PAKISTAN

Internal Developments and the U.S. Interest

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PREFACE

Of the many nations that became independent after World War II and the breakup of the imperial system, Pakistan was one of the few that “was deprived of a fictitious sense of inevitability.” Had the British and the Hindu and Muslim inhabitants of historic India shown more statesmanship, a separate Muslim state on the subcontinent would have been unnecessary. Yet Pakistan did come about—hastily created, scantily endowed, and cursed by geography as regards both its own form and its allotment of neighbors. Few nations have been born into such unpromising circumstances.

Pakistan’s path since independence has not been much smoother than its birth foretold, but it has remarkable accomplishments to its credit, not the least of which is that it has overcome its lack of inevitability and established itself as a permanent and substantial member of the international community. Because of its size and location Pakistan plays an important role not only in the politics of southern Asia but on the global scene as well. For better or worse it has become an element in the international equation—a significant counter in the competition between the superpowers. What happens to Pakistan matters to the United States and what happens within Pakistan is hardly of less importance, because the shifting Pakistani domestic scene inevitably affects the international role that Pakistan will play.

For the past year and more, Pakistan’s domestic scene has been turbulent, raising questions as to the nation’s future internal order and its long-term willingness and ability to maintain a close, cooperative relationship with the United States. At another level, there are serious questions as to what kind of political system is best suited for Pakistan and what kind of system is compatible with continuing U.S. support. These questions are played out against a background of unrest to the west of Pakistan, difficult relations with its Indian neighbor, the danger of a Soviet presence in Afghanistan, and a possible nuclear arms race in the subcontinent. To begin, however, we have to look at Pakistan itself: where it is coming from, where it stands now, and where it may be going. These are questions rooted in the domestic order of the nation.
1. PAKISTAN'S INTERNAL SCENE

THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The Early Years. Although Pakistan created itself to be a state for Muslims, the political traditions of its leadership lay not in the Koran but in British models: representative government of the Westminster type and a viceregal, bureaucratic style that the British brought to a fine art in their rule of India.\(^*\)

The country's early years were occupied with regional and linguistic squabbles, and there was a dangerous disjunction between political and economic power in the country. The interim parliament that governed Pakistan through the first decade of its existence was at best inept. Leaders changed rapidly, political parties lacked programs and performance, the conduct of politicians ranged from inept to disgraceful, and there was little basis within the population on which to build allegiance to democracy. (Pakistan was nearly a quarter-century old before its first national election was held.)

The Ayub Era. The other side of the British heritage asserted itself ever more strongly. The small but effective bureaucracy, in cooperation with the army, assumed increasing responsibility and power. As a result the establishment of martial law under Mohamed Ayub Khan in 1968 was more a culmination of events than a sharp break, and it was widely hailed by the populace. Ayub brought substantial economic growth to Pakistan, but the rewards of that growth were poorly distributed between the East and West wings of the country and among classes. He built up a modern military force, but in 1965 he allowed Pakistan to drift into an unsuccessful and costly war with India. Ayub was forced out of office in 1969 and replaced by another general, Yahya Khan, who decided that it was time to get the army out of the business of government completely. Yahya removed all obstacles to political activity and set about preparing for Pakistan's first open national elections.

\(^*\)There are several good sources covering the early years of Pakistan's political development. Especially useful for the 1950s and the source of the quote in the preceding sentence is Lawrence Ziring, Pakistan: The Tragedy of Political Development (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1986). The events leading to the tragedy of East Pakistan are particularly well described by Romesh Thapar, Pakistan: Failure in National Integration (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975). For a sophisticated analysis of the Bhutto years and the social bases of Pakistan's problems, see Shafiq Javed Burki, Pakistan Under Bhutto, 1971-77 (London: Macmillan, 1980).
Yet this genuine exercise of democracy was only to compound Pakistan's problems. The elections resulted in not one but two clear-cut winners. Zulfiquar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) achieved a solid majority in West Pakistan, while Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Awami League swept to victory in the East. Events deteriorated rapidly during 1971, and by the end of the year Bengali and Indian forces had established the independent nation of Bangladesh. The Pakistani army was convincingly defeated and the nation split. Pakistan's first experiment with elections based on universal suffrage in 1970 can hardly be seen as a success. It did, however, bring Bhutto to power in a truncated Pakistan and in effect inaugurated the contemporary phase of Pakistani politics.

Bhutto in Power. Bhutto's great achievement was holding Pakistan together at this critical time and giving it a new sense of national purpose. He set about the problem of Pakistan's international position, and within a few years the memories of Pakistan's ignominious defeat were gone. At home he also started off decisively. The PPP platform had been populist in tone, and Bhutto's closest advisers were leftists who moved rapidly to socialize key parts of the economy and to give the lower classes their first sense of participation in Pakistan's economic development.

After a few years, however, Bhutto jettisoned his leftist advisers and turned to the landlords who had dominated Pakistani politics—to its detriment—since the early 1960s. He never permitted a strong party organization to emerge within the PPP, and he failed to build national institutions that would have meaning beyond his personal role. His economic policies became erratic, and his regime gained a reputation for callous disregard of human rights, whether of political opponents or alleged separatists in Baluchistan and the Northwest Frontier Province.

As Bhutto increasingly gathered power into his own hands, the opposition parties were able to pull themselves together to contest the 1977 elections jointly. Although the PPP would probably have won fair elections, Bhutto was not willing to leave matters to chance, and so he rigged them. The opposition went into the streets, and ultimately the army chief of staff whom Bhutto had appointed because of his supposed loyalty—General Zia ul-Haq—forced Bhutto from office and ultimately into prison and to the gallows.

PAKISTAN UNDER ZIA

The Military Regime. Zia, Bhutto, and most Pakistanis expected the army takeover in 1977 to be brief—a minor course correction rather than a major change of direction for the Pakistani state. Over time, however, it became increasingly clear that Zia was loath to return power to a civilian government that showed little promise and might well demand his head. (His coup in 1977 was treason, under the terms of the 1973 constitution.)

