

From Divergence to Convergence: Pakistan-United States Foreign & Strategic Relations 1977-1989

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Abstract

During the period 1977-1989, Pakistan and the entire region (South and Southwest Asia) was of minimal strategic importance for the Carter Administration. The United States remained focused on controversial issues like — nuclear non-proliferation, human rights, democracy, and the French supply of nuclear reprocessing plant to Pakistan. The perceived nuclear proliferation threat had directly affected Pakistan's foreign and security relations with the US. In this last phase of the Cold War, the regional securitisation was reinforced by the bipolar international structure of the 1980s. In fact, it was the security environment prevailing at the time that had shaped their bilateral convergence. After December 1979, the US took cognizance of the shifting regional strategic dynamics to Kremlin's advantage. Consequently, Pakistan and the US had adroitly balanced their priorities in accordance with their predominant national interests and values — to prevent Soviet expansionism. In essence, alliances between states are of evolutionary nature that tend to remould with the changing strategic and foreign policy goal posts of the states. In this context, Agha Shahi had rightly commented about the nature of Pak-US bilateral relations, that it was “a hand-shake not an embrace.” It was primarily a tactical arrangement; therefore, it cannot be classified as a *durable strategic relationship*. Therefore, after the withdrawal of the Soviet forces this relationship gradually began to wither away.

Keywords: Pak-US, Bilateral Relations, Pakistan's, Foreign Policy, Soviet Union, China, Cold War.

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Introduction

From July 1977 right up to the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan on December 27, 1979,¹ Pakistan and the entire region (South and Southwest Asia) was a low-priority area for the Carter Administration, although, the then President of Pakistan, Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq, after the spring 1978 'Saur Revolution' (April 27, 1978) in Afghanistan, had cautioned President Jimmy Carter about the shifting balance of power equation in Soviet Union's favour.² The Saur Revolution and the subsequent invasion by Soviet Union was its apparent drive toward the warm waters of the Indian Ocean.³ At that time, Pakistan-US foreign and strategic relations were strained and "under immense pressure" over the issue of supply of French nuclear reprocessing plant, and absence of democracy in Pakistan.⁴ The then US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State testifying before the US Congress had stated that, "US security interests in South Asia are limited... our primary concerns have been the promotion of regional stability and the normalisation of relations between the nations of the Subcontinent." Therefore, normalisation of relations under India's predominant role was naturally not acceptable to Islamabad.⁵ During this period, primarily the thrust of security conception was focused on military and strategic relationships between the states.⁶ It was after the military coup d'état of July 5, 1977, and the removal of Pakistani Premier Z. A. Bhutto, that the friction between Pakistan and US had briefly mellowed down. Subsequently, Bhutto was arrested and hanged in 1979 in spite of "worldwide appeals for clemency."⁷

Pakistan, since its inception in August 1947, has been in a perpetual state of insecurity due to asymmetrical relationship with its adversary – India. This motive for security, and the bid to strengthen its "national

¹ For the causes of Soviet invasion, see Kamal Matinuddin, *Power Struggle in the Hindu Kush: Afghanistan (1978-1991)* (Rawalpindi: Services Book Club, 1991), 100-109.

² Amaury de Riencourt, "India and Pakistan in the Shadow of Afghanistan," *Foreign Affairs* 61, no. 2 (winter 1982/83): 425.

³ See Milan Hauner, "Seizing the Third Parallel: Geopolitics and the Soviet Advance into Central Asia," *Orbis* (spring 1985): 5-31; and also see Thomas Hammond, *Red Flag over Afghanistan* (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1984).

⁴ Feroz Hassan Khan, *Eating Grass: The Making of the Pakistani Bomb* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press India Pvt. Ltd, 2013), 132.

⁵ K. Arif, ed., *American-Pakistan Relations (Documents)*, vol. I (Lahore: Vanguard Books Ltd, 1984), 328.

⁶ Ken Booth, *Theory of World Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 96.

⁷ Riencourt, "India and Pakistan," 421.

coexistence” in the absence of external security guarantees,⁸ had ultimately encouraged Pakistan to enter into US-sponsored treaties, including the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO),⁹ to cater for its “perception of the peril” emanating from India, and from the unbalanced balance-of-power system then prevailing in the region.¹⁰ This alignment did play a significant role in strengthening Pakistan militarily in the 1950s and 1960s, which, after the Sino-Indian War of 1962, started to come under stress on the issue of supply of arms to India by the US and the United Kingdom (UK).¹¹

In the mid-1970s, the main clash between them was over the nuclear issue, and the French supply of nuclear reprocessing plant to Pakistan. Earlier, General Zia had offered to open up Pakistan’s nuclear installations to the International Atomic Energy Agency’s (IAEA) inspection, if India too reciprocated. India refused.¹² Simultaneously, Zia kept on reiterating that Pakistan’s nuclear programme was peaceful. However, by August 1979, their estrangement had become so intense that the US Ambassador was summoned at the Foreign Office and apprised of the “serious concern over the escalation of the campaign of threats and intimidation regarding Pakistan’s peaceful nuclear programme.”¹³ There were fears the US might encourage India to initiate a preventive attack against Pakistan’s nuclear facilities.¹⁴

Strategic Objectives

“Strategic importance, “writes George C. McGhee, is “like beauty, it is in the eye of the beholder. What is of strategic importance to one nation can be of no importance, a void or wasteland to another.”¹⁵ It is argued that, from July 1977 to December 1979, for the Carter Administration, Pakistan had minimal strategic importance. Washington relied more on other influential

⁸ Kenneth N. Waltz, “International Structure, National Force, and the Balance of World Power,” in *International Politics and Foreign Policy: A Reader in Research and Theory*, ed. James N. Rosenau (New York: The Free Press, 1969), 304.

⁹ Riencourt, “India and Pakistan,” 423.

¹⁰ Waltz, “International Structure,” 304.

¹¹ Riencourt, “India and Pakistan,” 423.

¹² See Zulfqar Khan, “The Politics of Nuclear Non-proliferation with Particular Reference to South Asia,” *IPRI Journal* 5 no. 1 (winter 2005).

¹³ *Dawn*, August 16 and 17, 1979.

¹⁴ *New York Times*, August 11, 1979.

