

Superpower Rivalry and Conflict

The long shadow of the Cold War on
the twenty-first century

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6 Pakistan and the Cold War

Stephen P. Cohen

Introduction

Pakistan is undergoing a prolonged internal crisis, one that has been compounded by strained relations with its neighbours, and even with its allies. It is tempting to attribute its present difficulties to its involvement in the Cold War, and particularly to its relations with the United States.¹ This is most frequently done by Pakistani analysts, but scholars and practitioners from other countries often share this approach. However, absolute judgments about the connection between the Cold War and contemporary perplexities are often misguided. History is obviously one guide to the present, but it is more often a trap, as bits and pieces of the past are coupled in order to create a reality that never existed.

This chapter seeks to assess the causes and consequences of Pakistan's engagement in the Cold War from several perspectives. What were the pushes and pulls that brought Pakistan to the point where its leaders liked to boast (especially to Americans) that it was the 'most allied' of American allies? What were the American and British motives in bringing Pakistan into their orbit? What were the political, economic, and ideological consequences of Pakistan's participation in the Western alliance system, notably on the very identity of the Pakistani state? Finally, what are the lessons? Since Pakistan's incentives for joining the alliance system were largely India-oriented, what has been the impact on India and the region?

Thinking about alliances and security

In 1945 'Pakistan' was an idea, not a state, and very little thought was given to strategic implications in the event of its creation. If there was any concern about South Asia's security, it revolved around India's status, not Pakistan's. The British themselves were ambivalent: many liked and respected 'Muslim India', and some favoured the idea of an independent Pakistani state. But others saw that if there were to be a split, then the larger India would be the dominant regional power. Strategically, the British thought that India and Pakistan would have to enter into some form of military confederation,

requiring a British presence in the region for many years to come. The assumption was that both India and Pakistan would remain dependent on the former colonial power.

As for the Americans, they were more familiar with India than with the still-theoretical notion of an independent Muslim state in South Asia. This familiarity arose through the writings and reputation of leading Hindu political figures, notably Mohandas K. Gandhi (the 'Mahatma') and Jawaharlal Nehru. Their only peer and rival in the Muslim community, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, was unknown to most Americans.

By 1947, the regional security debate revolved around two questions.

First, how would an independent Pakistan stand between India and Afghanistan, on the one hand, and between India and the Soviet Union, on the other? Could Pakistan maintain a viable army? Would it serve as a bulwark for India against Soviet pressure or radical Islamic movements? Jinnah, the leading figure in the Pakistan movement, and the late poet-philosopher Mohammed Iqbal, argued that a new Pakistan would enhance the defence of the subcontinent precisely because of its Islamic nature. Neither man correctly foretold Pakistan's strategic fate. According to Iqbal, whose ideas underpinned the Pakistan movement, the Muslims of Punjab and the Northwest Frontier Province would 'be the best defenders of India against a foreign invasion, be that invasion the one of ideas or bayonets'.² Iqbal wrongly believed that the Islamic nature of a new Pakistan would give it inherent strength. Jinnah, too, was excessively optimistic in thinking that the minorities in Pakistan would be hostages to good behaviour, and that natural cultural and economic linkages would strengthen relations between its various groups.

The original idea of Pakistan was as a homeland for Indian Muslims, a place where they would not be dominated by the Hindu majority in a one-man-one-vote democracy. Few advocates of Pakistan dreamt that Pakistan and India would become bitter enemies, or that the armed forces of Pakistan would dominate Pakistani politics.

