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Pakistan, Power-Play and a New South Asian Paradigm

The total gamut of Pakistan's external policy – aimed at making up the difference in power with India, accessing external resources and expanding manoeuvrability – can be said to be resting on four pillars. These are: one, relations with the US and the West; two, ties with China; three, linkages with the Islamic countries; and four, interactions with multilateral bodies, in particular the United Nations.

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Introduction

Pakistan is a country much in focus today. This is not just because of the many challenges it confronts. It is also because of its immense potentials. A nuclear armed nation with an overwhelming Muslim majority population, Pakistan is often in the news, but, alas, almost always for the wrong reasons. With an area of nearly 800 000 sq. miles and a population estimated at 196 million, it has a GDP of US \$ 885 billion, and natural resources not yet fully

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ascertained. It straddles Middle East and South Asia, and is a conduit between two volatile and politically significant regions. It borders India and China, Asia's two foremost protagonists. Also, Afghanistan is a cauldron of incendiary politics. Pakistan itself has its own state of political uncertainties, often rocked by civil commotion. Its strategic location, untapped resources, and domestic inscrutabilities render it a position for power-play with the world's most powerful nations, and in return, demands an intricate global role for that country to perform three basic foreign policy roles: first protection of its sovereignty, second accessing resources for its own development, and third, ensuring for itself a position for policy making.

Pakistan was to have been a secular nation, modelled on western democratic tradition.² At least that was how the founder of the nation, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, in August 1947, saw it. Of Jinnah's life, Professor Stanley Wolpert, wrote: "Few individuals significantly alter the course of history. Fewer still modify the map of the world. Hardly anyone can be credited with creating a nation state. Mohammed Ali Jinnah did all three."³ Intensely secular in lifestyle, habits and behaviour, deeply fond of most things English, Jinnah used the western political idiom of the nation state, against all odds to advance the argument that the Muslims of India constitute a separate nation. He gave ideological battle to towering personalities like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, shrugged off the unfriendliness of the British Viceroy Lord Mountbatten, rode roughshod over opposition in his own camp, and based on the Wilsonian paradigm, managed to build a new country, Pakistan, for his Muslim co-religionists in India. His death in 1948, too soon after the country's creation, and the assassination of his mentee Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan in 1951 caused a period of instability, with no less than six Prime Ministers serving during the next eight years.⁴ Thereafter, military rule alternated with often idiosyncratic civilian control, with massive follies of generals and civilians leading to the secession of East Pakistan, politically the more liberal and in religious terms the more syncretic and tolerant part of the nation in 1971. True, the separation might have given Pakistan a more compact 'physical identity',⁵ but this was at a great political price, as it severed those elements of civic politics that could have helped calm Pakistan's future sectarian passions, the current bane of its domestic politics.

² Marie Louise Becker, *The All-India Muslim League 1906-1947*, Karachi, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 11.

³ Stanley Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1984, p. vii.

⁴ M. R. Kazimi, *A Concise History of Pakistan*, Karachi, Oxford University Press, 2009, p.195.

⁵ B.L.C. Johnson, *Pakistan*, London and Exeter, Heinemann, 1979, p.1.