¹⁵ George C. McGhee, “The Strategic Importance of Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan to the United States,” in *Soviet-American Relations with Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan*, ed. Hafeez Malik (London: Macmillan Press, 1987), 27.

regional states like Iran, Saudi Arabia and India. Secondly, Pakistan's geostrategic significance was temporarily overshadowed by its nuclear programme. Zia, like Bhutto, had also categorically refused to accept Carter Administration's insistence on non-proliferation and continued the latter's nuclear policies which evidently alienated Carter so much that he excluded Pakistan from his visit programme to the Gulf and South Asia (he embarked on a state visit to Iran and India) in January 1978.¹⁶ At this juncture, Pakistan read Carter's aloofness to mean he might be contemplating US withdrawal from the area. Although the Saur Revolution of April 1978 had significantly transformed the strategic landscape of the region and increased the involvement of Soviet Union in the region. Prima facie, it still had no impact on US policy which remained aloof to the regional changes right up to the day the Soviet forces occupied Afghanistan. The invasion brought the Soviets "500 miles closer to the warm waters of the Indian Ocean and the mouth of the Persian Gulf."¹⁷ It was first a serious challenge to the US and the West's policy of containment of "Marxist imperialism,"¹⁸ that directly threatened Pakistan and other regional countries. The Saur Revolution claimed it stood for "anti-colonialism" and "modernisation" on socialist lines.¹⁹

Pakistan's frustration at US failure to take cognizance of the changing geopolitical situation of Southwest Asia was understandable. Moreover, Carter could not formalise a consensus between India and Pakistan on the NPT which the latter was ready to sign if India also agreed to do the same.²⁰ The idea of declaring South Asia as a Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone (NWFZ) advanced by Pakistan was also rejected by India as well as signing of NPT.²¹ Commenting on the NWFZ proposal, K. Subrahmanyam, remarked that, "The South Asian Nuclear Free Zone proposal of Pakistan is an attempt to make India renounce the nuclear option and make the subcontinent an area vulnerable to Chinese hegemony." He argued for the inclusion of China and the US in a nuclear non-proliferation regime, as they had a "nuclear presence" in the region.²²

The primary reason for the impasse in Pak-US relations was that the strategic policy interests of the two countries were premised on divergent poles, granted the US had been the major contributor of military and

¹⁶ M Raziullah Azmi, "Pakistan-United States Relations: An Appraisal," *Pakistan Horizon* XXXVI, no. 3 (1983): 42.

¹⁷ Riencourt, "India and Pakistan," 423.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 437.

¹⁹ Matinuddin, *Power Struggle*, 31.

²⁰ See Khan, "The Politics of Nuclear Non-proliferation."

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Times of India*, April 22, 1985 and April 18, 1987.

economic assistance to Pakistan.²³ The major areas of dissension included the French nuclear reprocessing plant, human rights, and the absence of democracy in Zia's military regime. There was also this misconception about the military balance in South Asia about which Lawrence Ziring wrote that Carter had "concluded that India's hegemony in South Asia is unquestioned and must be adapted to rather than challenged."²⁴ The clash over strategic objectives continued right till the end of 1979. It was only after the escalation of regional and international crises looming over the horizon of Southwest Asia and the Gulf area that President Carter was compelled to take note of the situation and realised the security and geographical significance of Pakistan. As Morgenthau writes, it is the national interest that is calculated in terms of a state's power significance²⁵ that impel states to use the changing dynamics as necessity,²⁶ to restructure their policies in accordance with the changing global and regional security imperatives. It was not only the territorial integrity of Pakistan that was at stake, but primarily, it was the desire to protect the free world and the vital oil supplies from the communist threat that brought a change in US perceptions towards the region. The Soviet move suggested that, perhaps it "had given up détente in favour of expansionism," writes Roy. "This new policy endangered the vital interests of the US," which was tantamount to undermining its containment policy, protection of the sea lanes, and interests of the free world.²⁷ Pakistan overnight became a frontline state. It shared a 1300-mile long border with a country that Soviet Union now occupied.²⁸ Once again, Pakistan-US foreign and strategic goals converged. Therefore, it is argued that the regional security complex (RSC) of that period possessed the essential ingredients of the anarchic structural fault lines that posed global challenges, which directly impacted the changing security paradigm of Asia.²⁹ It impelled the estranged friends to forge a transitory cooperative architecture to force the Soviets out of Afghanistan. The regional "securitisation was reinforced" by the bipolar international

²³ Susan B. Epstein and K. Alan Kronstadt, "Pakistan: US Foreign Assistance," *Congressional Research Service*, July 1, 2013, <http://fas.org/srg/crs/row/R41856.pdf> (accessed on September 15, 2014): 1.

²⁴ Lawrence Ziring cited in Azmi, "Pakistan-United States," 42.

²⁵ See H. J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: A Critical Examination of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970).

²⁶ See N. Machiavelli, *The Prince* (London: Penguin, 1961).

²⁷ Olivier Roy, "The Lessons of the Soviet/Afghan War," *Adelphi Paper* 259 (1991): 15.

²⁸ Thomas P. Thornton, "Between the Stools? US-Policy towards Pakistan during the Carter Administration," *Asian Survey* (October 1982): 969.

²⁹ Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, *Regions and Powers: The Structures of International Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 11.

structure of the 1980s.³⁰ Rather, it was the “security environment” prevailing at the time that had shaped their bilateral convergence.³¹ Of course, it was not necessarily determined by any moral or legal commitments, but by bilateral interests of the two countries.³² On the other hand, Pakistan sensed it was an opportunity to manoeuvre the regional balance of power equation,³³ which had dangerously tilted contrary against its national interests by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

The ‘Saur’ and Iranian Revolutions

Pakistan’s foreign policy by the end of 1977 was quite diversified. It had adopted a less confrontational posture towards India. Pakistan’s relations with Kabul were improving when the communists overthrew President Daud on April 27, 1978.³⁴ Earlier, the pro-Moscow regime in Kabul had long nursed anti-Pakistan movement in Balochistan, which was reminiscent of Kipling’s “Great Game.”³⁵ With the collapse of the Daud regime, the new communist leader, Noor Mohammed Taraki, quickly took up the old so-called ‘Pakhtunistan’ issue with Pakistan.³⁶ It seems that the coup did not arouse any apprehensions in the mind of Afghanistan’s other neighbours, including India and Iran, about the change in the regional balance of power dynamics. Zia tried to sensitise Washington about the shifting balance of power that was seriously tilting in Soviet Union’s favour but his warnings due to the difficult phase in their relationship were ignored. The West gave little weight to the coup. It “was seen as a reinforcement of a traditional and long-term Soviet influence in Kabul.”³⁷ Moreover, even after the assassination of Adolph Dubs, US Ambassador to Afghanistan in February 1979, Carter merely suspended economic assistance to Kabul, rather than reassessing the significance of Soviet involvement there.³⁸ The People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) signed a Soviet-Afghan Friendship and Cooperation Treaty on December 6, 1978, but Carter gave

³⁰ Ibid., 449.

³¹ Ibid., 24.

³² Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 382.

³³ Waltz, “International Structure,” 308.

³⁴ Riencourt, “India and Pakistan,” 427.

³⁵ Ibid., 431, 432.

³⁶ A. T. Chaudhri, “Handshake across the Durand Line,” *Pakistan Times*, October 14, 1977; also see Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, “The Afghanistan crisis and Pakistan’s Security Dilemma,” *Asian Survey* (March 1983): 227, 243.

³⁷ Roy, “The Lessons of the Soviet,” 12.

³⁸ Ibid.

that little importance.³⁹ Obviously, these events right next to Pakistan were of great concern to Islamabad, perceived as the Soviet's intention to secure geostrategic advantages from Afghanistan. In such a scenario, Zia had little option but to aid the Afghan resistance fighters — *Mujahedeen* (the holy warriors).

