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Pakistan's Hinterland Option in Central Asia: Prospects for Regional Security and Development

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Abstract
This article examines Pakistan's strategic pivot towards the Central Asian Republics (CARs) following the Soviet Union's dissolution in 1991, analyzing the geopolitical, economic, and cultural drivers behind this "hinterland option." It argues that Pakistan's initiative was motivated by the quest for strategic depth against India, the need to compensate for diminished Cold War relevance, and the aspiration to access new markets and energy resources. The study traces the historical connections between South and Central Asia while detailing Pakistan's multifaceted engagement through diplomatic missions, trade agreements, and infrastructure proposals. It critically assesses the competitive regional environment involving Turkey and Iran, the complicating factor of the Afghan civil war, and the secular orientation of Central Asian elites that tempered expectations of Islamic solidarity. The article concludes that while Pakistan successfully established institutional footholds through the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), its ambitions were constrained by Afghanistan's instability, Central Asia's persistent links with Russia, and the region's pragmatic rather than ideological foreign policy orientation.

***Keywords**: Pakistan, Central Asia, strategic depth, geopolitical competition, Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Post-Cold War, Afghanistan, India, regional security, political Islam.*

Introduction

On December 18, 1991, a beaming Sardar Asif Ahmed Ali, Minister of State for Economic Affairs, proudly told the Pakistani press that Pakistan was establishing diplomatic relations and formal contact with the five Central Asian Republics (CARS) of the Soviet Union after completing a three-week tour of the region just two weeks before the Soviet Union formally ceased to exist.[1] This surprisingly appropriate and sharp response by the Pakistani bureaucracy to regional challenges raised questions about Pakistan's intentions and the prospects of its endeavor.

Central Asia and South Asia

India as a whole, or more especially, the northern region of South Asia and Central Asia, has long shared strong cultural ties. The Mughal dynasty, which dominated much of India from 1526 until the final Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah II passed away in exile in Burma in 1962.[2] It was established by Babur, the last Timurids from Central Asia. The connections between the two areas were likely more cultural than political for the most of the time. But in the nineteenth century, Russia, Britain, and India and its crown jewel were all involved in a power struggle in

[1] The 24 member's delegation traveled to Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenia, Kazakhstan and also to Azerbaijan and Russia from November 24 to December 14, 1991. Central Asia: Islamic World's New Frontier, [Supplement], in *Dawn*, Karachi, January 15, 1992.

[2] Cf. Herbert Hartel, 'Geschichte Vorderindiens seit 1525,' in B. Spuler (ed), *Geschichte der islamischen Lander*. Neuzeit. (Handbuch der Orientalistik, 1. Abtl., Bd. 6,3), Leided/Koln: Brill:1959, pp. 234-273, esp. p. 235ff.

Central Asia.[3] The 'Forward Policy' of imperialism was developed to protect British interests in India from the alleged threat of Russian expansionist aspirations outside of Central Asia.[4]
British Indian focus moved to Communist subversion and the alleged threat it posed to colonial power over India following the 1917 Russian Revolution. During the Civil War in TransAsia in 1918–1919,[5] Indian troops from British India took part in the British intervention. In the 1920s and 1930s, the 'Basmachi' guerrillas, an armed Islamic rebel group to Soviet rule in Central Asia, established safe havens in Afghanistan and northern India.[6]
Since Pakistan's inception, there has been a noticeable cultural and political connection between Pakistan and Central Asia. When the Tashkent declaration suspended the conflict between India and Pakistan following the 1965 war, it witnessed its most spectacular moment in 1966. The selection of the negotiation location was important and vital to the discussions' success. The Political and cultural exchange has been less significant but nonetheless equally significant. Both Soviet diplomats serving in the Soviet diplomatic posts in Pakistan and a significant number of Soviet delegations that had visited Pakistan were from Central Asia. Their expectation that they would have easier access to Pakistani popular opinion was not without foundation.

Changed Environment

However, historical and Pakistan's cultural connections to Islam and Central Asia by themselves would not adequately account for Pakistan's push in that direction. Ironically, Pakistan has always defined itself in terms of its ties to Islam and West Asia. It attempted to break away from the South Asian subcontinent but ultimately found that all it wanted was to reconcile with India, its ancestral neighbor in South Asia. It has governed every foreign policy choice made by Pakistan's successive administrations. Pakistani policymakers' quest for a workable strategic depth towards India was heightened by the significantly increased military and strategic imbalance in India's favor following the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. Creating a critical mass to neutralize India or perhaps to exact revenge for the loss of East Pakistan was the perceived task. Pakistan's SEAT0 and CENTO membership had failed to prevent its partition as the big countries stood by in 1971. Thus, Bhutto and Zia, respectively, weakened Pakistan's connections with both blocs.
Bhutto attempted to establish a formal Third World alliance, which he planned to head. He also successfully hosted the Organization of Islamic Countries Lahore Summit in February 1974, putting it to the test.[7] After 1977, Zia's focus shifted from the Iran-Libya-Algeria-PLO connection to Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf Sheikhdoms, relying more on conservative Islamic nations.[8] Zia was the one who thought that establishing an Islamic block between the Arabian Sea and the Urals region would provide his nation the "strategic depth".[9] It required in its conflict

[3] For a detailed exposition of the 'Great Game' as the Anglo-Russian rivalry in the 19th century was called, see Gerald Morgan, *Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Central Asia*,1810-1895, London: Cass, 1981, 264 pp.
[4] For a classical assertion of British imperial interest in the region cf. George N.Curzon, *Russia in Central Asia*, London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1889, 477 pp. Morgan suggested that the threat perception on both sides was more imaginary than real since neither of them was capable or willing to go beyond Afghanistan. Morgan, *Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Central Asia*, p. 213.
[5] For a thorough account of the events cf. C. H. Ellis, British '*Intervention' in Transcapia* 1918-1919, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963, p. 175.
[6] On the Busmachi resistance see Central Asian Review, 1959, No. 3, pp. 236- 250; G. Wheeler, *The Modern History of Soviet Central Asia*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 964, pp. 107-111.
[7] Cf. Islamic Summit 1974, Pakistan: Address by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Prime Minister of Pakistan, 22 February 1974, Islamabad: department of Films and Publications, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Auqaf and Haj,Government of Pakistan, [n.d.] p. 26.
[8] This switch in allegiances is described for the 1976-78 period in Marvin G. Weinbaum/Gautam Sen, 'Pakistan Enters the Middle East,' in *Orbis*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Fall 1978), pp. 595-612.
[9] Cf. "Pakistan: Looking North". in *The Economist*, London, February 22, 1992, p. 57.

with India, prior to him, the Muslim bloc had a perfect blend of philosophy and potential, but it had not yet shown to be very successful.