History, geography, and ideology appear to combine to pit Pakistan against its perceived principal regional rival, India. But what is most palpable is the territorial dispute over Kashmir that has led to at least three major wars between the two countries, in 1947, in 1965 and in 1999. In fact, the dispute has locked Pakistan and India into a war-situation, and according to Subrata Mitra, it is an “attrition which India cannot manage to win and Pakistan cannot afford to lose”.⁶ Since 1984, there have been numerous skirmishes along the borders, or what is known as the Line of Control (LOC), including the Siachen Glacier. India currently administers around 43% of the region including Jammu, the Kashmir valley and Ladakh, and Pakistan controls around 37%, namely what it calls ‘Azad Kashmir’ and the northern areas of Gilgit and Baltistan. India is by far larger with a land area of 3.2 million sq. miles and a population of 1.2 billion. Besides, India has a military strength of nearly 1.3 million, double that of Pakistan’s 617 000. But a strategic equivalence is rendered in terms of nuclear deterrence: Pakistan possesses about 100-120 nuclear warheads compared to India’s 80-100. This also means an all-out conflict is not conceivable, though at lower threshold it is still possible, with the huge risks of their developing into self-destructive nuclear wars. So, unsurprisingly, there is an incontrovertible centrality of Kashmir, and, therefore of India, in the way Pakistan shapes its external behaviour. However, it is noteworthy that Kashmir was not a factor in the 1971 Bangladesh war that Pakistan fought with India, and India is less of a factor, though not altogether absent in the way Pakistan organises its policy vis-à-vis the Taliban, foreign and domestic terrorism(the Islamist ‘caliphate’ has declared Pakistan a part of its ‘Khorasan Wilayat’) and Afghanistan.

Foreign-Policy Models and Pakistan

There are several options that a weaker neighbour may have in terms of dealing with one that is larger and ostensibly more powerful. One is what the Scandinavian political scientist Erling Bjøl has described as ‘pilot-fish behaviour’, which implies ‘keeping close to the shark to avoid being eaten’.⁷ Finland’s relations with the Soviet Union is an example, based on the early Finnish perception that its ‘national interests do not permit ties nor the pursuit of

⁶ Subrata K. Mitra, *Politics in India: Structure, Process and Policy*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 297.

⁷ Erling Bjøl, in August Schou and Arne Olav (eds.), *Small States in International Relations*, Stockholm, Almqvist and Wiksell, 1971, p.33.

alignment with an anti-Soviet policy'.⁸ Sweden, on the other hand, in addition to behaving like a pilot-fish, tried to make itself as troublesome as possible for the potentially more powerful adversary to overcome. The Pakistani ethos rejected the 'pilot-fish' option. Indeed, while making itself a troublesome adversary, Sweden vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, , chose to make up for the difference in power with the neighbour by enmeshing itself in a web of extra-regional linkages. Apart from buttressing its sense of security, the extra-regional linkages also sought to satisfy the aspirations of quest for resources and expanding the manoeuvrability in policy-making.

Literature on foreign policy analysis tends to be either 'process-oriented', especially with regards to developed countries, or 'function oriented' as with regards to developing ones. The former concentrates on detailed examination of foreign policy-making processes, with emphasis on institutions like bureaucracies, political parties and pressure groups, and the influence they exert on foreign policy outcomes.⁹ Regarding developing countries, which being still rudimentary, deserve less attention than the functions of foreign policy or the purposes they are put to. In other words, their foreign policies are being seen as function of functions.¹⁰

There are other ideas. Migdal has identified four broad conceptual models for foreign policy explanation: One, the 'geo-political model' whereby physical location assumes prime importance and internal changes in regimes or ideologies have little significant impact; two, the 'organization process model' which sees all foreign policy as organisational output; three, the 'bargaining model' whereby 'players' bargain with one another to produce 'political outcomes'; and, finally, the 'rational policy model' which assumes that policy is a result of actions which are calculated responses to achieve certain ends.¹¹

In the case of Pakistan, the socio-political system possesses features of both developed and developing countries, thus rendering any single model of analysis difficult and instead calls for a 'model-mix', with empiricism as the dominant factor. As in many developing countries,

⁸ Finnish President Urho Kekkonen's speech given at the Swedish Agrarian Union in Stockholm & December 1943 in Thomas Vilkuina (ed.), *Neutrality: The Finnish Position, Speeches by Dr. Urho Kekkonen, President of Finland*, P. Ojansu and L.E. Keyworth (trans.), London, Heinemann, 1970, p. 30.

⁹ For instance, G. Allison, *Essence of Decision*, Boston, Little Brown, 1971, and M. Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, Washington DC, Brookings Institution, 1974.

