

In Search of Identity and Security: Pakistan and the Middle East, 1947-77

by
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INTRODUCTION

Throughout its relatively brief history, Pakistan has been preoccupied with the difficult tasks of trying to insure its political and economic security as well as finding the proper means of providing a strong sense of national identity. Needless to say, a very important factor in the formulation of Pakistan's foreign policy has been India, which it has perceived not only as a military threat, but also as a diplomatic rival.¹ Therefore, Pakistan has looked outside the region of South Asia for political support, and military and economic assistance. Yet, Pakistan has had its own internal problems that cannot be attributed to India (or to Afghanistan, with whom Pakistan's relations, at times, have been far from friendly).

When Pakistan came into existence in 1947 with the partition of India, that state had no history of being a political or economic unit, while its inhabitants had no common language or uniform culture. Moreover, until 1971 — when what was known as East Pakistan seceded and fully asserted its Bengali character through its establishment as the state of Bangladesh — Pakistan consisted of two wings separated by some 1,000 miles of Indian territory. Even today, Pakistan is far from being unified; indeed, Shahid Javed Burki, a former Pakistani government official, aptly describes that country as “a nation in the making.”² Pakistan was created to serve as a territorial entity for the Muslim population of South Asia. (However, it should be noted that today more Muslims of the Indian subcontinent live outside its borders than within.) Interestingly, aside from Israel, it is the only country in recent history to be established solely on the basis of common religion. Thus, Pakistan's Islamic character has in the past and will continue in the future to be a factor in that country's domestic and foreign policies. With regard to Pakistani domestic politics, ethnicity is still a very important factor despite governmental attempts in the past to use Islam as a means to deny such distinctions within Pakistan.³ Naturally, Pakistani foreign policy also has been greatly concerned with the preservation of national integrity. There has been a national consensus in two regards — the perceived threat of India and that Pakistan seek to promote friendly relations with countries in Asia and Africa, especially those with Muslim majorities.

For the most part, it has been only in the last two decades that Pakistan has had great success in developing mutually beneficial relationships with other predominantly Muslim populated states, especially the Arab countries of the Middle East. (In both domestic and foreign policy, Islam is seen as an element of identity. However, in the domestic environment, Baluchis or Pathans may see it as a secondary factor given their ethnic groups' dissatisfaction with

Punjabi dominance in internal politics and the fact that they have brethren across the borders in Iran and/or Afghanistan.)⁴ While Pakistan did develop close ties with Turkey and Iran prior to the 1970s, during much of that time period these countries were members first in the Baghdad Pact and later, with Iraq's withdrawal from the organization in 1959, in the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). These Western-sponsored alliances were regarded disfavorably by most of the Arab world, but by the mid-1960s, the newly created Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) organization, designed to promote joint economic projects, had surpassed CENTO in importance.

This article will review and analyze Pakistan's relations with the so-called "northern-tier" states of Turkey and Iran as well as the countries of the Arab world over a thirty year period from the time of Pakistan's independence from Great Britain through the administration of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto — the architect of Pakistan's close ties with the Arab states of the Middle East that have continued to thrive well after his removal from power. Pakistani-Middle Eastern relations since 1977 are dealt with in order to assess the lasting impact of Bhutto's policy toward the region. This is the only area of foreign policy in which Bhutto's successor, Zia ul-Haq, maintained a similar outlook.

The purpose of this article is to show how Pakistan was finally accepted by the Arab states, the core of the Muslim world, and to argue that these ties, while very important, do not alone answer Pakistan's needs in terms of security or identity. True security can only be achieved when Pakistan resolves its outstanding problems with India, among which the issue of Kashmir is most important.⁵ As for identity, only through the maintenance of democratic government can a consensus finally be built on what it means to be Pakistani.⁶ Emphasis on the common faith of Pakistan's citizens is not enough to preserve national integrity due to the culturally diverse nature of the country. Yet, throughout the history of that states' existence, all of Pakistan's leaders have sought close relations with the Muslim world because such a policy has been popular domestically; in addition, they probably did so to serve as justification for their country's existence.

The shape of Pakistan's Middle Eastern relations, in general, may be seen in the context of Pakistan's security concerns and the need to adapt to changing political and economic realities both in South Asia and the Middle East. In the early years of Pakistan's existence, that country was nonaligned as was India, but unlike its larger neighbor it did not receive much attention from the United States government. The Pakistanis tried to forge close ties with the Muslim world and used the United Nations to strongly support struggles for self-determination in the region. When in the mid-1950s they had little to show for their efforts, Pakistan joined Turkey, Iran and Iraq in the Baghdad Pact, a US-supported "northern-tier" alliance. (This was a practical arrangement that had nothing to do with Islamic identity on the part of Pakistan's partners as especially both the Turkish and Iranian leadership had been, over many years, promoting secularism in their respective countries.) During this time, the Americans provided the Pakistanis with a great deal of military and economic assistance. Pakistan's close ties to the US strained its relations with the Arab

world. Over time, the Pakistanis felt that they were being “taken for granted” by the Americans and were offended by the US’s failure to provide support over Kashmir in 1965.

As Sino-Indian and Pakistani-American relations declined — the former over a border dispute — Sino-Pakistani relations improved greatly. The China “card” gave Pakistan the opportunity to balance somewhat its relations with the other two superpowers. Also, Pakistan’s new approach to foreign policy — i.e. a de-emphasis of its pro-Western posture in Middle Eastern politics — helped that country develop closer ties with the Muslim world, especially, at first, with Saudi Arabia who was interested in promoting Islamic unity. While the Muslim world supported Pakistan on the Kashmir issue, Pakistan reciprocated with succor to the Arabs in their conflict with Israel. These relations became greatly important with the rise in oil prices following the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. The Arabs used a part of their increased wealth to provide Pakistan with economic assistance, which included financing for arms. In return, the Pakistanis offered military know-how and manpower as well as civilian workers to those sparsely populated countries.

