

# **Pakistan in The New Great Game: On Gwadar Port**

Written by Markus Markert

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## **Pakistan in The New Great Game: On Gwadar Port**

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### **Pakistan in The New Great Game: The Political Economy and**

#### **Geopolitics of Gwadar Port**

#### **CHAPTER 1 – Introduction**

##### *1.1 Background*

When I started the research for this paper during my fully funded trip to Pakistan in October 2014, I was confronted with the following statement: 'Gwadar will become one of the most strategic spots in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and certainly the gem in China's string of pearls'. Fortunately, I was given the opportunity to speak to such influential figures as General Hamid Gul, former Director-General of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Pakistan's premier intelligence agency, and to Muhammad Ul Haq, son of former President Zia Ul Haq and head of the Pakistan Muslim League (Zia), the Senators Chaudhary Tanvir Khan and Mohammad Jaffar Iqbal, major representatives of the military, such as Major General Zamir and Major General Azim, as well as many others, who expressly declined to be named.

During these talks I got the impression that the port was very much on the mind of both the general public as well as the nation's elite. It created the sense that there is something imperceptible lurking in the shadows around Gwadar. Some pointed at possible Indian and/or Afghani backing of the Baluch insurgency movement, others blamed the United States for secretly intervening in Baluchistan to prevent greater Chinese influence in this critically important area of the world, still others accused the Gulf States, fearful of the threat a successful Gwadar Port might pose to Dubai, of meddling in inner-Pakistani affairs. Having heard first hand from key decision-makers what they thought about Baluchistan and Gwadar, I decided to embark on the task to bring some light into this tangled undergrowth of accusations and threat perceptions. I continued to dig deeper into the issues surrounding Gwadar with the help of academics from the Universities of Warwick and Oxford and think tanks such as Chatham House, but also in conversations with scholars from the United States and Germany, representatives of the Baluch opposition in exile, as well as military figures from the Republic of India.

The insights from both on-the-record and off-the-record interviews, in conjunction with the information obtained through reviewing the literature on the topic, made it clear to me that the most important aspect of Gwadar lies in the fact that the port as well as its infrastructure is being built by the People's Republic of China (PRC). The reasons behind this are clear: As a rising world power, China's thirst for energy from the Middle East, especially its demand for crude oil, is growing at a stunning speed. At the same time, however, the PRC finds itself in a dependency on the United States whose navy dominates both the waters around Middle Eastern oil fields, 'one of the greatest material prizes in world history' (United States Department of State, 1945), as well as the Strait of Malacca through which nearly all of China's oil is shipped. A pipeline from Gwadar through Pakistan up to Xinjiang Province in Western China would thus allow the People's Republic to quench its thirst while also decreasing its reliance on American goodwill. On top of that, Gwadar might also potentially provide the PRC with a strategic hub that could also be used for military purposes so as to gradually challenge US dominance over China's and indeed the world's energy supply.

In this context, I believe, it is of utmost importance to acknowledge, that America's 'unipolar moment' is over. The

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pieces are in flux and the 21<sup>st</sup> century holds the sinister promise of renewed tensions and possible armed conflict among world powers before they will settle again. One of these theatres of potential war is Gwadar in the province of Baluchistan, Pakistan. Against this background, we might see the emerging struggle for supremacy in Central Asia and beyond as another 'Great Game'. The term found its way into public consciousness through Rudyard Kipling's book *Kim* and referred to the strategic rivalry between the British and Russian Empire for territories and resources in the region. In the light of the aforementioned Sino-American contest it appears as if a New Great Game is in the making, with new protagonists, old motives and Baluchistan as one of the prizes to be won.

## 1.2 Purpose and Research Questions

Against this background, the primary purpose of this dissertation is to explicitly research how Gwadar Port and the province of Baluchistan can be embedded into a geopolitical framework. Therefore the following research questions will be addressed:

1. How can the strategic importance of Gwadar Port and Baluchistan be viewed through classical geopolitical approaches such as Spykman's and Mackinder's Rimland and Heartland theories?
2. Building on this, why does Gwadar constitute such a major geopolitical prize in the contemporary geopolitical setting?

On the other hand, a further purpose of this paper is to use the Baluch insurgency as a case study to demonstrate the practical consequences of the addressed strategies of geopolitics. Doing so, however, requires one to leave the 'god's eye view' (Toal et al., 1998, 16) of geo-strategy behind and challenge the way of geopolitical thinking within International Relations. This requires some further elaboration before consequent research questions can be developed: America's grey eminence of Foreign Policy, Zbigniew Brzezinski, famously referred to the struggle over power and influence in Eurasia as a 'Grand Chessboard', 'on which the struggle for global primacy continues to be played' (1997, 30). A game of chess, the most popular Western game of strategy, however, would suggest a clearly identifiable board on which clearly defined, homogenous actors would move rationally according to previously defined rules. The parallels to IR theory are obvious: broadly speaking, its most dominant school, realism, portrays the world as a battlefield of homogenous nation-states, which act rationally and according to scientifically detectable rules (Gray, 1999, 173-74, 178; Taylor, 1994; Thomson, 1995, 216-17, 225; Wallerstein, 2000; Waltz, 1979).

