

Expert Opinion

75 Years of Pakistan

Muhammad Reza Kazimi*

The Diamond Jubilee of a country not expected to survive beyond 6 months is a time for retrospection. Pakistan came into existence because a minority was subject to religious discrimination accompanied by violence. As such its identity came to be defined by religion, quite contrary to a Westphalian state. The formulation of the demand for Pakistan was the Two Nation Theory, voiced by both Hindu and Muslim political leaders. Pakistan was disadvantaged at creation by the Radcliffe Award 1947 and the burden of a province separated from the mainland by a 1000 miles. It came into being in the Cold War Era, it passed from the bipolar to the unipolar to the now multipolar world. Pakistan survives as a nuclear, but poor nation. It has a sizeable population and strategic position, but caught now, in a pandemic, a deluge and debt trap in turn. The survival of Pakistan has become necessary for the stability of the emerging world order and its proverbial resilience is being put to its highest test.

When the Lahore Resolution was passed, it was said that Pakistan would not come into being. When it came into being it was said that Pakistan could not last. Now when Pakistan is celebrating its Diamond Jubilee it is said that Pakistan should not have come into being. It is undeniable, however that when we mark 75 years of our existence, we are in an economic crisis. We are also in a deluge. We cannot stop people from asking whether our present plight is incidental or structural in nature, and to answer that question we shall have to re-visit the 1947 Partition, the Pakistan Movement; for introspection, but also to arrive at a solution.

In one sense, after the Delhi Riots of 2019, it was not necessary to explain why Pakistan came into being. The survivors were openly questioning the wisdom of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, not the foresight of Mohammad Ali Jinnah. Questions are academic in nature too, and I

* Dr. Muhammad Reza Kazimi is Editor, *Quarterly Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*.

need to place on the record, the various criticisms of the Pakistan Movement. In the course of introspection, Dr. Kaiser Bengali stated publicly at a Pakistan Institute of International Affairs Seminar that the economy of Pakistan is being brought to such a pass that we have to surrender our nuclear arsenal.¹

That is seen as our contradiction, we are a nuclear state but we are a poor state. We can now better understand why Zulfikar Ali Bhutto said that we must have a nuclear shield even if we have to eat grass. Once bereft of our nuclear arsenal we shall lose the very independence that we are celebrating. Either way it is not a matter of choice, it is a matter of survival. Pakistan came into being, after the Cold War had started, and today the Ukraine crisis seems to have brought us to full circle. What we are undertaking to do is not to provide the background, but to set the context.

It is often asked why Muslims did not formulate a Two-Nation Theory when they were rulers, instead of when they were in decline and a minority. As a matter of record, they did. What else did the puritanism of Mujaddid Alf Thani and Shah Waliullah signify? Even Akbar the Great Moghul when he invested Chittor in 1568, called it a victory of Islam over Hinduism, broke idols, destroyed temples and killed 30,000 Rajputs.² Akbar also re-named Prayag as Allahabad. It was Akbar's tolerance which was urged on Mohammad Ali Jinnah by Lord Mountbatten.³

Let us then see then how this theory evolved.

History of the Two-Nation Theory

- 'Hindus and Muslims are two separate nations'—Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in 1867
- 'Every community is entitled, even bound to organize itself, if it is to live as a separate entity'— After inspecting RSS Sabarmati Camp. Mahatma Gandhi, *Young India*, 6 January 1929
- 'There is one point which has been troubling me of late and one about which I want you think carefully and that is the question of Hindu-Muslim unity. I have devoted most of my time during the last

¹ Nausheen Wasi and Kaiser Bengali, 'Contemporary Economic and Security Issues in Pakistan', in Masuma Hasan (ed.) *Pakistan Horizon*, 73:1 (January 2020), 28.

² Iqtidar Alam Khan, 'Akbar's Personality Traits and World Outlook', in Irfan Habib (ed.) *Akbar and his India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000) 79-96.

