

Policy Forum 01-01A: The Sino-Pakistani Relationship: From Harmony to Disquiet

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By Ahmad Faruqui

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I. Introduction

This contribution is by Ahmad Faruqi, Defense and Energy Economist at [EPRI](#), based in Palo Alto, California. He is currently working on a book entitled "The Price of Strategic Myopia: Reforming Pakistan's Military."

Faruqi explores the Sino-Pakistani bilateral relationship, which he argues may have run its course. He argues that the relationship may also soon undergo a reversal. Faruqi reviews Pakistan's historical relationship with the PRC, examines changes in PRC priorities and the influence they have had on its relationships with Pakistan. He concludes with a discussion of future scenarios, including the impact of a changed Sino-Pakistani relationship upon India and the US.

II. Essay by Ahmad Faruqi

"The Sino-Pakistani Relationship: From Harmony to Disquiet"

By Ahmad Faruqi¹

Pakistan and China have had a warm relationship since the early sixties. Till the nineties, the relationship was "smooth as silk." Mao wanted to limit the expanding influence of the US and the USSR by creating links with the third world. Neighboring Pakistan, then the world's largest Muslim country, became China's gateway to the Islamic crescent. In addition, it provided a counterweight to India with whom China had fought a successful border war in 1962, and which was now raising six mountain divisions to combat a future Chinese invasion with help from the US and the UK.

The Sino-Pakistani relationship entered a turbulent phase in the nineties. All bilateral relationships have to contribute to the multilateral relationships that exist between the two countries and the rest of the world. As discussed later in this chapter, the emergence of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the intensification of the separatist movement in Kashmir, and significant changes in domestic and foreign priorities in China documented in a recently issued White Paper on National Defense have interjected disequilibrium in the Sino-Pakistani equation. This paper explores whether the bilateral relationship has run its course and whether it may indeed undergo a reversal. It begins with a review of Pakistan's historical relationship with China, examines changes in China's priorities and the influence they have had on its relationships with Pakistan, and concludes with a discussion of future scenarios.

Harmony in the Sino-Pakistani Relationship

In the early sixties, China became an ally of Pakistan. The Pakistan International Airlines began air service to Beijing long before any airline from the non-communist world, in large measure because China did not have diplomatic ties with several European countries that wanted to initiate air service.² Subsequently, China provided significant amounts of economic and military aid to Pakistan, helped set up an indigenous defense production capability, and more recently provided missile and nuclear technology over vociferous US objections. Till fairly recently, China has consistently backed Pakistan on the issue of Kashmir. Chinese maps often show Kashmir as a region that belongs to neither Pakistan nor India.

Unfortunately, Pakistan has often ignored China's advice, to its own peril. During the 1965 war with India, China's Prime Minister, Zhou Enlai, advised Pakistan to wage a people's war against India, after India attacked Lahore in force on the morning of September 6. The Chinese strategy revolved around a deceptively simple folk poem that Mao Zedong wrote during the revolutionary war and that subsequently guided the strategy of the Red Army:

The enemy advances, we withdraw
The enemy rests, we harass
The enemy tires, we attack
The enemy withdraws, we pursue³

As noted by General Musa, Pakistan's army chief during that period, the Chinese felt that Pakistan's strategy was too forward, since it was designed to take on a numerically superior enemy right at the border. The Chinese advised Pakistan to fall back, draw the Indian army into Pakistani territory, and once the Indian lines of communication had gotten stretched, then take on the Indian army in force. These military principles had been elucidated by Chairman Mao during the Long March, and validated through successful practice against numerically superior and better-armed foreign and domestic troops. However, they required a high degree of moral courage and popular support among the people.

Unfortunately, Ayub's political base was no where as strong as Mao's, and he did not think he could survive the initial loss of Pakistani territory, possibly including the city of Lahore, even if that ultimately led to victory over India. Mao's strategy was ultimately predicated on the carrying out a citizen-defense guerilla war. As noted by Van Evera, such strategies "are viable for Switzerland or China, but not for Guatemala or ancient Sparta, because these unpopular governments cannot arm their people without risking revolution."⁴ Air Marshal Asghar Khan, who was Pakistan's air chief just prior to the 1965 war, and who was brought in by Ayub as a special envoy to China, notes in his memoirs that Zhou Enlai offered a generous package of arms to Pakistan, on Pakistan's request.⁵ Surprisingly, Ayub did not want the arms to come directly from China because that might upset the Americans, notwithstanding the fact that the arms were needed to offset the crippling effects of the American arms embargo on Pakistan. Zhou was concerned that Pakistan would not be able to hold out long enough for the arms to arrive by that prolonged route. He wanted to meet Ayub in person to go over this matter, to determine his resolve to engage in a protracted war with India, and to suggest that the Pakistani Army change its tactics to put the numerically larger Indian Army on the defensive. However, Ayub was reluctant to have Zhou visit him in Pakistan, again because of fear of upsetting the Americans. Even then, the Chinese issued an ultimatum to India to withdraw from portions of its disputed border with China, putting pressure on the Indian forces that were engaged in hostilities with Pakistan. All of this was to no avail, since Pakistan concluded a ceasefire in less than three weeks.⁶

In 1966, China stepped in to fill the void created by the US arms embargo against Pakistan. It supplied large quantities of arms and ammunition, including hundreds of Chinese-produced F-6 (Russian MiG-19SF) fighters, T-59 (Russian T-54/55) tanks, and four-barreled 20 mm anti-aircraft guns.⁷ The equipment was not as sophisticated as the American, British, and Soviet equipment in Pakistan's or India's inventories. Yet the sheer magnitude of the shipment gave Pakistan a tremendous boost, in a vindication of Lenin's adage that "quantity has a quality all its own." Subsequently, by marrying US technology with Chinese hardware, Pakistan was able to get both quality and quantity. The T-59 tank was refitted with the deadly British L7 main gun.⁸ Sidewinder air-to-air missiles, western avionics and ejection seats were refitted on the F-6s, creating a very potent Mach 1.4 air superiority fighter and ground attack aircraft.⁹ This aircraft was only good for 100 hours of flying but the Pakistanis were able to get about 130 hours out of it.¹⁰ It proved its worth in the 1971 war with India, when the Pakistani Air Force scored a three-to-one kill ratio against the Indian Air Force according to data personally recorded by General Chuck Yeager who was then military advisor in Islamabad.