Other Indian Muslims were more sceptical. The Congress politician Shaukatullah Ansari argued that Pakistan would have insufficient resources to defend itself without outside help, for it would face *three* conflicts involving two fronts. In the west there was a potential threat from both the Soviet Union and Afghanistan, in the east from Japan and China, and in both the east and west from India. Further, a united India would be a great power, whereas a divided one would be as weak as Egypt, Burma or 'Siam', and the British would use an independent Pakistan to control India (this idea later resurfaced in India, with the United States replacing Britain as the potentially controlling power). Ansari failed to persuade Congress to concede a substantial degree of autonomy to the Muslims of a united India, perhaps as a confederation.³

The most prescient politician of them all, when it came to assessing what Pakistan would become, was the Scheduled Caste leader B. R. Ambedkar,

who argued that India stood to *benefit* from a separate Pakistan, which would leave most of the subcontinent's wealth in predominately Hindu India and make Pakistan, with its poor resource base, a weak state. Ambedkar also noted that India's army would no longer be dominated by Muslims, and its primarily Hindu civilian government would not be vulnerable to the army. 'A safe army,' Ambedkar commented, 'is better than a safe border.'⁴

The second strategic calculation involved Pakistan and Britain's far-flung territories in the east, notably Hong Kong, Malaya and Singapore. Some British strategists distrusted Congress and Nehru, and saw Pakistan as a more reliable ally, one that could facilitate British contacts with these colonies, and Australia and New Zealand. Eventually Americans, too, came to see the strategic value of West Pakistan's location, particularly as a possible bomber base on the Soviet Union's southern flank. This perception eventually led to close ties between the West and Pakistan's fledgling army, but for the first ten years the army was too small and too junior to play any role other than a military one. It did, however, become a conduit for western influence.

Into the alliance

The process by which Pakistan became a Cold War ally can be quickly summarized. At independence in 1947, Pakistan became a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations.⁵ It retained Britons in high administrative and military positions, and the United Kingdom was the initial source of military supplies and officer training. In 1954, Pakistan and Iraq signed mutual cooperation agreements with Turkey (a NATO member). Britain and Iran also entered into security arrangements, and the 'Middle East Defence Organization', more popularly known as the 'Baghdad Pact', was formed in 1955, loosely modelled upon NATO. The United States never became a full member. The name of the organization was changed to the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) after the Iraqi monarchy was overthrown in 1958. CENTO had little formal structure, but the United States and Britain had access to facilities in Pakistan, notably an air base outside of Peshawar from which U-2 intelligence flights over the Soviet Union were launched. There was also an important signals intelligence centre located there. CENTO was dissolved in 1979 after the Iranian revolution, but it had never been a militarily effective organization.

Also in 1954, Pakistan signed a Mutual Defence Agreement with the United States and subsequently became a member of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), or the Manila Pact, in February 1955. Like CENTO, it was designed to be a regional NATO, only in this case to block communist advances in Southeast Asia. SEATO lasted for over twenty years, and was dissolved in June 1977.

SEATO, like CENTO, had regional and non-regional members. France, the United States and Britain were members, as were New Zealand and Australia. Regional states included Thailand, the Philippines and Pakistan (whose

East Wing was in close proximity to Southeast Asia). SEATO was less effective than even the feeble CENTO. It was never formally involved in the Vietnam war, in part because of Pakistan's objection.

What did Pakistan receive in return for its membership in these two Cold War alliances? It obtained large amounts of economic and military assistance, sometimes at bargain terms. The programme of military assistance continued until the 1965 Indo-Pakistani War when the US suspended arms shipments to both Pakistan and India. This embargo remained in place during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971 and was not lifted until 1975.

Of special value were the contacts with American and other allied military forces. Large numbers of Pakistanis were trained in the United States, while significant numbers of Turkish, Iranian and American officers received training in Pakistan, where foreign officers are still called 'allied officers'. American training teams also visited Pakistan, making presentations on a wide range of military and strategic subjects, including nuclear warfare.

Pakistan also received diplomatic support on the vexing issue of Kashmir. Both Britain and the United States supported Pakistani positions in the United Nations, but neither would extend their NATO or CENTO commitments to include the defence of Pakistan in case of a war with India. Pakistani officials sought such assurances well into the 1980s, but no American administration was willing to commit itself – although at least one US ambassador exceeded his authority by assuring the government of Pakistan that American help would be forthcoming in case of an India–Pakistan conflict. Routinely, American and British governments have intervened in India–Pakistan crises in attempts to avert large-scale war, and even to reach an agreement on Kashmir, but with mixed results.⁶

Pakistan's liabilities as an American Cold War ally were also evident. Pakistan had entered into the alliances with one single purpose: to acquire weapons and political support so it could balance the larger India. It made nominal gestures towards Cold War objectives of containing the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China (the latter symbolized by membership in SEATO) but other than providing bases for American overflights and intelligence operations it contributed little to the overall effort, with one important, and ironic, exception.

