

COMPLIANCE AND DEFIANCE IN PATRON-CLIENT STATE
RELATIONSHIPS: A CASE STUDY OF PAKISTAN'S
RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES, 1947-2013

A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY OF
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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and, to the best of my knowledge, does not contain material previously written or published by any other person except where due acknowledgment is made in the text or footnotes.

Aly Zaman

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents for their prayers and their unwavering faith in me even as I myself often struggled to overcome those twin evils of self-doubt and despair. It is also dedicated to my wife Sahar for the constancy of her love, encouragement and support, and to my daughter Fatima, my pride and joy.

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Abstract

By employing the theoretical construct of patron-client state relationships, this thesis conducts a historical analysis of the relationship between Pakistan and the United States from Pakistan's independence in 1947 to its first successful transition from one elected government to another in 2013. Specifically, the thesis places particular emphasis on two conflicts with global implications in which the United States and Pakistan were closely aligned with each other: the covert war against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (1979-1989) and the ongoing war in Afghanistan since 2001 against the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Throughout these two periods, the US provided billions of dollars in military and economic assistance to Pakistan in exchange for services deemed essential for the attainment of America's vital strategic and national security objectives. On both occasions, the client regime benefited from considerable latitude provided by the patron to pursue domestic and foreign policies aimed at consolidating its own hold on power and protecting what were regarded as fundamental national interests but not necessarily serving the avowed objectives of its patron.

The US-Pakistan case study serves to highlight a fundamental contradiction that can characterise strategically driven patron-client state relationships. Instead of making the client more susceptible to the patron's influence, increased assistance by the patron can actually make the client less likely to comply with the patron's demands. This is especially true of relationships in which the patron regards the client's cooperation as vitally important for the attainment of the patron's core security interests. Paradoxically for the patron, the assistance that it provides to a strategically important client can end up undermining the very reasons that led to the provision of such assistance in the first place. Chief amongst those reasons are ensuring the client's compliance and maintaining its internal stability. At the same time, as long as the patron's own strategic interests necessitate a degree of client cooperation, it will find itself compelled to keep the relationship going, thereby giving the client continued room to deviate from the patron's script to an extent where it can pursue its own national interests with relative impunity, confident in the knowledge that while its defiance might lead to occasional tensions with the patron, its continuing strategic importance will prevent a complete rupture and the consequent termination of material assistance.

Table of Contents

Declaration	2
Dedication	3
Acknowledgements	4
Abstract	6
INTRODUCTION.....	9
I. Purpose and Significance.....	9
II. Methodology.....	11
III. Structure.....	14
CHAPTER ONE: INTERNATIONAL PATRON-CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS - THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND ANALYTICAL IMPLICATIONS.....	15
I. Origins.....	15
II. Characteristics.....	18
III. Goals	23
Patron's Goals	23
Client's Goals	26
IV. Categories	28
Type 1: Patron-Centric	29
Type 2: Patron-Prevalence	29
Type 3: Influence Parity	29
Type 4: Patron and Client Indifference	30
Type 5: Client-Prevalence	31
Type 6: Client-Centric.....	31
V. The Domestic Impact of External Patronage	31
VI. Extending the Paradox	43
CHAPTER TWO: SETTING THE STAGE - THE FIRST THREE DECADES OF PAKISTAN'S CLIENCY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES.....	48
I. The Rationale for Cliency: Post-Colonial Legacies.....	48
Demographic Challenges.....	48
Economic and Administrative Challenges.....	49
Security Challenges	51
II. The Quest for Patronage	55
III. Tying the Patron-Client Knot.....	60
IV. Twists and Turns.....	63
V. Nixon and the "Tilt" to Pakistan.....	67
VI. Nuclear Defiance	71
CHAPTER THREE: FRONTLINE STATE - THE ZIA-UL-HAQ ERA	83
I. A Troubled Beginning: Carter and Zia	83
II. Converging Interests in Afghanistan.....	89

III. Driving a Hard Bargain.....	93
IV. Resurrecting the Relationship: Reagan and Zia	99
V. Partners in Jihad.....	103
VI. Nuclear Cat-and-Mouse	118
VII. Zia’s Death: An Unresolved Mystery	123
CHAPTER FOUR: A PARTING OF THE WAYS - US-PAKISTAN RELATIONS DURING THE 1990s	130
I. Transitioning to Democracy.....	130
II. Stresses and Strains.....	133
III. The Rise of the Taliban.....	142
IV. Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan	150
V. War by Proxy	151
VI. Returning to Square One.....	158
CHAPTER FIVE: BACK TO THE FRONTLINE - BUSH, MUSHARRAF AND THE WAR ON TERRORISM.....	161
I. Musharraf and the US: The Pre-9/11 Phase.....	161
II. Partners in Arms	170
III. Musharraf’s Double Game.....	188
IV. Standing by his Man	205
CHAPTER SIX: DIFFERENT APPROACH, SIMILAR RESULTS - OBAMA AND PAKISTAN	217
I. Obama and AF-PAK.....	220
II. The India-Pakistan Rivalry in Afghanistan.....	230
III. The Year from Hell	234
CONCLUSION.....	247
BIBLIOGRAPHY	256
Online Primary Sources.....	256
Declassified documents	260
Memoirs	260
Interviews	262
Books and Book Chapters	263
Journal Articles.....	281
Policy Reports and Papers.....	287

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan's pivotal geographic location - straddling West, Central and South Asia - has been both a blessing and a curse, lending it an importance in the world at variance with its unflattering socio-economic indicators but also making it vulnerable to intrusive foreign involvement. At critical moments of its existence, it has functioned as a client state of the United States, a position that has conferred short-term strategic and financial benefits but which has also contributed in entrenching the dominant role of the Pakistani military within the state and in perpetuating a national political economy of external dependence. For its part, the US too has derived significant strategic dividends through its association with Pakistan at varying periods over the last six decades. However, such dividends have come at a considerable cost. American patronage has neither been able to make Pakistan internally more stable nor externally more receptive to American demands.

Such is the dilemma that a patron can, and often does, confront, after entering into a relationship with a strategically significant client. Instead of becoming more loyal and compliant, the client can actually become more defiant of the patron even as it continues to benefit increasingly from the patron's largesse. This is because increased patronage can engender a sense of impunity in the client and bestow it with enough confidence to pursue its own national interests even when they conflict with those of the patron. Paradoxically, therefore, in patron-client state relationships of a strategic nature such as the one between the US and Pakistan, the client has the potential to exert as much influence on the relationship as the patron, and at times even more.

I. Purpose and Significance

This thesis highlights contradictions and paradoxes that can emerge out of a distinct form of association between dominant and subordinate states in the international system. It also seeks to plug a fairly obvious gap in the literature on Pakistan's relationship with the US by situating it within the parameters of a clearly articulated theoretical matrix, in this case the phenomenon of patron-client state relationships. The significance of employing a theoretical framework to comprehend the policy choices of two very different nations brought together at varying periods into forming close strategic associations derives not only from the complete absence of any previous attempt to view US-Pakistan relations through a theoretical lens, but because the existing scholarship on international patron-client relationships in general is also very limited.

Although references to such relationships in international relations literature and discourse are by no means infrequent, there have been very few methodical attempts to actually apply the patron-client model in studying relationships between nations. This research aims to fill scholarly gaps in its subject area and, even though its focus is exclusively on US-Pakistan relations, the questions that it raises and the conclusions that it draws can be of relevance to many other instances of partnership and association between “hegemons and followers” in the international system.¹

The thesis addresses the following central research questions:

- i) What are the factors and motivations that lead dominant and subordinate states in the international system to form patron-client relationships?
- ii) How do patron-client relationships differ from other forms of cooperation between dominant and subordinate states, especially alliances?
- iii) Why does a client risk jeopardising its relationship with the patron by pursuing policies that may not be in the patron’s declared interests?

Hypotheses to be tested are as follows:

- i) Increased patronage has a positive correlation with the level of client compliance, that is, the greater the level of assistance provided by the patron, the more likely the client will be to comply with the patron’s demands.
- ii) The greater the client’s dependence upon the patron, the more likely the client will be to align itself with the patron’s interests.
- iii) Clients deemed by the patron to be of significant strategic importance will be likely to receive more assistance but will be less compliant in fulfilling the patron’s requirements.

By employing the theoretical construct of patron-client state relationships, this thesis conducts a historical analysis of US-Pakistan relations from Pakistan’s independence in 1947 to its first successful transition from one elected government to another in 2013. Based on extensive research using both primary and secondary sources, the thesis establishes that Pakistan fits the theoretical model of a client state, although it also accepts that patron-client state relationships, being dynamic and fluid arrangements, are susceptible to frequent

¹ Kristen P. Williams, Steven E. Lobell and Neal G. Jesse, eds., *Beyond Great Powers and Hegemons: Why Secondary States Support, Follow, or Challenge* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), vii.

change and even to outright transformation or breakdown. America has not always been Pakistan's patron, nor has Pakistan always been an American client. There have been periods in their bilateral relationship when the two countries have been significantly disenchanted with each other, perhaps the US, being the stronger power, more so than Pakistan. This research does address those periods of estrangement as well, but its main emphasis is on exploring how the relationship played itself out during periods of close strategic alignment.

Specifically, the thesis conducts an exhaustive examination of two conflicts with global implications in which the US and Pakistan were closely aligned with each other: the so-called jihad against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (1979-1989) and the post-9/11 American war in Afghanistan against the Taliban and al-Qaeda. The periods in power of two Pakistani military strongmen, General Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988) and General Pervez Musharraf (1999-2008), are particularly relevant for the purposes of this research as they marked the most intense stages of a patron-client relationship between the US and Pakistan that was forged in the 1950s but whose intensity had waxed and waned in line with the fluctuating geo-strategic threat perceptions that shaped international relations both during the Cold War as well after its termination.

Throughout these two periods, the US provided billions of dollars in military and economic assistance to Pakistan in exchange for services deemed essential for the attainment of America's vital strategic and national security objectives. On both occasions, the client regime benefited from considerable latitude provided by the patron to pursue domestic and foreign policies aimed at consolidating its own hold on power and protecting what were regarded as fundamental national interests but not necessarily serving the avowed objectives of its patron.

II. Methodology

This thesis uses the case study method in support of its key theoretical propositions. Although not without their critics, case studies continue to be extensively employed in social science research, not only in traditional disciplines such as anthropology, history, international relations and political science, but also in more policy-oriented subjects such as education, public health, public administration and urban planning.² At the same time, they do not have a universally agreed upon definition and have been explained by scholars in a variety of ways. One definition reserves use of the term *case study* to “those research

² Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications, 1984), 10.

projects which attempt to explain holistically the dynamics of a certain historical period of a particular social unit.”³ Another explanation posits a case study as an “in-depth, multi-faceted investigation, using qualitative research methods, of a single social phenomenon.” It points out further that the study is “conducted in great detail and often relies on the use of several data sources.”⁴ Finally, a more technical definition of a case study is as follows:⁵

A case study is an empirical inquiry that:

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when
- the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which
- multiple sources of evidence are used.

The case study method seeks to provide answers to specific research questions in the real world and, to that end, utilises as many sources of evidence as necessary. Those sources tend more often than not to be qualitative in nature but that does not at all imply that the case study method places no reliance at all on quantitative data. This particular project, however, is fundamentally an exercise in qualitative research. Moreover, the central focus of the thesis is on determining *how* and *why* a particular type of relationship between two nations of unequal strength and status has functioned in a certain way over a defined period of time. This singular emphasis on extensively studying and analysing the workings of a particular social phenomenon made the case study approach the most relevant methodological framework for the purposes of this research endeavour. The fact that there is a theoretical thread running throughout the thesis made it easier to determine how to collect data and how much of it to process, thereby simplifying the occasionally cumbersome task of sifting through masses of information.

The great advantage of the case study method is its use of multiple sources to gather evidence that can be used to develop new theories or to either expand or challenge existing ones. In this case, the evidence collected is used to expand understanding of the theory of international patron-client relationships. There are several data-gathering techniques that can be used simultaneously in case study research including documentary information; archival records; interviews; direct observation; participant-observation; and physical

³ Randy Stoecker, “Evaluating and rethinking the case study,” *Sociological Review* 39, no. 1 (February 1991): 97-98.

⁴ Joe R. Feagin, Anthony M. Orum and Gideon Sjoberg, eds., *A Case for the Case Study* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 2.

⁵ Yin, *Case Study Research*, 23.

artefacts.⁶ This research is based on both primary and secondary sources of research. The former include extensive study of agreements, communiques, personal memoirs of key individuals, oral histories, transcripts of congressional hearings, important speeches, treaty instruments and, last but by no means least, declassified official documents - especially those from the Foreign Relations of the United States series; from the digital databases of the National Security Archive at George Washington University and the Cold War International History Project at the Woodrow Wilson Centre; and from Department of State records maintained at the National Archives and Records Administration in Maryland. I also conducted semi-structured interviews in both the US and Pakistan of senior retired diplomats, military officers, academics and area specialists. Secondary sources consulted include a wide array of books, journals, policy reports and newspapers.

Regrettably, much of the primary source material relating to the Reagan administration's policies towards Afghanistan and Pakistan has yet to be declassified. The relevant official documents released so far from that period primarily deal with Washington's unsuccessful attempts to dissuade Islamabad from acquiring nuclear weapons. While I have cited those documents at length, the absence of archival material relating to the Afghan jihad remains a major limitation. Moreover, the passage of almost three decades since the conclusion of the Reagan presidency meant that most of the senior figures of the administration that dealt with Pakistan were either dead or otherwise inaccessible on account of old age and infirmity, as indeed were their counterparts in Pakistan. Fortunately, there is a wealth of secondary material available on the period which enabled me to back up my main theoretical propositions.

The other main focus of this research, the Musharraf era, is of course much more recent, which made it significantly easier to track down informed contacts. Those that I interviewed in the US had no objection to being cited and provided useful insights based on their experiences. A number of other sources who could have provided valuable information were approached but were either unavailable or did not respond. These included members of the George W. Bush administration. In Pakistan, most interviewees preferred off-the-record conversations to attributable interviews, possibly on account of the sensitivity of the subject under review, especially Pakistan's policies in Afghanistan. I do not, however, see the shortage of attributable interviews as a serious shortcoming since they invariably covered ground that was already in the public domain. Fundamentally, this thesis remained focused not on uncovering new empirical ground per se but rather on situating clearly

⁶ Yin, *Case Study Research*, 79.

observable historical evidence within a distinct theoretical framework, an approach not used before in scholarly examinations of US-Pakistan relations.

One of the limitations of the case study method - especially a single-case study such as this one - and, indeed, one of the major criticisms against it, is that its conclusions lack external validity. In other words, although case study research makes it easier to establish a particular causal link relating to a solitary case or a small set of cases, its findings are not readily transplantable to a larger sample.⁷ This thesis admittedly faces the same limitation but its underlying purpose in any case is not to suggest that all patron-client state relationships function the same way as the US-Pakistan relationship. It makes no claims of universal applicability for the theoretical propositions that it presents or the hypotheses that it examines. What it does attempt to do is to illuminate hitherto unexplored dimensions of real-world applications of a particular theoretical paradigm. The primary concentration of this thesis is on examining the nature of Pakistan's relationship with the US, that is, on particularisation rather than generalisation. If any of its findings can be validly applied to other similar cases, then so much the better but the thesis itself does not make any such presumption, although it does carry the implicit hope that the wider applicability of its conclusions might be considered a worthwhile subject for future research.

III. Structure

The thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter One lays out the theoretical foundations of patron-client state relationships, examines the relevant literature in the field, points out the contradictions that distinguish certain types of such relationships and argues that the US-Pakistan case study provides significant evidence of those contradictions. The following five chapters all proceed in chronological sequence. Chapter Two provides a historical overview of the US-Pakistan relationship from 1947 to 1977. Chapter Three is based on a detailed examination of the bilateral relationship during the Zia-ul-Haq era, with particular focus on US-Pakistan collaboration in Afghanistan against the Soviet occupation. Chapter Four looks at the breakdown in bilateral relations during the brief democratic interlude between the dictatorships of Zia-ul-Haq and Pervez Musharraf. Chapter Five contains a comprehensive analysis of US-Pakistan relations during both the pre- and post-9/11 periods up to Musharraf's exit from office in 2008. Chapter Six sets out how the relationship between the US and Pakistan played itself out in the post-Musharraf phase leading up to the most recent elections held in Pakistan in May 2013. The thesis ends with a conclusion that sums up its main arguments and tests the hypotheses mentioned above.

⁷ John Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 43.

CHAPTER ONE: INTERNATIONAL PATRON-CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS - THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND ANALYTICAL IMPLICATIONS

I. Origins

The phenomenon of patron-client relationships has its origins in social anthropology and, while the actual use of the terms 'patron' and 'client' is confined predominantly to the Mediterranean and Latin American areas, similar relationships can be found in most other cultures. James Scott defines the patron-client relationship as a "dyadic" (two-person) association involving a "friendship in which an individual of higher socioeconomic status (patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status (client)," who in turn reciprocates by offering "general support and assistance, including personal services" to his benefactor.¹ Alex Weingrod sees the study of patronage as an analysis of how "persons of unequal authority, yet linked through ties of interest and friendship, manipulate their relationship in order to attain their ends."² A simpler definition propounded by Christopher Clapham envisages "clientilism" as a "relationship of exchange between unequals."³

Patron-client analysis both originated in anthropological studies and for long remained the exclusive preserve of anthropologists, who primarily employed it to comprehend inter-personal power relationships within small local communities. Tribes, villages and regions became the units of analysis for gauging how tribal leaders, village headmen and regional notables dispensed favours in exchange for the allegiance of their subjects or subordinates.⁴ From an anthropological viewpoint, therefore, patron-client relationships constitute the bedrock of factional organisation.⁵

Inequality and reciprocity signify the core elements of a patron-client relationship and its other dimensions stem in large part from them. Inequality does not merely refer to the existence of two individuals with differing degrees of power, wealth or social standing; it also implies that they be "brought together within a set of interactions which define the

¹ James C. Scott, "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia," *American Political Science Review* 66, no. 1 (March 1972): 92.

² Alex Weingrod, "Patrons, Patronage and Political Parties," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 10, no. 4 (July 1968): 379.

³ Christopher Clapham, "Clientilism and the State," in *Private Patronage and Public Power: Political Clientilism in the Modern State*, ed. Christopher Clapham (London: Frances Pinter, 1982), 4.

⁴ Scott, "Patron-Client Politics," 92.

⁵ Christopher P. Carney, "International Patron-Client Relationships: A Conceptual Framework," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 24, no. 2 (Summer 1989): 43.

superiority of one over the other.”⁶ Similarly, reciprocity denotes more than just the possession of assets or attributes required by each other; it is also essential that the exchange of benefits be “in some degree voluntary, a matter of discretion or personal choice.”⁷ This element of voluntary reciprocity separates patron-client dyadic relationships from those that rest purely on coercion or the bonds of rigidly delineated authority.⁸

In addition to inequality and reciprocity, scholars have also identified a third important characteristic of patron-client relationships, namely, proximity. Ergun Özbudun views proximity as the “diffuse, personal, face-to-face” nature of the relationship, which often leads to “feelings of affection and trust between the partners.”⁹ Keeping the central attributes of inequality, reciprocity and proximity in mind, a patron-client relationship can thus be summed up as “a more or less personalised relationship between actors (i.e., patrons and clients), or sets of actors, commanding unequal wealth, status, or influence, based on conditional loyalties, and involving mutually beneficial transactions.”¹⁰

Much of the literature on patron-client relations produced by political scientists draws on the research conducted by anthropologists and sociologists to examine how such relationships influence the political behaviour of individuals and communities, and how they in turn have an impact on the political dynamics of their respective states.¹¹ For instance, in his examination of political developments in Brazil during the nineteenth century, Richard Graham declared patronage to be “the connecting web” that bound Brazilian politics together and the element that “sustained virtually every political act.”¹² Studies on more recent political phenomena such as, for instance, Conor O’Dwyer’s work

⁶ Clapham, “Clientilism and the State,” 4.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ John D. Powell, “Peasant Society and Clientelist Politics,” *American Political Science Review* 64, no. 2 (June 1970): 411-425.

⁹ Ergun Özbudun, “Turkey: The Politics of Political Clientilism,” in *Political Clientilism, Patronage and Development*, ed. S.N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger (London: Sage Publication, 1981), 250.

¹⁰ René Lemarchand, “Political Clientilism and Ethnicity in Tropical Africa: Competing Solidarities in Nation-Building,” *American Political Science Review* 66, no. 1 (March 1972): 69.

¹¹ See, for instance, Arnold Strickon and Sidney M. Greenfield, eds., *Structure and Process in Latin America: Patronage, Clientage and Power Systems* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1972); Anthony H. Galt, “Rethinking Patron-Client Relationships: The Real System and the Official System in Southern Italy,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (April 1974): 182-202; Carl Lande, “Introduction: The Dyadic Basis of Clientilism,” in *Friends, Followers and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientilism*, ed. Steffin W. Schmidt et al (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); S.N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger, “Patron-Client Relations as a Model of Structuring Social Exchange,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22, no. 1 (January 1980): 42-77; Clapham, ed., *Private Patronage and Public Power*; Howard F. Stein, “A Note on Patron-Client Theory,” *Ethos* 12, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 30-36; Frances Hagopian, *Traditional Politics and Regime Change in Brazil* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); John D. Martz, *The Politics of Clientilism: Democracy and the State in Columbia* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1997); and Herbert Kitschelt and Steve I. Wilkinson, eds., *Patrons, Clients and Policies: Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

¹² Richard Graham, *Patronage and Politics in Nineteenth Century Brazil* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 1.

on state-building in post-communist Eastern Europe¹³ or Mohamed Fahmy Menza's identification of patronage-based networks as a prominent feature of Hosni Mubarak's rule in Egypt¹⁴ testify to the continuing use by political scientists of the theoretical model of patron-client relationships to explain domestic political outcomes.

In comparison to studies on the political impact of patronage and cliency within communities, nations and societies, there is significantly less research examining the theoretical underpinnings of international patron-client relationships, that is, patron-client relationships between states. This dearth of scholarship is surprising in view of the fact that the policy of powerful political units to safeguard their interests and expand their influence through the adoption of clients is by no means a recent one. In fact, the origins of this policy can be traced back to the Roman Empire, which employed client states to defend its extended frontiers, maintain stability within their own territories and supply troops to fight alongside Roman forces when required. Despite benefiting substantially from the assistance provided by its clients, Rome took care to keep them at an "optimal strength," that is, "strong enough to protect themselves and help the Romans, but too weak to threaten Roman interests."¹⁵

No client was permitted to expand at the expense of another client without Rome's explicit sanction: "It was understood that Roman interests were best served by maintaining local balances of power between nearby clients, so that the system could keep itself in equilibrium without recourse to direct Roman intervention."¹⁶ Many of the features of Rome's system of patron-client relations were adopted by the British Empire, which maintained a string of client states and dependencies across Africa and the Middle East.¹⁷ The same held true of the Soviet Union in its relations with its East European satraps during the Cold War.¹⁸ But perhaps the most extensive use of client states as instruments of foreign and security policies can be seen in the once formidable but now increasingly embattled *Pax Americana*¹⁹ of the post-World War Two international order.²⁰ According to Sylvan

¹³ Conor O'Dwyer, *Runaway State-Building: Patronage Politics and Democratic Development* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

¹⁴ Mohamed Fahmy Menza, *Patronage Politics in Egypt: The National Democratic Party and Muslim Brotherhood in Cairo* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

¹⁵ Michael Handel, *Weak States in the International System* (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1981), 33.

¹⁶ Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 31.

¹⁷ W. Taylor Fain, *American Ascendancy and British Retreat in the Persian Gulf Region* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 24.

¹⁸ Handel, *Weak States*, 133.

¹⁹ Michael Cox and Doug Stokes, *US Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 413. According to some scholars, the *Pax Americana* actually ended during the 1970s after America's military defeat in Vietnam, its growing détente with the Soviet Union and changes to the post-World War Two US-dominated international monetary system. See, for instance, Jeffrey A. Frieden and David A. Lake, *International Political Economy: Perspectives on Global Power and Wealth* (London: Routledge, 2000),

and Majeski, one of the “fundamental components” of U.S. foreign policy for over a hundred years has been, and indeed continues to be, the “acquisition and protection of client states.”²¹

II. Characteristics

International patron-client relationships vary considerably in terms of their specific characteristics but, at their core, are all structured on a reciprocal exchange of goods and services that are meant to increase the level of security of the patron and the client and usually cannot be obtained by them from other sources. The criticality of these items of exchange joins the two countries together in a mutually advantageous relationship. The patron normally provides the client with “economic aid, including loans, grants, technical advice and indirect transfers; security assistance, including training, liaison, and equipment for the client’s military, police and intelligence forces; security agreements, such as treaties, alliances, and informal commitments of support; and often overt or covert intervention in the client’s domestic politics.”²² In exchange, the client typically responds by providing services that enhance the patron’s security. For instance, “it may agree to serve as a regional policeman on the patron’s behalf; it may carry out joint military or intelligence operations with the patron; or it may permit the patron to establish military bases or intelligence-gathering facilities on its territory.”²³

Studies of asymmetrical power relationships between states have subsumed various forms of cooperative bilateral security interaction beneath the broad rubric of alliances in the international system.²⁴ For that reason, it is essential at the outset to briefly explain why

15. On the factors that facilitated the advent of the *Pax Americana* after World War Two, see Charles L. Mee, *The Marshall Plan: The Launching of the Pax Americana* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984).

²⁰ On the United States as an imperial power, see Richard H. Immerman, *Empire for Liberty: A History of American Imperialism from Benjamin Franklin to Paul Wolfowitz* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010). On the declining fortunes of the *Pax Americana*, see Geir Lundestad, *The Rise and Decline of the American “Empire”: Power and its Limits in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

²¹ David Sylvan and Stephen Majeski, “An Agent-Based Model of the Acquisition of U.S. Client States,” Paper prepared for presentation at the 44th Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Portland, February 25 - March 1, 2003, 1.

²² Mark J. Gasiorowski, *US Foreign Policy and the Shah: Building a Client State in Iran* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 3. Also see Christopher C. Shoemaker and John Spanier, *Patron-Client State Relationships: Multilateral Crises in the Nuclear Age* (New York: Praeger, 1984); and Carney, “International Patron-Client Relationships,” 42-55.

²³ Gasiorowski, *US Foreign Policy and the Shah*, 2.

²⁴ See, for instance, Robert L. Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968); Julien R. Friedman, Christopher Bladen and Steven Rosen, *Alliance in International Politics* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1970); Ole R. Holsti, P. Terrence Hopmann and John D. Sullivan, *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances: Comparative Studies* (New York: Wiley, 1973); Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987); Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Erich Reiter and Heinz Gärtnert, eds., *Small States and Alliances* (Heidelberg, NY: Physica-Verlag, 2001); and Thomas J. Christensen,

patron-client state relationships must be set apart from alliances between strong and weak states. There is considerable disagreement among scholars on what constitutes an alliance. One of the most influential voices on international alliance formation and functioning, Stephen Walt, sees virtually any agreement between states as an alliance. His definition of an alliance as “a formal or informal relationship of security cooperation between two or more sovereign states” effectively blurs the distinction between alliances and patron-client relationships.²⁵ Jacob Bercovitch describes alliances in similarly broad terms as “a collaborative agreement between two or more states to join together, for a stipulated period, to pursue common political, economic or security interests.”²⁶ In contrast to such expansive definitions, Charles Kegley and Gregory Raymond have taken a much more focused view of alliances by narrowing them down to “formal agreements between sovereign states for the putative purpose of coordinating their behaviour in the event of specified contingencies of a military nature.”²⁷

Owing to their formal and often explicit nature, alliances make relationships between states more precise and thus make a deterrent threat more visible and, consequently, more credible.²⁸ According to the realist approach to international relations, states invariably join forces to balance against potential hegemonies by forming alliances that are more powerful than any single state.²⁹ However, while alliances undoubtedly play a vital role in ensuring the stability of the international system, their applicability may extend more to major powers, for whom the “salient political environment” is the worldwide distribution of power.³⁰ For most other states, the main security concerns are generally of a more proximate regional nature rather than an extended global one. Thus, military and political

Worse than a Monolith: Alliance Politics and Problems of Coercive Diplomacy in Asia (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011).

²⁵ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, (Note 1), 1.

²⁶ Jacob Bercovitch, “Superpowers and Client States: Analysing Relations and Patterns of Influence,” in *Superpowers and Client States in the Middle East: The Imbalance of Influence*, ed. M. Efrat and J. Bercovitch (London: Routledge, 1991), 1.

²⁷ Charles W. Kegley, Jr. and Gregory A. Raymond, *When Trust Breaks Down: Alliance Norms and World Politics* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1990), 52.

²⁸ Randolph M. Siverson and Harvey Starr, *The Diffusion of War: A Study of Opportunity and Willingness* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 41.

²⁹ See, for instance, Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations* (New York: Random House, 1948); Morton Kaplan, *System and Process in International Politics* (New York: Wiley, 1957); Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979); Emerson M.S. Niu, Peter C. Ordeshook and Gregory F. Rose, *The Balance of Power: Stability in International Systems* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); and Michael Sheehan, *The Balance of Power: History and Theory* (London: Routledge, 1996).

³⁰ Gerald L. Sorokin, “Patrons, clients and allies in the Arab-Israeli conflict,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 20, no. 1 (1997): 46.

dynamics in a regional context are “different from - and, in many ways, more complex than - global power balancing.”³¹

As opposed to superpowers that “seek allies in order to balance against those with the largest capabilities,” weaker states often perforce must rely on the assistance of outside states to balance a threat from within their region.³² Specifically, non-regional powers may provide money, weaponry, training or even their own military personnel. However, such assistance is usually sought and obtained not under the framework of formal alliances but rather on the basis of more informal patron-client relationships. According to Bercovitch, such relationships are based on “informal understandings, trust, loyalty, solidarity and shared interests” but are “not fully legal or contractual.”³³ The patron provides military, economic and diplomatic support to its regional client without explicitly committing to military involvement, neutrality or consultation.³⁴ Patron-client relationships are often preferred over formal alliances because of the greater room for manoeuvre that they afford. Not only do they “allow governments to act quickly and quietly” but they are also “more easily renegotiated and less costly to abandon than treaties.”³⁵ At the same time, however, it is precisely the fluidity of such relationships and their vulnerability to easy abandonment that makes them more unreliable than formal treaty-based alliances.

In his examination of alliance formation and patron-client relationships in the Middle East during the Cold War, Gerald Sorokin also distinguishes alliances as “formal promises of military support” from patron-client relationships, which are “informal relationships that entail the actual provision of political, economic and military assistance...”³⁶ After analysing Israeli and Syrian Cold War-era security policies, Sorokin concluded that the costs of alliance support often outweighed the costs of assistance from a patron, thereby meaning that “where possible, states involved in regional conflicts will form patron-client relationships with outside major powers.”³⁷ Sorokin’s contention that regional conflicts are often the primary drivers behind the formation of patron-client state relationships provides the main rationale for Pakistan’s frequent assumption of the role of an American client state. Pakistan’s foreign and defence policies have historically been shaped overwhelmingly by its regional rivalry with India. Although having “issued from the same colonial womb”

³¹ Gerald L. Sorokin, “Patrons, clients and allies in the Arab-Israeli conflict,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 20, no. 1 (1997): 46.

³² Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 161.

³³ Bercovitch, “Superpowers and Client States,” 15.

³⁴ Sorokin, “Patrons, clients and allies,” 49.

³⁵ Charles Lipson, “Why are Some International Agreements Informal?” *International Organization* 45, no. 4 (Autumn 1991): 518.

³⁶ Sorokin, “Patrons, clients and allies,” 47.

³⁷ Ibid.

after the partition of the British Indian subcontinent in 1947, the two countries have remained bitter rivals ever since.³⁸ Thus, Pakistan's desire to acquire a powerful external patron has been motivated primarily by the need to "balance" against a much larger and stronger regional adversary.³⁹

A notable contribution to the regrettably limited literature on international patron-client relationships has been made by Christopher Shoemaker and John Spanier in their work on the impact of such relationships on multilateral crises during the Cold War. The writers identify two major analytical weaknesses most commonly found in the study of patron-client state relationships. First, most analysts and policymakers implicitly assume that patrons are motivated exclusively by the desire to maximize their influence and power everywhere and at all times. In making this assumption, they disregard both the basic goals that drive a superpower and its weak, usually Third World, ally into a patron-client relationship as well as the international political context within which such a relationship is formed. This first weakness in analysis in turn leads to a second erroneous assumption whereby patron-client state relationships are regarded as static and rigidly ordered arrangements. The presumption of rigidity ignores "the most important dimensions of patron-client state relationships," which is that they are, in reality, "fuzzy, fluid, fluctuating partnerships, subject to constant change and only becoming sharply defined in the context of a crisis."⁴⁰

The arguments made by Shoemaker and Spanier hold true in the context of US-Pakistan relations. The US was never desirous of maintaining overpowering influence over Pakistan at all times; it was only when the international political environment necessitated greater US engagement in Southwest Asia that patron-client linkages were established with Pakistan. By extension, relations between the two countries were never rigidly structured; the US invariably discarded Pakistan, as it did during most of the 1960s, 1970s and 1990s, when Pakistan appeared to have lost its utility, in turn compelling it to turn towards China for partial fulfilment of its defence requirements. Nevertheless, whenever the US has sought Pakistan as a client, the latter has never been reluctant to embrace American patronage.

Patron-client state relationships can be distinguished from other forms of bilateral interplay between states on the basis of several dominant characteristics. First, there is a substantial disparity in the military capabilities of the states involved in the relationship. In other words, "the principal security transfers between patron and client are unidirectional in

³⁸ Christophe Jaffrelot, "India and Pakistan: Interpreting the Divergence of Two Political Trajectories," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 15, no. 2 (2002): 252.

³⁹ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 3.

⁴⁰ Shoemaker and Spanier, *Patron-Client State Relationships*, 16.

nature, flowing from the patron to the client.”⁴¹ The client cannot, on its own steam, become a military superpower; nor, indeed, can it effectively guarantee its own security from external threats. In the US-Pakistan context, there was always a huge power differential in terms of military capabilities that propelled a vulnerable and weak Pakistan to seek help from the much stronger US in exchange for services firstly in the struggle against communism and subsequently in the war on terror. Pakistan’s military weakness vis-à-vis India and its vulnerability to the threat from that quarter drove it towards enlisting in the US alliance network of the 1950s, hoping for assurances of American protection against India that, however, were never forthcoming.

Second, the client usually plays a prominent role in inter-patron competition. The greater the edge the patron acquires over its rivals through its association with the client, the more value the patron will place on keeping that association intact, thereby providing the client with its primary means of influence over the patron. At various times during the Cold War, Pakistan was important to the success of American efforts at containing communism, especially during the Afghan jihad against the Soviets. General Zia-ul-Haq, secure in the knowledge that his country’s alliance with the US gave the latter a significant advantage over the Soviet Union, used the influence acquired thereby to secure massive military and economic funding that was partially used to further American interests in Afghanistan but which also went into crushing domestic opposition to the regime, Islamising the state and building up the country’s nuclear programme, policies that ran counter to America’s professed adherence to the principles of democracy, secularism and nuclear non-proliferation.

Finally, patron-client relationships are accompanied by “a critical perceptual dimension...derived from consistent association between the two states for a recognizable, if sometimes only brief, period of time.”⁴² Such association between patron and client can manifest itself in a number of ways but it must be readily apparent to the international community that the two states are closely linked to each other. During the Cold War, Pakistan’s membership of US-sponsored regional military networks, the pro-US inclinations of its military and political ruling elites, and its willingness on more than one occasion to serve as America’s “most allied ally” in Asia left little room for ambiguity regarding its position as an American client state.⁴³ Similarly, General Pervez Musharraf’s decision in 2001 to reverse the Pakistani military’s support of the Taliban in Afghanistan and his subsequent enlistment in America’s “war on terror” was also indicative of the fact

⁴¹ Shoemaker and Spanier, *Patron-Client State Relationships*, 13.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Mohammed Ayub Khan, *Friends Not Masters* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 130.

that Pakistan, although capable of occasional bouts of defiance, would officially never stray too far from its American patron.

III. Goals

Any logical analysis of patron-client state relationships must begin by identifying and examining the goals or objectives that necessitate the formation of such a relationship.

Patron's Goals

For its part, the patron will aim to expand its control over the client through the attainment of specific goals of varying description. The contours of the relationship and its potential to remain intact over a reasonable timeframe will be determined in large measure by the patron's assessment of the client's contribution towards achieving the patron's goals. These can be goals of ideological conformity, international solidarity or strategic advantage. According to Shoemaker and Spanier, the relationship between the respective goals of the patron and its measure of influence over the client can be shown through the following diagram:⁴⁴



i) Ideological Goals

A patron may have objectives of an ideological nature, whereby it seeks to restructure its client in line with its own political, economic and cultural practices and institutions. Such a transformation is undertaken in order to demonstrate the patron's systems of governance and overall way of life as superior to those of its rivals. In the pursuit of ideological goals, the patron may demand alterations in the client's political structure or national security architecture, the implementation of specific economic programmes, the inculcation of the patron's own cultural and societal values and even the assumption of direct control over the client's domestic and foreign policies.⁴⁵

Ideological goals undeniably influenced US nation-building efforts in post-World War Two Germany and Japan, as well as its relations with long-standing clients such as South Korea and Taiwan. Similarly, in addition to the economic and strategic purposes behind America's

⁴⁴ Shoemaker and Spanier, *Patron-Client State Relationships*, 13.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 18.

decision to finance the reconstruction of Western Europe after World War Two through the European Recovery Program (popularly known as the Marshall Plan), there was also the ideological need to set up thriving capitalist democracies in Western Europe as a more attractive alternative to the Soviet Union's array of East European communist satellites.⁴⁶ If goals of an ideological nature govern the patron's interests in its relationship with the client, then the patron will most likely insist upon an unflinching adherence to its demands and "tolerate few digressions" on the part of the client.⁴⁷

ii) Goals of Solidarity

Another objective that a patron might wish to attain through the client is international solidarity, that is, public demonstrations of loyalty by the client towards the patron. Such displays of allegiance can be shown through measures such as voting conformity with the patron in the United Nations and other multinational forums; the signing and ratification of international agreements and treaties; regular visits by heads of state and government; and consistently voiced public expressions of support for the patron's external policies. As long as the patron is driven by goals of international solidarity, it will permit the client a reasonable degree of freedom in its internal functioning, provided that it continues to stand by the patron on international issues of significance.

iii) Strategic Goals

The third and most important type of goal that the patron seeks to attain is strategic advantage, by which the patron strives to gain access to, and control of, all or part of a client's territory or major resource in order to deny the use of such strategic assets to its rivals. The patron may also seek to use the client as a surrogate in regional conflicts. For instance, the Soviet Union used North Vietnam as its proxy during America's war in Vietnam (1963-1975), with the US returning the compliment by using Pakistan as its primary surrogate against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (1979-1989). Ironically, both the US and the Soviet Union used Saddam Hussein's Iraq as a surrogate during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), especially when it appeared likely that Iran was going to prevail over its opponent in that conflict.⁴⁸

The patron could also utilise the client's territory in order to station its own armed forces or position its strategic assets in order to counter the expansion of a rival's influence.

⁴⁶ See, for instance, Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan: America, Britain and the Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1947-1952* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

⁴⁷ Shoemaker and Spanier, *Patron-Client State Relationships*, 18.

⁴⁸ See Nigel Ashton and Bryan Gibson, eds., *The Iran-Iraq War: New International Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

Examples would include the stationing of American troops in several Western European client states during the Cold War to prevent Soviet encroachment; the positioning of Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba to bolster the communist regime of Fidel Castro against American attempts to overthrow it; and the continued presence of substantial American troops on the territory of clients such as Japan and South Korea.

Goals of strategic advantage are sought when the patron demands military bases and/or intelligence outposts on the client's territory, access to a diverse range of facilities at the client's disposal, and cooperation and collaboration between the armed forces and intelligence services of the two countries. As of 2014, for instance, according to the US Department of Defence's own figures, the American military's global "real property portfolio" spanned 576 overseas sites, with the army using 248 such sites, the air force running 186, the navy operating 120 and the Marine Corps in possession of 22.⁴⁹

In exchange for the client's assistance in the fulfilment of the patron's strategic goals, the latter will allow the former considerable latitude in pursuing a wide range of domestic and international policies, provided, of course, that they do not imperil the patron's strategic advantage. Patron-client relationships bound by strategic considerations can end up becoming skewed in favour of the client by compelling the patron to "go to great lengths to preserve the relationship, even to the extent of allowing the client some measure of access to the patron's political and military resources."⁵⁰

The category of goals sought by the patron can change over the course of the relationship and, owing to such alterations, the nature and extent of the demands imposed on the client and the degree of influence wielded over the client by the patron will fluctuate accordingly. In addition, there is nothing to prevent the patron from seeking more than one type of goal simultaneously; for instance, goals of international solidarity can - and often are - sought in conjunction with goals of strategic advantage. The premium that the patron places on the relationships will therefore be determined by the client's ability and willingness to fulfil all those goals, although goals of strategic advantage will remain preeminent.⁵¹

⁴⁹ As of 2014, the US Department of Defence occupied a reported 284,458 buildings throughout the world, valued at over \$570 billion and comprising over 2.2 billion square feet. See "Base Structure Report Fiscal Year 2014 Baseline," US Department of Defence, Office of the Deputy Undersecretary of Defence (Installations and Environment), accessed June 30, 2015, <http://www.acq.osd.mil/ie/download/bsr/Base%20Structure%20Report%20FY14.pdf>

⁵⁰ Shoemaker and Spanier, *Patron-Client State Relationships*, 20.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

Client's Goals

If the demands that the patron imposes upon the client are dependent on the patron's goals in forming and sustaining their relationship, the client's readiness to fulfil those demands will be determined in large measure by the client's own objectives in entering into the relationship. Client goals differ markedly from patron goals primarily due to the glaring power differential between them. Most clients tend to find themselves enmeshed in what they see as deeply hostile security environments and, therefore, client goals tend to revolve around the nature and intensity of the threat closest to them. A superpower patron, on the other hand, operating on a much wider political canvas, will inevitably have a broader and more diversified range of both interests and threats than its client.

From the client's perspective, the relationship with the patron will be determined by the level of threat faced by the client. If the threat level is low, the client will be much more difficult for the patron to manage than if the threat level is high, since the client will have "less incentive to surrender its internal autonomy, its international independence, or its territorial integrity to the patron."⁵² If the threat level is high, however, the client will be much more likely to give in to the patron's demands. Manifestations of high threat levels include "the mobilization of the client's armed forces, the presence of hostile forces in close proximity to the borders, the sudden influx of large numbers of weapons to the client's enemies, or unusual domestic violence within the client state itself."⁵³ Under such conditions, the patron will tend to dominate the relationship as long as the high-threat situation persists and as long as the client continues to envisage its salvation lying in the hands of the patron. According to Shoemaker and Spanier, the relationship between the client's goals, as shaped by its threat environment, and the client's ability to manipulate the relationship in its favour can be shown as follows:⁵⁴

Strong Client Control

Weak Client Control

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Low Threat Environment

High Threat Environment

⁵² Shoemaker and Spanier, *Patron-Client State Relationships*, 22.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 23.

i) Strategic Goals

In exchange for relinquishing a measure of autonomy to the patron, what are the benefits that the client seeks to gain through its association with the patron? One goal often of great importance to the client is to use its relationship with the patron to strengthen its position relative to one or more regional rivals. Thus, Pakistan has traditionally used its position as an American client to offset a stark regional imbalance of power in favour of its main rival, India. Similarly, South Korea and Taiwan have also used their cliency relationship with the US as a counterweight to militarily more powerful regional rivals such as North Korea and China. For significant periods of the Cold War, Egypt and Syria functioned as clients of the Soviet Union in order to combat the regional challenge of Israel, which itself operated as an American client.

ii) Internal Goals

In addition to improving its own position externally, a client state might also use its relationship with the patron to enhance the internal legitimacy of its collaborating client regime vis-à-vis its domestic opposition, disburse material benefits accrued from the patron to purchase internal allegiance and thereby solidify its grip on power. However, if the client regime is unable or unwilling to ensure effective distribution of the patron's material favours amongst the mass of the population, then both the regime as well as its patron will face increasing internal resentment, leading on occasions to the outbreak of violent overthrows and even revolutions. Prominent examples of American-backed client states that failed to spread their wealth equitably, tyrannized their own people and ended up as major strategic disasters for American foreign policy include Iran under the Shah, Cuba under General Fulgencio Batista and Nicaragua under the Somoza political dynasty.

iii) Goals of Solvency in the International Market

External goals for the client are not confined exclusively to strategic and diplomatic issues. Many weak states find themselves confronted not only by more powerful external enemies on the security front but also consider themselves vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the global economy, making it even more imperative for them to find a powerful patron to cling to in the "harsh environment of the international arena."⁵⁵ For an underdeveloped country with a weak economy, poor governance and insufficient resources, the material benefits of external patronage can - and often do - outweigh the costs of diminished sovereignty and circumscribed internal autonomy.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Carney, "International Patron-Client Relationships," 48.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

iv) Clidency by Choice

Most states that seek external patronage are prompted to do so out of necessity, in that their own resources are often not sufficient to guarantee their security against external aggression or to build up a viable and self-sustaining national economy. However, patron-client state relationships are not always confined to those between a great power and a weak state and can also extend to relationships between great powers and middle powers. For instance, Australia and, to a lesser extent, Canada, are examples of states that have become clients more by choice rather than necessity. Although advanced industrial economies with few proximate external threats, both countries have voluntarily become American clients in order to “accumulate credit” with their patron.⁵⁷ Post-World War Two Britain, although carrying significantly more weight internationally than both Australia and Canada, could also be said to fall into the category of states that follow an “affiliation strategy” towards the US, an approach by which a small or middle power effectively adopts a great power as its leader in international affairs.⁵⁸

v) Clients as Patrons

Weak states that may be clients of superpowers can become patrons in their own right of states weaker than themselves. For instance, Nasserite Egypt, although dependent on Soviet military and economic assistance, nevertheless attempted to patronise a number of other Arab countries. Similarly, Pakistan’s attempts to act as a patron of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan during the 1990s were undertaken in spite of its own problems of internal governance and a weak economy dependent in large measure on hand-outs from international financial institutions. Before 1948, Yugoslavia was regarded as a Soviet client state but nevertheless remained determined to make Albania its own client.⁵⁹ Thus, the prestige and material benefits gained from their association with their patron can in turn encourage weak states to entertain ambitions of recruiting client states of their own.

IV. Categories

In their seminal work on patron-client state relationships, Shoemaker and Spanier present a typology based on six such relationships, each with its own distinct characteristics and implications for the international order. Through the aid of this typology, patron-client state

⁵⁷ Handel, *Weak States*, 146.

⁵⁸ Charles Hanly, “The Ethics of Independence,” in *An Independent Foreign Policy for Canada?* ed. Stephen Clarkson (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968), 22.

⁵⁹ Handel, *Weak States*, 139.

relationships can be better understood as “fundamentally bargaining relationships in which each state tries to extract from the other valuable concessions at a minimum cost.”⁶⁰

Type 1: Patron-Centric

This sort of relationship emerges out of the patron’s desire for ideological conformity on the part of the client combined with the client’s security concerns arising from its presence within a high-threat environment. The client’s excessive dependence on the patron for what it perceives as its very survival allows the patron to dominate such relationships and exert much of the influence within them. At the same time, however, the patron derives little of actual strategic significance through its association with the client, whose need for patronage is considerably greater than the value of the services it can render in exchange. Indicators of a type 1 relationship include a wholesale governmental change in the client country and the rise to power of a new leadership that enjoys the patron’s favour; sudden and far-reaching changes in the economic and social institutions of the client state; and equally dramatic changes to long-standing internal and foreign policies followed by the client.

Type 2: Patron-Prevalence

In such relationships, the patron will be driven by goals of international solidarity whereby it will seek to prevail upon the client to align with it on key international issues. In return, it will allow the client a greater degree of internal autonomy than in patron-centric relationships, since the edge derived by the patron over its competitors through displays of international solidarity on the part of the client will be greater than the limited strategic benefits arising from type 1 associations. One of the primary manifestations of a patron-prevalence relationship is the conclusion of a formal agreement or treaty between a patron and its client. Even if the specific provisions of such a treaty are not publicly revealed, awareness of the fact that the treaty exists is by itself a “clear signal to the international community of the solidarity between the patron and the client.”⁶¹

Type 3: Influence Parity

These relationships diverge from patron-centric and patron-prevalence arrangements in terms of the objectives pursued by the patron and the premium placed by the patron on keeping its relationship with the client intact. Instead of ideological conformity or international solidarity, the goals for the patron in influence parity relationships are strategic in nature and are often linked to its rivalry with other potential patrons for global

⁶⁰ Shoemaker and Spanier, *Patron-Client State Relationships*, 24.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

supremacy. A client in possession of strategic assets such as military bases, logistical facilities, a critical geographical location or a major natural resource such as oil becomes a major catch for the patron.

On account of the strategic advantages that it can offer the patron, the client is particularly well placed to exert a significant degree of influence in the relationship, since the patron will be willing to “go to great lengths, expense, and risk” to keep the client on board.⁶² At the same time, the client, situated in a high-threat security environment, will also be desperate for patronage and will be ready to provide major concessions to the patron in return. Both parties will be willing to go the extra mile in keeping the relationship intact as long as each continues to meet the other’s core requirements. At the same time, however, influence parity relationships are susceptible to sudden and dramatic change, as both states push the boundaries of the relationship ever further in a relentless quest to extract as much as possible from each other.

Type 4: Patron and Client Indifference

Whereas types 1, 2 and 3 are characterised by clients in high-threat environments and have the “goal calculus” of the patron as their “principal differentiating variable,” the remaining three types are marked by clients situated in low-threat environments who are, as a consequence, far less amenable to the patron’s demands, especially if such demands are seen as unduly intrusive or internally destabilising.⁶³ A type 4 relationship is, therefore, one which neither party values in particular and in which both patron and client remain largely indifferent to each other’s demands.

In type 4 relationships, the patron is driven by ideological goals and seeks to establish direct control over the client’s internal politics and national security apparatus. However, the client, not being beset by an immediate threat to its security, will normally be unwilling to grant the patron the degree of control it desires unless the patron can make an outstanding contribution in spheres other than security-related ones. For its part, the patron will not consider the overall relationship worth the cost of making “sweeping offers of vast support.”⁶⁴ Owing to the indifference of both patron and client, type 4 relationships can just meander along without causing any danger to global or even regional tranquillity. What such relationships can do, however, is to provide a historical platform from which they can subsequently morph into more collaborative associations of strategic significance.

⁶² Shoemaker and Spanier, *Patron-Client State Relationships*, 34.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

Type 5: Client-Prevalence

These relationships also revolve around clients based in low-threat environments but as opposed to type 4 relationships, the patron's goals in this case pertain to international solidarity rather than ideological conformity. The patron is, therefore, no longer indifferent towards the client and will be willing to invest more in keeping the relationship intact. The client, however, does not have a similarly keen interest in the relationship and consequently will extract a steep price from the patron in return for its continued participation. Thus, the client's influence is greater in type 5 relationships than in any of its predecessors.

Type 6: Client-Centric

In the estimation of Shoemaker and Spanier, such relationships are the most dangerous category of patron-client state relationships owing to their tendency to “run the greatest risk of escalating into a larger confrontation, perhaps involving the superpowers themselves in direct conflict.”⁶⁵ As their name suggests, client-centric relationships revolve around a client that enjoys maximum influence over the patron and has virtually unrestricted access to the patron's military, economic and diplomatic resources. Such relationships are formed when the patron is in pursuit of a major strategic objective that can only be obtained through the cooperation of the client and which, once obtained, will lend the patron a substantial and potentially decisive advantage over its rivals. Not facing a hostile environment, the client is ideally placed to negotiate the best possible deal for itself, especially when it can successfully convey to the patron the impression of being available to those amongst the patron's competitors who are willing to bid higher for its services.

V. The Domestic Impact of External Patronage

Patron-client relationships at the international level do not simply impinge upon the foreign policy of the client state; they also have a significant bearing on the client state's internal autonomy. In his examination of America's patron-client relationship with the Shah of Iran, Mark Gasiorowski identifies two main groups of structural factors that constitute “higher-level” determinants of state autonomy: endogenous determinants, which are intrinsic to the society in question, and exogenous determinants, which arise out of a state's (and by extension its society's) presence in an international system whose developments have a direct impact on the state's domestic politics.⁶⁶ Endogenous structural determinants include the mode of production, which influences state autonomy through its framing of the class

⁶⁵ Shoemaker and Spanier, *Patron-Client State Relationships*, 42.

⁶⁶ Gasiorowski, *US Foreign Policy and the Shah*, 10.

structure of society and the division of power between classes;⁶⁷ the stage of development attained by the mode of production, which also determines the distribution of power in society;⁶⁸ the particular form assumed by the mode of production, as in, for instance, the extensive state control associated with state capitalism or centrally planned socialism;⁶⁹ and, in the case of rentier states, the substantial autonomy enjoyed by the state on account of most of its revenue being generated from external sources instead of through domestic resource mobilisation.⁷⁰

The most common exogenous determinants of state autonomy are the level of economic dependence on external states and international financial institutions⁷¹ and the impact of post-colonial political and economic legacies.⁷² To these two factors, Gasiorowski adds a third, namely, patron-client state relationships. Based on his examination of US policies towards Iran under the Shah and their impact upon Iran's domestic politics, he concludes that the "cliency" relationship established between the US and Iran was an exogenous structural factor that dramatically increased the autonomy of the Iranian state by strengthening its "autonomy-enhancing capabilities."⁷³

Having entered into a mutually beneficial relationship with a strategically important client, a patron will try its utmost to ensure stability in that country so as to safeguard those vital national security interests that necessitated forming the relationship in the first place. Patrons attempt to reduce unrest or instability in the client country by providing the latter with "goods and services that enhance their ability to repress or co-opt unrest; indeed, economic aid, security assistance, and intervention are often used solely for this purpose."⁷⁴ When a client is pivotal to a patron's security, the patron will tend to provide "whatever

⁶⁷ Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: Norton, 1972).

⁶⁸ Guy Berger, *Social Structure and Rural Development in the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁶⁹ See Vincent Kelly Pollard, ed., *State Capitalism, Contentious Politics and Large-Scale Social Change*, (Leiden: Brill, 2011); and John Higley and György Lengyel, eds., *Elites After State Socialism: Theories and Analysis*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000).

⁷⁰ See Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani, eds., *The Rentier State* (Kent: Croom Held Ltd., 1987).

⁷¹ See Robert A. Packenham, *The Dependency Movement: Scholarship and Politics in Development Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

⁷² See Hamza Alavi, "The State in Post-Colonial Societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh," *New Left Review* 74 (July-August 1972): 59-82; and Amita Shastri and A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, eds., *The Post-Colonial States of South Asia: Democracy, Identity, Development and Security* (Oxford: Routledge Curzon, 2001).

⁷³ Gasiorowski, *US Foreign Policy and the Shah*, 15. Gasiorowski maintains that most observers are in agreement about the domestic fallout of external patronage for the client state; at the same time, however, he laments the "highly polemical" nature of the analyses made in that regard that have yielded "little insight" into precisely how a client's internal politics are affected. In view of this disappointingly limited existing research on the domestic effects of international cliency, he emphasises the need for a coherent theoretical framework to act as an effective explanatory model in that regard.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

goods and services are necessary to maintain political stability, including emergency economic aid and even military intervention.”⁷⁵

There are several instruments through which the patron endeavours to promote stability in the client state by increasing its capacity to either co-opt or crush domestic opposition. Economic assistance of varying forms is one of the primary tools at the patron’s disposal in that regard. Private capital injection in the domestic economy can be particularly effective in increasing the state’s autonomy, although such a rise in the power of the state does not necessarily ensure higher growth or greater social equity.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, external economic assistance, be it in the form of loans, grants, direct investment or indirect transfers, generally provides the client, at least in the short term, with enough fiscal manoeuvrability to purchase the support of key societal groups or at the very least prevent their active opposition. The lesser the influence that those groups are able to wield over the state, the greater will be the state’s autonomy.

Along with economic aid, security assistance features as the other primary instrument through which a patron attempts to ensure political stability within the client state. Such assistance acquires particular importance when the client is beset by internal disorder and strife, be it through opposition groups launching strikes and demonstrations or guerrilla forces waging insurgencies. During the Cold War, the provision of security assistance in the form of weapons, training and other logistical support to the military, paramilitary and police forces of client states was an integral component of US foreign policy. American foreign security assistance programmes had wide-ranging objectives and combined “elements of foreign aid, military assistance, diplomacy, propaganda, and intelligence.”⁷⁷ Foremost amongst the goals sought through the provision of such support were the prevention of communist penetration and the suppression of all forms of internal dissent. Moreover, a well-trained and well-equipped coercive apparatus of the state was deemed important for the attainment of economic growth and national development.⁷⁸

Another potential option that the patron can exercise in order to keep a client stable and compliant, or to restore stability where its absence is leading - or might lead - to an undermining of the patron’s vital national interests, is intervention. For Margaret Hermann and Charles Kegley, foreign military intervention is “arguably the most frequent type of

⁷⁵ Gasiorowski, *US Foreign Policy and the Shah*, 4.

⁷⁶ William E. Odom, *On Internal War: American and Soviet Approaches to Third World Clients and Insurgents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 60.

⁷⁷ William Rosenau, *US Internal Security Assistance to South Vietnam: Insurgency, Subversion and Public Order* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 9.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

military force in use and under debate today.”⁷⁹ Others, such as Richard Little, maintain that military involvement by one state in the internal affairs of another constitutes “only a small segment of the intervention field.”⁸⁰ Non-military forms of intervention could include verbal instigations or “declaratory diplomacy”; economic carrots such as loans and grants or economic sticks such as embargoes and sanctions; intelligence operations and similar covert activities; and military moves short of direct intervention, such as aid, training and advisors.⁸¹ Both direct military involvement and the non-military measures mentioned above signify attempts to “coercively influence the internal political order of another state.”⁸²

For the client state to remain internally stable, a delicate balance has to be struck in terms of the internal autonomy that it is to have. A state that lacks the autonomy to transform society and bring about “revolutions from above” may have to suffer “revolutions from below.”⁸³ In other words, a state whose leading officials can rise above the interests of powerful social groups to bring about major structural transformations will be in a better position to avoid the mass revolutions that are likely in states where societal groups are dominant, leading to a breakdown in repressive controls over the lower classes.⁸⁴ In contrast to a state with little or no autonomy, a state that, while subject to societal constraints, nevertheless remains “relatively autonomous” is better equipped to “pursue the long-term, systemic interests of society”, thereby staving off major domestic unrest that could potentially lead to revolution.⁸⁵

If too little state autonomy is a recipe for chronic domestic instability, unrest and even revolution, then too much autonomy can be equally destabilizing. A state that attains a high degree of autonomy will not be constrained by the fundamental interests of various societal groups or of society in general; instead, the “whims and personal priorities” of state officials will determine both the framing of state policies as well as the methods chosen to implement them.⁸⁶ Freed from societal constraints, these superintendents of the state may respond to both domestic and external challenges in ways that are not in consonance with

⁷⁹ Margaret G. Hermann and Charles W. Kegley, Jr., “Ballots a Barrier Against the Use of Bullets and Bombs: Democratization and Military Intervention,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 40, no. 3 (September 1996): 440.

⁸⁰ Richard Little, *Intervention: External Involvement in Civil Wars* (London: Martin Robertson, 1975), 11.

⁸¹ Ariel E. Levite, Bruce W. Jentleson and Larry Berman, eds., *Foreign Military Intervention: The Dynamics of Protracted Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 8.

⁸² Levite, Jentleson and Berman, *Foreign Military Intervention*, 8.

⁸³ Ellen Kay Trimberger, *Revolution from Above* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1978), 13. For a broad overview of various sociological perspectives on revolutions, see Michael S. Kimmel, *Revolution: A Sociological Interpretation* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1990).

⁸⁴ See Theda Skocpol, *Social Revolutions in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 125-126.

⁸⁵ Gasiorowski, *US Foreign Policy and the Shah*, 17.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

perceived societal interests and needs. In case this divergence between state and society “persists and becomes acute,” political instability will continue to increase and in some cases may even lead to revolution.⁸⁷

External patronage, be it through security assistance, economic aid, or some form of direct or indirect intervention, has the potential to make a client state highly autonomous. As indicated before, when the patron is confident that vital strategic benefits can be attained through its association with the client, it will go to great pains to ensure that the client remains politically stable. To that end, the patron will provide the client with a range of instruments to quell domestic opposition, including “emergency economic aid, crowd control or counterinsurgency equipment, and perhaps even military intervention.”⁸⁸ The patron’s largesse may not be enough to keep its client regime in power in the long run but, over a short term period, it facilitates an increase in the client regime’s autonomous power over its societal rivals. According to Gasiorowski, the domestic political effects of patron-client state relationships are contingent on the intensity of the relationship, which in turn is shaped primarily by “the strategic importance of the client and by domestic political conditions in the client country.”⁸⁹

Gasiorowski’s use of the theoretical model of patron-client state relationships to analyse the domestic effects of US patronage upon the Iranian state under the Shah constitutes a departure from the prevalent literature on relationships between dominant and subordinate states in the international system. Much of that scholarship is based on the foreign policy aspects of relationships between hegemons and their dependents rather than on their internal impact, particularly for those nations falling in the latter category.⁹⁰ Gasiorowski argued that US policies towards Iran during the rule of the Shah were aimed at building up a client state that would safeguard vital American economic and security interests in the Middle East. Accordingly, for over two decades, US financial and military largesse flowed into Iran, enabling the state, embodied in the form of the Shah himself, to become highly autonomous. Instead of stabilizing the state, however, such elevated levels of autonomy led to greater instability, stemming from the increasing divergence of the policies of the highly autonomous state from the interests of major segments of society. It was this widening

⁸⁷ Gasiorowski, *US Foreign Policy and the Shah*, 17.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ See, for instance, Robert O. Keohane, “The Big Influence of Small Allies,” *Foreign Policy* 2 (Spring 1971): 161-182; Marshall R. Singer, *Weak States in a World of Powers: The Dynamics of International Relationships* (New York: Free Press, 1972); Klaus Knorr, *The Power of Nations* (New York: Basic Books, 1975); Jan F. Triska, ed., *Dominant Powers and Subordinate States: The United States in Latin America and the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986); and Williams, Lobell and Jesse, *Beyond Great Powers and Hegemons*.

chasm between the state and key societal groups that eventually led to the Iranian Revolution.

Gasiorowski thus identifies a fundamental paradox in patron-client state relationships in that while one of their primary objectives is to promote political stability in the client country, they could instead promote instability by enabling the client state to become too autonomous for its own good. Whereas US policies towards Pakistan have not sparked an actual revolution thus far, they have undeniably contributed towards another, albeit less extreme form of political instability, namely, the prevalence of military authoritarianism and the continuing weakness of democracy.

While there is a considerable body of literature examining the role of historical and structural factors in explaining Pakistan's democratic deficit and the military's persistent political ascendancy, there is comparatively much less research on the role of external forces in influencing Pakistan's internal politics.⁹¹ Most accounts of the US-Pakistan relationship, for instance, have focused on foreign policy dimensions and strategic issues without delving in any great depth into the domestic political and socio-economic fallout of the relationship for Pakistan.⁹² Although the domestic impact of US policies on Pakistan is too broad a subject to form the exclusive focus of this thesis, the issue is certainly worthy of some scrutiny, especially since it tends to support Gasiorowski's contention that external patronage can end up undermining the client's internal stability rather than improving it.

⁹¹ See, for instance, Hamza Alavi, "The State in Post-Colonial Societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh". Also see Hamza Alavi, "Authoritarianism and Legitimation of State Power in Pakistan," in *The Post-Colonial State in Asia: Dialectics of Politics and Culture*, ed. Subrata Kumar Mitra (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990); Ayesha Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule: The Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) and *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Robert La Porte, Jr. "Another Try at Democracy," in *Contemporary Problems of Pakistan*, ed. J. Henry Korson (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993); Marvin G. Weinbaum, "Civic Culture and Democracy in Pakistan," *Asian Survey* 36, no. 7 (July 1996): 639-654; Stephen P. Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2004); Ayesha Siddiqi, *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy* (London: Pluto Press, 2007); Aqil Shah, *The Army and Democracy: Military Politics in Pakistan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); and Saira Yamin, "Pakistan: National Security Dilemmas and Transition to Democracy," *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 2, no. 1 (April 2015): 1-26.

⁹² See, for instance, W. Norman Brown, *The United States and India & Pakistan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963); Dennis Kux, *The United States and Pakistan, 1947-2000: Disenchanted Allies* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); A.Z. Hilali, *US-Pakistan Relationship: Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005); Hafeez Malik, *US Relations with Afghanistan and Pakistan: The Imperial Dimension* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2008); Richard L. Armitage, Samuel R. Berger and Daniel S. Markey, "US Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan," Council on Foreign Relations, Independent Task Force Report No. 65 (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2010); Bruce Riedel, *Deadly Embrace: Pakistan, America and the Future of the Global Jihad* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2011) and *Avoiding Armageddon: America, India and Pakistan to the Brink and Back* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2013); and Hussain Haqqani, *Magnificent Delusions: Pakistan, the United States and an Epic History of Misunderstanding* (New York: Public Affairs, 2013).

American support for authoritarianism in Pakistan dates back to 1953, when it backed Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad's dismissal of Prime Minister Khawaja Nazimuddin's constitutionally mandated government. Ghulam Muhammad, a senior civil servant with a pronounced contempt for politicians and democratic norms, had occupied the largely ceremonial position of governor-general after Nazimuddin himself had vacated that office to become prime minister, the main executive authority in Pakistan's parliamentary system of government. Prior to his dismissal, Nazimuddin had opposed proposals for a security alliance with the US as part of "a US-sponsored military strategy...for west Asia, based on military alliances with local client regimes" such as Pakistan and Turkey.⁹³ Accordingly, Nazimuddin "had to be removed"⁹⁴ and to this end, the US supported the destabilizing efforts of three men occupying key positions in the executive who were united in their pro-US - and anti-democracy - inclinations; Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad, Secretary of Defence Major General ® Iskander Mirza and the army chief, General Ayub Khan.

A series of riots, strikes and demonstrations were engineered to weaken the Nazimuddin government and an artificial food crisis was created to propagate the "spectre of an impending famine."⁹⁵ In desperation, Nazimuddin turned to the US, in particular, for food aid but the latter showed no urgency in responding to his appeals and an emergency shipment of US wheat was delivered only after Ghulam Muhammad, with the support of the civil-military bureaucracy, had sent Nazimuddin packing. In Nazimuddin's place, Ghulam Muhammad appointed Muhammad Ali Bogra, "a political non-entity from Bengal who seemed more concerned about promoting American interests than those of his province."⁹⁶ Prior to being made prime minister, the "enthusiastically pro-American" Bogra had been serving as Pakistan's ambassador in Washington.⁹⁷

The US embassy in Pakistan reported back to the State Department that Nazimuddin's dismissal had been "planned and accomplished" by the pro-US troika of Ghulam Muhammad, Iskander Mirza and Ayub Khan, with the last named having informed the US consul-general in Lahore that he had "worked hard to have something along this line accomplished."⁹⁸ Washington hailed Bogra as "energetic and progressive-minded"⁹⁹ and

⁹³ Hamza Alavi, "Pakistan-US Military Alliance," *Economic and Political Weekly* 33, no. 25 (June 20-26, 1998): 1553.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism*, 52.

⁹⁷ Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India, and Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 162.

⁹⁸ American Consulate General Lahore dispatch to State Department, April 28, 1953, 790D.00/4-2853, Department of State Records (hereafter DSR), National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA).

regarded Nazimuddin's dismissal as a "welcome gain as far as US interests are concerned."¹⁰⁰ What remained unacknowledged, or was perhaps wilfully ignored, was that Nazimuddin's dismissal actually signified "an important step towards the demise of popular government and the control of the central government by the....civil service and military leadership."¹⁰¹

In 1954, fearful that the Constituent Assembly - the elected legislative body tasked with framing a new constitution for Pakistan - was going to clip his powers, Ghulam Muhammad ordered its dismissal.¹⁰² Although patently arbitrary and undemocratic, such moves were regarded with equanimity by Washington since they "did not seem likely to bring about a change in Pakistan's policy of cooperation with the US".¹⁰³ Ghulam Muhammad retained Bogra as Prime Minister but promoted Mirza to Home Minister and brought Ayub Khan into the cabinet as Defence Minister, a move that formalised the army's entry into political affairs. The US expressed its confidence in the civil-military bureaucratic troika ruling Pakistan by signing the Mutual Defence Agreement of 1954 that further strengthened the military's hand over the politicians and paved the way for eventual military rule.

In 1955, Home Minister Iskander Mirza - another stalwart remnant of British India's colonial bureaucracy - replaced Ghulam Muhammad as governor-general. Shortly thereafter, he became Pakistan's first president when the country's new constitution transformed it from a dominion into a republic. Although theoretically a parliamentary democracy, Pakistan was actually ruled by two unelected bureaucrats: President Mirza and army chief General Ayub Khan. The American embassy in Pakistan contentedly reported back to the State Department that the "pro-United States group which had aligned Pakistan with the free world" enjoyed complete ascendancy in the existing dispensation and emphasised that the continuance in power of that group was "important to our objectives here."¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Memorandum from State Department Pakistan Desk Officer Lee Metcalf to South Asian Affairs Office Director Don Kennedy, April 21, 1953, Pakistan 1953 Folder, Office of South Asian Affairs Files, DSR, NARA.

¹⁰⁰ US embassy in Pakistan telegrams to the State Department, April 18, 1953 and April 20, 1953, 790D.00/4-1853 and 790D.00/4-2053, DSR, NARA.

¹⁰¹ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 54.

¹⁰² For an exhaustive account of Ghulam Muhammad's motives in dismissing the Constituent Assembly as well as the political repercussions of that dismissal, see Allen McGrath, *The Destruction of Pakistan's Democracy* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1996).

¹⁰³ State Department telegram to US Embassy in Karachi, November 26, 1954, 611.90D/11-2654, DSR, NARA.

¹⁰⁴ Despatch from the Embassy in Pakistan to the Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter *FRUS*) 1955-1957, Volume VIII, South Asia, August 26, 1955, ed. John P. Glennon (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1987), 435-437.

Between 1956 and 1958, Mirza, whose pro-US inclinations were further strengthened by the marriage of his son to the daughter of the then US ambassador to Pakistan, operated as an unabashed autocrat, appointing and dismissing prime ministers and cabinets at will. Yet the US refused to be critical of Mirza on the ground that any such criticism would be seen in Pakistan as “tutelage of the leadership.”¹⁰⁵ When Mirza, with the backing of the army, abrogated the constitution and declared martial law in October 1958, the US expressed a “certain sadness” at the formal dismantling of Pakistan’s fledgling democracy but Secretary of State John Foster Dulles reassured the Pakistani president that “the changes which have occurred do not alter in any respect the close ties which exist between our two countries.”¹⁰⁶

Within just a few weeks of his promulgation of martial law, Iskander Mirza had a major falling out with his partner in power, General Ayub Khan, with whom he was now jostling for absolute power. Deeply alarmed that the president was conspiring to remove him, Ayub Khan struck first by mounting a bloodless coup that quickly secured Mirza’s resignation and his banishment into exile in Britain. The army’s decision to assume direct control over the country did not stem solely from the rivalry between Mirza and Ayub Khan. In fact, it was driven primarily by the acute concern of the Punjabi-dominated army and its civilian allies that elections scheduled to take place in 1959 could erode their dominance of state power and place it in the hands of nationalist politicians, especially those from the more populous eastern half of the country.

In their decision to “tear down the façade of parliamentary democracy,” Pakistan’s civil-military bureaucratic partners had the unconditional support of “their international patrons,” particularly the US.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, the steady flow of military assistance by Washington following Pakistan’s entry into the constellation of America’s Cold War satellites in 1954 played a vital role in enlarging the autonomy of the military over its domestic political rivals. Access to American training methods and weaponry accelerated the Pakistani army’s transition from “an ex-colonial army into a national army with its own corporate identity and ethos.”¹⁰⁸ The rapid modernisation and institutional development of the military, stemming in large part from the security assistance provided by the US, strengthened the “soldiers’ belief in the superiority of their skills over those of civilian politicians” and encouraged the army’s high command to “expand into an array of civilian roles and

¹⁰⁵ Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Pakistan, *FRUS1958-1960*, Volume XV, South and Southeast Asia, February 4, 1958, ed. Glenn W. LaFantasie (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1992), 621-622.

¹⁰⁶ Letter from Secretary of State Dulles to President Mirza, *FRUS1958-1960*, Volume XV, South and Southeast Asia, October 17, 1958, 677-678.

¹⁰⁷ Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism*, 55.

¹⁰⁸ Shah, *The Army and Democracy*, 17.

functions.”¹⁰⁹ Such notions of superiority within the military became even stronger in view of the abject failure of the political class to deliver in terms of democratic consolidation and good governance.

With an organised and powerful army at his command, a civil bureaucracy eager to position itself as his chief domestic collaborator, and a superpower patron which voiced no criticism of his usurpation of power, Ayub Khan embarked upon an ambitious programme of economic liberalisation and socio-political reengineering. With input from a phalanx of American economic advisors from the Harvard Advisory Group and the Ford Foundation and steady injections of aid from the US and other Western countries, the military regime achieved significant growth in both agriculture and industry. However, the fruits of such growth were not equitably distributed and wealth became concentrated in the hands of a miniscule minority. In 1968, when Ayub’s sycophants within the civil bureaucracy were organising ceremonies marking a ‘Decade of Development,’ the chief economist of his own Planning Commission conceded that 66% of all industrial projects, 97% of all insurance funds and 80% of all bank deposits were in the hands of some twenty-two families.¹¹⁰ These industrial families combined with an estimated 15,000 senior civil servants and around 500 generals and senior military officers¹¹¹ to form the “core of the regime’s bases of support in the urban areas.”¹¹²

In the political arena, Ayub sought to impose a system suited to what he deemed the “genius” of the Pakistani people.¹¹³ In practice, that meant working out an arrangement which lent a legitimising veneer of democracy to his authoritarian rule. Ayub’s solution was a scheme for local government labelled Basic Democracy, whereby the country was divided into 80,000 constituencies, each of which would elect a Basic Democrat on a non-party basis. Local councils were installed and given a range of civic responsibilities but had very little authority with which to discharge them; instead, effective power over all local matters was tightly controlled by civilian bureaucrats, the primary executors of the military regime’s policies.

In addition to serving on the local councils, the Basic Democrats formed an electoral college for the selection of the president. In 1960, Ayub Khan had himself elected president

¹⁰⁹ Shah, *The Army and Democracy*, 17.

¹¹⁰ Mahbubul Haq, “System is to blame for the 22 wealthy families,” *Times* (London), March 22, 1973.

¹¹¹ Angus Maddison, *Class Structure and Economic Growth: India and Pakistan since the Mughals* (New York: W.W Norton, 1971), 143.

¹¹² Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule*, 306.

¹¹³ Khan, *Friends Not Masters*, 186.

after obtaining 95.6% of the votes cast by the Basic Democrats.¹¹⁴ By 1962, Ayub had promulgated a new constitution that transformed Pakistan's governing system from parliamentary to presidential, with extensive powers vested in the presidential office.¹¹⁵ In 1965, he was re-elected by the Basic Democrats as president in an election marred by widespread instances of electoral malpractice and misuse of power by his collaborators within the civil bureaucracy.¹¹⁶

America's priorities with regard to democracy promotion in Pakistan during the first two decades after independence can be gauged from the fact that, of the \$3.5 billion in economic aid between 1952 and 1967, the overwhelming bulk was provided during periods of civil bureaucratic/military rule. From a total of less than \$20 million in 1952, when elected politicians were in power, aid rose to \$260 million in 1959, when martial law was firmly in place, and to more than \$550 million in 1965, when Ayub Khan had further cemented his authoritarian rule through his manipulated presidential election victory.¹¹⁷ By 1969, however, massive social unrest unleashed by Ayub's American-backed economic policies and tightly controlled political system had forced the dictator from office. In violation of his own constitution, he handed over power to army chief General Yahya Khan, under whose rule Pakistan descended into a brutal civil war that ended with the secession of the eastern half of the country to form independent Bangladesh. Yahya Khan's relations with the Nixon administration and the latter's policy approach towards the East Pakistan crisis are covered in detail in Chapter Two.

Pakistan's first ever transition from dictatorship to democracy took place in 1972 and lasted just five years before being wrapped up by yet another praetorian adventurer. The transition coincided with a steady deterioration in relations between Washington and the civilian government in Islamabad headed by Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, primarily because of Bhutto's aggressive pursuit of a nuclear-weapon capability. Aid provision during that period sank to unprecedented lows, further weakening Bhutto's internal position vis-à-vis the powerful civil-military establishment, although it must be said that Bhutto's own autocratic tendencies¹¹⁸ combined with misguided socio-economic policies¹¹⁹ were arguably

¹¹⁴ Lawrence Ziring, *The Ayub Khan Era: Politics in Pakistan, 1958-1969* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1971), 18.

¹¹⁵ Amongst his stated reasons for doing away with the Westminster system of parliamentary government was the extraordinary claim that such a system required "a really cool and phlegmatic temperament" that "only people living in cold climates seem to have." See "Pakistan to have a Presidential Form of Government," *The Times* (London), March 2, 1962.

¹¹⁶ Ayesha Jalal, *The Struggle for Pakistan: A Muslim Homeland and Global Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 115.

¹¹⁷ Irving Beecher and S.A. Abbas, *Foreign Aid and Industrial Development in Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 62.

¹¹⁸ See, for instance, Stanley Wolpert, *Zulfi Bhutto of Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1993).

the greatest contributors towards his eventual downfall. In any case, there were few tears shed in Washington when General Zia-ul-Haq upended Pakistan's brief experiment with electoral democracy through yet another military coup.

Backed by US patronage, Zia fanned the flames of jihad in Afghanistan (discussed exhaustively in Chapter Three) whilst simultaneously using Islam at home to legitimise his rule and combat his secular democratic opponents. In 1981, the same year the US announced a five-year \$3.2 billion aid package for Pakistan, Zia gave himself powers to arbitrarily remove judges and disallow the judiciary from reviewing any of the military regime's actions. Similarly, the press was coerced, through forced closures and stringent censorship, into "the service of building Zia's artefact of an Islamic social order."¹²⁰ The military's interventions into all aspects and areas of civil society were dramatically increased.¹²¹ After repeated postponements, Zia finally allowed a carefully controlled election in 1985 but was still taking no chances; just months before permitting the return of a semblance of parliamentary democracy, he had himself elected to a fresh five-year presidential term through a sham referendum in which he received 98 per cent of the vote.¹²² US support for the regime played a critical role in reinforcing its "sense of impunity" for its unconstitutional actions and allowed it to commit "gross human rights violations without any serious repercussions."¹²³ Exactly the same criticism can be made about the role of US patronage in nurturing the Musharraf regime's sense of domestic impunity, a subjected addressed in more detail in Chapter Five.

