

US INTERESTS IN SOUTH ASIA IN POST 9/11 ERA: EFFECTS ON PAKISTAN

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Introduction

All is changed utterly,” wrote the Irish critic, playwright and poet of the modern age, WB Yeats, some seventy years ago.

More than two years have passed since September 11, which changed the world and the international order. In the war against terror, old allies came together, and new enemies were created. Pakistan, which was considered a failing state in US foreign policy circles, and was suffering from increasing global isolation, regained the “most allied ally of the US” status.

The US war against the Taliban and its hunt for the alleged mastermind of 9/11, Osama bin Laden, made Pakistan a very important partner in the global alliance against terrorism. Pakistan was in a position to provide the US with vital intelligence that made it necessary for the United States to renew its diplomatic and military relationship with Islamabad. Any air sortie from aircraft carriers or from the US air base in Diego Garcia had to over fly Pakistani territory, and therefore required Islamabad’s permission.

Pakistan also wanted to change its Afghanistan policy, which had proved to be inconstant. General Musharraf’s address to the gathering of the pious celebrating the birthday of the Holy Prophet PBUH on 5 June 2001, and the foreign policy documents, which appeared after the fall of the Taliban, are clear indicators that Islamabad was reconsidering its position before 9/11. This event provided the immediate reason. Above all, President Musharraf correctly calculated that if Pakistan did not cooperate with the United States, the Vajpayee administration, which was steadily improving its ties with the United States, would try to marginalize Pakistan. At worst, Pakistan itself could be targeted. This shift in Islamabad’s policy towards the Taliban, viewing them as a

strategic liability rather than an asset, was clearly acknowledged by "General Pervez Musharraf in his televised address to the nation on September 19. General Musharraf said that "at this juncture I am worried about Pakistan only" and that "I give top priority to the defense of Pakistan. Defense of any other country comes later."¹

By joining the international coalition against terrorism, President Musharraf, not only safeguarded country's national interest but also managed to end his international isolation and came across as a popular leader at the global level. He also succeeded in obtaining promises of American assistance totaling almost one billion dollars

Apparently, since 9/11, Pakistan-US relations have improved at a steady pace and a lot of misgivings have been removed by staying constantly in touch at the highest levels of leadership. This renewed relationship is founded on more mature grounds because the limits are also known. The United States is a global actor and Pakistan's concerns are essentially regional.

However key questions remain, how durable is the relationship? Is the fight against terrorism the only glue that binds the United States and Pakistan together? What happens to U.S.-Pakistan relations if and when the U.S. shifts its priorities from counter terrorism and Afghanistan to other considerations? Can the U.S. and Pakistan find some durable basis for cooperative interaction?

This article endeavors to answer these questions by examining the US policy objectives towards south Asia especially Pakistan and the change in Pakistan-US relations which took place after the 9/11 attacks and its impact on Pakistan.

Pakistan-US Relations: Post Cold War Developments

In the post cold war era, Pakistan lost its traditional significance in the eyes of the American policy circles. Ironically, India emerged as a state, which America could not ignore due to its economic potential and size.

Though Pakistan remained an important moderate Muslim country but India was perceived to have more cards and a better hand overall with its own influence in the Middle East, Far East and a much larger role in international trade.² India was also perceived in United States, as one becoming stronger or making good progress in economic development, trade promotion and spread of democracy and was increasingly perceived as a favorable partner.³

It was this perception which led to the "Discovery of India" tour by former President Bill Clinton. Bush administration that replaced Clinton's followed the some policy regarding India. Since then there is steady development in the US-India relation. On the other hand, Pakistan remained insignificant for United States in the pre 9/11 world.

On the eve of 9/11 terrorist attacks, Pakistan was under four types of U.S. Sanctions.

First, President Bush (Senior), under Section 620-E of Foreign Assistance Act or the Pressler Amendment (as it is normally known) suspended economic assistance and military sales to Pakistan in October 1990.

Second, after the nuclear explosions by Pakistan, another set of military and economical sanctions were imposed on Pakistan under the Arms Export Control Act.

Third, under the democracy law, sanctions were applied on Pakistan after General Musharraf's assumption of power on October 12, 1999.

