

Islamic world and South Asia: Rise of Islamism and Terror, Causes and Consequences?

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Abstract

Cold War, Containment, arms race, low intensity wars, cross border violations have changed the complexion of Islamic world and South Asia. The persistence of Palestinian and Kashmir issue, Afghan war, Khomeni revolution and Iraq-Iran war, contributed towards the resurgence of Islamism. It solidified Islamic sentiment, mobilized the Islamic militants in the Islamic world and insrumentalized Islam as an ideology of political action and holy war. It also led to the mushroom growth of religious institutions from Afghanistan to Indonesia. Religious schools were not new to Islamic world and South Asia, they had been there as institutions of learning for centuries but what these wars did was to politicize and weaponize them. More importantly, they gave legitimacy to Islamic militancy and in many weak states in the Rimland (Chechnya, Tajikistan, Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines to name a few) became sanctuaries for potential terrorists. The roots of terror lie not in religious belief but political circumstances, economic conditions and security imperatives of these states. Consequently, peace, cooperation, economic partnership remains elusive in the Islamic world and South Asia.

Introduction

This paper is divided into four parts. The first part provides a definitional context and conceptual framework for explaining and analyzing the Islamic world and South Asia. The two are interconnected at multiple levels; strategic, cultural, economic, political and more important in recent year's escalation of religious militancy. I will argue that interplay of three variables; Islamic belief, geo-politics and institutional settings help us to understand the linkages between the Islamic world and South Asia. Second part builds linkages on how geo-politics of Cold war and policies of Containment contributed towards resurgence of Islamism in South Asia and the Islamic world. Third part focuses on analyzing the responses of the Islamic world and South Asia towards these policies and resurgence of Islamism. Fourth and last part summarizes the principle arguments and explores some ideas on a strategy for peace and cooperation between the Islamic world and South Asia.

Islamic World: From Islamic Belief to Political Islam/Islamism

Islamic world is large and amorphous. It includes 57 states and has a population of one and half billion¹. It has diversity of race, language and culture. Territorially it spreads across the continent of Asia and Africa-from Morocco to Indonesia and Siberia to Zanzibar. Given this diversity and vastness, what is Islamic world? Is it a geo-political entity? Is it an economic block? Is it simply a conglomeration of states whose members (claim that they are a multinational community (Ummah) who are bounded by a common faith-Islam? What is equally important, it is not how the Islamic world or Muslim Ummah perceives, identifies and projects it but how they are perceived, identified and projected by others.

Out of 57 states 22 are Arab, which reflect a common identity and a certain degree of homogeneity based on language and Arab culture.² In this broader linguistic and cultural sense Islamic world is divided into Arabi and Ajami (that is those states and Islamic people, who speak languages other than Arabic). In popular political imagination the Islamic world is defined as a community of believers who are one because of their Islamic faith and belief. It does not take into account nuances and differences of belief and practices (Shiite, Sunni and various other denominations in each). The reality of Islamic world is much more complex, it is multi-layered, multi-lingual and culturally diverse. Among the Muslim intellectuals those who propound the unity of Ummah argue that underneath this complex diversity, there is common thread of unity of belief, which cuts across region, race and ethnicity. Some would like to see this unity of belief transformed into an ideology of political action, but have had little success³. What is recognizable that Islamism or Islamic political discourse has gained greater legitimacy in both the Islamic world and South Asia? The history of Islamic societies clearly indicates

¹ <http://www.forisb.org/pak-oic.htm>

² see, *The Arab Human Development Report 2002*(New York:UNDP,2002)pp1-5

³ For an excellent discussion on various scholarly interpretations in Egypt, Pakistan ,Turkey ,see, Fazalur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*(Chicago/London: University of Chicago,1982)pp43-129

that religion and politics have remained inseparable in their evolution and development.⁴ Today, more than ever, in the Islamic world, the separation between religion and politics is at best murky. The rise of Islamism is far from unified; it has multiple facets and reveals contradictory trends. It ranges from Osama bin Laden's notorious Jihad, Taliban's repressive variety of rule in Afghanistan to Algeria's Islamic Front and Hizab Ollah, Hamas in Lebanon and Palestine, Islamic Brotherhood in Egypt to Ak/Fazilet party in Turkey or apolitical Tableeghi Jammaat in Pakistan and Nahdatul Ulama in Indonesia. What needs to be acknowledged that in each states Islamism has grown because of its peculiar socio-political circumstances, state policies and adaptations to Cold War. Two kinds of tensions are visible in the Islamic world; first, there is a yearning for evolving some kind of unity among the Muslim states and a coherent response on issues confronting the Ummah. Second, more than an intellectual debate a pervasive and complex struggle to develop a political system that would distinguish a 'Islamic state' from the rest. On both fronts, the progress of Islamic world has been far from satisfactory. The greatest intellectual challenge the Muslim societies are confronted with is how to reconcile Islamic values with challenges of modernity and democratic form of governance.⁵

Twentieth Century has witnessed revival of Islamic movements in different parts of the Muslim societies, attempting to synthesize theological and political to build a sense of identity revolving around Islam. In the Islamic world the nation-state and national identity is under duress from the twin forces of globalization and Islamism. Those who advocate unity of belief among Islamic societies they under value territoriality based idea of nationhood, thus Ummah are presented as a supra-national concept. *In reality the issue is political and not merely 'cultural or civilizational'. The battles with in the Islamic world and struggles outside are political and not merely religious, Islamism and Islamic discourse is a dominant reality.*

Resultantly, Islamic world, today, is both, terror stricken and terror ridden. In the aftermath of 9/11, Bernard Lewis, the renowned historian addressing and analyzing the response of the Islamic world raised the pertinent question -What Went Wrong?⁶ Lewis provided the answer by debunking the religious education and inability of Muslim societies to respond to challenges of modernity. Both merit attention. But perhaps more relevant and meaningful question to ask is why the Islamic world has been so complacent in responding to the events of 9/11? This complacency provided the anti-Islamic interests in the West, particularly in the US to portray Islamic world as hostile to the West, its institutions, values of freedom and tolerance. A number of US policy intellectuals have used Islam and terrorism interchangeably⁷. In the Western perception, particularly US

⁴ Fazalur Rahman pp50-58

⁵ For an incisive and wide ranging analysis of Islamic revival movements and their political messages and organizations, see Garham Fuller, "The Future of Political Islam" *Foreign Affairs*, vol.81, no2, March April, 2002, pp48-60

⁶ Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002)

⁷ See for example the influential conservative thinker William J. Bennett, who argues that "Islamist Terrorists" may be small in numbers and on the outer fringes but over all ideological movements in the Islamic world are anti-West and conclusively asserts-"there is no question that Islam is at war with the West and specifically with America". pp77-78. His chapter "A war Against Islam?" provides an interesting

perception, terrorism emanates from the Islamic societies. It is explained as emerging from a set of factors: failure of Islam to adopt modernity, oppressive and corrupt regimes, and weak civil society, primitive and anti-west educational system (particularly the Madrassa education)⁸. This has led many observers and commentators in the US to demand/advocate reform of religious education and democratization of political system in the Islamic world⁹. What needs to be appreciated that for many in the Muslim societies this is an unwelcome intrusion. Is religious education system in the Islamic world flawed? Many in the Islamic world recognize that it suffers from serious inadequacies; yet, Madrassa and modern education have existed as parallel currents. What has contributed to the politicization and militancy of the Madrassa in the past few decades? I will argue the answer needs to be searched in forces of globalization and Cold War policies that contributed towards the politicization of the Madrassa and not merely their curriculums.