³ *Jinnah: Speeches and Statements 1947-1948* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000) 33-34.

six months to the study of Muslim history and Muslim Law and I am inclined to think it neither possible nor practicable' Lala Lajpat Rai to C. R. Das. Cited in Indra Prakash, *A Review of the History and Works of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Hindu Sanghathan Movement*, New Delhi, Akhil Bharatiya, Hindu Maha-Sabha, 1938

- 'The Hindus and Muslims belong to two different philosophies, social customs and literature'—Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Lahore 23 March 1940
- 'Let us bravely face the unpleasant fact. There are two nations in India, the Hindus and the Muslims' Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, cited in Beverly Nichols, *Verdict on India*, Bombay, Thacker & Co. 1944, p.185
- 'There was no chance of Hindus there agreeing to put themselves under permanent Muslim domination'. Pandit Jawharlal Nehru in Nicholas Mansergh et al. (eds.) *The Transfer of Power*, London, HMSO, 1981, Vol.X, p.1013

However, regardless of who promoted the Two-Nation Theory, we need to ask, is it intrinsically valid, or could it become the basis of nationhood? Among all the proponents of the Two-Nation Theory, it was Jinnah alone who did not see it as a water tight compartmentalization, he saw it as the basis of two federations; one with a Hindu and one with a Muslim majority. He made this clear to H.V. Hodson the Reforms Commissioner:

Each minority, whether Hindu or Muslim will have its essential rights of language and so forth protected, but it will have to reconcile itself to being a minority. The strain will be relaxed because the Hindus in Muslim areas will no longer feel that they have this enormous mass behind them, nor will the Muslims feel that they have no one behind them and must always be ruled by a Hindu majority'.⁴

Now we come to what can be called the Unionist Party version of the Pakistan Movement. Critics, including the British, held that Pakistan would be economically unviable. Dr Shahid Javed Burki says Pakistan was created for economic reasons by the Muslim minority states and that the Muslim majority states had no reason to demand Pakistan:

The Movement was led by a group of people who belonged to the Muslim minority areas of British India and who felt that their economic future would be threatened in a state in

⁴ Waheed Ahmed (ed.), *The Nation's Voice*, Vol.4 (Karachi: Quaid-i-Azam Academy, 1999), 831-43.

which the Hindu majority would rule. However they created a state in the part of India in which Muslims constituted the majority and felt secure about their economic future even after the departure of the British from India.⁵

This assertion fails to explain why the Muslims of Punjab were against the Delhi Muslim Proposals 1927 which would be based on joint electorate. Why were the Muslims of the majority areas in need of separate electorates? Because they knew that a national majority could neutralize a regional majority. The 1945 elections were won by the Muslim League from both the majority and minority areas. On an All-India basis the Muslims were a minority, that is why the Chief Ministers of the Punjab, Bengal and Assam attended the October 1937 Session of the All-India Muslim League despite its having lost the recent elections. The Muslim political elite was led by the Unionist Party in Punjab and by the National Agriculturist Party in UP, the largest Muslim majority and Muslim minority provinces respectively. The latest broadside has come from Mazhar Abbas of the GCU, Faisalabad, who says the Muslim landlords learnt that Congress would introduce land reforms which was why they demanded partition.

Now land reforms were on the manifesto of both the Congress and the Muslim League in 1937, when they had an electoral understanding against the British sponsored National Agriculturist Party. The only difference was that the Muslim League would pay compensation while the Congress would not. Sailesh Kumar Bandopadachaya, who accuses Jinnah of being in need of his lucrative law practice, still in the context of the 1937 elections concedes:

There is also no edge in the plea that the League leadership was especially pro-landlord interests; to be honest to facts, the class character of the bulk of the leaders was elitist, the difference being that of Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Further, both parties rallied together to confront the Agriculturist Party.⁶

The All-India Muslim League did not join the provincial ministries until the Congress did so, Liaquat Ali Khan told the Nawab of Chatari that it would be undemocratic to form a minority government.⁷

⁵ Shahid Javed Burki, 'History must not Lie', *Dawn*, Karachi, 9 November 2010.

⁶ Sailesh Kumar Bandopadachaya, *Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah and the Creation of Pakistan* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1991), 131.