Moreover, the Muslim nations have a crucial place in the globe and from a political, economic, and defense perspective, they are having big advantages. They are situated along the world's major air, sea, and land routes. It is unfortunate that we have lost a significant amount of time since our independence, but nature has gifted them with limitless material resources that are necessary for the advancement and well-being of Islam so that its people might design their lives in accordance with its teachings.[10]

Bhutto respectfully presented himself for the position of head of the Islamic world, denouncing his efforts for third world countries as self-serving and adding that it had a negative effect on public sentiment in the developing nations. Zia suggested putting aside personal preferences and interests in order to choose one of the leaders as a unifying force, a man of God, and an inspiration for at least guiding the Muslim world toward a single God, while discussing the challenges of achieving Muslim unity.[11]

President Zia put aside his personal interest and inclined to choosing a leader who is primarily responsible for unity of Muslims, and having inspiration for at least leading the Muslim towards the god (Allah).[12]Bhutto had tried to keep his distance from the United States, and tried to main the coronial relations with China and recognized Eastern bloc countries including Korea, Vietnam, and Eastern Germany diplomatically. The Afghan crisis following the 'Saur' revolution in April 1978 and the Soviet invasion in 1979 allowed Zia to largely turn back to the United States for security underwriting for Pakistan.[13]

However, just a restricted amount of this was done for a predetermined amount of time. Moreover, the end of the Cold War and the Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan signaled a regional and international reevaluation of security guarantees and alternatives, which left Pakistan's strategic importance to the world's superpowers and the United States in particular dwindling quickly. The importance of Pakistan to American national security had diminished since 1991, the United States has refused to provide Pakistan any military assistance due to concerns about its potential for nuclear production. Pakistan's nuclear option was not the primary cause of this; rather, it was the quickly waning need for the United States to preserve this quasi-alignment in the face of dire financial constraints and an urgent desire to use the "peace dividend" domestically.[14]

Additionally, Selig Harrison of the Carnegie Endowment for Peace asserted that the US no longer need access to Pakistani installations in order to keep an eye on Soviet military initiatives. Pakistan's bilateral issues with the United States were made worse by the lack of a sizable pro-

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[10] Zia-ul-Haq, President Calls for Islamic Society: Address to the Nation, Rawalpindi: [Government of Pakistan], November. 1979, pp. 7-8.

[11] What I am trying to project is something without selfishness (like, for example, we had in this country in the past, where in the name of the Third World, a certain personality wanted to project himself, something that was not taken well not only within the other developing countries but also in the Muslim world).' Zia-ul-Haq, 'Interview to Syed Hasan Mutahar, 'Muslim World League', Makkah, 13-3-78, in President of Pakistan, General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq, *Interviews of foreign Media* , Vol. I, March- December 1978, Islamabad: Directorate of Films & Publications, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of Pakistan, [n. d.], p. 118.

[12] Ibid. p.118.

[13] John Canham-Cyne, 'The Bomb Again,' in *Newsline*, Karachi, December 1990, pp. 53-55.

[14] US Ambassador John Manjo, though emphatically in favor of continued close relations, was quoted to have told the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee during confirmation hearings that 'the end of the Cold War and of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan have changed the strategic content of our long standing Relationship, Some, pointing to a number of critical problems we face, have questioned whether it is still in our interest - and indeed, whether it is possible -to have such a strong relationship.' *Dawn*, September 25, 1992.

Pakistan lobby and a political base of its own in the country. John Canham-Cyne correctly noted in his background articles on the problem.[15] According to I5 Robert G. Wirsing, Pakistan has had the unique misfortune of needing foreign allies far more than they have ever needed Pakistan. The fact that India, Pakistan's main adversary, is a desirable strategic option to itself has been another setback for Pakistan. Its ability to approach supporters beyond its immediate neighborhood has always been out of reach. Its alliance partners' dependability never matched its strategic dependence; for the majority of them, the subcontinent's power dynamics imposed an unsettling duality in outlook.[16]

It is also impossible to view Russia and other post-Soviet nations as a promising substitute source of security assurances. Even while Russia was prepared to see beyond the divisive outlook of the Cold War era, a unique Russian foreign policy needs time to develop. Russia was willing to improve ties with Pakistan as part of a more balanced strategy, but not at the price of India[17]. When Russian vice Premier Burbulis met with Indian leaders in Delhi in May 1992, he delivered this message.[18] India and Russia and Ukraine signed new friendship and cooperation treaties. In January of 1993, Boris Yeltsin travelled to India again. Russian affection for India has a long history and will ultimately triumph, even if the Russian Indian entente may not revert to the warmth and intimacy that existed while the Soviet Union was still in existence.

India's economic management experience of what they refer to as a "mixed economy" of private and state sector is of great interest to Russia's newly formed political class. Since then, high-level delegations from Turkmenia, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan have travelled to India.[19] Other motivations for Pakistan to strike a balance with close ties to the CARS include the robustness of the Russia-India relationship and India's concurrent moves towards Central Asia. The harsh reality that the new global order would favour powerful regional powers like India and that regional alliances would take on new significance and purpose was brought home to Pakistan in the wake of the most recent Gulf War. On January 28, 1991, Chief of the Army Staff General Mirsa Aslam Beg addressed Pakistan's top military staff officers about the effects of the Gulf War on Pakistan and called for a "strategic consensus" of all regional states in light of the collapsing global order of superpowers. In an act of "strategic defiance,"[20] he envisioned regional governments ensuring their mutual security. Iran and Turkey were a logical choice in this context. The Nawaz Sharif government's pro-Western yet Islamic policies were intended to foster deeper cooperation with Iran's Islamic-minded leadership as well as tighter connections with Turkey, which is more secular. Islamic nations' cooperation was seen as a desirable substitute for the previous superpower support. Pakistan intended to get access to Islamic solidarity's resources. But up until then, the Islamic option had not shown to be very successful. Pakistan's President Ghulam Ishaq Khan discussed the wave of change sweeping Europe and stated that it might

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[15] 15 John Canham-Cyne, 'The Bomb Again”,' pp. 53-56.

[16] 16 Robert G. Wirsing, *Pakistan's Security under Zia*, 1977-1988, New York: St. Martin's Press 1991, p. 7.

[17] After returning from a six-day visit to Moscow, Pakistan’s secretary-general of foreign Affairs Akram Zaki said Moscow had assured that Pak-Russian relations would not be allowed to be influenced by the relations with other countries. A declaration of principles governing future relations was envisaged to be signed at a higher political level. *Dawn*, October 3, 1992. This was confirmed by the Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev in Islamabad in April 1993 announcing a visit of the Russian Prime Minister later in the year. *Dawn*, April 8, 1993.

[18] Asian Recorder 1992, p. 22343.

[19] Cf. Keesing 's Record of World Events 1992, Harlow/Essex; Longman, pp. 38811(Kyrgyzstan), 38868 (Turkmenia); Asian Recorder 1992, Delhi, p. 22226 (Kazakhstan).

[20] *Dawn*, January 29, 1991. For a more detailed exposition of Pakistan's policy before and after the 1991 Gulf War see Dietrich Reetz, 'Pakistan's Engagement in der Golf-Region. Islamische Solidaritat order regionale Machtpolitik?' in Ferhar Ibrahim/Mir A. Ferdowsi, Die Kuwait-Krise und das regionale Umfeld: hinter gunde, interessen, Ziele. Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 1992, pp. 147-162.

unavoidably have significant effects on the Islamic world while speaking at a group meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in January 1990 in Islamabad focused on "Confidence and Security Building in the Islamic World." He underlined the necessity of energizing the OIC in order to turn it into a truly powerful tool for settling disputes within the ummah and giving the assertions of Muslim unity a tangible expression.[21]

At the same time, there was significantly less of an ideological component to Pakistan's wish to maintain tight ties with Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics. Because of its strategic location, especially its closeness to the Asian Republics of the former Soviet Union and the role it can play in the region with its cultural and religious links with these and other countries like Iran and Afghanistan,[22] Pakistan argued that it should have a special status of regular consultations with the European Community, similar to what India enjoys. Pakistan therefore asserted that its importance had not diminished but rather changed, and that it was still as valuable and significant to Western interests as it had been. Regarding Afghanistan, it insisted that it was in charge of the situation and that Pakistan was the only country the West could rely on to prevent the establishment of a fundamentalist Islamic government in Kabul. Pakistan's self-proclaimed Islamic administration was attempting to win over the West by limiting Islamic militancy in the area, displaying usual ambivalence. Accordingly, there was little proof that the views of his more liberal Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and the Islamic-minded President Ishaq Khan differed much in granting access to US or European Commission monies at the expense of announcing some liberalism.