Several factors helped Zia hold onto power; probably the most important was public tolerance. Although many Pakistanis demanded a return to civilian rule as vociferously as conditions permitted, the bulk of the population either was unconcerned or did not contest Zia's view that a return to open political activity would lead to little good. Certainly comparison with the Bhutto years—and indeed with much of Pakistan's past—favored Zia. A sense of order and reliability was restored and, for the first several years, human rights were reasonably well protected, in contrast to Bhutto's flagrant abuses. (As time passed, Zia also slipped in this regard, and Pakistani prisoners began to fill with political prisoners.)

The 1977 coup had been an act of the entire army leadership, and Zia skillfully kept that group's support—in part by clever manipulation of assignments and promotions but, more important, by appealing to its interests. Some military thinkers were disturbed to find the army occupying itself with the business of governance rather than warfare, and even more became concerned about the problem of corruption that inevitably faces people who control scarce resources. Zia pointed out, however, that it was the army's duty to hold power until control could be handed back to a regime that, unlike the PPP, would respect the army's interests. And, of course, there were those in the army who were glad enough to hold onto the perquisites of power rather than return to the barracks.*

Zia was also helped by economic performance. Bhutto had left the economy in shambles, and Zia's advisers acted sensibly to restore the situation. More important, Pakistan was able to reap huge benefits from the oil boom in the Persian Gulf. The rising cost of petroleum imports was more than offset by the remittances of Pakistani workers who flocked to the Gulf and sent most of their earnings home. Between 1978 and 1986 the Pakistani economy achieved an annual average growth of 6.7 percent and, in contrast with the Ayub years, a substantial part of this growth found its way into the lower economic reaches of society. Judged by World Bank criteria, Pakistan under Zia has very nearly reached middle-income status.†

Zia also sought to bolster his regime by emphasizing Islam. This action reflected the personal preferences of a genuinely pious man, but beyond that he hoped that Islam would play a critical role in unifying Pakistani society. The Islamization program has worried outside observers (understandably uneasy about Islamic punishments, such as flogging and amputation), and educated Pakistani women have been disturbed by the threat it poses to the social gains they have made. In addition, many observers doubt that the mass of Pakistanis, mostly Sunnis, respond to attempts to generate enthusiasm in the name of Islam. But the impact of Islamic punishments has been minimal; most women, even those among the elite, have not been seriously disadvantaged; and although Islamic propaganda is pervasive, there is little compulsion involved; Pakistan is not Khomeini's Iran.

*Stephen P. Cohen's The Pakistan Army (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) offers an inside survey of the Pakistan military, especially its political concerns.
An additional basis of support for Zia was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The influx of three million refugees and the danger posed by the Soviets are certainly troublesome. But throughout the first half of the 1980s at least, the cause of Afghanistan was a popular one in Pakistan, and most Pakistanis willingly accepted their government’s support of the resistance movement and the refugees. In addition, the Soviet invasion opened the gates of U.S. aid, with substantial rewards for both the military and civilian sectors of the economy.

Towards Civilian Rule. Although Zia could rule under martial law for some time, the situation could not be maintained permanently. Until 1979 Zia promised national elections, but then he shifted emphasis to the need to develop institutions that were Islamic in nature and suited to Pakistan’s level of political development. Appointed advisory bodies at the national and local levels—intended to give some legitimacy to Zia’s regime and to serve as a transitional form to a more stable political order—proved unsuccessful because few prominent figures were willing to jeopardize their political futures for a role that promised little influence or benefit.

In 1985 Zia’s system was shaken by a wave of discontent that swept through Sind province and led to bloody repressions. In addition, the disparate opposition groups pulled themselves together in the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (M RD), which became the principal opposition to Zia’s regime. The M RD was not very impressive (aside from the PPP, most of its constituents were little more than the personal following of individuals, and its unity was mainly on paper), but Zia recognized the need to respond. In 1984 he staged an unconvincing referendum in which the Pakistanis were asked whether they wanted Islam to be the guiding principle of the state. Zia interpreted the inevitable positive vote as a personal mandate to remain in office as president of Pakistan.

The parliamentary and provincial elections that followed in February 1985 were somewhat more edifying. Many opposition leaders were put under detention, political parties were not allowed to participate as such, and no national campaigning was permitted. The PPP and other constituents of the M RD boycotted the elections. The outcome did, however, reaffirm the desire of the Pakistani people to resume political activity: even under the unattractive conditions set, more than half the electorate turned out, and a number of Zia’s ministers were defeated.

The next steps in the progression were the appointment of a civilian cabinet, led by an undistinguished politician, Mohamed Khan Jumino, and the presentation of a draft constitution for the approval of the newly elected national assembly. The constitution provided for a strong presidential system with a built-in role for the military, and it retroactively sanctioned the actions that had been taken under martial law. Although most of the constitution was approved, the assembly showed considerable independence in restricting the powers of the president and the military—changes that Zia accepted.

On December 30, 1986, martial law was ended, and the first few months of 1987 showed promising trends. Reportedly against Zia’s preferences, Jumino legalized political parties and rescinded the venerable Pakistan Muslim League (PML) to be the vehicle of his government. He reshuffled his cabinet, dropping or reassigning some ministers who had been Zia’s choices. During the spring, there were encouraging signs that Jumino was carefully expanding his sphere of independence, including involvement in sensitive personnel matters. Few would have suggested that Jumino was in a position to act against strongly held positions of Zia, but he was emerging as more than a rubber stamp. The process was imperfect, but politics was taking place, and the opposition was concerned it would slide from irrelevance to atrophy if it could find no platform.

THE RETURN OF BENAZIR

In early 1986 the opposition was galvanized by the return from exile of Benazir Bhutto, the daughter of Zulfiqar. With her combination of intelligence, Western training, and innate political flair, Benazir cut a dramatic figure—daughter of a martyr, victim of persecution, and a striking symbolic alternative to the drabness of a military regime that had stayed too long and a lackluster civilian team.* The rallies that greeted Benazir on her return reportedly were the largest Pakistan has ever seen. The core of her support was in her native Sind, but she was received with hardly less enthusiasm in the cities of the Punjab. She demanded that new elections be held in the fall of 1986, but the Zia-Jumino government flatly refused, and the basis for a standoff had been laid.

Both Benazir and Jumino announced demonstrations on Pakistan’s national day, August 14. Fearful that matters would get out of hand, Jumino forbade both demonstrations but Benazir refused to follow suit. She was once again arrested, and major riots broke out. After considerable violence and thirty-seven deaths, the government put down the riots and the situation returned to a sullen normalcy.