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) worked closely with the Pakistan Army's Corps of Engineers to construct an all-weather highway along the ancient Silk Road.¹¹ Cutting through

seemingly impassable mountains, the Karakorum Highway serves as a land bridge between the countries. Having as much symbolic value as economic value, it ignited emotions in India by conjuring up an image of an invasion from the north, a la the invasions of Genghis Khan and his successors in the Middle Ages.

On the diplomatic front, Pakistan brokered China's opening towards the US in 1971. This new relationship enabled China to block the emerging border threat from an increasingly belligerent USSR. Pakistan worked assiduously with the US and countries in the Muslim world to get China a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. In February of 1971, with great foresight, China advised Pakistan's military government led by General Yahya to seek a political settlement with the political leaders of East Pakistan. Yahya and his junta ignored this advice, and launched Operation Searchlight against the Mukti Bahini fighters who were seeking to create an independent state of Bangladesh. With less than 45,000 troops under his command, Lieutenant General Niazi of Pakistan's Eastern Command had no chance of quelling the rebellion which quickly spread like a Maoan "prairie fire" and engulfed the 75 million citizens of East Pakistan. The resulting hostilities escalated out of control, plunging East Pakistan into a bloody civil war that resulted in massive waves of refugees pouring into the Indian state of Bengal. Atrocities committed by the Pakistan Army were condemned universally. Pakistan's attempt to save East Pakistan by opening a second front along the western border with India gave India the long-awaited opportunity to invade East Pakistan in December. Just like Sparta feared that an invading army might grow if it entered Spartan territory, because Spartan slaves and dissident tribes would desert to the enemy, so General Niazi's worst fears were realized when India invaded in full force and was doubly helped by the local population's desire to rid itself of Yahya's unpopular oligarchy. Faced with a force that was five times bigger than his tired and beleaguered garrison, and completely cut off from his base in West Pakistan, General Niazi surrendered half of Pakistan to General Aurora of the Indian Army.¹²

In the aftermath of this war, India emerged as the dominant power in the South Asian subcontinent. To offset this dominance, China provided more military hardware to Pakistan, and helped set up a domestic arms industry comprised of several factories to build tanks and warplanes. The new hardware included fast moving Shanghai-class naval attack craft. Pakistan equipped these boats with anti-shiping missiles, to match the firepower of India's Soviet-supplied Osa boats that had successfully attacked fuel tanks in the Karachi harbor with Styx missiles. It also included several hundred T-59 tanks and A-5 ground-attack aircraft that Pakistan upgraded with western avionics and ejection seat. In 1972, with Chinese assistance, an F-6 Rebuild Factory was established to avoid sending large numbers of these aircraft to China for overhaul. This factory has since grown into the impressive Pakistan Aeronautical Complex. Since completing its first aircraft in 1982, the plant has overhauled 265 F-6s, 112 A-5s ground-attack aircraft and 55 F-7s (Soviet MiG 21 derivative) air superiority fighters. Each aircraft is completely rebuilt at the end of 800 flight hours, or roughly eight years of service. The F-7 overhaul takes around 30 weeks; Chinese wiring is replaced with Raychem wiring for better insulation, and all rubber seals are also replaced.¹³

India's nuclear explosion in 1974 caused China to accelerate its nuclear, missile, and space programs to ensure China's pre-eminence of the Asia-Pacific region by "restraining Japan and containing India". China's assistance to the nuclear and missile programs of North Korea and Pakistan has been largely motivated by the need to countervail its Asian strategic rivals. According to an Indian analyst, "Beijing has long used Pakistan -- dubbed as "China's Israel" by PLA generals, to contain India's growing power and repeatedly broken its promises to halt clandestine strategic transfers to Pakistan in violation of NPT Article I obligations. Even the repeated imposition of sanctions did not deter China from working long and hard to transform the China-India nuclear equation of the 1960s into an India-Pakistan nuclear standoff in the 1990s. To take the heat off its proliferation activities, Beijing has encouraged its military allies, Islamabad and Pyongyang, to

establish closer nuclear and missile cooperation links since the early 1990s, following Sun Tzu's advice of 'subduing the enemy without fighting.' Such a strategy not only obviates the need for China to pose a direct threat to Japan or India but also allows Beijing to wield its prestige as a disinterested global nuclear power while playing the role of a regional arbiter." 14

When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979, China joined Pakistan in calling for a Soviet withdrawal. It provided arms and ammunition to the Afghan Mujahideen to fight the Soviets and worked actively with Pakistan to create a viable government after the Soviet retreat.¹⁵ In April 1989, the Chinese foreign minister, Qian Qichen, expressed serious concern that faction-fighting among the Mujahideen could turn into a civil war with adverse consequences for Pakistan and other neighboring countries. The premier, Li Peng, said that aid to the Mujahideen would be stopped once the existing agreements ran out.¹⁶ China "fully supported the Pakistani positions on an interim government and symmetry during the Geneva negotiation process and worked closely with Pakistan to provide assistance to Afghan refugees."¹⁷, but made it very clear to Pakistan that international support for the Mujahideen was running out.

It continued to support Pakistan in its conflict with India over Kashmir, since that conflict pins down the vast majority of India's armed forces along the border with Pakistan. The Pakistan Air Force was supplied with 160 F-7Ps, the last of which was delivered in 1992. 18 To redress this aircraft's well-known shortcoming as an interceptor, Pakistan has installed updated Marconi Super Skyraider pulse-Doppler radar.