In July 1971, Pakistan facilitated a secret visit by National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger to Beijing. Other channels had been opened to China (notably Romania), but Nixon chose to send Kissinger via Pakistan. This visit was consequential: it led to a de facto US–China alignment directed against the Soviet Union, and Pakistan was widely recognized (and took full credit) for making this breakthrough possible. In a way, this signalled the beginning of the end of the Cold War, in that the apparently monolithic Communist movement was seen as having a crack. From this point onward, the United States made a distinction between major Communist powers that were friendly (China), and those that were hostile (the Soviet Union). That China was in the midst of a domestic bloodbath was of little consequence: Nixon

and Kissinger saw that the Chinese were also wary of Soviet power, and for the duration could be counted on to balance it.

The 1971 war that resulted in Pakistan's partition witnessed a major fracture in US–Pakistan relations and challenged the *raison d'être* of the alliance as far as Pakistanis were concerned. The Bangladesh movement received widespread public support in the United States, as did India's military intervention. Yet, the US government tilted heavily in favour of Pakistan, prizing the alliance over human rights violations by the Pakistan army and good relations with India. Clearly, the administration wanted to show the Chinese that the United States could be counted on to stand by Pakistan, an old 'friend', supposedly making the point that it could also be counted on to back China should the occasion arise. Claiming that the 1971 military crackdown in East Pakistan was an internal affair, and that outside powers had no right to intervene, Nixon and Kissinger refused to condemn their ally Pakistan.

The 'tilt' in favour of Pakistan had no material consequence. It disappointed the military and civilian elites of West Pakistan (which, after Bangladesh was formed, carried on with the name 'Pakistan') and infuriated India and most Bengalis. It could be argued that the United States' support deterred India from attacking West Pakistan, but the evidence for this is sketchy, at best. It would have taken a heroic effort to move Indian forces to the western front, and there was no assurance of a victory over a still intact Pakistan army.

After the war, Pakistan's new leader, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, expressed the view that Pakistan had been betrayed – the beginning of a long history of Pakistani claims of deception and betrayal by the United States. To drive the point home, Bhutto embarked on a policy that was to lessen Pakistan's dependence on the United States, bringing it out from under the cover of a pro-West military alliance.

Bhutto struck out in several directions. Diplomatically he moved to energize Pakistan's Islamic identity, creating new and strong ties with Saudi Arabia, Iran and other Islamic states. Pakistan became a key member of the OIC (the Organisation of the Islamic Conference) founded in 1969, and has repeatedly sought OIC support in its relations with India. Bhutto also stressed Pakistan's non-aligned and 'developing' credentials, calling his new policy 'bilateralism', which implied neutrality in the Cold War. Bhutto withdrew Pakistan from SEATO, and military links with the West declined. CENTO was disbanded following the fall of the Shah of Iran in March 1979, and Pakistan subsequently became a member of the Nonaligned Movement.

Militarily, Bhutto reversed past policy and initiated a secret nuclear weapons programme. His military predecessors had rejected nuclear weapons in favour of conventional US military and economic aid. Bhutto managed to get a programme going in the mid-1970s that was to culminate in a weapon within ten years. The policy was continued by Bhutto's successor, General Zia ul-Haq. Both Bhutto and the Pakistan army were reacting to India's 1974 'peaceful nuclear explosion', later admitted to be a weapons test by its chief

scientist. The Pakistan bomb was not seen as merely a deterrent: by the early 1980s Pakistan strategists had concluded that with a bomb, they could provoke and probe India without fear of escalating to a nuclear conflict or even a large-scale war. They were correct, and once Pakistan had actually developed a weapon, subsequent regional crises were shaped by this assumption. There was a price to be paid, and from the late 1970s, nuclear issues became the sticking point of Pakistan's relations with its former Western allies, notably the United States.