In the context of the US role in influencing Pakistan's domestic politics, particularly with regard to strengthening authoritarianism and weakening democracy, significant theoretical backing can be found in an empirical study conducted by Abraham Diskin, Hannah Diskin and Reuven Hazan on the contributory factors behind democratic collapse. Four groups of relevant independent variables are employed for this purpose. The first group is made up of institutional variables and addresses elements ranging from the type of regime to the concentration of powers within it. The second group includes societal variables and focuses on factors ranging from the democratic historical background to social cleavages. The third group consists of mediating variables - situated between the institutional and societal groups - ranging from the nature of the party system to the level of government and coalition stability. The last group is actually a single variable, foreign involvement, which has "rarely

¹¹⁹ Shahid Javed Burki, *Pakistan under Bhutto* (London: Macmillan, 1980).

¹²⁰ Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism*, 104.

¹²¹ Shah, *The Army and Democracy*, 154-155.

¹²² "Pakistani Leader Gets 98% of Referendum Vote," *New York Times*, December 21, 1984.

¹²³ Shah, *The Army and Democracy*, 155.

received any attention in the discussion of democratic stability, but which has proven to be essential.”¹²⁴

Diskin *et al* maintain that foreign involvement, including both intervention by, and threats from, foreign countries, as well as the involvement of other external elements in domestic politics, is an “extraneous variable that does not fit into any of the three previous categories” but whose “explanatory power” makes its inclusion “imperative in any analysis of democratic collapse.”¹²⁵ Based on an examination of 30 cases of collapsed democracies compared to 32 cases of stable democracies with at least a generation of uninterrupted democratic government, it is hypothesized that countries experiencing serious levels of involvement by foreign forces, be they states or non-state actors, are more prone to democratic collapse than those with low involvement.

VI. Extending the Paradox

Whilst agreeing with Gasiorowski, therefore, that substantial external patronage can lead to greater political instability in the client state by making it highly autonomous and, therefore, dismissive of key societal groups that consequently become alienated and resentful, this research aims to extend his paradox. It argues for the inclusion of the following related paradox that can afflict certain types of patron-client state relationships:

While various forms of assistance and intervention on the part of the patron can strengthen the internal autonomy of the client - thereby allowing it to temporarily quell domestic opposition and continue protecting the patron's interests - they can also make a client externally autonomous to an extent where it will pursue what it deems its vital national interests - even if they are directly opposed to those of the patron - secure in the knowledge that its strategic importance will compel the patron to keep the relationship intact.

In other words, thanks to the patron's support, the client state can become highly autonomous not only internally but also with respect to crucial foreign policy interests that might be directly opposed to those of the patron, thereby defeating one of the primary motivations for the patron to have entered into the relationship: maximum compliance on the part of the client. This paradox gives rise to two interrelated questions: (a) why does the client imperil the continuation of its relationship with the patron - and risk losing the material benefits that it derives therefrom - by acting against the patron's interests?; and (b) how does the patron respond to such defiance on the part of its client?

¹²⁴ Abraham Diskin, Hannah Diskin and Reuven Y. Hazan, “Why Democracies Collapse: The Reasons for Democratic Failure and Success,” *International Political Science Review* 26, no. 3 (2005): 292.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 295-296.

As mentioned before, the patron's motivation in providing military and other forms of assistance to the client is to keep it stable and secure its alignment with the patron's own interests. By extension, the patron generally operates on the assumption that an increase in the amount and/or quality of financial and military aid being provided to the client will result in a corresponding rise in the client's level of compliance with the patron's directives. In the context of international relations, *compliance* can be defined as "a sacrifice, wherein actors abandon their preferences as they conform to another's dissimilar foreign policy wishes."¹²⁶ By becoming increasingly dependent on the patron's material support, it is assumed that the client will be less likely to jeopardize its relationship with the patron and will be more willing to subordinate its own interests to those of its benefactor.

According to Stephen Walt, a patron's leverage over its client is enhanced when it enjoys an "asymmetry of dependence" over the latter. In other words, if a client finds itself confronting a looming threat to its security at a time when its patron does not face a challenge of similar intensity, then the patron's ability to influence the client's behaviour will increase.¹²⁷ On the flip side, the greater the importance of the client for the patron, the more assistance the client will be likely to secure but the lesser will be the leverage generated for the patron through increased aid.¹²⁸ Wary of placing an important client under serious pressure, the patron will be unlikely to reduce its support even in the face of mounting non-compliance on the client's part. Thus, large aid programmes, instead of increasing the patron's control over the client, may actually be indicators of its growing dependence on the client.

In their empirical investigation of the relationship between US military assistance and recipient state cooperation, Patricia Sullivan, Brock Tessman and Xiaojun Li propose three "competing, clearly defined, and falsifiable" theoretical models encapsulating the linkage between the provision of American military aid and the behaviour of recipient states.¹²⁹ The first of these, termed the *Arms for Influence* model, envisages military aid as an effective form of leverage through which to extract recipient state cooperation. This assumption stems from precedents established centuries before the US and Soviet donor-recipient linkages set up during the Cold War. The Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman empires, amongst others, all employed military assistance as a "primary, independent instrument for

¹²⁶ Neil R. Richardson, "Economic Dependence and Foreign Policy Compliance: Bringing Measurement Closer to Conception," in *The Political Economy of Foreign Policy Behaviour*, ed. Charles W. Kegley, Jr. and Pat McGowan (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1981), 102.

¹²⁷ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 43.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹²⁹ Patricia L. Sullivan, Brock F. Tessman and Xiaojun Li, "US Military Aid and Recipient State Cooperation," *Foreign Policy Analysis*, no. 7 (2011): 276.

promoting their interests.”¹³⁰ The hypotheses logically arising out of the *Arms for Influence* model are:¹³¹

- As the total amount of military aid to a country increases, the level of cooperation the recipient displays towards the donor will increase “beyond what would be expected based on shared preferences alone.”
- Increasing dependence of the recipient on military assistance will increase “cooperative foreign policy behaviour towards the donor.”
- The donor will “decrease or eliminate” its military support to states that become less compliant.

In contrast to the *Arms for Influence* approach, which emphasises a positive relationship between US military aid and the degree of cooperation shown by its recipients, the second explanatory model proposed by Sullivan *et al* maintains that instead of generating greater compliance, increasing dependence on the donor can actually lead to the recipient becoming more defiant. Termed the *Lonely Superpower* model by its authors, it argues that regimes dependent for their security and survival on their patron’s military assistance may seek to dispel the impression amongst key domestic and international audiences that they are mere vassals of the donor by adopting a defiant posture towards it on certain issues of global significance.¹³² On the basis of this model, the authors hypothesise that growing dependence on the patron’s military assistance will lessen the client’s inclination to remain aligned with the former’s strategic foreign policy objectives.

The third and final explanatory framework, termed the *Reverse Leverage* model, identifies a paradoxical effect of military aid in that donors can end up becoming dependent on their recipients. Liberal injections of military assistance “runs the risk of creating militarily strong, assertive clients” that consider themselves equipped well enough to ignore their patron’s interests without facing the threat of the patron’s chastisement.¹³³ The patron’s dependence on strategically important clients for facilities such as preferential access to hydrocarbon resources, permission to establish military bases and intelligence-gathering stations, granting of over-flight rights, and the joint prosecution of counter-terrorism/counter-insurgency operations makes the cessation of military assistance to those countries potentially costlier for the patron itself than for its clients.

¹³⁰ William H. Mott, *United States Military Assistance: An Empirical Perspective* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 1.

¹³¹ Sullivan, et al., “US Military Aid and Recipient State Cooperation,” 280.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., 281.

The *Reverse Leverage* model generates the following hypotheses:¹³⁴

- States that the patron regards as vital to its security interests will be more likely to secure military aid but will be less likely to increase their compliance with the patron's directives "as the amount of aid they receive increases."
- Keeping "all else equal," states that secure substantial amounts of military assistance will be less cooperative than those receiving comparatively modest support.
- The patron will be unlikely to significantly reduce or to terminate assistance when important clients become more assertive and less compliant.

After rigorously testing their various hypotheses through a combination of statistical methods, Sullivan *et al* find little evidence to back up the *Arms for Influence* model; on that basis, they posit an inverse relationship between levels of US military aid and recipient state cooperation. The *Lonely Superpower* model is perceived as being "on the right track" by predicting "an unorthodox relationship between aid and cooperation" but it does not stand up to statistical scrutiny as well as some of the hypotheses associated with the *Reverse Leverage* model in explaining the exact forms that "such unorthodoxy would take."¹³⁵

In line with the contentions of the *Reverse Leverage* model, it is statistically demonstrated that (a) "states receiving military aid from the United States exhibit lower levels of cooperation than states that do not receive military aid"; (b) "in the population of all states, higher levels of military aid appear to produce more defiant behaviour"; and (c) "the United States does not punish defiance with reductions in aid or reward greater cooperation with increases in military aid."¹³⁶ These results affirm that patrons, in this case the US, will be prepared to countenance a considerable level of defiance on the part of certain strategically important clients, and that such defiance will most likely not lead to cessation of, or even reductions in, assistance to those states. Clients in receipt of higher levels of aid will view such assistance not as evidence of the patron's munificence but instead as a fairly reliable barometer of its dependence. Paradoxically, therefore, the very tools that the patron uses to increase its influence over the client may instead end up increasing the client's control over the patron.

The US-Pakistan relationship clearly appears to fit the *Reverse Leverage* model. The long history of association between the two countries notwithstanding, Pakistan has traditionally been a problematic client for the US, just as the US itself has generally been regarded as an

¹³⁴ Sullivan, et al., "US Military Aid and Recipient State Cooperation," 282.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 290.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

untrustworthy patron by Pakistan. Each country's perceived need for the other has been shaped by security considerations that have seldom been in confluence. During much of the Cold War, for instance, Pakistan leveraged the strategic advantages offered by its geographical position at the crossroads of West, Central and South Asia to secure access to US military assistance in order to build up its defence against India. The US, for its part, intended its weaponry and other tangible forms of patronage to be used to deter communist expansionism in the region. During the 1980s, General Zia-ul-Haq proved particularly adept at manipulating the US into supporting his regime by building up the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as a precursor to an eventual takeover of Pakistan as well. Assured of US patronage, Zia was able to get away with policies manifestly against America's avowed interests, most notably those directed at dominating Afghanistan as well as those aimed at acquiring a nuclear-weapon capability to deter India.

Similarly, in 2001, General Pervez Musharraf took advantage of America's need for Pakistan's logistical, military and intelligence services in the war against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan to strengthen his own position over his domestic civilian opposition as well as to pursue regional policies that reflected the long-term strategic interests of the military and its intelligence apparatus instead of the objectives of their American patron. Thus, while American interests centred on dismantling al-Qaeda, defeating the Taliban and installing a relatively stable pro-US dispensation in Afghanistan, Pakistan's interests, as defined by its military, dictated a continuation of support to the Taliban in Afghanistan as well as to those Islamist forces within Pakistan deemed to possess strategic value. While supporting the Taliban was considered essential for the protection of Pakistan's long-term interest in using Afghanistan as its 'strategic depth' against India, Musharraf's policy of cracking down on certain strands of militant Islamism while tolerating and even encouraging others was meant to blackmail the US into supporting him or else risk a nuclear-armed Pakistan falling into the hands of extremists.

CHAPTER TWO: SETTING THE STAGE - THE FIRST THREE DECADES OF PAKISTAN'S CLIENCY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES

I. The Rationale for Cliency: Post-Colonial Legacies

Pakistan's search for external patronage began almost immediately after its creation in 1947. Alignment with a major foreign power was deemed essential by the country's early leadership in order for it to have any chance of confronting the formidable economic, societal and security-related challenges arising out of its traumatic birth. Pakistan's establishment as an independent state was the outcome of a campaign waged by India's Muslims to have a separate state of their own following the culmination of almost two centuries of British colonial rule in India. The partition of the subcontinent into Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan constituted one of the largest mass migrations in human history with around twelve million people moving between the two countries.¹

In addition to causing displacement on such a colossal scale, partition became the catalyst for horrific communal violence, with Hindus and Sikhs slaughtering Muslims escaping to Pakistan and Muslims in Pakistan massacring Hindus and Sikhs fleeing to India. At least a million people are believed to have been killed in the carnage that accompanied the division of the subcontinent, a gory statistic that considerably dampened the initial euphoria in both new countries of freedom from colonial rule.²

Demographic Challenges

Carved out of the north-western and north-eastern parts of British India, the state of Pakistan was distinctive in two fundamental respects: its *raison d'être* was based entirely on the religion practiced by most of its citizens and its constituent geographical units were separated by over a thousand miles of foreign territory. The western part of Pakistan, comprising the provinces of Punjab, Sindh, the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Balochistan, was larger in size but smaller in population than the eastern part, known as

¹ Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2007), 6. Also see H.V. Hodson, *The Great Divide: Britain – India – Pakistan* (London: Hutchinson, 1969); and Patrick French, *Liberty or Death: India's Journey to Independence and Division* (London: HarperCollins, 1997).

² Stanley Wolpert, *Shameful Flight: The Last Years of the British Empire in India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1.

East Bengal.³ In 1955, by means of an administrative arrangement known as One Unit, the four western provinces were lumped into a single provincial entity known as West Pakistan, while the sole province in the east became East Pakistan.

Although united by their shared Islamic faith, there was little else that the two regions had in common; in fact, the predominantly Muslim population of West Pakistan, particularly in Punjab, had a far greater cultural, ethnic and linguistic affinity with Hindus and Sikhs across the eastern border with India than with their Bengali compatriots a thousand miles away. At the same time, on the other side of the divide, the mainly Muslim inhabitants of East Pakistan had the same linguistic and cultural make-up as their Hindu neighbours in the bordering Indian state of West Bengal but, outside of a common religion, had no other major linkages with their fellow Pakistanis in the distant western portion of the country. Such differences were magnified by the physical gulf between the two wings, leading to the existence of opposing world views with those in the west looking towards the Middle East and those in the east turning towards Southeast Asia.⁴

While East Pakistan was ethnically and linguistically homogeneous, the four provinces of West Pakistan, although geographically contiguous, were distinct in most other respects, including culture, ethnicity and language.⁵ In addition to bridging the territorial differences between the eastern and western portions of the country, Pakistan's political leadership had, therefore, to grapple with the dilemma of fostering a sense of national unity amongst populations that, apart from their belief in the same religion, were fundamentally distinct from each other.

Economic and Administrative Challenges

The daunting task of forging a common national identity amongst markedly disparate peoples and territories was matched by the equally formidable challenge of ensuring

³ The British Indian provinces of Punjab and Bengal were the only two to actually undergo partition. Punjab was split up into Pakistani West Punjab (later simply referred to as Punjab) and Indian East Punjab while Bengal was divided into Pakistani East Bengal and Indian West Bengal.

⁴ Ian Talbot, *Pakistan: A Modern History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 99.

⁵ The lingua franca of each province mirrored its ethnic composition. Thus, Bengali was spoken by Bengalis, Punjabi was spoken by Punjabis, Sindhi by Sindhis, Baluchi by Baluchis and Pashto by the Pashtun inhabitants of the NWFP. The national language of the country, Urdu, was not native to any of the regions that constituted Pakistan, even though it was spoken and understood by the West Pakistani urban intelligentsia, especially in Punjab. Following partition, Urdu-speaking refugees from northern India, where the language had originated, migrated to (mainly West) Pakistan in large numbers. Since many central leaders of the freedom movement as well as senior officers of Pakistan's powerful civil bureaucracy were Urdu-speaking refugees from India, they managed to install Urdu as the lingua franca of the country, even though it was the first language of a very small minority of the population. For more on language and its impact on ethnicity and politics in Pakistan, see Alyssa Ayres, "The Politics of Language Policy in Pakistan," in *Fighting Words: Language Policy and Ethnic Relations in Asia*, ed. Michael E. Brown and Sumit Ganguly (Cambridge, MA: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, 2003), 51-80.

Pakistan's economic viability in the face of crippling institutional and resource constraints. Pakistan commenced its existence with a pronounced industrial deficit. It was an overwhelmingly agrarian society, with agriculture accounting for 60 per cent of total output and 70 per cent of total employment, as compared to just 6 per cent of output and 10 per cent of employment for industry.⁶ The political economy of each of Pakistan's constituent units was, therefore, shaped primarily by agrarian forces.

The British had presided over a rigidly centralized unitary state in India with a tightly integrated economy; however, they had neglected to ensure an even-handed development of various regions around the country. Major port cities such as Bombay, Calcutta and Madras all ended up in independent India, as did most of the industrial centres that had emerged under British auspices. Even though Pakistan possessed 23 per cent of the territory of undivided India and 18 per cent of the population, it inherited a mere 10 per cent of the industrial base in the two countries and just a shade over 7 per cent of the overall employment facilities.⁷ On the eve of partition, only one out of the leading fifty-seven Indian companies was owned by a Muslim.⁸

Partition not only left the bulk of industrial and commercial development in India but also split Pakistani raw materials away from their primary marketplaces. The main cotton producing areas of what became West Pakistan, for instance, had supplied raw materials to cotton mills in Ahmedabad and Bombay, both of which were now in independent India.⁹ Pakistan itself had just 14 of the subcontinent's 394 cotton mills at the time of partition, in spite of the fact that cotton was one of its two main cash crops, the other being jute.¹⁰ East Pakistan, which produced much of the world's jute supply, did not possess a single jute processing mill.¹¹ Prior to partition, its jute crop had been sent to the industrial heartland of Calcutta which, after the division of the subcontinent, now formed part of Indian West Bengal.

In addition to inheriting most of the commercial and industrial establishments of the colonial era, India had the added advantage of taking over both the central bureaucratic apparatus in the former imperial capital, New Delhi, as well as the Bengal provincial secretariat in Calcutta. Pakistan, on the other hand, had to build up both its federal

⁶ Tariq Ali, *Can Pakistan Survive? The Death of a State* (New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1983), 43.

⁷ Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism*, 23.

⁸ Claude Markovits, *Indian Business and Nationalist Politics, 1931-1939: The Indigenous Capitalist Class and the Rise of the Congress Party* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), Appendix 1.

⁹ Talbot, *Pakistan*, 97.

¹⁰ Chaudhri Muhammad Ali, *The Emergence of Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 336.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 335.

government from scratch in Karachi, the new capital and the country's only port city, as well as create a completely new provincial government in Dhaka, the capital of East Pakistan. Most of the native members of the elite Indian Civil Service (ICS), the 'steel frame' of British rule in the subcontinent, were Hindus who opted for India at the time of partition. Afflicted by a chronic shortage of trained manpower and resources, Pakistan's nascent bureaucracy had to contend with the "impossibly difficult" task of resettling and rehabilitating millions of refugees who had migrated from India, primarily to areas in West Punjab.¹²

Security Challenges

Pakistan's financial woes were compounded by the fact that, within a few months of partition, it was at war with India over control of the strategically significant princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. At the time of independence, Pakistan had received 17.5 per cent of the financial assets and 30 per cent of the defence forces of British India; however, with a paltry 200 million rupees (then around \$60 million US dollars) as its opening cash balance, Pakistan soon had to pump in 35-50 million rupees every month towards the upkeep of its defence forces alone.¹³ Not surprisingly, the assumption of responsibility for safeguarding the strategically vulnerable north-western and north-eastern wings of the subcontinent was "well beyond the capacities of the newly created state" which, in the initial year of independence, incurred a higher defence expenditure than that of the undivided government of India.¹⁴

The conflict between Pakistan and India over ownership of Jammu and Kashmir (hereafter referred to as Kashmir) was to bedevil relations between the two countries right from the time that both attained independence a day apart from each other in August 1947. Prior to partition, India had been divided into 11 provinces under direct British control and some 562 states ruled by native princes. These princely states, covering over one-third of the subcontinent, enjoyed considerable internal autonomy but externally remained under the suzerainty of the British Crown, an arrangement referred to as "paramountcy."¹⁵ Once India and Pakistan were created, the paramountcy of the British Crown over the princely states came to an end and, under the terms of the Indian Independence Act of 1947, they were

¹² Ali, *The Emergence of Pakistan*, 260.

¹³ Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism*, 22.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Although the British never explicitly laid down a precise definition of paramountcy, the arrangement implied that the Viceroy of India would devise and execute policies affecting defence, foreign relations, communications and coinage on behalf of the princely states. An agent or resident appointed by the Viceroy was assigned to each state to tend to such matters. See Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, "Rajputana under British Paramountcy: The Failure of Indirect Rule," *Journal of Modern History* 38, no. 2 (June 1966): 139.

given the right to accede to either state or to remain independent, although on the latter option the act was “not without its ambiguities.”¹⁶

With an area covering almost 85,000 square miles, Kashmir was one of the largest of the princely states of British India and occupied a vital strategic position in the extreme north-western portion of the subcontinent. Not only did it share borders with the new states of India and Pakistan but it also adjoined Tibet and the Chinese province of Sinkiang. Moreover, it provided access to Soviet Central Asia through the Wakhan Corridor, a narrow strip of Afghan territory bordering Kashmir that led into Tajikistan. Not surprisingly, therefore, both India and Pakistan regarded Kashmir as a key strategic prize and made frenetic attempts to woo the state’s ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh.

On a number of grounds, Pakistan’s claim to Kashmir appeared stronger than that of India. Although ruled by a Hindu, the overwhelming majority of the state’s population was Muslim and the state itself was geographically contiguous to the Muslim majority region of Punjab that eventually became part of Pakistan. Kashmir’s economy was inextricably linked with Pakistan and its communication with the outside world lay through Pakistan. Finally, the waters of the Indus, Jhelum and Chenab rivers, which flowed through Kashmir, were indispensable to the agricultural life of Pakistan.¹⁷

The state’s ruler, however, was inclined to commit to neither Pakistan nor India and instead desired independence.¹⁸ His procrastination created alarm among sections of his Muslim subjects that he eventually intended to accede to India, leading to an open revolt in the region of Poonch.¹⁹ The maharajah’s brutal suppression of the Poonch uprising prompted the tribesmen along Pakistan’s border with Afghanistan to come to the aid of their oppressed co-religionists. Thousands of fanatical tribal fighters, accompanied by Pakistani irregulars, swept into Kashmir and were on the verge of taking the state capital, Srinagar.

¹⁶ Alastair Lamb, *Crisis in Kashmir: 1947-1966* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 35. The Indian Independence Act of July 18, 1947, provided that “as from the appointed day [August 15, 1947] the suzerainty of His Majesty over the Indian States lapses...” This was commonly interpreted as a provision which, following partition, made the princes independent sovereigns who were theoretically at liberty to join either new dominion, or else to remain unattached to either. Both Pakistan and India accepted the independent status of the princely states upon the termination of British paramountcy but Indian officials later argued that paramountcy could not lapse and, as a consequence, none of the states could maintain a presumption of independence. See Alice Thorner, “The Kashmir Conflict,” *Middle East Journal* 3, no. 1 (January 1949): 17.

¹⁷ A detailed description of the grounds on which Pakistan based its claim to Kashmir is contained in Lamb, *Crisis in Kashmir*, 17-22. Also see William Barton, “Pakistan’s Claim to Kashmir,” *Foreign Affairs* 28, no. 2 (January 1950): 299-308.

¹⁸ M.C. Mahajan, *Looking Back* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1963), 132.

¹⁹ See Christopher Snedden, *The Untold Story of the People of Azad Kashmir* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

With his fiefdom slipping out of his hands, a desperate Hari Singh turned to New Delhi for help, which agreed to do so provided the maharaja formally acceded to India.

Once the instrument of accession was signed on October 27, 1947, Indian troops were airlifted to Srinagar and the advance of the tribesmen was halted. Pakistan sent its regular forces into Kashmir in 1948, thereby marking the commencement of the first of its four wars with India. Hostilities continued until 1949 when the UN brokered a ceasefire that left India in possession of two-thirds of the former princely state and Pakistan in control of the remainder. The Kashmir dispute, however, stayed alive and would remain one of the chief determinants of Pakistan's foreign and defence policies in the decades to follow.

With a significantly larger and more powerful neighbour breathing down its neck in the east, Pakistan's already precarious security situation was further imperilled by a similarly threatening adversary on its western flank. The kingdom of Afghanistan was the only member of the United Nations to oppose Pakistan's entry into the world body in 1947, an opposition stemming from its refusal to accept the dividing line between Afghanistan and Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) as a legitimate international boundary. In 1893, the border between British India and Afghanistan had been demarcated by Sir Henry Mortimer Durand, the foreign secretary for India, following an agreement with Amir Abdur Rahman, the potentate of Afghanistan. Taking its name from its originator, the Durand Line, as the border became known, ran for some 2,430 kilometres across a broad swathe of territory descending from the snow-capped peaks of the Hindu Kush down to the dust-laden but equally inhospitable terrain of Balochistan.²⁰ It also cut across the rugged tribal belt between Afghanistan and British India populated by tribes belonging to the Pashtun ethnic group,²¹ an affiliation they shared with the Afghan monarch.²²

Jealous guardians of their independence and ferociously warlike, the Pashtun tribes had for centuries subsisted on raiding the fertile plains of India and British efforts to subdue them had met with fierce resistance. Once the border was demarcated, the tribal belt, split between Afghanistan and British India, became virtually a "no man's land" until 1901, when Viceroy Lord Curzon declared it a Tribal Territory under the direct control of the

²⁰ The speedy conclusion of the agreement between the British and Amir Abdur Rahman was facilitated by an offer to increase the annual subsidy paid to the Afghan king by £300,000. See Harold E. Raugh, Jr., *The Victorians at War, 1815-1914: An Encyclopaedia of British Military History* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2004), 124.

²¹ Pashtun, Pakhtun, Pukhtun and Pathan are all variants of the same word.

²² Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic country comprising Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, Turkmen, Balochis and a variety of smaller groups. From the early seventeenth century onwards, however, power within the country has resided with the Pashtuns, the largest ethnic denomination in Afghanistan. During the reign of Ahmed Shah Durrani (1747-1772) - regarded as the father of modern Afghanistan - the Pashtuns presided over an empire that stretched from Iranian Khorasan through Afghanistan and modern-day Pakistan to Delhi and other parts of north-western India.

central government of India.²³ At the same time, he cobbled together the British-administered districts adjoining the tribal areas into a separate province known as the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). The Tribal Territory thus became a “marchland” in which the north-western frontier of the British Indian Empire could be protected from threats emanating from Czarist Russia, its rival in the nineteenth century quest for Central Asian supremacy immortalized by the epithet, the Great Game.²⁴

The legitimacy of the Durand Line as an international frontier was reaffirmed by subsequent agreements between British India and Afghanistan in 1905, 1919, 1921 and 1930.²⁵ However, the eventual withdrawal of the British from their Indian colony in 1947 and the transfer of British control over the subcontinent’s north-western frontier to Pakistan prompted Afghanistan to challenge the continued validity of the Durand Line. Shortly after Pakistan’s creation, Afghanistan proceeded to raise vociferous calls for the creation of an independent Pashtunistan (also referred to as Pakhtunistan) or “land of the Pashtuns,” incorporating Pakistan’s entire North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), the tribal areas along the Durand Line, the south-western province of Balochistan and parts of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir such as Gilgit and Baltistan.²⁶ Claiming that its original acceptance of the Durand Line in 1893 had been extracted under duress, Afghanistan argued that Pakistan could not inherit a territory seized by the British through force and that “treaties are binding on governments and not their subjects...”²⁷

Pakistan repudiated the Afghan demand for Pashtun self-determination as a violation of international law and asserted the validity of the Durand Line as the legitimate border between itself and Afghanistan. Pakistan’s claim had the support of the departing British, who regarded it as “the inheritor,” under international law, of the “rights and duties of the old Government of India” in the territories along the erstwhile northwest frontier of India.²⁸ Nevertheless, Afghanistan refused to give up its calls in favour of Pashtunistan and its ties with Pakistan consequently remained under considerable strain, especially during the decade-long premiership of Sardar Mohammad Daoud Khan (1953-1963), a cousin and brother-in-law of the Afghan king, Zahir Shah. A staunch nationalist and an ardent advocate

²³ James W. Spain, “The Pathan Borderlands,” *Middle East Journal* 15, no. 2 (Spring 1961): 169.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ See S.M.M Qureshi, “Pakhtunistan: The Frontier Dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan,” *Pacific Affairs* 39, no. 1/2 (Spring–Summer 1966): 103.

²⁶ The Afghan demand for the whole of Balochistan to be included in Pashtunistan was questionable, in that a majority of the province’s population was non-Pashtun. The inclusion of Gilgit and Baltistan was even more problematic, since their populations were overwhelmingly non-Pashtun and both areas had voluntarily acceded to Pakistan in November 1947.

²⁷ Quoted in Khurshid Hasan, “Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations,” *Asian Survey* 2, no. 7 (September 1962): 15.

²⁸ Ibid.

of Pashtunistan, Daoud took a hardline position on relations with Pakistan. During his period in office, there were frequent instances of cross-border incursions, trade and transit disputes and vitriolic propaganda campaigns mounted by both sides against each other. On two occasions, in 1955 and 1961, Afghanistan severed its diplomatic ties with Pakistan.²⁹

Owing primarily to the threat from India in the east and, secondarily, from Afghanistan in the west, Pakistan's early leadership accorded top priority to national defence through the creation of a strong military. Such a need appeared even more pressing on account of the weakness of Pakistan's military capacity in the immediate aftermath of partition. Out of the 46 military training establishments found in British India, only 7 were based in Pakistan.³⁰ The three key command workshops of the British Indian army that repaired and maintained military vehicles and machines were all in India.³¹ Out of 40 ordnance depots, Pakistan inherited only 5 and out of 17 ordnance factories, it inherited only 3.³² Pakistan's share of the erstwhile British Indian army approximated 36 per cent, or around 140,000 out of a total strength of some 410,000 in 1947. However, it had to settle for 30 per cent of the Indian army, 40 per cent of the navy and 20 per cent of the air force.³³ The shambolic condition of Pakistan's military infrastructure in the initial years after independence was summed up by its first military ruler, General (later Field Marshal) Ayub Khan:³⁴

So our army was badly equipped and terribly disorganized. It was almost immediately engaged in escorting the refugees who streamed by the million into Pakistan; and not long after that it was also involved in the fighting in Kashmir. Throughout this period we had no properly organized units, no equipment, and hardly any ammunition. The position was so bad that for the first few years we could only allow five rounds of practice ammunition to each man a year. Our plight was indeed desperate.

II. The Quest for Patronage

In the words of a leading South Asian historian, "few countries have emerged with as many disadvantages as Pakistan."³⁵ Abandoned in a perilous environment by its "British

²⁹ Breaking off diplomatic links backfired both times for Daoud since it led to Pakistan blocking the transit of Afghanistan's goods at great cost to the land-locked country's economy, which depended heavily on its traditional trading route through Pakistan. By 1963, the economic costs of Daoud's confrontational approach towards Pakistan had generated considerable discontent within Afghanistan, prompting Zahir Shah to induce him to resign.

³⁰ Shuja Nawaz, *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, its Army and the Wars Within* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 30-31.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule*, 42.

³⁴ Khan, *Friends Not Masters*, 21-22.

³⁵ Francis Robinson, "Origins," in *Foundations of Pakistan's Political Economy: Towards an Agenda for the 1990s*, ed. William E. James and Subroto Roy (London: Sage Publications, 1992), 33.

midwife,” it did well merely to survive what was a tempestuous birth.³⁶ However, the magnitude of the economic, political and security problems that it confronted convinced its early leadership, both civilian and military alike, that their country’s survival lay in attaching it to the coattails of a powerful external patron. With Britain in no position after the ravages of World War Two to bankroll its former colonial satrapies, it was left to the United States to take over many of the interests of the British Empire around the globe, most prominently in Europe and followed soon thereafter in the Middle East. It was to the US, therefore, that Pakistan would turn very early on for patronage and, although initially reluctant to respond favourably for fear of alienating India, several American administrations from Eisenhower onwards would eventually come to see the merits of having a loyal client located in a strategically critical part of the world.

Pakistan’s overriding security concern after independence was the threat of a much larger and more powerful India seeking to overturn partition by forcibly reincorporating Pakistan within its fold. Most Pakistanis were convinced that the acceptance of partition by the Indian leadership had been a “cunning and temporary expedient” to ensure an early departure of the British, following which India would be free to dominate and even “absorb Pakistan as it saw fit.”³⁷ Indeed, no less a figure than India’s first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, had conceded that his rationale for accepting partition was that “in this way we shall reach that united India sooner than otherwise.”³⁸ Even the departing British validated Pakistani concerns about India’s hostile designs. Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck, supreme commander of the Indian army in 1947, affirmed to the British government that “the present Indian Cabinet are implacably determined to do all in their power to prevent the establishment of the Dominion of Pakistan on a firm basis.”³⁹

In view of the imbalance between Pakistan’s limited indigenous military capability and the enormous domestic and external security challenges that it confronted, its early leaders wasted little time in seeking powerful foreign patrons to bankroll the modernization of its armed forces as well as to inject much-needed foreign exchange into a cash-strapped economy. That recourse to outside help would have to be made to ensure Pakistan’s survival had been proclaimed by Pakistan’s founder, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, a few months before his country’s creation. According to Jinnah, Pakistan “could not stand alone” and would have to befriend a superpower. Out of the potential candidates, Russia had “no

³⁶ Talbot, *Pakistan*, 95.

³⁷ William J. Barnds, *India, Pakistan and the Great Powers* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1972), 71.

³⁸ Maurice L. Gwyer and A. Appadorai, eds., *Speeches and Documents on the Indian Constitution, 1921-1947*, Volume II (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 682.

³⁹ John Connell, *Auchinleck* (London: Cassell & Co., 1959), 920.

appeal” and France was “weak and divided,” thereby leaving only England and America, of which he deemed the former the “natural friend.”⁴⁰

Following partition, Jinnah again emphasised the pro-West orientation of his foreign policy: “Pakistan is a democracy and communism does not flourish in the land of Islam. It is clear therefore that our interests lie more with the two great democratic countries, namely, the UK and the USA, rather than with Russia.”⁴¹ Having quickly realized that the UK no longer had the resources to oblige Pakistan with the level of assistance it required, Jinnah turned his attention towards the US. He despatched an envoy to Washington entrusted with the unenviably challenging task of securing a massive \$2 billion loan to meet Pakistan’s economic and defence requirements for the next five years. In effect, Jinnah was offering the US a reciprocal arrangement whereby Pakistan’s alignment with US strategic interests would be rewarded with an American commitment to guarantee Pakistan’s economic and territorial viability. Not surprisingly, the request was politely turned down and Pakistan was left to console itself with a paltry \$10 million humanitarian relief grant.⁴²

The extraordinarily large amount of the loan sought from the US betrayed Jinnah’s lack of understanding of American foreign policy priorities at the time. It also demonstrated unrealistic expectations - at least at that point in time - of American assistance, arising out of an exaggerated view of Pakistan’s strategic importance. Shortly after Pakistan’s creation, Jinnah had declared that “America needs Pakistan more than Pakistan needs America” on account of Pakistan’s position as the “pivot of the world.” He also reminded the US that “Russia is not so very far away” and expressed a hope that, as had been the case in Greece and Turkey, American money and weapons would be provided to Pakistan as well in order to deter potential communist penetration.⁴³ Much to Jinnah’s disappointment, the US was far too involved with European post-war reconstruction and the containment of communism in Europe, East Asia and the Middle East to attach more than peripheral importance to South Asia.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Mehruddin Ali ed., *Jinnah on World Affairs: Select Documents, 1908-1948* (Karachi: University of Karachi), 360.

⁴¹ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 20.

⁴² M.S. Venkataramani, *The American Role in Pakistan, 1947-1958* (New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, 1982), 26.

⁴³ Margaret Bourke-White, *Halfway to Freedom: A Report on the New India in the Words and Photographs of Margaret Bourke-White* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1949), 91-93.

⁴⁴ Under the terms of the Marshall Plan of 1948, massive amounts of American assistance had been pledged for the reconstruction of European countries devastated by World War Two in order to keep them within the orbit of Western capitalism and shield them from communist penetration. Similarly, the Truman Doctrine, enunciated in 1947, also sought to contain the spread of communism by declaring America’s right to intervene anywhere in the world where a communist takeover appeared imminent. Greece and Turkey were the first countries to receive assistance under the umbrella of the Truman Doctrine.

America's policy towards India and Pakistan after their independence was essentially a continuation of its pre-independence approach, which was predicated on the assessment that the subcontinent had been within the British sphere of influence for the last two centuries and would in all probability remain so even after the sun had finally set on the British Indian empire. In the lead up to Britain's withdrawal from its Indian colony, the US had "forcefully supported" British attempts to leave behind a united India.⁴⁵ Once Pakistan became inevitable, however, Washington was quick to come to terms with India's partition, although its opinion of Pakistan's viability as an independent nation remained unfavourable.⁴⁶ American perceptions of India, on the other hand, were much more flattering. For most Americans, "the land of Gandhi and Nehru...was destined to play a great role on the world stage." Jinnah's Pakistan, on the other hand, was regarded as "a sad mistake" whose future was "no more than a question mark on the surface of the globe."⁴⁷

Not all official American assessments of Pakistan were as gloomy. As early as 1948, Lieutenant Colonel Nathaniel Hoskot, the US defence attaché in Pakistan, had been sufficiently impressed by its "strategic worldwide importance" to recommend to his government that military assistance be provided forthwith. In the event that such assistance was not provided, Hoskot warned that Pakistan could be compelled to seek relief elsewhere.⁴⁸ A 1949 Joint Chiefs of Staff study outlining US interests in South Asia singled out Pakistan as the only country in the region of significant strategic and military importance to the US, with the Karachi-Lahore corridor serving as a potential base for air operations against the Soviet Union.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the Truman administration generally remained content with having the British play the lead role on all significant matters affecting the subcontinent and followed a policy of studied neutrality towards India and Pakistan, especially over the Kashmir dispute. As part of its regional approach that precluded favouring one side over the other, Washington imposed an informal arms embargo on both India and Pakistan during the 1948 war and only lifted it after hostilities had fully ended.

If the Americans were to have picked sides in South Asia, there is little doubt that India, with its size, population and resources, would have been the preferred choice. The success

⁴⁵ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 9.

⁴⁶ Robert J. McMahon, "United States Cold War Strategy in South Asia: Making a Military Commitment to Pakistan, 1947-1954," *Journal of American History* 75, no. 3 (December 1988): 817.

⁴⁷ S.M. Burke and Lawrence Ziring, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: An Historical Analysis* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1990), 116.

⁴⁸ Nathaniel R. Hoskot to Department of the Army, February 14, 1948, file 845F.00/2-1448, DSR, NARA; and Hoskot to Department of the Army, April 24, 1948, file 845F.00/4-2448, DSR, NARA.

⁴⁹ "Appraisal of United States national interests in South Asia," Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *FRUS1949*, Vol. VI, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, March 24, 1949, ed. Herbert A. Fine, et al (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1977), 29-31.

of the Chinese communists in 1949 led to considerable speculation in the US about India's use as a bulwark against further communist inroads into the Asian mainland. Any hopes in that regard were quickly dashed, however, when India, under Nehru, proclaimed its unswerving adherence to a policy of complete non-alignment with the Western and Soviet blocs that were contesting the Cold War. Nehru's refusal to even endorse, let alone be a part of, American plans to contain communism gradually awakened the US to the possibility of enlisting Pakistan as a replacement.

Unlike Nehru, Pakistan's leaders from Jinnah onwards made no secret of their willingness to side with the West in its conflict with the Soviet Union in exchange for financial and security guarantees. In 1950, on what was the first of numerous subsequent trips by Pakistani heads of state or government to Washington, Pakistan's first prime minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, emphasised to his American interlocutors both the incompatibility of communism with Pakistan's Islamic way of life as well as the "fighting qualities of her anti-Communist Muslim warriors."⁵⁰ Such words were music to the ears of an American audience that had felt bitterly disappointed by Nehru's declaration on a visit to the US a year before that "we have no intention to commit ourselves to anybody at any time."⁵¹ While there was no immediate change in US policy towards the region, there was a growing awareness in Washington that in the event of an American war with the Soviet Union, it appeared likely that Pakistan would be ready to help out "in every way possible, such as making air bases available."⁵²

The outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 afforded Pakistan a very useful opportunity - one that it accepted with both hands - to convince the US of its reliability as an ally. Liaquat Ali Khan immediately and fully endorsed the US decision to invoke the UN collective security system against the Soviet-backed North Korean invasion of South Korea. Pakistan's unstinted diplomatic support to the US during the Korean War was greatly appreciated by Washington and stood in stark contrast to India's assumption of a mediatory role in the conflict, viewed by the US as appeasement of China.⁵³ Another notable event in which Pakistan was able to demonstrate its alignment with US interests occurred in 1951, during the signing of the US-sponsored peace treaty with Japan in San Francisco. While Pakistan not only signed the treaty but also provided strong support to it from the floor of the conference, India refused to even attend the ceremony. Once hailed by the US media as "the

⁵⁰ Burke and Ziring, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy*, 124.

⁵¹ Ibid., 121.

⁵² McMahon, "United States Cold War Strategy in South Asia," 820.

⁵³ Burke and Ziring, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy*, 126-128.

world's most popular individual,"⁵⁴ Nehru was now excoriated as "the Lost Leader."⁵⁵ Pakistan, on the other hand, began increasingly to be seen as America's "one sure friend in South Asia."⁵⁶

In spite of a growing recognition both of Pakistan's loyalty to the anti-communist cause as well as of its strategic potential in the defence of the Middle East against communist penetration, the Truman administration remained wary of making a formal military commitment to Pakistan for fear of antagonizing India. Nevertheless, modest amounts of military assistance began to be provided in order to placate the demands of a country increasingly being viewed by American strategic planners as indispensable to the protection of critical areas of the Middle East, in particular the oil fields of the Persian Gulf.⁵⁷ Instead of being seen exclusively through a South Asian prism as was traditionally the case, Pakistan now began to be envisaged in Washington as potentially a key factor in safeguarding US interests in the Middle East.

III. Tying the Patron-Client Knot

Although the wheels of a formal US-Pakistan alliance had been set in motion during the Truman administration, the actual crystallization of Pakistan's aim to become a bona fide client state of the US had to wait until President Dwight Eisenhower was in office. The former supreme commander of allied forces in Europe during World War Two was determined to further intensify his predecessor's policy of containing communism, an aim in which he had the staunch support of his militantly anti-communist Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles.⁵⁸ The Middle East accordingly became a central arena of US-Soviet competition, starting with Iran. In 1951, a major threat to Western oil interests had arisen in Iran when its Prime Minister, Muhammad Mossadegh, ended the hegemony of Western oil companies by nationalizing Iranian oil. Months after Eisenhower took office, the democratically elected Mossadegh was removed through a coup that was planned and sponsored by the governments of the US and Britain.

Having successfully neutralized a serious threat to its strategic interests in the Middle East, the US deemed it essential to erect institutionalized arrangements not only for the protection

⁵⁴ Burke and Ziring, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy*, 120.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 135.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ "Pakistan", Department of State Policy Statement, *FRUS 1951*, Vol. VI, Part 2, Asia and the Pacific, July 1, 1951, ed. Fredrick Aandahl (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1977), 2206-2216.

⁵⁸ For more on the Eisenhower-Dulles era of US foreign policy, see Roby C. Barrett, *The Greater Middle East and the Cold War: US Foreign Policy Under Eisenhower and Kennedy* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2007) and Stephen Kinzer, *The Brothers: John Foster Dulles, Alan Dulles, And Their Secret World War* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2013).

of oil supplies but, more broadly, to counter the danger of any potential transference in the regional balance of power towards the Soviet Union and China. In other words, Eisenhower and Dulles embarked upon a more aggressive strategy of containment aimed not only at preventing further Soviet and Chinese military expansion but also at “restricting their political and cultural intercourse with states outside their sphere of control lest the pestilence [of communism] spread.”⁵⁹

Pakistan’s geographic position, situated as it was between the Soviet Union and China, now carried considerable appeal for the US in the execution of its policy of enhanced communist containment. Following a trip to Pakistan in 1953, Dulles expressed his appreciation for the “genuine feeling of friendship” that he found there and formed a favourable opinion both of “the appearance and spirit of what we saw of the armed forces and their leaders”⁶⁰ as well as of the “martial and religious characteristics” of Pakistanis in general.⁶¹ Dulles’ main reference point with regard to the armed forces was army chief General Ayub Khan, a physically imposing ethnic Pashtun who made a powerful impression on the American Secretary of State both on account of his martial bearing as well as his articulation of Pakistan’s strategic situation. In Ayub’s assessment, Pakistan confronted a clear and present danger of a Soviet invasion through Central Asia that sought access to the warm waters of the Arabian Sea. To fend off such a threat, Ayub pressed upon Dulles the indispensability of building up Pakistan’s military forces.⁶²

By this time, Pakistan’s leaders had realised that their best chance of securing US patronage was to minimise references to the Indian threat and to instead consistently play the anti-communist card in its parleys with the Eisenhower administration. That such a strategy would reap dividends in Washington can be gauged by Dulles’ testimony before Congress that “those fellows [Pakistanis] are going to fight any communist invasion with their bare fists if they have to.”⁶³ In spite of such ringing endorsements, however, there continued to be considerable foot-dragging within the US diplomatic and national security establishment regarding the actual provision of aid to Pakistan, mainly on account of the fallout of such assistance on America’s relations with India. Such vacillation in turn led to increasing

⁵⁹ Shirin Tahir-Kheli, *The United States and Pakistan: The Evolution of an Influence Relationship* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982), 1.

⁶⁰ The Secretary of State to the Department of State, *FRUS 1952-1954*, Vol. IX, Part 1, The Near and Middle East, May 26, 1953, ed. John P. Glennon (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1986), 147.

⁶¹ Memorandum of Discussion at the 147th Meeting of the National Security Council, *FRUS 1952-1954*, Vol. IX, Part 1, The Near and Middle East, June 1, 1953, 379-386.

⁶² “Assessment of the Soviet Threat to Pakistan and the Armed Forces Needed to Meet This Threat,” Memorandum dated December 1952, presented to Dulles by Ayub Khan on May 23, 1953, Pakistan 1953 Folder, Office of South Asian Affairs Files, DSR, NARA.

⁶³ Testimony of the Secretary of State, *Selected Executive Session Hearings*, US House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Vol. 10, June 2, 1953, NARA, 96.

frustration amongst Pakistan's leadership. On a visit to the US in September 1953 to inspect army facilities, General Ayub Khan memorably told off his American interlocutors for their indecisiveness: "For Christ's sake, I didn't come here to look at army barracks. Our army can be your army if you want us. But let's make a decision."⁶⁴

It took the exhortations of another powerful supporter of assistance to Pakistan - Vice-President Richard Nixon - before a decision was finally taken in that regard. Following a visit to Pakistan in December 1953, Nixon declared Pakistan a country that he "would like to do everything for" and considered it "disastrous" if aid to Pakistan was not forthcoming.⁶⁵ Nixon's effusive advocacy of Pakistan's cause proved conclusive and in May 1954, a Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement between the US and Pakistan was signed by which the latter officially became part of a 'Northern Tier of Defence.' Through this strategic mechanism, the US wished to reduce its own involvement in future Korea-like crises by building up the military forces of frontline client states such as Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Pakistan. In exchange for US arms, Pakistan formally joined a US-sponsored network of anti-communist alliances by entering the South-East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954 and the Baghdad Pact (later to become CENTO) in 1955.⁶⁶

Under the terms of the Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement, the US undertook to equip 4 Pakistan army infantry and 1.5 armoured divisions, provide modern aircraft for 6 air force squadrons, and deliver 12 vessels to the navy, all at an estimated cost of \$171 million.⁶⁷ However, in order to assuage Indian concerns regarding the decision to arm Pakistan, the agreement explicitly committed Pakistan to the use of American weaponry only in instances of internal security, self-defence, or UN collective security efforts and forbade their employment in "any act of aggression against any other nation." Moreover, it bound Pakistan to obtain the prior approval of the US before utilising the assistance received under the agreement for "purposes other than those for which it was furnished."⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 57.

⁶⁵ Memoranda of Discussion at NSC meetings, December 16 and 23, 1953, NSC Series, Whitman File, Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas. During his visit, Nixon had been informed by Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad that were the US to withhold aid now, after extensive publicity and hype regarding its imminent provision, it would be akin to "taking a poor girl for a walk and then walking out on her, leaving her only with a bad name." Nixon evidently found the analogy a persuasive one. See Memorandum of Conversation by the Ambassador in Pakistan (Hildreth), *FRUS 1952-1954*, Vol. XI, Africa and South Asia, Part 2, Karachi Embassy Files Lot 59 F 4, December 7, 1953, ed. John P. Glennon (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1983), 1831-1832.

⁶⁶ The Baghdad Pact became the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) in 1959 after Iraq's withdrawal following the 1958 coup that toppled the country's pro-West monarchy.

⁶⁷ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 69.

⁶⁸ Muhammad Zafarullah Khan and John K. Emmerson, "United States-Pakistan Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement (May 19, 1951)," *Middle East Journal* 8, no. 3 (Summer 1954): 339.

As a quid pro quo for the provision of American aid, Pakistan agreed to make “the full contribution permitted by its manpower, resources, facilities and general economic condition to the development and maintenance of its own defensive strength and the defensive strength of the free world.”⁶⁹ Its membership of SEATO and the Baghdad Pact was partially a fulfilment of treaty obligations arising out of the Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement but was also seen by the country’s civil-military leadership as a potential mechanism for preventing aggression from all threats, and not just communist ones. However, Pakistan’s attempts to obtain a security guarantee against India came to naught, with the US making it clear that the alliance networks would deal only with cases of communist aggression.⁷⁰ This failure was outweighed, however, by the realization that American patronage was finally in Pakistan’s grasp and that the US, which had for long rejected its Pakistani supplicant, had now come to regard the country as “America’s most allied ally in Asia.”⁷¹

IV. Twists and Turns

It took just a couple of years, however, for America’s ardour for its “most allied ally” to cool. Questions increasingly began to be raised within the US national security establishment about the wisdom of enlisting Pakistan as a client in view of the absence of any tangible benefits for the US to be drawn thereby. Moreover, there was also a growing recognition in US foreign policy-making circles that the alliance with Pakistan rested on aims that were fundamentally contradictory: while the US wanted to build up Pakistan’s military forces as a defence against regional communist expansion, Pakistan desired to use American military support to shore up its own defences against India. Such conflicting aims led one US ambassador to Pakistan to voice his concern that the bilateral relationship was “based on a hoax, the hoax being that it is related to the Soviet threat.”⁷² By 1957, even Eisenhower himself lamented the decision to aid Pakistan as a “terrible error” but chose not to discontinue the assistance programme for fear of its “severe repercussions” on relations with Pakistan as well as the potentially deleterious impact on the future of the Baghdad Pact.⁷³

⁶⁹ Khan and Emmerson, “United States-Pakistan Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement,” 340.

⁷⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, *FRUS 1952-1954*, Vol. XI, Africa and South Asia, Part 2, Secretary’s Memoranda of Conversation, Lot 64 D 199, October 18, 1954, 1868-1869.

⁷¹ Mohammed Ayub Khan, “The Pakistan-American Alliance: Stresses and Strains,” *Foreign Affairs* 42, no. 2 (January 1964): 195.

⁷² Letter from the Ambassador in Pakistan (Langley) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Rountree), *FRUS 1955-1957*, Vol. VIII, South Asia, December 27, 1957, ed. John P. Glennon (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1987), 487-490.

⁷³ Memorandum of Discussion at the 308th Meeting of the National Security Council, *FRUS 1955-1957*, Vol. VIII, South Asia, January 3, 1957, 18-29.

Although at times strained in private, the US-Pakistan relationship remained close in public and was further solidified through the conclusion of a bilateral agreement of cooperation in 1959, by which time Ayub Khan had taken over the reins of political power as Pakistan's first military ruler. Under the agreement, the US committed to come to Pakistan's assistance if it was the victim of aggression, with the proviso that that aggression must emanate from a communist entity in order to justify American intervention on Pakistan's behalf.⁷⁴ Yet again, Pakistan did not get what it really wanted, that is, a promise of US support in case of an attack by India.

For its part, Pakistan responded by allowing the establishment of a secret US intelligence base in Badaber, near Peshawar. Known as the 6937th Communications Group or, more informally, as Operation Sandbag, the base employed radio receiver and transmitting facilities and also supported the flight of American U-2 spy planes that took off from Pakistan air force facilities in Peshawar to fly over Soviet Central Asia in order to collect information on Soviet military installations and equipment.⁷⁵ Under the 1959 agreement, the US was allowed unfettered access to the Badaber airbase for ten years. The grant of this critical intelligence facility went a considerable way towards convincing the US that it was finally getting its money's worth from its Pakistani client.

In exchange for the Badaber base, Pakistan received a long sought after addition to its air-force in the form of F-104 supersonic fighter aircraft. However, although greatly valued, even those jets might not have seemed to Ayub Khan to have been worth the cost after a U-2 spy plane flying from Badaber on a reconnaissance mission over the Soviet Union on May 1, 1960, was shot down and its pilot taken hostage. After initially lying to the world that the aircraft had been observing weather patterns, Eisenhower came clean and accepted full responsibility for the flight. In accordance with pre-planned arrangements, however, the US State Department continued to lie that Pakistan's territory had been used without its permission even as the Pakistan government dissembled for its part by claiming that it had not authorized the U-2 flights.⁷⁶

An incensed Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet leader at the time, refused to be placated by the fabricated responses and warned Pakistan that Peshawar had been "circled in red" on Soviet maps.⁷⁷ He also threatened immediate retaliation if, in future, any American plane was

⁷⁴ Khan, *Friends Not Masters*, 130.

⁷⁵ Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 185.

⁷⁶ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 113.

⁷⁷ Memorandum of a Conversation, *FRUS 1958–1960*, Volume XV, South and Southeast Asia, June 2, 1960, 810-813.

allowed to use Peshawar as a base of operations against the Soviet Union.⁷⁸ Although Ayub Khan attempted to counter Soviet intimidation by claiming that in the event of Soviet aggression, Pakistan “will not be alone,” he was alarmed not only by Moscow’s threats but, more worryingly, by the “cumbersome, sluggish and clumsy” response of his own American patron to the crisis.⁷⁹ With his confidence in America’s security guarantees against communist aggression shaken by the fallout of the U-2 affair, Ayub thought it expedient to mollify the Soviets by accepting their offer to conduct oil exploration in Pakistan, this being “one way a smaller power apologizes for its actions against a major power in the modern world.”⁸⁰

The bonhomie between the US and Pakistan that had been restored as a result of their agreement in 1959 was partially damaged by the U-2 incident; whatever remained disappeared soon thereafter once the US began to display a renewed interest in cultivating India. America’s conferment of patronage upon Pakistan was never meant to be at the expense of India; indeed, it was only when American efforts to woo the Indians had foundered on the hard rock of Nehruvian non-alignment did the US turn towards Pakistan. At the same time, however, although critical of India’s neutralist foreign policy, Eisenhower and Dulles were desperate to prevent India’s fall to communism and continued to provide significant amounts of aid to India concurrently with their assistance to Pakistan. In fact, between 1956 and 1957, US aid to India jumped dramatically from \$92.8 million to \$364.8 million while that to Pakistan grew from \$162.5 million to only \$170.7 million.⁸¹

By the early 1960s, the patron-client relationship between the US and Pakistan started to unravel as Eisenhower’s successor, John F. Kennedy, resolved to assist India in becoming “a free and thriving leader of Asia.”⁸² The Sino-Indian border war of 1962, in which India suffered a humiliating defeat, compelled Nehru to abandon his neutralist pretensions by seeking US military aid, which Kennedy was quick to provide. Pakistan felt let down by what it perceived as an alarming realignment of US priorities in South Asia in India’s favour and began to explore the possibility of building ties with China in view of their shared enmity with India. However, Pakistani measures to secure alternative sources of external support were, at least at that stage, cautious and tentative and there was no stomach for terminating its cliency relationship with the US. The American decision to arm India was a bitter pill but one that Pakistan’s leaders reluctantly swallowed, consoling themselves

⁷⁸ Michael Beschloss, *Mayday: Eisenhower, Khrushchev and the U-2 Affair* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), 256.

⁷⁹ Paul Grimes, “Ayub Doubts U.S. Can Act Swiftly,” *New York Times*, June 27, 1960.

⁸⁰ Barnds, *India, Pakistan and the Great Powers*, 162.

⁸¹ Burke and Ziring, *Pakistan’s Foreign Policy*, 257.

⁸² John F. Kennedy, *The Strategy of Peace* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 143.

with the forlorn hope that they might prevail upon their patron to condition military aid to India with a permanent settlement of the Kashmir dispute. When the US and other influential members of the international community refused to oblige Pakistan in that regard, the latter eventually sought to resolve - unsuccessfully as it turned out - the deadlock over Kashmir militarily during the second India-Pakistan war in 1965.⁸³

If American military assistance to India in 1962 had been an unwelcome surprise for Pakistan, the US approach to the India-Pakistan war of 1965 left Pakistanis shell-shocked by what they perceived as a cruel and undeserved betrayal on the part of their American patron. Upon the outbreak of hostilities, the Lyndon Johnson administration suspended military and economic assistance to both countries. Since the US had provided the bulk of Pakistan's military hardware for over a decade, the arms suspension had a much more serious impact on Islamabad than on New Delhi, which received its weaponry from a number of sources, most prominently the Soviet Union. It was not until 1967 that the sale of American spare parts to Pakistan was resumed but prohibitions remained in place regarding the supply of tanks, fighter and bomber aircraft and artillery, thereby allowing China to replace the US as Pakistan's main arms supplier.⁸⁴

The 1965 war marked an acceleration of the drift between the US and Pakistan. With American forces becoming increasingly embroiled in the quagmire of Vietnam, there was little appetite in Washington for the sort of high-level engagement in South Asia that had characterized the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations. As a consequence, Pakistan increasingly moved closer to China and even began to improve relations with the Soviet Union; by 1968, Moscow became Islamabad's second largest arms supplier after Beijing.⁸⁵ In return for increased Soviet economic and military assistance, Pakistan chose not to

⁸³ Pakistan's failed attempt to wrest Kashmir from India in 1965 was based on a two-pronged approach by which, in the first stage, irregulars were smuggled into Kashmir in order to foment a popular uprising against Indian rule. With the Indian authorities caught up in trying to control the unrest, Pakistan then launched the second stage of its plan by sending its regular troops and tanks across the ceasefire line in Kashmir in order to cut off Indian forces from their overland link with India. The Pakistani plan was based on certain critical assumptions that subsequently proved to be flawed: that the Kashmiris would rise in rebellion against India, which they declined to do; that India would not cross the international border with Pakistan, which it did; and that the international community, especially the US, would prevail upon a harried India to settle the Kashmir issue once and for all, which it refused to do. Once Indian forces counter-attacked across the international border, Pakistan's offensive in Kashmir ground to a halt and it was forced to redirect its attention to the defence of its own territory. The war lasted for a little over two weeks and ended in a stalemate. For Indian and Pakistani perspectives on the 1965 war see, respectively, R.D. Pradhan, *1965 War: The Inside Story* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2007) and Farooq Bajwa, *From Kutch to Tashkent: The Indo-Pakistan War of 1965* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2013).

⁸⁴ John W. Finney, "U.S. Won't Renew Arms Aid to India and Pakistan," *New York Times*, April 13, 1967.

⁸⁵ Richard Sisson and Leo E. Rose, *War and Secession: Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 196.

extend the lease of the American intelligence base at Badaber.⁸⁶ By 1969, when the Johnson presidency came to an end, Pakistan technically remained an American ally by continuing to be a member of SEATO and CENTO but, for all intents and purposes, the patron-client relationship forged between the two countries a decade and a half earlier was over.

V. Nixon and the “Tilt” to Pakistan

The election of Richard Nixon to the US presidency in 1968 raised expectations in Pakistan of a much-needed upswing in a relationship that had virtually hit rock bottom. Pakistanis had not forgotten Vice-President Nixon’s forceful advocacy of military assistance to their country in 1954 and looked forward to a period of closer ties with Washington with Nixon as president. The likelihood of a restored relationship became even greater in view of Nixon’s wish to employ Pakistan as an intermediary in order to initiate highly secret contacts with China. Such a policy represented a complete shift from those of Nixon’s immediate predecessors, Kennedy and Johnson, both of whom had been critical of Pakistan’s “flirtation” with Beijing.⁸⁷

That initial flirtation had been transformed into a firm partnership when Beijing provided diplomatic and military support to Islamabad during the 1965 war with India. In view of Pakistan’s closeness to China, President Nixon decided to use the good offices of his Pakistani counterpart, General Yahya Khan, to confidentially convey his peace overtures to the Chinese leadership.⁸⁸ Once a favourable response was received from Beijing, the US immediately rewarded Pakistan for its services by announcing a one-time exception to an existing ban on transfers of lethal weapons and allowing Pakistan to procure \$50 million worth of aircraft and some 300 armoured personnel carriers.⁸⁹

The failure to devise a power-sharing formula between Pakistan’s western and eastern wings following the country’s first national election in 1970 prompted the Bengali population of East Pakistan to unfurl the banner of an independent state of Bangladesh, leading in turn to the outbreak of a bloody civil war. The Pakistani military’s brutal suppression of the Bengali secessionist movement earned it considerable opprobrium in the US Congress, which compelled the Nixon administration to terminate all military aid. However, dependent on Pakistan for the success of his secret opening with China, Nixon

⁸⁶ Sisson and Rose, *War and Secession*, 174.

⁸⁷ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 176.

⁸⁸ After Ayub Khan had failed to stifle growing domestic opposition to his rule, he was persuaded by the army, headed by General Yahya Khan, to resign. In March 1969, Yahya Khan became president as well as army chief, scrapped Ayub’s constitution of 1962 and declared martial law throughout Pakistan.

⁸⁹ “U.S. to Resume Arms Sales to Pakistan,” *New York Times*, October 9, 1970.

refused to withhold economic assistance and continued to provide resolute diplomatic support to an increasingly embattled Yahya Khan.

On July 9, 1971, Nixon's National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, finally made the first US high-level contact with communist China by means of a secret flight from Islamabad to Beijing. A week later, Nixon formally announced Kissinger's trip to a stunned global audience and declared his own intention to visit China. Soon thereafter, a deeply grateful US president sent his Pakistani counterpart an effusive letter of thanks in which he hailed the latter's "great service in the cause of world peace" by means of his "indispensable role as a bridge" between the US and China.⁹⁰ Even in the face of growing demands at home for the US government to be more critical of the Yahya Khan regime for its military operation in East Pakistan, Nixon privately sent a strong message to relevant officials: "To all hands. Don't squeeze Yahya at this time."⁹¹

Notwithstanding Nixon's wish to avoid "squeezing" Yahya Khan, neither he nor his Pakistani ally could prevent the civil war that officially began in March 1971 from mushrooming into a wider conflict that would end up squeezing the life out of united Pakistan. The initial military operation had resulted in a massive exodus of refugees across the border into India, including members of the Bengali secessionist forces, known as the *Mukti Bahini*, who were joined by Bengali defectors from the Pakistan army. Sensing its opportunity to inflict a crushing defeat on its arch-foe, India immediately began to train and arm the Bengali rebels and permitted a Bangladesh government-in-exile to operate from Calcutta.⁹²

After a war of attrition spanning several months during which the Indian military engineered *Mukti Bahini* guerrilla raids on Pakistani military personnel and installations, India began to use its own troops alongside the insurgents and by November 22, 1971, it had physically occupied areas across the East Pakistan border. In early December, a full-scale Indian invasion of East Pakistan was underway and, although a weakened and outnumbered Pakistan attempted both to defend its eastern wing as well as divert India by launching an offensive of its own in the west, the outcome of the third India-Pakistan war was a foregone conclusion. On December 16, 1971, Pakistani forces in East Pakistan surrendered to the Indians in Dhaka, marking the creation of independent Bangladesh. According to his own testimony, the American ambassador to Pakistan at the time, Joseph Farland, received a direct order from Washington to meet Yahya and tell him to call off the

⁹⁰ F.S. Aijazuddin, *The White House and Pakistan: Secret Declassified Documents, 1969-1974* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 207.

⁹¹ Henry A. Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little Brown, 1979), 856.

⁹² Sisson and Rose, *War and Secession*, 181-186.

war, an undertaking that was “quite an activity for the ambassador of a foreign country to tell the president of another country.”⁹³

Throughout the East Pakistan crisis, spanning almost ten months, Nixon provided consistent diplomatic support to Pakistan, a policy that subsequently became known as his “tilt” towards that country in its conflict with India.⁹⁴ In the formulation and execution of this policy, he had the full backing of his national security advisor but encountered serious opposition from within the South Asia section of the State Department, which generally favoured a public condemnation by the US government of the military operation in East Pakistan and increased US pressure on Yahya Khan to pursue a negotiated settlement.⁹⁵ Nixon and Kissinger, on the other hand, believed that there were crucial geopolitical considerations at stake in the conflict which made it essential to avoid giving the impression that the US was letting down a loyal ally in its time of need.⁹⁶ Besides, Nixon had a “special feeling” for Yahya Khan which he was loath to discard and which influenced much of his conduct throughout the crisis.⁹⁷

Notwithstanding Nixon’s empathy with Yahya Khan, Kissinger later conceded that both he and Nixon had realized fairly early on into the military crackdown in East Pakistan that it heralded a “period of transition to greater East Pakistani autonomy and, perhaps, eventual independence.”⁹⁸ As a result, they focused their energies on trying to “reduce the pain” for their “friends in West Pakistan” by ensuring that a potential break-up of the country would not be a violent one.⁹⁹ This involved private discussions with the military regime in Pakistan regarding the need to seek a political solution to the crisis. After initially appearing “oblivious to his perils,” Yahya Khan eventually accepted several US proposals, including a US offer to mediate a deal with the secessionists as well as a promise not to execute their arrested leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

⁹³ Interview with Joseph Farland, Oral History, January 31, 2000, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, accessed June 28, 2015, <http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Farland,%20Joseph%20S.toc.pdf>

⁹⁴ The word “tilt” had its origins in leaked minutes from secret meetings of the Washington Special Action Group convened during the period when India and Pakistan were at war. In one such document, an irate Kissinger had warned officials that he was “getting hell every half hour” from Nixon who believed that “we are not being tough enough on India.” Instead, the President “wants to tilt in favour of Pakistan.” Cited in Christopher Van Hollen, “The Tilt Policy Revisited: Nixon-Kissinger Geopolitics and South Asia,” *Asian Survey* 20, no. 4 (April 1980): 339.

⁹⁵ Sisson and Rose, *War and Secession*, 259; Van Hollen, “The Tilt Policy Revisited,” 345-346; and Kissinger, *White House Years*, 864.

⁹⁶ Both Nixon and Kissinger subscribed to the view that America’s growing ties with China would be weakened if the US was perceived as unreliable when it came to supporting its allies, particularly in the case of Pakistan, which was China’s ally as well. Van Hollen, “The Tilt Policy Revisited,” 353; and Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 194.

⁹⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, *FRUS 1969-1976*, Vol. XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, June 3, 1971, ed. Edward C. Keefer (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2005), 163-167.

⁹⁸ Memorandum from the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, *FRUS 1969-1976*, Vol. XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, April 28, 1971, 94-99.

⁹⁹ Tahir-Kheli, *The United States and Pakistan*, 36.

According to Kissinger, Indian obstructionism put paid to all initiatives aimed at a negotiated settlement of the crisis. Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had “no intention of permitting Pakistan’s leaders to escape their dilemma so easily”¹⁰⁰ and shot down Yahya Khan’s offer for a unilateral ceasefire, the repatriation of most refugees and a return to civilian government in East Pakistan, concessions that had been extracted from him by Nixon.¹⁰¹ After failing in its objective of preventing another India-Pakistan war, the US then attempted to bring an end to hostilities as quickly as possible. Nixon and Kissinger were convinced that India’s war aims were not confined merely to defeating the Pakistan army in East Pakistan but also envisaged the “disintegration” of West Pakistan.¹⁰² This view possibly gained currency after a frosty meeting between Nixon and Mrs Gandhi at the White House in November 1971, during which the latter had claimed that not only East Pakistan but areas in the western wing such as Balochistan and the NWFP both desired and deserved greater autonomy. The statement appeared to her American interlocutors, Nixon and Kissinger, as “at best irrelevant to the issues and at worst a threat to the cohesion of even West Pakistan.”¹⁰³

While the Nixon administration had reconciled itself to the eventual separation of East Pakistan, it was not prepared to countenance the fragmentation of the country’s western half, particularly at the hands of a close Soviet ally like India. Just months before the outbreak of war, India and the Soviet Union had signed a twenty-year Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation, a move aimed at countering an emerging US-Pakistan-China axis and giving India enough international muscle once it decided to go to war with Pakistan.¹⁰⁴ In view of Pakistan’s membership of CENTO, its proximity to the Persian Gulf, and its close relations with other important Muslim countries (and fellow US clients) such as Jordan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, the maintenance of West Pakistan’s territorial integrity was viewed by the US as a strategic imperative.

Whether or not India actually intended to follow up its victory in East Pakistan with a full-blown offensive aimed at turning West Pakistan into a “vassal state”, as claimed by

¹⁰⁰ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 871.

¹⁰¹ Tahir-Kheli, *The United States and Pakistan*, 42.

¹⁰² Kissinger, *White House Years*, 886.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 881.

¹⁰⁴ While not exactly a military pact, the treaty provided that in case either party was attacked by another or even threatened to be attacked, both parties would “enter into mutual consultations in order to remove such threat and to take appropriate effective measures to ensure peace and the security of their countries.” Article IX of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation, August 9, 1947, in Robert Jackson, *South Asian Crisis: India-Pakistan-Bangladesh* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1975), Appendix 8, 190.

Kissinger, has been the subject of considerable debate.¹⁰⁵ What is certain, however, is that Nixon and Kissinger viewed Soviet-backed India's designs against West Pakistan as sufficiently serious to merit the despatch of an eight-ship task force headed by an aircraft carrier to the Bay of Bengal. They also believed, mistakenly as it turned out, that China would intervene militarily on Pakistan's behalf and that a US naval presence would be necessary to deter a potential Soviet offensive against China.¹⁰⁶ The US fleet arrived only a day before the Pakistani surrender in Dhaka, following which India agreed to an unconditional ceasefire in the west.

Nixon and Kissinger claimed that their decision to send the taskforce was successful both in deterring potential Indian aggression in West Pakistan as well as in convincing the Soviets to exercise restraint over its Indian ally. By preserving at least that much of Pakistani territory, they prevented what they saw as a clear threat to international order through the "naked recourse to force by a partner of the Soviet Union backed by Soviet arms and buttressed by Soviet resources..."¹⁰⁷ Opponents of their policy maintain that it was "flawed both in conception and implementation" and that it needlessly transformed a local conflict into a great-power confrontation.¹⁰⁸

On balance, it is reasonable to conclude that Nixon allowed the crisis to degenerate into war by his refusal to put meaningful pressure on Yahya Khan to end military atrocities in East Pakistan and bring about a political solution to the conflict. Obsessed with cementing his place in US presidential history as the initiator of peaceful relations with communist China, Nixon was unwilling to risk the success of his China initiative by weakening the position of his chosen intermediary. He therefore looked the other way as Yahya Khan unleashed a wave of brutality over his own people. Even if assertions by Nixon and Kissinger regarding the US role in "saving" West Pakistan are allowed credence, they should not in any way absolve them of their share of responsibility in providing legitimacy and support to a regime that had lost all credibility in the eyes of most of its own people.

VI. Nuclear Defiance

After presiding over his country's disintegration, General Yahya Khan resigned the presidency in the wake of the defeat to India and handed over power to a civilian politician, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, an ambitious protégé-turned-opponent of Ayub Khan whose Pakistan

¹⁰⁵ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 903. For a comprehensive critique of the Nixon-Kissinger approach to the East Pakistan crisis, see Van Hollen, "The Tilt Policy Revisited," 339-361.

¹⁰⁶ Raymond Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1994), 305.

¹⁰⁷ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 913.

¹⁰⁸ Van Hollen, "The Tilt Policy Revisited," 355.

People's Party (PPP) had won a majority of seats in West Pakistan in the 1970 elections. As Ayub's foreign minister, Bhutto had been one of the chief planners and supporters of the 1965 war with India but had shrewdly used the negative fallout of that conflict to build his own political base in opposition to Ayub. Once out of office, Bhutto became a populist politician, using his personal charisma and fiery oratory to tap into an increasingly bitter anti-American sentiment amongst Pakistanis at what they perceived as American perfidy in refusing to come to the aid of their once "most allied ally" in its war with India.

Even during his time as foreign minister, Bhutto had been an ardent advocate of building up Pakistan's relations with China and lessening its dependence upon the US. During his period in opposition, his calls for an independent foreign policy became more strident and his condemnation of America's broken commitments to Pakistan became more pronounced.¹⁰⁹ Upon his ascension to power, however, Bhutto showed greater pragmatism in his approach to the US. Shortly after becoming president, he broke with protocol by calling upon the American ambassador to Pakistan at the latter's residence as a way of expressing the sincerity of his desire to inaugurate "a whole new period of close and effective relations with the United States."¹¹⁰

In other words, Bhutto wished to resurrect his country's cliency relationship with its traditional source of military and economic assistance. In March 1972, the US was presented with a formal request for a resumption of military aid, with the Pakistani shopping-list including 100 M 47/48 tanks, 4 submarines, 12 B-57 bombers, 25 F-5 fighter jets, 1000 M-601 trucks and an unspecified amount of artillery and communications equipment. In addition, it also petitioned the US to provide replacements for American-supplied weaponry lost during the 1971 war including 74 tanks, 25 F-86 fighter aircraft, 4 B-57 bombers and 3 F-104 jets.¹¹¹ In exchange, Bhutto proposed a more active role for Pakistan within CENTO,¹¹² the provision of port and "tracking station" facilities to the US along Pakistan's Arabian Sea coastline and the enhancement of American "collaboration" in Pakistan's strategic military planning.¹¹³

With a battle for re-election coming up later that year, Nixon pleaded his inability to resume military aid before winning a second term in office but Pakistan was reassured that if it

¹⁰⁹ See Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, *The Myth of Independence* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

¹¹⁰ F.S. Aijazuddin, *The White House and Pakistan*, 486-487.

¹¹¹ Telegram 49598 from the Department of State to the Embassy in Pakistan, *FRUS 1969-1976*, Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972, March 23, 1972, 1-2.

¹¹² Following the creation of Bangladesh, Pakistan withdrew from SEATO but continued to remain a member of CENTO until 1979, when the withdrawal of Iran from the organization after the Islamic Revolution brought the American-backed Middle Eastern security network to an inglorious end.

¹¹³ Memorandum from Secretary of State Rogers to President Nixon, *FRUS 1969-1976*, Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972, March 17, 1972, 1-3.

faced another Indian attack, the US would “react violently” in response.¹¹⁴ While understanding the need to wait until after the elections to seek US assistance, Bhutto kept playing the old anti-Soviet card employed to good effect by his predecessors in order to make the case for Pakistan’s need for US patronage. He warned his American interlocutors, without providing hard evidence to the effect, that the Russians were moving into India and Bangladesh in large numbers, which made it essential for the US to retain a presence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean. According to Bhutto, the Russians desperately wanted access to a warm water port in close proximity to the Persian Gulf and it would be a great setback to them if the US built and operated such a port from one of the sites being offered by Pakistan.¹¹⁵

In a meeting with Nixon during his state visit to the US in 1973, Bhutto came equipped with maps of Pakistan’s Arabian Sea coastline to again push the idea of the proposed US-built port in Balochistan where “if the US is interested, there could even be a US presence.”¹¹⁶ Bhutto declared that he was “morally certain” that such a US presence would be “justified in terms of Pakistani interests.”¹¹⁷ Although “intrigued” by the idea, Nixon declined to say anything definitive on it until it had been checked with the US Navy. In the meantime, however, he assured Bhutto that even without such incentives being offered, the independence of Pakistan would remain “a cornerstone of US foreign policy.”¹¹⁸ Much to Bhutto’s disappointment, however, there would be no immediate resumption of US military aid. Even though Nixon had won a second term, his internal battle for survival in the midst of the Watergate scandal that eventually brought a premature end to his presidency meant that he had precious little domestic manoeuvrability to manage a lifting of the arms embargo imposed on Pakistan during the 1971 war.

Knowing that mere expressions of American goodwill and verbal declarations of support for Pakistan’s independence would neither address the country’s pressing economic and military needs nor strengthen his own internal position, Bhutto began to look for alternative sources of support. While continuing to build on the friendship with China, he also managed to normalize relations with the Soviet Union after they had been badly damaged during the East Pakistan crisis. This was in line with Bhutto’s diplomatic strategy of

¹¹⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, *FRUS1969-1976*, Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972, March 29, 1972, 1-8.

¹¹⁵ Telegram 4089 from the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State, *FRUS1969-1976*, Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972, July 8, 1972, 1-3.

¹¹⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, *FRUS1969-1976*, Volume E-8, Documents on South Asia, 1973–1976, Document 147, September 18, 1973, 1-16.

¹¹⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, *FRUS1969-1976*, Volume E-8, Documents on South Asia, 1973–1976, Document 148, September 19, 1973, 1-14.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

“trilateral bilateralism,” by which he resolved to maintain reasonably friendly and cooperative relations with all three great powers - China, Russia and the US.

Bhutto also achieved considerable success in wooing Iran and the Arab oil-producing states, whose windfall profits generated in the wake of the 1973 oil embargo made them particularly attractive potential sources of assistance. He played the Islamic card to great effect, most prominently in 1974 when he hosted an Islamic summit at Lahore that was attended by 37 Muslim countries. His vocal championing of Islamic causes made a very favourable impression on conservative monarchs such as King Faisal of Saudi Arabia and Sheikh Zayed of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), but Bhutto was versatile enough to develop equally close relations with more secular Muslim rulers as well, most prominently the Shah of Iran and Libya’s Colonel Qaddafi. As a consequence, in terms of economic assistance, Iran, Libya, Saudi Arabia and the UAE became Pakistan’s most generous benefactors during the 1970s.¹¹⁹

Diversifying its sources of material assistance became particularly crucial for Pakistan once nuclear weapons entered the South Asian strategic environment following a successful atomic test by India in May 1974.¹²⁰ Indian acquisition of nuclear-weapon capability, coming on the heels of its success in the 1971 war, compelled a deeply worried Pakistan to launch “all-out efforts” to extract security guarantees and weapons from the major powers.¹²¹ Bhutto himself declared that were Pakistan’s security interests to be satisfied by the US through the provision of adequate security guarantees against an Indian nuclear attack, then Pakistan “will not squander away limited resources in [the nuclear] direction”.¹²² When neither a security guarantee nor a resumption of conventional weaponry was offered, Bhutto felt Pakistan was left with no option but to follow India down the nuclear path, a decision that would put him increasingly at odds with the US.