Fourth, in November 2000, the U.S. imposed 2-year sanctions on Pakistan's Ministry of Defense and Pakistan's Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Organization on receiving missile technology and equipment from China. In September 2001 sanctions were again imposed for two years on some Pakistani companies on the same charge.

In short, in Stephen Cohen's words on the eve of September 11, most observers saw India as *rising* and Pakistan *floundering*.

The War against Terrorism and Pak-US Relations

Soon after the 9/11 attacks, people at helm in Washington realized that Afghanistan cannot be approached *politically* or *militarily*, with out having Islamabad on their side. Due to its geographical position on the southern and eastern borders of Afghanistan it was the best location for supporting the US air campaign against Taliban, when operating from ships in the Arabian Sea or bases in the Persian Gulf. One of the major reasons for General Musharraf's joining the global alliance against terrorism was that if Pakistan did not cooperate with the United States, Pakistan would be marginalized and isolated by the US and the international community.

In his televisive address to the nation on September 19, 2001, Musharraf gave these reasons for joining the international coalition against terror: security; economic revival; to safeguard its "strategic assets"; and the Kashmir issue. In his January 12, 2002 address he stated that the decision to join the international coalition against terrorism was based on principles and in Pakistan's national interest."

According to the U.S. Departments of State and Defense, Pakistan has afforded the United States unprecedented levels of cooperation by allowing the U.S. military to use bases within the country, helping to identify and detain extremists, and tightening the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. In the spring of 2002, U.S. military and law enforcement personnel reportedly began engaging in direct, low profile efforts to assist Pakistani security forces in tracking and apprehending fugitive Al Qaeda and Taliban fighters on Pakistani territory. Press reports indicate that Pakistan has remanded to U.S. custody nearly 500 fugitives including AbuZubaydah, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, and Khalid Mohammed.

Indo-Pak Military Stand Off 2002

The attacks on Jammu State Assembly on October 2001 and the Indian Parliament on December 13, 2001 resulted in a yearlong military stand off between India and Pakistan. The Indians used these incidents to bracket the Kashmir freedom struggle with terrorism. Colin Powell reacting on the car bomb explosion in Indian Occupied Kashmir said: "This clearly was an act of terror. We are going after terrorism in a comprehensive way, not just in the present instance of al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden, but terrorism as it affects nations around the world, to include the kind of terrorism that affects India".⁴

Yet the United States did not fully accept India's contention that Pakistan was to blame for the attack and asked India to provide concrete evidence. State Department spokesman, Richard Boucher said, "It was for the Indians to find out who was responsible for those horrible acts and take appropriate action".

US Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage visited India and Pakistan in June 2002 as part of the US effort to defuse the tension between the two countries. This visit was followed by the visit of US Defence Secretary, Ronald Rumsfeld. He admitted "there is no Al Qaida activity in Kashmir

Alarm bells rang in Washington when Islamabad stated that it would have no recourse but to use nuclear weapons if India were to invade in large numbers, reacting on this, New Delhi modified India's position of no first use. The dangerous and heightened military readiness led to active crisis management diplomacy by United States. US Senator Richard Lugar recently wrote that the "war was averted, barely, thanks to intense, discreet diplomacy by the United States".

The turning point in the crisis came when the United States issued a warning to its citizens that they leave India, and airlifted non-essential government personnel. According to Stephen Cohen, "the U.S. decision also demonstrated to the Indian government that,

the new U.S.-Indian relationship could not be counted on to provide absolute support under all circumstances".⁵

The yearlong stand off came to its end with a pledge from General Musharraf to permanently stop cross border infiltration during Deputy Secretary Armitage's visit to Pakistan. Armitage also assured a proactive American role in the resolution of the Kashmir problem. New Delhi expressed its satisfaction with Pakistan's actions and crisis come to an end.

New US Interests and Challenges in South Asia after 9/11

SAIS Professor Walter Andersen recently wrote in his paper "India and Pakistan Challenge American Diplomacy" that since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the United States has been pursuing two geo-strategic objectives in South Asia. The United States continues its efforts to build a strategic relationship with India, the second most populous state in Asia. The second objective is to build up Pakistan as a frontline state in the global war on terrorism.

