

Pakistan's Relations with the Islamic World

Apart from the perennial preoccupation with India, there have been some other important dimensions in Pakistan's foreign policy. In particular, Pakistan's strong attachment to its Islamic ideology has prompted it to espouse the causes of Muslims all over the world. Indeed, the 1973 Constitution imposes an obligation on the Pakistan Government to develop closer relations with other Islamic countries.

Pakistan's founding party, the Muslim League, had supported the Palestinian cause even before Pakistan came into being. This was reflective of the strong sentiments of the Muslims of the subcontinent, even during the period of British colonial rule, in support of all Islamic causes, whether in Turkey in the First World War or Libya when Italy occupied it in 1911. The issue of retaining the Caliphate in Turkey, following the First World War, gave rise to a serious political campaign by Muslims in British India, known as the Khilafat Movement. Moreover, the poet-philosopher Iqbal has been a great influence on the Pakistani people in their Pan-Islamic yearnings.

After Pakistan became independent in 1947, it started to extend enthusiastic support to Muslim causes all over the world. Pakistan helped in the liberation struggle of several Muslim countries in Africa, namely, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Sudan, Somalia, and Eritrea. Similarly, Pakistan strongly supported the liberation struggle of Indonesia in 1948¹. In later years, Pakistan was sympathetic to the aspirations of Muslims in Southern Philippines. After the Soviet military incursion in

Afghanistan in 1979, support for the Afghan resistance, of course, became the centrepiece of Pakistan's diplomacy. More recently the cause of the Bosnian Muslims has received strong support from Pakistan. Sympathy for the cause of the Muslims in Chechnya and Kosovo has also been evident.

The Palestine issue gripped Pakistan's attention from the outset. Jerusalem's status as the third most holy city for Muslims has deeply influenced Pakistan's attitude. In the UN forum, Pakistan's first Foreign Minister, Sir Zafrrulla Khan, became the leading proponent of the Palestinian cause after the Arab-Israel dispute erupted in 1948. (He was to be elected as the President of the UN General Assembly in 1964, the only time that Pakistan has held such a high elective office, and later on as a Judge of the World Court, mainly due to Arab gratitude for his role in the Palestinian cause.)

Pakistan has remained unwavering in its support for the Palestinian and Arab cause. In the process, the Arabs have been gratified but Israel and the powerful Zionist lobby, particularly in the US, have been deeply antagonized. This has hurt Pakistan in both tangible as well as intangible ways. For instance, under the Zionist influence, the Western media, which dominates the world news coverage, has in general negatively projected Pakistan. This proved particularly damaging for Pakistan during the Bangladesh crisis of 1970-71. Even in general terms it has denigrated Pakistan's image in the world.

Pakistan's friendship for the Arabs pre-dates the discovery of oil in most of the Arab countries, and certainly pre-dates the oil boom. The motive for this friendship was mainly ideological. Pakistan's friendship with the Arabs has also brought tangible benefits in the economic field and in terms of diplomatic and material support, consisting of economic aid and manpower. Around two million Pakistanis are at present gainfully employed in the Arab countries whose home remittances are an important factor for the country's economy. On the diplomatic front, most of the Arab countries, with a few exceptions, have tended to support Pakistan in its problems with India, particularly on the Kashmir issue, in the two wars with India, and during the Soviet

occupation of Afghanistan. In fact, Pakistan has all along drawn strong support from the Arab countries in a number of fields, including joint economic ventures and investment, which has helped the country significantly.

Apart from the Arab cause, Pakistan took the leading role in international forums to mobilize support for the Afghan cause after the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan. Pakistan was in fact the main channel, despite its routine denials, in extending military support to the Afghan guerrillas—the Mujahideen. In international forums, Pakistan's efforts were successful and the Soviet Union was largely isolated on this issue. Pakistan also encouraged the UN to play a mediatory role in the Afghan crisis from the beginning. The pressure of international public opinion, including boycott of the Moscow Olympics, contributed along with other factors, to the Soviet decision to pull out of Afghanistan. The Geneva Accords on Afghanistan, negotiated under UN auspices over a period of seven years, were eventually signed by Pakistan and the Afghan regime in 1988, bringing about the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan. This was considered as one of the more notable achievements of the UN and gave the world body a high profile in international diplomacy. The Geneva Accords were, moreover, a high moment for Pakistani diplomacy and allowed Pakistan to occupy the world's centre stage.