Yet, during my trip to Pakistan I found that reality looked much different and more diffuse than portrayed by theory. Local politicians, wielding enormous influence and power, command over an *entourage* of 50.000+ people. Different ethnicities, speaking different languages, live across the country whose borders (especially its Western ones) appear rather fuzzy. In Baluchistan itself, whose territory is located both in Pakistan and Iran, local rulers, known as *Sardars*, have repeatedly led their private armies of several thousand men against the Punjabi-dominated armed forces of Pakistan whilst also sparking insurgencies against Tehran. Put simply in Weberian terms: I could not see the monopoly of violence in Pakistan that legitimately exercised control over a clearly definable territory (Weber, 1919), which ought to have been there according to the 'grand chessboard-theories'. Fortunately, there is a body of literature emerging that portrays world politics in a different light (e.g. Amitav, 2009; Bilgin, 2008; Falk, 2002; Glassman, 1999; Kavalski, 2012; Lansford, 2000; Misra et al., 1980; Osiander, 2001; Walker, 1993; 2010; Zielonka, 2006; 2008; 2011; 2012). Yet, most geopolitical scholars still think and speak in terms of nations: the United States using its Asian allies, like India, to conduct a policy of offshore balancing against China, which itself is trying to break out of its perceived encirclement by improving relations with Pakistan etc.. Contrasted with my own observations in Pakistan itself, however, one cannot help but to think of be reminded of Walker's warning that such talk tends to have 'a bad habit of ignoring or crudely oversimplifying questions about what it means to claim political authority, and more specifically, what it means to make a claim to the forms of authority expressed by the modern sovereign state' (2010, 13). Drawing on such criticism, Zielonka underscores that 'many writing on international relations have tended to assume that states are "black boxes", trying to augment power and meet their national interests' (2012, 512).

Against this background, the point I am hoping to make is that whilst a simplified and broader framework as developed in the first part of the paper might be necessary to understand the 'bigger picture', there is a discrepancy

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between the way the world is being portrayed in geopolitical analysis and what Keller called 'the geopolitics of practice' (Appendix IV). Drawing on my own observations in Pakistan and on what I have learned during my reading, it might be confidently asserted that if one 'zooms into the chessboard', a multiplicity of actors emerges who carry out their own policies and do not at all fit into the categories of Westphalian nation states. In this context, I consider it to be of crucial importance to bear in mind the notion of 'polycentric authority', advanced by Zielonka within his 'new medievalism'. In his theory power resembles a patchwork of different, polycentric authorities distributed across a certain territory, in complete contrast to the Westphalian notion of a central monopoly of violence (Zielonka, 2006). To be sure, his argument is mainly centred on the European Union, yet his criticism of the state-centred analysis in International Relations reminds us of the simplifications portrayed by traditional 'chessboard-theories'. Furthermore, it also contributes to 'problematise the dominant understanding of IR as a world of sovereign states which demarcate inside from outside' (Cochran, 1999, 121; see also: O'Loughlin, 2014, 15-40) and thereby highlights the necessity to analyse other centres of authority and players that would usually be excluded in an analysis that only thinks in terms of clearly identifiable centres of authority and monopolies of violence. As already mentioned above, Zielonka's warning that we should not treat states as 'black boxes' has been a guiding idea during my research in the country itself. Moreover, it bears a striking similarity with my observations in Pakistan and the multiplicity of actors visible if one 'zooms into the chessboard'. Among those polycentric authorities are the Baluch insurgents, involved in the ongoing uprisings in both Pakistan and Iran. Hence, whilst this paper will draw on the classical schools of International Relations and Geopolitics, it will, at the same time, indirectly challenge the fundamental epistemological and ontological assumptions of the Westphalian paradigm by focusing on the background and role played by the insurgency in Baluchistan. Therefore, the following research questions will be addressed in the second part of the paper:

3. To what extent is there a correlation between the clash of geopolitical interests around Gwadar and the violent unrest in Baluchistan?

4. How have other powers intervened in Gwadar and Baluchistan?

The dissertation will unfold its overall argument in six chapters. Having introduced the topic of this paper in this first chapter, Chapter 2 will describe and discuss the research method and methodology that has been applied for this research.