The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan enabled Pakistan to repair its relations with the US, which were strained under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and to strengthen its ties with the Arab states of the Persian Gulf; ties with Iran were generally cordial as Pakistan remained neutral in the Iran-Iraq War.⁷ During the 1991 Gulf War, the Pakistani government maintained a military presence in Saudi Arabia but kept its distance from the US-led campaign against Iraq due to opposition at home, and anger over the American government’s suspension of military and economic aid resulting from Pakistan’s nuclear program.⁸

THE FOUNDATION AND OBJECTIVES OF PAKISTANI FOREIGN POLICY

In his inaugural speech to the Constituent Assembly on 11 August 1947, just three days before Pakistan achieved its independence, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who received the title of *Quaid-i-Azam* (The Great Leader),⁹ stated that one’s “religion or caste or creed” had “nothing to do with the business of the state.”¹⁰ Indeed, the Constituent Assembly chose to recognize Pakistan’s non-Muslim population — which at the time numbered about twenty percent of the country’s total — by adding a white strip to the Muslim League’s green party banner to serve as the new state’s flag.¹¹ Yet, there was no doubt that Pakistan’s leaders saw the new state as a means of serving the interests of the Indian subcontinent’s Muslims. In March 1949, in the midst of a massive exchange of population between India and Pakistan — that would result, according to the 1951 census, in the latter having a ninety-five percent Muslim population — Pakistan’s first prime minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, declared the following in the Constituent Assembly:

Pakistan was founded because the Muslims of this Sub-Continent wanted to build up their lives in accordance with the teaching and traditions of Islam, because they wanted to demon-

strate to the world that Islam provides a panacea to the many diseases which have crept into the life of humanity today.¹²

However, it should be noted that the founding fathers of Pakistan were secular-minded nationalists who based their ideas for the new state on Western political theory and logic. They wished to build the country into a constitutional democracy and in the process fit Islam into their design. They saw no contradiction in having an "Islamic state" with a polity operating according to the principles of modern democracy as "fairness, justice, compassion and honesty are all tenets of Islam."¹³

Still Pakistan has had a difficult time over the years trying to maintain a constitutional democracy — it was under military rule 1958-71 and 1977-88 — and to define a Pakistani identity. In an introductory note for the proceedings of the First Congress of the History and Culture of Pakistan — held in Islamabad in 1973 — the editor remarked:

The mind of [the] Pakistani intellectual has often been agitated by a consideration of the question of our national identity What are the links that bind the people of Pakistan? What is the soul and personality of Pakistan? What is our national identity and our peculiar oneness which makes us a nation apart from other nations?¹⁴

Pakistan's leaders concerned themselves with the problem of national identity in both domestic and foreign policy. However, it was the loss of what became Bangladesh that forced a re-examination of the issue and brought about a greater emphasis on Islam. On the domestic scene, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's administration granted a number of concessions to the Islamic establishment, among which was a decision to include, for the first time in Pakistan's history, a minister for religious affairs in the central cabinet.¹⁵ (At the same time, Bhutto had to use the military to quash a Baluchi rebellion following his decision to dismiss their elected regional government.)¹⁶ In addition, the 1973 constitution, in contrast to the constitutions of 1956 and 1962, which did not address foreign affairs, required that the state "shall endeavour to preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among the Muslim countries based on Islamic unity."¹⁷ However, despite Pakistan's changes in attitude concerning alignment with either the Western bloc or the Muslim world, its foreign policy has remained constant in terms of objectives.

The first and foremost objective of Pakistan's foreign policy has been to preserve its national integrity. Indeed, it has never felt very comfortable with its South Asian neighbors, India and Afghanistan. Since independence, Pakistan and India have been involved in three wars — in 1948-49 and 1965 over Kashmir, and in 1971 over Bangladesh — and the dispute over Kashmir still lingers.¹⁸ In addition, the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan is still in dispute with the latter calling, from time to time, for the creation of the state of "Pukhtunistan" for the Pathans of Pakistan's North West Frontier Province and part of Baluchistan while presently Pakistan continues to keep a wary eye on the ongoing civil strife next door.¹⁹ However, Pakistan's integrity cannot be

preserved solely through the realm of foreign policy. It has been bothered over the years by ethnic strife which has the potential to bring about its disintegration, as was the case with Bangladesh's separation. In what was prior to 1971 the western wing of the country, the Pathans, Baluchis and Sindhis have also been resentful of the Punjabis and the Urdu-speaking refugees from India who have historically dominated the politics and/or economy of Pakistan.

Another important objective of Pakistan's foreign policy remains its need to seek support for and improvement of its economy. It should be noted that the territories that constituted Pakistan were economically the poorest of what had been British India, and that they were dependent upon the industries of other areas of the subcontinent for basic consumer goods. While Pakistan possessed no known mineral resources it did have, however, two potential assets. Prior to independence the eastern areas of Bengal had produced the bulk of India's jute, while the western part of the Punjab, with an extensive system of irrigation, had annual surpluses of food.²⁰ Since 1947, Pakistan's economy has grown considerably, yet as of 1983 its per capita income was only \$390, which according to the World Bank classifies it as a low-income country.²¹ These concerns of political and economic security were clearly on the minds of Liaquat Ali Khan and Pakistan's leadership in the early years as they are today with the current government.

A third objective of Pakistan's foreign policy is best expressed in the words of Liaquat Ali Khan who in 1951 stated:

To us in Pakistan nothing is dearer than the prospect of the strengthening of the world-wide Muslim brotherhood. Any endeavour, from whatever direction it is made, to bring the Muslims of far-flung countries together and to stimulate in them brotherly feelings of mutual affection, understanding and co-operation readily finds an echo in the hearts of the Muslims of Pakistan.... [Indeed,] part of the mission which Pakistan has set before itself [is] to do everything in its power to promote closer fellowship and co-operation between Muslim countries.²²

Aside from Pakistan's need to establish its place in the world, it has had a genuine affinity with other Muslim populated territories seeking self-determination, given its past experience and its immediate concerns regarding Kashmir. As Jinnah pointed out in 1948:

We are all passing through perilous times. The drama of power politics that is being staged in Palestine, Indonesia and Kashmir should serve as an eye opener to us [in the Muslim world]. It is only by putting up a united front that we can make our voice felt in the councils of the world.²³

Twenty-six years later, in the keynote address to the Second Islamic Summit Conference in Lahore, the secular-minded Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto also called for Islamic unity:

There is no power without economic strength. Unless we reorientate our outlook and try to develop the potential to meet our basic economic and security needs through cooperative endeavour, we will continue to lack the inherent strength, the solidity, which is necessary for achieving our social, cultural and political purposes.