Pakistan Initiative

In light of this, the first formal visit to Central Asia by a group from the Pakistani government in December 1991 focused on strategic issues. Notably, the visit received widespread publicity in Pakistan just a few days after U.S. Senator Pressler's visit to India, during which the Indian media emphasized his cautions about the threat posed by Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia. Pressler went on an eleven-day official tour to South Asia in January 1992. Pressler is the author of the 'Pressler Amendment,' a measure that limits U.S. military and economic assistance to Pakistan due to its nuclear development. The 'fundamentalist belt' of Muslim countries, he said in Delhi, might include Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, five former Soviet central Asian republics, and sections of Turkey.[23] Pressler claimed that because Islamic fundamentalism is "on the rise in the world," the seven to nine Muslim states that are geographically next to one another, including Pakistan, may form a "confederation" and become a powerful force in this region of the world that would cause issues for India.[24] In order to find a solution to their main concern at the time—the future of the former Soviet Union's nuclear weapons stockpile—the United States was searching for partners. Preventing the spread of nuclear weapons into the hands of a fundamentalist anti-Western Islamic group of states seems to be one of its main goals. Pressler cautioned that foreign economic aid to non-Russian republics would need to have conditionality's attached in order for them to turn over their armaments to the Russian Federation.[25] In light of this, Pakistan was most likely not the main American concern. In order to mobilize India as a regional source of restriction that would be focused more at Central Asia than Pakistan, the U.S. was taking advantage of India's worries of a Muslim bloc led by Pakistan. The necessity to stop Pakistan from developing nuclear weapons was also emphasized by

[21] *The Pakistan Times*, Lahore, January 29, 1990.
[22] *Dawn*, July 16, 1992.
[23] *The Hindustan Times*, Delhi, January 12, 1992.
[24] *The Hindustan Times*, (1992).
[25] *The Hindustan Times*, (1992).

Pressler, who even proposed an early "Camp David-style" gathering of the leaders of China, India, Pakistan, the United States, and the former Soviet Union for this purpose."[26]

Then, in order to maximize the benefits of its Central Asian initiative in terms of its relationship with India and the United States, Pakistan must have made the decision to launch an offensive. Central Asia was meant to give Pakistan the kind of strategic hinterland that it had consistently lacked in its earlier wars with India. In Pakistan's perspective, India had an unfair edge because of its vast geographic reach and abundant natural resources. Given the unfavorable geographic circumstances, Pakistan is likely to lose any significant military conflict with India. According to Ahmad Rashid's headline piece for the semi-official newspaper supplement published on the occasion by the Pakistan Times and Dawn, based in Karachi, Central Asia was now expected to present Pakistan with "the opportunity of new strategic alliances. "This focus on 'strategic depth' with respect to India can also be addressed by strengthening relations with Asia's Muslim heartland. The new republics are also the natural allies of a new regional bloc that could join the current regional cooperation arrangements (RCO) [Regional Cooperation Organization] between Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan.[27] If Islamabad is willing to provide the proper conditions, Central Asia is a natural ally for Pakistan.

It was thought that in a battle with India, the immediate military advantage would come from having access to military supplies via potential land routes in Central Asia that were not under the control of the Indian air or sea forces. According to Naeem Sarfraz, another delegation member, the "gallant but hopelessly inadequate Pakistani fleet"[28] appeared to be unable to defend the sea lanes leading to Karachi. In his article about the visit on "the new strategic scenario," he reasoned that in order to build a fleet that can maintain Pakistan's sea lanes open and enable the nation to bring in the oil needed to keep its military operating past the point at which its three-week oil reserves run out, at least $2 billion in equipment alone would be needed. Pakistan would have safe channels of communication thanks to the establishment of several routes to Central Asia, which were thought to be a significant deterrent to India in and of itself.

Cooperation

Several potential areas of cooperation were investigated during the December 1991 visit by Assef Ali. Pakistan desired to benefit from the influx of directives resulting from the CARs' need to modernise their administrative structures and establish market economies. Up until now, the majority of their production capacities were connected to Ukrainian or Russian enterprises. In addition to a market for raw materials from these republics, Pakistan thinks it can provide services like banking, insurance, management, and English language instruction. It might provide a variety of essential consumer goods that are desperately needed right now. It was especially eager to market textile goods to a region where it was thought that textile quotas would not be implemented anytime soon. The team from Pakistan paid particular attention to how these nations, in contrast to Pakistan, had a vast resource base. Their contemporary technical, scientific, and cultural infrastructure, as well as their high literacy and educational standards, gave them an advantage over many South Asian or African nations in the fight for growth. Pakistan asked the presidents of all the nations it visited to visit Pakistan and signed memorandums of cooperation and joint declarations on economic, educational, and cultural interaction. The CARs require short-term help credits for engineering items, food, and medication. During his visit, Sardar Assef Ali offered the republics long-term credits for between

[26] *The Hindustan Times*, (1992).
[27] Ahmad Rashid, 'Seizing a historic opportunity,' [Supplement], *Dawn*, January 15, 1992, p.1
[28] Ahmed Rashid, (1992).

$lo million and $30 million each to start trade.[29] Pakistan also sought to create joint ministerial commissions. Given its history of hostilities with India, Pakistan appeared to support the CARs' perceived need to develop their own armies and security forces because they feel threatened by Russia's overwhelming superiority or by territorial and other claims made by nearby republics. Pakistan would be able to provide small arms and training, for which it says preparations have already been made. At the end of his visit, Assef Ali gave a briefing to the Chambers of Commerce, the National Defense College, and the General Head Quarters (GHQ), among other relevant government institutions. Although money appeared to be limited, Pakistan wanted to open embassies as quickly as possible, and the team begged the US to reduce the number of large embassies. as well as the Central Asian free staff.

After then, delegations began to flow in. Numerous initiatives were being examined, with a focus on collaboration with Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. The April 1992 power import deal with Tajikistan, which called for Pakistan to restart the Tajik hydel power facility at Ragoon that had been inactive since Russian workers had left, was noteworthy. For the next 30 years, Pakistan would have access to up to 3600 MW of electricity. Up to $5,000 billion in support from Pakistan, 25% in cash, and 75% in Pakistani-made commodities were all part of the barter arrangement. Beginning in 1997,[30] the aid would be monetary adjusted against the sale of power to Pakistan.30 That was the type of collaboration that was envisioned, fusing Pakistan's knowledge and financial resources with the resource potential of the central Asian countries. The tripartite agreement with Afghanistan and Uzbekistan is also noteworthy since it may serve as the foundation of a useful regional partnership on the ground. The initial recommendations addressed a wide range of topics, including power, hydroelectric stations, irrigation, banks, highways, railroads, satellite communication, and the manufacturing of telecommunications equipment.[31]