⁷ Pran Chopra (ed.), *Towards Freedom 1937-1947*, Vol.1 (New Delhi, 1985), 313.

As for inducting the religious elite Mazhar Abbas holds that they were equally divided between the Congress and Muslim League. He names only the Jama'at-i-Islami and the Khaksars as opponents of the Muslim League. This is not true as the Jami'at-ul-Ulama had said that they could co-operate with the Congress but not with the Muslim League. Other ulama also sided with Congress, not forgetting Abul Kalam Azad who was constantly buffeted by Mahatma Gandhi during his tenure as Congress President. In fact Jinnah told the Muslims that the Muslim League 'had freed you from the undesirable elements of Maulvis and Maulanas'.⁸

I have devoted a whole chapter to Dr. Pervez Hoodbhoy's speech at the Karachi Adab Festival, 2020: here I reproduce only two of his objections and my responses to them 'Jinnah never wrote an essay in his life.' There is the book Ahmed Saeed, (ed.) *Writings of the Quaid-i-Azam*, Lahore, Nazaria-i-Pakistan Trust 2014. It contains 20 essays written by Jinnah. 'Jinnah had no plans for Science and Technology' I again refer to a book Khalid Shamsul Hasan, *Quaid-i-Azam's Unrealized Dream*, Karachi, Royal Book Co. 1991 which contains minutes of the Planning Committee. Page numbers 24 to 26 list the Sub Committees on Fuel and Power, Mining and Metallurgy, Chemical Industries and Manufacturing and Engineering Industries. On 1 November 1944 M. A. Jinnah addressed the A-IML Planning Committee:

It is not our purpose to make the rich richer and to accelerate the process of the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few individuals. We should aim at levelling up the general standard of living among the masses and I hope your Committee will play due attention to this very important question. Our ideal should not be Capitalistic but Islamic, and the interests and welfare of the people as a whole should be kept constantly in mind.⁹

So much for an elitist state which Shahid Javed Burki and Mazhar Abbas alleged Pakistan was. Let us also recall the 1943 speech of Mohammad Ali Jinnah:

There are millions of people who hardly get one meal a day. Is this civilization? Is this the aim of Pakistan? Do you realize

⁸ Yasser Latif Hamdani, *Jinnah A Life* (New Delhi: Macmillan, 2020), 195.

⁹ Khalid Shamsul Hasan, *Quaid's Unrealized Dream* (Karachi: Royal Book Co., 1991), 33.

that millions have been exploited and cannot get one meal a day, if that is Pakistan, I would not have it.¹⁰

Another tact used by Jawaharlal Nehru was to claim that Jinnah knew that Pakistan could never stand up to scrutiny and therefore he was determined, that it should not be subject to it. By this he implied that Jinnah never defined Pakistan, so whatever he gained, he would describe as Pakistan. This too, is not true. On 8 November 1945, in answer to a query from an Associated Press of America correspondent, M.A. Jinnah defined Pakistan geographically, politically and economically. Geographically he named Sindh, Balochistan, N-WFP and the Punjab (whole) and Assam and Bengal (whole). Politically, he said Pakistan would be a democracy; economically he personally hoped its major industries and services would be socialized. Mr. Jinnah said that he would oppose one party rule: 'An opposition party or parties are good correctives for any party that is in power.' The Muslim League leader said that Hindu minorities can rest assured that their rights shall be protected.¹¹

The harshest criticism has come from Ishtiaq Ahmed who called Mohammad Ali Jinnah 'the villain of the piece who bears most responsibility for the bloody partition of India which claimed more than a million Hindu, Muslim and Sikh lives'.¹² Ishtiaq Ahmed persists with the illusion that riots were the result of the Partition, while in fact, Partition was a result of riots. As far as personal responsibility is concerned, even those contemporaries who have candidly said they did not like Jinnah have recorded the following:

The Secretary of State Lord Pethick-Lawrence who had an unseemly scene with Jinnah over Clause 8 of the Cabinet Mission Plan writes: 'He was coming to believe that Gandhi did not care whether 2 or 3 million people died and would rather that they should than he should compromise'.¹³ Then there is the account of the Viceroy Lord Wavell, that when in the after math of the Great Calcutta Killing August 1946 he asked Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru to conform to the Cabinet Mission's interpretation of its own plan:

¹⁰ Ahmed Hasan Dani (ed.), *World Scholars on Quaid-i- Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah*, [Delhi, 1943] (Islamabad: Islamabad University, 1979), 362.