Turkey

Pakistan has always had a very warm and close relationship with Turkey. In the 1950s, both became members of the Baghdad Pact, later CENTO. They have had an active bilateral military collaboration from earlier years. Both also took active steps to foster economic and other kinds of collaboration on a regional basis under the aegis of the RCD, later re-named as the ECO.

The Turkish people have retained grateful memories of the support extended to them, in the beginning of the twentieth

century, by the Muslims of British India. This contrasted with what the Turks regarded as betrayal by the Arabs during the First World War. Turkey was thus keen to establish a close relationship with another large non-Arab Muslim country like Pakistan following its independence in 1947. This fitted in well with Pakistan's search for friends and allies in the Islamic world. The two countries have tended to support each other on most issues of vital interest. In the more recent past, Pakistan was probably the only country in the world to support Turkey on its military intervention in northern Cyprus. Pakistan for its part has received steadfast Turkish support on the Kashmir issue and some degree of military assistance during the two wars with India. There is, of course, tremendous goodwill between the two peoples.

Pak-Turkish relations, nevertheless, suffer from some limitations. Turkey regards itself more as a European rather than an Islamic country. Defying the rest of the Islamic world, it has maintained friendly and even close relations with Israel, a right from the beginning, and these relations have acquired a military dimension in the more recent past. Clearly, this has been something of an anathema for the other Muslim countries, including Pakistan. Turkey joined the OIC somewhat hesitantly, regarding its membership as a departure from its secular polity. However, the realization that absence from an important forum would be even more disadvantageous, made Turkey join this Islamic body. Besides, it could not ignore that in case of a security crisis for Turkey, the Islamic world would always be a natural supporter of Turkey.

For internal reasons Turkey plays down the role of Islam in its polity. In fact, it has sought to come down hard on all manifestations of Islamic orthodoxy. At times it appears that devotion to Islam is even considered as a security threat by the ruling elite in Turkey, particularly by the armed forces which have set themselves up as the custodians of the tradition of secularism of the founder of modern Turkey, Kemal Ataturk. The Europeanization of Turkish society has also put a distance between the two nations since most Pakistanis observe a more

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orthodox Islamic course. Similarly, in foreign policy, Turkey has been far more pro-West than Pakistan. There is an odd dimension, therefore, to the bilateral relations between Pakistan and Turkey. In its expressions of friendship with Turkey, Pakistan is always vociferous in its emphasis on the Islamic bonds between them. On the other hand, Turkey tends to downplay this factor and instead emphasizes more the various bilateral linkages.

In the economic field, despite all the exhortations by the leadership in Pakistan and Turkey, the two countries have hardly ever been able to forge any significant co-operation. Evidently, the economies of the two countries are hardly complementary and they are even competitors producing the same kind of goods. Thus, there is more sentiment than solid substance in the bilateral relationship.

More recently in Central Asia, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, there seems to be some competition between Pakistan and Turkey for influence in the six independent Islamic states. Because of their common ethnic origins, the countries of Central Asia are regarded by Turkey as a kind of exclusive preserve. On the other hand, Pakistan hopes to spread its influence in these countries, which constitute Pakistan's hinterland.

In the last few years, Turkey has been alarmed by the rise of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan. Their revolutionary Islamic 'fundamentalism' is a cause of anxiety for the secular regime in Turkey, which faces a grave internal challenge from its own Islamic 'fundamentalists'. Turkey is thus impassive to such influences anywhere in the Islamic world. The Central Asian countries, with an ethnically Turkish background see the Taliban in next door Afghanistan as a threat to the stability of their own regimes. Turkey has thus tended to make a common cause with the Central Asian countries against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. This makes for a contrasting attitude with Pakistan, which is perceived as a supporter of the Taliban regime. Moreover, the increasing emphasis on Islamization in Pakistan and the adoption of the *Shari'ah* as the supreme law of the land