¹⁰ Examples would be, B. Korany, 'Foreign Policy Models and their Empirical Relevance to the Third World Actors: A Critique of an Alternative', *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. 26, No.1, (1974), pp. 70-94; and, FB Weinstein, 'The Uses of Foreign Policy in Indonesia', *World Politics*, Vol. xxiv, No.3, (April 1972), pp. 356-381.

¹¹ Joel Migdal, 'Internal Structures and External Behaviour', *International Relations*, Vol.IV, No.5, (May 1974) pp. 510-526.

there have been charismatic leaders, Bhutto, Zia-ul-Haq, Pervez Musharraf, Zardari, Nawaz Sharif to name some, whom Henry Kissinger would call ‘prophets’ in the system.¹² While they have been powerful and have often given directions, they have been restrained by both the mosque (i.e the proponents of religious-oriented social leadership), and the military, which has always been a powerful factor in shaping Pakistan’s external behaviour. The mosque and the military have often worked, in the words of Husain Huqqani, a diplomat cum analyst, in “alliance” to this end.¹³ Ayesha Jalal, another prolific writer, has argued how the generals have often purchased security (purportedly vis-à-vis India) at the cost of democracy.¹⁴ The excessive role of the military has led some analysts to even call Pakistan a ‘garrison state’.¹⁵ Some others have termed it ‘a bureaucratic polity’.¹⁶ Concurrently, there also exists a significant modern elite, who draw their intellectual pabulum from the West. Pakistan also has an effective diaspora, with many of its members playing important governmental and legislative roles in their host countries (as in the UK and the US), and impacting policy-making in their country of origin.¹⁷ The upshot of this diversity is that, policy which very often is a result of the interactions of these elements, ends up being ‘irrational’, with one element or the other seeming to exert preponderant influence. Some will say that the military has been able to exert the most influence. However, Pakistan’s rather efficient and well equipped Foreign Ministry (Pakistani diplomats have a reputation of sagacity gained over years) may translate this into a modicum of acceptable set of perceived national self-interest.¹⁸

The total gamut of Pakistan’s external policy, aimed at achieving the three-fold objectives identified earlier of making up the difference in power with India, accessing external resources and expanding manoeuvrability, can be said to be resting on four pillars. These are:

¹² Henry A. Kissinger, ‘Domestic Structure and Foreign Policy’ in Wolfram A. Handreider (ed.), *Comparative Foreign Policies: Theoretic Essays*, New York, David McKay Co.Inc, 1971, p 47.

¹³ See, Husain Huqqani, *Pakistan: Between the Mosque and the Military*, Lahore/Karachi/Islamabad, Vanguard Books, 2005, p.3.

¹⁴ See for instance, Ayesha Jalal, *A Struggle for Pakistan: A Muslim Homeland and Global Politics*, Harvard University Press, 2014.

¹⁵ K. L. Kamal, *Pakistan: The Garrison State*, New Delhi, 1982, or more recently, Ishtiaq Ahmed, *The Pakistan Garrison State: Origins, Evolution, Consequences (1947-2011)*, Pakistan, Oxford University Press, February 2013.

¹⁶ S. H. Hashmi, Foreword in CH Kennedy, *Bureaucracy in Pakistan*, Karachi, 1987.

¹⁷ For an elaboration of this point, see Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, *Pakistan: A Diplomat’s Insights*, Singapore, Research Asia, 2015, p. 82.

¹⁸ Currently this system is being led by two sagacious professionals, Sartaj Aziz, a reputable and well-regarded economist, as Advisor for Security and Foreign Affairs, and Ambassador Syed Tariq Fatemi, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister.

one, relations with the US and the West; two, ties with China; three, linkages with the Islamic countries; and four, interactions with multilateral bodies, in particular the United Nations.