Although Bhutto can lay a legitimate claim to being the father of Pakistan’s bomb, the country’s actual nuclear programme had commenced even before he had become a cabinet minister. The Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) had been set up in 1956 with the assistance of the US government’s Atoms for Peace initiative and its mandate was

¹¹⁹ See Burke and Ziring, *Pakistan’s Foreign Policy*, 425-427. During the Bhutto era, Pakistan also developed substantial military-to-military arrangements with other Islamic states, including the signing of military protocols with Kuwait, Iraq, Oman, the UAE, Libya and Saudi Arabia. It also provided Bahrain, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Malaysia, Qatar, Syria, Sudan, and Turkey with access to military installations and services.

¹²⁰ Code named “Smiling Buddha,” the test was referred to by India in somewhat Orwellian terms as a “peaceful nuclear explosion.”

¹²¹ Telegram 5623 from the Embassy in Pakistan to the Department of State, *FRUS 1969-1976*, Volume E-8, Documents on South Asia, 1973-1976, June 12, 1974, 1-6.

¹²² Bernard Weinraub, “Pakistani Presses U.S. for Arms,” *New York Times*, October 14, 1974.

confined to the promotion of peaceful uses of atomic energy. As minister for mineral resources between 1958 and 1962, Bhutto took a keen interest in the nuclear programme and supported both the creation of the Pakistan Institute of Nuclear Sciences and Technology (PINSTECH) in 1960 and the implementation of an ambitious training program run by the PAEC by which hundreds of Pakistani students were sent abroad to obtain research degrees in physics and nuclear-related subjects.¹²³

By the time he became foreign minister in 1963, Bhutto had already begun “lobbying in earnest”¹²⁴ to use nuclear technology for military purposes as a response to what appeared to Pakistan as alarmingly imminent moves by India in that direction.¹²⁵ Once China went nuclear in 1964, Pakistan considered it only a matter of time before India followed suit. After India’s commissioning of a nuclear reprocessing plant in 1964, Bhutto famously declared that if India developed a nuclear weapon, then “even if we have to feed on grass or leaves - or even if we have to starve - we shall also produce an atomic bomb as we would be left with no other alternative.”¹²⁶ In his study of the impact of India’s nuclear weapons on global proliferation, George Perkovich suggests that Pakistan’s decision to initiate the 1965 war with India could well have been prompted by a desperate urge to settle the Kashmir issue in its favour before its adversary acquired nuclear capability.¹²⁷

The unwillingness of key allies such as the US and China to intervene on Pakistan’s behalf in the 1971 war convinced Bhutto that his country would need nuclear weapons to deter future Indian aggression, especially in view of a growing imbalance of conventional weapons in India’s favour stemming from the continuing US arms embargo on Pakistan.¹²⁸ Two years before India went overtly nuclear and just a couple of months after becoming president, Bhutto assembled a secret gathering of Pakistan’s leading scientists and informed his stunned audience that Pakistan would have to build an atomic bomb at all costs. He declared that he had always wanted Pakistan to acquire nuclear weapons and now fate had placed him in a position to make it happen.

¹²³ *Nuclear Black Markets: Pakistan, A.Q. Khan and the Rise of Proliferation Networks* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2007), 15.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ See George Perkovich, *India’s Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 108.

¹²⁶ Feroz Khan, *Eating Grass: The Making of the Pakistani Bomb* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 7. This view was not, however, endorsed by Bhutto’s political overlord at the time, President Ayub Khan, who did not consider nuclear weapons necessary for Pakistan’s national security. See Kamal Matinuddin, *The Nuclearization of South Asia* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002), 81.

¹²⁷ Perkovich, *India’s Nuclear Bomb*, 108.

¹²⁸ The American arms embargo was imposed on both Pakistan and India but the latter continued to receive an uninterrupted flow of weapons from the Soviet Union, especially during the 1971 war. Although Pakistan did receive arms from China, they were far less sophisticated than American or Soviet weaponry.

When he asked the scientists how long it would take them to build a bomb, Bhutto initially received ambivalent responses from his audience, with some expressing the impossibility of giving a definite timeframe and a few even doubting if Pakistan had the requisite technological capacity to pull it off at all. Finally, one intrepid scientist put forward five years as a realistic period in which to make the bomb upon which Bhutto, with his characteristic flair for the dramatic, lifted his hand, pushed forward three fingers and said “Three years. I want it in three years.”¹²⁹

Caught up in the sheer electricity of the moment and fired up by Bhutto’s call to “vindicate the country’s honour” after its humiliation by India in 1971, the scientists agreed to do it in three years if given the required resources and facilities. Bhutto gave them his personal assurance that he would find them all that they required to get the job done. India’s explosion in 1974 only lent further urgency to a quest that had been initiated at least two years earlier, a quest that would, according to one account, result in “one of the most audacious forays ever into the world of nuclear and industrial espionage.”¹³⁰ In securing external financial backing for Pakistan’s nuclear programme, Bhutto wielded the Islamic card to full effect. King Faisal and Colonel Qaddafi, in particular, proved especially receptive to Bhutto’s offer of “the one thing that their billions could never buy on their own - the promise of an Islamic bomb.”¹³¹

Whilst embarking on their quest for the bomb in 1972, Bhutto and his team of scientists decided to adopt what was regarded as the “most efficient pathway” to nuclear weapons: the production of weapons-grade plutonium.¹³² The reprocessing technology required to extract it was “widely understood, easily available and relatively cheap,” thereby convincing the Pakistanis that the plutonium route was “their easiest way to the Islamic bomb.”¹³³ It did not take long, however, for roadblocks to emerge, stemming primarily from export controls and safeguards imposed by leading Western industrialized nations in order to prevent further proliferation after India’s ‘peaceful nuclear explosion’ of 1974.

Ironically for Pakistan, it would become the first and most obvious test-case for the credibility of the US-led international nuclear non-proliferation regime, even though it was India that had actually tested a nuclear weapon. In anticipation of the probable obstacles that lay ahead, Pakistan had decided as early as 1974 to secretly pursue an alternative to the plutonium route, even as it carried on with its efforts to secure reprocessing facilities for

¹²⁹ Steve Weissman and Herbert Krosney, *The Islamic Bomb* (New Delhi: Vision Books, 1983), 18.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 17-19.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 29. Estimates of Libya’s contribution to Pakistan’s nuclear programme range from \$100-500 million. See Khan, *Eating Grass*, 111.

¹³² *Nuclear Black Markets*, 16.

¹³³ Weissman and Krosney, *The Islamic Bomb*, 196.

plutonium extraction. The second pathway to the bomb was uranium enrichment, a highly complicated process mastered at the time by only a handful of the most scientifically advanced Western countries, which had built their enrichment facilities under complete secrecy and kept the technology used therein equally confidential.¹³⁴

In September 1974, Bhutto received a letter from Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan (better known as A.Q. Khan), a Pakistani metallurgist working for a specialized engineering firm in Holland. Khan's firm provided sub-contracting and consultancy services to a European nuclear consortium called URENCO, which used a new and highly secret ultracentrifuge technology to enrich uranium as a fuel for nuclear power plants. In his letter, Khan advocated the use of highly enriched uranium as an alternative to the plutonium route and offered his expertise in centrifuge technology to help Pakistan obtain enough fissile material for a nuclear weapon. His offer was accepted but he was asked to stay on in Holland and acquire greater knowledge of the process. At the same time, however, his advocacy of the uranium route was cogent enough to compel Bhutto to initiate a secret uranium enrichment plan code-named Project 706.¹³⁵ In February 1975, the prime minister approved the construction of a secret centrifuge-based uranium enrichment facility in the small town of Kahuta, thirty kilometres southeast of Islamabad.

In the meantime, A.Q. Khan had gained vital information about gas centrifuge technology through visits to URENCO's uranium-enrichment facility in the Dutch town of Almelo. By 1975, he was passing on centrifuge designs to his Pakistani colleagues working on Project 706. Once the Dutch authorities became suspicious of Khan's activities, he moved back to Pakistan in December 1975 and formally joined the secret uranium enrichment programme. In July 1976, he managed to prevail upon Bhutto to give him complete control over the centrifuge project, which included presiding over a secret procurement programme operating through Pakistani embassies and consular offices in Europe. The Kahuta facility, which had previously fallen under the ambit of the PAEC, was now made an autonomous organization called the Engineering Research Laboratories and placed under A.Q. Khan's unfettered authority.

Even as he clandestinely pursued nuclear weapon capability, Bhutto continued to urge the US to end its arms embargo on Pakistan, a decision that was finally taken in 1975 by Nixon's successor, Gerald Ford, who restored American arms sales to both Pakistan and

¹³⁴ Weissman and Krosney, *The Islamic Bomb*, 187.

¹³⁵ For more on the objectives and functioning of Project 706, see Khan, *Eating Grass*, 142-160.

India concurrently.¹³⁶ Despite the generally friendly attitude of the Ford administration towards Pakistan and the “personal relations” that Bhutto claimed he enjoyed with Kissinger (whom Ford had retained as Secretary of State), strains in the overall relationship between the US and Pakistan soon began to emerge over the nuclear issue.¹³⁷ Of particular concern to the US was Pakistan’s agreement with a French engineering firm in 1974 for the construction of a facility to reprocess spent nuclear fuel, which the Americans feared would be used by the Pakistanis to extract weapons-grade plutonium. When viewed in conjunction with Pakistan’s negotiations with West Germany for the acquisition of a heavy water production plant, such measures, in the opinion of the US administration, gave rise to “perceptions...that non-peaceful uses may be contemplated”.¹³⁸

A top-secret memorandum on nuclear proliferation activities prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in December 1975 warned that Pakistan could be technically capable of building a nuclear device by 1978.¹³⁹ In a letter to Bhutto, Ford officially expressed his “deep personal concern” regarding Pakistan’s nuclear-related activities and warned of their potentially damaging impact on the future course of US-Pakistan relations. He also called upon Bhutto to abandon plans to acquire the reprocessing facility and heavy water plant until Pakistan’s nuclear programme was “sufficiently developed to establish a clear need” for their acquisition.¹⁴⁰ While sympathising with Pakistan’s nuclear ambitions in private deliberations with his own officials,¹⁴¹ Kissinger engaged in muscular diplomacy with Bhutto in a determined - albeit unsuccessful - attempt to wean him away from the nuclear option. Bhutto’s verbal assurances that Pakistan’s nuclear facilities would be placed

¹³⁶ National Security Decision Memorandum 289, *FRUS 1969-1976*, Volume E-8, Documents on South Asia, 1973-1976, March 24, 1975, 1-2. The lifting of the arms embargo applied only to the *sale* of weapons in hard currency; it made no provision for *grants* or concessional sales, which had been “the mainstay” of military assistance to Pakistan during the 1950s and early 1960s. Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 218.

¹³⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, *FRUS 1969-1976*, Volume E-8, Documents on South Asia, 1973-1976, February 5, 1975, 1-9.

¹³⁸ Telegram 40475 from the Department of State to the Embassy in Pakistan, *FRUS 1969-1976*, Volume E-8, Documents on South Asia, 1973-1976, February 19, 1976, 1-4.

¹³⁹ Memorandum to Holders, “Prospects for Further Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons,” Special National Intelligence Estimate 4-1-74, December 18, 1975, Digital National Security Archive (hereafter DNSA), accessed July 18, 2015, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nukevault/ebb333/doc01.pdf>

¹⁴⁰ Letter from President Ford to Pakistani Prime Minister Bhutto, *FRUS 1969-1976*, Volume E-8, Documents on South Asia, 1973-1976, March 19, 1976, 1-3.

¹⁴¹ In a high-level State Department meeting convened to discuss Pakistan plans to acquire the reprocessing facility, Kissinger had declared: “I must say I have some sympathy for Bhutto in this. We are doing nothing to help him on conventional arms, we are going ahead and selling nuclear fuel to India even after they exploded a bomb and then for this little project we are coming down on him like a ton of bricks.” Memorandum of Conversation, *FRUS 1969-1976*, Volume E-8, Documents on South Asia, 1973-1976, July 9, 1976, 1-12.

under adequate safeguards were dismissed by Kissinger on the grounds that he was “not so interested in words but concerned about realities.”¹⁴²

Undeterred by US pressure, Bhutto forged ahead in his quest to build the bomb, even as he undertook to assure the international community that he had no intention of doing so.¹⁴³ The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) finally gave its approval to the Franco-Pakistani nuclear agreement after Pakistan consented to place the facility in question, the Chashma reprocessing plant, under international safeguards, including regular visits by IAEA inspectors. Pakistan also undertook to ensure that the reprocessing equipment or the material produced by it would not be used for “the manufacture of any nuclear weapon or to further any other military purpose or for the manufacture of any other nuclear explosive device”.¹⁴⁴ Such assurances were not sufficient to convince the US, which decided to pursue a carrot-and-stick approach towards Pakistan.

In August 1976, on his final trip to Pakistan as Secretary of State, Kissinger offered to strengthen Pakistan’s conventional defence capabilities by providing 110 Corsair A-7 attack bombers in exchange for an abandonment of the reprocessing plant. In case Pakistan refused, Kissinger threatened that all aid could be cut off under new legislation passed by the US Congress in a bid to curtail further nuclear proliferation. Under the terms of the Symington Amendment to the foreign assistance act introduced in June 1976, all economic and military aid was prohibited to any non-Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT) signatories involved in importing or exporting reprocessing facilities or unsafeguarded enrichment plants.¹⁴⁵

Whilst urging Bhutto to accept the American offer, Kissinger warned that if the Democrats under Jimmy Carter came to power in the forthcoming US presidential election, they would adopt a much tougher stance on non-proliferation and would make a “horrible example” out of Pakistan. In a meeting with Pakistan’s ambassador to the US the following month, he reiterated his warning that if the Democrats won, “they would like nothing better than to make a horrible example about somebody.” Since it would be very difficult for them to take

¹⁴² Memorandum of Conversation between Secretary Kissinger and Prime Minister Bhutto, February 26, 1976, DNSA, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB193/HAK%202-26-76.pdf>

¹⁴³ According to Perkovich, Bhutto’s own statements during his murder trial as well as later American intelligence reports indicate that during a May 1976 visit to China, he managed to convince the Chinese to provide important material assistance towards the Pakistani bomb effort. See Perkovich, *India’s Nuclear Bomb*, 196.

¹⁴⁴ Weissman and Krosney, *The Islamic Bomb*, 96.

¹⁴⁵ The amendment took its name from its author, Democratic Senator Stuart Symington.

on the French, Kissinger cautioned that Pakistan would be a far easier victim for an “assault” by a future Carter administration.¹⁴⁶

Bhutto’s version of his meeting with Kissinger is different, in that he accuses the latter of having threatened to make a horrible example out of him personally if he did not desist from going after the bomb. Even if such were indeed the case, that did not prevent Bhutto from writing to Kissinger in evidently warm terms following Ford’s defeat by Carter in November 1976: “The termination of your present high office saddens me...I shall always cherish my association with you as a friend with esteem and affection”.¹⁴⁷ Yet Bhutto did not allow his personal friendship with Kissinger to influence his stand on the reprocessing plant; nor did Kissinger’s policy of combining incentives such as the A-7 bombers with dire warnings of “horrible” consequences have any impact. Bhutto remained defiant and Kissinger returned empty-handed.

Notwithstanding their differences over the nuclear issue, Pakistan and the US enjoyed generally cooperative ties during the brief period of the Ford presidency, in no small measure due to the close working relationship between Bhutto and Kissinger. With Bhutto at the helm, Pakistan diversified its foreign policy and the US no longer remained its only source of external patronage; at the same time, however, American economic and military support continued to be sought as assiduously as before. While Ford and Kissinger were in charge, such support was forthcoming, most notably with the lifting of the arms embargo in 1975. But the return of the Democrats under Jimmy Carter who, during his presidential campaign, had promised to be resolute on non-proliferation and human rights, did not augur well for the future of America’s relationship with its once “most allied ally.”

As expected, US-Pakistan relations rapidly plummeted to unprecedented depths after Jimmy Carter assumed the presidency. Bhutto soon found himself facing growing US pressure to roll back the nuclear programme at a time when domestic opposition to his rule was intensifying rapidly. Bhutto’s overwhelming victory in national elections held in March 1977 was tainted by allegations of widespread rigging. His main opposition, a nine-party grouping called the Pakistan National Alliance, rejected the election results and took to the streets demanding Bhutto’s resignation, sparking widespread demonstrations and strikes. Bhutto’s attempts to suppress the protests led to violence and significant loss of lives, eventually forcing him to call in the army to restore order. With governance in a state of paralysis and a national economy teetering on the brink of collapse, the Pakistan army was

¹⁴⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, *FRUS 1969-1976*, Volume E-8, Documents on South Asia, 1973–1976, September 11, 1976, 1-4.

¹⁴⁷ Wolpert, *Zulfi Bhutto*, 273.

provided the rationale for another overt foray into the country's political process. On July 5, 1977, Bhutto was removed through a bloodless military coup carried out by army chief General Zia-ul-Haq.

During his final months in office, an increasingly desperate Bhutto had trained his guns on the US, accusing the Carter administration of orchestrating the domestic protests against him as part of a "vast, colossal, huge international conspiracy" to topple him and thereby prevent Pakistan's nuclear programme from attaining fruition.¹⁴⁸ In his last political testament written from a cell where he had been placed on a murder charge that eventually cost him his life, Bhutto maintained that Pakistan had been on the "threshold of full nuclear capability" when he left the government to "come to this death cell." He alleged that the "Christian, Jewish and Hindu civilizations," all of which already possessed nuclear capability, wished to deny it to the "Islamic civilization" just when it was on the cusp of attaining it.¹⁴⁹ Bhutto was unable to present hard evidence to substantiate the allegation of US involvement in his overthrow, but even if his claim were true, any hopes that the Americans might have had of the nuclear programme going out with its originator were to be dashed. Zia-ul-Haq would be just as resolute in the pursuit of nuclear capability as the man he had replaced, a theme addressed in greater detail in the following chapter.

Conclusion

The turbulent history of Pakistan's relationship with the United States during the first three decades of its existence testifies to the inherently changeable nature of international patron-client relationships. Their fluidity, in turn, stems from the volatility of the strategic environment in which they are formed and which serves as the battleground upon which they operate. Constant permutations and shifts of alignment on that battleground in turn determine the direction that patron-client relationships must take; indeed, they even determine if such relationships need be maintained at all. As argued in the first chapter, patron-client state relationships are not static arrangements in which an all-powerful patron exerts hegemonic control over its supine client; on the contrary, the client invariably exerts considerable pressure on the patron and, given the right circumstances, is capable of a high degree of strategic defiance, even at the risk of depriving itself of the patron's material assistance.

In the initial years after independence, Pakistan desperately sought an external patron to guarantee both its economic solvency as well as its territorial integrity against threats from India and, to a less pressing extent, from Afghanistan. Until the early 1950s, the US saw

¹⁴⁸ Lewis M. Simons, "Bhutto Alleges U.S. Plot," *Washington Post*, April 29, 1977.

¹⁴⁹ Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, *"If I am Assassinated...."* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1979), 138.

little of strategic significance to engage its attention in South Asia; whatever interest it had was directed at securing a cooperative relationship with India, which it saw as a potential ally in preventing communist penetration into Asia. When India opted to remain non-aligned in the Cold War, the US reluctantly turned towards Pakistan, which readily agreed to serve as a foot-soldier in the battle against communism in exchange for American arms and economic aid. Whereas America desired its weapons to be used solely for the purpose of countering communist aggression, it soon became clear that Pakistan's only purpose in seeking them was to build up its military against India. A relationship that, from its outset, rested on contradictory purposes and which, moreover, could not claim a clear ideological or historical basis for its continuity, was never likely to be one that would fulfil the expectations of either party.

By the early 1960s, Pakistan began to entertain serious misgivings about America's reliability as a patron in case of a conflict with India. The relationship was put to its first real test during the 1965 India-Pakistan war and, at least from Pakistan's perspective, the US miserably failed it. Instead of assisting Pakistan in its hour of need, the American response was to punish its once "most allied ally" by choking off its access to US weaponry at a time when it needed it most. With American interest in South Asia once again in decline, Pakistan's strategic importance diminished, resulting in a considerable weakening of the patron-client bonds forged during the 1950s.

Nixon's decision to utilise Pakistan as the medium through which to achieve a rapprochement with China temporarily restored a measure of strategic value to the relationship. However, his controversial "tilt" towards Pakistan did not extend to preventing the separation of half the country. Pakistan's subsequent embarkation on a determined quest to acquire nuclear capability was met with sustained and, on occasions, stern US opposition, both in the form of verbal cautions as well as through more practical measures such as the stoppage of military aid. But Pakistan refused to submit to American pressure to abandon its nuclear ambitions, just as it had earlier defied American strictures not to use US-supplied weaponry against India. Instances such as these are stark reminders of the often rather limited influence that a patron state, even if it be a superpower, can bring to bear on a client that is fully committed to pursuing what it deems its fundamental national interests, even when those interests conflict with those of the patron.

CHAPTER THREE: FRONTLINE STATE - THE ZIA-UL-HAQ ERA

General Zia-ul-Haq's coup of July 1977 abruptly terminated Pakistan's brief experiment with representative democracy and inaugurated what still remains its longest period of direct military rule. Upon taking over the country, Zia solemnly proclaimed his intention to hold elections within ninety days and hand over power to the people's elected representatives. Instead of honouring that pledge, he proceeded to rule Pakistan with an iron fist for the next eleven years. Even when the end finally came, it arrived not through a voluntary relinquishment of power but through Zia's death in a mysterious plane crash in the sandy wastes of the Bahawalpur desert in Pakistan's south-east.

The impact of Zia's policies continued to be felt long after the demise of their originator. Indeed, more than two and a half decades after Zia plunged to his fiery death, his shadow still looms large over Pakistan's political, societal and geo-strategic landscape. At the same time, however, it is debatable if Zia could have ruled for as long as he did or had as powerful an influence within Pakistan as well as beyond had it not been for a single exogenous factor: the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, which catapulted Pakistan virtually overnight from an international pariah into a bastion of resistance to communist aggression.

With Zia at the helm, Pakistan became an indispensable part of the largest covert operation mounted by the CIA during the Cold War. Once again, America and Pakistan found themselves locked in the bonds of a patron-client relationship whereby, in exchange for its services in coordinating the Afghan resistance, Pakistan was rewarded with substantial American military and economic aid and Zia's military dictatorship was provided international legitimacy. Although clearly in pressing need of American patronage, Zia was by no means a mere pawn to be used whichever way his superpower patron deemed fit. In fact, he shrewdly manipulated the relationship with the US in ways guaranteed not only to prolong his own rule but to also protect what he viewed as Pakistan's core interests, even when they conflicted with those of the US itself.

I. A Troubled Beginning: Carter and Zia

During the first half of Jimmy Carter's one-term presidency, relations between the US and Pakistan reached the nadir of their fortunes. By the time Carter took office in 1977, Pakistan's geographic location had lost much of the strategic allure that had made it a recipient of US patronage at varying periods over the previous three decades. The absolute

monarchies of Iran and Saudi Arabia had become the leading pillars of support for US interests in the Middle East and West Asia. Moreover, under Carter, the US was committed to lowering tensions with the Soviet Union, part of which would involve an effort to “negotiate itself and the Soviets out of the Indian Ocean power race.”¹ Finally, the US no longer required Pakistan to function as an intermediary with China, to which it now had direct access.

Even more worryingly for Pakistan, the diminution of its strategic importance for the US was accompanied by the realization that Carter and his foreign policy team appeared much more favourably disposed towards India. This was in line with an approach propounded by Carter’s national security advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, which sought to “weave a worldwide web” of bilateral relations between the US and emerging regional “influentials” in the Third World.² Within the South Asian region, that meant India and not Pakistan; accordingly, in July 1977, as General Zia-ul-Haq was upending democracy in Pakistan, Carter welcomed India’s newly elected prime minister, Morarji Desai, to the White House.³ The following year, Carter became the third US president after Eisenhower and Nixon to undertake an official trip to India; unlike his predecessors, however, he chose not to include Pakistan in his travel itinerary to the subcontinent.

Although concerned about Pakistan’s reversion to military rule, the Carter administration’s major bone of contention with its new interlocutors in Islamabad remained the nuclear issue. While Bhutto was in office, Carter had continued to pursue the carrot-and-stick approach of the Ford/Kissinger period of threatening sanctions but also keeping the incentive of military aid on the table if Pakistan gave up its nuclear ambitions. However, neither Bhutto nor the man who removed him would cave in to American pressure. Shortly after taking over, Zia made it clear to the US that he would continue his predecessor’s policies regarding Pakistan’s nuclear programme, thereby demonstrating a regime-transcendent consensus that no compromise would be made on what had become a core security interest as well as a matter of national prestige. In response, the Carter administration suspended all economic assistance under the terms of the Glenn Amendment of 1977.⁴

¹ Thomas Perry Thornton, “Between the Stools? U.S. Policy Towards Pakistan During the Carter Administration,” *Asian Survey* 22, no. 10 (October 1982): 959.

² Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1983), 53.

³ Desai’s election had been preceded by two years of emergency rule imposed by Indira Gandhi. Thus, just as India’s brief encounter with authoritarian rule came to an end, Pakistan embarked upon yet another period of military rule.

⁴ The Glenn Amendment took its name from its author, Democratic Senator John Glenn, and prohibited US aid to countries that had not signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty but which imported nuclear fuel reprocessing technology. Although the Glenn and Symington Amendments are often referred to as

Having failed to convince Pakistan to abjure the nuclear option, the US then decided to persuade France to back out of its contractual obligation regarding the building of the Chashma reprocessing plant. Earlier US attempts to scuttle the Franco-Pakistani nuclear agreement had been criticised by France as a violation of sovereignty and the French had consistently maintained their intention to honour the contract.⁵ However, a combination of renewed diplomatic pressure from the US and France's own suspicions about Pakistan's real motivations in seeking the reprocessing technology gradually forced a change in its policy regarding nuclear cooperation with Pakistan.

In September 1977, the French suggested a modification of the fuel reprocessing process so as to prevent the production of pure plutonium and instead generate a mixture of plutonium and uranium that could not be used in manufacturing nuclear weapons. Pakistan's rejection of the change and its insistence on acquiring plutonium alone finally convinced France that it was indeed the bomb that Islamabad was after. In July 1978, France despatched an envoy to inform Zia that it was suspending its nuclear agreement with Pakistan. Having expected loud recriminations and protests, the envoy was surprised to find Zia "full of self-control" and "more a diplomat than a simple military man."⁶ While such a restrained response was in keeping with Zia's outward persona of self-effacing humility, his sangfroid at what was undoubtedly a bitter blow might well have stemmed equally from the knowledge that Pakistan still had an ace up its sleeve. The plutonium route to the bomb may have been temporarily closed but the uranium route still lay open.

By the time Zia removed Bhutto from power, Pakistan was well on the way towards gathering the tools needed to make its nuclear dream a reality. A.Q. Khan's extensive network of contacts built during his time in Europe allowed Pakistan to find loopholes within the regulatory mechanisms set up by the US and its European allies to restrict access to major components used in uranium enrichment.⁷ Although such components were classified and subject to strict import controls, individual parts were not guarded as closely. Pakistan was thus able to activate its enrichment plant by "proceeding systematically from country to country, buying the essential items - part by part - from dozens of companies in at least five different Western European nations."⁸

forming part of a single legislative package, the former is usually cited with reference to nuclear fuel reprocessing while the latter is considered more applicable to instances of uranium enrichment. See Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 409 (Note 38).

⁵ Weissman and Krosney, *The Islamic Bomb*, 171.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 185.

⁷ For an exhaustive account of Pakistan's procurement of nuclear-related material from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, see Khan, *Eating Grass*, 162-173.

⁸ Weissman and Krosney, *The Islamic Bomb*, 187.

The Carter administration had heaved a sigh of relief after France pulled out of its nuclear agreement with Pakistan. For Washington, the French decision symbolised a much needed victory for the nascent international non-proliferation regime. With the reprocessing plant taken out of the equation, the primary irritant in US-Pakistan relations was removed, thereby allowing a resumption of economic aid, albeit to the tune of a fairly modest \$69 million. Before long, however, the nuclear factor re-emerged as a major source of friction between the two countries.

Pakistan's covert procurement programme in Europe could not remain under wraps indefinitely. Towards the end of 1978, it was becoming apparent to the US that Pakistan had hedged its bets on the plutonium route to the bomb by simultaneously seeking to enrich uranium. When the American ambassador at the time, Arthur Hummel, confronted Zia with intelligence emerging about Pakistan's clandestine enrichment programme, he found the general "a very good actor" who indignantly denied the existence of such a programme. Zia even offered to allow American experts to inspect any facility in the country that might be under suspicion. The ambassador promptly accepted the invitation but Zia made sure not to follow through on it.⁹

Apart from the nuclear issue, the bleak prospects for a restoration of democracy and the equally grim fate awaiting former prime minister Bhutto were other areas of concern for the US, albeit not as serious as Pakistan's quest for the bomb. Zia repudiated his promise to hold elections in October 1977 and postponed them indefinitely. In September 1978, he cemented his grip on power by assuming the office of president whilst remaining army chief and keeping martial law in place. Moreover, in order to lend domestic legitimacy to his rule, Zia began to promulgate measures aimed at the Islamisation of the Pakistani state and society including the institution of Quranic punishments, the establishment of a *shariah* court to bring existing laws in greater conformity with Islamic strictures and the promotion of *madrassas* (Islamic schools).

In the meantime, the pronouncement of Bhutto's death sentence by the Lahore High Court in March 1978 had prompted calls for clemency from a number of foreign leaders, including President Carter. In February 1979, Bhutto's appeal to the Supreme Court - the highest court in the country - against his earlier conviction was rejected, leading to another

⁹ Interview with Arthur W. Hummel Jr., Oral History, July 13, 1989, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Hummel,%20Arthur%20W.Jr.1989.toc.pdf>

request from Carter to Zia to commute Bhutto's death sentence to life imprisonment.¹⁰ This was followed by the passage of a resolution in the US House of Representatives calling on Zia to spare Bhutto's life.¹¹ Just weeks before the execution, Zia received a third message from Carter to pardon Bhutto but remained unmoved and allowed the sentence to be carried out on April 4, 1979.¹²

Two days after Bhutto was hanged, the US once again suspended economic assistance to Pakistan. Although there was speculation in some quarters in Pakistan that the American decision stemmed at least partly from a desire to chastise Zia for ignoring Carter's supplications to spare Bhutto's life, the truth was that Pakistan had again fallen foul of US non-proliferation strictures. By March 1979, US intelligence had received enough evidence to conclude that Pakistan was engaged in operating secret facilities "whose only conceivable purpose was to enrich uranium for a nuclear explosive capability."¹³ What made this programme "even more egregious" than the reprocessing project was that it was "undertaken covertly and relied on deception to obtain the needed equipment abroad."¹⁴

Prior to imposing sanctions under the Symington Amendment, the US had sought "reliable assurances" that Pakistan was not seeking nuclear weapons.¹⁵ While Zia denied that Pakistan had such an intention, he refused to rule out the possibility of conducting a "peaceful nuclear explosion" and rejected placing all of Pakistan's nuclear facilities under international safeguards.¹⁶ Not sufficiently reassured of Pakistan's nuclear bona fides, the US cut off economic aid. Although not unexpected, the continuing American opposition to its nuclear ambitions appeared to be particularly galling for Pakistan at a time when the Carter administration was fighting a tough domestic battle with Congress to continue supplying Indian nuclear power reactors with enriched-uranium fuel.¹⁷ An increasingly fraught bilateral relationship was placed under added strain when it was revealed that an inter-agency group within the State Department had been considering a range of options on

¹⁰ Interview with Arthur W. Hummel Jr., Oral History, July 13, 1989, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Hummel,%20Arthur%20W.Jr.1989.toc.pdf>

¹¹ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 238.

¹² Zia had articulated his position on Bhutto's appeal to the Supreme Court a few months before it was finally rejected and refused to be swayed from it: 'If the Supreme Court says: "Acquit him," I will acquit him. If it says: "Hang the blighter," I will hang him.' Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 364.

¹³ Thornton, "Between the Stools?" 967.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Hassan Abbas, *Pakistan's Drift into Extremism: Allah, the Army, and America's War on Terror* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), 95.

¹⁶ Thornton, "Between the Stools?" 967.

¹⁷ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 239.

derailing Pakistan's nuclear programme, including examining the possibility of mounting an attack on the Kahuta enrichment facility.¹⁸

Even as their overall diplomatic relations visibly worsened during the first two and a half years of Zia's rule, there was a substantial improvement in the level of covert intelligence cooperation between the US and Pakistan. The fall of the Shah of Iran in February 1979 had deprived the US not only of its principal regional gendarme but also of electronic monitoring facilities set up in Iran to spy on Soviet Central Asia. Upon being approached by the CIA as an alternative to Iran, Zia agreed to the installation of listening posts in Pakistan's northern border areas adjoining Soviet missile-testing and anti-satellite launch sites.¹⁹ Ambassador Hummel confirmed that the US had "very good cooperation from the Pakistanis" and that "almost anything that we wanted to do, we could do, as long as we could figure out how we could keep it hidden."²⁰

Pakistan's willingness to accommodate US strategic objectives to such great lengths did not result in any immediate material rewards; military aid remained suspended and economic assistance was cut off under the Symington Amendment even as negotiations for the monitoring facilities were still in progress. However, the burgeoning intelligence cooperation remained unaffected by such setbacks. Zia took a carefully calculated decision to make a more long-term investment in his relationship with the US by acquiring a potentially powerful bargaining chip that could be cashed in at a more opportune time later on. At the same time, he did manage to reap some short-term dividends from the grant of the eavesdropping facilities, most notably in the form of shared intelligence between the CIA and its Pakistani counterpart, the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI), on events in neighbouring Afghanistan.

Notwithstanding their growing convergence of interests in the shadowy world of covert intelligence, the overall diplomatic relationship between Pakistan and the US continued on a seemingly inexorable downward spiral. On November 21, 1979, a frenzied mob of students attacked and burned down the US embassy in Islamabad, killing two Americans and two Pakistani embassy employees in the process. The students had been enraged by uncorroborated reports of American and Israeli involvement in the takeover of Islam's holiest site, the Grand Mosque in Mecca. Despite frantic appeals for help from the US ambassador and even a personal telephone call from Carter to Zia, the military authorities were slow to respond to the crisis. At the time of the attack, Zia had been riding a bicycle

¹⁸ Richard Burt, "Pakistan Protests to US Envoy on Nuclear Report," *New York Times*, August 15, 1979.

¹⁹ Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Afghan Withdrawal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 56.

²⁰ Arthur Hummel, Oral History.

down the main road of nearby Rawalpindi as part of a public relations exercise aimed at promoting the “simple virtues of self-propelled transport.”²¹ Much of Islamabad’s security apparatus, therefore, had been detailed to protect the pedalling president.

It took five hours for an army unit to finally reach the charred embassy compound, by which time the mob had already started to melt away. Speculation abounded amongst US officials present at the scene that the government’s poor response to the attack could have been less a result of incompetence and more a case of not rushing to save American lives in case the rumours of American involvement in the events in Saudi Arabia turned out to be correct.²² It was even suspected by some that the government had actually instigated the protest in order to let the Americans “sweat a bit.”²³ Although Zia subsequently conveyed his regrets to Carter - who in turn thanked him for his assistance - an already strained bilateral relationship appeared to have deteriorated almost beyond repair before being dramatically revived in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

II. Converging Interests in Afghanistan

American covert involvement in Afghanistan predated the actual Soviet invasion of that country by several months. It stemmed from increasing anxiety in Washington about growing Soviet penetration into Southwest Asia at a time when US influence in the region had waned considerably following the overthrow of the Shah of Iran. In April 1978, a Soviet-backed Marxist government had been installed in Kabul through a coup that toppled Afghan president Mohammad Daoud Khan. The US had recognised the new communist regime and maintained normal diplomatic relations with it until February 1979. It even continued to provide economic aid in a bid to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a Soviet satellite. By early 1979, however, it had become clear to the US that the Afghan government was relying increasingly on Soviet support to prop itself up against a growing domestic rebellion. Accordingly, President Carter ordered preliminary spadework on the possibility of covert assistance to the Afghan rebels.²⁴

²¹ Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004), 29.

²² Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 244.

²³ *Ibid.*, 245.

²⁴ The US decision to abandon its policy of trying to wean the Afghan regime away from its Soviet patron in favour of one directed at supporting the anti-regime insurgency was precipitated by the killing of the US ambassador to Afghanistan, Adolph Dubs, in February 1979. Dubs had been abducted by a Tajik separatist group opposed to the Pashtuns’ political domination of Afghanistan and lost his life in a badly mismanaged rescue attempt in which Afghan police forces operated under the direction of Soviet advisors. For more, see Henry St. Amant Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985), 98-100.

The most vocal advocate of such support within the Carter administration was Brzezinski, who warned the president that the Soviets' "creeping intervention" in Afghanistan could eventually put them in a position to secure access to the Indian Ocean by achieving the dismemberment of Pakistan and Iran.²⁵ Sensing an opportunity to further its strategic interests in Afghanistan as well as build on the existing intelligence cooperation with the CIA, Pakistan soon approached the US to discuss assistance to the insurgents, including the provision of small arms and ammunition. With the turmoil in Afghanistan continuing to grow, leading in turn to a proportionate increase in the Soviet military footprint in the country, Carter finally agreed to launch covert operations in July 1979, six months before the Soviets formally invaded.

The initial level of covert American support to the Afghan insurgency was limited to non-lethal aid amounting to the modest sum of \$500,000, consumed within six weeks of its allocation.²⁶ By that time, the administration was receiving urgent requests from Pakistan, both directly from Zia through normal diplomatic channels as well as from the ISI through its CIA connections, for weapons and equipment for the insurgents. Carter agreed to ramp up the level of covert support through a series of measures including the provision of funds to the ISI to buy weapons that were then funnelled to the insurgents as well as supplying the ISI with a similar amount of US lethal weaponry for onward distribution.²⁷ The CIA and the ISI worked in tandem to impart training to the rebel fighters and jointly coordinated the aid that was trickling in from a number of other interested countries, including China, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Kuwait.²⁸

Months before the Soviet invasion, therefore, the basic skeleton of what would eventually become "an extraordinary logistics pipeline from suppliers around the world" had been put in place.²⁹ Pakistan was ideally placed to be the fulcrum of the pipeline not only because of its geographical proximity to Afghanistan but also because it already enjoyed close ties with several of the Afghan resistance outfits. Several years before the Soviets entered Afghanistan, Pakistan had secretly cultivated a number of Afghan dissident groups, especially those with an Islamist orientation, as a counterweight both to pro-Pashtunistan nationalist forces spearheaded by Daoud as well as the increasingly powerful Soviet-backed cadres of the Marxist Peoples' Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA).

²⁵ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 426-427.

²⁶ Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 146.

²⁷ Ibid., 146.

²⁸ Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 34.

²⁹ Gates, *From the Shadows*, 149.

During the 1960s, the liberalising instincts of the secular King Zahir Shah and the growing penetration of communism within Afghanistan had aroused the opposition of an incipient Islamist movement led by Islamic studies professors returning to their teaching positions in Kabul after pursuing higher degrees abroad, most notably at Egypt's Al-Azhar University, Islam's most renowned seat of religious scholarship.³⁰ During their studies in Egypt, some of those academics, notably Burhanuddin Rabbani and Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, were deeply inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood and the revolutionary interpretation of political Islam preached by some of its more radical ideologues. Upon resuming their professorial positions in Kabul, they proceeded to impart the lessons in religious radicalism imbibed in Egypt to a growing band of young Afghan Islamists, including two as yet little known men who would achieve much greater prominence in the years to follow: Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Ahmed Shah Massoud.

Daoud had resigned from the prime ministership in 1963 but returned to power a decade later by colluding with the Afghan communists to topple Zahir Shah while the king was on a visit to Italy.³¹ He then proceeded to abolish the monarchy, turned Afghanistan into a republic with himself as its first president, and unfurled the banner of Pashtunistan once again. Worryingly for Pakistan, the return of its seemingly implacable foe in Afghanistan coincided with a major political crisis at home stemming from Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's unwillingness to tolerate opposition party governments in the two provinces sharing a border with Afghanistan: the NWFP and Baluchistan. Bhutto accused Daoud of fomenting unrest in both provinces and of backing an insurgency that erupted in Balochistan in 1973 after Bhutto dismissed the provincial government run by his opponents.³²

In response to Daoud's active encouragement of opposition groups in the NWFP and Baluchistan, Bhutto launched an aggressive counter-offensive. After Daoud cracked down on his Islamist opponents, many of them, including Rabbani, Massoud and Hekmatyar, fled to Pakistan where they established links with Islamist groups there as well as with Pakistani intelligence agencies, who were constantly "on the lookout for potentially important Afghan

³⁰ For a detailed account of Afghanistan's domestic political dynamics during the 1960s and 1970s, see Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2004), 133-197.

³¹ After the coup, Zahir Shah stayed on in Italy and did not return to Afghanistan until after the overthrow of the Taliban almost three decades later.

³² Bhutto's allegations of Afghan involvement in stirring the pot of insurrection in NWFP and Baluchistan were not without substance. Daoud's deputy foreign minister, Abdul Samad Ghaus, conceded that the Afghans "could not remain indifferent to the plight of the Pashtuns and the Baluchis, who were their kith and kin." He maintained further that Afghanistan could not ignore those who were "continuously coming to Kabul to seek help and guidance" and confirmed that they received "ample moral and material help from the Afghans, as they had in the past." Abdul Samad Ghaus, *The Fall of Afghanistan: An Insider's Account* (London: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defence Publishers, 1988), 114, 123.

dissidents.”³³ Bhutto not only gave the Islamists refuge but provided arms and training and then sent them back into Afghanistan to mount covert operations against the government. A dedicated Afghan cell was set up in the Foreign Office under Bhutto’s overall supervision to coordinate the activities of the insurgents. For a while, Pakistan maintained a small contingent of Afghan fighters at an airbase in the NWFP that could be airlifted at short notice to carry out surprise guerrilla attacks inside Afghanistan.³⁴

In the summer of 1975, Pakistan-backed insurgents led by Ahmed Shah Massoud were infiltrated into the Panjshir Valley northeast of Kabul to stir up an insurrection against the government. Although the rebellion was crushed and Massoud forced to flee back to Pakistan, Daoud became sufficiently “wary of Pakistan’s hostile intentions” to explore ways of arriving at an accommodation.³⁵ Bhutto was quick to respond and both leaders exchanged visits to each other’s countries in 1976. Bhutto’s removal from power in 1977 did not slow down the momentum of the nascent process of reconciliation. If anything, it was expedited by Zia-ul-Haq, who came across to his Afghan interlocutors as “the most affable, well-disposed, and farsighted Pakistani leader” that they had ever encountered.³⁶

Zia and Daoud also exchanged reciprocal visits and developed a constructive working relationship, leading to expectations in some quarters that they would eventually be able to engineer a mutually acceptable solution to the Pashtunistan issue within three to four years.³⁷ Upon his return to Kabul after visiting Pakistan in March 1978, Daoud had expressed his satisfaction with the trip and had declared Zia “an honest man” with whom he could do business.³⁸ Tragically for Daoud, that was to be his last meeting with the general; just weeks after his return from Pakistan, Soviet-trained Marxist sympathisers within the Afghan army, some of whom had helped bring Daoud to power in 1973, carried out a bloody coup that resulted not only in his removal from power but also in his execution, along with eighteen members of his family.³⁹

³³ Riaz M. Khan, *Untying the Afghan Knot: Negotiating Soviet Withdrawal* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 69.

³⁴ Robert G. Wirsing, *Pakistan’s Security under Zia, 1977-1988: The Policy Imperatives of a Peripheral Asian State* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991), 31.

³⁵ Ghaus, *The Fall of Afghanistan*, 125. In addition to political and strategic reasons, Daoud’s desire to lower tensions with Pakistan was also motivated by economic concerns. He was anxious to create favourable conditions for the implementation of his developmental plans, which were expected to be largely financed by Arab and Islamic countries, many of whose leaders had personal relationships with Bhutto and were very favourably disposed towards Pakistan.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 140.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 147.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ M. Hassan Kakar, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, 1979-1982* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 15.

In September 1978, Zia travelled to Kabul to meet Afghanistan's new Marxist leaders, President Nur Mohammad Taraki and his deputy Hafizullah Amin, and revive the bilateral talks suspended after Daoud's overthrow. Zia was concerned by the revival of Afghan propaganda on Pashtunistan following the coup and adopted a conciliatory tone with Taraki by offering to discuss any problems that the new regime was encountering, provide technical support where needed and ensure that transit routes remained open.⁴⁰ To his disappointment, he found the new Afghan president responding with "oratory about his popular support and vagueness about specific issues."⁴¹ Having failed to secure an explicit assurance from Taraki that the reconciliation process would be continued, Zia decided to revert to Bhutto's initial policy of providing covert support to the Afghan dissidents, who had declared a jihad against the new atheistic rulers of their country and regarded themselves as *mujahidin* (Muslims fighting in the way of God to defend Islam against its enemies). By the winter of 1978, Pakistan was receiving significant numbers of Afghan refugees and had set up a network of guerrilla training camps and supply routes on its side of the Durand Line.⁴²

III. Driving a Hard Bargain

On December 24, 1979, some 85,000 Soviet troops massed along the border with Afghanistan crossed over to remove the government of Hafizullah Amin, who was executed and replaced with the more acceptable Babrak Karmal.⁴³ The increasing level of Soviet involvement in Afghanistan's internal affairs had been no secret and Moscow's military action may not have been as rude a shock to Washington as has conventionally been believed.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, it did deal a fatal blow to President Carter's attempts to expand détente with America's arch-rival in the Cold War. The invasion unquestionably signified a major shift in Soviet strategic planning since it constituted the first instance of Soviet troops being committed outside the Warsaw Pact theatre of operations. For the US, moreover, the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan, coming close on the heels of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, represented a serious threat to American and Western interests in the Persian Gulf.

⁴⁰ Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*, 86.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 100.

⁴³ In September 1979, Amin had removed Taraki through a palace coup and had him secretly executed. A couple of months later, it was Amin's turn to be toppled and killed.

⁴⁴ In an interview in 1998, Brzezinski revealed that when Carter had signed the secret directive authorizing aid to the insurgents in July 1979, he had told the president that such assistance would eventually lead to Soviet intervention. Brzezinski admitted that "we didn't push the Russians to intervene, but we knowingly increased the probability that they would." On the day of the invasion, Brzezinski claims he told Carter: "We now have the opportunity of giving to the USSR its Vietnam War." Transcript of Brzezinski's interview to the *Le Nouvel Observateur* provided in David Gibbs, "Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Retrospect," *International Politics* 37, no. 2 (June 2000): 241-242.

Anxious to deliver an immediate and effective “global response” to what he viewed as an alarming “qualitative change in Soviet behaviour,” President Carter telephoned his Pakistani counterpart on the morning of the invasion to reaffirm the 1959 bilateral security agreement against communist aggression.⁴⁵ For the US, Pakistan was once again a “frontline state” and an “indispensable element” of a punitive strategy aimed at making the invasion as costly an adventure as possible for the Soviets.⁴⁶ In January 1980, President Carter enunciated the Carter doctrine which proclaimed that “any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.”⁴⁷ Pakistan’s proximity to the Persian Gulf would make it a vital component in case a need arose to put the Carter doctrine into practice.

The fact that, in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet invasion, it was the US that approached Pakistan and not the other way around signified to Zia that Washington’s urgent need for Islamabad’s cooperation at that point in time outweighed Pakistan’s seemingly perpetual need for American aid. In a sudden, dramatic twist of fortune, a military dictatorship that had found itself banished to a diplomatic wilderness on account of its nuclear ambitions and human rights violations was transformed almost overnight into a citadel of resistance against “dangerous Kremlin expansionism.”⁴⁸ Once castigated for his autocratic rule, Zia began to be wooed by his erstwhile critics, who suddenly took note of his “hitherto unknown ‘sterling qualities’ and the special importance of Pakistan in the changed circumstances.”⁴⁹ Provided he played his cards right, Zia could now look forward to US coffers being opened up for Pakistan once again.

The prospect of being at the receiving end of an American aid windfall was no doubt a tantalizing one for Zia and his coterie of generals, who were presiding over an economy in dire straits and a military in urgent need of modernization. However, the likelihood of an influx of American cash and weapons, welcome though it was, should not be taken to mean that Zia considered the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan to have been a blessing in disguise. In fact, he regarded it as a serious threat to Pakistan’s security. Pakistan’s traditional alignment with the US meant that relations between Moscow and Islamabad had never been warm. At the same time, the Soviets had enjoyed close ties with Pakistan’s arch-rival, India, for almost three decades and continued to maintain a military relationship with New Delhi.

⁴⁵ Thornton, “Between the Stools?” 969

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 443.

⁴⁸ Howard B. Schaffer and Teresita C. Schaffer, *How Pakistan Negotiates with the United States: Riding the Rollercoaster* (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2011), 121.

⁴⁹ Khalid Mahmud Arif, *Working with Zia: Pakistan’s Power Politics, 1977-1988* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1995), 314.

Moreover, the presence of thousands of Soviet troops along Pakistan's long and porous border with Afghanistan, also a traditional antagonist, meant that Islamabad had to confront the likelihood of increased Soviet-Afghan subversive activities among Pakistani dissident outfits.⁵⁰ Afghanistan's earlier attempts to settle the Pashtunistan issue in its favour had never been much of a threat but with the backing of a superpower's military resources, "Kabul's ambitions had to be seen in a new light" by Islamabad.⁵¹

Although conscious of the increased threat on its western border, it is unlikely that Zia actually shared the forebodings of some US observers that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was the opening gambit in a wider plan to overrun Pakistan and secure access to the warm waters of the Arabian Sea. In the months preceding the invasion, Pakistan had actually taken steps to improve its relationship with the USSR, most notably by finally withdrawing from CENTO in March 1979. Had it been genuinely concerned about increased Soviet penetration in its neighbourhood, Pakistan would have been unlikely to leave an organization put together for the very purpose of containing Soviet expansionism.

While the Afghan threat to Pakistan had been considerably expanded as a result of the Soviet invasion, it was New Delhi that remained Islamabad's principal adversary. Instead of fearing outright Soviet aggression, therefore, Zia was much more concerned with the potential for Indo-Soviet collaboration designed to "intimidate, destabilize, or even dismember" Pakistan.⁵² Nevertheless, this did not deter him from adroitly playing up the spectre of a direct Soviet attack on Pakistan, both to shore up his own position domestically as the defender of Islamic Pakistan against the godless communists as well as to make a convincing case for American military aid that could be used to counter India.

Soon after the invasion, Zia sat down with his closest advisors to formulate Pakistan's response to the dramatically altered security situation on its western border. According to Agha Shahi, Pakistan's foreign minister at the time, the country had the following options:⁵³

One: to confront the Soviet Union directly by participating in the Afghan resistance;

Two: to acquiesce in the fait accompli imposed by the Soviet Union with all its attendant security and political implications;

Three: to protest the Soviet action for its violation of accepted international norms in the international forums of the United Nations, the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement short of a confrontation with this superpower, while seeking to strengthen

⁵⁰ Wirsing, *Pakistan's Security under Zia*, 34-35.

⁵¹ Ibid., 33.

⁵² Ibid., 39.

⁵³ Agha Shahi, *Pakistan's Security and Foreign Policy* (Lahore: Progressive Publishers, 1988), 50.

Pakistan's security politically and its defensive capability but without aligning itself with one side or the other in the superpower contention.

Officially, Pakistan decided to go with the third option and soon mounted a vigorous diplomatic campaign to generate international condemnation of the Soviet invasion whilst simultaneously seeking humanitarian assistance for masses of Afghan refugees that had flooded into Pakistan in the invasion's aftermath.⁵⁴ At the same time, however, Zia and his fellow generals, eager to embrace a rationale for American military aid, decided to complement the diplomatic pursuit of a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan with covert military support to the Afghan resistance. Overriding the concerns of his civilian advisors who had cautioned against measures that could be construed by the Soviets as provocative, Zia embarked upon a highly risky policy of deliberate dissimulation. Whilst publicly denying any involvement in aiding the Afghan resistance for fear of incurring severe Soviet reprisals, he secretly expanded Pakistan's control over the conduct of the clandestine war against Afghanistan's Soviet occupiers.

Although anxious to get the American aid pipeline reopened, Zia was careful not to convey any signs of desperation to Washington. Secure in the knowledge that he occupied a strong bargaining position but also mindful of past instances of American unreliability, he pursued a measured policy aimed at determining whether or not the proposed material and strategic benefits accruing from an alliance with the US would outweigh the real risk of increased Soviet hostility along with the probable damage to Pakistan's standing within the non-aligned nations. In January 1980, Zia despatched foreign minister Shahi and a cohort of military advisors to Washington for the first formal talks with the US since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Prior to his departure, Shahi had intimated to US Ambassador Arthur Hummel that Pakistan wished to have the 1959 bilateral security agreement - an executive instrument - replaced with a mutual defence treaty ratified by the US Congress, and sought the provision of a multi-billion dollar military and economic aid program.⁵⁵ Much to Zia's disappointment, both requests were rejected.

The Pakistani delegation was informed that the NATO-type treaty that it was soliciting could not be provided; in other words, the US would not make an overarching security commitment that would cover all threats to Pakistan, including those from non-communist sources such as India. Moreover, although the Carter Doctrine proclaimed the Persian Gulf

⁵⁴ In the United Nations, Pakistan took the lead in drumming up support from Muslim countries and fellow members of the Non-Aligned Movement. After a special session of the UN General Assembly on Afghanistan in January 1980, the Soviet military action in Afghanistan was condemned by an overwhelming 104-18 vote with 14 abstentions. Significantly for Pakistan, the only country outside of the communist bloc not to vote against the Soviets was India. See Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 248.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 248.

to be of vital interest to the US, Islamabad did not receive a definite answer from Washington to the question of whether or not it was “included in this definition.”⁵⁶ As for Pakistan’s aid requirements, the US proposed \$400 million in combined military and economic aid over the next two years, a sum considerably below Pakistan’s expectations. A particularly bitter pill for Zia to swallow was the rejection of a request for highly advanced F-16 fighter jets, the “symbolic lead item on the Pakistanis’ wish list.”⁵⁷ Finally, while the Carter administration undertook to seek a Congressional waiver of the nuclear-related Symington restrictions in order to provide aid to Pakistan, it nevertheless affirmed that such an undertaking was not indicative of “any lessening of the importance the US attaches to nuclear non-proliferation.”⁵⁸

Upon hearing of the modest American aid offer, Zia famously dismissed it as amounting to nothing more than “peanuts” and declared that “Pakistan will not buy its security with \$400 million.”⁵⁹ In a subsequent interview, he maintained that if the US was serious about helping Pakistan, then “let it come whole hog. If I accept such a meaningless level of aid, I will only provoke the Russians without really getting a defence against them. I will burn my bridges!”⁶⁰ Without naming a figure of his own, Zia pointed to the \$3 billion that the US Congress had earmarked for Egypt as a reward for making peace with Israel and claimed that Pakistan was entitled to “no less, and in terms of the threat that we face, even more.”⁶¹

When Brzezinski and Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher visited Pakistan in February 1980 to offer personal assurances of support, Zia pressed them for increased military aid as well as US security guarantees against both Soviet and Indian aggression. When neither plea received a favourable response, Zia informed them that in view of the failure of the two parties to come to an agreement, Pakistan’s security interests would be better served by a “broad understanding with the United States, reinforced by the public US reaffirmation of the 1959 assurances, but with Pakistan publicly distancing itself from the United States and collaborating more closely with other Muslim countries in opposing the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.”⁶² Privately, Zia assured Brzezinski that such an approach would be in America’s interests as well.

⁵⁶ Thornton, “Between the Stools?” 970.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 971.

⁵⁸ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 249.

⁵⁹ William Borders, “Pakistan Dismisses \$400 Million in Aid Offered by US as ‘Peanuts,’” *New York Times*, January 18, 1980.

⁶⁰ Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 57.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 449.

According to a member of the Brzezinski-Christopher delegation, both sides had “misjudged badly. The Americans overestimated the extent to which Pakistan had rethought its role following the Soviet attack; the Pakistanis erred in believing that the American offer could be bargained upward.”⁶³ Zia’s chief of staff, who participated in the negotiations, found that the US alone had been guilty of misjudgement in terms of underestimating the “resilience of Pakistan.”⁶⁴ Zia’s dismissal of America’s aid offer was certainly without precedent in the history of the relationship between the two countries and signified an “embarrassing diplomatic setback” for President Carter, who was already increasingly embattled on the foreign policy front.⁶⁵

For the remainder of Carter’s one-term presidency, Zia avoided entering into a bilateral security arrangement on America’s terms and made no attempt to publicly downplay his rejection of the American aid offer. At the same time, he declared that although Pakistan was no longer interested in obtaining military aid from the US, it would not look the other way if economic assistance, in particular debt relief, was offered. Carter agreed to participate in an international debt rescheduling programme for Pakistan and, with his hopes for a second term dwindling rapidly in the wake of the Iran hostage crisis, tried again to cobble together a security arrangement with Islamabad. Zia was invited to the White House in October 1980 and offered the much sought after F-16s but Pakistan’s canny dictator refused to take the bait. He was astute enough to know that Carter would, in all probability, lose the election and that it would therefore be futile to conclude an agreement that would inevitably be nullified by an incoming Republican administration. Accordingly, Zia nonchalantly deflected Carter’s offer of the F-16s by claiming that he did not want to burden the latter with Pakistan’s affairs when he was occupied with his presidential campaign and that the matter could be deferred until after the election.⁶⁶

The impasse over an aid package acceptable to both parties did not stand in the way of a substantial increase in the level of covert collaboration between the US and Pakistan to strengthen the Afghan resistance against the Soviets. Just days after the Soviets entered Afghanistan, Carter authorized the covert supply of lethal weapons to the mujahidin, thereby expanding the arms pipeline that had been put into operation several months prior to the invasion. During his trip to Pakistan in February, Brzezinski met privately with Zia to discuss an enhanced covert action programme. From Islamabad, he flew to Riyadh to secure a guarantee from the “sensible and very pro-American” Crown Prince Fahd that the Saudis

⁶³ Thornton, “Between the Stools?” 971.

⁶⁴ Arif, *Working with Zia*, 338.

⁶⁵ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 251.

⁶⁶ Arif, *Working with Zia*, 338.

would match every dollar given by the US to the mujahidin.⁶⁷ China, another member of the arms pipeline, undertook to sell weapons to the US and donate some to Pakistan.⁶⁸ By July 1980, the covert programme had “dramatically expanded” to include “all manner of weapons and military support” for the mujahidin.⁶⁹

IV. Resurrecting the Relationship: Reagan and Zia

Zia’s expectation of a Republican victory in the US presidential election of 1980 was accompanied by a reasonable assumption that Carter’s challenger, Ronald Reagan, would demonstrate a greater appreciation of Pakistan’s security interests and be more amenable to requests for military assistance. On both counts, Zia turned out to be correct. Running on a robustly anti-communist foreign policy platform, Reagan inflicted a crushing electoral defeat on Carter, whom he successfully depicted as the promoter of “a culture of national malaise, manifested by stagnation at home and weakness abroad.”⁷⁰

While discarding both the realpolitik-driven détente of Nixon and the multilateral idealism of Carter, Reagan proposed an ideologically driven foreign policy that sought to restore America’s decline in world affairs by confronting the Soviet Union wherever an opportunity presented itself. For Reagan and his hawkish foreign policy team, regional conflicts had to be addressed within the context of the global dialectic between the “Free World”⁷¹ led by the US and the “Evil Empire”⁷² presided over by the Soviet Union. In this cosmic battle between good and evil, there would be no room for Carter-era obsessions such as human rights, and even nuclear non-proliferation would have to take a backseat to the overriding objective of defeating communism. For Zia, who had acquired a well-deserved reputation for violating both human rights as well as non-proliferation conventions, Reagan could not have come to power at a more opportune time.

The new administration in Washington wasted little time in reaching out to Islamabad as a vital collaborator in resisting the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. One of its first foreign policy initiatives was a proposed five-year aid package for Pakistan amounting to \$3.2 billion, a figure unlikely to be dismissed by Zia as “peanuts.” The military component of the

⁶⁷ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 449.

⁶⁸ Stevel Coll, “Anatomy of a Victory: CIA’s Covert Afghan War,” *Washington Post*, July 19, 1992.

⁶⁹ Gates, *From the Shadows*, 148-149.

⁷⁰ Michael J. Nojeim and David P. Kilroy, *Days of Decision: Turning Points in U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books Inc., 2011), 209.

⁷¹ “President Reagan’s address to the nation about Christmas and the situation in Poland, December 23, 1981,” *The American Presidency Project*, accessed July 24, 2015, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=43384>

⁷² “President Reagan’s remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals, March 8, 1983,” *The American Presidency Project*, accessed July 24, 2014, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=41023&st=evil+empire&st1=>

package, which included 40 F-16 jets, amounted to \$1.5 billion, while the remaining \$1.7 billion was economic assistance. Reagan's offer, significantly larger and more long-term than that proposed by his predecessor, was meant to "give Pakistan confidence in our commitment to its security and provide us reciprocal benefits in terms of our regional interests."⁷³ Put more simply, American military and economic patronage would be extended to Pakistan in exchange for its services in resisting the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Although encouraged by the more generous US aid offer, Zia was determined to ensure that American assistance came with no strings attached; in other words, the client, and not the patron, would determine the terms of the relationship. The stridently anti-communist agenda of the Reagan Doctrine, which involved "surrogate wars in the Third World" as the "cutting edge of a broader challenge to the Soviet Union," provided Zia a potent bargaining tool in his negotiations with the US.⁷⁴ While the aid package was still being finalized, Zia conveyed to the US that Pakistan was prepared to be the "necessary conduit" for enhanced aid to the Afghan resistance but would perform that function only if the US gave sufficient evidence of its "credibility and reliability" as an ally.⁷⁵ The most important indicator of Washington's trustworthiness would be "giving up its opposition to Pakistani plans to develop nuclear energy for 'peaceful purposes.'"⁷⁶

In April 1981, shortly after receiving the American aid offer, Zia deputed his chief of staff, General K.M. Arif, to accompany foreign minister Agha Shahi to Washington for further discussions and instructed them to withhold agreement until assurances had been received from the Americans on major issues of concern for Pakistan. When the Pakistani delegates informed US Secretary of State Al Haig that there would be no compromise on the nuclear programme, they were reassured that the issue "need not become the centrepiece of the US-Pakistan relationship," as had been case during the Carter presidency.⁷⁷ At the same time, Haig did caution the Pakistanis that in the event that they exploded a nuclear device, the reaction in the US Congress would make it difficult for the administration to cooperate with Pakistan to the extent that it hoped. Pakistan interpreted this as a tacit admission by the US

⁷³ State Department memorandum from Assistant Secretary-Designate for Near East and South Asia Nicholas Veliotos to Deputy Secretary of State William Clark, March 7, 1981. See Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 256-257.

⁷⁴ Gates, *From the Shadows*, 197.

⁷⁵ Joseph Kraft, "In Pakistan, Unlikely Support," *Washington Post*, March 10, 1981.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 257.

that it could “live with Pakistan’s nuclear program as long as Islamabad did not explode a bomb.”⁷⁸

Another carryover concern for Pakistan from the Carter era was US policy towards human rights and the restoration of democracy. The Carter administration had been openly critical of Pakistan’s military regime for its poor human rights record and its unfulfilled promises to return the country to democratic rule. Arif informed Haig that “we would not like to hear from you the type of government we should have.” Haig put to rest any fears of continued US criticism of Zia’s domestic policies by reassuring his chief of staff that “General, your internal situation is your problem.”⁷⁹

Finally, Pakistan sought and received assurances from the Reagan administration that Islamabad, or more specifically the ISI, would continue to manage the distribution of arms, ammunition and equipment to the Afghan mujahidin. The role of the CIA would be confined to providing weapons and money, which would be routed to the Afghan fighters through the ISI. Zia had insisted upon this arrangement right from the outset when the rudiments of the multi-national arms pipeline had been put together during the latter half of the Carter presidency. US diplomatic staff and CIA officers were seldom allowed direct contact with the mujahidin; in fact, such contacts were officially proscribed by the ISI.⁸⁰ Even in the case of training on how to use new weapons, the Americans had to instruct the Pakistanis who in turned trained the Afghan guerrillas.⁸¹ Like Carter, Reagan was content, for the most part, to cede effective control over the direction of the covert war in Afghanistan to Zia and the ISI, a decision that would have fateful consequences in the years to follow.

Having assured himself that American patronage would not be accompanied with any major conditionality, Zia did not deem it necessary to press for a formal treaty as he had done with Carter and formally tendered his provisional acceptance of the aid package, which still required the approval of the US Congress. In its efforts to circumvent nuclear-related sanctions imposed on Pakistan, the Reagan administration argued that the sanctions had not succeeded in deterring Pakistan from its pursuit of nuclear weapons; on the contrary, by forbidding the supply of conventional arms, they had actually enhanced Pakistan’s sense of insecurity and made the nuclear option seem indispensable. While claiming that the Pakistan government “can be in no doubt about our concerns” on the nuclear issue, the administration, sought to address “the sense of insecurity that can only heighten

⁷⁸ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 257.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 63.

⁸¹ Arther Hummel, Oral History.

pressure...to develop nuclear weapons” by proposing the renewed supply of conventional weaponry.⁸² Congress was sufficiently swayed by the argument to grant a six-year waiver of the sanctions that prohibited aid to Pakistan but some lawmakers who remained sceptical of the wisdom of the aid package managed to secure acceptance of an amendment that would terminate assistance to any country that exploded a nuclear device.⁸³

By the end of 1981, American aid had started to flow into Pakistan once again, enabling Zia to reassure his core constituency, the military, of his vigilance in safeguarding its institutional interests. US military assistance allowed Pakistan to expand its forces in line with the enhanced threat on its western border. Overall troop numbers rose by around 12 per cent to 478,000 in 1982.⁸⁴ A new corps was raised in Quetta, the provincial capital of Baluchistan, to act as a key line of defence in the event that the Soviets chose to “give Pakistan a bloody nose” for its support to the mujahidin.⁸⁵

Notwithstanding these measures to guard against a potential Soviet offensive, Zia never deemed the possibility of Soviet military intervention as a more serious threat than the traditional one emanating from India. Accordingly, much of the weaponry solicited and received from the US was meant more to redress a growing military imbalance with India than to guard against a Soviet invasion of Pakistan. The convergence of views between Washington and Islamabad with regard to covertly fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan merely “cloaked” but “could not eradicate” overall security priorities that were fundamentally divergent.⁸⁶ As was the case in earlier periods of patron-client relations between the two countries, American military aid to Pakistan was provided to deter the threat of communism but was actually used to counter India. Even as the Reagan administration argued that its aid to Pakistan “will not inject a new element of instability into the South Asian subcontinent,”⁸⁷ it also conceded that “a policy designed to stabilize one of Pakistan’s borders could not be guaranteed to stabilize the other.”⁸⁸

⁸² Testimony of James L. Buckley, Under Secretary of State for Security Assistance, Science and Technology, before the Sub-Committees on International Security and Scientific Affairs, International Economic Policy and Trade, and Asian and Pacific Affairs of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, September 16, 1981, in Shahi, *Pakistan’s Security and Foreign Policy*, Appendix VIII, 350-351.

⁸³ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 260.

⁸⁴ Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 372.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Wirsing, *Pakistan’s Security under Zia*, 102.

⁸⁷ Testimony of James L. Buckley, Under Secretary of State for Security Assistance, before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Aid and the Proposed Arms Sales of F-16’s to Pakistan* (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1982), 8.

⁸⁸ Wirsing, *Pakistan’s Security under Zia*, 102.

V. Partners in Jihad

Pakistan's espousal of the Afghan resistance to the Soviet occupation and its acceptance of some 3.5 million Afghan refugees were decisions that were driven by strategic, ideological and domestic considerations. Confronted by the forbidding prospect of a two-front situation whereby it could find itself on the receiving end of a coordinated attack by Afghan-Soviet forces in the west and the Indian military in the east, the most immediate objective of Pakistan's strategic planners became the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan. The loudest voice within Zia's coterie of military advisors in favour of covertly fighting the Soviets was that of Lieutenant General Akhtar Abdul Rahman Khan, the Director-General of the ISI, who warned that if the Soviets were allowed an easy occupation of Afghanistan, they would be emboldened to try their luck in Pakistan as well, most likely through Baluchistan.⁸⁹

Zia saw the merits in Akhtar's argument, not only for strategic reasons but also because Pakistan's willingness to take on the might of the Soviet military would generate desperately needed American diplomatic, financial and military backing for his regime. Apart from personal considerations of prolonging his rule, Zia's ideological orientation made him feel "morally bound to aid Islamic resurgence against an aggressive godless creed."⁹⁰ By championing the jihad, Zia would be able to burnish his credentials with the Islamic world, and particularly the oil-rich Gulf monarchies, as the defender of Islam against Soviet-backed communism. Moreover, fomenting jihad in Afghanistan would fit in neatly with his domestic political agenda of Islamisation, which sought to lend religious sanction to Zia's military dictatorship whilst undercutting the support base of his secular political opposition.

The removal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan was also deemed necessary for the early return of Afghan refugees to their own country. By 1987, Pakistan housed the world's largest refugee population, with the officially estimated figure of 3.45 million constituting almost 3.5 per cent of Pakistan's entire population.⁹¹ Although the refugees had initially been welcomed and provided with considerable access to local resources, a sudden influx of such substantial dimensions exacted a heavy toll on Pakistan's socio-economic fabric, leading in turn to a growing movement within the country calling for direct negotiations

⁸⁹ Brigadier Mohammad Yousaf and Mark Adkin, *The Bear Trap: Afghanistan's Untold Story* (London: Leo Cooper, 1992), 25.

⁹⁰ Khan, *Untying the Afghan Knot*, 11.

⁹¹ Wirsing, *Pakistan's Security under Zia*, 44.

with the Afghan government and for the refugees to be returned as expeditiously as possible.⁹²

Pakistan's final and arguably most imperative objective in backing the Afghan resistance was to settle the long-term future of its western neighbour in a way calculated to most adequately address Pakistan's own national security interests. Chief among them were preventing the revival of Afghan nationalism, securing Afghan recognition of the Durand Line as the international border between the two countries and gaining strategic geo-political depth in any future war with India. For Zia and his fellow generals, such objectives could only be achieved through "the creation of a post-war Afghanistan that, if not a client state, would, at a minimum, offer a friendly northwestern frontier."⁹³

In his opposition to the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, Zia was fortunate to discover a kindred spirit in William Casey, Reagan's nominee for director of the CIA, who had accepted the position "primarily to wage war against the Soviet Union."⁹⁴ For Casey - a staunch Roman Catholic - Muslim allies such as Zia and the Saudi ruling family constituted "an important front in a worldwide struggle between communist atheism and God's community of believers."⁹⁵ Casey's global crusade against communism would make common cause with Zia's local jihad in Afghanistan.

Casey did not immediately take an interest in the Afghan jihad and, for the first two years of the Reagan presidency, US funding to the mujahidin remained essentially the same as was provided by the Carter administration, that is, \$60 million annually, which in turn was matched by the Saudis. Neither the US nor Pakistan entertained any illusions at that point in time of actually defeating the Soviets in Afghanistan through their covert operations. The presidential finding signed by Carter in December 1979 allowing the supply of weapons to the mujahidin had described "harassment" of Soviet forces as the rationale behind the policy.⁹⁶ The finding was reauthorized by Reagan who, like Carter, wished to raise the costs of the Afghan invasion for the Soviets and deter them from similar ventures elsewhere in the Third World. However, this was "not a war the CIA was expected to win outright on the battlefield" and the presidential finding emphasised that in conducting its activities, the CIA was to "work through Pakistan and defer to Pakistani priorities."⁹⁷ In other words, the terms

⁹² Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 211.

⁹³ Marvin Weinbaum, "War and Peace in Afghanistan: The Pakistani Role," *The Middle East Journal* 45, no. 1 (Winter 1991): 73.

⁹⁴ Gates, *From the Shadows*, 199.

⁹⁵ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 93.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

of engagement of the covert war in Afghanistan would be determined almost exclusively by Zia-ul-Haq, Akhtar Abdul Rahman Khan and the ISI.

In many fundamental respects, the Afghan jihad became the ISI's personal war, transforming the agency from an intelligence outfit of fairly modest means and influence into a national security behemoth wielding enormous control over both foreign policy as well as domestic politics.⁹⁸ Although the US and Saudi Arabia were responsible for bankrolling the jihad, it was the ISI that, through its dedicated Afghan Bureau, exercised complete control over all operational matters concerning the resistance to the Soviets.⁹⁹ According to Brigadier Mohammad Yousaf, who headed the Afghan Bureau from 1983 to 1987, the "foremost function of the CIA" was to spend "American taxpayers' money, billions of dollars of it over the years, on buying arms, ammunition and equipment" for the jihad.¹⁰⁰ At the same time, it was a "cardinal rule" of Pakistan's Afghan policy to prevent the CIA from having any influence over the distribution of money and weapons once they arrived in Pakistan; nor would any Americans be permitted to train the mujahidin, have direct contact with them or be allowed to go into Afghanistan.¹⁰¹

It was the ISI, therefore, and not its American paymaster that set the quantum of arms and money to be provided to the main mujahidin parties headquartered in Peshawar, the provincial capital of the NWFP and the logistical nerve centre of the Afghan jihad. Initially, there had been more than 80 resistance groups operating in Peshawar but by 1982, the ISI had managed to whittle them down to seven principal parties.¹⁰² Four out of the seven were regarded as Islamic fundamentalist outfits while three were considered moderate or

⁹⁸ The ISI was founded in 1948 by Major General William Cawthorne, a British army officer who served as army deputy chief of staff for the new state of Pakistan. He confined its role to gathering and processing military intelligence and coordinating intelligence operations among the military's three services: army, air force and navy. Although the ISI drew officers from all three services, the bulk of its personnel came from the army and it was always headed by a senior army officer. During Ayub Khan's rule, the agency's scope was expanded to include domestic espionage against the regime's political opposition. ISI-trained irregulars were used in the ill-fated insurrection in Kashmir that led to the 1965 war with India and both Bhutto and Zia used the ISI to conduct low-level covert operations in Afghanistan prior to the Soviet invasion. From such generally undistinguished origins, the ISI emerged to play a central role in the largest covert operation mounted by the US during the Cold War.

⁹⁹ Headed by a serving army brigadier, the Afghan Bureau was responsible for the day-to-day management of Pakistan's support to the mujahidin. By 1983, it had around sixty officers and three hundred non-commissioned officers and enlisted men. The bulk of the Bureau's personnel were ethnic Pashtuns, many of whom belonged to tribes that straddled the border with Afghanistan and who could consequently operate undetected in civilian clothing along the border or inside Afghan territory. See Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 65.

¹⁰⁰ Yousaf and Adkin, *The Bear Trap*, 81.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. According to Yousaf, admitting Americans directly into the training and distribution systems ran the risk of making the jihad vulnerable to Soviet propaganda to the effect that it was not a legitimate struggle against foreign occupation but instead a grubby little conflict in which the mujahidin were fighting against fellow Afghans for the sake of the US.

¹⁰² Weinbaum, "War and Peace in Afghanistan," 76.

traditionalist ones.¹⁰³ All seven Peshawar-based parties were Sunni Muslim groups and, with the exception of the mainly Tajik Jamiat-i-Islami, were primarily Pashtun in their ethnic composition.¹⁰⁴ Afghan parties and commanders that were secular-nationalist in their orientation were effectively excluded from the Peshawar grouping, as were Shia resistance parties, which turned towards Iran for patronage.

The party leaders were the political heads of their respective groups and were responsible for parcelling out money and weapons received from the ISI to their field commanders, who did the actual fighting. Initially, the ISI had supplied the commanders directly, a system that provided plentiful opportunities for corruption for both donors and recipients.¹⁰⁵ Eventually, Zia and Akhtar discontinued the practice and replaced it with a more formal mechanism of disbursing supplies through the parties, ostensibly to instil more unity within the fractious resistance leadership and hold them directly accountable but more significantly to allow the ISI to decide which amongst them was worthy of the greatest support.¹⁰⁶ In effect, the resistance leaders deemed most likely to advance the ideological, political and strategic goals of Zia and the military in Afghanistan would be made the leading recipients of the ISI's patronage.

The balance of Pakistani support for the Afghan resistance tilted heavily in favour of the fundamentalist groups, which received as much as 75 per cent of the military aid provided to the resistance parties.¹⁰⁷ The ISI clearly felt more comfortable working with those with whom it already had an existing relationship; Hekmatyar, Rabbani and Khalis all had ties

¹⁰³ The fundamentalist parties consisted of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami-yi Afghanistan (Islamic Party of Afghanistan); a splinter group of the Hezb-i-Islami headed by Yunus Khalis that carried the same name; Burhanuddin Rabbani's Jamiat-i-Islami-yi Afghanistan (Islamic Society of Afghanistan); and the Ittihad-i-Islami Bara-yi Azadi-yi Afghanistan (Islamic Union for the Freedom of Afghanistan) led by Abdul Rasul Sayyaf. The three moderate/traditionalist parties included Mahaz-i-Milli-yi-Islami-yi Afghanistan (National Islamic Front of Afghanistan) led by Pir Sayyid Ahmad Gailani; the Jabha-yi-Nijat-i-Milli-yi Afghanistan (Afghanistan National Liberation Front) of Sibghatullah Mujaddidi; and Muhammad Nabi Muhammadi's Harakat-i-Inqilab-Islami-yi Afghanistan (Movement of the Islamic Revolution).

¹⁰⁴ For a comprehensive account of the origins, composition and structure of the Afghan resistance, see Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2002), 179-246.

¹⁰⁵ In 1983, for instance, ISI officers in the Afghan Bureau's Quetta station were caught colluding with their Afghan contacts in the mujahidin to sell off CIA-supplied weapons as part of what had by then become a flourishing black market in arms meant for the Afghan jihad. See Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 67.

¹⁰⁶ In 1984, Zia summoned the leaders of the seven parties and effectively bulldozed them into forming an alliance known formally as the Islamic Union of Afghan Mujahidin but referred to more commonly as the Afghan Alliance. From that point onwards, it was agreed that every commander would have to affiliate himself with one of the seven parties, otherwise he would invalidate himself from any help from the ISI, be it arms, ammunition, equipment or training. Although seen as an essential step towards unifying the Afghan resistance and coordinating their operations, in effect the ISI-sponsored arrangement "produced just enough unity to ease the military's task of controlling the mujahidin." The seven-party alliance provided for a rotating leadership which assured that "no Afghan leader, including Hekmatyar, could monopolize power, and that the movement would have to continue to look to Pakistan for guidance." See Weinbaum, "War and Peace in Afghanistan," 79.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 78.

with Pakistani intelligence going back to the early 1970s. Sayyaf was closely aligned with the ISI's Saudi partners - whose Salafi-Wahhabi creed he espoused - and was the recipient of generous funding from governmental and private sources within the kingdom.¹⁰⁸ Amongst the fundamentalists, however, it was Hekmatyar, the most radical and ruthless of the lot, who was viewed by Zia and the ISI as the candidate most likely to protect their core strategic interests.