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does not strike a sympathetic chord in secular Turkey. Thus the two countries are moving away from their earlier enthusiastic collaboration.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has probably been the country closest to Pakistan's heart. As the birth-place of Islam and as the custodian of the two holiest cities of Islam, it has tremendous emotional and religious pull for the Pakistani Muslims who are second to none in their passionate attachment to Islam. In ideological terms also, there is great affinity between the two countries. Both have been generally moderate, even conservative in their foreign policy, with a great deal of emphasis on Islamic causes. Both have been wary of Arab radicals, particularly their emphasis on secularism and socialism, as also, in the case of Saudi Arabia, the radicals' calls for republicanism. By and large, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have had a pro-West orientation, despite periodic differences with the US, particularly for its support for Israel. The Saudis were enthusiastic about the creation of Pakistan in 1947 as a new Islamic state. Muslim pilgrims from India had been coming to Arabia for centuries and were always welcomed for their piety and wealth, when the Arabian Peninsula was for cash-starved. Thus, there had been a traditional enthusiasm for the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent. This background gave Pakistan a flying start with Saudi Arabia. In the late 1940s, oil wealth was beginning to flow into Saudi Arabia but the country was very backward. The first Pakistanis to arrive in Saudi Arabia were doctors and engineers. Thereafter, Pakistani collaboration started in practically every field. This expertise has been a key factor in Saudi Arabia's rapid growth.

There have been only two brief periods of estrangement between the two countries. In the mid-1950s, Pakistan's joining of the Baghdad Pact which also included Iraq, with which the Saudis had an old dynastic rivalry, led to a period of strain between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. In this period, an exchange

of visits between King Saud of Saudi Arabia and Indian Prime Minister Nehru also caused heart burning in Pakistan. King Saud was also at times courting Arab radicals, many of whom had turned against Pakistan due to its membership of the Baghdad Pact as also its perceived pro-West role during the 1956 Suez crisis. However, with the exit of King Saud, relations with Pakistan became very friendly under King Faisal.

The second time when Pak-Saudi relations came under a cloud was when Z.A. Bhutto came to power in Pakistan in December 1971. The Saudis were apprehensive of the sympathy shown by Bhutto and his party-men for the Palestinians and other Arab radicals who were, at that time, strongly critical of the conservative Arab regimes like that of Saudi Arabia. Even from an earlier date, King Faisal was unhappy with the movement led by Bhutto to topple President Ayub Khan, for whom the King had high regard. Bhutto's proposal to appoint an aide, who was believed to be from the heretical Ahmadi sect, as the Pakistan Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, was rejected by the Saudis, creating a certain strain in bilateral relations. However, the strong support extended by Pakistan to the Arabs in the 1973 War against Israel and the oil boycott sponsored by King Faisal, followed thereafter by the successful holding of the Islamic Summit in Pakistan in 1974, restored the warmth in Pakistan-Saudi relations.

For the greater part in the history of their bilateral relations, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have stood by each other on most political issues. Pakistan's unflinching support for the Palestinian and Arab cause against Israel has won it the lasting appreciation of Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries. Beginning from the 1960s, Pakistan provided security support to Saudi Arabia to strengthen its defence against Yemen and Israel. In the 1980s, following the incident of the seizure of the Holy Ka'aba by some Islamic militants, Pakistan's involvement in providing security support to Saudi Arabia developed on a scale unmatched by any other country. Thousands of Pakistani military personnel served in Saudi Arabia, basically to strengthen the country's

internal security. This military presence has remained an important area of collaboration between the two countries.

Saudi Arabia was very forthcoming in extending support to Pakistan during its wars against India. It has all along strongly supported Pakistan on the Kashmir dispute. During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia joined the US in extending strong military and other support to Pakistan. In the Saudi conception, the security of Pakistan was the motivating factor in determining their opposition to the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan.

Saudi Arabia has been a principal aid donor to Pakistan over the years. During the period of the oil boom (1974-84), Saudi assistance to Pakistan probably surpassed that of any other country. Since then, the Saudi aid has largely dried up, not only for Pakistan but also for other countries. This was primarily due to the heavy financial burden borne by Saudi Arabia during the Iran-Iraq War, followed by the Gulf War against Iraq, which strained the Saudi economy. Its immense foreign exchange reserves more or less dissipated. Also, over the years, the Saudis were besieged by so many countries looking for aid that a point of exhaustion had been reached by the early 1980s. Under these circumstances, it would be difficult for Pakistan to secure any significant aid from Saudi Arabia unless there is a new oil boom.