The fall of the Shah of Iran and the Islamic Revolution of 1979 was another major historic event that changed the entire geopolitical configurations of the region. The ousting of the Shah proved to be a boon for the Soviets, and a great blow to US interests. In fact, Washington had lost its most influential ally in the Gulf, and its credibility as a protector of vital US interests in the area stood exposed. The forces that were hostile to US, when they came to power in January and December 1979 in Iran and Afghanistan, respectively, actually were determined to eliminate the US influence and presence from the region. The US, which was earlier considered as a trusted ally, came to be treated as the "Great Satan" and an arch-enemy of Iran.⁴⁰ The Soviet Union capitalised on the changed geopolitical environment, and gained a new connotation after the occupation of Afghanistan. Pakistan, under a military government was already alienated from the US, as observed earlier, on different issues, including the nuclear. In such a situation, Zia's pessimism concerning Carter Administration's attitude towards Islamabad was understandable. His bitterness is reflected in these words:

You can't live in the sea and create enmity with whales. You have to be friendly with them. The Soviet Union is on our door-step. The USA is 10,000 miles away.⁴¹

The prime reason for the US foreign policy failure during this time can be attributed to the Carter Administration's inability to formulate a realistic and rational policy. On this, the Soviets capitalised eagerly which ultimately led to "the chaotic state of American policy in the area."⁴²

Previously, the Shah of Iran had acted as the main pillar of US policy in the Gulf and Southwest Asia. But in case of Pakistan there was an inherent contradiction in their foreign and security policy perceptions. A study of "official documents and pronouncements" suggests that US

³⁹ Stephen Galster, "Washington, Moscow and the Strategy for Kabul: The Cold War Continues in Afghanistan," *The Afghanistan Forum, Occasional Papers* (1990): 2.

⁴⁰ Miron Rezun, ed., *Iran at the Cross-roads: Global Relations in a Turbulent Decade* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1990), 115.

⁴¹ *Los Angeles Times*, January 16, 1980.

⁴² Shirin Tahir-Kheli, "Proxies and allies: the case of Iran and Pakistan," *Orbis* (Summer 1980): 339.

policymakers had left “deliberate vagueness” in committing to support Pakistan vis-à-vis India.⁴³ When both the countries had signed defence pacts in the early 1950s, America’s then primary motive was to collectively contain the communist threat. Interestingly, the US policymakers’ statements had left “sufficient ambiguity” for the Pakistani leadership to genuinely interpret this as “US assurances as covering a threat from any source - the likely being India.”⁴⁴ This ambiguous stance was the source of much acrimony in later years. Now, at that juncture, writes Shirin Tahir-Kheli, the Carter Administration had failed to realise the hazards of depending on the Shah and, after the fall of the Iranian monarchy in January 1979, both Iran and Pakistan officially withdrew from CENTO. But even after CENTO’s demise Pakistan still remained a US ally technically due to the existence of the 1959 Executive Agreement.⁴⁵ In the meantime, the Iranian revolutionary government felt encouraged to openly announce it would spread the Islamic revolution in all corners of the conservative and predominantly Sunni Gulf states. This alarmed the Gulf and Arab states. The situation became critical when in November 1979 Iranian students seized the US Embassy in Tehran and took the entire diplomatic staff hostage. The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan a month later could not have happened at a more critical moment. The spectre of Soviet threat in Southwest Asia, the Persian Gulf, the Middle East signalled an inevitable change in the geopolitical situation. It also signalled a formulation of Pakistan-US-China strategic nexus against the Soviet Union.⁴⁶

The Year 1979

The year 1979 proved to be fateful. It ushered in a new era of détente between the US and Pakistan, intensified tension between the two power blocs in the critical phase of the Cold War, which led to calibration of a strategy to push the Soviets out of Afghanistan. The Islamic Revolution in Iran had further constrained US policy options in the region. Together, these events transformed the political and military landscape along the Soviet Union’s southern frontiers which successfully “exploited the polarisation of regional conflicts” in its favour.⁴⁷ On the other hand,

⁴³ Ibid., 339-340.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 340.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ See, Girilal Jain, “Compulsions of Pak Rulers: Avoidance of Tension of Two Front,” *Times of India*, January 7, 1981.

⁴⁷ Alvin Z. Rubinstein, “Soviet geopolitical involvement in the Arch of Crisis,” in *International Security in Southwest Asia*, ed. Hafeez Malik (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984), 183-184.

Pakistan and the US vainly endeavoured to influence each other's policies; neither was Pakistan prepared to abandon its nuclear programme, nor was the US President willing to compromise on its approach vis-à-vis Pakistan. The Carter Administration's pressure on Pakistan to abandon its nuclear programme had hardened the latter's resolve. As a result, the US cut off all military and economic assistance to Pakistan in April 1979 under the Symington-Glenn Amendment. Islamabad insisted its nuclear programme was peaceful and posed no threat to any country. Pakistan's Foreign Affairs Adviser, Agha Shahi, instructed his officials to "counter propaganda against the peaceful nuclear plan." He regretted the dichotomy in their respective perceptions: what to Washington were its "global policy interests," to Pakistan all that mattered was its "vital national interest."⁴⁸

In August 1979, the US Congressional delegation under Congressman Lester Wolff, visited South Asia, including Pakistan. Before the arrival of the US delegation in Pakistan, Zia remarked that, "Pakistan would never compromise on its sovereignty," and expressed the resolve that the nation was prepared to shoulder its own burden. Therefore, it will not allow its "national interest to be compromised in any manner whatsoever."⁴⁹ It was probably the first time that the Pakistani President had made such a strong statement about the nuclear programme. In sentiment it reflected Bhutto's famous remarks that "We will eat leaves and grass, even go hungry," but would not abandon the nuclear programme.⁵⁰

After the hanging of Bhutto, the human rights question again came into the limelight. Zia's military regime as the "worst violator" of human rights by the US.⁵¹ The entire PPP leadership was arrested and disqualified from participating in the scheduled elections of November 1979. Zia, who had pledged on the first day of his coup, to hold elections within 90 days did not honour his promise and kept on postponing the polls on one pretext or the other. All political activities were banned. This further affected Pakistan-US relations. Yet in 1979, the US Under-Secretary of State for Security Assistance, Science and Technology, Lucy Benson, visited Pakistan in November and promised to sell seventy F-5 fighter aircraft, hawk ground-to-air missiles, armed helicopters and anti-tank weapons at a total cost of \$500 million, deliverable over a period of three years. This was viewed in Islamabad as a carrot, and US attempts to influence Pakistan's nuclear policy. Pakistan's plea to sell F-15 fighter aircraft was refused by

⁴⁸ *Pakistan Times*, July 13, 1979; also see, Khan, *Eating Grass*.

⁴⁹ President Zia's address to the nation, *The Muslim* (Islamabad), July 28, 1979.

⁵⁰ *Times*, July 9, 1979, 40; and also see, Khan, *Eating Grass*.

⁵¹ Shirin Tahir-Kheli, *The United States and Pakistan: The Evolution of an Influence Relationship* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982), 74.