Rodney Jones divides the US policy interests in South Asia as: Strategic; Preventing proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction; Regional security and conflict-resolution; Promoting economic development and trade; and Democracy promotion.

Following can be termed as main US interests in South Asia in the post 9/11 environment:

- Prevention of a war or war like situation between India and Pakistan.
- Have active cooperation from both India and Pakistan in its war against terror.
- To prevent/ensure that nuclear weapon-related material goes into the hands of terrorists or rogue states.

- Many observers also maintain that now United States also seeks a solution to the Kashmir problem, which it perceives have the potential to provide a sanctuary to extremist Islamic military.

In the post 9/11 era, India continues to be the most important country in South Asia for the United States. United States continues to aspire for a long term political and security partnership, expand trade and economic relations. In keeping the fact that the Americans perceive India as a counter weight to China it will continue to work to expand political, security, military and intelligence cooperation.

USA South Asia Policy and Pakistan

Pakistan is considered as one of the most complex and difficult challenges for US diplomacy.⁶ Though US considers Pakistan as a very important ally in the on going war against terror, it is also a country considered by the Americans to be politically instable, entrenched with Islamic extremism. Its economic and social weakness and hostility towards India is alarming for the Americans. As the recent council of foreign relations report says that the United States has a "major stake in a stable Pakistan, at peace with itself and its neighbor.

In the wake of September 11 United States has following Pakistan-related interests:

- First, *terrorism* and terrorism related issues top the American agenda in Pakistan.
- Second, Islamabad's *nuclear program* has been and continues to be a concern for the Americans. The alleged movement of nuclear and missile technology to and from Pakistan is taken very seriously in United States, though recently American officials have said that no such movement is taking place any more but yet there are people in United States who advocate that the Pakistani nuclear weapons should be

neutralized. Another related concern is the nuclear arms race between India-Pakistan.

- Third, the *democratization* of Pakistan is an American interest. Yet they see it, just like many in Pakistan, in its long and short-term dimensions. In the long-term, a democratic Pakistan is seen as desirable, but getting there might disrupt the state in the short-term.
- Fourth, Pakistan's *hostile relationship with India* impinges on short and long-term American interests.
- Fifth, Pakistan's significance and role as a *moderate* Muslim state.

US Post 9/11 Policy & Effects on Pakistan

Pakistan-USA relations were greatly effected with the events of 9/11. Pakistan emerged as a frontline state from the marginal backwaters, against the America-led war against terrorism. The United States expressed gratitude for Pakistan's vital support in the international campaign. On the occasion of Musharraf's visit to the United States in February 2002, President Bush announced new bilateral programs which included: debt relief; democracy assistance; strengthening education; expanded defense cooperation; and cooperation in law enforcement, science and technology. In its *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, issued in September 2002, the White House has indicated that it would "invest time and resources [into] building strong bilateral relations with India and Pakistan." Adding that US-Pakistan relations had been "bolstered by Pakistan's choice to join the war against terror and move towards building a more open and tolerant society." US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said America considered ties with Pakistan long, 'strategic' and 'mutually beneficial,' adding that he looked forward to, "strengthening it in a variety of different ways."

In post 9/11 environment, Pakistan feels some what reassured that US. And Pakistani forces could jointly and effectively deal with Islamic terrorist forces in the region, especially the pro-Taliban/Al-Qaeda elements that may have slipped across the Durand Line after the October 2001 bombings. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the US presence in the region may restrain India from launching any conventional attack against Pakistan. The number of visits by foreign leaders to Pakistan following the September 11 event testified to the geopolitical importance attached to the region and the country. Second, reconstruction and revival of Afghanistan may restore normalcy and ameliorate the socio-political conditions of Pakistan's troubled western neighbor, thereby opening up the long-stalled prospects with the Central Asian republics.⁸

The United States and Pakistan launched a Joint Working Group on Counter-terrorism and Law Enforcement. The Pak-US Defence Consultation Group was re-established to revive military ties. The group met in September 2002. Discussions on military cooperation, joint exercises, security assistance and anti-terrorism took place. International Military Education Training Program (IMET) was also revived.

