

THE FRAGILE PAKISTANI STATE ALLY OF THE UNITED STATES AND CHINA

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Introduction

China and Pakistan are perhaps the most incongruent allies in the world. China is an atheist, authoritarian, emerging superpower; Pakistan is an Islamic, undemocratic, unstable medium-sized garrison-state that in recent decades has been using Islamism, jihadism and support for terrorism to achieve its goal of becoming the dominant Islamic power in the region. From the very beginning of the Cold War, the United States has been arming and aiding Pakistan as a highly dubious ally against Communism and more recently against Islamist terrorism, but Pakistan has used most of the aid for wars against India over Kashmir. India responded to the US-Pakistan alliance with a military pact with the Soviet Union. After the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s, and India's defeat by China in the border war in the Himalayas in 1962, China became the real ally of Pakistan. Beijing's evolving geopolitical ambition since its break with Moscow was to use Pakistan as the back door to the Indian Ocean and the Middle East and to prevent India from becoming the dominant power in South Asia. Sino-Indian hostility further escalated after another Indo-Pakistani war over Kashmir in 1965 and India's liberation of East Pakistan from (West-) Pakistani military repression, leading to the creation of Bangladesh and the breakup of Pakistan in 1971. For the first time during the Cold War, the United States and China had been jointly supporting the losing side – the (West) Pakistani military dictatorship – while democratic India and the Soviet Union had supported the Bangladeshi people's war of liberation. From the late 1970s China played a key role in giving Islamabad the 'Islamic nuclear bomb' and ballistic missiles for China's own strategic goal of containing Soviet-allied India. China's supply of nuclear and missile technology to Pakistan was a recurrent acrimonious issue in US-China relations during the 1980s and 1990s, while the US-Pakistani military alliance was moribund.

Times have changed. '9/11' and the need for military action against Osama Bin Laden's al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan led to the revival of the US-Pakistani military alliance, but after seven years of mixed results, Washington still has limited illusions about Pakistan's reliability as an ally in the war on terror. Pakistan has become a chronically unstable, dangerous country, ranking twelfth on the global list of failed states, and Washington's main priority has become to restabilize it by means of forceful intervention in its domestic politics. The latest such intervention, imposing a flawed deal on Pakistan's current military dictator to co-opt former Prime

Minister Benazir Bhutto in a new pluralistic democratization process, has collapsed after the assassination of Bhutto. Who killed her? Al-Qaeda-linked elements, Pakistan's sinister military intelligence or perhaps Musharraf's own henchmen? It may never be known.

In recent years, the US has switched its priority to India as a strategic and economic partner in the region. Even China no longer has full confidence in Pakistan's Taliban- and terrorism-sponsoring military oligarchy, and no longer supports Pakistan's military objectives against India, especially in Kashmir. Beijing's priority may have become to solve its longstanding border problems with the emerging regional power India and to expand economic ties with it.

Pakistan: Anti-Communist 'Ally' of the US but 'Not Against China'

The Chinese and Pakistanis were preordained to become special friends from the early 1950s onwards, but it took many years before their tentative relationship culminated in a fully fledged alliance and an 'all-weather friendship'. After the bloody partition of the British Indian Empire in 1947 and the communist victory in the Chinese civil war, Pakistan and the People's Republic of China were both isolated countries with powerful enemies and few friends. The religious foundations of the state of Pakistan were expected to bring it friends among the Muslim countries, but as Javed Burki pointed out:

In 1947 Islamic resurgence was still three decades into the future. Egypt, Turkey and Indonesia, all had their own problems. Afghanistan, the Muslim country with a long border with Pakistan and historical base of the Mughal Conquerors who in the sixteenth century established a Muslim Empire in the already heavily Islamicized parts of Northern India, coveted some of Pakistan's territory.¹

Pakistan's enemy was India; while the United States was China's. So the vague contours of US-Pakistani friendship were already on the horizon. The problem for Pakistan was that India and China were 'friends' of sorts during most of the 1950s. Pakistan was also on the American side during the Korean War and India was neutral. After the Korean War, US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was enlisting allies for two anti-communist pacts that should block the expansion of world communism in Asia: the Baghdad Pact, in 1958 renamed the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO); and the South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). India, although a democracy, rejected any type of military alliance with the West because of its policy of non-

1) Shahid Javed Burki, *Pakistan: Fifty Years of Nationhood* (Boulder CO: Westview, 1999), p. 192.

alignment and neutralism and its ideology of socialist anti-imperialism. From the American viewpoint, Pakistan was the best second choice: West Pakistan faced the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and Soviet Central Asia; and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) faced China and South-East Asia. The problem was that Pakistan, as a Muslim nation, shared the anti-communist goals of the American-led alliances, but only from a religious/ideological, not a political/military viewpoint. Neither the USSR nor China, the two leading communist countries, were any threat or danger to Pakistan. Pakistan's overwhelming concern was to overcome the isolation that India had driven it into and the threat that India posed. Pakistan needed (American) arms against India – not China² – to hold on to the north-western sector of Kashmir that its militias had conquered in 1947. Thus, Pakistan was from the very beginning only a conditional, limited US ally. Also from the American side, the early alliance was inherently unstable given Congressional conditions on military aid and the increasing US involvement in Vietnam in the 1960s.

India's logical response to Pakistan's military alliances with the United States was to move closer to the Soviet Union. In November 1955, a few months before Soviet leader Nikita Krushchev, to the great annoyance of China's Chairman Mao Zedong, denounced the crimes of Stalin, Krushchev, together with his Prime Minister Nikolai Bulganin, paid a high-profile visit to India, which basically marked the beginning of a (de facto) alliance with non-aligned India against the American military alliances in the region. It was the first crack in the 'world-threatening alliance' of the two communist giants – Soviet Russia and Red China – soon to be followed by further deterioration over Krushchev's policy of 'peaceful coexistence' with the West and issues of Marxist-Leninist ideological purity. The Soviet Union became the supplier of some 70 per cent of India's military hardware until the end of the Cold War in 1991. The Cold War paradigm was now complete, pitting India and the Soviet Union against China and Pakistan, with the United States trying to figure out what value Pakistan had as an ally. The China-Pakistan relationship was asymmetric and not yet a full alliance. Pakistan had a congenital urge to injure India, but China never undertook to bail it out, when in distress. China was encircled by the US system of military alliances in the east and south-east: South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam and SEATO, and it was under a trade embargo. The only back door out was the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong.³

2) This was the reassurance that Pakistani Prime Minister Mohammed Ali Bogra and his successors gave to their Chinese counterpart Zhou Enlai (Chou En-lai) at the Bandung Conference in 1955. See Satyabrata Sinha, 'China in Pakistan's Security Perceptions', in Swaran Singh (ed.), *China-Pakistan Strategic Cooperation: Indian Perspectives* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2007), chapter 4.

3) The Chinese communists were unable to take Hong Kong by military means during the final phase of the civil war with the Kuomintang, and during the Korean War they negotiated maintenance of the status quo for practical, among others blockade-busting, purposes. See Willem van Kemenade, *China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Inc.: The Dynamics of a*

China's geostrategic position deteriorated further after the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s, so its link with Pakistan as a back door to the Indian Ocean and the Middle East became a vital foreign policy concern. China in return supported Pakistan's position in Kashmir so as to tie up India in South Asia and to befriend Muslim neighbours of its own Muslim-dominated and turmoil-ridden Xinjiang and the wider West Asian/Middle Eastern Muslim region.⁴ As one historian notes: 'To sacrifice Pakistan would be tantamount to conceding South Asia as India's sphere of influence'.⁵

Growth towards an 'All-Weather, Time-Tested Friendship'

After India's defeat by China in the border war of 1962, neutral India finally adopted an active anti-China policy and became eligible for Western military aid. The Kennedy administration, together with the British, started shipping arms to India under the condition that they 'not be used against Pakistan, but only against communist China'. Pakistan got nervous that the West was now intent on building India into the main anti-communist bastion in Asia and felt pressured to look for alternative sources of military supplies: China willingly filled the slot. Kennedy's Defense Secretary Robert McNamara warned Pakistan that it should realize that together with India, it was threatened by the same enemy: communist China. Although India received far fewer arms from the Americans and British than it used to get from the Soviets, Pakistan realized that its flow of American arms would be curtailed and that China would be a much more compatible friend. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, foreign minister under Pakistan's President Ayub Khan since 1963, became the architect of the almost exclusive strategic reorientation of Pakistan towards China. Prominent Pakistani historian Khalid Bin Sayeed describes the US attempt to exchange Pakistan for India as 'America's betrayal'. Meanwhile, Sayeed calls China's behaviour in the eyes of Pakistanis 'politically impeccable', especially when seen in the light of this American betrayal. But Sayeed's formulation illustrates Pakistan's antipathy towards communism, when he states that since Pakistan was surrounded by such hostile neighbours as India, Afghanistan and the USSR, and '*with her friends like the United States and other members of the Commonwealth so far away, what else could Pakistan do*

New Empire (New York: Knopf, 1997), chapter 2 entitled 'Hong Kong: From British Crown Colony to Special Administrative Region of the PRC'.