Being a zealous advocate of a pure Islamic state, Hekmatyar was opposed to the secular nationalist agenda behind the demand for Pashtunistan and could be counted on to settle the border issue to Pakistan's satisfaction provided he was given a leading role in any post-Soviet dispensation. Within Pakistani intelligence circles, Hekmatyar was viewed as "an excellent administrator" and the "toughest and most vigorous" of all the resistance leaders, although there was also an admission that he was "ruthless, arrogant, inflexible..."¹⁰⁹ His close relationship with the Jamaat-i-Islami (Party of Islam), Pakistan's main Islamist party and a key political ally of Zia's regime, also worked in his favour.¹¹⁰ Hekmatyar's limited base of support within Afghanistan, his reputation as - amongst other unflattering attributes - a bigoted fire-breathing zealot,¹¹¹ and question marks about the effectiveness of his commanders in battle against the Soviets¹¹² appeared of little consequence to Zia and the ISI. Of greater significance to them was his ruthless enforcement of party discipline, his "authoritarian internationalist brand of Islam,"¹¹³ the development of a powerful corps of loyal and ideologically driven commanders and his skilful use of public relations to enlist external support for himself and his party.

Having agreed to cede operational control of the jihad to its Pakistani client, the US was content, for the most part, to go along with the ISI's war aims. According to prominent area specialist Marvin Weinbaum, the CIA had no option but to allow the ISI to play the lead

¹⁰⁸ Along with Saudi assistance, Sayyaf was also receiving around 17-18 per cent of all Pakistani-provided supplies. See Yousaf and Adkin, *The Bear Trap*, 105. Sayyaf had few commanders of his own but did manage to attract many Arabs to serve under his banner thanks to the Salafi ideology that he preached and the pan-Islamic ideals that he championed. See Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 221.

¹⁰⁹ Yousaf and Adkin, *The Bear Trap*, 40-41.

¹¹⁰ Modelled on the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Jamaat-i-Islami was committed to making Pakistan an Islamic state and played an important role in the preparation and implementation of Zia's domestic programme of Islamization. It was also an enthusiastic supporter of the Afghan jihad and enjoyed close ties with most of the resistance groups. However, its most cooperative relationship was with Hekmatyar's Hizb-i-Islami.

¹¹¹ Hekmatyar's critics have accused him of "an extraordinary range of misconduct, including homosexuality, ruthless torture and killing of his adversaries within the resistance, and even collaboration with the Soviet Union." See Wirsing, *Pakistan's Security under Zia*, 60.

¹¹² According to one account, Hekmatyar "consistently placed the long-term goal of Islamic revolution above resistance to the Soviets or to the Kabul regime. His militants were commonly engaged in fighting against fronts of all other parties, for his most important strategic goal was securing the dominance of Hizb over all the Islamic forces." Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 215.

¹¹³ Weinbaum, "War and Peace in Afghanistan," 77.

role in Afghanistan: “The US had nothing in common with the mujahidin groups and couldn’t manage them. The ISI said it could and to some extent it did do so.”¹¹⁴ Few policymakers in Washington saw the need to question the CIA’s almost complete dependence on its Pakistani counterpart for managing the Afghan resistance. Instead, there was increasing satisfaction that America’s policy towards the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was reaping dividends. By 1983, the fundamental US objective of getting the Soviets bogged down in a costly war of attrition had become a reality; the mujahidin, although still under-equipped and weakened by internal rivalries, were destroying Soviet men and material worth several times more than the aid being provided to them by the CIA.¹¹⁵

Within the CIA itself, criticism of the ISI’s role was even more muted on account of Casey’s passionate embrace of the jihad and his warm personal relationships with Zia and Akhtar, who convinced the CIA director that Hekmatyar was their best option amongst the mujahidin leaders.¹¹⁶ Even in its own independent estimation, the CIA regarded Hekmatyar as “the most efficient at killing Soviets,” thereby proving him worthy of being considered “their most dependable and effective ally.”¹¹⁷ This was in spite of the fact that Hekmatyar’s scarcely concealed contempt for the US was surpassed only by his rabid hatred of the Soviet Union.¹¹⁸ Reagan’s secretary of defence, Caspar Weinberger, claimed that the US had no illusions about the Afghan fundamentalist groups but had no other viable alternative: “We knew they were not very nice people, that they were not all people attached to democracy. But we had this terrible problem of making choices.”¹¹⁹

In April 1982, Casey visited Pakistan and held the first of many meetings with Zia, who treated him to a standard spiel on Afghanistan that was imparted to all interested foreign visitors. This was done with the aid of a map on which a red celluloid template was placed to demonstrate how the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was the prelude to a further thrust in the direction of the oil-rich Persian Gulf. Zia claimed that the Soviets would never relinquish their position in Afghanistan and declared that the US had a “moral duty” to

¹¹⁴ Interview with Marvin Weinbaum, Washington, D.C., October 30, 2013.

¹¹⁵ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 68.

¹¹⁶ In his willingness to oblige Akhtar and the ISI, Casey would even overrule his own staff who challenged certain Pakistani requests for money or weapons with the words: “No, the General [Akhtar] knows what he wants.” Yousaf and Adkin, *The Bear Trap*, 79.

¹¹⁷ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 120.

¹¹⁸ Even as they embraced him as their best bet in Afghanistan, some of Hekmatyar’s CIA patrons could not help but think that they might have been nourishing a viper in their bosom. According to William Piekney, CIA station chief in Islamabad from 1984 to 1986: “I would put my arms around Gulbuddin and we’d hug, you know, like brothers in combat and stuff, and his coal black eyes would look back at you, and you just knew that there was only one thing holding this team together and that was the Soviet Union.” Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 164.

ensure that any potential Soviet advance further southwards was confronted. Casey promised to find more funding for the mujahidin and was asked by Zia to improve their anti-aircraft capability since “the Pathans,” although “great fighters,” were “shit-scared when it comes to air power.”¹²⁰

Notwithstanding his Islamist orientation and his espousal of the Afghan resistance as a legitimate jihad, Zia was fundamentally a hard-headed realist with a clear idea of the limitations both of his own country as well as of its Afghan clients in the form of the mujahidin. Although committed to covertly resisting the Soviet occupation, Zia was mindful of not fanning the flames of jihad in Afghanistan to such an extent that they ended up engulfing Pakistan as well. His constant refrain to the ISI was to ensure that “the water in Afghanistan must boil at the right temperature”¹²¹ and his American interlocutors were similarly cautioned that the shared objective of the two countries in Afghanistan must be to “keep the pot boiling, but not boil over.”¹²² Support for the Afghan resistance had to be measured against the risk of provoking Soviet retribution, either on its own or in collusion with India.

Right from the outset, therefore, Pakistan was anxious to limit its covert engagement in Afghanistan to a level that would allow it a reasonable degree of plausible deniability, thereby mitigating the danger of Soviet reprisals. At the same time, it participated in efforts to find a negotiated resolution of the conflict through international mediation. In June 1982, a UN intermediary conducted the first round of indirect negotiations between Pakistan and the Soviet-backed Afghan government in Geneva, a process that would culminate six years later in the formal withdrawal of Soviet occupying forces from Afghanistan.

Pakistan’s approach to the Afghan jihad thus constituted a tortuous balancing act whereby an overt policy of internationalizing the conflict and pursuing a negotiated solution to it resided in uneasy coexistence with covert assistance to the mujahidin. By 1983, a clear division had emerged between the ISI and the foreign ministry over how best to resolve the Afghan conflict, with General Akhtar claiming that the Soviets would never withdraw and the foreign minister, Sahibzada Yaqub Ali Khan, declaring the Soviets to be sincere in their intention to exit Afghanistan provided certain conditions were met.¹²³ For its part, the militantly anti-communist Reagan administration was deeply sceptical of the UN-sponsored

¹²⁰ Gates, *From the Shadows*, 252.

¹²¹ Yousaf and Adkin, *The Bear Trap*, 20.

¹²² Gates, *From the Shadows*, 252.

¹²³ The most important of these was a Pakistani commitment to stop aiding the resistance in exchange for a Soviet commitment to withdraw their forces and a reciprocal undertaking by the Afghan communist regime not to support anti-state forces in Pakistan. See Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 105-107.

talks and Casey, in particular, regarded them as a Soviet “propaganda ploy” that had to be countered by continuing covert support to the resistance.¹²⁴ Zia himself was not willing to risk American opprobrium and a possible cessation of the billions in American aid that served as his political lifeline by cutting a deal with the Soviets. Although he kept the talks going, he instructed Yaqub Ali Khan to tone down his peacemaking efforts; in the meantime, the jihad in Afghanistan continued and would soon undergo a major intensification.

The impetus for raising the temperature of the resistance eventually came not so much from Zia or Casey but from within the US Congress. A group of virulently anti-communist members across the political divide who had become staunch supporters of the jihad began to harangue the CIA with calls to increase the amount and quality of assistance to the mujahidin. Spearheading this effort was Democratic Congressman Charlie Wilson, a rambunctious character who had achieved considerable notoriety on account of his colourful private life but who would eventually attain more favourable recognition in the US for making the Afghan jihad his own personal anti-Soviet crusade.¹²⁵

After three trips to Pakistan between 1982 and 1983, Wilson established a warm personal rapport with Zia and was incensed both by the plight of the Afghan refugees as well as by the CIA’s apparent reluctance to increase aid to the mujahidin. From his position as a member on the powerful Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the House of Representatives’ Committee on Appropriations, Wilson single-handedly engineered a dramatic expansion of the CIA’s Afghan programme. The initial CIA request of \$30 million for 1984-1985 was turned into a \$120 million windfall. Having secured greater willingness on Zia’s part for a “sharp increase” in the volume of arms for the mujahidin, Casey embraced Wilson’s support.¹²⁶ Through Wilson’s efforts in Congress and Casey’s influence in the Reagan White House, the Afghan programme continued to expand in the succeeding years: \$250 million in 1985, \$470 million in 1986 and \$630 million in 1987, all of which was matched equally by the Saudis.¹²⁷

Pakistan’s initial decision to support the mujahidin had been motivated primarily by the need to confine the Soviet military thrust to Afghanistan and prevent it from advancing

¹²⁴ Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 102-105.

¹²⁵ For an exhaustive account both of Wilson’s personal peccadilloes as well as his crucial role in ensuring the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan, see George Crile, *Charlie Wilson’s War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003).

¹²⁶ Gates, *From the Shadows*, 321.

¹²⁷ In 1988, Zia acknowledged Wilson’s contribution to the jihad in words of fulsome praise: “If there is a single man who has played a part that shall be recorded in history in golden words, it is that right honourable Congressman, Charles Wilson. Charlie did it.” Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 158.

further southwards. For Zia and his military advisors, the possibility of the Afghan resistance managing to reverse the Soviet advance on its own appeared a remote one. In comparison, the likelihood of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan consolidating itself into “a permanent part of the security architecture”¹²⁸ of the region seemed much greater.¹²⁹ Shortly after the invasion of Afghanistan, Zia conceded that his country would have to adapt to the reality of a Soviet presence next door by remarking that it was not possible to “live in the sea and create enemies with whales.”¹³⁰

By 1984, however, the Afghan resistance had demonstrated its resilience in the face of overwhelming odds, emboldening Zia to escalate the conflict by seeking improved weaponry for the mujahidin.¹³¹ His decision to make the Afghan pot boil at a higher temperature signified a changing of the goalposts for Pakistan from preventing Soviet expansionism beyond Afghanistan to securing a “strategic realignment” in South Asia.¹³² Imbued with religious fervour and empowered by the virtually unqualified support of the US for Pakistan’s conduct of the Afghan jihad, Zia and the ISI under Akhtar increasingly saw the covert war as a God-given opportunity for Afghanistan and Pakistan to become part of an anti-India and Islamist-led regional bloc. Pakistani support for Hekmatyar stemmed from the perception of its strategic planners that he could be relied upon to work towards establishing “a pan-Islamic entity that could stand up to India.”¹³³

By the mid-1980s, Zia was entertaining dreams of a confederation between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the first instance which would eventually expand to include Kashmir and Central Asia.¹³⁴ Such lofty aspirations fitted in neatly with Casey’s proposal to Zia to target the “soft underbelly” of the Soviet Union by initiating guerrilla attacks inside Soviet Central Asia.¹³⁵ Between 1984 and 1987, the ISI, with the knowledge and tacit approval of the CIA,

¹²⁸ Wirsing, *Pakistan’s Security under Zia*, 39.

¹²⁹ By 1983, the Soviets were reportedly constructing and expanding six airfields in south-west Afghanistan, prompting most analysts to conclude that they were going to be in the country for the long haul. See Khan, *Untying the Afghan Knot*, 103.

¹³⁰ William Borders, “Pakistani Leader Appeals for Aid Without Strings,” *New York Times*, January 16, 1980.

¹³¹ The decision to raise the stakes in Afghanistan reflected the almost total ascendancy of the ISI over the Pakistani foreign ministry when it came to the country’s Afghan policy. Yaqub Ali Khan’s periodic efforts to shift support from hard line Islamists to more moderate elements and tribally based local leaders had been consistently undermined by Akhtar, who also effectively obstructed the foreign ministry from playing a constructive role in the Geneva negotiations. Zia’s position on the Geneva talks was more nuanced than Akhtar’s outright opposition to any agreement that did not ensure a fundamentalist regime in Kabul. According to Charlie Wilson, Zia thought the negotiations were “just window dressing” but he also thought they could be useful in terms of deterring Russian military action against Pakistan. As far as Wilson himself was concerned, the Geneva talks were nothing but “total bullshit.” See Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 161.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 162.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Yousaf and Adkin, *The Bear Trap*, 189.

conducted scores of cross-border incursions and sabotage missions and despatched hundreds of mujahidin up to twenty-five kilometres inside the Soviet Union. Such attacks were terminated only after the infuriated Soviets had pointedly threatened a direct attack on Pakistan in case they were allowed to continue.¹³⁶

In an interview recorded months before his death in 1988, Zia proclaimed that right from the outset of the covert war in Afghanistan, his goals had been to drive out the Soviet Union, install an Islamist government in Kabul in place of the communists, and effect a critical “strategic realignment” in the region in Pakistan’s favour against its Indian arch-enemy:¹³⁷

We have earned the right to have a friendly regime there [in Afghanistan]... We took risks as a frontline state, and we won’t permit it to be like it was before, with Indian and Soviet influence there and claims on our territory. It will be a real Islamic state, part of a pan-Islamic revival that will one day win over the Muslims in the Soviet Union...

It is debatable if such indeed were Zia’s objectives all along. His initial caution with regard to limiting Pakistan’s involvement in the war suggested a prudently pragmatic approach aimed more at damage control rather than the attainment of sweeping geo-strategic and ideological goals. As the war progressed, however, the tantalizing prospect of securing strategic depth against India by virtue of a client government in Afghanistan became a crucial long-term objective for Zia and the ISI and one that would remain a cardinal principle of Pakistan’s Afghan policy in the decades to follow.

By 1985, the burgeoning support for the mujahidin within the US Congress and the consequent spurt in funding for the Afghan jihad encouraged the Reagan administration to replace its policy of simply “harassing” Soviet forces - a carryover from the Carter era - with a more aggressive and strident approach aimed at ensuring an outright Soviet defeat in Afghanistan. Formalized as National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) 166 and signed by Reagan in March 1985, America’s new classified policy objective in Afghanistan was to “push the Soviets out.”¹³⁸ Substantial amounts of sophisticated weaponry began to pour into Afghanistan, including heavy machine guns and surface-to-air missiles. The logistics pipeline was revamped and instruction imparted to the mujahidin was expanded through the

¹³⁶ Yousaf and Adkin, *The Bear Trap*, 195, 205. According to the head of the ISI’s Afghan Bureau, the US later “got cold feet” about the missions inside the Soviet Union and although the CIA continued to give “every encouragement unofficially to take the war into Soviet territory,” it was careful not to provide “anything that might be traceable to the United States.”

¹³⁷ Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 92.

¹³⁸ Gates, *From the Shadows*, 349.

establishment of a massive training infrastructure managed exclusively by the ISI's Afghan Bureau.¹³⁹

From around 1984 onwards, the trainees included a growing band of volunteers from a number of Arab countries who had journeyed to Afghanistan to join the jihad. A leading participant in the Arab recruitment drive was Osama bin Laden, a wealthy Saudi construction magnate with links to Saudi and Pakistani intelligence and a generous patron of the fundamentalist parties in the Afghan resistance, chiefly those led by Hekmatyar and Sayyaf.¹⁴⁰ The CIA looked favourably on widening the base of the jihad to include volunteers from other parts of the Muslim world and even examined ways to increase their participation by cobbling some sort of an "international brigade" but such plans did not materialise.¹⁴¹

The Soviets responded to the American escalation of the covert war in Afghanistan by raising the intensity of their own military activities, particularly through their use of Mi-24 Hind helicopter gunships and specialized Spetsnaz ground forces. The vulnerability of the mujahidin to devastating Soviet aerial power led to growing fears in the US and Pakistan alike that the resistance could eventually crumble unless provided with an effective counter-weapon. In February 1986, after considerable bureaucratic wrangling in Washington, the US decided to supply the mujahidin with the newest and most sophisticated anti-aircraft weapon in its arsenal: the shoulder-fired Stinger missile, an infrared, heat-seeking projectile capable of engaging low-altitude, high-speed aircraft.¹⁴² The introduction of the Stinger proved a major turning point in the Afghan war; according to the CIA's estimates, a Soviet helicopter or airplane was brought down seven out of every ten times that a Stinger was fired by the mujahidin.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ By mid-1984, the ISI was putting over 1,000 recruits a month through the training regimen and by late 1987, at least 80,000 mujahidin had received training over a four-year period. Yousaf and Adkin, *The Bear Trap*, 117.

¹⁴⁰ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 153.

¹⁴¹ Gates, *From the Shadows*, 349.

¹⁴² The CIA had initially opposed providing the Afghan resistance with Stingers on the grounds that it might provoke a major confrontation with the Soviets. The Pentagon had also opposed the supply of Stingers on the basis that the Soviets might capture one and reengineer it. By 1986, however, US policymakers had been sufficiently influenced by the destruction caused by Soviet helicopter gunships to consider the introduction of the Stinger as a tactical necessity whose potential benefits outweighed the risks of its deployment. See Seth G. Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2009), 38-39.

¹⁴³ Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War*, 437. According to former CIA director Robert Gates, the Stinger played a pivotal role in turning the tide in Afghanistan in favour of the resistance: "It greatly increased Soviet and Afghan aircraft (and pilot) losses and thus the cost of the war to Moscow; it forced changes in Soviet tactics that helped the mujahidin on the ground; and it was a big psychological boost for the resistance." Gates, *From the Shadows*, 350.

With its military intervention turning into the proverbial albatross around the neck, the Soviet Union under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev began to explore ways of salvaging a face-saving exit out of the smouldering ruins of its ambitions in Afghanistan. At a US-Soviet summit conference in December 1987, Gorbachev publicly declared his intention to take Soviet troops out of Afghanistan over a twelve month period after agreement was reached on terminating external aid to the mujahidin. Even as the fighting continued, international attention began to shift increasingly towards the UN-sponsored negotiating process in Geneva. With an agreement now well and truly within reach, US interests in Afghanistan began to diverge from those of its Pakistani client. After initially being at best lukewarm and at worst actively hostile to the Geneva talks, the US had agreed in 1985 to serve as a guarantor of any agreement that ensured a Soviet withdrawal. In exchange for a commitment by the Soviets to take their forces out of Afghanistan within a stipulated period of time, the US undertook to terminate its assistance to the mujahidin.

In February 1988, Gorbachev confirmed that Soviet troops would begin withdrawing from Afghanistan by the middle of May and would complete their exit over the following ten months. Once Moscow agreed to withdraw, Washington was satisfied that its primary objective in fuelling the Afghan jihad had been met. According to then US Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Michael Armacost, “Our main interest was getting the Russians out. Afghanistan, as such, was remote from major US concerns.”¹⁴⁴ This hands-off approach to Afghanistan’s future placed the US at odds with Zia and the ISI. Islamabad became worried at the prospect of Washington and Moscow making common cause in Geneva to frustrate its goal of installing the government of its choice in Kabul. According to Arnold Raphel, the American ambassador to Pakistan at the time, the US was focused on the Soviet withdrawal whereas Zia and the ISI were “more concerned about what they called ‘strategic realignment’ and about establishing a pan-Islamic confederation of Pakistan and Afghanistan. They felt that after eight years Pakistan was entitled to run its own show in Kabul.”¹⁴⁵

By permitting the Soviets the fig-leaf of a negotiated exit from Afghanistan whilst leaving its client communist regime in power, the ISI believed that the US was denying the mujahidin the fruits of a famous victory that, thanks to Pakistan’s consistent support, now lay within its grasp. In March 1987, Akhtar Abdul Rahman Khan had been promoted to the ceremonial position of Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee. His replacement as head of the ISI, Major General Hameed Gul, was even more implacably opposed to a political

¹⁴⁴ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 287.

¹⁴⁵ Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 259.

compromise over Afghanistan than his predecessor,¹⁴⁶ especially after several Soviet military reverses in mid-1987 had strengthened the ISI's conviction that the resistance could eventually prevail on the battlefield as long as external support continued.¹⁴⁷ Zia essentially concurred with the ISI's assessment and publicly accused the US of colluding with the Soviet Union to ditch the Afghans and "smear Pakistan in the bargain as an obstacle to peace."¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, he threatened to withhold Pakistan's signature on the Geneva documents unless the Soviets removed their client PDPA regime led by Mohammed Najibullah in Kabul and agreed to an interim government chosen through processes dominated by the Pakistan-based and ISI-controlled mujahidin parties.¹⁴⁹

In what constituted an ironic reversal of positions, Pakistan was now advocating a linkage between a Soviet withdrawal and a political transition in Kabul that had originally been proposed by the Soviets themselves but which Islamabad and Washington had both rejected. Pakistan's position all along had been a willingness to sign an agreement with any government in Kabul once a definite timeframe for a Soviet withdrawal had been finalized.¹⁵⁰ The US had gone along with the same approach and had spurned a Soviet offer in 1987 to collaborate in setting up an interim coalition government comprising Najibullah and elements of the resistance.¹⁵¹ The Soviet decision to discard the linkage and withdraw without settling Afghanistan's political future took Zia by surprise. He attempted to persuade the US to revive the proposal for a transitional government in Kabul but was told by US Secretary of State George Shultz that America's foremost priority now was to get the Soviets out of Afghanistan.¹⁵² The Soviet Union, in turn, made it abundantly clear to Zia that it had no intention of delaying its departure from Afghanistan.¹⁵³

Faced with mounting international pressure to abandon his opposition to the Geneva accords, a desperate Zia tried to drum up domestic support but was stymied by his own hand-picked prime minister, Muhammad Khan Junejo. In 1985, Zia had sought to assuage growing domestic opposition to his rule by restoring the constitution, permitting non-party elections and finally ending the state of martial law that had remained in force ever since his seizure of power in 1977. By nominating Junejo, a nondescript politician of unassuming

¹⁴⁶ A personal sketch of Gul prepared by the US Defence Intelligence Agency in 1989 described him as a "strong supporter of Pakistan's ties to the US..." but also as a "real fire-breather" on religious issues. "Biographic Sketch, Major General Hamid Gul, Defence Intelligence Agency, January 1989," DNSA, accessed July 19, 2015, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/publications/dnsa.html>.

¹⁴⁷ Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 257.

¹⁴⁸ "Our name being sullied by US-USSR deal on Afghanistan," *Nation*, February 19, 1988.

¹⁴⁹ Lally Weymouth, "Zia: No deal with Najibullah," *Washington Post*, January 24, 1988.

¹⁵⁰ Khan, *Untying the Afghan Knot*, 251.

¹⁵¹ George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan, 1993), 1089.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Khan, *Untying the Afghan Knot*, 256-257.

manner and docility of temperament, as prime minister, Zia thought he had put in office a man unlikely to challenge his authority. To the surprise of many, Junejo proved himself anything but a timid yes-man and gradually began to assert himself even in influencing Pakistan's foreign and defence policies.

The domestic debate over the Afghan endgame threw up a stark divergence of views between Zia and Junejo, with the latter advocating a quick signing of the Geneva accords. After Zia threatened to block progress towards a Soviet withdrawal unless an interim government in Kabul was put in place, Junejo demonstrated surprising political courage by going over Zia's head to turn public opinion at home in favour of signing the accords. In February 1988, Junejo invited leading national newspaper editors to a briefing in which he explained why it was necessary for Pakistan to sign the accords. Amongst the reasons the prime minister put forward was that "our American and Saudi friends would not forgive us, and they are reminding me of this day after day."¹⁵⁴ The remark appears to suggest that the US might have been egging Junejo on to stand up to Zia, who reacted angrily by accusing it of being "only interested in the withdrawal of Soviet troops. It doesn't care what happens to the Afghans afterwards."¹⁵⁵ Isolated on the issue at home as well as internationally, Zia grudgingly agreed to put aside his opposition to the accords.¹⁵⁶

The Geneva accords, signed on April 14, 1988, by Pakistan and the PDPA regime as principals and the US and the Soviet Union as guarantors, essentially consisted of four instruments, two of which were bilateral agreements between Pakistan and Afghanistan.¹⁵⁷ The first of these bound the two countries to a policy of non-interference in each other's internal affairs. The detailed clauses of this agreement effectively prohibited Pakistan from continuing its assistance to the mujahidin or allowing its territory to be used for that purpose. The second bilateral agreement pertained to the voluntary return of Afghan refugees in Pakistan to their own country. A third instrument was a Declaration on International Guarantees signed by the US and the Soviet Union by which they committed themselves to abjure interference in the internal affairs of Pakistan and Afghanistan as well as to act as co-guarantors of the entire settlement. The final instrument, known as the Agreement on the Interrelationships for the Settlement of the Situation Relating to

¹⁵⁴ Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 259.

¹⁵⁵ "Our name being sullied..." *Nation*. General Hamid Gul, who was heading the ISI at the time, maintained that "there can be no question that Junejo was weaned away from Zia by the Americans." Interview with Hamid Gul, Rawalpindi, January 1, 2014.

¹⁵⁶ Zia vented his spleen against Junejo a month after the accords were signed on April 14, 1988, by sacking the prime minister and sending his government packing.

¹⁵⁷ "Afghanistan-Pakistan-Union of Soviet Socialist Republics-United States: Accords on the Peaceful Resolution of the Situation in Afghanistan," *International Legal Materials* 27, no. 3 (May 1988): 577-595.

Afghanistan, was signed by all four governments, with the US and the Soviet Union acting as witnesses. It committed the Soviets to complete their withdrawal from Afghanistan within a period of nine months starting from May 15, 1988.

The Geneva accords were almost derailed at the last instant over the question of continued assistance to the mujahidin once the terms of the settlement became operative. The Soviets had maintained all along their intention to continue providing military support to the Kabul regime even after their withdrawal and the accords contained no provision preventing them from doing so. Pakistan, on the other hand, was expressly barred by the provisions of the accords from continuing its assistance to the mujahidin. Moreover, the US had given an implicit agreement at the time it became a guarantor of the Geneva talks that it would stop helping the mujahidin once the Soviets agreed to withdraw. When the withdrawal became imminent, bipartisan Congressional supporters of the jihad put sustained pressure on the Reagan administration to continue assisting the mujahidin until there was overwhelming evidence of the Soviets having terminated aid to their client regime in Kabul.¹⁵⁸ After some tough last-minute bargaining, the US and the Soviets agreed to what became known as “positive symmetry,” by which both sides could continue to assist their respective clients in Afghanistan even after the Soviet withdrawal.¹⁵⁹

The problem still remained, however, of how to keep the arms pipeline to the mujahidin going without Pakistan’s participation. Under the terms of the accord, Pakistan had undertaken to “prevent within its territory the training, equipping, financing and recruitment of mercenaries from whatever origin for the purpose of hostile activities against the other High Contracting Party [Afghanistan], or the sending of such mercenaries into the territory of the other High Contracting Party...”¹⁶⁰ The US was worried that it had placed its Pakistani ally in an embarrassing and even dangerous position of violating its obligations under the Geneva accords. However, any concerns in that regard were settled by Zia himself, who called Reagan to reassure him that Pakistan would continue to serve as the principal conduit for US aid to the mujahidin. When Reagan asked Zia how Pakistan would respond to Soviet charges that it was contravening its Geneva undertakings, Zia coolly

¹⁵⁸ On March 1, 1988, the US Senate passed a resolution by a vote of 77-0 expressing “strong belief” that the US government should not “cease, suspend, diminish, or otherwise restrict assistance to the Afghan Resistance” until it was “absolutely clear” that the Soviets had terminated their military occupation and that the mujahidin were “well enough equipped” to maintain their integrity during the transition period. Khan, *Untying the Afghan Knot*, 270.

¹⁵⁹ Although not made a formal part of the accords, the US position on “positive symmetry” was delineated in a statement made by Secretary of State George Shultz at the signing ceremony which asseverated America’s right, “consistent with its obligations as a guarantor,” to provide military assistance to “parties in Afghanistan” so long as the Soviets continued to proclaim their own right to do so. See Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 1093.

¹⁶⁰ Clause 8, Article II of the Geneva Accords. See Roseanne Klass, “Afghanistan: The Accords,” *Foreign Affairs* 66, no. 5 (Summer 1988): 944.

replied that he would “just lie about it. We’ve been denying our activities there for eight years.” For good measure, he added that “Muslims have the right to lie in a good cause.”¹⁶¹

VI. Nuclear Cat-and-Mouse

It was not the Soviets alone to whom Zia had been lying for eight years. His consistent but false denials of Pakistani involvement in the covert war in Afghanistan were matched by his steadfast but equally disingenuous responses to his American patron’s concerns about Pakistan’s nuclear programme. By 1982, Pakistan was in receipt of an annual injection of \$600 million in US military and economic assistance as wages for fighting the covert war against the Soviets in Afghanistan. Through making Pakistan the fourth largest global recipient of US aid at the time, the Reagan administration desired not only to ensure its continued cooperation in fuelling the resistance in Afghanistan but also to address its security concerns to an extent where it put aside, or at the very least slowed down, its plans to acquire nuclear weapons.

It soon became apparent, however, that Pakistan had no intention of making any compromises on its nuclear programme. Zia shrewdly calculated the extent to which he could move forward on the nuclear front without jeopardizing his alliance with Washington. As long as Pakistan did not actually test a nuclear device, he was confident that Reagan and his posse of anti-Soviet hardliners in the administration and in Congress would put a greater premium on defeating the Soviets in Afghanistan than on thwarting Pakistan’s pursuit of the bomb. As it turned out, Zia’s confidence in the Reagan administration was not misplaced. Unwilling to jeopardize Pakistani cooperation in resisting the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, Washington made no concerted attempt to restrain Islamabad’s march towards nuclear acquisition, confining itself only to expressions of concern and the occasional mild rebuke. This was despite the fact that by mid-1982, Reagan had informed Zia through a private envoy that “intelligence of an incontrovertible nature” had been unearthed which showed that “Pakistanis or people purporting to represent them” had transferred designs and specifications for nuclear weapons components to purchasing agents in several countries “for the purpose of having these nuclear weapons components fabricated for Pakistan.”¹⁶²

In response, Zia denied any knowledge of such transfers and gave his “word of honour as a soldier” that Pakistan “would not embarrass the US government” by manufacturing a nuclear device. The American envoy, former deputy director of the CIA Vernon Walters,

¹⁶¹ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 1091.

¹⁶² “My first meeting with President Zia,” report sent by Ambassador Walters to the Secretary of State, July 5, 1982, DNSA, accessed July 20, 2015, <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/347027-doc-13-a-7-5-82.html>.

went away from the meeting with the feeling that “either he [Zia] really does not know or he is the most superb and patriotic liar I have ever met.” Just months after receiving Zia’s assurances, Walters returned to Islamabad once again, this time carrying fresh evidence obtained by US intelligence incriminating Pakistan of continuing its covert acquisition of nuclear technology. In response, Zia declared that “nothing could be hidden” from the US intelligence community, that the CIA was “capable of penetrating anywhere,” and that Pakistan would be “foolish to act on any other assumption.” Whilst finding the American allegations “difficult to deal with” and short on specifics, he affirmed that if anyone in Pakistan were found guilty of genuine wrongdoing, he would personally “hang that chap upside down.”¹⁶³ Zia’s final statement to Walters contained a request to convey to Reagan his “word of honour as president of Pakistan and as a soldier that I am not and will not develop a nuclear device or weapon.”¹⁶⁴

On a state visit to the US in December 1982, Zia was able to personally convince Reagan that he was “telling us the truth” in declaring that Pakistan’s nuclear programme was “for peaceful purposes.”¹⁶⁵ In reality, the covert procurement of nuclear-related materiel and technology continued apace, as did the efforts to enrich uranium to bomb-grade level. By June 1983, a secret State Department memorandum warned that within two to three years, Pakistan could produce sufficient fissile material for a single nuclear device and that sustained operations could eventually lead to several devices every year.¹⁶⁶ In line with his policy of deliberate dissimulation, however, Zia continued to reassure a host of concerned American interlocutors that he would never do anything to “embarrass” his patrons.¹⁶⁷ In November 1984, when directly asked by US Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan if Pakistan had a bomb, Zia issued a categorical denial: “We are nowhere near it. We have no intention of making such a weapon. We renounce making such a weapon.”¹⁶⁸

For the most part, the Reagan administration appeared content to go along with Zia’s fabricated responses; a clandestine Pakistani nuclear programme seemed a tolerable price to bear in exchange for making the Soviets bleed in Afghanistan. The US Congress, however, was much more reluctant to give Pakistan’s nuclear programme a clean bill of health.

¹⁶³ “Pakistan Nuclear Issue: Meeting with President Zia,” report sent by Ambassador Walters to the Secretary of State, October 17, 1982, DNSA, accessed July 20, 2015, <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/347029-doc-14-a-10-17-82.html>

¹⁶⁴ “Pakistan Nuclear Issue: Meeting with President Zia,” report sent by Ambassador Walters to the Secretary of State, October 25, 1982, DNSA, accessed July 20, 2015, <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/347030-doc-14-b-10-25-82.html>

¹⁶⁵ William K. Stevens, “Zia Sees Pakistan as the Front Line,” *New York Times*, December 8, 1982.

¹⁶⁶ “The Pakistani Nuclear Program,” US Department of State secret memorandum, June 23, 1983, cited in Andrew Winner and Toshi Yoshihara, *Nuclear Stability in South Asia* (Medford, MA: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, 2002), 22.

¹⁶⁷ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 278.

¹⁶⁸ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 493-494.

Congressional scepticism of Zia's assurances increased after three Pakistani nationals were indicted in the US in July 1984 for attempting to illicitly export equipment that could be used to make nuclear weapons. The indictment came shortly after two other Pakistanis had been convicted in Canada for trying to illegally export nuclear-related material produced in the US.¹⁶⁹ Under pressure from Congress to take a tougher line with Pakistan, Reagan wrote to Zia in September 1984 to warn him of "implications for our security program and relationship" should Pakistan enrich uranium beyond the five per cent level sufficient for nuclear fuel for power reactors but not enough for a bomb. Zia responded with a specific pledge to refrain from crossing the five per cent threshold.¹⁷⁰

In 1985, the Foreign Relations Committee of the US Senate approved a proposal to amend the Foreign Assistance Act in order to make it mandatory for the president to issue an annual certification that Pakistan neither possessed a nuclear device nor was in the process of developing it for US aid to continue. Under strong pressure from the Reagan administration, the Committee watered down the original proposal to a more lenient one requiring an annual certification that Pakistan did not have a nuclear weapon and that US assistance to it was advancing non-proliferation goals.¹⁷¹ US officials reassured their Pakistani counterparts that the Pressler amendment, as it came to be known, needed to be viewed "as a way to avert more damaging legislation, not as a device for cutting off assistance."¹⁷² The Reagan administration had to accept another amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act, this time moved by Democratic Congressman Stephen Solarz, which barred aid to any country whose government entities were found guilty of illegally importing nuclear technology from the US.¹⁷³ Unlike the Pressler amendment, however, the Solarz amendment did carry an escape clause in the form of a presidential waiver.

Secure in the knowledge that his US patron would not be willing to put Pakistani cooperation in Afghanistan on the line, Zia gradually became more confident in asserting Pakistan's right to pursue the nuclear option. In parleys with US officials in November 1985, Zia issued his customary refrain that he would never "embarrass" the US¹⁷⁴ but dropped his usual reference to Pakistan's "peaceful" nuclear ambitions in favour of a

¹⁶⁹ Rick Atkinson, "Nuclear Parts Sought by Pakistan," *Washington Post*, July 21, 1984.

¹⁷⁰ "Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Program and US Security Assistance," memorandum from Kenneth Adelman, Director, US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, to the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, June 16, 1986, accessed July 19, 2015, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114316>

¹⁷¹ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 277.

¹⁷² Ibid. The amendment took its name from its primary sponsor, Republican Senator Larry Pressler.

¹⁷³ Robert Pear, "Legislators Move on Atom Exports," *New York Times*, March 27, 1985.

¹⁷⁴ "How Do We Make Use of the Zia Visit to Protect Our Strategic Interests In the Face of Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Activities," memorandum from Secretary of State Shultz to President Reagan, November 26, 1982, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114311>

“minimum nuclear program necessitated by its security environment.”¹⁷⁵ A month later, the US Defence Intelligence Agency had received and was verifying intelligence reports that Pakistan had produced an atomic weapon in October 1985 with the assistance of China.¹⁷⁶

In June 1986, a secret memorandum issued by the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency revealed that Zia had violated his undertaking not to enrich uranium beyond five per cent, with the result that Pakistan now had enough highly enriched uranium for one or more nuclear weapons.¹⁷⁷ The memo affirmed that US verbal demarches and cautions had failed to slow down Pakistan’s nuclear program and issued a stark warning that simply using “more words, without some action to back it up, will only further reinforce Zia’s belief that he can lie to us with impunity.”

Whilst acknowledging that taking a tougher line with Pakistan could entail risks to US interests in Afghanistan, the memo suggested that such risks could be mitigated if pressure was applied “discriminately.” In this regard, it recommended an immediate review of US policy towards Pakistan’s nuclear programme and called for all military assistance to be suspended pending the review’s outcome. The advice went unheeded and the Reagan administration continued to confine itself to ineffectual calls for nuclear restraint even as it announced a fresh six-year \$4.02 billion aid package for Pakistan. Towards the end of 1986, Reagan also provided the first annual certification mandated by the Pressler amendment that Pakistan did not possess a nuclear weapon.

In 1987, any doubts that might have remained about the actual nature of Pakistan’s nuclear programme were removed when A.Q. Khan, the country’s chief nuclear scientist and a man not averse to self-projection, boasted to an Indian journalist that Pakistan had attained nuclear-weapon capability. “They told us Pakistan could never produce the bomb and doubted my capabilities,” said Khan, “but they know we have done it. America knows it.”¹⁷⁸ Shortly after Khan’s interview, further corroboration of Pakistan’s nuclear capability came from no less a personage than Zia himself. In an interview to *Time* magazine in April 1987, he declared: “You can write today that Pakistan can build a [nuclear] bomb whenever it wishes.”¹⁷⁹ Pakistan’s decision to lift its veil of nuclear ambiguity was driven by serious tensions with India at the time that may have necessitated recourse to nuclear deterrence to

¹⁷⁵ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 278.

¹⁷⁶ “Pakistan-China: Nuclear Weapons Production and Testing,” Defence Intelligence Agency cable to excised location, December 6, 1985, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114315>

¹⁷⁷ “Pakistan’s Nuclear Weapons Program and US Security Assistance.”

¹⁷⁸ Kuldeep Nayar, “Pakistan Can Make an A-Bomb: Says Pakistan’s Dr. Strangelove,” *Observer* (London), March 1, 1987.

¹⁷⁹ “Knocking at the Nuclear Door,” *Time*, March 30, 1987, 32.

ward off a possible Indian attack. While the threat of war with India did indeed recede, Zia's public assertion of Pakistan's nuclear capability clearly contravened his own promise never to "embarrass" his American patron.¹⁸⁰

Further embarrassment, this time for both patron and client, was to follow in July 1987, when a Pakistani-born Canadian named Arshad Parvez was arrested in Philadelphia whilst attempting to purchase special purpose steel needed to make nuclear weapons. During the sting operation that nabbed him, Parvez had confirmed to undercover US law-enforcement officials that the steel was to be used in a gas centrifuge enrichment plant to make nuclear weapons.¹⁸¹ Although Pakistan denied any complicity in Parvez's procurement activities, the case led the US Congress to allow the six-year waiver of sanctions through which Pakistan had been receiving aid to lapse, leading to a temporary cessation of assistance.¹⁸² However, legislators calling for punitive measures against Pakistan were outnumbered by those who attached greater significance to the successful prosecution of the Afghan jihad. In December 1987, Congress restored the waiver and Reagan issued a second certification under the Pressler amendment of Pakistan's nuclear bona fides.

On the same day that Reagan certified for the second time that Pakistan did not have a nuclear device nor was in the process of developing one, a US district court found Arshad Parvez guilty of conspiring to ship material to Pakistan that could be used in the production of nuclear weapons. The conviction placed the Reagan administration in a quandary since the provisions of the Solarz amendment called for a suspension of aid in case of illegal importations of nuclear-related technology.¹⁸³ Yet again, America's geo-political interests prevailed over its non-proliferation goals. Reagan used the waiver granted to him under the Solarz amendment to allow the continuation of aid to Pakistan, citing US national interests as the rationale behind his decision.¹⁸⁴ Before exiting the White House, he gave his third and final annual certification that Pakistan did not possess a nuclear weapon. On this occasion, however, with the Soviets in the process of completing their withdrawal from Afghanistan and Pakistan's strategic importance in decline as a consequence, Reagan did

¹⁸⁰ As it turned out, the Reagan administration did not appear to have suffered much embarrassment on account of Zia's unprecedented candour about Pakistan's nuclear programme. According to the Pakistani ambassador to the US at the time, Washington's response was seen as "an aye and a wink." Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 285.

¹⁸¹ Norman Kempster, "Plot to Buy Steel for A-Arms Alleged," *Los Angeles Times*, July 15, 1987.

¹⁸² Michael R. Gordon, "Businessman Convicted in Pakistan Nuclear Plot," *New York Times*, December 18, 1987.

¹⁸³ David K. Shipler, "Pakistan Tied to Atom Shipping Plot," *New York Times*, January 14, 1988.

¹⁸⁴ Presidential Determination No. 88-5, January 15, 1988, *Federal Register* 53, February 5, 1988, 3325.

point out that the status of the Pakistani nuclear programme might make another certification problematic.¹⁸⁵

VII. Zia's Death: An Unresolved Mystery

Neither Zia nor his chief associate in the Afghan jihad, Akhtar Abdul Rahman Khan, would live long enough to witness the completion of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. On August 17, 1988, an American-supplied C-130 Hercules transport plane carrying Zia, Akhtar and eight other senior Pakistani generals crashed minutes after taking off from Bahawalpur, where Pakistan's top military brass had gone to attend test trials of a US-made tank. Amongst the thirty-one passengers on board the ill-fated aircraft were the American ambassador to Pakistan, Arnold Raphel, and the military attaché, Brigadier General Herbert Wassom. After lurching in mid-air, the plane plunged to the ground and exploded upon impact, killing all on board including the man who had been the unchallenged arbiter of Pakistan's destinies for over a decade.

An inquiry conducted by Pakistani air force officers with the technical assistance of their US counterparts found "a criminal act or sabotage" as the most probable cause of the crash.¹⁸⁶ On the basis of forensic evidence gathered from the plane's debris, the inquiry concluded that a highly toxic chemical agent or nerve gas had been used to incapacitate the flight crew and maintained that the use of such "ultra-sophisticated techniques would necessitate the involvement of a specialist organization well versed with carrying out such tasks and possessing all the means and abilities for its execution."¹⁸⁷

Instead of pursuing the inquiry's findings, the US government sought to distance itself from them by propagating the notion that the crash occurred due to a malfunction in the plane and was, therefore, an accident. Moreover, both the State Department and the Pentagon, each of whom had lost a senior official in the crash, refused to allow the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to send its experts to Pakistan,¹⁸⁸ even though US legislation mandated the FBI to investigate terrorist incidents abroad in which American nationals had been assaulted or murdered.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁵ David Ottoway, "Pakistan May Lose US Aid," *Washington Post*, January 28, 1989.

¹⁸⁶ Edward Jay Epstein, "Who Killed Zia?" *Vanity Fair*, September 1989, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www.edwardjayepstein.com/archived/zia.htm>

¹⁸⁷ Robert D. Kaplan, "How Zia's Death Helped the US," *New York Times*, August 23, 1989. For a detailed account of the findings of the inquiry, see Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 400-403.

¹⁸⁸ John H. Cushman, Jr., "F.B.I Is to Begin Inquiry of Crash That Killed Zia," *New York Times*, October 23, 1988.

¹⁸⁹ The relevant legislation in this context was the so-called 'long arm law' or, more formally, the Omnibus Diplomatic Security Antiterrorism Act of 1986. See Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 399.

By excluding the FBI from the investigation, the US government ensured that American participation was confined to the air force accident investigators and did not include any criminal, anti-terrorist or sabotage experts. It was only owing to Congressional pressure and criticism of what appeared to be a government cover-up that an FBI team was eventually sent out to Pakistan ten months after the crash, by which time the trail had gone cold. Astonishingly, Arnold Raphel's replacement as US ambassador to Pakistan, Robert Oakley, revealed before Congress in June 1989 that he and other top officials met at the White House on the day of the crash but "it didn't occur to anyone" to send criminal investigators to the crash site.¹⁹⁰

For their part, Pakistan's military authorities did not seem any more inclined than the US government to get to the bottom of the matter. Despite the fact that the crash had wiped out virtually the entire top echelon of the army, the official investigation was handed over not to the ISI or Military Intelligence but to a civilian bureaucrat, who would be unlikely to rock the boat by asserting himself against an all-powerful military establishment. No autopsies were ever performed on the bodies of the flight crew which might have provided evidence of the use of an incapacitating chemical agent or nerve gas. The official reason given was that Islamic law mandated burial within twenty four hours of death but in actual fact, Pakistani military protocols did not follow that rule and autopsies in cases of air crash fatalities were routinely performed.¹⁹¹

The investigation of those with access to the plane at the airport and who were involved in its security was perfunctory and there was no attempt to methodically interrogate suspects or follow up on possible leads. Telephone records of calls made to Zia and Akhtar prior to the crash were destroyed.¹⁹² In the immediate aftermath of Zia's death, his successor as army chief, General Aslam Beg, had declared the crash a "conspiracy" whose perpetrators would be found and brought to justice. It soon became apparent, however, that the army was content to sweep the probable assassination of their chief under the carpet, a sentiment shared by Washington, despite the fact that two senior American officials had also plunged to their deaths alongside Zia. To date, the US National Archives have not declassified some 250 pages related to the crash.¹⁹³

The fact that Zia had no dearth of enemies, both domestic and foreign, who might wish to eliminate him led to feverish speculation in Pakistan - a country known to be "a Petri dish

¹⁹⁰ Robert Pear, "F.B.I. Allowed to Investigate Crash That Killed Zia," *New York Times*, June 25, 1989.

¹⁹¹ See Epstein, "Who Killed Zia?" Also see Yousaf and Adkin, *The Bear Trap*, 14.

¹⁹² Epstein, "Who Killed Zia?"

¹⁹³ Barbara Crossette, "Who Killed Zia?" *World Policy Journal* 22, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 94.

for conspiracy theories” - about the identity of his putative assassins.¹⁹⁴ The most obvious suspects were the Soviets, either acting alone or in collusion with their Afghan allies. The involvement of arch-foe India could not be ruled out, nor indeed could that of Zia’s partner in the Afghan jihad, the US, which had become wary of his Islamist agenda in Afghanistan and his continuing pursuit of nuclear weapons. Within Pakistan, Zia’s domestic political opponents, chief amongst them the exiled sons of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, had already attempted to assassinate him in the past and could conceivably have tried again, this time with much greater success.¹⁹⁵ Zia’s aggressive espousal of a puritanical form of Sunni Islam and his proximity to Saudi Arabia had alarmed Pakistan’s Shia minority, which might have plotted his removal. Finally, Zia might have outlived his utility for his primary constituency, the army.

So who did kill General Zia-ul-Haq? The CIA and the Soviet KGB both possessed the “ultra-sophisticated techniques” that the inquiry report suggested had been used to bring about the crash. Afghan and Indian intelligence could have obtained access to the chemical agents purportedly used to disable the crew through their KGB partners. However, planting the gas on board the plane, keeping track of Zia’s itinerary, preventing the performance of autopsies on the dead bodies and getting rid of Zia’s telephone records could not have been done by any foreign intelligence agency; the collaboration of locals, especially from within the Pakistani military and its intelligence apparatus, would have to be assured.

The US insistence that the crash was due to a malfunctioning aircraft rather than sabotage could have been motivated by a desire to prevent a breakdown of relations with the Soviets in case they were found responsible for the crime. Evidence of Soviet and/or Afghan involvement in the deaths of not only the president of Pakistan but also two senior American officials would inevitably have led to heightened tensions between the US and the USSR and would in all likelihood have scuttled the Geneva accords. If proof of Indian involvement was unearthed, it would be equally fraught with danger since it could precipitate another war between two countries both suspected of having nuclear weapons. Finally, the US may also have wanted to spare Pakistan, and particularly the army, the embarrassment of discovering that elements from within the military might have been involved in the plot to kill Zia.

¹⁹⁴ Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 396.

¹⁹⁵ Following Bhutto’s ouster from power in 1977, his two sons, Mir Murtaza and Shahnawaz, had gone into exile and, after their father was hanged, set up an anti-Zia terrorist group known as Al-Zulfikar in Kabul, where they had been provided refuge by the PDPA regime. Operating initially out of Kabul and later on from Damascus, Al-Zulfikar carried out a number of terrorist operations, including attempts on Zia’s life as well as the hijacking of a Pakistan International Airlines passenger jet in 1981.

Another possibility is that the US itself decided to eliminate a once close ally whose increasing recalcitrance was becoming an impediment to its evolving geo-political interests in the region. Even though Zia had been pressurised into signing the Geneva accords, he continued to adhere to the conviction that they had been a setback for Pakistan and the mujahidin and made no secret of his disdain for the non-interference provisions of the accords to which Pakistan had become a signatory. Less than two months before he died, Zia had declared that the sacrifices of the mujahidin would not be allowed to go unrewarded: “We will either throw Najib out of Kabul or establish a provisional government inside Afghanistan first and then throw him out.”¹⁹⁶ For Zia, the dream of a Pakistan-Afghanistan confederation as the cornerstone of a pan-Islamic bloc that would incorporate the Muslims of Soviet Central Asia - “who knows...perhaps even Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, you will see” - was well and truly alive.¹⁹⁷

For the US, on the other hand, the prospect of an Islamist takeover in Southwest Asia, coming less than a decade after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, was a deeply worrying one. In April 1987, William Casey had died of a brain tumour, depriving Zia of his closest and most influential ally within the Reagan administration and the mujahidin of one of the most ardent American supporters of their jihad. Following Casey’s death, the CIA-ISI partnership came under greater scrutiny in Washington, with questions being raised in Congress and by the American media about the wisdom of toeing the ISI’s line in Afghanistan.

Increasing criticism began to be directed at the policy of showering millions of American taxpayers’ dollars on Gulbuddin Hekmatyar even though he had refused to visit the White House in 1985 to shake hands with Reagan. However, Zia and the ISI continued to prop up Hekmatyar as the man most likely to implement their pan-Islamic regional goals. General Hamid Gul, who headed the ISI at the time of Zia’s death and was well known both for his Islamist inclinations as well as his criticism of US policies in the region, had no doubt in his mind about the culprits: “The Americans knocked off his plane because they could not abide an Islamic system being promulgated in Afghanistan and Pakistan.”¹⁹⁸

Zia’s continuing support to anti-US elements in the Afghan resistance, his opposition to the Geneva accords and his cloak-and-dagger pursuit of nuclear weapons might have convinced his American patrons that their once indispensable client had become a dangerous liability. Even if the US did not eliminate Zia itself, the possibility cannot be discounted of a tacit agreement between Washington and Moscow that the KGB and/or its Afghan proxies

¹⁹⁶ Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 260.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Interview with Hamid Gul.

would assassinate Zia, and the US would ensure a whitewashing of the subsequent investigation. An even more intriguing explanation was propounded by none other than the US ambassador to India at the time, John Gunther Dean, who saw in the plot to kill Zia “the hallmarks of Israel, or specifically the Israeli intelligence agency, Mossad.”¹⁹⁹ Dean tried to take up his theory in Washington but was deemed medically incompetent, stripped of his security clearance and eventually made to retire from the State Department.²⁰⁰ Even if Dean was correct in his suspicions about Mossad, it is difficult to believe that Israel removed Zia without the prior approval, and possibly the complicity, of the US.

In the absence of conclusive evidence linking a particular suspect to the crash that killed Zia, any assigning of guilt in that regard can only be speculative, not to mention irresponsible. What appears irrefutable, however, is that there was a significant cover-up operation by the US government and elements of the Pakistani military in the aftermath of the crash that blighted efforts to determine its true causes and consigned it to the realm of conspiracy theories, innuendoes and rumours.

Conclusion

General Zia-ul-Haq’s adroit manipulation of the US serves as a fascinating example of how a client state can influence its patron’s policies to its own advantage. Zia’s failings as a ruler were many, not least of them being his use of Islam as a legitimizing cover for his repressive internal policies. However, in terms of protecting his own self-interest, the corporate interests of the institution that he represented, and the core national security interests of the country as he saw them, Zia could justifiably be regarded as Pakistan’s most successful ruler thus far. The fact that his eleven-year rule remains the longest period in office of any Pakistani leader, military or civilian, testifies to the remarkable native cunning that allowed him to weather many a domestic and external storm and keep his grip on the country intact.

The longevity of Zia’s rule becomes all the more impressive in view of the fact that during his period in power, Pakistan had to confront formidable security challenges that would have sorely tested the ability of those more formally trained in diplomacy and statecraft than a career army officer of very humble origins. While acutely conscious of Pakistan’s security predicament, especially in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Zia was

¹⁹⁹ Crossette, “Who Killed Zia?” 96.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 100. After declaring him medically incompetent, the State Department ordered him not to return to India but instead to proceed to Switzerland for six weeks to “rest.” He was then allowed to return to New Delhi but only to pack up his belongings and say his farewells.

shrewd enough to realize that every challenge also presented an opportunity, not only to ensure his own survival but also to advance Pakistan's strategic interests.

From a US perspective, Zia's vision of spearheading an Islamic bloc in the region should have been a cause for serious concern and should have led to a major re-examination of existing US policies regarding the covert war in Afghanistan. At the very least, there could have been more of an effort to break the ISI's stranglehold over the conduct of the jihad. Towards the mid-1980s, the CIA did take tentative steps towards reaching out directly to elements of the mujahidin not on the ISI's payroll, most notably through secretly providing some cash and arms to Ahmed Shah Massoud, widely regarded as the most celebrated mujahidin commander against the Soviet occupation and a bitter rival of the ISI's preferred option, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.²⁰¹ For the most part, however, the Reagan administration and the CIA remained firmly in step with Pakistan's policies. Attempts to bypass the ISI were made fairly late in the game when Pakistan's control over the jihad was too well-entrenched to be significantly curtailed.²⁰²

For his supporters in Washington - of which there was no dearth - Zia's image as "our staunch Asian anti-Communist hero"²⁰³ and "someone we could work with"²⁰⁴ outweighed the more objectionable aspects of his conduct, most notably his persistent lies about the nature and extent of Pakistan's nuclear programme. According to a leading American South Asia expert, Zia "played the clod" but was actually "a very shrewd guy" who knew "both that we [the US] could be fooled and that we wanted to be fooled."²⁰⁵ Other analysts disagree that the US desired to be fooled and argue that it had to reluctantly accept Zia's lies in the greater interest of ensuring Pakistan's vital cooperation in Afghanistan. Former US ambassador to Pakistan Robert Oakley is of the opinion that the US did not see through Zia's dissimulation from the outset but eventually did realize that it was being lied to. However, the situation in Afghanistan and the reluctance of President Reagan - "a very trusting man" - to ask serious questions of a close ally dissuaded the US from living up to its own non-proliferation goals.²⁰⁶

There appears to be a much greater consensus amongst informed observers of US-Pakistan relations, however, on Zia's remarkably deft management of his leverage over the US to extract the maximum possible concessions for Pakistan. A former head of the ISI recalled Zia's adept handling of his relationship with the US: "He would never take dictation from

²⁰¹ See Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War*, 202; and Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 124.

²⁰² Interview with Shuja Nawaz, Washington, D.C., November 7, 2013.

²⁰³ Interview with Stephen P. Cohen, Washington, D.C., October 28, 2013.

²⁰⁴ Interview with Marvin Weinbaum.

²⁰⁵ Interview with Stephen P. Cohen.

²⁰⁶ Interview with Robert B. Oakley, Washington, D.C., November 26, 2013.

the Americans, who ended up pandering to him. In a very soft way, he would invariably carry his view.”²⁰⁷ A former US ambassador to Pakistan is fulsome in his praise of Zia: “Brilliant, focused, dynamic...an exceptional human being who had a cause and pursued it intelligently and successfully.”²⁰⁸ According to a leading Pakistani military historian, Zia was “not an intellectual giant” but still “played his hand brilliantly” with the US. What distinguished him from his military and civilian predecessors was that “they took whatever the US was willing to give them and then asked for more; Zia, on the other hand, turned down what the Americans had to offer and compelled them to replace it with an aid package that measured up to his own expectations of what Pakistan deserved to receive for its services to the US.”²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ Interview with Hamid Gul.

²⁰⁸ Interview with Robert B. Oakley.

²⁰⁹ Interview with Shuja Nawaz.

CHAPTER FOUR: A PARTING OF THE WAYS - US-PAKISTAN RELATIONS DURING THE 1990s

If the 1950s and, to a greater extent, the 1980s, represented the high-water marks in the US-Pakistan relationship, then the 1990s were a period when it plumbed its very depths. To paraphrase William Shakespeare, the last decade of the twentieth century constituted a long and often frigid winter of mutual discontent for the two countries which neither was able to turn into glorious summer. With the Cold War having been won, the US found little to engage its interest in South Asia other than building a closer relationship with India. The drift away from Pakistan, a frontline American ally during the Cold War, towards India, which had been a firm friend of the Soviet Union during that conflict, gained increasing momentum under President Clinton. Throughout Clinton's presidency, Pakistan was viewed through a narrow security-centred prism that necessitated engagement with the country only to the extent of addressing important American national security concerns such as nuclear proliferation and international terrorism. Heavy sticks were wielded in the form of sanctions but were matched with precious few carrots, thereby depriving Pakistan's fledgling democracy of the international support it required so desperately to assert itself against the military, which continued to maintain complete control over issues of national security.

I. Transitioning to Democracy

General Zia-ul-Haq's eleven-year dictatorship - the longest continuous stretch of military rule in Pakistan's history - was succeeded by a decade-long experiment in limited parliamentary democracy in which the military remained the ultimate arbiter of the fate of a series of short-lived elected governments. Following Zia's death, his successor as army chief, General Aslam Beg, declined to impose a fresh round of martial law and instead expressed his intention to restore democracy in Pakistan through elections. Beg realized that eleven long years of a heavy-handed and deeply polarizing dictatorship had bred considerable popular resentment, leaving little domestic appetite for continued overt military rule. Moreover, Pakistan's chief external patron, having achieved its goal of securing a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, now began to press for a quick return to democracy. According to the US ambassador to Pakistan at the time, America continued to have a major stake in Pakistan even after Zia's death, both because of Afghanistan and

because Zia had promised to hold elections, which the ambassador claimed “we wanted to take place very badly.”¹

Although General Beg promised free and fair polls, he had no intention of abdicating the military’s preeminent position amongst Pakistan’s organs of state to the victor of the elections, widely expected to be the Pakistan Peoples’ Party (PPP) of the executed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, now led by his daughter Benazir. Both Beg and the ISI, still commanded by the hawkish Hamid Gul, suspected Benazir Bhutto of seeking revenge against the army for eliminating her father. Moreover, they were concerned that her pro-US inclinations could push her towards making compromises both on the nuclear programme as well as on the continuation of support to the ISI’s preferred mujahidin proxies in Afghanistan.

In the lead up to the elections, the ISI masterminded a campaign aimed at preventing a widely anticipated PPP landslide. The military’s premier intelligence agency had by then become firmly established in the business of domestic political engineering, a direct consequence of the expanded powers and resources that it had secured during the Zia era.² Impressed by its management of the Afghan jihad, Zia had decided to concurrently employ the ISI against his domestic political opposition and the agency quickly developed a reputation for being “omnipotent, taping every phone call, with informants in every village, city block, and public space.”³ Hamid Gul made full use of the ISI’s influence and resources to cobble together an anti-PPP coalition consisting of conservative politicians and Islamist parties such as the Jamaat-i-Islami.

In spite of its best efforts, the ISI could not prevent Bhutto from winning the largest number of electoral seats; however, it ensured that her main rival, Nawaz Sharif of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML), won provincial elections in Punjab, the country’s largest and most powerful province. Sharif was a protégé of Zia, who had handpicked him as chief minister of Punjab in 1985. He owed his rise to the army and the ISI and could therefore be safely relied upon to exert constant political pressure on Bhutto. Through fostering a permanent state of confrontation and hostility amongst the country’s political elite, the military wished to ensure that its domestic rivals for power were far too busy squabbling amongst

¹ Interview with Robert B. Oakley.

² Saeed Shafqat, *Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan: From Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to Benazir Bhutto* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 207. According to one estimate, the ISI’s numerical strength rose from 2,000 in 1978 to 40,000 a decade later with a billion-dollar budget. See Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, “Religious Militancy in Pakistan’s Military and Inter-Services Intelligence Agency,” in *The Afghanistan-Pakistan Theater: Militant Islam, Security and Stability*, ed. Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Clifford D. May (Washington: FDD Press, 2010), 33.

³ Riedel, *Deadly Embrace*, 21.

themselves to mount a determined challenge to its institutional interests and control over state policies.

Even though Bhutto had won the election, the civil-military bureaucratic establishment ruling Pakistan dragged its heels in letting her assume the prime ministerial office and grudgingly relented only after being nudged in that direction by Washington. The outgoing Reagan administration was favourably impressed by the Western-educated, pro-American leader of Pakistan's largest political party. Upon seeing signs of procrastination on the part of the military in respecting the outcome of the elections, the US sent a two-member team of senior officials from the State Department and the Pentagon to coax President Ghulam Ishaq Khan - a retired senior civil servant who had served Zia faithfully - and General Beg to share power with Bhutto.⁴ They agreed to do so on the condition that Bhutto would not encroach upon the military's turf. The US-brokered deal mandated that the incoming prime minister would have no say in the armed forces' internal matters, especially with respect to the promotions of senior officers and the preparation of military budgets; nor would she be allowed to influence policy formulation on core strategic issues such as Pakistan's nuclear programme, relations with India and the continuing conflict in Afghanistan.⁵

Just days before the elections in Pakistan, voters in the US had gone to the polls to elect a successor to Ronald Reagan. Their choice was the incumbent vice-president, George H.W. Bush, a pragmatic practitioner of old-school real politik diplomacy who had previously served as ambassador to the United Nations and head of the CIA. Bush's arrival in office coincided with a dramatic drawing down of the Cold War. On February 15, 1989, the Soviet Union finally completed its withdrawal from Afghanistan and between July and December of the same year, a number of countries in Eastern Europe overthrew their communist dictators and replaced them with governments committed in varying measure to democracy and the free market. With the Cold War rapidly approaching its culmination, the glue that had bound Pakistan to the United States for much of the last decade, and indeed during earlier periods in their relationship, was wearing thin and a marriage of convenience that had weathered many a storm was heading inexorably towards a messy divorce.

⁴ Ghulam Ishaq Khan had occupied important administrative positions in the governments of Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto but it was during Zia's period that he attained real prominence, first as a powerful minister of finance and later as chairman of the Senate, the upper chamber of the Pakistani parliament. Upon Zia's death, Khan assumed the office of acting president of Pakistan as per constitutional provisions directing the Senate chairman to occupy the presidency in case of the incumbent's death, resignation or removal.

⁵ Interview with Robert B. Oakley. Additionally, Benazir agreed to support Ghulam Ishaq Khan in presidential elections to be held soon, allow Beg to complete his stipulated three-year term and retain Zia's foreign minister, Yaqub Ali Khan. The army was given a say in the appointment of the new defence minister and a senior civil servant close to Ishaq Khan was allowed to continue as the new government's principal economic advisor.

II. Stresses and Strains

US-Pakistan relations during the 1990s revolved principally around three factors: Pakistan's nuclear programme, its growing tensions with India over Kashmir, and its role in the continuing conflict in Afghanistan. Prior to his departure from the White House, Ronald Reagan had issued a final certification under the Pressler Amendment but had "put the Pakistanis on notice" that they were lurching on the precipice of nuclear sanctions.⁶ His successor, although favourably impressed by Pakistan's young, articulate and very pro-US new female prime minister, made it clear to his Pakistani interlocutors very early on in his presidency that the Reagan-era policy of overlooking Islamabad's nuclear indiscretions was no longer tenable. Although desirous of maintaining the close security partnership of the 1980s, the Bush administration warned Pakistan that with the Soviets withdrawing from Afghanistan and the Cold War drawing to a close, pressure from within the US Congress to take a tougher line on Pakistan's nuclear-related activities would become much greater. In other words, the continuation of US military and economic aid was now made contingent on Pakistan's agreement to freeze its nuclear programme.

The hardening of US policy on the nuclear issue had an immediate impact. Pakistan halted its production of weapons-grade uranium and, whilst addressing a joint session of the US Congress in June 1989, Prime Minister Bhutto declared that "we do not possess, nor do we intend to make, a nuclear device. This is our policy."⁷ Having confirmed through US intelligence sources that Pakistan had indeed suspended its nuclear programme, Bush issued another certification under the Pressler Amendment that Pakistan did not possess a nuclear weapon, thereby clearing the way for the sale of an additional sixty F-16 fighter jets and the continuation of an annual military and economic aid package to the tune of \$576 million for 1989.⁸

While a major rupture between the US and Pakistan was temporarily averted, the bilateral relationship was soon subjected to another critical test with the looming possibility of another India-Pakistan war. Around the same time that the jihad against the Soviets in Afghanistan was tapering off, the banner of another jihad was about to be unfurled in Kashmir. Decades of oppressive centralized control by India had stifled democratic development in the part of the disputed region that it administered and had bred simmering resentment among the overwhelmingly Muslim population of the Kashmir Valley, whose

⁶ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 299.

⁷ David Ottaway, "Addressing Congress, Bhutto Formally Renounces Nuclear Arms," *Washington Post*, June 8, 1989.

⁸ Michael R. Gordon, "Nuclear Course Set by Pakistan Worrying U.S.," *New York Times*, October 12, 1989.

patience finally ran out in 1987 after state elections that year were massively rigged by New Delhi.⁹ By 1989, Kashmir was in the throes of a spontaneous mass uprising aimed at securing freedom from Indian rule. Led primarily by young Kashmiri activists of the pro-independence Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), the insurgency rapidly acquired enough momentum to rock the foundations of Indian control over Kashmir.

With Kashmir sinking into almost complete anarchy, India imposed direct central rule and attempted to stamp out the rebellion through brute force but only managed to further radicalize the insurgents and build greater support for the freedom movement.¹⁰ Frustrated by its failure to put down the uprising, India began to accuse Pakistan of fomenting a guerrilla war by providing arms and training to the insurgents, whom New Delhi denounced as “terrorists” but who were hailed by Islamabad as “freedom fighters.”¹¹ Pakistan publicly insisted that it provided only moral and diplomatic support to the Kashmiris’ indigenously driven struggle for self-determination, but while that may have been the case in the immediate aftermath of the uprising, it was not long before the Pakistani army and the ISI began to exploit the insurgency in Kashmir in pursuit of their own strategic interests.

Emboldened by its successful use of unconventional warfare against the Soviets in Afghanistan, the ISI sought to replicate the same model in Kashmir. A dedicated Kashmir cell within the ISI was set up along the lines of the Afghan Bureau to coordinate the recruitment and training of Kashmiri militants who had crossed over into Pakistan-administered Kashmir (referred to by Pakistan as Azad (free) Kashmir).¹² Training was imparted not only at newly built camps in Azad Kashmir but also at pre-existing ones in Afghanistan where, after receiving training alongside Arab jihadists, the Kashmiri guerrillas were sent back to fight the Indians equipped with weapons diverted from the Afghan arms pipeline.¹³ After initially training and arming secular nationalist outfits like the JKLF, the ISI gradually sidelined them in favour of Kashmiri Islamist groups that had links with Pakistan’s own Islamist parties and could be relied upon to pursue Kashmir’s accession to Pakistan rather than independence from both Pakistan and India.¹⁴ Moreover, it began to infiltrate increasing numbers of Pakistani and foreign veterans of the Afghan jihad into

⁹ For a detailed examination of the causes behind India’s failure to effectively integrate Kashmir, see Sumantra Bose, *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003) and Sten Widmalm, *Kashmir in Comparative Perspective: Democracy and Violent Separatism in India* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2002).

¹⁰ P.R. Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema and Stephen Philip Cohen, *Perception, Politics and Security in South Asia: The Compound Crisis of 1990* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 52.

¹¹ Devin T. Hagerty, “Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia: The 1990 Indo-Pakistani Crisis,” *International Security* 20, no. 3 (Winter 1995/96): 94.

¹² Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military* (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2005), 287.

¹³ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 221.

¹⁴ Haqqani, *Pakistan*, 288.

Kashmir, thereby transforming it into “an arena for global jihad instead of merely an indigenous insurgency.”¹⁵

Notwithstanding Pakistan’s growing involvement in the insurgency, the underlying causes of Kashmiri alienation were internal and stemmed from legitimate grievances against the oppressive policies of a succession of Indian governments.¹⁶ Instead of addressing those grievances, India found a “convenient scapegoat” in Pakistan upon which to shift blame for the “internal trauma” in Kashmir.¹⁷ By early 1990, the two countries had dramatically increased their military deployments on either side of the Line of Control, the dividing line between their respective portions of Kashmir, and intense artillery and mortar exchanges became frequent occurrences. Prime Minister Bhutto, under sustained pressure from the army and Islamist parties to take a more aggressive line on the insurgency, publicly promised a “thousand-year war” in support of the militants’ struggle for “self-determination.”¹⁸ Bhutto’s Indian counterpart, V.P. Singh, responded by calling on his compatriots to be “psychologically prepared” for war and admonished Pakistan that “those who talk about 1,000 years of war should examine whether they last 1,000 hours of war.” Singh issued a further warning that a Pakistani deployment of nuclear weapons would compel India to follow suit.¹⁹

Alarmed at the possibility of a war breaking out between two potentially nuclear-armed countries, President Bush despatched his deputy national security advisor, Robert Gates, to the subcontinent in May 1990 to conduct “preventive diplomacy” aimed at defusing the crisis.²⁰ In Islamabad, Gates delivered a blunt message to the Pakistani civilian and military leadership that the US had “war-gamed every conceivable scenario between you and the

¹⁵ Haqqani, *Pakistan*, 289. According to Haqqani, Pakistan’s plan for liberating Kashmir through jihad consisted of two parts. The first was to make Kashmir ungovernable for the Indians and to elevate the cost of continued Indian occupation to an unsustainable level. The other component was based on internationalizing the Kashmir issue once again by securing the involvement of the international community in finding a solution to the dispute in line with Pakistan’s interests.

¹⁶ According to one account provided by a non-Pakistani writer: “Throughout the subcontinent’s postcolonial history, Indian rule in Kashmir has included militarization, repression, economic deprivation, and indiscriminate violence, including, at various times, the denial of democratic processes, the manipulation of elections, and the jailing of political leaders...” Haley Duschinski, “Destiny Effects: Militarization, State Power, and Punitive Containment in Kashmir Valley,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 82, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 696.

¹⁷ Victoria Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan and the Unending War* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 142.

¹⁸ Hagerty, “Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia,” 98.

¹⁹ David Housego and Zafar Meraj, “Indian Premier Warns of Danger of Kashmir War,” *Financial Times*, April 11, 1990; Mark Fineman, “India’s Leader Warns of an Attack by Pakistan,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 15, 1990; and “VP Urges Nation to Be Ready as Pak Troops Move to Border,” *Times of India*, April 11, 1990.

²⁰ Although India had not exploded a nuclear device since its “peaceful nuclear explosion” of 1974, US nuclear experts assumed that it had developed a nuclear capability since then. They also deemed Pakistan’s nuclear programme to have reached the point where Islamabad possessed the wherewithal to assemble a nuclear device at short notice. See Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 306.

Indians, and there isn't a single way you win."²¹ Moreover, in the event that a war between the two countries was instigated by Pakistan, Gates made it clear that Washington would terminate all military aid to Islamabad and called upon his Pakistani interlocutors to stop supporting the insurgency in Kashmir.²² Finally, he maintained that the US had concrete evidence that Pakistan had crossed the nuclear red line by machining uranium metal into bomb cores and warned that unless those cores were melted, Bush would no longer be able to shield Pakistan from sanctions under the Pressler Amendment.²³ Pakistan predictably responded to Gates' allegations by denying them all. However, the American envoy was able to extract an undertaking that the training camps operated by the ISI for the Kashmiri insurgents would be shut down.²⁴

Within two weeks of the Gates mission, the crisis had passed and India and Pakistan agreed to undertake a series of confidence-building measures aimed at lowering tensions. For Pakistan's rulers, however, the import of Gates' message was unmistakeable; as far as Washington was concerned, Islamabad no longer carried the same strategic utility that it did for much of the 1980s. The Soviet defeat in Afghanistan "cut the legs out from under the U.S.-Pakistani strategic partnership, allowing submerged policy differences to resurface."²⁵ At the same time, with the Soviet Union in a state of terminal decline and the Cold War approaching its end, the US saw great potential for building up closer relations with India, which in turn was seeking new alignments in a post-Soviet world.²⁶ For much of the 1990s, therefore, Pakistan would find its core national security objectives consistently at odds with the regional interests of its traditional patron.

The growing gulf between the US and Pakistan also began to manifest itself in Afghanistan, which had been the bedrock of the patron-client state relationship sustained over the course of the previous decade. In the immediate aftermath of the Soviet withdrawal, cooperation between the two primary instigators of the Afghan jihad, the ISI and the CIA, remained steady but there were increasing doubts within the State Department about the advisability of continuing to follow the ISI's lead in Afghanistan.²⁷ Such doubts became even more

²¹ Seymour Hersh, "On The Nuclear Edge," *New Yorker*, March 29, 1993, accessed July 22, 2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1993/03/29/on-the-nuclear-edge>

²² Chari, et al., *Perception, Politics and Security*, 103.

²³ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 306.

²⁴ Hersh, "On The Nuclear Edge."

²⁵ Hagerty, "Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia," 92.

²⁶ Indian military purchases from the US jumped from \$56,000 in 1987 to \$56 million in 1990. Rajesh Kadian, *The Kashmir Tangle: Issues and Options* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 142.

²⁷ In the late spring of 1988, the State Department appointed career diplomat Edmund McWilliams as US special envoy to the Afghan mujahidin in order to act as a "counterforce to CIA analysis and decision-making" and to "work with the rebel leaders outside of ISI earshot, assess their needs, and make recommendations about U.S. policy". In October 1988, after extensive meetings with leading members of the resistance, McWilliams reported back to headquarters that there was "a growing frustration, bordering

pronounced after an ISI-planned and CIA-supported mujahidin offensive on the strategically important Afghan town of Jalalabad in March 1989 ended in disaster.²⁸

At a high-level national security meeting where the decision to mount the Jalalabad offensive was taken, ISI chief Hamid Gul informed prime minister Bhutto that Jalalabad would fall within a week if she was “prepared to allow for a certain degree of bloodshed.”²⁹ Instead, the Afghan government forces, bolstered by massive Soviet military assistance, held on and inflicted heavy casualties on the mujahidin, who found themselves unable to make a sudden transition from guerrilla to conventional warfare and who were, in any case, far too disunited to mount a cohesive campaign. The fighting continued for several months and ended with Afghan government forces retaining their control over Jalalabad³⁰ and Hamid Gul being removed by Bhutto from his position as head of the ISI.³¹

Shortly before the commencement of the ill-fated Jalalabad offensive, the Bush administration had signed off on a continuation of covert assistance to the mujahidin in the stated interests of guaranteeing “self-determination” for the Afghan people.³² In pursuit of that goal, the CIA sought a quick overthrow by the mujahidin of the communist government left behind by the Soviets in Kabul and expected Afghan President Najibullah to capitulate quickly. Defying all predictions of his imminent demise, however, Najibullah doggedly clung on to power, in part due to continued Soviet military support but also owing to widening divisions within the mujahidin leadership, whose personal ambitions and mutual distrust made it very difficult to mount a coordinated and sustained challenge to the regime.

on hostility, among Afghans across the ideological spectrum” towards Pakistan and the US for their support of Hekmatyar. Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 176,183.

²⁸ In December 1988, the ISI cobbled together an Islamist-dominated Afghan Interim Government (AIG) headquartered in Peshawar and proposed to Benazir Bhutto that it be regarded as a government-in-exile in the forlorn hope of generating a sense of unity among the viscerally fractious and perennially squabbling resistance leaders. The Pakistan Foreign Office, on the other hand, argued successfully that the AIG first establish itself inside Afghanistan before such recognition was provided. Accordingly, Bhutto gave the ISI the go-ahead to mount an offensive on Jalalabad after Hamid Gul had reassured the prime minister that the mujahidin were in a position to take the town. See Riaz Mohammad Khan, *Afghanistan and Pakistan: Conflict, Extremism, and Resistance to Modernity* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011), 18-19.

²⁹ See Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 192. Astonishingly, the American ambassador to Pakistan, Robert Oakley, sat in on what was a highly confidential meeting on national security and proffered his views on the subject under discussion. However, no Afghans were present when the two leading patrons of their cause took “such a crucial and fateful strategic decision...on their behalf.” See Lawrence Lifschultz, “Afghanistan: Whose War Is It Anyway?” *Economic and Political Weekly* 24, no. 49 (December 9, 1989): 2707.

³⁰ For more on the causes behind the failure of the Jalalabad offensive, see Larry P. Goodson, *Afghanistan’s Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics and the Rise of the Taliban* (Vancouver: University of Washington Press, 2012), 70-72; and Barnett M. Rubin, “The Fragmentation of Afghanistan,” *Foreign Affairs* 68, no. 5 (Winter 1989): 156-158.

³¹ As far as Bhutto was concerned, Gul’s failure to capture Jalalabad was not the only blemish on his resume. She knew that he had worked to prevent her victory in the elections and feared that he was now plotting her removal from power. For more, see Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 424-425.

³² Charles Cogan, “Partners in Time: The CIA and Afghanistan since 1979,” *World Policy Journal* 10, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 77.