Benazir was soon released, but at least for the time being her challenge had been turned aside. Although by no means defeated, she had lost an important early round by miscalculating the extent of her support in the Punjab, especially the willingness of the other opposition parties to get their skulls cracked on her behalf. The political leaders there recalled the summary treatment they had received from her father, and Benazir’s imperious and intolerant manner suggested that they would fare little better under her rule. As long as they stand aside, she will have to rely almost solely on the PPP to mobilize mass support.

The PPP, however, has its own problems. It must turn enthusiasm into a solid political organization that can mobilize carefully calibrated pressure, become an effective vote-getting machine, and develop a credible alternative political program. This is a vast undertaking, and one that even the political skills of

the elder Bhutto had been unable to master. A decade in the political wilderness has
done little to improve the PPP, and many of its most influential leaders
(who themselves suffered under Zulfikar’s heavy hand) are unenthusiastic about
accepting to renewed domination of the Bhutto family. Shortly after the failure
of the August demonstrations, several prominent moderate leaders broke from
Benazir’s leadership and formed a separate National People’s Party (NPP),
which has attracted the support of some important retired military officers.

Benazir’s first challenge is to achieve mastery over herself—a difficult task
for anyone, let alone a person of thirty-three years whose family traditions
are paternalistic at best. There is no reason to doubt a priori that she can
do this or that she will develop the organizational skills needed. She is an impressive
young woman; a wait of four years—until the elections scheduled for 1990—might
make her a better leader than she would have been had she forced a change
in government in 1986.

Beyond this, the other opposition parties also need to rethink their situations
and their relationships to the PPP. Despite her widespread popularity, Benazir
might not be able to win a parliamentary majority for her party, and the
prospects for a coalition government are little short of chaotic. Years in the
opposition, with little prospect of power, have not taught these parties responsi-
bility. A few years dedicated to serious electoral politics rather than postur-
ing might be the best medicine.

Junojo has not used up all of his credit, but he is precariously close to doing so.
His early promise of independence from Zia has faded, and the politically active
entitlements and urban population doubt that he is more than a facade for con-
tinued military domination. Large-scale corruption has apparently become com-
mon. The August disturbances counted heavily against him, as did the failure to
control promptly the Sindh rioting in November. A cabinet reshuffle made little
impression, and it will take a higher order of political skills than Junojo has
demonstrated thus far if he is to lead Pakistan toward a more open political future.

The military, under Zia or some other general, stands poised to reimpose martial
law if the law and order and political situations deteriorate and Pakistani
political parties once more show their fecklessness. At this stage, however,
such action probably would provoke violent resistance. The change that Zia
has set in motion will be hard to stop, even though its direction is disturbingly
ambiguous.

PROSPECTS FOR PAKISTAN

The Political System. Pakistan is looking for new forms that will somehow
combine its Islamic, liberal democratic, and authoritarian strands—none of which
can rule on its own, but each of which has some veto power over the others.
Zia and Junojo are encountering the same kinds of problems that beset Ayub
when he sought to institute a political system that was less than fully democratic
and to breathe new life into the Muslim League as the “king’s party.” Thus
far, the signs are not promising for the PML, which is already plagued by

internal tensions and has not been able to develop a committed following. The
new parliament does not inspire respect. Like Ayub, Zia is confronted with
two countervailing facts of Pakistan politics: the nation finds it very difficult
to cope with a fully open political system, yet dynamic and influential parts
of Pakistani society are unwilling to settle for something less.

If the Junojo administration is able to make it through until the promised elec-
tions in 1990 and Zia allows the political system to work itself out, Pakistan
will have made a significant step toward establishing a stable political system.
Finding a way to fade away gracefully over the next several years, so that
the 1990 elections do not become a referendum on military rule, is probably
the most difficult task that Zia has faced. An equally daunting task may be
for Zia to realize that this is what has to be done. Certainly no one who has
watched Zia develop his political skills over the past decade will underestimate
his ability to shape events in Pakistan—in one direction or another.

Junojo himself can not be written off completely, and, should he fail, there are
some other options for salvaging the present system. Pakistanis suspect that
Zia and the army are hedging their bets by grooming the NPP, led by Ghulam
Mustafa Jatoi, as an alternative to Junojo. Jatoi, a seasoned political leader
with a considerable following in the PPP, comes from the Sind—the most
volatile part of Pakistan. The political and economic factors that have enabled
Zia thus far to hold power are still largely in place, and although the op-
position gots the most headlines, many Pakistanis (including, most important,
much of the army) are still inclined to support Zia as long as his rule guarantees
stability and continued economic gains.

The prospects for continued economic growth are fair, although recent good
results (the past two years have shown increases of 8.8 percent and 7.5 per-
cent) mask some serious difficulties. Population growth rates of 5.1 percent
annually are exceptionally high, and Pakistan lags far behind even other South
Asian nations in the building of social infrastructure, especially education.

These are factors that should have little impact over the next few years. More
troublesome could be the perennial South Asian specter of repeated monsoon
failures or major reductions in Pakistani employment in the Gulf states, which
has been a principal source of Pakistani prosperity, especially among the poorer
classes. As oil revenues decline, the producers have already cut back on foreign
workers. This cutback has not yet hit Pakistan hard, but some of the economic
cushion has been removed, and a drastic cutback could cause grave economic
and political problems for Pakistan throughout this decade. The nation’s foreign
debt burden has also grown to a disturbingly high level: 22 percent of exports.

Resurgent Regionalism. Stability is another questionable factor. There are
myriad possibilities for disruption in a country that is forced to operate so near
the edge in its domestic and foreign policies as well as in its economy. Sind,
the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), and Baluchistan recent Punjabi
dominance and prosperity, but the government has limited ability to redress
perceived imbalances because the Punjab, with more than half the country’s
population, is and will remain the center of political power.
Of the smaller provinces, the NWFP (13 percent of the population) is probably the least disaffected; many of its Pathans have gone to the Gulf to work, and the region has kept pace with the overall growth in the Pakistani economy. However, they are growing increasingly restive under the pressure of nearly three million Afghan refugees, who are overwhelmingly concentrated in the NWFP. Although most of these refugees are fellow Pathans and have been received hospitably, seven years of hospitality have become burdensome as the Afghans compete for scarce jobs and resources. In addition, feuds among the refugees, sabotage by Kabul agents, and even Soviet-Afghan air strikes along the border have made the NWFP (and its capital, Peshawar) a dangerous place to live. The Pathan separatism of earlier years has been largely silenced in the face of the Soviet presence across the border, but unrest is growing in the NWFP and will continue to grow until some solution is found for the Afghan problem.

