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469A Bukit Timah Road  
#07-01, Tower Block, Singapore 259770  
Tel: 6516 6179 / 6516 4239  
Fax: 6776 7505 / 6314 5447  
Email: [isasec@nus.edu.sg](mailto:isasec@nus.edu.sg)  
Website: [www.isas.nus.edu.sg](http://www.isas.nus.edu.sg)



## **Pakistan and Patrons: The United States, PR China and Saudi Arabia**

**Ishtiaq Ahmed<sup>1</sup>**

### **Abstract**

*Many Asian and African polities entered into alliances with the two main superpowers of the post-Second World War era – the United States (US) and the Soviet Union – in the hope of getting economic and military aid. Some chose to tread a middle path by joining the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Pakistan initially entered into an alliance with the US, followed by alliances with the People's Republic of China and Saudi Arabia to assert itself in relation to the much bigger and more powerful India. However, the alliances placed Pakistan in a relationship of dependency vis-a-vis its three patrons. This paper examines the implications and ramifications of such dependency for Pakistan in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks ordered by Al Qaeda on the US and especially in the aftermath of the killing of Osama bin Laden by US Special Forces in Abbotabad, Pakistan.*

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<sup>1</sup> Ishtiaq Ahmed is Honorary Senior Fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies, an autonomous research institute, Professor at the National University of Singapore and Professor Emeritus of Political Science, Stockholm University. He can be contacted at [billumian@gmail.com](mailto:billumian@gmail.com). The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the institute.

## **Introduction**

This study examines the following chain of hypotheses:

A state beset with the fear of foreign aggression can solicit the support of a powerful patron state or states willing to brace its economic and military power. However, foreign economic and military aid also means that the donor state gains influence over the recipient state. Given the anarchical nature of international politics room for manoeuvre exists for dependent states. The latter can mitigate donor pressure through diversification of dependence. However, the relationship is an unequal one and foreign donors through carrot-and-stick methods can strive to change the behaviour of the recipient state.

## **The Pakistan-US Relationship**

Pakistan's security concerns were built into the peculiar geography and historical legacy that devolved upon the power elite of Pakistan to whom the British transferred power on 14 August 1947. The power elite included political leaders, senior civil servants and military commanders. The historical antecedents included the fact of a painful birth that through a bitter and bloody partition of British India. It left at least one million Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs dead and at least 14 million people were uprooted and driven across an international border that was demarcated between India and Pakistan through the Radcliffe Award of 17 August 1947. Since Pakistan was claimed as a separate state for the Indian Muslim minority (some one-fourth of the total 400 million population of India at that time) who its leaders claimed constituted a distinct cultural nation entitled to independent statehood, the application of such a principle for partitioning India resulted in Pakistan emerging as a sovereign state comprising two separate geographical entities – the north-eastern and north-western zones of the subcontinent where the Muslims were in a majority. In between was 1,500 kilometres of Indian territory.

More importantly, the border between the two states was drawn very close to some important Pakistani cities such as Lahore, Sialkot, Okara and so on. Additionally, Afghanistan, on the western border disputed with Pakistan the border that existed between them in the form of the Durand Line drawn by the British in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thus from the beginning Pakistan's defence and security needs and requirements posed extraordinary challenges to its civilian and military leaders.<sup>2</sup> The India-Pakistan relationship was from the onset a bad one and over the years remained so. In the process three wars and some lesser armed conflicts, mutual fear and animosity and recurring zero-sum competitions and contests in the South Asian region and in international forums came to typify their behaviour towards one another, some friendly

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<sup>2</sup> Dennis Kux, *The United States and Pakistan 1947-2000: Disenchanted Allies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 20-47.

gestures notwithstanding. In Pakistan, fear-of-India became the leitmotif of its security paradigm causing an arms race that in the long run was profoundly vitiating for Pakistan's economic development as the limited scarce resources available to the state were directed towards defence. Equally the dispute over Kashmir between the two states overwhelmed Pakistan's foreign policy priorities.

On the other hand, Pakistan's unique geostrategic location in the eastern and western regions of the Indian subcontinent encouraged the Pakistani power elite to try convincing the Americans that Pakistan could be an ally in the containment of communism not only in South Asia but also in the Middle East and South-east Asia. The Pakistan Army, created out of a division of the British Indian Army had been deployed during the First and Second World Wars in the Middle East, Africa, Europe and South-east Asia. The calculation simply was that if the US were to co-opt it into its policy of containment of communism it would help Pakistan acquire infrastructure it needed to become an effective and credible military force.