The most significant military development occurred in 1992 when China supplied Pakistan with 34 M-11 battlefield missiles, a solid-fuel variant of the Soviet Scud-B missile. The trigger for providing these missiles may have been the US decision to supply 150 F-16 war planes valued at \$ 6 billion to Taiwan over China's vociferous objections. A similar pattern of behavior was observed in 1994 after the US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, visited China and hectored the leadership on the need to improve human rights in China. Very soon after his visit, China supplied missile parts to Pakistan.¹⁹ Subsequently, evidence has turned up that China helped construct a factory for making these missiles. According to one US account, "For five years the CIA had been carefully tracking the flow of Chinese M-11 missile components into Pakistan. Then at the end of 1995 came a stunning discovery. Agency satellites spotted a curious-looking facility under construction near the northern Pakistani town of Rawalpindi, just 10 miles from the capital of Islamabad. It had long, narrow buildings with doorways large enough to roll out a rocket the size of the 30-ft. M-11, as well as a test stand nearby, where the solid-fuel engine could be mounted and fired up. The agency concluded that not only was China selling missiles, but it was also helping Pakistan build a factory to manufacture them. For the CIA, uncovering the plant represented "a first-class piece of spying," says a senior agency official."²⁰

China is also helping Pakistan in the field of nuclear power, even though it has stated that the program is only aimed "at peace use of nuclear energy, and it is under the safeguards of the IAEA. Such cooperation is not directed against India."²¹ In 1992, China signed an agreement to export a 300 MW nuclear-power plant to Pakistan, marking the first time that China exported a nuclear power station. Construction began in 1993 at Chasma, and the plant began generating power in June 2000.²²

China's Changed Domestic Priorities

China has recently issued a White Paper on China's National Defense in 2000. This paper has been given extensive publicity in China, where it has been published as an insert in several newsmagazines, including the October 23 issue of the highly respected Beijing Review. In addition, to give it a global readership, it has been posted on China's official web site.²³ As is to be expected,

the paper devotes a great deal of space to discussing three issues that are of great concern to China's defense managers: the long-standing dispute with Taiwan; the US doctrine of Theatre Missile Defense; and relations with neighboring states.

However, what is of greater significance than the articulation of these issues is the statement in the paper that defense is subordinate to economic development. This has several implications for China's historically close relationship with Pakistan, as discussed later.

The White Paper describes China's bold experiment with free enterprise economics that was begun by Deng Xiaoping.²⁴ "For many years, China was a stagnant giant, a backwater, less of an economic competitor than far smaller-places like Taiwan or South Korea."²⁵ In 1979, Deng sought to pull China out of economic stagnation by introducing market competition within the framework of socialist ideology. The new slogan "To get rich is glorious" replaced the old slogan that "The East is Red"²⁶ with which Mao had heralded the arrival of communism in China at the Tianamen gate of the Forbidden City, overlooking Tianamen Square on October 1, 1949. Deng pointed out that 55 million offshore Chinese constituted the world's sixth richest economy, and asked his colleagues in the Chinese Communist Party to imagine what 1.1 billion mainlanders could do on the mainland if given the right market-based incentives.²⁷ Open markets were created for agricultural produce and market-based pricing was introduced in the agricultural sector. Large increases in agricultural purchase prices (without passing the cost on to the cities) led to tremendous increases in food production.²⁸ China began to accept loans from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Four economic zones were created to attract foreign capital to China.

After Deng's death in 1997, the economic modernization program continued to forge ahead under Jiang Zemin's leadership. Deng's modernization program and its priorities were preserved: first agriculture, then industry, then science and technology, and lastly defense. Jiang moved to privatize money-losing government owned corporations which still employed the majority of Chinese workers, and showed no signs of holding back what is by all measures "one of modern history's most daring and heroic economic and social adventures."²⁹ Since the experiment began 20 years ago, China's GDP has been steadily climbing at a rate of 10 percent a year, although the growth rate has fallen by two to three percentage points in recent years.³⁰ Savings and investments rates have consistently exceeded 30% of GDP. This period may well represent the most massive episode of growth in world history.³¹ Per capita annual income has grown at 8.8% a year for the past two decades, and now stands at \$750 per person. During the Asian-Pacific financial crisis of 1997, the Chinese economy did remarkably well. It lent Thailand more than \$1 billion,³² and even offered financial support to the increasingly wobbly Russian economy. Investment as a percent of GDP is about 38% and savings are about 43%. China exports about 22% of its GDP, and foreign exchange reserves now stand at \$152 billion.³³ The volume of trade this year is estimated to reach \$475 billion, which is \$100 billion higher than last year.³⁴ Some analysts expect China to become the world's biggest economy by the year 2020, indicating that Deng's legacy will remain intact into the twenty-first century.³⁵ He has accomplished what Mao had only envisioned: a true Great Leap Forward.

Deng recognized that without a strong economy, China could not become a great power. He said that China "must grow wealthy and strong," taking a line from Japan's Meiji modernizers in the late nineteenth century.³⁶ Once China had attained economic strength, it would be in a position to begin developing military capability commensurate with its new status as a great power. It would have to de-emphasize defense spending in the near term in order to become a stronger power. Notes a US assessment, "China's grand strategy aims for comprehensively developing national power so that Beijing can achieve its long-term national goals. This grand strategy, which Beijing defines as "national development strategy," has been reaffirmed by the post-Deng collective leadership.

This development strategy is based on an assumption that economic power is the most important

and most essential factor in comprehensive national power in an era when "peace and development" are the primary international trends and world war can be avoided. In this context, Beijing places top priority on efforts to promote rapid and sustained economic growth, to raise technological levels in sciences and industry, to explore and develop China's land- and sea-based national resources, and to secure China's access to global resources."³⁷

Consistent with this vision, the White Paper states clearly that national defense is subordinate to the nation's overall goal of economic construction. It says that "developing the economy and strengthening national defense are two strategic tasks in China's modernization efforts. The Chinese government insists that economic development be taken as the center, while defense work be subordinate to and in the service of the nation's overall economic construction." By making economic security the centerpiece of its national agenda, the communist leadership in China hopes to avoid the fate of its Soviet comrades where political liberalization preceded economic liberalization. The USSR collapsed under the weight of its military spending, as it sought to attain military parity with the US, whose economy was six times bigger.

The White Paper calls for implementing a military strategy of active defense that seeks to "gain mastery only after the enemy has struck. Such defense combines efforts to deter war with preparations to win self-defense wars in time of peace, and strategic defense with operational and tactical offensive operations in time of war."

It supports the development of a "lean and strong military force" in the Chinese way. This involves two elements. First, by managing the armed forces according to law, and by transforming "its armed forces from a numerically superior to a qualitatively superior type, and from a manpower-intensive to a technology-intensive type," it hopes to comprehensively enhance the armed forces' combat effectiveness. Second, by "combining the armed forces with the people and practicing self-defense by the whole people, China adheres to the concept of people's war under modern conditions, and exercises the combination of a streamlined standing army with a powerful reserve force for national defense."

