

THE BRITISH ROAD TO WAR

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Without doubt, the decision to go to war against Iraq with the United States was—and remains—the most controversial foreign policy act of a British government in many decades. The controversy was not only about whether the war was justified, whether the reasons given for the decision to go to war were genuine, but about fundamentally different conceptions of international relations: the role of the United Nations and collective security.

Any analysis of the decision to go to war is complicated by the fact that the reasons and factors that motivated the United States only partially overlapped those of the United Kingdom. Moreover, Britain and the United States approached the issue of the nature of the contemporary international system and international security from philosophical standpoints that were diametrically opposed. It is therefore necessary to explain how Britain and the United States came to be partners in this risky and controversial endeavour. The purpose of this study is to explain the British decision to go to war, to analyse the arguments that were given to justify the war, and then discuss the questions that arise for the future of the international system and Britain's place in the world.

The Road to War

The British government had difficulty in making a persuasive case for military action against Iraq. This was not merely because, if truth be told, the main impetus for pursuing this conflict came from the United States and the British government had not chosen to initiate this crisis at this time. It is also due to the fact that the argument for taking action against Iraq was complex, based to a large degree on what, in a court of law, would be called circumstantial evidence. It is also a consequence of the insistence of the opponents of the war, especially of the Liberal Democrats, that the use of force could only be justified on the basis of UN Security Council resolutions and that humanitarian reasons for taking action against Saddam Hussein's regime had to be ignored.

The case against the Iraqi regime had three distinct elements: that it was a murderous and criminal regime that oppressed its own population; that it posed a threat to its neighbours; and that it was engaged in a sustained effort to

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develop weapons of mass destruction in violation of UN Security Council resolutions. Moreover, it was said to be supporting international terrorism and developing long-range missiles that could attack Western countries in the future.

These arguments were based on the record of the Iraqi regime that left little doubt that the country remained a threat to its neighbours. Saddam Hussein had been at war continuously since he attacked Iran in 1979. After the Iran–Iraq war, he went to war against the Kurds inside Iraq, using chemical and biological weapons. Then he invaded Kuwait and, after the first Gulf War, he continued to launch attacks on the Kurds in northern Iraq, attacked Allied planes patrolling the no-fly zone, and engaged in major military operations against Shiites inside Iraq. Saddam’s ambitions were not a secret: he wanted to be the pre-eminent power in the region and lead the effort to destroy Israel. Even though Saddam Hussein had no proven links with Al Qaeda, he had advocated terrorist attacks on the United States in the past.

British policymakers were concerned that this was an unstable situation. There had been continuous pressure to weaken sanctions and ease the constraints applied to Iraq. Prior to the First Gulf War, 70 per cent of Iraqi GDP was spent on the build-up of its armed forces and if Iraq could gain greater financial resources from oil sales, it would be in a position to rebuild its capabilities.¹ There was evidence that Iraq was becoming increasingly successful at circumventing sanctions.

It is commonly held that “the reason for going to war” was the threat represented by Iraq’s illegal weapons of mass destruction. The very extensive human rights violations by Saddam’s regime were an explanation given later and were not part of the so-called “reason for going to war”. This belief is so entrenched that it is practically impossible to find any other version of events, either in the available literature or in public debate.

The evidence shows, however, a more complex picture. Arguments for or against war are based on political, moral, and legal considerations. The British political elite engaged in these arguments found it very difficult to conceptualise the different elements of the case for war and the weight that should be given to them. Politicians critical of the war did not focus on the moral or political case for or against war (except to point out the possible collateral damage of war), but on the legal case. For example, when Menzies Campbell, the Foreign Affairs spokesman of the Liberal Democratic Party, was confronted on television by Iraqis with the horrors of Saddam Hussein’s rule and demands for the liberation of Iraq from this oppressive regime, he said that international law did not permit a war to be fought on this basis.² With

¹ Anthony H. Cordesman, *Iraq and the War of Sanctions: Conventional Threats and Weapons of Mass Destruction* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1999).

² BBC, “Question Time”, 25 September 2002.

their imperviousness to any moral considerations, the Liberal Democrats resembled a group of defence lawyers, determined to let Saddam off the hook on a legal technicality. They offered no alternative approach for dealing with the human rights abuses perpetrated by the Iraqi regime. For example, when the government published a dossier on human rights abuses in Iraq, Menzies Campbell stated: “Saddam Hussein’s barbarism has been well documented for many years. But support for military action will depend not upon this catalogue of horror but whether Iraq fulfils its obligation under Security Council resolution 1441.”³

In line with his other contributions to the debate about Iraq, Campbell did not consider it necessary to say what should be done about the human rights situation in Iraq. The critics of the war channelled the public debate in a direction which focused solely on a narrow aspect of international law. This was based on a simplistic and anachronistic understanding of the issues involved in the legality of the use of force.⁴ In reality, moral, strategic, political, and legal issues cannot be so neatly separated, given that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is a political body which makes decisions based not necessarily on the merits of the case, but according to the political interests of the major veto-holding powers. There can be an overwhelming moral and political case for war, even when the legal basis for military action is slim or non-existent, and where the UNSC will not sanction action because of the internal politics of a permanent member, a situation that Western powers had already encountered on more than one occasion since the end of the Cold War. Ironically, it was not difficult to make a legal case for war against Iraq since UNSC resolutions 678 and 687 gave broad authority for the use of force against the Iraq regime in order to restore peace and stability in the region. The nature of the critics’ arguments explains the British government’s rather narrow focus on the one issue on which the UN Security Council could be engaged, namely, Iraq’s failure to disarm. However, contrary to common belief, it would be incorrect to assert that this was the sum total of the “case for war” presented by the British government. On the contrary, all the various elements justifying the war were presented from the very beginning and throughout the public debate preceding the war.

³ Menzies Campbell, “Any Military Action Must Depend on Fulfilment of UN Resolution”.

<http://www.libdems.org.uk/index.cfm/page.homepage/section.home/article.3771>
(4 December 2002).

⁴ Christine Gray, *International Law and the Use of Force* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000); Simon Chesterman, *Just War or Just Peace? Humanitarian Intervention and International Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Adam Roberts, *Humanitarian Action in War*, Adelphi Paper 305 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

This is evident in statements by British ministers, and especially Tony Blair, even in the early phases of the confrontation with Iraq. In his speech at the George Bush Senior Presidential Library on 7 April 2002, the British Prime Minister stated that: “We must be prepared to act where terrorism or Weapons of Mass Destruction threaten us.”⁵ He pointedly justified the need for regime change in certain cases: “If necessary the action should be military and again, *if necessary and justified, it should involve regime change.*”[Emphasis added]. He then went on to cite the cases of Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia, the Taliban, and Sierra Leone, emphasizing the rejoicing of those liberated from the brutality to which they had been subjected.

We cannot of course, intervene in all cases but where countries are engaged in the terror or WMD business, we should not shirk from confronting them. Some can be offered a way out, a route to respectability. I hope in time that Syria, Iran and even North Korea can accept the need to change their relations dramatically with the outside world.

Pointedly, Iraq was left out of the list of those nations whose relations could dramatically improve. His view on Iraq again emphasized heavily both the potential regional threat Iraq posed and the brutal nature of the regime:

...leaving Iraq to develop WMD in flagrant breach of no less than nine separate UNSCRs, refusing still to allow weapons inspectors back to do their work properly, is not an option. The regime of Saddam is detestable. Brutal, repressive, political opponents routinely tortured and executed: it is a regime without a qualm in sacrificing the lives of its citizens to preserve itself, or starting wars with neighbouring states and it has used chemical weapons against its own people.

Blair emphasized that the decision of how to deal with Iraq had not been made, and called for UN inspectors to be allowed in. Nevertheless, it was no accident that the Prime Minister had juxtaposed the virtue of regime change with his severe critique of the Iraqi regime and set it apart from other members of the “axis of evil”.

Blair’s position on Iraq was complex and not without internal contradictions. The special relationship with the United States had been at the core of Blair’s foreign policy. From Blair’s point of view, this was not in contradiction to a closer integration into Europe. Far from it: Blair saw Britain as the bridge across the Atlantic that would help to unify the Western world as a whole. While Bill Clinton was US president, this was a natural relationship, since the world view of the Clinton administration was very similar to that of New Labour.⁶ The Clinton administration was also committed to a new world

⁵ Prime Minister Blair’s Speech at the George Bush Senior Presidential Library. <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page1712.asp> (7 April 2002).

⁶ Hillary Rodham Clinton, *Living History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), p.424.

order, based on international law, the United Nations as a collective security organization, and international regimes. It was committed to arms control and the resolution of conflicts through diplomacy. But it had also shown resolve in confronting Milosevic in the former Yugoslavia and bringing stability and order to the Balkans. It had pulled out all the stops to get an agreement in the Middle East (albeit without success in the end). The Bush administration was a million miles away from this view of the world. It wanted to reduce US overseas involvement, it had no use for international regimes (e.g., the Kyoto protocol, the biological weapons convention) and a profound scepticism towards the United Nations. Even though in terms of substance the British government was much closer to its European partners, Blair made an enormous effort to maintain the special relationship with the United States. His purpose was to influence US policy as best as he could and ensure the commitment of the US to close relations with its European allies.

It is commonly understood that the events of 9/11 had a profound impact on US foreign policy. Suddenly, the Bush administration needed allies, and took recourse to the whole range of international institutions and regimes available in order to create an alliance for the “war against terror”. This, however, was a temporary shift, not a fundamental change in outlook. In other areas of foreign policy, the old instincts continued to prevail. The new national security doctrine of the United States, which sought to adjust the priorities of national security policy to the contemporary security environment, included a commitment to deal with threats pre-emptively, before they had even been fully formed.⁷ This was evidently a reaction to the experience with Al Qaeda. To many outside the United States, this part of US National Security Policy was alarming.

This sense of alarm was particularly prevalent in the British Labour Party. Indeed, to many in the party, George Bush and everything he stood for were entirely anathema. They rejected his approach to international politics wholesale and saw the new National Security Policy as an agenda for US imperialism that had to be resisted.

For this reason, the events of 11 September 2001 assisted Prime Minister Blair immeasurably in maintaining the special relationship with America—even under George Bush. In response to the attacks on the US, the British government swung firmly behind the Bush administration. Given the unique capabilities British armed forces had in working with the US armed forces in out-of-area missions, there was a clear opportunity for Blair to cement the special relationship and play a unique role as a partner in the war

⁷ *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (White House, Washington D.C., September 2002); for analysis, see Robert S. Litwak, “The New Calculus of Pre-emption”, *Survival*, vol.44, no.4 (Winter 2002-3), pp.53-79; for the impact on

against terror, all ideological differences notwithstanding. When Blair met Bush on 20 September 2001, the issue of Iraq was discussed, but Blair and Bush agreed that they had to focus on the issue at hand, namely, how to deal with the Taliban and Al Qaeda.⁸

The conflict with Iraq was postponed, but not averted. The defeat of the Taliban was only the first phase in the war against terror. Whether the conflict of Iraq was part of the war against terror or not was an issue on which there was ambivalence both in the United States and Britain. The American argument was that Saddam Hussein hated the United States, his regime was inherently aggressive and would be a regional threat if not contained, and that his possession of WMD was dangerous. This was the case not just because Saddam had proven to be willing to use these weapons, but also because their very existence made them a potential source of such weapons for international terrorism. The seriousness of this danger and the alleged links between Iraq and Al Qaeda were continuously and inconclusively debated in the run-up to the war.

When Tony Blair met with President Bush in Crawford, Texas, on 6 April 2002, he was confronted with the fact that the United States had decided to resolve the Iraq issue by removing Saddam Hussein from power. The strategic choice for Britain now was to either join the American effort or let the Bush administration go it alone.

At the root of the decision to support the United States was the fear of an international order in which the United States was pursuing its own unilateralist agenda, increasingly divorced from the rest of the world. The international order that Blair envisaged for the twenty-first century would rest on the foundation of international norms and principles, the United Nations as the locus of legitimacy and international security, and a united Western world that would propagate these principles, with more and more states joining, and the gradual elimination of totalitarianism, terrorism, and global poverty. The threat of international terrorism would be so much harder to tackle if the Western world was divided.

This is not to say that Blair could not see the merits of the case for action against Iraq. Britain and the United States had jointly checked Iraqi aggression for the previous eleven years by patrolling the no-fly zone and controlling Iraqi oil exports. Every week, British aircraft were hitting Iraqi targets. But this form of containment required the actual use of deadly force on an on-going basis. Moreover, Blair was cognizant of the arguments constantly promoted by the Left that containment had devastating effects on

non-proliferation of WMD, see George Perkovich, "Bush's Nuclear Follies", *Foreign Affairs*, vol.82, no.2 (March/April 2003), pp.2-8.

⁸ For the decision to postpone action against Iraq until the Taliban had been dealt with, see Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002).

ordinary Iraqis. It was also failing because Saddam was increasingly circumventing sanctions, while not giving any sign of moving closer to compliance with UNSC resolutions. Operation Desert Fox, in which the United States and Britain attacked Iraq after the UNSCOM inspectors had to be withdrawn, was a demonstration of total weakness, indicating that the United Nations was unwilling to enforce its will.⁹

It is one of the fundamental principles of the “Just War” theory that the decision to go to war must be proportional. In other words, the evil likely to be caused by the war must be less than the evil prevented by war. Most critics of the war did not in fact advocate any alternative to military action, as if there was a choice to do nothing.¹⁰ The Liberal Democrats advocated a continuation of containment, but did not engage in a moral analysis of the consequences of containment. Likewise, German foreign minister Joschka Fischer advocated containment, without spelling out the implications.¹¹

It was not easy for Tony Blair to condemn containment, given that this had been the policy of the British government since 1991. Any criticism of containment therefore was an admission that the policy he had previously pursued and defended was fundamentally immoral. Nevertheless, Tony Blair was brave enough to make precisely this case during a public debate chaired by Jeremy Paxman and televised by the BBC.¹² To reiterate, the case against containment was first of all that containment was hard to sustain indefinitely. There were two distinct reasons for this: international support for containment was declining, with Russia and France putting pressure on the US to agree to the easing or even lifting of sanctions. The other reason was that Saddam Hussein was increasingly able to circumvent sanctions. Blair stated that the regime managed to illegally get about \$3 billion from the oil-for-food programme every year.¹³ More fundamentally, it had become evident that the

⁹ This point was made forcefully by Scott Ritter. See Scott Ritter, *Endgame—Solving the Iraq Problem Once and for All* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), p.196.

¹⁰ For a systematic analysis of the options *vis-à-vis* Iraq, see Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Threatening Storm—The case for Invading Iraq* (New York: Random House, 2002), pp. xxviii-xxx.

¹¹ For an analysis of the German approach, see Anja Dalgaard-Nielson, “Gulf War: The German resistance”, *Survival*, vol. 45, no.1 (Spring 2003), pp.99-116.

¹² “Newsnight”, 6 February 2003.

¹³ The argument advanced by the British government, namely, that containment was not sustainable in the future, has been hotly debated in the literature. Pollack makes the case advanced by Tony Blair, that containment was failing and that it was not a plausible option to seek to re-establish it (Pollack, *Storm*). A similar case was made by Scott Ritter, who denounced the policy of containment as a complete failure. Unlike Pollack, he proposed a new policy of engagement with Iraq, but recognized himself that, from his knowledge of Saddam Hussein, there was doubt about its feasibility (Ritter, *Endgame*). The contrary case was made in Carl Keyser, Steven E. Miller, Martin B. Malin, William D. Nordhaus, John D. Steinbruner, *War with Iraq—Costs, Consequences and Alternatives* (Cambridge, MA: American Academy of Arts and

way in which the Iraqi regime responded to containment was that it shifted the burden on to the Iraqi population. The result was a catastrophic decline in the Iraqi economy, the total decay of its infrastructure, resulting in reduced life expectancy, and significantly higher mortality in the population than would normally be expected. In the words of John and Karl Mueller, “economic sanctions have probably already taken the lives of more people in Iraq than have been killed by all weapons of mass destruction in history.”¹⁴ Moreover, the Iraqi regime itself was suppressing the population in a brutal manner, indiscriminately torturing and murdering large numbers of people and keeping the entire population in a state of fear.

The most pernicious aspect of this was that resistance to the external threat was a major factor in Saddam’s hold on power.¹⁵ It was an extraordinary dilemma: If Saddam was let out of his box, he would no doubt reoccupy Northern Iraq, destroy the democratic government that had emerged among the Kurds, and kill many people. Soon his reach would extend further and he would re-emerge as a threat to the whole region. On the other hand, containment sustained his regime at home. Thus, Eric Herring has argued that the British government, in effect, was accessory to the death of a large number of Iraqi children.¹⁶ In the BBC “Newsnight” programme chaired by Jeremy Paxman, Blair gave a clear signal that he was not prepared for this to continue. The problem was the lack of alternatives. Since 1991, it had become absolutely clear that there were no instruments of soft power that would be effective against the Iraqi regime. Everything had been tried: covert action, supporting internal dissent, attempts to assassinate the leadership, and extremely severe

the Sciences, 2002). The latter study completely ignored the human costs and humanitarian consequences of containment.

¹⁴ John Mueller and Karl Mueller, “The Methodology of Mass Destruction: Assessing Threats in the New World Order”, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 23, no.1 (2000), pp. 153-87, p.164. Estimates of premature Iraqi deaths due to sanctions vary greatly. The Iraqi government itself provided figures which were quite high to demonstrate the wickedness of sanctions; Pollack, in *Storm*, discusses various estimates and concludes that, in the first seven years after the first Gulf War, between 135,000 and 150,000 Iraqi children died and that a total of between 200,000 to 225,000 Iraqis may have died prematurely during this period (p.139). Cordesman has a more sceptical approach to such claims. See Cordesman, *War of Sanctions*. See also Eric Herring, “Between Iraq and a hard place”, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 28, no.1 (January 2002), pp.39-56, who claims there were 500,000 premature deaths in Iraq due to sanctions. It is interesting to note that opponents of sanctions were usually also opponents of regime change in Iraq.

¹⁵ Volker Perthes, *Iraq under sanctions: A regime defiant*, Middle East Programme, Briefing no.40 (February 1998), Royal Institute of International Affairs, London; Herring seems to suggest that this was deliberate policy (Herring, “A hard place”, p.44).

¹⁶ This seems to be the implication of the general argument of Herring’s article (Herring, “A hard place”).

sanctions had all been tried without effect.¹⁷ Some commentators suggested that if sanctions were actually lifted, then eventually the Iraqi people would have the resources to effect regime change from within. Historical experience, however, cast strong doubt on this optimistic scenario. Saddam's was a classical dictatorial regime along the lines of Hitler's Germany or Stalin's Soviet Union. It held on to power by a combination of a sophisticated apparatus of internal repression, the willingness to employ an unlimited degree of violence, to the extent of killing literally millions of people, and engaging in continuous conflict with other countries. Under such conditions, regime change from within is not a practical proposition, no matter what the social and economic conditions of the country may be.¹⁸

The choice was not between war and peace. The choice was between continuing the low-level war in which Britain was already involved, that would keep the Iraqi people trapped in this catastrophic situation indefinitely, or a quick war which would allow for a free and ultimately prosperous Iraq to emerge as a modern democratic state.

The other dilemma that Blair faced was that since the United States had already decided to go to war, it was only a question of how to obtain international legitimacy and keep the Western alliance together. Any other course would have destroyed Blair's foreign policy of the previous five years and drastically reduced British influence in international affairs. Even worse was the damage he perceived would be done to the international system if the United States was alienated, forcing it towards unilateralism, and the transatlantic relationship was damaged.

Blair advised Bush that while the United States could go it alone, even for a superpower such as the United States it was important to have allies. The two leaders struck a deal: if Bush would take the issue of the Iraq to the United Nations, and give Iraq one more chance to comply with the UNSC resolutions and co-operate with the elimination of WMD through UN inspections, then Britain would support the United States. Moreover, Britain would do its utmost to deliver the support of other UNSC members for whatever actions were decided upon.

Blair acknowledged in public that there was a profound contradiction between tactics and strategic objectives. If Saddam took the last chance he would be given to avoid war, then he would be left in power and the objective

¹⁷ Some have argued that if the administration of Bush senior had supported the uprising in 1991, Saddam Hussein would have been overthrown. (See Herring, "A hard place", p. 44. He argues that John Major's government was against the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.) However, closer analysis raises scepticism about the potential for an overthrow of Saddam, except with the support of allied armed forces amounting to a full-blown invasion (see Pollack, *Storm*, ch.3)

¹⁸ It is not the purpose of this paper to debate all the policy options fully, but rather to explain the perspective of the Blair government. For more detail, see Pollack, *Storm*.

of liberating Iraq would not be achieved. Moreover, past experience provided plenty of evidence for the conviction that, even if Saddam were to disarm, he would start up his clandestine activities to develop WMD again in due course. Indeed, Saddam Hussein had broken every international agreement he had ever signed, usually (like the Gulf War ceasefire agreement) very shortly after signing it. Reaching a settlement with Saddam was not desirable, because it would not be worth the paper it was written on. The only way to reconcile this contradiction rested on the belief that a leopard doesn't change its spots and that there was no chance that Saddam would accept the full dismantlement of his WMD programmes.

After the war, it was widely asserted by, among others, former Labour cabinet member, Robin Cook, that Blair was determined to go to war, regardless of what Iraq would do.¹⁹ This is true in the sense that the strategic objectives Blair had set were not attainable without regime change. Robin Cook's account ignores the dynamics of the international confrontation that was set in motion. As we shall see, there was a real opportunity for Iraq to avoid war.

As a result of Blair's influence, contrary to expectations and against the strenuous objections of some of his key advisers, President Bush took the matter of Iraq to the United Nations. This was a remarkable achievement for Tony Blair. Bush's speech to the UN General Assembly was an extraordinary *tour de force* that bore all the hallmarks of Tony Blair's influence. First, Bush surprised his audience by announcing that the United States would rejoin UNESCO. Having reaffirmed the importance of the United Nations for the international system, Bush went on to deliver a systematic account of Iraq's crimes and its defiance of the United Nations. Relentlessly and meticulously, he built up the case for action. He left no doubt that Iraq's failure to abide by its obligations to destroy its WMD under the Gulf War ceasefire agreement and a succession of UNSC resolutions since had to be dealt with. But weapons of mass destruction were only part of the argument. Iraq's WMD were so dangerous precisely because Iraq threatened its neighbours and brutally suppressed its own population. Later commentators frequently alleged that the justifications for military action constantly shifted. The Bush speech proves the opposite. The US President delivered a set of comprehensive demands that Iraq would have to fulfil. Apart from the destruction of nuclear, biological, chemical capabilities, and ballistic missiles, these included:

- ending support for terrorism and actions to suppress it;
- ending the persecution of Iraq's own civilian population, including Sh'ias, Sunnis, Kurds, Turkomans, and others;

¹⁹ Robin Cook, *Point of Departure* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003); John Kampfner, *Blair's Wars* (London: Free Press, 2003).

- accounting for all Gulf War personnel whose fate remained unknown;
- ending all illicit trade outside the oil-for-food programme and accepting UN administrations of the funds of that programme.

Bush expressed clear support for the goal of liberty for Iraq:

Liberty for the Iraqi people is a great moral cause, and a great strategic goal. The people of Iraq deserve it; the security of all nations requires it. Free societies do not intimidate through cruelty and conquest, and open societies do not threaten the world with mass murder. The United States supports political and economic liberty in a unified Iraq.²⁰

Bush challenged the United Nations to deal with Iraq and enforce its own resolutions. It was abundantly clear from the outset that the goals enunciated in his speech were highly unlikely to be achievable without regime change in Iraq. Regime change, however, was unlikely without the use of force.

Having presented the challenge to the United Nations, the US and British governments now had to fight the battle on two fronts. One was the battle to get support for a UNSC resolution that would provide legitimacy for the confrontation with Iraq. The second was to convince their domestic public of the rightness of their course.

The British government issued two dossiers. One of them set out the evidence about Iraq's "weapons of mass destruction".²¹ The other detailed human rights abuses in Iraq.²² Again, the arguments about Saddam's threat to international security were juxtaposed with the systematic and large-scale violations of human rights by the Iraqi regime. The importance of this linkage was emphasised by the inclusion of the statements about human rights in the dossier on WMD.

Unlike the human rights dossier, the WMD dossier was later the subject of intense controversy, especially as the Iraq Survey Group, which was set up to locate Iraqi WMD in the aftermath of the war, had by the end of September 2003 not located any chemical or biological weapons (the dossier did not claim that Iraq possessed nuclear weapons).²³

On 24 September 2002, Foreign Minister Jack Straw presented the government's case to the House of Commons. He started not with weapons of mass destruction or Iraq's threat to national security, but rather with the crimes and human rights abuses of Saddam Hussein's regime. He made the case that

²⁰ President George W. Bush's remarks at the United Nations General Assembly. <www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/print/20020912-1.html>

²¹ "Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction—The assessment of the British government" (2002).

²² FCO, *Saddam Hussein: Crime and Human Rights Abuses* (2002).

²³ Central Intelligence Agency, statement by David Kay on the interim progress report of the Iraq Survey Group (ISG) (2 October 2003).

organised repression and weapons of mass destruction were an integral part of a system that kept Saddam in power, hinting that the main target of Iraqi WMD was in fact the Iraqi population, a claim that was made more explicit in a later speech. He then went on to a systematic exposition of the government's case, including the failure of containment and the need to actually *use* force, if the threat alone was insufficient to cause Saddam Hussein to comply with the demand of the Security Council to disarm. Straw made no effort to bridge the contradiction between the issue of human rights and the focus on disarmament, a contradiction that had already become apparent in the government's approach.²⁴

The Conservative Party had decided to support the government. Spokesman Michael Ancram said: "Our message to Saddam Hussein today is blunt and simple: 'You have reached the end of the road; destroy your weapons or we will do it for you.'"²⁵

The leader of the Liberal Democrats, Charles Kennedy, questioned the notion of regime change, and supported the Prime Minister in his efforts to invest the United Nations with its proper authority. He advised him to resist American unilateralism and any movement towards precipitate action. He also warned the Prime Minister that Parliament would expect to be consulted prior to the decision to take any action.

UNSCR 1441

The US and British governments went to work to draft a UNSC resolution that would be strong enough to put Iraq under pressure and provide the mandate necessary for any action to enforce it, while at the same time avoid a French or Russian veto. The first draft was agreed on 25 September 2002, after three telephone conversations between Colin Powell and Jack Straw. The key stumbling points were the nature of weapons inspections and the degree of "automaticity" of further action if Iraq did not comply with UN demands.

The unanimous approval of UNSCR 1441 by the Security Council was a triumph for US Secretary of State Colin Powell and British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw. The resolution under Chapter VII of the UN Charter found Iraq in material breach of its obligations under previous resolutions; it gave Iraq one more chance to comply and threatened serious consequences in the event of a failure to do so.

The US and Britain believed that the resolution gave them the authority they needed, because it was deliberately framed so that it would require the UNSC to reconvene in the event of a material breach by Iraq, but did not require another resolution in order to take action. France and Russia,

²⁴ Commons debate on Iraq (24 September 2002), opening statement by Foreign Secretary Jack Straw. <<http://www.fco.gov.uk>>

²⁵ *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 24 September 2002, column 40.

on the other hand, had clearly insisted on not giving automatic authority to take action; hence the ambiguous phrase, “serious consequences”.

Consequently, the strategy embodied in UNSCR 1441 was confused and based on a major miscalculation. The Bush administration believed that Saddam would soon demonstrate non-compliance. True to form, Iraqi defiance of UNSCR 1441 began from day one, albeit in a different form than previously. The full and final “truthful” declaration submitted by Iraq in December was a preposterous document. It denied that Iraq possessed WMD and did not explain the disposition of materials Iraq itself had declared it had before 1998. It was comprised to some extent of a re-edited version of previous declarations submitted prior to 1998. In the words of the UNMOVIC report presented by Hans Blix: “The declaration of 7 December, despite the hopes attached to it and despite its large volume, has not been found to provide new evidence or data that may help to resolve outstanding disarmament issues.”²⁶

As far as the British government was concerned, Iraq was effectively in material breach.

However, Britain and the US clearly wanted a more direct demonstration that Iraq continued to defy the United Nations. UNMOVIC inspectors led by the former Director of the IAEA, Hans Blix, began their inspections in Iraq. The United States was not prepared for Saddam Hussein’s tactics. Unlike in previous inspections, Iraq co-operated reasonably well in providing access to any sites that the inspectors wanted to investigate. The suspect sites, including presidential palaces, were now empty. The “smoking gun” would be practically impossible to find. The concealment was so effective that the only method likely to yield results would be to interview Iraqi scientists, perhaps even to provoke defections. The political problem was that Saddam could mount an effective pretence at compliance, while refusing to co-operate in a meaningful manner.

The determination to find the “smoking gun” was at odds with the way the United States and Britain later explained they understood the mandate of the inspectors. They said that the role of the inspectors was merely to verify the declaration that Iraq had submitted, and not hunt for undeclared weapons or programmes.²⁷

The first hint of smoke came in the form of empty chemical warheads which had been omitted from the declaration. Another tantalizing item was a document on the Iraqi nuclear programme, concealed in a scientist’s home. Even more significant even was the inspection of the Al Samoud 2 missiles

²⁶ UNMOVIC, Twelfth Quarterly Report, UN document S/2003/232 (2003) of 28 February 2003.

²⁷ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, *Memorandum submitted by Olivia Bosch* (former UNSCOM Inspector), June 2003.

which revealed that their range slightly exceeded that permitted. Moreover, the casting chambers at the Al Mamoun facility, which had been reconstituted after having been destroyed by UNSCOM, were judged to be able to produce motors for missiles of ranges well in excess of 150 km. After the exertion of considerable pressure, Iraq started to destroy the Al Samoud 2 missiles on 1 March 2003.

In the meantime, the situation in the UN Security Council had begun to change. After an impassioned statement by the German Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer, at the Munich Defence Conference to the effect that he could not support a war at all, France and Germany consolidated their efforts to prevent war. At the same time, Russia's opposition became more vocal. The destruction of the Al Samoud 2 and Hans Blix's statements to the UNSC were cited as evidence of "progress". The implication was that peaceful disarmament would work, given enough time.

These statements were largely disingenuous. Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, stated that so far Iraq had done everything that had been asked of it. The UNMOVIC report stated that Iraq had co-operated as far as the *process* was concerned, with some significant exceptions (the most important of which was the failure to permit unsupervised interviews with Iraqi scientists). But it was also quite clear that there was an almost complete lack of co-operation in terms of *substance*, to the extent that the report stated: "The results in terms of disarmament have been very limited so far".²⁸

The inspectors carried out 550 inspections, albeit only a tiny number (44) at so-called "new" sites. But this activity had not produced a single weapon of mass destruction, or a single piece of evidence about the fate of the stockpiles and precursor materials. The underlying reality was that Iraq persisted in its implausible story. All of the concessions and co-operation were marginal. Britain and the United States took this to mean that Iraq continued to be in material breach.

The French and Russian approach turned the intent of UNSCR 1441 on its head. The smoking gun, the material breach would now not be evidence of Iraq's defiance, but of the successful work of the inspectors. The more the inspectors discovered, the more it would be proof that disarmament was working and the more secure Saddam's regime would be. Consequently, France decided resolutely to refuse to declare Iraq in material breach under any circumstances.

The paradox was that US and British policy became a victim of its success. Despite the absence of a smoking gun, there was a consensus in the Security Council that Iraq had to be disarmed. The difference of opinion was now on whether this could be done using the inspections.

²⁸ UNMOVIC, Twelfth Quarterly Report, UN document S/2003/232 (2003) of 28 February 2003.

This dilemma was reflected in the political debate in Britain. The Liberal Democrats especially pleaded for the government to give “Hans Blix time to do his work”. Thus, the leader of the Liberal Democrats, Charles Kennedy, wrote in the *Observer*:

Surely, it makes more sense at this juncture to pursue a proven and effective inspection programme as the best means of Iraqi containment, than to hurtle precipitately into full-scale military conflict?²⁹

But containment was precisely not the government’s objective, because, as we have discussed, it did not meet the full scope of its strategic objectives even if it could be implemented effectively. In any case, the inspection programme was not “proven” in any meaningful sense of the word.

For the British government and US administration, inspections were the route to war, unless the Iraqi regime fully complied. For the French government, and for some strands of opinion in Britain, inspections were the route to avoid war. This was an illusion. War could not be avoided because the United States would go to war unless Iraq came unambiguously clean on its WMD programmes and capabilities. There was no realistic prospect for the inspection process to achieve such an outcome.

The diplomatic battle focused around a so-called second resolution to follow on from UNSCR 1441 that would provide new authority for the use of force against Iraq. Initially, the United States and Britain stated that a further resolution was not required. This remained the position until February 2003, when Blair told Bush that his position was becoming untenable without a second resolution. He was under intense pressure from Labour Party backbenchers and the Liberal Democrats who were opposed to military action without specific authorisation from the UNSC. The United States changed its position in order to support its main ally. This shift was also designed to prevent the tabling of a resolution that would have condemned military action against Iraq and rendered any such action illegal.

At the same time, there was a change in France’s position. France was becoming more concerned about the prospects of a showdown in the United Nations and it did not want to be put in the position of casting a veto against the majority opinion of the Security Council. The French ambassador to the United States, Jean-David Levitte, told US Vice-President Dick Cheney to proceed without another resolution. The French advice was that the US interpretation of UNSCR 1441 was sufficient to justify military action and they should rely on this interpretation.³⁰

However, as the United States and Britain continued to press for a second resolution, attitudes hardened, and Germany, Russia, and France united

²⁹ Charles Kennedy, “Military Action in Iraq”, *Observer* (London), 26 January 2003.