The pressure of the Afghan refugees is also felt in sparsely populated Baluchistan, where discontent is fueled by backwardness, a history of brutal repression, oppressive feudal conditions, and a substantial amount of pro-Soviet sentiment.* Although Baluchistan is more of an irritant than a threat to Pakistan’s central government (at least, that is, so long as Moscow does not meddle directly), it is one more problem that pulls at the national fabric and taxes the abilities of the central government.

The greatest problems are arising in the Sind, the second-largest province, with 23 percent of the population. The indigenous Sindhis were first overwhelmed by the arrival of refugees from India; more recently the jobs and wealth of the province have gone to Punjabis and, especially, Pathan migrants and Afghan refugees. Late 1986 saw rioting in the major cities of the Sind, which resulted in casualty levels that were high even by Pakistani standards, raising serious doubts as to the ability of the Junejo government to ensure minimum levels of law and order.

Although Benazir will seek to identify herself with the discontent of her native province, the Sind unrest is not a product of PFF agitation or leadership (or, despite Junejo’s assertions, the result of Indian instigation). It appears to be anomic, with manifestations that are criminal as much as political. Whether the Sindhi’s rage can be channeled is far from clear; for the time being the situation shows the weakness of Junejo (himself a Sindhi) and, to some extent, Benazir’s inability to seize leadership of discontent.

**AN INTERIM BALANCE**

Pakistan is a complex and large country. In theory, it should be possible to rule it by brute force, but that road is not one that many Pakistanis are willing to travel. Failing that, there seems no realistic alternative to a political system that is perceived by the people as open and responsive to their varied interests; certainly the specter of regionalism will be difficult to lay to rest until the smaller provinces gain a greater sense of control over their own destinies. This is basically the way that India has held together and maintained an open society—and India has had to face problems of diversity that are much greater than present-day Pakistan’s.

Compared with India—and that is the comparison most frequently made—Pakistan has failed badly at organizing itself politically. But although geography condemns Pakistan to be India’s neighbor, perhaps political analysis should not enforce the same linkage. Compared with most—who indeed almost all—other newly independent countries, the Pakistani record is not all that bad. If we consider the large countries of Asia other than India—Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Iran, the Philippines, Vietnam—the political development of Pakistan begins to look better. To say that there is a potential for gross disruption is only to say that Pakistan is also a developing country with social and economic weaknesses. Comparative standards, however, are of more interest to political analysts than to the Pakistanis whose lives are involved and to those outsiders who have to deal with Pakistan. For them, the weaknesses and uncertainties of Pakistani politics raise troubling questions.

2.
THE U.S. INTEREST

THE UNITED STATES AND PAKISTAN

Developments in Pakistan's domestic affairs are of more than academic interest to Americans, who have made a considerable investment there. Pakistan supports important U.S. interests—and these are vulnerable to changes inside Pakistan. In addition, the special role the United States plays in preserving Pakistan's vital interests means that many Pakistanis fear or hope (often both) that the United States will play a greater role in Pakistan's domestic affairs than is realistically possible. The bases of mutual concerns between the two countries result from more than three decades of association, and the burden of history lies heavy upon it.

A Troubled Past. Given the harsh circumstances of its creation, Pakistan had two choices: accede to Indian preeminence or seek outside support to attempt to balance India. The bitterness attendant on partition rendered the first choice unacceptable, but the United States' search for partners in building the ring of containment around the Soviet Union and China made the second a reality. In the latter half of the 1950s and beyond, this arrangement worked fairly well, as substantial economic and military assistance restored a degree of Pakistani self-confidence. Pakistan's moment in the sun was brief, however, and in the view of Pakistanis its brevity and rapid decline were largely the fault of the United States: many Americans had always preferred a relationship with India. When the opportunity arose in the late 1960s to provide India with generous economic assistance and then, in the face of the Chinese threat, with military aid, Pakistan felt that it had lost its balance—its main reason for the alliance.

The alliance in fact had a fatal flaw that both the United States and Pakistan had chosen to ignore: the parties had entered into it with no shared threat assessment and with different priorities. For Washington the objective was containment of the Soviet Union and China; for Islamabad it was opposition to India. When the moment of truth came in the 1965 Indo-Pakistani war (and to a lesser extent again in 1971), the United States stood aside and even cut

off military supply in Pakistan’s hours of greatest need. For the Pakistanis this was a betrayal never to be forgotten.

Although relations settled down in the early 1970s, the advent of the Carter administration, with its own economic and military aid package that included advanced weapons to enhance Pakistan’s ability to resist Soviet and Afghan pressure—and, inevitably, to strengthen Pakistan’s ties vis-a-vis India. For its part, Pakistan continued to provide refuge for Afghans driven from their country, to be the focal point for international (especially Islamic) opinion condemning the Soviet actions, and to serve as a conduit for military and other assistance for the Afghan mujahedeen.

The current relationship between Islamabad and Washington appears to be congenial to the traditional power centers of Pakistan—the army, the bureaucracy, the industrialists, and the large landowners. Individuals within these groups may have their doubts, but most of them probably see no reason to question the foreign-policy leadership of Zia and his astute foreign minister, Sahabzada Yaquib Khan, which has done well for Pakistan in difficult circumstances.

Even among the political parties it is difficult to find a focus of opposition on foreign-policy matters. If the newly reconstituted Pakistan Muslim League (PML) were to challenge Zia, it would be on a carefully selected domestic issue (although a softening of approach to Moscow and Kabul is a possibility precisely because of the domestic implications). Most of the opposition parties are hardly worth notice, but the PPP has within it many members who are hostile to the United States and disposed toward a policy of nonalignment in the Indian style, if not friendship with the Soviet Union. Benazir Bhutto, however, has been careful to reassure Americans that she would not make any sharp changes in Pakistan’s policy toward the United States, and she seems to believe that she can enhance her political position within Pakistan by implying that she has U.S. support. In power, she might pursue other policies, but on the basis of her current position she would seem to pose little danger to the continuation of a mutually profitable U.S.-Pakistan relationship. In any event, the likelihood of her attaining power in the near term diminished greatly during late 1986.