With the Soviets gone, the jihad degenerated into a bloody civil war, not only between the communists and the mujahidin but increasingly amongst the mujahidin themselves. At the core of this internal conflict resided the bitter personal rivalry between Gulbuddin Hekmatyar - still the ISI's favoured candidate - and Ahmed Shah Massoud.³³

With the war in Afghanistan drifting along inconclusively, American interest in the conflict began to wane; funding for the covert programme declined from a high of \$630 million in 1987 to \$350 million in 1989, \$300 million in 1990 and \$250 million in 1991.³⁴ Differences within the Bush administration on Afghanistan became more pronounced and prevented the implementation of a coherent policy towards what was becoming an increasingly intractable problem. The State Department began reaching out with diplomatic and material support to "moderate" resistance leaders who favoured a negotiated settlement; at the same time, it also began to push for a broad-based political settlement which would exclude not only communist "extremes" such as Najibullah but also Islamist "extremes" such as Hekmatyar and Sayyaf.³⁵ The CIA, on the other hand, continued its collaboration with the ISI and the Saudis to promote the hardline Islamist elements within the mujahidin³⁶ even though it also did maintain a secret unilateral network of individual commanders on its payroll, which included Massoud.³⁷

In the absence of a unified mujahidin challenge to his regime, Najibullah managed to cling on to power. In the meantime, Afghanistan continued a precipitous slide down the Bush administration's list of major foreign policy priorities. In September 1991, after twelve years of playing out their superpower rivalry on the forbidding terrain of the "graveyard of

³³ In March 1990, the ISI embarked upon a plan to remove the Najibullah regime and install Hekmatyar in power through a coup launched by Najibullah's own defence minister, General Shahnawaz Tanai. Money to purchase the loyalty of army units and rebel commanders came in part from Osama bin Laden. The coup attempt ended in abject failure after government forces loyal to Najibullah crushed Tanai's defectors in Kabul, forcing the general to flee to Pakistan, where he was provided refuge. Hekmatyar's own fighters failed to penetrate even the outskirts of the capital. Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 211-213. Just months later, the ISI attempted to coordinate a massive and indiscriminate rocket assault by Hekmatyar on Kabul, an operation which would potentially have caused enormous civilian casualties. It was only after the US government directly opposed the operation that it was called off. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 253.

³⁴ George Lardner, Jr., "Afghan, Cambodia Aid Cut: Conferees' Report Sets Out New Rules for CIA Operations," *Washington Post*, October 24, 1990.

³⁵ Peter Tomsen, *The Wars of Afghanistan: Messianic Terrorism, Tribal Conflicts, and the Failures of the Great Powers* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), 347-350.

³⁶ In 1991, the CIA worked with Saudi intelligence to transfer scores of Iraqi tanks, armoured personnel carriers and artillery pieces to Afghanistan after they had been abandoned in Kuwait by Saddam Hussein's retreating forces during the Gulf War. The captured weaponry was shipped to Pakistan where the ISI used it to support massive conventional attacks on the eastern Afghan city of Gardez by Hekmatyar, his Arab allies and Jalaluddin Haqqani, an Islamist commander who had close ties with the ISI and the Saudis and also enjoyed the "full support" of the CIA, which saw him as "the most impressive Pashtun battlefield commander" in the war against the Soviets. Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 202, 225-226.

³⁷ By early 1989, Massoud was on a \$200,000 monthly CIA retainer whereas commanders of lesser stature, including some who were affiliated with Hekmatyar, received anywhere from \$5,000 to \$50,000 every month. Not surprisingly, the CIA kept such payments hidden from the ISI. Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 190.

empires,” the US and the Soviet Union formally agreed to terminate all military assistance to their respective feuding proxies in Afghanistan. With this action, the US “effectively washed its hands”³⁸ of a country on whose soil the CIA had mounted the largest covert operation in its history and whose “courageous struggle” against the invading Soviet behemoth had been hailed by President Reagan as “one of the epics of our time.”³⁹ After the Soviet Union disintegrated in December 1991, Washington promptly consigned the Afghan “epic” to the dust-heap of Cold War history.

The Bush administration’s dwindling interest in Afghanistan meant that Pakistan lost much of the strategic significance that it had carried for the US during the Reagan era. In October 1990, American economic and military aid to Pakistan worth almost \$600 million annually was frozen after Bush failed to certify under the Pressler Amendment that Pakistan did not possess a nuclear weapon. The sanctions came at a time when Pakistan was the third largest recipient of US aid in the world. Although aid had also been cut off twice by President Carter, the decision by Bush “hurt much more and had substantially greater impact,” especially on Pakistan’s defence establishment which lost out on around \$300 million a year in arms, spare parts and military-related equipment.⁴⁰ Pakistani public opinion regarded the suspension of aid as a cruel betrayal by the US, which had swept the nuclear issue under the carpet when it needed Pakistan’s help in Afghanistan but “hypocritically applied the sanctions” once that help was no longer required.⁴¹ What was even more infuriating for Pakistan was that its arch-rival India, which had actually tested a nuclear device almost two decades ago, was not similarly punished by the US.

Shortly after the Pressler sanctions came into force, Pakistan went to the polls for the second time in two years. In August 1990, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan had dismissed Benazir Bhutto’s government on charges of corruption, governmental mismanagement and nepotism.⁴² On this occasion, the army and the ISI managed to ensure a victory for their preferred candidate, Nawaz Sharif, who assumed the prime ministerial office in the midst of

³⁸ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 317.

³⁹ “Remarks on Signing the Afghanistan Day Proclamation, March 10, 1982,” *The American Presidency Project*, accessed July 19, 2015, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42248>

⁴⁰ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 308-309.

⁴¹ Eamon Murphy, *The Making of Terrorism in Pakistan: Historical and Social Roots of Extremism* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 119.

⁴² Under changes to the Pakistani constitution introduced by Zia-ul-Haq, the president had the power to sack the prime minister. According to one source, the decision to remove Bhutto was actually taken at a meeting of the army’s corps commanders a few days earlier. Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 430. While Bhutto’s government was clearly far from a success on the governance front and was badly damaged by allegations of corruption involving Bhutto’s husband, Asif Ali Zardari, the underlying reasons for her dismissal stemmed from the military’s suspicions about Bhutto’s peace overtures towards India, her perceived willingness to freeze the nuclear programme, her attempts to rein in the ISI and her efforts to influence the appointment and dismissal of senior military officers. See Shah, *The Army and Democracy*, 169-170.

two ongoing jihads and a sharp downturn in relations with the US.⁴³ The new government in Islamabad was warned by Washington that Pakistan's nuclear programme was in contravention of US laws and that "we can't change our policies. You have to change yours."⁴⁴ Moreover, Pakistan was put on notice that its continuing support to the insurgency in Kashmir carried the risk of the country being officially declared a state-sponsor of terrorism.⁴⁵

In Afghanistan, in the meantime, the US left Pakistan to deal with the fallout of a brutal civil war.⁴⁶ The Najibullah regime did not long outlive its Soviet patron; within months of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Najibullah agreed to step down and Kabul finally fell to the mujahidin in April 1992. However, a victory that had been sought for so long and for which so much in blood and wealth had been expended, turned out to be a Pyrrhic one with "ugly, internecine violence" quickly breaking out among the major contenders for power from within the mujahidin.⁴⁷ Pakistani attempts to broker power-sharing agreements between the feuding parties - especially between its favourite Pashtun candidate, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, and the allied Tajik duo of Burhanuddin Rabbani and Ahmed Shah Massoud - ended in failure and Afghanistan descended into a period of vicious ethno-political fragmentation.⁴⁸ Frustrated by its inability to win the peace in Kabul after having won the war in Afghanistan, Pakistan for a time slowed down its efforts to determine the fate of its western neighbour, even though the ISI continued to develop linkages with the powerful warlords that now held sway over most of the country.⁴⁹

⁴³ Acting on the orders of army chief General Aslam Beg, the head of the ISI, Lieutenant General Asad Durrani, distributed millions of rupees amongst leading anti-Bhutto politicians, including Nawaz Sharif, to prevent the PPP from returning to power. Ardeshir Cowasjee, "We Never Learn from History 2," *Dawn*, August 4, 2002.

⁴⁴ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 314.

⁴⁵ Once Nawaz Sharif, himself an ethnic Kashmiri who saw the insurgency as a "jihad that was incumbent on Pakistanis" (Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 437), became prime minister, the ISI moved quickly to bring the Kashmiri resistance under its own centralized control. Within a year of Sharif's premiership, the Hizbul Mujahidin, a pro-Pakistan Kashmiri guerrilla group affiliated with Pakistan's Jamaat-i-Islami, had received enough backing from the ISI to push itself to the forefront of the insurgency. See Haqqani, *Pakistan*, 289-290. The US warning to Pakistan regarding its alleged commission of state-sponsored terrorism was based on intelligence reports that the ISI was playing a direct role in stoking the fires of the Kashmir insurgency by training and supplying Kashmiri militants and sending them across into Indian-held Kashmir and in other cases by allowing non-Kashmiri veterans of the Afghan jihad to come to the aid of their Kashmiri co-religionists. See Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 316.

⁴⁶ Between 1992 and 2001, there was no American ambassador or CIA station chief assigned directly to Afghanistan. Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 239.

⁴⁷ Goodson, *Afghanistan's Endless War*, 74.

⁴⁸ For detailed examinations of the factors behind the civil strife in Afghanistan that followed the Soviet withdrawal and the conduct of the various players involved, see Goodson, *Afghanistan's Endless War*, 70-76; William Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 140-177; Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 247-280; and Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan*, 209-219.

⁴⁹ Khan, *Afghanistan and Pakistan*, 49-52. Massoud had been the first Afghan commander to enter Kabul after the fall of Najibullah and became minister of defence soon thereafter, prompting Hekmatyar to bomb Kabul for several months during 1992. The Islamabad accord of 1993 distributed the offices of

With the Cold War at an end and Afghanistan no longer a major area of converging interests, Pakistan's relationship with the US began to fall apart. By the end of the George H.W. Bush presidency in 1993, Pakistan was viewed by the US as having "not only lost strategic importance" but also as being a "nuclear troublemaker and a source of regional instability."⁵⁰ The election of Bush's successor, Bill Clinton, a Democrat with no foreign policy experience who set great store by non-proliferation and human rights and whose "fascination with India" extended back to his student days, gave Pakistan scant hope for an improvement in bilateral relations.⁵¹

The new administration in Washington reiterated the warning issued to Islamabad by its predecessor that Pakistan "stood on the brink" of being declared a state sponsor of terrorism for its training and infiltration of militants into Kashmir.⁵² Nawaz Sharif was sufficiently worried by the American threat to initiate a crackdown on Arab extremists within Pakistan.⁵³ Moreover, he replaced his hand-picked head of the ISI, Lieutenant General Javed Nasir, a firebrand Muslim zealot passionately committed to the jihadist cause not only in Afghanistan and Kashmir but across the world.⁵⁴ Mollified by Sharif's attempts at damage control, the US refrained from affixing the label of "terrorist state" to Pakistan. However, the ISI's policy of sustaining militancy in Kashmir, although somewhat modified on account of American pressure, remained fundamentally unchanged.⁵⁵

By mid-1993, Sharif's attempts to assert himself against President Ghulam Ishaq Khan prompted the latter to dismiss a second elected prime minister within less than three years. As was the case with his predecessor, Sharif was removed on charges of corruption and maladministration; on this occasion, however, the Supreme Court overturned the president's decision and restored Sharif to the premiership. With president and prime minister now

president, prime minister and defence minister amongst Rabbani, Hekmatyar and Massoud respectively, but Hekmatyar's objection to his arch-rival holding the powerful defence portfolio resulted in an early breakdown of the accord and a resumption of fighting between them.

⁵⁰ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 320.

⁵¹ Riedel, *Avoiding Armageddon*, 114.

⁵² Douglas Jehl, "Pakistan Is Facing Terrorist Listing," *New York Times*, April 25, 1993.

⁵³ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 322.

⁵⁴ Nasir had played a key role in arming and supporting Bosnian Muslims during the ethnic war that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. Among his other exploits while in charge of the ISI was supplying weapons to the Arakanese Muslims inhabiting the region adjoining Burma's border with Bangladesh who were fighting for an independent homeland. He was also reported to have established contacts with Tamil extremists and was believed to be operating a gun-running operation and other fund-raising activities out of Bangkok. When Nasir's successor visited the ISI's headquarters and was shown the "strong room" that had once contained "currency stacked to the ceiling," he found it empty on account of the fact that ISI operatives had taken suitcases filled with cash to the field, including to the newly independent Central Asian Republics, ostensibly to set up safe houses and operations there in support of Islamic causes. Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 467-468.

⁵⁵ Direct ISI support to the Kashmiri militants "tapered off" but retired military intelligence operatives and Afghan mujahidin working through the Jamaat-i-Islami and other Islamist parties allied with the ISI in Kashmir continued to lend support to the insurgency. Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 322.

locked in a state of open conflict, it was left to the army to step in as the final arbiter. Both protagonists were compelled to resign from their respective offices and a caretaker administration was put in place to run the country until fresh elections were held in October 1993. Those elections, Pakistan's third in five years, brought Benazir Bhutto back into power with enough of a majority to ensure that one of her leading party stalwarts, Farooq Leghari, became president.

During Bhutto's second stint as prime minister, there was partial improvement in Pakistan's relations with the US. The Clinton administration supported a Congressional amendment to take some of the sting out of the Pressler sanctions through the resumption of economic assistance. Moreover, Clinton approved the provision of military equipment paid for by Pakistan but frozen in the US due to the sanctions and permitted the reinstitution of training programmes for Pakistani military personnel.⁵⁶ The prohibition on fresh weapons sales, however, remained intact and differences between the two countries persisted on Pakistan's continued backing of the Kashmir insurgency, its suspected receipt of nuclear and missile technology from China, and its failure to curb the production and trafficking of narcotics. Of comparatively less concern to Washington at the time was Islamabad's cultivation of a new group of ultra-conservative Islamic zealots thrown up by the maelstrom of Afghanistan's lingering civil war.

III. The Rise of the Taliban

By 1994, Afghanistan was teetering on the brink of disintegration. While Hekmatyar and Massoud continued to battle it out for control over Kabul, much of the country was carved up among a number of powerful warlords, each possessing his own militia and generating revenue through taxes and transit fees.⁵⁷ The Tajik duumvirate of Rabbani as president and Massoud as defence minister controlled Kabul and its surroundings as well as parts of the north-east of the country; Hekmatyar was confined to a small region south and east of Kabul; in western Afghanistan, Ismael Khan, a Tajik mujahidin commander affiliated with Rabbani's Jamiat-i-Islami party ruled over the Afghan cultural heartland of Herat; in the eastern provinces of Khost, Paktia and Paktika that bordered Pakistan's Pashtun tribal belt, the Pashtun mujahidin commander Jalaluddin Haqqani, a recipient of ISI and Saudi

⁵⁶ The Congressional amendment allowing the resumption of economic aid to Pakistan took its name from its sponsor, Republican Senator Hank Brown, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's subcommittee on South Asia.

⁵⁷ In January 1994, in alliance with the Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum, Hekmatyar unleashed a savage bombardment of Kabul that failed in its objective of dislodging the Rabbani-Massoud government from power but ended up destroying half the city and killing some 25,000 of its inhabitants. See Amin Saikal, "The Rabbani Government, 1992-1996," in *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban*, ed. William Maley (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1998), 33.

patronage, held sway; the Hazaras, the third largest ethnic grouping in Afghanistan after the Pashtuns and the Tajiks, controlled a portion of central Afghanistan; and much of the northern part of the country was under the rule of the Uzbek strongman Abdul Rashid Dostum. Each of these warlords “fought, switched sides and fought again in a bewildering array of alliances, betrayals and bloodshed.”⁵⁸

The only region of consequence not controlled by a powerful warlord was the Pashtun heartland of Kandahar bordering the Pakistani province of Balochistan. Much of southern Afghanistan including Kandahar was ruled by an unsavoury assortment of low-ranking former mujahidin commanders who subsisted on extortion, primarily by levying heavy tolls on goods passing through their respective areas to and from Pakistan.⁵⁹ These warlords felt no compunction in plundering and brutalizing their own populations, including by seizing their properties, robbing merchants in the marketplaces and kidnapping and sexually abusing young girls and boys.⁶⁰

In reaction to this state of pervasive lawlessness, a new force dramatically emerged out of Kandahar in the summer of 1994 pledging to end the much loathed rule of the local commanders and bring peace and order to the region. Known as the Taliban (the plural form of the Arabic word *talib*, meaning ‘student’), the group consisted primarily of young Afghan refugees - predominantly Pashtun in ethnicity - who had grown up in camps across the border in Pakistan and had been schooled in the hundreds of madrassas or Islamic seminaries that had sprung up in Pakistan’s tribal areas in the wake of the Soviet invasion.⁶¹ The Afghan jihad against the Soviets and Zia’s own domestic policies of Islamisation led to a dramatic surge in new madrassas in Pakistan with funding from both external sources such as Saudi Arabia and its fellow Gulf monarchies as well as through domestic fund-raising by Pakistani religious parties patronized by the Zia regime.⁶² Espousing a staunchly

⁵⁸ Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 21.

⁵⁹ Khan, *Afghanistan and Pakistan*, 49.

⁶⁰ Rashid, *Taliban*, 21.

⁶¹ As the Taliban began to acquire increasing amounts of territory, the militia took on a “three-legged structure” comprising the madrassa students that formed its main source of recruitment as well as its cannon fodder; former mujahidin elements who found it expedient to clamber atop the Taliban bandwagon; and Pashtun officers of the erstwhile Afghan communist armed forces, who sought to reposition themselves inside Afghanistan’s power matrix by lending their military expertise to the Taliban. See Anthony Davis, “How The Taliban Became A Military Force,” in *Fundamentalism*, ed. Maley, 54. Also see Kamal Matinuddin, *The Taliban Phenomenon: Afghanistan 1994-1997* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁶² Between 1982 and 1988, the period during which the Afghan jihad was at its most intense, more than 1,000 new madrassas were opened in Pakistan, mostly along the border with Afghanistan in the NWFP and Balochistan. See Zahid Hussain, *Frontline Pakistan: The Path to Catastrophe and the Killing of Benazir Bhutto* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 80. The US had been fully supportive of the religious radicalisation of thousands of young Afghans and funded the production of textbooks in Afghanistan’s major languages that were “filled with talk of jihad and featured drawings of guns, bullets, soldiers and

puritanical interpretation of Islam imbibed from their madrassa education in Pakistan, the Taliban, led by an obscure veteran of the anti-Soviet jihad named Mullah Mohammed Omar, vowed to restore order in Afghanistan through the enforcement of the *shariah*, or Islamic law.⁶³

The Taliban's first victory was the takeover of Spin Boldak in October 1994, followed a month later by the much more significant capture of Kandahar, Afghanistan's second largest city. By January 1995, their ranks had been swelled by some 12,000 Afghan and Pakistani madrassa students eager to join the battle for the rest of Afghanistan.⁶⁴ In March, they made their first advance on Kabul, prompting Hekmatyar, who was still besieging the capital, to flee eastwards before their arrival. In Kabul, the Taliban met their first serious defeat when they were pushed back by Massoud's forces. Quickly shaking off the setback, they turned their attention westwards towards Herat and were at first similarly repulsed before capturing the city in September.

By April 1996, with the star of the Taliban clearly in the ascendant, 1,200 Pashtun religious notables from southern, central and western Afghanistan assembled in Kandahar to proclaim Mullah Omar *Amir-ul-Momineen* (Commander of the Faithful), an Islamic title whose conferment made the poorly educated village cleric of nondescript origins the "undisputed leader of the jihad and the Emir of Afghanistan."⁶⁵ Just months afterwards, Kabul finally fell to the Taliban⁶⁶ and, despite the occasional military reverse, further territorial gains followed over the next two years, leaving them in control of 80 per cent of Afghanistan by the end of 1998.⁶⁷

mines..." See Joe Stephens and David B. Ottaway, "From U.S., the ABC's of Jihad: Violent Soviet-Era Textbooks Complicate Afghan Education Efforts," *Washington Post*, March 23, 2002.

⁶³ The title *mullah* is bestowed on those Muslims deemed well-versed in Islamic law and theology. Mohammed Omar had been the mullah of a village in his native Kandahar whose own madrassa studies had been interrupted twice, initially by the Soviet invasion and then by the creation of the Taliban. He had fought under Yunus Khalis against the Soviets and then against the Najibullah regime and had been wounded on four occasions, including in the right eye which was permanently blinded. Rashid, *Taliban*, 24; Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 287-289. For more on the role of the mullah in Afghan society, see Roy, *Islam and Resistance*, 31-33.

⁶⁴ Ahmed Rashid, "Pakistan and the Taliban," in *Fundamentalism*, ed. Maley, 81.

⁶⁵ Rashid, *Taliban*, 41-42.

⁶⁶ Upon taking over the capital, one of the first acts of the new rulers of the city was to drag former president Najibullah out of the UN compound in Kabul where he had sought asylum since stepping down in 1992. He was castrated, dragged behind a pickup truck and shot dead. His brother was also tortured to death and both bodies were then hung in public. See Frank A. Clements, *Conflict in Afghanistan: A Historical Encyclopaedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2003), 112.

⁶⁷ Facing relentless pressure from the Taliban, Rabbani and Massoud made a desperate attempt to broaden the government's power base by reaching out to Hekmatyar, their arch rival, in order to insert a Pashtun component into their anti-Taliban coalition. An equally desperate Hekmatyar, no longer the favourite of the ISI which had by then thrown its weight fully behind the Taliban, agreed to become prime minister in a coalition government with Rabbani and Massoud. However, this belated rapprochement could not stave off the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban, following which Rabbani, Massoud and Hekmatyar all fled

For a population devastated by over a decade and a half of relentless warfare and destruction, first at the hands of a brutal occupying power and then by the selfish power struggles of its own leaders, the Taliban takeover of substantial swathes of the country was not a wholly unwelcome development, especially in Kabul and Kandahar, which had become particularly strife-ridden.⁶⁸ True to their initial commitment, the Taliban were largely successful in enforcing order, disarming the population and providing physical and material security. However, such successes were attained not through establishing the rule of law via a modern and efficient criminal justice apparatus but rather by instilling fear through the institution of what the Taliban saw as punishments mandated by Islam, including the amputation of hands for theft, lashes for the consumption of alcohol and stoning to death for adultery.⁶⁹

Militantly opposed to modernity and wedded to an extremely narrow, literalist interpretation of Islam that stemmed from a very limited understanding of the Quran, Islamic history and jurisprudence, the Taliban subjected the areas under their control to “the strictest Islamic system in place anywhere in the world.”⁷⁰ Women were prohibited from working and girls’ schools and colleges were shut down. Television, videos, satellite dishes, music and all games including chess, football and even kite-flying were banned. Strict dress codes were laid down for women, who had to wear the *burqa*, the head-to-toe version of the veil, in order to appear in public. Although women had to suffer the brunt of the Taliban’s draconian social reengineering, men were not spared either. All adult males were required to grow full beards which could not be trimmed shorter than a man’s fist, wear their *shalwars* (native baggy pantaloons worn by men in Afghanistan and Pakistan) above the ankle and congregate in the mosque to offer the five daily obligatory prayers. A special religious police was set up to ruthlessly enforce the Taliban’s code of morality.⁷¹ At the

north. For more on the weaknesses of the government in Kabul that ended up compromising its ability to resist the Taliban, as well as Pakistan’s role in undermining the government through its support to the Taliban, see Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan*, 217-225.

⁶⁸ See, for instance, Goodson, *Afghanistan’s Endless War*, 110; Khan, *Afghanistan and Pakistan*, 61; Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, 195; and Rashid, *Taliban*, 35.

⁶⁹ The traditional Islamic penalties mentioned in the Quran were on occasions modified by the Taliban according to customs laid down in the Pashtun tribal code or *Pashtunwali*, including having the victim’s family members execute murderers themselves (by gun and knife), hanging rapists, burying homosexuals alive, flogging fornicators, and subjecting those guilty of lesser offences to varying degrees of public humiliation. See Goodson, *Afghanistan’s Endless War*, 123.

⁷⁰ Rashid, *Taliban*, 50. The Taliban’s opposition to modernity did not, however, extend to modern weapons of war. In their capture of Herat, for instance, they defeated the forces of the vastly more experienced guerrilla commander Ismael Khan through “Blitzkrieg tactics” involving the use of pick-up vehicles with mounted anti-aircraft cannon and multiple-barrelled rocket launchers. See Davis, “How The Taliban Became A Military Force,” 62.

⁷¹ For a detailed examination of the Taliban’s social policies, especially with respect to gender issues, see Hafizullah Emadi, *Dynamics of Political Development in Afghanistan: The British, Russian and American Invasions* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 181-184; Goodson, *Afghanistan’s Endless War*, 118-120; Peter Marsden, *The Taliban: War and Religion in Afghanistan* (London: Zed Books,

same time, the Taliban saw opium production and drug trafficking as neither immoral nor criminal and allowed both to flourish since they were major sources of revenue for their military expansion.⁷²

For Pakistan, the sudden emergence of the Taliban came at a time when its Afghan policy appeared to be going nowhere. Islamabad's quest to acquire 'strategic depth'⁷³ against India by installing a client regime in Kabul had been stymied by the dismal performance of its preferred candidate, Hekmatyar, who had failed to dislodge Rabbani and Massoud from Kabul.⁷⁴ Moreover, the unending political volatility and pervasive insecurity inside Afghanistan was holding Pakistan back from opening up lucrative trading routes with the energy-rich republics of Central Asia, which had become independent after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Benazir Bhutto's interior minister Naseerullah Babar, an ethnic Pashtun and a retired army general who had been a key member of the Afghan cell set up during the mid-1970s to nurture Islamist dissidents such as Hekmatyar, Massoud and Rabbani, was particularly captivated by the dream of establishing trade linkages with Central Asia. In the Taliban, Babar saw a force equipped with the discipline and military

2002), 87-99; Rashid, *Taliban*, 105-116; and Elaheh Rostami-Povey, *Afghan Women: Identity and Invasion* (London: Zed Books, 2007), 26-38.

⁷² When they first captured Kandahar in 1994, the Taliban had expressed an intention to eliminate all drugs from Afghanistan, which at the time was responsible for more than half of the world's total opium production [for figures, see "World Drug Report 2010," *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime* (New York: UNODC, 2010), 38]. However, they soon realized that they needed the income from poppy cultivation and would alienate the Pashtun poppy farming community in their own heartland in southern Afghanistan by banning opium production. Between 1992 and 1995, Afghanistan had produced a steady average of 2,200-2,400 metric tonnes of opium every year but by 1997, as the Taliban extended their control to Kabul and the north, opium production jumped by 25 per cent to 2,800 metric tonnes, even though the Quran expressly forbade the production, sale and consumption of intoxicants. Drug money became the backbone of the war economy run by the Taliban, allowing them to buy weapons, transport and fuel; to pay their soldiers; and to purchase the loyalties of warlords and militia commanders. See Rashid, *Taliban*, 117-124.

⁷³ Despite widespread occurrence of the term 'strategic depth' in Pakistan's national security discourse, there is considerable debate both about its origins and meaning as well as the extent to which it remains an important plank of Pakistan's security policies. Many scholars date the origins of 'strategic depth' to Zia-ul-Haq's policy of seeking to install an Islamist government in Kabul beholden to Pakistan for its support against the Soviets and willing to make common cause with Islamabad in an anti-India regional Islamic bloc. However, the clearest - and also the most controversial - articulation of the concept as a military doctrine was made by General Aslam Beg, who envisaged Afghanistan as a physical space where Pakistan could relocate its personnel, resources and even nuclear assets in the event of an Indian invasion. A more common and certainly more realistic understanding of the concept than that propounded by Beg is of having "the kind of friendly regime, expectedly an Islamist one, in Kabul that would enable Pakistan to avoid traditional insecurity or at least neutralize its western tribal borderlands and avoid future Afghan governments with strong links to New Delhi." Marvin G. Weinbaum, "Pakistan and Afghanistan: The Strategic Relationship," *Asian Survey* 31, no. 6 (June 1991): 498. Also see C. Christine Fair, *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 103-105.

⁷⁴ Within the ISI, and particularly amongst the Pashtun officers on the Afghan desk, there was an abiding mistrust of Massoud who, besides being a non-Pashtun, had consistently maintained his operational independence from Pakistan during the anti-Soviet jihad. Throughout that conflict, he never once travelled to Pakistan and it was only in late 1990, well after the Soviet withdrawal, that he visited Islamabad as part of a failed attempt by the ISI to effect a reconciliation between the feuding Afghan warlords. The ISI's perception of Massoud was doubtless coloured by his bitter rivalry with Hekmatyar, its own principal client amongst the mujahidin. See Khan, *Afghanistan and Pakistan*, 52-53.

potential to make that dream a reality, especially after the new movement demonstrated its mettle very early on by freeing a Pakistani goods caravan held hostage by Kandahari warlords, followed days thereafter by their remarkably easy takeover of Kandahar itself.⁷⁵

The initial Pakistani support to the Taliban came from the interior ministry under Babar and the powerful trucking mafia operating out of Quetta and Kandahar which desired to open new routes to transport smuggled goods between Pakistan, Iran and the newly independent Central Asian republic of Turkmenistan but found it impossible to conduct business in view of the excessive tolls imposed by warlords and rogue commanders along the way.⁷⁶ Within Pakistan, the Taliban also derived strong support from one of the country's main religious parties, the Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Islam (JUI) or Party of Islamic Scholars, in whose madrassas the majority of the Taliban's foot soldiers and even some senior leaders had been educated⁷⁷ and to whose sternly puritanical Deobandi ideology they subscribed.⁷⁸ One faction of the JUI,⁷⁹ headed by a Pashtun cleric named Maulana Fazlur Rahman, formed part of the ruling

⁷⁵ For more on the Taliban operation to free the convoy and their subsequent takeover of Kandahar at the cost of just a dozen men, see Rashid, *Taliban*, 28-29.

⁷⁶ Initially, the transport mafia, consisting of Pashtuns drawn from the same tribes as the Taliban leadership and allied to them through business interests and inter-marriage, paid them a monthly retainer but as the movement began its territorial expansion, it demanded and received more and more funds, including US \$300,000 in a single day in Quetta prior to an impending attack on Herat. See Rashid, "Pakistan and the Taliban," 77.

⁷⁷ During the Afghan jihad, the JUI had been largely ignored by the ISI in favour of its main domestic political rival, the Jamaat-i-Islami, which enjoyed close links with Hekmatyar and other mujahidin leaders. For much of the 1980s and early 1990s, the energies of the JUI were focused on the building and management of hundreds of new madrassas along the Pashtun areas bordering Afghanistan in the NWFP and Balochistan where young Pakistanis and Afghan refugees were provided free education, food, clothing and shelter and were imparted military training. Three principal Deobandi centres attracted the largest number of Afghan students and eventually became the primary sources of education, inspiration and recruitment for the Taliban: Dar-ul-Uloom Haqqania run by Samiul Haq and Dar-ul-Uloom Dera Ismail Khan run by Fazlur Rahman, both in the NWFP; and Jamiat-ul-Uloom-i-Islamiyyah operated by Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzai in Binori Town, a suburb of Karachi. While Shamzai was a well-respected cleric, Samiul Haq and Fazlur Rahman were also politicians who each headed their own faction of the JUI. Samiul Haq, in particular, is widely regarded as the intellectual godfather of the Taliban; by 1999, at least eight Taliban ministers in Kabul were graduates of his madrassa and dozens more alumni served as Taliban governors in the provinces, military commanders, judges and bureaucrats. See Rashid, *Taliban*, 89-92. Also see Khan, *Afghanistan and Pakistan*, 56-57.

⁷⁸ The Deobandi school of thought within Sunni Islam emerged during the mid-19th century from the Indian town of Deoband near New Delhi as an Islamic revivalist movement aimed at arresting the spiritual and socio-economic decline of India's Muslims living under British colonial rule. The Deobandis aimed to groom a new generation of erudite Muslims who would revive Islamic values based on intellectual learning, spiritual experience and Islamic law. In general, the Deobandis circumscribed the role of women in the public sphere, opposed all forms of hierarchy within the Muslim community and bitterly opposed both the Shia sect of Islam as well as the mystical strain within the religion embodied by the Sufis. The Taliban, however, were to take these beliefs to "an extreme which the original Deobandis would never have recognised." See Rashid, *Taliban*, 88. Also see Hassan Abbas, *The Taliban Revival: Violence and Extremism on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 65-67.

⁷⁹ Differences over party policy during the 1980s led to the JUI splitting up into two factions, one headed by Fazlur Rahman (JUI-F) and the other by Samiul Haq (JUI-S). For more on the schism within the party, see, International Crisis Group Asia Report N°216, *Islamic Parties in Pakistan*, December 12, 2011, accessed July 16, 2015, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south/asia/pakistan/216%20Islamic%20Parties%20in%20Pakistan.pdf>

coalition with Benazir Bhutto's PPP; as a political ally of the prime minister, Rahman used his access to the government, the army and the ISI to drum up official support for the Taliban. He also used his appointment by Bhutto as chairman of the National Assembly's Standing Committee for Foreign Affairs⁸⁰ to enlist Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states on the Taliban's behalf whilst also lobbying for them on his frequent visits to Western capitals.⁸¹

Although Pakistan's decision to throw its weight behind the Taliban was undoubtedly a major explanatory factor behind its rapid expansion, it should not necessarily be construed as evidence that the militia were a Pakistani creation or a brainchild of the ISI. In fact, the Taliban were "a phenomenon waiting to happen"⁸² in a country ravaged by war and amongst a people cruelly betrayed by the incessant squabbling of their own leaders, thereby making it "ripe for the emergence of a new and purer movement."⁸³ Moreover, the extreme ideology preached and implemented by the Taliban purportedly in the name of Islam was a direct consequence of a policy of radical religious indoctrination in which not only Pakistan but the US, Saudi Arabia and other supporters of the Afghan jihad were all complicit. Although Naseerullah Babar reportedly referred to the Taliban as "our boys" and both the Pakistan government and the JUI publicly acclaimed their early victories, the Taliban demonstrated from the outset that they were "nobody's puppet."⁸⁴ Soon after taking Kandahar, they issued Pakistan a warning not to make deals on its own with individual warlords and disallowed goods bound for Afghanistan to be transported by Pakistani trucks.⁸⁵

In view of its later extensive patronage of the Taliban, it is ironic that the ISI initially viewed the radical new movement with a measure of scepticism.⁸⁶ When the Taliban first appeared on the scene, the ISI was still wedded to its policy of supporting Hekmatyar; in any case, it was more focused at the time on running its other jihad in Kashmir than on exploring new options in Afghanistan and had by and large resigned itself to an indefinite continuation of that country's intractable civil war. It was actually Benazir Bhutto and particularly Naseerullah Babar who saw in the emergence of the Taliban not only a chance to finally establish trade routes to Central Asia but also an opportunity to wrest control over

⁸⁰ The National Assembly is the popularly elected lower house of the bicameral Pakistani parliament; the indirectly elected Senate serves as the upper house.

⁸¹ Rashid, *Taliban*, 90.

⁸² Khan, *Afghanistan and Pakistan*, 56.

⁸³ Goodson, *Afghanistan's Endless War*, 110.

⁸⁴ Rashid, *Taliban*, 29.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Even greater scepticism, if not outright denunciation of the Taliban, was voiced by the Jamaat-i-Islami, for long the ISI's partner in Afghanistan and a key supporter of Hekmatyar. A publication backed by the party alleged that the Taliban were a creation of the CIA and British intelligence. See Rafique Afghan, *Weekly Takbeer*, March 2, 1995.

Afghan policy from the ISI.⁸⁷ Thus, the early patron of the Taliban was principally the civilian government of Pakistan and not the ISI.⁸⁸ However, the Taliban's speedy acquisition of more and more territory, coupled with Hekmatyar's continuing failure to take Kabul, compelled the ISI to take notice, leading to an internal debate within the agency as well as within the top military hierarchy in general about supporting the extremist militia.

By the summer of 1995, the Pashtun network within the army and the Pashtun Islamist supporters of the Taliban within the ISI had prevailed over those who advocated a more cautious approach so as not to damage relations with Central Asia and Iran.⁸⁹ With Rabbani and Massoud looking increasingly towards Pakistan's main regional rivals - Iran, India and Russia - for diplomatic and material support,⁹⁰ the military decided to fully back the Taliban as the "only possible alternative for Pakistan's own strategic interests in Afghanistan."⁹¹ Sensing her Afghan policy slipping into the hands of the military, Benazir Bhutto tried to argue against facilitating the Taliban to mount an offensive on Kabul and instead urged that their growing strength be used only to negotiate for a broad-based Afghan government. Under sustained pressure from the ISI, however, she eventually capitulated to its "persistent requests for unlimited covert aid to the Islamic militia."⁹²

Since Pakistan's own economy, crippled by a combination of corruption, poor management and US sanctions, could not possibly sustain such an enterprise on its own, the ISI solicited assistance from a familiar source: Saudi Arabia. Engaged in their own proxy war with Iran in Afghanistan, the Saudis needed little persuasion to switch their support from the ineffective Hekmatyar to the much more promising Taliban, who had impressed Riyadh as much by their martial prowess as by their extreme Deobandi ideology, which closely

⁸⁷ Rashid, *Taliban*, 184.

⁸⁸ While the ISI played its waiting game, Babar forged ahead with civilian assistance to the Taliban by setting up an Afghan Trade Development Cell within the interior ministry, which ostensibly aimed to coordinate the work of ministries in opening up trade routes to Central Asia but actually served to provide logistical support to the Taliban from the budgets of those ministries. Kandahar was connected to Pakistan's telephone grid and Pakistani engineers repaired roads and provided electricity to the city. The paramilitary Frontier Corps, directly under Babar's control, helped the Taliban set up an internal wireless network for their commanders. For details of further assistance between 1995 and 1996, see Rashid, *Taliban*, 184-185.

⁸⁹ Rashid, "Pakistan and the Taliban," 86. Both the army chief at the time, General Abdul Waheed Kakar, and the head of Military Intelligence, Lieutenant General Ali Kuli Khan Khattak, were Pashtuns, as were all operational ISI field officers involved with the Taliban.

⁹⁰ Declassified State Department documents indicate that as of October 1995, the ISI's aid to the Taliban was "pervasive" but also "modest" and included only limited "lethal assistance." In contrast, Iran was "pouring large amounts of money and materiel into Afghanistan" in support of the Rabbani government and was "recruiting, arming and training several thousand anti-Taliban Afghan refugees" in camps inside Iran along the border with Afghanistan. See "Afghanistan: Russian Embassy Official Claims Iran Interfering more than Pakistan," U.S. Embassy (Islamabad) Cable, November 30, 1995, DNSA, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB227/6.pdf>

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 331.

resembled the Saudis' own official creed of Wahhabism.⁹³ Generous contributions by Saudi intelligence as well as private sources within the kingdom both facilitated the expansion of the Taliban as well as "buoyed the treasuries" of the Pakistan army and the ISI during the "lean years of American economic sanctions."⁹⁴

IV. Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan

By 1996, in addition to their patrons within the Saudi ruling establishment, the Taliban had found another generous Saudi benefactor in the shape of Osama bin Laden, a member of the kingdom's leading construction firm who relocated to Peshawar during the 1980s and contributed generously from his substantial coffers to fund a range of logistical services for the mujahidin.⁹⁵ In 1986, he had set up his own training camps for Arab recruits, several thousand of whom fought the Soviets from bases in a number of provinces in Afghanistan but whose "extreme Wahhabi practices made them intensely disliked by the majority of Afghans."⁹⁶ Towards the end of the Afghan jihad, bin Laden set up an organization called al-Qaeda (meaning 'the base' or 'the foundation' in Arabic) ostensibly as a documentation bureau to record the names of the Arab Afghans and inform the families of those missing or slain. Its actual purposes were much more ambitious, including carrying the impetus for the "nascent worldwide Islamist movement into the post-Afghan jihad era" through the provision of "a base from which the ummah-wide Islamist movement and potential adherents could be organized, trained, paid, and generally inspired."⁹⁷

Following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, bin Laden returned home to Saudi Arabia and became a bitter opponent of the Saudi regime after it allowed in US troops to defend the kingdom against Iraq during the 1991 Persian Gulf War.⁹⁸ His criticism became even more strident after some 20,000 American troops remained stationed in Saudi Arabia

⁹³ The Saudis would have felt little compunction in ditching Hekmatyar, and for that matter their other favourite, Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, in view of the embarrassingly vocal opposition by both men to Saudi Arabia's alliance with the US during the 1991 Persian Gulf War against Iraq.

⁹⁴ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 296.

⁹⁵ For exhaustive accounts of bin Laden's origins and his role in the Afghan jihad, see Abdel Bari Atwan, *The Secret History of Al-Qaeda* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Peter L. Bergen, *Holy War, Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden* (New York: Touchstone, 2002); Coll, *Ghost Wars*; Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and Michael Scheuer, *Osama bin Laden* (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁹⁶ Rashid, *Taliban*, 132. In addition to earning the disapproval of Afghans in general, bin Laden and his cohort of Arab militants effectively alienated non-Pashtuns and Shia Muslims in particular by allying themselves with the most extreme pro-Wahhabi elements within the Pashtun mujahidin, especially Hekmatyar, Khalis, Sayyaf and Haqqani.

⁹⁷ Scheuer, *Osama*, 72. 'Ummah' is the Arabic word for the global community of Muslims.

⁹⁸ The catalyst for the Gulf War was the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, following which bin Laden had proposed to the Saudi government that he be allowed to assemble mujahidin fighters from around the world as well as his own Arab Afghan veterans in order to liberate Kuwait. His offer was spurned and over half a million US troops entered the Gulf, with most stationed in Saudi Arabia. For bin Laden, the Saudis' decision to ask the Americans to defend the kingdom and liberate Kuwait came as "the biggest shock of his entire life." See Atwan, *The Secret History of Al-Qaeda*, 45.

even after Iraq's defeat and Kuwait's liberation. The Saudi government confiscated his passport but he used his powerful connections to flee his native country, initially to Afghanistan, where he made a failed attempt to mediate between the warring mujahidin groups, and then to Sudan, where a friendly Islamist regime welcomed the wealthy fugitive with open arms. It was out of his new base in Khartoum that bin Laden launched al-Qaeda's first military attacks against the US.⁹⁹ In the meantime, his continuing criticism of the Saudi ruling family led to his citizenship being revoked. Under intense pressure from the US and the Saudis, the Sudanese government eventually asked bin Laden to leave and in May 1996, he fled once more to the familiar surroundings of Afghanistan.¹⁰⁰

Upon his return to Afghanistan, bin Laden issued his first declaration of jihad against America from his new base in the city of Jalalabad, which fell shortly thereafter to the Taliban, who assured him of continued refuge in recognition of his services during the anti-Soviet jihad. Bin Laden struck up a close friendship with Mullah Omar, who convinced him to relocate to Kandahar, where he built a house for the Taliban leader's family and made other significant financial contributions to the new regime's treasury.¹⁰¹ Moreover, he despatched several hundred Arab Afghans to fight alongside the Taliban in their offensives against the Northern Alliance, a military coalition consisting primarily of non-Pashtun forces that had coalesced under Massoud's leadership following the Taliban's takeover of Kabul in 1996.¹⁰² The increasingly strong nexus between the Taliban and al-Qaeda could not possibly have occurred without the knowledge, and even active encouragement, of the ISI, which wanted to use bin Laden's financial resources and his cohort of battle-hardened Arab Afghans both to train Kashmiri militants as well as in support of the Taliban's efforts to take over all of Afghanistan.

V. War by Proxy

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were not the only ones captivated by the Taliban's perceived potential to stabilise Afghanistan. The militia's rapid initial expansion clearly made a favourable impression upon the Clinton administration, which regarded it as a more than useful instrument for the attainment of a number of key US regional interests, including

⁹⁹ Bin Laden claimed that his Arab Afghans played a key role in downing two American Black Hawk helicopters in Somalia in 1993 in an operation that cost the lives of 18 American soldiers.

¹⁰⁰ The Saudis were particularly incensed after a car bomb explosion in Riyadh in October 1995 - the first of its kind in the kingdom's history - outside a joint Saudi-US military facility killed seven people, including five Americans. Three of the four alleged perpetrators, all of whom were caught and executed, were Arab veterans of the Afghan jihad and one had actually been a member of bin Laden's own brigade in Afghanistan. See Mamoun Fandy, *Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 3.

¹⁰¹ Rashid, *Taliban*, 139.

¹⁰² The actual name of the Northern Alliance was the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan.

containing Iran and cracking down on Afghanistan's booming production and trafficking of opium.¹⁰³ Towards the end of 1995, the Taliban's strategic appeal for Washington was augmented by the latter's quest to secure access for American oil companies to the potentially enormous energy deposits of Central Asia through pipelines that would have to traverse Afghanistan. For such plans to attain fruition, a stable Afghanistan would be an essential prerequisite, one that the US believed the Taliban could deliver. Between 1995 and 1997, as the Taliban extended their rule across large portions of the country, the Clinton administration chose to disregard their repressive religious and social policies and their blatant violations of elementary human rights. Of far greater importance to Washington at the time was a proposal by an American oil company, Unocal, to build a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan running through Afghanistan, thereby bypassing Iran.¹⁰⁴

Thus, at a time when the Taliban were busy holding public executions and floggings and banning women from offices and schools, the US outlined its Afghan policy to a closed gathering of the UN Security Council by declaring that the Taliban had "demonstrated their staying power" and that it was "not in the interests of Afghanistan or any of us here" that they be diplomatically isolated.¹⁰⁵ Although there is no evidence to suggest that it provided direct material support to the Taliban, the initially favourable response by the US to the expansion of Taliban control, its tacit approval of Pakistani and Saudi support to the Taliban and its firm backing of Unocal's pipeline plans were viewed with deep suspicion by regional rivals such as Russia and Iran, who reacted by stepping up their aid to the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance. By the end of 1996, after Kabul had fallen to the Taliban, battle-lines in Afghanistan's new proxy war appeared to have been firmly drawn between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the US on the side of the Taliban and Iran, Russia, India and the Central Asian Republics on the side of the Northern Alliance.

Less than a month after the Taliban entered Kabul in triumph, their original Pakistani patron, the civilian government of Benazir Bhutto, was dismissed two years before the

¹⁰³ The Taliban were fiercely anti-Shia and, following their capture of the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif in 1998, had conducted a pogrom against ethnic Hazaras, who were Shia. They followed that up by kidnapping and executing eleven diplomats and intelligence personnel stationed in the Iranian consulate in Mazar, causing outrage in Iran and sparking fears of an all-out Iranian invasion of Afghanistan. During the raid on the consulate, the Taliban had been joined by a Pakistani militant group, the fanatically anti-Shia Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (Army of the Companions of the Prophet), a clear indication of how "Talibanized Afghanistan had become an incubator for the growth and training of Pakistani extremist and militant groups..." Khan, *Afghanistan and Pakistan*, 69.

¹⁰⁴ For an exhaustive account of the regional competition for Central Asian energy resources during the latter half of the 1990s, and in particular Unocal's dealings with the Taliban, see Rashid, *Taliban*, 157-182. Also see James Fergusson, *Taliban: The True Story of the World's Most Feared Guerrilla Fighters* (London: Bantam Press, 2010), 108-110.

¹⁰⁵ Statement by Robin L. Raphel, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, United Nations Meeting on Afghanistan, November 18, 1996, cited in Richard Mackenzie, "The United States and the Taliban," in *Fundamentalism*, ed. Maley, 91.

completion of its constitutionally mandated five-year term on the by now familiar charges of corruption, inability to maintain law and order and general mismanagement of the economy and state institutions.¹⁰⁶ In the farcical game of musical chairs into which Pakistani politics had by then degenerated, fresh elections in February 1997 brought Nawaz Sharif back to power for a second time, this time in a landslide. Sharif's return to the premiership coincided with the commencement of Clinton's second presidential term, which was accompanied by a change of guard at the State Department where Madeleine Albright took over from Warren Christopher as Secretary of State.¹⁰⁷ There would be no real change, however, in Clinton's overall policy on South Asia; nuclear sanctions on Islamabad remained in place and Washington continued to place a greater premium on expanding ties with New Delhi. Moreover, differences persisted on Pakistan's persistent use of jihadist proxies in Kashmir¹⁰⁸ and elsewhere,¹⁰⁹ as well as on its acquisition of ballistic missile technology from China and North Korea.

Fairly early into Clinton's second term, Afghanistan too joined the list of major irritants in the US-Pakistan relationship. The change of government in Pakistan brought no shift in the ISI's Afghan policy; if anything, the agency intensified its support to the Taliban and, in the wake of their capture of the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif in May 1997, convinced not only Nawaz Sharif but also Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to formally recognise the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan. All other countries, including the US, opted to withhold recognition.¹¹⁰ In Washington's case, the initial flirtation with the misogynistic Taliban was being increasingly questioned by women's

¹⁰⁶ The charges were not without considerable merit, particularly those arising from persistent and credible allegations of massive corruption against both Bhutto and her husband Asif Ali Zardari, whom she had made minister for investment. See John F. Burns, "Bhutto Clan Leaves Trail of Corruption in Pakistan," *New York Times*, January 9, 1998.

¹⁰⁷ During Clinton's first term, Albright had served as the American ambassador to the UN.

¹⁰⁸ Pakistan's support to the Kashmir insurgency rose appreciably during Bhutto's second stint as prime minister, with Pakistani religious parties openly recruiting volunteers for the Kashmir jihad and the ISI running training camps in Pakistan-administered Kashmir and later in Afghanistan. In order to avoid being seen by the military establishment and her political opponents as soft on India, Bhutto went along with the ISI's Kashmir agenda. Haqqani, *Pakistan*, 234-238.

¹⁰⁹ An investigative report by the *New York Times* published in March 1995 cited diplomatic and intelligence sources that claimed that militants trained in Pakistan were fighting not only in Kashmir but had participated in other conflicts around the Muslim world, including the Philippine island of Mindanao, Tajikistan, Bosnia and several countries in North Africa facing Islamist insurrections such as Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria. John F. Burns, "Terror Network Traced to Pakistan," *New York Times*, March 20, 1995.

¹¹⁰ The decision by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the UAE to recognise the Taliban appeared embarrassingly premature when, just three days afterwards, the Taliban were expelled from Mazar by a spontaneous rebellion of the city's native Uzbek and Shia inhabitants against their Pashtun occupiers. The setback was not of sufficient magnitude, however, for the Taliban's three patrons to withdraw their recognition, which remained intact, even though it was not until August 1998 that the Taliban recaptured Mazar, with substantial support from the ISI and the Saudis.

rights supporters at home, including powerful female figures within the administration such as first lady Hillary Clinton and Secretary of State Albright.

On a trip to Pakistan in November 1997, Albright declared unequivocally - doubtless to the consternation of her hosts - that the US decision not to recognise the Taliban was because of “their approach to human rights, their despicable treatment of women and children, and their general lack of respect for human dignity...”¹¹¹ She also made it clear that the US did not deem the Taliban to be in a position to occupy the whole of Afghanistan, affirmed that “other parties” in the Afghan conflict needed to be recognised and urged Pakistan to use its influence with the Taliban to push them towards negotiating with their opponents.¹¹² Such criticism fell on deaf ears; the military and the ISI, and indeed the Sharif government, continued to back the Taliban on the flawed assumption that complete Taliban control over all of Afghanistan would be accepted by the world as a *fait accompli*. Their irrational pursuit of ‘strategic depth’ against India through the installation of a client Pashtun Islamist government in Afghanistan blinded them both to Pakistan’s increasing isolation from the world on account of its backing of the Taliban as well as to the growing impact of the Taliban’s warped ideology upon Pakistan’s own socio-political landscape.¹¹³

Already encumbered by growing differences on a range of major bilateral policy areas, the US-Pakistan relationship was put to another stiff test in May 1998 when both India and Pakistan became overt nuclear-weapon states. New Delhi’s decision to conduct five nuclear tests on 11 May was bettered by Islamabad later that month when it conducted six tests of its own. During the brief intervening period between these momentous events, the Clinton administration, which had been taken by surprise by the Indian tests, tried its utmost to coax Pakistan not to go down the same road by offering a string of incentives, including the resumption of economic and military aid, international recognition and a state visit for Nawaz Sharif to the White House “with all the panoply possible.”¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Ian Brodie, “Albright attacks Taleban oppression of women,” *The Times* (London), November 19, 1997.

¹¹² Mackenzie, “The United States and the Taliban,” 91.

¹¹³ For a country already beset with multifarious internal problems, including a fragile state apparatus, a crumbling federal structure, a moribund economy, an unending crisis of national leadership and deep social, ethnic and sectarian fissures, Pakistan was especially vulnerable to being swept away by the wave of militant Islamism that had already inundated its western neighbour. The increasing radicalization of Pakistani society during the 1990s, and especially after the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan, led some commentators to issue stark warnings of the growing “Talibanization” of Pakistan. See, for instance, Eqbal Ahmed, “What after strategic depth?” *Dawn*, August 23, 1998; Ahmed Rashid, “The Taliban: Exporting Extremism,” *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 6 (November-December 1999): 22-35; and Olivier Roy, “Rivalries and Power Plays in Afghanistan: The Taliban, the Sharia and the Pipeline,” *Middle East Report* 27, no. 1 (Spring 1997), accessed July 19, 2015, <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer202/taliban-sharia-pipeline>

¹¹⁴ Riedel, *Avoiding Armageddon*, 123.

Caught between vociferous domestic public opinion in favour of giving a matching response to India on the one hand and sustained American pressure not to do so on the other, an “anguished” Sharif sought a security guarantee from Clinton against India as the price for not testing.¹¹⁵ When such a guarantee was not forthcoming, he gave his scientists the go-ahead to test, following which the US immediately imposed further sanctions, an eventuality of which Clinton had given Sharif notice in their final conversation before the tests. The episode demonstrated yet again that when it came to what were perceived as its core national interests, Pakistan would resist American pressure, be it in the form of inducements or threats, to abandon them, even if they were in conflict with America’s own declared interests.

The US had hardly had time to come to terms with South Asia’s dramatically transformed security architecture following the India-Pakistan nuclear tests when its attention in the region was again transferred to Afghanistan. In August 1998, twin suicide bombing strikes on American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania that claimed more than two hundred lives were traced by American intelligence to the al-Qaeda network of Osama bin Laden, still residing in Afghanistan as a guest of the Taliban. Just months prior to the bombings, bin Laden and his deputy, the firebrand Egyptian Islamist Ayman al-Zawahiri, had launched the World Islamic Front for Jihad Against the Jews and Crusaders with the avowed aim of targeting Americans and their allies - both civilian and military - all over the world.¹¹⁶ Following that declaration, the US had engaged in its first direct high-level engagement with the Taliban to convince them to extradite bin Laden to Saudi Arabia to stand trial but to no avail.¹¹⁷

After concluding that there was sufficient evidence of bin Laden’s culpability in the attacks in Africa, the US fired around 75 Tomahawk cruise missiles on suspected bin Laden hideouts in Afghanistan which did not locate their principal target but instead killed at least twenty Kashmiri militants receiving instruction in guerrilla warfare at one of bin Laden’s training camps, thereby disproving Pakistan’s repeated denials that it provided only moral

¹¹⁵ Tim Weiner, “After an Anguished Phone Call, Clinton Penalizes the Pakistanis,” *New York Times*, May 29, 1998; and Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 346.

¹¹⁶ Although officially bin Laden’s deputy, the older, more experienced al-Zawahiri, a medical doctor by profession, was seen by many Western intelligence analysts as bin Laden’s mentor and the real creative force behind al-Qaeda’s operations. See Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 381-383.

¹¹⁷ In April 1998, the US permanent representative to the UN, Bill Richardson, travelled to Afghanistan to hold talks with the Taliban on bin Laden and was informed that the al-Qaeda leader was a “guest” of the regime who could not simply be handed over. However, by then desperate to secure American recognition and financial assistance to prop up an economy in a state of complete collapse, the Taliban did propose that the US and Saudi Arabia could bring evidence against bin Laden in an Afghan court and that a verdict in favour of deportation would be honoured. Khan, *Afghanistan and Pakistan*, 76.

and diplomatic support to the Kashmir insurgency.¹¹⁸ Even though the missiles had to fly through Pakistan's airspace on their way to Afghanistan, the US did not deem it expedient to provide advance notice to the relevant Pakistani authorities out of concern that details of the operation would be leaked to the Taliban and bin Laden.¹¹⁹

Having failed to kill bin Laden, the US worked through the medium of UN resolutions to put pressure on the Taliban to hand him over to a country where he could legitimately be put on trial.¹²⁰ Those resolutions also called on all countries to push the Taliban in that direction, an obvious reference to Pakistan, which by that time was providing all sorts of assistance to the Taliban, including paying the salaries of Taliban government employees out of its own depleted budget.¹²¹ Previous attempts by the US to enlist Pakistan's help in getting hold of bin Laden had failed to elicit the required cooperation. The ISI was reluctant to close down an important source of funding and training for Kashmiri militants and was wary of triggering a militant backlash at home for collaborating with the US against bin Laden, whose anti-Americanism had struck a powerful chord with Islamist groups within Pakistan. It also did not wish to jeopardize its Afghan policy by antagonising the Taliban, who had declared bin Laden their guest whose safety and well-being was mandated both by Pashtun culture as well as Islamic social mores. Nevertheless, under sustained American pressure, both Nawaz Sharif and the ISI eventually agreed to set up a 60-person commando team trained and funded by the US to capture bin Laden.¹²²

The Taliban's other external champion, Saudi Arabia, also came under increased US pressure after the bombings in Africa to secure bin Laden's arrest and extradition. When they had first come into contact with bin Laden after capturing Jalalabad, the Taliban had sent a message to Riyadh seeking guidance on whether to keep him there or hand him over to the Saudis. They were instructed to keep bin Laden where he was but to ensure that he

¹¹⁸ According to one account, a number of ISI personnel supervising the training of the militants were also killed or wounded in the attack. See Bruce Riedel, *The Search for Al Qaeda: Its Leadership, Ideology, and Future* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2008), 68.

¹¹⁹ At the same time, the US was also afraid that if given no notice at all, the Pakistanis might interpret the strikes as an Indian attack and respond in kind. To forestall that eventuality, the Clinton administration arranged for a senior US military official to be present in Rawalpindi at the very moment the missiles were fired in order to clarify to his Pakistani counterparts that they had not been launched by India. Riedel, *Avoiding Armageddon*, 127.

¹²⁰ Between 1996 and the summer of 2001, the US unsuccessfully pressed the Taliban on over thirty occasions to expel bin Laden from Afghanistan. "U.S. Engagement with the Taliban on Usama Bin Laden," State Department Report, Secret, Circa July 16, 2001, DNSA, accessed July 19, 2015, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB97/tal40.pdf>

¹²¹ During the 1997-1998 financial year, when its own economy was reeling under the combined weight of painful international sanctions and prolonged domestic mismanagement, Pakistan gave the Taliban US\$30 million in aid, which included arms and ammunition, fuel, spare parts for a range of military equipment, road building and electricity supply. Rashid, *Taliban*, 183-184.

¹²² Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 537.

did not speak or work against the interests of Saudi Arabia.¹²³ The kingdom's rulers clearly preferred to have bin Laden at liberty in Afghanistan than incarcerated in Saudi Arabia, where he might become "a magnet for anti-royal dissent."¹²⁴ Moreover, the close relations that bin Laden still maintained with sympathetic members of the Saudi ruling elite and elements within Saudi intelligence could prove devastating for Saudi Arabia in case they were brought to light in an open court. The Saudis preferred bin Laden to be either dead or in the custody of the Taliban; what they clearly did not desire was for him to be captured and tried by the Americans.¹²⁵

Despite bin Laden's continuing fulminations against the Saudi ruling family, the kingdom maintained its support to his Afghan hosts in line with its overarching goal of countering Iranian influence in the region. In the months preceding the attacks in Africa, the Saudis financed the Taliban's offensives in northern Afghanistan and were silent on the question of bin Laden's extradition.¹²⁶ Following the Africa bombings, however, both Saudi Arabia and Pakistan found themselves under enormous American pressure to persuade the Taliban to hand him over. Saudi intelligence chief Prince Turki al-Faisal travelled to Kandahar with his Pakistani counterpart to convince Mullah Omar that bin Laden had to be surrendered. While there are varied accounts of the meeting's specifics, they are all agreed on the outcome, which was that the Taliban leader refused to comply with his visitors' demand.¹²⁷ His defiance led Saudi Arabia to break off diplomatic ties with the Taliban, followed soon thereafter by the UAE.¹²⁸ By 1999, Pakistan stood alone as the only country in the world to maintain full diplomatic relations with the Taliban¹²⁹ and refused to distance itself from them even after the US had officially declared them a state sponsor of terrorism.¹³⁰

¹²³ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 341.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Rashid, *Taliban*, 138; and *Exporting Extremism*, 33.

¹²⁶ Tim McGirk, "Guest of Honour," *Time*, August 31, 1998, 24.

¹²⁷ See, for instance, Atwan, *The Secret History of Al-Qaeda*, 56; Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 414-415; Iftikhar Murshed, *Afghanistan: The Taliban Years* (London: Bennett & Bloom, 2006), 300-302; and Rashid, *Taliban*, 138-139.

¹²⁸ At the same time, however, Riyadh did not actually withdraw its recognition of the Taliban and funding from private Saudi sources remained largely unchecked Rashid, *Exporting Extremism*, 33.

¹²⁹ Despite their control over most of Afghanistan, the Taliban's inability to win broad international recognition resulted in Afghanistan's seat in the UN being held by representatives of the Rabbani government that the Taliban had ousted from Kabul in 1996.

¹³⁰ The American decision against the Taliban came in the form of an executive order passed by Clinton in July 1999. This was followed up with UN Security Council Resolution 1267 of October 15, 1999, that imposed economic and travel sanctions on the Taliban, including by calling on member states to freeze Taliban funds and financial resources. See *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (New York: W.W Norton & Company, 2004), 125.

VI. Returning to Square One

In order to mitigate Pakistan's growing diplomatic isolation in the wake of the nuclear tests and its continued support to the Taliban, Nawaz Sharif launched a peace initiative with India in February 1999 that appeared to show considerable early promise of a genuine improvement in relations between the two countries.¹³¹ However, such efforts came to naught soon thereafter when the Pakistani army launched a poorly planned incursion into the strategically situated town of Kargil in Kashmir. Although taken completely by surprise by Pakistan's initial offensive, which consisted of infiltrating both regular troops and Kashmiri militants to occupy high-altitude positions abandoned by the Indians during the forbidding Kashmiri winter, the Indians responded with full force by deploying both their army and air force against the intruders.¹³² With losses mounting on both sides, international concerns intensified that India would seek to broaden the theatre of operations by crossing over into Pakistan, leading to an escalation in violence that could potentially spark a catastrophic nuclear exchange.¹³³

Pakistan's official stance throughout the Kargil conflict that the men occupying the positions were indigenous Kashmiri mujahidin and not regular Pakistani army personnel could not overcome the incredulity of the international community. Washington held Islamabad exclusively responsible for instigating the crisis and pressed it to withdraw its forces from Kashmir. For the first time ever in an India-Pakistan conflict, the US was "unequivocally and publicly siding with India," and by doing so left Islamabad "devastated."¹³⁴ Such was the extent of Pakistan's diplomatic isolation on the issue that it failed to garner the support of even its closest ally, China, which also urged it to withdraw unilaterally.

With his government completely bereft of international support and with India threatening to expand the war, Sharif attempted to cut his losses by pleading with the US for a face-saving exit. Clinton consented to Sharif's request for a meeting but made it conditional on Pakistan agreeing to announce a unilateral withdrawal from Kargil. In case Islamabad backed out of doing so, the US would hold it responsible for starting a war that might end in a nuclear disaster. Following their meeting in Washington on July 4, 1999, during which an

¹³¹ In February 1999, Indian prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee travelled to Lahore on the inaugural run of a bus service launched between the two countries. During his visit, he concluded an agreement with Sharif to begin a dialogue on all outstanding issues, including Kashmir.

¹³² For more on the military dimensions of the Kargil conflict, see Peter Lavoy, ed., *Asymmetric Warfare in South Asia: The Causes and Consequences of the Kargil Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); and Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 507-519.

¹³³ Stephen Kinzer, "The World Takes Notice: Kashmir Gets Scarier," *New York Times*, June 20, 1999; and "Ever More Dangerous in Kashmir," *Economist*, June 19, 1999, 66-67.

¹³⁴ Riedel, *Avoiding Armageddon*, 132.

angry Clinton berated his visitor for the irresponsibility of Pakistan's actions and threatened to label it a supporter of terrorism in Afghanistan and Kashmir if it did not pull back its troops from Kargil, Sharif agreed to a unilateral withdrawal. The only concession that he was able to extract from Clinton in exchange was a vague undertaking to take a personal interest in encouraging a speedy resumption of the peace process between India and Pakistan that had been interrupted by the hostilities in Kashmir.¹³⁵

The Kargil debacle led to a rapid breakdown in relations between Nawaz Sharif and the main architect of the ill-fated intrusion in Kashmir, army chief General Pervez Musharraf.¹³⁶ In October 1998, Sharif had handpicked Musharraf over two more senior generals to replace General Jehangir Karamat, whom Sharif had compelled to resign for exceeding his mandate by publicly recommending an institutionalised role for the military in the formulation of Pakistan's national security policies.¹³⁷ Having successfully gotten rid of one army chief, Sharif attempted a repeat performance but on this occasion, it was he who ended up being removed from office. In a dramatic sequence of events worthy of a Hollywood action movie, Sharif dismissed Musharraf from office while the latter was still airborne on the way back from an official trip to Sri Lanka. The commercial plane carrying Musharraf was not allowed to land at its original destination of Karachi but was instead diverted elsewhere. By that time, however, Musharraf's senior generals had got wind of the game that was afoot and moved quickly to arrest Sharif and his associates, following which Musharraf's plane was able to land safely. Within little more than a decade of Zia's death and for the fourth time in its brief history, Pakistan yet again fell under direct military rule.

¹³⁵ For a detailed first-hand account of the deliberations between Clinton and Sharif, see Bruce Riedel, "American Diplomacy and the 1999 Kargil Summit at Blair House," Policy Paper Series, Centre for the Advanced Study of India, University of Pennsylvania, 2002, accessed July 17, 2015, <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.473.251&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

¹³⁶ Not surprisingly, Sharif and Musharraf have widely divergent and often mutually contradictory views about the Kargil mini-war. Sharif claimed that he was inadequately briefed by Musharraf about the nature and extent of the incursion and that in the end, it was Musharraf who pleaded with him to go to Washington to extricate the army from what had by then become a lost cause. See Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 519. Musharraf, on the other hand, maintained in his biography that in military terms, the Kargil adventure was a resounding success and "a landmark in the history of the Pakistan Army." Moreover, he wrote that Sharif's decision to seek Washington's intercession in ending hostilities was a "purely political decision" taken by the prime minister on his own even though Musharraf had assured him that the military situation remained "optimistic." Finally, he also claimed that Sharif had not been kept in the dark about the Kargil plan and was regularly briefed about the situation as it continued to unfold. See Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 87-98.

¹³⁷ Almost from the outset of his second term, Sharif had displayed a clear intention to use his substantial electoral majority in parliament to consolidate his position against all opposition, be it political, executive or judicial. He took away the president's power to sack the prime minister and dissolve the assemblies; forced the resignation of President Leghari and instigated the removal of the chief justice of the Supreme Court; and was in the process of promulgating legislation aimed at enforcing Islamic law throughout Pakistan and putting himself beyond the reach of both parliament and the courts through a massive expansion of prime ministerial powers. See Hasan-Askari Rizvi, "Pakistan in 1998: The Polity under Pressure," *Asian Survey* 39, no. 1 (January-February, 1999): 180.

Conclusion

At the dawn of a new millennium, US-Pakistan ties appeared to be in worse shape than at any previous period in the chequered relationship between the two countries. Washington's disillusionment with Islamabad's utility as a strategic client was matched by Islamabad's feelings of having been betrayed by its patron, leading to a spurt in anti-American sentiment across the country. The drying up of US aid and the imposition of nuclear-related sanctions during the 1990s was severely resented by Pakistanis in general but was a particularly bitter pill to swallow for the military establishment, which depended primarily on American weaponry and spare parts to meet its conventional defence needs vis-à-vis India. No longer in a position to mount a credible conventional deterrent to India, the Pakistani military, operating through the ISI, increasingly turned to the use of militant proxies to defend its strategic interests in Afghanistan and Kashmir, especially since Washington had by then washed its hands off the former and was not inclined to imperil its growing rapprochement with New Delhi by attempting to mediate a solution to the latter.

The decision by the US to disengage from Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal instead of pursuing a long-term peace settlement was fatally flawed. Washington then attempted a brief flirtation of its own with the Taliban before realising the impracticality of doing business with them. It subsequently became openly critical of both the Taliban and their Pakistani patrons, whilst also maintaining its opposition to Islamabad's proxy war in Kashmir. Although it did force a Pakistani retreat from Kargil, the US failed to prevent Islamabad from propping up the Taliban, conducting nuclear tests and using militants against India. Deprived of the mutually advantageous bonds inherent in relationships of patronage and cliency, US-Pakistan relations during the 1990s became trapped in a vicious circle of acrimony and mistrust. It would take the seminal event of the new millennium's first decade to bring about another dramatic convergence of strategic interests between Washington and Islamabad.

CHAPTER FIVE: BACK TO THE FRONTLINE - BUSH, MUSHARRAF AND THE WAR ON TERRORISM

In several crucial respects, US-Pakistan relations during the Musharraf period mirrored those that prevailed during the 1980s. Both Zia and Musharraf were treated as international outcasts after their respective coups against democratically elected governments but both had their sins washed away after aligning themselves with America's strategic interests in Afghanistan and received substantial material rewards from the US for their services. Although one a devout Islamist and the other a self-proclaimed "enlightened moderate," both used Islam for political ends. Zia did so by attempting to Islamise the Pakistani state and waging jihad in Afghanistan while Musharraf did so by trying to come across as a moderate and largely secular Muslim before his Western audiences but ensuring that the army's jihadist proxies in Afghanistan and Kashmir were not abandoned.

Both Zia and Musharraf pursued policy objectives diametrically opposed to those of their American benefactors and both were able to get away with doing so because Washington's need for their sustained cooperation outweighed its frustration at their continued defiance. In the final analysis, therefore, during both periods, it was frequently the case that the tail wagged the dog; in other words, the client played as much of a role as the patron in defining the relationship, even to the extent of consistently flouting the patron's interests when it perceived them to be in conflict with its own.

I. Musharraf and the US: The Pre-9/11 Phase

There were very few within Pakistan who publicly mourned the premature termination of the Nawaz Sharif government, which had frittered away much of the goodwill and support that had given it a landslide electoral victory in 1997 by failing to reverse Pakistan's economic decline and improve public sector delivery on key areas of governance. As was the case in the initial aftermath of earlier coups, there was a general hope within Pakistan on this occasion too that the military would succeed where the civilians had failed. In a departure from his predecessors, General Musharraf did not impose martial law and bestowed on himself the relatively innocuous sounding title of "chief executive" rather than the more forbidding one of "chief martial law administrator." He also initially did not assume the presidency and allowed Sharif's appointee to continue in that position. Political parties were not banned and nor was press censorship instituted; at the same time, however,

Musharraf did follow earlier instances of military rule by compelling senior judges to take an oath of allegiance to his regime, with those who refused to do so compulsorily retired.

Musharraf's attempt to soften the hard edge of his military rule was directed at assuaging widespread international condemnation of his seizure of power by portraying himself as a reluctant coup-maker with no personal ambitions but instead motivated only by an interest in reforming the country. Despite such efforts, however, which included the announcement of an ambitious seven-point reform agenda soon after taking over the country, the overall international reaction to the coup was predominantly adverse.¹ The Clinton administration, although under no illusions about the failings of the Sharif government, condemned the coup and immediately imposed sanctions which, under existing US legislation, were automatically triggered in the event of the overthrow of a democratically elected government. With the Pressler sanctions and those imposed after the 1998 nuclear tests already in place, Pakistan's transition from America's "most allied ally" to its "most sanctioned ally" was now complete.²

Just as Zia had failed to secure American support for his dictatorship in the years preceding the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Musharraf too found himself "in Washington's doghouse" during the first two years of his military rule.³ The American lack of favour stemmed partly from Musharraf's upending of democracy and his reluctance to provide a timetable for its return but more so from a growing recognition that he had no intention of complementing his proposed domestic reform agenda with a similarly transformed foreign policy.⁴ Musharraf was as committed to maintaining 'strategic depth' in Afghanistan as all previous Pakistani army chiefs over the last two decades. On India, meanwhile, and more specifically with respect to Pakistan's Kashmir policy, he had already given sufficient evidence of his hawkish inclinations through his instigation of the Kargil incursion.

Musharraf's appointment of Lieutenant General Mahmud Ahmed - one of the leading architects of Kargil, a central player in the execution of the October coup and an enthusiastic supporter of the Taliban - as head of the ISI was a clear indicator that there would be no let-up in the policy of using militant proxies for the attainment of the military's

¹ Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, 149-150.

² "US Policy Towards Pakistan," Hearing before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States House of Representatives, One Hundred Tenth Congress, First Session, Serial No. 110-21, March 21, 2007, 9.

³ Schaffer and Schaffer, *How Pakistan Negotiates*, 133.

⁴ In an address to the nation to explain the rationale for the coup and to lay out the objectives of his regime, Musharraf had been deliberately vague about the actual period that he intended to hold on to power when he declared that the military had "no intention to stay in charge any longer than is absolutely necessary to pave the way for true democracy to flourish in Pakistan." See "Text of General Pervez Musharraf's Speech," *Dawn*, October 18, 1999.

core strategic objectives. Just months after Ahmed took over the ISI, an Indian commercial aircraft travelling from Kathmandu to New Delhi was hijacked by militants believed to be from the Harakatul Mujahidin, a Kashmiri militant group backed not only by the ISI but also funded and trained in Afghanistan at Osama bin Laden's camps.⁵ The plane was diverted to Kandahar, where the Indian government eventually negotiated the release of the passengers taken hostage by freeing three senior Kashmiri militant leaders incarcerated in Indian jails. Although there was no direct evidence linking the ISI to the hijacking, the released men soon made their way to Pakistan where they were allowed to operate with impunity, even to the extent of one of them announcing the formation of a new militant outfit, the Jaish-e-Muhammad (Army of Muhammad), to continue the jihad in Kashmir.

In January 2000, with concern mounting in Washington about increased India-Pakistan tensions following the hijacking incident, the Clinton administration despatched its first official delegation to Islamabad to meet Pakistan's new military ruler. Led by Assistant Secretary of State Karl Inderfurth, the delegation pressed Musharraf and the ISI to assist in capturing a Saudi al-Qaeda operative named Abu Zubaydah, suspected of involvement in terrorist plots in Jordan and the US and allegedly working out of a secure base in Peshawar. In response, the ISI claimed to have no knowledge of Abu Zubaydah's whereabouts even though he was assisting the agency to recruit and vet Kashmiri militants that were then sent to al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan.⁶ The US delegation also urged Musharraf to revisit the policy of fomenting militancy and terrorism in Kashmir, to which the latter responded by implicitly admitting his country's culpability after offering to use Pakistan's "influence" in Kashmir to lower tensions provided India reduced its growing troop numbers along the border.⁷ Musharraf did appear to show a greater willingness to move against bin Laden, however, and undertook to meet Mullah Omar in that context as soon as possible.⁸

The lack of progress on major areas of concern to the US such as terrorism, nuclear proliferation, democracy and human rights sparked a contentious debate within the Clinton administration on the advisability of including Pakistan in the itinerary for the president's proposed trip to South Asia in March 2000. Those advocating that Clinton give Pakistan a miss pointed to major security concerns arising out of the presence of al-Qaeda in neighbouring Afghanistan and cautioned that a meeting with Musharraf would be

⁵ Riedel, *Deadly Embrace*, 58-59.

⁶ Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (New York: Viking, 2008), 48.

⁷ Strobe Talbott, *Engaging India: Diplomacy, Democracy, and the Bomb* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2004), 190.

⁸ *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 183.

interpreted as putting the “presidential stamp of approval” on his military regime.⁹ They also maintained that Musharraf had done nothing on the al-Qaeda front or in reducing tensions with India to be rewarded with a presidential visit.¹⁰ On the other hand, those in favour of Clinton going to Pakistan argued that it was essential for Washington to maintain its channels of communication with Islamabad in order to have any possibility of influencing the latter’s conduct, particularly in case India-Pakistan tensions continued to rise. By the winter of 1999-2000, US intelligence estimates had concluded that the chance of a full-scale war between India and Pakistan had increased after the nuclear tests and the Kargil conflict.¹¹

In the end, Clinton decided that there was enough at stake in Pakistan to override Secret Service warnings of probable assassination plots.¹² His decision not to exclude Pakistan from his travel plans was driven by a number of considerations including lowering tensions over Kashmir; pushing for an early return to democratic rule; urging Musharraf not to execute Nawaz Sharif, who at the time was on trial for his life;¹³ and pressing for greater Pakistani cooperation against bin Laden.¹⁴ Although eventually deciding in favour of visiting Pakistan, Clinton left his Pakistani hosts in no doubt about their country’s diminished status when it came to America’s strategic preferences in the region. While the US president would spend a full five days in India, he allocated a mere five hours to his trip to Pakistan.¹⁵

Bill Clinton’s South Asian journey of March 2000 unambiguously showcased America’s dramatic post-Cold War strategic realignment in the region. Clinton had already attained considerable popularity within India for his steadfast support of New Delhi’s position during the Kargil conflict and earned particular approbation for virtually browbeating Pakistan into bringing that clash to an end. In the months preceding his visit to the subcontinent, he had earned further Indian goodwill by waiving a significant number of

⁹ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 356.

¹⁰ Talbott, *Engaging India*, 191.

¹¹ Judith Miller and James Risen, “A Nuclear War Feared Possible over Kashmir,” *New York Times*, August 8, 2000.

¹² Talbott, *Engaging India*, 190-191.

¹³ Following the October coup that toppled his government, Nawaz Sharif was arrested and charged with a range of offences including criminal conspiracy, hijacking (a charge that carried the maximum penalty of the death sentence), kidnapping and attempted murder in relation to the alleged refusal to permit landing rights to the plane carrying Musharraf.

¹⁴ Bill Clinton, *My Life* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2004), 830-833.