Over time, Chinese defense spending as a proportion of GDP has been in a state of steady decline since 1971: from about 17.4% in 1971 to 7.5% in 1985.³⁸ Compared to many other countries, China's defense expenditure remains at a fairly low level. Currently, the share of the national budget going to defense is around 8%, down by one percentage point from five years ago. Total defense spending in 2000 is \$14.6 billion, which is only 5% of the defense spending of the United States, and 30% of Japan's defense spending. As a percentage of GDP, Chinese defense spending is 1.31%, compared with 3% for the US and 2.7% for India.³⁹ To place these numbers in perspective, it is useful to note that according to official sources, Pakistan is spending about a third of its national budget on defense, and this represents about 6% of its GDP. If all defense expenditures are accounted for, the true figure might be twice as high. Most defense economists regard 3% of GDP the upper limit on defense spending for developing countries.

China has introduced market competition in its defense industries by the creation of ten corporations. In addition, a major program of "downsizing and restructuring" is underway in the armed forces. During the mid-eighties, China announced its intention to reduce the PLA's strength from 4.2 million to 3 million. In September 1997, China announced an additional reduction of 500,000 troops over the next three years. By the end of 1999, this reduction had been achieved, and the adjustment and reform of the structure and organization of the armed forces had been basically completed. Several corps headquarters, divisions and regiments have been deactivated. The command structure is now leaner, more agile and efficient. Increased emphasis is being placed on the newly emerging field of information warfare. Additionally, to give them a sharper focus, the armed forces are being pulled out from commercial activities. Over 290 business management

bodies have been either completely dismantled or turned over to local governments.

China's New Foreign Policy

To ensure the success of its military downsizing programs, China has made complementary changes in its foreign policy. Close economic and political ties have been developed with the bordering Central Asian states. International trade in energy, chemicals and consumer goods is flowing freely across these boundaries. As noted by Ahmed Rashid, in the future these ties could become even more important than China's ties with the traditional Muslim world. An 800-mile long railway line has been built from the capital of Kazakhstan to the capital of Xinjiang. China is setting up factories in Kazakhstan and it has beaten out American oil companies Texaco and Amoco in the race to acquire 60% of Kazakhstan's leading oil company. It has committed to investing \$4 billion into a major oil field and several billions more to building two pipelines.⁴⁰ One of these pipelines will connect Kazakhstan with Xinjiang, and other one will connect Kazakhstan with Iran. The former is scheduled for completion by 2005, and is 1,800 miles long.⁴¹ It has also signed several agreements with Uzbekistan and a ten-year agreement on economic cooperation with Russia.⁴²

China has even resolved through diplomacy the single most dangerous territorial question, the dispute with Russia over the disputed border along the Amur and Usuri Rivers, which had almost led to full-scale war between China and the Soviet Union in the sixties.⁴³ Gorbachev's visit to Beijing in 1989 began the normalization of ties between the two countries that had begun to be frayed in the fifties during the Stalin period. Russia has once again become China's main arms supplier. Due to the inability of the Chinese defense industry to produce state-of-the art weaponry, China has temporarily reversed its policy on relying exclusively on domestic arms production,⁴⁴ and bought approximately \$8 billion in sophisticated Russian weapons between 1991 and 1999. These sales included 72 SU-27 fighters (akin to US F-15s), with a license to produce 200 more under the Chinese designation of J-11; 4 Kilo-class submarines; 2 Sovremennyi-class guided missile destroyers equipped with SS-N-22 missiles that can sink aircraft carriers; 50 T-72 tanks; and 70 armored personnel carriers. More recently, after four years of negotiation, Moscow and Beijing have concluded a deal for 60 top-of-the line SU-30 multirole fighters, a longer-range version of the SU-27.⁴⁵ Russia is also likely to provide China with one or more A-50 AWACs aircraft, to make up for the aborted purchase of the Phalcon radar system from Israel that would have been retrofitted inside Russian Il-76 transport aircraft.⁴⁶

The White Paper cites several agreements to implement confidence-building measures that have been inked with Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan since the first meeting in Shanghai in April 1996. In particular, it notes the importance of reducing military forces near the borders of the five parties and of not using force, or threatening to use force, against each other. Most notably, the White Paper states that the five countries are united in their resolve to not use "the excuse of protecting ethnic or religious interests" to interfere in each other's internal affairs. It also expresses their combined opposition to "national separatism, religious extremism or terrorism" and other activities that induce social instability. At this year's meeting in Dushanbe of the "Shanghai Five" countries, China proposed that the five nations upgrade their cooperation in regional security. It urged that they take "joint actions to crack down on all forms of extremist, separatist and terrorist forces in the region" and stop "weapon-trafficking, drug-trafficking, and illegal immigration." A regional anti-terrorism center is likely to be established in Bishkek, capital of Kyrgyzstan.⁴⁷

China is pursuing these policies since it is quite vulnerable on its western and northern borders. China's border areas account for 64% of its territory, and are largely inhabited by its ethnic minorities that account for only 8% of its population. The western and northern border areas are very resource rich and impoverished. Till recently, China's nuclear weapons testing range was housed at Lop Nor, in Xinjiang. Many of the minority peoples living in these areas are Muslim. After

the independence of five independent states in Muslim Central Asia in the early 1990s, many Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang Province began to harbor their own aspirations for independence.⁴⁸ China is very concerned about threats to its territorial integrity posed by such aspirations. Separatist pressures are being felt all around China's periphery, including the prosperous southeastern region around Shanghai. The rulers in Beijing are well aware that such movements at the periphery have caused the downfall of dynasties in Chinese history.

Chinese relations with the United States have still not recovered fully from the accidental US bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade during the war over Kosovo. The anniversary of the Korean War was recently observed in China with open criticism of the "US aggressors," terminology that had not been used since the Vietnam War. In addition, China continues to be deeply troubled by US political, military and economic support for Taiwan. Finally, the US efforts to develop a theater missile defense in concert with Japan have caused great apprehension in China.