Following on from this, the first part of Chapter 3 will evaluate a review of the literature concerning Gwadar and Baluchistan. The second part of the chapter will present and discuss a review of contemporary geopolitical as well as IR literature that deals with the rise of the rising powers of the East, notably China and India, and the reaction of the West to it. Having done so, the third part of the chapter will introduce how this paper attempts to weave together both clusters of the literature so as to better understand the geo-strategic significance of Gwadar and Baluchistan.

Chapter 4 will highlight the results of the empirical data collected from the conducted interviews as well as the findings from the reviewed literature on Gwadar and geopolitics. After having briefly outlined some background information on Gwadar and Baluchistan, the paper will then move on to demonstrate how both can be viewed through the theoretical lenses of classical geopolitical theories. Thereafter, Gwadar's contemporary geopolitical significance will be underscored and particular emphasis will be put on its importance for China's energy strategy. Having done so, the last part of the chapter will highlight how other powers have intervened in the region and used the Baluch insurgency for the greater geopolitical goal of containing a rising China.

Finally, Chapter 5 will summarise the research findings and draw conclusions based on the analysis of the previous chapters. The findings as well as suggestions for further studies will be discussed.

## CHAPTER 2 – Methodology

### 2.1 Research Strategy

In order to comprehensively address the research questions, it is crucial to articulate and implement a research

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strategy, consisting of a variety of methods. In doing so, it is furthermore necessary to demonstrate that these methods are sufficient to assure the reliability and validity of the collected data.

As already mentioned, I was given the opportunity to carry out primary research during my research visit to Pakistan, fully funded by the Provincial Assembly of the Punjab, and used this to interview several important figures of the Pakistani political-economic elite on the topic of drone strikes as well as on Gwadar and Baluchistan (see: Appendix VI). The interviews took mainly place in the corridors of political power in Islamabad, in the bastion of military might in the General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi, as well as in the homes of several senators and politicians. Moreover, having generously been invited to several weddings, I could also use these functions to engage in some more informal talks. Having returned from Pakistan to the United Kingdom, more specific research questions were drafted and with the aim to validate the findings more structured interviews have been conducted.

## 2.2 Data Collection

This dissertation uses both secondary as well as primary data so as to create a framework that allows one to compare and contrast the findings and ultimately discuss them in the course of the paper.

### 2.2.1 Secondary Data

With regard to the secondary data used for this project, it can be briefly stated that a large part of the background information for this paper has primarily been derived from the books and journal articles outlined in the literature review. Additionally, websites such as *Stratfor*, *Wikileaks* and *Balochinterest* have been consulted and in some cases contacted to ask for interviews. Moreover, governmental reports and strategy papers together with various regional print media have also served as points of reference (Balochinterest, 2015; Stratfor, 2015; TheBaluch, 2015; Wikileaks, 2015).

### 2.2.2 Primary Data

However, the information obtained through these sources represents only one part of the 'methodology equation' in this paper. It has been decided to employ qualitative elite interviews to collect primary data for several reasons.

First of all, the focus of this paper constituted previously unexplored academic territory encountered for me. To help with this challenge, Bogner et al. point out that interviews can 'serve to establish an initial orientation (...) as a way of helping the researcher to develop a clearer idea of the problem' (2009, 46). Having said this, it is important to underline that there are different approaches to qualitative interviewing – among them unstructured and semi-structured interviews. According to Saunders et al., unstructured interviews allow the researcher and the respondent to talk freely as neither of them is bound to a pre-determined set of questions that needs to be worked through. It is thus most suitable for the initial phase of the research. Semi-structured interviews, on the other hand, aim to follow a certain list of questions and topics that the researcher hopes to cover during the conversation. Naturally, they already require a certain knowledge of the topic and might thus also be viewed as the 'next step' after unstructured interviews (2012, 376, 378ff). Overall, both unstructured as well as semi-structured interviews have been chosen as a method to obtain primary data. Generally speaking, unstructured interviews were chosen as the preferred method of research during my time in Pakistan. After having obtained initial insight knowledge and sufficient information about the topic, however, semi-structured interviews were conducted after my return to the United Kingdom in order to compare and contrast the findings and further refine my investigation.

Secondly, apart from being an explanatory tool to acquire initial knowledge of the topic, elite interviews also serve two other, perhaps more important, purposes in the context of this paper. As a starting point, it is important to face the fact that Pakistan's current socio-economic system arguably resembles a classical Marxist pyramid with 60 per cent of its population living below the poverty line and a minority largely owning the means of production in a country that is largely running an agricultural economy (Ghosh, 2013). The importance of military, political and economic elites in the country can thus not be over-emphasised. As Richard puts it: 'the whole notion of an elite, implies a group of individuals, who hold, or have held, a privileged position in society and, as such, as far as a political scientist

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is concerned, are likely to have had more influence on political outcomes than general members of the public' (Richards, 1996, p. 199). Given this background, it was absolutely essential to engage with those elites academically and thus obtain valuable primary data from the key decision-makers of the country.

