THE ISLAMIZATION OF PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

by

Louis A. Delvoie*

*The author was Canadian High Commissioner to Pakistan from 1991 to 1994 and is at present a Skelton-Clark Fellow at Queen's University, Kingston, Canada. The views expressed in this article are the author's and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

Pakistan was founded in 1947 in order to provide a homeland for the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent, a homeland in which they could live free from the domination of the Hindu majority population of the region. The design of the founding father of Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, was to create a Muslim country in which a Muslim majority would be free to exercise its religion, live according to its customs, and develop its culture, but also one in which the minorities would enjoy full equality of rights and citizenship. His purpose was not to create an Islamic State, but Pakistan has over the years diverged from the course on which Jinnah set it and has taken on most of the formal characteristics of an Islamic State. In recent years this reality has come to be increasingly evident in Pakistan's foreign policy, in part a reflection of domestic forces, in part a reaction to external events. This will have the effect of rendering far more difficult all future international efforts to control nuclear weapons proliferation in South Asia and to foster a peace process aimed at improving Indo-Pakistan relations and resolving the Kashmir problem.

Ideological Evolution

In the course of a long and prominent career in the Indian independence movement, Jinnah had slowly, and at times reluctantly, come to the conclusion that a united India could not fulfil the aspirations of its Muslim citizens. He became convinced that the Muslims needed a country of their own and went on to become the

dominant force in the movement to create a separate and independent Pakistan carved out of what was then British India. Jinnah's vision of Pakistan was of a country composed principally of Muslims, but essentially secular and democratic in its constitution and political institutions. He made this clear in a speech to the Constituent Assembly on 11 August 1947, three days before independence. He told the members of the Assembly: "You are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed -- that has got nothing to do with the business of the State." He went on to suggest that ideally "Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the State."[1]

But Jinnah did not long survive the birth of Pakistan, and the government quickly came under pressure from the Ulema (religious scholars) to give the new nation a more Islamic character. This was the starting point of what was to be a prolonged national debate over the difference between a Muslim State and an Islamic State, and which of the two Pakistan should be. The definitional question was answered in more or less complex ways, depending on whether it was examined in political or legal and religious terms. The distinguished Pakistani scholar and politician Khurshid Ahmad put it quite simply thus: "A Muslim state is any state which is inhabited and ruled by Muslims. An Islamic state, on the other

hand, is one which opts to conduct its affairs in accordance with the revealed guidance of Islam and accepts the sovereignty of Allah and the supremacy of His law, and which devotes its resources to achieve this end."[2]

The question of whether Pakistan should become an Islamic State was answered incrementally by the actions of successive governments over a period of four decades. Already in 1949 the then prime minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, secured the adoption by the Constituent Assembly of what has come to be known as the "Objectives Resolution." The resolution began the process of substituting the concept of divine sovereignty for that of the sovereignty of the people, and stipulated that in the new state "the principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice as enunciated by Islam shall be fully observed."[3] These tendencies were carried forward in the Constitution of 1956, which also decreed that the name of the country should be "The Islamic Republic of Pakistan," that the president had to be a Muslim and that the laws of the country should be brought into conformity with the injunctions of Islam.[4] This latter task was eventually entrusted to an Advisory Council of Islamic Ideology created by President Ayub Khan in 1962.

Other landmarks in the process of Islamization were to follow. In the early 1970s Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto enacted a law banning the sale and consumption of alcohol. In 1979 President Zia Ul Haq issued the Hudood Ordinances which prescribed Islamic punishments (stoning to death, cutting off of hands) for certain

crimes and which were severely detrimental to women's rights in cases involving rape, adultery and extra-marital sex.[5] Finally in 1991 the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif secured the passage through Parliament of the Shariah Act which stipulated that "the Injunctions of Islam as laid down in the Holy Quran and Sunnah, shall be the supreme law of Pakistan." The Act also called upon the government to take action to ensure the Islamization of the judiciary, the economy and the education system.[6]

Actors and Factors

These various measures taken cumulatively provide the legal framework for a full-fledged Islamic State. That Pakistan has not yet fully reached that state is due to a number of social, economic and political factors. Most important among these is the fact that the national institutions responsible for implementing the various Islamic laws and decrees have been dominated by Western-educated or Western-oriented elites, whose religious zeal is tempered by liberal traditions, by pragmatism and by a sense of moderation. Thus the current president, prime minister and chairman of the Senate are all Oxford graduates, while the Chief of the Army Staff is a graduate of the Canadian Army Staff College; none of them seem to be particularly committed to the process of institutional Islamization. Similarly, the judiciary and the bar are steeped in the traditions of the British Common Law and have shown themselves reluctant to call for or impose the harsh punishments provided for in the Hudood Ordinances; even where these have been decreed, they

have only rarely been carried out. Even after securing the passage of the Shariah Act, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif did his best to circumvent the Islamic prohibition of riba (interest) because it was inconsistent with his efforts to modernize, liberalize and deregulate the economy, and especially with his endeavours to attract foreign investment into Pakistan.

