

Review Article

China-Pakistan Relations

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Books on China are in. This round began with Henry Kissinger's *On China* London, Penguin, 2012 followed by Andrew Small's *The China-Pakistan Axis* London, Hurst, 2015 and now by a Pakistani author Mohammad Yunus with his *Awakened China Shakes the World and is now Pakistan's Mainstay*, Islamabad, Institute of Policy Studies, 2015. It surfaces that this is the veteran author's third book on China, where, as a career diplomat, he enjoyed three postings. The main value of this book is author's personal observations and experience and his personal interaction with almost all the leaders of the two countries — Mao Zedong, Zhou En Lai, Chen Yi and on the other side Mohammad Ayub Khan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq.

A Pakistani update on Sino-Pakistan Relations has long been overdue, since Anwar H. Syed's *China and Pakistan: Diplomacy of an Entente Cordiale* (Karachi, Oxford University Press, 1974) was published when the main protagonists of this entente, Mao Zedong, Zhou En Lai and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto were alive and in office. The relations between China and Pakistan have not changed, however, the world around has changed, and even close mutual ties need to be re-stated and re- defined constantly as the surrounding world re-arranges and re-configures itself. Pakistan –China relations, helped by an early Pakistani recognition of the People's Republic of China were established firmly during the Bandung Conference 1955. Pakistan's founder Mohammad Ali Jinnah had fallen out with Chiang Kai Chech over the latter's questioning of the advisability of Partition, and though a gift of two priceless Ming vases were offered to breach the heal, the new country did not hesitate in holding out its hands towards Chiang's rival.

These relations began when Russia and China were formally allies. They peaked when the Sino-Soviet split had occurred, and by the time the 1971 war broke out, Russia and China were outright adversaries.

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Today, the world has passed from being Bipolar during the cold war, to being unipolar after the disintegration of the U.S.S.R.; and now after the resurgence of China, it is back to the classic balance of power equation, as Vladimir Putin clearly spelt out in December 2014.

Russia and China having shed most of their ideological baggage have a deeper understanding of each other now, as compared to the cold war era. This time round, it is Russia that is the more pressed of the two eastern powers ever since conflict in Ukraine broke out. Why this should have been so was not apparent as it was not clear why the European Union, faced with the withdrawal of Britain over migrants from East Europe, should have sought to add another East European country to the EU, a country moreover that has always been behind the Iron Curtain. Thus the EU seemed to be imposing a treaty of Versailles on a country that did not even need to rearm.

The state of the discipline being what it is, International Relations needs both: objective analyses from the outside as well as insider's account such as the one Yunus provides. I have had a long author/editor relationship with Mohammad Yunus since his University of Calgary days and he is entitled to put down whatever criticism I offer here, to force of habit. Mohammad Yunus offers both interpretation and information, and sometimes the information is derived from the interpretation, which creates shades of ambiguity.

Khalid Rahman, Director-General, Institute of Policy Studies puts forward three objectives of the book under review. They are: 1) Understanding the internal dynamics of emerging China and its role in the modern world. 2) Understanding the dynamics of Pakistan-China Relations, and recommending measures for strengthening this association further. 3) Increasing awareness and understanding between the two countries on various subjects and at different levels.

As for understanding the internal dynamics of emerging China, Yunus straightaway attributes it to the abandonment of the Great Leap Forward, which he unhesitatingly describes as the Great Leap Backward. Yunus dilates upon this topic, to which we shall later return. At present, what has to be taken into account is that China was most belligerent in its defense of Pakistan, when it was in its most radical phase. In its present disposition China needs to weigh its options more judiciously and to give a more measured response because China is not only a nuclear, but an economic power.

As for China's evolving role in the contemporary world, Yunus begins with the rehabilitation of Deng Ziao Ping, that is, before the current phase of its place in the world had begun. It is the population and size of China that has overtaken its military and nuclear might to raise it

to world power status. Why, since after 1971, China has been perceived to be in a place to challenge the U.S.A. globally and why it has come closer to Russia shall be the indicators which could explain the nature of China's evolving role in the twenty-first century.