¹⁵ Even for that brief duration, Musharraf had to agree to humiliating conditions, including that nobody in military uniform would receive Clinton at the airport and that Musharraf himself would be dressed in civilian clothing when he met his American visitor. Furthermore, Clinton refused to have himself photographed shaking hands with Pakistan’s military ruler and insisted that he would make a televised address to the Pakistani people prior to his departure. Haqqani, *Magnificent Delusions*, 306.

nuclear-related sanctions on India whilst declining to do the same with respect to Pakistan.¹⁶ Over the course of his five days in India - the first visit by an American president in twenty-two years - Clinton received rapturous welcomes wherever he went, especially when he declared to his Indian audiences that their country was “a leader, a great nation, which by virtue of its size, its achievements and its example, has the ability to shape the character of our time.”¹⁷ Moreover, he affirmed that the US shared the Indian government’s concerns about “the course Pakistan is taking” and empathised with India’s difficulties as “a democracy bordered by nations whose governments reject democracy.”¹⁸

A senior State Department official in the Clinton administration described the president’s visit to India as “by any standard and in almost every respect, one of the most successful such trips ever.”¹⁹ On the other hand, Clinton’s subsequent stopover in Pakistan, the first trip by an American president in over thirty years, has justifiably been termed “one of the strangest in presidential history.”²⁰ In marked contrast to India, where Clinton had at times broken security cordons to mingle and even dance with the locals, his short stay in Pakistan was governed by extreme security precautions that, coupled with the paucity of time available, precluded any meaningful interaction with ordinary citizens.²¹ In order to thwart possible terrorist attempts to attack Clinton’s plane with surface-to-air missiles, a decoy plane with official markings painted on it arrived first carrying a presidential double. Clinton himself arrived behind the first plane in an unmarked aircraft and immediately left for his meeting with Musharraf. His motorcade travelled along deserted roads from which the public had been kept away; thus the only Pakistanis that the president saw were the masses of security personnel lining his route.²²

With Pakistani cooperation no longer a strategic imperative for the US, Clinton found himself at liberty to confront Musharraf over a range of contentious issues but placing particular focus on Pakistan’s continuing links with the Taliban and al-Qaeda and its sponsorship of militancy in Kashmir. Once again, he urged Musharraf to use his influence with the Taliban to secure bin Laden’s arrest. Although Musharraf agreed to cooperate with

¹⁶ Talbott, *Engaging India*, 181. The sanctions relief provided to India made it eligible for loans and other financial assistance and allowed it to participate in the US government’s International Military Education and Training Programme. In Pakistan’s case, sanctions relief was confined to some agricultural credits and bank loans to the government.

¹⁷ “Text of President Clinton’s Speech to the Joint Session of the Parliament of India, March 22, 2002,” Archives of the Press Information Bureau, Government of India, accessed July 15, 2015, <http://pib.nic.in/archieve/indous/indouspr8.html>

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Talbott, *Engaging India*, 193.

²⁰ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 506.

²¹ Josy Joseph, “Clinton is a hit in Nayala,” *Rediff.com*, March 23, 2000, accessed July 17, 2015, <http://www.rediff.com/news/2000/mar/23josy.htm>

²² Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 357.

covert intelligence operations against bin Laden,²³ he emphasised his reluctance to do anything that might alienate the Taliban and stressed how difficult it was to negotiate with “people who believe that God is on their side.”²⁴ Musharraf also expressed a willingness to de-escalate tensions with India over Kashmir but ruled out any unilateral steps by Pakistan in that context. In response to Clinton’s queries about a return to democracy, Musharraf declined to provide a definite timetable, arguing that if he did nominate an exact date, his political opponents would scuttle his reform agenda by simply waiting him out.²⁵

Following his inconclusive meeting with Musharraf, Clinton addressed the Pakistani people directly through the medium of a televised speech shown live across the country. Anxious not to jeopardise a visit that would lend a desperately needed measure of international legitimacy to his military rule, Musharraf had given in to the American president’s unprecedented demand for a televised address. He probably regretted doing so after Clinton used his speech to convey a series of blunt messages to the military regime. Whilst sharing the disappointment of the Pakistani people in the failings of their previous democratic governments, Clinton pointed out that “the answer to flawed democracy is not to end democracy, but to improve it.” He called upon Pakistan to intensify its efforts to defeat those inflicting terror, including by targeting embassies, an obvious reference to al-Qaeda and an implicit reminder to the military that it had not done enough to capture bin Laden. On the nuclear issue, Clinton urged Pakistan to be “a leader for non-proliferation” by signing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) of 1996.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly of all, Clinton unequivocally informed his Pakistani audience that Kashmir could not be resolved militarily and that “no matter how great the grievance,” attacks on civilians across the border with India could not be tolerated. He also maintained that America “cannot and will not mediate or resolve the dispute in Kashmir,” which could only be settled by Pakistan and India through dialogue, an unambiguous endorsement of India’s traditional position on Kashmir that it was a bilateral issue and, ipso facto, an equally clear negation of Pakistan’s projection of Kashmir as an internationally acknowledged dispute whose settlement was mandated by UN resolutions. Clinton’s speech held out the promise of America’s “full economic and political partnership” if Pakistan overcame the “difficult challenges” that he had outlined but issued a stark warning that a

²³ Riedel, *Deadly Embrace*, 60-61.

²⁴ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 357.

²⁵ Ibid.

continuing failure to meet those challenges carried the danger that Pakistan “may grow even more isolated...moving even closer to a conflict no one can win.”²⁶

In the aftermath of Clinton’s visit, the US kept up its pressure on Pakistan to urgently revisit its Afghan policy. On a visit to Washington in April 2000, ISI head General Mahmud Ahmed was handed a verbal dressing down by Under-Secretary of State Thomas Pickering after unsuccessfully trying to convince him that bin Laden’s status as an honoured guest of the Taliban made it very difficult for Pakistan to move against him. Pickering’s brusque response was that the people who harboured those who killed Americans were “our enemies” and that “people who support those people will also be treated as our enemies” before ending with a warning to Pakistan “not to put itself in that position.”²⁷ The threat was deemed serious enough by Ahmed to warn Mullah Omar in a subsequent visit to Kandahar that the bin Laden issue had to be resolved “before it is too late” but there was no actual progress in that regard.²⁸ Despite that, Pakistani support to the Taliban continued and, according to US government sources, attained an “unprecedented” magnitude during the Taliban’s summer offensive that year.²⁹

Notwithstanding its periodic issuance of threats and warnings, the Clinton administration’s overall policies on Pakistan, the Taliban and al-Qaeda had little clarity of purpose, were plagued by indecisiveness and were consistently rendered ineffective by the divergent policy priorities of concerned US government departments. Clinton’s failure to influence Pakistani behaviour on major US policy concerns stemmed primarily from the fact that, while wielding plenty of sticks, he had little to offer in the form of carrots. During his presidency, Pakistan became one of the most heavily sanctioned countries in the world and Clinton’s inability or unwillingness to ease Congressional pressure on Islamabad meant that there was no real incentive for it to be more receptive to US demands.

In his second term, in particular, Clinton failed to get the State Department and the CIA to pursue a coordinated approach to the region by putting aside their separate policy agendas. Whereas the State Department prioritised India-Pakistan relations and nuclear non-proliferation, the CIA focused on bin Laden and al-Qaeda.³⁰ At the same time, however, the CIA refused to back the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance, which it viewed with suspicion as an instrument of Russia and Iran. Thus, at the same time that the US warned Pakistan that a

²⁶ “Clinton Addresses Pakistani People,” *CNN*, March 25, 2000, accessed July 18, 2015, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0003/25/bn.01.html>

²⁷ Barton Gellman, “Broad Effort Launched After ’98 Attacks,” *Washington Post*, December 19, 2001.

²⁸ Tim Judah, “The Taliban Papers,” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 70.

²⁹ “Pakistan Support for Taliban,” US Department of State Cable, September 26, 2000, DNSA, accessed July 18, 2015, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB227/34.pdf>

³⁰ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, xlv.

complete Taliban takeover of Afghanistan would not serve Islamabad's interests, it also reassured its Pakistani interlocutors that it did not regard Massoud as a viable alternative and acknowledged that the Taliban were "a feature of the Afghan political landscape" that would be "part of any political settlement."³¹

In October 2000, less than a month before presidential elections in the US, a suicide bombing attack on a US naval destroyer docked in the Yemeni port city of Aden killed seventeen American sailors. Although the US never directly blamed bin Laden for the attack, the attack was widely believed to be a macabre parting gift by bin Laden to Clinton as he stood on the cusp of completing his final term in office. On this occasion, however, Clinton decided against using retaliatory missile strikes, leaving it to the incoming Republican administration of George W. Bush to fashion an appropriate response. Before leaving office, however, Clinton did manage to get the UN to impose a fresh round of sanctions on the Taliban, including a complete arms embargo.³² His administration also conveyed its final recriminations to Pakistan, the Taliban's lone international supporter, that it was not doing enough on bin Laden and warned that the US would "have to make some hard decisions" about Pakistan if it did not change course in Afghanistan.³³

Undeterred by the nebulous threats of an administration on its way out, Pakistan continued to provide substantial support to the Taliban, a policy that Musharraf justified as being "in accordance with Pakistan's national interest," which necessitated Afghanistan's Pashtun majority being kept "on our side."³⁴ Such comments further inflamed the sentiments of the Afghans, especially all those in opposition to the Taliban, including many Pashtuns themselves.³⁵ Musharraf did, however, make one concession to Clinton, albeit on a different matter. Following months of behind-the-scenes diplomacy between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the US,³⁶ former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, who had been sentenced to life imprisonment after being found guilty on hijacking and terrorism charges, was granted a pardon and exiled to Saudi Arabia in December 2000 after forfeiting much of his considerable wealth and undertaking not to participate in politics for 21 years.³⁷

³¹ "Pakistan Support for Taliban," U.S. Department of State Cable.

³² Khan, *Afghanistan and Pakistan*, 86.

³³ "U/S Pickering Discusses Afghanistan, Democratization and Kashmir in NY with [Excised]," US Department of State Cable, November 20, 2000, DNSA, accessed July 17, 2015, http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB344/osama_bin_laden_file_pakistan_06.pdf

³⁴ "Musharraf Defends Pro-Taliban Policy," *News Network International (NNI)*, May 26, 2000.

³⁵ One of those Pashtuns was the future president of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, at the time in exile in the Pakistani city of Quetta, who reported to journalist Ahmed Rashid that Musharraf's remarks made him feel "sick in the stomach." Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 50.

³⁶ Riedel, *Avoiding Armageddon*, 136.

³⁷ Luke Harding, "Pakistan frees Sharif to exile in Saudi Arabia," *Guardian*, December 11, 2000.

Clinton's failure to get Musharraf to move decisively against bin Laden rested on the presumption that Pakistan exercised enough influence over the Taliban to bring about his arrest or at the very least his expulsion from Afghanistan. Yet, the Taliban, although clearly dependent on Pakistan's assistance and ever hungry to secure as much of it as possible, were anything but obedient clients of their patron. Ironically for Pakistan, the Taliban proved to be a more difficult client to manage than Pakistan itself had traditionally been for the US. Their consistent refusal to compromise over bin Laden was by no means the only instance of defiance not only of Pakistani directives but also those of their other patron, Saudi Arabia. Throughout their period in power, the Taliban declined to recognise the Durand Line as the international boundary between Pakistan and Afghanistan and refused to abjure Afghan claims to portions of north-western Pakistan. Moreover, instead of curbing Pashtun nationalism, as the Pakistani military and the ISI had hoped, the Taliban sharpened it by giving it an Islamic character that began to exert a powerful impact on Pakistan's own Pashtuns.³⁸

In his memoirs, Musharraf maintained that, while there had been "nothing wrong" with Pakistan's intentions in backing the Taliban against the "anti-Pakistan" Northern Alliance, Islamabad failed to realise that "once the Taliban had used us to get to power, we would lose influence over them."³⁹ He acknowledged that Pakistan's relations with the Taliban were "never smooth" and actually "quite uncomfortable."⁴⁰ Testifying to Pakistan's lack of control over the Taliban, he claimed that despite being their chief patron, Pakistan "could only watch in horror" as the Taliban "unleashed the worst abuses of human rights...under the cloak of their own peculiar interpretation of Islam..."⁴¹ Yet, in spite of the many iniquities committed by the Taliban in the name of Islam and their frequent and often contemptuous dismissal of Pakistani attempts to moderate their behaviour, Musharraf and the ISI continued to provide them crucial support, even at great cost to Pakistan's own standing in the region as well as more generally within the international community.

Although Musharraf himself was Westernised and secular in his upbringing and temperament and had no ideological affinity with the Taliban, he subscribed firmly to the notion that they remained Pakistan's best chance of attaining 'strategic depth' in Afghanistan and, as a consequence, were deserving of continued support no matter how unpalatable their domestic policies might be. This reasoning placed the military and the ISI

³⁸ Rashid, *Taliban*, 187. What was even worse, the Taliban provided refuge, weapons and training to some of Pakistan's most extreme Sunni sectarian outfits who targeted Shias, wanted the country declared a Sunni state and advocated the overthrow of the Pakistani governing elite through an Islamic revolution.

³⁹ Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, 209.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 211.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 212.

at odds with the largely sidelined Foreign Office, which issued prescient warnings that by “riding the [Taliban] tiger,” Pakistan was pursuing policies that “we know are never going to deliver and the eventual costs of which we also know will be overwhelming.”⁴² Such cautions were dismissed by the ISI and its allies amongst Pakistan’s Islamist parties, whose perception of the Taliban was “grounded in religious naïveté” that saw them as devout, well-intentioned, and dedicated Islamic warriors imbued with the desire to bring peace to Afghanistan.⁴³

Even those within the military establishment with more realistic views about Afghanistan were generally supportive of the Taliban and argued that once they had settled into complete control over Afghanistan, they would be “ripe to undergo an internal metamorphosis towards moderation.”⁴⁴ This reasoning was consistently employed with Western audiences in order to justify Pakistan’s continued patronage of the Taliban but was found increasingly specious as the Taliban’s policies made them the object of worldwide revulsion.⁴⁵ However, the military and the ISI remained impervious not only to the force of global public opinion but also to Afghan voices raised against the Taliban, both within Afghanistan as well as abroad by the large Afghan diaspora. Thus, much of the goodwill that Pakistan had earned from ordinary Afghans for its resistance to the Soviet occupation and its housing of millions of refugees was frittered away. That goodwill should have been Pakistan’s real measure of ‘strategic depth’ in Afghanistan. By throwing its weight behind the Taliban, however, it ended up becoming the victim “not only of its strategic vision, but of its own intelligence agencies.”⁴⁶

II. Partners in Arms

In view of the Pakistani military’s historically better relations with Republican administrations in Washington, particularly during earlier instances of military rule, Musharraf and his coterie of generals would in all likelihood have regarded George W. Bush’s controversial victory in the 2000 presidential election with a degree of optimism. However, such optimism would no doubt have also been tempered with a good deal of

⁴² Judah, “The Taliban Papers,” 76.

⁴³ Khan, *Afghanistan and Pakistan*, 84-85.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Documents uncovered in Kabul after the Taliban’s removal from power revealed an undated message from an unnamed American official to his similarly unidentified Pakistani recipient in which the following point was made: “You tell us that dialogue with the Taliban will moderate their behaviour and lead to progress on our numerous areas of concern. We have not disputed that. But you state that Pakistan has little influence over Taliban policies even though Pakistan has recognized the Taliban, assisted them in broad areas, and engaged in an extensive dialogue.” The document concludes as follows: “It is not credible that the Taliban’s principal foreign supporter and principal source of supply has little influence. If this is true then four years of unstinting political support and material assistance seem surely to have been for naught, and the policy is in serious need of re-examination.” Judah, “The Taliban Papers,” 78-79.

⁴⁶ Rashid, *Taliban*, 187.

caution. In stark contrast to his father George H.W. Bush, who was widely regarded as an expert on international issues, the younger Bush was an almost total neophyte when it came to foreign policy. During the election campaign, his frequent gaffes when confronted with questions involving international affairs had already made him the object of widespread and often amusing popular ridicule. Musharraf could not have failed to notice that when asked by an interviewer if he could name the man in charge of Pakistan, the best that Bush could come up with was “General.”⁴⁷ Even more worrying than his ignorance about Pakistan, however, was the fact that his campaign had raised massive donations from well-heeled Indian-American businessmen, who were now likely to nudge him firmly in India’s direction, even to the extent of forming a strategic partnership with New Delhi against a fast rising China.⁴⁸

The Bush administration’s opening parleys with its Pakistani counterpart focused primarily on the issue of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda. Soon after Bush took office, Musharraf wrote him a confidential letter of congratulations that also attempted to make the case for improved ties between their two countries. In his response, Bush expressed a similar desire for better relations but linked them with greater Pakistani cooperation in Afghanistan against bin Laden, whom he referred to as a “direct threat to the United States” and urged Musharraf to “use your influence with the Taliban” to bring the al-Qaeda leader “to justice” as well as close down his network.⁴⁹ At the same time, however, senior officials in the Bush administration such as Secretary of State Colin Powell realised that with a virtual plethora of sanctions still in place and no realistic chance of obtaining Congressional relief, inducing Pakistan to change its Afghan policy would be a very difficult task.⁵⁰

It is at least arguable if, by this stage, Pakistan even had sufficient influence over the Taliban to make them bend on the bin Laden issue. By refusing to surrender bin Laden after the Africa bombings in 1998, Mullah Omar had defied both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, his two leading patrons. Since then, the Taliban had become an international pariah and had been subjected to crippling sanctions. Instead of pushing them towards more moderate behaviour, however, such ostracism produced the opposite effect of making them even more bigoted and reactionary and enveloped them more closely in al-Qaeda’s embrace.

⁴⁷ “Bush no whizz on foreign quiz,” *BBC News*, November 6, 1999, accessed July 19, 2015, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/506298.stm>

⁴⁸ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 546.

⁴⁹ Secretary of State Colin L. Powell, Written Remarks Submitted to The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, March 23, 2004, accessed July 18, 2015, http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/hearings/hearing8/powell_statement.pdf

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Mullah Omar's relations with bin Laden had not always been cordial⁵¹ and at least until 1998, he had seen the fugitive terrorist as a useful bargaining chip that could be employed to secure American recognition for his regime.⁵² However, the imposition of sanctions and the increasingly vociferous and sustained international criticism of the Taliban's domestic policies made Omar and other senior Taliban leaders more receptive to the puritanically dogmatic Salafi-Wahhabi ideology of bin Laden and his Afghan Arabs.⁵³

Bin Laden, in turn, openly encouraged the Taliban to be more extreme in their policies, since the more isolated they were, the greater would be their dependence on him. Al-Qaeda's growing influence over the Taliban was clearly visible in Mullah Omar's decision in March 2001 to ignore impassioned pleas from countries across the world not to destroy two giant images of Buddha carved out of a cliff face in the city of Bamiyan, in central Afghanistan. Under pressure from the international community to intervene in the matter, Musharraf sent his interior minister to meet Mullah Omar and try to reason with him through recourse to verses from the Quran and instances from Islamic history that emphasised tolerance for other faiths.⁵⁴ The Taliban leader ignored the entreaties of his Pakistani patron and went ahead with the demolition.⁵⁵

After investing so heavily in the Taliban and having closed its doors to all other options in Afghanistan, Pakistan continued to fight a losing battle on their behalf internationally in trying to convince the world that their barbarous domestic policies were a transient aberration and that greater engagement with them on the part of the international community would inevitably moderate their conduct. Pakistani foreign minister Abdul Sattar peddled this argument in a meeting in Washington with Bush's national security advisor, Condoleezza Rice, in June 2001, just as twenty thousand Taliban troops including thousands of Pakistani militants were mounting yet another offensive against the Northern Alliance.⁵⁶ Rice delivered a blunt rejoinder to Sattar that the US could not ignore the reality

⁵¹ According to a former head of the ISI, Omar told him during a meeting following the Africa bombings in 1998 that bin Laden was like "a bone stuck in my throat. I can't swallow it, nor can I get it out." Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 536.

⁵² Rashid, *Taliban*, 139-140.

⁵³ Khan, *Afghanistan and Pakistan*, 80.

⁵⁴ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 548-549.

⁵⁵ Just a couple of months earlier, Omar had already given Islamabad written notice of his growing defiance through a letter to Musharraf in which he called upon him to "enforce Islamic law...step by step" in Pakistan and concluded with an open threat: "This is our advice and message based on Islamic ideology. Otherwise you had better know how to deal with it." Judah, "The Taliban Papers," 73.

⁵⁶ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 57.

that Pakistan was “in bed with our enemies” and that it “must drop the Taliban.”⁵⁷ Her “very tough message” was met with “a rote, expressionless response.”⁵⁸

On the whole, however, the Bush administration’s overall approach towards Pakistan, Afghanistan and al-Qaeda prior to the 9/11 attacks was hardly an improvement over its predecessor’s and was characterised by a similar lack of urgency and the absence of a clear direction.⁵⁹ For almost six months after Bush took office, the South Asia bureau of the State Department did not have a permanent head. Proposals coming from various directions about a transformed South Asia policy, including from the CIA’s Counterterrorism Centre about the possibility of assisting the Northern Alliance against the Taliban, piled up but were not acted upon.⁶⁰ Also disregarded was a recommendation by the National Counterterrorism Coordinator, Richard Clarke, to split off all other issues in the bilateral relationship with Pakistan and focus exclusively on demanding that Pakistan “move vigorously against terrorism” or, in other words, “to push the Pakistanis to do *before* an al Qaeda attack what Washington would demand that they do after.”⁶¹

By the summer of 2001, as increasing evidence came to light of Pakistan’s continued violation of UN resolutions prohibiting arms supplies and other material assistance to the Taliban⁶² and US intelligence issued numerous warnings of a potentially imminent al-Qaeda attack,⁶³ Bush wrote again to Musharraf to solicit Pakistan’s assistance against bin Laden. Since the missive contained no incentives that could “open up diplomatic possibilities,” it merely became yet another futile attempt aimed by the US at “registering its concerns,” to which Pakistan once again paid no heed.⁶⁴ Contemptuous of UN sanctions against the Taliban, whom he proclaimed “the dominant reality in Afghanistan,” Musharraf declared that the arms embargo on the Taliban was “unjustified, discriminatory and will further escalate the war.”⁶⁵ Faced with continued Pakistani intransigence on the issue, the ponderously moving Bush administration finally decided to adopt a new policy direction in Afghanistan based on providing \$125-200 million a year to arm the Northern Alliance

⁵⁷ Khan, *Afghanistan and Pakistan*, 87.

⁵⁸ National Security Advisor Dr Condoleezza Rice, Opening Remarks to The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, April 8, 2004, accessed July 19, 2015, <http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/hearings/hearing9/ricestatement.pdf>

⁵⁹ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 542-546.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 207.

⁶² During the 2001 summer offensive, up to thirty ISI trucks a day were still crossing into Afghanistan. Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 60.

⁶³ Between May-July 2001, the US National Security Agency reported at least thirty three different intercepts indicating a likely al-Qaeda strike. Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 560.

⁶⁴ *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 207.

⁶⁵ “World should engage, rather than isolate, Taliban: Musharraf,” *News (Islamabad)*, August 22, 2001.

against the Taliban.⁶⁶ However, the “all-important issue” of how to handle Pakistan once aid starting flowing to the Taliban’s opponents was left unresolved.⁶⁷

On September 9, 2001, just five days after the US had taken a policy decision to start arming the Northern Alliance in a bid to eventually topple the Taliban, Ahmed Shah Massoud was assassinated in a suicide attack conducted by two Tunisian al-Qaeda operatives posing as journalists who had waited for several days before finally being granted an interview with their quarry.⁶⁸ Two days later came the devastating terrorist strikes in New York and Washington, the catalyst for what Bush would soon declare a global “war on terrorism.” The Taliban might have controlled most of Afghanistan but Massoud’s opposition to their rule had not flagged in the face of adversity and he continued to symbolise the last bastion of resistance to a complete Taliban takeover. His removal was clearly a central component of the 9/11 plot; bereft of Massoud’s inspirational leadership, the Northern Alliance would be highly unlikely to withstand another Taliban offensive, thereby making it very difficult for the US to find allies in Afghanistan against al-Qaeda and the Taliban in the aftermath of 9/11.

In his memoirs, Musharraf has dedicated a whole chapter to the immediate aftermath of 9/11 entitled “One Day that Changed the World.”⁶⁹ While there is much debate over the degree to which the dramatic events of September 11, 2001, could truly be regarded as transformational on a global scale,⁷⁰ what is beyond dispute is that those events triggered a fundamental turnaround in US-Pakistan relations and provided Musharraf a much needed “external circuit-breaker” in terms of arresting Pakistan’s protracted economic decline as well as his own diplomatic isolation.⁷¹ With American strategic interests once again necessitating Pakistan’s services, over a decade of estrangement ended virtually overnight to be replaced by mutual expressions of solidarity and cooperation in the pursuit of a shared objective of fighting terrorism. As they did in the 1980s, “Afghanistan’s tragedies” again became “a boon for Pakistani dictatorships.”⁷² Like Zia before him, who used the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan to transform himself from an international pariah to a frontline

⁶⁶ Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 36.

⁶⁷ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 60.

⁶⁸ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 574-576.

⁶⁹ Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, 199-207.

⁷⁰ See, for instance, Jon Henley, “Was 9/11 really the day that changed the world for ever?” *Guardian*, September 10, 2011. Also see Marvin L. Astrada, *American Power after 9/11* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 31.

⁷¹ Amin Saikal, *Zone of Crisis: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and Iraq* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 81.

⁷² Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 538.

ally against Communism, Musharraf seized the opportunity thrown up by 9/11 to again make America “fall in love with a man in uniform” in Pakistan.⁷³

The Bush administration did not take long to assign guilt for what was the largest ever foreign attack on American soil, claiming almost 3,000 lives and, according to one estimate, inflicting long-term financial losses to the tune of \$3.3 trillion.⁷⁴ Just a day after the attacks, CIA director George Tenet informed Bush that the evidence against bin Laden and al-Qaeda was “conclusive” and obtained presidential sanction for a massive covert action plan in Afghanistan worth \$1 billion.⁷⁵ In an address to the nation delivered in Congress a few days later, Bush confirmed that bin Laden was responsible for 9/11 and issued a series of non-negotiable demands to the Taliban, chief amongst them being the surrendering of the al-Qaeda leadership to the US and the closing down of all terrorist training facilities. A failure to comply, Bush warned, would cause the Taliban to share the fate of the terrorists. Moreover, in what was now proclaimed an open-ended “war on terrorism,” Bush presented the world with a stark choice: “Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.”⁷⁶ His message was not lost on Musharraf, who by that time had already made up his mind to ditch the Taliban and thrown in his lot with the US.

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, Secretary of State Colin Powell informed Bush that whatever retaliatory action he took in Afghanistan would rest on Pakistani support. Upon being told by Bush to “do what you have to do” in that regard, Powell and his deputy Richard Armitage drew up a list containing the following seven demands that Pakistan would have to meet:⁷⁷

- To stop al-Qaeda operatives at its border and end all logistical support for bin Laden;
- To give the US blanket overflight and landing rights for all necessary military and intelligence operations;
- To provide territorial access to US and allied military intelligence and other personnel to conduct operations against al-Qaeda;
- To provide the US with intelligence information;

⁷³ Riedel, *Deadly Embrace*, 62.

⁷⁴ Shan Carter and Amanda Cox, “One 9/11 Tally: \$3.3 Trillion,” *New York Times*, September 8, 2011.

⁷⁵ Woodward, *Bush at War*, 40-41.

⁷⁶ “George W. Bush, Address to the Nation, September 20, 2001,” accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/speeches/09.20.01.html>

⁷⁷ *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 331.

- To continue to publicly condemn the terrorist acts;
- To cut off all shipments of fuel to the Taliban and stop recruits from going to Afghanistan; and
- If the evidence implicated bin Laden and al-Qaeda and the Taliban continued to harbour them, to break relations with the Taliban government.

By chance, ISI chief General Mahmud Ahmed was in Washington on an official visit when the 9/11 attacks occurred. In a meeting with CIA director George Tenet just two days earlier, he had enthusiastically defended Mullah Omar as a man who desired only the best for the Afghan people. Moreover, he had recommended that the US try to bribe key Taliban officials into handing over bin Laden but, at the same time, made it clear that neither he nor the ISI would provide any assistance in that regard. Tenet found his Pakistani counterpart “immovable” when it came to the Taliban and al-Qaeda.⁷⁸ The day after the attacks, General Ahmed was summoned to the State Department by Richard Armitage and given a stark ultimatum that Pakistan had to decide whether it was with the US or against it; this was a “black-and-white choice, with no grey.”⁷⁹ The threat was sufficiently menacing for Mahmud to immediately assure Armitage on Musharraf’s behalf of Pakistan’s “unqualified support.”⁸⁰

The US kept up the pressure on Pakistan through another blunt message, this time delivered directly to Musharraf by the American ambassador in Islamabad, Wendy Chamberlin, that the US-Pakistan relationship was “at a turning point” after 9/11 and that Pakistan would have to discard “diplo-speak” and decide once and for all if it was “either with us or not with us.”⁸¹ The ambassador ruled out dialogue with the Taliban and informed the “visibly

⁷⁸ George Tenet, *At the Centre of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 141-142.

⁷⁹ “Deputy Secretary Armitage’s Meeting with Pakistan Intel Chief Mahmud: You’re Either With Us or You’re Not,” US Department of State Cable, September 13, 2001, DNSA, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB358a/doc03-1.pdf>

⁸⁰ In his memoirs, Musharraf famously claimed that Armitage had threatened Mahmud that Pakistan would be bombed back to the Stone Age. Armitage categorically denied that he had ever used such words and Mahmud also confirmed to the writer Shuja Nawaz that he did not convey a message along those lines to Musharraf. What appears closer to the truth is that Musharraf intentionally played up the American threat to overcome the opposition of some of his senior generals to a complete change of course in Afghanistan. On a visit to the US in 2006 to promote his book, Musharraf met Armitage who told him that he had not used the words that had been attributed to him in his meeting with Mahmud. However, despite Armitage’s clarification, Musharraf did not retract his version of Armitage’s threat during his book tour, no doubt because such a retraction might have adversely affected sales of the book. See Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 540.

⁸¹ “Musharraf: We Are With You in Your Action Plan in Afghanistan,” US Embassy (Islamabad) Cable, September 13, 2001, DNSA, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB358a/doc02.pdf>

taken aback” Pakistani president⁸² that “action is now the only language that matters.” Musharraf saw the writing on the wall and quickly assured Chamberlin that “we are with you in your action plan in Afghanistan.” The American action plan was revealed to Pakistan later that day during a follow-up meeting between Armitage and Mahmud. The ISI head was formally handed over the list of afore mentioned non-negotiable demands, which he then conveyed to Musharraf.⁸³

Just hours later, Powell called Musharraf to inform him - “as one general to another” - that “the American people would not understand if Pakistan was not in this fight with the United States.”⁸⁴ In view of the Pakistani military’s long-standing links with the Taliban, Powell had expected some resistance from his fellow general to the demand that those links now be severed. To his surprise, however, Musharraf immediately accepted all seven demands that had been presented to him.⁸⁵ Following a subsequent meeting with his top military commanders, he gave the US ambassador further confirmation that both he and they unconditionally accepted America’s diktat. At the same time, he did not omit to point out that his decision to align himself with the US would carry a substantial price domestically and that in order to “counterbalance” it, he “needed to show that Pakistan was benefitting from its decisions.”⁸⁶

In other words, Pakistan needed assurance that its services in America’s “war on terror” would carry commensurate material rewards. The ambassador accordingly advised the State Department that Pakistan “will need full US support as it proceeds with us.”⁸⁷ Even as it was issuing thinly veiled warnings of dire consequences if Pakistan did not side with the US against the Taliban and al-Qaeda, the Bush administration had held out the assurance that “the right choice by Pakistan in this matter” could lead to “bright prospects for a positive relationship with the US.”⁸⁸ Once Musharraf decided to make “the right choice,” the stage was set for America and Pakistan to become patron and client once more.⁸⁹ This was to be

⁸² In June 2001, Musharraf appointed himself president whilst concurrently retaining the office of army chief.

⁸³ “Deputy Secretary Armitage’s Meeting with General Mahmud: Actions and Support Expected of Pakistan in Fight Against Terrorism,” US Department of State Cable, September 14, 2001, DNSA, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB358a/doc05.pdf>

⁸⁴ “Secretary’s 13 September 2001 Conversation with Pakistani President Musharraf,” US Department of State Cable, September 19, 2001, DNSA, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB358a/doc10.pdf>

⁸⁵ Woodward, *Bush at War*, 59.

⁸⁶ *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 331.

⁸⁷ “Musharraf Accepts The Seven Points,” US Embassy (Islamabad) Cable, September 14, 2001, DNSA, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB358a/doc08.pdf>

⁸⁸ “Deputy Secretary Armitage’s Meeting with Pakistan Intel Chief Mahmud: You’re Either With Us or You’re Not.”

⁸⁹ In his self-exculpatory account of the thought processes that went into the decision to change course in Afghanistan, Musharraf maintained that before opting to ditch the Taliban, he actually “war-gamed” the

an association spawned - as it was in the 1980s - by the march of events in Afghanistan, on whose war-ridden landscape the two countries would forge a symbiotic yet tempestuous relationship in which a shared strategic need would often exist uncomfortably with divergent strategic interests and endemic mutual mistrust.

The swiftness with which Musharraf submitted to American pressure indicated his mortal fear, and indeed that of the military as a whole, that India would take advantage of the situation to have Pakistan declared a state sponsor of terrorism. Suspicions to that effect had been aroused in Islamabad after the Indians pre-empted their rivals by offering Washington bases and logistical support. For Musharraf, any reluctance on Pakistan's part to join the "war on terrorism" on America's side would inevitably lead to India being asked to perform the same role. The resultant Indo-US nexus would allow New Delhi a "golden opportunity" to transform the existing situation in Kashmir, either by launching a war or by swinging international opinion in its favour.⁹⁰ An even worse prospect for Pakistan in case it did not abandon its support to the Taliban was that the US would seek to destroy its nuclear weapons, a task in which, in Musharraf's estimation, India "would have loved to assist the United States to the hilt."

Anxious to prevent the US from turning towards India but also reluctant to abandon Pakistan's 'strategic depth' against its arch-rival in Afghanistan, Musharraf found himself on the horns of a dilemma, one that he attempted to resolve through a two-pronged approach. His willingness to make Pakistan "a frontline state again" in the service of US foreign policy objectives did not preclude him from launching a frantic, last-ditch effort to keep the Taliban in power.⁹¹ On his own initiative, he despatched ISI chief General Mahmud to Kandahar to warn Mullah Omar that he faced a stark choice between "one man and his safe haven versus the well-being of 25 million citizens of Afghanistan."⁹² Mahmud subsequently informed Richard Armitage that he laid down a set of conditions before Omar, including the expulsion or extradition of bin Laden and thirteen of his top associates; the closing down of all terrorist training camps; and the opening up of suspected terrorist

US as an adversary and came to the inevitable conclusion that in such a scenario, Pakistan would face certain annihilation. The question then confronting him was whether the Taliban were "worth committing suicide over," to which his answer was "a resounding no." Having suddenly realised that the "misplaced, messianic zeal" of the Taliban was contrary to the "moderate, tolerant, progressive spirit of Islam" espoused by most Pakistanis, Musharraf pointed to several benefits that would accrue to Pakistan if it ditched the Taliban, especially the lifting of sanctions and the injection of foreign aid into a badly depleted economy. For Musharraf, therefore, "self-interest and self-preservation" were the twin bases for his decision to stand alongside the US against the Taliban. Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, 201-204.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 202.

⁹¹ "Musharraf: We Are With You in Your Action Plan in Afghanistan."

⁹² "Deputy Secretary Armitage-Mamoud [sic] Phone Call," US Department of State Cable, September 18, 2001, DNSA, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB358a/doc09.pdf>

training sites to international inspection. Mahmud claimed that the Taliban reaction was “not negative on all these points” and that their top leaders were engaged in “deep introspection.”⁹³ Before leaving for a second meeting with the Taliban, he implored the US “not to act in anger” and advised that “real victory will come in negotiations.”⁹⁴ The Taliban’s elimination, Mahmud argued, would only cause Afghanistan to revert to warlordism. At the same time, however, he promised his American interlocutors that no matter what the outcome of his parleys with the Taliban, Pakistan “stands behind you” and “will not flinch from a military effort.”

Mahmud’s second meeting with Mullah Omar, in which he took with him a delegation of Pakistani clerics, was also inconclusive and before the end of September, Pakistan had withdrawn all diplomatic staff from Afghanistan.⁹⁵ There was much speculation, however, about whether Mahmud, whose strong pro-Taliban sentiments were an open secret, had indeed warned Omar to accept the inevitable or whether he had instead encouraged him to remain defiant or, at the very least, been disinclined to apply much pressure. Mahmud’s own testimony appears to suggest that his “heart was not in the mission.”⁹⁶ In an interview given to the writer Shuja Nawaz, he maintained that he “didn’t try to persuade” Omar to act contrary to his convictions since, as a Muslim himself, he did not see the need to “go against another Muslim.”⁹⁷ Moreover, the clerics sent ostensibly to put pressure on the Taliban included several at whose madrassas many of the senior Taliban leaders had been educated. According to details of the meeting leaked to the CIA, instead of making the Taliban see reason, the clerics ended up expressing solidarity with them.⁹⁸

In the lead up to Operation Enduring Freedom, the name given by the Bush administration to its impending military offensive against the Taliban and al-Qaeda, the ISI under General Mahmud attempted to salvage some measure of its fast departing ‘strategic depth’ in Afghanistan through pursuit of a double game in which cooperation with the US in some areas was balanced with continuing assistance to the Taliban. ISI fuel tankers and supply trucks continued to make their way into Afghanistan in violation of UN resolutions as well as Musharraf’s own commitment to the Americans.⁹⁹ Thousands of Pakistani volunteers, many of them seminary students, were allowed to cross over into Afghanistan to join the Taliban in yet another jihad. Furthermore, dozens of ISI officers and hundreds of Pakistani

⁹³ “Deputy Secretary Armitage-Mamoud [sic] Phone Call.”

⁹⁴ US Embassy (Islamabad) Cable, “Mahmud Plans 2nd Mission to Afghanistan,” September 24, 2001, DNSA, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB358a/doc11.pdf>

⁹⁵ John Daniszewski, “Pakistan Is Out of Afghanistan,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 25, 2001.

⁹⁶ Riedel, *Deadly Embrace*, 66.

⁹⁷ Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 543.

⁹⁸ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 77.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

paramilitary troops stayed inside Afghanistan to help the Taliban fortify their defences before the start of the American bombing campaign. A small team of serving and retired ISI officers was sent in to lend their advisory expertise to the Taliban just days before the start of the war and in violation of Musharraf's own orders.¹⁰⁰

In a bid to consolidate his own hold over the army as well as in response to increasing American pressure to rein in the ISI, Musharraf removed Mahmud and two other senior generals known for their Islamist sympathies and their opposition to the post-9/11 alignment with the US. Ironically, all three men had been instrumental in effecting the coup that had brought Musharraf to power.¹⁰¹ Their sacking was confirmed just hours after Operation Enduring Freedom went into effect on October 7, 2001, and earned Musharraf the immediate approval of the US, which saw the removal of Mahmud, in particular, as "a final measure" of Musharraf's "determination to aid America in rooting out al Qaeda."¹⁰²

Mahmud's replacement, Lieutenant General Ehsan-ul-Haq, had previously served as the head of Military Intelligence and was regarded as a close confidant of Musharraf, who now tasked him to terminate, or at least drastically reduce, ISI support to the Taliban. Ehsan responded by disbanding two major units of the ISI with long-standing links to Islamist militants in Afghanistan and Kashmir.¹⁰³ For an organization that had been heavily involved with such elements for decades, the limited purge ordered by Musharraf was not sufficient to bring about a complete change of mindset and some ISI officers with strong religious convictions and powerful anti-American sentiments continued to view themselves as "more Taliban than the Taliban."¹⁰⁴ At the same time, however, Musharraf's removal of Mahmud and his subsequent efforts to sideline Taliban sympathisers within the ISI's rank-and-file were critical steps in terms of convincing the Americans of his bona fides in the war on terrorism.

Having strengthened his position within the military by removing those likely to obstruct his new pro-US agenda and heartened by the absence of large-scale and sustained protests against his U-turn at home, Musharraf proceeded to lend valuable and substantial support towards the success of Operation Enduring Freedom. Pakistan made two-thirds of its airspace available for the US and its coalition partners and provided five airbases/airfields whilst agreeing, at the same time, to let coalition planes land anywhere in an emergency. In

¹⁰⁰ Ahmed Rashid, "Intelligence team defied Musharraf to help Taliban," *Telegraph*, October 10, 2001.

¹⁰¹ For detailed accounts of the central roles played by Mahmud and the other two generals - Muhammad Aziz Khan and Muzaffar Usmani - in the October 1999 coup, see Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, 120-134; and Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, 526-527.

¹⁰² Tenet, *At the Centre of the Storm*, 181.

¹⁰³ Hussain, *Frontline Pakistan*, 46.

¹⁰⁴ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 79.

the year following the commencement of the war, a total of 57,800 sorties were launched from or through Pakistan, which provided fuel amounting to 400,000 litres a day for coalition aircraft and other US forces operating from Pakistani bases. The US was also permitted to install extensive radar facilities at three Pakistani airfields, allowing for coverage of the entire Pakistani airspace.¹⁰⁵

Although it declined to provide ground troops to support the American-led invasion, Pakistan initially deputed 115,000 regular and paramilitary troops along its borders with Afghanistan and Iran to capture fleeing members of the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Moreover, it allowed the US to station some 1,100 US forces on its soil for the duration of the war, including US Special Ops and CIA paramilitary teams.¹⁰⁶ The Pakistani air force and navy did not lag behind the army in providing support to their US counterparts; while the former provided its airfields and bases and deployed radars, the latter facilitated the “largest amphibious operations in size, duration and depth” conducted by the US Marine Corps since the Korean War.¹⁰⁷

In total, the US made 2,160 requests to Pakistan in connection with Afghanistan-related operations between September 2001 and October 2002 of which action was completed on 2,008 and was in progress on the remainder. The cost to Pakistan’s economy for multifarious services in the “war against terrorism” was estimated at \$10 billion.¹⁰⁸ Musharraf did not immediately put a price tag on those services and, indeed, for several months after the commencement of the US invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan provided its substantial support “*without any established repayment mechanism* [author’s italics].”¹⁰⁹ Such apparent self-abnegation stemmed from recognition by Pakistani decision-makers that any tough bargaining by them “at a time of extraordinary gravity” would “detract from the quality of a gesture that was considered both inevitable and in Pakistan’s national interest.”¹¹⁰

Pakistan’s reluctance to seek material rewards for its role in facilitating the US invasion of Afghanistan did not dissuade the Bush administration from unilaterally extending concrete expressions of its appreciation. Nuclear-related sanctions on Pakistan were lifted within days of 9/11 on the grounds that their continuation “would not be in the national security

¹⁰⁵ US Central Command, “International Contributions to the War on Terrorism: Pakistan,” accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/pakistan-uscentcom.htm>

¹⁰⁶ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 89.

¹⁰⁷ US Central Command, “International Contributions to the War on Terrorism.”

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ C. Christine Fair, *The Counterterror Coalitions: Cooperation with Pakistan and India* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2004), 30.

¹¹⁰ Khan, *Afghanistan and Pakistan*, 89.

interests of the United States.”¹¹¹ This was followed by the passage of a new law that allowed the president to waive the remaining sanctions on Pakistan provided he could certify that “making foreign assistance available facilitates democratization in that country and helps the United States in its battle against international terrorism.”¹¹²

The path was now cleared for Bush to provide a \$1 billion package of direct budgetary and balance of payments support, including a \$673 million grant.¹¹³ The US also agreed to reschedule \$379 million out of a total bilateral debt of \$2.7 billion, thereby preventing Pakistan from falling in arrears in terms of debt servicing, a key requirement for further assistance.¹¹⁴ In addition, Washington helped Islamabad secure similar debt rescheduling agreements with other major lenders such as Japan and the European Union and supported the approval of fresh loans from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.¹¹⁵ The lifting of sanctions and resumption of American economic aid provided much needed breathing room to Pakistan’s listless economy, which at the time was averaging only 2.5 per cent annual growth and, moreover, was left with a mere \$1.5 billion in foreign exchange reserves.¹¹⁶ Apart from the fiscal benefits accruing from American economic assistance, Musharraf saw the extension of such patronage as evidence that his regime was no longer regarded as an international pariah. High-level officials from the US and other major international players dutifully made their way to Islamabad in the months preceding 9/11 to commend Musharraf for his decision to stand in the frontline of the “war against terrorism.”

Whilst such developments were no doubt welcome ones for Musharraf, what he was really looking for from the US was a “strategic tradeoff” whereby in exchange for aligning itself with Washington’s global anti-terror coalition, Islamabad would secure American backing for the protection of its core strategic interests.¹¹⁷ For Musharraf, those interests included the installation of a new government in Kabul that was friendly to Pakistan and accurately reflected Afghanistan’s ethnic composition; in other words, the majority Pashtuns should have representation in proportion to their numbers. Another major strategic concern for Pakistan was to prevent its support to militancy in Kashmir from being tarred with the increasingly broad sweep of America’s anti-terror brush. Put more simply, Musharraf

¹¹¹ Luke Harding and Rory McCarthy, “Sanctions lifted as US rewards Pakistan,” *Guardian*, September 24, 2001.

¹¹² Thomas Lum, “U.S. Foreign Aid to East and South Asia: Selected Recipients,” *Congressional Research Service*, April 10, 2002, accessed July 17, 2015, <http://www.iwar.org.uk/news-archive/crs/9661.pdf>

¹¹³ “Assistance, loans and rescheduling pacts after 9/11,” *Dawn*, September 11, 2002.

¹¹⁴ Lum, “U.S. Foreign Aid to East and South Asia.”

¹¹⁵ Bisma Momani, “The IMF, the US War on Terrorism, and Pakistan,” *Asian Affairs* 31, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 41-50.

¹¹⁶ Shahid Javed Burki, “Lower Growth, Rising Poverty,” *Dawn*, July 24, 2001.

¹¹⁷ Robert G. Wirsing, “Precarious Partnership: Pakistan’s Response to U.S. Security Policies,” *Asian Affairs* 30, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 72.

wanted the US to exclude the Kashmiri “freedom struggle” from its “crackdown on regional terrorism,” thereby allowing Pakistan to continue pursuing jihad in Kashmir even as it undertook to discontinue jihad in Afghanistan.¹¹⁸ A final strategic interest for Pakistan was to block any international effort directed against its nuclear programme or its growing arsenal of ballistic missiles.¹¹⁹

As American bombs with devastating payloads began to rain down on the poorly fortified positions of the Taliban, Musharraf desperately tried to secure Washington’s support for Pakistan’s attempts to shape a post-Taliban Afghanistan. At the very least, in exchange for the support he was providing, he demanded to be involved in any future US policymaking concerning Afghanistan and wrote to Bush to warn him that Pakistan would not accept a Northern Alliance government in Kabul and that Pashtuns needed to be fully represented.¹²⁰ In line with that argument, he began to push the notion of splitting off “moderate” Taliban from the hardliners and making them an integral part of any future power-sharing arrangement. For a time, the Bush administration appeared to buy Musharraf’s argument that there were “many moderate elements within the Taliban community.”¹²¹ At a press conference in Islamabad shortly after the start of the war, Colin Powell opined that to the extent the Taliban were “willing to participate in the development of a new Afghanistan with everybody being represented,” then the US would “have to listen to them or at least take them into account.”¹²²

With the world’s most powerful country attacking one of its weakest, the short-term outcome of Operation Enduring Freedom was never really in doubt, even though an initial delay in dislodging the Taliban had led to speculation that the US might have another Vietnam-like “quagmire” on its hands.¹²³ Facing relentless American aerial bombardment, deprived of Pakistan’s logistical support and harried by an increasingly assertive Northern Alliance suddenly awash in CIA dollars, the Taliban resistance collapsed in several key cities in northern and central Afghanistan and retreated to its native Pashtun strongholds in the south. For the US, the speedy collapse of the Taliban obviated the need to determine whether or not moderate elements existed within them who would be amenable to parting ways with Mullah Omar and other hardliners. Instead, the focus was now on ensuring a

¹¹⁸ Wirsing, “Precarious Partnership,” 72.

¹¹⁹ The termination of US military assistance to Pakistan during the 1990s due to nuclear-related sanctions denied Pakistan F-16 fighter jets capable of delivering a nuclear payload. The deficiency drove Islamabad towards pursuing a flourishing ballistic missile development programme that benefitted from close collaboration with China and North Korea. For more, see Khan, *Eating Grass*, 235-248.

¹²⁰ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 79.

¹²¹ “Secretary Colin L. Powell, Remarks with President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan, October 16, 2001,” accessed July 19, 2015, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2001/5392.htm>

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Woodward, *Bush at War*, 263.

complete Taliban defeat through efforts by the CIA to activate anti-Taliban Pashtun warlords in the south.¹²⁴

In his first meeting with Bush at a time when the Taliban were on the run, Musharraf labelled the Northern Alliance “a bunch of tribal thugs” who wanted to capture all of Afghanistan. He also voiced a “deep fear” that America would once again abandon Pakistan once its interests in the “war on terrorism” had been secured.¹²⁵ In response, Bush claimed that he fully understood Pakistan’s concerns about the Northern Alliance and, on the question of abandoning Pakistan, asked Musharraf to inform his countrymen that “the president of the United States looked you in the eye and told you we wouldn’t do that.”¹²⁶ Finally, regarding Musharraf’s demand that the rapidly advancing Northern Alliance forces not be allowed to enter Kabul, Bush undertook to “encourage our friends to head south...but not into the city of Kabul.”¹²⁷ Just two days later, however, Northern Alliance troops under the command of General Mohammad Fahim, a key lieutenant of Ahmed Shah Massoud, entered Kabul after massive American aerial bombardment on the Taliban’s defensive positions outside the city had prompted them to abandon it without putting up a fight.

The impassioned cries of “death to Pakistan”¹²⁸ issuing from jubilant crowds in Kabul celebrating the fall of the Taliban were grim reminders to Musharraf and the ISI that with the Northern Alliance now in control of the capital, their “worst nightmare”¹²⁹ had come true. What made the fall of Kabul even harder to swallow for Pakistan was that the US allowed it to happen despite Musharraf having received assurances from Bush to the contrary. In fact, following the triumphant entry of the Northern Alliance into the city, unnamed Pakistani military sources issued bitter complaints through the local media that US special forces had been directing the offensive on Kabul and that American military power had “handed Afghanistan to Pakistan’s worst enemies in that country.”¹³⁰

Bush’s volte face on the issue of handing over Kabul to the Northern Alliance was a clear indicator to Musharraf and the ISI that the post-9/11 situation would not be a repeat of the 1980s. On this occasion, Washington would not defer to Islamabad on all matters affecting Afghanistan and nor would it necessarily operate through the ISI to attain its objectives in

¹²⁴ Robert L. Grenier, *88 Days to Kandahar: A CIA Diary* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015).

¹²⁵ Woodward, *Bush at War*, 303.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ “Presidents Bush and Musharraf Hold News Conference,” *CNN*, November 10, 2001, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0111/10/se.06.html>

¹²⁸ “Kabul falls to Northern Alliance,” *BBC*, November 13, 2001, accessed July 20, 2015, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1653137.stm

¹²⁹ Kamran Khan, “Kabul fall is Pakistan’s ‘strategic debacle,’” *News* (Islamabad), November 14, 2001.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

that country. At the same time, however, Washington was not prepared to disregard Pakistan's interests in Afghanistan to an extent where it might imperil Musharraf's domestic survival and, by extension, jeopardise the continuation of Islamabad's services in the "war on terrorism." Thus, even as it permitted the Northern Alliance to take Kabul, the Bush administration allowed Pakistani planes to airlift to safety hundreds of ISI personnel, paramilitary forces and Pakistani volunteers holed up with Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters in the northern town of Kunduz, which had been besieged by the Northern Alliance and was under massive American bombardment.

In response to a personal request by Musharraf, who warned that the potential killing of hundreds and possibly thousands of captured Pakistani military operatives would bring about his own downfall, Bush agreed to secretly allow an air corridor through which Pakistani air force planes operated multiple flights over several days.¹³¹ An unspecified number of people, allegedly including high-ranking Taliban and al-Qaeda members, were evacuated to Pakistan. The Kunduz airlift gave Musharraf and the ISI the impression that the US, although clearly not as indulgent of Pakistan as it was during the anti-Soviet jihad, nevertheless placed enough of a premium on its post-9/11 strategic importance to discreetly look the other way as it pursued a double game in Afghanistan and concurrently continued its jihad in Kashmir.

With the Taliban in disarray, the US gave the United Nations the go-ahead to convene an international conference in Bonn to choose a provisional government for Afghanistan. All major Afghan factions except the Taliban were invited to participate in the Bonn deliberations.¹³² After several days of hard bargaining, an agreement was hammered out by which Hamid Karzai, an anti-Taliban Pashtun tribal notable from Kandahar, was chosen as chairman of an interim administration.¹³³ Shortly thereafter, the Taliban surrendered Kandahar to local tribal leaders including Karzai, heralding the end of a remarkably expeditious campaign in which the US had managed in less than three months to remove the Taliban from power. At the same time, however, Washington's failure to capture or kill the top Taliban and al-Qaeda leadership left a major question mark on the actual extent and

¹³¹ For a detailed investigative account of the highly secret Kunduz operation, see Seymour M. Hersh, "The Getaway," *New Yorker*, January 28, 2002, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/01/28/the-getaway-2>

Also see Dexter Filkins and Carlotta Gall, "Pakistanis Again Said to Evacuate Allies of Taliban," *New York Times*, November 24, 2001; and Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 90-93.

¹³² The factions included supporters of the exiled King Zahir Shah (the Rome Group); moderate Peshawar-based mujahidin parties (the Peshawar Group); prominent Afghan émigrés, including those based in Iran (the Cyprus Group); and leading representatives of the Northern Alliance.

¹³³ Karzai had been an early supporter of the Taliban but had eventually been put off by their extreme policies and had gone into exile in Pakistan, from where he worked on plans to remove the Taliban and reinstate Zahir Shah as king of Afghanistan. See Carlotta Gall, *The Wrong Enemy: America in Afghanistan, 2001-2014* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014), 205.

durability of its apparent victory in Afghanistan. Mullah Omar and his senior associates lived to fight another day by fleeing across the border into Pakistan. Similarly, Osama bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri were also able to evade their American and Afghan pursuers from their hideout in the Tora Bora mountains near Jalalabad and find refuge in Pakistan's tribal belt adjoining Afghanistan.¹³⁴

Around the same time that the US was mounting its failed attempt to finish off bin Laden and al-Qaeda in the Battle of Tora Bora, it had to simultaneously contend with an alarming spike in tensions between India and Pakistan following a major terrorist attack on the Indian parliament in New Delhi. India immediately placed responsibility for the attack on two Pakistan-based, Kashmir-centric extremist groups, the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (Militia of the Pure) and the Jaish-e-Muhammad (Army of Muhammad). Moreover, it directly blamed the ISI for sponsoring terrorism in Kashmir and ordered a massive mobilisation of some 800,000 troops along the border with Pakistan.¹³⁵ Much to the chagrin of the US, Musharraf diverted most of the troops deployed along the western border with Afghanistan towards the east in order to ward off a potential Indian attack, leaving behind only 6,000 regular army personnel along with 40,000 paramilitary forces.¹³⁶ Most US policymakers at the time believed that the Pakistani redeployment "undercut whatever possibility existed of halting the passage of fleeing al-Qaeda and Taliban operatives."¹³⁷

Through his dramatic U-turn against the Taliban in Afghanistan, Musharraf had hoped to earn enough American gratitude to be allowed to continue supporting militancy in Kashmir, just as Zia-ul-Haq had cashed in on his alignment with US interests in Afghanistan during the 1980s to expand Pakistan's nuclear programme. On this occasion, however, Musharraf failed to comprehend the global paradigm shift that had occurred after 9/11 whereby the international community in general and the US in particular now claimed to have "zero tolerance" for all manifestations of Islamist extremism and expected Pakistan to abandon its militant proxies, be they in Afghanistan or Kashmir.¹³⁸ Shortly after the attack on the Indian

¹³⁴ On the culpability of the US itself, and particularly of the overall military commander in Afghanistan, General Tommy Franks, in not doing enough to capture or kill bin Laden during the initial months of the war, see Peter Bergen, "The Account of How We Nearly Caught Osama bin Laden in 2001," *New Republic*, December 30, 2009, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/the-battle-tora-bora>

¹³⁵ Riedel, *Avoiding Armageddon*, 149.

¹³⁶ Polly Nayak and Michael Krepon, "US Crisis Management in South Asia's Twin Peaks Crisis," The Henry L. Stimson Centre, Report 57, September 2006, accessed July 17, 2015, <http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/research-pdfs/USCrisisManagement.pdf>

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ "National Strategy for Combating Terrorism," Central Intelligence Agency, February 2003, accessed July 22, 2015, https://www.cia.gov/news-information/cia-the-war-on-terrorism/Counter_Terrorism_Strategy.pdf

parliament, Bush urged Musharraf to act against the alleged perpetrators by closing down their camps, freezing their assets and arresting their leaders.¹³⁹

Under sustained American pressure, Musharraf executed another seemingly momentous U-turn. In a televised address to the nation on January 12, 2002, he banned five extremist outfits including Lashkar-e-Tayyaba and Jaish-e-Muhammad and declared that no organisation would henceforth be allowed to “indulge in terrorism in the name of Kashmir,” even though he also affirmed that “Kashmir runs in our blood” and that “no Pakistani can afford to sever links” with it.¹⁴⁰ Washington welcomed Musharraf’s pledge and Bush invited his Pakistani counterpart to the White House the following month to applaud the “great courage and vision” that had enabled Musharraf to realise that “his nation cannot grow peacefully if terrorists are tolerated or ignored in his country, in his region, or in the world.”¹⁴¹ As an immediate reward, the US announced \$300 million as compensation for Pakistan’s role in facilitating US military operations in Afghanistan¹⁴² and another \$220 million in debt relief.¹⁴³

In his meeting with Musharraf, Bush had hailed the former’s commitment to “banning the groups that practice terror, closing their offices and arresting the terrorists themselves.”¹⁴⁴ However, it soon became clear that Musharraf had no intention of fulfilling that commitment in letter and spirit. Scores of Kashmir-centred militants rounded up in the immediate aftermath of Musharraf’s speech were quietly released just weeks later and the terrorist outfits that had been proscribed continued to operate freely after simply changing their names.¹⁴⁵ Indian and Pakistani forces remained mobilised and the clouds of war again descended over the subcontinent in May after another deadly terrorist attack in Kashmir by Pakistan-based militants.

Deeply concerned by the increasingly likely prospect of a war between two nuclear-armed states, the Bush administration embarked upon a process of crisis management that placed pressure on both sides to de-escalate the crisis. The turning point came in the form of a pledge secured by Richard Armitage from Musharraf that he would do his utmost to

¹³⁹ Dov S. Zakheim, *A Vulcan’s Tale: How the Bush Administration Mismanaged the Reconstruction of Afghanistan* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2011), 114.

¹⁴⁰ “In Musharraf’s Words: ‘A Day of Reckoning,’” *New York Times*, January 12, 2002.

¹⁴¹ “The President’s News Conference With President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan, February 13, 2002,” *The American Presidency Project*, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=63820>

¹⁴² Zakheim, *A Vulcan’s Tale*, 117.

¹⁴³ “US praises Musharraf’s stance,” *BBC*, February 15, 2002, accessed July 19, 2015, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1821866.stm

¹⁴⁴ “The President’s News Conference With President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan.”

¹⁴⁵ Seth Mydans, “Musharraf Treading Gently Against Pakistani Militants,” *New York Times*, April, 28, 2002.

“permanently” interdict infiltration across the Line of Control.¹⁴⁶ In October 2002, after ten months of eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation involving up to a million troops, the crisis ended after India called off its military operation in Kashmir.¹⁴⁷

III. Musharraf’s Double Game

Even though the US had placed pressure on Pakistan to end its support to militancy in Kashmir, Musharraf was aware that for the US, the fight against al-Qaeda outweighed all other concerns. To that end, Washington required extensive and prolonged military and intelligence cooperation from Islamabad since at least a few thousand al-Qaeda operatives including its top leadership had obtained sanctuary in Pakistan, partly in the lawless tribal areas bordering Afghanistan but also in a number of major urban centres. In the estimation of the Bush administration, therefore, it was Pakistan, and not Afghanistan, that was the new frontline in its “war against terrorism.” Musharraf and his military planners decided to exploit the salience placed by Washington on confronting al-Qaeda by adopting a dual policy whereby they would reap the material benefits of targeting al-Qaeda and its local affiliates, whom they now regarded as a major threat to the Pakistani state, but would concurrently maintain their links with the Taliban and the Kashmir-centric militant groups.

In the first few years after 9/11, Pakistani security agencies collaborated closely with their American counterparts in rounding up hundreds of al-Qaeda members, including the alleged mastermind of the 9/11 attacks, Khalid Sheikh Muhammad, and prominent operatives such as Abu Zubaydah, Ramzi bin al-Shibh and Abu Faraj al-Libi. The bulk of the arrests took place in major cities including Faisalabad, Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi, forcing al-Qaeda in turn to abandon their urban hideouts and fall back to their original base within the forbidding environs of Pakistan’s tribal areas bordering Afghanistan, where they had first sought refuge after the fall of the Taliban. Musharraf also submitted to US demands to investigate and crack down on links between al-Qaeda and two Pakistani nuclear scientists with whom it had been engaged in the early stages of planning for manufacturing a nuclear device.¹⁴⁸

While willing to go after al-Qaeda in Pakistan’s cities, Musharraf was reluctant to target its much stronger presence in the largely autonomous and predominantly Pashtun tribal belt bordering Afghanistan, where the writ of the Pakistani state had always been very

¹⁴⁶ C. Raja Mohan, “Musharraf vows to stop infiltration: Armitage,” *Hindu*, June 8, 2002.

¹⁴⁷ For an exhaustive account of the India-Pakistan standoff of 2001-2002 and the US role in preventing it from becoming an all-out war, see Nayak and Krepon, “US Crisis Management in South Asia’s Twin Peaks Crisis.”

¹⁴⁸ Tenet, *At the Centre of the Storm*, 261-268.

limited.¹⁴⁹ Referred to as Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), the highly weaponised and militantly conservative border region had formed the frontline in the joint CIA-ISI covert war against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.¹⁵⁰ In an ironic twist, it had now become the principal theatre of a global conflict between the US and many of the same elements that Washington had sent into battle against the Soviets in the 1980s. With much of Pakistan's regular army stationed on the eastern front during the standoff with India, thousands of foreign militants from a wide range of ethnicities - Arabs, Chechens, Uighurs, Uzbeks and others - found easy access to the poorly governed FATA, where they were welcomed and provided sanctuary on the bases of Pashtun tribal customs, a shared goal of defeating the US in Afghanistan and, at least in some cases, substantial financial inducements.¹⁵¹

FATA also became a haven for operatives of Pakistani sectarian and militant groups outlawed by Musharraf in 2002. Despite the ban, the military establishment continued to view retention of proxies as an essential condition for the fulfilment of Pakistan's preeminent strategic objective of countering India's conventional military superiority and preventing it from becoming a regional hegemon. Thus the ISI had facilitated the re-emergence of most of the proscribed groups under new names.¹⁵² At the same time, however, a noticeable improvement in relations with India, marked by the inauguration in early 2004 of a formal peace process and the launch of regular back-channel bilateral

¹⁴⁹ The same Pashtun tribes straddle both sides of the Durand Line, the boundary between Pakistan and Afghanistan drawn up by the British in 1893. Despite their geographical division, the tribes have never ceased to intermarry, trade, fight, celebrate and mourn with each other. Moreover, they all adhere to the *Pashtunwali* tribal code that regulates their social intercourse, key elements of which are *melmastia*, or hospitality; *nanawati*, the right of a fugitive to claim sanctuary, and *badal*, the right to extract vengeance. See Nabi Misdaq, *Afghanistan: Political Frailty and External Interference* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 273-274; and Clements, *Conflict in Afghanistan*, 201.

¹⁵⁰ FATA consists of seven tribal agencies - Bajaur, Khyber, Kurram, Mohmand, Orakzai, North Waziristan and South Waziristan - and six frontier regions attached to settled districts in the current province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (previously the North West Frontier Province). Out of the seven agencies, only Orakzai does not have a direct border with Afghanistan; the other six adjoin the Pashtun-majority provinces of Kunar, Nangarhar, Paktia, Paktika and Khost. The region is still governed by a set of colonial-era legal provisions known as the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR), devised by the British to tame the native tribes and retained in their entirety by Pakistan after independence. FATA has yet to be fully integrated into Pakistan's federating structure and the jurisdiction of Pakistani courts does not extend to the region. Such neglect on the part of successive governments in Islamabad is directly responsible for the continuing lawlessness, impoverishment and overall ungovernability of the tribal belt. For a detailed examination of the failure of Pakistani state policies in FATA, see International Crisis Group Asia Report N°125, *Pakistan's Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militants*, December 11, 2006, accessed July 17, 2015, http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/southasia/pakistan/125_pakistans_tribal_areas___appeasing_the_militants.pdf

¹⁵¹ Anne Sternsen, "Al Qaeda's Allies," Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative Policy Paper, New America Foundation, April 2010, accessed July 18, 2015, <http://counterterrorism.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/stenersen2.pdf>

¹⁵² Stephen Tankel, "Domestic Barriers to Disarming the Militant Infrastructure in Pakistan," *Peaceworks*, No. 89, United States Institute of Peace, September 9, 2013, accessed July 19, 2015, <http://www.usip.org/publications/domestic-barriers-dismantling-the-militant-infrastructure-in-pakistan>

negotiations, prompted Musharraf to restrain home-grown militant groups, most of which were operating in Kashmir. Cross-border infiltration by militants into Kashmir declined appreciably by 2006-7 but instead of completely dismantling the militant architecture, the ISI effectively purchased their quiescence by providing them food and lodging and even keeping some on a regular retainer.¹⁵³ Thus the aim was to “rein in, not dismantle, militant groups,” which were kept in reserve to either be “demobilized or reengaged” based on regional security imperatives.¹⁵⁴ A sizeable number of Kashmir-centred Pakistani militants, however, predominantly from Punjab and referred to as the Punjabi Taliban, refused to hang up their boots and drifted off to FATA where some joined the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan while others teamed up with al-Qaeda and its tribal and foreign allies holed up in the tribal belt to train their guns on the Pakistani state.¹⁵⁵

Even as al-Qaeda set up its new headquarters in FATA’s South Waziristan agency, Musharraf resisted calls by the US to send in ground forces to crush it, fearing that any incursion by the Pakistani army into a region where it had not had a major presence for over five decades would spark a rebellion by heavily armed tribals with potentially devastating consequences for the military as well as his own regime.¹⁵⁶ However, under intense American pressure to go after al-Qaeda’s top leaders and its affiliated militants engaged in mounting cross-border attacks on US forces in Afghanistan, Musharraf eventually gave in and in early 2002, sent the Pakistan army into FATA to prevent the ingress of al-Qaeda operatives and their local and foreign allies escaping US operations across the border in Afghanistan. However, major “search-and destroy” operations were launched only in the spring of 2004, after continuing attacks on US forces in Afghanistan had prompted Washington to threaten to send in its own troops into FATA if Pakistan did not move more proactively against the militants.¹⁵⁷ Although the US did not carry out that threat, it did

¹⁵³ See Haqqani, *Pakistan*, 306; Mohammad Amir Rana, *The Seeds of Terrorism* (London: New Millenium, 2005), 283; and Stephen Tankel, *Storming the World Stage: The Story of Lashkar-e-Taiba* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2011), 128.

¹⁵⁴ Tankel, “Domestic Barriers,” 10.

¹⁵⁵ Hassan Abbas, “Defining the Punjabi Taliban Network,” *CTC Sentinel* 2, no. 4 (April, 2009), accessed July 15, 2015, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Vol2Iss4-Art1.pdf>

¹⁵⁶ The regular Pakistani army had been withdrawn from FATA in 1947 by Mohammad Ali Jinnah himself, who had made a compact with the tribal notables that they would be allowed to manage their internal affairs with minimal interference from the central government in exchange for keeping their region a self-guarded buffer zone along Pakistan’s north-western frontier. See Z. H. Zaidi, ed., *Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah Papers: Pakistan: Pangs of Birth, 15 August-30 September 1947* (Islamabad: National Archives of Pakistan, 2001), p. 309; and Daniel Markey, “Securing Pakistan’s Tribal Belt,” Council on Foreign Relations, Council Special Report No. 36, July/August 2008, accessed July 19, 2015, <http://www.cfr.org/pakistan/securing-pakistans-tribal-belt/p16763>

¹⁵⁷ Marc Kaufman, “U.S. Claims Right To Enter Pakistan,” *Washington Post*, January 4, 2003.

commence missile strikes on militant targets in FATA by Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), commonly known as drones.¹⁵⁸

By this time, Musharraf was already less inclined towards further foot-dragging on the issue. In December 2003, he survived two assassination attempts within less than a fortnight, the second of which was a suicide attack carried out by two bombers who had both been trained in al-Qaeda-run camps in South Waziristan.¹⁵⁹ The attacks arrived on the heels of a *fatwa* or religious edict passed by Ayman al Zawahiri calling for Musharraf's ouster¹⁶⁰ and provided the Pakistani ruler with graphic evidence of the terrorist backlash that he now confronted.¹⁶¹ His response was to send in an army trained to fight a conventional war with India into the uncharted waters of a counter-insurgency campaign against a battle-hardened, well-resourced and ideologically motivated foe. Between 2004 and 2006, the Pakistani army mounted a series of operations in the two Waziristan agencies in which it encountered fierce resistance and sustained heavy losses. It retaliated through indiscriminate and excessive force, including the use of heavy artillery and helicopter gunships. Since these were far from precision strikes, they caused significant collateral damage and, combined with arbitrary arrests and intrusive search operations, only served to inflame local sentiments against the government and provide a powerful recruiting tool to the militants.¹⁶²

With the conflict gaining in intensity and the morale of his troops sagging under the weight of growing casualties, Musharraf sought to appease the militants through a succession of peace deals with an assortment of militant leaders in both agencies of Waziristan. However, the carrot-and-stick policy of heavy-handed military operations interspersed with short-lived negotiated settlements invariably based on humiliating concessions by the government was neither able to pacify the region nor establish the government's writ within it. Instead,

¹⁵⁸ The first known US drone strike in FATA occurred in June 2004 and took out Nek Muhammad, a prominent militant leader from South Waziristan with whom the Pakistan military made the first of its several ill-fated peace deals. Such strikes, which were never officially acknowledged by Washington, were used sparingly primarily because Bush wished to avoid embarrassing his Pakistani counterpart who, notwithstanding frequent public denunciations of the strikes as a violation of national sovereignty, was secretly coordinating them with Washington. See Jon Boone and Peter Beaumont, "Pervez Musharraf admits permitting 'a few' US drone strikes in Pakistan," *Guardian*, April 12, 2013.

¹⁵⁹ The attacks were committed by two different cells belonging to the same terrorist group. Although headed by senior al-Qaeda planners and manned primarily by members of the banned Jaish-e-Muhammad, its rank-and-file also included serving Pakistani army and air force personnel deeply resentful of Musharraf's pro-US policies. See Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, 245-263.

¹⁶⁰ Peter Bergen, "War of Error," *New Republic*, October 15, 2007, accessed July 19, 2015, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/politics/war-error>

¹⁶¹ Although the first attack, which involved a remote-controlled bombing of a bridge upon which Musharraf's cavalcade was passing, did not result in any fatalities, the twin suicide bombing claimed fourteen lives, injured forty-six people and caused widespread destruction of infrastructure in the vicinity. Salman Masood, "Pakistani Leader Escapes Attempt at Assassination," *New York Times*, December 26, 2003.

¹⁶² International Crisis Group Asia Report N°125, *Pakistan's Tribal Areas*.

it contributed in widening the scale of the insurgency and making much of FATA a hotbed of violent extremism wherein the tribal militants providing sanctuary to al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban became a powerful force in their own right, one that sought to replicate in Pakistan the policies enforced by the Taliban in Afghanistan during their period in power.

By 2006, the Talibanisation of FATA was well under way, with what were by then known as the Pakistani Taliban effectively running a parallel government in the two Waziristans and expanding their presence not only in other agencies in FATA but also in the settled districts of the NWFP.¹⁶³ Each successive peace accord with the government gave the militants increasing political space to implement “Taliban-style administrative and judicial structures” in FATA.¹⁶⁴ The traditional dispute mechanism institution of the *jirga* (assembly of tribal notables) was formally banned and pro-government tribal elders were killed or forced to flee.¹⁶⁵ Aggrieved parties had to seek relief from the Taliban representative in their village, who “performed the functions of police officer, administrator, and judge.”¹⁶⁶ Reminiscent of the anachronistic rule of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the militants attacked music, video and CD stores, closed down barbershops and destroyed schools, especially those for girls.¹⁶⁷ Even as Musharraf denied Pakistan’s alarming slide towards Talibanisation before his American interlocutors,¹⁶⁸ his own security agencies issued grave warnings of a dramatic surge in militant influence not only in FATA but increasingly in NWFP’s settled areas and urged “swift and decisive action” to confront the “parallel authority” enjoyed by the Pakistani Taliban.¹⁶⁹

Through his peace deals with the militants, Musharraf had hoped to ward off a domestic terrorist backlash by diverting their attention exclusively towards combating US forces and their coalition partners in Afghanistan. From 2006 onwards, FATA indeed became a crucial base for the Afghan Taliban from which to plan their insurgent attacks inside Afghanistan and in which to seek refuge after executing them. In the wake of the Miramshah peace

¹⁶³ International Crisis Group Asia Report N°125, *Pakistan’s Tribal Areas*.

¹⁶⁴ Aqil Shah, “Praetorianism and Terrorism,” *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 4 (October 2008): 23.

¹⁶⁵ Zulfikar Ghumman, “Taliban killed 150 pro-government maliks,” *Daily Times*, April 18, 2006.

¹⁶⁶ Seth G. Jones and C. Christine Fair, *Counterinsurgency in Pakistan* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2010), 55. In one particularly gory instance, the militants accused around two dozen locals of involvement in crimes ranging from kidnapping to murder, executed them and mutilated their bodies in the centre of Miramshah, the district headquarters of North Waziristan. See “More ‘bandits’ die in Waziristan,” *BBC*, December 9, 2005, accessed December 15, 2014, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4514788.stm

¹⁶⁷ See “Taliban ban music in N. Waziristan,” *Dawn*, May 8, 2007; Christopher Allbritton, “The Pakistani Taliban’s War on Schoolchildren,” *Time*, December 4, 2009, accessed July 19, 2015, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1943639,00.html>; and Paul McGeough, “Inside the Taliban’s heart of darkness,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, May 22, 2007.

¹⁶⁸ Zahid Hussain, “Musharraf’s Doublespeak,” *Newsline*, October 17, 2006, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www.newsline.com/2006/10/musharrafs-doublespeak/>

¹⁶⁹ Ismail Khan, “Talibanisation imperils security, NSC warned: Immediate action urged,” *Dawn*, June 23, 2007.

agreement of September 2006 in North Waziristan between the Musharraf regime and the Taliban, cross-border infiltration of militants into Afghanistan increased by 300 per cent.¹⁷⁰ However, a fundamentally contradictory policy based on a deeply flawed distinction between “good Taliban” and “bad Taliban” could not possibly prevent FATA-based extremism from spreading its tentacles into Pakistan proper.¹⁷¹ Musharraf and the ISI clung to the misplaced conviction that they could manipulate militant outfits by promising incentives or threatening reprisals and “never really grasped the extent to which the militancy in FATA had turned inward against the Pakistani state.”¹⁷² In the meantime, FATA became the epicentre of global terrorism with several major post-9/11 terror plots around the world either planned or inspired by al-Qaeda having some connection with Pakistan’s lawless tribal wasteland.¹⁷³

Musharraf’s last two years in office saw Pakistan engulfed in the flames of a vicious terrorist onslaught which claimed thousands of lives and made suicide bombings an everyday occurrence in a country with barely any experience of them before 9/11.¹⁷⁴ Terrorist attacks around the country increased by an astronomical 746 per cent between 2005 and 2008, Musharraf’s last year in office.¹⁷⁵ Similarly, suicide attacks jumped from 7 in 2006 to 56 in 2007 and 63 in 2008.¹⁷⁶ Militants who had for long been nurtured by the military as strategic assets now turned upon their benefactors, who appeared to have no answer to the jihadist genie that they had themselves spawned. Baitullah Mehsud, a militant leader from South Waziristan with close ties to al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban, became the Pakistani military’s chief terrorist bugbear. In February 2005, the army had concluded a peace deal with Mehsud that effectively left him in control of parts of South Waziristan

¹⁷⁰ Markey, “Securing Pakistan’s Tribal Belt.”

¹⁷¹ The Manichaeen dichotomy between “good” and “bad” Taliban was based on the notion that the Afghan insurgents struggling against a foreign occupation were legitimate freedom fighters worthy of sympathy and support while the Pakistani Taliban, who were killing fellow Pakistanis, were agents of outside forces such as the US and India. For a useful rendering of the many contradictions in this approach, see Khaled Ahmed, “The fiction of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Taliban,” *The Friday Times* XXIV, no. 39 (November 09-15, 2012), accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www.thefridaytimes.com/beta3/tft/article.php?issue=20121109&page=2>

¹⁷² Moeed Yusuf, “Pakistan’s Militancy Challenge: From Where, to What?” in *Pakistan’s Counterterrorism Challenge*, ed. Moeed Yusuf (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2014), 29.

¹⁷³ Barbara Sude, “Al-Qaeda Central,” Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative Policy Paper, New America Foundation, February 2010, accessed July 18, 2015, <http://www.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/sude.pdf>

¹⁷⁴ The first suicide attack in Pakistan preceded 9/11 and occurred when an Egyptian national rammed an explosives-laden truck into the Egyptian embassy in Islamabad killing 14 people. The next 22 attacks took place between 2002 and 2006, when Pakistan was in the thick of the “war on terrorism.” See Imtiaz Gul, *The Al Qaeda Connection: The Taliban and Terror in Pakistan’s Tribal Areas* (New Delhi: Viking, 2009), 142.

¹⁷⁵ Muhammad Amir Rana, “Pakistan Security Report 2008,” *Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies* (2008), 3.

¹⁷⁶ Amir Mir, “Pakistan: The suicide-bomb capital of the world,” *Asia Times Online*, September 16, 2011, accessed July 20, 2015, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/MI16Df04.html

occupied by his fighters without requiring him to surrender foreign militants or to explicitly renounce cross-border infiltration into Afghanistan.¹⁷⁷ By 2007, he had broadened his support base to the extent of carving out a virtual “independent Taliban mini-state” in South Waziristan, from which he would soon unleash terrorist mayhem throughout Pakistan.¹⁷⁸

Right from the outset of Pakistan’s enlistment as a frontline American ally in the “war against terrorism,” Musharraf’s relative willingness to go after al-Qaeda stood in stark contrast to his consistent reluctance to target its Taliban comrades. While the crackdown on al-Qaeda netted a significant number of major operatives, not a single important member of the Taliban hierarchy was captured and handed over to the US.¹⁷⁹ Instead, Mullah Omar and thousands of his followers were allowed safe entry into Pakistan, not just to lick their wounds but to have a base from which to regain their strength and plot their return. Although they had received a fearful pounding that had left them demoralised and dispirited, they had by no means been vanquished and were fortunate in that their senior leadership had come out of the war almost completely intact and with a secure sanctuary in Pakistan.¹⁸⁰

Mullah Omar himself was widely believed to have been resettled by the ISI in the city of Quetta in Balochistan, where he soon put together a new Taliban *shura* or consultative body to reorganise the resistance to the American occupation, starting off with the four southern Afghan provinces of Uruzgan, Helmand, Kandahar and Zabul.¹⁸¹ In eastern Afghanistan and in Pakistan’s adjoining tribal areas, the reorganization was carried out by groups allied to the Taliban, most notably the network headed by Jalaluddin Haqqani, the formidable veteran mujahidin commander who had later thrown in his lot with the Taliban, serving as a minister in their cabinet as well as overall military commander of Taliban forces against the American invasion in 2001. Still close to the ISI as well as al-Qaeda, Haqqani relocated his network to the Pakistan tribal agency of North Waziristan from where he began to oversee

¹⁷⁷ Hassan Abbas, *Militancy in Pakistan’s Borderlands: Implications for the Nation and for Afghan Policy* (New York: The Century Foundation, 2010), 18.