These and a host of other examples which could be cited suggest that while Pakistan may in law be an Islamic State, in practice it still has some way to go to become one in the full sense of the term. But this fact begs a question: if most of Pakistan's leaders were not particularly enthusiastic about Islamisation, why did so many take the initiative to bring it about, or at least acquiesce in it? In grappling with this question, at least one thing seems clear and that is that they were not responding to the expressed demands or wishes of a majority of Pakistanis. Over the last 25 years, Pakistanis have had the opportunity to vote in four different general elections for religious parties which advocated the creation of an Islamic State. None of these parties ever came close to winning a majority in the popular vote or in seats in the National Assembly. Their best showing was in 1970 when they collectively won 21.6 percent of the popular vote; their worst was in 1993 when they secured less than 8 percent of the popular vote and only 3.5 percent of the seats in the National Assembly.[7]

The fact is that the religious parties, and the religious scholars, leaders and clergy who adhered to them, were able to

exercise an influence out of all proportion to the popular support they enjoyed because of the volatility and instability of Pakistani politics. Political leaders, even those with no particularly strong religious inclinations, very often found it desirable to manipulate or placate the religious parties in order to secure their hold on power. This was due in large measure to the ability of these parties to mount vocal campaigns or mass demonstrations on short notice either for or against the government. The largest of the religious parties, the Jamaat-I-Islami, has traditionally been one of the most highly organized political forces in the country with thousands of full-time workers and well structured chapters in schools and factories; the second largest party, the Jamiat Ulema-I-Islam, has also at certain times in its history enjoyed an organized and disciplined following.[8] Such parties have been able to make their weight felt in times of political crisis or instability, and have repeatedly been able to extract concessions from the national political leadership of the day in exchange for offers of support or benevolent neutrality. Or put another way, and as forcefully expounded by a former Chief Justice of Pakistan:

> Unscrupulous politicians manipulated these religious forces for their own ulterior motives. Consequently the fanatical elements became a political force in their own right, and over the years managed to impose their dogmatic ideology over Pakistan. This way the purpose for which Pakistan was created was defeated and it came under the domination of medieval forces.[9]

While Pakistani leaders and elites may often display considerable discomfort with this Islamic political ideology, it has become sufficiently firmly established in the affairs of the

state that few of them choose to challenge it overtly for fear of being labelled "Un-Islamic" by political opponents, by the media or by the ulema. The influence of the ideology and of its proponents has long been evident in domestic politics, but has in recent years become increasingly evident in the foreign policy of Pakistan.

Foreign Policy Orientations

Pakistan's foreign policy was from the start dominated by two principal preoccupations. The first was to secure the political and military support necessary to defend itself against India, and to be able to prosecute its interests in its relations with India, especially in trying to achieve a resolution to the Kashmir problem. The second was to obtain the financial and technical assistance required to foster socio-economic development. To Pakistan's Western-oriented and pragmatic policymakers of the early years, both of these preoccupations dictated close relations with a number of Western countries, chiefly the United States for security assistance and certain Commonwealth countries (Britain, Canada, Australia) for economic development assistance under the Colombo Plan.

From essentially modest beginnings, these relationships with the West became virtually institutionalized. Pakistan entered into a series of bilateral agreements with the US in the field of security and eventually became a member of the Baghdad Pact and the Central Treaty Organization, and a key component of the US's policy of containment of the Soviet Union. Similarly, but at a later

stage, there came into being a consortium of Western countries which became Pakistan's principal source of development assistance; the consortium included the United States, Britain, Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands and other Western European countries. The realities of the Cold War and of the Sub-continent, and especially India's growing ties to the Soviet Union, led Pakistan also to enter into and develop ever closer relations with China; these were eventually to become another pillar of Pakistani foreign policy.

Thus it is difficult to discern any influence of Islamic ideology in the main elements of Pakistani foreign policy over the first 25 years of Pakistan's existence as an independent state. (Pakistan's forthrightly pro-Arab stance on the Palestine Question was not essentially different from that of many non-Muslim Third World countries, including India.) Indeed it was not until Zulfikar Ali Bhutto came to power at the end of 1971 following the secession of East Pakistan that any elements of Islamic ideology began to appear in Pakistan's substantive foreign policy.