The US and the West

In Pakistan's early stages of development, starting from the 1950s well into the late 1960s, the strategy followed in economic development was based on the Harrod Domar model. It was one of promoting rapid industrialisation under the ownership and control of the rising capitalist class, with the presumption that the benefits of growth would 'trickle down' to the most depressed sections of the community.¹⁹ The received wisdom among Pakistani policy makers was Paul Rosenstein-Rodan's 'Big Push' theory. It favoured planned large scale investments in industrialisation in countries with surplus workforce in agriculture in order to take advantage of network effects, viz., economies of scale and scope to escape the low-level 'equilibrium trap'. Hence the need for large doses of funds, from external sources, such as the US and the West, as well as the Bretton Woods Institutions.. In the meantime, in "a desperate need to find an equalizer against a belligerent India", Pakistan had already joined US-sponsored military pacts, such as CENTO and SEATO, which also was in consonance with Pakistan's ideological predilections to counter the spread of Communism.²⁰

Between 1951 and 2011, the US obligated nearly US \$ 67 billion in aid. The aid 'waxed and waned', from year to year, in consonance with the nature of bilateral relations. These were mostly connected to the on-going conflict in Afghanistan, and also certain bilateral differences erupting from time to time, and sometimes there were stoppages. To signal renewed commitment to Pakistan, the US Congress in 2009 approved the Kerry-Lugar-Berman (KLB), putting security and development on two separate tracks, and authorising a development related support of US \$ 47.5 between 2001 and 2014. A variety of factors severely restricted disbursements. Tapping on alternative sources, the government of Pakistan (GOP) approached the IMF for a package of \$6.6 for FY 2013-2016 to solve the BOP crisis and shore up the depleting foreign exchange reserves.

Since Nawaz Sharif came into office in 2013, the GOP's mantra has been 'trade, not aid', and Pakistani officials have hoped for a bilateral trade figure of around \$ 11 billion over the next

¹⁹ For an explanation of what it entails, see, Mahbubul Huq, *The Strategy of Economic Planning: A Case Study of Pakistan*, Karachi, Oxford University Press, 1963.

²⁰ Shahid M. Amin, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: A Reappraisal*, Karachi, Oxford University Press, 2002, p.43.

five years. In 2013 the two-way trade between the US and Pakistan was \$ 5.3 billion. The figure has moved up only slightly since. The reason is textiles, Pakistan's forte. US legislators are wary of according any preferential treatment to Pakistan that would hurt American textile manufacturers. Outside of textiles, even in agro-business, Pakistanis are unlikely to be able to meet the high American regulatory standards. Therefore, prospects remain dim. Contemporary Europe, in its own interest to stabilise Pakistan through what Joseph Nye has called 'soft power', fills in the gap somewhat by offering to spread gentler values as democracy and human rights, and also, on more pragmatic side, by offering Pakistan since 1 January 2014, the GSP-Plus status that would enhance Pakistani exports to Europe by 42 billion a year.

Today, it is difficult to imagine that Pakistan was such a close confidante of the US, providing bases for secret U-2 flights, including the celebrated one of pilot Gary Powers in May 1960, instead of the Soviet Union.²¹ President Richard Nixon had once asked President Yahya Khan to be a conduit to China.²² The latter effectively complied with the request. Thereafter, Pakistan, during the period of President Zia-ul-Haq was a staunch ally in the war against the Russians in Afghanistan, and Pervez Musharraf had rendered unstinted support to George Bush during his 'war on terror'. But this relationship became strained over time, because the US, dictated by its own strategic interests moved close to India. The strain in the relationship was compounded by Pakistan's 'dual-purpose' use of the Taliban, seen by the US as 'enemy', as a foe domestically, but to be cultivated, largely by the Pakistani military's Inter-services Intelligence as a tool vis-à-vis India. The US operation of eliminating bin Laden in Abbottabad deeply embarrassed the powers that be in Islamabad. But since both need each other, the US-Pakistan ties have assumed the form of a 'transactional relationship', based on the outcomes of negotiations rather than one that is spontaneous. Borrowing an expression from the philosopher, Emmanuel Kant, while complex, it is a "categorical imperative". The Pakistanis generally indicate to the Americans that they are committed, but not wedded, to the relationship. When piqued, as they sometimes are these days, they sometimes look to other options and closer friends, China, for instance.