Washington making Pakistan to “believe that India always would have the final veto over US arms to their country, at least under Carter;” who supposedly did not want to disturb the conventional arms balance in South Asia that was already in favour of India.⁵²

The Pakistan-US relationship received a further setback in August 1979, when an angry mob set fire to the US Embassy in Islamabad and damaged American Centres in Lahore and Rawalpindi reacting to rumours Israel had seized the holy places in Saudi Arabia. Pakistan apologised and offered a substantial sum for the rebuilding of the embassy building and repairing the Centres. Their relations had touched the nadir.

President Carter’s lack of concern for the communist takeover in Kabul led Zia and his advisers to conclude that the US could “no longer be aroused to take note of Soviet inroads in Southwest Asia.” Therefore, Pakistan contemplated the possibility of making “peace with the Soviets.”⁵³ The eminent Pakistani diplomat, Sahibzada Yaqub Ali Khan was transferred from Washington to Moscow. The change did not go unnoticed in Washington. Later on, Pakistan participated in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in October 1979 at Havana, Cuba. Soon after these visible changes in the foreign policy of Pakistan, came the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. Zia termed the Soviet move as a deliberate and well thought-out move taking advantage of Washington’s apathy towards the earlier communist takeover of Kabul and Moscow’s growing interest in the region.⁵⁴

The dramatic change in the geopolitical environment of Southwest Asia again turned Pakistan into a frontline state and linchpin of US global strategic interests.⁵⁵ President Carter, a day after the Russian forces occupied Afghanistan on December 27, telephoned Zia and assured him of US commitment to support Pakistan to counter the Soviet threat.⁵⁶ After Carter’s telephonic assurance to Zia, the US National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, in an interview reiterated that, “He had been authorised to reaffirm a 1959 Executive Agreement under which the US

⁵² Ibid., 96.

⁵³ Tahir-Kheli, *The United States and Pakistan*, 75.

⁵⁴ Jiri Valenta, “The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan: The difficulty of knowing where to stop,” *Orbis* (Summer 1980): 212.

⁵⁵ Pakistan perceived the invasion as fundamentally altering the “geostrategic environment” and as a “major military threat to the national security,” “Foreign Policy Debate in the National Assembly: Shabzada Yaqub Ali Khan’s Address,” *Pakistan Horizon* XXXIX, no. 1 (1986): 23, 24.

⁵⁶ Christopher Van Hollen, “Leaning on Pakistan,” *Foreign Policy* (Spring 1980): 35.

would take appropriate action,” including the use of force to “protect Pakistan” against communist expansionism.⁵⁷

Pakistan as a Frontline State

Contrary to Pakistan’s agreeable response to US overtures, Iran refused support to the US including the use of its territory to counter the Soviets in Afghanistan. Tehran had principally opposed the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan but Tehran was less antagonistic to the Soviet Union than to the US. Carter was now convinced that the Soviet strategy had expansionist motives and had to be contained to keep the Soviets out of the Indian Ocean’s warm waters and the Gulf area, and to ensure the flow of oil to the free world.⁵⁸ He termed the Soviet move as an “extremely serious threat for peace,”⁵⁹ and held it was “the greatest threat to peace since the Second World War.”⁶⁰

The altered geopolitical situation of Southwest Asia once again made Pakistan a frontline state and “an essential anchor of entire Southwest region”⁶¹ under Washington’s global policy to contain communist expansionism. The US policymakers also emphasised the need to create a “strategic consensus from Turkey to Pakistan, the latter being dubbed as a frontline state.”⁶² In reality, the “Soviet intervention created a mini” RSC, writes Buzan and Waever, under the “Asian supercomplex” that consequently sucked in other states into the conflict right through to the end of the Cold War in 1989.⁶³ This sudden change in the attitude of Carter came as a surprise to Zia since Washington right upto December 1979 had been endeavouring to prevent Pakistan from acquiring nuclear technology, and had already stopped all forms of economic and military assistance to it. It was also in 1979 when Islamabad withdrew from the CENTO, joined the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and became active in the affairs of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). In addition, Zia had also “warmly endorsed Ayatollah Khomeini’s revolutionary regime in Tehran.”⁶⁴ Despite all these developments, Carter in his State of the Union address on January 23, 1980, declared that:

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Olivier Roy, “The Lessons of the Soviet/Afghan War,” *Adelphi Paper* 259 (1991): 15.

⁵⁹ *New York Times*, December 29, 1979.

⁶⁰ *Presidential Documents* 16, January 14, 1980 (Washington, 1980), 25.

⁶¹ Azmi, “Pakistan-United States,” 44.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 109, 110, 111.

⁶⁴ Christopher Van Hollen, “Leaning on Pakistan,” *Foreign Policy* (Spring 1980): 38.

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 assault will be repelled by any means necessary including military force.⁶⁵

This announcement of what was later came to be known as the 'Carter Doctrine' categorically reaffirmed US commitment to "assist Pakistan in resisting any outside aggression."⁶⁶ The doctrine furthermore clearly articulated that a threat to US regional interests would be resisted through use of military force.⁶⁷ Pakistan became a tactical-cum-strategic ally of the US, in spite of the persistence of bilateral differences temporarily frozen in view of the changed geostrategic situation.⁶⁸ The US was aware that any attempt by Washington to arm Pakistan would have adverse implications on its relations with New Delhi. Islamabad was also aware of US limitations in this context and was quite clear about the true nature of the thaw. Commenting on the new phase of strategic convergence between the two countries, Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Agha Shahi, stated that it was "a hand-shake not an embrace." In Shahi's vision, it implied that Washington could "provide some support (to Pakistan) without disturbing the recipient's own balance of interests and alternative options."⁶⁹ The *raison d'être* of the new phase of relationship remained focused on both countries' common interests and values.⁷⁰ It was purely a tactical arrangement; therefore, it could not be classified as a *durable strategic relationship*. Pakistan's interest was to secure its northwestern frontiers from the perceived communist threat. This was indeed a realistic approach to a changing regional security dynamics. Shahi in essence had lucidly described the true nature of relationship between Pakistan and the US.

Initially, Zia government's response to Washington's enthusiastic overtures was cautious. The US Deputy Secretary of State, Warren Christopher's scheduled visit to Islamabad in January 1980 was postponed on the plea that his visit "particularly on the heels of his meeting with

⁶⁵ "The State of the Union address by the President of the United States," *Congressional Record* 126, no. 7 (House Document no. 96-257), 166-169, cited in Janice Gross Stein, "The Wrong Strategy in the Right Place: The United States in the Gulf," *International Security* (Winter 1988/89): 146.

⁶⁶ Hollen, "Leaning on Pakistan," 40.

⁶⁷ Roy, "The Lessons of the Soviet," 15.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Cited in W. Howard Wriggins, "Pakistan's Foreign Policy after Afghanistan," in *The Security of South Asia*, ed. Stephen Philip Cohen (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 72.

⁷⁰ J. Haslam, *No Virtue like Necessity: Realist Thought in International Relations since Machiavelli* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 12.