Although he was an Oxford-educated socialist, Bhutto frequently invoked the concept of Pan Islamism in his foreign policy, most notably in his endeavours to further develop Pakistan's relations with the Arab states of the Gulf region. His primary motive in strengthening ties with these countries was to diversify Pakistan's sources of financial and political support at a time when he deemed that the country had become overly dependent on the United States and precisely when the Gulf states were

beginning to deploy the wealth accumulated as a result of spectacular increases in the price of oil. At the level of public diplomacy, these initiatives culminated in Pakistan's hosting the Islamic Summit Conference in Lahore in 1974, which among other things produced a ringing declaration of support for Pakistan from President Quaddafi of Libya ("our strength is your strength, our resources are your resources").[10] In more concrete terms, these initiatives eventually resulted in agreements covering economic assistance to Pakistan, the temporary migration and employment of hundreds of thousands of Pakistanis in the Gulf States and the stationing of Pakistani army units in Saudi Arabia to help train and reinforce the Saudi Army.

"The Islamic Bomb"

But it was in relation to Pakistan's nuclear weapons program that Bhutto most explicitly invoked Islam and Islamic solidarity in Pakistan's foreign and security policy. Spurred on by India's detonation of a nuclear device in May 1974, Bhutto redoubled Pakistan's efforts to acquire what he referred to as "nuclear capability." He at first explained the policy primarily in terms of Pakistan's security requirements vis-à-vis a hostile India, and went so far as to suggest that the threat posed to Pakistan by India's nuclear capability was sufficiently great that if necessary Pakistanis would "eat grass to produce the bomb." Later in his political testament, written shortly before his execution, he gave the policy a broader, Islamic, significance. After recounting his

efforts to develop Pakistan's nuclear program and to overcome both foreign and domestic opposition to it, he wrote:

> We were on the verge of full nuclear capability when I left the government to come to this death cell. We know that Israel and South Africa have full nuclear capability. The Christian, Jewish and Hindu civilizations have this capability. Only the Islamic civilization was without it, but that position was about to change.[11]

The idea that Pakistan's nuclear weapons program should be seen in Islamic or Pan Islamic terms was not exclusive to Bhutto, and certainly did not die with him. It was appropriated by some of the leaders of Pakistan's religious political parties. Thus as recently as in 1993, the deputy leader of the Jamaat-I-Islami urged the government "to announce in unequivocal terms that it had the right and the will to make the nuclear bomb" on the grounds that a bomb in the hands of "the Muslim world would guarantee world peace."[12] Equally importantly, the religious parties, especially the Jamaat-I-Islami, took the lead in supporting Pakistan's nuclear weapons program on the domestic political front and in resisting the efforts of the US and other Western countries to contain it. For example, a convention of the Pakistan Islamic Front recently adopted a resolution calling upon the government to incorporate the nuclear program in the country's constitution so that no government would be able to limit or abrogate a program essential to "the defence of the country, peace in the region and a solution to the Kashmir issue."[13] Similarly, the leaders of religious parties and the media under their influence have not hesitated to question the patriotism or brand as traitors all government leaders suspected of

willingness to "cap" the nuclear weapons program, thus further complicating the task of finding some form of nuclear nonproliferation regime for the South Asian region.[14] In this respect at least, one element of Bhutto's Islamic foreign policy has had an enduring effect.

Zia and the Afghan War

If Zulfikar Ali Bhutto embraced Islamic elements in the enunciation of his foreign policy, he did so somewhat haphazardly and in response to specific opportunities. His successor, General Zia Ul Haq, on the other hand, did so on the basis of strategic calculation and some degree of personal conviction. This was particularly evident in his formulation of Pakistani policy in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the end of 1979.

Shortly after deposing Bhutto in a military coup in 1977, General Zia promised to hold general elections within a matter of months and to make way for an elected civilian government. He reiterated this promise on several occasions in the early months of his regime, but progressively began to distance himself from it. In the face of both domestic opposition and international opprobrium (especially strong following the execution of Bhutto) Zia turned to Islam to try to give his regime some legitimacy. On the domestic front, he claimed to have a special mission to transform Pakistan into a truly and fully Islamic state. On the international front, he sought to play a prominent and constructive role in the affairs of the community of Muslim nations, as

represented by the Organization of the Islamic conference (OIC); events in Afghanistan provided him with an excellent opportunity to do so.

For General Zia the entry of Soviet forces into Afghanistan presented Pakistan with a stark strategic dilemma: "To the east were 800 million hostile Hindus while now to the west, the Red Army had occupied Afghanistan, so the likelihood of Pakistan being squeezed out of existence between the two enemies was a real possibility."[15] After reviewing all aspects of the situation with his military and intelligence advisors, Zia decided that Pakistan should support a guerilla campaign against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan with money, arms, training and operational guidance; "it would be a Jehad against Communist infidels, it would be Pakistan's first line of defence in the west, and it would regain for him some his lost international esteem."[16] But Pakistan's economy was particularly weak at this time and it was evident to Zia that the country had neither the financial resources nor the materiel to effectively support guerilla operations in Afghanistan on a scale which would have a real impact on the occupying Soviet forces; he would have to seek help from abroad.