It is interesting to note that for several years the United States remained unconvinced about such a role for Pakistan in its strategy of containing communism. However, when Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru decided not to take sides in the Cold War, Pakistan began to receive a sympathetic hearing from the Truman administration. The first consignment of US military aid arrived in Pakistan in 1951. With Dwight D. Eisenhower becoming president in 1953, Pakistan began to be considered a major ally in Asia. Military agreements in 1954 and 1959 meant military and economic aid pouring into Pakistan in a substantial way. However, all along the Americans made it very clear to the Pakistanis that US military hardware was not to be used in a war with India. With minor reservations and deviations the Americans remained steadfast in their calculation that India was the paramount power in the subcontinent and also the only democracy, notwithstanding its policy of non-alignment.<sup>3</sup>

During the 1962 Sino-Indian border showdown, it became clear that the Americans were committed to the unity of India and would render it all help against China and other hostile powers. Much to the chagrin of the Pakistanis, a sharp increase in US economic and military aid to India took place. On the other hand, the Americans were alarmed when Pakistan deployed the Patton tank and other advanced US military equipment in the Rann of Kutch military showdown with India during the spring of 1965. A few months later when Pakistan dispatched infiltrators into the Indian-administered Kashmir and India crossed the international border in the Punjab on 6 September 1965, the US imposed an arms embargo on both India and Pakistan but it hurt Pakistan mainly because it was almost entirely dependent on US armaments. President Ayub Khan regretted that the US did not stand by an ally but came to the rescue of a non-aligned country such as India.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Jain, Rashmi (ed), *The United States and Pakistan 1947-2006: A Documentary Study* (New Delhi: Radiant Books, 2007), p. 35.

<sup>4</sup> Mohammad Ayub Khan, *Friends not Masters* (Islamabad: Mr. Books, 2006), p. 153.

The US, however, did not come to the rescue of Pakistan during the 1971 civil war in East Pakistan, but warned India not to invade West Pakistan. As a result, while Pakistan broke up, truncated Pakistan, now confined only to West Pakistan, survived as an independent state. In July 1971, Pakistan facilitated a secret meeting between Henry Kissinger and the Chinese leaders which paved the way for a process that ultimately led to normalisation of relations between the US and China. After the Soviet Union sent the Red Army to Afghanistan in 1979 to help the Afghan communists, the US-Pakistan military alliance revived, though without any trust surplus being generated beyond the objective of driving the Soviets out of Afghanistan. Pakistan received large amounts of US economic and military aid. It used that opportunity to pursue clandestinely a nuclear weapons programme as India had already demonstrated its nuclear capability with a test in 1974. The US Congress was perturbed by Pakistan's nuclear ambitions, but the Reagan administration turned a blind eye to it.<sup>5</sup> The withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan in 1989 also resulted in the US exiting from it.

It was followed by a bloody civil war that ended with the Taliban capturing power in Kabul in 1996. Pakistan became a close ally of the Taliban and along with Saudi Arabia and the Arab Emirates its main international backer. The Taliban gained international notoriety as an Islamist scourge that wanted to eradicate all traces of Western modernity, especially any signs of female emancipation, and accretions to unadulterated monotheistic Islam from Shiite or Sufi sources. They also began to target the tiny Hindu and Sikh minorities that lived in Afghanistan and hounded up and executed Afghans who may have converted to Christianity. From the Taliban point of view, the whole non-Muslim world was involved in a sinister conspiracy against Islam and Muslims.<sup>6</sup>

During this period, Pak-US relations remained intact though disagreement emerged on the Taliban regime – while Pakistan hailed it as a great Islamic ally the Americans expressed concerns over its massive human rights violations. On the other hand, the Americans were interested in using the good offices of Pakistan to probe cooperation with the Taliban in pursuit of oil and gas exploration in central Asia.<sup>7</sup>

However, a marked deterioration in US-Pakistan relations took place when in May 1998 Pakistan exploded nuclear devices in response to India's test explosions a few days earlier. No doubt President Bill Clinton was equally agitated by India initiating the nuclear test explosions, but relations with Pakistan touched the nadir when General Pervez Musharraf carried out the Kargil military operation along the Line of Control in Kashmir in May 1999. Only in February that year Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Indian Prime Minister

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<sup>5</sup> Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan between Mosque and Military* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), p. 216.