The second and third coming

Pakistan's Cold War alliances were formally defunct, but events were to re-energize relations with the major Western powers, notably the United States. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 revived the close relationship between Pakistan and the United States. The Carter administration's initial offer was rejected by Zia, who termed it 'peanuts'. But Pakistan accepted a 1981 offer by Ronald Reagan to provide \$3.2 billion to Pakistan over a period of six years, equally divided between economic and military assistance. A second economic and military assistance package was announced in 1986, this time for over \$4.0 billion, with 57 per cent for economic assistance.

The continuation of the war in Afghanistan led to waivers of legislative restrictions on providing aid to countries (such as Pakistan) with unverifiable nuclear programmes. The Pressler Amendment of 1985 required that if the United States president could not certify to Congress on an annual basis that Pakistan did not 'possess' a nuclear weapon, assistance to that country would be cut off. For several years, Reagan and then President George H. W. Bush provided such waivers. But with the withdrawal of the Soviets from Afghanistan in 1989 and the end of the Cold War, the United States suddenly discovered that it could no longer certify the absence of nuclear weapons, and assistance to Pakistan ended.

For ten years, until the 9/11 attacks in 2001, Pakistan's nuclear programme was the core issue in its relations with the United States. Although Washington continued to push both India and Pakistan for a regional solution to the threat of nuclear weapons proliferation, Pakistanis complained loudly that they bore the brunt of United States anti-proliferation policies.

The 9/11 attacks led to a third coming of the US–Pakistan alliance, and the George W. Bush administration moved quickly to eliminate many sanctions imposed by its predecessor. Washington also declared Pakistan to be a 'major non-NATO ally', entitling it to buy certain military equipment at reduced prices.

Pakistan again served as a support base for an Afghanistan war, and then as a partner in tracking down al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders who had fled to Pakistan. More to the point, as far as Pakistan was concerned, a massive military and economic assistance programme was initiated, much along the

lines of that provided under the 1950s alliances, and after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. This came to over \$1 billion a year, most of it for payments for the use of Pakistani facilities in support of the American and NATO invasion of Afghanistan. Much of this money was unaccountable, and by 2008 there was loud Congressional criticism that it had been misspent and, more devastatingly, that Pakistan was not pulling its weight in combating radical extremism in Afghanistan and Pakistan itself. Indeed, Pakistan has been often characterized as supporting both sides of the conflict in Afghanistan.⁷

Lessons learned and forgotten

What are the lessons to be drawn from this history of alliance, and re-alliance? They can be grouped into several categories: their influence on Pakistani domestic politics, notably the role of the armed forces; their influence on regional and strategic relations; and finally on the nature of alliance politics itself.

The domestic impact

One of the least-explored consequences of Pakistan's Cold War alliances was how they weakened the position of Pakistan's left and liberal forces. It has often been pointed out that the Pakistan military were the key beneficiaries of the alliances (and may still be), but one corollary of this relationship was that the left was not allowed to develop in Pakistan. With the 'natural' anti-Communist Islamic forces favoured officially by both the Government of Pakistan and its Western allies, the state never developed the ideological and social diversity that would enable it to withstand the end of the Cold War and the onslaught of globalization, including the resurgence of Islamic extremism. It is undergoing a transformation from a backwards feudal-dominated political elite to a state that is going to be overwhelmingly urban, yet without a political system that can absorb and channel the new urban population. Its political community remains undeveloped and still linked to its pseudo-feudal origins. Much of this was encouraged (or tolerated) by Pakistan's Western allies, who desired stability above all. Needless to say, this was also encouraged by Pakistan's other allies and close friends, notably Saudi Arabia and the People's Republic of China, both of which found it easier to deal with the military and establishment elites, and consequently never criticized the suppression of political dissent in Pakistan.