Bhutto continued:

The Muslim countries are now so placed as to be able to play a most constructive and rewarding role for cooperation among themselves and with other countries of the Third World. Not only are they possessed of a common heritage and outlook but also their economies are such as to enable them to supplement one another's development effort. It is time that we translate the sentiments of Islamic unity into concrete measures....²⁴

As can be seen, sentiment and necessity have shaped Pakistan's foreign policy objectives.

PAKISTAN'S QUEST FOR "BROTHERHOOD" IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

Pakistan's efforts in its early years to forge close ties with the other countries of the Muslim world were in some regards overzealous, for even *Dawn*, the Muslim League newspaper felt the need to assert in 1952:

that the time has come for Pakistan's intelligentsia to realise that Pakistan is not adding to its prestige in the international field by running after certain other countries which are economically and otherwise in a far less stable position than Pakistan itself....²⁵

Indeed, the rector of Cairo's al-Azhar University "observed drily that too many Islamic conferences had been called in Pakistan" while Egypt's King Faruq was reported to have said in jest, "Don't you know that Islam was born on 14 August 1947?"²⁶ Pakistan hosted the first International Islamic Economic Conference in 1949, but the third meeting of that organization in 1954, also held in Karachi, turned out to be its last. The third and fourth sessions of the World Islamic Conference also met in, what was at the time, Pakistan's capital in 1949 and 1951 — having previously gathered in Mecca and Jerusalem in 1926 and 1931, respectively — but did not convene again until 1967.²⁷ In addition, there were two failed attempts during the early 1950s to organize in Pakistan a conference of governmental leaders from countries throughout the Muslim world.

These attempts at fostering Islamic brotherhood were bound to fail, for other countries in the Muslim world did not share Pakistan's views regarding the relationship between religion and nationality. Instead, they generally saw political issues from perspectives of territorial or racial nationalism, or in terms of opposition to Western colonialism rather than along lines of Muslim versus non-Muslim. Therefore, India's calls for Afro-Asian solidarity had greater

appeal. Nevertheless, Pakistan played an important role, during its early years, especially in the United Nations, in its advocacy of the struggles for self-determination in predominantly Muslim areas from North Africa to Southeast Asia.

Few could speak so eloquently as Pakistan's Foreign Minister Zafrullah Khan on the issue of Palestine. Just one day before the United Nations' General Assembly adopted the proposal of the majority on the Special Committee on Palestine calling for the partition of that country (28 November 1947), Zafrullah Khan argued before the General Assembly that the Western powers were "forcibly driving ... a Western wedge into the heart of the Middle East" and warned them that they would have to face the consequences of their approval of the creation of Israel: "Remember ... that you may need friends tomorrow, that you may need allies in the Middle East; I beg of you not to ruin and blast your credit in those lands."²⁸ Following the General Assembly vote (of 33 to 13, with 10 abstentions), in which Pakistan sided with the six Arab states, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, India, Greece and Cuba, *Dawn* denounced the decision which it viewed as supporting an "impolitic, immoral and illegal move to partition a small country without reference to and against the will of the overwhelming majority of its people." Moreover, the newspaper described the partition plan as a "diabolical conspiracy to sow the seeds of war in the Middle East."²⁹ Indeed, as Zafrullah Khan pointed out to the General Assembly, in the midst of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war:

[A]t no time and under no circumstances would the East ever assimilate or reconcile itself to a sovereign State of Israel. With Jewry as such the East had no quarrel; it had indeed a deep sympathy with the sufferings of the Jewish race....

As for the specific question of partition, Pakistan's Foreign Minister asserted that his country's situation was quite different from that of Israel. After all, the Indian subcontinent was divided as a result of mutual consent and Pakistan was established in areas of South Asia where Muslims were in the majority. In the case of Palestine, however, Zafrullah Khan pointed out that Jews were in the minority in every sub-district except Jaffa; furthermore, (as he was to state in 1952) the United Nations' actions with regard to Israel represented "an imposed decision to take away ... [a] country from a people who had inhabited a land for nearly 2,000 years and to hand it over to people who were coming from ... outside...."³⁰ While the Arab-Israeli conflict continued to be an important issue for the Pakistanis, there were a number of other territories throughout the Muslim world in which they took an active interest.

When, in December 1948, the Netherlands attempted through military means to reassert colonial control over Indonesia, Zafrullah Khan strongly criticized these actions while his government prohibited Dutch aircraft from landing in or overflying Pakistan.³¹ The following year, not only were the Netherlands and Indonesia able to reach an agreement with the help of the United Nations concerning the latter's independence, but the General Assembly also agreed to Libya becoming an independent state by January 1952, a cause for which Zafrullah Khan had worked hard to garner support. The Pakistani Foreign

Minister also firmly opposed Italian trusteeship over Somaliland; the General Assembly eventually placed Italy's former colony under the United Nations' trusteeship, an arrangement that was to last until 1960 when that territory received its independence. During the following decade Pakistan along with other Asian and African states expressed support for Tunisian, Moroccan and Algerian independence in discussions in the General Assembly.³² This was also a time when Pakistan strengthened its ties with Turkey and Iran and moved firmly into alliance with the Western powers. In the process, relations with much of the Arab world deteriorated.