All likely successor regimes are generally committed to present policy as regards the Muslim world, China, India, the Soviet Union, the Nonaligned Movement, and nuclear matters.
however, an extremist accession to power is something of a random event rather than a contingency warranting close consideration.

U.S.-PAKISTANI RELATIONS: THE COSTS AND BENEFITS

We cannot, however, expect Pakistani policy (any more than our own) to remain static. Any government in power will have to contend not only with a shifting strategic environment but also with the burden of history and the inevitable differences in outlook between two such divergent countries: North-South issues, global versus regional priorities, and commitment to Islamic concerns. Pakistan is, after all, an Afro-Asian, developing, nonaligned country that has much more in common even with India than with the West. More immediately pressing are a number of specific issues relating to bilateral problems and mutual concern with broader matters. The relations between the United States and Pakistan are not exempt from the standard calculations of costs and benefits and it is precisely in this area that the most thoughtful critics of the relationship focus their attention.

The benefits of the relationship are important for both sides. Pakistan obtains resources that it could not readily get elsewhere. Over the past five years the United States has provided $3.2 billion to Pakistan, divided between military and economic assistance. Current plans call for $4.02 billion over the next six years, although this program has yet to win congressional approval and funds must be appropriated each year. Pakistan gains some geopolitical advantage in its relationship with India because New Delhi must take more account of Pakistan when the latter enjoys U.S. backing; in addition, the mere fact of a cooperative U.S.-Pakistan relationship reduces the possibility of Indo-U.S. cooperation. Finally, Pakistan feels somewhat more secure as it faces the Soviet-Afghan threat from the North, for as President Zia is fond of observing, "it takes a superpower to check a superpower."

For its part the United States also gains from the relationship on several fronts. First—and this is a point all too often neglected—we have a good relationship with one of the world's relatively important countries that shares many of our concerns about the Soviet Union. Second, the Reagan administration claims that U.S. aid programs have dissuaded the Pakistanis from developing and testing nuclear weapons. Third, Pakistan provides an essential conduit for U.S. and other support to the mujahideen in Afghanistan, and it represents the mujahideen and their supporters in the peace talks sponsored by the UN. Finally, Pakistan plays a helpful, stabilizing role in the Gulf region, where vital U.S. and Western interests are at stake. This current set of ties between Islamabad and Washington is much more realistically founded than was the relationship of the 1960s. The efforts of the Reagan administration to build trust and confidence in Pakistan have offset some of the bitterness of the past and generated a more mature relationship.

The strategic relationship between Pakistan and the United States is a low-risk one on both sides. Pakistan critics argue that the country pays high and dangerous costs, and association with the United States is certainly one—but only one—of the elements that could provoke Soviet and Indian wrath. It is difficult, however, to find many costs that Pakistan incurs solely because of the U.S. tie. The Zia government has been extremely adept at limiting Pakistan's commitments and has been able to preserve Pakistan's position in the non-aligned world. And, as we shall see later, most of the Pakistan actions that the United States values are actions Pakistan probably would take even without the U.S. tie.

The costs of the relationship are fairly small for the United States. The aid bill is certainly large (Pakistan is third, behind Israel and Egypt) but seems commensurate with value received and appropriate to Pakistan's needs. The most evident political cost is in U.S. relations with India, but American abandonment of Pakistan and recognition of India's right to regulate U.S. relations with South Asia would bridge only part of the gap between Washington and New Delhi, which is defined by other determinants. Nonetheless, it is a real opportunity for sustaining significantly to Indian reliance on the Soviet Union for military and security support. In addition, many people would argue that the willingness of the United States to temporize on the question of Pakistan's nuclear activities results in serious costs to U.S. nonproliferation policy.

The fact that the administration lists nuclear policy in the "benefit" column while critics list it as a "cost" points up a particular problem in the U.S.-Pakistan equation—the ambiguity of some of the payoffs for each side. This can be best seen in a review of the most pressing issues between the two countries.

MAJOR ISSUES IN U.S.-PAKISTANI RELATIONS

Nuclear Program. The renewal of U.S. military and economic assistance to Pakistan was possible only because the Congress agreed to suspend Section 609 of the Foreign Assistance Act (the "Symington amendment"), which prohibits aid to any country that imported nuclear enrichment technology. The rationale for this policy reversal has been that Pakistan's nuclear weapons program reflects its insecurity; by providing economic and military aid, the United States can ameliorate that insecurity, making a nuclear program less pressing.

There is little doubt that the U.S. rationale is both a success and a failure. On the one hand, Pakistan understands that certain actions, such as testing of a nuclear device, would mean the irrevocable termination of assistance. Pakistan has not tested, and as long as it is critically dependent on U.S. assistance, it will be very hesitant to do so. This is a matter of some consequence because a Pakistani test would almost certainly evoke an Indian response in kind and the launching of a very public and dangerous nuclear arms race in the subcontinent.


1 The Symington waiver is contained in Section 620(j) of the act, which requires the president to certify annually that Pakistan does not possess a nuclear explosive device and that U.S. aid will be suspended if Pakistan acquires one. Section 620(j) expires on September 30, 1987, and may not be renewed if there is a future aid program. Current information on the status of the Pakistan nuclear program is provided in annual surveys by Leonard S. Hamburger, "Nuclear Weapons: The Spread," Arms Control Today 16 (July 1986): 8-9, and by Leonard S. Spector, most recently, Going Nuclear: The Spread of Nuclear Weapons 1986-1987 (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1987).
On the other hand, it is equally clear that the Pakistanis are pressing ahead with a nuclear weapons program, including clandestine attempts to smuggle important components out of the United States. There is little reliable information available in public as to the precise status of the Pakistani program (we do not know, for instance, whether Pakistan is yet in a position to test a nuclear device), but there is little reason to think that U.S. policy and programs have deflected Pakistan from its objective of achieving a nuclear weapons capability—or even essentially delayed it. An ever greater suspension of disbelief is necessary to accept the required presidential assurances that Pakistan has no nuclear device and that our policy is deterring it from getting one. Critics are disturbed by evident U.S. complacency in the violation of the spirit, if not the letter, of U.S. nonproliferation policy. Others respond that this is a policy already in tatters—and that the strenuous efforts of the Carter administration were costly and bore little fruit.