The Pakistani elite, plus its foreign supporters, effectively whitewashed Pakistan's failure to achieve constitutional normalcy. Their grounds were that a state under external pressure and still in internal disarray had no choice but to compromise on such niceties as a constitution. Pakistan fell into constitutional limbo: it was governed neither by the 1935 Government of India Act, nor by a new constitution. Pakistan stumbled for decades. It did not have to

meet the tougher tests of standing on its own. It was always able to 'borrow' power, but it failed to use this to reform its social and political institutions.

Pakistan's forty-year old experiment with military rule was broken only by spells of highly personalistic, sometimes autocratic, civilian governments, all of which were carefully watched – and eventually deposed – by the army. Military rule was opposed by a few Pakistani politicians, but most found a role in the new system or dropped out of politics, with nary a murmur from Pakistan's Cold War allies. Pakistan's army, at first assisted by the civilian bureaucracy and a group of experienced political elites, assumed the role of benevolent babysitter, watching over Pakistani politics and society. Later it was to assume the dominant role in 'correcting' Pakistan, emulating the all-encom-passing role of *maa-baap* (mother-father, the colloquial name for the British Raj). It dealt with the Americans without reference to other Pakistani institutions. Like the Raj, it justified its rule in strategic and moral terms. Under Ayub Khan, grave matters of state security were taken out of the hands of the always untrustworthy political class. Pakistan was to undergo a transition from a homeland for Indian Muslims to a fortress, where its citizens could live more or less 'Islamic' lives secure from the predatory India.

Thus, the alliances placed the army at the centre of decision-making in a state under stress. As long as India was a mortal threat – epitomized by the 1971 war that divided Pakistan – the army could claim that it had the best understanding of the requirements of national defence and security. They were the dedicated, professional guardians of 'Fortress Pakistan'. Civilian politicians who interfered with the smooth operations of the armed forces, especially the army, might as well have opened the fortress gates to the barbarian invader. Further, it was the army's view that regional peace was possible, but only if a military balance was achieved between India and Pakistan. If Delhi refused to recognize Pakistan's legitimate existence and denied the validity of the two-nation theory, it would meet a reality check administered by a well-armed Pakistan. The Indians were bullies, and bullies recognize superior power. The prime duty of Pakistanis, therefore, was to keep the fortress intact, safe from external and internal enemies. The alliances made this a feasible strategy until the region went nuclear around 1990, after which it was impossible to contemplate the full-scale use of military force.

Pakistan and its region

The alliances with the West enabled Pakistan to hold its own vis-à-vis India for many years. Pakistanis had an intense, underdog desire to disprove Indian predictions that their state would fail. SEATO and CENTO, and their subsequent ad hoc improvisations, enabled Pakistan to compete with India in military terms. Several generations of Pakistanis knew that the Indian National Congress had accepted partition grudgingly, expecting it to collapse. By merely staying afloat, Pakistanis felt they were defying India, and the alliances made this possible. This psychology is still evident in the third post-

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independence generation, particularly in cricket and sports rivalries with India and in public declarations of Pakistani nuclear prowess. But had the United States and other countries not averted their eyes (or in some cases, actively supported Pakistan), the nuclear programme would not have been possible.

Pakistan's central dispute with India over the status of Kashmir was also affected by its Cold War alliances. Of greater interest to West Pakistanis than those in the East Wing, Kashmir seemed to confirm the core rationale for Pakistan, that Muslims could not live peacefully or safely in a Hindu-dominated India. However, to bring Kashmir into Pakistan, or to force India to yield it, Pakistan needed to borrow even more power from its Cold War allies. It was not until the most recent military ruler, Pervez Musharraf, that Pakistan began to seriously engage India over a settlement on Kashmir, but by this time attitudes in India towards Pakistan had hardened, and Kashmir became a treasured grievance for enough people in both countries to block any agreement.

Pakistan and alliance politics

Alliances are generally one of two types: bandwagoning and balancing. A bandwagoning alliance is one of choice, with a view towards maximizing benefits, and those who enter into such an alliance will leave it when these do not fulfil expectations. A balancing alliance is driven by the existence of a shared enemy: one enters into such an alliance, and stays in it as long as the enemy remains shared and real. Indeed, with such a relationship there need not be a formal alliance, but a tacit understanding that both sides share a common threat.