¹¹ *Dawn*, Delhi, 9 November 1945.

¹² Ishtiaq Ahmed, *Jinnah His Successes, Failures and Role in History* (Gurgaon: Penguin Random, 2020) 1.

¹³ Peter Clarke, *The Last Thousand Days of the British Raj* (London: Penguin, 2008), 453.

Nehru got very heated, Gandhi said if a blood bath was necessary, it would come about in spite of non-violence.¹⁴

Then there is the statement of Jawaharlal Nehru: 'I would rather have every village in India put to the flames than to keep the British Army here after 15 August'.¹⁵ Finally see the report of Brigadier Desmond Young:

British officers—infantrymen from the desert battles—have told me that three weeks from August 15 in the Punjab were worse than anything we experienced in war...They blamed the Sikhs most...It is undeniable that from the day of Master Tara Singh's speech, if not before, the Sikhs began their preparations. In making them they had covert assistance of some, at least, of rulers of Sikh states who supplied them with arms. It is equally certain that the massacre of Muslims in Delhi in September was the result of a carefully planned Sikh conspiracy, and it was not, as the Hindu press tried to make out, a spontaneous act of revenge by Sikh refugees from Western Punjab.¹⁶

Thus the shoe is on the other foot, contrary to what Ishtiaq Ahmed in his most voluminous denunciation of Jinnah tries to establish.

With so much concerted opposition it is not a surprise that not all aspirations were fulfilled. When Pakistan came into being, the provinces of the Punjab and Bengal were divided, and of Assam, Pakistan could get only Sylhet. Democracy lasted barely a decade, and socialism became taboo. Since India had withheld the financial assets of Pakistan and Muslim Plutocrats intervened, socialist economy could not be given effect too. Still in 1948, M.A. Jinnah spoke of Islamic Socialism and Liaquat Ali Khan called Islamic Socialism the state policy of Pakistan.

Now we face two questions. Why did not Pakistan collapse, as predicted, and why Pakistan did not find stability. For the first question, we owe our survival to the selfless devotion, dedication and honesty of our first batch of government servants from the Secretary-General down to the lowest ranking peon. We had no place to begin our government. Our office workers made work places for themselves, wherever they could find shade or shelter, bringing furniture and stationery from home.

¹⁴ Penderel Moon (ed.), *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1974), 341.

¹⁵ Leonard Mosley, *The Last Days of the British Raj* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1962), 149.

¹⁶ *Dawn*, Delhi, 7 December 1947.

Thus we forestalled the short-term danger, but even this was not tension free.

The Sindh Muslim League went into opposition when Karachi was declared to be the capital of Pakistan. Then the Sindh government wanted financial compensation at a time when Pakistan's coffers were empty.¹⁷ At first, they refused to accommodate more than 100,000 refugees and relented to the extent of allowing 200,000.

Despite such discouraging circumstances the Government machinery was given a push start, so much so that when Britain and India devalued their currency Pakistan refused to follow suit and started purchasing industrial machinery from East European countries against hard cash as the West would not sell us the machinery for industries already established in India, making us subservient as perhaps we were, in their perception, to India.

There were two long term pincers put in our path. You have in the section on the Two-Nation theory and how Jawaharlal Nehru employed it to deny Bengal the independence their leaders, both Hindus and Muslims sought, although Mohammad Ali Jinnah and the A-IML had agreed. This has been recounted among others by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in his memoirs. *Why* Nehru took this stance is also revealed in *The Transfer of Power Papers*. Nehru said: 'East Bengal would be a source of embarrassment for Pakistan'.¹⁸

On the other side, when Sri Prakasa the first Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan, proposed that Pakistan be allowed to have Kashmir for the sake of peace, Jawaharlal Nehru was indignant: He wrote back 'Kashmir will be a drain on India's resources, but they would be a greater drain on the resources of Pakistan'.¹⁹ This means his promises of plebiscite were totally insincere from the beginning, and it is on these two issues Kashmir and Bangladesh that Pakistan has had to face aggression. The 1965 War on Kashmir and 1971 war on Bengal. You know that I have written books and papers covering these events, but here I shall try to tell you briefly the internal story of these wars.