PAKISTAN, THE "NORTHERN-TIER" AND ALLIANCE WITH THE WEST

By the early 1950s, Pakistan had little to show for its efforts in the direction of attempting to achieve Islamic unity. At the same time, aside from the Korean War boom, it faced continuing economic difficulties and had concerns about its military security. Ever since the establishment of Pakistan, its leaders had courted Washington for a strong commitment of military and economic assistance, but during the late 1940s the Truman administration was primarily concerned with developments in Europe and secondarily with those in the Middle East and East Asia. South Asia, on the other hand, "simply did not rank very high among American priorities during a time of heightened global tensions and escalating demands for limited American resources."³³ Moreover, the Americans agreed with the British on the need for an evenhanded approach with regard to Pakistan and India so as not to jeopardize prospects for a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

However, by 1951 with nationalistic fervor on the increase in the Middle East in such places as Egypt and Iran over the issues of British troops based along the Suez Canal and ownership of oil resources, respectively, the United States began to view Pakistan as a strategic asset for the Western defense of the region. While they took note that Pakistan possessed "the greatest military potential in the Middle East next to Turkey," the British continued to have reservations about arming the Pakistanis. However, the British were in no position to dissuade the Americans when in 1953 the Eisenhower administration embraced the idea of a "northern-tier" regional alliance to include Turkey, (post-crisis) Iran, Iraq and Pakistan, as they favored a Middle Eastern defense pact in principle and did not wish to alienate the Pakistanis over this issue. Moreover, Pakistan's "clever combination" of public diplomacy, playing on the American government's aversion to nonalignment, and leaks to both the American and Pakistani press about plans for US-Pakistan military cooperation, designed to agitate the Indian government, served to hasten American plans to arm Pakistan.³⁴ On 19 May 1954, the United States and Pakistan signed a Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement according to which Pakistan was to be provided with military equipment and training for its armed forces. It should be noted that during the preceding month the Americans had signed a similar agreement with Iraq, and that Turkey and Pakistan had concluded a treaty of friendship and cooperation, a move which the Eisenhower administration had hoped would

serve as the first step on the road to the development of a regional defense organization. However, it was through a more forceful agreement calling for cooperation in security and defense between Turkey and Iraq on 24 February 1955 that the “northern-tier” alliance, initially referred to as the Baghdad Pact, was launched. Great Britain became a member less than two months later and was followed by Pakistan in September and Iran in November of the same year. Like the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), in which Pakistan became a founding member in September 1954, the Baghdad Pact had no joint military command nor did it afford Pakistan protection in the event of war with India.

Why then did Pakistan join these Western-sponsored pacts? Ayub Khan, who was the Pakistani army’s commander-in-chief from 1951-58, offers the following explanation in his autobiography, regarding the Baghdad Pact:

The Muslim world occupied an area which was vital strategically and economically and that was the reason why the United States and other western countries thought it worth their while to befriend the Muslims.... There was no reason why we should not have taken advantage of the opportunity. For us, our own needs for development were paramount....

Moreover, Ayub Khan acknowledges that a “major benefit” of joining the organization — which became known as CENTO with Iraq’s withdrawal in 1959 — was the “association and friendship” that developed with Pakistan’s Muslim neighbors to the west, Turkey and Iran. As for SEATO, on the other hand, whose Third World membership also included the Philippines and Thailand — the other members were Australia, New Zealand, the US, Great Britain and France — Ayub Khan has this to say:

I do not quite know the reasons that prompted the Government of Pakistan to join this Organization: one must really ask Chaudry Zafrullah Khan, who was then Foreign Minister. We soldiers were not consulted I thought at the time [we learnt of it] that Pakistan had no reason to join SEATO at all. Perhaps the main consideration was to oblige the United States, who had been giving us considerable economic help.³⁵

Ayub Khan continues in his autobiography:

If anyone thought that membership of this Organization would in any way strengthen the position of the eastern part of Pakistan, then he was obviously overlooking the fact that the real danger to East Pakistan was from India which surrounded it on all sides.³⁶

In 1971, just four years after Ayub Khan wrote those words, East Pakistan — with the assistance of India — became Bangladesh. The loss of its eastern wing also formally ended Pakistan’s membership in SEATO. However, in actuality, since the early 1960s — with Pakistan’s growing ties with the

People's Republic of China, and its disappointment over the US's failure to offer support in its confrontation with India over Kashmir — that organization meant nothing to the Pakistanis. As for CENTO, Pakistan remained a member until 1979, when due to the Iranian revolution, that organization ceased to exist. While by the mid- 1960s the alliance itself was superseded in importance to its members by its economic offshoot, the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) organization, earlier, during the mid- to late 1950s, Pakistan and its "northern-tier" allies had antagonized much of the Arab world.

When, in early 1954, Pakistan and Turkey announced that they would make plans to cooperate in matters of defense, Egypt, which was in the process of negotiating for the removal of British troops from its soil, criticized such a move on Cairo radio calling it "a catastrophe for Islam ... the first stab in our back. The next one will probably occur when Iraq joins the plot."³⁷ Iraq's signing of the Baghdad Pact a year later, as well as Great Britain's subsequent accession to the alliance, disturbed not only Egypt, but most other Arab countries as they saw it as an attempt by the West to divert their attention from Israel and to maintain British influence in the Middle East. Therefore, when Pakistan joined the Baghdad Pact, even Saudi Arabia, through its embassy in Karachi, called the move "a stab in the heart of the Arab and Muslim states," while Radio Mecca lamented: "Is it ... possible for any person to believe that an Islamic State as that of Pakistan should accede to those who have joined hands with Zionist Jews."³⁸ (It should be noted that both Turkey and [alliance member to be] Iran had recognized the state of Israel in 1950 — though the latter only *de facto* — and were in the process of expanding these ties.)³⁹ A couple of months later, during a visit to India, King Saud "publicly certified that the fate of Indian Muslims was 'in safe hands.'"⁴⁰ While Pakistani-Saudi relations had indeed reached a low point, they were better than those between Karachi and Cairo at the time of the Suez crisis of 1956.