²¹ Ian Talbot, *Pakistan: A Modern History*, Lahore/Karachi/Islamabad, Vanguard Books, 1999, p. 173.

²² Henry Kissinger, *White House Years*, Boston, Little Brown and Co., 1979, pp. 180-181.

China

If, among all variables that mark contemporary international relations, there were one constant, it would be Pakistan-China relationship, the world's primary 'all-weather' friendship. Verbal grandiloquence and flowery terminologies are rarely in short supply when both sides describe their bilateral links. Examples of such expressions are, "sweeter than honey", "higher than mountains" and "stronger than steel". But any serious observer will know that these are not mere hyperboles, but, in consonance with the linguist culture of eastern politics, conveying the essence of a unique strategic partnership. The links that began around 1963, with the signing of the border agreement, were initially seen as a counterpoise against India by both sides following the Sino-Indian War of 1962. But as China re-emerged as a global power, this relationship, at least as far as China and Pakistan were concerned, was put to other uses, for instance, to bridge China to the US.

A recent example of cooperation between Pakistan and China is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a fruition of President Xi Jinping's visit to Pakistan in April 2015. This is a part of Xi's 'One Belt, One Road' initiative that is seen as the centre-piece of his foreign policy. It involves the Old Silk Route connecting China with Central Asia, and then with Europe and beyond, and the new Maritime Silk Road, linking up the ports of powers friendly to China, combining together to facilitate Beijing's quest for trade and resources. The CPEC is an offshoot of the initiative linking north-west China, far from the Chinese seas, to the Pakistani warm water port of Gwadar. China has committed US \$ 46 billion for projects in infrastructure and energy along the 2000 mile stretch of the 'One Belt, One Road' initiative.

To keep Pakistan's powerful security circles appeased, China has been providing military support to Islamabad for years. Pakistan's nuclear programme has greatly benefited from this relationship. China has in the past not only provided conventional weaponry but also nuclear-capable platforms. Initially, the idea may have been to strengthen Pakistan's capabilities vis-à-vis India. Now China, with its burgeoning global role, endeavours to delink its relations with Pakistan from those with India. For instance, China would like the planned sale of eight submarines to Pakistan, capable of carrying nuclear tipped missiles as well, as shoring up Pakistan's 'second-strike' capability, which in theoretical strategic terms, could be likened to 'stabilizing'.

While Pakistan might still perceive its China links as buttressing its sense of security, mainly vis-a-vis India, the Chinese agenda may be broader. The ‘One Belt, One Road Initiative’ into which Pakistan fits in so neatly, can be placed on the backdrop of Xi Jinping’s ‘China Dream’ or *Chunguo Meng* (in Mandarin). This entails mainly three things: one, ‘new kind of relationship’ with the Big Powers such as the US, two, ‘win-win’ with all countries (including India), and strategic partnership with ‘all weather friends’ (Pakistan) to stimulate benefits for all concerned.

All this is purported to support what China like to call, not ‘peaceful rise’ but far more nuanced ‘*hepingjuechi*’ which can be translated to ‘peaceful development’.

These differences in perceptions, however slight and subtle as some may assess them to be, cause Pakistan to look at others as well in terms of security and developmental reinsurances. The Islamic countries are the most obvious candidates.