Geopolitics and the Islamic world

Islamic world is a geo-political entity. It is rich in resources, oil, gas, radioactive minerals, agriculture and large population. It is an area of enormous geo-strategic value and significance. The Islamic world is a large component of what political geographer Spykman called the 'Rimland States'- which are on the outer fringes of Eurasia-Europe, Russia and littoral states of Africa, Indian Ocean and along China. Spykman was a visionary strategic planner and thinker; almost half a century ago he articulated the strategic significance of Rimland for American strategy makers but simultaneously identified the problem of the Rimland states, which resonates for a large part of the Islamic world today. Writing in 1943, he argued;

*"The Rimland of the Eurasian landmass must be viewed as an intermediate region, situated as it is between the heartland and the marginal seas. It is functioning as a vast buffer zone of conflict between sea power and land power. Looking in both directions, it must function amphibiously and defend itself on the land and sea. In the past, it has had to fight against the land power of the off shore Islands of Great Britain and Japan. Its amphibious nature lies at the basis of its security problems."*¹⁰

Thus in geo-political context from Mediterranean Sea to Indian Ocean, the Islamic world straddles as a significant territorial land mass- Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia and South East Asia For students of modern strategy and warfare, the formation and

insight on conservative mind set in America. see, Why We Fight: Moral Clarity and War on Terrorism (New York: DoubleDay,2002)pp71-101 also see Daniel Pipes, Militant Islam Reaches America(New York:W.W.Norton,2002)

⁸ Bernard Lewis, pp130-170.

⁹ Thomas Friedman, the celebrated Foreign Affairs analyst of The New York Times ,wrote a series of articles after 9/11 which reflect this point of view and are part of his book, Longitudes & Attitudes: Exploring The World After September 11 (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux,2002).For his reportage of the Islamic world including India, see pp 52-162.

¹⁰ .Nicholas J.Spykman, The Geography of Peace(New York: Harcourt, Brace and co,1944)p.41

functioning of the two US global military commands Central Command (CENTCOM) and Pacific Command, further illustrate the pivotal position of the Islamic world.. Reinforcing the Spykman thesis of who so ever controls the Rimland dominates the world. Thus, in geo-political/ geo-strategic sense one needs to understand the centrality of Rimland states, which happen to be predominantly Islamic and where Islamism with multiple facets is the prevailing political wave.

Cold War and Containment

Changing political realities change the geo-strategic significance of an area. During the Cold War (1947-89) Rimland was the principal territorial instrument for Containment. In its war against Communism the Islamic world has been generally supportive of the US if not totally aligned with it. With the collapse of Soviet Union, the significance of Rimland has not diminished, it has attained new heights, and a terrorist threat has appeared which seem to have roots in the Islamic world. A number of Rimland states have appeared as the primary source of security threat-Iraq, Iran, North Korea is the 'axis of evil' and Pakistan (including Persian Gulf) to the Philippines is infested with 'terrorists' of some Islamic connection¹¹. *So Containment is neither dead nor has become irrelevant, new alliances are in the offing and territoriality of the battlefield remains the same. What is interesting to note that during the Cold War Era both the US and Soviet Union sought influence and alliances with the Rimland states in the Islamic world, however, today, both are skeptical and wary of the rising "Islamic fundamentalism". The US is keen to explore ways to reduce dependence on Arab oil, while the Russian goal is to avail this opportunity and increase flow of its oil in the Western market.*¹²

In the early 1940's when the Cold War was in its infancy phase, Spykman incisively argued that the Soviet power is located, "*west of Urals. The heartland becomes less important than the Rimland and it is the cooperation of British, Russian and the United States land and Sea power that will control the European Littoral, and thereby the power relations of the world.*"¹³.

Given the dismemberment of Soviet Union what Spykman forecast about US, British, Russian alliance appears in the realm of possibility? Russia is increasingly looking towards the West and is certainly wary of Muslim dominated states on its borders. This is a major transformation from the Cold War era when Russia was a major supporter of a number of Arab states. Will Russia seek reassertion in Central Asia in return for disengagement from the Arab World? Is Russia redefining its relations with Iran? What is obvious Russia is a closer ally of the US and West than ever before in modern times. In the wake of US-Russia convergence of interests the Rimland states of the Islamic world may find themselves redefining their strategies. North Korea, Syria and Iran in their

¹¹ .Seth Mydans, "*Fears of Islamic Militancy Could Emerge in Cambodia*" The New York Times, December 12, 2002 p.c22. The report provides details of Islamic militants in Cambodia, Thailand and Philippines, how Muslim minority in these states has acquired militancy. According to yet another report the US is dispatching 1,700 troop's commandos and military advisors to the Philippines to combat "Muslim Extremists". For details see news report by Eric Schmitt, "U.S Combat Force of 1,700 is headed to The Philippines". The New York Times, February 21, 2003.

¹² see for example a report by Neela Banerjee, "*Oil, Politics and the New Global Fault lines*" The New York Times, September 30, 2001

¹³ Spykman, p44.

different ways are pursuing a policy of ‘strategic defiance’ while many in the Islamic world believe that Iraq was invaded because of its ‘strategic defiance’ and oil.

Institutional

Since the end of Second World War and particularly in the last three decades the Islamic world has been struggling to develop institutions that may facilitate cultural, educational, economic and political cooperation and interdependence. The Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC), Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Arab league, to name a few. How have these institutions come into existence? What kind of interdependence, integration and possible political voice do they represent and promote in the Islamic world? The record of Islamic world in building institutional linkages is mixed; their performance has been cosmetic and not substantive. What is noteworthy that they have made a beginning and are struggling to pool their resources and energies with greater vision, vigor and dedication?¹⁴ A major shortcoming of the Islamic world lies in comprehending and utilizing its geopolitical strength. Islamic world has not been able to evolve a coherent geo-strategic vision. If the leadership in these countries were to build a vision based on collective resources and needs rather than simple religious bond it could earn them greater recognition and respect in the comity of nations. It seems too obvious to learn from the examples of European Union and ASEAN but basically, the challenge for the leadership is to channelize the enormous goodwill that is available in their own states for such a commonwealth of Muslim states. Will the leaders, intellectuals and policy makers in the Islamic world rise to the occasion to redirect the energies of their citizens?