At the time of Pakistan's independence, Saudi Arabia was a very undeveloped country. Though oil exports from Saudi Arabia had started after the Second World War, affluence came only after the oil price went up in the early 1970s. In the early years, Pakistan even extended some aid to Saudi Arabia. Pakistan also came forward to provide expertise in diverse fields. This included military training of Saudis on a large scale. Saudi naval officers were nearly all trained in Pakistan until a few years ago. Pakistanis have, of course, worked in nearly all fields in Saudi Arabia right from the beginning. From the personal staff of the royal family to experts and workers in agriculture, banking, commerce, education, engineering, industry, and medicine, Pakistanis are to be found everywhere in Saudi Arabia. They are above all trusted by the Saudis and they get adjusted

to Saudi cultural conditions more readily than many other nationalities. At present, over one million Pakistanis are working in Saudi Arabia whose home remittances are greater than that of Pakistani expatriates living all over the world.

Until Pakistan's defeat in the 1971 War and the oil boom which made Saudi Arabia one of the richest countries in the world, Pakistan was viewed as a kind of an elder brother by the Saudi government and people. That basic friendship remains but the relationship has since undergone a perceptible change in that Saudi Arabia has been, for many years, the senior partner. It is Pakistan, which is constantly wooing the Saudis for political or other support. The Saudi leaders hardly ever visit Pakistan whereas the Pakistani leaders keep flocking to Saudi Arabia most of the time. However, the Saudis realize Pakistan's continued importance in the region and the Islamic world. More Pakistan's nuclear capability is an additional reason. More importantly, the Saudis regard Pakistan as a trustworthy friend who will come to Saudi Arabia's assistance whenever the occasion arises. This includes any requirement for strengthening the internal security of the Saudi regime.

The threat perception of the Saudis has changed in the last two decades. In the past, Israel was seen as the main threat. Pakistan could be counted upon to provide whatever assistance it could to defend Saudi Arabia against the Israeli threat, even though, in strategic terms, it was the US, due to its strong involvement with the production and export of oil from Saudi Arabia, which was expected to hold back Israel from committing any aggression against Saudi Arabia. During the 1950s and 1960s, the Saudis also felt threatened by radical Arab nations including Egypt, Syria, and even Yemen. Pakistan was a useful military partner of the Saudis in the event of any direct attack on Saudi Arabia.

However, with the coming of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the Saudi threat perception became more preoccupied with Iran. It was this fear that propelled the Saudis to support Iraq against Iran in the eight-year war, which finally ended in 1988. This help was given to Iraq in spite of the fact that its own radicalism

policies. In view of the new regime's ideological commitment to Islam, it would have been logical to expect a strengthening of relations with Pakistan which was so heavily committed to Islamic solidarity. Moreover, it was also the first country to recognize the revolutionary Iranian government which renamed the country as the Islamic Republic of Iran. Whereas the Shah was pro-West and highly Europeanized, the new Iranian regime, like Pakistan, swore by Islam. Moreover, the Islamic revolutionaries in Iran were influenced, among others, by the Pakistani poet-philosopher Iqbal who had written some of the most stirring poetry, in the early twentieth century, both in Urdu and in Persian, on Islamic renaissance and the concept of Islamic brotherhood. All of this pointed towards a common ideological affinity with Pakistan. Similarly, the communist take-over in neighbouring Afghanistan in 1978 was another area of common concern for Pakistan as well as Iran, as it represented both an ideological and a strategic threat to the two countries.

In spite of these common factors, the revolutionary regime in Tehran showed a considerably lukewarm attitude towards Pakistan. Probably the only point on which Pakistan could really take satisfaction was that revolutionary Iran did reaffirm, like the Shah's government, support for Pakistan on the Kashmir issue. In fact, the new regime's professed attachment to Islamic causes probably left no other option. By and large Iran did not fully reciprocate Pakistan's many gestures of friendship in as positive terms as was warranted. Its news media was often critical of Pakistan.

It seemed, at first, that Pakistan's old links with the Shah had aroused the suspicions of the new regime, which evidently did not differentiate that Pakistan's friendship was with Iran as a country and not with the Shah as an individual. The Iranian revolutionaries, who regarded the US as the 'great Satan,' were also inclined to view Pakistan as a pro-American country which, along with the ousted Shah's government, had been members of Western military pacts. In truth, Pakistan could not be equated with the Shah. The latter had remained strongly pro-West till the end but Pakistan's honeymoon with the US had ended more

than a decade earlier. In holding Pakistan to be pro-US, the Islamic revolutionaries also seemed to have ignored the fact that around 1979 Pakistan was actually facing US sanctions, on account of the latter's suspicions that Pakistan was seeking to develop a nuclear capability.