Pakistan's alliances with the West and other countries during the Cold War were of *both* types: it was originally sheer bandwagoning, joining CENTO and SEATO for a nominal opposition to Communism, in exchange for substantial military and economic aid. However, the alliance was not strong enough to prevent Pakistan from edging closer to China in order to obtain Beijing's support against India, and eventually the United States itself decided that China was not quite the Communist threat that the Soviets were. The United States moved into an alliance-like relationship with China vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, a relationship facilitated by Pakistan. In the meantime the Soviets themselves sought a stronger alliance with India, providing military and economic support, as well as a veto in the United Nations. This completed a complex five-party relationship with the Soviet Union and India on one side, and Pakistan, China, and the United States on the other.

So, for Pakistan, what began as a bandwagoning alliance with the Americans (from which Pakistan received support for its effort to counter India) wound up as a strategic alliance with China, directed against India. Despite Indian paranoia, the United States never saw New Delhi, as did Pakistan and China, as a strategic threat. Complicating this minuet even more, China

originally saw India as the catspaw of the West, but eventually came to appreciate Pakistan's interest in breaking away from the United States. Yet it did become an alliance partner of sorts in the second coming of the Cold War, when Pakistan actively supported American efforts to counter the Soviets in Afghanistan. This brought China, Pakistan, and the US into a true balancing alliance, not against India, as Pakistan would have hoped, but against the Soviet Union.

The supreme irony here is that Pakistan did not play a balancing role (except for its limited support for US intelligence operations based there) until *after* it had left CENTO and SEATO. From the American perspective, Pakistan was not an ally against China, but this non-participation turned into a virtue when Pakistan served as a bridge to China. Ever since, Pakistanis have claimed American support for their role (and suffering) in the Cold War. But this Cold War role was minimal until after they left the formal alliances, and was primarily directed against India. In addition, Pakistan actually hastened the end of the first Cold War by facilitating the American-Chinese link.

Conclusion

If Jinnah had been less persistent, the Indian National Congress more accommodating, or the British more responsible in fulfilling their final imperial obligation, Pakistan would never have become a player in the Cold War, nor might it have suffered the consequences. The state born on August 14, 1947, had deep structural problems: it was divided between east and west, its economy was torn by partition, and its major political movement, the Muslim League, had shallow roots in what became Pakistan. Further, Jinnah died early, and powerful groups, especially in West Pakistan, propounded an alternative Islamic vision for the state. Finally, with the Indians openly hostile to the new state, the seemingly best way to offset Indian power was to turn to outside allies and the army, thus elevating the latter's internal influence and prestige.

Over the years, the United States' relationship with Pakistan has been of intense engagement followed by withdrawal. Washington turned to Pakistan in the early 1950s when India chose nonalignment, and Pakistan, desperate for outside support, eagerly reciprocated. Islam was assumed to confer a natural immunity to Communism, and Pakistan was at once both explicitly Muslim and geographically near both the world's two great Communist powers. By joining CENTO and SEATO, it acquired military power that allowed it to maintain a balance with India. As a democratic ally, Pakistan was often held up by the United States as a 'model' for the Islamic world, although no other Muslim state regarded it as such. In its dealings with the Islamic world, Pakistan did not claim to be such a model but emphasized its Islamic origins and its anti-Israeli credentials. The Arab states and Iran looked down on Pakistan, and the Afghans were too wary of Pakistan to

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regard it as a model. Furthermore, when Pakistan tried to advance itself into Central Asia, the Muslim states there rebuffed it.

In the early 1960s, the US-Pakistan alliance frayed when Pakistan turned to China for assistance while the United State backed India in its war with China. After a failed American effort to mediate the Kashmir dispute, the alliance became dormant, only to be revived briefly in 1970–72 when Washington wanted to show its gratitude to Islamabad for facilitating the opening to China. Afterward, the two countries went their separate ways, and the alliance quickly gave way to indifference, bolstered only by very small economic and military training programmes. The loss of East Pakistan in 1971 was devastating to Pakistani attitudes towards the idea of an alliance as a way of obtaining security. Not only did the West not prevent India from dismantling it, neither did the Chinese, despite some rhetorical efforts in that direction.