Competing notions of Islamism drummed, as voices of Ummah, geo-politics of the Rimland, and institutional linkages are the identifiable characteristics of the Islamic world. They help us understand the challenges and opportunities that the Islamic world provides to its members and the outsiders.

Imagine unleashing the innovative energies of the Islamic states. If these states were to do some bold thinking, instead of grand vision or quick fixes, focus on goals to restructure their domestic political order and concentrate on achieving them. Given the resource base, geo-strategic location and population size, if they were to improve their technological and human resource capability they could enter into a strategic partnership with the US with new vigor and energy. If these states were to act in concert not only the US will not deny patronage and partnership but also other patrons like China and Europe will be eager to help. The Islamic world in general and states like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Iran and Indonesia in particular need to be bold in redrawing the internal structures of their societies. Greater collaboration among these states need not be against any other state or power block but must aim at seeking stronger voice in raising concerns of the Islamic world, seeking greater autonomy in global affairs and pursuing collective goals. It must be taken into cognizance that these states have consistent record of opposing, resisting and combating Communism and were steadfast in supporting (post Khomeini Iran is different case) the US. However, in the recent decades, each state for its

¹⁴.For useful information on OIC and other institutions of Islamic states, besides, its home page ,see,<http://www.muslimmedia.com/archives>

own reasons or having unrealistic expectations became disenchanted and felt 'abandoned' by the US. On the other hand, it can also be argued that the US became dismayed and disenchanted with each of these states because they failed to contain the rise of anti-US Islamic militants and did little to improve indicators of governance and human rights record of their regimes.¹⁵ US particularly, felt that Iran has remained hostile to US interests.

Historical Overview

Leaders of the Islamic world: Radicals, Monarchs and Pragmatists

I will argue that during 1947-1989, Cold war, Arab-Israel conflict, oil boom and migration and remittances were important contributors in transforming the political landscape in the Islamic world

During 1947-1970, politics in most of the Islamic world was dominated by three types of leaders. The radical perspective was articulated and led by Jamal Abdul Nasser of Egypt and Ahmed Sukarno of Indonesia. Nasser propounded pan-Arabism, Non-Alignment, defiance of the US and support for the Palestinians—which translated into confrontation with Israel. During the early 1950's Monarchists were divided, leaderless, prone to palace intrigues and military coups and invoked Islamic unity symbolically and sparingly. In 1964 with the emergence of Shah Faisal as king of Saudi Arabia, the Monarchists gained a new sense of confidence and made explicit reference to Muslim Ummah as¹⁶ opposed to pan-Arabism and boldly embraced a pro-US and pro-West foreign policy. The Turkish and Pakistani leaders best reflected the Pragmatist approach. These leaders vigorously sought alliance with the US and the West (both joined CENTO) and were muted in their support for Islamic causes. This is to suggest that during the 1950s Islamic identity and solidarity with Ummah was a weak and underdeveloped link in the Islamic world. The leadership in the Islamic world was torn between the proponents of Pan-Arabism/ Non-Alignment and the seekers of pro-Western alliances. During this phase India and Pakistan competed for influence and role in the Islamic world, Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru of India, as one of the principal architects of Non-Alignment Movement gained greater respect and recognition as compared to Pakistan.¹⁷ Thus, to the dismay of many in Pakistan, India had gained a foothold in the Arab world.

During 1952-56, Nasser remained involved in internal struggle and consolidation of power. In 1956 when Nasser, nationalized the Suez Canal, Britain, Israel and France connived to invade Egypt and oust Nasser. The US president Eisenhower asked the invaders to retreat and resolve the issue peacefully. After the nationalization of Suez Canal, Nasser emerged as the leader of the Arabs and a respected voice in the Islamic world. Egypt under Nasser assumed the leadership role as a radical pan Arab, anti-status quo and anti-Israel state. The Arab Monarchies and Israel perceived Nasser as threatening to their existence. Nasser did help Algeria against French and other pan-Arab groups in

¹⁵ . See ,cited above Graham Fuller, Thomas Friedman

¹⁶ For insights on Nasser's rise, his politics and role in Arab politics I have generally relied on P.J.Vatikiotis, *Arab and Regional Politics in the Middle East*(New York: St.Martin's Press,1984)

¹⁷ J.N.Dixit, *Across Borders: Fifty Years of India's Foreign Policy*(New Delhi Picus Books,1998)pp14-48

the Arab states. Nasser was hostile towards Israel and challenged its legitimacy. Between 1956-62 Arab world witnessed endemic instability, coup in Jordan (1956), conflict in Lebanon (1958), revolution in Iraq in (1958), civil war in Yemen (started in 1962).

Despite this politics of conflict and instability in 1960 Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was formed¹⁸. The founding members were Saudi Arabia, Iran, Kuwait, Iraq and Venezuela. During the decade of 1960's oil boom and Arab-Israel June 1967 War, was to change the fortunes of Monarchists and the direction of politics in the Islamic world. Oil money began to be used for purchase of weapons and promoting Islamic unity. Faisal showed greater vigor, foresight and skill in challenging Nasser's leadership and providing an alternate discourse to radical pan-Arabism. He showed talent and diplomatic skill in neutralizing Nasser in the Arab summits. He was persuasive in seeking cessation of Saudi-Egyptian involvement in Yemen's civil war.¹⁹ After disengaging from Yemen, Faisal began to cultivate Muslim states beyond the Arab world. He claimed and asserted that Saudi Arabia as the custodian of holiest places of Islam was the natural leader of the Islamic world. To pursue this goal, Faisal adopted a two-pronged strategy: first, he began to organize the monarchies in the Islamic world; second, he began to propound a shift from Nasser's Arabism to Islamism-making calls for the unity of Ummah. In 1965, Faisal made an extensive tour of Islamic states-Jordan, Sudan, Pakistan, Turkey, Morocco, Guinea, Mali, Tunisia and Iran. He also proposed the holding of an Islamic summit conference; the Shah of Iran endorsed his idea. Nasser denounced the proposal as an 'imperialist plot' to create a pro-west alliance in the Islamic world. (In January 1966, Syria called a meeting of the 5 radical Arab states and denounced the idea). Nasser's leadership in the Arab world was challenged and the Islamic world was clearly divided between the Non-Aligned radicals and the pro-West Monarchists.