Two news items from *Dawn* of 25 June 2015 are very clear indicators. The first says that Russia was China's top oil supplier in May; and that Australia is the latest U.S. ally to join the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Both news items show that China has the economic resources to succor Russia, whose main resources remain oil and gas; as well as to pose as the rival to the U.S. even in the Commonwealth and European spheres of the world. Two days later (27 June 2015), *Dawn* carried the report that the market share that the EU lost in Russia due to sanctions, has been gained by China and other Eastern European countries.

Yunus is correct when he attributes the lost Chinese decade to the Great Leap Forward. In Russia; *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*, measures of the opposite nature, have had the same effect. In addition, we need to weigh in the Middle East also as a factor. Saudi Arabia refuses to revalue its price of oil, with the result that Russia continues to be vulnerable to EU sanctions.

While Pakistan views its relations with Saudi Arabia in spiritual terms, the non-Muslim world with which Pakistan's security is bound up sees them in different light, and as such terror has grown steadily as a factor governing Sino-Pakistan relations. When we survey the factors affecting the evolutionary dynamics, we find them to be arbitrary, and hence, incapable of a traditional diplomatic response.

We have already mentioned that the EU's interest in the Ukraine, considering Britain's stand over East European migrants (and the prospect of Greece opting out of the Eurozone) is inexplicable. It is capable of explanation only if we recognize that despite the shedding of communism, the clash between two ways of life, is keeping ideology afloat as a concern in International Relations.

Russia although in possession of energy resources remains short of hard cash, and, basically because the prices of its resources are subject to market manipulations, is restricted in its options. In building its 'super weapon' a stealth jet fighter TA-50-PAK- FA, which gives Russia an edge over the U.S. in the skies, a full one- fourth of the cost has been borne by India. India shall thus not only be entitled to aircraft direct from

the assembly line, but also technology transfer for a jet fighter potentially aimed at the United States, India's nuclear partner.¹

It means Chinese and Russian support notwithstanding, Pakistan shall have to buy its way into security systems and this it cannot do unless it clears its soil of Afghan citizens and disregards various sanctions to import oil and energy from the nearest location. On 29 June 2015 the All-Pakistan Textile Mills Association announced that the loss being unsustainable, textile mills are halting production, which means, pushing the country towards recession. It was the collapse of the Greek textile industry that plunged that country into crisis. A repetition of the same process in this country shall be calamitous. Already it appears that the grant of GSP+ by the EU instead of enhancing textile exports to Europe, caused it to decline in the first instance, and hit rock bottom in the second. The hope was voiced that China would invest in Pakistan to take advantage of the GSP+, and would bring in its own solar panels to cope with the energy short fall, but that has not happened, with no one telling us why.

This brings us to the second question posed by Khalid Rahman: What are the dynamics of Sino-Pakistan relations? It is true as all critics of our foreign policy, in order to plunge us into despair, keep reminding us that Sino-Pakistan relations have not been at a high pitch since the People's Republic of China took its rightful place in the UN Security Council, but Yunus is being fanciful when he claims (p.85) that had Yahya Khan gone to Kashghar to meet Mao Zedong when the 1971 war was raging, Pakistan would not have been dismembered. Regardless of the clandestine meeting not having been held, China had exerted itself to its full extent; but even though the U.S. and China were allies for the duration, the Soviet Union was able to pre-empt them by placing two nuclear armed submarines eight miles off the Pacific Coast.²

The new and disrupting factor in Sino-Pakistan relations is that of Islamic militants, by whatever brand name they go, they are making inroads into the Xingiang province among the Uighurs when complete tranquility is needed on the route of the China-Pakistan Export Corridor. This is the only way out if Pakistan is to rise above its present economic morass. Chinese anxiety was heightened when the Lal Masjid brigade kidnapped Chinese citizens from Islamabad. Pakistan's stance against terrorism needs to be unambiguous, not merely vociferous.

¹ Dawn, Karachi, 1 December, 2014.

² Paul Bracken, *Fire in the East* (New York: Perennial, 2002), p.102.

When the Chinese see that Abdul Aziz Ghazi is free to spread hatred across the country and they see that instead Pervez Musharraf has been indicted for taking action against him, we should not be surprised if they begin to weigh in other options, progress on the macro level notwithstanding. Ideological ambiguity is also preventing Pakistan from participation in any counter-alliance which could be thrown up in the east.

