in the region, Washington turned once more to supporting and co-operating with its one-time ally. During the 1980 presidential campaign, Ronald Reagan openly called for the establishment of military bases in Pakistan. Islamabad, by contrast, was determined not to provide any such facilities to the U.S. at the expense of its own national interests, which it believed had been compromised in 1965 and 1971.<sup>58</sup>

Pakistan's president at the time, General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq (1978-1988), had given a clear impression that he would support the toppling of the Shah of Iran to advance American interests in the region. Zia's foreign policy strategy seemed *prima facie* contradictory: despite his goals of strengthening Pakistan's image as a bridge between the West and the Muslim world, he was the first Pakistani ruler to adopt a hostile (albeit ambiguous) attitude towards Iran, while also criticizing the U.S. for not coming to the rescue of the pro-western Shah of Iran.

Zia's military regime repeatedly expressed concern over the increasing Soviet activity in Kabul, and called for U.S. action. Pakistan's foreign affairs advisor, Agha Shahi declared that the Afghan crisis had profoundly affected Pakistan, and that the historical role of Afghanistan as a buffer zone had disappeared. Pakistan found itself ill-prepared and ill-equipped to contain the military threat on its north-western border. The Pakistani advisor explicitly told the Americans that the time to do something to counter the Soviet advancement in Afghanistan was now.<sup>59</sup> This warning was not taken seriously by the U.S. administration, however, until the presence of Russian tanks and soldiers in the country became a reality.

Zia's management of relations with Afghanistan was not viewed in a positive light by all in Pakistan's political circles. Benazir Bhutto (at the time a promising and charismatic leader of the PPP) had been critical of President Zia's policy towards Afghanistan and of his diplomatic gains during these years from the valuable U.S. economic and military assistance he had secured. According to Pakistani foreign policy practitioners and military officials, her arrival to power in 1988 was followed by immense pressure from the U.S. (and the Indian lobby) over Pakistan's nuclear program. Her visit to the U.S. in 1989 aimed to convey the message that Pakistan neither had a bomb, nor had it any intentions of manufacturing one. On the other hand, she also asserted that Pakistan, being a sovereign nation, had the right to pursue its nuclear program for defense purposes. The U.S. showed some interest in maintaining cordial relations with Pakistan after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in

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<sup>56</sup> Syed Farooq Hasnat, "Pakistan - U.S. Relations on Slippery Grounds: An Account of Trust and its Deficit", *Pakistan Vision Vol. 12 No. 1*, 2011.

<sup>57</sup> U.S. recently declassified documents state that there was 'unambiguous evidence' that Pakistan was actively pursuing a nuclear weapons program and developing uranium enrichment and reprocessing technologies. Source: National Security Archives, 'The Pakistani Nuclear Program', secret/NOFORN/ORCON. Available at <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB114/chipak-11.pdf> Accessed 19 May 2014.

<sup>58</sup> *The Washington Post*, 3 December 1981.

<sup>59</sup> Agha Shahi's statement, *Dawn*, October 30, 1979.

1988/89, offering to sell the country thirty-eight F-16 fighter jets and attempting to gain U.S. Congressional approval to provide Islamabad with \$380 million in economic aid and \$240 million in military aid.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, Washington remained doubtful about the true ‘peacefulness’ of Pakistan’s nuclear program, which was considered a threat to regional stability.<sup>61</sup> In 1991, following the dissolution of the USSR, Pakistan’s strategic value to U.S. analysts was significantly reduced, and U.S. political and financial support followed suit. The 1990s would represent a turning point in the relations between the sole remaining superpower and a weakened Pakistan. This context would not change until after 9/11, when Pakistan became once more a frontline state and a pivotal actor in George Bush’s war on terror.

### **Institutional Issues**

Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan’s founding father of the nation, died in September 1948, thirteen months after the establishment of Pakistan as a nation. His demise set in motion the political trends in the country that undermined the already weak political institutions and fragmented the political process. Most post-Jinnah political leaders had regional and local stature but were not capable of impressing the superpowers. This made it difficult for the political parties and leaders to pursue a consistent approach towards the problems and issues of the early years, which needed professional and administrative experience to tackle. They were unable to develop consensus on many important domestic and international issues which resulted in an eight-year delay in drafting a Constitution. By the time the Constitution was finally introduced, in 1956, a strong tradition of the violation of parliamentary norms was established, thus making the government in power essentially helpless, the political parties divided and the assembly unable to assert its supremacy.

The political system of Pakistan has since been characterized by repeated interruptions of the constitutional order coupled with the establishment of weak and non-viable political institutions and the rapid expansion of the role of the British-trained military bureaucratic elite in the political process. Such an authoritarian and opaque system severely constrains civilian control of the military forces.

The failure to institutionalize good governance in Pakistan has caused much alienation at the national level. A good number of experienced and competent people feel that they are irrelevant to power management at the federal and provincial levels. Immersed in their own power games, Pakistani rulers do not prioritize the welfare of the common people, who carry the burden of the country’s Hobbesian foreign policy. These negative perceptions have led to an overall decline in the voting percentage in the general elections. Nevertheless, a more detailed observation of Pakistani society shows that, despite the lack of trust in politics and politicians (civilian and military), people continue to call for democracy, participatory governance and accountability.