Why was the command transferred midway from General Akhtar Husain Malik to General Yahya Khan? For the simple reason that the

¹⁷ Naumana Kiran Imran, 'Politics in Sindh and the Federal Cabinet of Pakistan', *Quarterly Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, 69:4, 89-107.

¹⁸ Nicholas Mansergh et al. (eds.), *The Transfer of Power*, Vol. 11 (London: HMSO, 1982), 03.

¹⁹ S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (New Delhi: Orient Longmans, Second Series Vol.4), 346-47 (letter dated 25 November 1947).

British High Commissioner Sir Morrice James made the request.²⁰ Why China refrained from helping Pakistan? For the simple reason that President Ayub told them not to. Why did Pakistan accept a precipitate cease-fire? You guessed it. Because Sir Morrice James asked President Ayub.²¹ The Americans despite the anger of President Lyndon B. Johnson were more accommodative. Under Secretary George Ball and Assistant Secretary William Bundy hoped that China would take some mild harassing action that would give the US some leverage over India.²² Secretary of State Dean Rusk issued a statement upholding the principle of self-determination.²³

What happened thereafter in Tashkent was another let down. It was India that was beholden to the USSR for arms, not Pakistan. Therefore it was an anomaly that Pakistan and not India should succumb to Soviet pressure. What happened in Tashkent is best told by Altaf Gauhar:

When Ayub was relating how Shastri kept saying he was answerable to the people, Bhutto interrupted him and said, quite sharply: 'But you too are answerable to the people. You don't have a heavenly mandate.'²⁴

What is more, over the typed draft of the Tashkent Declaration, where it was written that: 'all disputes between the two countries should be settled by peaceful means' President Ayub had added in his own hand: 'Without recourse to arms'.²⁵ Z. A. Bhutto had an unpleasant exchange with Alexei Kosygin to have Ayub's concession removed. A war widow appeared at the gate of the University of the Punjab when the Tashkent Declaration was published, with her two children to ask whether this was the result for which soldiers had laid down their lives.

Now to address the unseemly controversy regarding whether 1971 was a military or a political failure. In terms of gallantry, if anything, the Pakistan Army fought more bravely than in 1965. The arms embargo had assured a defeat, and surrounded on all sides by enemy territory and hostile and trained saboteurs they gave a sterling performance. Prime Minister Morarji Desai's admission that India had

²⁰ Roedad Khan (ed.), *The American Papers* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 44.

²¹ Roedad Khan (ed.), *The British Papers* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002), 398.

²² Aziz Ahmed, 'The First Round A Rejoinder,' *Dawn*, 22 June 1979.

²³ *The British Papers*, 410.

²⁴ Z. A. Bhutto (Foreign Minister)'s Speech UNSC 22 September 1965.

²⁵ Altaf Gauhar, *Ayub Khan Pakistan's First Military Ruler* (Lahore: Sang-i-Meel, 1993), 382.

lost more than 5000 regular soldiers is a fact to be weighed in. At the strategic level, foreign commentators held that if instead of defending the whole of East Bengal the Pakistan Army had withdrawn to the triangle created by rivers surrounding Dacca they could have held on for months.