Had the Beslan Massacre of 2 September 2004 been met with a clerical outcry in Pakistan, the 16 December 2014 Army Public School Massacre in Peshawar could not have taken place. It was this inhuman massacre that caused revulsion in the security establishment of Pakistan, a sentiment not as noticeable during earlier ethnic killings. This constitutes the answer to Khalid Rahman's last question. Pakistan has to eschew terror in all its shades and varieties, not only the most extreme form, the ISIS. Only then can we expect a Sino-Pakistani understanding to continue, to derive strength from the prevailing situation, not from inherited traditions and continue to develop at varying commercial, cultural and educational levels.

These questions cannot be answered exhaustively, but at least we can now come to the interpretations forwarded by Mohammad Yunus, the first in the Preface itself

The foundation of the crucially important defense co-operation between Pakistan and China was laid by President Ayub in 1965 in the teeth of opposition from the United States after he had been disillusioned of the promised U.S. support in Indo-Pakistan war of 1965 (p. XV)

Both the personalities and the chronology are unrelated to this assessment. The foundation was laid when on 25 April 1955 Mohammad Ali (Bogra) and Zhou En Lai prime ministers, respectively of Pakistan and China struck a rapport at the conclusion of the Bandung Conference. This rapport lasted till their lifetime. Providentially, Mohammad Ali had become Foreign Minister in Ayub Khan's cabinet. Yunus does mention this meeting later in his book, but does not adjust his assessment accordingly.

What Mohammad Ali did to re-establish Sino-Pakistan relations in 1963, would have been beyond any other person then. Although Yunus does not mention it, Qutbuddin Aziz describes the scene vividly that when Jawaharlal Nehru had called Pakistan a lackey of the United

States, Mohammad Ali had turned round and called India a lackey of the U.S.S.R.³

What Ayub Khan had suggested to the same Jawaharlal Nehru in 1959, was a joint Indo-Pakistan defense against China. Unbelievable today, it was Ayub's affiliation to the West that led him to make such a fantastic proposal. Pakistan was saved from ruination by the sullen refusal of Jawaharlal Nehru to consider Ayub's proposal, otherwise Pakistan would have forever lost the friendship of China with consequences one can only imagine. To call Ayub the founder of the Sino-Pakistani friendship is an anomaly.

It is also not true that China-Pakistan relations began in the aftermath of the 1965 War. Ayub had paid a state visit to China a year before, and throughout the war, on Britain's prompting, Ayub stoutly resisted enlisting China's help calling it a 'complication'. The Chinese were threatening India while the 1965 war was in progress, and also when the Tashkent summit was in progress. To be fair it was not only because of British pressure, but also because of personal inclination. According to his own diary, one year after the 1965 war, Ayub was threatening the Chinese ambassador with reprisals for his country's alleged ill-treatment of Muslims in China.⁴

Thus a simple, seemingly innocuous introductory passage was actually highly misleading shows that his interpretation and the facts he cites do not tally. Yunus has himself recorded the reluctance of Ayub Khan to pursue close relations even after his offer to Nehru had been rebuffed. When the border agreement between China and Pakistan had been ready, despite some re-thinking of details on both sides, Ayub refused to attend the signing ceremony. As Yunus puts it: 'In that crucial situation, Ayub was worried about upsetting Kennedy by visiting China, still at war with the United States' (p.94). Ayub proposed sending the new Foreign Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, instead. And thus pushed his protégé and soon to be rival into the limelight.

This was not all, Yunus shares the confidence that: 'The Ambassador allotted to me the task of drafting a less than enthusiastic and formal speech for Bhutto for the occasion, in order to cater to President Ayub's concerns' (p.95). It could not have been predicted then, but it shall cause no surprise now to learn from Yunus, that Bhutto cast

³ Qutbuddin Aziz, *Exciting Stories to Remember* (Karachi: The Islamic Media Corporation, 1995), p.55.