- 4) Swaran Singh (ed.), *China-Pakistan Strategic Cooperation: Indian Perspectives* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2007), pp. 20 and 45.
- 5) John W. Garver, *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 241.

except to explore areas of understanding with the communist Chinese?’ [italics added].⁶

Relations between India and China deteriorated parallel to Sino-Soviet relations during the 1960s and the early 1970s as Sino-Pakistani relations improved. China excluded the Pakistani-controlled northern part of Kashmir from the border dispute with India and, to the great annoyance of India, started negotiations with Pakistan on a – provisional – border settlement, which was concluded in 1963. The Manchu-Chinese empire had spurious historical claims to some of these areas, such as the northernmost part of Pakistani-controlled Kashmir bordering Xinjiang, named Hunza, whose ruler, the Mir, had recognized the Chinese Emperor as his suzerain after the Chinese conquest of East Turkestan (Sinkiang, Xinjiang) under Emperor Qian Long (Ch’ien Lung) in 1760.⁷ In the Sino-Pakistani border settlement, China acquired 5,000 square kilometres of Hunza south of the Mintaka Pass, bordering Gilgit. One clause was added: that China, after a settlement of the Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan, would renegotiate the border with the ‘relevant sovereign authority’.⁸ India responded by downgrading the special status of Kashmir in the Indian Union and putting it on a par with the other union states.

The Indo-Pakistani Wars over Kashmir: 1947

Kashmir is in some ways to India what Taiwan is to China: a peripheral area with an erratic imperial history, with mostly Muslim rulers until the Sikhs annexed Kashmir in 1820 from their newly established kingdom in Lahore, now Pakistan, during the decline of the Mughal Empire. Gulab Singh was recognized by the British as a tributary Maharajah by the Treaty of Amritsar in 1846 on payment of 75 Lakh (Rupees 7.5 million). The Qing Emperors Kang Xi and Qian Long had completed Manchu-Chinese control over Tibet in 1720 and Xinjiang in 1760. Now, in the 1840s, this upstart minor ruler Gulab Singh was making inroads into Tibet and Xinjiang, which gave rise to one of the Sino-Indian border disputes, which remains unresolved until the present day. Singh’s dynasty ruled Kashmir as the second largest ‘princely state’ of the British Indian Empire until independence in 1947, when Hari Singh was the reigning Maharajah.

6) Khalid Bin Sayeed, ‘Pakistan’s Foreign Policy: An Analysis of Pakistan’s Fears and Interests’, *Readings in Pakistan’s Foreign Policy*, vol. I (Lahore: Progressive Publishers, 1980), p. 53.

7) Peter C. Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge MA: Belknap, 2005).

8) Boundary Agreement between Pakistan and China, 2 March 1963. Xinhua News Agency, reprinted in G.V. Ambekar and D.V. Divekar (eds), *Documents on China’s Relations with South and South-East Asia (1949-1962)* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1964).

Kashmir combined disparate regions, religions and ethnicities: to the east, Ladakh, an old separate kingdom, was ethnically and culturally Tibetan and its inhabitants practised Buddhism; to the south, Jammu had a mixed population of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs; in the heavily populated central Kashmir valley, the population was overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim, but there was also a small but influential Hindu minority, the Kashmiri Brahmins or Pandits – of whom Nehru was one. To the north-east, sparsely populated Baltistan had a population ethnically related to Ladakh, but practising Shia Islam; to the north, also sparsely populated, Gilgit Agency was an area of diverse, mostly Shia groups; and, to the west, Punch was Muslim, but of different ethnicity than the Kashmir valley.

At the conclusion of British rule and the subsequent partition of the British Empire into the newly independent Union of India and the Dominion of Pakistan, both countries had agreed that the rulers of princely states would be given the right to opt for either Pakistan or India or – in special cases – to remain independent. In 1947, Kashmir's population was 77 per cent Muslim and it shared a boundary with Pakistan. For the Pakistani elite, gaining Kashmir was an issue of vital national identity. They claimed a natural right to all Muslim majority areas. Professor Phuntchok Stobdan, himself a Buddhist from Ladakh and adviser of the Indian government on Kashmiri affairs and border security, describes Pakistan's national psychology as: "We Muslims had ruled over the Hindus for more than 500 years – the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire – until the British came by mid-seventeenth century. Now the British have left, why shouldn't Muslims rule over Hindus again?"⁹ Indeed, it was anticipated that the (Hindu) Maharaja would accede to Pakistan after the British paramountcy ended on 14-15 August 1947. When the Maharaja hesitated and talks dragged on, Pakistan used tribal guerrillas to frighten the ruler into submission. Instead the Maharaja appealed to the former British Viceroy, now Governor-General, Lord Louis Mountbatten for assistance, which he agreed to on the condition that the ruler accedes to India. Once the Maharaja signed the 'Instrument of Accession', which included a handwritten clause added by Mountbatten, asking that the wishes of the Kashmiri people be taken into account, Indian soldiers entered Kashmir and drove the Pakistani-sponsored irregulars from all but a small section of the state. India approached the United Nations Security Council for a ceasefire and to mediate. Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru promised a 'Plebiscite under UN supervision' – which was never held, ostensibly because Pakistan refused to withdraw its troops. In the last days of 1948, a ceasefire was agreed under UN auspices; however, since the plebiscite demanded by the UN was never conducted, relations between India and Pakistan soured, and eventually led to two more wars over Kashmir in 1965 and 1999.

9) Interview with Prof. Phuntchok Stobdan, New Delhi, 28 November 2007.

The eastern region of the erstwhile princely state of Kashmir has also been beset with a boundary dispute. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, some boundary agreements were signed between Great Britain, Afghanistan and Russia over the northern borders of Kashmir, but China never accepted these agreements, and the official Chinese position did not change with the communist takeover in 1949. China obviously did not make a stand on the first Indo-Pakistani Kashmir War in 1947, simply because it was in the middle of its own civil war. After 1949 the PRC adopted a neutral stance on Kashmir in the years prior to the breakdown in Sino-Indian relations.

By the mid-1950s the Chinese army had entered the north-east portion of Ladakh. In 1957 the People's Liberation Army completed a military road through the Aksai Chin area to provide better communication between Xinjiang and western Tibet. India's belated discovery of this road led to border clashes between the two countries that culminated in the Sino-Indian war of October 1962. China has occupied Aksai Chin since 1962 and, in addition, an adjoining region, the Trans-Karakoram Tract, was ceded by Pakistan to China in 1965. India controls 101,387 square kilometres of the disputed territory of Kashmir, but the Indian sector includes the most important part – the Kashmir Valley – and this is the real source of the problem. Pakistan holds 85,846 square kilometres and China 42,555 square kilometres.

The Second Kashmir War: 1965

The 1965 war started as a series of guerrilla infiltrations into the Indian sector of Kashmir by Pakistani militia in an attempt to stir up a 'spontaneous' uprising that would force India into negotiations. When the uprising did not happen, the Pakistanis erroneously banked on the support of their great ally, the United States. India was not able to launch an adequate on-the-spot counter-offensive and instead opened second and third fronts by crossing into West Pakistan and launching major tank- and air-force combat near the cities of Lahore and Hyderabad. While United Nations Secretary-General U Thant was negotiating a ceasefire, tanks ran out of fuel around Sialkot, and at that moment China intervened diplomatically by summoning the Indian chargé d'affaires (relations had been downgraded) and issued an ultimatum that India dismantle all of the 56 military installations that it had erected at the border between Tibet and Sikkim within three days and that it would cease instantly all incursions across the Sino-Indian and Sino-Sikkimese border, return abducted border residents and stolen cattle and solemnly pledge to abstain from any further hostile actions across the border. At the same time, news was pouring in that China was amassing troops at the border near Sikkim and in Ladakh. Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri denied the Chinese accusations and expressed hope that China would not exploit the

current tense situation by attacking India. Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai called on the Pakistani leadership to launch a 'people's war' against the Indian assault on Lahore and charged that 'the Indian reactionaries could not have engaged in such a serious military adventure without the consent and support of the United States'.¹⁰

The American ambassador in Warsaw, the only place in the world where since 1955 official diplomatic talks between China and the United States were being held, had warned his Chinese colleague that China should stay out of the Indo-Pakistani conflict if it wanted to be safe from American retaliation. India accepted a UN-brokered ceasefire on 22 September 1965, followed by Pakistan. One day later China announced that India had acceded to its demands. In the end, the Americans did not play any significant role, because President Lyndon Johnson, preoccupied with Vietnam, did not want to spend American resources on Pakistan. It was the Russians who took centre stage by inviting Indian Prime Minister Shastri and Pakistan's President Ayub Khan to Tashkent, capital of the nearby Uzbek Soviet Republic for peace talks, which were chaired by Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin. The Tashkent Meeting took place in January 1966, but did not achieve more than a declaration on troop withdrawal on 10 January, which was denounced by Beijing as a Soviet ploy to cajole Pakistan to the side of India and Russia against China. Shastri died unexpectedly in Tashkent one day later, which gave the declaration an aureole of sacrosanctity.