Since Pakistan lacked direct access to those regions, the main barrier to its aspirations in Central Asia turned out to be a lack of communication. The chaos in Afghanisran, which was positioned between the two regions, compounded that issue. The Afghan border marked the end of South and Central Asia's railway networks. Therefore, it was not unexpected that a significant portion of Pakistan's efforts were focused on getting beyond this barrier. It was simpler to create air traffic. Pakistan International Airlines began operating a weekly flight between Islamabad and Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, in May 1992. The flight was just over an hour long. This followed the signing of a civil aviation agreement on February 15, 1992.[32] Regular flight service to Kazakhstan is also planned. A Central Asian airline that would supply all of the Central Asian republics and link them with Karachi, Islamabad, Istanbul, and Kabul was frequently discussed. Uzbekistan offered to use a portion of its share of idle former Soviet aircraft. But for trade and possible military applications, the train and road connection is essential. On the Pakistani side, there are three rail heads: one that ends within Iranian Baluchistan at Zahidan, close to the Pakistani border, and one each at Peshawar (Landi Kotal) and Quetta (Chaman), which face Afghanistan. On the Central Asian side, the railway would go through southern Afghanistan, connecting Chaman with Kushka at the Turkmen-Afghan border, Landi Kotal with Termez at the Uzbek-Afghan border, and Zahidan with Kirman inside Iran. Since these are capital-intensive projects, it would take a long time before any of these gaps could be closed. Experts from Pakistan recommended a railway container service as a quick fix to fill in the gaps in road

[29] *The Economist*, February 22, 1992, p. 57.
[30] *Dawn*, April 20, 1992.
[31] *Dawn*, July 18, 1992.
[32] *Dawn*, February 16, 1992.

transport From 1969 to 1980.[33] the route connecting Chaman, Kandahar, Herat, and Torhundi to Kushka was heavily utilised; however, it was interrupted by the invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. As a result, the route has been closed since 1980 and may reopen whenever Afghanistan's situation returns to normal. There had also been extensive business along the second connecting route that connected Termez with Landi Kota Peshawar, Kandahar, Kabul, Kunduz, and Hairatan. Given that the route would need to pass through harsh, hilly terrain, connecting the railheads at Landi Kotal and Termez may eventually provide many more challenges. Additionally, the third path that runs inside Iran might be temporarily covered by roads. The development of a contemporary deep seaport on a new Pakistani Railways extension at Gwadar/Pasni is expected to top off the transport scheme's great design. In 1998, this new port may be put into service to alleviate Karachi, which is a busy port. After the project is finished, a new, crucial communication and transportation link between Asia and Europe with strategic dimensions will need to be established.

However, roads within Afghanistan would need to be repaired before any of these proposals could come to fruition. It was declared that the National Highway Authority of Pakistan will shortly begin construction on the Afghan portion of the highway reconstruction initiative, which would encompass six important Afghan routes.34 Despite claiming it lacked the funds, Afghanistan had requested that Pakistan rebuild all of its highways that had been damaged during the 14-year conflict. The Islamic Development Bank and Saudi Arabia were to provide funding for the project. There are two other highways that circle Afghanistan. One is the Karakorum Highway, which runs across China on the easterly route via Kashgar mountains, while the other is a lengthy westward path to Iran. Pakistan's access to Central Asia may be seriously impeded if the unrest in Afghanistan lasts for a while. According to the plans' likelihood, if political circumstances improve, road traffic through Afghanistan will be resumed shortly.[34] The completion of railway connections could take anywhere from six to eight years. The World Bank is being contacted to provide funding for the railway connection. Russia might also join this project, which would involve seven or eight countries and be anticipated to cost $3 to $5 billion over seven or eight years.[35]

Transport and Communication

There was tension between the three prospective regional powers Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey—from the outset of the emergence of sovereign Muslim governments in Central Asia. Iran drew on its shared Persian past with Tajikistan, while Turkey benefited from the shared cultural heritage of the Turkic peoples that inhabited sizable portions of the former Turkistan. The political and cultural relations with Pakistan were far more universal. It was clear that Turkey was in the lead.[36] Suleyman Demirel, the Turkish prime minister, made up to $1.2 billion in credit arrangements during a visit to the area in May 1992. On June 25, 1992, documents for a Black Sea Economic Cooperation Region were signed in Istanbul. "J6 Turkey proposed a Central Asian development bank adopting the Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union" Demirel's visit in May 1992 coincided with the launch of a Turkish television channel that broadcast Turkish language programs to the republic.[37]" Eleven littoral states, including Turkey and Azerbaijan, are included in this group.[38] Suspicions regarding Turkey's objectives were partially aroused by the

[33] S. Akhtar Ali Shah, Addl. General Manager, Pakistan Railways, 'Rail Link with Central Asian States,' in *Dawn*, July 7, 1992.
[34] *Dawn*, July 29; August 5, 1992.
[35] *Dawn*, August 23, 1992.
[36] *Dawn*, May 7, 1992.
[37] *Dawn*, May 7, 1992.
[38] *Keesing's Record of World Events* 1992, p. 38874.

Turkish approach's comprehensiveness. The main source of annoyance was the vague remarks made by Central Asian officials on a Pan-Turkic state that would accept the majority of the CARS. Demirel was always careful to emphasize that the idea was open and secular. The Americans, who thought that Turkey would be able to keep Iran and other fundamentalist Islamic influences at away, nodded in agreement with the Turkish model after maintaining constant communication with the U.S. administration on the matter.[39] Along with defense conversion issues, U.S. Secretary of State James Baker focused on strengthening ties with the Islamic states when he embarked on a 10-day tour of the former Soviet Union in February 1992. This change in strategy was partially brought on by concerns about Iranian activity in the area. The United States would open embassies in Turkmenia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Azerbaijan, it was announced on February 19. The US-Turkish cooperation on actions in Central Asia was discussed during the Turkish Prime Minister's visit to the United States, which took place at the same time as Baker's visit.[40]

Regional Bloc

To add some grandeur to their usually drab internal politics, Turkic officials were clearly not opposed to leveraging the topic of the resuscitation of a sizable Turkic state for the first time since the Ottoman Empire. When asked about Turkey's new role in a post-Cold War world, Prime Minister Demirel highlighted that Turkey was helping to establish a lasting world peace "and we will serve as a bridge between the 200 million people of Europe and 300 million people of E.C.O. and the Middle East countries" during a visit to Pakistan in October 1992.[41]

However, a pan-Turkic accord has not yet come to pass. During a summit convened by Turkish President Turgut Oza1 in Ankara on October 30, 1992, the leaders of the former Soviet Turkic states were unable to reach a consensus to go significantly beyond their current bilateral agreements "towards multilateral cooperation." This was what Turkey had hoped for when it put forth a commitment to the free flow of capital, labour, products, and services akin to that of the European Community. The former Soviet governments were hesitant to commit to what would essentially be a "Turkish version of the Arab League," despite their joint proclamation promising deeper collaboration and an annual future meeting. Iran was the first to open embassies in the CARS, but Kazakhstan was especially hesitant to risk potentially strained future ties with other CIS nations and with the rest of Europe.[42] Oil accords with Turkmenia and other countries were finalised.[43] On February 17, 1992, a Caspian Sea Treaty with Iranian influences was announced.[44] It connected Iran, Turkmenia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Russia, bringing together all of the coastal states of the Caspian Sea. Because Iran lacked Turkey's economic clout, its campaign relied heavily on appealing to cultural affinities. The inaugural International Congress on Scientific Research was held in Iran. and Cultural Cooperation in Central Asia, which was attended by authorities and academics from 30 countries in November 1992.[45] Another recently established organization in the area that links Iran with Tajikistan and Afghanistan is the Iran-