In contrast to its earlier practice, US used a new and more proactive approach of crisis management to prevent escalation of the conflict during May and June 2002 between India and Pakistan. This was coupled with an acceptance in the Indian camp of a behind-the-scenes, low-key US role in pushing forward Indo-Pakistan peace process.

An important effect on Pakistan was the end of American sanctions on Pakistan. On September 22, 2001 and on October 27, 2001, President Bush in two separate orders removed nuclear test-related economic sanctions and sanctions on Pakistan related to democracy and debt arrearage through 2003. This removal of sanctions allowed the United States to extend \$600 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF) to Islamabad. In 2002, Pakistan received an estimated \$624.5 million in development assistance and ESF.⁹

The U.S. economic assistance during 2002-2003 included \$ 600 million as fiscal support and over \$ 455 million for different development programs. Washington also re-scheduled \$379 million out of the \$3 billion owed by Pakistan. Washington also paid \$220 million to Pakistan for the facilities used during the Operation Enduring Freedom. Pakistan also received economic assistance from the World Bank, IMF and Asian Development Bank as well as economic assistance, debt relief and trade concessions from Japan and the European Union. In December 2001, the Paris Club recommended to its members the rescheduling of Pakistan's debts amounting to \$ 12.5 billion, for a period of 38 years.

In 2001 Pakistan's exports to USA were to the tune of \$2.2 billion and it imported items costing around \$556 million from the United States. During January -June 2002, total exports to USA from Pakistan came down to slightly more than \$1 billion. It imported goods worth \$ 316 million during the same period. 9/11 adversely effected the Pak-US. Number of orders were cancelled due to the uncertainty first due to the on going war against terrorism and then the standoff between India and Pakistan. The tourism industry was one of those who were the most effected.

President General Pervez Musharraf visited the U.S. in June 2003. This visit produced a number of important decisions:

- The U.S. offered 3 billion dollars five year economic assistance package, which is expected to commence in 2004. It is equally divided between assistance for economic development and military sales. Pakistan would be allowed to use economic assistance funds according to its needs, including for repayment of its bilateral loan to the U.S., which stood at 1.8 billion dollars in June 2003.
- It was also reported that the U.S. might provide C-130 and P3C Orion aircraft, Cobra and Huey helicopters to strengthen the border security arrangement, mainly the Pak-Afghan border. Pakistan is also expected to get communication gear and

spares parts for the equipment and aircraft already in use in Pakistan.

- A Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) was signed as a step toward a free trade agreement. An accord was signed for cooperation in science and technology.¹⁰

One prominent Pakistani analyst notes. Direct cash grants of approximately \$800 million, including a US grant of \$600 million are a relief. Remittances by expatriate workers have gone up considerably to around \$900 million. In addition, Pakistan has been able to secure more loans from international financial institution (IFIs), including the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The foreign exchange situation is also better than at any time in the monetary history of the country, with reserves of over \$5.6 billion. In terms of its foreign debt re-profiling, \$12 billion have been rescheduled for a period of 38 years, with a grace period of 16 years. Pakistan owes a massive debt of \$38 billion to the development world, the IFIs and commercial banks.¹¹

Another important effect on Pakistan was that for the first time in the history of Pakistan, it decided to deploy its troops in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in June 2003 to monitor the Pak-Afghan border so that the Taliban and Al-Qaeda personnel did use it as a hiding place.

The presence of Pakistan army in region minimized the chances for the Afghan warlords to smuggle things to and from Pakistan. They claimed that the Pakistan Army has crossed the afghan border and has entered into Afghan territory and have captured it. Number of border skirmishes took place in which they were badly beaten by the Pakistani troops. Thus creating a new crisis in Pakistan-Afghanistan relations. This crisis has revived the age-old Durand Line issue. This crisis is a direct consequence of Pakistan's decision to dispatch its regular troops into FATA and post them on Pakistan-Afghanistan border on the insistence of the U.S. military authorities.¹²

Ironically, despite the fact that Pakistan is a major US ally in the war against terror, there are certain US policies that are adversely affecting Pakistan's relations with the U.S. and fueling anti-U.S. sentiments in Pakistan. The mistreatment of Pakistanis in the U.S. under the Patriot Act, 2001, the new registrations laws and the new procedure for issuance of American visa are cases in point.¹³

India's general importance in the American policy circle has not been impeded by the War on Terrorism. A US perception of India's future importance as a strategic partner remains a factor in the continuously developing Indo-US security cooperation. Interestingly, India has benefited evidently from the War on Terrorism. This ongoing War has given India a new hearing among audiences around the globe for its arguments that armed militants in Kashmir are terrorists, and that Pakistan's support for the Kashmiri freedom struggle demonstrates that Pakistan itself is a sponsor and source of international terrorism.