<sup>6</sup> Ishtiaq Ahmed, 'The Pakistan Garrison State' in Tan Tai Yong (ed), *South Asia: Societies in Political and Economic Transition* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2010), pp. 116-118.

<sup>7</sup> Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan between Mosque and Military* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), p. 238-40.

Atal Behari Vajpayee had met in Lahore to pledge commitment to peace between their nations. Musharraf's military adventure cast Pakistan in a very bad light internationally. That relationship aggravated further when in October 1999, Musharraf overthrew Nawaz Sharif. Pakistan began to be treated as a pariah state; whatever sympathy it enjoyed in international forums on its Kashmir stand dissipated, and instead arch rival India began to be courted by the Americans.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, India had adopted free market principles and was fast emerging as a future industrial powerhouse and market. Additionally, its democratic credentials rendered it ideologically benign to the Americans.

### **9/11 Terrorist Attacks and Revival of US Interest in Pakistan**

However, Pakistan became indispensable to US interests when Al Qaeda masterminded the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks that claimed thousands of lives in the US. The famous threat from the Bush administration to Pakistan induced General Musharraf to declare Pakistan an ally in the war on terror. Forthwith, the US launched massive aerial bombing and within weeks US, NATO and anti-Taliban Afghan forces belonging to the Northern Alliance drove the Taliban out of Afghanistan. Taliban and Al Qaeda leaders dispersed in the tribal belt on both sides of the Durand Line and later found sanctuary in Quetta, the capital of the Pakistani Balochistan province. A pro-US Pukhtun leader, Hamid Karzai, was appointed as Afghanistan president. Karzai had a good rapport with India.

This time round the alliance between Pakistan and the United States was even more markedly instrumentalist. The Americans were willing to pay the Pakistan military for intelligence about Al Qaeda and capturing and handing over of Al Qaeda operatives to them.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, the Pakistanis were not willing to hand over Afghan Taliban leaders to the Americans because they were considered as 'strategic assets' to contain Indian influence in the post-US period. Those considered strategic assets were Mulla Omar, his other close associates, and the Jalaluddin, Sirajuddin Haqqani group. Later, an anti-Pakistan Taliban group known as the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) also emerged against whom the Pakistan military took punitive action. Nevertheless, the US and NATO were allowed several facilities including use of some air bases and transport facilities.

Meanwhile, after lying low for some time the Taliban began to menace the US and NATO forces in real earnest from 2005 onwards. More interestingly a section of the Taliban belonging to the tribal areas on the Pakistani side of the border established the Tehrik Taliban Pakistan (TTP) that unleashed terrorist attacks on Pakistani civilian and military targets because Pakistan had allied itself with the Americans. On the other hand, the TTP was denounced in the Pakistani media as a terrorist organisation funded by India and some even accused the US of supporting the TTP. During 2007-2011 terrorist attacks in Pakistan

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<sup>8</sup> Strobe Talbott, *Engaging India: Diplomacy, Democracy and the Bomb* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2006), p. 237.

increased dramatically claiming 35,000 lives including 5,000 military personnel. All such developments did not alter the basic incongruence of interests between the US and Pakistan: while the former wanted the Pakistan military to crush Al Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban, the latter undertook military operations essentially against strongholds of the TTP and its allies in their strongholds in Swat and South Waziristan and adjoining tribal areas.

## **Obama Administration and Pakistan**

After Barack Obama was elected as president in late 2009, a more focused US policy purporting to tackle terrorism in Afghanistan and Pakistan as a common objective, known as AfPak, was devised. In the subsequent unfolding of such policy, the Kerry-Lugar bill of September 2010, that offered US\$7.5 billion over a period of five years, set up the framework for strict monitoring of military aid to Pakistan as well as greater transparency and accountability with regard to the economic aid further cooperation between the United States and Pakistan.<sup>10</sup> The Pakistan military protested over provisions in the bill that alluded to civilian supremacy and restricted its discretion to use the military aid. In any case, the Americans began to exert intense pressure on Pakistan accusing it of not taking resolute action against those forces hiding in the tribal belt and in the capital of the southern province of Balochistan, who were behind recurring terrorist attacks in Afghanistan on US, NATO and Afghan troops and civilians. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and other senior officials aired misgivings that Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Omar and others were hiding in Pakistan and that the Pakistan government was not taking action against them. Pakistan vehemently denied any such policy, deploring the lack of sympathy and understanding from its Western allies for its losses in life and property and other sacrifices. On the other hand, General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani said that Pakistan could not slacken its preparations for a conflict with India as it remained the main threat to Pakistan's existence.<sup>11</sup>