The willingness of the Congress to go along indefinitely cannot be taken for granted. The margin of support has always been narrow, and trouble probably lies ahead as the Congress considers the new aid request and the renewal of the Symington amendment waiver. Should the Congress restore the Symington amendment, there would be an automatic cutoff of all economic and military assistance; this is, however, unlikely, even though discontent with Pakistan has always been stronger among Democrats, who now control both houses.

Pakistanis, for their part, are bitter at past U.S. attempts to curtail their nuclear activities. Because Pakistan denies that it is making nuclear weapons, it cannot of course directly accuse the United States of frustrating its national interests (although criticism is barely masked). It does, however, complain that the United States is undermining its nuclear power program and has never punished India for its nuclear activities, whereas Pakistan has been exposed to the full rigors of the law and may be again. (Pakistanis are understandably unimpressed when told that the provisions of U.S. law are not the same in both cases.) It is worth noting, incidentally, that a nuclear capability is part of the heritage of "Bhuttoism," and no Pakistani government is likely to abandon it.

Narcotics. Another issue that is high on the congressional agenda, and hence acts as a possible restraint on the assistance program, is the fact that as much as half of the world's heroin is grown in and passes through Pakistan. There are joint U.S.- Pakistani programs aimed at reducing production and export, and Pakistan, which now has its own addiction problem, is making a serious effort to contain the problem. There are inevitable slippages and shortcomings, however (including a doubling of opium production in the past crop year), and the International Narcotics Control Act of 1986 offers Congress various opportunities to harass and delay aid programs to recipients who are sources of narcotics.

India. The India factor is a perennial burden on both sides of the U.S.-Pakistani relationship. Washington refuses to subscribe to Pakistan's assessment of a joint Indo-Soviet threat, lest alone the image of an irredentist India waiting for the opportunity to dismember and then reincorporate Pakistan into a greater

Hindu realm. Although Pakistan has a much livelier concern about the Soviet menace now than it had in the 1960s,* its reading of history is that India is the real threat to its existence. Pakistan's military deployments still appear to reflect more concern with India than with the Soviet Union, and planners place highest value on weapons systems that are more appropriate to war with India in the plains of the Punjab and the Sind than to the mountainous area along the Afghan frontier.

The evident desire of the Reagan administration to build bridges to Rajiv Gandhi, including the transfer of advanced military-related technology, recalls U.S. attempts to ride two horses in the early 1960s. Given India's unhappiness at the resumption of the U.S.-Pakistani security relationship, Washington's initiatives may or may not prove successful. The Pakistanis see in this effort, however, an extremely unwelcome reminder that many Americans would prefer to have their principal South Asian relationship with India.

India believes that Pakistan is nearing a nuclear capability and that it has actively supported Sikh separatists in the Punjab. Further developments on either of these fronts could lead to an Indian attack, and hostilities—began for whatever reason—would present immeasurable problems for American policy in the region and beyond. Even a sharp growth in recrimination and tension would undermine the little progress that the United States has painfully made over the past several years in developing a South Asian policy that balances relations with the region's two major powers. This situation is not new, and the blame lies at least as much with India as with Pakistan, but Indo-Pakistani hostility is a major problem for U.S. policy toward South Asia.

Afghanistan and the Soviet Union. For those who look backward, there are some disquieting similarities to the 1960s in this central aspect of the new strategic arrangement between Washington and Islamabad. As then, the two countries have entered the relationship with different premises and interests. The U.S. concern with Afghanistan is primarily in a global context: Washington is determined that the Afghan experience be costly to the Soviets and deter similar adventures in the future. For some Americans, a perpetuation of the conflict is an acceptable second-best to finding a solution, since it imposes continuing costs on Moscow in terms of men, matériel, and international image. But, for Pakistan, Afghanistan is a regional problem and a direct threat to its own security. It can find little solace in the global costs the Soviets are incurring, for Pakistan itself is incurring costs at home that may be proportionately greater.

The United States and Pakistan share a primary goal of getting the Soviet Union out of Afghanistan and restoring peace, and thus far this mutual goal has overshadowed the differences in emphasis. It is not hard, however, to imagine situations in which the two countries could part ways. A number of the more likely outcomes in Afghanistan will cause the United States to lose

*Recent data from a poll by the Pakistan Gallup organization show that, among persons interviewed, more people feel that the Soviet Union is a greater threat than is India.
much of its interest in the region. When that happens, there will be no more big economic and military assistance packages for Pakistan, and members of Congress who have reluctantly tolerated Pakistan's continued nuclear activities will be free to restore the full rigor of the Symington amendment.

Policy toward Afghanistan is one of the areas in which the opposition (including the PPP) is most critical of the Zia regime. Even many government supporters question whether it is wise for Pakistan to let its relationship with Moscow deteriorate as badly, especially in support of a cause with such a questionable future. Soviet pressure, disruptions caused by three million refugees, and simple weariness will force any Pakistani government to consider compromising some basic positions if external developments do not preempt policy choices.

A key U.S. interest would be jeopardized if Pakistan were to succumb to a mixture of internal and external pressures, cut off avenues of support to the mujahidin, and recognize the legitimacy of the puppet regime in Kabul. The defection of Pakistan would severely undercut the entire international position on Afghanistan and have a significant adverse impact on the U.S. global position (or, at least, on the way Americans see that position). The secure presence of a Soviet military force in Afghanistan also would pose some additional threat to Western interests in the Middle East, although Afghanistan is hardly the Soviet route of choice for an attack on the Gulf region. Whether the threat to Pakistan itself would be greater or less would presumably be a matter for Pakistanis, more than Americans, to worry about.

Shifting in the Pakistani position on Afghanistan are likely to be less dramatic than that. The Afghan situation has demonstrated a tragic tenacity, and sharp change could wait for quite a while. The Pakistanis have shown dogged skill in handling the UN-sponsored negotiations on Afghanistan—helped in no small part by the Soviets' inability to come up with a credible schedule for withdrawal or a government in Kabul that would prove widely acceptable.