In the first instance Zia turned to the US government which had reacted strongly to the Soviet invasion and was canvassing options to counter it. His ambition was not only to secure support for the Afghan War, but also to obtain the restoration of US economic and security assistance which had recently been suspended because of American concerns over Pakistan's nuclear program. In

putting forward his massive demands ($2 billion) to Washington, Zia portrayed Pakistan and himself as the logical successors to Iran and the deposed Shah as the principal defenders of Western interests in the region and as the most effective instruments for resisting Soviet expansion in South West Asia. While Zia certainly did not get all he wanted from the United States, he did manage to forge a close association which saw Pakistan become the US's closest ally in the region and the main conduit for military and financial assistance to the Afghan guerillas. With a number of ups and downs this close partnership was to endure until the death of Zia and the conclusion of the Geneva agreements on the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan in 1988.

But with the example of the fate of the Shah still very much in mind in early 1980, Zia was painfully aware of the political dangers of being seen to be too closely associated with the US and of being viewed as a puppet of Western interests. Therefore, simultaneous with his approaches to Washington, he launched a campaign to secure the support of the Muslim world against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. To a meeting of the foreign ministers of 37 Muslim countries which he convened in Islamabad at the end of January 1980, Zia spoke of the invasion as an unprecedented attack on the Muslim world by a superpower and portrayed Pakistan as the leader or front line state in a holy war (Jehad) to defend Islam. In this and subsequent endeavours, he was highly successful not only in identifying his Afghan policy with the cause of Islam for domestic political and international

purposes, but also in securing substantial financial support from the oil-producing states of the Gulf.[17] In so doing, he demonstrated the political and economic advantages which Pakistan and its leaders could derive from pursuing foreign policy initiatives based on Islamic ideology and Muslim solidarity. This lesson was not to be lost on his successors.

Adjusting to new realities

The death of General Zia and the restoration of democratic government in Pakistan coincided with a number of significant regional and international developments which were to have a profound effect on the environment in which Pakistani governments would have to formulate their foreign policies. The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the end of the Cold War, and the final collapse of the Soviet Union all had implications for Pakistan's geo-strategic situation and for its foreign relations. Collectively, these events were in one sense highly beneficial to Pakistan. They meant the end of the threat posed by the presence of the armies of a hostile superpower on Pakistan's western border. They also meant that Pakistan would be faced with fewer difficult choices in its relations with the United States and the former Soviet Union, as well as with China. Finally, they were to curtail the political, economic and military support which Pakistan's traditional adversary India had for over two decades received from the Soviet Union.

But if regional and international events in the period 1988-91

contributed in one sense to improving Pakistan's security situation, they also produced distinctly negative impacts. On the one hand, the geo-strategic importance to the West of Pakistan as a Cold War ally dwindled and then vanished. On the other hand, Western countries liberated from the threat of military confrontation with the Soviet Union began to attach higher priority to other aspects of their foreign and security policies, most notably in the fields of nuclear nonproliferation and human rights and good governance. On both fronts Pakistan was to suffer adverse consequences. In October 1990 the President of the United States refused to certify that "Pakistan does not possess a nuclear explosive device" and thus triggered the entry into force of the Pressler amendment to the 1985 International Security and Cooperation Act, which stipulated that without this certification all American economic and security assistance to Pakistan should be terminated, and that no military equipment or technology should be sold or transferred to Pakistan.[18] At the same time a number of other Western countries, most especially Germany, Canada and the Netherlands, began to lay heavy emphasis on Pakistan's record in the field of human rights and good governance in determining the nature and quantity of the aid they were prepared to provide Pakistan. Pakistani delegations to the annual meetings of the aid consortium for Pakistan were subjected to more or less subtle pressure on subjects such as discrimination against women and minorities, the size of the resources devoted to defence, the inadequacy of budgetary allocations for health and education,

corruption in government, etc. But perhaps most galling and worrisome of all from a Pakistani perspective was the speed with which both the United States and China made highly visible overtures to an India now freed from its close political and security ties to the Soviet Union.[19]