The Indo-US "strategic partnership" has entailed frequent military consultations in the wake of September 11. 14 April 2002, an agreement worth \$ 146 million was signed to provide American radar to the Indian army.¹⁴ In mid-May 2002, both conducted an airborne assault exercise in Agra, the first in 32 years.¹⁵ They are also doing joint patrols in the Malacca Straits in the Indian Ocean. Further, both are planning a joint mountain warfare exercise in Alaska – the first time that Indian troops will set foot on US territory.¹⁶

The USA has also started a substantial military sales program. India has purchased US \$200 million worth of sophisticated counter-battery radars and a substantial number of General Electronic (EC) engines for India's LCA project. Possible sale of p-3 maritime surveillance aircraft is on the avail. USA has approved Israel selling India Phalcon airborne radars as part of an AWACs deal with Russia collaboration. A memorandum of understanding on high technology signed in March 2003 stipulates transfer of dual-use items, space cooperation and provision of missile defence system to India. It is speculated that the US could clear the sale of Israeli "Arrow antimissile system" to India or its

own "patriot system." The transfer of anti-missile system to India would be a very serious matter for Pakistan, as it would affect its minimum nuclear deterrence stability. On January 13, 2004, President Bush announced that both US and India have agreed to expand cooperation in civilian space program, civilian nuclear activities and high technology trade and that they have also agreed to expand our dialogue on missile defense.

Massive arms build-up by India would lead to generating insecurity syndrome not only in South Asia but also in the neighboring regions and the outcome would be quite opposite of what the United States foresee for the region.

Conclusions

At present the Bush administration considers Pakistan as an indispensable ally in the war against terror. American think tanks claim that the United States has a strong interest in friendly, stable, and long-term ties with Pakistan.

Since 9/11 the relationship has significantly improved. Though contentious issues exist and there is divergence on more issues than convergence. At present, as most observers have noted, Islamic extremism, Kashmir and Afghanistan are the main issues between the two. Both sides need to remain and move forward with extreme caution as any action from either party can improve or worsen the relationship. Both Washington and Islamabad have to discuss more on the issues on which both have divergence of opinion. Both sides are committed to strong relationship due to shared interests yet basis for any such partnership is not present at the moment.

There is a big lesson in post 9/11 American policy shift for Pakistan: Prior to 9/11, the Bush administration was reluctant to remove nuclear related sanction against Pakistan concurrently with India. Now it has promptly waived democracy-related sanctions because of what President Bush described as a shift in US. "National security interests." However it demonstrates that these sanctions on

Pakistan were not really related to the principals of nuclear or missile non-proliferation or of promoting democracy, but were inextricably linked to the policies designed to serve American interests. The lesson for Pakistan therefore is that in the *real politik* interests are paramount and moral principles are used to serve national interests.¹⁷ An eminent Pakistani analyst has very promptly said that it is time that the Pakistani decision makers should ask some questions from the United States, such as: if Pakistan is to responsible for its side of the Durand line, shouldn't the Americans be held responsible for failing in establishing a Afghan national army or for containing the Afghan warlords?. Why Pakistan is the only target of the western pressure on the issue of the transfer of nuclear related information to Libya and Iran? Why are they investigating the European brokers, middlemen and companies, who have sold or smuggled nuclear equipment to Tehran and Tripoli. Especially when their names have been given by the Iranians and the Libyans.¹⁸

In all likelihood Indo-US strategic partnership will not only continue but also grow further in the days ahead. This might create problems for Pakistan, as it cannot escape the geo-political realities of South Asia. There will always be an Afghanistan to its right and an India to its left, and an unsettled Kashmir in between. Therefore, Pakistan should continue to mend fences with India. As regards its relationship with United States, Pakistan needs to proceed with caution and keep in mind what Decimus Laberius said in first century B.C. "*Treat your friend as if he will one day be your enemy, and your enemy as if he will one day be your friend.*"