Islamic Countries

That is why and how Pakistan came to look to the Islamic countries. These countries also provided spiritual and material sustenance to the Pakistanis, housing as Saudi Arabia did, Islam’s holiest shrines, pilgrimage to which was mandatory for all Muslims. Oil wealthy Saudi Arabia also generously supported Pakistan’s financial needs. Saudi Arabia has provided solace and succour to Pakistani politicians who were forced to live abroad, including Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The external Islamic links strengthened Pakistan’s own Muslim identity. Out of 7 million Pakistanis living overseas, nearly 2 million reside in the Middle East. Indeed, the severance from former East Pakistan also gave Pakistan a geographical contiguity with the region, in some ways rendering Pakistan as much Middle Eastern as South Asian. Indeed, if it were not for the issues with India, Pakistan would have understandably focussed westward. Under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, largely credited with the loss of the eastern wing, this ‘non-Indian’ identity was emphasised. This, to Stephen Cohen, meant that Pakistan ceased to learn from ‘the one country it resembled most’, India, including the ability to follow suit when in later years, India chose the path of economic reforms.²³

²³ Stephen Philip Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan*, Washington DC, The Brookings Institution, 2004, p. 170

In return for their favours, Pakistan gave the Middle Eastern countries intellectual leadership, serving as a ‘think-tank and laboratory’ in political and economic matters.²⁴ Pakistan had the strongest air-force among Muslim countries, one of the best-equipped armies, and was the only nuclear-weapon country. This fact could also be a source of embarrassment to Pakistan i.e. when Saudi Arabia, the UAE and others sought Pakistan’s assistance in fighting the Shiite Houthi rebels in Yemen, Pakistan, with its 20% Shia population and sectarian worries of its own, was obliged to risk Arab ire by refusing.²⁵

But the biggest fillip to ‘Islamization’ of Pakistani domestic and foreign policies came during the presidency of General Zia-ul-Haq. Confronted with the loss of Bangladesh, and perhaps more humiliatingly to the Pakistanis, the defeat with India in the 1971 war, and unwilling to allow any other ambitious power seekers from damaging the nation, his call to Pakistan’s Islamic heritage attained a ‘resonance’ hitherto unknown.²⁶ The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan provided Zia an opportunity and Pakistan went all-out in its support of the Afghan Mujahideen, in alliance with the US and the West. The Mujahideen flocked in droves into Pakistan, and when the Soviets quit Afghanistan, the Mujahideen morphed into Taliban, both in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The traditional Indian ‘Deobandi’ idea of an Islamic society forged an alliance with the Arab Wahabi School.²⁷ This deadly mix proved explosive for Pakistani’s domestic and regional politics, and haunts it till this day.

When the US and President George Bush launched their “war on terror”, and in its pursuit attacked Afghanistan, Pakistan’s Pervez Musharraf was obliged to offer support. But this was to be in a complex fashion. Pakistan apprehended that the Taliban in Afghanistan may return,²⁸ and Pakistan, at least some of its military, needed Afghanistan for ‘strategic depth’ vis-à-vis India. Moreover, the all-powerful ISI within the Pakistani army was reluctant to let go of the Taliban, a potential tool against India. Finally, succumbing to pressures, many originating from the Taliban itself, the Army decided to launch Operation *Zarb-e-Azb*, aimed at eliminating terrorist hide-outs in North Waziristan and the tribal belt.²⁹ With the US-backed military support, and a change of guard in Kabul from President Hamid Karzai to

²⁴ Shahid M. Amin, op. cit., p.4.

²⁵ Iftekhhar Ahmed Chowdhury, ‘Yemen, Pakistan and Arab Monarchies’: Widening Gulf?’, Singapore, ISAS Brief 365, 17 April 2015.

²⁶ Lawrence Ziring, *Pakistan: At Crossroads of History*, Lahore/Karachi/Islamabad, Vanguard, 2004, pp. 174-175.

²⁷ Ayesha Jalal, *Partisans of Allah: Jihad in South Asia*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2008, p. 278.

²⁸ Bob Woodward, *Obama’s Wars*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 2010, p.164.