In assessing these post-Cold War realities, Pakistani politicians, officials, academics and journalists tended perhaps not unexpectedly to dwell more on their downsides than their upsides. Throughout 1991, conference and seminar proceedings and newspaper editorials were replete with images of Pakistan as a loyal ally of the US and the West that had been unceremoniously discarded once it had outlived its usefulness. The sense of betrayal was real, if often exaggerated for effect.[20] Beyond bemoaning the unreliability of Western countries, Pakistan more or less deliberately adopted two tacks in responding to the demands of the new situation. The first was to try to mend fences with the United States and secure the revocation of the application of the Pressler amendment. Pakistan in fact made very little headway on this front because while it was prepared to appeal to old friendships and to explain at great length the necessity of its nuclear weapons program vis-à-vis a nuclear armed India (and Israel), it was not prepared to accept any effective and verifiable reversal or even curtailment of the program. The second tack involved trying to find new sources of support in the Muslim world not only to further Pakistan's economic development and bolster its position in its ongoing confrontation with India, but also in

resisting the pressures being brought to bear on it by the US and other Western countries.[21]

Islamic issues and causes

The government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (1990-93) embarked at times hesitantly, at times enthusiastically on the path of making Pakistan's foreign policy more Islamic in character, spurred on in part by the fact that the Jamaat-I-Islami was a member of the governmental coalition. This movement in Pakistani policy became particularly evident in the government's response to the crises in Somalia, Bosnia and Kashmir, and was to be carried over into the policy of the successor government of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, which came to office at the end of 1993.

When the United Nations finally intervened militarily in the long-standing and bloody civil war in Somalia, there was no evident political, economic or military reason why Pakistan should have become heavily involved in the UN action. Pakistan's links with Somalia and the Horn of Africa were not strong and Pakistan's interests in the region were negligible. Yet the government of Nawaz Sharif decided to make a major contribution of troops to the UN peacekeeping force in Somalia and did so in the name of Muslim solidarity, invoking the terrible sufferings being endured by fellow Muslims. This rationale was deemed sufficient to warrant building up the Pakistani contingent to a level of 7,200 troops, making it the largest national contingent in the UN force, and maintaining it in Somalia even after it became the victim of the

most serious incident of violence in the history of UN peacekeeping, when 26 Pakistani soldiers were killed by Somali gunmen in a single encounter. Pakistan's role in Somalia became the first instance of the country making a contribution out of all proportion to its interests and its financial resources in an effort to demonstrate its dedication to the cause of the international Muslim community.[22]

If Pakistan's connections to the situation in Somalia were tenuous, those to the situation in far off Bosnia were even more so. Yet here again Pakistan sought to carve out a special role for itself within the community of Muslim nations. In the first instance, the government of Nawaz Sharif offered several million dollars worth of humanitarian assistance to the Bosnian Muslims and then welcomed to Pakistan a contingent of 300 Bosnian Muslim refugees. Although fairly symbolic in nature, these gestures were ones which a country as poor as Pakistan could not readily afford. But as the war in Bosnia progressed, Pakistan endeavoured to play a more prominent political role in countering what it saw as a campaign of genocide by the Bosnian Serbs against the Bosnian Muslims. Pakistan managed to secure for itself the chairmanship of the OIC's contact group on Bosnia and in that capacity became the principal spokesman for the Muslim countries. Whether at the head of OIC delegations or acting in its own right, Pakistan put forward to the UN and other international organizations a succession of demands: the lifting of the UN arms embargo against Bosnia, the bombardment of Serb positions by NATO aircraft, the creation of

"safe areas" for Muslims, the deployment of forces from Islamic countries to defend Bosnian Muslim enclaves and the participation of Islamic countries in the Geneva peace talks on Bosnia.[23] Pakistan also gave very concrete evidence of its support for the Bosnian Muslims by contributing 3,000 troops to the UN peacekeeping force serving in the former Yugoslavia.

It was, however, in relation to the situation in Kashmir that the governments of both Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto gave the strongest evidence of their inclination to rest at least one major part of their foreign policy on Islamic ideology and Muslim solidarity. Always central to Pakistan's foreign policy concerns, the confrontation with India over Kashmir took on a new character with the outbreak of an armed insurgency in the Valley of Kashmir in 1990. On the one hand, the Indian government greatly increased the number of its security forces in Kashmir and these progressively became involved in almost continuous counter-insurgency operations, characterized by widespread human rights violations. On the other hand, the Pakistani government came under pressure from the US to terminate its support to the Kashmir insurgents in the interests of regional stability while at the same time the Jamaat-I-Islami urged the government to increase that support and if necessary declare war on India to liberate Kashmir.[24]