There is, however, an inexorable force to the negotiating process that the Soviets are well positioned to manipulate. General Secretary Gorbachev's Vladivostok speech, suggesting a Soviet desire to get out of Afghanistan, the token withdrawal of Soviet troops, the offer of a cease-fire and national reconciliation, and the visit of Foreign Minister Shevardnadze to Kabul have all created a momentum for a settlement and put pressure on Pakistan to relax its negotiating position. Beginning in late 1986, the Soviets reined in their anti-Pakistan propaganda and apparently showed themselves more forthcoming in the bilateral talks. This offering of carrots, coupled with the sticks that Moscow and its Afghan allies continue to hold, may force Pakistan and its friends to face difficult incremental decisions. The United States must plan for such a contingency because, in the last analysis, it is Pakistan that controls the lifelines to the mujahidin, and it is Pakistan, not the United States, that will suffer if the Soviets decide to lash out. Simply urging Pakistan to stand fast will be an inadequate American policy response, even though the U.S. military supply program is designed to provide Pakistan with capabilities to deter and, if necessary, counter the kind of limited probe that would be the most likely form of Soviet pressure for the near future.

Mutual confidence may have been rebuilt under the Reagan administration, but no thinking Pakistani expects that the United States would or could provide full protection from a serious Soviet attack. Aside from the uncertainties that often accompany the outbreak of limited hostilities and delay the response time, Pakistan is well aware of its distance from the United States, its relatively low standing on the scale of U.S. interests (compared with the Middle East, Europe, Japan, and Central America), and the questionable willingness of any U.S. administration to risk hostilities with the Soviet Union. This awareness explains reported Pakistani caution in controlling the amounts and types of assistance flowing to the Afghan resistance. It is also the reason for Pakistani attempts to elicit a NATO-like agreement that would automatically commit the United States to defend Pakistan.* Because this is an obligation we cannot undertake, we shall have to show understanding for Pakistani preferences in the negotiating process.

At the same time, U.S. policymakers should keep in perspective the benefits that America gains from Pakistan's role in Afghanistan. These are substantial, and Pakistanis emphasize the risks that they are running on our behalf. Yet much of what Pakistan does to support the mujahidin should not be billed to our account alone, since Pakistan does not support the Afghan resistance as a favor to the United States. Despite ambivalence, many Pakistanis still see this support as a sacred duty toward Muslim neighbors; beyond that, two other countries that are at least as important to Pakistan as the United States (China and Saudi Arabia) look to Pakistan to maintain its support for the mujahidin.

The Middle East and the Gulf: The important coincidence of U.S. and Pakistani policies on the Persian Gulf also needs closer examination. Although the United States benefits from Pakistan's role there, Islamabad is not acting on America's behalf in that area but pursuing interests of its own, derived from its close ties to the conservative regimes of the region and a broader sense of Muslim identity that it shares with Iran as well. In one sense, this is a positive consideration because it increases the likelihood that Pakistan will continue to pursue helpful policies, including providing military training and other support to Saudi Arabia and the small Gulf states. Should these U.S. friends come under Soviet attack, Pakistan probably would be available as a staging area for U.S. military support.

But there are important policy interests that Pakistan does not share with the United States. We could not, for instance, expect Pakistan to support any action to break an embargo imposed by the Persian Gulf oil producers, or be party to any American action in support of Israel, which Pakistan regards in fervently Islamic terms. (Indeed, U.S. support for Israel is a significant element in

*With the passing of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) by the U.S. Pakistani relationship was formalized in a bilateral agreement of March 6, 1969, which provides: "In case of aggression against Pakistan, the Government of the United States of America, in accordance with the Constitution of the United States of America, will take such appropriate action, including the use of armed forces, as may be mutually agreed upon..." Although Washington apparently has offered stronger reassurances, these are less than satisfactory to Pakistan because they still do not automatically commit the United States.
Differing perceptions of threats and interests cast doubt on gaining support from Pakistan in many of the most important contingencies the U.S. may face in southern Asia.

Pakistan’s Internal Affairs. Even when U.S. military and economic aid has been given to support broadly accepted Pakistani goals, it has contributed to the economic well-being and to the satisfaction of the military, thereby strengthening successive regimes. Withholding assistance is, of course, at least as intrusive. Thus some element of U.S. intervention in Pakistan’s affairs is inevitable, and divergent interests will be looking to America as an ally—or bogeyman—especially if the political temperature rises. Critics of the regime will press this point in Washington, and it will be tempting for Americans to focus on the shortcomings of the Pakistani political process and draw back from relations with a country that we understand poorly—and even when understood has a number of facets that we find unattractive or dangerous. Other Americans will seek to condition the relationship on immediate restoration of full democracy, notably if the demands are articulated by a personality such as Benazir Bhutto, whose shortcomings are outdone by her charisma—especially when seen from a distance.

The United States has a commitment to foster open societies and support human freedoms and should continue to keep Pakistan aware of this commitment. (The Reagan administration seems to have a fair record in this regard.) Ultimately, a complex society such as Pakistan can achieve stability, and hence be a dependable ally, only in a democratic framework. Human rights in terms of violation of the person have improved under Zia, but if the opposition is able to lobby and sustain a program of political agitation that triggers a strong-armed reaction, human rights could become another difficult issue for the United States.

Pakistan, however, is not Western Europe or North America of the late twentieth century. As observed earlier, civilian leaders have done at least as much as the military to weaken Pakistan’s political fabric and bring democracy into disrepute; the two general elections were national disasters. Given the current disarray and disorganization of the opposition, it appears incapable of providing stable government to Pakistan.

Pakistan politics is in a complicated state of transition that nobody understands fully. There is a reasonable case to be made for moving by stages to a full exercise of democracy as the Zia-Junior experiment, at its best, offers. However, the failure of Ayub’s system of Basic Democracies to meet the Pakistan’s political aspirations is an warning that transitional forms cannot be fig leaves for continued military control. And of course the Zia-Junior experiment is decidedly not “at its best.” It may be in irreversible decline, and even if not, there is room for doubt that Zia will ultimately decide to let his experiment run its logical course.