With the loss of the east wing and subsequent development of a Pakistani nuclear program, the Carter administration introduced sanctions. However, American policy did a complete about-face when Islamabad provided essential support for the anti-Soviet operations in Afghanistan. A second US-Pakistan alliance now took shape. At this time, American ambassadors in Islamabad liked to check off the many important interests they were attempting to advance, such as supporting the Afghan mujahiddin, containing the Pakistani nuclear programme, edging Pakistan toward a more democratic political order, averting an India-Pakistan crisis, and slowing the flow of narcotics. When difficult decisions had to be made, the first interest – sustaining Pakistan's cooperation in the war against the Soviet Union – trumped all others. Washington was mild in its language regarding democratization, it underestimated the risks of an India-Pakistan war, and it averted its eyes from the Pakistani nuclear programme. About the only successful policy (other than containing the Soviets) was curbing the drug trade.

However, a second checklist could have been drawn up. This would include trends that were ignored by the Reagan administration and some of its successors, and included Pakistan's uneven economic development, its crumbling educational system, and the growth of Islamic radicalism. Only the nuclear programme received sustained high-level American attention until the linkage between Pakistan, the Taliban, and Osama bin-Laden's al-Qaeda became evident in 1996.

These lists show not only how the urgent often drives out the important, but also that the choice of what is 'important' is often very subjective. The Reagan administration was uninterested in the consequences of supporting radical Islamists because they were thought to be the best anti-Soviet fighters, and their religious fervour appealed to some American officials and politicians.⁸ A few years later, the Clinton administration was heavily focused on nuclear issues and the Taliban–Osama bin Laden nexus in Afghanistan, while the George W. Bush administration revived a formal military agreement with Pakistan. *No* American administration thought it important to ask why

Pakistan's educational system was collapsing and why Islamic schools were replacing them. These were considered 'soft' issues, but are now correctly seen as critical ones.

During the decade of democracy in the 1990s, Pakistan's institutions continued to deteriorate, and the army continued its meddling in politics. A huge debt was accumulated and official cultivation of radical Islamic groups continued. Nevertheless, the nuclear issue continued to shape American judgments. During the last two years of Clinton's final term and in the first year of the new George W. Bush administration, Pakistan was more or less ignored in favour of the emerging India, and the prevailing American view of Pakistan, when it was thought of at all, was that it was an irritation.

This history illustrates several important features of the US–Pakistan relationship, especially as expressed in the Cold War alliances and their two post-Cold War offspring.

First, the alliance was episodic and discontinuous, driven on the American side entirely by larger strategic calculations during the Cold War and later by the need for military allies in the war against terrorism. On the Pakistani side, of course, the purpose of the alliances was to acquire resources and political support for Pakistan's contest with India.

Second, although American aid strengthened the hand of the army, the on-again, off-again quality of the relationship made the army itself wary of the United States. The military training programmes familiarized Pakistan army officers with the United States and American strategic policies and fostered a better understanding of American society, but they did not create a cadre of 'pro-American' generals. Meanwhile, anti-Americanism grew among Pakistani civilians who saw the US alliances as perpetuating the army's role.

Third, the economic consequences of the US relationship were equally ambiguous. While Pakistan did receive a lot of aid and most of its economic growth took place during the periods of highest aid flows, the assistance was not conditioned on serious economic and social reform. In the end, Pakistan never saw the kind of 'tough love' that other American allies received – assistance made conditional on economic and social reform. Nor did Pakistan have any relevant role models (as did Taiwan and South Korea, to name two).