²⁹ Shahid Javed Burki, ‘Terrorism’s Most Devastating Blow in Pakistan’, Singapore, ISAS Brief, No. 355, 23 December 2014.

President Ashraf Ghani, far more favourably inclined towards Islamabad, Pakistan would need to retool, refurbish and re-energise its Afghan policy, where Indian understanding and empathy would be helpful, indeed essential.³⁰

The United Nations

21 April 1948 is perhaps the most important watershed date for Pakistan in terms of its relations with the United Nations. That day, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 47, instructed the UN Commission to proceed to the region to “prepare for a plebiscite on Kashmir”.³¹ It was adopted under Chapter VI of the Charter, and was therefore, ‘non-binding’. Nonetheless, Pakistan has always held India accountable for its non-implementation. On 13 August 1948, the UN Commission for India and Pakistan adopted another resolution, asking for both armies to withdraw and for the Kashmiris to be given the right to self-determination. Neither side adhered to it. India did not hold the plebiscite and Pakistan did not withdraw its troops. Consequently, there is always continuing tension around the dividing Line of Control (LOC). Pakistan has since then, almost constantly sparred with India at the UN on Kashmir, either formally in the Councils or informally along the corridors. This is also the principal reason why Pakistan seeks to block any Security Council reforms that could provide India with a permanent seat by helping to rally opposition to such expansion through groupings such as the ‘Coffee club’ or ‘Uniting for consensus’.

The UN, of course provided Pakistan with a strengthened sense of security, a source of material support, a venue for Pakistani leaders to meet others around the world (for instance during General Assembly sessions each winter), and also with a forum to air its views on global issues, such as those relating to Palestine, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and thematic subjects of development and environment. Pakistan despatched a series of excellent Permanent Representatives (Ambassadors) to the UN (for instance Munir Akram, Maleeha Lodhi) who contributed significantly to UN deliberations, raising the profile of the country in foreign eyes. UN Peace-keeping operations are something close to the Pakistani military’s heart. It obtains for them numerous perks and keeps them well-trained and fit. It also helps to deflect their interest

³⁰ For an elaboration of factors and issues involved see, Shahid Javed Burki, Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury and Riaz Hassan, *Afghanistan: The Next Phase*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2014.

³¹ Security Council Resolution 47, *Resolution of 21 April 1948, S/7/26* (21 April 1948), available at: [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/47\(1948\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/47(1948)).

somewhat from domestic political interventions, lest it sullies the international reputation and questions their political correctness, which could damage their chances of being chosen to serve. This role has also drawn praise from the highest levels at the UN.³² Interestingly, Bangladesh, Pakistan and India, provide an overwhelming majority of global peacekeepers, and service together in distant places like Africa, enhances the camaraderie between the three forces. Actually, at the UN, it has been observed that when the professionals want it, Pakistan and India can have excellent cooperation, as transpired when both Pakistan and India sat in the Security Council in 2012, with their Ambassadors, Abdullah Haroon and Hardeep Singh Puri, closely collaborating.³³

Conclusion

There are several reasons why a ‘paradigm-shift’ in Pakistan–India relations is called for. One, while Pakistan’s foreign policy aims rested on creation of external linkages based on the four pillars (US and the West, China, the Islamic world and the UN), over time each of the pillars ceased to be effective as a direct counter to India, as each developed its own Indian connections. Two, the threat from the spread of the ideas of the newly self-proclaimed ‘Caliphate’ of the Islamic State, which sees the Islamic realm as one global entity without frontiers, and does not recognise states as Pakistan (created in the western Westphalian mould) already declared a part of its ‘Khorasan wilayat’ may be greater and more existential than that perceived to be emanating from India. Three, and as a corollary of the last point, Pakistanis would be better off shunning the Salafi/Wahabi influence of the Middle East and turning to South Asia to seek greater identity with their original sufistic culture of sub-continental Islam, where Muslims are taught “to be good by following the teachings of the great past reformers including the Prophet himself”, thus creating “religiously responsible individuals...”.³⁴ Four, both deter each other with nuclear weapons despite the conventional imbalance, and in the words of two analysts: “South Asia is said to be the acid test of for deterrence optimists. So far, nuclear deterrence has passed all of the many tests it has

³² UN Chief hails Pakistan’s leading role in Peace Keeping Operations, ‘United Nations News Centre, 13 August 2013, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=45613> (accessed 12 May 2015).