On first glance, China's rapprochement with Russia and its confrontation with the US appears to be a reversal of Chinese policies during the seventies and eighties when it viewed the USSR as its primary security threat, and welcomed US President Nixon to the Great Hall of the People in order to neutralize the Soviet threat to its borders. However, there is an underlying consistency in Chinese foreign policy. It is concerned about the very one-sided global balance of power in which the US dominates all other countries culturally, politically, economically and militarily. The French foreign minister, equally troubled by this development, has called the US an unprecedented "hyperpower" that dominates the globe in multiple dimensions: military, economics, politics, and culture. In seeking to create a multi-polar world, China wants to restore harmony in global politics. It does not matter if that means reversing the relationships with Russia and the US, since the new alignment now better serves its national interests. This phenomenon is by no means unique to modern China, and resonates with an adage from imperial Britain: "we have no perpetual friends or eternal allies; but we do have interests, both perpetual and eternal."

To achieve its objectives, China is prepared to be patient. It has rarely underestimated the capabilities of its foes, and will not fight a war under adverse circumstances. This thinking is deeply ingrained in Chinese culture, and dates back at least 25 centuries to the time when Sun Tzu penned *The Art of War*. Thus, even after half a century of political conflict, not a single shot has been fired over the Taiwan Straits, even though China remains committed to peaceful reunification of Taiwan with the mainland. China expert David Shambaugh was asked in a recent interview to what extent is China willing to risk other national priorities for the forceful reunification of Taiwan with the mainland. He said that "China does not wish to resort to force, or coercion, to resolve this problem. They have actually very little objective interest in doing so. It would bring tremendous international isolation of China...Investment would likely dry up, and the regime would be in danger. Indeed, a war would have unpredictable consequences, so it is not at all in the Beijing leadership's interest to go down this course or path to reunify Taiwan."⁴⁹

However, by choreographing its intent to use force should Taiwan declare independence from China, it has now brought matters to a point where the leaders of Taiwan's Nationalist Party are preparing to visit Beijing to work out a negotiated solution.⁵⁰ China also has deep rooted differences with Japan, most notably over the Japanese failure to apologize for their war crimes during the Sino-Japanese war that began in 1931 with the invasion of Manchuria and culminated in 1937 with the Rape of Nanjing when 300,000 Chinese were raped, tortured, and put to the sword.⁵¹ It continues to pursue diplomatic channels to gain ownership of several islands that are disputed between the two countries. However, it has no intentions to resort to war with Japan. Indeed, it continues to engage in international trade with Japan, and to accept Japanese economic aid.

Parallel Developments in Russia

It is important to note that Russia has also announced its decision to shrink its military forces. Current plans call for a reduction of 600,000 troops over the next five years, from a base of between four and five million troops. About one-fourth of the Russian national budget goes to defense. Yet the Russian armed forces are poorly equipped and trained. Several soldiers are underpaid or not paid at all, and morale is at an all-time low. It is no surprise that Russia lost its first war in Chechnya a few years ago, and has prevailed thus far in the current conflict by using firepower indiscriminately against Chechen fighters and civilians. As the New York Times stated in a recent editorial, "Russia can no longer afford to sustain the imperial-size forces it inherited from the Soviet Union. Conversion to a smaller, better-equipped force will allow more effective defense against any foreign threats and would decrease the risk to democracy from restive, underpaid military officers."⁵² While downsizing its forces in aggregate terms, Russia plans to triple spending per soldier over the next decade. This will produce a force strong enough to repel any external threats that may develop along Russia's frontiers in the Caucasus, Central Asia, or Siberia.

Cost cutting is not confined to conventional arms. Russia also wants to drastically curtail the number of its nuclear warheads, and has invited the United States to follow suit. President Putin wants to draw down the nuclear warhead inventories in the two countries to 1,000 weapons each. States Aleksei G. Arbatov, a member of the Russian Parliament's defense committee, "Nuclear weapons are virtual weapons, designed and deployed never to be used. [They provide] the best area to seek economy while using our available resources for peacekeeping, or for countering ethnic or religious extremists and the destabilization which follows them."⁵³

Discord Enters the Sino-Pakistani Relationship

While it devotes considerable space to condemning religious extremism, the White Paper makes only a passing reference to South Asia as an area of instability along its borders. And it makes no mention of the right of the people of Kashmir to self-determination. This is a major change in Chinese policy toward Pakistan.

Over the past decade, several signs have emerged that the China-Pakistan relationship has begun to cool-off. Three factors appear to be at work. First, under Deng Xiaoping, China gave priority to economic development over defense, and began a massive downsizing of its military. This required China to undertake complementary changes in its foreign policy. This program got a boost with the demise of the USSR, China's major security concern.

At the same time, the departure of the USSR from Afghanistan spurred the rise of the Taliban.⁵⁴ Originally a group of students from religious seminaries in southeastern Afghanistan, the Taliban follow a very primitive and rigid interpretation of Sunni Islam that is at odds with the more liberal interpretations followed by the people of Pakistan. They also clash with the beliefs of the Shia sect that has numerous followers in Pakistan. The rights of women are severely impinged upon. For example, they are not allowed to leave their homes to study or work or to choose their own husbands. Men who do not keep beards can be subjected to punishment, even though the keeping of beards, while highly recommended as a tradition of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, is not an obligation in Islam. Because of such practices, many Islamic scholars have called into question the validity of their beliefs.⁵⁵ It is unlikely that their approach to Islam would find favor in much of Pakistan, since it is even more primitive than the approach being followed in Saudi Arabia. However, there are defensive and offensive compulsions behind Pakistan's support of the Taliban and these are not likely to change any time soon.

On the defensive side, there are two primary factors. First is Pakistan's desire to create strategic depth in its territorial boundaries. Geographically, it has a narrow trunk all the way through. It is concerned that India can easily cut it into two pieces if it strikes south of the Punjab network of

irrigation canals.⁵⁶ Thus, to create strategic depth, it needs Afghanistan or Iran as a buffer zone into which its forces might conduct a strategic retreat. There is evidence that during the Shah's period, Pakistani warplanes used airfields in Iran to stay out of range of Indian warplanes. Since Pakistan helped the Afghans defeat the Soviets, it has a much higher probability of being able to use Afghanistan as a buffer zone than Iran which is ruled by a Shia-theocracy.