### **Institutional disparity**

Pakistan inherited an institutional imbalance at the time of independence in August 1947, with the process of political decomposition and deterioration being set in motion soon after independence. The Muslim League that led the independence movement lacked sufficient organization, leadership, and capacity for state- and nation-building after the death of “the father of the nation” Muhammad Ali Jinnah in 1948. A number of Muslim League leaders had come from feudal or semi-feudal backgrounds, and were motivated by personal ambitions rather than any desire to build or strengthen the party as a workable organization capable of standing on its own feet. They were unable to offer

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<sup>60</sup> *The Washington Post*, June 7, 1989

<sup>61</sup> S.M Burke and Lawrence Ziring, *Pakistan’s Foreign Policy*, 2<sup>nd</sup>edn., Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 463-70

any effective alternative solutions to the enormous security and developmental challenges faced by Pakistan.

Secondly, the lack of economic and institutional resources in the early years of independence led the civilian government to turn to the armed forces, not only for security but also for administrative support. Security problems with India, especially the First Kashmir War in 1948, also helped strengthen the military's position. Dependence on the armed forces is clearly reflected in the country's large military spending.<sup>62</sup> The military's position within the country's political system received an additional boost with Pakistan's participation in the U.S.-sponsored military alliances in the mid-1950s. These agreements facilitated weapon transfers to Pakistan and the American training of the Pakistani military, which increased the military's overall competence and ability to strike their enemies.

### Conclusion

From the Pakistani military's perspective, the legacy of the country's relations with the U.S. during the Cold War has been negative. A sense of bitterness and mistrust towards the United States pervades Pakistani society and a large part of the population believes that their country has been unfairly treated, despite declaring itself a close U.S. ally in South Asia. Three main complaints were repeatedly pointed out: first, Washington's refusal to help Pakistan during the 1965 war with India when it desperately needed assistance against its stronger enemy; second, the United States' discarding of Pakistan when it was no longer needed after the Afghan war to promote U.S. agenda in the region; and, third, the sometimes discriminatory nature of U.S. nuclear sanctions, which have had a strongly negative impact on Pakistan's economy and were targeted towards Pakistan only and did not affect India.

Geo-strategic considerations remain central to the US-Pakistan relationship. Interviews with diplomats and military officials show that, from the Pakistani standpoint, the U.S. sought to subordinate Pakistan rather than propose a foreign policy that could engender mutual gains and foster understanding. As in the Cold War, India remains the most valuable diplomatic prize of the region, which reduces Pakistan's bargaining power vis-à-vis the U.S. This is a bitter reality and both the U.S. and Pakistan have been part of the problem and part of the solution simultaneously.

Despite Pakistan's respect for U.S. security sensitivities in the region, the latter was not prepared to extend enough diplomatic support to Pakistan in its problems with India. It claimed its fight was primarily against Communism and India was not a Communist nation; moreover the United States did not want to provoke India at the cost of Pakistan, whom it believed to be a country highly strategic in the containing of Chinese influence. This raised doubts in Pakistan about the credibility of American support in the wake of the signing of defense pacts between the two nations. If Pakistanis were skeptical of American commitment to provide defense to Pakistan against India, questions were raised in the United States in late 1950s about the prudence of relying on Pakistan as a defender of American interests vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. However, the two sides downplayed their outstanding differences and continued to cooperate with each other for different reasons.

It is worth mentioning that some groups of Western-educated top-brass in the Pakistani military made a significant contribution towards building the Pakistan-U.S. relationship during its

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<sup>62</sup> SIPRI database <http://www.sipri.org> Accessed 20 Feb 2014.

101, boulevard Raspail, 75006 Paris – France Tel: +33(0)1 47 20 00 94 – Fax: +33 (0)1 47 20 81 89 Website: [www.ags.edu](http://www.ags.edu) (Please cite this paper as the following: Lubna Sunawar & Tatiana Coutto (2015). U.S. Pakistan Relations during the Cold War. *The Journal of International Relations, Peace and Development Studies*. Volume 1. Available from: <http://scholarworks.arcadia.edu/agsjournal/vol1/iss1/6>)

formative years. They threw their weight behind the United States because, in their view, the West was more advanced in economic and technical fields and had sufficient resources and determination to support its allies, which they believed would benefit Pakistan in the long run.

The U.S. tested Pakistan as a frontline ally during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Like many Cold War-era partners, Pakistan was able to successfully bargain for significant assistance from Washington in exchange for its help in containing the Soviet Union. Neither side was inclined towards a deeper alignment of interests in Afghanistan. However, U.S. attention to the Afghan crisis quickly evaporated in the wake of Soviet withdrawal from the region, which began a new chapter of resistance and confrontation with Islamabad over nuclear proliferation. The U.S. cutoff of aid to Islamabad in the waning days of cooperation in Afghanistan led to a view in Pakistan of the U.S. as an ‘unreliable ally’.

In order to reverse the increasing anti-Americanism in Pakistan and the trust deficit on both sides, there is a dire need to improve government accountability in Pakistan, which can only be reached through education and the improvement of social conditions. It is worth noting that the presence of democratic institutions in India (despite their limitations) has also been a factor in that country’s stability and, thereby, in attracting investments and partnerships. The United States, however, must rely on soft rather than hard power. Its continuous reliance on hard power, its self-designated status as the sole policeman of international affairs, and its brutal use of force without respect for the sovereignty of independent nations can only lead to hostility.

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