America's NATO allies in London" was not conducive for Pakistan.⁷¹ Besides, Islamabad expressed annoyance over Brzezinski's public invocation of the 1959 Executive Agreement without the knowledge and prior consultation of Pakistan about the broader security apparatus for the region.⁷² In March 1980, US Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, had also reaffirmed US "commitment to the 1959 agreement" with Pakistan.⁷³ However, the primary reason for this cautious response was that, most government officials and elite in Islamabad regarded the US as basically unreliable for its failure to support Pakistan in the 1965 and 1971 wars with India.⁷⁴ Such a narrow view through a single lens was not in accord with diplomatic finesse on the part of Pakistan. World politics is not static, convergence and divergence amongst states are formalised for certain objectives. Once these are achieved, the erstwhile alliances are remoulded in consonance with the changed foreign and strategic imperatives. Zia insisted on a new formal agreement, or a treaty with the US that could guarantee Pakistan in clear terms its security against any aggression. This explicit guarantee, the Carter Administration was not prepared to give since it could have multiple ramifications, including undermining its relations with India "at a time when the USSR" was "the object of American security concern" in the region.⁷⁵ This was realpolitik. Carter weighed the implications of antagonising India at that critical juncture. Pakistan's "nuclear ambition" and the military regime's human rights record⁷⁶ were factors he could not overlook. An explicit guarantee was out of the question in the given environment.

Warren Christopher and Brzezinski's visits to Pakistan materialised in February 1980. Before their visits, in January, the OIC Foreign Ministers summit was held in Islamabad and it unanimously called on the Soviet Union to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan, and suspended Moscow-sponsored Babrak Karmal government in Kabul from the organisation.⁷⁷ The UN General Assembly too asked for the unconditional withdrawal of the foreign forces. Diplomatically, Moscow had failed to muster sufficient support for its policy in Afghanistan.⁷⁸

⁷¹ Hollen, "Leaning on Pakistan," 36.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Azmi, "Pakistan-United States," 43.

⁷⁴ Wriggins, "Pakistan's Foreign Policy," 66-67.

⁷⁵ Hollen, "Leaning on Pakistan," 40.

⁷⁶ Thomas P. Thorton, "Between the stools? US Policy towards Pakistan during the Carter Administration," *Asian Survey* (October 1982): 969.

⁷⁷ "Foreign Policy Debate," 27.

⁷⁸ Arnold, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion*, 115.

To facilitate rapprochement with Pakistan the US offered a military assistance package of \$400 million. Zia rejected that as “peanuts.” Instead, Zia urged Washington to provide definite assurance to “guarantee Pakistan’s independence.”⁷⁹ Pakistan was sceptical Washington. In fact, Zia wanted to transform the 1959 Executive Agreement into a full-fledged defence pact. In addition, Islamabad solicited Congressional backing for the US assistance programme to Pakistan, but, Washington was not ready to go that far while Carter’s “peanuts” or any other similar aid arrangement⁸⁰ had little attraction for Pakistan.

Actually, Carter had circumvented the Symington-Glenn Amendment to make this offer. Zia had his own limitations. He could not afford to provoke Moscow when its forces stood on its frontiers, or antagonise India, and undermine Islamabad’s standing at the NAM and the OIC.⁸¹ In a public statement on May 18, 1980, he stated that Islamabad would keep its “non-alignment with the US and the Soviet Union” till he was fully “convinced that the US was ‘genuinely committed’ in blocking the Soviet expansion.”⁸² Michael Howard commenting on the turbulent tactical-cum-strategic relationship between Pakistan and the US wrote that, “The genuineness of the commitment, it was implied, could be precisely measured with dollar aid.”⁸³ More significantly, the US had no plan to build-up Zia as a substitute for the former Shah of Iran. According to Michael Howard, Carter’s other motive for offering support to Pakistan was to communicate a “message to the Soviet Union” and another to the Arab states in the Gulf region to “keep their distance” from the Soviet Union.⁸⁴ Therefore, their relationship from December 1979 to January 1981 remained confined to issuance of statements and counter-statements. The effective period of Pakistan-US rapprochement only commenced in January 1981 when the Republicans regained power under President Ronald Reagan.

Beginning of Rapprochement

Like all countries, Pakistan’s basic objectives were to search for security. In the back-drop of Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, Zia’s top priority was to

⁷⁹ Michael Howard, “Return to the Cold War,” *Foreign Affairs* 59, no. 3 (1980): 463, 464.

⁸⁰ Tahir-Kheli, “Proxies and Allies,” 347.

⁸¹ Hollen, “Leaning on Pakistan,” 44-45.

⁸² Howard, “Return to the Cold War,” 464.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

enhance the country's "defence capabilities."⁸⁵ Pakistan's geographical proximity to the Persian Gulf, and its historical and cultural association with the people of Afghanistan, made it a significant obstacle in the way of Moscow's supposed expansionist policy.⁸⁶ At the same time, Pakistan also tried to strengthen its defensive capabilities against India. Initially, Carter Administration had tried to bridge the gap of differences with Pakistan which were persisting since the mid-1970s. The major problem, according to Geoffrey Kemp, was "the American tendency to view Pakistan's importance through the lens of global security rather than as a larger country with which the US should seek good relations no matter what." Pakistan, he said, was perceived as a "non-democratic" state, making the US more sceptical about forging a durable relationship with Islamabad. On the other hand, it regarded India as a "natural partner"⁸⁷ in spite of its "hostility to many American policies" and US opposition to India's nuclear tests in 1974. However, the events at the end of 1979 and beginning of 1980 forced Carter to reconsider the premise of US policy toward South and Southwest Asia. In spite of Carter's foreign policy adjustment, Pakistan-US tactical-cum-strategic arrangement could not materialize until the start of President Reagan's tenure in January 1981.

President Zia was quite critical of US policy toward Pakistan, and thought that Carter's aid offer was "devoid of credibility of a US-Pakistan relationship, nor was the package commensurate with the magnitude of the threat." Instead of buying security it would invite "greater animosity" of a superpower that happened to be Pakistan's neighbour.⁸⁸ What Pakistan was aspiring for was a "NATO-like security commitment," that Carter thought was neither possible nor feasible. Thus the parleys for US aid "were terminated"⁸⁹ and the proposed assistance package stood withdrawn. Zia remarked, "United States had foreign relations but no foreign policy."⁹⁰ Even the seasoned US diplomat Kissinger was critical of Carter

⁸⁵ G. W. Choudhury, *Pakistan: Transition from Military to Civilian Rule* (Essex: Scorpion Publishing Ltd., 1988), 40-41.

⁸⁶ Francis Fukuyama, "The Security of Pakistan: A trip Report," *RAND* (September 1980): 2.

⁸⁷ Geoffrey Kemp, "A Roller Coaster relationship: United States-Pakistan Relations After the Cold-War," in *From Containment to stability: Pakistan-United States Relations in the Post-Cold War Era*, ed. Colonel David O. Smith, proceedings of a Seminar co-sponsored by *The Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS)*, Washington and *The Institute for Strategic Studies*, Islamabad (Washington, D.C.: INSS, 1993), 52.

⁸⁸ Hafeez Malik, ed., *Soviet-American Relations with Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan* (London: Macmillan Press, 1987), 133.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Tahir-Kheli, *The United States and Pakistan*, 76.