Pakistan had not gained anything from the war: it had solidified national unity in India and widened the divisions between West and East Pakistan. Ayub Khan dismissed his pro-China Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and moved to restore balance in relations with the West, Russia and China. However, China remained the cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy because it was the only country that fully identified with its anti-India goals. With Ayub Khan resigning in 1969 and Bhutto as the new president and then prime minister from 1971 until 1977, the pro-China trend was firmly consolidated. What had started as a flirtation was now a lasting relationship.¹¹ As Pakistan's relations with China intensified, its active participation in CENTO and SEATO lapsed. Throughout the 1960s, US intelligence agencies documented the strengthening of Pakistan's relationship with China in violation of its treaty commitments to the United States.¹²

In 1969 India became alarmed again about a planned new land link from Kashgar in Xinjiang to Gilgit in the north-east of Kashmir, the so-called Karakoram Highway, at an altitude of 4,877 metres the highest paved road in the world. This was clearly the first stage in China's 'Long March South' to

10) 'Chinese Government Leaders Condemn Indian Expansionism and Aggression against Pakistan', *Peking Review*, no. 38, 17 September 1965.

11) Sinha, 'China in Pakistan's Security Perceptions', p. 88.

12) Declassified internal CIA report dated 21 July 1995 detailing US policy problems with Pakistan, available online at <http://www.gwu/nasarchive/NSABB/NSAEBB114/chipak-1.pdf>.

the Indian Ocean. The 1,300 kilometre-long road through the Khunjerab Pass runs through disputed territory that India calls 'Pakistan Occupied Kashmir' (POK) and Pakistan refers to as the 'Northern Areas'. India considered this a new strategic route that should facilitate Chinese intervention in an inevitable new Indo-Pakistani war, be it over Kashmir or over the survival of Pakistan as a geographically anomalous, bipartite country, split by 1,600 kilometres of Indian territory.

The Bangladesh Independence War

It was not only geographical distance that divided West and East Pakistan. It was like a colonial empire, with the West Pakistani elite exploiting the East like a 'predatory foreign ruling class', most recently by imposing the Urdu language on the Bengali-speaking East. Aggravating disparities in economic development and West Pakistani opposition to opening the border between East Pakistan and Indian West Bengal had further deepened the crisis. Elections led to an overwhelming victory of the populist Awami League in the East, winning 167 out of 169 seats. This result even took Awami Leader Sheikh Mujib'ur Rahman by surprise and shocked President Yahya Khan. Mujib'ur's main demand was a federal constitution with equal power-sharing between East and West. He called a general strike, which the Yahya military regime decided to break by brutal military force. Sheikh Mujib'ur Rahman was arrested and flown to a secret location in West Pakistan. Soon, millions of East Pakistanis fled to Indian West Bengal.

On 17 April 1971 a new East Bengali state of Bangladesh was proclaimed, which India welcomed, but which West Pakistan was ready to crush if necessary by indiscriminate army violence against civilians. Confronted with an ever-escalating flow of refugees and pressed by West Bengali public opinion to support their East Bengali brethren and to recognize Bangladesh diplomatically, the Indian government, led by Indira Gandhi, had no alternative but to intervene. But since the self-proclaimed Bangladeshi government did not control any substantial chunk of territory, the basis for this in international law was shaky. The conflict was legally Pakistan's internal affair and large-scale interference by India could lead to a major war with the risk of Chinese intervention.

It is noteworthy that the Soviet Union was the only power that acted in a principled and consistent way in this particular conflict. Since its mediation in Tashkent, Moscow had kept close contact with Islamabad without alienating New Delhi, and during the new crisis it urged the Pakistani military to stop immediately its bloody repression in the East and to negotiate peacefully with representatives of the East Pakistani people.

The United States, meanwhile, took the contradictory line of condemning India, while sending aid for an estimated 10 million East Bengali refugees, and at the same time continuing arms supplies to West Pakistan's

military dictatorship so as to keep the dialogue going and to exercise some influence on the regime in Islamabad. 'We were in the process of trying to convince the Chinese that we were worthy friends, who stood by their ally' said Walter Andersen, a former US State Department South Asia specialist, now Associate Director for South Asia Studies at the Paul Nitze School of Advanced International Studies of Johns Hopkins University in Washington DC.¹³ Credibility with China was suddenly an important consideration, because American diplomats were busy preparing President Nixon's historical visit to China in February 1972.

China faced the same dilemma as the Americans. It had the option of supporting a national liberation movement with strong radical leftist elements against neo-imperialism by fellow Asians. However, it opted for traditional state interests and identified completely with West Pakistan's military regime, while scolding India as 'reactionary expansionists' and – referring to Czechoslovakia in 1968 – the Soviet Union as 'shameless hypocrites'.

The Nixon administration's policy of ignoring large-scale Pakistani atrocities was based on fear that India, after eliminating Pakistani rule in East Bengal, would invade West Pakistan, install a pro-Indian/pro-Soviet regime there and thus severely damage American and Chinese interests and pave the way for full Soviet domination of South Asia. Nixon and Kissinger not only dismissed Indian and international concerns about Pakistani genocide in the East, they also ignored what went down in the annals of diplomatic history as perhaps the most strongly worded protest of a diplomat against the indefensible behaviour of his own government. US Consul-General in Dhaka Archer Blood protested in April 1971 in a diplomatic telegram:

Our government has failed to denounce the suppression of democracy. Our government has failed to denounce atrocities. Our government has failed to take forceful measures to protect its citizens while at the same time bending over backwards to placate the West Pakistan-dominated government and to lessen any deservedly negative international public relations impact against them. Our government has evidenced what many will consider moral bankruptcy [...] But we have chosen not to intervene, even morally, on the grounds that the Awami conflict, in which unfortunately the overworked term genocide is applicable, is purely an internal matter of a sovereign state. Private Americans have expressed disgust. We, as professional civil servants, express our dissent with current policy and fervently hope that our true and lasting interests here can be defined and our policies redirected.¹⁴

There was another, more immediate, reason for the United States to refrain from taking a critical attitude towards Pakistani abuses in the East. In

13) Interview with Dr Walter Andersen, Washington DC, 1 February 2008.

14) US Consulate (Dacca) Cable, 'Dissent from US Policy toward East Pakistan', 6 April 1971, Confidential, 5 pp, includes signatures from the US Department of State. Source: RG 59, SN 70-73 Pol and Def.From: Pol Pak-US To: Pol 17-1 Box 2535.

April 1971 '*ping-pong diplomacy*' had started between the United States and China, and Henry Kissinger's secret July 1971 visit to China was being prepared through Pakistani channels. President Richard Nixon's opening to China was – in part – a ploy to end the doomed Vietnam War without admitting defeat.

India's concern, prior to the war in East Pakistan, was to hedge against Chinese intervention. India and the Soviet Union thus decided to make a counter-move against what was perceived as an emerging US-China-Pakistani triangle. On 9 August 1971 India's Foreign Secretary Swaran Singh signed a Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation, a nice euphemism for a military pact, with his Soviet colleague Andrei Gromyko. The diplomatic prelude to war had now clearly started. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi travelled to Moscow first, then to the major European capitals and finally to Washington.¹⁵ The Europeans told Gandhi that they would make a last effort to persuade Pakistan's President Yahya Khan to release Sheikh Mujib'ur Rahman from incarceration; and the Americans on 8 November 1971 pledged to cut off arms' supplies to the Pakistanis. Bhutto, reappointed as foreign minister, visited Beijing from 5-8 November 1971 to seek 'reassurance'. Behind the scenes, the Chinese tried to persuade the Pakistanis to make a settlement with the leaders of East Pakistan, but in vain.¹⁶ The Chinese were non-committal, but what they did offer the public was a bewildering outburst of Orwellian doublespeak. They lamented that the Indians had done the same thing to China (in Tibet) as they were now doing to Pakistan in the East:

They fomented a rebellion in the Tibet Region of our country and engaged in all kinds of subversive activities. When the rebellion was crushed by the Chinese people, they [the Indian reactionaries] coerced tens of thousands of Chinese [Tibetan] residents to their country, thus fabricating the question of the so-called 'Tibetan refugees'.¹⁷

Full-scale war between the armed forces of India's 980,000 troops and Pakistan's 392,000 started on two fronts on 3 December 1971, with a massive Indian air campaign against all airports and bases in East Pakistan, destroying all of the aeroplanes that were grounded. The Pakistanis attacked in Kashmir

15) Nixon and Kissinger intensely disliked Indira Gandhi. According to documents that were declassified in 2005, they were deeply angered over her closeness to the Soviet Union. During the run-up to the war Kissinger said 'the Indians are bastards anyway'. Nixon added: 'We really slobbered over the old witch [...] The Pakistanis are straightforward and sometimes extremely stupid. The Indians are more devious, sometimes so smart that we fall for their line'. See the US National Security Archive at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/news/20050629/index.htm>.