Usually such rhetorical rituals ended with some senior US official expressing words of appreciation for Pakistan's contribution to the war on terror and the great suffering its people had incurred because of it. All along a refrain that Pakistan had become the epicentre of global terrorism and that Al Qaeda and Taliban extremists could pose a threat to regional and global peace in case they captured the state and thus could access Pakistan's nuclear weapons estimated to be between 80-100 bombs could be heard in the United States, India and elsewhere too.

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<sup>10</sup> 'The Kerry-Lugar Bill Full-Text', *Forum Pakistan*, <http://www.forumpakistan.com/full-text-of-the-kerry-lugar-bill-details-and-conditions-t36999.html>. Accessed on 12 October 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Cyril Almeida, 'Kayani spells out threat posed by Indian doctrine', *Dawn* (4 February 2010), <http://archives.dawn.com/archives/44561>. Accessed on 12 October 2011.

## **The Hunt for Osama bin Laden**

Secretly the Americans obtained visa from the Pakistan government for hundreds of their undercover agents to conduct the search for Osama bin Laden.

Such a concession was exposed in a dramatic manner when an undercover agent, Raymond Davis was apprehended after he killed two Pakistanis, belonging to the ubiquitous Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), who were trailing his vehicle on a motorcycle. It generated mass hysteria as right-wing politicians, newspapers and talk-show pundits and even ordinary Pakistanis protested against such blatantly violent behaviour of a foreigner against Pakistanis on Pakistani soil. However, the Americans got their man freed by a clever exploitation of Islamic law that allowed the payment of blood-money to victims.<sup>12</sup> The Americans continued to pressure Pakistan relentlessly to continue pursuing Al Qaeda and Afghan Taliban leaders suspected of hiding in Pakistan while simultaneously expanding their independent search for them.

## **The Execution of Osama bin Laden**

On 2 May 2011, the US carried out a spectacular raid on the garrison town of Abbotabad just north of the Pakistani capital, Islamabad. US Special Forces commandos, known as the Navy Seals, arrived in complete secrecy from bases in Afghanistan to the rather large building in which bin Laden was hiding. They killed him and some of his accomplices, taking his and their bodies away with them back to their base in Afghanistan. The Americans claimed that the whole operation had been carried out in complete secrecy and the Pakistan government had not been taken into confidence because of fear that the information could be leaked from the Pakistani side.

After a few weeks of farcical protests from Pakistan about the violation of Pakistani sovereignty and equally phoney expressions of appreciation by the Americans for Pakistan making many sacrifices in the war on terror, it turned out that the particular assault on Abbotabad was indeed carried out in total secrecy by the Americans. Some weeks later, Pakistan arrested a number of military and intelligence functionaries who had been providing information to the Americans about that particular building in Abbotabad and its mysterious occupants. On the other hand, a number of secret communications between the US and Pakistani military functionaries revealed by Wikileaks showed that US drone attacks that had been going on in FATA for years were not only requested by the Pakistan military but also assisted by the them.<sup>13</sup> Publicly each time such attacks killed innocent people the military

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<sup>12</sup> *The News* (17 March 2011), <http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrintDetail.aspx?ID=4665&Cat=13&dt=3/17/2011>. Accessed on 13 October 2011.

<sup>13</sup> 'Cables Reveal Role of US Troops in Pakistan', *Dawn* (21 May 2011), <http://www.dawn.com/2011/05/21/cables-reveal-role-of-us-troops-in-pakistan.html>. Accessed on 19 October 2011.

would protest. However, notwithstanding an understanding on the drone attacks there can be no denying that the trust deficit increased enormously in the aftermath of the 2 May raid on bin Laden's hideout in Abbotabad. Voices were raised in the US Congress to cut off aid to Pakistan but then the Obama administration issued statements that Pakistan's role in the fight against terrorism was important. Since then relations between Pakistan and the US have nosedived and are currently considered critically strained and can take the form of some sort of military confrontation.