[39] *Turkish Daily News*, Ankara, June 26, 1992.
[40] *Keesing 's Record of World Events* 1992, pp. 38771-2.
[41] 41 *Dawn*, October 26, 1992.
[42] *Keesirzg's Record of World Events* 1992, p. 39192.
[43]Following a visit by Iranian President Rafsanjani to Turkmenia for the Central Asian summit in May 1992, agreements were announced (i) to construct a gas pipeline to Europe via Iran and Turkey (existing pipelines ran to Russia and Ukraine); and (ii) on transport, Banking and trade. Iran had announced a $50 million import credit to Turkmenia in April and an annual import of 150,000 tons of diesel oil from Turkmenia. Iran was also to cooperate on oil exploration and refining with Turkmenia, whose offshore oil extraction in the Caspian Sea was suffering disruption because of shortages of hitherto centrally supplied materials. *Kwsing 's record of world events* 1992, p. 38969.
[44] *Arab News*, Jidda, February 18, 1992.
[45] T*ehrani Times*, Tehran, November 15, 1992.

based Association of Persian Language. Soon after, cultural pacts were signed with Turkic Central Asian nations like Kazakhstan.[46] Iran saw itself as the focal point of an expanded Middle East, referring to increased cooperation with the former Soviet Central Asian republics, Turkey and Pakistan, and voicing new ambitions to control Persian Gulf security.[47]

While Turkey felt it could play a larger regional role, connecting the Middle East, Central Asia, and Europe. Pakistan was at a little disadvantage as Turkey and Iran took use of their historical connections to Central Asia. Pakistan was therefore tasked with bringing the Economic Cooperation Organization's (ECO) dormant regional council back to life. It had been inactive since its founding in 1984, when it took the role of the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD), which was established in 1964 by Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan.[48] The RCD was first intended to give the security cooperation of the 1954-formed CENT0 military alliance an economic component. The member states' mutual commerce rarely exceeded the five percent threshold. On February 16–17, 1992, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan met with his Iranian and Turkish counterparts in Tehran at the request of Pakistan in order to reenergize the E.C.O. by encouraging Azerbaijan and the Central Asian Republics to join. Another possible addition to aid in the restoration of the war-torn nation was Afghanistan.[49] At this summit, Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan were assured full membership in the E.C.O. Kyrghyzstan was invited but chose not to attend, while Tajikistan took part as an observer.[50]

Shortly before the E.C.O. Council of Ministers meeting in Islamabad on November 28, 1992, Kazakhstan decided to arrive late. The Treaty of Izmir was legally revised during this summit, and the number of members was increased from three to 10, comprising the five Central Asian nations of Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey in addition to Pakistan. The bloc was the greatest economic bloc after the European Common Market, with 300 million people living within its borders and member states' total land area exceeding 6 million square kilometres. Central Asian leaders, some of whom had stoically backed a centralistic power structure in the former Soviet Union not long ago, must have suddenly changed their minds due to the rapid breakdown of the old economic order of the former Soviet Union and the absence of workable alternatives. The CARs joined every organization where membership was available in the competition for the most financial and economic support. Within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), they decided to work together more closely. On April 22–23, 1992, the leaders of the Central Asian states convened in Bishek, Kyrghyzstan, to establish the framework for a regional alliance inside the CIS.[51]They were attempting to forge tighter ties with the European community, NATO, and the European Conference on Security and Cooperation (CSCE) as the Soviet Union's successor states with significant European responsibilities. A few joined the European Bank for Development and Reconstruction. First of all, though, they were part of the Commonwealth of Independent States, or CIS, where Russia continued to hold a significant amount of power. In January 1993, they signed the CIS member laws, which established a collective security mechanism of some sort. The Cars cannot afford to enrage Russia. Significant Russian

[46] *Tehran Times* December 5, 1992.

[47] Any Persian Gulf security arrangement excluding Tehran would be a recipe for failure, Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati declared to Pakibtani media. *Dawn*, October 13, 1992.

[48] The *Economist*, February 22, 1992, p. 57.

[49] Its charge d'affidires delivered its membership application to E.C.O. Secretary General, Ali-Reza Salari in Tehran on July 8, 1992. *Tehran Times*, July 12, 1992.

[50] Maqbool Ahmad Bhatty, Impact of Central Asian Changes, in Regional Studies, Islamabad: *Institute of Regional Studies*, p. 25.

[51] *Keesing Record of World Events* 3992, p. 38874.

communities reside on their territories.[52] Despite its flaws, they must contend with the persistence of economic interdependence left behind from the Soviet Union. The all-Soviet nomenklatura still has strong ties to many Central Asian governments. As a result, some Central Asian nations were hesitant to sign any legally binding pact that would affect their ties with Russia and Europe.

and Cultural Cooperation in Central Asia, which was attended by authorities and academics from 30 countries in November 1992.[53] Another recently established organization in the area that links Iran with Tajikistan and Afghanistan is the Iran-based Association of Persian Language. Soon after, cultural pacts were signed with Turkic Central Asian nations like Kazakhstan. Iran saw itself as the focal point of an expanded Middle East, with regard to increased cooperation with the former Soviet Central Asian republics, Turkey and Pakistan, and voicing new ambitions to control Persian Gulf security, while Turkey felt it could play a larger regional role, connecting the Middle East, Central Asia, and Europe.[54] Pakistan was at a little disadvantage as Turkey and Iran took use of their historical connections to Central Asia. Pakistan was therefore tasked with bringing the Economic Cooperation Organization's (ECO) dormant regional council back to life.[55] It had been inactive since its founding in 1984, when it took the role of the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD), which was established in 1964 by Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan. The RCD was first intended to give the security cooperation of the 1954-formed CENT0 military alliance an economic component. The member states' mutual commerce rarely exceeded the five percent threshold. On February 16–17, 1992, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan met with his Iranian and Turkish counterparts in Tehran at the request of Pakistan in order to reenergize the E.C.O. by encouraging Azerbaijan and the Central Asian Republics to join. Another possible addition to aid in the restoration of the war-torn nation was Afghanistan. At this summit, Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan were assured full membership in the E.C.O. Kyrgyzstan was invited but chose not to attend, while Tajikistan took part as an observer.

Shortly before the E.C.O. Council of Ministers meeting in Islamabad on November 28, 1992, Kazakhstan decided to enter the E.C.O. as a late member. The Treaty of Izmir was legally revised during this summit, and the number of members was increased from three to 10, comprising the five Central Asian nations of Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey in addition to Pakistan. The bloc was the greatest economic bloc after the European Common Market, with 300 million people living within its borders and member states' total land area exceeding 6 million square kilometers. Central Asian leaders, some of whom had stoically backed a centralistic power structure in the former Soviet Union not long ago, must have suddenly changed their minds due to the rapid breakdown of the old economic order of the former Soviet Union and the absence of workable alternatives. The CARs joined every organization where membership was available in an effort to obtain the most financial and economic support. Within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), they decided to work together more closely. On April 22–23, 1992, the leaders of the Central Asian states convened in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, to establish the framework for a regional alliance inside the CIS. They were attempting to forge deeper ties with the European community, NATO, and the European Conference on Security and Cooperation (CSCE) as the Soviet Union's successor states with significant European responsibilities. A few joined the European Bank for Development and Reconstruction. Initially, however, they were part of the

[52] Cf. 'Russian Sahibs Go Home,' in *The Economist*, August 8, 1992, pp. 53-54.
[53] *Dawn*, May 12, 1992.
[54] *Dawn*, (1992)
[55] *Dawn*, May 12, 1992.