Finally, the most enduring and pernicious consequence of Pakistan's long association with Western-sponsored alliances during the Cold War, especially its second and third phases, has been the transformation of Pakistani self-images from being a staunch, reliable, and strong moderate Muslim ally of the West, to being a victim, a state that has suffered on behalf of the West, and which has not been adequately compensated for its suffering. This could be called the 'condom syndrome,' where Pakistan is used, abused, and then discarded – it constitutes a central theme now in Pakistan's ties to the United States and other states.⁹ Being a victim seems to be morally gratifying to Pakistan: it explains why so many things went wrong, it identifies the chief

culprit (the Americans), and it lays the groundwork for massive claims on American and Western support.

This syndrome has a sturdy narrative. It begins with Pakistan's disappointment, and mistreatment as a member of CENTO and SEATO. It continues with Pakistan's abandonment, time and time again, for no good reason. It includes a claim on the resources of others, and it ends with a threat: 'help Pakistan or else it will become a radical, Islamic state'.¹⁰ The narrative also includes a false history of America's response to Pakistan's covert nuclear programme, and a reminder that Pakistan was unjustly denied economic and military assistance after the Soviets had been expelled from Afghanistan. The narrative is designed to appeal to American guilt, but it is based on a highly selective interpretation of the facts. It may be time, although it may also be too late, for both Americans and Pakistanis, as well as key countries such as India, to come to a more accurate understanding of the burdens of the past that are being carried into what is quite likely an even more troubling future.

Notes

- 1 For an extensive overview of US–Pakistan relations, see Dennis Kux, *The United States and Pakistan: Disenchanted Allies* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000); and for a review of the first twenty-five years, see Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India and Pakistan* (Columbia University Press, 1994). An authoritative Indian view that covers the years of the SEATO and CENTO alliances is found in M.S. Venkataramani, *The American Role in Pakistan* (New Delhi: Radiant, 1982). A detailed history from a Pakistani perspective is in S. M. Burke, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: An Historical Analysis* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1973).
- 2 Presidential address to the Allahabad Session of the All-Indian Muslim League, December 29, 1930.
- 3 For a lengthy and nearly unique discussion from this perspective, see Shaukatullah Ansari, *Pakistan: The Problem of India* (Lahore: Minerva Book Shop, 1944).
- 4 B.R. Ambedkar, *Pakistan, or the Partition of India* (Bombay: Thacker and Co., 1940), pp. 85–87.
- 5 It remained in the Commonwealth after becoming a Republic in 1956, only to withdraw in 1972 to protest the recognition of Bangladesh –the former East Pakistan—by Britain, Australia, and New Zealand, but rejoined in 1989 during Benazir Bhutto's first government.
- 6 For a history of American crisis intervention, see P.R. Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, and Stephen P. Cohen, *Four Crises and a Peace Process: American Engagement in South Asia* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2008).
- 7 For a comprehensive overview of US–Pakistan relations that summarizes well the widespread frustration with Pakistan in the Washington policy community, see C. Christine Fair, 'Time for Sober Realism: Renegotiating US Relations with Pakistan', *The Washington Quarterly*, April, 2009, pp. 149–72.
- 8 For a perspective on this issue by one of the leading supporters of the mujahedin, member of Congress Charlie Wilson, see George Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003).
- 9 For one sample see Maleeha Lodhi, 'The Pakistan–US Relationship', *Defense Journal* (Pakistan), April 1988, <http://www.defencejournal.com/april98/pakistanus.htm>, accessed March 20, 2009. Lodhi writes that the invocation of the Pressler

amendment in October 1990 destroyed the US–Pakistan partnership, and stemmed from an American decision that Pakistan was no longer a strategic necessity. In fact the Pressler amendment (which allowed the United States to overlook Pakistan’s nuclear weapons programme) was suggested originally by Pakistani officials, and was violated almost immediately by Pakistan thereafter. The Reagan and Bush administrations overlooked these violations for several years, allowing Pakistan to both receive military assistance and to build a nuclear weapon.

- 10 For a British discussion of the ‘gun to the head’ syndrome, see Jason Burke, ‘Our skewed world view wont let us see the real Pakistan’, *Guardian*, March 15, 2009: (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentsisfree/2009/mar/15/Jason-burke-Pakistan/print> (accessed March 22, 2009)).