Administration's half hearted attempts to back Pakistan. "Somewhere and somehow, the US foreign policy will have to find a way of rewarding friends and penalising opponents,"⁹¹ he said. However, it was left to Ronald Reagan to reward friends and penalise opponents. The new administration came up with a credible and acceptable aid offer for Pakistan with the intent to sustain an appropriate balance of power in the region.⁹²

The Reagan Administration

Pakistan-US dialogue on the resumption of assistance was based on the US conviction that the Soviet action required rejuvenation of a stronger and durable Pakistan-US strategic relationship. For Reagan, Pakistan was the 'Forward Defence' from where the battle against the Soviet 'Evil Empire' could be launched. Therefore, Reagan moved quickly to establish closer strategic relations with Islamabad. Accordingly, Reagan made relevant amendments in the Symington-Glenn legislation to enable Pakistan to receive US economic and military assistance.⁹³ The "weak states," writes Waltz "have often found opportunities for manoeuvre in the interstices of a balance of power."⁹⁴ Pakistan's and US' motives were "self-preservation," security, and to maintain a balance of power against the Soviet aggression,⁹⁵ which accorded them an opportunity to forge a tactical-cum-strategic cooperative framework.

The new economic and military aid package of \$3.2 billion was signed in September 1981. (After the expiry of this package, another agreement worth \$4.02 billion was signed in 1987.)⁹⁶ The aid arrangement was to take effect from October 1982. It called for a quick restoration of US military assistance programme to Islamabad.⁹⁷ The aid programme was in addition to the covert assistance already being provided by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to the Afghan *Mujahedeen* through Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI). According to Shirin Tahir-Kheli, this agreement was quite similar to the one earlier signed by both countries in the 1950s. However, the only difference was that of quality and quantity of the arms agreed to be supplied to Pakistan, which included forty F-16 fighters along with other sophisticated weapons.⁹⁸ Pakistan Foreign

⁹¹ *New York Times*, April 11, 1980.

⁹² Waltz, "International Structure," 307.

⁹³ Malik, *Soviet-American Relations*, 133.

⁹⁴ Waltz, "International Structure," 308.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Roy, "The Lessons of the Soviet," 39.

⁹⁷ *New York Times*, September 16, 1981.

⁹⁸ Tahir-Kheli, *The United States and Pakistan*, 104.

Minister, Agha Shahi, commenting on US commitment stated that, “We do believe in the determination of the new US Administration to strongly support the independence of Pakistan.”⁹⁹ Besides, the Reagan Administration also made it clear that the aid package would not undermine Islamabad’s non-aligned status and, that Washington had no plan to acquire bases in Pakistan in return.¹⁰⁰ The agreement was formalized without any quid pro quo, and prepared and signed with such an ease and cordiality that US Foreign Secretary, Alexander Haig, termed the parleys for assistance as “unusually cordial and productive” affairs.¹⁰¹

The Afghan crisis had elevated the status of the Persian Gulf and the Southwest Asian area at par with that of Western Europe, Japan and South Korea, where the Cold War was then raging. As Pakistan was the Chairman of the OIC, and a leading member of the NAM, so it was a natural partner in the US “efforts to rally Third World opinion against the Soviet” intervention in Afghanistan.¹⁰² Consequently, the entire structure of Pakistan-US bilateral relations was changed with the signing of a military assistance agreement. Their collaboration became much closer, and Pakistan’s Foreign Minister, Agha Shahi and the US Under-Secretary of State, James Buckley, exchanged visits to Washington and Islamabad. Buckley stated that, “The thrust of Reagan’s Administration is to recognise that arms transfers, properly considered and employed, represent an indispensable instrument of American policy that both complements and supplements the role of our own forces.”¹⁰³ Islamabad believed that Washington’s determination to accord unequivocal support to the territorial integrity of Pakistan without a formal pact, and a quid pro quo attached to it was a realistic *modus operandi* in the prevalent situation. Islamabad’s viewpoint that “they get fairer deal from Republicans than from Democrats”¹⁰⁴ is not unfounded and has evidence in the history of their bilateral relationship.

Finally the collective efforts of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, which “played a key role in providing a haven for the Afghan Refugees and a channel for aid to the Afghan resistance” culminated in the Mujahedeen’s victory and the withdrawal of Soviet forces in February 1989 (after the

⁹⁹ *New York Times*, April 22, 1981.

¹⁰⁰ Malik, *Soviet-American Relations*, 133-134.

¹⁰¹ *New York Times*, April, 22, 1982.

¹⁰² Choudhury, *Pakistan*, 42.

¹⁰³ Tahir-Kheli, *The United States and Pakistan*, 105.

¹⁰⁴ Choudhury, *Pakistan*, 43.

signing of Geneva Accords in April 1988).¹⁰⁵ The Soviet Union disintegrated and the Cold War ended.

New Approach to Bilateralism

Pakistan handled the Afghan crisis with adroitness. Zia's stand on Afghanistan had earned him respect in the corridors of power in Washington and the West. The Reagan Administration kept Islamabad exempt from the US nuclear non-proliferation law throughout the 1980s which had plagued their relations throughout the 1970s. It was the Symington-Glenn Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act that barred assistance to those countries which were acquiring nuclear potential without safeguards of the IAEA. During the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, the US "twice suspended it to permit continued aid to Pakistan and, after 1985, the Congress further regulated the law enabling the US President to certify that, "Pakistan does not 'possess' a nuclear explosive device" in order to continue the flow of aid.¹⁰⁶ In fact during this period, Pakistan had become "the cornerstone of the American policy in South Asia;" hence, the nuclear proliferation legislation was "set aside" to formalise tactical-cum-strategic relationship with Pakistan.¹⁰⁷

At this juncture, both countries' respective national interest imperatives were so overwhelming that not even the India factor could influence the formalisation of the tactical-cum-strategic ties. Of course the factor of Indian support for the Soviets was there. India and Vietnam were the only two members of the NAM that did not support the UN resolutions calling for Soviet withdrawal. And India had endorsed Moscow's move at all international forums.¹⁰⁸ Obviously, in international politics, basically it is the rationality and realism that predominantly determine the relationship

¹⁰⁵ Richard P. Cronin, *The United States, Pakistan and the Soviet Threats to Southern Asia*, Congressional Research Service (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, September 1985), 2-4.

¹⁰⁶ Mahnaz Ispahani, "Pakistan: Dimensions of Insecurity," *Adelphi Paper* 246 (Winter 1989/90): 59.

¹⁰⁷ Roy, "The Lessons of the Soviet," 35.