Commonwealth of Independent States, or CIS, where Russia continued to hold significant sway.[56] In January 1993, they signed the CIS member laws, which established a collective security mechanism of some sort. Russia cannot be alienated by any of the CARs.[57] Significant Russian communities reside on their territories. Despite its flaws, they must contend with the persistence of economic interdependence left behind from the Soviet Union.[58] The all-Soviet nomenclature still has strong ties to many Central Asian governments. As a result, some Central Asian nations were hesitant to sign any legally binding agreements that would affect their ties with Russia and Europe.

Impediments and Hurdles

This strategy mirrored a widespread worry among all E.C.O. member states about how other nations and neighbors would perceive their new alliance. In addition to Russia, the US, China, and India also viewed the new formation with concern. Therefore, it was explicitly stated in the E.C.O.'s May 1992 Joint Sununit Statement that they would not erect any block "imping on the interests of other states." Additionally, the summit aimed to "investigate the potential for holding a conference on interaction and measures to build confidence in Asia." This served as a startling reminder of the Soviet Union's long-standing policy proposal to hold a conference on Asian security, which was initiated by Breshnev and met with chilly reception by the majority of nonconformist Asian countries at the time. Once more, reciprocal trade, tariffs, and visa policies were governed by "international law" and "their international commitments," taking into account Russian interests. The CARS stressed that the discussions at the May 1992 E.C.O. summit and the inaugural Turkic summit in Ankara on October 30, 1992, were not intended to undermine the Commonwealth of Independent Statess6 and that Pakistan needed to attend to Indian sensitivities. Pakistan took cautious to prevent the appearance of creating a Muslim bloc, even if the expanded E.C.O. was clearly intended to act as a check on Indian power in the area. Ghulam Ishaq Khan, the president of Pakistan, recalled the numerous historical, cultural, and religious ties that bind the members of the E.C.O. during the November 1992 meeting in Islamabad. However, he said that "while we must always be mindful of these linkages, we would be best advised to develop our cooperation along pragmatic lines.""J7" Pakistan was aware that an openly Islanlist profile was not only unacceptable to many Central Asian leaders but would also draw criticism and suspicion. Following that E.C.O. meeting, Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Shaharyar Khan emphasised the organization's economic dimension and categorically denied that it was a Muslim bloc. Thus, it adopted a two-pronged approach to conceal the Islamic denominator through references to economic cooperation and to fabricate evidence in support of a powerful Muslim bloc of countries.

As of right now, cooperation inside the E.C.O. framework is essentially a statement of purpose. The E.C.O. had taken a long time to settle on some projects and a basic infrastructure since its resurgence in 1984. Since 1987, a system of preferred tariffs that offers a reciprocal ten percent decrease has been discussed but not yet put into effect. Although it might be accelerated presently, the proposed E.C.O. Trade and Development Bank has suffered the same fate since 1988. The E.C.O. Chamber of Commerce may have started working already with a fresh impetus the

Joint Communique., signed after the E.C.O. summit in Ashkhabad, Turkmenia, on May 9-10, 1992, laid down directions for future cooperation. In addition to wanting to create and carry out joint investment projects, the member nations aim to expand the volume of their bilateral

[56] *Keesirzg 's Record of World Events* 1992, p. 3891 7 & 39192.
[57] *Dawn*, November 29, (1992).
[58] Dawn, (1992).

commerce.[59] They regard one another like the most favored nation. cooperative banking and cooperative ventures of small and medium-sized businesses are envisaged. In addition to the infrastructure for gas and oil, transportation and communication links must be established. Better border crossing infrastructure and the establishment of shared preferential practices for the movement of people and products should be researched. They will examine their national cultures and histories.[60] It was decided at the May 1992 conference that Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan would share responsibility for development initiatives. Iran was in charge of oil and mineral resources, Pakistan was focused on finance and services, and Turkey was primarily involved in education, administration, and industrial management. The agenda also included a broad development strategy for Afghanistan. In November 1992, an E.C.O. Chamber of Commerce was established at the Islamabad summit.[61] "To improve its international standing, E.C.O. member states applied for an observer status with the U.N. General Assembly. Pakistan may benefit from its detached position if Central Asian leaders are reluctant to respond to Turkey and Iran's embrace of Islam and culture.[62]" Among others, Pakistani President Ishaq Khan proposed the concept of an Islamic Common Market when he visited Turkey in October 1992. may seem a bit unrealistic at the moment, but it nevertheless serves as a significant driving force for all endeavors.[63]

Islam

Pakistan's leaders showed a great deal of reality in assessing the situation, despite how alluring the possible increase in power may be. Assef Ali made it plain that he had no illusions about the task's complexity during his trip to Central Asia in December 1991. He cautioned against hastily adopting these republics in the name of Islam, as their current leaders may be intolerant. He accurately noted that the Central Asian Republics' ruling elites are conservative in that they draw on the earlier political structure. They slowed down any potential change that may have threatened their established authority as a result. Regardless of their admiration for Islamic customs and culture, that would be the main reason they would not accept an Islamic form of government.[64]

Assef Ah's discussions with CARS political leaders produced a ubiquitous allusion to the Turkish model. Many of their people's sentiments were not just pan-Islamic or pan-Turkic; they were also pan-Turkic. "They have a little surprise in store for them in Central Asia if anyone were to jump to the conclusion that the day after tomorrow, they are going to start behaving like the Iranians, the Saudis, or the Pakistanis." It appeared to be appealing because it combined an Oriental, Islamic, authentic, indigenous, or whatever other name one may choose with a secular substance. Asif Ali underlined that these were fully modern nations that were more receptive to Russian-style Western influence than to political Islam, which, in their opinion, hasn't yet produced the benefits of stability and growth in the region. He emphasized that their primarily secular worldview was dictated by the Russia and the built infrastructure. The economic interdependence of the former Soviet countries could be a significant economic barrier to further cooperation. In an effort to maintain their shared market, they will lower tariff barriers and remain competitive with other nations on a single policy. Then, Pakistan will face the same challenges in its trade with Central Asia as any other region in the world. Due to the former Soviet republics' need to use any market share they can, it would have to contend with non-tariff

[59] *Turkish Daily News*, Ankara, October 25, 1992, "*Dawn, Feburary 29, 1992.*
[60] *Dawn*, May 12, 1992.
[61] *Dawn*, November 29, 1992.
[62] *Tehran Times*, March 13, 1993.
[63] *Dawn* October, 2, 1992.
[64] Supplement *Dawn* 15, January, 1992. P. iii

imports from Russia and possibly even the Baltic countries. Pakistan attempted to present a brave front, believing that they would initially support Russia but would later change their minds after realizing the benefits of dealing with the outside world." Ali thought they would have to travel to the West if they wanted capital because they couldn't acquire it from Russia. They cannot impose different tariffs on Russia and the rest of the world. The developed world will not tolerate this.

Ali may be correct given the current breakdown of the common Ruble territory. The team from December 1991 also came to the conclusion that if the Afghanistan issue was not resolved promptly, any attempts at collaboration between Pakistan and Central Asia would fail. Delegation member Ahmed Rashid described an Afghan settlement as "a crucial factor. “He underlined the following points in his summary of the discussions with Central Asian leaders: The primary route to Central Asia must pass through Afghanistan, and the Afghan war has stoked suspicions in the region about Pakistani intentions. According to Ali, "they believed that if you have a reactionary government in Kabul, there would be bloodshed in Tajik areas, in Turcoman areas, and in Kabul." The IS1 [Inter-Services Intelligence] and the Jamaat-e-Islami are determined to undermine their region, and Pakistan supports fundamentalist regimes in Central Asia. Furthermore, anyone who opposes such a regime would face persecution, which would lead to a large-scale displacement as refugees from Afghanistan to Central Asian countries. "If you try to bring a fundamentalist solution to Afghanistan, you would be responsible for the breakup of Afghanistan because our Tajiki’s would not live in that kind of Afghanistan," the president of Tajikistan informed them bluntly. An extreme rightist administration will not be tolerated even by Tajik and significant commander Ahmed Shah.