In this connection, some of the most recent statements by top US officials are noteworthy. For example, on 22 September 2011, the outgoing US Chief of Army Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen asserted in a US Senate hearing that the Haqqani network in Pakistan's North Waziristan was a 'veritable arm of the ISI'. This statement was made in the wake of an assault on the US embassy in Kabul a week earlier. Mullen went on to say that Pakistan was exporting violent extremism to Afghanistan and warned of US action to protect American troops. He remarked: 'If they keep killing our troops that would not be something we would just sit idly by and watch'. Defence Secretary Leon Panetta, who was also present at the hearing, also expressed frustration and reiterated that the US would safeguard its troops.<sup>14</sup>

Next day, White House spokesman Jay Carney said: 'It is critical that the government of Pakistan breaks any links they have and take strong and immediate action against this [Haqqani] network'.<sup>15</sup> This strong-worded statement was made while Pakistani Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar was in New York. She expressed her feelings in the following words: 'Anything which is said about an ally, about a partner, publicly to recriminate, to humiliate, is not acceptable'.<sup>16</sup> Pakistan's top soldier, General Kayani termed Mullen's remarks as 'very unfortunate and not based on facts'. He went on to say that such remarks did not help create a climate for a 'constructive and meaningful engagement for a stable and peaceful Afghanistan, an objective to which Pakistan is fully committed'.<sup>17</sup> It was followed by a statement by a Pakistani official that Pakistan had no plans to immediately go after the Haqqani Group.<sup>18</sup>

Apparently such a standpoint indicated that Pakistan was willing to defy the US when it came to its vital interests of maintaining the Haqqani Group as an asset in Afghan politics to contain Indian influence and clout in Kabul. A couple of days later, the US modified its stand by saying that the White House did not categorically endorse Admiral Mullen's claims.

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<sup>14</sup> 'Haqqani Network is a "veritable arm" of the ISI: Mullen', *Dawn* (22 September 2011), <http://www.dawn.com/2011/09/22/haqqani-network-is-a-%E2%80%9Cveritable-arm%E2%80%9D-of-isi-mullen.html>. Accessed on 21 October 2011.

<sup>15</sup> 'White House Backs Mullen Allegations', *Dawn* (24 September 2011), <http://www.dawn.com/2011/09/24/white-house-backs-mullen-allegations.html>. Accessed on 13 October 2011.

<sup>16</sup> *The Strait Times* (24 September 2011).

<sup>17</sup> 'Allegations against ISI "baseless": Kayani', *Daily Times* (24 September 2011), [http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011%5C09%5C24%5Cstory\\_24-9-2011\\_pg1\\_3](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011%5C09%5C24%5Cstory_24-9-2011_pg1_3). Accessed on 21 October 2011.

<sup>18</sup> 'Pakistan will not Launch Haqqani Offensive', *Dawn*, (26 September 2011), <http://www.dawn.com/2011/09/26/pakistan-will-not-launch-haqqani-offensive.html>. Accessed on 13 October 2011.



White House spokesman Jay Carney put the concerns of his government in the following words: ‘It is not the language I would use. I think the fact that there are links that exist between the Pakistan government and the Haqqani network – the nature of those can be assessed and is complicated. But there is no question that they have safe havens in Pakistan’.<sup>19</sup>

It seems that the US at present is not prepared for a direct clash with Pakistan that could escalate to military action comparable to the raid on Abbotabad. On the other hand, such public posturing does not preclude the possibility that behind the scenes Pakistan has assured that it will take action later. One cannot overrule US troops being deployed in North Waziristan in case the Americans decide that they must do it, even if it may mean some sort of violent conflict with the Pakistan military. On the whole, the Americans have in the past managed to achieve their objectives in Pakistan.

### **The Pakistan-China Liaison**

The Pakistan-China liaison has been down-to-earth balance-of-power, my-enemy’s-enemy-is-my-friend type of calculation. Pakistan used the Chinese connection to reduce its dependence on US weaponry. Consequently China began to supply MIG aircraft and other hardware to Pakistan. However, it was not willing to risk its own security by invading India either in 1965 or 1971. On the former occasion, it advised Ayub Khan and Bhutto to fight protracted guerrilla warfare even if Lahore and other parts of Pakistan were occupied by the Indians. Such advice was of no practical use to Pakistan as its leaders feared an imminent Indian advance on Lahore.<sup>20</sup>

