



**Pakistan. The US, Geopolitics and Grand Strategies, edited by Usama Butt and Julian Schofield, Pluto Press, London 2012, 272 pp., € 25.**

The killing of Osama Bin Laden highlighted the already shattered relationship between the American and Pakistani governments. This incursion, the illegal drone war and other encroachments upon the Pakistan's sovereignty by the US have brought the "special" relationship to square one. Yet, "the post 9/11 US-Pakistan relationship is not as special it is often portrayed as being. It reflects a complex combination of the phenomena of the war on terror, regional alliances and geopolitical realities, and Indian-Pakistani arch rivalries." The skillful balancing of this political *mélange* is seen by the US and its Western cronies as a double game. Despite its close relationship with China and its

difficult political and geopolitical maneuvering, Pakistan is still perceived as a key Western ally.

The book's editors, Usama Butt, director of the Institute of Islamic Sociopolitical and Strategic Affairs (IISA), and Julian Schofield, deputy director of the Centre d'études des politoques étrangères et de sécurité (CEPES) at the Université du Québec in Montréal, have gathered leading scholars from Pakistan and some Western countries. Even a scholar from the American Enterprise Institute, a neo-conservative think tank, is on board.

The book is divided into two parts: The first one deals exclusively with Pakistan-US relations; the second part discusses Pakistan's foreign relations with other states. Pakistan's domestic setting is as complex as its geopolitical situation and cannot be reduced to the decade of the "war on terror" or solely explained by its complicated relation to India. Both sections of the book are based on the paradigm that the country's foreign policy should not be defined by the war on terror. Beside the US, Pakistan's staunchest allies are Saudi Arabia and China, and the relations with Iran and Afghanistan are also excellent.

Plodding through all the chapters is a bit laborious, although each is interesting to read. While each chapter is free-standing, reading them in sequence conveys the complexity of Pakistani political setting to the reader. Starting out with Usama Butt's article that deals with the relationship between the dynamics of the "global war on terror (GWOT)", the country's Islamic orientation and the reactions of the masses, the article comes to a preliminary conclusion that "all the challenges the world faces today are the direct results of inhuman Western policies, its luddism, imperialism, and the selfish and arrogant attitude". "Pakistan was formed in the name of Islam", writes Butt and hints at the irony that the Islamic ideology is being contested today both within and outside its borders. Historical developments show that the Christian West from the eighth century on until today fought a bloody war against the religion of Islam, starting with the crusaders, the reconquest of Spain by the so-called catholic kings, the colonialism and imperialism to the Islamophobia of the neo-colonial period. The West and especially the US through its drone wars have caused massive anti-Westernism and anti-Americanism in Pakistan. As the main reasons for this attitude Butt blames "the Islamophobic theory of a clash of civilizations, constructed largely by neoconservatives and Christian-Zionists, along with the Bush doctrine of pre-emption, all viewed through the prism of the GWOT". The author sees two ways out of Pakistan's political deadlock: firstly, there must be an "honest debate" about the role of Islam in the running of the state; and secondly, there needs to be a serious re-evaluation of the conduct of the GWOT within the country.

Michael Rubin, scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, hints at the different and often mutually exclusive understandings of the national interests and threat perceptions between the US and Pakistan, albeit they are considered allies. These different threat perceptions and the distrust often reserved for rogue states leads the US government astray writes the author: "India may be Pakistan's greatest external threat, but ethnic nationalism poses just as serious a challenge to Pakistan's integrity, and indeed its existence." Rubin is not that optimistic about US-Pakistani relations. He writes that the difference in the perception of the national interest, the religious ideology and ethnic nationalism "are simply too vast to overcome".

Another interesting article deals with the relationship between Pakistan and Iran, the nuclear question and US and Western concerns. Although Iran and Pakistan are bound by cultural, tribal and religious bonds, both

countries have a complex relationship, writes Harsh V. Pant. While cooperation between the two countries is essential to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan, a decline in Afghanistan's security can exacerbate the rivalry between the two. According to the author, Iran would consider a "re-Talibanization" of Afghanistan by Pakistan as an unfriendly act.

As regards the nuclear issue, the US administration applies double standards towards India and Pakistan. According to one of the authors, Shaista Tabuassum, professor of the Department of International Relations at Karachi University, the "United States and other western powers consider Pakistan's nuclear program to be a threat to their own security and to the rest of the world". It is true that neither Pakistan nor Israel have signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and refuse inspections of their installations. But why is only Pakistan considered a threat to the peace? The author describes the history of Pakistan's nuclear program and the US government's preferential treatment of India because both of them see China as a threat to their hegemonic endeavor.

The editors' state in their conclusion that the relationship between the US and Pakistan lacks a basic principle of diplomacy: trust. After ten years of a "global war on terror" that affected especially Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq and caused havoc to the region, the question arises how Pakistan can remain resilient. The authors' outlook is not too optimistic, in view of US hegemonic ambitions. According to their opinion, "distrust" is a polite way to describe the bilateral relations between the US and Pakistan.

The book leaves the reader with the strong impression that the US Empire is not sensitive enough to the regional interests of its "ally" Pakistan, let alone of other actors. US President Obama's drone war that causes many more deaths among civilians than among alleged terrorists infuriates the Pakistani people and contributes to the instability of the country. The global war on terror has badly affected the central Asian region. It serves only the hegemonic interests of the US and is directed against China and Russia.

Unfortunately, some authors use the phrase "global war on terror" to describe the havoc that is caused by the US Empire in the region. However, this terminology is a language construction. First, it is not a "war" and secondly, the operations going under this heading are not directed against "terrorists" but aim at US hegemony. The current discussions in the US show that the "drone war" and President Obama's "hit list" are seen by some pundits as "state terrorism". Unfortunately, the authors do not render these issues problematic.

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