16) Wang Taiping, *PRC's Diplomatic History 1970-1978* (Beijing: World Knowledge Publishers, 1999), p. 110 (in Chinese).

17) *Peking Review*, 12 November 1971.

and in the Indian Punjab, where they made some gains, but these were unsustainable after India took Dhaka, the Bangladeshi capital, on 13 December. The Pakistani commander, General A.A. Khan Niazi had vowed to fight until the last man, but on 16 December 1971 he surrendered to his Indian counterpart, General Jagjit Singh Aurora. The Chinese had, as usual, refrained from any activity on any front.

The war had been simultaneously conducted at the United Nations, where a Chinese ambassador had just two months before taken the seat that had been occupied by Chiang Kai-shek's representative until October 1971.

On the second day of the war on 4 December 1971, the Russian ambassador to the UN, Jacob Malik, submitted a draft resolution in which Pakistan was ordered to find a political settlement within Pakistan that should lead to a ceasefire. Malik also proposed inviting a representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations' session. The draft was immediately vetoed by China: the first Chinese veto. The Chinese ambassador, Huang Hua, engaged in mind-boggling rhetoric and wondered whether India would now use the presence of Tibetan 'counter-revolutionary refugees' in India as a pretext for aggression against China. He extended this logic even to the Soviet Union and asked his Soviet counterpart:

Is the Soviet Union going to use the tens of thousands of Chinese citizens, which it abducted by force from China's Xinjiang in 1962 and of whom it uses some for anti-China subversive activities, as a pretext for aggression against China? And are you going to use this kind of people in the United Nations to justify your aggression and subversion?¹⁸

Huang was referring to Muslim Uyghur people who had escaped the famine in China, caused by Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward in 1959, and had fled to Kazakhstan during the following years. During a third debate Huang Hua went as far as comparing Bangladesh with *Manchukuo* and the government of Bangladesh with a *Quisling clique*.

When the defeat of Pakistan was imminent, President Nixon sent the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Enterprise to the Bay of Bengal, not as long has been assumed to intimidate India, but according to Walter Andersen:

[...] again to show China that we were steadfast in our support to Pakistan, an ally of both China and the United States. In fact fighting had ended before the Enterprise entered the Indian Ocean. The American nuclear carrier was faced by the Indian light aircraft carrier Vikrant. The Soviet Navy sent two task forces from Vladivostok including nuclear submarines, which trailed the American carrier group at a distance of a few hundred miles. It was all show.¹⁹

18) *Peking Review*, 10 December 1971.

19) Interview with Walter Andersen, 1 February 2008.

The US Navy backed off after the Pakistani surrender in the East when India refrained from a new campaign for the dismemberment of West Pakistan. American policy was deeply flawed and led to a freeze in US-India relations until the end of the Cold War. The architect of the failed policy was no less than Dr Kissinger.²⁰

An official statement of the Chinese government in Beijing on 16 December 1971 took a more serious line than the outbursts of its UN ambassador. It asked the question: if the Indian government was so concerned about the national aspirations of the people of East Pakistan, why was it so indifferent about the national aspirations of the people of Kashmir? US proposals were vetoed by the Russians and Russian proposals were vetoed by China. It was a novel spectacle in world politics: the United States, for the first time, inadvertently found itself in partnership with China in condemning Soviet expansionism and its client-state India, and conniving at Pakistan's indiscriminate terror against the civilian people of East Pakistan (Bangladesh). On 16 December 1971, the day of the Pakistani surrender, China accused India of new border violations near Sikkim in the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA – in 1985 renamed Arunachal Pradesh) and demanded that India immediately cease its incursions. What the Chinese wanted to achieve with this diversion was unclear, because it was too late to have any impact. Bangladesh was a fait accompli. Pakistan as a pair of pincers around the Indian subcontinent had ceased to exist. The third and thus far most important military phase of the Indo-Pakistani conflict had ended with far less potent input from China than India had feared and Pakistan had hoped. According to Andersen, the Indians had not taken China's posturing and its diplomatic harangues at all seriously. The Indo-Soviet Treaty and possible Soviet military build-up on the Chinese north-eastern and Central Asian borders were enough deterrent for the Chinese not to get involved in the war militarily. It later transpired that Kissinger had met on 10 December 1971 with the new Chinese UN ambassador Huang Hua, who assured him that China would continue fighting in support of Pakistan as long as it had a rifle in its armoury, but apart from supplying arms it did nothing. A few months later, Zhou Enlai complained to the visiting Nixon and Kissinger in Beijing that Pakistan's military ruler, General Yahya Khan, did not really lead his troops in East Pakistan. Peking's central goal had not been that Pakistan remained united, but that West Pakistan remained independent of India and friendly towards China.²¹ After the conflict, Chinese civilian and military aid to Pakistan increased in leaps and bounds. For instance, Pakistan reportedly

20) Jussi M. Hanhimeaki, *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 156.

21) Sinha, 'China in Pakistan's Security Perceptions', p. 91.

received nearly one-third of its arms from abroad from the PRC in the period from 1966-1980, amounting to approximately US\$ 1.5 billion.²²

US-China détente after the Kissinger and Nixon visits to Beijing in 1971-1972 had a multiple impact on the China-Pakistan axis. It relaxed the American encirclement of China, reduced China's apprehension about the India-Soviet alliance and encouraged it to have a broader view of South Asia than the one through Pakistani lenses. Until the Bangladesh Independence War, China had been the main backer – with Pakistan – of the right to self-determination for the Kashmiri people. However, in July 1972 the Simla Agreement was signed by Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Pakistani President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, binding the two countries 'to settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations'. It also cemented the Line of Control as something close to a permanent border. The agreement has been the basis of all subsequent bilateral talks between India and Pakistan, and equally important to all Chinese official pronouncements on the conflict.

China Helps Pakistan to Develop Nuclear Weapons

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto made the first request to China to help Pakistan to develop nuclear weapon capabilities to match India's budding programme when he was foreign minister in 1965, but China at that time was non-committal. In 1976 he urged the Chinese again to oblige, and this time they agreed to supply Pakistan with blueprints for a fission weapon around or before 1983.²³ Pakistan had been the most loyal and consistent supporter of China in the international arena on all issues: the United Nations; Taiwan; Tibet; human rights; etc.²⁴ Strategic factors that led China to change its position were the amputation of East Pakistan by India's intervention in the Bangladesh Independence War in 1971 and India's first nuclear test in 1974. China was not the first and only foreign contributor. The first illicit supplier of nuclear technology came from the Netherlands in the form of the theft of nuclear blueprints by A.Q. Khan, who was to emerge as the father of

22) Srikanth Kondapalli, 'Pakistan in China's Security Perceptions', in Swaran Singh (ed.), *China-Pakistan Strategic Cooperation: Indian Perspectives* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2007), pp. 53-73.

23) In 1977, after being deposed in a military coup by General Zia Ul-Haq, Bhutto addressed posterity in the following words from his death cell in a Rawalpindi prison, where he would be hanged two years later: 'We know that Israel and South Africa have full nuclear capability. The Christian, Jewish and Hindu civilizations have this capability. The communist powers also possess it. Only the Islamic civilization was without it, but that position was about to change'. Quoted in Brahma Chellaney, *Asian Juggernaut: The Rise of China, India and Japan* (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2007), p. 51.

24) Arpit Rajain, 'Proliferation Concerns: An Overview', in Swaran Singh (ed.), *China-Pakistan Strategic Cooperation: Indian Perspectives* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2007), chapter 7.