In this evolving situation the United States has limited influence over the major actors. Heavy-handed attempts to force the pace of democratic development would be a risky gamble, and U.S. short-term interests are probably best served by a continuation of current arrangements. Blind acceptance of the Zia-Junior system also would be shortsighted, since its long-term prospects are very questionable. But there is no requirement for the United States to make such a commitment to protect its current concerns, any more than there is for it to commit itself to the opposition in order to protect the long term. Only partial commitments are appropriate to the nature of the relationship. Wisdom suggests a policy of distance from all the parties, coupled with a reaffirmation of U.S. support for a process leading to democracy.

Military and Economic Assistance. All these factors come together to influence congressional consideration of the new aid package and the renewal of the Symington amendment waiver. The debate will bring all shades of opinion in the volatility intrusive way that characterizes American charitable actions. It will be pointed out that a generous aid commitment will strengthen the hand of the current Pakistani government and that the reconsideration of a fresh package provides an excellent opportunity to rethink the problems in U.S.-Pakistan relations and impose new conditions on assistance.
Pakistanis respond that the package is not so generous in view of Pakistan's needs and the contribution that Pakistan, in its support of the mujahedin, is making to an important Western interest. Pakistan claims that because of a somewhat longer payout period, growing debt repayments, and inflation, a package of $6.5 billion over the 1988-93 period would have been needed to equal the $3.2 billion provided earlier. The final U.S. offer amounted to $4.08 billion, albeit with significantly better credit terms and a larger grant component, and Pakistan realistically sees this offer as the best available. This time the economic aid represents 57 percent of the total amount (compared with half previously) and will again probably be devoted mainly to agriculture, infrastructure, education, and health. Because the needs are obvious and the programs well conceived and executed, the economic side of the request will invite less scrutiny and criticism.

The military component—never popular with the Congress—will be the focus of greater concern. The 1981 program was highlighted by forty F-16 aircraft, plus new equipment for air defense (radars and surface-to-air and air-to-air missiles), and for firepower enhancement (artillery, antitank missiles and radars, and helicopters). In addition, Pakistan received several hundred reconditioned M-48A5 tanks and Harpoon ship-to-ship missiles for the navy. This time the mix of matériel probably will be generally the same, but reduced funds (including those from Arab sources) will force Pakistan to look more carefully at big-ticket items.

There will be lively debate in Washington over the kinds of weapons systems appropriate for Pakistan, in terms of both their cost and their likely use. Although India should have no veto right over U.S. arms sales to Pakistan, its concerns are inevitably a factor if it seems wise to avoid selling such items as naval missiles that can be used only against India. Both Pakistan and a U.S.-Pakistan relationship must, after all, take some account of the realities of the South Asian regional context. Other items that India objects to, such as additional F-16s, M-1 tanks, and airborne warning and control systems, present more difficult choices because they could be used on the Afghan front as well as against India. India is making AWACS its key concern, and given the great expense of the system as well as the provocation it poses to India, a good case can be made for seeing whether a less capable system could meet Pakistan's military requirements. Overall, however, it is the fact of the U.S.-Pakistan relationship, not individual items, that bothers New Delhi.

The prospects for the aid package as well as for individual weapons systems are clouded. Given budgetary pressures, $4 billion is a lot of money. Groups concerned with such issues as human rights, democracy, nonproliferation, and narcotics will make common cause with the budget cutters and the not-considerable group of Americans who wish to break the relationship with Pakistan—frequently in pursuit of the chimera goal of Indian friendship. The debate could become ugly, requiring skill and endurance on the part of Pakistan's friends—as well as those who see in the U.S.-Pakistan tie an important support for this country's foreign-policy interests.

America's interrelated interests in Pakistan have to do with Pakistan's internal order and the closeness of its ties to us. In the tradition of patron-client relationships there is a natural temptation to push hard on either or both of these fronts—to restore democracy rapidly and to align Pakistan still more closely with various U.S. interests. Some Americans will focus on one of these areas and some on another, leading to heated debates that may cancel each other out in the end.

In the next several months U.S.-Pakistani ties are likely to be strained by vociferous congressional debate over the aid package and possibly by the need for Pakistan to make adjustments to its Afghan policy. Unless both sides show restraint and understanding, either or both of these factors—not to mention possible developments on the nuclear front—would plunge U.S.-Pakistani ties back to the depths of 1979 and be destabilizing for Pakistan internally. This would be unfortunate, since neither party has realistic and attractive alternatives to the present kind of relationship.

Despite current strains and difficulties, U.S.-Pakistani ties have reached a fairly stable plateau from which both sides should be pursuing policies that will meet more immediate needs while laying a solid groundwork for the longer term. The starting point should be a recognition that our ability to alter Pakistani developments, at least in any positive way, is extremely limited. The patron-client relationship belongs to a past of sad remembrance. The United States is no longer uniquely important to Pakistan, which will act according to its perceived interests, bargaining hard and skillfully to extract maximum benefits. Because Pakistan, too, is making only a partial commitment, we have a full right to bargain hard for those things that are genuinely important to us. We must recognize, however, that we will not get everything we want.

First, the United States needs to establish priorities for its preferences, which is most important: nuclear nonproliferation, control over production and export of narcotics, interests in Afghanistan, or participation in a "strategic consensus"? Second, policymakers must make clear to themselves and, where appropriate, to Pakistan just what the United States' irreducible minimum requirements are; no nuclear explosion is a clear one, but how far can we tolerate Pakistani compromise on Afghanistan or slippage in narcotics enforcement?
programs? In broad terms, we will need to strike a balance between desirable and feasible goals that also can serve as a bridge to the future. Two such goals are:

- On the domestic front, the maintenance of a process that offers some prospect for a stable and open Pakistani political system, furthered by low-key U.S. involvement in Pakistan's domestic affairs that supports process rather than party.

- In foreign affairs, continuation of the limited but useful relationship that President Zia has aptly described as "a handshake, not an embrace," focused on sustainable shared interests and realistic objectives.

For the more distant future we have to do what we can to promote (and, above all, not to hinder) a rapprochement between India and Pakistan that will simultaneously make it easier for the United States to deal with South Asia and reduce the need for the South Asian nations to solicit outside involvement in their security affairs. Even short of this goal, however, our objective in Pakistan is to work toward a relationship that is limited in scope and (particularly) intensity but rests on shared interests and values and is not hostage to the internal politics of either side or to transient issues for its substance.

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