The second half of 1960's was dominated by two developments, first, as noted above by Nasser –Faisal rivalry and second, by the humiliating defeat of the Arab armies in the six day June 1967 Arab-Israeli war. The Arab-Israeli war shattered Nasser and discredited the radical Arab leadership. Besides establishing the supremacy of Israel in the Arab world, it also led to the rise of Monarchists in the Islamic world. After the war, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Libya-all monarchies agreed to provide economic assistance to Egypt. Besides loss of territories, military hardware, human life and resources (Sinai oil fields in case of Egypt, West Bank tourism and agriculture in case of Jordan, Golan Heights in case of Syria) Arabs and Islamic world was sunk with a feeling of shame, humiliation, frustration that followed the defeat.²⁰ Israel conquered 42,000 square miles of land and became three and half times larger than its original size. Egypt lost almost 85% of its military hardware worth \$ 2 billion, similarly the Jordanian military capability was badly damaged, and Syrians military losses were the lowest.²¹

¹⁸ <http://www.opec.org>

¹⁹ .For an insight on the rise of Shah Fiasal, and evolution and development of OIC,see ,Noor Ahmad Baba, Organization Of Islamic Conference:Theory And Practice of Pan-Islamic Cooperation (Karachi: Oxford University Press,1994)p47

²⁰ .ibid.pp53-54

²¹ In this short duration war, Egypt lost between 10,000 to 15,000 men, among them 40 pilots and 1,500 officers, Jordan, lost 700 soldiers and 6,000 were reported missing or wounded, Syria had 450 dead. Israel reported 679 dead and 2,563 wounded. For a detailed account of the war and its after affects see Michael B.

The Arab-Israel 1967 war had three consequences for the Islamic world:(1) *Israel's primacy as militarily the most powerful state- conqueror and occupier in the Middle East was clearly established* (2) *Palestinian question gained the status of core issue in the Arab and Islamic world* (3) *Saudi Arabia began to replace Egypt as the leader and dominant voice in the Islamic world.*

As the Islamic world was struggling to develop policies to respond to these changes, in 1968 the British government announced that it will withdraw its military from Gulf and East of Suez by 1971. This meant that a number of tiny 'British protectorates' – Qatar, Bahrain, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, 'Seven Trucial States' will need to define their arrangements of statehood. It unleashed a war of territorial claims and counter claims-Iran declared that Bahrain belonged to her. This alarmed the Persian Gulf Monarchies; Iran began to build up arms and projected its military power as the dominant power in the Gulf. This intensified Iran-Arab power rivalry. Concerns about oil flow from Gulf to Europe and Japan roused debate on who will dominate the Gulf and Indian Ocean? Soviet Union caused further alarm by announcing what it called 'Asian Security Plan', which was perceived as a Soviet bid to seek access to 'warm waters'. Islamic world was further jolted when on August 21, 1969 Israel occupied Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied Jerusalem, which is regarded as the third holiest place for the Muslims. It hurt Muslim sentiments, evoked mass protests in the Islamic world and compelled their leaders to evolve some kind of a collective response to challenge the Israeli aggression. It is in this context that on September 25th, 1969, the leaders of the Islamic world met in Rabat and announced the formation of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC). It was tasked; to institutionalize efforts to forge unity among the Islamic world; to defend Islamic causes in the international arena; to establish mechanisms to resolve differences within the Ummah. It decided to launch diplomatic and political efforts to liberate Al-Quds Al Sharif (Jerusalem) and established in Jeddah the headquarters of the Organization (pending the liberation of Jerusalem, which will be the permanent headquarter). In 1972, the Conference had its third meeting and adopted a Charter of the Organization; the stated goal was to strengthen solidarity and cooperation in political, economic, cultural, scientific and social arenas among the Islamic states. To pursue these objectives the OIC Foreign Ministers were to meet annually and the heads of state/governments every three year.²²

During 1969-79, the Palestinian issue engulfed the Arab states in interstate rivalries and dominated the Islamic world. In the post 1967 situation whereas Jordan, Syria and Egypt sought ways and developed strategies to get their territories back from Israeli occupation, the Palestinians were dislocated from Jordan (1970) and pushed into Lebanon, they resorted to and intensified 'terrorist acts' against Israel. While Syria under president Hafiz Al Asad played a complex game of tactical peace and occasional war with Israel (Lebanon 1975-76) Jordan and Egypt, particularly after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war explored ways to seek return of their occupied territories as price for peace with Israel. In 1978 president Anwar Sadat signed the Camp David Accords recognized Israeli's right to exist, established diplomatic relations and in return got back Sinai. It was a bold and

Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of Modern Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) pp305-327.

²² for detailed history of OIC formation and organization, see, Noor Ahmad Baba, pp63-98 and 209-216

pragmatic decision but was not received enthusiastically in the Islamic world; in fact, Egypt quietly stepped down as the sole spokesman of the Arabs and that meant the death of pan-Arabism²³. Iraq and Syria competed for leadership but Saudi Arabian supremacy in the Islamic world was well established with radical Arab leaders in disarray and discredited. With Egypt neutralized, the Iranian and Saudi Arabian monarchies at ease and confident, most observers felt that the Islamic world was under the effective control of pro US leaders. However, little did many of the analysts anticipate that Soviet Union will invade Afghanistan and Shah of Iran' and his powerful army will so quickly lose the moral authority in the face of Khomeini's revolution. The 1979, Khomeini's Revolution in Iran and Soviet intervention in Afghanistan changed the complexion of politics in the Islamic world. These two events gave impetus to Islamic revivalist movements in various parts of the Islamic world.

Holy wars and Un-holy Alliances

Between 1979-1991, the Islamic world remained the focus of three major concerns; first, the Palestinian issue continued to agitate and ignite Muslim public (Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982 and uprooted the Palestinians and their 'infrastructure of terror') and the leaders in the Islamic states could not wish it away and continued to pass resolutions of solidarity and sympathy with the Palestinians. The 1970, 1976 and 1982 dislocations of the Palestinians also forced thousands of them to relocate in the Persian Gulf and other Arab states for employment opportunities. To appease the Palestinians, both the Monarchies and the Radical Arab states began to provide financial assistance to Yasser Arafat, who acquired the status of head of a state, without a state, besides being the 'sole spokesman' of the Palestinians.²⁴ Second, Afghan war (1979-89) was transformed and galvanized into Holy War (Jihad) under US patronage, Islamic militants (Jihadis) were mobilized from Arabi and Ajami states, they fought side by side with their Afghan brethren. By all accounts it was a successful war, which the Afghans valiantly fought against the 'Soviet infidels' and brought down the 'evil empire'.²⁵ Third, ironically, on the other side Iraq invaded Iran in 1980 and for 8 years an Arab and Ajami state fought against each other, devastating each other and undermining the unity of 'Muslim Ummah'. Having declared victory over Iran, in 1990 Saddam Hussain invaded Kuwait, the Arab Monarchies were shaken, and they requested the help of International Community and the US. To help vacate Iraqi aggression against Kuwait, the US launched Operation Desert Storm and forced Iraq out of Kuwait.