Now, this is only a rumor, but a rumor I heard when the conflict was raging, that either General Tikka Khan or Lt. General A. A. Niazi had suggested that the Pakistan Army take over Assam, which had a border with China with civilians on both sides coming under occupying forces. Such a decision required vision which was wanting. It was not a military failure, but an individual failure. The 6 Point program had been floated in 1966 and its implications had been commented upon again and again. General Yahya Khan had been urged by his military colleagues to impose a two-third majority condition to frame a constitution, but he refused even to countenance a 60% majority condition.²⁶

The Communications Minister in Yahya Khan's cabinet G.W. Choudhury had been Professor and Head of the Department of Political Science at the Dacca University. His assessment of the situation was a bit different from West Pakistan analysts:

Thanks to the naiveté and incompetence of Governor Ahsan, Mujib and his followers had a free hand and were able to preach secession without the least hindrance. Bhashani told me that if the Government were leaving Mujib free to preach the idea of Bangladesh, he had no option but to speak in terms of an independent East Pakistan.²⁷

Regarding the role of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto so many lies have been told, it is necessary to underline that Bhutto had never said *Hum Idhar, Tum Udhar*. This was a headline in the *Azad* Lahore 15 February 1971. The sub-headline of the same issue quoted Bhutto as saying Pakistan shall remain united. In fact it was Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who told *The New York Times*, 4 March 1971 that both wings should have separate prime ministers. It is *The New York Times*, 16 December 1971 that reveals that the Polish Resolution had not even been on the agenda, and what Bhutto tore up was the Agenda. An Anglo-French Resolution was under consideration. The Polish Resolution had been rejected earlier because it required Pakistani Armed Forces first to vacate its own territory while India would vacate it later at an unspecified date. Also left unspecified, was the ultimate destination of the Pakistan Armed Forces, though the

²⁶ Kuldeep Nayar, *Distant Neighbors* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1972), 136 (Photographic Image).

²⁷ G.W. Choudhury, *The Last Days of United Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1993), 87.

preceding clause had clearly said that the civilian population would be allowed to go home.

It should also be remembered that in 1971, Pakistan had no constitution, but only basic law which was Martial Law. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto could not have been transferred the office of President without first transferring authority to him as the Chief Martial Law Administrator. Pakistan withstood defeat, the loss of territory but still survived. The developments take us to *The Crash of 1979*. A work of fiction written years before the designated year, but it nevertheless proved to be a bad omen. Three major events took place that year. The execution of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the Revolution in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. What happened next, is best told by Secretary of State Hilary Clinton:

Let's remember here, the people we are fighting today, we funded 20 years ago, and we did it because we were locked in a struggle with the Soviet Union. They invaded Afghanistan and we did not want to see them control Central Asia, and we went to work. It was President Reagan in partnership with Congress led by Democrats, who said, you know what; it sounds like a pretty good idea. Let's deal with the ISI and the Pakistan military and let's go recruit these mujahidin. And great, let them come from Saudi Arabia and other countries importing their Wahhabi brand of Islam so that we can go beat the Soviet Union.

And, guess what? They (Soviets) retreated, they lost billions of dollars and it led to the collapse of the Soviet Union. So there is a very strong argument which is it wasn't a bad investment in terms of the Soviet Union. But let's be careful with what we sow because we will harvest. So, we left Pakistan. We said okay fine. You deal with the Stingers we left all over your country, you deal with the mines that are along the border, and, by the way we don't want to have anything to do with you. In fact we are sanctioning you. So we stopped dealing with the Pakistan military and ISI and now we are making up for a lot of time.²⁸

The upshot was that Pakistan entered the Reign of Terror and Drugs. After 9/11 The United States urged us to do more in combating the militants. The State Department continuously accused Pakistan of playing a double game. However there was no subterfuge. General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani told Ann Patterson the US Ambassador on 23

²⁸ *Ibid.* 117.

September 2009 that unless Pakistan was sure of the outcome, it could not afford to completely cut off contact with the Taliban ‘General Kayani was utterly frank about this’, she wrote home. Her recommendation was for the US to actively pursue the resolution of the Kashmir conflict; the obvious solution that the US would not look at.²⁹

Pakistani diplomacy does not lack finesse. Therefore communication does not translate to collaboration. Had it been so, Pakistan would have been spared the violence inflicted on the most harmless targets. To name a few attacks claimed by the Tehrik-i-Taliban, Pakistan, the Hangu School attack, 2013 the Army Public School, Peshawar 2014 massacre and the Civil Hospital, Quetta mass bombings 2016.