³⁰ James P. Rubin, “Stumbling into War”, *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2003),

in the view that the threat was not sufficient to justify an attack on Iraq, and that UNMOVIC inspections were the way to deal with Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programmes. Particularly puzzling was the inability of the Bush administration to win over the Russians. Russian President Putin had told Bush that he would support the war if there was clear evidence of secret WMD (the "smoking gun"), but as the inspections proceeded, the Russian position hardened against military action. This may have been a consequence of the general neglect of US–Russian relations in the Bush administration. Especially in the aftermath of the US abrogation of the ABM Treaty, the anti-American forces in the Russian elite, which include figures like Yevgeny Primakov and Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, appear to have been in the ascendancy. But, as Jack Rubin has pointed out, the Bush administration does not seem to have made a particular effort to woo the Russians with guarantees to safeguard Russia's financial interests in Iraq and such like.³¹

The rather patronising treatment the US administration meted out to Hans Blix and his team also backfired, with Blix going out of his way to assert his independence from Washington and in his report to the UNSC publicly questioning statements US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, had made in his televised presentation of the Iraqi WMD threat.

In order to achieve a second resolution, some substantive compromise would have been necessary. There was a compromise text for a solution that would have had the tacit backing of ten countries and Hans Blix. It would have given Iraq more time (until mid-April) and clear criteria of compliance (including accounting for the stocks of anthrax and VX gas, the destruction of all illegal missiles, and permission to interview Iraqi scientists outside the country). A failure to meet any of the criteria would have constituted material breach and provided authority for the use of force.³² On 12 March 2003, Tony Blair proposed six such "benchmark tests" for Iraq, to be included in a draft resolution. The British government was prepared to accept such a compromise, but the Bush administration was cagey about the benchmarks and was not prepared to grant more time.

As the deadline came closer, the question whether to continue to go for a second resolution or not became more pressing, and the British government had to consider its position in the event that the resolution was vetoed. Earlier, when questioned by Jeremy Paxman, Tony Blair refused to give an assurance that, if there was a veto for a second resolution, he would consider it binding; and he introduced the concept of an "unreasonable" veto:

pp.1-11, p. 5.

³¹ Rubin, *ibid.*

³² Rubin, *ibid.*, p.6.

...supposing in circumstances where there was a clear breach of Resolution 1441 and everyone else wished to take action, one of the members put down a veto. In those circumstances it would be unreasonable. Then it would be wrong because otherwise you couldn't uphold the UN. Because you'd have passed your Resolution and then you'd have failed to act on it.³³

Needless to say, this “innovative” approach to international law was widely criticised.

Just as Britain was desperate to avoid a veto of the second resolution, France wanted to avoid casting such a veto if it was in a minority on the UNSC. French Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin, went on a much-criticised trip to Africa to get support for French opposition to the US, while Bush and Powell stayed at home and worked the phones without success. Chirac made a counterproposal to the British proposal, which would have involved a 30-day timetable with a weaker version of the British criteria of non-compliance. By this time the Bush administration was no longer prepared to make compromises to win over the French.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the unenviable position in which the United States and Britain found themselves might have been avoided. In the words of Jack Rubin:

It is true, then, that France's opposition made passage of a second resolution impossible. But it is also true that the United States' failure to lay the diplomatic groundwork and offer modest compromises made achieving even a moral majority on the council impossible.³⁴

At the same time, it is important to note that there is no reason to believe that any of the proposed offers to Saddam Hussein to clarify the modalities of “the final opportunity” would have resulted in the avoidance of war. Even if the pleas to give Hans Blix and UNMOVIC more time had been heeded, the end result would have been the same.³⁵ This was especially the case as the French threat to veto any resolution, no matter what its text, was perceived to effectively remove the imminent threat of the use of force, which was the only thing that had so far compelled Saddam to provide some limited co-operation. However, the political position of the US and the United Kingdom might have been very different if they had compromised on this point. On 17 March 2003, the US, UK, and Spain withdrew their proposed UN Security Council draft resolution on Iraq and criticised France for threatening to veto it.

On 17 March 2003, President George W. Bush issued an ultimatum to Saddam Hussein and his sons to leave Iraq within 48 hours or face military

³³ “Newsnight”, 6 February 2003

³⁴ Rubin, “Stumbling into war”, p.6.

³⁵ This is true especially in the light of the failure of the Iraq Survey Group to find any WMD after the war.

conflict. As the conflict was imminent, the tensions within the British cabinet were beginning to show. On 9 March, Overseas Development Secretary, Clare Short, declared her intention to resign if Britain participated in a war without UN backing, but was persuaded to stay on. The Leader of the House of Commons, Robin Cook, resigned on 17 March, revealing his disagreement with the government's policy on Iraq. On 18 March, the House of Commons debated the impending conflict in Iraq. The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, won parliamentary approval for the participation of British troops in a war against Iraq when an amendment proposed by Labour dissidents was voted down by 396 to 217, with about 140 members of the Labour Party voting against the war.

The Nature of the Iraqi Threat

In order to assess the British decision to join in the war against Iraq, it is critical to understand how the British government perceived the threat posed by Iraq. One of the remarkable features of the case the British government made in favour of action against Iraq is the cognitive disconnect with regard to the alleged threat that the Iraqi regime posed. Contrary to widespread belief, the British government never claimed that Iraq represented an imminent threat against the United Kingdom. Nor did it claim that Iraq was an imminent threat against anyone except the Iraqi people.

Much public debate focused on a statement in the dossier on WMD issued by the government to the effect that Saddam Hussein's "military planning allows for some of the WMD to be ready within 45 minutes of an order to use them".³⁶ It was later asserted by various commentators that this claim was a central element in the case the government made for the need for urgent action against Iraq and was designed to give the impression of an imminent threat. However, the overall tone and content of government statements on the Iraqi threat was measured and did not claim any imminent threat. On the face of it, the statement could be simply designed to emphasize that Iraq had the capability to rapidly deploy biological and chemical weapons and that Iraq's capability was not just hypothetical. It did not say or imply that an Iraqi attack was imminent. The public controversy arose from a report by the BBC reporter, Andrew Gilligan, that "a senior member of British intelligence" cast doubt on the 45-minute claim, saying that it was based on just a single source and that it was included in the dossier by the Prime Minister's spokesman, Alistair Campbell, "to sex up" the dossier. The source turned out to be a government scientist in the Ministry of Defence, David Kelly, who committed suicide after giving testimony to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee and the public revelation by the

³⁶ "Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction—The assessment of the British government", Foreword by the Prime Minister, p.7.

Ministry of Defence that he was Gilligan's source. Three different enquiries took place in the context of this public controversy that revealed a great deal of information about the British government's threat assessment: the enquiry by the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, the enquiry by the House of Commons Intelligence and Security Committee, and the Hutton enquiry set up to investigate the circumstances surrounding the suicide of Dr Kelly. The information revealed during the Hutton enquiry established that the core of Gilligan's story, namely, that the 45-minute claim was included in the dossier at the behest of Alistair Campbell, was false. The report of the Intelligence and Security Committee confirmed that the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) had determined in its assessment on 9 September 2002 that Iraq could deploy munitions with biological and chemical weapons within a time of between 20-45 minutes. The Iraqi source on which this assessment was based stated that the average time of deployment was 20 minutes and 45 minutes was considered the maximum. An analysis of the intelligence shows that both the JIC assessment and the dossier erred on the side of caution. The committee took the view that the government was right in considering the intelligence reliable, even though it was only based on a single source. This was partly based on the assessment that it did not add anything to what was already known from previous intelligence regarding the Iraqi capability to rapidly deploy biological and chemical weapons. Ultimately, it simply reflected the belief that Iraq had biological and chemical munitions that were ready for deployment in combat.

The Prime Minister's introduction to the WMD dossier also stated that the threat from Saddam Hussein "is serious and current".³⁷ This formulation was as strong a statement as Tony Blair felt he could make, but it fell clearly and deliberately short of the claim that there was an "imminent threat".

Indeed, speeches by the Prime Minister and Jack Straw were generally very vague about the threat in the sense that they do not identify any specific targets of the threat or describe threat scenarios. For example, in his speech at the Royal Institute of International Affairs on 21 February 2003, Jack Straw identified the WMD as a threat primarily to the Iraqi people:

Recent intelligence shows that Saddam's military plans envisage using chemical and biological weapons against a range of targets, including his own Shia population. Some of these weapons are deployable within 45 minutes of an order to use them. During the Cold War, people in Britain had to become inured to the everyday possibility of annihilation. Imagine the effect on the

³⁷ Ibid., p.3.

public psyche if this threat came not from an external adversary, but from one's own government.³⁸

Nevertheless, sifting through various public statements a comprehensive analysis of the threat does emerge.

The first element of the threat consisted in Saddam Hussein's propensity for aggression. In Tony Blair's words, "He has twice before started wars of aggression. Over one million people died in them."

The second element was that Saddam Hussein possessed WMD, had programmes to develop WMD, and had used WMD against sections of his own population.

Uniquely Saddam has used these weapons against his own people, the Iraqi Kurds. Scores of towns and villages were attacked. Iraqi military officials dressed in full protection gear were used to witness the attacks and visited later to assess the damage. Wounded civilians were normally shot on the scene. In one attack alone, on the city of Halabja, it is estimated that 5,000 were murdered and 9,000 wounded in this way. All in all in the North around 100,000 Kurds died, according to Amnesty International. In the destruction of the marshlands in Southern Iraq, around 200,000 people were forcibly removed. Many died.

The reason why Saddam's regime represented a unique danger was that it seemed to recognise no norms or restraints, other than those imposed by military force.

Finally, there was the threat of terrorism. The British government was very careful not to claim the existence of any links between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda. But Tony Blair clearly expressed the view that, at some point in the future, states that develop WMD and terrorists might work together.³⁹

As a result of the enquiry conducted by the House Commons Intelligence and Security Committee, a summary of the intelligence on Iraqi WMD that was available to the government prior to the war has been published. The Joint Intelligence Committee had concluded in the assessments from 1999 to September 2002 that Iraq:

retained a limited amount of chemical and biological weapons and up to 20 al Hussein missiles (range 650km) from 1991;
 had a chemical and biological weapons capability;
 had the capability and facilities to produce ballistic missiles.
 There was a successful programme to produce ballistic missiles in excess of the UNSCR 687 range limit (150km) and missiles were manufactured. However, intelligence suggested that the Iraqis had not yet developed chemical and biological warheads for these new missiles and it would take six

³⁸ Jack Straw, "Reintegrating Iraq into the International Community is a Cause with Compelling Moral Force" (21 February 2003), RIIA, London.

³⁹ The Prime Minister, House of Commons, 18 March 2003.

months to overcome the “technical difficulties”; and did not have nuclear weapons capability. It had a programme to develop the capability above its 1990 knowledge and was intent on sourcing the necessary raw materials.⁴⁰

As for the weapons systems that would be capable of delivering chemical and biological weapons, they included free-fall bombs for aircraft, helicopters, and aircraft sprayers, ballistic missiles (al Hussein with a range of 650 km, and the al Samoud/Abahil with a range of 150 km plus), L-29 remote-piloted vehicles, and artillery shells and rockets with a maximum range of 25 km.⁴¹

The assessments made it clear that Iraq probably did not have chemical or biological weapons for the al Samoud/Ababil missiles and the operability of the al Hussein was uncertain. Artillery and short-range rockets were the most likely weapons used to deliver chemical and biological munitions against Western forces. These were described by the Intelligence and Security Committee as “battlefield” and not “strategic weapons”.⁴²

The concept of “strategic weapons” was not defined in the Committee’s reports, but the term is usually related to the range of weapons and the capacity to attack the heartland of the opponent. The Joint Intelligence Committee assessed that Iraqis could use chemical and biological weapons against neighbouring states or Western forces. A “strategic use” was, by implication, clearly possible if the Allies no longer patrolled the non-fly zone.⁴³

There is no question that, at the time, Iraq’s capabilities to deliver chemical and biological weapons were limited to attacks in the region. The Intelligence and Security Committee criticized the government’s dossier for not pointing out that the so-called “45-minute claim” only related to battlefield and not to strategic weapons. But other than that, it confirmed that the dossier’s account of Iraqi WMD conformed to the intelligence assessments.⁴⁴ As we have seen above, an analysis of Blair’s and Straw’s public speeches shows that their description of the threat was in conformity with this rather restricted assessment of the threat.

In addition to weapons ready for deployment, there was the question of biological and chemical materials that could be weaponised in future. The

⁴⁰ Intelligence and Security Committee, “Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction—Intelligence and Assessments”, Cmnd. 5972, p.15.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.17

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Robin Cook claimed in his memoirs that Tony Blair did not believe that Iraq had “strategic weapons”, capable of delivering WMD. He is correct, but he is demolishing a “straw man”, in so far as Blair never claimed that Iraq had such weapons. (*Sunday Times*, 5 October 2003) The article in the *Sunday Times* had the totally misleading headline ‘Blair “knew Iraq had no WMD”’.

⁴⁴ The Committee also criticized the fact that a statement which asserted that Iraq could not launch a nuclear strike against the United Kingdom was removed from the dossier, because it would have clarified the limited nature of the threat (p. 26).

WMD dossier stated that Iraq had produced at least 8,500 litres of anthrax by 1991, and listed various other biological agents. It also referred to 2,850 tonnes of mustard gas, 210 tonnes of tabun, 795 tonnes of sarin and cyclosarin, and 3.9 tonnes of VX. Any threat assessment was complicated by uncertainties about how much of these stocks were still in existence. Some of these materials might have become unusable with the passage of time. Iraq had claimed at various times that stocks were destroyed unilaterally, but these claims had to be treated with caution because they were part of the effort to conceal its activities from UNSCOM. Significant amounts of chemical weapons material and precursors were destroyed by UN inspectors. Any assessment of materials retained therefore involved a considerable degree of uncertainty. Blair frequently referred to the 8,500 litres of anthrax, and according to UN inspectors, Iraq could have retained up to 10,000 litres of anthrax and associated production capacities.⁴⁵ The Joint Intelligence Committee had evidence that five tonnes of VX had been produced in 1998 and 20-30 tonnes of biological agent had been produced in 1997-98.⁴⁶ However, the Committee concluded: "The JIC could not quantify the amounts of chemical or biological agents and weapons produced within the assessments because there was insufficient intelligence on production amounts and weapon quantities."⁴⁷

From what was known at the time, there was a reasonable presumption that Iraq retained considerable stocks of materials and production capabilities. The degree of certainty (or uncertainty) of these assessments was hard to convey in simple sound bites, and it might be argued that the impression was created that Iraq definitely possessed 8,500 litres of anthrax and various stocks of chemical weapons. But the statements made by Blair did not say that, and the uncertainty was conveyed by his demand that Saddam Hussein account for the materials and provide evidence for any claim relating to the destruction of WMD materials and precursors.⁴⁸

A critical element of the British government's threat analysis was that containment was not a plausible long-term strategy to deal with Saddam's regime.

People say: but containment has worked. Only up to a point. In truth, sanctions are eroding. He now gets around \$3 billion through illicit trading every year. It is unaccounted for, but almost certainly used for his weapons programmes. Every day this year and for years, British and American pilots risk their lives to police the No-Fly Zones. But it can't go on forever. For years when the weapons inspectors were in Iraq, Saddam lied, concealed, obstructed and harassed them. For the last four years there have been no

⁴⁵ *Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction—a Net Assessment* (London: IISS, 2002), pp.37-8.

⁴⁶ Intelligence and Security Committee, "Iraqi WMD", p. 20.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Statement by the Prime Minister, 25 February 2003.

inspections, no monitoring, despite constant pleas and months of negotiating with the UN. In July, Kofi Annan ended his personal involvement in talks because of Iraqi intransigence.⁴⁹ The point here is clear: The increasing ability of Saddam to obtain financial resources despite the sanctions, coupled with the absence of any UN controls over the WMD and ballistic missile programmes since 1998 meant that the threat would grow to a level when Saddam would represent a real and imminent danger.

The threat emanating from Iraq rested not so much on Iraq's present capabilities, even though they were considered to constitute an unacceptable risk. It rested on an analysis of Saddam's strategic goals, his propensity for aggression, and the future capability he was likely to acquire as containment eroded. In particular, it was considered to be dangerous for someone who completely lacked any sense of restraint, norms, or proportionality to be in possession of such lethal weapons, which at some future point might come into the possession of terrorists.⁵⁰

It is also important to reiterate that, according to the government, the threat posed by Iraq was not one to the United Kingdom homeland, although this might be the case in the future if the regime succeeded in advancing its ballistic missile programme and either developed or somehow obtained the technology to construct longer range missiles. But the government depicted mostly a threat to the region. However, given the British involvement in the Middle East, such a threat would affect the United Kingdom and British interests.

The obvious question is why this emerging threat had to be dealt with at this time and why it was so urgent. The stock answer that government representatives gave was that the conflict with Iraq over WMD had already gone on for 12 years, and that this was the end of the line. The underlying reasons were threefold: first of all, Saddam continued to defy UNSCRs under Chapter VII and there was a case at least for engaging in an effort to compel

⁴⁹ Prime Minister's speech to the Labour Party Conference in Blackpool, 10 September 2002.

⁵⁰ This point is made by Pollack, who argues that the sheer recklessness of Saddam Hussein and his inability to calculate the costs of his actions, as evidenced by his previous use of chemical weapons and the igniting of the Kuwaiti oilfields even though the Iraqi retreat had become inevitable, shows the danger of relying on deterrence. Khidhir Hamza, an exiled Iraqi scientist who was involved in the Iraqi nuclear weapons programme, stated his conviction that if Saddam Hussein ever acquired nuclear weapons, he would definitely use them. See Khidhir Hamza, *Saddam's Bombmaker* (New York: Touchstone, 2000). By contrast, Keyser et al., *War with Iraq*, argue, in effect, that Saddam's recklessness was so dangerous that it should already deter the US from military action. Paul Rogers likewise argued that war against Iraq was too dangerous because Iraq would use chemical and biological weapons in any conflict. See Paul Rogers, *Iraq: Consequences of a War* (Oxford: Oxford Research Group Briefing Paper, 2002).

him to comply and not to permit this defiance to continue. Once the challenge to Saddam had been made, the international community had the choice of either seeing it through—and that almost certainly would mean to make good on the threat of the use force—or lose for good all credibility and the capacity to enforce Iraqi disarmament. Jack Straw made this point during the House of Commons debate on 18 March 2003:

The United Nations embraced that invitation, and what it agreed—which was encapsulated in 1441—was not containment but a realisation that containment and the exhortation of Saddam Hussein had run their course and had failed. In their place, there was a new strategy for the active disarmament of the regime, backed by a credible threat of force—a threat that, if it is to be credible, has to involve the actual use of force if and when the threat itself has failed to work. As Sir Jeremy Greenstock told the Security Council when resolution 1441 was passed, there was indeed “no automaticity” about the use of force: it was entirely conditional on Saddam Hussein’s compliance or otherwise with the resolution. In the debate today, some have said that we should have shown more flexibility and offered more time. We did both. We offered great flexibility and clarity about the terms of the ultimatum, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister spelled out. We also said—I said—to our five permanent colleagues that if the only issue between us and them over the ultimatum was more time than the 10 days that we had allowed, of course we could negotiate more time. But no country that has asked for more time has been prepared to say how much more time should be allowed before time runs out. None of them is prepared to issue an ultimatum. In reality, they are not asking for more time. They are asking for time without end. The fact is this: Saddam will not disarm peacefully. We can take 12 more days, 12 more weeks, or 12 more years, but he will not disarm. We have no need to stare into the crystal ball for this. We know it from the book—from his record. So we are faced with a choice. Either we leave Saddam where he is, armed and emboldened, an even bigger threat to his country, his region and international peace and security, or we disarm him by force.⁵¹

Secondly, there now existed the political will to deal with this matter effectively. This had not been the case in the past and might not be the case in the future, and there was no doubt that one could not wait for Saddam’s plans with regard to WMD and ballistic missiles to come to fruition. Thirdly, not to act now meant to prolong containment for an indefinite period of time, thereby allowing the suffering of the Iraqi people to continue. While the threat of Iraqi external aggression was not imminent, the terror faced by the Iraqi people continued unabated.

Despite the strenuous effort by members of the government to convey its perception of the threat, an extraordinary cognitive dissonance developed. Even such experienced politicians as Menzies Campbell and Peter

⁵¹ *Hansard*, 18 March 2003, column 901-2.

Kilfoyle stated, inaccurately, that the government had claimed Iraq represented an imminent threat to the United Kingdom, a perception that was widely shared throughout the country. There are several factors that can explain this cognitive dissonance. The first is the complexity of the government's case that defied simple sound bites. It was alleged at various times, that the government shifted from one justification for the war to another. However, an analysis of speeches given by Tony Blair and Jack Straw show a great deal of consistency over the year in the run-up to the war and almost invariably presented the whole spectrum of arguments and how they were linked. The second is that the public statements of the US administration had a different slant, stretching the evidence to emphasize the imminence of the threat and seeking to establish a link between the Iraqi regime and Al Qaeda. The third was that there was a contradiction between the diplomatic strategy adopted and the analysis of the threat and the strategic objectives that were derived from this analysis. Both the US administration and the British government were convinced that the threat could not be dealt with through a diplomatic settlement. In the first place, they did not believe that compliance with UNSC resolutions could be achieved through diplomacy. But even if an agreement were to be reached and Iraq disarmed peacefully, the extensive experience with Saddam Hussein over decades made it clear that there was a high probability that such an agreement would be violated in due course and Iraq would resume clandestine WMD programmes.

The most problematic aspect of any prospective agreement with Iraq was that if Iraq was declared to be in compliance with UNSC resolutions, sanctions would have to be lifted. This would provide Saddam Hussein with substantial resources to restart his military programmes. Such an agreement would therefore just initiate another round in the struggle with Saddam Hussein and would require the continued use of force to police the agreement and contain Iraq. Moreover, such an agreement would not achieve the full range of the strategic objectives. If, as the British government had stated, the threat of the Iraqi regime was primarily a threat to the Iraqi population, this would not be addressed by an agreement on disarmament. Moreover, the Iraqi people would be condemned to suffer the appalling treatment it received from the regime for an indefinite period of time. Tony Blair did support the argument in favour of regime change, but in the subsequent political debate, this element was downplayed as it was emphasised that Saddam Hussein was to be given a last chance, even though Blair admitted that this would fail to address the problem. The government adopted such an ambiguous position only because it believed that otherwise support from the UNSC would not be obtainable, and it was convinced that the bluff would not be called. However, this approach introduced an element of confusion into the arguments presented to its domestic constituency from which it was seeking support for the action it was about to take.

There is no doubt that the British government was convinced that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. In the light of the failure of the Iraq Survey Group (ISG) to find any weapons of mass destruction after the war, it is a legitimate question to ask whether the intelligence assessments prior to the war were fundamentally mistaken. The interim report of the ISG published on 2 October 2003 stated that its work had not reached the point where it could definitely be said whether weapons stocks existed prior to the war or not.⁵² Clearly, the Iraqi regime behaved as if it had something to hide. It presented a dossier that did not answer any of the questions. It failed to cooperate on *substance* and incurred the anger of the United States and the displeasure of UNMOVIC by refusing to give unrestricted access to its scientists. Given the risks that such behaviour entailed, it needs to be explained why the Iraqi regime acted in this manner if there was nothing to conceal. The ISG reported evidence of hitherto unknown biological weapons programmes and efforts to obtain technology for ballistic missiles with greater range. However, the true nature of Iraqi WMD capabilities still remains to be determined.

A Humanitarian Intervention?

Contrary to widespread belief, the totalitarian and tyrannical nature of Saddam Hussein's regime and its systematic violation of human rights were central to the British government's case for military action from the very beginning. It was intrinsically linked with the justification for war in two ways: first of all, it was an element of the threat to be addressed, because the threat was also against the Iraqi population itself (especially population groups of different ethnic or religious affiliation than Arab Sunnis). Moreover, there was a causal relationship between the nature of the regime and its threat to international security. The continuous persistence of an external threat was a major factor that underpinned Saddam's rule and justified the oppression of his people. The corollary was that Saddam was actively seeking conflict with other states, an interpretation that had been borne out throughout the entire period of his rule. It meant that the confrontation with the United Nations, with armed forces provided by the United States and Britain, was an essential pillar of Saddam's continued hold on power.

The second link between the Iraqi regime's violations of human rights and the justification for the use of force was that it decided the issue of proportionality. In his exposition of Saddam Hussein's crimes, Tony Blair

⁵² Central Intelligence Agency, statement by David Kay on "The Interim Progress Report on The Activities of The Iraq Survey Group (ISG)", before the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, The House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Defense, and The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

stated that the regime had been responsible for killing about one million people during the war with Iran, and had itself killed about 100,000 Kurds in the north; and large numbers also died when 200,000 people were forcibly removed during the destruction of the southern marshlands. The Human Rights dossier published by the government detailed the systematic human rights' abuses of the regime that had also been reported by Amnesty International, other organisations, and individual witnesses. These included systematic torture, murder, rape as an instrument of social control, and arbitrary imprisonment. What distinguished the Iraqi regime was the sheer scale of these atrocities which amounted to a veritable holocaust of proportions that dwarfed the crimes of the Khmer Rouge or Milosevic. To leave the regime in place meant to permit these crimes against humanity to continue.

Another element of the humanitarian disaster in Iraq was the consequences of sanctions. Estimates of the number of deaths due to the shortages in food, medicine, and other essential supplies vary substantially, but are generally believed to be in excess of 100,000.⁵³ The situation improved due to the oil-for-food programme, but the lack of co-operation of the Iraqi regime and its appropriation of resources generated by oil sales mean that the continuation of a sanctions regime would perpetuate the suffering of ordinary Iraqis. The British government was understandably very circumspect about the issue of sanctions since it had a direct responsibility for their imposition and therefore an indirect responsibility for the suffering of the Iraqi people. But it was evident that the continuation of containment would impose a heavy price on the Iraqi people. Blair stated that, "Thousands of children die needlessly every year from lack of food and medicine".⁵⁴

The argument about proportionality went like this: the scale of human suffering caused by the Iraqi regime in the past and that it was likely to cause in the future, if left in place, was such that it dwarfed the likely human cost of military action to remove the regime. Of course, assessing the proportionality of military action is not an exact science. Wars are unpredictable. To satisfy the criterion of proportionality, the best one can ask for is a reasonable assessment of likely outcomes on the basis of available information.

Opponents of the war generally focused on what they considered to be the likely human cost of war. Not surprisingly, their estimates differed by several orders of magnitude from those that were mooted by expert military analysts.⁵⁵ But they generally ignored the question of the human cost of *not*

⁵³ See note 13

⁵⁴ Prime Minister Blair's speech in the House of Commons, 18 March 2003.

⁵⁵ Michael O'Hanlon estimated that the US armed forces would suffer between 100 and 5000 casualties (he considered the lower figure more likely), and Iraqi armed forces between 2,000 and 5,000. He also speculated that tens of thousands of civilians might die, but did not support this latter claim with any analysis. Michael

going to war.⁵⁶ The need to consider not only the consequences of war, but also the consequences of taking no action was emphasized by Tony Blair:

We must face the consequences of the actions we advocate. For me, that means all the dangers of war. But for others, opposed to this course, it means—let us be clear—that the Iraqi people, whose only true hope of liberation lies in the removal of Saddam, for them, the darkness will close back over them again; and he will be free to take his revenge upon those he must know wish him gone.⁵⁷

Why did the government not avoid the ambiguities in its case for military action and advocate a humanitarian intervention? Humanitarian intervention can be defined as the military intervention in a state without the approval of its authorities, in order to prevent substantial suffering or death of its inhabitants.⁵⁸ There has been no general acceptance of the principle of “humanitarian intervention” as it violates (by definition) the principle of non-intervention, one of the central principles of international law. However, as Adam Roberts has pointed out: “... even the stoutest defender of non-intervention must concede a weakness. Can that rule really apply when the situation of the moral conscience of mankind is affronted? What is the ethical or logical foundation of the rule that makes it so rigid, so uncomprehending of misery, that it cannot allow for exceptions? One might even say that if a coherent philosophy of humanitarian intervention were developed, it could have the potential to save the non-intervention rule from its own logical absurdities and occasional inhumanities.”⁵⁹

O’Hanlon, “Estimating Casualties in a War to Overthrow Saddam Hussein”, *Orbis* (Winter 2003), p.21-40; Pollack estimated 500-1,000 US combat deaths, and suggested Iraqi military and civilian deaths might be of the order of 10,000-30,000. (Pollack, *Storm*, p.352) Anti-war activists generally claimed casualties would be of the order of hundreds of thousands, or even millions. One difficulty in assessing the argument of proportionality is the failure of either the US or British governments to publish any estimates of casualties.

⁵⁶ See for example the article by the Bishop of Oxford, Richard Harries, which said absolutely nothing about the humanitarian issues (the human costs of not going to war). Richard Harries, “This war would not be a Just War”, *Observer*, 4 August 2002. After the war, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, gave a lecture at Chatham House that was widely quoted in the press as declaring the war unjust, although the text of the lecture did not say so. When asked during a BBC Radio interview, Archbishop Williams did not give clear response to the question of whether the Iraq war was just. This part of the interview was never broadcast because Lambeth Palace protested that the interview was not supposed to be about the war.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Adam Roberts, *Humanitarian Action in War*, Adelphi Paper 305, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.19.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.20.

Since early 1991, there have been nine cases in which the United Nations Security Council has cited humanitarian reasons as a basis for military actions. In four cases (Northern Iraq, Somalia, Haiti, and Kosovo), military action was undertaken without the approval of the government of the state concerned, justified largely on humanitarian grounds. In two of these cases (Iraq and Kosovo), there was no explicit authority from the UNSC.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the legal basis of humanitarian interventions remains controversial. One of the issues that surfaced at various times during the public debate was: Why Iraq? Why not Iran, North Korea, or Zimbabwe? One obvious answer is that the means to solve all the problems of the world do not exist. But the question deserves a more complete answer. What made the case of Iraq unique in the view of the British government was that there were no soft power or diplomatic options left *vis-à-vis* Iraq, and the calculation of proportionality strongly favoured military action compared with continuing the existing policy, whereas in the case of North Korea for example any analysis of proportionality would strongly indicate that military action would have unacceptable consequences. Clearly, in every case the appropriateness of the means to deal with human rights violations have to be considered carefully; in the case of Iraq, the judgement was made that military action was appropriate and that there were no other means available to end the suffering of the Iraqi people.

In principle, the United States and Britain could have asked the United Nations to take action against Iraq on humanitarian grounds, and such a call for action was contained in President Bush's speech to the UN General Assembly. However, the judgement was evidently made that the UNSC was unlikely to sanction military action against Iraq on humanitarian grounds. On the other hand, since Chapter VII resolutions for action against Iraq were already in place in relation to Iraq's obligation under the 1991 ceasefire, there was a promising route to pursue action against Iraq on grounds for which an international consensus might be achievable, given that the UNSC had already determined what Iraq's obligations were, and all that needed to be done was to ask the UNSC to enforce its own resolutions. This does not mean, however, that a good case for action against the Iraqi regime on humanitarian grounds could not have been made. It needs to be noted that the humanitarian arguments were central to the British government's justification for military action against Iraq.

Was the War Illegal?

It is frequently asserted that the war against Iraq was illegal. The reasons commonly cited are that it was not a case of self-defence against an armed

⁶⁰ Adam Roberts, "Law and the Use of Force after Iraq", *Survival*, vol.45, no.2 (Summer 2003), pp. 31-56, p.19.

attack by Iraq and there was no specific UNSC authorisation. The argument is made that the threat of “serious consequences” contained in UNSCR 1441 falls short of an unambiguous authority to use force.⁶¹ Most of the critics have failed to address the substantive legal case that the government made and presented in the United Nations. Indeed, there continues to be very little public awareness of the legal basis on which Britain went to war. It is therefore worth quoting the letter from the US Ambassador to the UN:

The actions being taken are authorized under existing Council resolutions, including its resolutions 678 (1990) and 687 (1991). Resolution 687 (1991) imposed a series of obligations on Iraq, including, most importantly, extensive disarmament obligations, that were conditions of the ceasefire established under it. It has long been recognized and understood that a material breach of these obligations removes the basis of the ceasefire and revives the authority to use force under resolution 678 (1990). This has been the basis for coalition use of force in the past and has been accepted by the Council, as evidenced, for example, by the Secretary-General’s public announcement in January 1993 following Iraq’s material breach of resolution 687 (1991) that coalition forces had received a mandate from the Council to use force according to resolution 678 (1990).⁶²

Adam Roberts had commented that the “argument that past Security Council resolutions provide a continuing, or revived, authority to use force, in a different situation and a dozen years after they were passed may seem torturous, but an examination of their terms suggests that it has substance.”⁶³ UNSCR 678 (1990), adopted in response to Iraq’s occupation of Kuwait, provided authorization for a wide range of measures, not only to implement resolutions concerning Kuwait, but also “to restore international peace and security in the area”. UNSCR 687 (1991) spelt out the terms of the ceasefire in great detail. Subsequently, numerous UNSC resolutions determined that Iraq was in breach of the terms of the ceasefire. In 1998, when Iraq had ceased co-operation with the UNSCOM inspectors, UNSCR 1205 (1998) condemned Iraq as being in “flagrant violation” of UNSCR 687 and all other relevant resolutions.