Second, it is painfully aware that prior to the Soviet invasion in 1979, Afghanistan was heavily pro-Indian in its foreign policies. Previous Afghan governments were often questioning the legitimacy of the boundary line between the two countries. Known as the Durand line, this was drawn by Britain during the Raj and regarded by the Afghans as an artifact since ethnic Pushtoons lived on both sides of the line.⁵⁷ However, the Pakistani position was that this constituted an international frontier going back to the original agreement in 1893 that was confirmed in 1905 and reaffirmed in the Anglo-Afghan Treaty in 1919.⁵⁸ Pakistani governments till Bhutto's period lived under the specter of an independent Pushtoonistan being created out of Pakistan's Frontier province and adjacent elements of eastern Afghanistan. There was also a very real fear that in a war with India, Afghanistan would open a second front against Pakistan.

On the offensive side, Kashmir remains beyond Pakistan's reach, even after fifty years of military conflict with India. India has overwhelming military superiority over Pakistan, and attempts by Pakistan in 1947 and 1965 to wage a guerilla war in Indian-administered Kashmir have fizzled out primarily because the "raiders" that have been sent in from the Pakistani side have been poorly trained and failed to inspire an uprising among the local population. The battle-hardy fighters of the Taliban provide a new ray of hope to hawks in the Pakistani military. They are believed to have waged a successful jihad against the much larger and much better equipped forces of the heathen Soviet empire.

With tacit approval from Pakistan, the Taliban have joined forces with the freedom fighters in Kashmir to wage a jihad against similarly large and allegedly heathen Indian forces. Even though China had long supported the right of the Kashmiri people to self-determination, it is now in a bind. The Taliban forces have also begun to make their presence felt in western China. The first significant disturbances in 1992 in the Xinjiang province predated the arrival of the Taliban. Chinese authorities said the rioters, made up of Uighurs and Kyrgyz, had acquired arms, ammunition, and training from the Afghan Muhajideen. Scores of rioters were arrested and several were executed.⁵⁹ The Chinese took the events very seriously, since they threatened to unleash centrifugal forces in the border provinces that would become the proverbial "single spark that can start a prairie fire."⁶⁰ Xinjiang is now regarded as more critical to preserving the overall unity of the Middle Kingdom than Tibet where Han Chinese are now in a majority, and their presence has eliminated most residual resistance.⁶¹ The Karakorum Highway into Pakistan was closed. Yet new disturbances occurred in 1997, this time associated with elements connected with the Taliban. China warned Pakistan to stop supporting the Taliban, or risk losing its economic, military, and political support.

In many ways, this ideological rebuff was no different than President Ayub's resistance to Chinese efforts in the sixties to introduce communism in Pakistan. While maintaining close military ties with China, Ayub did not allow Maoist elements to gain a foothold within Pakistan. In later years, Ayub's foreign minister, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto fell out with Ayub and created his own political party. He espoused an ideology called Islamic Socialism that was cloaked in Maoist rhetoric, and reinforced the symbolism by donning a Mao cap at his mass rallies. However, Maoist thinking failed to take deep root in Pakistan since most Muslims regarded Islamic Socialism as an oxymoron. Furthermore, feudal lords whose credibility as socialists was never well established dominated Bhutto's party.

In its opposition to extremist Muslim forces that are bent on creating independent Muslim states within its boundaries, China has found a common ally in Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and

Kyrgyzstan. These five countries signed an agreement in Shanghai in 1996 and have met annually to affirm and expand their commitment to anti-terrorist activities. China knows that the extremist forces are using guerilla war tactics, and seeking to obtain maximum leverage by engaging in asymmetric warfare, a technology that it feels it had perfected during Mao's Long March. Consequently, when Pakistani forces attacked Indian bases in Kargil in 1999, China did not support Pakistan for fear of encouraging the Taliban.

Second, China initiated a dialogue with India, recognizing its great power aspirations,⁶² its increasing ability to project military power,⁶³ and its emergence as a global center of information technology.⁶⁴ The thaw in relations began with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Beijing in 1988. As noted by a veteran Pakistani diplomat, "the event was symbolized by Deng Xiaoping's marathon handshake with his Indian guest."⁶⁵ Relations between the two countries were cordial in the fifties but deteriorated in 1962 when the border war took place. Ambassadors were exchanged in 1976, and international trade between the two countries began in 1977. The volume of trade was \$25 million in 1977; it had reached \$1 billion by 1995, and now stands at \$2 billion a year. This is twice the volume of China's trade with Pakistan.⁶⁶

During Gandhi's visit, Deng spoke about the upcoming Asian-Pacific century, and said that such a century would not arrive till "China, India, and other developing countries in this region have become developed."⁶⁷ In 1991, Premier Li Peng visited India and a year later President K. R. Narayanan visited China. His visit was followed in 1993 by Prime Minister Rao's visit. In 1996 President Jiang Zemin visited India. Such exchanges at the highest level have created a breakthrough in Sino-Indian relations, much to the frustration of Pakistan. The most recent visitor to India was Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan, in July 2000. Tang, the most senior official to visit India after the nuclear tests of 1998, came with a five-point proposal for improving relations. He said "we sincerely hope that in the new century, China and India can achieve a neighborly-friendly, lasting and stable cooperative partnership in a real sense."⁶⁸ Tang stated that China's military cooperation with Pakistan was not directed against any third party or country, and reinforced the position that China had expressed in January during General Musharraf's visit. China urged Pakistan and India to "handle their divergence through peaceful negotiations, and prevent the arms race in South Asia from further escalation."⁶⁹ During his meeting with top legislator Li Peng in Beijing, the general committed Pakistan to maintaining peace and stability in South Asia, resolving all existing disputes with India, including the Kashmir issue, in a peaceful manner. He had also stated that Pakistan had been greatly impressed with China's fast economic growth.⁷⁰

According to a recent Chinese scholar, China regards India as a "great neighbor" and "is indeed concerned about the dispute between India and Pakistan, because pursuing a stable periphery is one of the most important goals of China's foreign policy. But China does not maintain a position on the dispute itself." ⁷¹ As far back as 1990, China had conveyed to Pakistan that the dispute was one "left over from history," a polite way of saying it was not taking sides.⁷² There has been a big change in China's long-standing policy on the Kashmir dispute, under which China supported the right of the people of Kashmir to self-determination. During the 1965 war, the Chinese foreign minister, Marshal Chen Yi, had referred to Pakistanis who were fighting for the freedom of Kashmir as China's "comrade in arms."⁷³