Pakistan's nuclear bomb. Indirect support came from Saudi Arabia, North Korea, Syria and the United States.²⁵

China joined the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 1984. China supplied M-11 missiles to Pakistan and maintained that this was within the Missile Technology Control Regime. In 1986, China concluded a comprehensive nuclear cooperation agreement with Pakistan. Chinese scientists began assisting Pakistan with the enrichment of weapons' grade uranium, and China reportedly also transferred tritium gas to Pakistan, which could be used to achieve fusion in hydrogen bombs and boost the yield of atomic bombs. Pakistan had been under threat of far-reaching US sanctions since the so-called 'Pressler Amendment' was adopted in 1985, which banned military aid to Pakistan unless the US President could certify that Pakistan neither possessed nuclear weapons nor was trying to develop them. Pakistan could manipulate its relationship with the United States as an indispensable ally as long as the Cold War prevailed. The US withheld military equipment from Pakistan that was contracted prior to 1990, worth about US\$ 1.2 billion, even though Pakistan had paid for this. The end of the Cold War brought further cuts, and in summer 1993 additional sanctions were imposed under the MTCR (Missile Technology Control Regime) for allegedly receiving missile technology from China.²⁶ The United States also had so much evidence of Chinese assistance to the Pakistani nuclear programme that it imposed sanctions on China in 1991, but these were already partially lifted in 1993.

France joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1991, and China followed suit in 1992, but continued to criticize the discriminatory nature of the Treaty and reiterated that it did not view non-proliferation as an end in itself, but rather as a means to the ultimate objective of the complete prohibition and destruction of nuclear weapons. In 1992 China also agreed to abide by the MTRC. Nevertheless, Chinese supplies of missiles and nuclear materials, including M-11 and M-9 missiles, surface-to-air missiles (SAM) and highly enriched uranium (HEU) continued all through the 1990s.²⁷

Even after acceding to the NPT, China continued to assist illicit nuclear weapons' programmes, for instance in addition to supplying Algeria with a plutonium-production reactor, China has supplied Iraq with lithium hydride, in violation of the international embargo on Iraq; Iran with a research reactor and a calutron, a technology that can be used to enrich uranium to weapons' grade; and Pakistan with tritium and specialized ring magnets, used in Pakistan's uranium enrichment programme.

The United States and China had a non-stop showdown over China's nuclear arming of Pakistan throughout the 1980s and 1990s. US policy was

25) Robert Einhorn, 'China and Non-Proliferation', *The National Interest*, 2 April 2003, available online at <http://www.inthenationalinterest.com/Articles/Vol2Issue13einhorn.html>.

26) Maleeha Lodhi, 'The Pakistan-US Relationship', available online at <http://www.defencejournal.com/april98/pakistanus.htm>.

27) Rajain, 'Proliferation Concerns', p. 141.

aimed at preventing Pakistan from acquiring nuclear weapons' capability by threatening to cut off economic and conventional military aid and imposing sanctions. Once it joined the NPT in 1992, China observed its legal obligations but continued to oppose restrictions on nuclear transfers and assistance under the name of non-proliferation. While direct Chinese assistance in Pakistan's nuclear weapons' programme has ended and the scope of nuclear technology transfers also narrowed, activities that could contribute indirectly to Pakistan's nuclear weapons' programme have continued.²⁸ The US 2003 Non-Compliance Report, submitted to Congress, charged that: 'Chinese state-owned corporations have engaged in transfer activities with Pakistan, Iran, North Korea and Libya that are clearly contrary to China's commitments to the United States'.²⁹

The Third Kashmir War: Kargil 1999

Although free of war for the 28 years since the Bangladesh Independence War in 1971, Pakistan remained a deformed country, single-mindedly obsessed with only one issue: Kashmir, with India in the background. Since it had been clear for decades that its conventional armed forces were too small to be a match for India and that no outside power would support Pakistan militarily against India, the Islamist faction of Pakistan's military establishment and its notorious intelligence service – Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) – had been practising 'Talibanization' – that is, giving fundamentalist Muslim boys, who only received some minimal education in Koran schools, military training and unleashing them on Indian targets, whether the parliaments in Delhi and Srinagar in 2001 or any non-military target or mountainous areas in Kashmir. Another option since the successful nuclear tests of 1998 was to play the nuclear card and threaten with the bomb, nothing less ! That is exactly what happened in 1999: a reckless militia operation, planned and remote-controlled, according to many sources, by the Chief-of-Staff, General Pervez Musharraf himself, half a year before he launched the coup that made him Pakistan's newest military dictator.

In February 1999, Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee travelled by bus to Lahore to meet his Pakistani counterpart, Nawaz Sharif. They spoke about increasing trade, simplifying the visa regime and Kashmir, of course, but no progress was made on the political stalemate. But as long as they talked, everybody considered it a good sign and this measured optimism was called the '*Spirit of Lahore*'. Then three months later, hundreds of Pakistani army regulars, disguised as Kashmiri insurgents, infiltrated the Kargil district of Kashmir. The idea was to occupy the mountain tops that

28) Rajain, 'Proliferation Concerns', pp. 142-154.

29) US Department of State, *US 2003 Noncompliance Report*, available online at <http://www.state.gov/t/vcrls/rm/24518.htm>.

overlooked the highway from the state capital of Srinagar to Leh, the district capital of Ladakh. The generals apparently believed that the nuclear shield provided protection, inhibiting the Indians from repulsing the intruders. Indian artillery soon started bombarding the enemy positions while fighter planes screamed overhead with rattling heavy machine guns and foot soldiers hauled themselves laboriously up the perpendicular slopes for man-to-man combat. Dozens of peaks, each with nests of machine guns, had to be recaptured one by one. It took the Indians almost two months to clear the mountains of an estimated 5,000 insurgents, some of them Kashmiris but most of them Pathans from Pakistan. On the Indian side there were over 500 dead; on the Pakistani side close to 4,000.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif alleged that he was only informed of the conflict by the generals when the fighting was in full swing. The US administration was alarmed by the fighting and the danger that it would escalate into a regional war, with China and Saudi Arabia – the great global financier of Islamicization – supporting the Pakistanis and India turning to its old ally Russia and perhaps its new one Israel ! US President Clinton sent Tony Zinni, the marine-general in charge of Central Command, to Islamabad to demand an immediate pullback from Sharif and Musharraf. When they did not comply, Clinton threatened to freeze an IMF credit of US\$ 100 million. Sharif then rushed to Beijing to get comfort from Pakistan's staunchest ally, but he got nothing.³⁰ By the end of June 1999, the Pakistani generals realized that their invasion had just been another ill-conceived military adventure that had produced nothing positive and not at all the American support for which they had hoped. The generals felt stabbed in the back by the civilians for making them believe that they were successfully bleeding India. Sharif made a telephone call to US President Bill Clinton on 2 July 1999, begging for his personal intervention. Clinton told Sharif in very strong terms that he would only get involved if Pakistan withdrew immediately and unconditionally from Kargil, a demand that Clinton himself simultaneously conveyed to Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee. The next day Sharif called the President to inform him that he was on his way to Washington. Clinton did not instantly shrug him off, so as not to make a bad situation worse. Sharif was bringing his wife and children with him, causing the White House to wonder whether he was coming to seek an end to a crisis or for protection against a coup d'état and political asylum.³¹ What Sharif wanted was a ceasefire, followed by a 'Kashmir Peace Process', similar to the one for the Middle East that Clinton was chairing at that moment. According to US intelligence, Pakistan might on the eve of Sharif's arrival be preparing its nuclear forces for deployment. The assessment was that a missile crisis

30) Strobe Talbott, *Engaging India: Diplomacy, Democracy and the Bomb* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 2004), pp. 157 and 159.

31) Talbott, *Engaging India*, p. 161.

worse than Cuba in 1962 could be in the making.³² In the end Sharif had to settle for a promise that Clinton would take a personal interest in encouraging an expeditious resumption and intensification of the bilateral efforts (i.e. that is, the Spirit of Lahore) once the sanctity of the Line of Control had been fully restored. The Indian government was satisfied that Pakistan had been denied any benefit from its aggression and considered President Clinton's performance during the Kargil crisis '*the prelude towards a new era in US-India relations.*'

Sharif had paid a crippling price for yielding to Clinton in Washington. Back in Islamabad, he untruthfully stated publicly that he had not been briefed by the generals on Kargil, admitting both his weakness and the military's command over civilians rather than the other way. Soon afterwards, Sharif provoked his own downfall when he ordered the airport to refuse landing rights for an airplane with General Musharraf upon returning from an overseas trip. The army rebelled and deposed Sharif, who was sentenced to death for attempted murder (on the grounds that the plane could have crashed), thus ending another brief flirtation with parliamentary democracy. Under American pressure, Musharraf, however, lifted the death sentence on Sharif and his brother fourteen months later and allowed them to go into exile in Saudi Arabia.³³

China had started moving away from blind support for Pakistan on the issue of Kashmir after Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Pakistan's President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto signed the Simla Agreement in 1972, binding the two countries 'to settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations'. The Agreement also cemented the Line of Control as something close to a permanent border. The Agreement has been the basis of all Chinese official pronouncements on the conflict.