During the 1970s Pakistan played an important go-between role to facilitate Sino-US contacts but when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was despatched by Yahya Khan to China to solicit help against India, the Chinese refused to give any guarantees to Bhutto of intervening in East Pakistan on behalf of Pakistan in spite of the fact that India was supporting the resistance movement of the Bengalis against the Pakistan Army.<sup>21</sup> India had entered into a peace treaty with the Soviet Union and a Chinese intervention could have resulted in a war between the two estranged communist states. This, the Chinese were not willing to risk. It was Richard Nixon’s threat to India that prevented an Indian invasion of West Pakistan, presuming that India had such a plan. However, when India tested a nuclear device to confront a perceived threat from China with which it disputed the status of Tibet and its border in the north-east,

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<sup>19</sup> ‘White House Refuses To Endorse Mullens Claims’, *Dawn* (Karachi, 29 September, 2011), <http://www.dawn.com/2011/09/29/white-house-refuses-to-endorse-mullens-claims.html>. Accessed on 13 October 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Altaf Gauhar, *Ayub Khan: Pakistan’s first military ruler* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1998), pp. 253-5.

<sup>21</sup> Sultan Muhammad Khan, *Memories & Reflections of a Pakistani Diplomat* (second edition) (Karachi: Paramount Books, 2006), pp. 346-7.

the Chinese allegedly helped Pakistan to attain nuclear weapon capability. It was consistent with Chinese policy to keep India pinned down on the western border with Pakistan.

China and Pakistan were part of the Afghan jihad as well, but after 9/11 a complication and tension began to arise. While China expanded its role in the construction of the Gwadar port city on the coast of southern Pakistan and acquired mining rights for gold and other precious minerals in Balochistan, the Islamist movement of the Uyghur of China's north-western province of Xinjiang was networking with Pakistani jihadist organisations. Some of them went back and fomented unrest and resistance to Chinese rule. Chinese protests resulted in the Pakistan government harshly treating them.

Similarly, when the Red Mosque Brigades raided Chinese massage parlours and killed Chinese working on different projects in Pakistan, the Chinese publicly expressed their anguish and the government of General Musharraf quickly decided to take stern action. One can wonder if military action against the extremists barricading inside the Lal Masjid complex was not expedited because it was preceded by attacks on the Chinese in Pakistan that had caused a number of deaths. Pakistan's resolve not to displease the Chinese has not meant that the latter continue to support Pakistan unreservedly in its disputes with India. A significant change in Chinese policy was discernible when during the Kargil mini-war they did not issue even a token threat to India. On the contrary, the Chinese leaders urged both sides to resolve the Kashmir dispute through negotiations. Prior to that, a Sino-India thaw had started when Rajiv Gandhi visited China and talked trade and cooperation. On its part, the Indian government moved away gradually from its stand on the Tibet question conceding Chinese suzerainty over it but with provisions for substantive Tibetan autonomy. On the question of Kashmir there was a visible change in when China remained neutral during the Kargil conflict and urged both sides to settle their disputes peacefully.<sup>22</sup>

More importantly, the so-called Afghan jihad had found its converts even among the Chinese Muslim minority of Uighurs and some of them had come to training camps in Pakistan. Within Pakistan, notwithstanding the official declaration of everlasting friendship with China, in 2007 Chinese nationals in Pakistan were subjected to harassment, abduction and some were even killed by extremist Islamists. That was the first time the Chinese government publicly aired its concerns and demanded that Pakistan should take proper measures to protect its citizens.<sup>23</sup> The Pakistan government then carried out a crackdown, which included the raid on the Red Mosque where some of the extremists were entrenched.

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<sup>22</sup> Swaran Singh, 'The Kargil Conflict: The Why and How of China's Neutrality', <http://www.idsa-india.org/an-oct9-3.html>. Accessed 13 October 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Ishtiaq Ahmed, 'The Pakistan Garrison State' in Tan Tai Yong (ed), *South Asia: Societies in Political and Economic Transition* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2010), pp. 131-2.

In January 2011 Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visited India. The visit aroused great curiosity and concern in Pakistan. He talked of peace and place for both India and China in Asia as leaders. In practical terms it resulted in a great boost to trade between them as both sides expressed desire to normalise their relations. Trade was to increase to US\$100 billion between them. Wen Jiabao continued his South Asian trip and arrived in Pakistan where he assured the Pakistanis of continued Chinese help and friendship. Several business deals were agreed and Pak-Chinese economic cooperation was to increase to US\$25 billion in the years ahead.