If the terms of ceasefire are violated, a case can be made in international law that at some stage force can be used against the violator.⁶⁴ The argument that the authority to use force contained in previous UNSC resolutions continues to apply was used at various times in confrontations with

⁶¹ Sixteen international law teachers wrote to *The Guardian* on 7 March 2003, claiming that military action against Iraq would be unlawful. The letter did not engage substantively with the government’s legal case, which had not been made public at that time.

⁶² Chesterman, *Just War?*, p.201.

⁶³ Roberts, “Law and use of Force”, p.40.

⁶⁴ See *ibid.*, p.42, for more detail.

Iraq in the 1990s. In 1993, UN Secretary-General, Boutros-Ghali, explicitly confirmed that action taken by the United States, Britain, and France against Iraqi missile launchers on 13 January 1993 was taken on the basis of previous UNSC resolutions and conformed to the Charter of the United Nations.⁶⁵ After Iraq ceased its co-operation with UNSCOM, the United States and Britain launched “Operation Desert Fox” against Iraq. These extensive military strikes against Iraq again relied on the authority of past UNSC resolutions.

UNSCR 1441 offered Iraq “a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations” and threatened “serious consequences” in the event that Iraq failed to comply. The resolution was a compromise. It stated clearly that Iraq was in material breach of its obligations under the ceasefire and subsequent UNSC resolutions, and reminded Iraq that the ceasefire had been conditional on Iraq’s acceptance of the provisions of UNSCR 687 (1991). A clear link to previous resolutions that authorized the use of force was thereby established. UNSCR 1441 was formulated deliberately in order to not require a follow-on resolution; it merely required the Security Council to convene immediately if Iraq failed to comply fully. It has been argued that the ambiguity about the consequences of failure to comply means that UNSCR 1441 does not provide a clear authorisation to use force. However, as Adam Roberts has pointed out, “it did not weaken any authorisation based on earlier resolutions.”⁶⁶ Consequently, when France declared it would veto any resolution to enforce UNSCR 1441, no matter what its contents, the United States and the United Kingdom derived their authority for action from earlier resolutions.

The legal case made by the US and UK governments is therefore on solid ground. Indeed, the legal case for action in Iraq is considerably stronger than, for example, that advanced for action against Serbia in the Kosovo crisis. It is therefore simplistic to say, without qualification, that the war was illegal. Nevertheless, there are obvious grounds for dissatisfaction. By refusing to support any follow-on resolution, France contradicted its earlier stance when it voted in favour of UNSCR 1441 which implied that action would be taken in the event of non-compliance. Moreover, given that any partial compliance by Iraq in the past had always been extracted by the threat of the use of force, France had effectively removed the means to coerce Saddam to co-operate any further, thereby making it impossible to enforce the whole range of Chapter VII resolutions against Iraq. But the obvious disagreement in the Security Council among the permanent members and the failure to obtain even a majority for a follow-on resolution is obviously unsatisfactory. It reflects to some extent the anxiety about the role of the United States and its doctrine of pre-emption, which many see as undermining the principles of international

⁶⁵ Ibid. See also Chesterman, *Just War?*

⁶⁶ Roberts, “Law and use of Force”, p.41

law. It also reflects the intrusion of domestic politics and national interest in the decision-making process of the UNSCR. In this context, the demands for full new UNSC authority for military action against Iraq may have been asking for too much. There may not yet be a sufficient consensus in the international community on the international order and the use of force against tyrannical states and other humanitarian interventions. The danger of the events of 2003 is that the international consensus on which the international institutions of collective security are based may have been weakened. It is the task of leading nations to rebuild and strengthen them.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the initiative for action against Iraq came from the United States. The British government decided to support the United States in order to persuade that country to go through the United Nations, and to prevent it from drifting into unilateralism, while also attempting to preserve the Western Alliance. The special relationship with the United States had been central to British foreign policy since the Second World War and had gained renewed significance during Blair's premiership. But it was not just a question of blindly following the United States. Blair's public statements and all other information in the public domain gave no reason to doubt that Tony Blair was sincerely convinced that the long-standing confrontation with Iraq needed to be resolved.

Contrary to common perception, the British government was quite consistent in the reasons that it offered for the need to take action against Iraq. It is almost universally believed that the "reason for going to war" was the failure of Iraq to comply with the UNSCRs that required the elimination of its weapons of mass destruction, associated development programmes, and the threat that these weapons represented. The reality is, however, more complex and it is clear that the tyrannical nature of Saddam's regime and its large-scale violations of human rights were an integral factor in the decision to take action against Iraq. In the view of the British government, it shifted the argument of proportionality decisively in favour of military action. Due to the continuing repression and human rights abuses and the indirect association of Western governments with the suffering of the Iraqi people as an unintended consequence of containment, action against Iraq had acquired an urgency that it would not have had on the basis of a security threat.

It is widely asserted that the British government claimed that there was an imminent threat from Iraq. But the government was careful never to make such a claim. On its part, it did not claim that Iraq posed a direct threat to the United Kingdom, nor did it claim that there was a link between Iraq and Al Qaeda. The most urgent threat, based on existing capabilities, was short-range, affecting the people of Iraq (especially Northern Iraq, which was no longer

under Saddam's rule) and neighbouring states. In addition, there was an emerging threat due to the ongoing WMD and ballistic missile development programmes. The judgement, based on Saddam Hussein's regime's past behaviour for over two decades and his strategic goals, was that Iraq would emerge as a major regional and possibly even strategic threat. Moreover, the mere presence of biological and chemical weapons in Iraq meant that there was a distinct possibility that, at some point in the future, some of these weapons could find their way into the hands of terrorists.

Public confusion about war aims was, in part, due to the fact that the diplomacy pursued did not entirely match the strategic objectives. Even though Tony Blair downplayed the issue of regime change in Iraq, it is clear that he had a profound commitment to the removal of the regime of Saddam Hussein for security and humanitarian reasons. Thus, it turned out to be one of the fundamental drivers of his policy towards Iraq.

It is also frequently asserted that the war against Iraq was illegal, since it failed to achieve consensus in the UNSC with regard to a follow-on resolution to UNSCR 1441. However, the US and British governments presented a solid legal case for action in Iraq, based in part on previous authorisation to use force. While somewhat controversial, this case has merit and cannot be easily dismissed.

The fact that the UNSC could not agree on a follow-on resolution to UNSCR 1441 and the deep divisions in the Council on how to deal with Iraq obviously weakened the United Nations. As a collective security organisation and as the source of legitimacy in international law, the UN is weakened not only by actions taken without its authority, but also by the failure to enforce its own resolutions. It is the irony of the Iraq conflict that its purpose supposedly was to enforce Chapter VII UN Security Council resolutions. The conflict with Iraq also raised the question once again of whether the framework of international law—that still in some ways reflects the international system of the Cold War period—is in need of modernisation. It clearly seems to be a weakness of international law that it does not seem to provide a clearer framework for addressing the actions of a regime that, arguably, is the most murderous and oppressive since the end of the Second World War. It seems that the use of force in the context of a humanitarian intervention is an issue on which the international community finds it difficult to reach a consensus, but which in the contemporary era has acquired new significance. One can interpret the British and French attitudes to the Iraq conflict as two alternative approaches to dealing with a global superpower that is sceptical of the United Nations and international regimes and is prepared and has the capability to pursue its security unilaterally. The British approach was predicated on both constraining and legitimizing US policy by channelling it into a process involving the UNSC. The French sought to isolate the United States and prevent it from acting by denying it the legitimacy it asked for. The latter

approach was conceptually unsound, had no chance of success, and ultimately failed. Unfortunately, it also caused the British approach to fail and upset the delicate balance of relations with the US on the one hand and Europe on the other that Blair had tried to construct. None of this means, however, that the standing of the United Nations is permanently damaged, or that Britain's relations with Europe cannot be repaired. It has demonstrated, however, that the United States and the other leading members of the United Nations need to come to a new understanding of how collective security can function in an international system where one state has such a dominant position in terms of both soft and military power.

Ultimately, Britain's decision to participate in the action against Iraq was based on a lack of suitable alternatives. Since the United States was committed to action against Iraq, Britain had to choose whether or not to participate. Letting the US go ahead on its own seemed to be the far less desirable alternative. Assuming that there had been a real choice for Britain about whether or not there would be military action, the only strategic alternative was the continuation of containment. This was deemed unacceptable because of the declining effectiveness of containment as a policy, the inability to disarm Iraq and control its illicit weapons programmes, and the seriously adverse impact it was having on the Iraqi population. Once the UNSC had issued its renewed challenge to Iraq, giving the regime a "final chance" to disarm, war had become practically inevitable. The only alternative was to lose the opportunity for confrontation with Iraq and forego any future possibility of forcing Iraq to disarm and comply with UNSC resolutions. Indeed, in the future any threat of the use of force against Iraq would have had no credibility. Worse still, Saddam Hussein would have clung to power. This was the quandary of any conceivable alternative to war. And that was why Tony Blair led Britain to participate in the war against Iraq. ■

EVOLVING NUCLEAR CONSTRUCTS OF INDO-PAK DÉTENTE

Farah Zahra*

Introduction

Although India and Pakistan have embarked upon a path of establishing peace and stability in the region, they continue to strengthen their military capabilities, as if oblivious of the positive political developments. Alongside these developments, discussions on Nuclear Confidence Building Measures (NCBMs) began last month. Thus, South Asia presents an interesting situation where, despite détente, number of aspects gain significance within the realm of nuclear weapons.

Regarding nuclear weapons, a number of technical stability-enhancing measures such as notification of missile tests, moratorium on testing, non-deployment suggestions, etc., will form part of the series of discussions to be held between India and Pakistan. However, these NCBMs should not delude us into thinking that India and Pakistan can overcome the nuclear risks involved in maintaining and improving their nuclear arsenals by working towards implementation of NCBMs. Both states might move towards a reduction of nuclear risks—though it is debatable whether specific technological CBMs make us safer or more vulnerable—a poor substitute for a larger vision of the future of nuclear weapons. The majority of us may take for granted that “nuclear development is likely to continue in predictable directions in the move towards stable deterrence”.¹

Secondly, the question arises as to what shape a wider, long-term vision of their nuclear arsenals of India and Pakistan might take. As the two begin to mend fences and there seems to be enough goodwill on either side, this may be the right time to set a “preamble” to the NCBMs, not a concretely-defined, highly optimistic vision, yet containing some positive ideas for the future, even outside the confines of “stable deterrence”. There has to be a preamble to the eventual aims of the NCBMs. In formulating such a preamble, we need to factor in two realities: (a) even if the Kashmir dispute is “resolved”, nuclear weapons will still exist in the subcontinent; and (b) the deterrence equation is not static: capabilities and scenarios are changing in the region. A perfect deterrence situation for South Asia perhaps exists only in the realm of dialectical discussions.

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¹ General (ret'd) Jehangir Karamat, Inaugural Address at IPRI seminar in Islamabad on “Arms Race And Nuclear Developments In South Asia”, 20-21 April 2004.

Thirdly, the proposal put forward by India's External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, for a "common nuclear doctrine" received an apt response from the Pakistani Government—neither acceptance nor rejection; Indian analysts predict that the proposal has a shelf life of about two months.² However, Mr Singh's suggestion should be seen as a reiteration by India that its security calculus also includes China, and that India is willing to think in terms of a regional solution (which, for India, also includes China), in contrast to its prior position calling for global solutions.

This article aims to examine NCBMs in the light of the Strategic Restraint Regime (SSR) suggested by Pakistan and the Lahore Memorandum of Understanding signed between India and Pakistan. It will also examine the technological limitations of NCBMs, and consider the role the United States and the international community in managing proliferation in this region. The conclusion includes some suggestions and policy recommendations in view of the three points mentioned above.

Restraint Regime and Stability

Pakistan proposed what it calls the "Strategic Restraint Regime" (SRR) in October 1998, five months after the nuclear test explosions by India and Pakistan. It has since repeatedly presented this proposal to India at different regional and international fora. India has clearly and persistently declined the offer. For Pakistan, there may be little more to this suggestion than maintaining the high moral ground: Repeating it over a prolonged period is not likely to get India to change its mind. India is looking at a much larger canvas as far as its defence requirements go. Pakistan, on the other hand, is vigilant in fulfilling its requirements and making advancements in military technology to match those made by India, to remove any gaps in what it terms the "equilibrium".

Pakistan also keeps India and the international community informed that it is mindful of these gaps (it "will retain the edge"—presumably a reference to Pakistan's nuclear deterrent) and that it does not appreciate India's creating imbalances through defence purchases.³ What this amounts to if not an "arms race" is somewhat confusing since Pakistan maintains that "an arms race is not sustainable by Pakistan".⁴ Finally, Pakistan has enunciated that its "nuclear deterrence level is not static", as the "deterrence level is linked to the Indian

² Raja C. Mohan, statement made during a seminar on "Prospects of peace, stability and prosperity in South Asia" organized by the Institute for Regional Studies, 8 June 2004.

³ Statement by Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesperson, Masood Khan, "Indian arms shopping disturbing peace: FO", *News* (Rawalpindi), 7 October 2003.

⁴ Statement by Pakistan's Foreign Secretary, Riaz Khokhar, "Arms race in South Asia termed economically unsustainable", *Dawn* (Islamabad), 14 November 2003.

threat”⁵. This is also symptomatic of Pakistan’s disarmament policy rhetoric which might now be curtailed, after Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri’s recent call for a “rhetoric restraint regime” for both countries.

Pakistan’s SRR proposal was based on three suggestions: (a) to prevent the accidental use of nuclear weapons; (b) to ensure the lowest possible quantity and quality of nuclear weapons; and (c) to prevent the spread of nuclear-weapons technology.

Some Indian analysts maintain that India needs ICBMs to potentially deter the United States, probably invoking India’s sovereign right to make its security determinations. However, India has shown interest in the first suggestion in the SSR, putting the NCBMs talks on track. The second and third areas are of less significance to India. It has previously aspired to a level of deterrence commensurate with its global status, though it might now be open to further discussions on this issue, given Mr Singh’s statement, proposing a regional nuclear doctrine. On the other hand, proliferation of nuclear technology is something that India has claimed to have effectively controlled in the past and is doing a good job presently. Both of these, therefore, become issues that Pakistan has to contend with, with some possible assistance from India on the second point in, dealing with nuclear restraint.

In order to tackle the issue, Pakistan has suggested five measures within SRR. These are: a moratorium on testing; implementation of non-weaponization and non-deployment; a moratorium on deployment; a moratorium on the deployment of Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD); and an implementation of risk reduction measures. Some of these steps were embodied in the Lahore Memorandum of Understanding, signed between the Foreign Secretaries of India and Pakistan on 21 February 1999.

Lahore MoU and NCBMs

The Lahore MoU laid down a comprehensive set of eight CBMS, mostly nuclear, which have been largely neglected since the MoU was signed on 21 February 1999.

1. The Lahore MoU begins with a pledge for bilateral consultations on security concepts and “nuclear doctrines”. After five years of the tests and four years after the MoU was signed, Pakistan has no official “doctrine” which can be made the basis for official discussions. Some analysts have urged Pakistan to adopt a declaratory doctrine as “fudgy red lines can keep moving further back when it comes to the crunch and in Pakistan’s situation, perhaps a clearly enunciated one-rung escalation ladder—given the prevailing asymmetries—may be more

⁵ Statement by Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri, “Pakistan N-Deterrence level not static: Kasuri London”, *News* (Rawalpindi), 5 November 2003.

useful”.⁶ However, Pakistan’s nuclear doctrine remains conjectural since it is the country’s considered policy *not* to put forward a doctrine. On the other hand, Pakistan has already repeatedly conveyed its reservations about the robust Indian doctrine, which India converted from draft status to an official doctrine in January 2003.⁷

2. The second point deals with advance notification of ballistic missile tests. A strange record exists in this regard. The following is the Pakistani version since April 1999.

India: Three Agni tests were notified, one was not
Four Prithvi tests were notified, six were not
None of the seven Brahmos tests were notified.

Pakistan: Notification of all 13 Hatf, Shaheen and Ghauri tests.⁸

Pakistan accuses India of not abiding by the agreement of prior notification and also feels that India is sticking to the letter and not the spirit of the MoU (since it is not notifying Brahmos tests at all because it is not a “ballistic” missile, but a cruise missile). It may be worth noting here that approximately 50 per cent of the total missile tests conducted by India and Pakistan have been in the last three years.⁹

3. The third point in the MoU deals with a commitment on the national level to undertake measures to reduce the risks of accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons under the respective control of both countries. Both India and Pakistan have in place formalized structures that deal with the command and control of nuclear weapons. Pakistan set up its National Command Authority (NCA) in February 2000 and India set up its NCA three years later, in January 2003.
4. Moratorium on conducting further test explosions: The moratorium on nuclear testing stands while India does not test. According to many analysts, this may also depend on whether America starts retesting and whether India considers its needs for testing fulfilled, both of which are tenuous assumptions.
5. Prevention of incidents at sea was a troublesome area as, occasionally, fishermen stray across assumed boundaries in search of catch and are

⁶ Shireen Mazari, “Pakistan’s Nuclear Doctrine”, paper presented at IPRI seminar.

⁷ “The Cabinet Committee on Security Reviews Operationalization of India’s Nuclear Doctrine”, Government of India Press Release, 4 January 2003.

⁸ Summary taken from tables included in Brigadier Naeem Salik’s paper presented at IPRI seminar.

⁹ Rahul Roy Chaudry, paper presented at the IRS conference, 7-9 June 2004.

apprehended and imprisoned for years. This is linked to the border dispute of the 60-mile long estuary of Sir Creek in the marshes of the Rann of Kutch.

What could make the situation a little more complicated is the new Proliferation Security Initiative, instituted by the United States and other countries, which allows interdiction “to halt shipments of dangerous technologies to and from states and non-state actors of proliferation concern—at sea, in the air, and on land.”¹⁰ If there are to be joint Indo–US exercises, which, given the delicate nature of the peace process underway, are not desirable at present, a new situation will arise for Pakistan to worry about.

6. Neither side undertook periodical review of the implementation of existing CBMs.
7. Upgrading and improving communication links and providing for fail-safe and secure communications: Hotlines are considered limited in scope since they are voice communicators and can at times convey an unintended message; computer hotlines are being considered as apt replacements. Multiple channels would facilitate communication, though it should be mandatory to ensure some kind of centralization of the channels to eradicate confusion. Nuclear Risk Reduction Centres could prove helpful in this matter.
8. Bilateral consultations on security, disarmament, and non-proliferation issues for multilateral fora: Positive diplomacy can yield dividends if both countries adopt stances favourable to each other and appreciate each other’s point of view.

The NCBMs talks will most probably encourage this kind of communication; a further positive development would be for both countries to support each other, where possible, at international fora. A traditional Pakistani point of criticism against India has been that Indian nuclear ambitions are spreading “nuclear evil” in the region. Pakistan could instead turn its ire on the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (P5) for being the perpetrators of this evil and not doing enough on the vertical proliferation front where the Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) that have signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty promised in good faith to move towards global nuclear disarmament. However, there are forums such as the Conference on

¹⁰ White House Press Release, Office of the Press Secretary, Washington, DC. <http://www.state.gov/t/np/rls/prsrl/23809.htm> (4 September 2003.)

Disarmament, where Pakistan would be unable to go along with the Indian position of not accounting for existing stocks in discussions on the fissile material treaty. It may now be possible to hope that both states will avoid sharp criticism of each at international fora and devise some method of dealing with such issues at the bilateral level.

It needs to be noted here that, as opposed to the SRR which was a Pakistani suggestion spurned by India, the Lahore Memorandum of Understanding was signed by both India and Pakistan. This document merely contained the test moratorium element of the SRR, as India envisaged that it would place no immediate restraints on improving its nuclear arsenal. There is no mention in the Lahore MoU of non-weaponization, non-deployment, cessation of fissile material production, or any constraints to rein in the nuclear weapons programmes. India is willing to engage Pakistan, to a cautiously limited extent, to improve the nuclear environment. Nevertheless, we are still left with the question: How can India allay Pakistan's nuclear fears while continuing to fulfil its nuclear ambitions? In view of this question, we should keep in mind that, going by empirical evidence so far, there is no reason to assume that at any point in the future, the US may be able to exert any serious pressure on India, or for that matter even Pakistan, on non-proliferation.

Secondly, at this stage what seems even more significant is that there exists no common nuclear lexicon between India and Pakistan. For example, there seems to be no consensus on the term "deployment": what the Indians have termed as "forward storage" has been assumed by Pakistan to be "operational deployment".¹¹ However, the word "deploy" has been used by India with regard to its Agni missiles.¹²

Limitation of Technological NRRMs

Technological Nuclear Risk Reduction Measures (NRRMs) would certainly have a positive influence, facilitating further contact, generating an exchange of ideas and views, regardless of whether there is strict implementation of the measures themselves. However, we should also be clear that technological CBMs or NRRMs also have a few special drawbacks. The simplest ones between India and Pakistan have a bad and, at best, a strange record of implementation, though this could change for the better in future with the improvement in relations. The second problem is that of verification and monitoring. And the last one pertains to the situational changes (before ideas can be materialized), since the nuclear situation is rather dynamic. For example,

¹¹ Interview with Brig. Naem A. Salik, Director, Strategic Plans Division, Islamabad, 21 April, 2004.

¹² "India ready to deploy Agni", *Daily Times* (Lahore), 6 October 2003.
Also see "India to produce 30 more Prithvi missiles; Agni deployment this year", *Nation* (Islamabad), 8 September 2003.

W. P. S. Sidhu, in an article on nuclear risk reduction measures, argued for a “third option under which the missiles are inducted, but not deployed...”, going on to suggest that “a series of innovative NRRMs are required”.¹³ We now know that the Prithvi missiles have been inducted and “deployed”. It does seem that merely a series of NRRMs or NCBMs may not be enough without the bedrock of a progressive outlook, based on a long-term vision of nuclear weapons as mentioned earlier.

Let us examine the case of early warning systems which both states are endeavouring to obtain in order to further “stabilize” deterrence.

Early Warning Systems

An early warning system gives us warning that there is an external (nuclear) attack under way via missiles. This system, however, does not merely comprise a set of radar detectors and a platform. Included in this system is also an evaluation of the threat and formulation of a response strategy—and all this is to be done within the warning time provided by the system. The system could either be ground-based or via satellite. A very recent study done at Princeton University, USA, suggests that this warning time can be between 4-7 minutes for both systems, and, if a capital city is being targeted, it would barely be enough for the warning to be communicated.¹⁴ The study further envisages the three possible responses, all of which make this warning redundant. The three options include: feeding the warning signals into a missile defence system so that the interceptor can locate and destroy the incoming missile; the second option would be riding out a possible attack, i.e., waiting to see if the attack is for real and then respond and the last possibility could be to retaliate immediately which would mean maintaining a launch-on- warning posture (which is fraught with numerous possibilities of technological mishaps and false warning actually bringing about a nuclear war). In all three cases, the early warning systems seem to be of no use. However, both India and Pakistan seem to be headed in that precise direction. India even has it in its doctrine to set up “early-warning capabilities... space-based and other assets ...”¹⁵

Although these systems may, by and large, prove effective in this scenario, there are two major drawbacks. Firstly, there is considerable disparity between India and Pakistan in terms of technology for early warning; secondly, if such systems were to be in place, the next step, almost inevitably, for both countries would be to increase their arsenal. Increase of arsenals would in any

¹³ W. P. S. Sidhu, “India’s Security and Nuclear Risk Reduction Measures”, Report No.26, (Washington, DC: Henry L. Stimson Center, November 1998), p. 47.

¹⁴ M. V. Ramana, R. Rajaraman, Zia Mian, “Nuclear Early Warning in South Asia- Problems and Issues”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, EPW Special Articles, 17 January 2004. A lot of information from this article has been included in this section.

¹⁵ *Indian Nuclear Doctrine*, available at:

http://www.indianembassy.org/policy/CTBT/nuclear_doctrine_aug_17_1999.html

case be underway, but the perspective and calculus would change with working EWS in place.

India's quest for the Green Pine and Phalcon radars from Israel, along with its capability to launch geo-synchronous satellites and its Tech Exp Satel with high-resolution camera, capable of "sensitive defence surveillance", are not only evidence of its resolve to pursue EWS in earnest but also of the fact that Pakistan lags behind in this sphere. Pakistani experts have already advised a high state of alert.¹⁶ Pakistan's Ministry for Science and Technology hinted at matching Indian plans for EWS by launching a geo-stationary satellite to "meet its strategic and communication needs".

India might argue that its EWS has utility in its security calculus beyond Pakistan as well. Once the EWS are in place in both countries, the next step, a technological requirement, would be to have nuclear arsenals powerful enough to overcome the barriers posed by the EWS

Role of the US and the International Community

Former Commissioner of the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), Dr Victor Gilinsky, in his testimony on 30 March 2004 to the House Committee on International Relations on "The fuel cycle and the spread of the bomb" made two very pertinent points on non-proliferation. Firstly, he said that, "Nothing will be done to tighten the rules unless the United States takes the lead". In order to illustrate his point, he quoted former US President Ford who had said that, "We must be sure that all nations recognize that the US believes that non-proliferation objectives must take precedence over economic and energy benefits if a choice must be made". Secondly, he tried to emphasize that an approach was required that made non-proliferation a top priority in US foreign policy. However, empirical evidence shows us that the US has repeatedly and for an extended period of time, made choices in favour of politics and economics instead of non-proliferation in South Asia. This is what the US is doing currently and, in all likelihood, this is what it is going to do in future.

India, which supported the US when it decided to scrap the BMD, has found new moral force to go ahead with its own BMD plans, aggravating the nuclear situation between India and Pakistan. These are not the only US policies that have been detrimental for non-proliferation in South Asia. A certain amount of moral punch has been induced into the Indian actions and policies and statements as it saw the United States hounding the ghosts of 9/11 into far-flung lands, amidst calls for a "war on terror". It picked up the courage to say to the international community that, "we too should strike places that provide sanctuaries for our cross-border terrorists", meaning the

¹⁶ Agha Shahi, Zulfiqar Ali Khan, and Abdul Sattar, "Securing Nuclear Peace", *News* (Rawalpindi), 5 October 1999.

alleged training camps in Pakistan. This created further tensions between both countries. Thus, the new laws of pre-emption laid down by the sole superpower have not been without their fallout for South Asia, aggravating the nuclear situation in the subcontinent.

The US and the international community are in fact retaining and improving their nuclear arsenals, which puts India, an emerging global power, on firm ground to make provision for its own security needs. Instead of any earnestness to push for a re-think on Article 5, to come good on their promise of eventually getting rid of these weapons and cutting down on them, the P5 are generating a plethora of discussion on how to refurbish the NPT, so as to eliminate the problem of horizontal proliferation.

Fancy solutions have been put forward that speak of academic and innovative brilliance, without tackling the core issue. At the Moscow Carnegie International Conference 2003, American non-proliferation expert, George Perkovich, defended the NPT, saying that it was merely “a tool” that dealt with non-proliferation and that more tools needed to be produced in order to deal with states such as Iran, etc. Dr Victor Gilinsky, former US NRC Commissioner, and former Head of Physical Sciences Department at the Rand corporation has presented a set of “do’s and dont’s” that he recommends be introduced into a new NPT, making it more difficult for states such as Iran to proliferate via the excuse of nuclear energy production.¹⁷ And finally, Professor John Endicott from Atlanta suggests Nuclear-Free Zones and tackling proliferation on a regional basis and introducing that into the NPT.¹⁸ A new report on Universal Compliance by five well known non-proliferation experts in the US suggests that the strategic aim of the non-proliferation policy must now be to achieve universal compliance with the norms and terms of a deepened nuclear non-proliferation regime.¹⁹ However, it is pertinent to mention here that South Asia is outside the US counter-proliferation policy, whose ambit only covers states like Iran, Iraq, and North Korea—the so-called “rogue” states.

It seems that the global ire expressed at the 2000 NPT conference and the hard time that the American delegation had in New York has been washed out of the US memory altogether. As long as the United States and other P5 states think there is a way out of the proliferation problem by remaining outside the loop while trying to tighten the noose and rope others in, states like Israel, India, and Pakistan will continue to show the international community that they can defy all NPT norms, as they are NOT party to the treaty.

¹⁷ Testimony of Victor Gilinsky, House Committee on International Relations hearing on “The Bush Administration and Nonproliferation”, 30 March 2004.

¹⁸ John E. Endicott, paper presented at IPRI seminar.

¹⁹ George Perkovich, Joseph Cirincione, Rose Gottemoeller, Jon B. Wolfsthal, and Jessica Mathews, “Universal Compliance: A Strategy for Nuclear Security”, 18 June 2004.

Furthermore, they can get away with this stance, regardless of whether the US and the international community like it or not. Though there may be weaker states that the US can handle and console itself with the thought that the nuclear-weapons threat is controllable, challenges will arise regularly that it will have to be dealt with on military rather than moral grounds. As far as South Asia is concerned, it is a region that is beyond this debate and the NPT anyway.

Military Détente with Pivotal Shifts and Concrete Steps

Strides towards relaxed military relations would be easier sought once there is substantive progress in the resolution of disputes. However, if, in tandem with conflict-resolution, attention could be focused on the military aspect, room might be created for joint reflection by both India and Pakistan on where they want their nuclear capabilities to continue over the long term. In other words, a special emphasis must be placed by both parties on coming to a mutual understanding that the time is ripe for working out a “preamble” for NCBMs to follow in the coming months. This would surely go a long way in keeping it clear that the NCBMs are not an end in themselves, as they are not the vehicle to perfect our “deterrence”. Deterrence in the South Asian case may never be perfected. At the same time, we should not be paranoid or naïve enough to subscribe to the alarmist view and believe that we are perilously close to a nuclear disaster and we need to abandon nuclear weapons immediately.²⁰

In dealing with deterrence, first and foremost is the requirement for an admission by both countries that advancement of and addition to nuclear technology may be a limitless exercise, without a point which could be termed as the final point of security or of absolute, complete, and fully stable deterrence. Needless to say, “deterrence” is a word antithetical to the very process of peace and friendship that has begun here.

The psychological attitude towards nuclear weapons requires the pursuit of better technology as the ultimate solution. An exploration of the role of military and nuclear technology itself may be in order, to find out if under the tutelage of its military protectorate, not only in Pakistan but increasingly in India as well, it may have acquired a dynamics of its own.²¹

All such suggestions which can provide additional safety for the nuclear arsenals and facilities of India and Pakistan should be put on the table for brainstorming and mutual discussion. All “value-added” measures such as

²⁰ See Imtiaz H. Bokhari, “Adverse Partnership: A Paradigm for Indo-Pak Détente”, IPRI Journal, (Islamabad), vol.3, no. 2 (Summer 2003), p.11, for a fine analysis on the requirements of deterrence and questionable assumptions that may have been made on Pakistan’s part.

²¹ See M. V. Ramana, “Military Planning and Nuclear Weapons”, *Daily Times*, 16 January 2003. According to his analysis, military control over nuclear weapons is likely to increase with time.

agreements ranging from notification of tests to a moratorium on testing to non-deployment agreements will be discussed in the coming months. The idea of risk reduction centres on either side would be a great leap forward and the foundation for further discussion on the technical side, as well as providing a regular body for enhanced contact, regardless of the political temperatures. The maximum benefit is to be derived from measures that generate regular contact and encourage exchange of data and enhanced transparency—all of which are embodied in the risk reduction centre idea.²²

As a central body, the NRRC could provide a structure dealing with unilateral measures as well as bilateral measures, which could include: improving domestic capabilities, such as threat analysis to all nuclear facilities; investing in indigenous physical security technology; performing system upgrades; and instituting more rigorous personnel reliability programmes. Though initially suggested as unilateral measures, these could be taken on to the bilateral level, once NCBMs between the two countries are well-established.²³

Pakistan could take advantage of the turn in relations with India and shift the emphasis of its dissatisfaction with managing nuclear proliferation to the nuclear club members, without making India the prime target, even though it is the country of direct concern.²⁴ In fact, were it to form a partnership with India on matters of concern to both countries and forward a common cause at international fora, the international community might give South Asian concerns more recognition. For the people of the subcontinent, there are no indications that the world is moving towards nuclear disarmament, even though the weapons of mass destruction threat in Iraq may be taken care of, and Iran, North Korea, and others states may be brought in line. The case of vertical proliferation stands starkly neglected by the jury of nations that proactively seek to eliminate horizontal proliferation. ■

²² Farah Zahra, “Talking nuclear - with or without Agra”, *News on Sunday* (Rawalpindi), 22 July 2001.

²³ Arian L. Pregoner, “Securing Nuclear Capabilities in India and Pakistan: Reducing the Terrorist and Proliferation Risks”, *The Non Proliferation Review* (Monterey, California, USA, Spring 2003).

²⁴ The Millennium Declaration as well as the NPT Review Conference 2000 pledged that Nuclear Weapons States would take their obligation towards nuclear arms control seriously.

THE US, OIL, AND THE GEOPOLITICS OF THE PERSIAN GULF

Imtiaz H. Bokhari*

The world was still learning the rules of the game of a unipolar international order, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the events of 11 September 2001 (9/11) changed the game itself. The touchstone of this new game, as determined by President Bush, was that either “you are with us, or against us”. This worldview divided the world into black and white, ignoring the numerous shades of grey. No region of the world has been so profoundly affected by this American unilateralism in its foreign policy and pre-emption in its security policy as the Persian Gulf.