After years of sanctioning Pakistan and raining Drone attacks on its civilians, the United States awoke on 4 February 2022 to the realization that Pakistan was a strategic partner. Months later, the United States spelled out its policy on South Asia:

India is a global partner, while Pakistan is a valuable partner in a sensitive region. India is an invaluable partner, not just in the region, but as it relates to a lot of the United States’ shared priorities across the world...The US values our long -standing co-operation with Pakistan and has always viewed a prosperous and democratic Pakistan as critical to US interests.³⁰

When the TTP announced on 28 November 2022 that it was ceasing its truce with Pakistan because of its ‘unabated’ action in the Khyber-Pakhtunwa province.³¹ The United States immediately pledged support for Pakistan’s anti-TTP efforts. The State Department spokesperson recalled that the Pakistan people have suffered tremendously from terrorist attacks in the last two decades. ‘We support the Pakistan Government’s efforts to combat terrorism in all its forms’.³²

The TTP showed that its threats were not empty when a suicide attack took place against a truck carrying policemen who were to protect anti-polio workers from terrorists. Four lives were outright lost, one of a police officer, a lady and her two children. At least twenty-four suffered injuries.³³ The American assurance was welcomed because of being issued despite Pakistan’s neutrality in the Ukraine war. The United States did not applaud the identical stance of India and Pakistan on the Ukraine

²⁹ *Dawn*, 25 April 2009.

³⁰ *Dawn*, 29 May 2011.

³¹ *Dawn*, 21 November 2022.

³² *Dawn*, 29 November 2022.

³³ *Dawn*, 30 November 2022.

War. Both abstained, but India was more vocal on the reason for its neutrality.

The Indian Minister for External Affairs Subramanyam Jaishankar stated in Australia that: ‘India has had a long- standing relationship with Russia including military co-operation, dating back to the times when Western countries didn’t supply weapons to India and saw Pakistan as the preferred partner’.³⁴ It is not certain at which country this statement was directed. At the United States for showing it the limit of Nuclear Strategic Partnership, or at Russia whose President Vladimir Putin had stated only five days before that: ‘I would like to note that we see Pakistan as a priority partner in South Asia as well as the continent as a whole. Relations between our countries are developing positively and we are pleased about it’.³⁵

Pakistan’s position was based on principle. The Ukraine War is a mirror image of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, when the Soviet Union placed missiles in Cuba, a sovereign country within striking distance of the United States. Now read what President Vladimir Putin said on 26 December 2021 months before the outbreak of the war: ‘We have nowhere to retreat. NATO could deploy missiles in Ukraine that could take just four or five minutes to reach Moscow’.³⁶

Spheres of influence have been a courtesy in the era of conventional warfare, their retention in the nuclear age makes them a matter of survival. One lesson from the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis is forgotten. It is an observation of President John F. Kennedy:

They were in the wrong and they knew it. So when we stood firm, they backed down. But this doesn’t mean at all that they would back down when they felt they were in the right and had vital interest involved.³⁷

There was sufficient opportunity to assure the Russian Federation that NATO would not extend to Ukraine and to forestall the Ukraine war. If International Relations are bereft of morality, they are also bereft of rationale.

It is worth recalling the words also of Nikita Khrushchev:
When we put our ballistic missiles in Cuba, we had no desire to start a war. On the contrary, our principal aim was only to deter America from starting a war. We were well-aware that

³⁴ *Dawn*, 1 December 2022.

³⁵ *Hindustan Times*, 10 October 2022.

³⁶ *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 10 December 2022.