However, China's security concerns with regard to Muslim separatists trained allegedly in Pakistan remained. Thus, on 1 August, the Chinese blamed Muslim terrorists, allegedly trained in Pakistan, for an outbreak of deadly violence. It resulted in the imposition of heavy security but still 19 people lost their lives in two separate terrorist incidents. It was bluntly stated that, 'the group had learned skills of making explosives and firearms in overseas camps of the terrorist group East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) in Pakistan before entering Xinjiang'. The Pakistan government reportedly assured the Chinese authorities that it would extend full cooperation to their Chinese counterparts in dealing firmly with the separatists. However, Xinjiang expert Michael Dillon said that there was little evidence the group had any links to Pakistan.<sup>24</sup> Much worse was to follow. A Chinese mining company pulled out of what was to be Pakistan's biggest deal with a foreign mining company, complicating Islamabad's effort to position its giant neighbour as an alternative to the US as its main ally. An official at China Kingho Group, one of China's largest private coal miners, confirmed it had backed out in August from a \$19 billion deal in southern Sindh province because of concerns for its personnel after recent bombings in Pakistan's major cities.

The cancellation of the deal was acknowledged by Zubair Motiwala, chairman of the Sindh Board of Investment. After relations with the United States cooled off in the aftermath of bin Laden's execution in Abbotabad, Pakistan had probably begun to emphasise friendship with China. However, China's response had been lukewarm and the cancellation of the coal mining deal was some indication that China was not willing to become a substitute for the United States. Consequently Pakistan may remain dependent on billions of dollars in military and civilian aid from Washington for some time to come.<sup>25</sup>

### **Pakistan-Saudi Relationship**

The third major patron that Pakistan managed to obtain was Saudi Arabia. Linkages between the Wahabi regime and its admirers in Pakistan were established quite early as the leading

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<sup>24</sup> *Daily Times* (2 August 2011), [http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011\08\02\story\\_2-8-2011\\_pg7\\_3](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011\08\02\story_2-8-2011_pg7_3). Accessed on 13 October 2011.

<sup>25</sup> *The Wall Street Journal* (New York, 30 September 2011), <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203405504576600671644602028.html>. Accessed on 13 October 2011.

fundamentalist ideologue of Pakistan, Syed Abul Ala Maududi, was sympathetic to the severe type of Islamic state and society that existed in that super-rich rentier state on the Arab Peninsula. Already in the 1960s an ideological network had been established with the connivance of the Americans who backed Islamism to counter the left-leaning nationalist regime of Gamel Abdul Nasser of Egypt.<sup>26</sup> Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Islamic Summit at Lahore probably helped market Pakistan to the Saudis as well because thereafter thousands of Pakistani workers found work in the Persian Gulf.

It was however, General Zia's coup against Bhutto, the 1978 Afghan Communist coup, the rise of Shiite Iran under Khomeini in February 1979 and the December 1979 Soviet intervention in Afghanistan that in a big way furnished the Saudis with a leading role in Pakistani politics, internal and external. In particular the sectarian tangle between Iran and Saudi Arabia needs to be put in perspective. The Iranian clerics demonstrated the power of political Islam as an ideology that can be used to capture power and establish a medieval tyranny with trappings of modern practices and institutions such as elections and a parliament, albeit both distorted to return a government dominated by Shiite clerics. That message reverberated throughout the Muslim world but the arithmetic of sectarian numbers favoured Sunni leadership. That role was taken over by the Saudis who found the regime of General Zia and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan opportunities that could be exploited to its advantage. The Iranian-Saudi proxy war in the context of Pakistan meant sectarian terrorism between Pakistani Shias and Sunnis.<sup>27</sup>

More well-known is the leading role that Saudi Arabia began to play in the aftermath of the Soviet Red Army's intervention in Afghanistan. The Saudis not only provided ideological leadership but also large economic aid to Pakistan to conduct the jihad. Moreover, the Saudis endorsed the so-called Islamisation policy of General Zia, which meant the imposition of harsh laws sanctioned in medieval jurisprudential Islamic texts.<sup>28</sup> This became very obvious in 2007, when the two main opposition leaders, the self-exiled Benazir Bhutto was allowed to return to Pakistan under US pressure while Nawaz Sharif, whom General Musharraf had banished to Saudi Arabia, was allowed to return because of Saudi pressure.<sup>29</sup>

The depth of the vitiating impact of Saudi influence is not yet fully fathomed but it would not be an exaggeration to say that brutalisation of sensibilities of Pakistani society at all levels of society has taken place because of it.