When Indian Foreign Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee visited China to have his first look at post-Mao China after seventeen years of a freeze in relations (from 1962-1979), he discovered that the Kashmir issue had become an irritant in Sino-Pakistani relations that had to be addressed. As young Uygurs from Xinjiang went to Pakistan in the 1980s for military training to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan, a worrisome dimension was added to China's close relationship with Pakistan. After the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in the mid-1990s with the full backing of Pakistan's military, China became apprehensive about Pakistan becoming a catalyst for an Islamic revival in its troubled Xinjiang region. A PRC circular of late 1999 (the same year as the Kargil War) expressed the belief that there was a strong reason to suspect that Uygur separatists received help from abroad. Explosives used by separatists in Xinjiang had Chinese markings. They were exported to Pakistan, re-exported to Afghanistan and then found their way back to

32) Talbott, *Engaging India*, p. 167.

33) Talbott, *Engaging India*, p. 178.

terrorists in China.³⁴ The worst ‘blowback’ of China’s decades-long build-up of Pakistan as a military and nuclear power would be if Pakistan’s Islamist terrorism-sponsoring generals used nuclear weapons in Kashmir. Pakistan’s military’s intelligence agency, ISI, has for twenty years run a proxy war in Kashmir aimed at forcing New Delhi to amass troops in the disputed valley. If diplomatic pressure failed to resolve the Kashmir question, the ISI reasoned, Islamabad would have the option of launching a nuclear first strike that would take out half of the Indian army in one hit. Leaving the area uninhabitable for generations underlined the ISI’s Kashmir strategy: if we cannot have it, neither can you.³⁵

China’s Ballistic Missile Technology Transfers to Pakistan

Pakistan’s security establishment was early to realize the strategic importance of ballistic missiles. In February 1989, a few months before India tested its Agni missiles, Pakistan announced the testing of two types of missiles named *Hatf*, meaning ‘deadly’ and used for the sword of the Holy Prophet. Work on the *Hatf* was started in 1974 when Bhutto was prime minister.³⁶ However, Pakistan needed technological improvements and North Korea and China became the suppliers. Much of China’s early role in Pakistan’s missile development was conjecture. US intelligence disclosed in 1990 that China’s involvement in nuclear and missile proliferation is at least five times greater than what was estimated before. China used its missile relationship with Pakistan as a bargaining chip with the United States. A case in point: a 1992 US decision to sell 150 F -16 fighters to Taiwan – in violation of bilateral

34) Sinha, ‘China in Pakistan’s Security Perceptions’.

35) Mansoor Ijaz, ‘Defusing the Nuclear Time-Bomb’, *Financial Times*, 9 June 2002.

36) Rajiv Nayan, ‘Ballistic Missile Technology Transfers’, in Swaran Singh (ed.), *China-Pakistan Strategic Cooperation: Indian Perspectives* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2007), chapter 9.

communiqués³⁷ – led China to withdraw from P-5 talks on conventional arms’ transfers.³⁸ Later in 1992, there were reports of the transfer of 34 complete M-11 systems to Pakistan. This was followed by MTCR-related sanctions on China by the US, a step that was denounced by China and that prompted Beijing to threaten reneging from its promise to observe MTCR.³⁹ In 1994 US agencies found that Chinese technicians were travelling to Pakistan to activate the transferred M-11 missiles. This involved completion of the missile facilities and training of military personnel. A six-monthly report of the CIA noted how Chinese entities continued to work with Pakistan and Iran on ballistic missile-related projects during the first half of 2003. Chinese assistance has helped Pakistan to move towards domestic serial production of solid propellant short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) and has supported Pakistan’s development of solid propellant medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs). Pakistan’s elite came to realize that it was futile to persist in developing indigenous missiles and admitted that the Hatf series had failed. It was replaced by the Chinese M-series. The Pakistani Shaheen series has also become Chinese M-9, M-11 and M-18 types. Pakistan relies on ballistic missiles to deliver its nuclear warheads because its air force has not developed adequately. A long period of sanctions has left the Pakistani aircraft industry quite crippled and truncated.⁴⁰ It has been struggling with F-16 supplies for

37) The Three Communiqués are three joint policy statements made by the governments of the United States and the People’s Republic of China. The communiqués played a crucial role in the normalization of relations between the US and the PRC and continue to be an essential element in the current dialogue between the two countries. The first communiqué (28 February 1972), known as the Shanghai Communiqué, summarizes the landmark dialogue begun by President Richard Nixon and Premier Zhou Enlai during February 1972. Most important is the Taiwan issue. Essentially, both sides agreed to respect each other’s national sovereignty and territorial integrity. The United States formally recognized the desire of all Chinese for a unified and undivided China. The second communiqué (1 January 1979), the Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations, formally announces the commencement of normal relations between the United States and the People’s Republic of China. In so doing, the United States recognized that the government of the People’s Republic of China was the sole legal government of China. In addition, the US government declared that it would end formal political relations with the government of the Republic of China on Taiwan while preserving economic and cultural ties ‘with the people of Taiwan’. In the third and final communiqué (17 August 1982) both sides also reaffirmed the statements made about the Taiwan issue in previous communiqués and the United States pledged to reduce gradually arms sales to Taiwan and eventually to terminate them without being specific. See http://usinfo.state.gov/eap/east_asia_pacific/china/china_communicues.html.

38) See <http://cns.miis.edu/research/india/china/mpakpos.htm>.

39) Aparna Kher, ‘Pakistan in China’s Arms Trade’, in Swaran Singh (ed.), *China-Pakistan Strategic Cooperation: Indian Perspectives* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2007), chapter 16, p. 317.

40) The first two sets of sanctions relate to Pakistan’s development and testing of nuclear weapons. The third set of sanctions was in response to the seizure of power by General Musharraf in 1999 and the ending of a ‘corrupt’ democracy, which he said was leading the

more than a decade. Poor economic performance has prevented the Pakistan Air Force from undertaking major fleet expansion and modernization efforts by making the switch from US to European and Russian suppliers. Although India has a superior air force, it has no adequate defences at present against Pakistani ballistic missiles, but is catching up very fast. Pakistan has been using its deterrence to blackmail India. Pakistan has been supporting terrorism in India and any corrective measure by India threatens to turn into a nuclear battleground.

While India and Pakistan were once again teetering on the brink of war, after Pakistani-backed terrorists earlier in May 2002 had killed 32 civilians, mostly wives and children of soldiers in Kashmir, Munir Akram, Pakistan's ambassador to the United Nations threatened to use nuclear weapons against India on 30 May 2002. He defended Pakistan's refusal to commit to a nuclear no-first-use policy. Pakistan has small conventional forces compared to India, Akram said the day after presenting his credential to the UN Secretary-General. 'We have to rely on our means to deter Indian aggression. We have those means, and we will not neutralize them by any doctrine of no first use', he said.⁴¹

China has linked its nuclear proliferation, both for Pakistan's bomb and its supply of ballistic missiles, to the United States' long-time violations of US-China agreements in 1979 and 1981 on reduction and eventual phasing out of arms' sales to Taiwan. According to the Washington Post, the Chinese calculus was 'to blackmail the US into curbing arms' sales to Taiwan'.⁴² After '9/11', China became aware that Pakistan is seen more as the problem in the two most contentious issues – terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) – than as a solution, and its 'strategic partnership' with Pakistan at the old level had become untenable. On Kashmir, which is Pakistan's chief strategic concern in South Asia, China has distanced itself from the Pakistani position. Pakistan can therefore no longer ride on China's strategic coat-tails in regional economic interactions in Central and West Asia, although China has been more than willing to use Pakistan's goodwill in the Islamic world to facilitate its economic concerns in the area.⁴³ China's observer status at the ineffective South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is also a sign of China's encroachment into India's

nation to ruin. See Najam Sethi, 'Pakistan Faces a Historic Crossroads', *International Herald Tribune*, 24 September 2001.

41) 'Defiant Pakistan Threatens Nuclear Use', Press Trust of India, 30 May 2002, in *Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe*, 30 May 2002, available online at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com>. See also David E. Sanger, 'Bush Intervenes in Effort to Stop a Kashmir War', *The New York Times*, 6 June 2002.

42) *The Washington Post*, 14 July 2000.