Pakistan's involvement in the Suez crisis is far too complex to do it justice in this article. However, the following interpretation of events is presented in order to explain Pakistani- Egyptian relations in the context of Pakistan's relations with the countries of the Middle East in general, and to contrast it with those of India, its rival for influence in the region. In August 1956, just one month after Egypt nationalized the Anglo- French Suez Canal Company, at the first London Conference of 22 countries called to consider the issue, Pakistan's minister of foreign affairs and Commonwealth relations, Hamidul Haq Choudhury, declared that "the sovereign right of Egypt in her dealing with a commercial concern within her own territory cannot be challenged or contested." However, just like 17 other countries including the US, Great Britain and France as well as Turkey, Iran and Ethiopia, Pakistan favored international management of canal operations in cooperation with Egypt. India, on the other hand, preferred a "consultative body of user interests" that would not be able to exert any control over the canal; its proposal, which even the Egyptians disliked, had the support of Ceylon, Indonesia and the Soviet Union.⁴¹ While Pakistan voiced its opposition to the Suez Canal User's Association established by the Western powers — a scheme which Egypt's president Gamal

Abd al-Nasser labeled an "association for waging war" — and its foreign minister, Firoz Khan Noon, declared: "we cannot ... associate ourselves with the use of force or any solution imposed on Egypt against her will," relations between Cairo and Karachi remained at a low point.⁴²

According to Muhammad Heikal, Nasser's confidant, the Egyptian leader looked to Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru for advice and support. The two leaders who met each other initially a couple of months before the Bandung Conference of Afro-Asian states in April 1955, came to develop a personal friendship as well as a close working relationship in support of the cause of nonalignment.⁴³ On the other hand, Nasser was distrustful of the Pakistani leadership and their almost unwavering support of the policies of the Western powers. British Prime Minister Anthony Eden, however, "appreciated Pakistan's role and difficulties [given the Pakistani public's pro-Egyptian sentiment], and much preferred what was said and practised by Karachi ... than the moralizings and pro-Nasser positions adopted, as he saw it, by India..."⁴⁴

When Great Britain, France and Israel went to war against Egypt in late October-early November 1956, Pakistan's Prime Minister H.S. Suhrawardy in "unreservedly condemn[ing]" the action stated the following:

These developments have created a very grave situation. Not only have these events incited and helped Israel in her aggressive designs on Egyptian territory, but the violation by these two Powers of Egyptian sovereignty and territory by the use of force, in disregard of the appeals of the other members of the United Nations, has shocked world opinion and placed the very concept of that world organization in jeopardy.... What is happening in Egypt today constitutes a threat to the entire Muslim world.⁴⁵

Suhrawardy's statement was moderate in tone as he had to consider relations with Great Britain both within the Baghdad Pact and the Commonwealth.

India, which also belonged to the Commonwealth, was the only member of that body to send a formal protest to the British government, in which it referred to the Anglo-French bombing of Egypt as "being against all considerations of humanity." Nehru, himself, also remarked "we are going back to the predatory method of the 18th and 19th centuries."⁴⁶ Such words were more in line with the tone of the Pakistani press. *Dawn*, in an editorial of 1 November entitled "Hitler Reborn," declared that Great Britain and France "have suddenly turned the clock back hundreds of years, unwritten much of what has since been written in the book of human civilization, and decided to act as self-chartered libertines with the gun and the bomb, killing and conquering the weak like cowards."⁴⁷ As for the Middle Eastern members of the Baghdad Pact, they issued a joint statement in Tehran on 8 November in which they "condemned the Israeli act of aggression against Egypt," lamented the "regrettable armed intervention of the British and French forces" and took credit for influencing the British decision to accept a ceasefire on 6 November.⁴⁸ As was to be expected, following the ceasefire, Egypt turned to India for assistance at the United Nations.

When the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) was established and sent to Egypt to maintain the ceasefire and to assist in the execution of UN resolutions calling for the withdrawal of foreign forces, India sent a contingent of peacekeepers. Egypt, however, rejected Pakistani participation in UNEF. Suhrawardy reflecting on the Egyptian rejection stated the following to the Pakistani National Assembly in February 1957:

When Egypt, which claims to be a champion of the Arab cause and the anti-Israeli cause, chooses to recognize and make friends with India and to have armies of India on its soil, the India which recognizes Israel, and has trade relations with it, and amicable relations with it, and refuses to allow Pakistani troops as a part of the United Nations [Emergency] Force, am I to consider that Israel is the pivot of Arab policy?⁴⁹

This, of course, was “sour grapes”; while India did recognize Israel in 1950, it never sent a diplomatic representative to the Jewish state, nor did Indian-Israeli trade amount to much.⁵⁰ Moreover, Suhrawardy himself in a American television interview in July 1957 remarked that “the Arab states ought to recognize Israel and make peace with her” and that “Pakistan might eventually serve as a mediator.”⁵¹ As a matter of fact, Zafrullah Khan had earlier served as a “channel of Egyptian-Israeli dialogue.”⁵² In any event, it would take some time before Egypt and Pakistan could fully repair their strained relations.

Following the Suez Crisis of 1956, the US announced what came to be known as the Eisenhower Doctrine. It was a program for the Middle East designed to promote economic development and to provide military assistance, including the employment of American armed forces, “to secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence of such nations, requesting such aid, against overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by International Communism.”⁵³ Naturally, the members of the Baghdad Pact embraced the Eisenhower Doctrine, while Lebanon was the only Arab state (aside from Iraq) to formally endorse the program. When in 1958, the US intervened in Lebanon — where local Communists were not even a factor in that country’s civil war, but instead it was alleged that the United Arab Republic (UAR, a union of Egypt and Syria) was involved — Pakistan, Turkey and Iran issued a joint statement expressing their “appreciation and gratitude” for the “bold and appropriate decision.”⁵⁴ (It should be noted that on 14 July, just a day before the US landed troops in Lebanon, the Iraqi government was overthrown.) In contrast to the response of Pakistan and its allies, both India and the UAR condemned the American action.⁵⁵ Yet with Iraq’s subsequent withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact, Pakistan had a chance to improve its relations with the Arab world and to expand its ties with Turkey and Iran beyond matters of CENTO.