China knows the limitations of its military forces. While large in numbers, they "remain obsolescent, immobile, and without the precision arms and instant communications that make modern fighting forces increasingly lethal."⁷⁴ According to one analyst, they are "an unwieldy monster totally unsuited to the demands of fluid battles of today and in the future." The last time they were engaged in active operations was in 1979 against Vietnam, an embarrassing campaign that resulted in heavy casualties for the PLA.⁷⁵ One source estimates that 26,000 were killed and 37,000 wounded as

China's peasant-style militias encountered battle-hardened and well-trained professional troops.⁷⁶ The US government states that "The vast majority of the [Chinese] fighter fleet is composed of technologically obsolete airframes: about 2,900 are 1950s vintage F-5s and F-6s, with a further 1,000 composed of 1960-70s vintage F-7s. A sizeable--although unknown--percentage of these aircraft are not combat capable. China apparently has no confirmed capability to utilize precision-guided munitions (PGMs)."⁷⁷ Its potential for military action in Taiwan and other areas remains limited, and the armed forces of China remain grounded in low-technology.⁷⁸ For example, the PLA's Navy does not anticipate developing a true blue-water capability till the year 2050. Chinese naval strategic planners hope to acquire a 'green water' capability between 2002 and 2010 enabling it to reach the 'first chain islands' of Japan, the Senhaku islands, Taiwan and the coast of Borneo. By 2020 it hopes to be able to reach the 'second-chain islands' of the Kuriles in the north, the Bonin and Marina islands, and Papua New Guinea in the south.⁷⁹

The Chinese have also been deeply influenced by the use of sophisticated air power and precision guided munitions in the Gulf War and especially the Kosovo campaign. They feel vulnerable and ill prepared to fight a future war against any hi-tech opposition. This explains their emphasis on force modernization. The program includes "the revamping of force structure, the introduction of joint war-fighting techniques, and the purchase of weapon systems from the West and Russia, to enhance the power-projection capabilities, maneuverability, and lethality of its forces."⁸⁰

They have a long way to go and are not likely to become a potent threat either for the regional or extra regional powers in the short term. Even though the PLA ground forces are capable of threatening India's northern and eastern borders, the PLA Air Force is no match for the Indian Air Force. The Indian-made Agni II missile, while it may not have been weaponized at this stage, appears to be superior to Chinese missiles in terms of accuracy, reliability, speed of launch, and mobility, and most of China is now within Indian range. China's future leadership may be tempted, as Mao was in 1962, to "teach a lesson" to India. However, the Indians have made it plain that they will not be routed a second time, and intend to return any Chinese "lesson" in kind.⁸¹

Nevertheless, Sino-Indian relations in the near to medium term are likely to display rapprochement and strategic accommodation for each other's interests.⁸² The Line of Actual Control (LAC) between the two countries created after the 1962 war has become a progressively "cold" border, and has been formalized further in the Peace and Tranquility Agreement signed by the two countries in 1993. The two countries have agreed to maintain the LAC as the de facto international border pending its jurisdictional settlement. The foreign ministers of the two countries have exchanged visits and initiated a security dialogue.⁸³ This has been followed by a high profile visit to China by the president of India. Notably, China joined the US in condemning not only India but also Pakistan for conducting the tit-for-tat tests. A Chinese foreign ministry spokesman said: "China expressed deep regret about the nuclear tests conducted by Pakistan on May 28 and is deeply concerned."⁸⁴ China was unwilling to provide Pakistan a public guarantee of nuclear protection, if it did not undertake nuclear tests. Neither was the United States. Noting that internal pressures forced Pakistan to conduct the tests, Shang Huipeng, a specialist in Asian studies at Beijing University, added that the tests nevertheless created a "threat to nuclear stability in the region." China urged both countries to stop their testing immediately, abandon their plans for arming themselves with nuclear weapons, and sign the CTBT and NPT unconditionally. Chinese scholars have frequently cited the examples of several other countries that have terminated their nuclear programs, including Argentina, Brazil, Kazakhstan, South Africa, and Ukraine.

Even prior to the tests, the Chinese ambassador to Pakistan had spoken about China's concerns about the development of strategic ballistic missiles in the region. "As a close neighbor of South Asia, we don't want tensions and any upgrading of this capability and an arms race in the region."⁸⁵

China has stated in very plain language that Pakistan and India should resolve their dispute through peaceful means: a stable and peaceful environment in South Asia is in the fundamental interests of the Chinese people as China concentrates its efforts on modernization and domestic development.⁸⁶ It has referred to the territorial dispute over Kashmir as "an active volcano beneath the nuclear threat," and said that small-scale conflicts such as the Kargil campaign can spiral out of control, fraying the nerves of the two countries. In a statement clearly directed at Pakistan, the Chinese have said that "the two countries should respect the line of control in Kashmir and under no circumstances attempt to breach it, nor should they seek unilaterally to change the status quo in the region."⁸⁷

Third, China is engaged in a very delicate balancing act with the US. On the one hand, it opposes the emergence of the US as the world's only super power, and is very concerned about US support to Taiwan. Yet, for its continued economic development, it needs the US as a trading partner.⁸⁸ US support was critical to gaining entry into the WTO. Thus, to avoid US sanctions, China has yielded to US pressure and declared that it is not providing missile technology to Pakistan. This may be because the missile deals with Pakistan have become less lucrative as Pakistan's program has become more developed, and China can stand to gain more revenue by launching American satellites into space atop Chinese rockets. According to a British expert, Simon Henderson, Pakistan's strategic need to be able to hit all of India is better served by the Nodong MRBM missile technology that it has acquired from North Korea than by China's SRBM M-11 missiles.⁸⁹

Scenarios of the Future

Any bilateral relationship has to fit into and reinforce the network of multilateral relationships that each of the two countries has with other countries, or it ceases to exist. In the sixties, Pakistan and China shared a common enemy in India. And China wanted to get closer to the Muslim world, a role that Pakistan helped facilitate. This set of common interests allowed Pakistan to develop close ties simultaneously with China and the US, even though the latter two countries were adversaries. Pakistan also served as a conduit for western technology to flow into China, particular military technology related to avionics, radar systems, and sidewinder missiles. More recently, it is believed to have provided technology related to aerial refueling. This factor has diminished in importance as China has now obtained substantial access to western technology on its own, with 400 of the world's top 500 multinational corporations now operating in China.