⁴ Craig Baxter (ed.), *Diaries of Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan: 1966-1972* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.10.

aside the formal draft along with Ayub's concerns, and defying him, 'launched into a zealous and warm hearted speech at the end of which, personally I felt as if Bhutto had taken Nehru's place in Zhou's estimation' (p100).

The next step during which the Sino – Pakistan border agreement was tested, was the 1965 Indo- Pakistan War. Pakistani writers themselves put the onus of starting this war on Bhutto, unmindful of the fact that they are branding their own country the aggressor. But unlike most of his contemporaries, Yunus gives us an explanation based on the interpretation of U.N. documents:

Bhutto's assurance (that if Pakistan took action in Kashmir, India would not retaliate across the international border) turned out to have been based on a partial reading of the U.N. Charter. Admittedly paragraph 4 of Article 2 of the Charter did bind U.N. members to "refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state". At the same time, Article 51 Of the Charter stated, "Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent rights of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations" (pp.108, 109).

Yunus does not say whether Bhutto was guided by these documents or whether Yunus is hypothesizing Bhutto's reasoning. If Yunus thinks that Bhutto was so unrealistic to believe that the U.N. Charter would be a shield for Pakistan when very recently, it had not been a shield for Goa, he is wronging himself. Otherwise, the interpretation Yunus advances is flawed *per se*, since Kashmir was a disputed territory not a state within the meaning of the U.N. Charter, nor was it a member state within the meaning of Article 51.

However all such interpretations are beside the point. The 1965 Indo-Pakistan war did not begin with the sending of infiltrators into Kashmir. It began almost three months earlier when India had occupied Kargil. Perhaps Yunus is taking his cue from Walter McConaughy, the U.S. Ambassador who refused to abide by the defense pacts Pakistan had signed with Pakistan, on the ground that Pakistan had sent infiltrators into Kashmir. During that meeting, when McConaughy had mentioned infiltrators, Ayub had cited Kargil. Ayub had mentioned India's occupation of Kargil, as the cause of war in his 6 September 1965 address to the nation. Ayub had also explained to McConaughy that

Pakistan had sent infiltrators into Kashmir, a disputed area, and not to the territory of India.⁵

According to Air Marshal Nur Khan, the earliest that the infiltrators started going into Kashmir was 6 August 1965.⁶ In his book, Air Marshal M. Asghar Khan does not specifically mention infiltration but refers to a military adventure.⁷ He says that on 3 September, Ayub was complacent because of Bhutto's assurance that India would not retaliate across the international border. This could have grain of truth because it was on the same day (3 September 1965) that Mian Arshad Husain had sent intelligence to the effect that India was set to launch an all out invasion on 6 September. By 4 September the Commander-in-Chief was considering action based on that intelligence. He tells us that 10 at night:

I was in a bit of a dilemma in making this decision. If I had not so acted, the field army would have stayed in its forward concentration areas whence we could not have repelled their invasion. On the other hand, to move the army to the borders would have corroborated Shastri's statement.⁸

This is not going far afield, since it was Britain and not the United States that was trying to dissuade Ayub from enlisting Chinese aid, and that British sources had accused the Chinese of advising to send infiltrators, even training them.⁹ Moreover, sitting in the Foreign Office, Mohammad Yunus was unaware that the advice rendered by his minister and secretary had an inhibiting, and not stimulating effect on the Pakistan army. The army commanders cited the Foreign Office as their reason for not moving to defensive positions along the border and also for refusing to lay down mines on the Pakistani side of the territory.¹⁰

The scene Yunus describes, of Musa catching Bhutto by the neck in front of Ayub (p.109) is apocryphal. Musa himself says that on the night of 4 September he was weighing the strategic against the political option. Furthermore, the following passage from Musa's book should set the matter at rest. When Bhutto had asked Musa about the advisability of inducting China into the conflict, Musa had replied:

⁵ Muhammad Reza Kazimi, *The 1965 Indo-Pakistan War: A Historical Appraisal* (Karachi: SAMA, 2015), p.7.

⁶ *Dawn*, 2 August 2005, p.2.

⁷ M. Asghar Khan, *My Political Struggle*, Karachi, 2008, p.15.

⁸ Muhammad Musa, *My Version* (Lahore: Wajidali, 1983), p.48.