Writing shortly before the onset of American attack on Iraq, Robert Kagan viewed the second Gulf War in imperialistic terms, demonstrating a historical pattern. He described American operations and US penetration into the Persian Gulf and the Middle East as “the sixth American expansion.”¹ What are the driving forces behind this expansion? From the public pronouncements of the Bush administration, the following reasons can be deduced for their attack on Iraq: one, to eliminate Saddam’s weapons of mass destruction (WMD); two, to “liberate” the Iraqi people from Saddam’s brutal regime and to establish a liberal democratic order; and three, to facilitate the US in its fight against international terrorism. From the United States’ perspective, these were eminently worthy objectives for invading Iraq and had the support of the American people.

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¹ Robert Kagan, “Strategic Dissonance” (“One Year After: A Grand Strategy for the West”), *Survival*, vol. 44, no 4 (Winter 2002-03), p. 137. His first five expansions include: two periods of continental conquest, from 1800 to 1821 and 1844 to 1848; the third was the Spanish-American War, resulting in American hegemony in the Western hemisphere and acquisition of the Philippines; the fourth came during the two world wars, resulting in American expansion into two major regions of the world, which the Cold War consolidated; the fifth came in 1989-91, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and expansion through NATO’s enlargement and, in 1991, the first Gulf War.

Although Professor Kagan has identified the fifth and sixth “expansions” as related to the Gulf region, but American interest in the region had started soon after the Second World War, when British influence was on the decline and the importance of oil substantially increased.

There is, however, a group of critics who strongly argue that these Wilsonian ideals in support of the “sixth expansion” are a cover for the neo-conservative agenda of the Bush administration. In their opinion, of this group, “It’s the oil, stupid”, and empire, which are the main motives behind the American policy in the Greater Middle East region.²

This paper attempts to analyse these two sets of competing arguments regarding the American policy and to reflect on their international and regional implications.

The Bush Administration’s Logic

There is a need to evaluate each of the three arguments put forward by the Bush administration, supposedly providing the rationale for the American attack on Iraq.

Weapons of Mass Destruction

There are many contradictions in United States’ policy on the question of Saddam’s WMD. During the Iran–Iraq war of the 1980s, the United States not only permitted their acquisition by Saddam, they actively assisted him in their employment against the Iranian people and troops. During that war:

The Department of Defense, then headed by Caspar Weinberger, provided Iraq with secret satellite data on Iranian military positions. This information was provided to Saddam even though United States leaders were informed by senior State Department officials on November 1, 1983 that the Iraqis were using chemical weapons against the Iranians “almost daily”; they were also aware that United States satellite data could be used by Baghdad to pinpoint chemical weapons attacks on Iranian positions. Cheney, who succeeded Weinberger as secretary of defense in 1989, continued the practice of supplying Iraq with secret intelligence data.³

Major decision-makers in the administration of President George W. Bush, including Vice President Cheney and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, were important voices during the Reagan era and none of them was a conscientious objector to the American role in Saddam’s use of chemical weapons. In fact, Saddam’s use of chemical weapons against his own Kurdish population, in which thousands of innocent people, including women and children died, hardly provoked a serious protest by the United States. At that time, Saddam was considered by the Americans as “my enemy’s enemy”.

² Joseph Clifford, “It is the Oil, Stupid!”, Media Monitors Network, www.mediamonitors.net (5 September 2003); and Michael T. Klare, “For Oil and Empire? Rethinking War with Iraq”, *Current History*, March 2003.

³ Michael T. Klare, “For Oil and Empire?”

Apparently, Saddam Hussein had put an end to the acquisition of WMD capabilities and destroyed his stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons after the Gulf War of 1990-1. However, the Iraqi people continued to suffer sanctions for a decade, during which period, children were the worst-affected section of the population. If WMD are such an important determinant of American foreign policy, then how can the United States explain its North Korea policy? The perception is growing—even within the United States and the United Kingdom—that WMD as the basis for the decision to invade Iraq was, at best, made on very weak evidence and, at worst, was made in bad faith. Apparently the decision to invade Iraq had been made soon after 9/11; had the UN monitoring mission under Hans Blix been given the opportunity to complete its task and submit a report that there were no WMD, it would have deprived President Bush of the most potent argument for an offensive already decided upon.⁴ Therefore, the UN mission had to be prevented from completing its mission. The rest is history.

“Regime Change” for Promoting Democracy

Certainly, Saddam’s Iraq was not the only undemocratic country in the world, needing to be put on the road to enlightenment, with hundreds of thousands of American troops and tens or hundreds of billions of dollars required for conquest, reconstruction, and re-engineering of the politico-social institutions of Iraq. It was the same Saddam whose victory over Iran was ensured by the United States through active naval co-operation,⁵ and now, regime change was inevitable to “liberate” the Iraqis. Saddam Hussein had committed much greater sins during the 1980s, when he was a *de facto* ally of the United States which was fighting his war, than the sins he committed during the 1990s, for which his head was being demanded.

Apart from this serious contradiction, the question is: can democracy be planted through force of arms? Can the United States commit so many troops and such huge resources for promoting democracy wherever it is needed? Obviously not. Even if the United States could afford the price, the

⁴ An American scholar, who was part of the Bush administration, stated in an off-the-record discussion at the Islamabad Policy Research Institute in early 2003 that the decision to attack Iraq was made after the attack on the Twin Towers on 11 September 2001.

Secretary Rumsfeld and Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz had been pressing for an attack on Iraq and, on 17 September, in a National Security Council meeting, President Bush ended the debate by saying, “I believe Iraq was involved [in supporting terrorism], but I’m not going to strike them now. I don’t have the evidence at this point.” But he did ask them to keep working on plans for military action in Iraq. Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), p.99.

⁵ For a detailed account of US naval help, see Imtiaz H. Bokhari, *Management of Third World Crises* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 221-51.

invasion of Iraq for the reason of regime change can be sustained neither on moral grounds nor legally justified.

Fight against International Terrorism

In November 1983, the United States removed Iraq from the list of “nations that support international terrorism”⁶ and Donald Rumsfeld, as a special representative of President Ronald Reagan, personally conveyed this good news to Saddam Hussein. However, after 9/11, Saddam was accused of lending support to international terrorism—a justification for the attack in March 2003. No concrete evidence has been provided so far to the international community by intelligence agencies of the United States or the United Kingdom, linking Baghdad with Al Qaeda and its leader, Osama bin Laden. In fact, the contrary may be nearer the truth. The Report of the independent commission headed by Senator Pat Roberts (R-Kansas), investigating the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center in New York, has stated that there is “no credible evidence that Iraq and Al-Qaeda cooperated in attacks against the United States.”⁷

Contrary to their stated objective, the presence of American troops in the Persian Gulf region, particularly in Saudi Arabia, directly contributed to the increase of terrorist acts aimed at American interests and targets. Now, the presence of American troops scattered throughout Iraq provides a large number of targets to those determined to hit them, as well as those seen as their allies. Too close an association of the royal family with the United States may have contributed to the rise of anti-royal sentiment and the recent spate of terrorist activities in Saudi Arabia.

It is difficult to believe that the United States could not have foreseen that their attack on Iraq could lead to an increase, not a decrease, in acts of terrorism against them. So an attack on Iraq must have had an objective beyond merely fighting international terrorism.

The Competing Paradigm

On the basis of the foregoing analysis, those who viewed the Bush administration’s rationale for attacking Iraq with scepticism, did so on strong grounds. They argued that the main reasons for the operation were oil and geopolitics.

⁶ Dilip Hiro, *The Longest War: The Iran-Iraq Military Conflict* (London: Grafton Books, 1989), p. 121, cited by Imtiaz H. Bokhari, *Management of Third World Crises in Adverse Partnerships*, p. 223.

⁷ *Dawn*, 23 June 2004 (reprint from *Los Angeles Times*), and BBC World News, 16 June 2004.

“It’s the Oil, Stupid!”

Johnny Angel has asserted that, “Oil has been the prime mover behind any and every political decision in that region since the First World War, when trucks, tanks and planes replaced horses and camels”.⁸ It was Winston Churchill who first recognized the importance of oil as a strategic resource in 1912, when he ordered the conversion of battleship engines to oil from coal, as ships using oil were faster than those using coal and, in combat, speed is a vital advantage. Protecting key sources of oil and denying them to the Central Powers became one of Britain’s major strategic objectives in the First World War.

Since then, for many states oil has become a major strategic resource of such importance that it is a matter of national security, closely linked to national survival and well being, to the extent that the use of force to protect it is considered justifiable. “The national security of the United States depends on the reliable supply of energy to support our needs”, declared Representative Henry J. Hyde (R-Illinois) at a June 2002 hearing on United States’ oil requirements.⁹ He further noted that, “Any interruption in the flow of oil will be considered a vital threat to the national security—and, if such interruption is engendered by the actions of a hostile state or guerrilla group, could be cited as a *casus belli*, a cause for war.” This position of the United States is not new.¹⁰ It can also be seen as a mere restatement of the Carter Doctrine of 23 January 1980 when, in the wake of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, President Carter stated that any effort by a hostile power to obstruct the flow of Persian Gulf oil to the West would constitute a threat to America’s “vital interests and would be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.”¹¹

Oil is as important for sustaining the life style of the industrialized West as blood is to the human body. It is impossible to imagine the impact of a substantial reduction in oil supply to the West, where people consider their energy-dependent life style a matter of right. It is hard to imagine the consequences of a widespread, routine, or prolonged breakdown of oil supplies. Some of the world’s known major reservoirs have already peaked. It took nature almost 570 million years to create oil in the subterranean reservoirs, which we are likely to burn off in about 100 to 150 years. Disruption in the energy supply may be taken as an opportunity to effect structural changes in the energy sector, which powers so many of the things we take for granted.

⁸ Johnny Angel, “It’s the Oil, Stupid”, *LA Weekly*
www.users.drew.edu/dschoenb/Oil.html (26 September 2001).

⁹ Cited by Michael T. Klare, “The Deadly Nexus: Oil Terrorism, and America’s National Security”, *Current History* (December 2002).

¹⁰ Robert Tucker, “The Purposes of American Power”.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Persian Gulf: "Swimming" in Oil

During the Second World War, the United States provided six out of the seven billion barrels of oil that the Allies consumed from its oil fields along the Gulf of Mexico and in its south-west region. Realizing the role oil was to play in the future, President Roosevelt sent America's most eminent geologist, Everette Lee DeGolyer, to the Middle East to seek an answer to the fundamental question: how important are the Persian Gulf oil reserves to the future of the world? His answer was startling: The centre of gravity of world oil production is shifting from the Gulf [of Mexico]–Caribbean area to the Middle East area, and is likely to continue to shift until it is firmly established in that area.¹² At that time, even Mr DeGolyer may not have fully realized how prophetic his answer was. According to BP Amoco, the Persian Gulf region possesses some 675 billion barrels of oil, that is, almost two-third of known world reserves. The Persian Gulf countries are also the world's leading producers, jointly accounting for approximately 21 million barrels per day (bbl/d) or about 30 per cent of worldwide production.¹³ Perhaps even more significantly, the Persian Gulf countries maintain around 90 per cent of the world excess production capacity, which can be brought on line in case of an oil supply disruption.

According to the Energy Information's *International Energy Outlook 2002*, Persian Gulf oil production is expected to reach approximately 30.7 million bbl/d by 2010 and 42.9 million bbl/d by 2020, compared to 21.07 million bbl/d in 2000. This would increase Persian Gulf oil production capacity to 35 per cent of the world total by 2020, up from 28 per cent in 2000.¹⁴

US Dependence on Gulf Oil

Historically, energy has been abundant and relatively inexpensive in the United States. Americans consume 70 per cent more energy per capita or per dollar of GDP than do people in most other developed countries. Americans drive bigger cars, travel farther, live in bigger houses, and heat, cool, and light them more than the Europeans. The availability of reliable supplies of cheap energy, especially gasoline, is viewed as a birthright by many Americans. In 2000, Americans spent (directly or indirectly) about \$600 billion on energy of all kinds. About 38 per cent of US energy consumption comes from petroleum,

¹² Daniel Yergin, "Gulf Oil: how important is it anyway?"

<[news.ft.com/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=FT.com/StoryFT/FullStory&c=Story FT...9/4/2003](http://news.ft.com/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=FT.com/StoryFT/FullStory&c=StoryFT...9/4/2003) (21 March 2003).

¹³ BP Amoco, *Statistical Review of World Energy* (June 2002), cited by Michael T. Klare, "Global Petro-Politics: The Foreign Policy of Bush's Energy Plan", *Current History* (March 2002).

¹⁴ "Persian Gulf Oil and Gas Exports Fact Sheet" www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/pgulf.html (April 2003).

24 per cent from natural gas, 23 per cent from coal, eight per cent from nuclear power, and seven per cent from renewable energy, primarily conventional hydroelectric resources. In 2000, residential consumption accounted for 20 per cent, commercial 17 per cent, industrial 36 per cent, and transportation 27 per cent of the energy consumed.¹⁵ Petroleum imports have steadily increased to the point where the United States now imports about 60 per cent of its petroleum supply from other countries. Many analysts expect petroleum imports to continue to grow to 75 per cent of the total consumption of petroleum by 2020.¹⁶ In the last decade alone, from 1990 to 2000, total energy consumption increased by about 17 per cent.¹⁷ Petroleum imports averaged 10.6 million bbl/d in 2001, to meet a total demand of 19.6 million bbl/d during 2001. The United States gross oil imports from the Persian Gulf showed a slight decline during 2002, to about 2.3 million bbl/d, down from 2.8 million bbl/d in 2001. Overall, the Persian Gulf accounted for about 22 per cent of US *net* oil imports, and 11 per cent of US oil demand.¹⁸ This is a fairly high degree of dependence. In the years ahead, domestic production in the United States will decrease, while consumption is expected to increase, and the only region which can meet this shortfall is the Persian Gulf region.

Oil and the US Attack on Iraq

In Professor Klare's view, it is "oil and empire" that explain the United States' war on Iraq. American leaders have become increasingly concerned about their country's growing dependence on imported oil. This increasing "dependency is the Achilles' heel of American power; unless Persian Gulf oil is kept under American control, the ability of the United States to remain the dominant world power will be put into question."¹⁹ To ensure continued free access to Gulf oil, the Carter Doctrine had clearly spelled out that United States would not permit a hostile power to achieve a position that allowed it to threaten America's access to the Gulf.

Another motive behind the American actions is the pivotal role of the Persian Gulf in supplying oil to the rest of the world: whosoever gains control over Persian Gulf oil gets a stranglehold on the world economy. In addition, the United States' dependence on Saudi Arabia was increasing, and Washington was desperate to find an alternative source. Iraq's oil reserves were the only ones that could meet the demand. In Vice President Dick Cheney's view, Saddam Hussein, with 10 per cent of the world's oil reserves,

¹⁵ Paul L. Joskow, "United States Energy Policy during the 1990s", *Current History* (March 2002).

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ "Persian Gulf Oil and Gas Exports Fact Sheet" (April 2003).

¹⁹ Ibid.

large armed forces, and WMD, could threaten his neighbours and clearly move to a position that gave him a stranglehold on the United States' economy and on most of the other nations of the world as well. This, in essence, was a direct invocation of the Carter Doctrine and the main driving force behind the unilateral American attack on Iraq.

US Quest for Control over Gulf Oil

It is not so much the American *need* as it is its *greed* for oil which is at the root of the problem. Ross Perot, hardly the voice of progressive politics, made the observation in the first presidential debate of 1992 that the "Gulf War was fought solely for control of oil and nothing more." He further pointed out that it was not worth shedding American blood over something that Saddam would have been glad to sell to the Americans himself.²⁰ Of course, the Saddams, Sauds, Sabahs, Khalifas, al Nahyans, Khatamis, and Khameneis of the Persian Gulf would all be glad to sell oil to anyone, including the United States. The United States is perhaps not convinced that its need to buy the Gulf oil is exceeded by the Arabs need to sell it. The regimes in the Gulf are more dependent on the sale of oil than the US is on its procurement from them. Then why shed American blood for something that could be available on a commercial basis?

Apparently, it is not the question of simple access to oil. So vital is this product to matters of national security that direct control is considered necessary. The ever-increasing requirement of imported energy will have a profound and lasting impact on American policy towards the oil-rich Persian Gulf region. This control over oil gives America a stranglehold over the oil-dependent European and Japanese economies. In the not-too-distant future, even China and India will fall in the same category. The American grip on the oil jugular stranglehold can be turned into political leverage over most economies of the world, including those endowed with oil wealth. Major countries whose oil taps are controlled by the United States would be vulnerable to political coercion. The smaller countries would hardly matter in this game of high stakes. The European colonial powers did give something to their colonies but the sole neo-colonial power of today has only taken away and given nothing in return.

US and Geopolitics of the Gulf Region

Perhaps oil has drawn too much attention as a determinant of the US Persian Gulf policy to the neglect of some other factors. What has not drawn due attention is the geopolitical content of the decision to attack Iraq. The American military presence in Iraq sends a very powerful message to all neighbouring states who earn and spend hundreds of billions of petro dollars.

²⁰ Angel, "It's the Oil, Stupid".

These states can read the unspoken message in their politico-economic decision-making.

With its presence in Iraq, the American policy of “dual containment” has been simplified to containment of one country only: Iran. The American presence is not only on Iran’s western borders; in fact, US military forces are deployed on all the three sides of Iran: Afghanistan in the west, Central Asian Republics in the north, and in Iraq in the west. In the south, the fourth side, is the sea, over which the US naval forces reign supreme. Perhaps no other country in the world today is surrounded from all sides by American troops.

But it is the US presence in Iraq which heavily affects the power calculus in the region. It isolates Iran from Syria and Lebanon and has created uncertainty in Iran about the stability on the border along Kurdish-controlled Iraqi region. The question of the Kurdish future in Iraq could bring Iran and Turkey, both countries with large Kurd minorities, closer to each other in search of a joint approach to finding a solution to this difficult problem.

The most profound geopolitical fall-out of the American presence in Iraq is the direct and indirect security it provides to Israel. By taking over Iraq, the United States has eliminated the military threat to Israel from a country which was technically still at war with it. By occupying Iraq, it secured Israel from any hostile action from there. It also prevented Syria and Lebanon from supporting Iran in against any action Israel might decide to take against these two friends of Iran.

The US policy of containment has provided immeasurable security to Israel by its successful scuttling of the Iranian nuclear programme. Through coercive diplomacy, the US has managed to extract an additional protocol from Iran, permitting IAEA intrusive inspections of its nuclear installations and programme. After the pressure exerted on Iran, Libya’s Colonel Muammar Qaddafi has also decided to give up his quest for the nuclear bomb. This has ensured that no country in the Middle East, other than Israel, possesses nuclear weapons.

The Persian Gulf will now be the centre of gravity of *Pax Americana*. Bush wants to make the Persian Gulf the “jewel in the crown” of the American empire.

Trans-Atlantic Divide

One of the important consequences of the American attack on Iraq at the systemic level is the rift it has caused between the United States and its European allies. “It is too soon to tell whether Washington and Brussels will head down the same road as Rome and Constantinople—towards geopolitical

rivalry—but the warning signs are certainly present.”²¹ There have been a number of references downplaying the present state of transatlantic relations as a temporary phenomenon, that relations will eventually return to normal as the United States and EU are the largest trading partners and are bound by culture and religion.

There is also a need to understand what we mean when we say that transatlantic relations will become “normal”, or will remain “unfriendly”. Those who think that the transatlantic relationship will turn adversarial, like the India–Pakistan “Cold War” will be disappointed, as will those who think of the relationship as it was during the heydays of the 1950s and 1960s, when it was based on the defence of Europe against the Soviet Union. The glue of the Soviet threat that bound the Europeans and Americans together is no longer there. The relationship now needs to be saved from the consequences of American unilateralism. The world has changed profoundly and a new equation, a new relationship is now in the making.

This divergence has been compounded by a perception that the United States was relying primarily on a military instrument to defeat terrorism, rather than focusing on political, diplomatic, and economic measures. The Europeans believed that the United States was failing to address the underlying causes of terrorism. These include the lack of political and economic opportunities in the Muslim world and, very importantly, the US failure to play a more assertive role in addressing the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. The United States’ refusal to challenge the Sharon government remains a source of serious division, even with the key US allies such as the United Kingdom.²²

The Challenge of American Intervention in the Persian Gulf: Systemic

Doctrine of Pre-emption

The term “pre-emption” has been explained by Adam Roberts as “preventing an attack by disabling a threatening enemy. It can encompass both anticipatory self-defence (military action against an absolutely imminent threat) and preventing military action (to nip a future threat in the bud).”²³ In the post-1945 period, the right of self-defence has been viewed as a right to act against actual attack. The international community, including the United States, has been opposed to anticipatory self-defence.²⁴ The 2002 *National Security Strategy*

²¹ Charles Kupchan, *The End of the American Era*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), p. 153 cited by James B. Steinberg, “A Elective Partnership: Salvaging Transatlantic Relations”, *Survival*, vol. 45, no. 2 (Summer 2003); Note 5.

²² Steinberg, “An Elective Partnership”.

²³ Roberts, “Law and the Use of Force after Iraq”, *Survival*, vol. 45, no. 2 (Summer 2003).

²⁴ *Ibid.*

stated that international jurists often conditioned the “legitimacy of preemption on the existence of an imminent threat—most often a visible mobilization of armies, navies, and air forces preparing to attack.” It went further, justifying a radically different concept of pre-emption: “we must adapt the concept of imminent threat to the capabilities and objectives of today’s adversaries.”²⁵

The application of the Bush Doctrine of pre-emption in Iraq has very grave consequences for international relations, as it provides a precedent for major regional states to use force pre-emptively against smaller neighbours, without the existence of an imminent threat. The Bush Doctrine provides a license and justification to powerful states to use force against weaker states in pursuit of their objective of regional hegemony. In their use of force, they will act as the jury, the judge, and the executioner—all three rolled in to one. This obviously has grave implications at the systemic level.

Unilateralism

The Bush Doctrine has another implication. It provides justification to powerful states to act unilaterally in pursuit of their own national agenda. Unilateralism is more of an arrogance of power, manifested in defying the will of the majority in international politics. Unilateralism or “going it alone”, in pursuit of national interests through the use of force can lead not only to the weakening of international institutions but also of international law.

Weakening of the United Nations

American pre-emption and unilateralism in Iraq, without the approval of the UN Security Council, has created yet another debate. The United States forcibly cut short the work of Mr Hans Blix, head of UNMOVIC, by demanding withdrawal of UN weapons inspectors from Iraq. Impending military action by the United States obliged the UN Secretary General to recall the commission for their own safety. Obviously, this severely undermined the authority of the UN system as a whole.

The UN Security Council has the responsibility for the maintenance of international peace. It is supposed to act if, in its opinion, there is a threat to peace. But if it happens to be the most powerful nation of the world, a permanent member of the Security Council, who acts contrary to the letter and spirit of the UN Charter, then the entire UN system would be adversely affected. The United States’ use of force, in spite of opposition in the Security Council, seriously dented its role as the custodian of international peace.

²⁵ *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (White House, Washington DC, September 2002), p. 15. www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html.

Consequences of American Intervention in the Persian Gulf: Regional

Military Presence in the Persian Gulf

The American military presence in the Persian Gulf region, particularly in Saudi Arabia, has generated hatred against the Americans and resistance by the people of these nations against their own governments. Saudi Arabia was particularly vulnerable because radical Islamists aroused the anger of the people against them on the basis of presence of “non-Muslims” in the holy land. Others believe that the American soldiers are there for the protection of the ruling class and to suppress the masses. This perception in itself creates a gulf between the rulers and the ruled. Still others believe that the continued presence of American troops among them would hurt their way of life. A direct consequence of the American military presence has been the rise of militancy and acts of terrorism, aimed at damaging Saudi–US relations.

In Iraq, the Americans are perceived as an occupation force, although the Americans think they came to liberate the Iraqi people from Saddam. The extent of resistance to their presence should leave no doubt in American minds as to which of the two premises is nearer to the truth.

Increased Terrorism

One did not need a crystal ball to predict that an attack on Iraq would lead to increased hatred against the United States in the entire Middle East region. The Bush administration has argued at great length that the ouster of Saddam Hussein would be a great success in the war against terrorism. The reason for this is not immediately apparent: if anything, the opposite is true. Replacing Saddam with an American-engineered secular regime will not diminish, but rather fuel the wrath of Islamic extremists. So, this too cannot be accepted as the rationale for the American attack on Iraq.

This leads to another implication of American control over strategic resources that belong to others: it is a recipe for generating increased anti-Americanism. People will naturally resent someone controlling and benefiting from what rightfully belongs to them. Obviously, their struggle to regain control over what rightfully belongs to them would be dubbed “terrorism” by the American forces and dealt with as such.

Economic Effects

Another dimension to American control over oil needs to be considered, as it would lead to direct or indirect influence over the decision-making processes of states under the US control. This would result in reduced European access to those markets for their goods and services. American multinationals will get preferential treatment and would force out any competition. This has even been enunciated recently by President Bush when he declared that those

countries who opposed the American attack on Iraq would not be eligible to participate in contracts for reconstructing that country. At the same time, US oil conglomerates will exploit the oil wealth, from exploration to distribution. Indeed, oil indeed generates huge wealth. This attitude of the United States has only deepened the impression of exploitation by the neo-colonial power.

Conclusion

The United States' publicly-stated reasons for invading Iraq—WMD, liberation of the Iraqi people, and fighting international terrorism—were a mere façade to hide their more mundane objectives: oil and empire. Seen in historical terms, it seems a great departure from Wilsonian idealism to crude pragmatism, and from isolationism to world hegemony.

As the world's greatest military power, the United States relied on its military instrument, not for mere access but for control over the most strategic resource of the world: oil. Through this control over oil supplies, the United States has the jugular of the industrialized countries under its thumb, with immense potential for political leverage.

In geopolitical terms, the American military presence within the Muslim heartland contributes directly to the security of Israel. At the same time, this has resulted in increased anti-American feelings in the entire region. This is what is going to hurt the United States and its regional allies, long after the foreign troops leave the area. The American propensity to 'go it alone' on the basis of its military power has dented the Atlantic Alliance as well as weakened the United Nations system. It has set a precedent for unilateralism, which has serious implications for weak and small states. The international system has yet to find an answer to the basic question: who will guard international peace if the guardians themselves turn into violators? ■

THE ROLE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN PAKISTAN'S DEFENCE STRATEGY

Zafar Iqbal Cheema*

Introduction

A close reading of Pakistan's national security policy suggests that nuclear weapons have played an increasingly important role in its defence and deterrent strategy since the late 1980s. Addressing a conference in Islamabad, Pakistan's Foreign Minister in General Pervez Musharraf's government declared in November 1999: "Minimum nuclear deterrent will remain the guiding principle of our nuclear strategy."¹ He stated that, as India builds up its nuclear weapons arsenal: "Pakistan will have to maintain, preserve and upgrade its capability", in order to ensure the survivability and credibility of its nuclear deterrent.² Since then, this theme has been consistently reiterated at relevant occasions by General Musharraf and his top advisers.

This policy in fact was formulated before Musharraf's regime. Responding to the pronouncement of the draft Indian nuclear doctrine in August 1999 as "offensive, and threatening regional and global stability", the Defence Committee of the Cabinet (DCC) under the former Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, stated that the future development of Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme would be "determined solely by the requirement of our minimum deterrent capability, which is now an indispensable part of our security doctrine."³ As former Chief of Army Staff, General (retd.) Mirza Aslam Beg, went a step further, stating that: "as oxygen is basic to life and one does not debate its desirability, nuclear deterrence has assumed the life-saving property for Pakistan."⁴ Since its development, nuclear weapons capability has not only been considered an integral component of Pakistan's defence strategy but is believed to have been actually invoked on a number of occasions in the past decade and a half, to ward off an all-out war with India in the three conflict situations the two countries faced. Although the precise details of what role nuclear weapons played, how they were invoked or their use threatened,

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¹ "Pakistan to upgrade nuclear deterrent", *Dawn* (Karachi), 25 November 1999.

² *Ibid.*

³ "Pakistan says Indian nuclear plan threaten global stability", *News* (Rawalpindi), 26 August 1999.

⁴ General (retd.) Mirza Aslam Beg, *Development and Security: Thoughts and Reflections* (Rawalpindi: FRIENDS, 1994), pp. 168-79.

has not been formally disclosed; however, some studies have appeared on the issue.⁵

This article attempts, firstly, to list Pakistan's threat perceptions; secondly, it expound its nuclear policy; thirdly, it describe nuclear capabilities and delivery systems; fourthly, it analyses the nuclear doctrine and stability factor. Finally, it offers some suggestions and envisages likely future trends.

Pakistan's Threat Perceptions

Since its dismemberment in 1971, Pakistan's perception of threats from India has gradually been accentuated on account of various factors. First, the Indian conventional military superiority far exceeds Pakistan's conventional military capability in quantitative terms; the latter's ability to bridge that gap is increasingly being undermined due to a host of reasons. India's vast geographic base and consequent strategic depth, its large economy and industrial capacity not only allow it to maintain conventional military superiority but also to continue gradually increasing it. On the other hand, Pakistan's economic and industrial weaknesses undermine its military preparedness and logistical stamina. Since its development in the mid-1970s, a nuclear weapons capability is believed to compensate for the weaknesses in Pakistan's conventional military strength, notwithstanding the recently-bestowed status of a non-NATO ally by the United States, which might lead to a limited modernization of Pakistan's conventional military capability. US officials have however clarified that they will not disturb the current military equilibrium between India and Pakistan.

Second, Pakistan continues to perceive the possibility of limited or general war with India. This perception originates from the history of India–Pakistan relations. Since independence, the two neighbours have fought three wars (1948, 1965, and 1970-71) and, most recently, a limited conflict in Kargil. All of these (except the 1970-71 war) were fought over the unresolved Kashmir dispute. Both countries are locked in an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation on the Siachin glacier in the extreme north of Kashmir since India's occupation of the two-thirds of the glacier in 1983-84, in clear violation of the Simla Agreement of 1972. This agreement not only forbids the use of force to settle outstanding disputes, it also prohibits any unilateral changes in the Line of Control in Kashmir. In addition, both countries have faced many

⁵ For the 1986-87 Brasstacks crisis, see *Brasstacks and Beyond: Perception and Management of Crisis in South Asia*, ACDIS Research Report, (Urbana-Illinois, Program in Arms Control, Disarmament, and International Security, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1995); for the spring 1990 crisis, see Stephen P. Cohen, P. R. Chari and Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, *The Compound Crisis of 1990: Perception, Politics and Security*, ACDIS Research Report (Urbana-Champaign, University of Illinois, 2000); and Seymour M. Hersh, "On the Nuclear Edge", *New Yorker*, 29 March 1993, pp. 68-73. No study on the 1999 Kargil conflict has yet appeared from this perspective.

crisis-situations, such as the 1986-87 Brasstacks and the Kashmir crisis of spring 1990 which almost precipitated all-out war.

Given this pattern of hostility and armed conflict, Pakistan's perceptions of a threat of war with India are well-entrenched. Until recently, India and Pakistan co-existed in an emotionally-charged strategic environment, which occasionally generated crisis-situations, with the potential for triggering armed conflicts. The recently adopted Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) and the thaw in mutual relations are unlikely to change the long-term strategic policies of either country, unless core issues like Kashmir are resolved. So, given the vast conventional military asymmetries and lack of strategic depth, Pakistan's security policy is to use its nuclear weapons capability to deter India from starting another war, rather than fighting a war the outcome of which is likely to be unfavourable. The genesis of Pakistan's nuclear deterrent policy dates back to Z. A. Bhutto's rationale for the development of a nuclear capability for deterrence against the prospects of Indian aggression.⁶ Giri Deshingkar suggests:

If for any reasons, India were to threaten the existence of Pakistan as a state as presently constituted, they are expected to use nuclear weapons against India first. With a doctrine of this kind, which can usefully be termed "Volatility", Pakistan would not be deterred by India's nuclear capability or even overt weaponization.⁷

Third, India's nuclear weapons capability, which has always been 15 to 20 years ahead of Pakistan and relatively much larger, is perceived as an instrument for nuclear blackmail and coercion in the absence of a nuclear counterweight. The first Indian nuclear test in 1974 served as a catalyst to the development of a nuclear weapons programme in Pakistan. Although Z. A. Bhutto had expressed his individual motivations for the development of nuclear weapons by Pakistan before the first Indian nuclear test, there was no institutional support for that objective. Pakistan had not installed a single safeguards-free nuclear facility before 1974 and the first steps towards the establishment of the Uranium Enrichment Plant at Kahuta were taken in 1975, when Dr. A.Q. Khan was approached to set up such a facility. From the proliferation perspective, a reputed specialist, James E. Dougherty, immediately anticipated Pakistan's response to the Indian nuclear test and its implications, and wrote: "Proliferation by reaction is a phenomena associated with pairs of conflict-parties or historic rivals rather than a chain-reaction

⁶ Z. A. Bhutto, *The Myth of Independence* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1969), see chapter on "Deterrent against Aggression."

⁷ Giri Deshingkar, "Indian politics and arms control: recent reversals and new reasons for optimism", in Eric Arnett, *Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control in South Asia after the Test Ban* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, SIPRI, 1998), p. 32.

involving an indefinitely long series of countries.”⁸ Dougherty contended that, in reaction to the Indian nuclear test and weapons capability, Pakistan would be compelled to develop its own nuclear weapons capability because of its continued rivalry with India.⁹ The Indian nuclear weapons capability is perceived as posing a serious threat to Pakistan. The Pakistani strategic community generally adheres to the common belief that there is no defence against nuclear weapons and the only response to the threat of use of nuclear weapons or blackmail is either to seek a nuclear umbrella or to develop nuclear weapons capability. Pakistan’s non-acceptance of the Indian “no-first use” of nuclear weapons offer suggests that nuclear weapons are integral to its defence and deterrent doctrine.