During these decades, the gap between the pro-Western elite (who pretended and portrayed themselves as secular-liberal, but in reality could contribute little in developing a model of governance along liberal –secular lines-i.e. institutionalizing the rule of law, encouraging freedom of press, protecting human rights, promoting pluralist culture and liberal values etc) and the Islamists widened. The corrupt and weak regimes reflect an

²³ For an interesting and useful account of rise and fall of Nasser's 'ideology' and pan-Arabism, see Fouad Ajami, "The End of Pan-Arabism" in *The American Encounter: The United States And The Making Of Modern World*, edited by James F.Hoge,Jr and Fareed Zakaria (New York: Basic Books,1997)pp350-364

²⁴ Baba,pp98-115

²⁵ For an early and one of the most insightful and informative studies on the subject see, John K Cooley , *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism* (London: Pluto Press,2001)

intellectual failure of the liberal and progressive state or civil society in the Islamic world. These regimes in the Islamic world, in symbolism, substance, context and form were perceived as pro- West and anti-people, corrupt and devoid of popular legitimacy. At the popular level, growing disenchantment with the elite failure- inability to institute a participatory form of government and expand liberal-secular political space contributed to rise in Islamic militancy. Consequently Islamic world is rife with a growing disconnect between elite orientation, interests, goals and popular aspirations.²⁶ This makes the state in most of the Islamic world fragile and inherently unstable. Internal reform and restructuring is linked with external support and any regime change in one may have ripple effects on the other. What is more disturbing and alarming that the liberal-secular space in the Islamic world is losing ground—the electoral results in Pakistan and Turkey are pointers of that direction..

To summaries, *I have argued in the above section that the persistence of Palestinian issue, Afghan war, Khomeni revolution and Iraq-Iran war, contributed towards the resurgence of Islamism. It solidified Islamic sentiment, mobilized the Islamic militants in the Islamic world and insrumentalized Islam as an ideology of political action and holy war. It also led to the mushroom growth of religious institutions from Afghanistan to Indonesia.*²⁷ *Religious schools were not new to Islamic world, they had been there as institutions of learning for centuries but what these wars did were to politicize and weaponize them. More importantly, they gave legitimacy to Islamic militancy and in many weak states in the Rimland (Chechnya, Tajikistan, Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines to name a few) became sanctuaries for potential terrorists.*

Islamic world and South Asia

Islamic world has deep and strong, historical, cultural, economic and security linkages with South Asia. In fact as analyzed in the opening section of this paper in the geopolitical sense being part of the Rimland, South Asia is the counter part of the conflict ridden Arab world. Intractable disputes, conflict and war are the defining characteristics of South Asia. Cold War, Containment, low intensity wars, cross border violations and repercussions of Afghan war have changed the complexion of South Asia. Between 1989-91 while the Soviet Block crumbled, to borrow Francis Fukyama’s expression, and ‘end of history’ began to be celebrated in many parts. Many states of the world began to shape, adopt and adjust to the ‘new world order’.²⁸ However, South Asia continued to defy that logic. Conflict in Kashmir, arms race, civil war in Afghanistan reappeared with vengeance.

The strategic environment in South Asia is driven and defined by India-Pakistan rivalry. Despite shared colonial past, visible cultural and institutional similarities, the dynamics of power relations continue to be driven by, hostility, lack of trust, conflict and war. Insecurity, fear and suspicion of the ‘other’ continue to keep South Asia as the ‘nuclear

²⁶ .For an extensively researched and scholarly work on Islamic world and the rise of various Islamic movements and how they have weakened the state structures ,see, Gilles Kepel, Jihad: Expansion and Decline of the Islamic Movement (Cambridge: Belknap Press,2002)pp3-50

²⁷ .ibid. 400-430

²⁸ see Saeed Shafqat, “*Role of the U.S in the Changing World Order*” in Saeed Shafqat (Ed) Contemporary Issues in Pakistan Studies (Lahore:Azad,2000 3rd edition)pp229-238

flash point'. Peace, cooperation, economic partnership remains elusive. Most scholarly and journalistic studies continue to present dismal picture of 'unending conflict' in South Asia²⁹

²⁹ For a theoretically rigorous and perceptive analysis ,see, Sumit Ganguly, Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan tensions Since 1947(New York; Columbia University,2002) also see, Owen Bennett Jones, Pakistan: Eye of the Storm (New Haven: Yale University Press,2002) Mary Ann Weaver, Pakistan-In the Shadow of Jihad and Afghanistan(New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux,2002)

How did we get there? I will argue that after gaining independence, the leadership in two states found it difficult to liberate itself from the experience and processes of ‘partitioning of British India’. The root of ‘hatred of brothers’ is buried in the Hindu, Muslim and British histories and cultural experiences.³⁰ Both states can and do invoke ‘past glory’ to run each other down. Suspicious of each other’s intent the two tumbled into war over Kashmir (1947), this aggravated anxieties and insecurities. Since then Kashmir has and continues to be the ‘core issue’ of rivalry and potential war between India and Pakistan. India claims Kashmir is an ‘integral part of India’, Pakistan contests that claim and maintains it is a ‘disputed territory’. The two have fought four wars. Over the past half a century international community has shown little interest in the ‘historical, legal validity or merits’ of the case or even plight of the Kashmir’s, its primary concern has been to ensure that a conflict between the two does not degenerate into large scale military conflict and nuclear holocaust. Given the fact that today, both India and Pakistan possess nuclear weapons.

Pakistan’s insecurity further increased, when the founder of Pakistan Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah died (1948). During this formative phase the pronouncements and policies of Indian leadership did little to assure Pakistan that it has accepted the outcome of ‘partition’. Fearful and insecure about Indian domination, Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan (1947-51) and bureaucratic and military elite’s were quick to build consensus on seeking alliance with the US to counter ‘Indian designs’³¹. This sparked arms race between India and Pakistan. India under Nehru (1947-64) perceived itself to be the successor to the British Raj and expected to be accepted as the dominant regional power.

It aspired for a role as a global power and chose to pursue Non-Alignment as its foreign policy goal. As a leader of the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) Nehru was skillful in developing linkages and sustaining relations with the Arab world .In 1956, when Jamal Abdul Nasser nationalized Suez Canal, Nehru was quick in showing solidarity and support with Nasser and Arab cause. During the decade of 1955-65, NAM and Arab nationalism surged and India remained an influential actor in the Arab world³². While Pakistan being allies of the US and tied with CENTO and SEATO, was recalcitrant in supporting the cause of Arab brethren. Pakistan regretted the moment and learnt to mend fences with the Arab world, but it was not until the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965 that Pakistan was able to reconnect with the Arab world.

Diverging World Views of Indian and Pakistani Leaders

From Nehru to Vajpayee Indian leadership has made strenuous efforts that India be seen and treated as a major military, economic, political and technological power .Of course it has come to be recognized as the largest democracy, which is no small achievement. In May 1998, India exploded the bomb and demonstrated to the world that it would not be

30 see, Eric S.Margolis, War At the Top of The World: the Struggle for Afghanistan, Kashmir and Tibet(New York: Routledge,2001) In his chapter on “*The Hatred of Brothers*” he provides a chilling account of distrust between India and Pakistan .pp 154-178

³¹ Denis Kux, The United States and Pakistan 1947-2000: Disenchanted Allies (Washington D.C: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2001) pp 35-37.