³⁷ Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. *Journals 1952-2000* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2017), 177.

a war which started over Cuba would quickly expand into a World War. Any idiot could have a war between America and Cuba.³⁸

On 24 February 2022 when the Ukraine War broke out, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan was in Moscow. The nature of relations between Russia and Pakistan did not admit of any postponement of the visit to Moscow. It is heartening therefore that the Foreign Minister of the succeeding administration Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari defended on American soil, Imran Khan's visit to the Russian Federation, and the relations between Pakistan and Russia remain on the upswing. On 11 October 2022, just one day after the Indian External Affairs Minister had railed against the United States, India abstained from voting on a UNGA resolution condemning Russia's 'illegal annexation' of four regions of Ukraine, but so did Pakistan.³⁹

There was no comment on this rare assent between India and Pakistan. The United States was treating India and Pakistan differently, but Pakistan and India were treating the United States similarly. This was the second time in seven months that Pakistan had resisted Western pressure by abstaining from condemning Russia's actions in Ukraine.⁴⁰ There was a mild and curious hiccup when Senator Igor Morozov on 2 November 2022 shared the concern that Pakistan and Ukraine scientists had discussed the technology for making nuclear weapons. The Pakistan Foreign Office responded by the terming this claim as 'without any rationale and is entirely inconsistent with the spirit of Pakistan-Russia relations'.⁴¹

Within the fortnight Pakistan (and India) abstained from voting on a UNGA resolution calling upon Russia to pay reparations to Ukraine;⁴² On 28 November 2022 Pakistan's Minister for Oil was proceeding to Moscow for talks on oil and gas supply from Russia. On 6 December 2022 the results of the negotiations were shared.⁴³ India's Minister for External Affairs Subramanyam Jaishankar has also spoken of the need to increase trade with Russia.

This situation developed because NATO tried to impose a Treaty of Versailles on a nation that did not even need to re-arm. Western

³⁸ Strobe Talbott (ed. & tr.), *Khrushchev Remembers* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), 549.

³⁹ *The Express Tribune*, 12 October 2022.

⁴⁰ *The Express Tribune*, 14 October 2022.

⁴¹ *Tribune News Service*, 2 November 2022.

⁴² *CNBC*, 18 September 2022.

⁴³ *Economic Times*, 30 March 2022.

scholars are now weighing in the power equation between China and Russia as well as between India and Russia. Professor Matthew Sussex of Griffith University Australia has said: 'It is an unequal partnership. China is in the dominant position in the relationship. Russia needs China more than China needs Russia'. Similarly *The Economic Times* (30 March 2022) is of the opinion that: 'Russia will not support India in a stand-off against ally China'.

This equation is re-assuring. However as I have had occasion to point out before, Russia is dependent on India. Russia built its stealth jet fighter TA-50-PAK-FA, with 25% financing from India.⁴⁴ This means that not only India shall obtain the jets direct from the assembly lines, but a transfer of technology has been taking place. Every country in the range of the TA-50-PAK-FA is potentially threatened and this includes the United States. However a Sino-Indian standoff is not imminent. It goes back to the same year that the Cuban Missile Crisis developed. On the other side the primary victims of the gulf between the US policy towards India and Pakistan are the people of Kashmir.

The critics of our 'Kashmir First' policy assume that if a fire has broken out on the ground floor, the people on the first floor have no cause to worry. Mine is not a rhetorical but an empirical plea. The 'Kashmir First' policy was set aside when the Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan refused to attend the Summit on Kashmir called at Kuala Lumpur 18-20 December 2019. Thus the fact that Kashmir is potentially a very incendiary issue is not a Pakistani obsession. Despite Pakistan's relegation of the Kashmir issue, it has still garnered the world's attention after India's action on 5 August 2019

On 8 August 2019 Antonio Guterres Secretary-General of the United Nations refused to treat the Simla Agreement of 1972 as an impediment to the resolution of the Kashmir issue. He recalled that according to the Simla Agreement: 'The final status of Jammu and Kashmir is to be settled by peaceful means in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations'. The Secretary-General concluded that that the Kashmir issue should be settled in conformity with the relevant UNSC Resolutions.

On 30 January 2021 Secretary-General Guterres stressed the need to fully respect Human Rights in the Indian occupied regions of Jammu and Kashmir and on 29 June 2021 the Secretary-General urged India to 'end the use of pellets against children'. India has not examined this option primarily because of the obsession of Jawaharlal Nehru, but if India wishes to regain the world position it held when Buddhism spread across Asia, it needs to examine it. Buddha is not smiling.

⁴⁴ *Dawn*, 1 December 2022.