¹⁷⁸ Brian Glyn Williams, *Afghanistan Declassified: A Guide to America’s Longest War* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 206.

¹⁷⁹ The only Taliban figure of some significance ‘captured’ by the ISI after 9/11 was the unfortunate ambassador to Pakistan, Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef, who had applied for asylum after the fall of the Taliban but was instead handed over to the US. Zaeef was incarcerated in the infamous Guantanamo Bay military prison for four years during which he, along with most other inmates, was subjected to regular torture. See Abdul Salam Zaeef, *My Life with the Taliban* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2010).

¹⁸⁰ According to one estimate, the Taliban lost between 8,000 and 12,000 fighters - around 20 per cent of their total strength - during Operation Enduring Freedom, with around twice that number wounded and some 7,000 taken prisoner. Rashid, *Taliban*, 220.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 223.

operations but also, on account of age and physical infirmities, increasingly making way for his son Sirajuddin to take over the group's day-to-day management.¹⁸²

By early 2002, the Taliban could also count on the support of their old foe Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, whose forces they had routed in 1996, forcing him into exile in Iran. Hekmatyar had been a vocal critic of the American invasion as well as of the Karzai regime that the US installed and his verbal broadsides against the new dispensation in Kabul led to his expulsion from Iran.¹⁸³ After secret talks with his former ISI patrons in Dubai,¹⁸⁴ he returned to the familiar surrounds of Peshawar to make common cause with the Taliban and al-Qaeda against the Kabul government and the forces of its international allies, although he never formally merged his own party, the Hizb-i-Islami, with either.¹⁸⁵ The CIA made an attempt to assassinate its one-time favourite mujahidin leader through a missile strike on a suspected hideout but Hekmatyar survived and coordinated strikes inside Afghanistan with the Taliban from his base in a large refugee camp on the outskirts of Peshawar.¹⁸⁶ Even after the US State Department designated Hekmatyar a "global terrorist" in February 2003, the ISI made no move against him or his fighters.

The Taliban received another fillip in October 2002 when their main supporters amongst Pakistan's Islamist parties won elections in Balochistan and the NWFP, the two provinces that bordered Afghanistan, and subsequently formed governments that were openly sympathetic to the Taliban and played a major role in facilitating their resurgence. The Islamists contested the elections on the platform of a six-party alliance called the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA) meaning United Assembly for Action. Their victory - with the bulk of the seats going to the JUI, which had the closest links with the Taliban - was made possible primarily through heavy electoral rigging by the ISI against mainstream parties in opposition to Musharraf's dictatorship, most notably Benazir Bhutto's PPP and Nawaz

¹⁸² For a detailed examination of the origins and functioning of the Haqqani network and its multi-faceted linkages with the Taliban, see Vahid Brown and Don Rassler, *Fountainhead of Jihad: The Haqqani Nexus, 1973-2012* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹⁸³ Iran had cooperated with the US during its offensive against the Taliban and was a supporter of the Northern Alliance-dominated regime in Kabul. Hekmatyar's criticism of both had become a source of embarrassment for Tehran, especially as it came at a time when it had just been declared part of an "axis of evil" by President Bush. See "Iran 'expels' Afghan warlord," *BBC*, February 26, 2002, accessed July 20, 2015, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1842427.stm

¹⁸⁴ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 244.

¹⁸⁵ Scott Baldouf and Owais Tohid, "A triangle of militants regroups in Afghanistan," *Christian Science Monitor*, April 9, 2003, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0409/p07s01-wosc.html>. Also see Anna Mulrine, "Afghan Warlords, Formerly Backed By the CIA, Now Turn Their Guns On U.S. Troops," *U.S. News & World Report*, July 11, 2008, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2008/07/11/afghan-warlords-formerly-backed-by-the-cia-now-turn-their-guns-on-us-troops?page=2>

¹⁸⁶ Julian Borger, "'CIA missile' fails to kill Afghan faction leader," *Guardian*, May 10, 2002.

Sharif's PML-N (Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz).¹⁸⁷ At the same time, the MMA also managed to cash in on increasing anti-American sentiment in the areas most directly affected by the conflict in Afghanistan, where opposition to the American invasion and support for the Taliban were strongest.

The MMA's rise to power served a number of purposes for Musharraf and the military. The religious parties in Pakistan had historically been allies of the military establishment against its secular democratic opponents and could once again be counted on not to meaningfully oppose Musharraf's thinly veiled authoritarian rule nor challenge the military's core strategic interests.¹⁸⁸ In fact, in terms of the military's desire to keep alive the option of using the Taliban as a proxy in Afghanistan, the MMA's facilitative role would be crucial. At the same time, the MMA's strident anti-Americanism, its support of the Taliban and its control over two provinces that represented the heartland of the Taliban's presence in Pakistan gave Musharraf a powerful card to play in his dealings with the US by portraying himself as the last line of defence against a complete takeover of nuclear-armed Pakistan by radical Islamists allied with America's enemies in Afghanistan.

With support from the ISI and the MMA-led provincial governments in Balochistan and the NWFP, the Taliban did not take long to regroup and revive their resistance in Afghanistan. Parts of Quetta, in particular, were virtually handed over to thousands of "long-haired, kohl-eyed, black-turbaned Taliban."¹⁸⁹ From Quetta to the town of Chaman on the Afghan border, the JUI operated more than fifty madrassas where young militants were brought in for several weeks of religious instruction before being despatched to the frontlines by Taliban recruiters, who were often accompanied by ISI officers.¹⁹⁰ In order to conceal its role in the Taliban insurgency from the CIA and other Western intelligence agencies, the ISI set up a clandestine unit consisting of former Taliban handlers and retired Pashtun army officers working undercover through an "untraceable system of command and control."¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Neither Bhutto nor Sharif was permitted to return to Pakistan to contest the elections. Moreover, Musharraf promulgated a law specifically targeting both exiled leaders by which restrictions were imposed on the number of times a person could serve as prime minister.

¹⁸⁸ Although officially opposed to Musharraf's rule and openly critical of his alliance with the US, the MMA agreed to form a coalition with Musharraf's party, the PML-Q (Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid-i-Azam) in Balochistan, even as it joined the PPP and the PML-N in opposition to Musharraf in the federal parliament. For more on the MMA's rise to power and its collusion with the military, see International Crisis Group Asia Report N°49, *Pakistan: The Mullahs and the Military*, March 20, 2003, accessed July 15, 2015, [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/Pakistan%20The%20Mullahs%20and%20the%20Military.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/Pakistan%20The%20Mullahs%20and%20the%20Military.pdf)

¹⁸⁹ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 249. Quetta effectively became the Taliban's capital-in-exile and the centre for their logistical operations.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 249-250.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 221-222. According to Rashid, the rehired personnel of this secret organization maintained no apparent links with serving ISI officials or with the army high command; instead, they used the cover of regular jobs in both the public and private sectors to conduct their clandestine operations in support of the

In 2003, the Taliban declared a jihad to reclaim Afghanistan¹⁹² and Mullah Omar appointed a new ten-man ruling council to execute it.¹⁹³ The opening gambits of the jihad involved guerrilla attacks on US-led coalition forces as well as foreign aid workers.¹⁹⁴ As the insurgency expanded in its scope and intensity during 2004, American military and intelligence sources, according to a well-known Pakistani expert on the subject, began to see increasing evidence of “a systematic and pervasive system” of ISI complicity in the resurgence of the Taliban.¹⁹⁵

By 2004, they [US and NATO intelligence officers in Afghanistan] had confirmed reports of the ISI running training camps for Taliban recruits north of Quetta, funds and arms shipments arriving from the Gulf countries, and shopping sprees in Quetta and Karachi in which the Taliban bought hundreds of motorbikes, pickup trucks, and satellite phones. In 2003 and 2004, American soldiers at firebases along the border in eastern Afghanistan and U.S. drones in the skies watched as army trucks delivered Taliban fighters to the border at night to infiltrate Afghanistan and then recovered them on their return a few days later. Pakistani artillery gave covering fire to Taliban infiltrators crossing into Afghanistan, and medical facilities were set up close to the border by the army for wounded Taliban. Most damning of all was the extensive monitoring at the U.S. base at Bagram of wireless communications between Taliban commanders and Pakistan army officers on the border.

Pakistan’s fateful decision to encourage the revival of the Taliban stemmed primarily from the military’s traditional paranoia regarding an India-Afghanistan nexus that could potentially put Pakistan in the untenable position of fighting a two-front war. Long-standing fears of Indian encirclement became especially pronounced after the Northern Alliance swept to power in Afghanistan following the defeat of the Taliban. For Pakistan, the new political dispensation in Kabul was a bitter pill to swallow. The ISI had advised Musharraf that the Taliban would be able to withstand the American onslaught until the spring of 2002 and would then mount an open-ended guerrilla war but they capitulated in just eight weeks.¹⁹⁶

Taliban. The organization maintained no records and logistics and expenses came not through the ISI but the “less scrutinized offices” of the Frontier Corps, the army-led paramilitary force operating along Pakistan’s borders with Afghanistan.

¹⁹² Rahimullah Yusufzai, “Taleban ‘aims to regain power,’” *BBC*, March 28, 2003, accessed July 20, 2015, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/2897137.stm

¹⁹³ “Taliban form ‘resistance force,’” *CNN*, June 24, 2003, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/asiapcf/central/06/24/afghan.taliban/>

¹⁹⁴ Gretchen Peters, “How Opium Profits the Taliban,” *Peaceworks*, No. 62, United States Institute of Peace, August 2009, accessed July 18, 2015, http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/resources/taliban_opium_1.pdf.

¹⁹⁵ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 222-223.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 146-147.

In the end, Musharraf was left with little choice but to accept the decisions arrived at in Bonn. However, both he and the ISI were deeply concerned by the dominance of the non-Pashtun Northern Alliance in Afghanistan's new configuration of power, with the crucial portfolios of defence, interior, intelligence and foreign affairs all ending up in the hands of fellow Panjshiri Tajiks and close associates of Ahmed Shah Massoud.¹⁹⁷ Three out of five positions of vice-chairman in the interim administration also went to the Northern Alliance, whose dramatic ascendancy was perceived with considerable trepidation in Pakistan on account of the pro-India inclinations of many of its senior leaders.¹⁹⁸ New Delhi's own aggressive push to re-establish itself in post-Taliban Afghanistan only served to heighten Islamabad's fear of encirclement.¹⁹⁹ Deeply worried about losing out not only to India but to other regional competitors such as Iran and Russia, Musharraf and the military turned towards the Taliban as their only hope of regaining influence in Afghanistan.

America's own policies in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom and after the fall of the Taliban did little to assuage the security concerns of its Pakistani client. The Bush administration was determined to maintain a "light footprint" in Afghanistan, both in the fight against the Taliban and al-Qaeda as well as in terms of rebuilding a country devastated by twenty-two years of almost continuous war.²⁰⁰ In fact, Afghanistan was intended to be merely a curtain raiser for the subsequent invasion of Iraq.²⁰¹ Instead of deploying ground forces in sufficient numbers, the US subcontracted security duties to warlords from the Northern Alliance and from the Pashtun areas in the south and the east.²⁰² During the first year of the occupation, US troops numbered a mere 5,000 while the ratio of International

¹⁹⁷ Massoud hailed from the Tajik-majority province of Panjshir in Afghanistan's northeast.

¹⁹⁸ Aly Zaman, "India's Increased Involvement in Afghanistan and Central Asia: Implications for Pakistan," *Islamabad Policy Research Institute Journal* 3, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 69-97.

¹⁹⁹ A particularly unpalatable development for the Pakistani military was India's decision to reopen consulates in eastern and southern parts of Afghanistan that bordered Pakistan, a move that Islamabad regarded as a hostile act aimed at destabilizing Pakistan by fomenting sabotage, sedition and terrorism out of ostensibly diplomatic offices. See, for instance, Scott Baldauf, "India-Pakistan rivalry reaches into Afghanistan," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 12, 2003, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0912/p07s01-wosc.html>

²⁰⁰ Michael E. O'Hanlon and Hassina Sherjan, *Toughing it out in Afghanistan* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2010), 22-23. The desire for a "light footprint" was driven in part by the Bush administration's opposition to nation-building; in part by Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's espousal of a new type of cost-effective warfare that minimised the use of ground forces; and in part by the need to save resources for Iraq. The US was clearly more interested in "opposing and tearing things that it did not like" in Afghanistan than in "building up anything viable" to replace them.

²⁰¹ Even before the Taliban had been removed, Bush had instructed Defence Secretary Rumsfeld to draw up secret plans for potential military operations against Iraq. See Joseph J. Collins, *Choosing War: The Decision to Invade Iraq and its Aftermath* (Washington, D.C.: National Defence University Press, 2008), 6.

²⁰² A number of these warlords were the same drug smugglers, extortionists, murderers and rapists who had carved up their own individual fiefdoms during the early 1990s before being swept away by the Taliban, whose initial popularity amongst significant segments of the Afghan people stemmed primarily from their success in defeating the widely despised warlords.

Security Assistance Force (ISAF) peacekeepers²⁰³ to population was only 0.18 foreign military personnel to 1,000 people.²⁰⁴

As the Iraq invasion drew closer, increasing amounts of military and intelligence resources were diverted away from Afghanistan to facilitate regime change in Iraq.²⁰⁵ In the meantime, the authority of the government in Kabul installed by the US continued to be seriously undermined by Washington's propensity to empower the warlords in pursuit of its minimalist agenda of defeating al-Qaeda.²⁰⁶ While significant chunks of the CIA's \$1 billion war-chest went into purchasing the services of a collection of largely disreputable regional strongmen,²⁰⁷ the cash-strapped Afghan government was struggling to make ends meet and to extend its writ beyond the capital, leading to derisive descriptions of Karzai as the "mayor of Kabul"²⁰⁸ rather than the president of Afghanistan.²⁰⁹

The absence of a long-term American commitment to Afghanistan's rebuilding and security convinced Musharraf and his fellow generals that the US would wash its hands off Afghanistan in much the same way as it had done after the Soviets pulled out in 1989, and

²⁰³ The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was a multi-nation military outfit set up under the Bonn Agreement of 2001 to provide security to the Karzai government in Kabul. In August 2003, NATO assumed control of ISAF and in October of the same year, the UN extended its original mandate of protecting Kabul and its environs to securing the whole of Afghanistan. The actual expansion of ISAF's presence took place through a series of phases between December 2003 and October 2006. For a detailed examination of ISAF's mixed record in Afghanistan, see Amin Saikal, "Afghanistan's Transition: ISAF's Stabilisation Role?" *Third World Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (2006): 525-534.

²⁰⁴ Matthew Alan Hill, *Democracy Promotion and Conflict-based Reconstruction: The United States and Democratic Consolidation in Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 48-49. In 2002, there were only 4,500 ISAF troops in Afghanistan, all of whom were confined to Kabul and its surroundings. See International Crisis Group Asia Report N°123, *Countering Afghanistan's Insurgency: No Quick Fixes*, November 2, 2006, accessed July 15, 2015, http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/123_countering_afghanistans_insurgency.pdf

²⁰⁵ Brian Glyn Williams, *Predators: The CIA's Drone War on al Qaeda* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2013), 41.

²⁰⁶ For more on the Bush administration's mismanagement and neglect of post-Taliban Afghanistan, see David Rohde and David E. Sanger, "How a 'Good War' in Afghanistan Went Bad," *New York Times*, August 12, 2007; and International Crisis Group Asia Report N°123, *Countering Afghanistan's Insurgency*.

²⁰⁷ See Seymour M. Hersh, "The Other War: Why Bush's Afghanistan problem won't go away," *New Yorker*, April 12, 2004, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/04/12/the-other-war>; and Seth Jones, "The Rise of Afghanistan's Insurgency: State Failure and Jihad," *International Security* 32, no. 4 (Spring 2008): 7-40.

²⁰⁸ See, for instance, Simon Robinson, "Karzai's Kabul: Fit for a King?" *Time*, April 18, 2002, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,231457,00.html>; and Jason Burke, "Hard man in a hard country," *Guardian*, July 20, 2008.

²⁰⁹ According to the Bush administration's first special envoy for Afghanistan, James F. Dobbins, who served in that position from October 2001 to April 2002, the occupation of Afghanistan was "the most poorly resourced American venture into nation-building in more than sixty years." In the first year following the Taliban's collapse, the largest economy in the world contributed approximately \$500 million in reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan, which worked out to around \$20 per Afghan. A year later, the total amount of US aid had risen to only \$700 million; during the same period, \$18 billion were poured into the invasion and occupation of Iraq. US assistance to Afghanistan did rise to \$2.2 billion in 2004 but was halved by 2006. See James F. Dobbins, *After the Taliban: Nation-Building in Afghanistan* (Washington, D.C: Potomac Books, 2008), viii, 164.

that Pakistan would again be left to handle the fallout on its own. That fallout appeared particularly bleak to Islamabad on account of the fact that its enemies from the Northern Alliance now dominated the government in Kabul and ran Afghanistan's internal security apparatus. Had the US opted for a larger military footprint in Afghanistan and ensured a more inclusive government in Kabul, it might have been able to settle Pakistan's fears of being elbowed out of Afghanistan by India and its Northern Alliance proxies. However, the Bush administration neither put enough military boots on the ground nor entertained any proposal to negotiate with the Taliban, even when elements within them were willing to do so. In fact, Washington's "misguided" policy of eschewing reconciliation with the Taliban was often "spurred on" by the Northern Alliance, whose eagerness to settle personal scores with the Taliban "drove people who might otherwise have cooperated into the insurgency."²¹⁰

America's unwillingness to make a genuine commitment to Afghanistan's stability and its diversion of men and materiel to Iraq were seen in Islamabad as indicators that a complete US withdrawal was just a matter of time. Musharraf and the ISI feared that the resultant power vacuum left behind would likely be filled by India and Iran in view of the prevailing ascendancy of their Afghan allies. To obviate that possibility, they decided to back the resurgence of the Taliban, whom they continued to view as their only piece on Afghanistan's radically transformed geopolitical chessboard. This remained the case even after Karzai gradually succeeded in substantially increasing Pashtun representation in his government, largely at the expense of the Northern Alliance.²¹¹ For his Pakistani detractors,

²¹⁰ Fotini Christia and Michael Semple, "Flipping the Taliban: How to Win in Afghanistan," *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 4 (July/August 2009): 37. In February 2002, Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil, the Taliban's foreign minister and a man widely regarded as "the most reasonable Taliban leader," voluntarily approached the new Afghan authorities expressing a desire to join the new order. He was arrested, detained in the US-run prison at Bagram for 18 months, and then held under house arrest. Abdul Haq Wasiq, the Taliban's deputy minister of intelligence, and Rahmatullah Sangaryar, a senior field commander from Uruzgan, were incarcerated at the notorious Guantanamo Bay prison in Cuba after seeking government protection. Scores of fighters belonging to Wasiq's and Sangaryar's networks were once ready to recognize the Afghan government and lay down their arms but ended up not doing so. The message from the US and its Afghan allies "could hardly have been clearer: hold out an olive branch, and you will go straight to jail." According to a former high-ranking Pakistani diplomat, Islamabad felt that Jalaluddin Haqqani could have been persuaded to support the new dispensation in Kabul if the US had made him an overture but "any accommodation with the Taliban or pro-Taliban leaders was ruled out by the occupation authorities," as demonstrated by the complete exclusion of the Taliban from the Bonn Conference.

²¹¹ Faced by mounting pressure from his fellow Pashtuns alienated by what they perceived as a Tajik takeover of the country, Karzai engaged in slow but steady attempts to curtail the influence of the Northern Alliance. After becoming Afghanistan's first democratically elected president in 2004, he was sufficiently emboldened to drop a number of key Northern Alliance members from his cabinet, especially the powerful defence minister and Tajik warlord Muhammad Fahim, who was replaced with a Pashtun. By 2006, he had managed to end the dominance of the Northern Alliance altogether after sacking foreign minister Dr Abdullah Abdullah, the only remaining member of the original Northern Alliance "triumvirate," the other two being Fahim and former interior minister Yunus Qanooni, whom Karzai had defeated in the 2004 presidential election. See Indranil Banerjee, "The Problem of Institution Building in

Karzai's attempts to scale down the influence of the non-Pashtuns was "too little too late."²¹² ISI support for the Taliban continued and its plans to disrupt the 2004 presidential elections in Afghanistan through large-scale insurgent attacks were aborted only after direct pressure on Musharraf from Bush himself.²¹³

In general, however, Washington's criticism of Islamabad's double game remained largely muted. Musharraf correctly calculated that the Bush administration's overriding emphasis on decapitating al-Qaeda gave him enough manoeuvrability to continue supporting the Taliban. While such duplicity might occasionally generate a slap on the wrist from Washington, Musharraf was confident that US patronage would continue to flow as long as he was perceived to be resolute in the fight against al-Qaeda. According to Robert Grenier, the CIA's Islamabad station chief at the time of the 9/11 attacks, Musharraf and the ISI "worked closely with us to capture key al Qa'ida leaders...but they made it clear that they didn't care about targeting the Taliban." Their position encountered no meaningful criticism from Washington, which was "focused on al Qa'ida, not on capturing or killing Taliban leaders," whom it regarded as "a spent force."²¹⁴

By 2006, however, a massive escalation of insurgent attacks in southern and eastern Afghanistan demonstrated that the Taliban were anything but a spent force. With Mullah Omar allegedly directing operations out of Quetta and his fighters making full use of the sanctuaries granted to them in FATA and Balochistan, the Taliban wreaked havoc in Afghanistan. Suicide attacks increased from 27 in 2005 to 139 in 2006, remotely detonated bombings more than doubled from 783 to 1,677, and armed attacks nearly tripled from 1,558 to 4,542.²¹⁵ Drawing on lessons learned from the insurgency in Iraq, the Taliban increasingly began to use sophisticated Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) to target US and Afghan forces instead of engaging them in direct combat.²¹⁶ With around 4,000 fatalities in insurgent-related violence, 2006 became the bloodiest year since the start of the US occupation.²¹⁷ The Taliban resurgence continued to intensify throughout 2007, with a 27 per cent rise in overall attacks over the previous year and a 60 per cent increase in the

Afghanistan," in *Saving Afghanistan*, ed. V. Krishnappa, Shanthie Mariet D'Souza and Priyanka Singh (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2009), 153-154.

²¹² Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 221.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 259.

²¹⁴ Jones and Fair, *Counterinsurgency in Pakistan*, 45.

²¹⁵ Pamela Constable, "Gates Visits Kabul, Cites Rise in Cross-Border Attacks," *Washington Post*, January 17, 2007.

²¹⁶ Rob Evans, "Afghanistan war logs: How the IED became Taliban's weapon of choice," *Guardian*, July 26, 2010.

²¹⁷ Between 2002 and 2006, the number of deaths caused by insurgent attacks increased by 800 per cent. Jones, "The Rise of Afghanistan's Insurgency," 7.

province of Helmand, the heartland of the insurgency.²¹⁸ Although still most visible in the south and east, the Taliban penetration of Afghanistan's rural areas now manifested itself in western provinces such as Herat and central ones such as Wardak.²¹⁹ Even more worryingly for the US and the Afghan government, the insurgents were demonstrating an increasing ability to strike targets within Kabul itself.

In May 2003, US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld had declared the end of major combat operations in Afghanistan on the grounds that the country had been sufficiently pacified to move towards "stabilisation and reconstruction activities."²²⁰ By the time Rumsfeld left the Pentagon in December 2006, his earlier pronouncement appeared embarrassingly premature as the US and its client government in Kabul found themselves at the receiving end of an increasingly assertive Taliban insurgency. Rumsfeld's successor, former CIA director Robert Gates, realised soon after taking office in Bush's second term that the US had got it seriously wrong in Afghanistan: "While we were preoccupied with Iraq, between 2002 and 2005 the Taliban reconstituted in western Pakistan and in southern and eastern Afghanistan. Headquartered and operating in Pakistani cities including Peshawar and Quetta, virtually unhindered by the Pakistani government, the Taliban recovered from their disastrous defeat and again became a serious fighting force."²²¹

Pakistan's provision of sanctuaries to the Taliban was by no means the only factor behind the resilience of the insurgency, nor indeed of its eventual dramatic escalation. The chronic inability of the Karzai government to end corruption, provide essential services, disband regional warlords, and extend its tenuous writ beyond Kabul created a vacuum of governance that bred widespread public frustration and increased support for the insurgents.²²² In much of southern and eastern Afghanistan, Karzai and the provincial governors he appointed enjoyed little or no legitimacy and were increasingly seen as impotent stooges of the country's foreign occupiers. A considerable portion of the blame for the return of the Taliban must be apportioned to the US itself, which refused to commit enough resources to rebuild Afghanistan's economy and indigenous security services, nor

²¹⁸ Ed Johnson, "Gates Wants NATO to Reorganize Afghanistan Mission," *Bloomberg News*, December 12, 2007. For more on the Taliban penetration of Helmand, see Jean MacKenzie, "The Battle for Afghanistan: Militancy and Conflict in Helmand," Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative Policy Paper, New America Foundation, September 2010, accessed July 17, 2015, <http://counterterrorism.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/helmand2.pdf>

²¹⁹ Jones, "The Rise of Afghanistan's Insurgency," 36.

²²⁰ Tony Karon, "The U.S. Says the Afghanistan War Is Over. The Taliban Aren't So Sure," *Time*, May 6, 2003, accessed July 19, 2015, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,449942,00.html>

²²¹ Robert M. Gates, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War* (New York: Albert A. Knopf, 2014), 198.

²²² See Barnett Rubin, "Saving Afghanistan," *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 1 (January/February 2007): 57-74, 76-78; International Crisis Group Asia Report N°123, *Countering Afghanistan's Insurgency*; and Jones, "The Rise of Afghanistan's Insurgency."

provided enough troops of its own to ensure the country's security.²²³ Washington also failed to prevent a massive boom in the production of opium, a significant source of revenue for the Taliban insurgency.²²⁴

Benefiting from the flawed policies of the US and its Afghan allies, the Taliban, according to one account, managed to engineer "one of the most impressive comebacks against a US-led military coalition in history."²²⁵ A 2009 report by the Carnegie Endowment examining the strategies employed by the Taliban to fuel their resurgence found reliable evidence to suggest that the insurgents "have an efficient leadership, are learning from their mistakes, and are quick to exploit the weaknesses of its adversaries."²²⁶ By displaying a substantial level of "strategic planning and coordinated action" that belied their popular image of primitive savages, the Taliban were building up their own parallel administration in major chunks of the south and east, had "nationwide logistics," and managed an "impressive intelligence network."²²⁷ Although much of the original leadership of the movement remained intact,²²⁸ the scale of the insurgency testified to the emergence of a "neo-Taliban" phenomenon comprising a new generation of Pakistani, Afghan, al-Qaeda and Kashmiri fighters, many of whom were more comfortable with modern technology than their predecessors from the 1990s as well as more radical in terms of their acceptance of suicide attacks.²²⁹

²²³ US troop numbers in Afghanistan when the Taliban insurgency erupted in 2006 were only 20,400. They rose to 23,700 in 2007 and 30,100 in 2008. During the same three years, troops in Iraq amounted to 141,100; 148,300; and 157,800 respectively. Amy Belasco, "Troop Levels in the Afghan and Iraq Wars, FY2001-FY2012: Cost and Other Potential Issues," *Congressional Research Service*, July 2, 2009, accessed July 17, 2015, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R40682.pdf>

The deployment of US and ISAF troops dedicated to the stabilization of Afghanistan represented the lowest per capita commitment of peacekeeping personnel to any post-conflict environment since the end of World War Two. See Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, "Understanding the Taliban and Insurgency in Afghanistan," *Orbis* 51, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 84.

²²⁴ For more, see Gretchen Peters, *Seeds of Terror: How Heroin is Bankrolling the Taliban and al Qaeda* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2009).

²²⁵ Michael O'Hanlon, "Staying Power: The U.S. Mission in Afghanistan Beyond 2011," *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 5 (September/October 2010): 65.

²²⁶ Gilles Dorronsoro, "The Taliban's Winning Strategy in Afghanistan," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2009, accessed July 14, 2015, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/taliban_winning_strategy.pdf

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ The Taliban organisation that emerged over the course of the insurgency involved two main tiers. The top tier included the leadership structure and key commanders and was run by the Quetta shura headed by Mullah Omar. Below Omar, the shura was divided into a series of functional committees. Similar divisions of functions were in place at regional shuras in Peshawar and North Waziristan. The lower tier included thousands of fighters and also incorporated a parallel Afghan government, which included governors for Afghan provinces and ministers for such areas as defence and justice. Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 231-232.

²²⁹ For more on the neo-Taliban, see Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop: The Resurgence of the Neo-Taliban in Afghanistan* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 2007); and Syed Saleem Shahzad, "The rise and rise of the neo-Taliban," *Asia Times Online*, April 2, 2009, accessed July 19, 2015, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/KD02Df01.html

The success of an insurgency that grew primarily out of developments within Afghanistan and which incrementally acquired a self-sustaining momentum of its own cannot be attributed exclusively to exogenous factors. At the same time, it is debatable if the Taliban could have demonstrated the same level of resilience or revived their fortunes as much as they ultimately did without the sanctuaries and support they received from Pakistan. The complete transfer of command in 2006 from US-led coalition forces to NATO was seen by Islamabad as further evidence of Washington's desire to cut and run from Afghanistan.²³⁰ Moreover, a growing strategic convergence between the US and India, including the signing of a nuclear cooperation agreement that reversed over three decades of American non-proliferation policies, spurred fears in Pakistan that the US had picked India as its long-term partner in the region.²³¹ In raising the temperature of the Taliban insurgency, Pakistan sought to hedge against a potentially unfavourable emerging regional scenario whereby an imminent US withdrawal might lead to greater Indian involvement in Afghanistan, this time with America's probable encouragement.

Musharraf's decision to grant a safe haven to the Taliban after 9/11 played a critical role in the development of the insurgency. The relocation of the central shura under Mullah Omar's direct command to Quetta was particularly important because of the city's close proximity to the traditional Taliban strongholds in southern Afghanistan. The Taliban were also permitted a foothold in two other major urban centres, Peshawar and Karachi, with the former housing the movement's media and propaganda councils and the latter - Pakistan's largest city and commercial heartland - serving as its financial base.²³² Having stitched up an alliance between the Taliban and Hekmatyar, the ISI allowed the Hizb-i-Islami to operate out of Peshawar as well as the Bajaur and Mohmand agencies in FATA that bordered north-eastern Afghanistan.²³³ In the meantime, the Taliban-affiliated Jalaluddin Haqqani was left unhindered to manage his network out of North Waziristan. Thanks to their bases in Pakistan, the Taliban and their allies were able to "develop their strategies, recruit new members, contact supporters around the world, raise money, and - perhaps most important - enjoy a respite from U.S. combat operations."²³⁴

²³⁰ Barnett R. Rubin and Ahmed Rashid, "From Great Game to Grand Bargain: Ending Chaos in Afghanistan and Pakistan," *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 6 (November/December 2008): 35-36.

²³¹ Even as it signed the nuclear deal with India, the US turned down Pakistan's repeated requests for a similar agreement. See Jo Johnson and Farhan Bokhari, "US Senate approves India nuclear deal," *Financial Times*, November 17, 2006. This led to stark warnings from Islamabad that "a selective and discriminatory approach will have serious implications for the security environment in South Asia." See "Aziz Pleads for Pak-US N-Deal," *Daily Times*, April 6, 2006.

²³² Jones, "The Rise of Afghanistan's Insurgency," 30-31.

²³³ Rubin, "Saving Afghanistan," 71.

²³⁴ Jones, "The Rise of Afghanistan's Insurgency," 31.

Taliban operations in Helmand in 2006, in which they fought British troops to a standstill and eventually forced them to make a humiliating withdrawal, provided NATO with “incontrovertible proof” of covert Pakistani support to the Taliban.²³⁵ Some members of the ISI provided weapons and ammunition to the Taliban and even covered the medical expenses incurred on treating wounded Taliban fighters.²³⁶ US and NATO officials discovered several instances in which the ISI provided intelligence to Taliban insurgents at the “tactical, operational, and strategic levels.”²³⁷ This included alerting Taliban forces about the location and movements of Afghan and coalition troops, which ended up undermining several anti-Taliban military operations.²³⁸ There was increasing evidence of suicide bombers being recruited from Pakistani madrassas and moved to safe houses in Quetta where they were trained and then infiltrated into Afghanistan.²³⁹ The ISI also took no steps to prevent the development of a “lethal cottage industry” in FATA specialising in the production of IEDs, which were then used by the Taliban to devastating effect across the border.²⁴⁰

IV. Standing by his Man

Despite mounting evidence of Pakistan’s footprint in the Taliban insurgency, Bush took no steps to chastise Musharraf, with whom he had struck up a close personal rapport. The continuing latitude given to Musharraf was in line with Washington’s post-9/11 policy to avoid criticism of the Pakistani dictator, no matter how egregious his actions, as long as he remained resolute in the fight against al-Qaeda. Thus, the US simply sat back and watched as Musharraf consolidated his grip on power through a series of patently undemocratic measures. In April 2002, he called a public referendum to have his presidential term extended for another five years and massively rigged it to end up with a winning percentage of 97.5% of the total votes cast.²⁴¹ A few months later, he made amendments to twenty nine articles of the constitution that validated all previous actions taken by his regime and concentrated significant power in the presidential office that he occupied.²⁴² It was the position of army chief, however, that remained the real font of authority. Fully cognisant of

²³⁵ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 360.

²³⁶ Jones, “The Rise of Afghanistan’s Insurgency,” 31-32.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 366-367.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 361.

²⁴¹ Javed Rana, “97.5 per cent say ‘yes’ to Musharraf,” *Nation*, May 2, 2002.

²⁴² The diversion of political power from the prime minister to the president undermined the parliamentary form of government laid out in the Pakistani constitution. See International Crisis Group Asia Report N°40, *Pakistan: Transition to Democracy?* October 3, 2002, accessed July 16, 2015, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/PakistanTransition%20to%20Democracy>

that reality, Musharraf retained his uniform in the declared interest of maintaining “unity of command” and awarded himself a five-year extension in that office.²⁴³

When asked for his response to Musharraf’s political shenanigans, Bush avoided all criticism and confined himself to appreciating Pakistan’s military strongman for being “still tight with us in the war against terror.”²⁴⁴ Washington also made no effort to reprimand Islamabad after Musharraf followed up his constitutional reengineering by massively rigging national elections held in October 2002.²⁴⁵ While international observers identified “serious flaws” in the electoral process, the Bush administration hailed it as “an important milestone in Pakistan’s ongoing transition to democracy.”²⁴⁶ In June 2003, Bush invited Musharraf to the Camp David presidential retreat in Maryland, a privilege granted to very few foreign leaders, where the American president applauded his Pakistani counterpart for being “a courageous leader and friend of the United States” who had apprehended “more than 500 al Qaeda and Taliban terrorists.”²⁴⁷ In recognition of the “leadership” displayed by “this man [Musharraf] and his government,” Bush announced a five-year \$3 billion aid package of security assistance and economic support.²⁴⁸

Desperate to ensure Musharraf’s continued cooperation in the war against al-Qaeda, the Bush administration went to great lengths to avoid any policy position that might have weakened his internal position, especially after he survived the two attempts on his life in December 2003. Washington’s restrained response to the A.Q Khan affair, in which the CIA presented Musharraf with irrefutable evidence of Pakistan’s chief nuclear scientist operating an international nuclear smuggling network, was clearly a case in point. By late 2003, Khan was discovered to have sold nuclear technology to Iran, Libya and North Korea over a period spanning well over a decade and many believed it highly unlikely that the Pakistani military, which had maintained a stranglehold over the nuclear programme since at least the late 1970s, had no inkling of a nuclear black-market spread across ten countries and involving at least thirty middlemen.²⁴⁹ The US made no attempt to investigate the

²⁴³ “Musharraf Defends Power to Sack Government,” *News*, June 23, 2002.

²⁴⁴ Brahma Chellaney, “South Asia: Why isn’t democracy necessary for Pakistanis, too?” *New York Times*, September 3, 2002.

²⁴⁵ Rory McCarthy, “Musharraf regime is ‘rigging election,’” *Guardian*, September 16, 2002.

²⁴⁶ “Pakistan National and Provincial Assembly Election October 10, 2002,” Final Report of the European Union Election Observation Mission (EUEOM), accessed July 20, 2015, http://www.eods.eu/library/FR%20PAKISTAN%202002_en.pdf

²⁴⁷ “President Bush Welcomes President Musharraf to Camp David, June 24, 2003,” US Department of State Archive, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/sca/rls/rm/21878.htm>

²⁴⁸ After the package received Congressional approval, annual instalments of \$600 million each, split evenly between military and economic aid, commenced from FY 2005. See Susan B. Epstein and K. Alan Kronstadt, “Pakistan: U.S. Foreign Assistance,” *Congressional Research Service*, July 1, 2003, accessed July 15, 2015, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41856.pdf>

²⁴⁹ See Gordon Corera, *Shopping for Bombs: Nuclear Proliferation, Global Insecurity, and the Rise and Fall of the A.Q. Khan Network* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); “A.Q. Khan’s Nuclear Wal-

possibility of official complicity in Khan's illicit activities, nor did it put Musharraf under sustained pressure to grant access to the disgraced scientist. Instead, Musharraf was allowed by Washington to handle matters his own way. After persuading Khan to make a public confession on national television, he granted him an official pardon and then placed him under heavily guarded house arrest where he was denied visitors.

The Bush administration was quick to accept Pakistan's response to the crisis, maintained that the affair was Pakistan's "internal matter" and accepted Musharraf's assurances that Khan was acting alone without any official sanction or involvement.²⁵⁰ Thus, the "single worst case of nuclear proliferation in the last 50 years"²⁵¹ was effectively placed in cold storage with "not a squeak from the White House."²⁵² Just months after Musharraf's decision to pardon A.Q. Khan, Bush declared Pakistan a major non-NATO ally of the US, thereby placing it within a select group of American security clients, and ramped up the provision of military assistance.²⁵³ Foreign military sales agreements rose from \$27 million in 2002 to \$492 million in 2005, with Pakistan gaining access to sophisticated American weaponry including surveillance radars; air-traffic control systems; military radio systems; anti-ship, anti-armour and air-to-air missiles; maritime patrol aircraft; and helicopter gunships. The pièce de résistance was a \$5.1 billion agreement in 2006 to provide 36 F-16 combat aircraft along with related spare parts and munitions, constituting the largest-ever American weapons sale to Pakistan.²⁵⁴

Even as it bankrolled Musharraf's regime, the Bush administration continued to look the other way as Musharraf strengthened his dictatorship against its domestic opponents. Having given an undertaking to cast off his military uniform before the end of 2004 in order to secure parliamentary approval for his constitutional changes, he reneged on the agreement and kept holding the dual offices of president and army chief, but the volte face generated no criticism from Washington. In fact, just weeks before the expiry of the deadline for him to vacate the position of army chief, Bush met with Musharraf at the White House but made no mention of democracy; instead, he declared that he was "very pleased"

Mart: Out of Business or Under New Management?" Joint Hearing before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia and the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Non-proliferation, and Trade of the Committee on Foreign Relations, US House of Representatives, One Hundred Tenth Congress, First Session, Serial No. 110-97, June 27, 2007, 2; and Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 289.

²⁵⁰ David Rohde, "U.S. Will Celebrate Pakistan as a 'Major Non-NATO Ally,'" *New York Times*, March 19, 2004.

²⁵¹ "A.Q. Khan's Nuclear Wal-Mart," 2.

²⁵² Unnamed senior American intelligence official quoted in Seymour M. Hersh, "The Deal," *New Yorker*, March 8, 2004, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/03/08/the-deal-3>

²⁵³ Other members of the 'major non-NATO ally' club included Japan, South Korea, Argentina, Thailand, the Philippines, Israel, Australia, New Zealand, Egypt, Jordan, Bahrain and Kuwait. David Rohde, "U.S. Will Celebrate Pakistan."

²⁵⁴ K. Alan Kronstadt, "Pakistan-U.S. Relations," *Congressional Research Service*, October 26, 2006, accessed July 17, 2015, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/75409.pdf>

with Pakistan's efforts to combat al-Qaeda and affirmed that he found "nobody more dedicated" than Musharraf in that regard.²⁵⁵ There was a similar silence on Washington's part after Musharraf rigged local elections in 2005.²⁵⁶ However "regrettable" it may have privately felt such actions to be, the Bush administration clearly did not regard them as sufficiently serious to warrant a reappraisal of its "Musharraf-centric strategy."²⁵⁷

In March 2006, Bush followed up a two-day trip to India in which he formally announced the nuclear pact between the two countries with an overnight visit to Pakistan. The decision to spend at least a night in the country in defiance of security concerns expressed by the American Secret Service was prompted by Musharraf's insistence on avoiding a snub along the lines of the one he had received from Clinton six years ago.²⁵⁸ In Islamabad, Bush ruled out a nuclear deal for Pakistan but reaffirmed his commitment to a "broad and lasting strategic partnership" and was effusive in his public expressions of support for Musharraf, whom he praised for his "plans to spread freedom" and his continuing determination to "bring these terrorists to justice."²⁵⁹ In their private meetings, Bush claimed to have pushed Musharraf to relinquish his military office and govern purely as a civilian but placed no apparent pressure on him to provide a timeline in that regard. He also raised the issue of insurgent infiltration into Afghanistan from Pakistani sanctuaries and was satisfied with Musharraf's assurances of continued cooperation.²⁶⁰

With the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan in full swing, Musharraf visited the White House in September 2006 to sell his recently concluded peace agreement with the militants in FATA as a "treaty" aimed not at negotiating with the Taliban but at actually fighting them. Bush was quick to accept Musharraf's explanation: "When the President looks me in the eye and says, the tribal deal is intended to reject the Talibanisation of the people, and that there won't be a Taliban and won't be al Qaeda, I believe him, you know."²⁶¹ By that time, however, senior NATO commanders in Afghanistan had formed a much more critical opinion of Musharraf's decision to virtually hand over North Waziristan to the militants, thereby drawing their guns away from the Pakistani army and redirecting them exclusively

²⁵⁵ Robin Wright and Peter Baker, "Musharraf: Bin Laden's Location Is Unknown," *Washington Post*, December 5, 2004.

²⁵⁶ Kronstadt, "Pakistan-U.S. Relations," October 26, 2006.

²⁵⁷ Daniel S. Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan: America's Tortured Relationship with Islamabad* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 121.

²⁵⁸ Elisabeth Bumiller, "Bush's Stay in Dangerous Pakistan Rewards an Ally," *New York Times*, March 13, 2006.

²⁵⁹ "President Bush and President Musharraf of Pakistan Discuss Strengthened Relationship," Office of the Press Secretary, March 4, 2006, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2006/03/20060304-2.html>

²⁶⁰ George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010), 215.

²⁶¹ "Remarks by President Bush and President Musharraf of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan," Office of the Press Secretary, September 22, 2006, accessed August 6, 2015, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/sca/rls/pr/2006/72970.htm>

towards Afghanistan.²⁶² By the end of 2006, even the State Department was forced to admit that, as a result of Musharraf's deal, the Taliban had been able to use FATA as a secure base for sanctuary, regrouping, command and control, and supply.²⁶³ As for Musharraf, far from fighting the Taliban through the peace deal as he had professed to do, he told several NATO countries to resign themselves to an insurgent victory in Afghanistan.²⁶⁴

For over five years, the US had given unstinted support to Musharraf in the interests of defeating al-Qaeda. By 2007, however, it finally began to dawn upon the Bush administration that it may have seriously erred in depending so completely upon a man either unwilling to honour his commitments or incapable of doing so. Thanks in large measure to Musharraf's peace deals with the militants in FATA, al-Qaeda had managed to bounce back from the heavy losses sustained and disruption incurred in the initial years after 9/11 by acquiring a new base from which to provide training and financing to its global affiliates. A US National Intelligence Estimate issued in July 2007 warned that al-Qaeda remained America's preeminent terrorist threat and had "protected or regenerated key elements of its Homeland attack capability, including: a safe haven in the Pakistan Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), operational lieutenants, and its top leadership."²⁶⁵

Senior members of the Bush administration including Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defence Robert Gates travelled to Pakistan to take a tougher line with Musharraf but found him reluctant to break the 2006 peace deal with the FATA militants.²⁶⁶ Washington began to issue increasing public criticism of Musharraf's counterterrorism policies and expanded its use of drones in FATA for surveillance as well as targeted killings.²⁶⁷ Bush admitted in his memoirs that his friend had let him down: "Over time, it

²⁶² Declan Walsh, "Musharraf faces new questions over Taliban," *Guardian*, October 9, 2006.

²⁶³ Anwar Iqbal, "Taliban Command Structure in FATA Alarms US," *Dawn*, December 28, 2006.

²⁶⁴ Ahmed Rashid, "Accept defeat by Taliban, Pakistan tells Nato," *Telegraph*, November 29, 2006.

²⁶⁵ "National Intelligence Estimate: The Terrorist Threat to the US Homeland," Director of National Intelligence, July 2007, accessed July 20, 2015, http://www.dni.gov/files/documents/NIE_terrorist%20threat%202007.pdf

²⁶⁶ Gates gave Musharraf a specific list of "actions we wanted Pakistan to take, actions we could take together, and actions the US was prepared to take alone." The list included: "capture three named Taliban and extremist leaders; give the US expanded authority to take action against specific Taliban and al Qaeda leaders and targets in Pakistan; dismantle insurgent and terrorist camps; shut down the Taliban headquarters in Quetta and Peshawar; disrupt certain major infiltration routes across the border; enhance intelligence cooperation and streamline Pakistani decision making on targeting; allow expanded ISR flights over Pakistan; establish joint border security monitoring centers manned by Pakistanis, Afghans and coalition forces; and improve cooperation for military planning and operations in Pak." In response, Musharraf "kept a straight face and pretended to take all this seriously" but made no effort to comply. Gates, *Duty*, 204-205.

²⁶⁷ Although Musharraf had publicly protested the drone strikes as a violation of Pakistani sovereignty since they were first used in 2004, he had secretly permitted the US to operate them from a base in Balochistan. See Steve Coll, "The Unblinking Stare," *New Yorker*, November 24, 2014, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/11/24/unblinking-stare>

became clear that Musharraf either would not or could not fulfil all his promises. Part of the problem was Pakistan's obsession with India. The fight against the extremists came second. A related problem was that Pakistani forces pursued the Taliban much less aggressively than they pursued al Qaeda."²⁶⁸ This belated recognition of Musharraf's counterproductive policies did not lead to any diminution in American backing for his regime; in 2007, Pakistan received \$1.7 billion in total US aid, of which \$1.12 billion was security-related.²⁶⁹

At the start of 2007, Musharraf had appeared to be in an impregnable position both at home and abroad. By the end of that year, however, his days in power were clearly numbered. His downfall was set in motion by a decision to sack Pakistan's top judge, who had been displaying a worrying streak of judicial activism. The judge's removal sparked a movement launched by Pakistan's lawyers for his reinstatement that quickly grew into a popular rebellion against Musharraf's rule in which the lawyers were joined by Musharraf's political opponents as well as broad segments of civil society. Even as Musharraf unsuccessfully attempted to stamp out the movement by unleashing his security forces on the protestors, another crisis was brewing in the heart of Islamabad, where hundreds of heavily armed militants from a range of indigenous extremist groups had occupied a mosque compound called Lal Masjid (Red Mosque), from which they called on the government to impose Islamic law in the country. After procrastinating for six months, during which the clerical leaders of the mosque let loose a vigilante force of male and female madrassa students to patrol the streets of Islamabad and crack down on perceived immorality, Musharraf bowed to growing international pressure and sent in the army to clear the compound.²⁷⁰

Following a 36-hour gun battle, the Pakistani security forces finally prevailed after losing nine of their soldiers and killing around one hundred militants and students during the eight-day siege of the compound.²⁷¹ The mosque had for long been a recruiting ground for hard-core militants and was known for its sympathies with al-Qaeda, which now reacted by calling for revenge against Musharraf and the army.²⁷² That proved to be a clarion call for the militants in FATA led by Baituallah Mehsud, who terminated the peace deal with the government and declared jihad against the Pakistani state. The storming of the Red Mosque

²⁶⁸ Bush, *Decision Points*, 213.

²⁶⁹ K. Alan Kronstadt, "Direct Overt U.S. Aid and Military Reimbursements to Pakistan, FY2002-FY2012," *Congressional Research Service*, May 6, 2011, accessed July 16, 2015, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/163139.pdf>

²⁷⁰ For a detailed account of the Lal Masjid affair, see Manjeet S. Pardesi, "The Battle for the Soul of Pakistan at Islamabad's Red Mosque," in *Treading on Hallowed Ground: Counterinsurgency Operations in Sacred Spaces*, ed. C. Christine Fair and Sumit Ganguly (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 88-116.

²⁷¹ Declan Walsh, "73 bodies recovered at end of mosque siege," *Guardian*, July 12, 2007.

²⁷² Pardesi, "The Battle for the Soul of Pakistan," 107.

was followed by a dramatic rise in suicide bombings across the country.²⁷³ By then, the process of Talibanisation initiated in South Waziristan in 2004 had permeated to varying degrees across FATA and was spilling over into settled districts of NWFP such as Swat. In December 2007, a host of disparate militant outfits operating in FATA coalesced under Baitullah Mehsud's leadership to form the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) or Taliban Movement of Pakistan, a loosely structured umbrella organisation of around 40,000 fighters²⁷⁴ closely affiliated with al-Qaeda, which lent both ideological guidance and strategic direction.²⁷⁵

In the meantime, the sacked chief justice, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, had been restored to his original position by the judiciary and was threatening to block Musharraf's plans to have himself re-elected for another five-year term by the existing parliament whilst still wearing his military uniform. Despite growing evidence of widespread popular disenchantment with Musharraf within Pakistan, Bush continued to stand by his man, especially after the Lal Masjid crisis reinforced the perception in Washington that only a pro-US military dictator could prevent Pakistan from succumbing to an extremist takeover. Thus, there was no public condemnation by the US of Musharraf's attempts to emasculate the judiciary; instead, it confined itself to futile statements urging patience and compromise. Moreover, rather than acknowledging Musharraf as a major liability that needed to be discarded in America's own self-interest, the Bush administration tried merely to "soften the face" of his dictatorship by attempting a "shotgun wedding" between Musharraf and the exiled Benazir Bhutto.²⁷⁶ Following secret meetings between the two that were sponsored by the US, Bhutto returned to Pakistan in October 2007 but the deal came apart just weeks later when Musharraf declared a state of emergency, a cover for what was effectively an imposition of martial law.²⁷⁷

²⁷³ Suicide attacks rose from seven in 2006 to fifty six in 2007, with fatalities rising from 161 to 766. Amir Mir, "Pakistan: The suicide-bomb capital of the world," *Asia Times Online*, September 16, 2011, accessed July 20, 2015, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/MI16Df04.html

²⁷⁴ The consolidation of over a dozen distinct groups into a unified entity did not, however, result in a strong, centralised system of command and control. Instead, the TTP became a broad umbrella grouping of militants from FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as well as "splinter factions and freelancers" from established Punjabi groups that provided the "crucial capability to project power into Pakistan's heartland and its capital." See Tankel, "Domestic Barriers," 13.

²⁷⁵ In addition to its links with al-Qaeda, the TTP was also closely aligned with the Afghan Taliban. Although operationally autonomous, the organisation proclaimed Mullah Omar as its supreme leader and pledged ultimate loyalty to him. Amir Mir, "Of Pakistani jihadi groups and their al-Qaeda and intelligence links," *News*, March 24, 2009.

²⁷⁶ Riedel, *Avoiding Armageddon*, 157.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.* The US-brokered deal between Musharraf and Bhutto envisaged the latter returning to Pakistan following the withdrawal of corruption cases against both Bhutto and her husband. She would then contest elections set for later in the year and become prime minister in a power-sharing deal with Musharraf, who would remain president but eventually vacate the position of army chief. While Bhutto would tend to domestic affairs, Musharraf would retain control over national security matters.

With the judicial sword hanging over his plans to remain both president and army chief, Musharraf struck by declaring a state of emergency on November 3, 2007. He suspended the constitution, again sacked the chief justice of the Supreme Court and removed other judges of that court who declared his act illegal. Over sixty senior judges around the country were removed for refusing to take an oath to abide by Musharraf's new dispensation. Police swung into action against lawyers, politicians and human rights activists, and independent television channels were taken off the air.²⁷⁸ In an attempt to convince his Western supporters that his decision to impose martial law was not driven exclusively by the instinct for self-preservation, Musharraf claimed that it would facilitate the army to fight terrorism more effectively. However, on the same day that the emergency was declared, the army released twenty eight terrorists from jail, including eight self-confessed suicide bombers, in exchange for Baitullah Mehsud freeing around three hundred soldiers that he had taken hostage.²⁷⁹

In response to Musharraf's promulgation of martial law, Bush urged a speedy return to democracy and called on his Pakistani ally to divest himself of his uniform "as soon as possible" but gave no indication of any change in US policy in case Musharraf ignored his pleas and continued to praise him as a "strong fighter against extremists and radicals."²⁸⁰ In private, however, even Bush had realised by then that a Musharraf-centric policy was no longer a sustainable option but was nevertheless worried that "throwing him overboard would add to the chaos."²⁸¹ Even as Musharraf's political isolation grew at home, leading him in turn to pursue increasingly dictatorial policies, Bush refused to be the one to "pull the rug out from under him" and attempted almost until Musharraf's eventual resignation to somehow keep him in office.²⁸² Thus, the US supported Musharraf's re-election as president by his parliamentary allies for another five-year term but convinced him to finally retire as army chief, lift the state of emergency and announce elections for January 2008. However, any lingering hopes that Washington might have had of stitching up a power-sharing deal between Musharraf and Benazir Bhutto were dashed when the latter was assassinated in a gun and suicide bomb attack in Rawalpindi on December 27, 2007.

²⁷⁸ For a detailed account of Musharraf's actions and their implications, see International Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°70, *Winding Back Martial Law in Pakistan*, November 12, 2007, accessed July 17, 2015, http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/b70_winding_back_martial_law_in_pakistan.pdf

²⁷⁹ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 387.

²⁸⁰ Mark Mazzetti, "Bush Urges Musharraf to Reverse Course but Signals No Penalty if He Doesn't," *New York Times*, November 6, 2007.

²⁸¹ Bush, *Decision Points*, 216.

²⁸² Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honour* (New York: Crown, 2011), 610.

Bhutto's murder ironically ended up being the last nail in Musharraf's own political coffin. He tried to delay the inevitable by postponing elections for another month but could not prevent a resounding defeat for his party at the hands of its opponents, chiefly Bhutto's PPP - now led by her widower Asif Ali Zardari - and the PML-N of Nawaz Sharif, who had been allowed to come back to Pakistan shortly after Bhutto's homecoming in October 2007. Once bitter antagonists, the PPP and PML-N now joined forces to form a coalition government after resisting pressure from the US to align themselves with Musharraf's party - the PML-Q (Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid-i-Azam) - and other pro-Musharraf political forces.²⁸³ Even though the election results had shown quite emphatically how unpopular Musharraf had become, he clung on to the presidency in the hope that his most powerful domestic and external constituencies, the Pakistani army and the United States, would continue to prop him up. Before long, however, both constituencies disabused him of that hope.

In his capacity as a civilian president, Musharraf no longer enjoyed the same level of control over the military's policies as he had exercised whilst army chief and there were increasing signs of his hand-picked replacement, General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, seeking to distance the military from what had by then become Musharraf's toxic political legacy. Kayani's refusal to manipulate the 2008 elections in favour of Musharraf's allies sent a signal to his former boss of his intention to curtail the military's involvement in politics.²⁸⁴ With a popularly elected government in Pakistan comprising largely secular and moderate parties bitterly opposed to Musharraf and a new military leadership seemingly more focused on professional capacity-building rather than political intrigue, the deeply unpopular Pakistani president now seemed even to long-standing patrons in Washington as an undesirable anachronism that had outlived its utility.

Facing threats of impeachment from his political adversaries who now enjoyed a clear parliamentary majority, Musharraf found that he could no longer count on the support of the army or the US in case he took steps to ward off his removal from office. On August 18, 2008, in his ninth year in power, Musharraf resigned the presidency after being informed by Kayani that the military would not back any presidential move to dismiss parliament.²⁸⁵ The

²⁸³ Ansar Abbasi, "Zardari resisted US, Presidency pressures," *News*, February 22, 2008; and Raja Asghar, "Pressure on Asif, Nawaz to work with president," *Dawn*, February 23, 2008.

²⁸⁴ See Tim Johnson, "Pakistan military retreats from Musharraf's influence," *McClatchy Newspapers*, January 18, 2008, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2008/01/18/25011/pakistan-military-retreats-from.html>

Also see Zahid Hussain and Peter Wonacott, "Quiet General Tries to Keep Army Out of Politics," *Wall Street Journal*, August 22, 2008; and Mark Tran, "Pakistan: The key players in Pervez Musharraf's downfall," *Guardian*, August 18, 2008.

²⁸⁵ Aamir Latif, "Time Seems to Be Running Out for Pakistan's Embattled President," *U.S. News and World Report*, August 15, 2008, accessed July 20, 2015,

US, which had by then declared Musharraf's future to be a matter purely for the "internal Pakistani political process," was cautious in its reaction to his departure from Pakistan's political scene.²⁸⁶ While Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice praised him as a "friend to the United States and one of the world's most committed partners in the war against terrorism and extremism,"²⁸⁷ there was complete silence from Bush himself about the exit of a man with whom he had enjoyed a "good friendship"²⁸⁸ and on whose regime he had by then lavished at least \$12 billion over the last six years.²⁸⁹

According to one American expert on Pakistan, Musharraf's abiding failure was that "he wanted to be liked by everybody and he changed his appearance and his style accordingly. Towards the Americans, he was the tough anti-Islamist guy; to the Islamists, he was their buddy. He tried to be everything to everybody but never really had a mind of his own." At the same time, however, he "fooled the Americans just as skilfully as Zia, if not better; both men get an A-plus on that score."²⁹⁰ Another Pakistan expert in the US maintains that while Zia and Musharraf both possessed a certain degree of charm and were "personable" individuals, the major difference between them was Musharraf's secular orientation and his articulation of a "moderate" Islam, the kind of Islam "that the US wanted to hear about."²⁹¹ Initially, Musharraf appeared to the US as "someone that we could not only do business with but who could also deliver for us in a number of ways," only to discover later that "he was willing to go just so far and that there was no way the military was going to give up on its assets."²⁹² A former American ambassador to Pakistan considers Musharraf "effectively a replay of Zia, a reincarnation in every respect except for the Islamisation part."²⁹³

Conclusion

George W. Bush's policy of propping up the regime of General Pervez Musharraf in spite of its many imperfections was based on his overarching strategic goal of destroying al-Qaeda. Allied to that, but of lesser consequence, were the objectives of defeating the Taliban, stabilising Afghanistan and ending Pakistani support to home-grown militants

<http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2008/08/15/time-seems-to-be-running-out-for-pakistans-embattled-president>; and "Pakistan's Musharraf to Resign, Leave the Country," *Newsweek*, August 16, 2008, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www.newsweek.com/pakistans-musharraf-resign-leave-country-88401>

²⁸⁶ Ashraf Khan, "US says no meddling to save Musharraf," *USA Today*, March 27, 2008, accessed July 20, 2015, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-03-27-2929605478_x.htm

²⁸⁷ Saeed Shah, "Pervez Musharraf resigns as president of Pakistan," *Guardian*, August 18, 2008.

²⁸⁸ "President Bush and President Musharraf of Pakistan Discuss Strengthened Relationship."

²⁸⁹ "Direct Overt U.S. Aid Appropriations for and Military Reimbursements to Pakistan, FY2002-FY2015," *Congressional Research Service*, December 22, 2014, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/pakaid.pdf>

²⁹⁰ Interview with Stephen P. Cohen.

²⁹¹ Interview with Marvin Weinbaum.

²⁹² Interview with Marvin Weinbaum.

²⁹³ Interview with William B. Milam, Washington, D.C., 15 November 2013.

operating in both Afghanistan and Kashmir. There can be little doubt that Pakistan's cooperation played a critical role both in the speedy overthrow of the Taliban as well as in significant damage to al-Qaeda in the initial years after 9/11. Responding to massive financial inducements and the occasional mild arm-twisting, Musharraf rounded up or killed hundreds of al-Qaeda personnel, incurring retaliatory attacks on his own life in the process. He also curtailed cross-border infiltration into Kashmir and launched a partial crackdown on Pakistani militant and sectarian outfits.

The overall relationship between the US and Pakistan, however, continued to suffer from a fundamental divergence of interests. Musharraf's rationale in aligning himself with the US after 9/11 stemmed primarily from the Pakistani military's traditional preoccupation with the threat from India. Siding with the US against the Taliban - at least in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 - and al-Qaeda was deemed necessary in order to protect Pakistan's nuclear weapons from Indian designs against them; secure greater American engagement in trying to resolve Kashmir; forestall the possibility of a potentially anti-Pakistan alliance between Washington and New Delhi; and prevent India from establishing a foothold in post-Taliban Afghanistan. Much of the weaponry purchased from the US by Pakistan after 9/11 - especially fighter jets, maritime aircraft and air-to-air missiles - were clearly intended for conventional use against India rather than for counter-terrorism or counter-insurgency purposes.

Like Zia before him, Musharraf endeavoured to make full use of America's need for Pakistan's services without making any major compromise on what he and his fellow generals viewed as their country's core strategic interests. Thus, a distinction was drawn between al-Qaeda and its affiliated Pakistani sectarian groups on the one hand and the Afghan Taliban and Kashmir-focused militant groups on the other; while the former were viewed as threats that needed to be confronted, the latter were still seen as strategic assets worthy of continued support, especially after India dramatically increased its presence in post-Taliban Afghanistan and the US shifted its attention and resources towards Iraq.

Even as Bush turned on the aid pipeline and showered his Pakistani counterpart with praise for his courageous leadership, Musharraf allowed the Taliban to regroup in Quetta and launch attacks inside Afghanistan. Although Washington realised Musharraf's double game from fairly early on, it made no attempt to hold him to account, since its overriding focus was on al-Qaeda and not the Taliban. It was not until 2006, when the Taliban insurgency underwent a dramatic escalation, that the US became more critical of Pakistan's policies in Afghanistan. However, aid continued as before, including an average of a billion dollars a year in reimbursements to the Pakistani military for its counterterrorism operations.

There was a continuing reluctance on Washington's part to take any action that might jeopardise Pakistan's cooperation against al-Qaeda but by then, even progress on that front had slowed down considerably. The top leadership of al-Qaeda remained intact and was widely alleged to be headquartered in FATA. The army's half-hearted forays into FATA were prompted more by American pressure rather than a desire to extirpate militancy and terrorism from Pakistan. Musharraf's several peace deals with FATA's militants facilitated not only the resurgence of both the Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda but set the stage for Pakistan's confrontation with its own Frankenstein monster in the shape of the Pakistani Taliban. By the time Musharraf left office, the Pakistani army was fighting in all seven agencies of FATA and the TTP were in total or partial control of many parts of the tribal belt.²⁹⁴

²⁹⁴ Tanel, "Domestic Barriers," 13.

CHAPTER SIX: DIFFERENT APPROACH, SIMILAR RESULTS - OBAMA AND PAKISTAN

Between 2002, when the US began to effectively bankroll the Musharraf regime, and 2008, when Musharraf finally exited from power, the Bush administration poured in almost \$9 billion in overt military aid to Pakistan.¹ The overwhelming part of this assistance - around \$7 billion - was technically not aid but instead fell under the head of Coalition Support Funds (CSF), that is, compensation for Pakistani military operations conducted in support of America's vital national security objectives in the region, chief amongst them being the fight against al-Qaeda. According to some estimates, declared military aid could well have been matched, if not surpassed, by covert cash flows as monetary rewards for specific Pakistani counter-terrorism efforts.² In his biography, Musharraf boasted of having received "millions of dollars" in "prize money" from the CIA for handing over almost 400 suspected al-Qaeda operatives.³

Having invested so much for so long in Musharraf and his military regime, it took the Bush administration until its final year in office to wake up to the disconcerting reality that it had received nowhere near its money's worth. Osama bin Laden had not been captured nor his network eliminated. Although al-Qaeda suffered some serious reverses, especially during the initial years after 9/11, it had bounced back, in no small part owing to Musharraf's misguided policy of striking peace deals with its Pakistani allies in FATA. A February 2008 threat assessment prepared by the US Director of National Intelligence declared that by using FATA as a "staging area," al-Qaeda had been able to maintain "a cadre of skilled lieutenants capable of directing the organization's operations around the world."⁴ Another key US objective, defeating the Taliban in Afghanistan, remained similarly unfulfilled. Like bin Laden, Mullah Omar eluded capture and allegedly remained under the ISI's protection in Quetta. In the meantime, his insurgents continued to use Pakistani sanctuaries to mount increasingly lethal attacks inside Afghanistan.

¹ K. Alan Kronstadt and Susan Epstein, "Direct Overt U.S. Aid Appropriations and Military Reimbursements to Pakistan, FY2002-FY2013," *Congressional Research Service*, July 27, 2012, accessed July 17, 2015, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/196189.pdf>

² Craig Cohen and Derek Chollet, "When \$10 Billion Is Not Enough: Rethinking U.S. Strategy toward Pakistan," *Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (Spring 2007), 11-12.

³ Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, 237.

⁴ "Annual Threat Assessment of the Director of National Intelligence for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence," February 5, 2008, accessed May 20, 2015, <http://www.intelligence.senate.gov/080205/mcconnell.pdf>

By 2008, America's combined economic and military assistance to Pakistan over a six-year period amounted to over \$12 billion. Additionally, between 2002 and 2006, it approved arms sales worth another \$8.4 billion.⁵ Such largesse placed Pakistan amongst the world's leading recipients of American aid but was neither able to secure full Pakistani compliance with America's strategic interests nor ensure Pakistan's internal stability. Militant violence witnessed a precipitous rise during 2007, the last full year of Musharraf's rule, and continued to escalate the following year, with a spate of deadly suicide bombings across the country.⁶ Significant pockets of territory, not only in FATA but even in settled districts of the NWFP (which became Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2010) such as Swat, fell to the militants, despite the deployment of over 100,000 army and paramilitary troops in western Pakistan.⁷ Instead of confronting the forces of extremism, the new civilian government decided to appease them. In May 2008, Pakistani officials concluded a deal with pro-TTP extremists in Swat by which the government agreed to a phased withdrawal and consented to the establishment of Islamic courts in the area in exchange for the militants agreeing to discontinue their attacks on government forces.⁸

Prior to succeeding Musharraf as army chief, General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani had spearheaded the ISI from 2004 to 2007, a period in which al-Qaeda consolidated its redoubt in the tribal areas, the Pakistani Taliban became a force to be reckoned with and the Afghan Taliban formalised their comeback by launching a full-blown insurgency inside Afghanistan. As head of the ISI, Kayani had been the primary executor of Musharraf's dual policy of selectively targeting some militants to placate the US and keep the aid spigot running but leaving unmolested, or even directly or indirectly supporting, those deemed to be strategic assets against India or in Afghanistan.

Having become army chief, Kayani showed no inclination to jettison his predecessor's approach. In July 2008, the Indian embassy in Kabul was bombed by militants from the Haqqani network, leaving 54 people dead. Based on intercepted communications between ISI officials and the perpetrators, US intelligence agencies held the ISI directly responsible for planning the operation and claimed to have fresh evidence of ISI officials increasingly providing the militants with advance notice of impending American operations against

⁵ Cohen and Chollet, "When \$10 Billion Is Not Enough," 13.

⁶ From just two suicide bombings in 2002, the number had risen to 59 by 2008. See "United States National Counterterrorism Centre 2008 Report on Terrorism," accessed May 30, 2015, http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/terror_08.pdf

⁷ Jason Burke, "Pakistan warns west: we cannot fight al-Qaida if crisis escalates," *Guardian*, December 1, 2008.

⁸ Faris Ali, "Pakistan signs peace pact with militants in Swat," *Reuters*, May 21, 2008, accessed July 1, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2008/05/21/us-pakistan-militants-idUSISL13924320080521>

them.⁹ Under growing American pressure to rein in the ISI, the new elected government in Islamabad made a half-baked attempt to bring the agency under civilian control but quickly backed down when the army high command angrily resisted the move, leaving nobody in any doubt as to where ultimate power in Pakistan still resided.¹⁰

In November 2008, just weeks after the election of Barack Obama as America's next president, the repercussions of Pakistan's ambivalent approach to countering militancy were on gory display in India's commercial capital of Mumbai, when 10 terrorists belonging to the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, officially outlawed by the Pakistan government still enjoying unchecked freedom of movement, mounted coordinated attacks that had been planned in Pakistan and which left 175 people dead, including six Americans. The head of the ISI at the time, General Ahmed Shuja Pasha, admitted to his American interlocutors that the planners included at least two retired army officers with ISI links but that the operation did not have the agency's sanction.¹¹ However, one of the key suspects held in connection with the attacks subsequently confessed during interrogation that serving mid-level ISI officers were involved in operational planning, although the agency's high command may not have been aware of the actual nature and scope of the operation before it was launched.¹²

The Bush administration's post-9/11 policy choices in both Afghanistan and Pakistan signified a failure of substantial proportions. Afghanistan was neither pacified nor rebuilt, al-Qaeda was driven out but only as far as Pakistan's tribal belt across the border and both attention and resources were increasingly diverted towards what turned out to be an even greater misadventure in Iraq. With respect to Pakistan, the administration's approach was similarly myopic and blighted by inherent contradictions that remained unresolved, not least amongst them being the decision to prop up a military ruler whilst ostensibly championing democracy promotion across the Muslim world. The sudden turnaround in relations between the US and Pakistan necessitated by 9/11 increasingly became a "rickety foundation" upon which to erect America's regional strategy.¹³ According to a contemporary American expert on Pakistan, the US erred in defining the terms of its counter-terrorism cooperation with Pakistan too narrowly: "Lurching from crisis to crisis, Washington lacked a vision for its relationship with Islamabad broader than the desire to

⁹ Mark Mazzetti and Eric Schmitt, "Pakistanis Aided Attack in Kabul, U.S. Officials Say," *New York Times*, August 1, 2008.

¹⁰ Omar Waraich, "Pakistan's Spies Elude Its Government," *Time*, July 31, 2008, accessed July 1, 2015, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1828207,00.html>

¹¹ Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 46.

¹² Jason Burke, "Pakistan intelligence services 'aided Mumbai terror attacks,'" *Guardian*, October 19, 2010.

¹³ Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan*, 134.

keep Afghanistan and Pakistan on the rails long enough to see bin Laden dead and buried.”¹⁴

I. Obama and AF-PAK

During his election campaign, Democratic Senator Barack Obama had been strident in his criticism of the Bush administration’s policy of prioritising Iraq over Afghanistan, which he declared the “central front in the war on terror.” If elected president, he vowed to end the war in Iraq and make the battle against al-Qaeda and the Taliban “the top priority that it should be.” While promising to send additional troops to Afghanistan to fight the insurgents, Obama declared that the greatest threat to American security resided not in Afghanistan itself but rather in Pakistan’s tribal areas, where both al-Qaeda and the Taliban enjoyed sanctuary and support. The presidential aspirant emphasised that Bush’s decision to provide “a blank check to a general” had been a failure and that the US had to move beyond a “purely military alliance based on convenience” or else confront “mounting popular opposition in a nuclear-armed nation at the nexus of terror and radical Islam.”¹⁵

Shortly after his inauguration as president, Obama appointed former senior diplomat Richard Holbrooke as his Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (SRAP) and commissioned former CIA analyst and South Asia expert Bruce Riedel to conduct a strategic review of American policies in what the administration lumped together as “AF-PAK.”¹⁶ Based on the findings of the strategic policy review, Obama announced in March 2009 that his administration had “a clear and focused goal” to “disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future.” While calling on Pakistan to show its commitment to “rooting out al-Qaeda and the violent extremists within its borders,” Obama promised a departure from America’s usual policy of “providing a blank check” to successive Pakistani military regimes and undertook to forge a new relationship “grounded in support for Pakistan’s democratic institutions and the Pakistani people.”¹⁷

¹⁴ Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan*, 134.

¹⁵ “Text of Obama’s Remarks on Iraq and Afghanistan,” *New York Times*, July 15, 2008.

¹⁶ Richard Holbrooke is credited with inventing the term “AF-PAK” as indicative of the Obama administration’s desire to pursue a regional approach to the conflict in Afghanistan that recognised Pakistan’s central role in the attainment of the core objective of eliminating al-Qaeda. See Charlotte Kennedy, “After ‘AfPak,’ What Next?” *Foreign Policy*, April 24, 2014, accessed July 1, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/04/24/after-afpak-what-next/>

¹⁷ “Remarks by the President on a new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan,” Office of the Press Secretary, March 27, 2009, accessed May 26, 2015, https://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-a-New-Strategy-for-Afghanistan-and-Pakistan/

A white paper containing the detailed findings and recommendations of the strategic review delineated the various aspects of the new administration's strategy for U.S.-Pakistan relations, including bolstering Afghanistan-Pakistan cooperation; focusing Pakistan on the common threat; strengthening Pakistan's counterterrorism capabilities; increasing and broadening non-military aid; exploring previously untapped areas of economic cooperation; building up Pakistani governmental capacity; and asking allied countries to contribute more aid to Afghanistan and Pakistan.¹⁸ The administration subsequently supported Congressional efforts to pass legislation authorising a substantial increase in non-military assistance to Pakistan.

Taking its name from its main sponsors in Congress, the Kerry-Lugar-Berman bill (known more commonly by the acronym KLB) sought to raise US developmental aid to Pakistan to roughly \$1.5 billion annually for a period of five years.¹⁹ While military aid and reimbursements would continue to be provided, the KLB imposed stringent conditions that Pakistan would have to meet in order to qualify for security assistance. For instance, the US Secretary of State would have to certify annually before Congress that Pakistan was "continuing to cooperate with the United States in efforts to dismantle supplier networks relating to the acquisition of nuclear weapons-related materials..."²⁰ Another mandatory certification would have to be issued of Pakistan's "sustained commitment" towards combating terrorist outfits, including the extent to which it had made progress in:

- (i) ceasing support, including by any elements within the Pakistan military or its intelligence agency, to extremist and terrorist groups, particularly to any group that has conducted attacks against United States or coalition forces in Afghanistan, or against the territory or people of neighbouring countries;
- (ii) preventing al Qaeda, the Taliban and associated terrorist groups, such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed, from operating in the territory of Pakistan, including carrying out cross-border attacks into neighbouring countries, closing terrorist camps in the FATA, dismantling terrorist bases of operations in other parts of the country, including Quetta and Muridke, and taking action when provided with intelligence about high-level terrorist targets;
- (iii) strengthening counterterrorism and anti-money laundering laws; and

¹⁸ "White Paper of the Interagency Policy Group's Report on U.S. Policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan," accessed May 26, 2015, https://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/Afghanistan-Pakistan_White_Paper.pdf

¹⁹ The bill was named after its three principal Congressional sponsors, namely, Senators John Kerry and Richard Lugar and Congressman Howard Berman.

²⁰ "Text of the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009", accessed May 26, 2015, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-111publ73/html/PLAW-111publ73.htm>

- (iv) the security forces of Pakistan are not materially and substantially subverting the political or judicial processes of Pakistan.

The bill allowed the Secretary of State, acting on the authority of the President, to waive the above limitations if it was “important to the national security interests of the United States to do so.” In October 2009, Congress passed the KLB bill as the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act, which senior administration officials such as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton trumpeted as the opening of “a historic chapter” in bilateral relations that would “strengthen the bonds of friendship and cooperation between the American people and the people of Pakistan.”²¹ Within Pakistan, however, the new legislation immediately generated a storm of controversy and criticism, especially from the military itself, which publicly expressed its “serious concerns” about the impact of the aid package on “national security.”²² The civilian government led by President Asif Ali Zardari - who had been elected to office after Musharraf’s resignation - and his handpicked Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani welcomed the prospect of more American dollars to revive an economy paralysed largely by the government’s own corruption and incompetence. However, the opposition parties in parliament, backed up by a raucous Pakistani media, loudly and angrily denounced the “insulting” language of the new legislation.²³

Stunned by the vehemence of Pakistani opprobrium when they had probably been expecting the fervent thanks of a grateful nation, the sponsors of the KLB legislation quickly issued an explanatory statement clarifying that it did not “seek in any way to compromise Pakistan’s sovereignty, impinge on Pakistan’s national security interests, or micromanage any aspect of Pakistani military or civilian operations.”²⁴ The assurance managed to assuage wounded sentiments in Pakistan, which in any case was in no position to actually spurn the American aid offer. In fact, the army could well have engineered the domestic backlash in order to further strengthen its hand against an already beleaguered civilian government.²⁵ Yet, the diplomatic fracas surrounding the aid package underscored once again the gaping chasm of mistrust between two countries supposedly allied in a close strategic partnership.

²¹ “Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s Remarks with Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi After Their Meeting,” October 6, 2009, accessed May 26, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2009a/10/130314.htm>

²² “Corps commanders express concern over Kerry-Lugar,” *Dawn*, October 8, 2009.

²³ Jane Perlez and Ismail Khan, “Aid Package from U.S. Jolts Army in Pakistan,” *New York Times*, October 7, 2009.

²⁴ “Chairman Kerry And Chairman Berman Release Joint Explanatory Statement To Accompany Enhanced Partnership With Pakistan Act Of 2009,” October 14, 2009, accessed May 27, 2015, <http://www.foreign.senate.gov/press/chair/release/chairman-kerry-and-chairman-berman-release-joint-explanatory-statement-to-accompany-enhanced-partnership-with-pakistan-act-of-2009>

²⁵ Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan*, 144.

By 2010, total US aid to Pakistan comprising both military and non-military assistance increased to \$4.3 billion, representing a 2,185 per cent increase over pre-9/11 levels and making Pakistan the second largest recipient of American aid, behind Afghanistan but ahead of Israel.²⁶ While the increase in developmental assistance was important in signalling America's intention to broaden the scope of its engagement with Pakistan, it was never intended to be a major policy objective in and of itself. Instead, it was to be used as a complement to the Obama administration's core security interests in the region: destroying al-Qaeda's terrorist infrastructure erected in Pakistan's tribal areas, finding a face-saving exit from the quagmire in Afghanistan and preventing extremists in Pakistan from getting their hands on a nuclear weapon. Pakistani cooperation was deemed critical for the attainment of all three objectives. Like his predecessor, Obama sought to purchase that cooperation but, as was the case under Bush, the results were mixed. While willing - albeit under sustained American pressure - to mount operations against al-Qaeda and the TTP, the Pakistani army high command continued its hedging strategy of tolerating those groups that could serve its strategic interests in the future, especially once the US withdrew from Afghanistan.