³² Dixit, pp 61-65

treated like a ‘nuclear apartheid’. It has to be recognized as a legitimate global power and acquiring nuclear capability is part of the same larger goal.³³ In the Indian view nuclear explosions reaffirmed the belief in ‘The Wonder That was India’- it revived the lost glory of the Hindu national cultural power that is described as Hinduvita. In Indian perception by going nuclear India had succeeded in conveying to the world that ‘India is Emerging Power’ in the world and ‘the power’ in South Asia.³⁴ By projecting power, has India been able to win the confidence or respect of its smaller neighbors? Not probably. Nehruvian approach was benign neglect of South Asia because India aimed to play a moral and diplomatic role at the global level. With the emergence of Bangladesh in 1971 Indian foreign policy underwent a paradigm shift from benign neglect to a hegemonic role in South Asia. India craved for recognition as the power in South Asia. Should India care about how neighboring states perceive Indian power ambitions? The reality is India is the dominant power and increasingly desirous of recognition.

As opposed to India, the Pakistani leaders from Liaquat to Musharraf have found it difficult to liberate themselves from the fear of India. During the Cold War, Pakistani elites equated Indian Non-Alignment as alignment with the Soviet Union and their worst fears came true in August 1971, when India signed a twenty year (1971-91) Treaty of Friendship. The successive civil and military regimes cannot be exonerated from contributing to the dismemberment of the Pakistani state, however, Indian military intervention and humiliating defeat of its military left a deep scar on Pakistani national psyche. At the popular and elite level it promoted and solidified the belief that India has not accepted the creation of Pakistan, it aims to undo or reabsorb Pakistan into India. In the post 1971 period, fear of India got converted into an existentialist threat. Relations with India were not seen as simply territorial conflict on Kashmir, but Kashmir was only a symptom of a larger existential malaise, in which India began to be seen not only a hostile state but a hegemonic regional power. The break up of Pakistan did not produce an environment of trust and confidence, the Indo-Pakistan rivalry continued to persist. Ironically for one generation of Pakistanis it revived the bitter “memories of partition”. For another, it came at an opportune moment; coinciding with oil boom in the Middle East/Persian Gulf, rise of Monarchies and resurgence of Islamism. Internally, dismemberment rekindled and energized the Islamic sentiment in Pakistan. Religious groups became more vigorous and vociferous in demanding Islamization of laws. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1971-77) as president and prime minister of Pakistan responded to these external and internal challenges by adopting a four-pronged strategy: (1) strengthen relations with the Islamic world. (2) Enhance defense capability (3) strengthen relations with China (4) challenge Indian hegemony. On becoming president in 1972 Bhutto made a whirlwind tour of the Islamic world, he visited 14 Arab countries including Saudi Arabia, mostly symbolic but drastically re-orientated Pakistan towards the Islamic world. Bhutto redirected the loss of Pakistan by seeking opportunities of association with the Islamic states. Amongst the Pakistani civilian leaders he was the most imaginative, bold and talented leader who understood the dynamics of international relations. He was a

³³ Jaswant Singh, *Defending India* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999) pp306-337

³⁴ For Indian self-perceptions of power, its military, nuclear capability, see, Stephen Cohen, *India: Emerging Power* (Washington D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2001) pp36-65 also Jaswant Singh pp1-60.

crafty diplomat and possessed a strategic vision for Pakistan. He was conscious of Pakistan's loss and recognized that policy of 'strategic parity' that Pakistan had been pursuing with India may no longer be a feasible goal, but he was not willing to accept 'Indian hegemony'. He was careful not to confront India (signed Simla Agreement 1972) but simultaneously chose to build solidarity with the Islamic world. He was vigorous in adopting a policy of checkmating Indian influence in the Islamic world. He was able to develop personal relations with Monarchs, Radicals and Revolutionaries like Colonel Gaddafi of Libya. Bhutto was quick to grasp that in the Middle East the US was aiming to contain Soviet influence by building strategic partnership by engaging president Anwar Sadat of Egypt. Bhutto leaned towards Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. In building a bond with the Islamic world, his major achievement was holding of the Second Islamic Summit Conference in 1974, the event was a catalyst in expanding and consolidating Pakistan's relations with the OIC member states. Since the inception of OIC Pakistan has been an active member but after the Islamic Summit it became more vigorous in not only drawing the attention of Islamic world on Kashmir but also worked for promoting exchange of scientific and technological knowledge. The headquarters of OIC Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH) and the Secretariat of the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) is based in Islamabad.

By the mid 1970's Pakistan under Bhutto had become an effective player in the OIC and to its satisfaction had 'contained' Indian influence in the Islamic world. In the subsequent decades Pakistan was vigorous in drawing the attention of OIC on Kashmir, Afghanistan, NPT, CTBT and even Palestine.³⁵ During the 1990's adoption of resolutions on Kashmir by OIC have been trumpeted by Pakistan as 'internationalizing the Kashmir issue' causing irritation and evoking protests from India.^{35*}

Given its size, scale and resources in the post 9/11 world, the OIC could do more than merely adopting the resolutions, its energies can be channelized in two directions; strengthening political, economic and scientific cooperation among the Islamic states and promoting an environment of peace and development both in the Islamic world and South Asia.

During the Afghan war Indian –Pakistani rivalry continued to simmer, however, in 1989 as the Soviet troops withdrew from Afghanistan, the relations between the two soured. During Afghan war a number of Jihadi groups spawned in Pakistan with state and international support.³⁶

Between 1989-91 a number of unrelated developments, uprising in Indian held Kashmir (1989), civil war in Afghanistan, dismemberment of Soviet Union, Gulf war and termination of Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty proved fruitful for Jihadi groups and Pakistan military. The military elites began to advocate that an unstable Afghanistan provided Pakistan an opportunity to adopt a policy of strategic depth;

³⁵ .For details on 1974 Islamic summit and growing influence of Pakistan in OIC, Baba, pp 99-104 also pp 199-201

^{35*} For Indian side of the story, see Dixit, pp 247-257

³⁶ Cooley provides some fascinating details on these linkages, pp80-125

therefore it is desirable to have a government in Afghanistan that is sympathetic if not friendly towards Pakistan. Given their linkages with various Afghan factions, they appeared confident that such a goal is attainable, they began to work for it and facilitated the appearance of Taliban, Second, the uprising in Kashmir, led the Jihadi groups to believe that here is an opportunity where Jihad can be pursued, it suited the needs and world view of many private groups and some in the Pakistani governments, this reactivated and energized a new nexus among the religious groups and the Pakistani state, instrumentalized through Inter Services Intelligence(ISI) agency. Thus, during the 1990's successive civil governments in Pakistan became vigorous in internationalizing the Kashmir dispute and also abetting and supporting the Jihadi groups. With the rise and success of Taliban, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan began to be seen as patrons of Taliban. This strategy embroiled Pakistan into Afghan's civil strife and in 1994 as Taliban movement gained momentum and swept the country in 1996, Pakistan acquired the status of a Taliban ally and was one of the three states (the other two being Saudi Arabia and Kuwait) which recognized the Taliban regime until it was overthrown in October 2001.