43) Madhu Bhalla, 'Geopolitics of Economic Relations', in Swaran Singh (ed.), *China-Pakistan Strategic Cooperation: Indian Perspectives* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2007), p. 258.

backyard. China continues to assist Pakistan in augmenting its military with the joint development of the F-22P frigate and JF-17 Thunder fighter.⁴⁴

The Sino-Pakistan Friendship 'Karakoram Highway'⁴⁵

The grandest geostrategic scheme in Asia and perhaps the world is the 'Karakoram Highway' from China's Muslim Far West through the Himalayas into Pakistan, all the way to the Arabian Sea and the wider Indian Ocean. China's 'grand strategy' is to become the second 'two Ocean country' in the world after the United States. It only has a coastline on the Pacific Ocean but is methodically working towards the grand goal of building back doors towards the Indian Ocean through Burma and Pakistan and perhaps a third outlet through Assam and Bangladesh.⁴⁶

During the 1950s, Pakistan was as worried about China's demands vis-à-vis the disputed border as India was. China demanded 5,000 square kilometres of territory in Hunza in the far north of Kashmir on the border with the Chinese Muslim region of Xinjiang. In 1960, Pakistan's President Field Marshal Ayub Khan was still appealing to India to join together in common defence against the outsider, China. Referring to British colonialism, he even said:

I feel we should have a good chance of preventing a recurrence of history, which was that whenever the subcontinent was divided – which was often – someone or the other invited the outsider to step in.⁴⁷

India linked Ayub Khan's proposal completely with progress on Kashmir and rejected it. Work on the Karakoram Highway (KKH) had already started in 1959 by Pakistani army engineers on what was then known as the 'Indus Valley Road'. After the border agreement of 1962, China and Pakistan agreed to broaden the road to a dual carriageway and extend it to the Chinese border at Taxkorgan in the Tadjik Autonomous District of Xinjiang. Approximately 10,000 Chinese and 15,000 Pakistanis completed the road in 1986. It has 80 bridges and an average height of 4,700 metres. 300 Pakistani and 160 Chinese workers lost their lives during construction. According to the Centre for International and Strategic Studies in Geneva, Chinese nuclear and military equipment, including MH missiles, went through the Karakoram

44) Chietigj Bajpae, 'India Held Back by Wall of Instability', *Asia Times Online*, 1 June 2006.

45) 'Karakoram' is a Turkish word meaning 'black gravel', probably for the blackish rubble that covers the glaciers in the range.

46) For the linkage of Tibet and Yunnan with the Bay of Bengal, through Assam and Bangladesh, see chapter 1 of my forthcoming 'Clingendael' book on South Asia; for the linkage of Yunnan with the Bay of Bengal/Indian Ocean through Burma, see chapter 6.

47) Virendra Sahai Verma, 'The Karakoram Highway', in Swaran Singh (ed.), *China-Pakistan Strategic Cooperation: Indian Perspectives* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2007), chapter 17, p. 336.

Highway to Pakistan. On 30 June 2006, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Pakistan Highway Administration and China's State-Owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC) to rebuild and upgrade the KKH. 'The width of the highway', according to SASAC, 'will be expanded from 10 metres to 30 metres, and its transport capacity will be increased three times. Also, the upgraded road will be constructed to particularly accommodate heavy-laden vehicles and extreme weather conditions'. The decision to upgrade the KKH was taken during President Musharraf's visit to China in February 2006, when Pakistan requested that China help with the upgrading of the Karakoram Highway. Musharraf said, 'This road, when upgraded, will provide the shortest route to the sea for products manufactured in China. The same road can serve to provide an overland route for trade between China and India, thus linking two of the largest markets in Asia'.⁴⁸

Gwadar and the 'String of Pearls'

The Port of Gwadar in Baluchistan, 72 kilometres from the border with Iran and the new gateway to the Persian Gulf and the Straits of Hormuz – through which 40 per cent of the world's oil passes – is destined to become China's multi-purpose strategic back door to the Indian Ocean and the Middle East. China agreed to participate in the construction and development of the deep-sea port in 2001, just before '9/11' compelled the United States to expand its military presence in the region. This was an additional nudge for China to step up its involvement. China contributed about US\$ 198 million for the first phase – almost four times the amount that Pakistan has forked out for this phase – which includes construction of three multi-purpose ship berths. China has invested another US\$ 200 million towards building a highway connecting Gwadar port with Pakistan's largest city, Karachi, which is also a port on the Arabian Sea. Gwadar provides China with 'a transit terminal for crude-oil imports from Iran and Africa to China's Xinjiang region'. The network of rail and road links connecting Pakistan with Afghanistan and the Central Asian republics that is envisaged as part of the Gwadar project and to which China will have access would provide Beijing with an opening into Central Asian markets and energy sources, in the process stimulating the economic development of China's backward Xinjiang region.⁴⁹

Phuntchok Stobdan, the expert on India's cross-border security at the Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis in New Delhi, is very sceptical about the prospects for building a pipeline:

48) See <http://www.asiancurrent.com/2007/01/21/the-amazing-karakoram-highway/>.

49) Sudha Ramachandran, 'China's Pearl in Pakistan's Waters', *Asia Times Online*, 4 March 2005.

I don't think there is going to be a pipeline. Eight months out of one year the Kunjerab Pass is closed because of permafrost and snow. It will cost billions and so far China has paid all the cost. The Chinese are not happy. Pakistanis don't pay. On top of that there are these Muslim problems: fundamentalists, terrorists, Bin Laden hiding in that area. Saying and doing are different things. The Pakistanis want to do a lot of things but they can't sort out their domestic problems. Chinese engineers have been killed in those tribal areas. Most of the Chinese are attacked now. Don't forget, these people, the Muslim Pakis hate the Chinese infidels.⁵⁰

China's Grand Strategy in South Asia: India's Slow Responses

In India, there is a robust debate among academics, politicians and journalists that China, conscious of its centrality as the Middle Kingdom and the largest continuous empire – in Asia and the world – from the early 1950s had a grand design to reassert itself as the pre-eminent power in Asia. India had a history of transient Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim empires, based more on ephemeral, mercenary conquests of a multi-ethnic, multi-religious periphery – like the Ottoman Empire – than on an ancient, homogeneous, cultural core, like China. By the eighteenth century, the last Indian 'Mughal Empire' was so weakened by tension between a declining central authority and strong local rulers that it could no longer resist British interference and submission. After Indian independence in 1947, India re-emerged as the new leading power of Asia with the brilliant, cosmopolitan Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as the authentic voice of the whole resurgent Orient. As a globetrotting intellectual, Nehru had visited the Soviet Union in 1927 and China in 1939. He then told Kuomintang leader Chiang Kai-shek: 'More and more, I think of India and China pulling together in the future'. Nehru had the worldview of a sentimental leftist British aristocrat and ticked off the US as 'uncouth and uncultured, unrivalled in technology but predatory in its capitalism'. He visited the United States for the first time in 1949 when he was prime minister. US Secretary of State Dean Acheson found him 'prickly and arrogant [...] one of the most difficult people I ever had to deal with'. Chester Bowles, US ambassador in New Delhi from 1951-1953, later criticized Acheson's attitude towards Nehru as 'immature and ridiculous [...] to jump to the conclusion that because he [Nehru] is not 100 per cent for us, he must be against us'. Under Acheson's successor, John Foster Dulles, things would become worse. Dulles decisively wrecked Indo-US relations when he signed a military pact with Pakistan in February 1954: 'Dulles wanted pacts, Pakistan wanted money and arms'.⁵¹ Nehru had further angered Dulles by his tireless

50) Interview with Prof. Stobdan at IDSA, New Delhi, 28 November 2007.

51) Ramachandra Guha, *India after Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy* (London: Macmillan, 2007), p. 139. Indian intellectuals are unanimous in their opinion that the United States not only wrecked Indo-US relations but also the internal

campaigning for the recognition of the People's Republic of China and his insistence that it be given the permanent seat in the UN Security Council that was then occupied by Taiwan. Americans felt that Nehru had 'entered the arena of world politics as a champion challenging American wisdom'.⁵²

Thus was the intellectual and global strategic setting for India's relations with South Asia and the world in the 1950s, which was in staggering fast-forward mode. The first world-shattering change had been the communist victory in the Chinese Civil War in 1949 and it took most countries years, and the United States decades, to come to terms with that. How did India adjust? Nehru's first ambassador to Chiang Kai-shek's Republic of China was K.M. Pannikar, like Nehru himself a high-powered intellectual. After the promulgation of the PRC in 1949, Nehru kept Pannikar as ambassador to the new communist state and as such he soon met Chairman Mao Zedong. Pannikar wrote that Mao reminded him of his own boss, Nehru, 'for both are men of action with dreamy, idealistic temperaments' and both 'may be considered humanists in the broadest sense of the term'.⁵³ A few months after his meeting with Pannikar, who was representing a power that had historical interests in Tibet, Mao ordered the invasion of the mediaeval theocracy across the Himalayas. The Indian ambassador had to learn about it from All India Radio. Sardar Valabhbhai Patel, the great administrative unifier of India and its princely states and Nehru's deputy, was shocked at Pannikar's naivety. As a hyper-realist, he had warned earlier that he saw in Chinese communism nothing but an 'extreme form of nationalism'. Now he urged his boss to be 'alive to the new danger from China', make India militarily strong and no longer to pursue pro-China policies, such as advocating China's entry into the UN Security Council. Patel also hinted that India should give up its policy of neutrality and non-alignment in favour of an alliance with the West. Nehru was not going to listen. He thought it a pity that Tibet could not be saved, yet he considered it exceedingly unlikely that India would now face an attack from China; it was inconceivable that they would 'undertake a wild adventure across the Himalayas'. He thought that 'communism means inevitably an expansion towards India as rather naive'. Regardless of the events in Tibet,

development of Pakistan. Former ambassador and now Professor S.D. Muni said: 'Pakistan is going through its own internal turmoil, partly thanks to the West, which has messed up that country one way or the other by taking Pakistan on an alliance. We haven't really seen that alliance fructifying in making Pakistan strong. Militarily, the US has dumped a lot of weapons there but that didn't make Pakistan strong and much would depend, South Asia will depend, on Pakistan's future and the future of the India-Pakistan relationship'; interview with Prof. Muni at IDSA, New Delhi, 11 October 2007.