¹⁰⁸ Choudhury, *Pakistan*, 46. In this context, Olivier Roy writes that, "...India publicly accepted the Soviet justification for the invasion. It blamed Pakistan and the US for the consequences of the Soviet action, that is, the escalation of regional tensions into an East-West issue. The only way for India to try to reverse a Pakistani military build-up was to work for the withdrawal of Soviet troops after the consolidation of the Karmal regime. Thus India abstained from voting for the UN's annual resolution condemning the Soviet invasion, a resolution which always gained a large majority (usually about 120 votes)," Roy, "The Lessons of the Soviet," 39.

between states.¹⁰⁹ The question of morality is of secondary significance, and the “moral dignity of national interest” is paramount.¹¹⁰

Zia had also secured the backing of a powerful group of US Congressmen due to his staunch anti-Soviet stance and covert assistance to the Afghan *Mujahedeen*. This assured the continuous flow of US military and economic assistance to Pakistan.¹¹¹ Then Pakistan was the only state directly affected by the Soviet move, the only state that could channelize clandestine assistance to the *Mujahedeen* and the only state in the region that was prepared to face the Soviet threat so audaciously. Only two other countries, Iran, and to a lesser extent, India, could have provided bases to the US against the Soviet forces but they were not prepared to confront the Soviet Union. Therefore, Pakistan became a pivot of the US global policies, especially in Southwest Asia.¹¹²

Actually Iran had protested against the Soviet military intervention and considered it as an aggression against all the Muslims. It urged the Soviet Union to “immediately remove its army from Afghanistan” but it was not prepared to openly confront the invader as it was already in a state of crisis with the US over the hostages issue.¹¹³ Again Iran held the US “as the real instigator of the Iraqi” invasion of Iran.¹¹⁴ As for India, it had publicly accepted the Soviet justification for the invasion and accused the US and Pakistan of “escalation of regional tensions into an East-West issue.”¹¹⁵ In such an environment, New Delhi’s strategy was to “revive a Pakistani military build-up” issue with the intention of creating an alibi to abstain from voting on the UN General Assembly resolution that condemned the Soviet Union.¹¹⁶ In addition, it supported the Kabul regime during the NAM summit in New Delhi in 1983. Later on, in the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC), India advocated

¹⁰⁹ Robert. O. Keohane, “Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond,” in *Neo-Realism and Its Critics*, ed. R. O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University 1986), 164-165.

¹¹⁰ H. J. Morgenthau, *In Defence of the National Interest: A Critical Examination of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Knopf, 1951), 33.

¹¹¹ Kemp, “A Roller Coaster Relationship,” 52.

¹¹² Thomas P. Thornton, “US Strategic interests in South Asia,” in *Dilemmas of National Security and Co-operation in India, and Pakistan*, ed. Hafeez Malik (New York: St. Martin Press, 1993), 37-38.

¹¹³ Cited in Henry S. Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985), 201.

¹¹⁴ R. K. Ramazani, ed., *Iran’s Revolution: The Search for Consensus* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 57.

¹¹⁵ Roy, “The Lessons of the Soviet/Afghan,” 39.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Afghanistan's inclusion in the organisation.¹¹⁷ In such circumstances, Pakistan's sharing of common security perceptions with the US justified their mutual decision to stop the Soviet expansionism. This formalised the anti-Soviet Union strategic coalition between Pakistan, US and the Persian Gulf states.

At that time, Pakistan championed the *Mujahedeen's* struggle, and granted a safe haven to over three million Afghan refugees.¹¹⁸ The Soviet action had clearly put Pakistan's security in jeopardy by weakening its eastern frontiers against India which had a defence pact with Moscow since 1971. Therefore, the prime strategic and foreign policy targets for Pakistan were: the removal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan; neutralisation of the communist threat; the early return of three million refugees; and the attraction of maximum diplomatic and material support from the US, West and the conservative Arab states. Lastly, but not least, quell the revival of Afghan nationalism that could emerge in the shape of Pakhtunistan and 'Durand Line' border with Pakistan.¹¹⁹

After signing of the aid agreement in September 1981, Pakistan maintained a limited liability posture that saved Islamabad from coming into direct confrontation with the Soviet Union. After considering all the pros and cons, Zia quintessentially decided to build-up his foreign and security policy on four principles: 1) to resort to condemnation of the Soviet invasion at all international and regional forums; 2) maintain that Pakistan was not serving as a conduit in the Afghan war; 3) to secure assistance for the maintenance of over three million refugees; and 4) to evolve modalities to find a political solution to the Afghan problem through the auspices of proximity, or "third-party," parleys sponsored by the UN in Geneva.¹²⁰ The Pakistani policymakers pursued this multi-faceted policy with adroitness. Being a country next to Afghanistan, it faced some unavoidable risks. These risks were minimised by broadening the ambit of international support to the Afghan resistance. On the nuclear question, the US accepted Pakistan's assurance that it was not planning to manufacture a nuclear device, nor it was transferring nuclear technology to other countries.

Senator John Glenn, who had earlier taken a hard-line against Pakistan's nuclear programme, accepted that the Soviet move into Southwest Asia necessitated a change in US foreign policy towards

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Tom Rogers, "Afghan Refugees and the Stability of Pakistan," *Survival* (September/October 1987): 419.

¹¹⁹ Marvin G. Weinbaum, "War and Peace in Afghanistan: The Pakistani Role," *The Middle East Journal* (Winter 1991): 72-73.

¹²⁰ Wriggins, "Pakistan's Foreign Policy," 75-77.

Pakistan. While speaking before the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, he stated that:

On the one hand, the United States has long-standing and highly important non-proliferation interests and objectives which it is seeking to pursue in its nuclear relations with India and Pakistan.... On the other hand, long-term US interests in maintaining stable political and security interests in Southwest Asia have been accentuated by the Soviet aggression and the need for a clear US response to it.¹²¹

This change in the US foreign policy towards Pakistan took place when the aid agreements were being signed in parallel with Washington's adherence to the principles of nuclear non-proliferation that the Reagan Administration had waived in view of the Soviet threat to the region, but, making it amply clear to Islamabad that Washington was still committed to the ideals of nuclear non-proliferation. That explains Agha Shahi's christening of their bilateral tactical-cum-strategic cooperative framework as a "hand-shake", not an "embrace."

The improved bilateral relations provided Pakistan an opportunity to maintain a firm stand against the Soviet invasion which finally led to the signing of the Geneva Accords in April 1988 and the subsequent withdrawal of the Soviet forces by February 1989. It was primarily Zia's stand on Afghanistan that earned him the respect and influence on the Capitol Hill and helped Reagan Administration to protect Islamabad from the mischief of the US nuclear non-proliferation law. In spite of the 1985 Solarz Amendment, President Reagan consistently waived sanctions against Pakistan due to convergence of their strategic interests in Southwest Asia. The 1980s was a unique decade in the Pak-US bilateral relations. Zia's staunch anti-Soviet stance and covert assistance to the Afghan *Mujahideen* ensured unhindered flow of aid to Pakistan. The US was convinced that the Persian Gulf and the Southwest Asia could be the future theatre of US-Soviet Union military competition. Reagan with the cooperation of Zia and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries endeavoured to maintain regional stability and the status quo in the face of the communist threat and the spread of Iranian revolution.

In essence, the Afghan issue had dominated regional politics, and the US-Soviet relations from December 1979 to 1988. It began to lose its centrality after the Geneva Accords under which the Soviet Union had

¹²¹ *India-Pakistan Nuclear Issues*, Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, US Senate, 96th Congress, March 18, 1980 (Washington, D.C., 1980), 1.

agreed to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan. Pakistan lost its leverage as a front-line state in the US global calculus. During this period, Pakistan had also acted as a regional balancer in the area. Now, Pakistan became fully aware that after the neutralisation of communist threat from Southwest Asia, its cordial relations with the US would change. The nuclear non-proliferation issue, which the US Congress believed was “long over-due” with Pakistan, was expected to resurface again.¹²² Since the passage of the Pressler Amendment, the US President had continuously certified every year that Pakistan did not possess a nuclear device.