Fourth, Pakistan also perceives its nuclear deterrent as a means to ward off threats of pre-emption or of decapitation of its small nuclear force by India. Since 1982-83, India has planned to undertake pre-emptive air strikes against Pakistan’s nuclear weapons facilities, especially in their embryonic phase. In 1982, *Washington Post* reported Indian contingency plans to carry out pre-emptive strikes against Pakistani nuclear installations, especially the Kahuta Uranium Enrichment plant.¹⁰ Press accounts again appeared about the pre-emptive strikes by the Indian Air Force against Kahuta in 1984 during a CIA briefing to US Senators.¹¹ India ultimately resisted execution of such plans due to the fear that it might not be able to totally destroy Pakistan’s nuclear weapons capability and Pakistan might be left with some capability to retaliate against the Indian nuclear facilities.¹² The prospect of Pakistani air strikes with F-16s on the Indian nuclear facilities, especially at Mumbai, also created an atmosphere of fear.

Preceding the Pakistani nuclear tests on 28 and 30 May 1998, the Pakistani press carried reports about Indian pre-emptive air strikes, aimed at decapitation of Pakistan’s nuclear facilities, thereby hinting at the prospects of its nuclear tests.¹³ A Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman stated that he had convincing evidence of attack aircraft ready at the Indian airbase at Srinagar to undertake pre-emptive operations and eliminate Pakistan’s nuclear weapons capability.¹⁴ Pakistan threatened retaliation and deployed the Ghauri ballistic

⁸ James E. Dougherty, “Proliferation in Asia”, *Orbis* (Fall 1975), Special Issue, p. 926

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Milton R. Benjamin, “India said to Eye-Raid Pakistani A-Plants”, *Washington Post*, 20 December 1982.

¹¹ *Nucleonics Week*, vol. 25, no. 38 (September 1984), p. 4.

¹² W. P. S. Sidhu, “Indian Nuclear Doctrine”, in James Wirtz, Peter Lavoy and Scott Sagan, eds., *Planning the Unthinkable: How New Nuclear Powers will Use Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Weapons* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2000), pp. 125-157.

¹³ *Nation* (Islamabad), 28 May 1998, p.1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

missiles at unidentified sites to lend credibility to the situation depicted.¹⁵ One report suggested that some of the Ghauri missiles were equipped with nuclear warheads.¹⁶ Pakistan's perception of Indian pre-emptive strikes against its nuclear facilities was reinforced by the provisions in the Indian nuclear doctrine to employ conventional military capability against the threats of use of nuclear weapons.¹⁷ Such a scenario would compel Pakistan to continuously reject India's no-first-use posture and promote reliance upon nuclear weapons at the outset of a conflict-situation, rather than keeping them as weapons of last resort.

Fifth, India's declaration of a stockpile of chemical weapons introduces new uncertainties for nuclear stability with Pakistan.¹⁸ In 1992, India and Pakistan signed a bilateral agreement not to use chemical weapons against each other on the understanding that both the countries were non-chemical weapon states. Both countries also signed the global Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) as non-chemical weapons states; but afterwards, India declared a stockpile of chemical weapons before ratification in 1997, a stockpile which it is required to give up in ten years under the CWC provisions. The dramatic Indian disclosure of its possession of chemical weapons has not only added to the existing distrust between the two countries but generated apprehensions in Pakistan about the use of chemical weapons against its armed forces. Pakistan considers that the only available alternative to such a perceived threat of the use of chemical weapons is nuclear deterrence.

Pakistan's Nuclear Policy

Pakistan's policy on various elements of the non-proliferation regime has been closely linked with India's policy, more due to the Indo-centric nature of its decision-making process and less due to their intrinsic merits, as India is perceived as the principal threat to its security. Pakistan signed the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) in 1963 immediately after its conclusion, but withheld ratification until 1988 for reasons which have neither been made public nor fully investigated.¹⁹ Perhaps it was due to India's keen interest and lead in underground nuclear explosive technology. Pakistan's approach to the Non-

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ "Redefining Nuclear Order", *Nation* (Islamabad), 9 September 1998, special report, p. 5.

¹⁷ Please see section above on the Indian nuclear doctrine.

¹⁸ Pakistan accused India of using chemical weapons during the fighting at Kargil. "World: South Asia-India 'using chemical weapons' in Kashmir", *BBC News South Asia* (14 June 1999) http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/south_asia/newsid_36700/367930.stm; "Pakistan accuses India of lobbing chemical shells into Kashmir", *CNN.com* (13 June 1999) <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/asiapcf/9906/13/india.pakistan.02/index.html>.

¹⁹ United Nations, *Disarmament Newsletter*, 7(5), October 1989, p. 8.

Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was different from India's. It took an active part in the NPT negotiations, hailed its conclusion, and expressed a hope that all Non-Nuclear Weapon States would join it.²⁰ In an apparent response to the Indian objections to the NPT, Pakistan stated that it was "unrealistic to impose obligations on the nuclear powers similar in all respects to those which the treaty placed on the non-nuclear weapon states."²¹ However, despite its general support for the NPT, Pakistan did not sign it due to India's refusal to do so. It explained its NPT policy in the following terms:

In the final analysis, the position of Pakistan with regard to signing the treaty will turn on considerations of its enlightened national interest and security in the geopolitical context of the region in which Pakistan is situated.²²

Simultaneous with its pursuit of nuclear weapons capability since the late 1970s, Pakistan had offered India a wide range of nuclear arms control proposals. These proposals are: i) creation of a nuclear weapons-free zone in South Asia; ii) simultaneous signatures to the NPT by India and Pakistan; iii) mutual acceptance of IAEA safeguards; iv) bilateral inspections of each others' nuclear facilities; v) joint declaration to renounce the development of nuclear weapons; and vi) signing of a regional test-ban treaty.²³ India rejected all these proposals on the plea that they failed to address the Indian perception of a Chinese nuclear threat and treated India and Pakistan as equals, elevating Pakistan's importance, despite India's far greater size, and economic and military power.²⁴ It also argued that all these proposals were part of an "insincere diplomatic offensive" by Pakistan to isolate India in the non-proliferation forums and, therefore, lacked credibility.²⁵

During the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) negotiations, Pakistan demanded that the treaty ought to be an instrument against both horizontal and vertical nuclear proliferation, and must effectively contribute towards nuclear disarmament.²⁶ Like the NPT, Pakistan has generally supported the CTBT, while strongly indicating that its policy was contingent upon the Indian position and behaviour, i.e., that it would not sign the CTBT unless India did so. Pakistan's Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament (CD), Munir Akram, reiterated former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's statement made during her visit to Japan: "Let [Indian] Prime Minister Rao join me anywhere in the world to ensure that what happened in Hiroshima and

²⁰ *Documents on Disarmament: 1968* (Washington DC: ACDA, 1968), p. 317.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² SIPRI, *The Near-Nuclear Countries and the NPT* (Stockholm: SIPRI, 1972), p. 26

²³ *US Congressional Records*, 5 August 1988, p. S11005.

²⁴ "India not in favor of regional disarmament", *News India*, 14 November 1987.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Text of the statement at the Conference on Disarmament by Ambassador Munir Akram, Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office, Geneva, on 24 January 1996.

Nagasaki will never happen in Lahore and Delhi.”²⁷ However, given its stand against the CTBT, India would have tested its nuclear weapons before September 1999, no matter which government had been in power.²⁸ It aspired to the status of a full-fledged *de facto*, if not *de jure*, nuclear weapon state, before the CTBT came into force. Politics, ideology, longstanding nuclear ambitions, and pursuit of strategic power played a decisive role. Analysing the Indian argument about the Chinese nuclear threat to its security, Eric Arnett observes: “Their claim [India’s] is not only cynical but inconsistent with the history of Indian defense planning.”²⁹ “Fear of China, or later Pakistan’s military power does not fully explain India’s nuclear weapons program,” observes George Perkovich.³⁰

The Indian nuclear tests in May 1998 generated immense pressure on Pakistan to follow suit, due to their wide-ranging implications for its security and body-politic. Pakistan’s nuclear tests were axiomatic after the India nuclear tests since it was under intense pressure to redress the resultant strategic imbalance and the adverse impact on national security, as well as to re-establish deterrent stability between the two adversaries. The dynamics of domestic politics also forced Pakistan to go for nuclear tests. According to Neil Joeck, the threat of being driven from office was patently clear to Prime Minister Sharif, which compelled his government to carry out the nuclear tests.³¹ The Indian nuclear tests evoked a matching response from Pakistan on 28 and 30 May 1998. If the last fifteen years of Pakistan’s nuclear policy were any index to the future, its leadership would not have carried out the nuclear weapon tests, had India not carried out its tests, even if the tests were deemed necessary by its atomic bureaucracy. The series of tests Pakistan carried out in May 1998 enabled it to produce first generation nuclear weapons, which are considered appropriate for a credible nuclear deterrence against India at this stage.

Pakistan’s Nuclear Weapons Capability and Delivery Systems:

Despite the high level of attention given to Pakistan’s nuclear pursuits in the formative phase, Indian and Western strategic communities not only underestimated, but at times underplayed its propensity to rapidly acquire

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ For India’s CTBT policy, see Zafar Iqbal Cheema, “Background Factors Relating to Nuclear Disarmament Issues, Including NPT, CTBT and Likely Future Developments”, in Fasahat H. Syed (ed.), *Nuclear Disarmament and Conventional Arms Control Including Light Weapons* (Rawalpindi: FRIENDS, 1997), pp. 67-96.

²⁹ Arnett, *Nuclear Weapons*, pp. 1-18.

³⁰ George Perkovich, *India’s Nuclear Bomb: Impact on Global Proliferation* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), p. 12.

³¹ Neil Joeck, “Nuclear Developments in India and Pakistan”, *Access Asia Review*, vol. 2, no. 2 (July 1999), pp. 29-30.

nuclear weapons capability.³² Much before the series of nuclear tests in May 1998, Pakistan had acquired the capability to manufacture and assemble all the components of a nuclear device.³³ It claimed to have carried out five nuclear tests on 28 May, and the sixth on 30 May 1998.³⁴ Broadly, these tests pertained to three main areas of weaponization: low-yield weapons, high-yield fission, and boosted-fission weapons.³⁵ According to Dr Khan, Pakistan used “ready-to-fire nuclear warheads” and not test bombs on 28 and 30 May 1998.³⁶ Before the May 1998 tests, India was perceived as maintaining an ambiguous nuclear posture and “non-weaponized” nuclear arsenal capability: It had produced fissile material and bomb components, but had not turned the components over to the military.³⁷ Late in the 1980s and 1990s, however, the Indian military did become much more involved in nuclear weapons matters, conducting studies of preventive attack options in developing counter-force capabilities, and producing missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons. After May 1998, India claimed a 43 kiloton yield for the thermonuclear device and 12 kiloton for the fission device. International estimates suggested that the combined yields of the 11 May tests were between 10 to 15 kilotons.³⁸ The international community also questioned whether India had actually tested a thermonuclear device.³⁹

³² Dr Homi Sethna, Chairman of the Indian Atomic Energy Commission, contemptuously dismissed the possibility of a Pakistani nuclear response after India’s 1974 nuclear test by saying that Pakistan neither had the technology nor the capable men to produce nuclear weapons. Full details of Dr Sethna’s observation are available in Dr A. Khan’s interview in *The Muslim* (Islamabad), 1 March 1987; and Kuldip Nayyar, “Pakistan can make an A-Bomb: Says Pakistan’s Dr. Strange Love”, *Observer* (London), 1 March 1987. A US Congressional study in 1982 suggested a considerable underestimation of Pakistan’s development of nuclear weapons capability when it had virtually acquired most of the equipment for the Kahuta Uranium Enrichment Plant. *Analysis of Six Issues About Nuclear Capabilities of India, Iraq, Libya and Pakistan*, prepared by the Natural Resources Policy Division for the Subcommittee on Arms Control, Oceans, International Operations and Environment, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, January 1982 (Washington DC: US GPO, 1982), p. 18. In another context, US officials underplayed the initial reports of Richard Barlow, a CIA officer monitoring Pakistan’s nuclear pursuits in the 1980s. For further details, see, Hersh, “Nuclear Edge”, pp. 68-73.

³³ Aslam Beg, pp. 176-7.

³⁴ *News* (Rawalpindi), 29 and 31 May 1998, p. 1; *Nation* (Islamabad), 29 and 31 May 1998, p. 1.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ “Ready-to-Fire N-Warheads Used”, *Nation* (Islamabad), 29 May 1998, p. 1.

³⁷ Eric Arnett, “Nuclear Stability and Arms Sale to India: Implications for U.S. Policy”, in *Arms Control Today*, vol. 27, no. 5 (August 1997), pp. 7-11.

³⁸ Perkovich, *India’s Nuclear Bomb*, p. 426.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 427.

The most preferred Pakistani aircraft for nuclear delivery missions is likely to be the US-supplied F-16. It is a medium-range, multiple-role, high-performance aircraft that is considered especially suitable for nuclear delivery systems.⁴⁰ Pakistan procured 40 F-16 aircraft (the fighter-bomber version) in the early 1980s, under the terms of a limited force modernization programme, with US co-operation in the wake of the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan.⁴¹ The US took special care that no equipment was provided to Pakistan which could be used for or would assist in nuclear delivery missions.⁴² It specially denied the electrical mechanisms necessary for safe maintenance, transportation, and delivery of nuclear weapons by F-16s.⁴³ However, various accounts have appeared since then, which suggest that Pakistan has carried out modifications to the F-16s for nuclear delivery missions. In 1989, *Foreign Report* suggested that Pakistan has formatted the bomb to be delivered from beneath the wings of an F-16 and indicated the possibility of flight training being carried out.⁴⁴ The bomb design had also gone through a series of wind-tunnel tests and programmed in-flight computer system to provide the correct flight path for a nuclear bomb run.⁴⁵ It is reported that the Indian Defence Research and Development Organization had been perfecting aerial bombing techniques, using the MIG-23 and MIG-27 aircraft.⁴⁶ If that were true, the Pakistani choice for an aircraft delivery system, i.e., the F-16s, seems better than the Indian choice. However, India has a wider choice in the form of Jaguars, Mirage 2000, and MIG 29 aircraft.

Pakistan test-fired an intermediate range ballistic missile (MRBM) named “Ghauri”, on 6 April 1997. It is based upon a three-stage rocket with a 700 kg payload, has a range of 1500 km, and is capable of carrying nuclear warheads.⁴⁷ Equipped with the latest guidance technology, Ghauri (also called a Haft-V) can engage targets throughout India, except in its extreme east. However, there are hardly any important strategic installations and bases in the extreme east at this stage, which can operate against Pakistan. Most of such targets are located in central, southern, and western India, and are within

⁴⁰ *Aid and the Proposed Arms Sale of F-16 to Pakistan*, Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 97th Congress, 1st Session, 12-17 November 1981 (Washington DC: USGPO, 1981), p. 13.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Weapons Proliferation in the New World Order*, Hearing before the Committee on Government Affairs, United States Senate, 102nd Congress, 2nd Session, 15 January 1992, pp. 20-5

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ “Pakistan’s Atomic Bomb”, *Foreign Report* (12 January 1989), p. 1. However, *Foreign Report* is not generally regarded as a very reliable source.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ David Cortright and Amitabh Mattoo, eds., *India and the Bomb: Public Opinion and Nuclear Options* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), p. 8.

⁴⁷ *News* (Rawalpindi), 7 April 1998.

Ghauri's range. It can also engage India's naval deployments and bases within a range of 1,100 to 1,500 km, if deployed near Karachi. Its range can also be further extended to engage targets throughout India. In April 1999, Pakistan test-fired a short-range ballistic missile, Shaheen-I, with a range of 1000-1100 km, terminal guidance, and solid-fuel system, which provides it with rapid reaction capability. It has significantly enhanced Pakistan's strategic and political position *vis-à-vis* India.

Pakistan test-fired its longest-range nuclear-capable ballistic missile, Shaheen-II, on 9 March 2004, which can hit targets up to 2,000 km.⁴⁸ The missile's actual range is up to 2,500 km, but was restricted to 2,000 km so as not to cross Pakistan's declared territorial sea limit. The Shaheen-II is a solid-fuel and nuclear-capable ballistic missile, which gives Pakistan a ready-response capability. "It reflects Pakistan's resolve to maintain minimum credible deterrence as the cornerstone of its security policy", an ISPR statement said.⁴⁹ Pakistan had notified India as required under the mutually signed MoU on the advance notification of ballistic missiles tests and as a CBM in the prevailing environment to normalize relations.

Pakistan's choice of medium and intermediate range missiles (e.g., Hatf-3, Ghauri, and Shaheen), provides it with a diversity of nuclear force deployment options. The upgraded versions of Ghauri and Shaheen (Ghauri-II and Shaheen-II), with a range up to 2000 to 2500 km, would enable Pakistan to cover the entire Indian territories in its missile-targeting options. Pakistan has acquired the technology to miniaturize nuclear warheads for missile-based delivery systems and to develop boosted weapons.⁵⁰ Testing was necessary before it could undertake to deploy these missiles.⁵¹ Some observers suggest that Pakistan could have already produced warheads compact enough to be carried by missiles.⁵²

India–Pakistan Nuclear Doctrines

India's draft nuclear doctrine, announced on 17 August 1999 by its National Security Advisory Board constituted by the BJP government, is perceived in Pakistan as an aggressive and provocative strategy, which would not only fuel a nuclear arms race but enhance strategic instability between India and Pakistan.⁵³ Although the draft doctrine has yet to be formally approved by the Indian government, it is believed axiomatic in Pakistan that the Indian

⁴⁸ "Pakistan tests its longest-range missile", *Dawn* (Internet Edition), 10 March 2004.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ "Pakistan Working on Miniaturized N-Warhead", *Nation* (Islamabad), 16 April 1998, p. 9.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Hersh, "Nuclear Edge", pp. 55-73.

⁵³ "Pakistan says Indian nuclear plan threatens global stability", *The News International*, 26 August, 1999.

government would, by and large, embrace it.⁵⁴ The doctrine proclaims the development and maintenance of credible minimum deterrence, based upon a strategic triad of nuclear forces (land-based, air-based, and sea-based), second-strike capability, and punitive retaliation with nuclear weapons if deterrence were to fail.⁵⁵ It proclaims:

The fundamental purpose of Indian nuclear weapons is to deter the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons by any State or entity against India and its forces. India will not be the first to initiate a nuclear strike, but will respond with punitive retaliation should deterrence fail.⁵⁶

It declares that credible deterrence requires: sufficient, survivable, and operationally deployable nuclear forces, with robust command and control, and efficient intelligence and early warning systems.⁵⁷ The nuclear forces are to be under exclusive civilian command and control, with final authority to launch nuclear weapons resting with the Indian prime minister.⁵⁸

The danger of the proposed doctrine is that it relies upon the maintenance of highly effective conventional capabilities, not just to raise the threshold of conventional military conflict, but to deal with the threat of use of nuclear weapons by an adversary. By pronouncing such a nuclear war-fighting strategy, the doctrine is a recipe for a nuclear disaster, since any conventional pre-emptive strikes against an adversary's nuclear weapons to ward off threats of their use might automatically lead to a nuclear exchange. According to Rodney W. Jones, the Indian nuclear doctrine is based upon an expansive war-fighting force structure, without specifying adversaries, or an actual threat, language of which alludes provocatively to using conventional pre-emptive capabilities offensively against any party that might threaten to use nuclear weapons against India.⁵⁹ He opines: "By calling this strategy document a draft, the authors may hope to draw Pakistan reactively into public declarations of its own nuclear policy."⁶⁰ The proposed Indian nuclear doctrine is also an almost verbatim version of the Western strategic models on nuclear deterrence, and lacks ingenuity, except in its no-first-use offer, which is modelled on the former Soviet and Chinese proclamations.

On 4 January 2003, the Indian Cabinet Committee on Security reviewed the operationalization of India's Nuclear Doctrine and summarized a version, which, in some ways, significantly departs from the August 1999 draft

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Draft Report of the National Security Advisory Board on Indian Nuclear Doctrine (New Delhi: Government of India, 17 August 1999).

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Rodney W. Jones, "Pakistan's Nuclear Posture", *Dawn* (Karachi), 14 September 1999.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

document.⁶¹ It omits the development of a triad of strategic nuclear forces (land-based, air-based, and sea-based), which in any case was beyond India's short-term capacity to develop.⁶² The "no-first-use" posture has been modified in two ways. First, the word "anywhere" has been added to the provision to the no-first-use clause: "nuclear weapons will only be used in retaliation against a nuclear attack on Indian territory or on Indian forces anywhere." This implies that India may use nuclear weapons, even if the Indian forces happen to be in another state's territory, thus not ruling out an aggressive mode or occupation.⁶³ Article vi of the operationalised nuclear doctrine renders the "no-first-use" declaration invalid by stating: "However, in the event of a major attack against India, or Indian forces anywhere, by biological or chemical weapons, India will retain the option of retaliating with nuclear weapons."⁶⁴

Pakistan has not issued a document which can be termed a nuclear doctrine, perhaps deliberately so, to maintain flexibility. However, its policy of maintaining a minimum and credible small nuclear force, and addressing asymmetric strategic equilibrium with India by invoking nuclear weapons suggest the outlines of a nuclear doctrine. As indicated above, Pakistan has often declared that minimum nuclear deterrent will remain the guiding principle of its nuclear strategy.⁶⁵ "The minimum nuclear deterrence can and will never be compromised," General Musharraf reiterated, while inaugurating the 26th International Nathiagali Summer College on Physics in 2001.⁶⁶ He further stated: "Pakistan believes in maintaining a minimum credible deterrence and does not want to direct its available resources towards the race of weapons of mass destruction."⁶⁷ This statement has been reiterated many times, as recently as during the latest visit to Islamabad by the US Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage. Since the late 1980s, Pakistan has pursued a doctrine of minimum nuclear deterrence and adequate conventional defence to balance India's nuclear and conventional forces. As a note of caution, declarations about the doctrine need to be differentiated from its operational and functional dimensions. Pakistan's rejection of India's "no-nuclear-first-use" pledge also suggests that nuclear weapons are integral to its defence and deterrent doctrine. Pakistani leaders consider India's "no-first-use" offer as declaratory posturing, rather than an actual policy. Second, it

⁶¹ The Cabinet Committee on Security Reviews Operationalization of India's Nuclear Doctrines (New Delhi: Government of India Press Release, 4 January 2003).

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, article ii.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, article vi.

⁶⁵ "Pakistan says Indian nuclear plan threatens global stability", *The News International*, 26 August, 1999.

⁶⁶ Faraz Hashmi, "Nuclear Deterrence Vital to Security: Musharraf Rules out Compromise", *Dawn* (Internet Edition), 26 June 2001.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

would undermine the credibility of Pakistan's deterrence against an Indian attack or coercion. Pakistan's nuclear strategy aims to prevent an all-out war with India. The policy to downgrade Pakistan's conventional military capability unwittingly lowers its threshold to invoke the threat of use of nuclear weapons. It feels compelled to threaten the use of nuclear weapons at an early stage if a war looms on the horizon.

Pakistani officials have described general contingencies, which would warrant the threat or use of nuclear weapons. For example, an Italian report, based upon interview of Lieutenant-General Khalid Kidwai, Director-General of the Strategic Plans Division (SDP) by a team of Italian researchers, describes some scenarios for Pakistan's employment of nuclear weapons.⁶⁸ The interview-based report offers an analysis of Pakistan's nuclear posture and outlines contingencies under which Pakistan might resort to the threat or use of nuclear weapons. It states that Pakistan would resort to nuclear weapons' employment in the following eventualities:⁶⁹

- i) India attacks Pakistan and conquers a large part of its territory.
- ii) India destroys a large part either of its land or air forces.
- iii) India proceeds to the economic strangulation of Pakistan.
- iv) India pushes Pakistan into political destabilization or creates large-scale internal subversion.⁷⁰

Pakistan's foreign and defence policies set the general terms under which the doctrinal foundations of its nuclear policy are based. An analysis of its overall decision-making process suggests that Pakistan's nuclear doctrine has evolved, rather than having been formulated at a given point in its nuclear history. Its fundamental objective is deterring rather than fighting a war with India. Other objectives of the Pakistani nuclear doctrine in dealing with the perceived threat from India are to maintain an overall strategic equilibrium, to neutralize conventional military asymmetries against India, and to maintain its territorial integrity and political sovereignty. Conventional military disparities *vis-à-vis* India and lack of strategic depth compel Pakistani military leaders to threaten the use of nuclear weapons as a deterrent against a large-scale Indian invasion that threatens its territorial integrity.

There is general recognition in Pakistan that nuclear weapons played a role in diffusing various conflict-situations between India and Pakistan in the past decade and a half. It is believed that to defuse the 1986-87 Brasstacks crisis, Pakistan invoked its nuclear weapons capability through the good offices of Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan, who communicated a veiled nuclear threat to India

⁶⁸ Paolo Cotta-Ramusino and Maurizio Martellini, *Nuclear Safety, Nuclear Stability and Nuclear Strategy in Pakistan* (Como: Landau Network, January 2002).

⁶⁹ General Kidwai later denied the use of the wording of the contingencies.

⁷⁰ The wording of these thresholds is that of the Italian interviewers, Paolo Cotta-Ramusino and Maurizio Martellini, see note above, p. 5.

about Pakistan's possession of the nuclear bomb and the likelihood of its use, should Pakistan's territorial integrity be at stake.⁷¹ Dr Khan's statement was followed by an interview of General Ziaul Haq in *Time* magazine, in which he confirmed Pakistan's acquisition of nuclear weapons capability, although the Brasstacks crisis had passed its peak by then.⁷² Some experts believed that the interview was prompted by India's threatening military manoeuvres against Pakistan's relatively vulnerable southern sector around Rajasthan in Sindh province.⁷³

Pakistan once again considered invoking its nuclear weapons capability to avert the fear of a war with India during the spring 1990 Kashmir crisis. This crisis was precipitated due to an unprecedented and largely indigenous Kashmiri struggle for independence from India from 1989 onward. India perceived Pakistan as abetting and aiding the Kashmiri struggle and consequently deployed its troops along Pakistan's border. The Indian leaders threatened that Pakistan could not gain Kashmir without a war.⁷⁴ While rapidly deploying its conventional armed forces, Pakistan signalled the threat of the use of nuclear weapons by pre-positioning its F-16s, equipped with nuclear weapons, on full alert.⁷⁵ Due to the high risk of a nuclear war between India and Pakistan, the United States mediated to defuse the crisis. However, a study sponsored by the US Energy Department discounts the possibility of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.⁷⁶

K. Subrahmanyam assesses the role of nuclear weapons in the 1990 crisis as follows: "In 1965 after Pakistan's 'Operation Gibraltar', the war of 1965 happened. India didn't resort to a similar course of action in 1990."⁷⁷ The restraint imposed by the nuclear factor on the conventional military confrontation between India and Pakistan was all too obvious. Whether or not nuclear-weapons capabilities played a decisive role in averting the 1986-87 and 1990 crises, there is a widespread perception of the influence of nuclear weapons on strategic decision-making and of restraint imposed on the usually belligerent behaviour of the two long-standing adversaries.

The Kargil crisis in May 1999 was yet another stark reminder of the potential for an India-Pakistan conflict over the Kashmir dispute which could lead to a nuclear exchange. India internationalized the conflict, resulting in explicit demands from the international community, especially the great powers, for Pakistan to withdraw its forces as well as the Kashmiri militants

⁷¹ Nayyar, "Pakistan can make an A-Bomb", *Brasstacks*, p. 30.

⁷² "Knocking at the Nuclear Door", *Time* magazine, 30 April 1987.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Hersh, "Nuclear Edge", p. 64.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Cohen, et. al., *Compound Crisis*, pp. 98-102.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Devin Haggerty, "Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia: the 1990 Indo-Pakistan Crisis", *International Security*, vol. 20, no.3 (Winter 1995-96).

from the Kargil sector to avert the possibility of an all-out war with India, which might well have escalated into a nuclear clash between the two South Asian neighbours.⁷⁸ Hoyt cites a source which states that, “Indian and Pakistani officials and leaders exchanged direct or indirect nuclear threats no fewer than 13 times between May 26 and June 30.”⁷⁹ According to an Indian study, nuclear warheads were readied, and delivery systems, including Mirage 200 aircraft, short-ranged Prithvi missiles, and medium-ranged Agni missiles, were prepared for possible use.⁸⁰

Deterrent Stability in South Asia

There is a voluminous body of literature, variously favouring and opposing the prospects of deterrent stability between India and Pakistan. The lines of divisions between the proponents of nuclear deterrence and its opponents are drawn along culturally-ingrained orientations and preferences, which often colour so-called “rational” analyses and conclusions. Many South Asian experts generally agree that a state of mutual deterrence has been established between India and Pakistan, though the various descriptions of this deterrence differ. The deterrence relationship between India and Pakistan in the pre-tests (nuclear) scenario has not been explained by any known models of the Cold-war era; instead, some new terms have been coined such as non-weaponized deterrence, recessed deterrence, and existential deterrence. The concept of non-weaponized deterrence was proposed by George Perkovich, recognizing that India and Pakistan could retain nuclear weapons capabilities and fissile material, but remain short of manufacturing nuclear warheads.⁸¹ For a stable non-weaponized deterrent regime, India and Pakistan would undertake not to assemble or deploy nuclear weapons and nuclear-capable ballistic missiles.⁸² A non-weaponized deterrence posture had an inherent time-lag built into the system, which provided sufficient time for crisis management or decisions to employ nuclear weapons. Non-weaponized deterrence also visualized complementary CBMs in the nuclear and related non-nuclear fields.

⁷⁸ According to Timothy Hoyt, “Nuclear threats, usually veiled, were part and parcel of the crisis.” Timothy Hoyt, “Kargil: the Nuclear Dimension”, a chapter in a forthcoming book on Kargil by the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, pp. 12-13. Hoyt cites a source which states that, “Indian and Pakistani officials and leaders exchanged direct or indirect nuclear threats no fewer than 13 times between May 26 and June 30.”

⁷⁹ “India-Pakistan: Kargil Raises Risk of Nuclear War”, commentary by Praful Bidwai, *Inter Press Service* (New Delhi), 27 July 1999.

⁸⁰ Raj Chengappa, *Weapons of Peace* (New Delhi: HarperCollins Publishers India Pvt Ltd, 2000), p. 437. Nuclear weapons, according to this report, were placed at “Readiness State 3” –ready to be mated with delivery systems at short notice. Presumably, this means that they were assembled or virtually assembled.

⁸¹ George Perkovich, “Non-Weaponized Deterrence: The Case for Pakistan,” *Strategic Studies* (Islamabad), vol. XVII (Autumn-Winter 1994), pp. 142-6.

⁸² *Ibid.*

Recessed deterrence, a term attributed to Jasjit Singh, favours the development of nuclear weapons components and fabrication of warheads, but also requires them to be maintained in unassembled modes.⁸³ General Sundarji added to the concept of recessed deterrence by suggesting that India and Pakistan need not place their nuclear weapons components under military control, but instead could store components, fissile materials, and triggering devices at civilian laboratories in unassembled form and separate from delivery systems.⁸⁴ Recessed deterrence envisioned centralized negative controls and the weapons components to be so located that they could be air-transported to a central location, assembled and mounted on delivery systems in approximately six to twelve hours, to enable the launch of a retaliatory strike after riding out the adversary's first strike.⁸⁵ Both these concepts were based upon the traditional postulation that nuclear weapons—being weapons of mass destruction—have no tactical value or any significant ancillary role except to deter a nuclear attack or be used in a retaliatory second-strike mode. They are, therefore, essentially considered weapons of deterrence. The inherent problems in a non-weaponized deterrence regime were that unassembled arsenals diminished the possibility that nuclear weapons would always be available when needed and were more vulnerable to decapitation. However, the non-weaponized deterrence regime entailed an element of ambiguity that lacked transparency about the nuclear weapons capabilities of India and Pakistan and adversely affected deterrent stability.

The weaponization policies that India and Pakistan announced after their nuclear tests in May 1999 and the attendant doctrinal development should add transparency and may enhance stability, although at a higher threshold, and provided other essential pre-requisites of nuclear deterrence are fulfilled. These may include early warning systems, C³I networks, survivable weapons capabilities, including second-strike capabilities, and credible delivery systems. The non-weaponized deterrence regime between India and Pakistan has been transformed into a weaponized regime after their nuclear tests. Both India and Pakistan are now *de facto* nuclear weapon states, if not *de jure*.