Months after Obama took office, the civilian government in Pakistan, no doubt with the prior approval of the army, concluded a deal with TTP militants in the Swat district of the NWFP (currently Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) whereby courts would be set up to dispense justice in line with Islamic law in exchange for the militants agreeing to renounce violence against the state. Public pressure on both the elected government as well as the army to negotiate with the militants instead of fighting what was widely perceived as "America's war" had been mounting ever since it came to power.²⁷ Popular opinion within Pakistan overwhelmingly held US policies in the region as well as in the wider Middle East directly responsible for the rise in terrorist violence and was particularly embittered by America's growing use of drone strikes, which were seen as a blatant violation of state sovereignty.²⁸ Moreover, the collateral damage inflicted by drones in the tribal areas was seen as a direct cause of the terrorist retribution consequently visited on Pakistan's cities.²⁹

As was the case with previous peace deals, the Swat agreement soon unravelled, largely because the militants had no intention of abiding by its terms and simply wanted a lull in the fighting in which to regroup and consolidate their numbers. Instead of confining themselves

²⁶ Epstein and Kronstadt, "Pakistan: U.S. Foreign Assistance."

²⁷ Matthew J. Nelson, "Pakistan in 2009: Tackling the Taliban?" *Asian Survey* 50, no. 1 (January/February 2010), 118.

²⁸ Out of a total of 48 drone strikes in Pakistan during the Bush presidency, 36 took place in 2008, Bush's final year in office. "Drone Wars Pakistan: Analysis," *New America International Security Program*, accessed July 16, 2015, <http://securitydata.newamerica.net/drones/pakistan-analysis.html>

²⁹ Jones and Fair, *Counterinsurgency in Pakistan*, 25.

to Swat, TTP militants took over the adjoining district of Buner, just sixty miles from the Pakistani capital of Islamabad, setting off alarm bells in Washington. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton berated the Pakistan government for “basically abdicating to the Taliban and the extremists” and issued a shrill warning that the situation posed “a mortal threat to the security and safety of our country and the world.”³⁰ The TTP’s refusal to abide by the Swat agreement and growing evidence of its brutal excesses quickly swung public opinion in Pakistan against further negotiations and in favour of military action.³¹ Emboldened by greater public support, the army launched a heavy-handed conventional operation against the TTP in Swat and adjoining districts that eventually cleared those areas but not without causing massive displacement of the local population.³² By mid-2010, however, most of the displaced residents had returned to their native areas and law and order had been restored to the region, albeit only through the army’s continued occupation.³³

The Swat operation triggered off a spate of devastating terrorist attacks by the TTP across Pakistan, including a massive bomb strike on an ISI office building in Lahore that provided a blood-stained testament to the agency’s growing loss of control over those it had cultivated for decades as strategic assets. The attacks prompted the army to gear up for yet another operation in South Waziristan, the stronghold of TTP chief Baitullah Mehsud and his al-Qaeda allies, but before the formal launch of the operation Mehsud was killed by a CIA-operated drone strike in August 2009. His replacement, Hakeemullah Mehsud (no relation), took over from where his predecessor had left off and masterminded a string of deadly attacks on government forces, including a particularly audacious assault in October 2009, with direct involvement of former army personnel, on the heavily guarded headquarters of the Pakistan army in Rawalpindi.³⁴ In addition to dealing a huge psychological blow to the morale of the army, the attack raised further question marks abroad about the security of Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal. Although Hillary Clinton downplayed fears that the Taliban were going to take over the country, she considered the attack “a reminder that extremists...are increasingly threatening the authority of the state.”³⁵

³⁰ Declan Walsh, “Taliban oust Pakistani authorities in Swat Valley sharia zone,” *Guardian*, April 23, 2009.

³¹ In April 2009, video footage emerged of Taliban militants in Swat flogging a teenaged girl accused of illicit sexual relations. The video received widespread coverage on television and the internet and played a major role in turning public opinion within Pakistan against the Taliban. See Isambard Wilkinson, “Pakistan outcry over flogging of girl by Taliban,” *Telegraph*, April 3, 2009.

³² According to estimates by refugee organisations working in the affected areas, as many as 3 million people were displaced by the fighting. See Jones and Fair, *Counterinsurgency*, 68.

³³ C. Christine Fair, “Pakistan in 2010,” *Asian Survey* 51, no. 1 (January/February 2011), 104.

³⁴ “Attack on GHQ: confessions of a terrorist mastermind,” *Dawn*, September 21, 2011.

³⁵ Farhan Bokhari and James Boxell, “US and UK downplay Pakistan fears,” *Financial Times*, October 12, 2009.

Days after the Rawalpindi attack, the army commenced its ground incursion into South Waziristan, the fourth foray there in less than a decade with the three previous ones having all ended in failure. After encountering stiff initial resistance, the army managed to clear most of the ground previously occupied by the TTP and managed to disrupt the group's command, control and logistics infrastructure but was unable to capture or kill the senior leadership. In fact, the TTP relocated much of its manpower either to neighbouring Afghanistan or to other agencies in FATA, from whence to wage an attritional guerrilla war. Fighting continued in South Waziristan as well as across other parts of FATA throughout 2010. One agency, however, remained off-limits as far as the army was concerned: North Waziristan, home to the Haqqani network, elements of the Afghan Taliban and various Taliban factions led by warlords who had concluded deals with the army to focus their energies on confronting US and ISAF forces in Afghanistan instead of directing their guns at Pakistan.³⁶ Thus, even as the Obama administration acknowledged Pakistan's "determination and persistence" in combating al-Qaeda and the TTP, it also accused Islamabad of continuing to support "other Pakistan-based groups that operate in Afghanistan."³⁷

In order to mitigate the chronic mistrust between the two sides, Obama wrote a letter to Zardari in which he offered a long-term strategic partnership in exchange for Pakistani cooperation in "defeating Al Qaeda, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, Lashkar e Taiba, the Haqqani network, the Afghan Taliban and the assorted other militant groups that threaten security."³⁸ Obama also highlighted his vision for South Asia that centred on the creation of "new patterns of cooperation between and among India, Afghanistan and Pakistan to counter those who seek to create permanent tension and conflict on the subcontinent." The letter sought "fundamental readjustments" by Pakistan before the long-term partnership offered could be put in place. However, according to the Pakistani ambassador to Washington at the time, Islamabad did not see a need for any readjustment of priorities and

³⁶ According to a former chief spokesman of the Pakistani military, Kayani's formation commanders did recommend launching an operation in North Waziristan but were overruled by their chief on a number of grounds, including the risk of alienating militant groups previously allied with the army, the prospect of inflaming the religious right at home, and possibly a concern for his own personal safety, keeping in view the assassination attempts on his predecessor. See Mirza Khurram Shahzad, "Kayani feared religious right's backlash against him: Athar Abbas," *Dawn*, July 2, 2014.

³⁷ "Current and Projected National Security Threats to the United States," Testimony of Dennis C. Blair, US Director of National Intelligence (DNI), before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, February 2, 2010, accessed June 1, 2015, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-111shrg56434/html/CHRG-111shrg56434.htm>

³⁸ Haqqani, *Magnificent Delusions*, 338-339.

Zardari's reply, drafted by "a committee of Foreign Office and ISI bureaucrats," merely regurgitated "old clichés" about the threat from India.³⁹

In October 2010, senior officials from the two countries met in Washington for the third round of a US-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue, a brainchild of special envoy Richard Holbrooke. The meeting came close on the heels of an incursion into Pakistan by US-led NATO troops ostensibly in hot pursuit of Taliban militants but which ended up killing two Pakistani paramilitary border guards. In retaliation, Pakistan had temporarily closed the supply route into Afghanistan upon which US and other foreign forces relied heavily for the passage of key provisions.⁴⁰ During the deliberations in Washington, the US apologised for the deaths of the Pakistani personnel but also demanded a sustained effort by Islamabad to target the Haqqani network. For its part, Pakistan expressed its concerns about America's increasing tilt towards India, demanded that India be kept out of any future attempts at negotiating a solution to the Afghan conflict, and tried to secure Obama's agreement to visiting Pakistan in 2011.⁴¹

Although the Pakistani delegation in Washington was led by the foreign minister, the star attraction was army chief General Kayani - fresh from having just received a three-year extension in service - who was correctly identified by his American interlocutors as the ultimate decision-making authority within Pakistan on all national security matters. In a meeting with Pakistani officials including Kayani, Obama cautioned that a continuing absence of trust between the two sides would set them "on a collision course."⁴² Kayani's response was to present Obama with a 14-page memorandum on Pakistan's strategic concerns and priorities which held the US responsible for "causing and maintaining a controlled chaos in Pakistan" as part of an overall strategy aimed at depriving Pakistan of its nuclear weapons.⁴³ Notwithstanding the continuing suspicion with which patron and client viewed each other, the Obama administration announced a fresh five-year package of military aid worth \$2 billion.⁴⁴

With Pakistan consistently exhibiting one of the highest rates of anti-American sentiment in the world, Kayani was careful to maintain a public persona of independence and occasional

³⁹ Haqqani, *Magnificent Delusions*, 340.

⁴⁰ "Pak-US strategic dialogue tackles difficult issues," *Express Tribune*, October 21, 2010.

⁴¹ Fair, "Pakistan in 2010," 107.

⁴² David Ignatius, "Pakistan, U.S. have a neurotic relationship," *Washington Post*, July 13, 2012.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Paul Richter and David S. Cloud, "U.S. plans \$2 billion more in military aid for Pakistan," *Los Angeles Times*, October 23, 2010.

defiance when it came to his dealings with the US.⁴⁵ He steadfastly refused to accede to consistent refrains from Washington to go after the Haqqani network in North Waziristan, arguing that the army was already heavily engaged in other parts of FATA and that there was insufficient public support for such an operation.⁴⁶ Yet, away from the public gaze and on areas where he perceived a greater convergence of interests with the US, Kayani did provide considerable support. Classified US diplomatic cables released by the WikiLeaks website in 2010 revealed that Kayani had secretly allowed as many as 12 US Special Operations commandos to work as advisers to conventional Pakistani army units in operations along the Afghan border, despite repeated public pronouncements from both the civilian government and the military that US military presence within Pakistan would be confined to training at specified bases.⁴⁷ Even more significant was Kayani's private request to the US to expand the coverage of drone surveillance even as he denounced their use in public.⁴⁸

Senior US military officials, in particular Admiral Mike Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), invested considerable time and energy in cultivating Kayani, including by paying 27 visits to Islamabad between 2008 and 2011.⁴⁹ Mullen established a close personal relationship with Kayani and largely sympathised with his view that Pakistan simply did not have enough resources and troops to put into the field against the Haqqani network while it was still engaged in Swat and South Waziristan.⁵⁰ There was even speculation that the Pentagon had pushed the civilian government in Islamabad to extend Kayani's tenure as army chief.⁵¹ Rumours that the Obama administration in general wished to see Kayani remain in office intensified after the civilian government announced a sudden decision to prolong Kayani's term immediately after a trip to Pakistan by Secretary of State Clinton.⁵²

Washington was generally forthcoming in its approbation of the operations carried out in FATA and other Taliban-infested areas under Kayani's watch. The head of the US Central Command between 2008 and 2010, General David Petraeus, termed the army's counter-

⁴⁵ In 2012, for instance, three out of four Pakistanis in a Pew survey of 1,206 respondents considered the US an enemy of Pakistan. See Musa Memon, "Part 1 - PEW Report: Anti-American sentiment rife in Pakistan," *Express Tribune*, June 28, 2012.

⁴⁶ Karin Brulliard and Karen DeYoung, "U.S. efforts fail to convince Pakistan's top general to target Taliban," *Washington Post*, December 31, 2010.

⁴⁷ Karen DeYoung and Greg Miller, "WikiLeaks cables show U.S. focus on Pakistan's military, nuclear material," *Washington Post*, November 30, 2010.

⁴⁸ Jane Perlez, "Newspaper in Pakistan Publishes WikiLeaks Cables," *New York Times*, May 20, 2011.

⁴⁹ Brulliard and DeYoung, "U.S. efforts fail to convince."

⁵⁰ "Kayani's gambit," *Economist*, July 29, 2010, accessed June 1, 2015, <http://www.economist.com/node/16693723>

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² "3 more years for Kayani," *Express Tribune*, July 23, 2010.

insurgency tactics “quite impressive” and declared that they would be studied for years to come.⁵³ At the same time, however, the impasse between the US and Pakistan on targeting the sanctuaries of the Afghan Taliban and their allied Haqqani network remained unresolved. While much of the blame could legitimately be attributed to the Pakistani army’s schizophrenic policies towards tackling militancy, a considerable share of the responsibility must also be placed on the Obama’s administration’s failure to stabilise Afghanistan as well as the Karzai government’s continuing inability to provide even a semblance of good governance.⁵⁴

Amongst the policy outcomes of his first AF-PAK strategic review in March 2009, Obama had announced an immediate deployment of an additional 21,000 US troops to Afghanistan to provide an enabling security environment in the lead-up to presidential elections in August.⁵⁵ However, the troop increase was unable to slow down the momentum of the Taliban insurgency, which dramatically ramped up the scale of its attacks in a bid to disrupt the elections. While the elections eventually took place as scheduled, their credibility was gravely undermined by widespread fraud committed by loyalists of Hamid Karzai, who was running for a second five-year term.⁵⁶ In its desperation to use the fact that elections had been held at all as proof that its new strategy in Afghanistan was working, the Obama administration, instead of holding Karzai to account, deemed it expedient to sanctify his rigged electoral victory.

American backing for Karzai’s continuation in office could not but have been viewed with disfavour by Pakistan’s strategic planners, who had been stung by his often public harangues against the Pakistani army and the ISI and his pronounced tilt towards India. Karzai’s prolongation in power for another five years made it even more unlikely that Pakistan would agree to American demands for a policy shift with respect to the Afghan Taliban. Mixed messages emanating from Washington regarding its actual objectives in Afghanistan only served to compound Islamabad’s suspicions. In December 2009, after commissioning yet another AF-PAK review, Obama announced a surge of 30,000 more troops to fight the Taliban but effectively negated its impact by concurrently setting a

⁵³ Chris Allbritton, “U.S. commander lauds Pakistani efforts on militants,” *Reuters*, February 23, 2010, accessed July 1, 2015, <http://in.reuters.com/article/2010/02/23/idINIndia-46409920100223>

⁵⁴ For an exhaustive examination of the Karzai era as well as the American failure to rebuild Afghanistan, see Saikal, *Zone of Crisis*, 15-58.

⁵⁵ When Obama took over, total US troop numbers in Afghanistan were around 35,000 personnel. Hannah Fairfield, Kevin Quealy and Archie Tse, “Troop Levels in Afghanistan Since 2001,” *New York Times*, October 1, 2009.

⁵⁶ Peter Galbraith, who served as the deputy head of the UN mission in Afghanistan during the elections, maintained that the extent of electoral fraud had handed the Taliban “its greatest strategic victory in eight years of fighting the United States and its Afghan partners.” Jon Boone, “One in three votes for Karzai fraudulent, says US diplomat,” *Guardian*, October 5, 2009.

timetable for withdrawal commencing in July 2011. Such ambivalence was interpreted by Pakistan as indicative of dwindling American resolve to stay the course in Afghanistan and “relaxed what pressure Pakistan might otherwise have felt to reconsider its own stance towards the Taliban insurgents and get onboard with Washington’s program.”⁵⁷

Within the Obama administration itself, there was no clear consensus on the right strategy to employ in Afghanistan, thereby undermining the credibility of the plan that the president eventually decided to follow.⁵⁸ While the US military supported the troop surge, State Department officials were more sceptical, with the US ambassador in Kabul, Karl Eikenberry, arguing that as long as the border sanctuaries of the Taliban inside Pakistan remained undisturbed, “the gains from sending additional forces may be fleeting.”⁵⁹ When the surge failed to arrest the momentum of the Taliban, elements within the administration, most notably Richard Holbrooke, began to advocate reconciliation with the insurgents as part of a face-saving exit from Afghanistan. However, until his death in December 2010, Holbrooke made little headway in terms of actually influencing policy to that end primarily because he was largely ignored by Obama himself.⁶⁰

For Islamabad, which had for long been recommending a ceasefire and talks with the Taliban, such a policy shift by the US was not unwelcome but only provided that Pakistan itself facilitated the negotiating process and enjoyed a central role in determining its outcome. From Pakistan’s perspective, the American troop surge on its own would not be enough to break what had effectively become a military stalemate with the Taliban; in other words, military force would have to be accompanied with a comprehensive road map for negotiations aimed at achieving “inclusive” reconciliation, meaning a settlement with the Taliban high command.⁶¹ For much of 2010, however, the US approach to reconciliation remained much more narrowly defined and was subordinated to its military strategy. The troop surge was “essentially meant to weaken the Afghan Taliban leadership and wean off

⁵⁷ Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan*, 165.

⁵⁸ For a detailed account of the divisions within the administration regarding Afghanistan, see David E. Sanger, *Confront and Conceal: Obama’s Secret Wars and Surprising Use of American Power* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2012); and Woodward, *Obama’s Wars*.

⁵⁹ Eric Schmitt, “US Envoy’s Cables Show Worries on Afghan Plans,” *New York Times*, January 25, 2010.

⁶⁰ Holbrooke’s sidelining by Obama is described in detail by one of the special envoy’s key aides, Vali Nasr, who depicts his late boss as waging a lonely battle in favour of reconciliation against the combined opposition of the White House, the CIA and the Pentagon. See Vali Nasr, “The Inside Story of How the White House Let Diplomacy Fail in Afghanistan,” *Foreign Policy*, March 4, 2013, accessed June 12, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/03/04/the-inside-story-of-how-the-white-house-let-diplomacy-fail-in-afghanistan/>. For a rejoinder to Nasr, see Sarah Chayes, “What Vali Nasr Gets Wrong,” *Foreign Policy*, March 12, 2013, accessed June 12, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/03/12/what-vali-nasr-gets-wrong/>

⁶¹ “Military action alone not a solution for Kabul,” *Express Tribune*, November 6, 2010.

their middle- and lower ranking cadres,” thereby allowing Washington to exploit divisions within the Taliban to negotiate from a position of strength.⁶²

The fundamental policy disconnect between Washington and Islamabad did not augur well for the success of the nascent reconciliation process. Moreover, Pakistani fears of being excluded from that process by the US were heightened after Washington tried to bypass Islamabad in reaching out to the Taliban, initially by allowing the Karzai government to engage the Taliban directly⁶³ and later by opening up its own channels of communication.⁶⁴ In response, Pakistan moved to stymie such initiatives, including by capturing and imprisoning senior Taliban officials involved in clandestine talks with the Afghan government, most prominently Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the highest ranking Taliban leader after Mullah Omar.⁶⁵ Requests by the government in Kabul to extradite Baradar were turned down. At the same time, the ISI attempted to secure American backing for a deal between the Karzai government and the Haqqani network but was unable to overcome Washington’s reluctance to do business with an outfit that maintained its links with al-Qaeda and continued to attack US forces in Afghanistan.⁶⁶

II. The India-Pakistan Rivalry in Afghanistan

Amongst the not inconsiderable shortcomings of the Obama administration’s AF-PAK policy, a particularly glaring deficiency was its failure to set out a viable plan for addressing the adversarial relationship between Pakistan and India, a rivalry regarded by many observers as the key driver behind the Pakistani military’s ongoing support to the Taliban insurgency. Shortly after his election victory in 2008 but before being formally inaugurated,

⁶² Moeed Yusuf, “Decoding Pakistan’s ‘Strategic Shift’ in Afghanistan,” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, May 2013, accessed July 18, 2015, <http://books.sipri.org/files/misc/SIPRI13wcaMY.pdf>

⁶³ The Taliban had consistently rejected the idea of negotiating with the Karzai regime, which they dismissed as Washington’s stooge; instead, they sought direct talks with the US as the occupying power in Afghanistan. Since at least 2008, however, Karzai had been engaged in sporadic talks with current and former Taliban officials, occasionally facilitated by Saudi Arabia. See Steve Coll, “US-Taliban Talks,” *New Yorker*, February 28, 2011, accessed June 8, 2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/02/28/u-s-taliban-talks>

⁶⁴ Karzai had been advocating talks with the Taliban as early as 2004 but the Bush administration had shot down attempts at reconciliation because it equated the Taliban with al-Qaeda. By 2009-2010, however, with the Taliban showing no sign of succumbing to the troop surge and the continuing financial toll of the Afghan war becoming an increasingly hard sell domestically in tough economic times, Obama finally reached out to the Taliban. Secret talks arranged under German auspices between American officials and a Taliban envoy took place for the first time since 9/11 in Munich in November 2010. See Ahmed Rashid, *Pakistan on the Brink: The Future of Pakistan, Afghanistan and the West* (London: Penguin, 2012), 113-116.

⁶⁵ See Joshua Partlow and Karen DeYoung, “Afghan officials say Pakistan’s arrest of Taliban leader threatens peace talks,” *Washington Post*, April 10, 2010; and Dexter Filkins, “Pakistanis Tell of Motive in Taliban Leader’s Arrest,” *New York Times*, August 22, 2010.

⁶⁶ Alex Rodriguez and Laura King, “Reconciliation efforts with Afghan militants face major obstacle,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 29, 2010.

Obama had acknowledged that the extent of Pakistani cooperation with the US in Afghanistan would depend a great deal on how India and Pakistan managed their relations with each other. To that end, he suggested that the US facilitate “better understanding” between the two countries and even try to push them towards a resolution of the Kashmir dispute “so that they [the Pakistanis] can stay focused not on India, but on the situation with those militants.”⁶⁷ India was alarmed by any talk of internationalising an issue that it had always portrayed as a bilateral dispute between itself and Pakistan and quickly turned down Obama’s offer of facilitation.

New Delhi also managed to exclude itself from special envoy Richard Holbrooke’s remit. Obama had initially planned to appoint a representative with overall responsibility for Afghanistan, Pakistan *and* India but quickly caved in to protests from New Delhi that “such a broad mandate [presumably including Kashmir]...smacks of interference and would be unacceptable.”⁶⁸ Following his appointment, Holbrooke made it clear that his mandate was restricted to Afghanistan and Pakistan and tried to reassure his sceptical Pakistani interlocutors, for whom India was a central concern, that he would “deal with India by pretending not to deal with India.”⁶⁹ For many Pakistanis, Holbrooke’s semantics could not disguise the fact that the new administration had succumbed to India’s pressure not to hyphenate it with Afghanistan and Pakistan even as it ignored Pakistani reservations at being lumped together with Afghanistan. According to one US expert on Pakistan, right from the time the AF-PAK strategy was announced, the Obama administration saw Pakistan as “first and foremost an extension of the American mission in Afghanistan” and even though Islamabad eventually persuaded Washington to discard the appellation, the “mental framework stuck.”⁷⁰

Despite the increase in developmental assistance to Pakistan, the Obama administration largely followed its predecessor’s policy of viewing the bilateral relationship primarily through a narrow, security-driven lens. And like both Clinton and Bush before him, Obama made no secret of his preference for India as America’s strategic partner in South Asia. Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was the first foreign leader to visit the Obama White House on a state visit and New Delhi was the first port of call for Obama’s newly

⁶⁷ Myra MacDonald, “Obama’s Kashmir comments hit a raw nerve in India,” *Reuters*, November 3, 2008, accessed July 1, 2015, <http://blogs.reuters.com/pakistan/2008/11/03/obamas-kashmir-comments-hit-a-raw-nerve-in-india/>.

⁶⁸ Mukund Padmanabhan, “How India kept Kashmir out of U.S. Af-Pak envoy’s brief,” *Hindu*, April 12, 2012.

⁶⁹ Woodward, *Obama’s Wars*, 87.

⁷⁰ Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan*, 161-162. According to Markey, the AF-PAK symbolism was “flat-out rejected” by Pakistanis, who questioned how Afghanistan, “a landlocked, tribal society of 30 million people emerging from decades of civil war,” could be compared to “a nuclear-armed nation of nearly 200 million.”

appointed CIA director Leon Panetta, a gesture aimed at showing the ISI that “the CIA was looking elsewhere for allies in South Asia.”⁷¹

In a pointed rebuff to Pakistan, Obama travelled to India and Afghanistan in November 2010 but spurned Islamabad’s invitation for a visit. While in India, his words only heightened the Pakistani army’s paranoia about a rapidly emerging US-India axis. Obama declared India to be a world power that merited a permanent seat on the UN Security Council and termed the alliance between the two countries “one of the defining partnerships of the 21st century.”⁷² In response, an exasperated General Kayani let it be known through the Pakistani media that the “frames of reference” of the US and Pakistan about regional security issues “can never be the same” and that America’s once “most allied ally” had now become its “most bullied ally.”⁷³ From the Obama administration’s perspective, the benefits of cultivating India - the world’s second most populous country, a rising economic power, an enormous market for US manufacturers and, perhaps most significantly, a potential strategic counterweight in Asia to China - outweighed any considerations of how the growing Indo-US alignment might be viewed in Islamabad.

Of particular concern to the Pakistani army was the potential impact of India’s burgeoning strategic alliance with the US on events within Afghanistan, where Islamabad and New Delhi were by then waging an all-out proxy war. As alluded to in the previous chapter, India had managed to dramatically increase its footprint inside Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban. By 2010, it had poured in \$1.3 billion in developmental assistance, making it Afghanistan’s largest regional donor.⁷⁴ Pakistan consistently alleged that the Indian role in Afghanistan went beyond development to include use of its embassy and a host of consulates not only to erode Pakistan’s influence but to foment separatist unrest in Balochistan⁷⁵ and even to covertly assisting elements of the Pakistani Taliban.⁷⁶ Through its

⁷¹ Riedel, *Avoiding Armageddon*, 177.

⁷² “Obama’s India visit is Pakistan’s wake-up call: analysts,” *Dawn*, November 10, 2010.

⁷³ Brulliard and DeYoung, “U.S. efforts fail to convince.”

⁷⁴ Alistair Scrutton and Patricia Zengerle, “The ‘Great Game’ bubbles under Obama’s India trip,” *Reuters*, October 25, 2010, accessed July 1, 2015, <http://in.reuters.com/article/2010/10/25/idINIndia-52421520101025>

⁷⁵ Since 2005, Pakistan’s volatile Balochistan province had been in the throes of a secessionist insurgency whose roots lay in decades of political mismanagement and neglect by the Pakistani state. Similar rebellions had erupted in Balochistan in the past but none as sustained as the one that commenced in 2005 and which is still ongoing at the time of writing. For a detailed look at Balochistan’s seemingly unending volatility, see International Crisis Group Asia Report N°119, *Pakistan: The Worsening Conflict in Balochistan*, September 14, 2006, accessed July 10, 2015, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/pakistan/119-pakistan-the-worsening-conflict-in-balochistan.aspx>

⁷⁶ Ahmed Rashid, “Pakistan and the Afghanistan End Game - Part I,” *Yale Global Online*, March 12, 2010, accessed July 1, 2015, <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/pakistan-and-afghanistan-end-game-part-i>

support to the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani network, Pakistan sought to counter what it viewed as unacceptable Indian intrusion into its strategic orbit.

Under both Bush and Obama, the US had deferred to Pakistani fears of Indian encirclement by urging New Delhi to confine its role in Afghanistan to development and to steer clear of any security cooperation with the Afghan government, a clear redline for Islamabad.⁷⁷ However, the Pakistani military establishment remained deeply suspicious of India's close relationship with the Karzai regime. After the ISI arrested Mullah Baradar and other Taliban members for going behind its back in talking to the Afghan government, Karzai had complained to Pakistan that it was "sabotaging and undermining" his efforts at reconciliation but was informed in turn that if he wanted Pakistani cooperation, he should close down India's consulates in Jalalabad and Kandahar that bordered Pakistan.⁷⁸

In February 2010, the India-Pakistan proxy war in Afghanistan heated up after an attack on two guest houses in Kandahar left 18 people dead, of which nine were Indians including two serving army majors. Also amongst the dead was the assistant consul general from the Indian consulate in Kandahar.⁷⁹ American and Afghan intelligence quickly traced the attack to a joint operation mounted by the Haqqani network and the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Tayyaba.⁸⁰ Although Islamabad denied any involvement, the Kandahar attack, in the estimation of one observer, sent both Washington and New Delhi "a clear signal that the Pakistani military would protect its interests" in Afghanistan.⁸¹ A series of devastating terrorist attacks that took place in Lahore the following month were alleged by Pakistani authorities to have been carried out with Indian involvement.⁸²

Having invested so significantly in Afghanistan with a view to reducing Pakistan's influence there, India was jolted not only by the American decision to withdraw from Afghanistan but also because that withdrawal was now predicated not on defeating the Taliban, who were still viewed by New Delhi as outright Pakistani proxies, but instead on reconciling with them, a policy to which India was stridently opposed.⁸³ With Pakistan primed to occupy centre stage in managing the reconciliation process with the Taliban,

⁷⁷ Arjun Verma and Ambassador Teresita Schaffer, "A Difficult Road Ahead: India's Policy on Afghanistan," *South Asia Monitor* no. 144, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, August 1, 2010, accessed July 18, 2015, http://csis.org/files/publication/SAM_144.pdf

⁷⁸ Rashid, *Pakistan on the Brink*, 131.

⁷⁹ William Dalrymple, "A Deadly Triangle: Afghanistan, Pakistan and India," *The Brookings Essay*, June 25, 2013, accessed July 10, 2015, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/essays/2013/deadly-triangle-afghanistan-pakistan-india-c>

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Rashid, *Pakistan on the Brink*, 132.

⁸² "India rejects charge of involvement in Lahore blasts," *Hindu*, March 13, 2010.

⁸³ Simon Tisdall, "India and Pakistan's proxy war puts Afghanistan exit at risk," *Guardian*, May 7, 2010.

India faced the grim prospect of being denied any meaningful role in influencing the Afghan endgame in the lead-up to a final US withdrawal.

During his visit to India, however, Obama dispelled the impression that New Delhi was no longer relevant in Afghanistan. A joint statement with Manmohan Singh committed the US and India to “intensify consultation, cooperation and coordination” on Afghanistan and reiterated their shared view that “success in Afghanistan and regional and global security require elimination of safe havens and infrastructure for terrorism and violent extremism in Afghanistan and Pakistan.”⁸⁴ Such words, along with Obama’s fulsome recognition of India’s “extraordinary contribution to Afghanistan’s development,” only served to heighten the Pakistani military establishment’s fear of Indian encroachment in Afghanistan, paradoxically making it ever more difficult for Washington to convince Islamabad to abandon its proxies in Afghanistan. According to an American source, “by encouraging India to become the region’s major economic player in Afghanistan,” the US itself effectively undermined its own strategic interests by increasing Pakistan’s resolve “to hang on to the Taliban, the Haqqani group and other insurgent networks to both counter Indian influence and protect Pakistani interests in Afghanistan.”⁸⁵

III. The Year from Hell

In December 2010, Obama announced his annual review of US policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The review came in the wake of a NATO summit conference in Lisbon where it was announced that all combat operations by ISAF forces in Afghanistan would cease by the end of 2014 and that the vast majority of some 138,000 international troops would leave the country by then through a phased withdrawal.⁸⁶ While welcoming ongoing Pakistani operations in the tribal areas, Obama cautioned that much more needed to be done and declared his intention to insist to Pakistani leaders that “terrorist safe havens within their borders must be dealt with.” On a friendlier note, Obama looked forward to visiting Pakistan the following year and emphasised America’s commitment to “an enduring partnership that helps deliver improved security, development, and justice for the Pakistani people.”⁸⁷ There would, however, be no presidential visit to Pakistan in 2011 and the “enduring partnership” between the two countries that Obama had referred to would instead

⁸⁴ “Joint Statement by President Obama and Prime Minister Singh of India,” Office of the Press Secretary, November 8, 2010, accessed June 11, 2015, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/11/08/joint-statement-president-obama-and-prime-minister-singh-india>

⁸⁵ David Pollock, “Our Indian problem in Afghanistan,” *Washington Post*, November 8, 2010.

⁸⁶ Ian Traynor, “Nato maps out Afghanistan withdrawal by 2014 at Lisbon summit,” *Guardian*, November 21, 2010.

⁸⁷ “Statement by the President on the Afghanistan-Pakistan Annual Review,” Office of the Press Secretary, December 16, 2010, accessed June 11, 2015, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/12/16/statement-president-afghanistan-pakistan-annual-review>

descend into a prolonged and bitter diplomatic brawl without precedent in their bilateral relationship.

In an often tempestuous association that went back almost six decades, there had been some dramatic highs interspersed with periods of significant mutual estrangement. Amongst the latter, however, none could match the nature and extent of the deterioration in ties that took place in 2011, a year that could justifiably be termed the preeminent *annus horribilis* in the history of US-Pakistan relations. In January, Raymond Davis, a CIA contractor working out of the US consulate in Lahore, shot and killed two Pakistanis who he claimed were trying to rob him at gunpoint.⁸⁸ Davis was apprehended and placed behind bars to await trial for murder. After initially claiming immunity for him on the grounds that he was a bona fide diplomat, the US subsequently backtracked and confessed that he was indeed working for the CIA.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, Washington continued to put unrelenting pressure on Islamabad to let him go. After less than two months of incarceration, Davis was released and immediately spirited off back to the US following an arrangement worked out by the ISI in which the relatives of the men killed by Davis pardoned him in exchange for some \$2.3 million in “blood money.”⁹⁰

Davis had been part of a covert CIA team put together to monitor the activities of the Lashkar-e-Tayyba, the alleged perpetrator of the 2008 Mumbai attacks.⁹¹ Under Obama’s presidency, the CIA had substantially increased its covert presence inside Pakistan without keeping the ISI informed about the number and identities of its personnel and the nature of their activities. Amongst those activities was stepped up recruitment of locals to form a clandestine network aimed at tracking down Osama bin Laden.⁹² Even though the ISI eventually bowed to American pressure and agreed to let Davis off the hook, the whole murky affair cast a deep shadow over its relationship with the CIA and further deepened an already acute level of mistrust between the US and the Pakistani army. Enraged by evidence of “the creeping unilateralism” of CIA operations in Pakistan,⁹³ especially those directed at groups deemed to be the army’s strategic assets, General Kayani demanded from

⁸⁸ A third Pakistani died after being run over by a speeding vehicle from the American consulate despatched to retrieve Davis from the crime scene.

⁸⁹ Ewen MacAskill and Declan Walsh, “US gives fresh details of CIA agent who killed two men in Pakistan shootout,” *Guardian*, February 22, 2011.

⁹⁰ Greg Miller and Pamela Constable, “CIA contractor Raymond Davis freed after ‘blood money’ payment,” *Washington Post*, March 16, 2011. The concept of accepting “blood money” in lieu of seeking retaliation for murder or other forms of bodily harm is known in Arabic as *diyya* and in Urdu as *diyat*. The principle is contained within Islamic criminal law and is included in Pakistan’s penal code.

⁹¹ Mark Mazzetti, “How a Single Spy Helped Turn Pakistan Against the United States,” *New York Times*, April 9, 2013.

⁹² Rashid, *Pakistan on the Brink*, 171.

⁹³ C. Christine Fair, “Pakistan in 2011: Ten Years of the ‘War on Terror,’” *Asian Survey* 52, no. 1 (January/February 2012): 101.

Washington that it immediately recall some 335 American personnel including regular CIA operatives, all CIA contractors and most Special Operations forces deputed in the tribal areas to train Pakistani troops.⁹⁴

A vastly expanded CIA presence was but one prong of the Obama administration's covert war in Pakistan; the other prong, albeit one that was much more in the public domain, was a surge in CIA-operated drone attacks in the tribal areas, often without providing advance warning to Pakistani authorities. Unilateral drone strikes had actually been sanctioned in the final months of the Bush presidency, an indication of Bush's increasing frustration with Pakistan's inability or unwillingness to indiscriminately target all militants in FATA. Since the first known drone strike in Pakistan in 2004, only a small number of high-value targets on the CIA's hit-list had been killed by the drones and other potential strikes were aborted either because of delays in getting Pakistani approval or because the targets appeared to have been forewarned and had already bolted.⁹⁵ Bush authorised 36 strikes in his final year in office but Obama took the use of drones to another level altogether by ordering 52 strikes in 2009 and 122 in 2010.⁹⁶

Taken together, the increased use of drones and the unilateral expansion of clandestine CIA operations in Pakistan constituted a tacit admission by the Obama administration that despite providing more assistance than ever before, Washington was still not receiving the level of cooperation from Islamabad that it desired. Even though the drone attacks aroused widespread public fury in Pakistan and further inflamed anti-American sentiments, the US showed no intention of scaling them down. Just a day after Raymond Davis was flown out of Pakistan to safety and even as violent protests against his release were taking place in Pakistan's main cities, the CIA launched a lethal drone strike on a tribal council meeting in North Waziristan that killed at least 38 people, including a number of civilians.⁹⁷ Employing unusually strong language, General Kayani publicly denounced the attack for being "carelessly and callously targeted with complete disregard to human life."⁹⁸ In response, American officials claimed that the victims "weren't gathering for a bake sale" and were indeed "terrorists."⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Jane Perlez and Ismail Khan, "Pakistan Tells U.S. It Must Sharply Cut C.I.A. Activities," *New York Times*, April 11, 2011.

⁹⁵ Mark Mazzetti, "How a Single Spy Helped."

⁹⁶ "Drone Wars Pakistan: Analysis."

⁹⁷ Manzoor Ali, "Pakistan furious as US drone strike kills civilians," *Express Tribune*, March 18, 2011.

⁹⁸ Salman Masood and Pir Zubair Shah, "C.I.A. Drones Kill Civilians in Pakistan," *New York Times*, March 17, 2011.

⁹⁹ Masood and Shah, "C.I.A. Drones Kill Civilians in Pakistan."

Even as the US and Pakistan were still struggling to come to terms with the fallout of the Raymond Davis affair, the bilateral relationship went into a complete tailspin in May after American special forces finally tracked down and killed Osama bin Laden. Ever since 9/11, Pakistan's civilian and military leaders had steadfastly denied any possibility of bin Laden being present in their country, with General Musharraf having claimed as early as 2002 that the al-Qaeda head had probably died of kidney failure or, if still alive, was most likely holed up in a remote Afghan mountain hideout.¹⁰⁰ Yet, when the end came for bin Laden, he was discovered and killed not in Afghanistan or even in Pakistan's largely ungoverned tribal areas but instead in the garrison town of Abbottabad, just 115 kilometres from Islamabad and home to the Pakistan Military Academy, the equivalent of America's West Point.

In what was a shocking indictment of the Pakistani military's security protocols, two US Black Hawk stealth helicopters were able to enter Pakistan's airspace from Afghanistan, elude radar detection, and off-load 23 Navy SEALs onto bin Laden's sprawling compound. The SEAL team blew holes in the compound's walls, entered bin Laden's house, shot him dead and gathered up masses of electronic data equipment found on the premises. One of the helicopters was damaged as a result of a faulty landing and while the SEALs were completing their mission, a replacement was flown in, again undetected by Pakistani air defences. The damaged helicopter was then blown up in order to prevent its sophisticated avionics falling into the hands of the Pakistani authorities. By the time the Pakistani air force finally scrambled two F-16 jets to give chase, the two US helicopters, one of them carrying bin Laden's dead body, had already crossed back into Afghanistan.¹⁰¹

Through its network of Pakistani agents and informers as well as its own operatives on the ground, the CIA had been monitoring the compound in Abbottabad on the suspicion that it contained the fugitive al-Qaeda leader, who it later emerged had been there all along since 2006. By March 2011, Obama was satisfied enough with the evidence placed before him to initiate preparations for the raid. However, he turned down the option of enlisting Pakistan's cooperation or of even giving the Pakistanis advance notice so as not to risk the operation being compromised.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ John F. Burns, "A Nation Challenged: Dragnet; Pakistani Says Bin Laden May Be Dead Of Disease," *New York Times*, January 19, 2002.

¹⁰¹ For detailed accounts of the operation as well as of the deliberations within the Obama administration leading up to it, see Mark Bowden, "The death of Osama bin Laden: how the US finally got its man," *Guardian*, October 13, 2012; and Nicholas Schmidle, "Getting Bin Laden," *New Yorker*, August 8, 2011, accessed June 13, 2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/08/08/getting-bin-laden>

¹⁰² A 2015 article by well-known investigative reporter Seymour Hersh claims that much of the official story provided by Washington about the bin Laden operation was a deliberate fabrication. Hersh claims that bin Laden had actually been a prisoner of the ISI in Abbottabad since 2006 and that General Kayani

The circumstances surrounding the raid, particularly bin Laden's undetected presence for five years "practically under the Pakistani military's nose," gave rise to serious misgivings in Washington about having invested billions of dollars in a client state that was, at best, utterly incompetent or, at worst, complicit in harbouring the world's most wanted terrorist.¹⁰³ Within Pakistan, there was "confusion, outrage, and embarrassment," not only because of bin Laden's discovery inside the country but also because of the ease with which the US had been able to complete its operation without even being detected, let alone subjected to any resistance.¹⁰⁴ Many Pakistanis now began to question their army's ability to prevent India from launching a similar unilateral strike on Pakistani soil.¹⁰⁵

Faced with enormous domestic and international criticism, the army chose not to accept responsibility for what was arguably its greatest embarrassment since the 1971 defeat to India. General Kayani did not deem the debacle to be of sufficient magnitude to warrant his resignation, nor indeed did he allow the civilian government to accept ISI chief General Pasha's offer to resign. The elected government and parliament, in turn, found themselves unable to summon up the backbone to hold the army high command to account. Instead, they ended up towing the army's line by condemning the US raid as a violation of Pakistani sovereignty, calling for an immediate cessation of drone strikes and threatening to close down the ground lines of communication for supplying NATO forces in Afghanistan.¹⁰⁶

For its part, the Obama administration was careful not to formally accuse Pakistan of complicity in harbouring bin Laden since Pakistani cooperation was still deemed essential for facilitating the American withdrawal from Afghanistan. However, in the aftermath of the bin Laden raid, senior US diplomats did deliver a "stern message" to their Pakistani civilian and military interlocutors that patience in Congress was wearing thin and could

and ISI chief General Pasha knew of the raid in advance and had made sure that the two helicopters delivering the SEALs to Abbottabad could cross Pakistani airspace without triggering any alarms. According to Hersh, the CIA did not learn of bin Laden's whereabouts by tracking his couriers, as the White House has claimed since May 2011, but instead from a former senior Pakistani intelligence officer who betrayed the secret in return for much of the \$25 million reward offered by the US. Moreover, Hersh maintains that while Obama did order the raid and the Seal team did carry it out, many other aspects of the administration's account were false. Seymour M. Hersh, "The Killing of Osama bin Laden," *London Review of Books* 37, no.10 (May 21, 2015), accessed June 13, 2015, <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v37/n10/seymour-m-hersh/the-killing-of-osama-bin-laden>

The Obama administration has denied the veracity of Hersh's account and continues to reaffirm its original version of events. See Dion Nissenbaum, "White House Denies Report That Pakistan Helped in Bin Laden Hit," *Wall Street Journal*, May 11, 2015. Pakistan military sources have admitted that a former senior intelligence operative did indeed help the CIA in tracking down bin Laden but reject any advance knowledge of the Abbottabad operation. See "Pakistan military officials admit defector's key role in Bin Laden operation," *Dawn*, May 12, 2015.

¹⁰³ Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan*, 139.

¹⁰⁴ Fair, "Pakistan in 2011," 102-103.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ "No repeat of bin Laden raid: parliament," *Dawn*, May 14, 2011.

possibly affect the continued provision of aid.¹⁰⁷ In July, some \$440-\$500 million worth of scheduled counterinsurgency training and equipment for Pakistan was suspended and another \$300 million in CSF reimbursements withheld owing to lengthy delays by Islamabad in processing US visa requests.¹⁰⁸ Even though the Pakistani military dismissed the cuts as having no impact on its ability to continue combat operations, independent analysts within Pakistan saw the partial suspension of military aid as an obvious indicator of the growing downturn in relations between Washington and Islamabad and warned that it could lead the army towards adopting a more hostile anti-US posture.¹⁰⁹

Through the summer of 2011, whatever little mutual goodwill that remained between the US and Pakistan was further eroded by developments in Afghanistan. In June, Obama announced his plan for an incremental drawdown of US troops leading up to a complete withdrawal by 2014 and asked the American people, and presumably those of Afghanistan as well, to “take comfort in knowing that the tide of war is receding.”¹¹⁰ In reality, the conflict in Afghanistan remained more intense than ever before, with the Haqqani network in particular mounting a number of devastating attacks on US and Afghan targets, including a prolonged assault on the American embassy compound in Kabul in September that made a mockery of Obama’s claims that Afghanistan had been sufficiently stabilised to justify a withdrawal of foreign forces.

That same month, former Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani was assassinated in a suicide attack. Rabbani had been appointed by Karzai as chairman of the High Peace Council formed to negotiate with the Taliban and his death dealt a severe blow to the reconciliation process as well as to hopes for improved relations between Islamabad and Kabul, with the Afghan government directly accusing the ISI of involvement in Rabbani’s murder.¹¹¹ An infuriated Karzai immediately called off talks with the Taliban and quickly moved to stitch up a strategic partnership agreement with India by which New Delhi would

¹⁰⁷ Steven Lee Myers and Jane Perlez, “Tensions Rise as U.S. Officials Press Pakistan for Answers,” *New York Times*, May 3, 2011.

¹⁰⁸ K. Alan Kronstadt, “Pakistan-U.S. Relations,” *Congressional Research Service*, May 24, 2012, accessed July 14, 2015, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41832.pdf>

¹⁰⁹ Isaam Ahmed, “Pakistan says it doesn’t need US military aid,” *Christian Science Monitor*, July 11, 2011, accessed July 1, 2015, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-South-Central/2011/0711/Pakistan-says-it-doesn-t-need-US-military-aid>

¹¹⁰ “Remarks by the President on the Way Forward in Afghanistan,” Office of the Press Secretary, June 22, 2011, accessed June 14, 2015, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/06/22/remarks-president-way-forward-afghanistan>

¹¹¹ Both Pakistan and the Haqqani network denied having any role in Rabbani’s assassination. See Alissa J. Rubin, “A Leader’s Death Exposes Disarray in the Afghan Peace Process,” *New York Times*, October 3, 2011.

provide training to the Afghan army and police, a development certain to arouse considerable alarm in Islamabad.¹¹²

Following the US embassy attack, Admiral Mullen travelled to Islamabad to again press General Kayani for action against the Haqqani network but, as before, failed to secure any such commitment. Frustrated by Pakistan's intransigence, Mullen, who had thought he had built up a personal relationship with Kayani, returned to Washington to testify before Congress that the Haqqani network was "a veritable arm" of the ISI, with whose support it had conducted not only the attack on the US embassy but also "a host of other smaller but effective operations."¹¹³ Mullen's remarks signified the most serious official charges levelled by the US against Pakistan since 9/11 but failed to bring about any modification in Islamabad's policy approach towards Afghanistan. In response, Washington continued to carry out drone attacks despite repeated Pakistani protests. It also despatched a high-powered delegation led by Secretary of State Clinton to Islamabad to issue yet another stern warning that the US would act unilaterally if required against Pakistan-based groups attacking US forces in Afghanistan and that Pakistan would pay "a very big price" if it failed to make a definitive choice between fighting terrorists or supporting them.¹¹⁴

With mutual acrimony already at unprecedentedly high levels, the relationship between the US and Pakistan broke down completely in November after a NATO airstrike on a Pakistani outpost on the Salala mountain ridge along the Afghan border killed 24 soldiers. An enraged Pakistani military responded by closing down NATO's supply routes leading into Afghanistan; evicting US personnel from a secret airfield in Balochistan used, amongst other things, for launching drone strikes; and boycotting a major conference on Afghanistan to take place in Bonn in December. Moreover, Islamabad rejected Washington's expressions of regret and instead demanded an unconditional apology. In the meantime, the government initiated a review of "all programmes, activities and co-operative arrangements" with the US and with US-led forces in Afghanistan.¹¹⁵

Completed after months of protracted deliberations in April 2012, the review process laid down revised terms of engagement with the US including the immediate cessation of drone attacks and of any infiltration into Pakistan "on any pretext"; the banning of verbal security

¹¹² Tom Wright and Margherita Stancati, "Karzai Sets Closer Ties With India on Visit," *Wall Street Journal*, October 5, 2011.

¹¹³ Elisabeth Bumiller and Jane Perlez, "Pakistan's Spy Agency Is Tied to Attack on U.S. Embassy," *New York Times*, September 22, 2011.

¹¹⁴ Steven Lee Myers, "U.S. Officials Deliver Warning in Pakistan Over Extremists," *New York Times*, October 20, 2011.

¹¹⁵ Saeed Shah, "Pakistan orders US to leave airbase in row over deadly NATO assault," *Guardian*, November 27, 2011.

agreements with any foreign country; an unconditional apology for the killing of the Pakistani soldiers and a demand that the perpetrators be punished; an end to overt and covert operations inside Pakistan; no private security contractors to be allowed into the country nor any foreign bases maintained on Pakistani soil; and Pakistani territory and airspace no longer to be used to transport arms and ammunition into Afghanistan. For its part, the Pakistani parliament and government reaffirmed their commitment to prevent their territory from being used for “any kind of attacks on other countries” and declared that “all foreign fighters, if found, shall be expelled from our soil.”¹¹⁶

Even as the review process in Pakistan was proceeding, the US kept up its drone strikes, albeit with considerably reduced frequency.¹¹⁷ Islamabad responded by keeping the supply routes into Afghanistan closed, although that had less to do with the continuation of drone attacks, which had for long been secretly condoned by Pakistan’s civilian and military leadership, and more to do with the Obama administration’s reluctance to apologise for the Salala attack. The closure of ground routes leading into Afghanistan from Pakistan compelled the US to use the Northern Distribution Network, a much longer route through Russia and Central Asia that cost \$100 million a month more than the Pakistani passageway and would become even more expensive as the US began to move masses of weaponry and equipment out of Afghanistan in the lead-up to its final withdrawal.¹¹⁸ In response to Islamabad’s denial of transit facilities, Washington withheld all military-related assistance.

By mid-2012, however, both countries were keen to end the stand-off, the US because it undermined counterterrorism cooperation and increased the chances of a messy withdrawal from Afghanistan, and Pakistan because neither the civilian government nor the army could do without American money in the long-term or afford to prolong Pakistan’s growing international isolation. The US had actually been on the verge of issuing an apology several times but had chosen to withhold it for varying reasons, including continuing attacks by the Haqqani network in Afghanistan as well as a decision by Pakistan’s courts to sentence a local doctor to 33 years in prison for collaborating with the CIA in tracking down bin Laden.¹¹⁹ In July 2012, however, seven months after the Salala incident, the US finally said

¹¹⁶ “Guidelines for Revised Terms of Engagement with USA/NATO/ISAF and General Foreign Policy,” National Assembly of Pakistan, April 12, 2012, accessed June 15, 2015, http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1334243269_639.pdf

¹¹⁷ From an all-time high of 122 in 2010, drone attacks in Pakistan were reduced to 73 in 2011 and 48 in 2012. See “Drone Wars Pakistan: Analysis.”

¹¹⁸ Karen DeYoung and Richard Leiby, “Pakistan agrees to open supply lines after U.S. apology,” *Washington Post*, July 3, 2012.

¹¹⁹ The doctor’s arrest aroused a storm of criticism against Pakistan in the US Congress, which eventually voted to cut \$1 million every year from Pakistan’s aid budget for 33 years, that is, for each year of the doctor’s imprisonment. Huma Imtiaz, “US Senate docks Pakistan \$1m for each year of Shakil Afridi’s sentence,” *Express Tribune*, May 24, 2012.

it was “sorry for the losses suffered by the Pakistani military,” even though it stopped short of actually using the word “apology.”¹²⁰ The expression of regret was enough, however, to satisfy the Pakistan government, which immediately agreed to reopen the transit routes into Afghanistan and even consented to withdrawing its demand for substantially increased transit fees.¹²¹ In response, the Obama administration asked Congress to release some \$1.2 billion of withheld military payments, although Pakistan had claimed it was actually owed reimbursements worth \$3 billion.¹²²

Relations between Islamabad and Washington settled back again into an unstable equilibrium. Major differences persisted over Afghanistan, with Pakistan refusing to close down the Quetta shura or to target the Haqqanis in North Waziristan. Instead, Islamabad continued to advocate an even-handed reconciliation process inclusive of Afghan Taliban factions or affiliates operating from its territory as a prerequisite for a negotiated power-sharing arrangement in Kabul.¹²³ The US, on the other hand, remained wedded to a policy of weakening the insurgency as far as possible and only reconciling with those elements willing to fall in line with Washington’s “vision for Afghanistan’s political future.”¹²⁴ In September 2012, the US State Department formally designated the Haqqani network a terrorist organisation, thereby reducing the possibility of a negotiated settlement with the group and placing Pakistan under increased pressure to curtail its activities.¹²⁵ Earlier that year, Washington had placed a \$10 million bounty on information leading to the arrest and conviction of Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, the head of the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, for his alleged role in the 2008 Mumbai attacks.

Finding itself under considerable international pressure to discontinue the policy of using militants as proxies and with no end in sight to the war against its own Taliban, Pakistan attempted to broaden its range of interlocutors in Afghanistan by reaching out to non-Pashtun elements of the power elite in Kabul including its old enemies from the Northern Alliance, even as it also reiterated calls for reconciliation between the Afghan government and the Taliban.¹²⁶ However, measures towards facilitating a negotiated settlement could

¹²⁰ Josh Rogin, “Inside the U.S. ‘apology’ to Pakistan,” *Foreign Policy*, July 3, 2012, accessed June 15, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/07/03/inside-the-u-s-apology-to-pakistan/>

¹²¹ After having initially asked for \$5,000 for every NATO truck carrying supplies into Afghanistan, the Pakistan government agreed to maintain the existing fee of \$250. Eric Schmitt, “Clinton’s ‘Sorry’ to Pakistan Ends Barrier to NATO,” *New York Times*, July 3, 2012.

¹²² DeYoung and Leiby, “Pakistan agrees to open supply lines.”

¹²³ Yusuf, “Decoding Pakistan’s ‘Strategic Shift’.”

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ “Haqqani network is a terrorist body, announces Hillary Clinton,” *Guardian*, September 8, 2012. Also see Tom Wright, “U.S. Offers \$10 Million for Militant in Pakistan,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 3, 2012.

¹²⁶ John Glaser, “Pakistan Reaches Out to Old Afghan Enemies,” *Antiwar.com*, October 27, 2012, accessed June 15, 2015, <http://news.antiwar.com/2012/10/27/pakistan-reaches-out-to-old-afghan-enemies/>

not overcome the fundamental lack of trust permeating the triangular relationship between Afghanistan, Pakistan and the US. As he neared the end of his second and final term as president, Karzai's diatribes against Washington for its failure to secure Afghanistan became almost as frequent as those against Islamabad for its support to the Taliban. Moreover, he feared that the US would cut its own deal with Pakistan and the Taliban, leaving him out of the negotiating process.¹²⁷ For its part, Washington had become increasingly disillusioned by the abject dysfunctionality of Karzai's regime, which had little to show for itself on the governance front after being propped up by American dollars and troops for over a decade.

In November 2012, Americans went to the polls to elect Barack Obama for a second term as president. Six months later, Pakistan marked a major milestone in its troubled political history when, for the first time ever, one elected government completed its constitutional five-year term before peacefully transferring power to its elected successor. Having previously served two abbreviated terms as prime minister, Nawaz Sharif was elected for a third time with a comfortable majority. Washington publicly hailed Pakistan's successful democratic transition and announced the resumption of the strategic dialogue that had been stalled since 2011.¹²⁸ As was the case during 2008, the army largely stayed out of the electoral process. Nawaz Sharif came to power armed with what he saw as a popular mandate to improve relations with India and negotiate an end to the domestic war with the Taliban, both areas falling within the military's self-appointed jurisdiction. Whether or not he would be able to loosen the military's grip over Pakistan's national security and foreign policies, however, would be another matter altogether, one beyond the scope of this thesis.

Conclusion

Barack Obama's approach towards Pakistan was an important component of his overall strategy in Afghanistan, which he depicted as a "war of necessity" that Bush had overlooked in favour of waging his "war of choice" in Iraq.¹²⁹ However, the decision to lump Afghanistan and Pakistan into the AF-PAK paradigm was problematic and sent Islamabad a message that its significance lay primarily in its ability to advance America's interests in Afghanistan. Notwithstanding the AF-PAK label, right from the outset there was very little clarity and even less consensus within the Obama administration on how to deal effectively with either country. Obama's troop surge was unable to defeat the Taliban or to even weaken their resolve. Matters were not helped by Obama's decision to nominate a date

¹²⁷ Dan Roberts and Emma Graham-Harrison, "US races to mollify Hamid Karzai over plans for peace talks with Taliban," *Guardian*, June 20, 2013.

¹²⁸ Anwar Iqbal, "Pakistan, US finalise plans for strategic dialogue," *Dawn*, January 24, 2014.

¹²⁹ Sheryl Gay Stolberg, "Obama Defends Strategy in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, August 17, 2009.

for the withdrawal of troops at the same time that he announced the surge, leaving a serious question mark on America's long-term commitment to Afghanistan's security. The administration's subsequent attempts to negotiate a solution to the conflict were similarly unsuccessful.

On Obama's watch, the US-Pakistan relationship was rocked by a string of crises, the most egregious of them being the raid in Abbottabad that killed Osama bin Laden. Although bilateral ties partially improved in 2012, there remained a fundamental disconnect in the policy approaches of the two countries on the question of settling Afghanistan's political future. While both were in favour of a negotiated end to the insurgency, Pakistan was sceptical of the Obama administration's attempts to force the Taliban to the negotiating table through its troop surge and adhered to its long-held position that Afghanistan could only be pacified through a power-sharing arrangement worked out amongst all Afghan stakeholders, including the Taliban and its allies. In order to hedge against an adverse post-NATO dispensation in Afghanistan, it continued to tolerate and even support the Afghan Taliban.

As far as the Pakistani army high command was concerned, it made very little strategic sense to sever its links with the Taliban when Afghanistan's own future remained uncertain, with state collapse a real possibility. In case that happened and Pakistan had already burnt its bridges with the Taliban, it would have no card left to play in Afghanistan. Thus, Pakistan repeatedly turned a deaf ear to American calls for targeting the Haqqani network, nor did it make any attempt to move against the Quetta shura, despite repeated exhortations from the US to prevent the Taliban from using Pakistani territory as a base. A central factor behind Islamabad's intransigence was the army's acute concern about India's growing presence in Afghanistan and the need to exclude New Delhi from any role in shaping Afghanistan's security architecture, especially in the lead-up to the American withdrawal. The growing strategic alignment between the US and India only served to heighten Pakistani insecurities about potential Indian encirclement that Washington was either unwilling or unable to alleviate.

From Islamabad's perspective, therefore, American demands for greater cooperation in Afghanistan were contradictory and self-defeating, in that they called on it to turn against the Afghan insurgents whilst also requiring it to bring them to the negotiating table. Compliance with such conflicting policies might have ended up providing the US a face-saving exit from its Afghan quagmire but ran the risk of leaving Pakistan high and dry in

Afghanistan with “less influence and fewer friends.”¹³⁰ Instead of aligning itself with the Obama administration’s desire to “fight, talk, build,” the Pakistani military establishment effectively adopted a “cease-fire, talk, wait for the Americans to leave” approach that preserved its links with the Afghan insurgents whilst simultaneously seeking a decisive role for Pakistan in determining the outcome of any future reconciliation between the insurgents and the Afghan government.¹³¹

Obama came to power promising to change the way in which America had traditionally done business with Pakistan. Instead of investing in its relationship with the military alone - invariably to the detriment of Pakistan’s democratic development - Washington tried to strengthen the newly elected government in Islamabad in the hope that its material and diplomatic support would in turn facilitate greater civilian control over the military, promote internal stability, mitigate widespread anti-Americanism and, most importantly, secure greater Pakistani cooperation on issues of strategic concern for the US, particularly terrorism and the endgame in Afghanistan. To that end, Obama convinced Congress to sanction an unprecedented five-year \$7.5 billion economic aid package for Pakistan. At the same time, military assistance on an even more substantial scale continued to be provided, amounting to some \$8.3 billion between 2009 and 2012.¹³²

Four years after Obama enunciated his Pakistan strategy, there was little evidence to show that it had achieved its stated objectives. Increased economic aid was not enough to stabilise Pakistan’s tottering economy¹³³ and, in any case, much of what was provided was mismanaged by both donor and recipient.¹³⁴ Despite receiving Washington’s diplomatic and financial support, a corrupt and inept civilian government built up very little political capital domestically to resist the military’s continued dominance over all matters affecting national security. Anti-American sentiment continued to rise, with some three quarters of Pakistanis surveyed in 2012 regarding the US as an enemy.¹³⁵ Pakistan remained severely hit by domestic terrorism and, despite the military’s operations in the tribal areas, the Pakistani Taliban remained a potent force. While Washington could cite bin Laden’s killing as a

¹³⁰ Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan*, 166.

¹³¹ Eric Schmitt and David E. Sanger, “U.S. Seeks Aid From Pakistan in Peace Effort,” *New York Times*, October 30, 2011.

¹³² Epstein and Kronstadt, “Pakistan: U.S. Foreign Assistance.”

¹³³ Ibid. Only in 2010 did the amount of economic aid actually disbursed to Pakistan meet the stipulated annual allocation of \$1.5 billion. Amounts fell short by \$414 million in 2011, by \$433 million in 2012, and by \$428 million in 2013.

¹³⁴ See “Audit of USAID/Pakistan’s Government-to-Government Assistance Program,” Office of Inspector General, US Agency for International Development, Audit Report No. G-391-14-002-P, December 20, 2013, accessed June 16, 2015, <https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/audit-reports/g-391-14-002-p.pdf>

Also see Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan*, 145-150.

¹³⁵ “Pakistani Public Opinion Ever More Critical of U.S.,” *Pew Research Centre*, June 27, 2012, accessed June 16, 2015, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2012/06/27/pakistani-public-opinion-ever-more-critical-of-u-s/>

major policy success, the fact that it did not trust the Pakistanis enough to inform them of the operation in advance was a testament to the underlying brittleness of a supposedly close strategic relationship.

CONCLUSION

One of the primary aims of this thesis was to develop a broader understanding of international patron-client relationships by examining not only their characteristics, goals and types but also – through employing the case study of US-Pakistan relations - to identify certain contradictions and paradoxes that can at times become their defining features. Apart from making a contribution to the rather limited existing scholarship on this distinct form of association between dominant and subordinate states in the international system, the thesis concurrently sought to take a new approach to the study of US-Pakistan relations by positioning them within a defined theoretical paradigm.

International patron-client relationships stand apart from other forms of bilateral interaction between states on the basis of several major characteristics, all of which can legitimately be applied to the US-Pakistan association. First, there is a substantial disparity in the military capabilities of the states involved. Secondly, the greater the advantage the patron acquires over its competitors through its linkages with the client, the more value the patron will place on keeping those linkages intact, thereby giving the client its primary means of influencing the patron. Finally, the relationship between patron and client should be a self-evident reality, leaving no room for ambiguity in the perception of other nations.

Based on a detailed examination of how the relationship played itself out over some six decades, it is the contention of this thesis that in making their policy choices towards each other, the US and Pakistan consistently ticked the boxes that constitute a patron-client state relationship. While there were undoubtedly periods of mutual estrangement and disenchantment, it was during times of crisis that the relationship became most clearly defined and on all such occasions, the form that it took was invariably that between a powerful yet needy patron and a demanding, problematic but strategically important client. Even during periods when relations had cooled off, it was never the case that the patron disassociated itself from the client completely or that the client transferred its loyalties entirely to one of the patron's principal competitors. In any case, such fluctuations only serve to remove a widely held misunderstanding about patron-client relationships as being rigidly structured and instead reinforce the reality that such associations are actually fluid and often volatile arrangements in which the client at times enjoys more influence than the patron.

Contrary to a widely held public perception in Pakistan about the ubiquity of America's control over the country, the bilateral relationship, especially during periods of strategic

alignment, falls much more within the Influence Parity model instead of the Patron-Centric or even Patron-Prevalence model, as per the typology proposed by Shoemaker and Spanier outlined in Chapter One. By virtue of its superior power and resources, the patron is well-placed to extract major concessions from a client, especially one that finds itself located in a high-threat security environment and is desperate for external support. At the same time, the strategic advantage that it can provide to the patron - be it military bases, logistical facilities or simply its geographical location - gives the client a powerful bargaining tool with which to extract maximum concessions from the patron.

At the outset, this thesis laid out three primary research questions for examination. The first sought to discover the objectives that lead dominant and subordinate states in the international system to form patron-client relationships. The patron might be motivated by ideological goals, whereby it seeks to restructure its client in line with its own political, economic and cultural practices and institutions; by goals of solidarity, in order to demonstrate to its rivals its ability to recruit followers; and by strategic goals, by which the patron endeavours to secure access to, or even establish outright control over, all or a portion of a client's territory or major resource in order to deny the use of such strategic assets to its [the patron's] rivals. Client goals tend to focus on the nature and intensity of the threat closest to them. For the client, the relationship with the patron will be determined by the level of threat it confronts. If the threat level is low, the client will be much more difficult for the patron to manage than if the threat level is high, since there will be less of an incentive for the patron to surrender a measure of its sovereignty and internal autonomy to the patron.

A second research question related to the differences between patron-client relationships and other bilateral arrangements amongst nations, most notably alliances. While there are varied descriptions of the constituent elements that make up an alliance, it is generally agreed that they are formal and often explicitly laid down arrangements in which states team up to balance against potential hegemons. The applicability of the alliance paradigm arguably applies more to major powers operating on a global canvas than to lesser powers, which constitute the overwhelming majority of states. As opposed to superpowers that enlist allies in order to balance against rivals with similarly substantial capabilities, weaker states must often rely on the assistance of outside states to balance a threat from within their region. However, such assistance is usually sought and obtained not under the framework of formal alliances but rather on the basis of more informal patron-client relationships. Such relationships are often preferred over formal alliances because of the greater room for

manoeuvre that they provide but their flexibility can also be their greatest liability in that their vulnerability to easy abandonment makes them more unreliable than formal alliances.

The third and final question, which goes to the very heart of this thesis, pointed to an elemental contradiction that can be detected in certain types of patron-client state relationships, especially those belonging to the Influence Parity variety. It asked why a client would wilfully put its relationship with the patron on the line by pursuing policies manifestly against the patron's interests. The US-Pakistan case study that forms the centrepiece of this thesis is an attempt to answer this fundamental question. The history of the relationship, even during periods of ostensible strategic convergence, shows that the client will do everything in its power to protect and promote what it sees as its vital national interests, even if by doing so it acts against the declared interests of its patron.

The fact that a client can get away with defying its patron should not necessarily be taken to mean that the client dominates the relationship and derives much more from it than the patron. Owing to its vastly superior power and its lingering potential to punish a client that strays too far out of line, the patron exercises significant influence over the client and usually extracts enough from it to at least fulfil its most immediate short-term interests. During the 1950s, Pakistan's geographic location and its provision of basing rights for US surveillance aircraft played a crucial role in America's containment strategy against the Soviet Union. The defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan that hastened the end of the Cold War could not have been achieved without Pakistan's support. Similarly, after 9/11, Pakistan played a vital role in the expeditious removal of the Taliban from power and provided substantial assistance in the war against al-Qaeda.

Over the last six decades, there have been enough instances described in this thesis of American pressure, at times exerted through actual threats, successfully conditioning Pakistan's foreign policy choices and even its domestic politics. Yet, the instances that demonstrated the limitations of American influence in shifting Pakistan's traditional view of its fundamental national security interests have been significantly more numerous. On that basis, the following three hypotheses postulated at the outset of the thesis can now be tested:

1. Increased patronage has a positive correlation with the level of client compliance, that is, the greater the level of assistance provided by the patron, the more likely the client will be to comply with the patron's demands.

2. The greater the client's dependence upon the patron, the more likely the client will be to align its policies, especially those relating to strategic issues, in line with the patron's requirements.
3. Clients deemed by the patron to be of significant strategic importance will be likely to receive more assistance but will be less compliant in fulfilling the patron's objectives.

In the US-Pakistan context, the first hypothesis is, at best, only partially true. Increased assistance led to increased compliance but only on selective issues. During the 1950s for instance, in order to secure American patronage, Pakistan signed up in SEATO and CENTO but used American military aid not in defence against communist aggression but instead to deter India. Zia-ul-Haq waged the Afghan jihad on behalf of the CIA but only because he also considered it to be necessary in Pakistan's own interests; in the meantime, he oversaw the acquisition of a nuclear-weapon capability. Similarly, despite increasing American assistance, Pervez Musharraf was much more compliant in terms of going after al-Qaeda than he was in turning against the Taliban. In other words, wherever the national interest was presumed to clash with the demands of the patron, client compliance with such demands diminished even as patronal assistance increased. Moreover, client compliance only increased on those issues deemed to be in the client's own national interest, and not just that of the patron.

The second hypothesis carries even less evidence to back it up than the first. Pakistan's dependence upon the US for both economic and military aid was considerable during the 1960s but that did not prevent it from initiating a war with India in 1965, even though the US was clearly opposed to the move and reacted by cutting off all military assistance. During the 1970s, Pakistan refused to align itself with the US nuclear non-proliferation agenda and continued its pursuit of nuclear weapons even at the cost of sacrificing the admittedly limited American economic and military aid it was receiving at the time. During the 1980s as well as after 9/11, dramatic increases in US assistance led to Pakistan's increasing dependence on American patronage, particularly in the form of weapons and spare parts, but it was not matched by any noticeable increase in alignment with US policies, particularly where they were deemed not to be in consonance with Pakistan's own strategic interests.

What the US-Pakistan relationship tends to support much more unambiguously is the third hypothesis, which asserts that instead of making the client more susceptible to the patron's influence, increased assistance by the patron will actually make the client less likely to

comply with the patron's wishes. This is especially true of relationships in which the patron regards the client's cooperation as vitally important for the attainment of the patron's core security interests. Paradoxically for the patron, the assistance that it provides to a strategically important client can end up undermining the very reasons that led to the provision of such assistance in the first place. Chief amongst those reasons are ensuring the client's compliance and maintaining its internal stability. At the same time, as long as the patron's own strategic interests necessitate a degree of client cooperation, it will find itself compelled to keep the relationship going, thereby giving the client continued room to deviate from the patron's script to an extent where it can pursue its own national interests with relative impunity, confident in the knowledge that while its defiance might lead to occasional tensions with the patron, its continuing strategic importance will prevent a complete rupture and the consequent termination of material assistance.

General Zia-ul-Haq was particularly adept at walking this delicate tightrope. The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan was an obvious threat to Pakistan's security but also signified a priceless opportunity to Zia to make himself indispensable to the US. Access to American patronage, particularly in the form of new and sophisticated weapons of war, permitted Pakistan to redress, to some extent, a growing imbalance in conventional forces in favour of India. It also allowed Zia to keep his core domestic constituency, the army, content with his handling of affairs. Moreover, by earning the backing of the Reagan administration, Zia was able to deny US diplomatic support to his domestic political opposition. Finally, by virtue of Pakistan's alignment with vital US strategic interests in Afghanistan, Zia managed to extract from the US a tacit acceptance of Pakistan's accelerated push towards the production of nuclear weapons.

For the Reagan administration, the overarching goal of inflicting a Vietnam-like defeat on the Soviet Union in Afghanistan necessitated making a series of compromises with respect to Pakistan. Even though the CIA was bearing half the total costs of the Afghan jihad, it had virtually no say in determining where the money went or which amongst the mujahidin groups received the largest share of weapons. Although Pakistan was a client state whose financial solvency rested in large measure on foreign - primarily American - aid, it was Zia who got his way with the Americans that the ISI would exercise complete control over the day-to-day management of the Afghan resistance. As a result, the bulk of US-supplied equipment and weaponry ended up in the hands of those not necessarily well-disposed towards America but who were seen as best placed to protect Pakistan's long-term interests in Afghanistan. As envisaged by Zia, those interests centred on the creation of an Islamist

confederation of Pakistan and Afghanistan that would eventually make inroads into Soviet Central Asia.

By making Pakistan one of the largest global recipients of US military assistance, the Reagan administration sought to attain two primary objectives: (a) ensure essential Pakistani cooperation in bringing about a Soviet defeat in Afghanistan, and (b) address Pakistan's security concerns through improving its conventional military forces, thereby obviating the need for nuclear weapons or, at the very least, decelerating Pakistan's push to acquire them. Victory in Afghanistan was eventually attained but the ISI-CIA-Saudi handling of the Afghan jihad bequeathed enduring and painful legacies to all victorious parties. With regard to the second objective, that of curtailing Pakistan's nuclear ambitions, US policy was a complete failure; if anything, Zia viewed Washington's unwillingness to link continued military assistance to a rollback of Pakistan's nuclear programme as further confirmation of his indispensability to the US. In the battle of wills between patron and client over the nuclear issue, Zia ensured that it was the US that blinked first.

During the 1990s, the patron-client relationship between the US and Pakistan unravelled and America's once "most allied ally" became its "most sanctioned ally." The interlude between the dictatorships of Zia-ul-Haq and Pervez Musharraf saw a series of weak democratic governments come and go in quick succession while the army retained real political power in its own hands. 9/11 dramatically revived the relationship and, in what was essentially a repeat of the 1980s, America showed its willingness to do business with yet another Pakistani military ruler.

In the interests of successfully prosecuting its open-ended "global war on terrorism," the Bush administration went to great lengths to prop up General Musharraf's military dictatorship. Apart from billions of American tax-payers' dollars in military and economic assistance, this included making no criticism of Musharraf's domestic agenda, which involved the consistent use of political chicanery to prolong his own rule, even if it repeatedly came at the cost of constitutionalism and the rule of law. Washington was equally uncritical in its response to Musharraf's questionable handling of the A.Q. Khan affair and refused to place Pakistan's future cooperation in the war against al-Qaeda at risk by trying to investigate the not unlikely possibility of some degree of complicity between Khan and elements within the Pakistani military establishment.

Like Zia before him, Musharraf largely succeeded in leveraging America's need for Pakistan's cooperation in the war against al-Qaeda to pursue what he and his fellow generals viewed as their country's core strategic interests, even if those interests were

directly at odds with American objectives in the region. Thus, throughout his period in power, Musharraf made a clear distinction between al-Qaeda and its affiliated Pakistani militant and sectarian groups on the one hand and the Afghan Taliban and Kashmir-focused militant groups on the other. While the former would be confronted not only for the danger they posed to Pakistan but also because going after them would keep the American aid pipeline going, the latter were still seen as strategic assets worthy of continued support, especially after India dramatically increased its presence in post-Taliban Afghanistan and the US shifted its attention and resources towards Iraq.

Bush's close embrace of Musharraf was in keeping with the personalised approach towards Pakistan adopted by earlier American administrations in which short-term strategic interests legitimised support to a succession of military rulers at the expense of long-term democratic consolidation and structural reform. Musharraf leveraged Pakistan's geostrategic importance as well as his personal chemistry with Bush to shore up his position both within the army as well as against his political opponents. Even more than Zia, who had convinced many in the Reagan administration that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was only the prelude to a much wider advance through Pakistan towards the Persian Gulf, Musharraf successfully played on the Bush administration's fears that he was the only man - and the army the only institution - standing between an extremist takeover of the country as well as of its nuclear arsenal.

Barack Obama attempted a break with several of his predecessors over the previous six decades by strengthening Pakistan's post-Musharraf democratic transition in the hope that significant American investment in a democratically elected government would in turn facilitate greater civilian control over the military and enhance cooperation on issues of strategic concern for the US, particularly terrorism and the endgame in Afghanistan. However, thanks in part to decades of American patronage which, moreover, was by no means curtailed by Obama, the military has entrenched its dominance over Pakistan's foreign and national security policies so completely that it would have been extremely difficult for any elected regime - even one more capable than the largely impotent and incompetent PPP government in office from 2008 to 2013 - to have wrested decision-making authority from it.

Like Bush before him, Obama failed to change the strategic mind-set of the Pakistani army when it came to Afghanistan. Although Washington's own state of confusion with regard to determining the eventual contours of the Afghan endgame was at least partly to blame for this failure, an even greater mistake on the part of the US was its inability or unwillingness to recognise that for Pakistan's generals, the threat from India remained paramount. To that

end, they would do whatever it took to guard against the possibility of India increasing its influence in Afghanistan, even if it meant running the risk of alienating their American paymasters by covertly supporting the very forces the US was battling in Afghanistan. The army correctly calculated that such a risk was well worth taking owing to Obama's pressing need for Pakistan's cooperation in facilitating a face-saving American exit from Afghanistan. Washington's ability to hold Islamabad accountable for its dual policy in Afghanistan was also circumscribed by its fear of isolating a country deemed too important to fail in view of the risk that its nuclear weapons might fall into the hands of terrorists. By walking the tightrope of selective cooperation and consistent defiance, the client yet again demonstrated its ability to manipulate the relationship as much as the patron, if not more.

Patron-client state relationships have been an important feature of international relations for centuries and remain so today. Their informal nature and the suppleness and manoeuvrability that they lend to both patron and client make them a popular form of bilateral interaction between states. Yet, they are not without their risks, which this thesis has sought to highlight through its case study of US-Pakistan relations. Both countries have derived important short-term benefits from forging patron-client linkages; at the same time, the long-term costs for both, but particularly so for Pakistan as the much weaker power, have been far-reaching and, in some respects, calamitous. The genie of jihad that the US and Pakistan released in Afghanistan during the 1980s came back to haunt them both. America lost almost 3,000 lives on 9/11 while Pakistan has lost many times that number through participating in what it regarded for many years as America's war on terror but which it now admits has become its own.

Perhaps most injuriously for Pakistan, American patronage invariably coincided with periods of military rule, the partial exception being the post-Musharraf period but even then, military-related inflows easily surpassed civilian assistance. While consistent American backing to a succession of military regimes has undoubtedly conferred important security benefits, it has also contributed towards entrenching the political dominance of Pakistan's armed forces along with perpetuating a national economy almost completely dependent on foreign handouts. American patronage has played its part in keeping Pakistan a national security state whose strategic direction is determined by a largely unaccountable military which, although always hungry for American aid, has not been reluctant to bite the hand that feeds it if required by considerations of national and institutional interest. Despite this fundamental contradiction, the bonds of patronage and cliency between the two countries will endure and their potentially negative future consequences will be accepted so long as (i) the patron assigns a higher value to the benefits accruing from the client's cooperation

than to the costs incurred through the client's defiance, and (ii) the client prefers the short-term expediency of external patronage over the long, hard road to self-reliance.

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