To counter Pakistan in the Islamic world, India adopted a four-pronged strategy. First, in 1992, it recognized Israel that opened up the prospects of Indo-Israel security and strategic cooperation. Second, it reinvigorated and expanded its diplomatic and trade relations with Egypt, Iraq and Gulf states. Third, with the emergence of Central Asian states, India showed remarkable skill in expanding cultural and economic relations with the region. Finally, in 1995 it made a diplomatic break through by announcing the formation of Indo-Iranian Joint Commission, which has contributed towards substantial expansion of scientific, cultural, economic and security cooperation between the two. Since mid 1990's improvement in Indo-Iranian relations is a major regional development.

As noted earlier, from 1964 to 1979 Pakistan had cordial and friendly relations with Iran. But in the post Khomeini period, Pakistan-Iran interests diverged: Iran, revolutionary and Islamic distanced itself from the US and grew hostile and inimical; Pakistan continued to seek collaboration with the US. Had Pakistan used imagination it could have found a natural ally in Khomeini's Iran but Pakistan's obsession with Afghanistan and Saudi sponsored Islamization colored each other's perceptions. During the 1990s, particularly with the rise of Taliban, the Iranian's began to complain of "Be-etamadi"-lack of trust with Pakistan.³⁷ It was only after the overthrow of Taliban that Pakistan-Iran relations have taken a turn toward understanding and cooperation. In the 1990's Iran and Pakistan missed an opportunity but today they can develop a shared strategic vision not only in Central Asia but also in turning a new leaf of partnership and possibly peace and understanding with India. US policy towards Iran (which is unlikely to change any time soon) will remain a major challenge and is already forcing Iran to move away from the West and develop geo-strategic linkages with Russia.

The challenge is to replace 19th century 'power game' of conflict of interests, with a vision of partnership, shared interests and regional benefit for 21st century (for example,

³⁷ . Tanvir Ahmad "*Dealing with Iran*", Dawn, Karachi November, 16, 1998.

recently Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkmenistan have signed an agreement for 1,540 km pipeline that passes through 835 km Afghanistan in 615 km into Pakistan). If Iran, Turkey and Pakistan were to pool their resources, they could transform the fortunes of the region.

Migration, Remittances and Islamic Connection

In this section I will argue that Pakistan and India have not only an Islamic connection of belief and faith but also a historical pattern of ties with the Middle East .For Pakistan the Islamic factor provided a comparative advantage over India. Like security issues in the arena of export of manpower to the Arab states the two states continue to compete .The large scale migration that one saw during 1970's and 1980's as Addleton has perceptively observed just did not 'happen', "it grew out of a complex of set of economic, political and historical circumstances"³⁸ Pakistan's manpower has played a pivotal role in transforming the Gulf and the Middle East. Three factors strengthened Pakistan's Middle East connection.

- (1) First, Migration (Hijrat) and mobility has been a significant characteristic of Muslim society in undivided British India. Pakistan inherited this as part of its historical heritage. Since the time of Alexander the Great, India was invaded through the Khyber Pass- thus disruption, migration, conflict and occupation has been a historical pattern in the areas that constitute contemporary Pakistan, however, the British changed the course of history as they penetrated and conquered India through the Bay of Bengal .By the mid 19th Century, British, commerce, trade, technology and military power served as a vital link between the Persian Gulf/Red Sea with South and South East Asia. The opening of Suez Canal in 1869 connected the British controlled territories in the Persian Gulf with South Asia. The British rule gave impetus to the processes of migration and dislocation; in 1834 the official end to slavery in British Empire marked the beginning of large scale migration from British India to other regions of the world; the construction of canal irrigation system in Punjab and Sindh (1870-1930), led to large scale dislocation and re-settlement of people. During 1920's Khilafat Movement a pan-Islamic sentiment was a potent factor that encouraged mass mobilization of Muslims from all over India, causing dislocation and resettlement for thousands. According to one estimate by 1932, about 23 million Indians had emigrated from India. A vast majority eventually returned home.³⁹ In the post independence Pakistan the process of re-settlement, migration and dislocation continued because of a number of irrigation, water conservation projects (GM Barrage, Mangla and Tarbela dams).
- (2) Second, as noted earlier, the dismemberment of Pakistan did not diminish the voice and role of religious groups; it led to resurgence of Islamic sentiments and reinforced the Islamic Identity.
- (3) Oil wealth and construction boom in the Gulf and Middle East coincided with Pakistan's dismemberment and provided fresh opportunity for venturing out.

³⁸ Jonathan S. Addleton , Undermining The Centre : The Gulf Migration and Pakistan(Karachi: Oxford University Press,1992)p27

³⁹ .ibid,p29

This shows that the Pakistanis are an extremely dynamic and mobile people. The country has a culture of migration and mobility. In the post independence period Pakistan witnessed an internal migration from hinterland to the urban centers, it accepted and absorbed large-scale migration at the time of independence from India to Pakistan. Mobility is an attribute of Pakistani society that has not been given adequate attention. Migration (Hijrat) in Pakistani society is invoked by citing Prophet Muhammad's movement from Mecca to Madina. Mobility is considered an attribute of migration. Both, religion and prospects of economic opportunities and a drive to improve status of the family is considered a powerful incentive. Pakistani society values migration, particularly if it is for a higher cause or may lead to betterment of one's family. One can cite cases where families have chosen a family member, paid for his passage abroad, so that he can earn, send some money to improve the social and economic status of the family.

Another less noted feature of emigrants to the Gulf and Middle East is that by and large they tend to return home. The ties with the homeland are never really broken. The migration to the Middle East has the hope and expectation to return and tendency to improve socio-economic status in the society. Returnees, invested in land, transport, marriage or ceremonies is well documented. While those who migrate to the West in general they try to get absorbed or at least that is what they idealize. Thus, migration to the West has a different social value and orientation.

During the 1950-1960's internal migration within Pakistan was one of the biggest in the developing states. A number of studies claim that internal migration in Pakistan was higher compared to India during the same period. Internal migration is recognized as a potent factor in the growth and development of Pakistan. The total size of the Indian and Pakistani communities in the Middle East during the 1970's and 1980's were roughly comparable-even though India is far more populous and theoretically could have provided much larger proportion of the South Asian migrant force in the Middle East.⁴⁰ During the late 1970's the completion of Terbel and Mangla project, the same Pathan workers, who had been working on these projects in the 1970's as the Middle East construction boom appeared, became available for the same American Construction firms, who had construction contracts in Saudi Arabia and Gulf States and recruited Pakistani workers for jobs in the Middle East. By 1973, when Pakistanis began to migrate to Middle East, more than 40% of Pakistan's urban population had already experienced migration at least over their lifetime.