PAKISTAN AND THE MIDDLE EAST SINCE THE 1960s

In 1960, in an article in *Foreign Affairs*, Pakistani President Ayub Khan proudly declared the following:

[I]n the context of present-day world politics Pakistan has openly and unequivocally cast its lot with the West, and unlike several countries around us, we have shut ourselves off almost completely from the possibility of any major assistance from the Communist bloc. We do not believe in hunting with the hound and running with the hare.⁵⁶

Yet, during the same year, the controversy surrounding the downing of the American U-2 spy plane over the Soviet Union — on a flight that may have originated in Pakistan without that government's knowledge — probably forced Pakistan to diversify its relations.⁵⁷ By March 1961, it concluded an agreement with the Soviet Union in which it received a \$30 million loan and technical assistance for oil exploration, while the following year, Pakistan began formal negotiations that led to a border agreement being reached with the People's Republic of China in 1963. Meanwhile, as a result of the Sino-Indian border war of 1962, the United States and Great Britain rushed to provide India with military aid. While the Pakistanis felt such assistance to be excessive, the United States was quite concerned about Pakistan's growing relations with the People's Republic of China, which also included a civil aviation agreement in 1963. At the time of the Indo-Pakistani war of 1965, the US suspended arms deliveries to both India and Pakistan, a move that hurt the latter far more due to its total dependence on the US for military equipment and supplies. Naturally, the Pakistanis felt betrayed.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was foreign minister at the time, had this to say about the American embargo:

America's reason for terminating military aid is to force both countries into confrontation with China. Indo-Pakistani cooperation is a necessary step towards a fixed objective, which is the encirclement of China. The United States being, badly bogged down in Vietnam, would like to give military assistance only to [Asian] countries willing to use that assistance in the Vietnam war and prepared to use it against China.⁵⁸

While relations between the US and Pakistan had reached a low point, things improved somewhat over the next decade with the Sino-American rapprochement.⁵⁹ On the other hand, as for the Muslim world, most states were quite supportive of Pakistan in its 1965 war with India.

Indeed, Pakistan's image had changed due to its growing and/or improved relations with the Soviet Union and China, and its leadership's greater appreciation of the motivations of neighboring states in the Middle East as well as those in the Third World in general. During its confrontation with India in 1965, Pakistan not only received the strong support of Indonesia — whose leader Sukarno, an important figure in the nonaligned movement, had offered

military assistance — but also of Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Iran reportedly supplied Pakistan with jet fuel and gasoline free of cost, while Turkey — which had earlier received Pakistani support with regard to Cyprus — serviced aircraft and provided guns and ammunition. Saudi Arabia and, to a much lesser degree, Jordan provided financial support. (At the same time, Egypt professed its neutrality.)⁶⁰ Two years later, during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, Pakistan was able to repay the favor of its Arab supporters and to show its solidarity with Egypt, by condemning Israel's actions as "naked aggression" and by offering "material help" to the frontline states.⁶¹ While relations with Egypt did not improve much until after Nasser's death in 1970, ties with Saudi Arabia strengthened during the late 1960s.

In August 1967, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed an agreement for technical cooperation in the field of defense. This allowed for Pakistani military officers to be sent to the desert kingdom to oversee the development of Saudi Arabia's army and air force while Saudis were sent to Pakistan to receive military training. It should be noted that while initial Saudi contacts about the possibility of Pakistani help came as early as 1963, it was the American arms embargo against Pakistan and that country's need to find alternate sources of support as well as the "[impressive] Pakistani performance against a qualitatively and numerically superior Indian army" in 1965 that helped greatly to bring the two parties together.⁶² Of course, both countries hoped to develop relations beyond military ties.

As early as 1965, Saudi Arabia broached the idea of what became the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), currently an association of about 50 predominantly Muslim states promoting economic and cultural cooperation. In 1966, King Faisal visited a number of countries, including Pakistan, to garner support for his proposal of an Islamic pact, but received very little encouragement. At the time, one knowledgeable observer explained the Pakistani position in the following manner:

Pakistan has always been in favour of Muslim unity but is nevertheless wary of entering any new pacts in the Middle East since its unfortunate experience with the Arabs over the Baghdad Pact. Now that a group of States [namely the UAR, Syria, Iraq and Algeria] is opposing the idea of the Islamic pact, Pakistan is all the more anxious to avoid involvement in Middle East [Arab] disputes.⁶³

Yet by 1969, following the burning of al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, the short-lived Pakistani government of Yahya Khan attended the first summit meeting of the OIC in Rabat in which 25 countries, including Turkey, Iran and Egypt, were represented. The joint declaration concluding the conference announced the organization's strong support of the "Palestine people for the restitution of its usurped rights and in its struggle for national liberation."⁶⁴ During the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971, with the most notable exception of Egypt — which the Soviets used, possibly without Cairo's approval, as a base to airlift weapons to India — countries throughout the Muslim world sided with

Pakistan. Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Libya and Iran reportedly transferred military equipment to Pakistan, including jets, while the last country also provided sanctuary for Pakistani commercial aircraft.⁶⁵ As a result of the war, Bangladesh was established in what was formerly East Pakistan while Yahya Khan was forced to resign as president and to hand over power to his deputy prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

In 1972, a few months after assuming the presidency of what was left of Pakistan, Bhutto stated the following concerning foreign policy:

The severance of our eastern wing by force has significantly altered our geographic focus. This will naturally affect our geopolitical perspective. The geographical distance between us and the nations of South East Asia has grown [A]t the moment, as we stand, it is within the ambit of South and Western Asia. It is here that our primary concern must henceforth lie.