³³ Iftekhhar Ahmed Chowdhury, *The UN and the WTO: A South Asian Perspective*, Singapore, Research Asia, 2015, pp. 63–65.

³⁴ Riaz Hassan, *Islam and Society: Sociological Explorations*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2013, p.33.

faced”.³⁵ Finally, as Pakistan, whose economy the IMF reckons will grow by 4.7% next year, needs a sustained growth of 5-7% a year to cut poverty.³⁶ Shahid Javed Burki has argued that is exactly how much the GDP in Pakistan will rise if there is unimpeded trade with India.

In relaxing intra-mural tensions in South Asia, because of India’s size, power, influence and endowments, India might need to bear a disproportionate responsibility, even at times, if it is to be without immediate reciprocation. That for some time has been a willingness to go along that path, both in Islamabad and New Delhi, was already evident in the past attempt at ‘back-channel diplomacy’.³⁷ Prime Minister Narendra Modi made it explicitly by inviting all the South Asian leaders at his inaugural in May 2014. The gesture was very well received in Islamabad.³⁸ The Gordian knot in terms of India’s relations with Bangladesh was also cut by the Modi visit to Dhaka in June this year. While there has been very tardy progress in achieving the SAARC goals (largely due to such structural issues like avoidance of sensitive issues and the requirement for unanimity for decision-making), is it not possible for the three components of former British India-India, Pakistan and Bangladesh- to come together in a relationship of ‘trilateralism’? The answer is yes.

How would it work? The three countries could work out a ‘matrix’ detailing the problematic aspects of their relations with a view to solving them. This could involve dividing bilateral relations into categories: those that can be resolved with a bit of effort or ‘green-box issues’; those that will require some dedicated effort or ‘orange-box’ issues; and those whose resolution for now will be difficult, or ‘red-box’ issues. The ‘lower hanging fruits’ or the ‘green box’ issues may be addressed first graduating thereafter to the ‘orange’ and ‘red boxes’, hoping that the resultant generation of goodwill from the ‘forward movement’ in one box could positively impact others. SAARC shied away from contentious issues. ‘Trilateralism’ would turn on its head, and identify the issues with a view to resolving them. Rather than have formal meetings, starting with officials, then Ministers and finally Heads, ‘trilateralism’ could entail the heads meeting informally, unconstrained by decisions at lower levels. The purpose of ‘trilateralism’ would not be to supplant the more formal SAARC process, for it has its values and other parties are involved, but to enmesh the core of South

³⁵ Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed*, New York/London, W.W. Norton & Company, 2003, p.124.

³⁶ *Economist*, ‘Pakistan’s Economy: Fuel Injection’, 2 May 2015.

³⁷ *The New Yorker*, Steve Col I, ‘The Back Channel: India and Pakistan’s Secret Kashmir Talks’, 2 March 2009.

³⁸ The author’s meeting with Foreign and Security Advisor Sartaj Aziz and Special Assistant to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif at the Islamabad Foreign Ministry, 28 May 2014.

Asia in a web of intimate linkages, that would complement, revitalise and strengthen SAARC. India could thus lead South Asia's rise, with Pakistan and Bangladesh following in a 'flying geese' formation, to the benefit of all their people. For now, this may seem beyond reach, but the idea is worth a try. As the English poet, the mighty Robert Browning, so liked in South Asia, said: "man's reach should exceed his grasp, what else are the heavens for?"

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