Whereas Pakistani governments had traditionally pursued their interests in Kashmir as a political and territorial issue in their relations with India, they began in the 1990s to lay far heavier

emphasis on the religious character of the dispute, portraying it as a struggle for and of abused and downtrodden Muslims against the overwhelming might of a brutal Indian security apparatus. As one commentator put it: "Islamabad believes its Kashmir policy to be an emblem of Muslim politics in a world hostile to Islam."[25] In appealing for support from other Muslim countries the Pakistani government's hand was greatly strengthened by two quite separate Indian actions. The first was the destruction in 1992 of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya by Hindu extremists associated with the opposition Bharatia Janta party. The second was the siege in 1993 by Indian security forces of the Hazratbal Shrine in Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir. Both incidents evoked strong reactions in various parts of the Muslim world, and Pakistan did its utmost to exploit them. In the event, Pakistan enjoyed only limited success in mustering effective support from Muslim countries for its positions on Kashmir, as was evidenced in its unsuccessful efforts to have the UN adopt resolutions condemning Indian human rights violations in Kashmir in 1993 and 1994.[26] And Pakistan got nowhere with the idea of having the OIC impose economic sanctions against India, despite the fact that India steadfastly rejected the OIC's proposal to send an official delegation to Kashmir to investigate charges of human rights abuses by Indian security forces.[27]

Central Asia and the ECO

Pakistan's growing sense of isolation in the post-Cold War world combined with the emergence of the newly independent

republics of Central Asia were to give yet another Islamic dimension to Pakistan's foreign policy in the early 1990s. In reflecting on Pakistan's future orientations and prospects in international trade, Pakistani policymakers and businessmen were very conscious of the development of major regional economic blocs (EC, NAFTA, ASEAN) and of the fact that Pakistan did not belong to any regional organization that could effectively serve its economic interests. On the one hand, the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) had not developed any operating mechanisms to foster economic cooperation, was more often than not paralyzed in its efforts by differences of view among its members and was in any event totally dominated by India. On the other hand, the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) which linked Pakistan to Iran and Turkey was a largely moribund body which owed its existence to earlier partnerships with the United States (CENTO and RCD) in the fields of security and economic development. Under these circumstances, it was perhaps not surprising that Pakistan saw the collapse of the Soviet Union and the accession to independence of six Muslim republics in Central Asia as creating a target of opportunity.[28]

Placing heavy emphasis on Pakistan's religious, cultural and historical links to Central Asia, the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif launched a series of bilateral and multilateral initiatives in the direction of the newly independent republics. While vaunting the merits of the port of Karachi as an access to the sea for the exports of Central Asia, Pakistani delegations

toured the republics with offers of credit and technical assistance, and always on the look out for market opportunities. The state-owned Pakistan International Airlines started services to the capitals of some of the republics and Central Asian leaders were invited to visit Islamabad. At the same time the Pakistani government took the lead in exploring the possibilities for revitalizing and expanding the ECO. These efforts came to partial fruition in November 1992 when Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif hosted a foreign ministers' meeting in Islamabad at which six Central Asian republics plus Afghanistan officially joined the ECO. This meeting was followed by political and technical gatherings at which the representatives of the enlarged ECO mapped out ambitious plans for increased cooperation in trade, investment, communications, scientific research and education.[29]

If the initial motivations and manifestations of Pakistan's overtures to the Central Asian republics were primarily economic and commercial in nature, they were also firmly grounded in politico-religious considerations. Thus one Pakistani commentator spoke of "Pakistan's hopes and expectations for a convergence of the independent states of Central Asia as a strategic rear area against India" and of the "vision of a united belt of Islamic states capable of playing a strategic role."[30] But it is also a series of political and religious factors which account for the paucity of both political and economic results which Pakistan has so far derived from its Central Asian policy. These include: the continuation of the civil war in Afghanistan which is a barrier to

increased trade; the reluctance of the Central Asian republics to abandon their secularist heritage and inject Islamic elements into their foreign relations; the domestic politico-religious conflicts which continue to beset several of the republics; the strength of the links to, and the influence of, Russia; the competition for influence in Central Asia among Turkey, Iran and Pakistan; and finally the interest which certain Central Asian republics have manifested in developing their relations with India.

Universalization and beyond

At the intellectual level at least, the process of Islamization of Pakistan's foreign policy has not been confined to individual issues or regions, but has shown signs of trying to encompass the interests of the whole community of Muslim countries. Beyond identifying Pakistan's national interests with those of the Islamic world, there has been a tendency to suggest that they are interchangeable,[31] and that only through the creation of a strong and unified Muslim world can Pakistan and other Muslim states hope to promote and defend their interests in an international system dominated by one superpower and various regional economic blocs. Thus one leading Pakistani scholar and politician has advanced the view that the enlargement of the ECO should be seen as only one of several building blocks in the construction of a Muslim Economic Union, encompassing all Muslim countries and endowed with a single currency, capital market and development agency, as well as joint banking, communications and insurance services.[32] More recently

Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto was reported to have directed some of her ministers and officials to develop a proposal for the creation of a "New Islamic Social Order" whose long-term goal would be "the economic uplift and defence of the 50 Islamic countries."[33]

The process of Islamization of the country's foreign policy, including the evocation of such ambitious schemes as those cited immediately above, has evoked relatively little direct opposition or overt criticism in Pakistan. There have, of course, always been a number of politicians, officials and scholars ready to remind participants in seminars and conferences that Islamic ideology and Muslim solidarity are no substitute for military and economic strength in defending and promoting the nation's interests, and to point to Pakistan's continuing heavy dependence on the West and Japan in the fields of trade, investment and aid. Rare, however, have been the expressions of such views in Parliament and in the media. Even rarer have been direct attacks on the whole notion of Islam being viewed as an integral element of Pakistan's foreign policy. Only one small Islamabad weekly newspaper took the unusual step of publishing a lead editorial entitled "Who cares for our Islamic credentials?" in which the author argued that Pakistan's constant references to Islamic themes in its international relations were not taken seriously by other Muslim countries and that Pakistan had derived no benefits whatever from the support it had given and the sacrifices it had made on behalf of other Muslim countries; he went on to suggest that Pakistan should emulate most of the Arab and other Muslim countries which founded their foreign

policies on pragmatic considerations of national interest.[34] Another small weekly newspaper was quick to publish a satirical and sarcastic attack on Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's proposal for a New Islamic Social Order.[35] But such public expressions of opposition have been few and very far between.

In the absence of concerted domestic opposition, is the process of Islamization of Pakistan's foreign policy likely to continue? Projecting the historical record of the past 25 years into the future would seem to suggest an affirmative answer to the question, but much will depend on the answers to four other questions. First, will Pakistan be able to achieve a degree of internal political stability which will make governments less susceptible to the pressures of the Ulema and the religious political parties? Second, will Pakistan's still essentially pragmatic foreign policy establishment be able to define coherent new foreign policy directions which take account of post-Cold War and post-Soviet realities? Third, will it prove possible for Pakistan to make the policy adjustments necessary to bring about a significant improvement in both the atmospherics and the substance of its relations with the United States and other Western countries? Finally, will the influence of Hindu nationalism in Indian politics, as exemplified by the current status of the Bharatia Janta party, continue to grow and thus accentuate Islamic reactions in Pakistan? The answers to these questions lie well outside the purview of the present discussion, but they will all in different ways be highly relevant to the future of the process.

What does already seem clear, however, is that the extent to which Pakistan's foreign policy has become Islamized in recent years will render far more difficult all future international efforts to control nuclear weapons proliferation in South Asia and to foster a peace process aimed at improving relations between Pakistan and India, and resolving the Kashmir problem.

Notes

1. Quoted in I. Ahmed, The Concept of an Islamic State in Pakistan (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1991), p. 79.

2. K. Ahmad, "Why Muslims want an Islamic State," in The Muslim, Islamabad, 25 March 1994, p. 7. For a more complex and juridical approach to the problem of definition, see the work of a former chief justice of Pakistan in M. Munir, From Jinnah to Zia (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1980), pp. 97-159.

3. Government of Pakistan, Debates of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, Karachi, 1949, Vol. V, pp. 100-101.

4. See S. Mahmud-un-Nasir, Constitutional History of Pakistan (Lahore: Mansoor Book House, 1980), pp. 51-56.

5. For a discussion of the substance and impact of these ordinances, see A. Jahangir and H. Jilani, The Hudood Ordinances: A Divine Sanction? (Lahore: Rhotas Books, 1990).

6. Government of Pakistan, The Gazette of Pakistan, Islamabad, 1991, pp. 186-191.

7. For statistical tables comparing the results of the various elections, see The News, Islamabad, 13 October 1994, p. 3. See also the article by Kamran Khan "Election 1993: Pakistan says good-bye to religious politics" in The News, Islamabad, 12 October 1993, p. 1.

8. The history and organization of the principal religious parties are outlined in A. H. Shahbaz, Pakistan Political Parties (Islamabad: Islamabad Press Service, 1990), pp. 108-156.

9. Former Chief Justice Muhamaad Munir as summed up in I. Ahmed, The Concept of an Islamic State, p. 164.

10. On Bhutto's overtures to the Gulf States, see A. Malik, "Pak-Arab ties: an overview," in The News, Islamabad, 1 March 1994, p. 6; and R. Syed, "ZAB Global Scenario: Not a failure," in The Muslim, Islamabad, 31 December 1993, p. 7.