Plus, because of the changes in its foreign policy, China is now anxious to have stability along its borders, and the Pakistani-Indian conflict seriously detracts from that goal. China no longer seeks to spread its ideology to other countries. Most importantly, with the exception of the conflict with Taiwan, it "does not seek to use military force to occupy the territory of neighboring countries or to attack the United States."⁹⁰ China is very concerned about the influence of the Taliban in fomenting separatist movements in Xinjiang, and has issued loud pronouncements opposing "splittism." Pakistan's close ties with the Taliban can have a much more damaging impact on its relations with China, unlike Pakistan's close ties with the US in the sixties.

In the future, the Sino-Pakistani relationship is likely to cool off further if Pakistan continues to support the Taliban.⁹¹ China will come down hard on Pakistan, but how hard depends on how tenuous is the situation in its troubled border regions including Xinjiang and Tibet. It knows that India is geared up to foment separatist movements in Tibet if China openly supports the Kashmiri movement. It is likely that Pakistan's China ties will continue to cool off till they reach such a low point that Pakistan realizes the true costs of its patronage of the Taliban is unacceptable, and stops the patronage. Of course, it is also possible that global pressures on the Taliban to change their policies may diminish the power of the Taliban both within and outside Afghanistan, thereby eliminating this serious irritant from the Sino-Pakistani equation.

There is even a remote possibility that the Sino-Pakistani relationship will continue to worsen because of China's desire to improve ties with India, and its recognition that Pakistan has no other patron besides China.⁹² Deep down, there is not much that is common between China and Pakistan. As noted by veteran Pakistani diplomat, Iqbal Akhund, the two countries have widely different languages, cultures and ideologies, and there is little people-to-people exchange between them.⁹³ China has shown that it will switch sides to protect its national interest. For example, in Cambodia it now supports the government of Hun Sen, who was a bitter enemy of the Pol Pot regime and the Khmer Rouge that was supported by China for decades.⁹⁴ China now provides Cambodia with \$218 million in foreign aid, one of the highest aid amounts that it provides to any country in the world.

There is a much higher possibility that Chinese-US relations will continue to worsen, possibly because of continued US support to Taiwan, China's desire to emerge as the eminent power in Asia, and the US desire to establish a Theatre Missile Defense in concert with Japan. Two China experts in the United States take this scenario sufficiently seriously that they have written a "War Game" involving these parties.⁹⁵ Some argue that China has initiated planning to invade Taiwan, by hurling a barrage of short-range ballistic missiles. They cite several pieces of evidence, including a PLA Document 65 that talks about "solid grounds for achieving reunification using military power," and another article by PLA Colonel Zhu Cheng that states that China recognizes that war over Taiwan would force the United States to make a complete withdrawal from East Asia, similar to the loss in Vietnam.⁹⁶ In the event of such a conflict, China may choose to play the "Pakistan card" to further infuriate the US. Pakistan would then become the beneficiary of additional nuclear and missile technology. Additionally, if an increasingly cocky India, equipped with a blue water navy and sporting aircraft carriers, missile-armed submarines, and guided missile destroyers, begins to militarily threaten China's preeminence in the South China Sea, China may begin arming Pakistan with strategic weapons.⁹⁷

There are signs that Pakistan is ignoring subtle signals that have been emanating from China for almost a decade now. Or it may be misreading them. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that Pakistan's relationship with China will undergo a reversal. Pakistan is likely to remain China's ally in most scenarios, especially after the development of its nuclear capability. However, it cannot take China for granted. The drivers that originally drove the Sino-Pakistani relationship have shifted, since today's China wants to see stability both along its borders and inside these borders.

Postscript

Pakistan may want to take a leaf from China's book, and shift its own priorities toward economic development. Admittedly, this would represent a sea change in Pakistan's national security policies that have traditionally placed a heavy emphasis on military security and territorial integrity. It is common place for Pakistan's leadership to argue that "policy-makers can only attend to economic development after the territorial security has been strengthened and secured."⁹⁸

As noted by Paul Kennedy, the most significant aspect of China's warfighting power lies in the remarkably swift growth of its economy. China's generals, like military groups everywhere, prefer short-term to long-term means of security. It is a measure of Deng's leadership that he was able to inculcate patience in his general staff, and assure them that long-term security will be assured only when its output and wealth have been multiplied many times. Deng's strategy "involves the ability to see how the separate aspects of government policy relate to each other. It therefore involves a sophisticated balancing act, requiring careful consideration as to the speed at which these transformations can occur, the amount of resources to be allocated to long-term as opposed to short-term needs, the coordination of the state's internal and external requirements, and-last but not least in a country which still has a 'modified' Marxist system-the ways by which ideology and practice can be reconciled."⁹⁹

During his speech to the Pakistani senate in 1996, Jiang Zemin suggested that Islamabad should put aside disputes with India over Kashmir and instead pursue economic development.¹⁰⁰ Pakistan needs to reign in defense spending that is consuming more than 6% of its GDP. The resources that are freed up can be devoted to the development of export oriented industries to help pay off the debt and to create jobs. If peace can be reached with India over Kashmir, much of the rationale for maintaining one of the world's ten largest armed forces with strength of 600,000 would dissipate. A region that accounts for 1% of the population of India and Pakistan, Kashmir has tied up 25% of the combined armed forces of the two countries. Pakistan is spending about \$110 million a year in the war over Kashmir and India is spending about \$400 million a year.¹⁰¹ These expenditures are a terrible waste of resources, given that Pakistan is saddled with a foreign debt of \$38 billion and India with a debt of \$100 billion. If it changes its offensive posture in Kashmir, Pakistan may be able to downsize its military by 50 % and still maintain a credible defense capability against India.¹⁰² It would be wise to cap the nuclear program at its current level, since its best use is that of a credible deterrent. Otherwise, Pakistan risks being caught in a very expensive, dangerous and unstable nuclear arms race.¹⁰³

Most of Pakistan's 140 million people are illiterate and live in conditions of abject poverty. Insufficient human development heightens the myriad ethnic and sectarian fissures that permeate Pakistani society today, and poses a much greater threat to Pakistan's survival than India's armed forces.¹⁰⁴ Pakistan should revise its policy agenda to focus on human development.

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