When the Soviet forces started to leave Afghanistan after May 15, 1988, the US interest in the nuclear non-proliferation law revived. Now that Pakistan was not bleeding the “Evil Empire” any longer, its strategic position in the eyes of Washington had to diminish. When President Zia died in a tragic air crash on August 17, 1988, an architect of Pakistan-US collaboration in Afghanistan, Brzezinski remarked that, “Zia was very important to the whole geopolitical strategic constellation of the region, very important to the freedom fighters of Afghanistan”. He expressed scepticism if Pakistan-US cooperation would continue in Afghanistan after Zia’s demise.¹²³ The US now thought that Pakistan was developing an “Islamic bomb.” In a way it was a serious notice to Pakistan that the Reagan Administration was facing difficulty in certifying that Pakistan was not making a nuclear bomb.

Concluding Remarks

There has been a consistent anomaly and contradiction in the Pakistan-US bilateral relations since the 1950s. Pakistan had always viewed its relations with the US in the context of supplementing its regional security requirements and to neutralise the threat from India. On the other hand, the US viewed its links with Pakistan purely in global security terms. Thomas P. Thornton nicely highlights this contrasting basis of Pakistan-US relations, that Washington conceived its links with Pakistan in view of its global strategic interests to contain the “Soviet Union and China, whereas Pakistan saw the US support mainly in the regional terms - i.e. against India.”¹²⁴ As a result Pakistan could not extract guarantees of security

¹²² Paula R. Newberg, “Dateline Pakistan: Bhutto's Back,” *Foreign Policy* (Summer 1994): 173.

¹²³ Eqbal Ahmad and Nasim Zehra, “Pakistan After Zia,” *Middle East Report* (November-December 1988): 32.

¹²⁴ Thomas P. Thornton, “The New Phase In US-Pakistan Relations,” *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1994): 149.

against India in spite of a long period of alignment with the US stretching from the early 1950s to the close of 1989.

In December 1988, the new Prime Minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto, who was immensely popular in the US, gave no indication about her government's desire to change the existing nature of Pakistan-US relations, which previously Zia had formulated. At the same time, she was not prepared to unilaterally close Pakistan's nuclear programme that was considered by the whole nation as a national symbol. She reiterated that Pakistan was committed not to assemble a nuclear device.¹²⁵ It was quite ominous that the nuclear question would continue to compound Pakistan-US relations, because now Washington was not ready to give special concessions to Pakistan with regards to its nuclear non-proliferation law after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. Pakistan perceived that, if it unilaterally signed the NPT, then it would be difficult for Islamabad to counter the Indian nuclear hegemony. Pakistan also wondered how could anyone see Islamabad as a threat to its neighbour which was economically and militarily much more powerful. A direct consequence of the diminished regional status of Pakistan indicated the end of Pakistan-US *entente* beyond 1989. Simultaneously, Pakistan considered the US proliferation law as discriminatory and reiterated that it was committed to continue its nuclear programme. According to Paula R. Newberg:

The Pressler Amendment is a harmful law. By punishing Pakistan but not India, neither country has any incentive to change policies, and both play the nuclear card more forcefully...In the end, the US is left with a newly distorted relationship with Pakistan in which Pakistan spends most of its time trying to elude Pressler and little effort reforming its practices.¹²⁶

While Geoffrey Kemp commenting on Pakistan-US *entente* remarked that:

The very large US assistance programme during the 1980s was directly attributable to Afghanistan.... Reagan Administration's willingness to "overlook" Pakistani nuclear activity was a deliberate strategic choice. Had the Soviet Union not invaded Afghanistan, the US showdown with Pakistan over nuclear issue would have come much earlier.... Part of the problem has been the American tendency to view Pakistan's importance through the lens of global security

¹²⁵ Rasul B. Rais, "Pakistan In 1988: From Command To Conciliation Politics," *Asian Survey* (February 1989): 206.

¹²⁶ Newberg, "Dateline Pakistan: Bhutto's Back," 172.

rather than as a large country with which the US should seek good relations no matter what.... Pakistan is an important country for the US, and this importance is likely to grow in the years ahead. As in the past, some, but not all of the reasons are strategic. Pakistan is an integral part of the Southwest Asian security system. Southwest Asia and the security of the Persian Gulf remain key American strategic interests and will be so for the foreseeable future.¹²⁷

In fact, both countries had consistently held to their respective positions on divergent questions ranging from human rights to nuclear non-proliferation. Simultaneously, they formalized a collaborative framework based on a clear understanding on containing Soviet expansionism.¹²⁸ However, the other broader framework of security threats, including military, political, economic, societal, and environmental and the relational phenomenon¹²⁹ did not figure prominently in their approach. Essentially, their relationship revolved around military and the balance of power equation strategy. As observed in the foregoing sections, during the period, Pakistan and the US had adroitly balanced their priorities in accordance with their predominant national interests and values¹³⁰. Secondly, the question of morality, including that of human rights and nuclear non-proliferation, remained of secondary importance. As a result, the “moral dignity of national interest”¹³¹ was considered much more rational and pragmatic. Other controversial issues were set aside in order to evolve a consensus strategy. “Alliances tend to be specific, of short duration,” writes Morton Kaplan, and they “shift according to advantage and not according to ideology (even within war).”¹³² It was truly a geopolitical realpolitik revolving around the axis of tactical-cum-strategic framework. For that reason, fundamentally their alliance formation in 1981 remained “limited to objectives” — defeat of the Soviet Union. They both did achieve this objective. However, they could not possibly extend the war’s limited objectives beyond the parameters of post-Soviet withdrawal period, i.e.,

¹²⁷ Kemp, “A Roller Coaster,” 52, 55.

¹²⁸ Stephen M. Walt in his empirical study of states’ behavior toward alliance formation suggests that, states invariably balance against the threats instead of being against a power; Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

¹²⁹ Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Studies in the Post-Cold War Era* (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 2008), 20.

¹³⁰ Haslam, *No Virtue like Necessity*, 12.

¹³¹ Morgenthau, *In Defence of the National Interest*, 33.

¹³² Morton A. Kaplan, “Variants on Six Models of the International System,” in *International Politics and Foreign Policy: A Reader in Research and Theory*, ed. James N. Rosenau (New York: The Free Press, 1969), 295.

1989. It can be deduced that both countries had not paid sufficient attention to other potent sectors of non-military elements of security, as identified by Buzan, which could possibly have “woven” them “together” in a strong web of structure for the future as well.¹³³ Furthermore, the Pakistani policymakers apparently also could not fully appreciate the true dynamics of the international politics, which is obviously premised on the principles of mutual convergence to achieve certain strategic objectives. In essence, alliances between states are of evolutionary nature that tend to remould with the changing strategic and foreign policy goal posts of the states.■

¹³³ Barry Buzan, “New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-First Century,” *International Affairs* 67, no. 3 (1991): 433.