Figure 1: US Core Interests and Policies in South Asia

Periods	Cold War to 1990		Post Cold War - 1990 to 1998		Post Nuclearization 1998		Post 9/11, 2001 - Anti-Terrorism	
	India	Pakistan	India	Pakistan	India	Pakistan	India	Pakistan
<i>Policy Dimensions</i>								
<i>Alliance/strategic partner</i>	India not available	high US priority	India more receptive	US priority drops	US priority on hold	US priority receding	US courts strategic options	US priority pivots on WOT
<i>Nuclear and WMD Non Proliferation</i>	high US priority	high US priority	high US priority	high US priority (Pressler)	US urging restraint, no deploy	US urging restraint, no deploy	US priority muffled	US worry nuke hijacking
<i>Regional stability/security</i>	high US priority	high US priority	US priority in flux	US priority in flux	US focus on nuke use risk	US focus on nuke use risk	US tilts to India on Kashmir	US focus on anti-terrorism
<i>Economic growth and trade</i>	economic aid mutual priority	US priority assistance	US praises economic reform	US aid inhibited by NP priority	India's IT sector takes off	US policy hemmed in	US prefers trade vs. aid	US targets assistance
<i>Democracy Promotion</i>	India's democracy admired	US focus on institutions	India's democracy admired	US focus on elected govt	India still admired	US priority seesaws	US priority muted	US priority seesaws

Source: Rodney Jones, "United States and South Asia: Core Interests and Policies and their impact on the security and economic developments of the Regional Countries, paper read at Institute of Regional Studies International Seminar "Major Powers & South Asia," held in Islamabad on August 11-13, 2003.

Table 1. US Assistance to Pakistan, FY2001-FY2004
(in millions of US dollars)

Program Account	or	FY2001 Actual	FY2002 Actual	FY2003 Allocation	FY2004 Request
CSH		--	14.0	15.6	25.0
DA		--	10.0	34.5	50.0
EMRA		--	25.0	--	--
ESF		--	624.5	188.0	200.0
FMF		--	75.0	224.5	75.0
IMET		--	0.9	1.0	1.3
INCLE		3.5	90.5	31.0	38.0
NADR		--	10.1	--	5.0
PKO		--	220.0	--	--
Subtotal		\$3.5	\$1,070.0	\$494.6	\$394.3
P.L. 480 Title I		0.5	10.0	15.0	--
P.L. 480 Title II		1.9	5.1	12.4	(d)
Section 416(b)		85.1	75.7	--	--
Total		\$91.0	\$1,160.8	\$522.0	\$394.3

Source: US Departments of State and Agriculture; US Agency for International Development.

Abbreviations:

CSH	Child Survival and Health
DA:	Development Assistance
ERMA	Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance
ESF:	Economic Support Fund
FMF:	Foreign Military Financing
IMET:	International Military Education and Training
INCLE:	International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (includes border security)
NADR:	Nonproliferation, Anti-Terrorism, Demining, and related
PKO:	Peacekeeping Operations
P.L.480 Title I:	Trade and Development Assistance food aid (loans)
P.L.480 Title II:	Emergency and Private Assistance food aid (grants)
Section 416(b):	The Agriculture Act of 1949, as amended (surplus agricultural commodity donations)

Note:

- a. Includes \$9 million in UN Family Planning Funds that currently are on hold pending presidential determination.
- b. Congress authorised Pakistan to use this ESF allocation to cancel approximately \$1 billion in concessional debt to the US government.
- c. Includes \$73 million for border security projects continuing in FY2003.
- d. Title II food aid accounts generally are held in reserve.
- e. Food aid amounts do not include what can be significant transportation costs.

Source: K Alan Kronstadt, "Pakistan US Relations," CRS issue brief Congress, Updated November 3, 2003. Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress.

End Notes

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The author wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to Dr. Rifaat Hussain, mentor, teacher and friend. Also to Dr. Rodney Jones, Dr. Stephen Cohen and Dr. Hasan Askari Rizvi. Their phenomenal works were the main source for this study.