To add to Pakistan's discomfiture under the new revolutionary regime, Iran, which is a Shia Muslim stronghold, showed a disposition to take an active interest on behalf of Pakistan's minority Shia population. This served to accentuate communal differences inside Pakistan between the majority Sunnis and the Shia community. Some observers believe that in order to counter the Iranian interest in the Pakistani Shias, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries started to extend support to Pakistani Sunni militants thereby playing a part in the rise of Pakistan's ominous sectarian problem and the resultant internal destabilisation, notably since the early 1980s. Moreover, this has given India the opportunity to fish in troubled waters in Pakistan, for strategic reasons of its own.

Pakistan, however, remained steadfast in its efforts to woo the Iranian regime. In order to remove the misgivings of the new Iranian government about any military association with the US, Pakistan agreed to disband the already moribund military pact CENTO in 1979. During the Iran-Iraq War, in the 1980s, Pakistan secretly tilted towards Iran, while maintaining an overtly neutral attitude. Not surprisingly, Pakistan's help to Iran could not remain unknown for a long period of time. This brought bitter complaints from the Gulf Arab states with which Pakistan had always maintained very close relations and where hundreds of thousands of Pakistanis were gainfully employed. Yet Pakistan took this risk in its keenness to secure greater Iranian friendship.

Pakistan also joined the OIC's mediation efforts to bring an end to the fratricide between Iran and Iraq. This helped Iran at the time when Iraq was pushing deep into Iranian territory. As the tide of the battle turned in Iran's favour around 1983, Pakistan tried its best to persuade Iran to accept a deal which would have vindicated its stance on the disputed Shatt-al-Arab and, in addition, would have secured massive reparations from

Iraq and its Arab supporters. This was not agreed to by Iran, which held that there could be no peace with the 'devil' Saddam Hussein. Iran did not merely reject this deal but seemed to harbour suspicions that Pakistan was trying to rescue the Iraqi regime. Belatedly, after five years of further bloodshed in which thousands of Iranian youth sacrificed their lives unnecessarily, Iran finally agreed to a cease-fire with the same hated Iraqi leader, but on much less advantageous terms.

Throughout this period, Pakistan tried to help Iran break out of its regional and general isolation by using its good offices with Saudi Arabia, USA, and others to improve their relations with Iran. This created difficulties for Pakistan in its own friendly ties with these countries. The leadership in Tehran hardly seemed to worry about its international isolation. Pakistan's 'good Samaritan' motives carried the risk of being misunderstood on both sides.

Driven by its hatred for the US, the Iranian leadership seriously explored the possibility, around 1994, of establishing an anti-US bloc in Asia consisting of Iran, India, and China. The idea got nowhere as neither India nor China was willing to join an anti-US grouping. Besides, the proposal made little sense since the three countries concerned are so very different in their outlook and systems. India clearly sees no security threat from the US. Neither China nor India has any intention, at least at the present time, to join in any anti-US alliance. However, from Pakistan's point of view, such a proposal coming from Iran was exceedingly disappointing. It showed a total disregard of Pakistan's strategic interests and its threat perception from India as also the sensitivities of Pakistan. Such a proposal also indicated that Islamic ideology is not a determinant in the formulation of Iranian foreign policy, at least in this particular instance.

Iran has often shown little regard for Pakistan's strong attachment to the Kashmir cause. In the OIC forum, Iran often kept aloof from the numerous resolutions and initiatives on the Kashmir issue, sponsored by Pakistan. For instance, despite urgings by the Pakistani delegates, the Iranian representatives in

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various OIC meetings held at Jeddah, between 1993 to 1997, made it a point not to speak on the Kashmir issue. This attitude was in strong contrast with the position taken by Saudi Arabia and others.

Pakistan's proposal in the OIC to hold a commemorative special Islamic Summit in Pakistan in 1997, to mark fifty years of its independence, aroused strong suspicions in Tehran which feared that such a Summit would deprive Iran from holding the regular OIC Summit in Tehran, which was also scheduled to be held that year. Iran more or less accused Pakistan of trying to sabotage the Summit in Tehran. For more than a year, this subject caused strains in Pak-Iranian relations in spite of Pakistan's protestations that the special Summit would be devoted to a single issue and would not be a substitute for the regular Summit which had its own long agenda. However, Iran remained suspicious that the Special Summit was merely a Pakistani ploy, in collaboration with Saudi Arabia with American backing, to deny Iran the opportunity to host the Islamic Summit and thus become the OIC Chairman for three years.