He will be convinced to establish a separate Tajik community in Afghanistan. Pakistan must clearly take care to avoid offending either of the Islamist and nationalist forces, the Pashtun and non-Pashtun groups, or the Afghan crisis if it hopes to maintain its hinterland option as far as Central Asia is concerned. Ali emphasized that "we must demonstrate to them through active policy that we are committed to finding a solution to the Afghan problem and that we are not attempting to impose any government in Kabul." A U.N. based solution, which is obviously a broad-based provisional Islamic government with general elections held after two years, would be the focus of our greatest effort. Local ethnic and political sensibilities in Central Asia, especially in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, were negatively impacted by the ongoing civil war in Afghanistan between different Mujahideen factions and former regime elements. These regions provided a sizable portion of the Soviet invading force. It is inevitable that the local political climate in the CARS will be directly impacted by the destiny of the Tajik and Uzbek minorities in Afghanistan. Additionally, the political and economic effects of the Afghan war are still plaguing them. They must address the economic and social rehabilitation of the "Afghans," the disillusioned and occasionally demoralized and renitent agents on the local political stage, as well as the demobilized soldiers who had been fighting in Afghanistan. They also have to deal with the smuggling of goods across the border from Afghanistan, including drugs and weapons. Asif Ali acknowledged that the atmosphere of the discussions on the Afghan issue during the December 1991 visit had been on the verge of animosity, but he insisted that he had been successful in persuading his partners of Pakistan's good intentions as well as the pointlessness and unfeasibility of the Najibullah alternative. He observed the profound worry for the future of the Tajik and Uzbek ethnic communities in Afghanistan, who feared losing out on the new power structure created by the Pashtun-dominated emigrant groups centered in Peshawar. The Central Asian Uzbek and Tajik leaders' worries about their relatives in Afghanistan turned out to be a little misguided and miscalculated. First, like in other post-communist countries, their newfound

ethnicism was purely pragmatic and served their desire for power. Second, their primary concern the Islamic challenge to their power came from within their republics rather than from the outside.

Twenty to thirty thousand Due to extreme personal hardship, Tajik refugees were fleeing their nation's civil strife and travelling to Afghanistan. December 1992.[65] With no way to live, some of them even wandered into Pakistan.69 Third, their ethnic relatives in Afghanistan appeared to be stronger than ever as they appeared to capitalize on the new regional equation. A fundamentalist solution to Afghanistan's predicament also did not sit well with Pakistan's administration. Nawaz worked to support Burhan Uddin Rabbani, the leader of the Afghan Jamaat-i- Islami, and his moderate Afghan Interim President Sibghatullah Mujaddedi, the leader of the Afghan National Liberation Front (ANLF). With the aid of organizations headquartered in Northern Afghanistan, such as the Tajik Defense and the Uzbek militia under General Dostum's command from the Mazar-e-Sharif region, they attempted to maintain equilibrium. The radical Islamist Hezb-e-Islami, led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and whose forces are primarily Pashtun, was opposed by Minister Shah Masood. His ideas were viewed as having the potential to destabilize not only Afghanistan but also Pakistan and other nearby nations, including the Muslim Central Asian states. Hekmatyar, who once received significant military assistance and commanded the largest detachment of Mujahideen forces, wanted the majority of the new power structure in the name of the Pashtun populace. The foundation for the political transition was established by the Peshawar Accord, which was signed on April 24, 1992. As a result, the rotating president of the Leadership Council of the seven Peshawar-based mujahedeen factions constituted an interim presidential government. Hekmatyar was promised the less important but still significant position of prime minister. In order to prepare for general elections in Afghanistan, the temporary president was supposed to call a nominated assembly, which would then choose a formal interim president for a two-year term. When the fighting between the different factions of the mujahideen grew more intense, Pakistan firmly decided to support the Hezb and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who represent the Pashtun faction of the guerrillas, calling for an early election in which they hope to secure a clear majority based on Pashtun dominance among the populace.[66]

The Islamic Jamboori Ittebad (IJI) government, President Ishaq Khan, and the ISI all agreed with the government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani to make sure that the benefits of the 14-year conflict are not wasted." According to reports, the IS1 recommended that all Hezb-e-Islami offices in Pakistan, particularly in the NWFP, be shut down since they posed a security risk to Pakistan; hence, every effort had to be made to assist the current Afghan administration.[67] Hekmatyar was not successfully reduced to size by Pakistan. He was recognized as the prime minister of the transitional government on March 7, 1993, [68] after the warring factions signed a fresh peace agreement mediated by Pakistan. An Organization of the Islamic Conference peacekeeping team was to oversee the agreement. The agreement did not, however, stand. Personal ambition and ethnic divisions appear to be the dominant factors. The bloodshed would go on "unless Hekmatyar and Rabbani can agree on who should be defense minister," as diplomats foresaw immediately after the settlement was arranged.[69] Rabbani repeatedly refused to entertain the idea of letting Masood, the most powerful leader in his Jammaat-ilslarni party,

[65] *Dawn*, February 20, 1993.
[66] *Dawn*, September 10, 1992.
[67] *Dawn*, August 25, 1992.
[68] *Dawn*, March 8, 1993.
[69] *Dawn*, March 16, 1993.

resign. Meanwhile, the Nawaz administration worked to further normalize the situation in Afghanistan. By the end of 1992, the Afghan Refugee Commission had been disbanded. Pakistan removed quotas and preferential treatment for Afghan refugee students in November 1992.[70] in January 1993, Pakistan said that it would repatriate the remaining 1.7 million Afghan refugees "by all means".[71] Pakistan withdrew its previous commitment to provide rehabilitation for the refugees, citing the failure of international donors to provide the necessary $250 million.[72] Pakistan also mandated that by January 31, 1993, all Afghan political parties and unregistered NGOs shut down their branches and offices within the country, especially in the Frontier Province.[73]

Therefore, Pakistan was fulfilling a request from the U.S. administration to demonstrate within 120 days that it was unrelated to terrorist attacks carried out by mercenaries and ex-Mujahideen from the Frontier Province or Kashmir.[74] The Nawaz administration's short overthrow highlighted the possibility of a fresh Islamist offensive. faction in Afghanistan as well as Pakistan. Pakistan's military and bureaucracy are more likely to work toward eliminating any barriers to deeper relations with Central Asia in the long run. However, it appears that Pakistan has reached the limit of its ability to affect the situation in Afghanistan. Observers think that Hekmatyar's destructive and desperate drive for power can only be ended by brute force. With the Nawaz administration back in place, Pakistan can move forward with its plan to restore normalcy to the area and establish regional cooperation.