Scott Sagan maintains that within the rationalist deterrent theory, three major elements for stable nuclear deterrence are pre-requisites: i) the absence of preventive war during the transition period, when one state has developed a nuclear weapons capability and the other has not; ii) both states must develop not only the ability to inflict unacceptable damage on the other, but also a reliable second-strike capability; iii) their nuclear arsenals must not be prone to

⁸³ Air Commodore (retd.) Jasjit Singh is the Director of IDSA, New Delhi. For his views, see Naem A. Salik, "A Minimum Deterrent Regime in South Asia" (under publication), pp. 3-4.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

accidental or unauthorized use.⁸⁶ In view of these requirements, Sagan believes that, from the organizational theory perspective, it is a formidable task for the new nuclear states.⁸⁷ India and Pakistan seem capable of inflicting unacceptable damage upon each on the basis of their existing nuclear weapons capabilities. In addition, they are in the process of building second-strike capabilities, e.g., the development and deployment of various categories of nuclear-capable ballistic missile systems. Moreover, there would be no guarantee to completely rule out accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons with any degree of definiteness. India and Pakistan are passing through the formative phase of such processes about the safety of their nuclear arsenals. They may acquire technologies to install PAL and EMP devices, and institute processes to forestall accidental and unauthorized uses of nuclear weapons in the long-term perspective.

Neil Joeck believes that India and Pakistan's nuclear capabilities "do not reduce or eliminate factors that contributed to past conflicts, and therefore, neither explain the absence of war over the past decade nor why war is currently unlikely."⁸⁸ He maintains that limited nuclear capabilities increase the potential costs of conflict, but do little to reduce the risk of its breaking out. However, without admitting the stabilizing effect of nuclear weapons capabilities, he recognizes that the development of command and control mechanisms would enhance stability in a crisis, and improve the ability to avoid nuclear use in the event of war.⁸⁹ Joeck suggests that operational considerations, e.g., nuclear doctrine, weapons safety, alternative response options, intelligence and early warnings would help to reinforce deterrence at ground level, and ensure that both sides have a choice, other than suicide or surrender.

Kenneth Waltz takes an optimistic view of deterrent stability among new nuclear nations, their weapons capabilities, and C² problems, and opines that over a period of time they would be able to resolve these problems, as did the existing nuclear weapon states.⁹⁰ Waltz further maintains that lesser (nuclear) states would not be able to disrupt nuclear equilibrium, as nuclear weapons make miscalculation difficult, they can be used both for defence and

⁸⁶ Scott Sagan, "The Perils of Proliferation", *International Security*, vol. 18, no. 4 (1994), p. 71

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 71-102.

⁸⁸ Neil Joeck, *Maintaining Nuclear Stability In South Asia*: Adelphi Paper No: 312 (London: IISS, 1997), pp. 12, 36-48. It needs to be mentioned that this paper was written before the May 1998 nuclear tests.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁹⁰ Kenneth Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better* (London: IISS, 1981), pp. 20-4.

deterrence, and, if employed responsibly, nuclear weapons make wars hard to start.⁹¹

Analysing the logic and prospect of deterrent stability in South Asia, Ashley Tellis opines: “The Indian subcontinent is likely to enjoy an extended period of ‘ugly stability’ that will probably last for at least a decade and possibly longer at the strategic level, simultaneously generating instability at the lower end of the conflict spectrum.”⁹² However, he points out:

the small number of nuclear weapons, the relatively provocative character of some of the delivery systems, the questionable command and control arrangements, the severely limited intelligence and warning systems, the casual attitudes towards nuclear deterrence, the lack of a clear and articulated deterrence doctrine, and the presence of few confidence-building measures, all combine to make successful deterrence stability a less-than-automatic outcome.⁹³

It is claimed that an elementary form of nuclear deterrence between India and Pakistan has been operative since 1988. Indicating the existence of nuclear deterrence between India and Pakistan in the pre-nuclear tests scenario (May 1998), General Beg stated as Chief of Army Staff in 1989: “Whether we have a nuclear device or not is a different matter, but the very fact that people believe we have the nuclear capability is in itself a meaningful deterrent.”⁹⁴ “The influence of nuclear weapons on the use of military force is widely recognized by influential opinions in India and that nuclear deterrence has kept wars in South Asia at bay.”⁹⁵ Answering the question whether India and Pakistan would have refrained from the three wars they fought in 1948, 1965, and 1971, had both of them possessed minimal nuclear deterrents, a former Chief of the Indian Army and a respected analyst of strategic issues has expressed his views thus: “These wars would not have occurred.”⁹⁶ Pakistani professionals agree with the assessment that, had Pakistan possessed a nuclear deterrent in 1971, “the dismemberment of Pakistan could have been averted.”⁹⁷ Commenting on the prospects for the future, a former Chief of the Indian Naval Staff has observed that, with nuclear capability, “Pakistan would be able to establish a deterrent nuclear posture against India, rendering in the

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 30.

⁹² Ashley J. Tellis, *Stability in South Asia* (Santa Monica: Rand Documented Briefing, 1997), p. viii.

⁹³ Tellis, p. 52. It is noteworthy that Tellis’ monograph was written before the 1998 nuclear tests.

⁹⁴ See in Munir Ahmad Khan, “Understanding Pakistan’s Nuclear Plans”, *News* (Islamabad), 8 March 1995, p. 6.

⁹⁵ *The U.S. and India*, A Report (Washington DC: Washington Council on Non-Proliferation, 1993), p. 24.

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 24-6.

⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 26.

process its conventional forces considerably less significant than it is today.”⁹⁸ Another senior Indian general has remarked: “What the nuclear capability does is to make sure that the old scenarios of Indian armor crossing the Sukkur barrage over the Indus and slicing Pakistan into two are a thing of the past.”⁹⁹

Nuclear weapons generally erode conventional disparities. According to an opinion in the influential *Times of India*, perhaps India could flatten Islamabad 20 times over instead of Pakistan flattening India five times, but overkill is an illusive strategy.¹⁰⁰ It continues: “20 bombs against 40 bombs, though less in number, still constitute unacceptable damage.”¹⁰¹ Nuclear weapons are believed to have a great equalizing effect. Unlike conventional weapons, nuclear weapons are not militarily usable, but are in fact political and psychological weapons and, therefore, meant to deter aggression and war. Qualitative asymmetries in nuclear weapons, like the one side having tested and the other untested ones, generate a serious power vacuum and strategic imbalance, which is prejudicial to the vital national security interests of the country that has not conducted tests. Although Pakistan had carried out cold tests of its nuclear devices as far back as 1987, through computer simulation techniques, a detonation was considered the litmus test to ensure that nuclear weapons will work reliably and enhance deterrent stability. The general perception in Pakistan is that its nuclear tests redressed the asymmetries in the strategic equilibrium and restored the power balance.

The Indian and Pakistani nuclear deterrents dissuade both countries from embarking upon a course of action perceived prejudicial to their vital national security interests. It is a policy as well as a condition for establishing a new psychological relationship between the two antagonists. Both the adversaries would be dissuaded from undertaking a course of action injurious to the other’s vital interests, due to the fear of infliction of unacceptable damage which would far outweigh the perceived advantages. Each adversary’s dissuasion is, therefore, based upon a rational calculus of costs and benefits. India and Pakistan do not possess formidable weapons capabilities compared to the superpowers; yet those they do possess are sufficient to cause unacceptable damage in case of counter-value targets in both countries. Nuclear deterrence, unlike conventional deterrence, is not decisively degraded by quantitative or qualitative disparity. So long as a state’s strategic arsenal is sufficient to survive the first strike and still inflict unacceptable damage, it does

⁹⁸ These views are cited in Mahbulul Haq, “Internal Nuclear Threat to South Asia”, *Regional Studies*, vol. xiv, no. (1996), p. 27.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Op-ed article, “India can no longer beat Pakistan in war”, *Nation* (Islamabad) 4 June 1998.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

not have to match the adversary's arsenal in numbers.¹⁰² Credible deterrence can be achieved with a small nuclear force.¹⁰³ One analyst has concluded that five or six nuclear warheads should be sufficient; even fewer should suffice to deter, provided they can be delivered on targets of high values.¹⁰⁴ Nuclear weapons "make the cost of war seem frighteningly high and thus discourage states from starting any wars that might lead to the use of such weapons."¹⁰⁵

As the nuclear capabilities of India and Pakistan mutually hold their cities hostage, any thought of the annihilation of tens of thousands of civilians does amount to "unacceptable damage." The excruciating damages of a possible nuclear exchange between India and Pakistan would be unpalatable for both countries, militarily, politically, socially, and economically. And this is what makes their counter-value deterrence stable. According to Haggerty:

If history discloses an unblemished record of political leaders resisting the temptation to decapitate their enemies' nuclear forces, opacity enhances their extreme caution. After all, opaque nuclear forces are even less attractive targets for first strike than transparent ones, because they are even more shrouded in ambiguity and secrecy.¹⁰⁶

That scenario has, however, changed in South Asia after India and Pakistan conducted nuclear tests in May 1998. The proponents of nuclear deterrence suggest that their argument is also upheld by empirical evidence. Nuclear weapons have helped to maintain peace and prevented military adventures in the past, and there is no reason to believe that they will not do so in the future. Even a powerful state is unlikely to commit aggression if it concludes that the potential gains are not worth the losses it has to risk. It is not necessary to conjure up doomsday scenarios of annihilation that entail an "unmitigated disaster."¹⁰⁷ There is almost complete consensus in Pakistan's strategic, scientific, and bureaucratic community that a nuclear deterrent capability is the best guarantee—if there can be one—to ensure peace, stability, and the absence of all out war with India. Ashley Tellis, in his post-1998 voluminous study of the Indian force posture, suggests: "The prospects of deterrent stability are [therefore] high because no South Asian state is currently committed to securing any political objectives through the medium of major conventional and, by implication, nuclear war."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² Mitchell Reiss, *Without the Bomb: Politics of Nuclear Non-Proliferation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 28.

¹⁰³ Waltz, *More may be better*, pp. 16-17.

¹⁰⁴ Andre Beaufre, *Deterrence and Strategy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), p. 66.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 26

¹⁰⁶ Haggerty, "Nuclear Deterrence", pp. 67-8.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

¹⁰⁸ Ashley Tellis, *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture: Between Recess Deterrent and Ready Arsenal* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001) p. 742.

Kamal Matinuddin provides a lengthy narrative on the existing theories of deterrence and briefly mentions opposing sides in the case of India and Pakistan, but is personally evasive on the subject of deterrent stability versus instability in south Asia.¹⁰⁹

Conclusion

The present state of strategic stability between India and Pakistan is a precarious one, which needs more constant monitoring and vigil than the former Cold-war models. The geographical proximity of India and Pakistan does not permit enough early warning information and time: the three to five minutes time-lag at present is inadequate for a rational and calculated response. This might prompt launch-on-warning responses, enhancing the chances of miscalculation. The relatively less sophisticated command and control systems may cause difficulties in dealing with problems of accidental and unauthorized launch of nuclear weapons. The increase in mistrust and hostility between India and Pakistan in the wake of the Kargil crisis and the unresolved Kashmir dispute compounds the problems of nuclear arms' competition, missile proliferation, and deployment, and adds to divergent perceptions about strategic stability and regional security in South Asia.

Pakistan has to be mindful that it does not engage in an open-ended nuclear arms race with India, since the latter's larger economy enables it to allocate stupendous resources for nuclear military development, which the former simply cannot afford. It needs to dispassionately work out the essential requirements of a sufficient and stable deterrence against India and then guard against unnecessary escalation. An over-kill capability would be superfluous. The announcement of a Pakistani nuclear doctrine, not in rapid response to the draft Indian nuclear doctrine, but based upon its own merits of credible minimum deterrence, would mitigate the chances of misperception and provocation by India.

iv) Both India and Pakistan should not ignore the global trends in favour of restraint on their nuclear capabilities. The present nuclear capabilities of India and Pakistan, based upon the demonstration of the recent nuclear tests, could help to promote stability and prevent the outbreak of war, provided disputes like Kashmir are immediately addressed. Limitation of their nuclear capabilities could be gradual, through the strengthening of mutual security. India and Pakistan should agree to contain their nuclear weapons capabilities within safe and manageable limits, mutually agreed upon by both countries. They must be willing to address the horrific consequences of a nuclear war, if deterrence were to fail.

¹⁰⁹ Kamal Matinuddin, *The Nuclearization of South Asia* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 171.

The current CBMs have helped to normalize the political relationship among the two states. It is hoped the atmosphere will further improve after peace and security negotiations scheduled in June 2004, which might result in instituting nuclear-related CBMs. Through confidence and security-building negotiations, India and Pakistan can obviate the requirements for hardened silos, nuclear submarines, and even a search for the improvement of second-strike capabilities, which are at present considered essential for stable deterrence. Only then can a mutually beneficial and long-lasting peaceful atmosphere be created in the subcontinent. The long-term maintenance of a nuclear deterrent relationship by itself is a complex strategic issue, which, in the case of India and Pakistan, will be a much more demanding task. A resolution of the Kashmir dispute will eliminate the *raison d' être* of hostility between India and Pakistan. ■

THE AMERICAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN CENTRAL ASIA: MOTIVES AND IMPLICATIONS

Aly Zaman*

Introduction

“*N*ever before in modern history has a country dominated the earth so totally as the United States does today...America is now the Schwarzenegger of international politics: showing off muscles, obtrusive, intimidating...The Americans, in the absence of limits put to them by anybody or anything, act as if they own a kind of blank check in their Mcworld.”¹

America is not simply the most powerful country in the world, or even the most dominant nation in human history. It is, in fact, the most potent and pervasive empire that this world has ever witnessed. Militarily, it is far ahead of its nearest competitors; economically, its capitalist doctrines hold the entire world in their thrall; culturally, its values and ideas have left their mark wherever its media tools have managed to penetrate. For over four decades after the end of the Second World War, however, the worldwide imposition of the *Pax Americana* was delayed and deterred by the Soviet Union, an empire in its own right, though nowhere near as formidable as America. Thanks to its inherent internal weaknesses and ill-advised foreign adventures—not to mention the relentless pressure placed on it by America—the Soviet empire crumbled in 1991, leaving behind a world dominated by a single superpower.

Some months before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a US-led coalition had declared war on Iraq, after the latter invaded Kuwait in August 1990. Iraq was swiftly subdued, but its brutal ruler, Saddam Hussein, was allowed to remain in charge. The rationale behind this decision soon became apparent. During the war, the US had set up military bases in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain, and it needed to keep alive the spectre of a psychotic Saddam Hussein breathing down the necks of his nervous neighbours to justify a prolonged military presence in the oil-rich and strategically-located Persian Gulf. Setting up bases has been a regular practice of all empires, and the US has been no different. After every major war in which America has been involved, it has left behind bases to ensure its continued involvement and

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¹ *Der Spiegel*, 1997. Cited in William Blum, *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 2002).

intervention in the years to come. The Second World War, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War provide ample testimony not only of America's predilection for setting up overseas bases but also of its utmost reluctance to relinquish them, even when the presumed threat has become non-existent.

The establishment of US bases in Central Asia in the wake of the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 must be viewed in this historical context. Just as America used the Second World War and the Cold War to justify an indefinite military presence in Europe, the Korean War to station over 37000 troops in South Korea, and the Gulf War to maintain men and materials in the oil-rich Persian Gulf, in much the same way, it has used the attacks of 11 September 2001 in New York and Washington and the consequent "war against terrorism" to establish a long-term presence in Central Asia. The region is blessed with enormous energy reserves, it is rich in minerals, and its geographical location is critical to the success of US efforts in two key areas: the "war against terrorism" and the containment of Russia, China, and Iran.

Throughout the 1990s, US policy towards the newly independent Central Asian Republics (CARs) was characterized by a fair degree of ambivalence, which sometimes created confusion both in Washington as well as the region about America's real motives in Central Asia. Initially, the primary US concern was the removal of Soviet nuclear weapons left behind in Central Asia. During the mid-1990s, the region's oil and gas assumed great importance in Washington, so much so that, for some time, the US tacitly supported the hardline Taliban regime's takeover of Afghanistan, on account of the fact that a strong central government in Kabul would facilitate US oil giant, Unocal, in its attempt to lay a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan, and onwards to Pakistan and India, thereby avoiding both Russia and Iran. When that particular plan was shelved due to Afghanistan's chronic instability, Central Asia's importance in Washington's eyes began to dwindle. The authoritarianism of the Central Asian leadership came under criticism, as did human rights violations within the republics. Apart from the disillusionment with the region created by the scrapping of the pipeline plan, another major reason that restrained the US from adopting a more proactive policy in Central Asia was the Clinton administration's emphasis on engaging Russia; it was not considered politically worthwhile to risk alienating Russia by encroaching into its "near abroad."

The advent of the second Bush administration heralded a major shift in US foreign policy objectives in Central Asia. Many in the administration, including Bush himself, were closely linked to oil companies in the US and favoured a more aggressive penetration of Central Asia to exploit its oil wealth, regardless of any adverse effects on the relationship with Russia. The Central Asian approach was part of an overall strategy of "full-spectrum dominance," devised by neo-conservative elements in the administration to ensure American hegemony over the entire world.

The attacks of 11 September 2001 in New York and Washington presented a tremendous opportunity to the US to extend its involvement in Central Asia. Alleged terrorist mastermind, Osama bin Laden, was held responsible for the attacks, and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan that was providing him refuge was deemed guilty by association. A massive bombing campaign against Afghanistan was planned, to be followed by a ground invasion, aimed at eliminating whatever remained of the Taliban and bin Laden's Al Qaeda network. Three of the CARs—Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—have borders with Afghanistan, which made them critically important to an effective prosecution of the American campaign. Uzbekistan and Tajikistan provided bases to the Americans in exchange for generous financial assistance, while Turkmenistan granted overflight rights to US warplanes. Subsequently, the US managed to construct a base in Kyrgyzstan as well, even though it does not share a border with Afghanistan. America's military presence in Central Asia is currently on a scale that it was unimaginable prior to 9/11; it is now the security manager of the region, much to the alarm of its major rivals: Russia, China, and Iran. All three of them already feel sufficiently encircled by American military involvement in other areas (Russia by NATO's eastward expansion, China by the American support to Taiwan, and Iran by the bases in the Persian Gulf).

As has been the case in the Persian Gulf, the US will maintain a long-term presence in Central Asia, prop up repressive regimes to stem the rising tide of Islamic radicalism, and insinuate its oil companies into the region to develop routes that will bypass Russia and Iran. Considering the region's volatility, these objectives will not be easily attained, which is why the US administration has made it clear that it intends to remain in Central Asia for a long time to come.

The aim of this paper is to examine the evolution of American policy towards Central Asia, the nature of the present level of its involvement in the region, and the objectives that America intends to attain through that involvement. It also tries to analyse the implications for major regional powers like Russia, China, and Iran, which have their own interests in Central Asia and are deeply concerned about possible US designs to undermine them.

The Evolution of American Policy in Central Asia

Prior to the events of 11 September 2001 and the subsequent US campaign in Afghanistan, the average American citizen, already notoriously ignorant of the world outside America, knew next to nothing about Central Asia. The five CARs—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—were amongst the least accessible territories of the erstwhile republics of the Soviet Union, and had been jealously concealed behind the Iron Curtain from the inquisitive gaze of both the capitalist West as well as the Muslim co-religionists of the CARs in their immediate neighbourhood, such as Iran, Turkey, and

Pakistan. After the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991, the CARs became sovereign entities; although independence had finally arrived, it was more a case of freedom being thrust upon the CARs than their having struggled for it. For over 70 years, they had been subjected to total Soviet control. The predominantly Russian leadership of the Soviet Union had, for all intents and purposes, colonized the region. Under Stalin's collectivization campaigns, there had been massive displacements of the indigenous populations in Central Asia and the march towards rapid industrialization led to an enormous migration of ethnic Russians into the region. With every passing year, Central Asia became increasingly dependent upon those Russians for the conduct of even the most basic activities.²

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the painful decades of subjugation came to an end and the five CARs unexpectedly found themselves transformed into independent states. Initially, courageous statements emanated from some of the Central Asian leaders, suggesting the charting of a course for the region that would be free from the shackles of Russian hegemony.³ But such sentiments, although praiseworthy, ignored certain key realities that necessitated continued dependence upon Russia. First, there was a glaring absence of an indigenous officer corps. In 1992, 70 per cent of all officers in Kazakhstan were Russian citizens; in Uzbekistan, an identical percentage of officers spoke only Russian; while in Turkmenistan, as many as 95 per cent of the officers were of Slavic origin.⁴ Secondly, the leaders of the CARs felt that their resources were too scarce and their national concerns too pressing for them to form a confederation and make a clean break from Russia.⁵ And finally, there was a general acknowledgement on the part of the CARs that they were not equipped to provide for their own security independently. These reasons combined to lead them "back into the arms of Mother Russia".⁶

The creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in 1992 testified to Russia's pre-eminent status as the chief guarantor of the security of the newly independent republics. All the CARs joined the CIS and, later that year, four of them also signed the Collective Security Treaty, Turkmenistan being the only exception. As far as the CARs were concerned, the Treaty did meet their basic security requirements. One of its provisions precluded the signatories from joining any security alignment that could

² Eric Miller, "And the Walls Came Tumbling Down: Central Asia and Security, Past, Present and Future", Paper prepared for the 13th Annual Graduate Student Symposium, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, 4-5 April 1997
<<http://minerva.acc.virginia.edu/~crees/symposium/miller.html>>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

undermine the security of any of the others.⁷ In this manner, Russia was legally justified in monitoring the foreign relations of the CARs, while the CARs had a security guarantee that they felt would promote stability within the region. Now that the US has a military presence in Central Asia and is making generous financial contributions to bolster the CARs' impoverished economies, the Collective Security Treaty has lost much of its relevance. But throughout the 1990s, the US found it extremely difficult to break the Russian stranglehold on Central Asian affairs.

At the time the CARs became independent, America's foremost policy objective in the region was the prevention of nuclear proliferation. The collapse of the Soviet Union had left Kazakhstan in exclusive possession of one of the world's largest arsenals of nuclear weapons: as many as 104 SS-19 ballistic missiles, with more than a thousand warheads, remained behind.⁸ Considering the political and economic travails that assailed the CARs after independence, there was considerable anxiety in Washington that the weapons would either be stolen or else purchased by undesirable nations, groups, or individuals. By May 1995, however, all nuclear weapons on Kazakh soil had been removed.

During the mid-1990s, America became an enthusiastic participant in the race for access to the enormous oil and gas deposits of Central Asia. America itself possesses only 3 per cent of the world's known oil reserves and, with less than 5 per cent of the world's population, it nevertheless accounts for over 25 per cent of the world's oil consumption.⁹ Imports account for 60 per cent of America's daily oil consumption, with 13 per cent of that coming from the Persian Gulf.¹⁰ It is estimated that, by 2050, Central Asia could account for 80 per cent of America's oil supply.¹¹ Keeping in mind these startling figures, it is hardly surprising that, even before the US had established embassies in each of the new republics, major US oil companies, encouraged by energy giant Chevron's earlier discovery of oil and gas in Kazakhstan, had arrived to take stock of the region's energy potential.¹² The competition for pipelines between the US, Russia, Iran, China, Turkey, and Pakistan became known as the New Great Game. The original Great Game, played out in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, had involved only two participants: czarist Russia and

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2002), p.60.

⁹ "How Oil Interests Play out in US Bombing of Afghanistan", Project Underground <http://www.peacenowar.net/Nov%208%2001--Oil.htm> (8 November 2001).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Joyce Lynn, "Pipe dreams: How oil fuels the Bush administration's 'war on terrorism'", *Online Journal* (22 August 2002) <http://www.onlinejournal.com/Special_Reports/Lynn082202/lynn082202.html>

¹² Rashid, *Jihad*, p.189.

imperial Britain, locked in a titanic struggle for ascendancy in Central Asia. The New Great Game had many competitors, all striving for one prize: pipelines.

America's main objective in the New Great Game was to break the existing Russian monopoly over both Central Asian energy development as well as the transportation of that energy to the outside world. In 1995, Unocal, a US energy company, came up with a plan to build a gas pipeline from Daulatabad in Turkmenistan, through Afghanistan, and onwards to the Pakistani city of Multan. The US government gave the plan its complete support, mainly on account of the fact that the proposed pipeline would avoid routes leading through Russia and Iran. But for the pipeline to become a realistic possibility, the internecine civil strife that had engulfed Afghanistan since the Soviet withdrawal would have to come to an end, and a strong central government would have to be in place in Kabul to maintain peace. With this end in mind, both Unocal and the US administration welcomed the takeover of Kabul by the hardline Taliban regime in 1996.¹³ It was only when feminists in the US began to protest against the discriminatory treatment of women by the Taliban did the Clinton administration distance itself from them.¹⁴ The official severance of any ties that might have remained was confirmed in 1998, after the bombing of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The attacks were believed to have been masterminded by Osama bin Laden, who at that time had taken refuge with the Taliban. Thirteen days after the bombing, the US fired 70 cruise missiles at bin Laden's camps in Afghanistan.¹⁵ Needless to say, Unocal's pipeline plan was immediately shelved.

Even before Afghanistan's volatility put breaks to US plans for tapping into Central Asia's oil wealth, there was a school of thought in Washington that argued against an increased American presence in the region on the plea that it would antagonize Russia. Strobe Talbott, the Russo-centric Deputy Secretary of State, was particularly keen to prevent any move that might be construed by Moscow as American encroachment into its backyard.¹⁶ But as Russia's economic condition became increasingly chaotic, Talbott's policy of engagement came under bitter criticism from conservative elements in the US administration and in Congress, the extremely powerful Jewish lobbies in Washington, and US oil companies. It was then that the US decided to put its weight behind Unocal. By 1997, however, disillusionment with the region had begun to set in. In that year, Talbott delivered a major address on the US approach towards Central Asia in which he emphasized that America had no binding interests in the region and did not harbour any ambition to "plant its

¹³ Rashid, *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia* (London: I.B. Tauris and Co Ltd, 2000), p.166.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.182.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.134.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.161.

flag” in Central Asia as a participant in the New Great Game.¹⁷ America felt no need to have an immediate presence in Central Asia; its interests would be served equally well—if not better—if the region remained “a no-man’s land outside any other power’s sphere of influence.”¹⁸

This hands-off approach continued till the end of the Clinton administration. By that time, relations between the US and the CARs had reached a difficult stage. The region’s standing in the West had gone down considerably on account of reports of widespread corruption, increasing despotism, and a lack of progress on economic reform.¹⁹ Experts in the US began to envisage the CARs “not as the next generation of Asian tigers but as the next wave of failed states.”²⁰

While the Clinton administration maintained a careful distance from Central Asia, the Bush administration that took office in 2001 chose to adopt a more aggressive approach towards the region, mainly on account of the tempting prospects for energy development that it offered. The administration is dominated by individuals with links to the powerful US oil lobby. President George W. Bush’s family has itself been running oil companies since the 1950s.²¹ His father, the first President Bush, made millions during the Texas oil boom in the 1950s and 1960s. In the process, he inevitably developed close ties with many in the oil industry, whose interests he then faithfully served during his long years in Washington’s corridors of power.²² Amongst the major contributors to several of the Bush family’s political enterprises was, rather ironically, the bin Laden family of Saudi Arabia.²³

The current President Bush kicked off his business career in the 1970s by setting up his own oil company.²⁴ His Vice-President, Dick Cheney, spent the late 1990s as the chief executive of Halliburton, the world’s largest oil services company. Even at that time, Cheney fully appreciated the tremendous energy potential of the Caucasus and Central Asia: “I cannot think of a time when we have had a region emerge as suddenly to become as strategically significant as the Caspian.”²⁵ President Bush’s National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice, sat on the board of Chevron during the early 1990s, while

¹⁷ Eugene B. Rumer, “Flashman’s Revenge: Central Asia after September 11”, *Strategic Forum*, no.195 (December 2002). <<http://www.ndu.edu/inss/strforum/sf195.pdf>>

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Damien Caveli, “The United States of Oil”, Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG), Montreal <http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/CAV111A.html> (21 November 2001).

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ George Monibot, “Oil, Afghanistan and America’s pipe dream”, *Dawn*, 25 October 2001.

the Commerce Secretary, Donald Evans, remained the CEO of a natural gas firm for more than a decade.²⁶ Richard Armitage, currently the Deputy Secretary of State, was contracted by Unocal to work on Central Asia pipeline interests in 1997.²⁷ The US special envoy to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, also served as an adviser to Unocal and took part in talks between the company and the Taliban in 1997.²⁸ Never has a US administration been so dominated by oil interests as it is today.

Oil played as much a role in precipitating the US bombing of Afghanistan in October 2001 as did Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaeda network. Afghanistan itself has very little oil and gas of its own; its real importance lies in its geographical position as the gateway to Central Asia. America was never unmindful of this fact: its tacit support to the Taliban in 1996-7 was motivated by the need for a strong government in Afghanistan that would pave the way for US-sponsored pipelines from Central Asia. Continued transportation through Russia would have prolonged that country's economic and political control over the region, while pipelines through Iran were also unacceptable, as they would have benefited a regime unfriendly to the US. A secure Afghanistan was considered the best option.

By providing refuge to Osama bin Laden, the Taliban signed their own death warrant. Previously, the US had seen them as the only party capable of ensuring a secure Afghanistan. By 2001, however, the reasoning in Washington had changed; it was now thought that Afghanistan could be secured only if the Taliban were removed. Even before 11 September, plans were well under way to eliminate the Taliban. In May 2001, there was a meeting in Geneva between American, Iranian, German, and Italian officials, where the main topic was devising a strategy to remove the Taliban and put in place a "broad-based government".²⁹ The topic was deliberated further at a G-8 summit in Geneva in July 2001.³⁰ A few days after the summit, secret negotiations took place in Berlin between US, Russian, German, and Pakistani officials. Later, the Pakistani officials, on condition of anonymity, described a plan devised by the

²⁶ Caveli, "The United States of Oil".

²⁷ "Former Unocal Consultant Appointed US Special Envoy To Afghanistan", *Drillbits and Tailings*, vol.7, no.1

<http://www.moles.org/ProjectUnderground/drillbits/7_01/1.html>(31 January 2002). <http://www.moles.org/ProjectUnderground/drillbits/7_01/1.html>(31 January 2002).

²⁸ Patrick Martin, "Unocal Advisor Named Representative to Afghanistan", *World Socialist Website* <http://www.corpwatch.org/news/PND.jsp?articleid=1149> (3 January 2002).

²⁹ Pepe Escobar, "Pipelineistan, Part 1: The rules of the game", *Asia Times Online* <http://www.atimes.com/c-asia/DA25Ag01.html> (25 January 2002).

³⁰ Ibid.

US around the end of July 2001 to conduct military strikes against the Taliban from bases in Tajikistan before mid-October.³¹

11 September merely served as the pretext for launching a war that had been planned long before. Yet, very few analysts in the American media highlighted this fact, or the hugely important role played by the oil factor in determining the parameters of the “war against terrorism”. One of those rare few was a commentary by Frank Viviano in the *San Francisco Chronicle* of 26 September 2001 in which he observed: “The hidden stakes in the war against terrorism can be summed up in a single word: oil. The map of terrorist sanctuaries in the Middle East and Central Asia is also, to an extraordinary degree, a map of the world’s principal energy sources in the 21st century....”³²

Ever since the events of 11 September 2001 and the subsequent campaign in Afghanistan, the US has managed to increase its involvement in Central Asian affairs to an extent hitherto considered unimaginable. At present, it has bases in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, and, as was the case in the Persian Gulf after the Gulf War in 1991, there is every indication that these bases will remain in place well into the future. Ostensibly set up to facilitate America’s campaign in Afghanistan against the Taliban and Al Qaeda, the bases actually signify its determination to establish a permanent foothold in a region of immense geo-strategic importance and enormous untapped energy resources.

In her testimony before the Senate Sub-Committee on Central Asia and the Caucasus on 13 December 2001, Elizabeth Jones, Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, professed America’s commitment to ensuring political and economic reform, respect for human rights, and the establishment of a “just society” in Central Asia.³³ In other words, the US is trying to establish a correlation between the long-term presence of its troops in Central Asia and the improvement of the region’s internal conditions. Such reasoning is designed merely to hoodwink and mislead; American forces have been present in large numbers in the Persian Gulf for the past twelve years but there has been no corresponding change in the despotic nature of the regimes in that region. And Central Asia will be no different: as long as America’s strategic interests are secured, democracy and human rights issues will not be strenuously pursued.

i) When America talks about bringing stability to Central Asia, it actually means creating an environment that will provide maximum protection to American interests in the region. Promotion of democracy and protection of human rights are, at best, only secondary interests. The real objectives are:

ii) making the region a veritable bonanza for US oil companies;

³¹ Ibid.

³² Cited in Patrick Martin, “Unocal Adviser”.

³³ Elizabeth Jones, Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, Testimony Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Sub-Committee on Central Asia

- iii) curbing the influence of Russia, China, and Iran; and,
- iv) eradicating Islamic radicalism.

In pursuance of these objectives, the US has made optimum use of the opportunities afforded to it after 11 September 2001 to increase its military presence in Central Asia. The Manas base in Kyrgyzstan houses 3000 US soldiers, and Kyrgyz President Askar Akaev himself revealed that the number would eventually increase to 5000.³⁴ The base has an area of 27 acres and is equipped with a 13000-foot runway.³⁵ Troops are housed in 10-man tents that have floors and a heating system.³⁶ The base has 24 fighter bombers, including F-15e and FA-18 aircraft, as well as C-130 cargo planes and six KC-135 refuelling planes.³⁷ The lease of the base is valid for only a year but, considering the lavish scale on which construction has already taken place, it is unlikely that the Americans will be winding up operations any time soon.