11. Z. A. Bhutto, If I am assassinated (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1979), pp. 137-138. With this passage Bhutto all but gave birth to the term "Islamic Bomb" to describe Pakistan's nuclear weapons program. It is therefore astonishing that so many Pakistani commentators

not only object violently to its use, but also attribute its inception to Western hostility and discrimination towards Islam and Pakistan. See, for example, M. Jawed, "The bogey of Fundamentalism" in Pakistan and Gulf Economist, Karachi, 5 February 1994, p. 11.

12. Professor Ghafoor Ahmed quoted in The News, Islamabad, 12 December 1993, p. 1.

13. Report datelined Lahore in The Muslim, Islamabad, 30 November 1993, p. 1.

14. See, for example, the editorial entitled "Surrendering the nuclear programme" in The Muslim, Islamabad, 25 September 1993, p. 6.

15. M. Yousaf, Silent Soldier (Lahore: Jang Publishers, 1991), p. 39.

16. Ibid., p. 41.

17. See J. Levesque, L'URSS en Afghanistan (Brussels: Editions Complexes, 1990), pp. 152-157.

18. The full text of the Pressler amendment is to be found in Section 902 of the International Security and Development Cooperation Act 1985 (Public Law 99-83; 99 Stat 268). The most immediate effect of the entry into force of the Pressler amendment was to interrupt the transfer of F16 fighter aircraft to Pakistan. Since Pakistan had already paid substantial sums of money for these aircraft, the issue rapidly became a major irritant in US-Pakistan relations.

19. These concerns are particularly well highlighted in the writings of an influential former Chief of the Army Staff, General Aslam Beg. See for example his "Balance of Power Paradigm and Pakistan's Security Problems" in T. Jan (ed.), Pakistan: Foreign Policy Debate (Islamabad: Institute of Policy Studies, 1993), pp. 123-142.

20. A review of editorials in 1991 in newspapers such as The News, Dawn, The Muslim and the government-controlled Pakistan Times reveals a constant recurrence of these sentiments.

21. See, for example, S. M. Koreshi, "Counteracting the New World Order" in Jan, Pakistan, pp. 45-77.

22. Some Pakistani leaders expressed the hope privately that Pakistan's contribution and sacrifices in Somalia would help to improve relations with the United States, while

others suggested that they would bolster Pakistan's credentials in the UN and thus make the world body more amenable to intervening on Pakistan's side in the Kashmir dispute. These motives never surfaced, however, in the Pakistani government's public explanations of its Somali policy.

23. See, for example, The Muslim, Islamabad, 25 February 1994, p. 8, and 6 March 1994, p. 8; the News, Islamabad, 29 April 1994, p. 8.

24. See the statements of Jamaat leaders as reported in The News, Islamabad, 12 September 1993, p. 12.

25. P. Newberg, "Indo-Pak Relations: Old diplomacy must be laid to rest," in The Friday Times, Lahore, 9 June 1994, p. 21. In a statement made in Cairo, the Pakistani foreign minister, Sardar Assef Ali, said that "Kashmir today is the Bosnia of Asia. There are half a million Indian troops who are killing a hundred people every day, burning houses, raping women." See The News, Islamabad, 2 June 1994, p. 1.

26. For its own reasons, it was Iran that took the lead in persuading Pakistan to withdraw its Kashmir resolution at the 1994 session of the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva.

27. The suggestion that the OIC might impose sanctions against India first surfaced at a press conference given by Foreign Minister (now President) Farooq Leghari. See Dawn, Karachi, 28 October 1993, p. 14.

28. See S. A. Khan, "Pakistan's relations with Central Asian States" in Strategic Perspectives (Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, 1994) 2, 1: 44-54.

29. See, for example, M. A. Ali Beg, "Pak-ECO Rail and Road Links" in Pakistan and Gulf Economist, Karachi, 25 June 1994, p. 35.

30. Z. A. Khan, "Options in post-cold war era" in Dawn, Karachi, 2 June 1994, p. 18. For a Pakistani perspective on the politico-strategic dimensions and potential of this sort of alignment, see H. Gul, "ECO's strategic significance in the context of Islamic resurgence" in Jan, Pakistan, pp. 183-199.

31. For example, in addressing an army gathering in 1994, President Leghari declared that "the defence of Pakistan is the defence of Islam." See The News, Islamabad, 25 April 1994, p. 4.

32. See K. Ahmad, "Some thoughts on Muslim Economic Union" in The Muslim, Islamabad, 13 May 1994, p. 7.

33. See The News, Islamabad, 2 July 1994, p. 1.

34. See The Diplomatic Times, Islamabad, 8 May 1994, p. 2.

35. S. Husain, "The Magic Wand," in The Friday Times, Lahore, 7 July 1994, p. 10.