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<sup>26</sup> Robert Dreyfuss, *Devil's Game: How the United States helped Unleash Islamic Fundamentalism* (New York: Dell Publishing), pp. 120-21.

<sup>27</sup> Ishtiaq Ahmed, 'Religious nationalism and minorities in Pakistan' in Ishtiaq Ahmed (ed), *The Politics of Religion in South and Southeast Asia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 94-5.

<sup>28</sup> Hilary Synnott, 'Chapter Four: Regional Relationships: India, China, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf' in Adephi Papers Special Edition, 49:406, *Transforming Pakistan: Ways out of Instability* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2010), pp. 153-6.

<sup>29</sup> Ishtiaq Ahmed, 'The Pakistan Garrison State' in Tan Tai Yong (ed), *South Asia: Societies in Political and Economic Transition* (New Delhi: Monohar, 2010), pp. 137-8.

Thousands of Pakistani military personnel have been posted in Saudi Arabia and made fortunes big and small because of the lucrative salaries available to them. Therefore an ‘institutional interest’ in maintaining the Saudi connection is rooted in the officer corps of the Pakistan military. Moreover, hundreds of thousands of Pakistanis who work in Saudi Arabia are exposed to a form of Islamic which is very different from their own syncretic traditions. It is puzzling that despite being comprehensively treated with contempt by the Saudi state and society, many return to Pakistan immersed in a culture of extremism and intolerance.

The age old Persian-Arab rivalry in the garb of Shia-Sunni extremism has since the 1990s been wrecking innocent lives in Pakistan. From 2001 onwards, sectarian terrorism has been on the rise and over time has also taken the shape of sub-sectarian between Deobandi and Brelawi Sunnis. On the whole, Islamic extremism has resulted in recurring violence against women, non-Muslims and deviant sects of Muslims.<sup>30</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Pakistan’s dependence on the US, China and Saudi Arabia evolved over time: each relationship resulted in the three patrons gaining influence on the Pakistan state. With regard to the US, it can be claimed that after the fall of the Soviet Union, Pakistan’s frontline status has become redundant and the current relationship is brittle, precarious and cynical. It is not likely to last longer than the need for US to use Pakistan to destroy whatever threat Al Qaeda and its affiliates pose to its security. Current American backing is conditional and limited and it involves penalties as well. Moreover, the US and the West in general are always going to be concerned about Pakistan’s nuclear assets. A Taliban-type takeover or some mad generals declaring an intention to use nuclear weapons will almost certainly be met with determined pre-emptive action from the West. It is important that Pakistan curbs extremism and terrorism at home and abides by the norms and standards of international law to dissuade punitive US action. On the other hand, there is no reason to believe that a more balanced and normal relationship cannot be achieved between them. Pakistan will continue to need US technological and economic aid to modernise and develop; equally from the American point of view, a democratic and peaceful Pakistan can create stability in South Asia and Pakistan can be accommodated in the economic cooperation that is now developing between India and the US.

The Chinese connection will continue, provided Islamic extremism is curbed. Also if the containment of India remains a paramount concern of Chinese defence and foreign policy,

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<sup>30</sup> *PIPS Security Report for 2009*, Islamabad: Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS, 2010).

then Pakistan will remain important as an ally on India's western front. China will probably always back Pakistan to keep a handle on India, but is not likely to back Pakistani military misadventures on Kashmir or elsewhere. It has in recent times openly expressed displeasure over alleged linkages between its Muslim separatists and training camps in Pakistan. On the whole, China is not likely to endanger its own security for the sake of Pakistan.

The Saudi influence has been ideologically very pervasive, while also including an economic dimension that has meant lucrative appointments in that state and other Arab emirates in the Persian Gulf. On the whole, such a connection has seriously harmed the modicum of democratic modernity that existed in Pakistan. The Arab Spring of 2011 has kindled hopes of a democratic development in the Muslim world, but as long as the rentier states of Iran and Saudi Arab continue to exercise their clout in the Muslim world, the struggle for democracy will always face the threat of subversion through their client terrorist militias and inflow of extremist propaganda.

On the whole, reliance on external support cannot be taken for granted and it is questionable if it is good for Pakistan. In one sense, Pakistan and India now enjoy parity in terms of nuclear weapons and capabilities. Therefore the threat from India, real and imagined, can more or less be neutralised. It is time to probe if both states can turn the corner and instead invest their resources in economic and human development. Pakistan can benefit most from such change.

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