The Karsi-Khanabad base in Uzbekistan is a “semi-permanent” one, consisting of heavy-duty tents equipped with latrines, water-purification systems, and work facilities.³⁸ There are between 1000 and 2000 troops present at the base.³⁹ It was made available to the US in October 2001, along with a considerable number of airfields, in return for an American guarantee that Uzbekistan’s security would be protected.⁴⁰ In December 2001, Tajikistan also announced that it would provide air bases for US forces, with Kulyab, Khojand, and Kurgan-Tyube coming under consideration.⁴¹ In 2002, transport planes from the US, France, and Italy used the Kulyab airfield to move troops, munitions, and various other essential commodities to Afghanistan.⁴²

At the outset of the “war against terrorism”, the US publicly gave the impression that its presence in Central Asia was merely a short-term necessity for ensuring victory against the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. In

and the Caucasus, Washington D.C.

<http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2001/11299.htm> (13 December 2001).

³⁴ Ed Blanche, “Georgia joins list of dangerous places where America wants a role”, *The Daily Star*, 8 March 2002.

³⁵ James Dao and Eric Schmitt, “US is building up its military base in Afghan region”, *New York Times*, 9 January 2002.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Dao and Schmitt, “US is building up its military base”.

³⁹ Robert G. Kaiser, “US Plants Footprint in Shaky Central Asia”, *Washington Post*, 27 August 2002.

⁴⁰ Eugene B. Rumer, “Flashman’s Revenge”.

⁴¹ Raffi Katchadourian, “US Eyes Bases In Tajikistan”, *EURASIA INSIGHT* <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav110501a.shtml> (28 January 2003).

⁴² Gao Fuqiu, “The Real Purpose of the American March into Central Asia”, *Outlook Magazine* <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/junshi/62/> (10 May 2002).

private, however, US officials admitted that they were there to stay.⁴³ Even after the Taliban had been routed and Osama bin Laden had been compelled to become a fugitive, the US gave no indication of withdrawing from Central Asia and justified its continued presence by now publicly suggesting that the “war against terrorism” would be “long” and “open-ended.”⁴⁴ While visiting Japan in January 2002, President Bush himself stated: “We stand more committed than ever to a forward presence in this [Central Asian] region.”⁴⁵ Paul Wolfowitz, the Deputy Secretary of Defence and arguably the most hawkish member of the administration, maintained that the bases in Central Asia “send a message to everybody, including important countries like Uzbekistan, that we have a capacity to come back in and will come back in—we’re not just going to forget about them.”⁴⁶ General Tommy Franks, Commander Central Command (CENTCOM), initially denied allegations that the US intended to establish permanent military bases in Central Asia: “What we do is we work together (with other countries) to have forces that come and go.”⁴⁷ Later on, however, he contradicted his own statement; on a visit to Uzbekistan in August 2002, he declared that the American military presence in Central Asia would increase, the Americans would expand military ties with the CARs, and US forces would stay on longer than expected.⁴⁸

US Objectives and their Implications

American military expansionism in Central Asia is designed to achieve certain objectives that the Bush administration views as critical to the retention of US hegemony over the entire world.

Securing the Region’s Oil and Gas

As mentioned before, several of the leading members in the present US administration, including President Bush himself, have close relations with leading US oil conglomerates. Both Vice-President Cheney, as the CEO of Halliburton, and National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice, as a board member of Chevron, devoted considerable attention to the tantalizing prospects for energy development in Central Asia. In 1994, Cheney facilitated a deal

⁴³ Ewen MacAskill, “From Suez to the Pacific—US expands its presence across the globe”, *Guardian*, 8 March 2002.

⁴⁴ See “Deepened Military Presence in Central Asia”, *Centre for Cooperative Research*, <<http://www.cooperativeresearch.org/home.htm>>

⁴⁵ Cited in Elisabeth Bumiller, “Bush Affirms US Role in Asia in New ‘Pacific Century’”, *New York Times*, February 2002.

⁴⁶ Cited in Jean-Christophe Peuch, “US Military Buildup Shifts Spheres of Influence”, *Radio Free Europe* <http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2002/01/11012002091651.asp> (11 January 2002).

⁴⁷ Cited in Agence France-Presse (AFP), 24 January 2002.

⁴⁸ Hooman Peimani, “Military buildup ends US-Russia honeymoon”, *CDI Russia Weekly* #220 <http://www.cdi.org/russia/220-11-pr.cfm> (28 August 2002).

between Chevron and Kazakhstan in his capacity as a member on the latter's Oil Advisory Board.⁴⁹ In a speech in 1998, he decried the US policy of imposing sanctions on oil-rich countries like Iran, Iraq, Libya, and Azerbaijan: "The good Lord didn't see fit to put oil and gas only where there are democratic regimes friendly to the US."⁵⁰ Later that year, he said: "You've got to go where the oil is."⁵¹ With Cheney as Vice-President, America is doing just that.

Condoleezza Rice joined Chevron's board in 1991 and performed sufficiently well for the company to name an oil-tanker after her.⁵² She was reportedly hired for her expertise on the former Soviet states and spent much of her time at Chevron working on prospective energy deals in the Caspian region.⁵³ By 1993, Chevron had concluded a \$20 billion deal with Kazakhstan to develop its Tengiz oil-field.⁵⁴

With Rice as National Security Advisor, it is highly probable that Chevron will play a major role in future US energy enterprises in the region. In fact, the wheels have already been set in motion: towards the end of 2001, the first new pipeline of the Caspian Pipeline Consortium—a joint venture, including Russia, Kazakhstan, Oman, Chevron-Texaco, and Exxon-Mobil—was officially opened. The \$2.65 billion pipeline links Tengiz to the Russian port of Novorossiysk on the Black Sea. The White House is now envisaging a network of multiple pipelines, including Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan, Baku–Supsa, and Baku–Novorossiysk.⁵⁵ The Unocal gas-pipeline project also appears to have been revived; on 27 December 2002, an agreement was signed by Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan to carry Turkmenistan's natural gas to the Indian Ocean via Afghanistan, thereby avoiding undesirable routes through Russia and Iran.⁵⁶ The US looks well set to achieve its long-standing dream of controlling Caspian oil and gas, thereby ending Russia's monopoly and significantly reducing its own dependence on OPEC oil.

Containing Russia, China, and Iran

Another key US objective in Central Asia is to restrict the influence of important regional players like Russia, China, and Iran. Russia stands to lose the

⁴⁹ "Armitage following Cheney Strategy for Central Asia",
<<http://www.btinternet.com/~nlpwessex/Documents/armitagecheneyasia.htm>>

⁵⁰ Geoffrey Gray, "Dick Cheney's Pipe Dream",
<http://www.villagevoice.com/issues/0142/gray.php>

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Lynn, "Pipe dreams".

⁵³ Caveli, "The United States of Oil".

⁵⁴ Lynn, "Pipe dreams". Currently, Chevron-Texaco holds a 45% interest in the Tengiz oil field.

⁵⁵ Pepe Escobar, "Pipelineistan, Part 2: The games nations play," *Asia Times Online*
<http://www.atimes.com/c-asia/DA26Ag01.html> (26 January 2002).

⁵⁶ "Central Asia Pipeline Deal Serves US Agenda"
<http://www.islamonline.net/english/news/2002-12/28/article06.shtml>

most from a long-term US presence in Central Asia. Ever since the CARs became independent, Russia has been the most influential external player in the region, both through its monopoly over energy transportation as well as by virtue of its position as the guardian of the Republics' territorial integrity. Many in Russia's official circles are of the opinion that it has a distinct set of economic and security interests in the region, which other powers should be obliged to respect.⁵⁷ Russian foreign policy pundits and security specialists fear that any increased US involvement in the region will be the prelude to an eventual military presence.⁵⁸ With American troops now present in three CARs and showing no signs of an imminent withdrawal, it appears that those fears are by no means unfounded.

America's determined stride into Central Asia has awakened Russia to the painful reality that it is no longer the pre-eminent power in the region. Initially, there were strong protests issued by many in the Russian political and military hierarchy against nascent American expansionism into Russia's "near abroad." In January 2002, the speaker of the Russian Parliament, Gennady Seleznev, stated that Russia would not approve of even the "appearance" of permanent US bases in Central Asia.⁵⁹ Sergei Ivanov, the Russian defence minister, maintained that Russia viewed the US military presence in Central Asia as a temporary measure and expected it to leave as soon as the anti-terrorist operation was completed.⁶⁰ General Konstantin Totsky, head of the Russian Federal Border-Guard Service, warned that if the US tried to establish a prolonged military presence in Central Asia, Russia and the US would be unlikely to remain friends.⁶¹

With the passage of time, however, Russian protestations have become much more muted, a clear indication of Russia's diminishing clout in the region, as well as of its disinclination to take on America. And the erosion of its influence is not confined to Central Asia alone; in the Caucasus too, the US has already made its presence felt. A day after the Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, warned the US that its planned deployment of commandos in Georgia could destabilize the whole region, Russian President Vladimir Putin suddenly declared that he saw "no tragedy" in the plan and was completely supportive of US efforts to assist Georgia in smoking out Chechen and Al Qaeda militants

⁵⁷ Gail Lapidus, "Central Asia in Russian and American Foreign Policy after 11 September 2001". Presentation at "Central Asia and Russia: Responses to the 'War on Terrorism'", a panel discussion held at the University of California, Berkeley <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~iseeces/> (29 October 2001).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ian Traynor, "Russia edgy at spread of US bases in its backyard", *Guardian*, 10 January 2002.

⁶⁰ Vladimir Isachkenov, "Official: US Should Leave Asia", *Associated Press*, 12 February 2002.

⁶¹ Sergei Blagov, "Central Asian nations choose their sides," *Asia Times Online* <http://atimes.com/c-asia/DA19Ag01.html> (19 January 2002).

from the Pankisi Gorge.⁶² The US has also improved ties with Armenia, one of Russia's closest allies in the former Soviet Union. In February 2002, a delegation of American military experts visited Armenia to discuss plans to upgrade the Armenian armed forces' communications system, to set up a military training complex, and to train and equip an Armenian peace-keeping force.⁶³

Russia might be of the opinion that the benefits obtained by co-operating with the US outweigh those that may be garnered by opposing it. It is undoubtedly true that Russia's struggle against the Chechens is now seen in a more favourable light by the US, as are Moscow's claims of Osama bin Laden's complicity in fuelling the fires of separatism in Chechnya.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, Russia cannot afford to be complacent about the US presence in the Caucasus and Central Asia. It should not allow itself to be lulled into a false sense of security by US moves to facilitate a more amicable NATO–Russia relationship. America clearly intends to encircle Russia and prevent it from becoming a major force in world affairs once again. NATO's eastward expansion is designed to achieve that very objective, as is the present US involvement in the Caspian region. US interests dictate that Russia must be given less room to manoeuvre in its immediate neighbourhood, and must, therefore, be precluded from exercising the same level of influence as it did in the past. The pipeline factor must also be remembered; America is determined to find alternatives to Russia as routes for its proposed pipelines, which makes it necessary not only for it to have its troops in the relevant places, but also to cultivate ties with the region's energy-producing and transporting countries at Russia's expense.

Russia has, of late, taken steps to reassert its position in Central Asia. In October 2003, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev jointly inaugurated a Russian air base in Kant, about 20 kilometres east of Bishkek. During his speech, Putin emphasized the importance of the Russian air detachment at Kant in safeguarding regional security. Akayev, for his part, unequivocally maintained that Kyrgyzstan viewed itself as Russia's political base in the region, and that, "Russia was given to us by God and by history."⁶⁵ At present, the force at Kant includes more than 20 aircraft and more than 150 troops. Thus far, Russia has spent 79 million rubles (\$2.6 million) to upgrade the base, and the total bill is expected to reach 219 million rubles.⁶⁶

Like Russia, China too has been compelled to come to terms with the US military presence in Central Asia. Prior to 11 September 2001, China had been assiduous in its efforts to forge closer economic, political, and military

⁶² Vladimir Radyuhin, "Russia resigned to US presence in Caucasus", *Hindu*, 3 March 2002.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Eugene B. Rumer, "Flashman's Revenge".

⁶⁵ Sergei Blagov, "Russia drops an anchor in Central Asia", *Asia Times Online*, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/EJ25Ag01.html>

⁶⁶ Ibid.

relations with the CARs. In 1995, it teamed up with Russia to establish the Shanghai Five, an informal security alliance that also included Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Uzbekistan joined the grouping in 2001, following which it became known as the Shanghai Co-operation Organization (SCO). Russia and China intended to make the SCO a military-political alliance, one that would “fashion a new regional security architecture.”⁶⁷ But the “war against terrorism” and the US presence in Central Asia have made that an increasingly unlikely possibility. In fact, there are genuine fears in both Beijing and Moscow that the SCO has become redundant; it could not come up with a credible response to the terrorist presence in Afghanistan and its own Central Asian members, particularly Uzbekistan, warmly welcomed US troops on to their soil.⁶⁸ Tashkent has actually been accepted by Washington as a regional partner.⁶⁹ Kazakhstan is wooing the US in order to secure greater investment as well as support for its application for membership of the World Trade Organization (WTO).⁷⁰ And the more impoverished of the SCO members, like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, are hoping for US largesse to flow in and invigorate their ailing economies.

The setback to the SCO must be particularly galling for China, which had hoped to use the organization as a springboard into Central Asia. America is now firmly settled in China’s strategic backyard, which was precisely what China had hoped to forestall when it led the way in forming the SCO. Well before 9/11, China had been concerned about the growing US and NATO presence in Central Asia. These concerns were aroused by the waning of Sino–US relations, chiefly by Nato’s Partnership for Peace programme with the CARs and the US 82nd Airborne exercise, CENTRAZBAT, in Kazakhstan in 1997. One of the primary motivating factors in China’s decision to create the SCO was, therefore, to become firmly entrenched in Central Asia before the Americans could do so, but 9/11 put paid to that objective.

A regional power broker prior to 11 September 2001, China now finds itself marginalized and isolated, “pondering the unenviable option of playing second fiddle to the US and a host of its newfound best friends.”⁷¹ Amongst those friends are India–China’s long-term rival for supremacy in Asia—and

⁶⁷ Sean Yom, “Power Politics in Central Asia”, *Foreign Policy in Focus*
<http://www.fpif.org/pdf/gac/0207centasia.pdf> (26 July 2002).

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Shahram Akbarzadeh, “Tashkent Caught between the United States and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization”, *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*
http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-06-05/20020522_UZBEKISTAN_US_SCO.htm
(5 June 2002).

⁷⁰ Michael Denison, “Central Asia’s New Romance with the West: A Match made in Heaven?” *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*.
<http://www.cacianalyst.org/2.../20020116_CENTRAL_ASIA_ROMANCE_WITHTH_WEST.htm> (5 June 2002).

⁷¹ Rumer, “Flashman’s Revenge”.

Pakistan, a long-time partner of China. While China, like Russia, might have benefited from the anti-terrorist operations in Afghanistan, the long-term presence of US forces in Central Asia will seriously undermine China's efforts to become an Asian superpower.

All is not, however, by any means lost for China in Central Asia. Its influence is constantly on the rise and, with Russia's role receding rapidly, it is now the region's most dynamic and resourceful neighbour. New routes of trade, such as pipelines, highways, and railroads, are linking Central Asia to the world, and China is well placed to capitalize on the potentially tremendous economic opportunities on offer. In the military sphere too, China is gradually making inroads; for instance, in October 2002, it conducted joint military exercises with Kyrgyz forces, the first such venture of its kind in the history of the PRC.

Iran is another country that the US is desirous of countering in Central Asia. Ever since the Iranian Revolution of 1979, relations between the two countries have been characterized by hostility and mutual suspicion. Iran already feels threatened by the presence of US forces in the Persian Gulf and Afghanistan, and its sense of encirclement has now increased, following the American advance into Central Asia. While the Taliban held sway in Afghanistan, Iran played a pivotal role in supporting the opposition Northern Alliance and wielded considerable influence in Central Asia, particularly in Tajikistan, with whom it shares ethnic, cultural, and linguistic ties. Tajikistan served as Iran's foothold in Central Asia, but post-9/11 developments have deprived it of its most valuable Central Asian partner. The alacrity with which Tajikistan accepted US forces on its soil was a considerable blow to Iran. Also, the opening of Turkmen airspace to American overflights and the creation of US bases in three CARs have clearly signalled to the Iranian political establishment that, in a conflict with the US, it would now need to worry not only about the American presence in the Persian Gulf but also in the north–Central Asia and the Caucasus—to say nothing of the east and south–Afghanistan and Pakistan.⁷²

Stamping out militant Islam

A major area of concern for the US in Central Asia is the rise of radical Islamic groups that threaten the survival of the existing regimes and aim to establish Islamic governments in their stead. Militant Islam in Central Asia is one issue on which there is a complete convergence of views between the US, Russia, and China. One of the main reasons that prompted Russia and China to form the SCO was to counter the challenge presented by militant Islamic groups, not only to the continuation of the existing *status quo* in Central Asia, but also to their own efforts to wipe out insurrection movements within their respective territories. Russia has accused Al Qaeda and Central Asian groups, such as the

⁷² Ibid.

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), of fomenting trouble in its breakaway republic of Chechnya, while China accuses the same parties of having created similar problems in its renegade province of Xinjiang.

Under Communist control, Islam in Central Asia had been brutally suppressed. It did, however, continue to flourish underground, due in the main to the dedicated missionary work of secret Sufi societies, or *tariqas*.⁷³ Once independence was attained, the people of Central Asia, restrained for so long from observing even the most basic rituals of their faith, embraced the opportunity to rediscover their Islamic identity and to re-establish links with their Muslim neighbours to the south, relations that had been severed ever since Stalin closed the borders between the Soviet Union and the rest of the world.⁷⁴

After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, thousands of young men from Central Asia who had been drafted into the Red Army had returned home with nothing but admiration for the bravery and Islamic fervour of their Afghan adversaries. Their hatred for the Soviet Union became more pronounced after their experiences in Afghanistan, as the discovery of the religious, ethnic, and linguistic ties that they shared with many of the people against whom they had fought made them more conscious of how profoundly the Soviet system had deprived them of their heritage and national pride.⁷⁵

After gaining independence, many Central Asians realized that the policies of their governments would determine both the political future of their respective states as well as the nature and extent of the Islamic revival in the entire region. But whatever hopes they might have entertained were dashed by the conduct of their leaders; in all the republics, authoritarianism reigned supreme, democracy, dissent, and debate were ruthlessly suppressed, and the Islamic revival was curtailed, often through the use of force. The draconian measures enforced by the leaders forced even moderates and liberal reformers to join the rapidly swelling ranks of the militants. The regimes responded with even greater force; repeated crackdowns were launched against Islamic activists, in which not only militants but thousands of ordinary practising Muslims were tortured and imprisoned for long periods.⁷⁶ From 1992 to 1997, a bloody civil war between Islamic rebels and the Tajik regime engulfed Tajikistan, ultimately claiming over fifty thousand lives.

At present, the most prominent militant Islamic group operating in Central Asia is the IMU. Since 1999, it has been the most potent military threat, not only to Uzbekistan, but to the stability of the entire region. Under the leadership of the charismatic Juma Namangani, the IMU launched guerrilla attacks against the regimes from bases in Tajikistan and Afghanistan from 1999

⁷³ Rashid, *Jihad*, p.40.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.5.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.6.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.8.

to 2001.⁷⁷ It is alleged to have strong links to Al Qaeda; in fact, Namangani is believed to have been killed whilst fighting with the Taliban and Al Qaeda forces against Northern Alliance forces in Mazar-e-Sharif in November 2001.⁷⁸ His demise has obviously been a tremendous setback for the IMU, but the group, although crippled, does remain intact and operational. Even after Namangani's death, IMU fighters participated in the intense battles of Operation Anaconda in Afghanistan and continued to launch small-scale guerrilla attacks against the US and its allies in the Pakistani border areas.⁷⁹ US officials estimate that the IMU is still capable of recruiting and training a multi-national force of up to 5000 guerillas within a year.⁸⁰ This force will be more than likely to target US troops and facilities situated in Central Asia.

Promoting democracy and protecting human rights

The authoritarianism of the Central Asian regimes has been one of the main factors behind the region's instability and the rise of militant Islam. All the Central Asian rulers are autocrats who have consistently employed brutal force to keep their populations under control. In the process, they have ridden roughshod over all democratic norms and have sown the seeds for the region's ethnic fragmentation.

In Kazakhstan, President Nursultan Nazarbayev's Unity Party has won all presidential and parliamentary elections since 1991, owing to state pressure, massive election rigging, and a refusal to accord representation to opposition parties.⁸¹ In June 2000, Nazarbayev's hand-picked parliament passed a bill conferring lifelong legal and political rights on himself and his entire family, thereby granting immunity against any charges that had already been made or could be made in the future.⁸²

Kyrgyz President, Askar Akaev, initially demonstrated a modicum of enthusiasm for democratic norms and institutions but has gradually become increasingly despotic. Kyrgyzstan's debt had mushroomed to \$1.27 billion by 1999, resulting in increased unemployment and poverty, as well as stiffer political opposition to the regime.⁸³ Akaev's response was identical to that of other Central Asian leaders facing similar problems: political dissent was crushed, the media was curbed, and elections were rigged.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Martin McCauley, *Afghanistan and Central Asia: A Modern History* (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2002), p.110.

⁷⁹ Artie McConnell, "Islamic Radicals Regroup In Central Asia", *Eurasia Insight* <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav051502.shtml> (15 May 2002).

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Rashid, *Jihad*, p.63.

⁸² Ibid., p.64.

⁸³ Ibid., p.69.

Although all the CARs have been beset by chronic internal instability, only one of them—Tajikistan—has thus far suffered a civil war. To its credit, however, Tajikistan rose from the ashes of war to produce a democratically-elected coalition government that accommodated both secular and religious parties. The peace agreement remains intact, but social unrest, lack of outside assistance, and crippling poverty have prevented Tajikistan from making any substantial progress.

Turkmenistan appears to be the personal fiefdom of President Saparmurad Niyazov. Niyazov's personality cult has developed to such a remarkable extent that buildings, streets, and even entire cities have been named after him. The regime of "Turkmenbashi" (Father of all Turkmen) is probably the most repressive in the region. Political parties have been outlawed, the media languishes under strict government control, meetings of all kinds are forbidden, and Christian and Hindu leaders have been thrown out of the country.⁸⁴ In January 1994, the Turkmen parliament nominated Niyazov president until 2002. This was followed by a parliamentary vote asking him to remain president for life. In February 2001, Niyazov announced that he would step down in 2010. As things stand, however, such a voluntary relinquishment of power seems very unlikely. Through the "indiscriminate use of the death penalty", the "torture of prisoners in overflowing prisons", and the "disappearance of dissenters without a trace", Niyazov has made evident his paranoia about staying in power.⁸⁵

And finally, in Uzbekistan, the largest and most powerful of the CARs, President Islam Karimov also rules with an iron hand. After becoming president in 1991, he drove his main opponent, the head of a secular nationalist party, into exile. He then targeted radical Islamic groups based in the Ferghana Valley. Besides the radicals, hundreds of ordinary Muslims were also arrested in a series of crackdowns, and mosques and seminaries were closed. This indiscriminate violence led to the development of a formidable Islamic opposition, embodied mainly in the IMU. "The rise of the IMU...can be directly linked to Karimov's refusal to allow Muslims to practise their religion and his extreme attitude to all religious expression or political dissent."⁸⁶

The "war against terrorism" has allowed the leaders of the CARs to intensify their violent suppression of dissent and their flagrant violations of human rights. Previously, the fear of international condemnation and the consequent threat of economic chastisement had inspired a certain amount of caution in the way the leaders dealt with their political opponents. Now that the CARs are frontline states in the "war against terrorism," however, the need for caution is nowhere near as great. In 2002, President Nazarbayev launched a

⁸⁴ Ibid., p.73.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.74.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.85.

crackdown on opposition parties and journalists during which offices were destroyed, property was confiscated, and scores of individuals were arrested.⁸⁷ President Karimov has used the pretext of fighting terrorism to increase his repression of political opponents; hundreds of people have been arrested thus far on trumped up charges.⁸⁸ And in the other Republics as well, the leaders have made full use of the international community's preoccupation with fighting terrorism to increase political repression within their territories.

The US administration tries to justify its presence in Central Asia on the basis that it will promote democracy and protect human rights. Yet, considering Washington's previous record of supporting despots and dictators whenever it suited its own interests, one can safely say that the democratization of Central Asia will be one objective that the US will be in no hurry to fulfil. America is fully aware of the repressive policies of the Central Asian leaders, of their total disregard for all democratic norms, and of their blatant violations of basic human rights. It is also aware that militant Islam is on the rise and remains convinced that it can be countered only by propping up and strengthening those same despotic regimes. This explains the generous financial rewards that have been flowing into Central Asia ever since 11 September 2001: American aid to the region increased from \$270 million in 2001 to \$408 million in 2002.⁸⁹

Central Asia is hardly the first example of America sacrificing its cherished concepts of democracy, justice, and the rule of law at the altar of expediency. The Middle East presents a particularly damning picture of American double standards. For decades, America has supported a tightly controlled monarchy of the House of Saud, for fear of the world's largest oil-producing nation falling into anti-American hands. It has also propped up equally undemocratic regimes in Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and the UAE. During the Cold War, it supported innumerable dictators, simply because they were opposed to Communism; it made precious little difference to the Americans how corrupt, undemocratic, or repressive they might have been. The "war against terrorism" is being fought on the same lines: those who co-operate with the US will be generously rewarded and allowed to rule as they please, while those who do not co-operate will be targeted.

Conclusion

There can be no doubt that America's increased involvement in Central Asian affairs, particularly those related to the region's security and energy resources, will have major implications not only for Central Asia but for the entire world.

⁸⁷ Hooman Peimani, "Abusing The 'War On Terrorism' In Central Asia", *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst* <http://www.cacianalyst.org/2002-.../20020814CENTRAL_ASIA_WAR_ON_TERRORISM.ht> (14 August 2002).

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Gao Fuqiu, "The Real Purpose of the American March".

In the short-term, Central Asia might benefit from an increase in US financial assistance and greater foreign investment. Also, US forces in the region could prove effective in battling the militant Islamic groups that threaten the survival of the existing regimes. However, a long-term US presence in Central Asia will be more than likely to increase instability in an already volatile environment. America's financial aid will end up in the hands of Central Asia's despotic leaders, who will use part of it to line their pockets and most of what remains on strengthening their security apparatus. The prolonged presence of US troops in the region will antagonize Russia, China, and Iran, as will US plans for developing alternative pipeline routes for the transportation of Central Asian oil and gas. Even before the US advanced into Central Asia, all three countries were extremely concerned about the ring of US bases on their borders. With America now firmly entrenched in Central Asia as well, the sense of encirclement that was being felt in Moscow, Beijing, and Tehran, will be reinforced.

As far as combating militant Islam is concerned, a long-term US military presence in Central Asia might actually prove counter-productive. America already has bases in several Muslim countries; the people of those countries generally resent the presence of American forces on their soil, and their bitterness has increased after 11 September 2001: the attacks themselves were a dramatic manifestation of that bitterness. Osama bin Laden has consistently demanded the withdrawal of US forces from the Persian Gulf, and from Saudi Arabia in particular. If America decides to maintain a presence in Muslim Central Asia on the lines of the one that it maintains in the Persian Gulf, then it should be prepared for more acts of terrorism, particularly as it has now also invaded Iraq. Groups like the IMU will be more determined than ever before to undertake terrorist activities, directed not only at the Central Asian regimes but also at the American troops present to protect them.

In spite of America's repeated professions of sincerity about bringing democracy and the rule of law to Central Asia, or for that matter, to Iraq, the truth is that in Central Asia, as in Iraq, the expansion of the *Pax Americana* remains America's foremost priority. Like every other major empire in human history, the American empire also relies on bases to augment its power and enforce its control over other peoples and nations. After every major war that it has fought and after every major foreign intervention that it has undertaken, America has stationed its forces behind to protect its interests and to enforce its writ. The "war against terrorism" is merely a convenient excuse for the extension of US hegemony over the entire world, and Central Asia is only one of the regions where that extension has taken place. From South Asia to the Middle East to the Balkans, and from Latin America to the Caribbean to Africa, the projection of American power and the protection of American interests have become an undeniable, though deeply disturbing reality. ■

CHINA'S SEAT IN THE UNITED NATIONS AN ANALYSIS OF PAKISTAN'S ROLE

Ghulam Ali*

While addressing a gathering at the Pakistan Institute of International Affairs (PIIA) on 30 May 2001, Mr Lin Shanglin, the Consul General of the People's Republic of China (PRC) appreciated Pakistan's support in helping China to gain a seat in the United Nations (UN). He stated:

Neither shall we forget it is our Pakistani friends who gave us firm support when China's legitimate seat was restored at the UN. Nor shall we forget it is our Pakistani friends again who upheld justice and lend (sic) China consistent and invaluable support on issues bearing on China's sovereign interests such as human rights, the question of Taiwan and of Tibet.¹

Again, on 23 November 2001, the Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan, Mr Lu Shulin, thanked Pakistan for helping to restore China's seat in the UN in 1971.² Such remarks have been expressed on several other occasions as well.

The issue of Chinese representation—whether the Nationalists or the Communists should represent the Chinese nation in the UN—had posed a grave issue for the world body. The problem was compounded by the fact that the Chinese delegation to the UN would have two seats: one in the General Assembly and the other as a prestigious Permanent Member of the Security Council, with the power of veto. Pakistan supported the Communists and stuck to that stance, except for a short period in the latter part of 1950s, when it sided with the US in blocking Chinese entry into the UN. However, in the early 1960s, it reverted to its previous supportive role. This support was directly proportional to its relations with China and considerably helped in strengthening relations between the two neighbouring states. This paper is an attempt to study the nature of Pakistan's support; and secondly, to assess how far it served China in its efforts to acquire the UN seat; and lastly, what its impact was on Sino–Pakistan relations.

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¹ Lin Shanglin, "Pakistan-China Relation", *Pakistan Horizon* (Karachi), vol. 54, no. 3 (July 2001), p. 13.

² "World heritage sites in China" <<http://www.dawn.com/2001/11/24/nat16.htm>> (27 May 2003).

Historical Background

During the Second World War, China was embroiled in intense civil strife. Despite this anarchy, it was granted Great Power-status in the Moscow Declaration of October 1943. In December of the same year, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill promised General Chiang Kai-shek of China that, at the end of war, Manchuria, Formosa, and Pescadore Island would be returned to China.³

The civil war in China continued even after the end of the Second World War. The UN seat reserved for the Chinese nation, including the permanent seat in the Security Council, was granted to the Nationalists. This enabled them to establish diplomatic relations with a number of countries, including Pakistan. However, Pakistan showed no enthusiasm in exchanging ambassadors, due to the known partiality of Chiang Kai-shek towards Indian leaders such as Nehru and Gandhi.⁴ Moreover, Pakistan was totally involved in resolving the initial problems arising from independence and fending off threats to its survival posed by its much larger neighbour, India. Thus, in spite of recognition of each other's governments, hardly any co-operation existed between the Chinese Nationalists and the government of Pakistan in the initial two years of the latter's existence.

In 1949, the internal situation in China took a new turn. The Communists expelled the Nationalists to Taiwan Island and established control over the whole of mainland China. Their founding father, Chairman Mao Zedong, renamed the new country the People's Republic of China and invited other states to establish diplomatic relations with it. Referring to Taiwan, he categorically declared that there was only "one China" and that Taiwan province was an integral part of mainland China. Any country seeking to establish relations with his country had to demonstrate its readiness to sever all diplomatic relations with the Taiwanese authorities and recognize the PRC as the sole, legal government of the Chinese people. Mao also warned that his government would not establish relations with any country that schemed to create "two Chinas" or having prior relations with the Nationalists.⁵ Later, on 18 November 1949, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai (also Foreign Minister from 1949 to 1956) sent a message to the United Nations Secretary General, Trygve Lie, and demanded the immediate removal of the Nationalists delegation from the world body. In February 1950, he repeated this demand and protested against the "unjustifiable" delay in admitting his country's representatives to

³ Cornelia Spencer, *Modern China* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis Educational Publications, 1969), p. 8.

⁴ S. M. Burke and Lawrence Ziring, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: An Historical Analysis* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 101.

⁵ China still adheres to this policy. By the end of 1998, the PRC had established diplomatic relations with 161 countries that followed a "one China" policy. See Qin Shi, comp., *China: 1998* (Beijing: New Star Publisher, 1998), pp. 62-64.

the UN.⁶ Within the United Nations, the USSR, then a close friend of China, launched a forceful campaign in favour of admitting the Communists and demanded the immediate expulsion of Taiwan. The level of the USSR's support can be assessed from the fact that it left the Security Council in protest and decided not to take part in its proceedings until "suitable measures" were taken for the removal of Chiang Kai-shek's delegation.⁷ At that time, the Communists had gained recognition from a number of countries, both Communist and non-Communist, which strengthened their position. Optimism prevailed that soon mainland China would be able to acquire the UN seat. In fact, this did not happen for almost two decades.

Pakistan responded positively to the emergence of the PRC and expressed its keen desire to establish diplomatic relations between the two countries. Mr Qureshi, then Pakistan's Ambassador to the Soviet Union, informed Premier Zhou Enlai that Pakistan had recognized the Government of the People's Republic of China in Beijing (then Peking) as the legal government of the Chinese people. He also said that his country had withdrawn recognition of the government of the Chinese Nationalists stationed in Taiwan and had severed all formal and informal links with them.⁸

Some analysts believe that the Kashmir factor played an important role in Pakistan's decision to support Communist China over Taiwan. For instance, John Garver noted, "If, as then seemed likely, the PRC was going to assume China's seat on the Security Council, Pakistan did not want that to happen with Beijing more favourably inclined towards India than Pakistan."⁹ S. M. Burke, a noted writer on Pakistan's foreign policy, maintained the same viewpoint.¹⁰ Whatever the motivation behind this decision, Pakistan's timely recognition of Communist China and endorsement of the PRC's Taiwan policy was a positive beginning for establishing good neighbourly relations between the two countries.