Bhutto continued:

There is a whole uninterrupted belt of Muslim nations, beginning with Iran and Afghanistan and culminating on the shores of the Atlantic and Morocco. With the people of all these states we share a cultural heritage, religious beliefs and a good deal of history. There is thus a community of interests which is further buttressed by the similarity of our aspirations and hopes. Clearly we have to make a major effort in building upon the fraternal ties that already bind us to the Muslim world.⁶⁶

Thus, Pakistan continued to play an active role in the OIC and to strongly support the Arab cause against Israel. During the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, Pakistan sent medical teams to both Egypt and Syria, while in the latter country Pakistani pilots engaged in defensive actions.⁶⁷ Furthermore, its minister for defense and foreign affairs, Aziz Ahmed, presented the following condemnation of Israel in the UN General Assembly:

For almost six years the Arabs and the rest of the world have waited for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East in accordance with Resolution 242, adopted by the Security Council in November 1967. Every effort made since then to resolve the conflict has been frustrated by the intransigence of Israel Israel has put the world on notice that it has no intention whatsoever to part with the [occupied Arab] territory.... [C]onsidering that all the peaceful avenues of settlement have been blocked, it is small wonder that the Arabs have taken up the challenge and decided to meet force with force.⁶⁸

Following the war, Pakistan hosted the second summit meeting of the OIC in Lahore in February 1974, at which 37 countries and the PLO were represented. (Syria and Iraq, which had boycotted the first summit in 1969 were in attendance, though the latter strictly as an observer.) The three-day conference afforded Pakistan the opportunity of recognizing Bangladesh, of increas-

ing its stature in the Muslim world politically and of benefiting economically.⁶⁹ This latter concern was extremely important given the rising price of oil following the 1973 Arab-Israeli war and the fact that Pakistan produced domestically only about ten percent of its petroleum needs.⁷⁰

Before pursuing in more detail Pakistan's economic relations with the Middle East, which would increase greatly during the 1970s and beyond, it must be mentioned, that while Bhutto held true to Pakistan's long standing foreign policy objectives, he more fully developed the policy of "bilateralism" — i.e., good relations bilaterally with each of the three "superpowers" — that had been initiated by Ayub Khan. (However, it was not until 1979, after the demise of CENTO and under the rule of Zia ul-Haq — Bhutto's successor — that Pakistan joined the Nonaligned Movement.) At the same time, Bhutto stayed clear of disputes in the Muslim world and carried on a somewhat similar policy in the Middle East by maintaining close ties with Saudi Arabia, Iran and Libya:

As he paid homage to Saudi Arabia for being the center of the Islamic world, and King Faisal as the keeper of the Faith, he cultivated the shah of Iran as an enlightened monarch and an old friend of Pakistan, and Libya's Colonel Qadaffi as a special person whose unannounced arrivals were always welcomed with a great deal of pomp and ceremony.⁷¹

These relations would bear much fruit economically. From 1973 to 1976, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Libya, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait and Qatar provided Pakistan with loans and credits worth \$993 million, totaling almost one-third of all financial aid coming from foreign sources over the same time period.⁷² In addition, Pakistani exports to the Middle East increased dramatically. In 1970-71, before the loss of East Pakistan, exports to the region amounted to twelve per cent of total exports while in 1974-75 it was twenty-five per cent.⁷³ In 1974-75, Saudi Arabia was the largest market in the Middle East in terms of monetary value for Pakistani agricultural and industrial exports, followed by Iran, the UAE, Iraq and Kuwait. For the same time period, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait (in that order) were far and away Pakistan's biggest suppliers of oil.⁷⁴ In addition to trade, the exportation of civilian manpower to the Middle East began during the Bhutto administration while, as mentioned previously, the exportation of military personnel to the region started even earlier. Both have become important sources of foreign exchange and workers' remittances have provided substantial relief in covering trade imbalances caused by the rising cost of oil.

By 1977, there were more than 300,000 Pakistanis working in the Middle East concentrated primarily in the Arab states bordering on the Persian Gulf and in Libya. In 1977-78, they brought in remittances totaling more than \$1.1 billion (about twice the monetary amount of Pakistan's service on its foreign debt) and equaling seventy-nine percent of the deficit-on-trade account.⁷⁵ By 1983, an International Labor Organization report estimated that there were 1.8 to 2.4 million Pakistanis working in the Middle East with fifty-nine percent of the workers employed in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, remittances

sent to Pakistan amounted to roughly \$2 to \$2.5 billion while petroleum imports cost the Pakistanis approximately \$1.45 billion.⁷⁶

By 1981, Pakistan had military contingents in 22 countries — though primarily in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Oman, Jordan, Syria and Libya — and was, with the exception of Cuba, the leading supplier of military personnel in the Third World. This policy was in part necessitated by the American arms embargoes of 1965 and 1971, and it enabled Pakistan to finance military purchases. (It should be noted that since the 1965 embargo, Pakistan has built up an indigenous arms industry with the help of the Chinese and the French, who have also provided or sold the Pakistanis tanks and aircraft, respectively; and Pakistan has the capacity to rebuild or reconstruct those tanks and aircraft.)⁷⁷ In both Libya and the UAE, Pakistanis have been contracted to maintain and fly airplanes for these countries' respective air forces while the two Arab states and Saudi Arabia have funded arms purchases, including French Mirage aircraft and American Cobra helicopters. In addition, it was reported in 1983 that the Saudis were providing Pakistan with \$1 billion in economic assistance annually. In Saudi Arabia, the Pakistani presence had been, until the 1991 Gulf War, the largest of any foreign military in the Arab world; it includes providing services for the Saudi army, national guard and palace guard. Estimates of Pakistani military personnel in Saudi Arabia vary; during the 1980s, it may have been about 20,000 while during the Gulf War the official figure was 11,000.⁷⁸

Pakistan is now dependent greatly on Saudi largess, which, as with its on again, off again American connection, comes with political strings attached. Recently, the Pakistanis were made fully aware of this with their equivocal stand during the Gulf War. General Mirza Aslam Beg, the Pakistani army chief of staff at the time, split with President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and openly supported Iraq while, due to internal Pakistani opposition to American involvement in the war, Pakistani troops in Saudi Arabia were far from the frontlines. Even though Pakistan faced a serious economic crisis at the time, no Arab financial assistance was forthcoming.⁷⁹

CONCLUSION

This article focuses primarily on a thirty year period in which Pakistan's foreign policy objectives have remained constant. Indeed, such is still the case of Pakistani policy today. However, Pakistan has, during its rather brief history, shifted in its foreign policy from nonalignment to being part of the Western alliance, to emphasis on "bilateralism." All during this time, it has sought Islamic unity. By 1971, Pakistan may have lost its eastern wing, but it was finally able to gain, through the efforts of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the acceptance of the Muslim world and to benefit in terms of identity and security from these relations.