Libya

Libya has also figured prominently in Pakistan's relations with the Islamic world. Pakistan had played an important role in Libya's independence, just as it had done in the case of the other North African countries—Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. As a result, Pakistan enjoyed considerable goodwill in Libya from the very beginning. Libya, with a small population of about four million people, only gained international prominence around 1970 when the oil boom made it one of the richest countries in the world. The seizure of power in Libya by young military officers led by Colonel Gaddafi also transformed the country. A fire-brand revolutionary, deeply influenced by Egypt's Colonel Nasser, Gaddafi has remained one of the most vociferous enemies of Israel. Similarly, Arab unity has been his

was feared by the Saudis and the other Gulf regimes alike. The traditional rivalry between the Arabs and the Persians was clearly also a factor. Iraq was able to pressurize and extract massive support from its oil-rich conservative neighbours.

As it turned out, not content with the destruction wrought by the war against Iran, Saddam Hussein next turned against his benefactor, Kuwait, and occupied it in a sudden attack in August 1990. Iraq had an old territorial claim against Kuwait and the war with Iran had made it bankrupt. Saddam decided to attack the small and militarily hapless Kuwait. This led to the largest ever collection on Saudi soil of troops from several nations, led by the US, which defeated Iraq in a brief but deadly battle early in 1991. Pakistan also sent troops to join the alliance against Iraq, but Pakistani public opinion was clearly in favour of Saddam Hussein who was mistakenly considered to be another Salahuddin fighting against the new Christian Crusaders. The comparison was, of course, ridiculous but was not uncharacteristic of the kind of illusions from which public opinion in Pakistan has suffered from time to time. Saddam Hussein had rarely shown any Islamic sentiments and, in fact, had ruthlessly crushed the Islamic opposition at home. As a committed Ba'athist, he was wedded to secularism and socialism. He had been close to the Soviet bloc and had adopted an unfriendly attitude towards Pakistan in the 1971 War against India. He had supported the Soviet-backed communist regime in Afghanistan. It was thus ludicrous to compare him with Salahuddin. The public sympathy for Saddam confused and irritated the Saudis and undid much of the goodwill generated by the sending of the Pakistani troops. Certain pronouncements that the Pakistani troops had been sent to defend the holy places in Saudi Arabia, rather than to fight Iraq to liberate Kuwait, also appeared like a dichotomy in the Pakistani stance. The Pakistani army chief, General Aslam Beg also caused annoyance in Saudi Arabia by his pro-Iraq comments.

The Gulf War revealed the declining military value of Pakistan for the Saudis. Their threat perception now involves possible wars against Iran or Iraq. Both are Muslim countries

and Iran has been a close friend of Pakistan. In particular, Pakistani public opinion would simply not accept that Pakistani soldiers be involved in any large-scale fighting along with the Saudis against either Iran or Iraq. Fighting Iran would go against Pakistan's strategic interests since Iran has always been seen as providing strategic depth to Pakistan in the case of a war against India. The availability of Pakistan to come to Saudi Arabia's help in case of a war with Iran, in particular, is highly improbable. This obviously lessens Pakistan's importance for Saudi Arabia. As a consequence, since the end of the Gulf War, American influence has grown further in Saudi Arabia. It is obvious that it is the US alone that has the political will and the military muscle to assist Saudi Arabia in case of aggression from either Iraq or Iran. The US has long had an adversarial relationship with both of these countries.

Iran

Iran is another country in the Islamic world with which Pakistan has always had very strong ties. It is not only a neighbour but also a country with which Pakistan has had age-old relations based on cultural, ethnic, and spiritual links. Iranian influence is visible in Pakistan's languages and culture. In particular, Urdu, the national language of Pakistan, has been heavily influenced by the Persian language and its poetic traditions. There is also tremendous goodwill for Iran among the Pakistani people. A close relationship with Iran has been considered by defence experts as a strategic necessity for Pakistan, in particular because of Pakistan's perennial confrontation with India. Iran can provide Pakistan, which is a bit of a rectangular country in its shape, having a relatively small breadth, a certain degree of strategic depth. An unfriendly Iran could be quite damaging for Pakistan's security and the worst nightmare would be some kind of a pincer movement by India acting in consort with Iran. It is this background which has prompted Pakistan, ever since its