Sino-US Enmity: Blockade of China's Admission

Initially, the US expressed its neutrality on the conflict between the two Chinese factions. It turned down the Nationalists' demand for military assistance and the appointment of a political and economic adviser in Taiwan.¹¹ However, this neutrality could not prevail for long. The bipolarity of the world and the tilt of the Chinese Communist leaders towards the USSR

⁶ *Keesing's Contemporary Archives: 1950*, p. 10575.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ K. Arif, ed., *China Pakistan Relations: Documents 1947- 1980* (Lahore: Vanguard, 1984), p. 3.

⁹ John W. Garver, *Protected Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), p. 190.

¹⁰ Burke, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy*, p. 102.

¹¹ *Keesing's Contemporary Archives: 1950*, p. 10917.

caused a deep cleavage between Beijing and Washington. The US had realized that its interests in the region could be better served by allying with the Nationalists with whom it had already established diplomatic relations. The Sino-US chasm deepened further when the Communists criticized the presence of US forces in Taiwan and its Seventh Fleet in the Straits of Taiwan. They termed it an act of “aggression” and demanded that the Security Council take immediate measures for the complete withdrawal of all US forces from Taiwan and other territories belonging to China.¹² This bitterness was followed by the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 in which China sided with North Korea and the US with South Korea. On the pretext of war, the US took Taiwan under its control to protect it from a potential Chinese threat.¹³ These developments put a stop to any incipient accommodation between China and the United States and effectively blocked the entry of the PRC into the United Nations till 1971.

The establishment of the PRC as the effective power in mainland China was a significant development, which raised the question of whether the Communists or Nationalists were the representatives of the Chinese people in the UN.¹⁴ Assessing the sensitivity of the issue, in June 1950, the Security Council appointed a committee of experts to investigate the rules governing the issue of credentials of representation.¹⁵ The committee could not find a solution to the problem, despite several sessions. The issue was then referred to the General Assembly, which started discussions on 25 September 1950. There was distinct division among the member countries when a debate was held on the issue. The US-led Western countries openly opposed the PRC’s seat. They argued that, as the Communists had gained control over mainland China by force, they were therefore unable to carry out the obligations attached to UN membership. Thus, in their view, the Communist government could not be considered legitimate.

Contrary to this viewpoint, Pakistan stood by the Communists and spoke in favour of their entry into the UN. Its chief delegate, Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan, stated that Article 4 of the UN Charter dealt with the admission of new members and not about the validity of representation, with which this debate was concerned. He argued that China was not applying for admission to the United Nations; it was already a member state, a permanent member of the Security Council, and one of the Big Five. The sole question was who was entitled to represent it in the Assembly. Zafrullah further stated

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Rasul Bux Rais, *China and Pakistan: A Political Analysis of Mutual Relations* (Lahore: Progress Publishers, 1977), p. 79.

¹⁴ Hameed A. K. Rai, ed., *Pakistan in the United Nations: Speeches delivered in the General Assembly by the heads of Pakistan Delegates: 1948-1978* (Lahore: Aziz Publisher, 1979), p. 225.

¹⁵ *Keesing's Contemporary Archives: 1950*, p. 10575.

that the undisputed and incontrovertible facts bearing upon the question revealed that the delegation present had for months ceased to exercise jurisdiction over any portion of mainland China. The struggle for supremacy between the Nationalists and the Communists had come to an end with the victory of the latter in mainland China. The Nationalists could no longer claim to be the representatives of the Chinese people.¹⁶ On these grounds, Zafrullah earnestly demanded the seating of the Communists in place of the Nationalists. However, the proposal was rejected by a majority vote.

A number of factors, the most important being a grave security threat from India, led Pakistan to join the Western defence pacts, namely SEATO (1954) and CENTO (1955). Interestingly, even after joining these pacts, for some time, Pakistan maintained its independent stand on the issue of Chinese representation. At the Bandung Conference in 1955, Prime Minister Muhammad Ali Bogra assured Premier Zhu Enlai that Pakistan had no fear of “Communist China” and its alliance with the West was not, in any way, directed against China.¹⁷ In case the United States launched a coalition war against China, Pakistan would not be a partner to it, just as it was not a partner in the Korean War. Zhou stated before the political committee of the conference that he was quite satisfied by the assurance given by the Pakistani Prime Minister regarding its joining the Western pacts.¹⁸ P. I. Cheema has written that China’s placatory tone towards Pakistan, even after the latter’s association with the US, was due to the Indian factor, the perception being that by receiving American arms, Pakistan was strengthening its defences against India, not China. In contrast to the USSR, China was far more realistic in assessing Pakistan’s rationale for participation in the Cold War defence alliances. It accurately comprehended Pakistan’s security compulsions and continued to pursue a policy of friendship.¹⁹ Later, in 1955, Pakistan’s ambassador to Beijing told his guests at the Independence Day reception that his countrymen, both in and outside the government, wished for the restoration of China’s seat in the world body.²⁰ Due credit went to Pakistan’s diplomacy as it successfully maintained the contradiction: joining the Western pacts without rousing Beijing’s opposition.

¹⁶ The speech was delivered by Sir Mohammed Zafrullah Khan at the 5th session of the UN General Assembly held on 25 September 1950. See Arif, *China Pakistan Documents*, pp. 36-8.

¹⁷ Han Nianlong, et al., *Diplomacy of Contemporary China* (Hong Kong: New Horizon Press, 1990), p. 112.

¹⁸ Rais, *China Pakistan Mutual Relations*, p. 10.

¹⁹ Pervez Iqbal Cheema, “The China Threat: A View from Pakistan”, in Herbert Yee and Ian Storey, eds., *The China Threat: Perceptions, Myth and Reality* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2002), p. 303.

²⁰ Premier Zhou Enlai was also present at the occasion. See Anwar H. Syed, *China and Pakistan: Diplomacy of Entente Cordial* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 71.

Hiatus in Relations

When Pakistan's military dependence on the US increased, it could not maintain for long its neutral stance on Sino-US rivalry and it eventually lent support to the US in blocking China's entry into the UN. Consequently, the mutuality of understanding between China and Pakistan that had developed during and after the Bandung Conference, began to wane. Pakistan's explicit pro-West posture was apparent in Prime Minister Suhrawardy's visit to Washington in July 1957, where he enunciated his country's readiness to support anti-communist policies. He had no hesitation in saying that world peace was safe in American hands. In his address to the US Congress, Suhrawardy expressed pride in being a US ally in the "great adventure of establishing in the world the rights of the individuals and opposing the measures that tend to trample that spirit." He endorsed John Foster Dulles, US Secretary of State, in denouncing "Communist colonialism".²¹ These remarks provoked dismay in China. However, Beijing showed remarkable patience and did not lodge any protest with Pakistan at its provocative statements.²² In the UN session of October 1957, the Pakistani delegation was undecided about the position it should take on the issue of China's seat. At first, the Pakistan delegation abstained from taking part in the voting; then it suddenly changed its stance and cast its vote against China.²³

Sino-Pakistan relations took another downward trend when, in the same year, radicals ascended to power in China and reshaped country's internal and external policies. They drew a distinct line between friends and foes and were more critical of Pakistan's close alliance with the US.²⁴ A Chinese protest note sent to Pakistan on 22 September 1958 reflected their grievances. The note inquired Pakistan's opinion on the status of Taiwan. Pakistan was undecided in this regard. Though it refused any *de facto* or *de jure* recognition of Taiwan, yet its statement that the decision on the status of Taiwan was unclear was grating to the Chinese authorities.²⁵ In addition, in 1958, when Sino-US tension was high in the Taiwan Straits, the Pakistani Ambassador in Beijing declined to concede that Taiwan was a part of China. "The juridical position of sovereignty over Formosa is not clear. The problem should, therefore, be settled by peaceful negotiations. The wishes of the local inhabitants should be

²¹ Khalid Mahmud, "Sino-Pakistan Relations: All-weather Friendship", *Regional Studies* (Islamabad), vol. XIX, no. 3 (Summer 2001), p. 5.

²² Sultan Mohammad Khan, "The warmth cools"
<<http://www.dawn.com/events/century/for3.htm>> (10 January 2003).

²³ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 1 October 1957.

²⁴ Samina Yasmin, *Pakistan's Relations with China 1947-1979* (Islamabad: Institute of Strategic Studies, 1980), p. 6.

²⁵ Arif, *China Pakistan Documents*, p. 17.

given due consideration”, the official stated.²⁶ This was a complete U-turn in Pakistan’s policy over the status of Taiwan from that it had endorsed while recognizing the government of the PRC in 1950.

During 1959, an assortment of unpleasant events caused Pakistan–China relations to deteriorate further. President Ayub Khan reacted in a surprising manner to Chinese action in Tibet and suggested to the Indian Prime Minister to stop squabbling and make arrangements for common defence of the subcontinent against the inexorable push from the north (China or Russia).²⁷ The suggestion read: “I foresee China moving south through Burma and Russia through Afghanistan and Iran, if there is no clash between the two of them.”²⁸ Beijing was perturbed by President Ayub’s self-created obsession regarding Chinese expansion and inquired against whom this common defence was proposed, as such a plan never existed anywhere in its policy.²⁹

Pakistan continued to back away from full support to the PRC, while moving closer to Taiwan. In July 1959, Pakistan gave official protocol to a Muslim Hajj delegation from Taiwan. The delegation met with Pakistan’s Foreign Minister and leaders of some religious parties.³⁰ Pakistan treated the delegation as if it hailed from a sovereign state, which infuriated the Chinese government. The *Peoples’ Daily* termed the Hajj mission “a plot designed to undermine China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, denigrate the prestige of the Chinese people and follow more closely the US scheme of creating ‘two Chinas’”.³¹ The level of China’s anger at Pakistan’s pro-American policies can be clearly assessed from a commentary published in the *People’s Daily*:

At every session of the United Nations General Assembly, from the ninth to the thirteenth, the Pakistan delegate invariably followed the cue of the United States by voting against discussion of the question of Chinese representation. In recent years particularly, the Pakistani Government has increased its contacts with the Chiang Kai-shek clique. At the same time, responsible personnel of the Pakistan Government have on many occasions openly denied China’s territorial sovereignty over Taiwan and what they call “mainland China” on the same footing. In the autumn of 1958 when the United States created tension in the area of China’s Taiwan Straits, the Pakistani Government in a note to China went so far as to allege that the legal position with regard to the question of sovereignty over Taiwan and

²⁶ G. W. Choudhury, *India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the Major Powers: Politics of a Divided Subcontinent* (New York: Macmillan, 1975), p. 162.

²⁷ Mohammed Ahsen Chaudhuri, *Pakistan and the Great Powers* (Karachi: Council for Pakistan Studies, 1970), p. 85.

²⁸ Choudhury, *India, Pakistan and Bangladesh*, p. 163.

²⁹ Arif, *China Pakistan Documents*, pp. 17-18.

³⁰ Mahmud, “Sino-Pakistan Relation”, p. 6.

³¹ *Peking Review* (Beijing), no. 30, July 28 (1959), pp. 18-19.

Panghu was unclear. This makes clear how closely the Pakistani Government has followed the United States in its conspiracy to create “two Chinas.”³²

Beginning of a New Era

The mutual defence agreement of 1959 marked the zenith of Pakistan–US relations. Afterwards, differences surfaced which weakened their relations. Parallel to this, certain developments were shaping events in a way that proved conducive for both China and Pakistan to sort out their differences and evolve friendly relations to protect their mutual interests in the region. The heydays of Sino–Indian and Sino–Soviet friendship had ended; substantial differences surfaced among them. New Delhi granted asylum to the fleeing Dalai Lama, his government, and thousands of his followers, an act that perturbed Chinese authorities. At the same time, the Sino–Indian boundary dispute became an explosive issue and led to border clashes. Anwar Syed termed the emerging Sino–Indian rivalry as “important differences of opinion regarding the proper basis for agreement and co-operation among the nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America...that is, Chinese sponsored anti-imperialism versus Indian-based non-aligned”.

In the meantime, the US was watching the new developments. The new administration under President John F. Kennedy found India a potential ally to counter China in the region and showed great generosity, bestowing all kinds of US assistance on New Delhi.³³ The magnitude of US concern at the souring of relations between the two giants of Asia can be measured in economic terms: up until 30 June 1959, the total American economic aid to India in the twelve years since its independence was officially valued at somewhat over \$1,705 million, which included \$931 million in agricultural commodities. Against this amount, in a short period of less than four years, from 1959 to 1963, India received \$4 billion from the US, many times more than the total amount it had received in the earlier 11-year period.³⁴ Pakistan, which was a US ally in three major defence pacts, was naturally disturbed and reacted against the US policy of enticing India. It concluded that a policy of complete reliance on the West for defence purposes was misplaced and needed thorough revision.

Thus, in the changing security environment in the region, Pakistan reoriented its foreign policy, which led to its opening up towards the Communist bloc. Commenting on the situation, the then President of Pakistan, General Ayub Khan, stated that it was important for Pakistan to normalize relations with China and the Soviet Union as it could not afford “an

³² Arif, *China Pakistan Documents*, p. 20.

³³ Syed, *China Pakistan Entente*, p. 81.

³⁴ Ghulam Ali, “Sino-Pakistan Relations: The Indian Factor”, *IPRI Journal* (Islamabad), vol. III, no. 2 (Summer 2003), pp. 99-100.

unnecessary political burden.”³⁵ President Ayub took note of the Sino–Indian rivalry, which flared up on their un-demarcated boundary. With a view to averting a similar conflict with China, with which Pakistan also shared a long un-demarcated border, he directed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to find ways to peacefully resolve the boundary dispute.³⁶ Meanwhile, Pakistan resumed its support for China to be given a seat in the UN. A major breakthrough came on 10 March 1960, when President Ayub, who was in London to attend the Commonwealth session, announced that the Commonwealth countries had, in principle, agreed to support Chinese admission to the UN. Nine days later, he informed journalists that his country would probably vote for the PRC to be admitted to the UN at its upcoming session.³⁷ Later in November 1960, a special meeting of the Pakistan cabinet approved this decision.³⁸

During the next UN session, in December 1961, Pakistan abandoned its opposition to China’s admission and instead supported its legitimate claim to a seat in the UN.³⁹ Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, then foreign minister in President Ayub’s Cabinet, applauded this decision and termed it a daring step on the part of his government. He stated that it would be impossible for the United Nations to bring to bear the full weight of its authority on any issue without the participation of the world’s largest nation.⁴⁰ Beijing duly appreciated this change in Pakistan’s policy. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in its review of Sino–Pakistan relations, remarked that in 1961, Pakistan took a great stride forward in improving Sino–Pakistan relations by voting in the UN General Assembly for China’s legal right.⁴¹ Later the same month, Premier Zhou Enlai, while talking to a correspondent of the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP), appreciated Pakistan’s support in casting its vote in favour of China’s rightful place in the world body and not following the US position of retaining the Chiang Kai-shek clique in the UN.⁴² The Border Agreement of March 1963 gave a new impetus to the recently warmed relations. On this occasion, the Chinese official, Mr Chen Yi, said that Pakistan, in defiance of

³⁵ Mohammad Ayub Khan, *Friends, Not Masters: A Political Autobiography* (Islamabad: Mr. Books, 2002), p. 139.

³⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 161–63.

³⁷ President Ayub was in London to attend the Commonwealth Conference. *Dawn* (Karachi), 11 March 1960.

³⁸ Arif, *China Pakistan Documents*, p. 26.

³⁹ *Morning News* commented that the step might have helped the negotiations on border demarcation between the two countries. See Syed, *China Pakistan Entente*, p. 84.

⁴⁰ Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: A Compendium of Speeches made in the National Assembly of Pakistan 1962–64* (Karachi: Pakistan Institute of International Affairs, 1964), p. 30.

⁴¹ Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “China Pakistan Relations”, <<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/4408.html>> (7 January 2003).

⁴² Arif, *China Pakistan Documents*, p. 41.

outside pressure, had voted for the restoration to China of its lawful seat in the UN for which the government and the people of China were highly obliged to the government and the people of Pakistan.⁴³

China welcomed Pakistan's independent posture in international politics. Earlier, it had adopted a neutral stance on the Kashmir issue; it now became supportive of Pakistan in its Kashmir policy. The Sino-Pakistan Border Agreement was the first occasion when China expressed its deep concern at the unresolved status of Kashmir. In the joint communiqué issued on the occasion, China appreciated the attitude of Pakistan in seeking a peaceful settlement of the Kashmir dispute and was of the belief that expeditious settlement of this question would be conducive to peace in Asia and in the world.⁴⁴ In subsequent years, China's Kashmir policy became aligned with Pakistan's. Beijing stated its support for the right of self-determination for the Kashmiri people. In addition, it rendered political support, economic assistance, and technological co-operation in defence production capabilities to Pakistan on an impressive scale. When, in 1965, the American arms embargo created a difficult situation for Pakistan, China came to Pakistan's help and supplied much-needed weapons.⁴⁵

Pakistan advocated China's viewpoint on all appropriate occasions. While welcoming Zhou Enlai on his visit to Pakistan in February 1964, President Ayub reaffirmed his country's support for China's lawful right in the world body and stated that, without the representation of one-fourth of the human race, the UN would remain incomplete. Ayub expressed his desire for the early admission of China to the UN.⁴⁶ A similar commitment was expressed in the joint communiqué, issued in March 1965. President Ayub reiterated Pakistan's firm support and opposed all schemes for creating "two Chinas". He also emphasized the need for China's participation in the negotiations on disarmament, which had started between the US and the USSR, and in international organizations whose membership had not yet been extended to China. Pakistan firmly believed that no step could be taken towards world peace if the biggest nation in the world was excluded from the disarmament process. In a letter written to Premier Zhou Enlai, President Ayub said that Pakistan was well aware of the necessity of China's inclusion in disarmament negotiations as well as in the UN, under whose aegis disarmament talks were being held. He believed that the acquisition of nuclear capabilities by China (in 1964) had further strengthened its case for UN membership. It is worth mentioning that, at a time when the international community was criticizing China for its nuclear explosion, Pakistan adopted an

⁴³ Ibid., p. 38.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 39.

⁴⁵ Cheema, "The China Threat", pp. 303-4.

⁴⁶ President Ayub's speech at the banquet given in honour of the visiting Chinese

independent stance and stated that China's acquisition of nuclear capability was an important development for its admission to the UN.

In order to break the deadlock over the issue, some countries put forward the proposal of dual representation, i.e., both Nationalist and Communist delegates to be given separate UN seats. The idea contradicted the Chinese stance that Taiwan had no separate identity but was an integral part of mainland China. China's rejection of those proposals as well as of the suggestions of "well-intentioned friends" that Beijing should accept a seat in the General Assembly, pending a settlement of the overall question of the representation, was quite natural.⁴⁷ Pakistan fully supported China's stance and disapproved of the proposal for dual representation. This was further elaborated on at the nineteenth session of the UN General Assembly, where Pakistan's representative drew the attention of the international community towards the repercussions of dual representation. He stated that China's admission was not only imperative for the effectiveness of the UN but also for the sake of peace. Only then could a beginning be made towards regulating the situation in Asia and restoring to that vast and conflict-torn continent the peace and tranquillity which its people desperately needed.⁴⁸ Again, in 1966, Foreign Minister Pirzada, while speaking in the General Assembly, doubted the effectiveness of the essential functions of the UN without Chinese representation, which had no justification in logic or on the basis of law. He said that the policy of keeping China out of the UN imposed a disability, not on the People's Republic of China, but on the UN. The absence from the world body of the real representative of the Chinese people was the single most important cause of the decline in its effectiveness and its inability to settle conflicts and tensions in Asian region.⁴⁹ In 1969, Air Marshal Nur Khan stated that the effectiveness of the UN would remain limited so long as it denied the right of the PRC to be represented in the world body. He reaffirmed, "We categorically reject the fiction of two Chinas. We give firm support and will continue our efforts for the rights of the People's Republic of China to be represented in the United Nations."⁵⁰

By the 1960s, it had become part of Pakistan's foreign policy to support China's bid for a UN seat. President Ayub's successor, President Yahya Khan, followed the same policy. During the visit of a Chinese official to

Premier, Zhou Enlai, on 20 February 1964, in Arif, *China Pakistan Documents*, p. 45.

⁴⁷ The editorial of the *People's Daily* of 4 December 1965 in *The China Quarterly* (January-March, 1965), p. 218.

⁴⁸ Speech of Pakistan's Minister for Foreign Affairs to the nineteenth session of the United Nations General Assembly held on 25 January 1965, in *Pakistan Horizon* (Karachi), vol. XVIII, no. 4 (1965), p. 73.

⁴⁹ Statement by Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Abdul Hafeez Pirzada, in the UN General Assembly on 29 September 1966, in Arif, *China Pakistan Documents*, p. 56.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Pakistan in March 1970, President Yahya expressed Pakistan's opposition to the plot of creating "two Chinas" and demanded the expulsion of the Chiang Kai-shek delegate from the UN.⁵¹ Later, at the time of his visit to Beijing in November 1970, Yahya delivered an impressive speech in favour of China and once again expressed Pakistan's solidarity with the Chinese people in their legitimate struggle to acquire UN membership. He argued that China was at par with the two superpowers in every respect. It was home to a fifth of the world's population and had made great progress in science and technology; it was a major power that could play a significant role in the promotion of world peace to which it had demonstrated its unstinting dedication. Yahya urged the international community to restore forthwith the lawful rights of the PRC in the United Nations, because, without its participation, the world body was seriously "handicapped". He added that it was shortsighted to deny the PRC its rightful place in the community of nations.⁵² China's Vice-Chairman, Tung Pi Wu, expressed deep gratitude for Pakistan's firm stand and stated that, disregarding foreign pressure, the Pakistan Government and people consistently remained friendly with China and firmly opposed to the scheme of creating "two Chinas".⁵³ Pakistan also canvassed for China's entry into the UN from the Commonwealth platform. At its January 1971 session held in Singapore, Pakistan removed the apprehensions of certain countries and assured them that Beijing had no expansionist designs: neither in the region nor in the world. Pakistan thus provided valuable support to China at a critical juncture when the countries of Southeast Asia were nervous of Chinese intentions and had consequently opposed its entry into the UN.⁵⁴

Pakistan's Role in Normalization of Sino-US Relations

The US was the major hurdle blocking Chinese entry to the UN. Pakistan was on good terms with both China and the US and worked as a bridge in normalizing their relations when Washington indicated readiness for such a rapprochement. The idea of reconciliation was first floated in a meeting between President Richard M. Nixon with French President Charles de Gaulle in the late 1960s, where Nixon stated, "... China could no longer be excluded from the international community and that he, as the President of the United States, was probably the only President with the unquestionable power and,

⁵¹ Mr. Kuo Mo Jo's speech at the dinner given in his honour on 11 March 1970, in *Pakistan Horizon* (Karachi), vol. XXIII, no. 2 (1970), p. 235.

⁵² Yahya Khan's banquet speech in Beijing on 11 November 1970, in Arif, *China Pakistan Documents*, pp. 126-7.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 125-6.

⁵⁴ Niloufer Mahdi, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy 1971-1981: The Search for Security* (Lahore: Ferozsons, 1999), p. 193, note 22 on p. 214.

therefore, the credibility to make such a gesture.”⁵⁵ On 24 May 1970, Nixon asked the US Secretary of State, William Rogers, then in Pakistan, to ask President Yahya Khan to determine Chinese views regarding talks with the US. In July 1970, the US took a series of actions to relax barriers to Sino–American trade and contacts. For the first time, US citizens travelling abroad could bring back \$100 worth of Chinese goods.⁵⁶ In August 1970, Nixon took the initiative for formal contact with China during his visit to Pakistan and encouraged Yahya Khan to act as an intermediary. Yahya communicated Nixon’s interest to Premier Zhou Enlai during one of their meetings in Beijing.⁵⁷ In September, the United States announced the doctrine of “evenhandedness”, which was aimed at not exploiting the Sino–Soviet split, but to “pursue a course of progressively developing better relations” with both countries. This remained the US policy during the 1970s.⁵⁸

President Nixon, in his second annual foreign policy report to Congress stated, “The United States was prepared to see the People’s Republic of China play a constructive role in the family of nations.” This was first time that the formal name of the Chinese Communists regime was used in an official US document. Finally, during 1970, the Nixon administration, announced that it would no longer block Beijing’s entry to the UN.⁵⁹ Accordingly, special arrangements were made for the participation of President Yahya Khan to attend the UN session in October 1970. The purpose of Yahya’s visit to New York was to directly discuss the normalization of relations between China and the United States. A quote from President Nixon’s book highlights President Yahya’s role in this regard:

On 25 October President Yahya Khan of Pakistan came to see me, and I used the occasion to establish the “Yahya channel”. We had discussed the idea in general terms when I saw him on my visit to Pakistan in July 1969. Now I told him that we had decided to try to normalize our relations with China, I asked for his help intermediately. “Of course we will do anything we can to help; but you must know how difficult this will be. Old enemies do not exactly become new friends. This will be slow, and you must be prepared for setbacks.”⁶⁰

A few days after his return from New York, Yahya flew to China and delivered President Nixon’s message to Zhou Enlai. During their meeting in private, Zhou stated that China had always been willing to negotiate its differences with the US. Taiwan, an integral part of China, was occupied by

⁵⁵ F. S. Aijazuddin, *From a Head Through a Head, to a Head: The Secret Channel between the US and China through Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 2.

⁵⁶ Freeman, “Rapprochement” in Hsiao, *Sino-American Normalization*, p. 3.

⁵⁷ Aijazuddin, *From a Head*, p. 3. 58.

⁵⁸ Freeman, “Rapprochement”, p. 3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p., 6.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

foreign troops of the United States. In order to discuss the subject of the evacuation of the Chinese territory of Taiwan, the special envoy from President Nixon would be most welcome in Beijing. Zhou Enlai further said, “China has had messages from the United States from different sources in the past but this is the first time that proposal has come from a Head through a Head to a Head. The US knows that Pakistan is a great friend of China and therefore we attach great importance to it.”⁶¹ He especially thanked Yahya for this diplomatic support. As a result of this understanding, Kissinger’s secret visit to Beijing via Pakistan was arranged. The world remained ignorant of these events until the next week when the US and the PRC simultaneously announced that Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai had extended an invitation to President Nixon to visit China and that the invitation had been accepted.⁶² Pakistan’s mediation played a significant role in the Sino–US rapprochement. As a result, the US softened its stand on China’s admission to the UN.

However, a hurdle still existed in full acceptance of China’s stand. Washington remained steadfast in its position regarding Taiwan’s independent status. Irrespective of its relations with the US, Pakistan opposed this stance in principle and stated that Taiwan had no separate identity but was an integral part of Chinese territory. Pakistan’s chief delegate, Sardar Abdul Rasheed Khan, in his address to the UN, once again rejected the proposal of “two Chinas” or one China and one Taiwan on both political and legal grounds. Politically, it would create new tensions by perpetuating the deepest grievances of the People’s Republic of China and would set a dangerous precedent for undermining the territorial integrity of validly constituted states. In regard to its legal aspect, both the Cairo Declaration of 1943 and the Potsdam Declaration of 1945 had pledged the restoration of Taiwan to China. The only solution, therefore, was to seat the representative of the People’s Republic of China in all organs of the United Nations and exclude those who illegally occupied the Chinese seat.⁶³ Pakistan co-sponsored the successful Albanian resolution presented in the General Assembly that held that there was only one China, and the PRC was the sole lawful representative of the Chinese people.⁶⁴

The Historic Decision

With the passage of time, the world community came to realize the need for China’s participation in the United Nations. On 15 July 1971, 18 countries, including Pakistan, sent a letter to Secretary General, U Thant, demanding that the General Assembly, in its upcoming session, recognize the PRC as the sole

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 42-3.

⁶² *Dawn* (Karachi), 16 July 1971.

⁶³ At the 25th Session of UN General Assembly held in September 1971 See Hameed A K. Rai, ed., *Pakistan in the United Nations: Speeches delivered in the General Assembly by the heads of Pakistan Delegations: 1948-1978* (Lahore: Aziz Publisher, 1979), pp. 375-76.

⁶⁴ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 4 August 1971.

legitimate representative of the Chinese people and expel “forthwith” the Chiang Kai-shek delegate from the UN. They also advocated the inclusion of China in the Security Council as a permanent member.⁶⁵ Speaking to the UN General Assembly on 26 October 1971, when the historic decision of China’s admission was made, Pakistani delegate, Muhammad Ali, made a fervent speech in favour of China and said: “It is from this viewpoint, as well as from the viewpoint of removing a disability from this Organization that Pakistan considers it essential that the Government of the People’s Republic of China be restored its lawful rights at the United Nations during this session.” The delegate opposed all attempts to promote the idea of dual representation that would set a most dangerous precedent, by permitting two opposing delegations to represent one and the same member state in the United Nations.⁶⁶

Finally, on 26 October 1971, the General Assembly passed a resolution that admitted the PRC to the UN and also granted it the status of permanent member of the Security Council. At the same time, it expelled the representatives of the Nationalists. It was the first time in the UN history that a member state was expelled.⁶⁷ Pakistan, which had played an important role in this achievement, expressed its deep “sense of satisfaction” at the decision. President Yahya Khan sent a message of congratulations to Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai and termed the Chinese victory “as if it was a victory for the people of Pakistan”. He stated that Chinese presence in the UN would make it truly universal and serve as a vital contribution towards safeguarding the rights of all people of the world and also to international peace and justice.⁶⁸

These UN proceedings were widely covered in the Pakistani press. The daily *Dawn* called it an epoch-making event in every sense, which had rectified the wrong done to China.⁶⁹ *The Morning News* termed it a “triumph of sanity over insensibility”.⁷⁰ Different political parties of Pakistan also welcomed the decision. J. A. Rahim, Secretary General of the Pakistan People’s Party, said on the occasion that China would better protect the interests of the developing countries against the interference of neo-colonialists powers in their internal affairs. Z. A. Lari, President of the Council Muslim League, described the event as a “landmark, filling a great vacuum which had been badly affecting the working of the United Nations.” The spokesman of the National Awami Party said that seating of the PRC in the UN had restored the faith of the oppressed people of the world in the international body. Organizations like the Pakistan Writers Guild, Pakistan–United Nations

⁶⁵ *Keesing's Contemporary Archives: 1971-1972*, p. 24766.

⁶⁶ Rai, *Pakistan in the UN*, p. 411.

⁶⁷ *Keesing's Contemporary Archives: 1971-1972*, p. 24941.

⁶⁸ *New Times* (Rawalpindi), 27 October 1971.

⁶⁹ *Dawn* (Karachi), 27 October 1971.

⁷⁰ *Morning News* (Karachi), 27 October 1971.

Association, and the Karachi Committee for Afro–Asian People’s Solidarity also applauded the decision.⁷¹

Conclusion

The PRC’s admission to the United Nations and its specialized agencies was a significant development in both the regional and international context. Moreover, it ended the long-prevailing isolation of the Chinese nation and activated its role in international politics. This also proved a valuable support to Third World countries, as China had been upholding their cause and promoting their interests.

From the very beginning, Pakistan’s stance on the issue was very clear. It was among the first countries to recognize the Communist government in China. Prior to this, it severed all nature of relations with the Nationalist government, which had been established earlier. Pakistan argued that since the Communists had established control on mainland China, they deserved to represent the Chinese nation in the UN, instead of the small group of Chiang Kai-shek supporters that was confined to Taiwan Island. This policy was motivated by the assumption that, sooner or latter, the Communists would replace the Nationalists in the UN, including at the permanent seat in the Security Council. Therefore, it was important to establish good relations with them to win their support on the Kashmir issue.

It became a significant part of Pakistan’s foreign policy to support China’s entry to the UN, its affiliated bodies, and important international organizations. Pakistan also demanded Beijing’s participation in negotiations on disarmament and sided with it in its opposition to the proposal of dual representation. China reciprocated in a befitting manner and rendered considerable political, economic, and military assistance to Pakistan in the subsequent period. It abandoned its neutral stance on the Kashmir dispute and started advocating the right of self-determination for the Kashmiri people. China was committed to friendship with Pakistan and helped it in the 1965 and the 1971 wars, winning the hearts of the people of Pakistan and deepening the mutual friendship. After becoming a permanent member of the Security Council, China used its veto in favour of Pakistan to block Bangladesh’s admission to UN and threatened to continue this exercise until Bangladesh and India amicably solved unsettled issues with Pakistan. This determined support greatly helped Pakistan to overcome the traumatic situation in the wake of the 1971 crisis.⁷² The episode constitutes an important chapter in the long diplomatic history of Sino–Pakistan relations. It helped to end China’s prolonged isolation and obtain its legitimate seat in the UN.

⁷¹ “Victory of right over wrong: UN decision welcomed”, *ibid.*

⁷² In August 1972, the PRC cast its veto against Bangladesh’s admission to the UN, in *Pakistan Horizon* (Karachi), vol. XXV, no. 3 (1972), p. 97.

Today, the friendship between Pakistan and China is an excellent example of mutual relationships. Over time, this relationship has flourished and no event in international politics has damaged the strong bonds. Pakistan's insistence on procuring for the PRC its rightful seat in the UN helped to further strengthen these ties. That is why Chinese people still express gratitude to Pakistan and its efforts in ushering them into the mainstream of international politics. ■