52) US arms' supplies and financial aid have hardly served US interests, but have been diverted for 53 years for Pakistan's military and terrorist schemes against India, as the *New York Times* most recently reported; see 'US Officials See Waste in Billions Sent to Pakistan', *New York Times*, 24 December 2007.

53) K.M. Pannikar, *Two Chinas: Memoirs of a Diplomat* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1955), pp. 80-82.

India should still seek ‘some kind of understanding’ with Beijing, for ‘India and China at peace with each other would make a vast difference to the whole set-up and balance of the world’. One month later, Sardar Patel died. Now there was no longer opposition at the top-level against Nehru’s policy of ‘understanding’ with China.⁵⁴ In 1952, Nehru’s younger sister, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, met Mao and Zhou Enlai in Beijing. She was deeply impressed by both, and in a letter to her brother she wrote about Mao: ‘As with the Mahatma, the public doesn’t just applaud him, they worship him’. Mrs Pandit had been ambassador to Moscow previously and could not resist comparisons; in the end she was not sure whether Mao reminded her more of Gandhi than of Stalin.⁵⁵

The monumental question is whether revolutionary, totalitarian China already in the 1950s had a premeditated policy of lulling neutralist, pacifist, soft social-democratic India into a false sense of security, deceiving it at every twist and turn, challenging Nehru’s status as a leading world statesman and India’s as the leader of the Afro-Asian world. The answer, or my answer at least, is no, not yet. Subsequent events in the post-Mao era and beyond, and then arguing backwards, make it quite persuasive that China has always pursued a policy of containing India and obstructing Indian primacy in South Asia. However, the chronology and chain of causation of events does not support such an assumption.

After US Secretary of State Dulles had lured Pakistan into two anti-communist military pacts in 1954 and India in response became a military client-state of the Soviet Union, China was of course acutely worried. Its east coast was already under blockade by the US. China’s first step to counter total isolation was to strengthen its border with India, by building a road link between Xinjiang and Tibet in 1956-1957. India accused China of land grabbing and perfidy, whereas the Aksai Chin Plateau through which the road ran was evidently disputed land. Had India been willing during the 1950s to recognize that Aksai Chin and also the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA, from 1985 known as Arunachal Pradesh) were disputed rather than unmistakable Indian territories that should have been the focus of negotiations and compromise, and had the Dalai Lama not fled to India and received political asylum there in 1959, could rapid deterioration of relations and war in 1962 have been avoided? After the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s, China’s geostrategic position was further weakened and India’s was strengthened because it was now a quasi-ally, and from 1971 onwards a full ally, of Soviet-Russia. Mao probably chose the Cuban Crisis in October 1962, when Washington and Moscow were fully preoccupied with each other, as the timing for his border war with India, delivering a body blow to India and

54) Guha, *India after Gandhi*, p. 170.

55) Guha, *India after Gandhi*, pp. 167-179. For subsequent events in Tibet and on the border, see chapter 2 of my full ‘Clingendael’ monograph on South Asia (forthcoming).

Nehru, which was an early prelude to China's resurgence as a great power and India's downgrading to secondary status.

The US rushed to the aid of India, the latest victim of 'communist aggression'. This was overwhelming evidence for Pakistan that America could not be trusted, opening the way for China and the Sino-Pakistani axis. Whether this was Mao's calculus or an unintended result of the war is as yet unclear, but it was a long-term strategic gain for China, which was blockaded and surrounded by a string of American-led military alliances in the east and by the Soviet Union in the north and west. Pakistan became China's back door to West Asia, the Middle East and the world at large. Pakistan even became the conduit and logistical base for the United States to initiate its détente with China when Pakistan's military ruler, General Yahya Khan, personally arranged Henry Kissinger's secret visit to Beijing in 1971, which was the harbinger of President Richard Nixon's historic visit in 1972, one of the truly epoch-making events of the twentieth century. India ended up on the wrong side of history, an economically stagnant partner of a decaying Soviet Union, an unenviable position that only changed after the end of the Cold War. The US alliance with Pakistan was defunct during the 1990s because of the Pressler Sanctions, and it was again China that softened the blow by generous offers of economic and technical aid. In addition to giving handouts, Chinese President Jiang Zemin called on Pakistan's Sharif government to end disputes with India over Kashmir and instead to pursue economic development. Pakistan needed to reign in defence spending, which is consuming more than 6 per cent of its GDP.

And the Future?

Since '9-11', the US has again poured billions of dollars into Pakistan as the frontline state with Afghanistan for the 'war on terror'. Instead of a safe base for this war, Pakistan was in reality a dangerously unstable country, misruled for decades by US-supported military autocrats, corrupt civilians and more recently increasingly undermined by Islamists and terrorists. The United States has made a major effort to normalize Pakistan by means of an ideology-driven plan to restore democracy with the late Benazir Bhutto as the saviour of the nation to be. With her violent assassination on December 27, 2007, it turned out differently. China, as the other longstanding ally of Pakistan and aspiring superpower, bears a good share of the responsibility to help clean up the Pakistani mess. A Chinese specialist in South Asian politics at the China Institute for Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), Hu Shisheng described how vital a stable Pakistan is for China:

We will contribute to its stabilization. A stable Pakistan is very important for us to build a stable Xinjiang. A disintegrated or dismantled Pakistan will be a disaster for us. We already know that during the American campaign in Afghanistan and operations in

Pakistan, Uyghurs were caught there. There are huge tribal areas there which have run themselves for centuries. Without close cooperation with Pakistan, how can China ensure stability there?⁵⁶

Asked what role China would play in restoring some degree of normalcy in Pakistan, another senior specialist in China-India relations at CICIR, Ma Jiali, admitted that China has no strategy and not even a clue about how to put Pakistan's house in order.⁵⁷

On February 18, the Pakistani electorate defied the worst doomsday prophecies. Although the turnout was mixed – over 50 per cent in core regions and some 20 per cent in peripheral areas – there was only limited violence and no immediate outcry like in more peaceful emerging democracies, that the vote was rigged. The result was good news for Pakistan's civil society and the forces of secular modernity, bad news for President and retired general Pervez Musharraf and the Islamic fundamentalist forces and mixed news for the Americans. The Bush administration had banked on a combined victory of Musharraf as their perceived 'indispensable' strongman-ally in the 'War on Terror' and of assassinated former Prime Minister Bhutto's party, the liberal-left Pakistan People's Party. Musharraf's party was trounced with only 40 seats in the 272 member Assembly, whereas the PPP got 87 and the moderate Pakistan Muslim League of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif got 66. Also in the unstable *Northwest Frontier Province* with Afghanistan, the secular and liberal Awami National Party came out the winner. The paradoxical situation now is that the winners want the loser, Musharraf to resign, but he wants to hold on to power, with the support of Washington. Musharraf's rationale is that this was not a presidential, but a parliamentary election. In the Pakistani constitutional system, the president is a figurehead, like in India and the prime minister is the chief executive. The US rationale is to keep Musharraf, because he is 'indispensable' for their 'War on Terror', which the Pakistani people consider a *mismanaged* American war, not their war. A further complication is that Musharraf is no longer commander-in-chief, the position from which he used to derive his real power.

As a result of the election, there are two struggles now in Pakistan: one between the internal political forces to form a civilian coalition government and one between the Bush administration and the Pakistani people to maintain American dominance with or without Musharraf.

It is still premature to draw final conclusions, but the Pakistani election may very well prove that the Bush-created spectre of *'Pakistan, being in a downward spiral of Islamic extremism from which only Musharraf and the US could save it is unjustified.'*

56) Interview with Hu Shisheng, CICIR, Beijing, 24 December 2007.

57) Interview with Ma Jiali, CICIR, Beijing, 3 January 2008.