*Between 1972-1990 remittances from the Gulf/Middle East workers transformed the economic, cultural and political landscape of Pakistan. Consumerism, housing colonies, English medium schools and Deeni Madrassas (religious schools) boomed. The remittances became a major source of Pakistani economy. It rose from a base of less than \$125 million in 1972-73, to 1\$ billion in 1978-79. By mid 1980's remittances touched the high mark of \$2 billion- a major source of foreign exchange. Between 1972-1988 the Pakistani workers in the Gulf and Middle East sent to Pakistan a foreign exchange amounting to the tune of \$20 billion.*⁴¹

⁴⁰ ibid,p35

⁴¹ . ibid,pp.120-121

Migration and remittances show that Islamic world continues to be huge factor for South Asia contributing about \$ 13 billion annually to their economies. According to a recent news report in 2001 India had 3.5 million workers in the Persian Gulf, who sent \$ 7 billion in remittances, Bangladesh 1.8 million, who sent \$ 2.9, Pakistan, 1 million, who sent \$2.2 billion (2002), while Sri Lanka had 0.9 million, who sent \$0.7 billion.⁴² The trend indicates that since the Gulf war 1991, the remittances and the number of workers in the Gulf has declined but still it is significant.

Conclusion: A Strategy for Peace and Possible Economic Partnership

Is it possible to deconstruct the environment of conflict and war in South Asia/Islamic world?

A strategy for peace will involve building trust, which is at its abysmal low, currently the two states can hardly communicate with each other without a 'facilitator'. Second, the security environment that the war on 'international terrorism' produced did dampen the dialogue process between the two countries. Pakistan continues to maintain that a distinction be maintained between Kashmiris 'right of self determination' and acts of 'terror'. Third, the arms race in South Asia appears to have intensified, both India and Pakistan have recently tested short and medium range missiles. Fourth, rhetoric of war continues to persist, on both sides, the leadership has done little to reduce the tensions. Fifth, currently, both India and Pakistan are oriented more towards the global economy than towards each other or South Asia. *The two-way legal trade between Pakistan and India stands at around \$100 million. Illegal trade is estimated to be nearly three times this figure. Thus total formal or informal trade with India accounts for less than 5 percent of Pakistan's total trade. Even if trade volume doubles after trade liberalization, it will still be around 7% of the globally projected imports of Pakistan.* But in the context of trade and economic relations it may mean big leap forward. Finally, India being the largest state can become engine of growth and dynamism in South Asia, for such a leadership role, it needs to build its infrastructure, the availability of oil and gas that Islamic states from Gulf to Central Asia provide for such an eventuality is possible but that requires a courageous and visionary leadership that can move the region away from conflict to cooperation.

A leadership that believes in peace and conflict avoidance, unfortunately, is not on the horizon at least in South Asia. The political leadership (both in opposition and government) in India and Pakistan need to seriously re-examine their public postures. Instead of reinforcing attitudes of antagonism between their citizens, they ought to create an environment of trust and confidence whereby issues of strategic significance for the two countries may be discussed and debated dispassionately with some degree of objectivity and in accordance with enlightened self-interest. The leadership should create some space, where dialogue between Pakistani scholars and their Indian counterparts are encouraged. A political, cultural educational dialogue between the two countries may help in easing the traditional antagonism. It may provide an opportunity for rethinking security and strategic concerns. Since Kargil crisis and particularly, December 2001, India and Pakistan have moved in fits and starts in pursuing normalization of relations.

⁴² Amy Waldman, "Gulf Bounty is Drying up in Southern India" The New York Times, February 24, 2003, p A3.

The onus is on the political leadership in the two countries. The post 9/11 world has provided the two countries opportunities to redirect their energies towards peace and regional cooperation, so far they seem to have shown little imagination in reducing arms race. If the leadership continues to show, lack of courage, imagination and shy away from seeking creative solutions, India and Pakistan may miss an opportunity for building peace and cooperation and promoting economic development. Since May 2003, some visible signs of normalization of relations between India and Pakistan are on the horizon. The two have restored exchange of ambassadors; bus service between Lahore and New Delhi has resumed. Maulana Fazal Ur Rehman leader of the JUI and secretary general of MMA visited India in July had a meeting with the Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and called for peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute.⁴³ The visit and meeting was interpreted as one faction of MMA distancing itself from religious extremists involved in waging Jihad in Kashmir. These are encouraging signs but not concrete steps towards peace and cooperation.

On the other hand, the prospects of cooperation with the Islamic world have never been brighter for India and Pakistan than today. India has opted to build strategic partnership with Israel and Iran. It has been skilful in expanding security arrangements with both states. As noted above, it continues to pursue a robust policy of cultural and economic penetration in the Persian Gulf and larger Islamic world. On its part, Pakistan has mended fences with Iran in recent years, however like many states of the Islamic world, it refuses to recognize Israel. India's recognition of Israel and its strategic partnership are forcing Pakistan to have a hard look at its Israel policy. Public opinion and leadership is divided, for many it is an emotional and ideological issue and enlightened national interest argument does not cut much ice. Pakistani policy makers and leaders need to take into cognizance that in the context of war in Iraq dealing with Israel is a political and not a religious issue. In the next five years the policy choices that Indian and Pakistan's leaders make could reshape the security and peace environment in South Asia and foster a new partnership with the Islamic world. Has India opted for strategic partnership over economic partnership? Or may be it can have both? What are the choices available to Pakistan? Is Pakistan ready for peace and normalization of relations with India? Has India's recognition of Israel hurt her relations with the Islamic world? Will Pakistan's recognition of Israel hamper her relations with the Islamic world? These are tough questions that policy makers need to address now, if India and Pakistan must avoid an impending nuclear holocaust and re-direct their energies in promoting peace and cooperation in South Asia and the Islamic world.

On its part the Islamic world has several possibilities: it can redefine bilateral and multilateral relations with the US; it can engage and energize relations with China, with new vigor, imagination and initiatives; it can choose to build a relationship of confidence and trust with Russia; more importantly, it can reconnect and strengthen partnerships with Europe, depending on the orientations, compulsions and needs of states of the

⁴³ . Maulana Fazal Ur Rehman had a ninety minute 'courteously call' on Indian PM and after the meeting stated, "I will take the message of peace to the people and members of the National Assembly". The Hindu online edition, July 21, 2003.

Islamic world. This requires finding creative ways of intensifying collaboration among OIC states and developing a coherent strategic vision.

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