Islam

Pakistan's administration was aware from the start that the issue of Islamic solidarity was delicate. On the one hand, Nawaz Sharif sought to use the appearance of an Islamist foreign policy toward Central Asia to appease his more moderate coalition partners from the Jamaat-i-Islarni who were upset that he was being too lenient with the application of Islam. However, he was well aware that Pakistan would encounter strong opposition in the post-Soviet bureaucracies of Central Asia, where a secular and pragmatic mindset predominated, if it seemed to be a champion for the development of Islamic fundamentalism. A pan-Islamic strategy was also thought to have the ability to topple the current governments, which were primarily (apart from Kyrgyzstan) dominated by former Communists. A stark reminder of such was provided by the circumstances in Tajikistan. The December 1991 team was therefore keen to warn Pakistani lawmakers and the populace that no one should expect these nations' leaders to suddenly turn into religious fanatics. Islam was viewed in Central Asia more as an expression of their cultural heritage that didn't require particular emphasis than as a religious product. Instead, it helped them regain their unique political identity by taking the shape of cultural nationalism.

Despite being formed by an alliance of Islamic parties of the Islamic Jambor Itimad, the Nawaz Sharif administration was more pragmatic, liberal, and pro-business. It was also engaged in a protracted struggle against fundamentalists to maintain political and economic institutions. However, despite the main political parties, Islamist movements have significantly influenced government policy in Pakistan's delicate balance of power. There has been a significant amount of pan-Islamic activity coming from Pakistan towards Central Asia. Mufti Sadyh, the Chairman of the Muslim Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, visited Pakistan and the International Headquarters of the Mota mar, the World Muslim Congress, which is located in Karahi, in

[70] *Dawn*, December 1, 1992.
[71] Ihtasham ul Huque, 'Pakistan unable to support Afghan refugees any longer,' in *Dawn*, January 16, 1993.
[72] Ihtasham ul Huque, (1993)
[73] *Dawn*, January 7, 1993.
[74] *Dawn*, January 17, 1993.

February 1991.[75] Additionally, in September 1989, Tajik Imams of significant mosques visited Pakistan. Delegations from Montana attended the regular conference of the Muslim Religious Board of Russia and Siberia in June 1990, which was held in Ufa, Bashkiria[76], and the bi-centenary commemoration of the first-ever Muslim Assembly of Muslims of the European parts of Russia and Siberia in August 1989."During the visit of Mufti Saudi to Pakistan in July 1990, a formal agreement with the Ministry of Religious Affairs was concluded, providing a Rs. 10 million donations for the construction of mosques and denim Madaris in Central Asia, for Islamic literature and videos, an Islamic printing press and scholarships for students of Islam in Pakistan's Islamic universities.[77] The Sunnite Harari rite, which is also the most common in Pakistan, was used by the majority of Muslims in Central Asia, which the Islamists regularly cited as a favorable circumstance for extending their influence there. According to their Pakistani counterparts, the Muslim Boards appeared to have significant power even though they were regarded as being faithful to the Soviet Union's old order. In order to foster Islamist opposition groups like the Islamic or Resistance Party, which has branches in all five CARS and is acknowledged as the strongest in Tajikistan, where it can mobilize up to one-third of the popular vote, Pakistan's Islamists consequently encouraged close ties with the Muslim Boards.[78]

The administration appears to have been pressured by Islamist groups to proceed with its first official journey to Central Asia in December 1991, and they assisted in its preparation. Prof. Dani, an area expert who also joined the Pakistani government team to Central Asia in December 1991, was the primary speaker at a well-attended seminar on Central Asia held in Islamabad by the Motamar in January 1990. [79] The Motamarin arranged a follow-up conference on Central Asia in January 1992. It could also be important to note that over time, the defense establishment and Islamists were becoming closer. The Motamar administration and Pakistan's top military officials held a joint conference in January 1990 on the country's December 1989 military exercise, known as Zarb-e-Momin (strike of the faithful), which served as clear evidence of the growing Islamicization of Pakistan's defense justification.[80] The Western fear that Pakistan's army will be used as a weapon in a pan-Islamic campaign which also alludes to Pakistan's nuclear option may be unrealistic and culturally biased. However, it is indisputable that the Pakistani establishment saw nationalism and Islam as an increasingly alluring excuse to maintain a massive military apparatus with proportionate military spending that considerably outstripped that of many other nations in the region following the end of the Cold War.

This pattern unexpectedly achieved a new peak in January 1991. Aslam Beg, the former head of Pakistan's army, linked the bombing of Baghdad to the fight of Karbala in his criticism of US military actions against Iraq.[81] Islam could not even be the primary factor pushing Pakistan in the direction of Central Asia. However, Islam has grown so interwoven with Pakistani politics that the language used in political discourse has clearly changed to include more references to Islam. In light of this, Pakistan's strategy toward Central Asia must be assessed as short-term realistic. Run where there is always the possibility of the Islamist dimension being brought up. Due to

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[75] *The Muslim World*, Karachi, Vol. 28, No. 5, p. 3; No. 34&35, p. 6. *The Muslim World*, Vol. 27, No. 13, p. 3; No. 11, p. 2.

[76] The Muslim World, Vol. 27, No. 9, pp. 1/4; No. 10, pp. 1/4, No. 50, p. I.

[77] *The Muslim World*, Vol. 28, No. 6&7, p. 5.

[78] For a discussion of the background of interaction between Pakistani Islamists and Central Asia/Afghanistan, cf. Khalid Duran, 'Out of the Afghan Rubble a Greater Tajikistan? Regional Repercussions of the Mujahidin Take-Over in Kabul,' in vierteljabresberichte, Bonn: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung 1992, pp. 343-349, and' Islamism – ideological connotations and current trends of Muslim Fundamentalism,' Ibid.., pp. 59-70,Shortcite.

[79] *The Muslim World*, Karachi, Vol. 27, No. 34, p. 4.

[80] *The Muslim World*, Vol. 27, No. 30, p. 2.

[81] *Dawn*, January 29, 1991.

regional internal forces and Pakistan's limited ability to establish itself in the area, this need not be concerning for Central Asian political prospects.

Perspective and Preferences

Pakistan has significant challenges before it can safely rely on a Central Asian hinterland, which could delay the effectiveness of its influence in the region. Pakistan's interest in Central Asia should be given some leeway in the interim since it could fortify ties of regional cooperation, which is crucial for the reconstruction of both Afghanistan and these societies, with the latter likely posing a bigger challenge. Less is known about the implications for regional security. Pakistan has already achieved some degree of success with its plan to obtain a strategic edge from the Central Asian connection. Attempts to establish an Islamic bloc along its northern border have alarmed India.[82] This has already helped to lessen India's long-standing hostility toward the United States, which India will increasingly view as a regional mediator in its disputes with Pakistan. Pakistan will get even more enraged and be forced to depend more on the regional and Islamic equation if the United States gradually shifts its allegiances towards India. To some extent, India has been successful in persuading the United States of Pakistan's malign intentions toward Kashmir. The United States has exerted significant political pressure on Pakistan to stop its overt and covert support for the Kashmiri "freedom fighters" or risk being listed as one of the nation's aiding and abetting terrorism, which would have detrimental effects on the distribution of financial resources and political backing. Only when the issues with India are resolved and, in particular, the Kashmir issue is placed on the negotiation table will the pull factors to entice Pakistan further into an Islamic Middle Eastern security structure be lessened. However, political stability must return to Pakistan with a government that is secure from imminent political or religious challenges at home and confident in the backing of the judiciary and bureaucracy.

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[82] During a visit to India in March 1992, Kyrgyzstan's President Akayev felt compelled 'to dispel concerns about the possible formation of a federation of Muslin1 states by former Soviet Central Asian republics' calling it 'impossible.' *Keesing 's Record of' World Events* 1992, p. 3881 1.

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