While Bhutto was overthrown in 1977 and executed two years later, his cultivation of close Pakistani-Middle Eastern ties would be his legacy to Pakistan. However, these relations, while important, have not alone provided the answers to Pakistan's problems of trying to insure its political and economic security as well as finding the proper means of providing a strong sense of

national identity. The Pakistani government has to resolve its on again, off again dispute with the United States over its nuclear program, while it must work together with the Indians to solve once and for all the most long-standing of their problems — the issue of Kashmir. To say the least, these are not easy tasks, but they are necessary for Pakistan to truly feel secure from external threats. Moreover, Pakistan has to maintain a democratic process domestically that will, over time, bridge ethnic differences and help to establish a Pakistani national identity that will not be based solely on its citizenry sharing a common religion.

According to Anwar Hussain Syed in his masterful work, *Pakistan: Islam, Politics, and National Solidarity*, only through democracy can Pakistan achieve national solidarity. The case of Yugoslavia has shown that unity cannot be forced. Neither can it be based solely on ideology as the demise of the Soviet Union has proven. Islamic institutions and relations with the Muslim world may be important for Pakistan's well-being politically, psychologically and/or economically, but it cannot guarantee the survival of the Pakistani state — a state with four distinct ethnic regions.

Endnotes

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2. Shahid Javed Burki, *Pakistan: A Nation in the Making* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1986), pp. 1-2. Burki, formerly an economic advisor to Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce, is presently an official with the World Bank.
3. Feroz Ahmed, "Pakistan's Problems of National Integration," in Mohammad Asghar Khan, ed., *Islam, Politics and the State: The Pakistan Experience* (London: Zed Books, 1985), p. 234; and Ataur Rahman, "Pakistan: Unity or Further Divisions?," in A. Jeyaratnam Wilson and Dennis Dalton, eds., *The States of South Asia: Problems of National Integration* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1982), p. 206.
4. See Selig S. Harrison, "Ethnic Conflict in Pakistan: The Baluch, Pashtuns, and Sindhis" in Joseph V. Montville, ed., *Conflict and Peacemaking in Multiethnic Societies* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1990), pp. 301-25.
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7. Craig Baxter, "Pakistan and the Gulf" in Thomas Naff, ed., *Gulf Security and the Iran-Iraq War* (Washington, DC: The National Defense University Press and the Middle East Research Institute, 1985), p. 103-28.
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11. Burki, *A Nation in the Making*, p. 43.
12. Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, *Debates*, vol. V, p. 2, 7 March 1949 as quoted in Keith Callard, *Pakistan: A Political Study* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1957), p. 197.
13. Lawrence Ziring, *Pakistan: The Enigma of Political Development* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1980), p. 34.
14. Waheed-uz-Zaman, "Editor's Note," *The Quest for Identity* (Islamabad: University of Islamabad Press, 1974), p. 1 as quoted in both Edward Mortimer, *Faith and Power: The Politic of Islam* (New York: Random House, 1982), p. 215, and Shirin Tahir-Kheli, "In Search of an Identity: Islam and Pakistan's Foreign Policy" in Adeed Dawisha, ed., *Islam in Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 70.
15. Syed, *Islam, Politics, and National Solidarity*, p. 126.
16. Harrison, "Ethnic Conflict," pp. 307-309.
17. Quoted in Burki, *A Nation in the Making*, p. 72.
18. See for example, Sumit Ganguly, "Avoiding War in Kashmir," *Foreign Affairs*, 69, no. 5 (Winter 1990/91), pp. 57-73, and Barbara Crossette, "India and Pakistan Seek Support in Kashmir Rift," *New York Times*, 24 May 1990, p. A-6 for descriptions of recent events and analyses of the ongoing dispute over Kashmir.
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25. Quoted in "Pakistan Comes Back to Earth," *The Economist* (London), 24 May 1952, p. 522.
26. Ibid. and Dawn, 27 September 1956 as quoted in S.M. Burke, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: An Historical Analysis* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 67.
27. Burke, *Mainsprings*, pp. 134-35.
28. UN General Assembly Official Records, Second Session, 126th Plenary Meeting as quoted in Ahmad, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy*, p. 81, and K. Sarwar Hasan, *Pakistan and the United Nations* (New York: Manhattan Publishing Company, 1960), p. 175.

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30. UN General Assembly Official Records, Third Session, 145th Plenary Meeting, 27 September 1948 and Seventh Session, 406th Plenary Meeting, 18 December 1952 as quoted in Hasan, *Pakistan and the United Nations*, p. 177, and Burke, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy*, p. 138.
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33. 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), p. 819.
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37. *Dawn*, 22 February 1954 as quoted in Burke, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy*, p. 202.
38. The quotations are from Mujtaba Razvi, "Pak-Saudi Arabian Relations: An Example of Entente Cordiale," *Pakistan Horizon*, XXXIV, no. 1 (1981), p. 83, and Hafeez-ur-Rahman Khan, "Pakistan's Relations with the U.A.R.," *Pakistan Horizon*, XIII, no. 3 (1960), p. 216, respectively.
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56. Mohammed Ayub Khan, "Pakistan Perspective," *Foreign Affairs*, 38, no. 4 (July 1960), p. 555. Though written before the U-2 incident this article was published after.
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