⁹ Roedad Khan ed. *The British Papers* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.422.

¹⁰ Muhammad Reza Kazimi, *op.cit.* pp.14-15.

I told him that we were satisfied with the military situation, but, if in his opinion, it was *politically* advisable to bring China to our side, physically she should be asked to threaten Indian troops wherever they themselves found it, on the Indo-China border.¹¹

From here we go to Tashkent and it is here that the observations of Yunus are most insightful, though at times they may not be in accord with the basic argument of his book:

Bhutto opposed the signing of the Tashkent Declaration presumably because the war had produced hardly any change in the position of Kashmir and that China despite having sided with Pakistan at his behest, had been left out of the Tashkent Conference, in deference to the opposition by both the super powers to allot any role to China (p.112)

Yunus says that Ayub had overruled Bhutto because the United States had put an arms embargo on Pakistan. Running out of ammunition would have mattered were a decision were to be taken over the *cease-fire* [emphasis added]. It would not be pressing enough to force Pakistan into a conference geared to futility. Yunus is not aware that when Nur Khan told Ayub Khan on 10 September that only two days of ammunition was left, he simultaneously advised sending Asghar Khan to China and Iran to replenish the arsenals. Ayub did not care, or did not dare to approach China, but the approach to Iran produced immediate results, with Iran sending plane loads followed by train and truck loads of ammunition. The Tashkent Declaration was anomalous because it was India and not Pakistan which was pressing for a cease-fire. The Pakistan Armed Forces wanted the cease-fire deferred by three days but Ayub would not listen.

However, Yunus confides in us that Ayub flew to China for a face to face meeting with Zhou En Lai and Mao Ze Dong after the Tashkent Conference and after Bhutto had resigned [p.113], a more mistimed approach is hard to imagine. It is also difficult to credit the account of Ayub having gone to China then. This does not tally with the threat dealt by Ayub to the Chinese ambassador in 1966 referred to above.

It is troubling to note that the Foreign Office subsisted on rumours unsubstantiated by documents. We should then not be surprised that the advice they rendered were personalized, not institutionalized. Thus the value of this book for us remains the insights he offers from immediate experience and personal interaction. Firstly we need to cite

¹¹ Muhammad Musa, *op.cit.* p.10.

glimpses of the Cultural Revolution. The analysis Yunus offers is more useful than the vivid images offered by Sultan Mohammad Khan:

The Cultural Revolution became a mixture of party purge, and class warfare during which many alleged rightists and so-called counter-revolutionaries were persecuted, humiliated, tortured and even murdered. (p.131)

Why and how Zhou En Lai survived the Cultural Revolution is the question at the center of Chinese politics of the 1970's. Even more intriguing is the nature of his equation with Mao Ze Dong. It could not have been but benign. Nevertheless, the Cultural Revolution had its own dynamics. Yunus has this observation to make:

Mao nominated Hua Guo Feng as his successor in place of Lin Biao confirming that Mao continued to regard Zhou En Lai as someone who had a bourgeois background and could not be relied to lead the party in its post-revolutionary phase (p.141).

How the military relations developed between a revolutionary China and a conventional Pakistan has been explained by Yunus:

The Chinese delegation explained that Pakistan's requirements had been calculated to conduct an 'imperialist' war in which the imperialist defended himself by starting a barrage of continuous fire to keep the field open against the enemy. Chinese troops on the other hand withheld their fire until they could see the white of the enemy's eye. That the Chinese pointed out was the reason for the difference in the calculation by the two sides of the ammunition required for combat operations. (p.121)

Thus, for all our criticism which could have been ironed out by the author during the editing stage, what Mohammad Yunus offers contributes greatly to our understanding of this relationship, absolutely vital for Pakistan. As a tail-piece, however, I cannot resist the temptation to show the nature of the knowledge Yunus has consigned to footnotes. Only two examples shall suffice

Transcripts of the Zhou En Lai-Kissinger meetings contradict Kissinger's Memoirs (p.137 – note 129)

China helped Pakistan test the trigger of nuclear bombs. (p.150 – note 134)

It is unfair perhaps, to mention this, but these represent two crucial lines of inquiry that were not pursued.