Having said this, the topic also requires a certain degree of insider knowledge in order to fully comprehend the inner working of, for example, intelligence or military operations in the region of Baluchistan. As emphasised by Welch et al., 'members of the elite serve as sources of information on specific areas of knowledge that would otherwise be inaccessible' (2002, 613). Since a considerable part of this paper focuses on the *how* and *why* of potential involvement of other world powers in Baluchistan, it is crucial to obtain information through elite interviews that would otherwise be almost impossible to obtain. However, as one might expect, the interviews conducted with the representatives of the Baluch opposition, the Pakistani military circles and their Indian counterparts on foreign interventions in Baluchistan have, as explicitly requested, not been recorded and remain off the record. Given the sensitivity of the topic, these measures were taken to assure the anonymity and, quite literally, the safety of the respondents, who otherwise would have refused to share their information. Moreover, as this project marks only the beginning of a much wider academic work, I consider it to be of crucial importance to build and further a relationship of mutually assured trust through such a precautionary approach. *Summa summarum*, both the socio-economic circumstances of Pakistan and the necessary insider knowledge about military and intelligence operations essentially require it to obtain data through the use of elite interviews.

## CHAPTER 3 – Literature Review

The existing research drawn upon in this research proposal can be organised into two clusters: (1) research on Gwadar, Baluchistan and the wider region, (2) research that focuses on the geopolitical context of the topic as well as its theoretical aspects within the framework of International Relations.

### 3.1 Gwadar, Baluchistan, and the Wider Region

Among regional scholars much attention has been paid to the actual and potential strategic importance of Baluchistan and Gwadar, both for the economic development of Pakistan itself and for the wider region. All of them highlight important issues around the building of the port, despite the fact that a considerable part of their work reads more like government strategy papers that tend to paint the situation in rather rosy colours. Malik, for example, points to the enormous potential Gwadar could hold for Pakistan and stresses the importance that Baluchistan holds to Chinese strategy planners. However, in contrast to Khan, he only indicates the prospect of Sino-Indian rivalry that might lie ahead if everything went according to plan (Malik, 2012). Whilst also emphasising the economic attractiveness of Gwadar to the Central Asian Republics (CARS), the latter fills this gap and highlights the rivalry between the Indian-built port of Chahbahar in Iran and Gwadar. He thus clearly underlines the intense competition of various types that surround this critically important area of the world. Nevertheless, whilst implying the emergence of a future struggle for regional dominance between a Sino-Pakistani bloc on the one side and an Indo-American alliance on the other side, he tends to neglect the role of the United States, one, if not *the* most important player in the region and in the 'New Great Game' that is emerging. Building on this, Khan, just like Malik, turns a blind eye to possible foreign involvement in the province of Baluchistan (Khan, 2012) and thereby misses the chance to penetrate deeper into the security web that has been spun around Baluchistan.

This last point, however, is taken up by Mazhar et al., who in their rather 'ideologically charged' paper, look at Baluchistan more closely and passionately raise the spectre of alleged US-Indian desires to carve out a 'Greater Baluchistan' out of the rest of Pakistan (Mazhar et al, 2012). In comparison, a more 'sober' view on this issue is provided by Haider, who agrees with the aforementioned scholars on the vast economic as well as geopolitical potential of the port to both Pakistan and China. However, digging deeper into the point made by Mazhar et al., he stresses the high possibility of India's possible collusion with the Baluch insurgents so that she may be able to hit two birds with one stone, that is, to weaken her arch-rival Pakistan and put obstacles in China's way to regional dominance (Haider, 2005).

Having highlighted the more regional dimension of academic discourse on the subject, there are some notable

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exceptions of Western scholars who have focused on the strategic importance of Baluchistan. Although written in 1981, Harrison's book *In Afghanistan's Shadow* still serves as a standard reference among academics interested in the region (Harrison, 1981). Whilst providing a history of the Baluch as well as an insight into Baluch society, Harrison warns against Soviet plans to gain access to the warm waters of the Gulf and, consequently, to the vitally important oil fields of the wider Middle East (see also: Blood, 1995). Indeed, read with the aforementioned more contemporary discourse on Chinese-built Gwadar in mind, it becomes clear that the issues at stake are still very much the same as they were when Moscow, not Beijing, was the predominant power on the Eurasian landmass. However, taking into account the bygone era in which the book was written, it can only serve as a foundation on which further analysis might be built to analyse Baluchistan and Gwadar in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Apart from Harrison, there are four other notable scholars who have focused on the topic. Axmann and Marx – both of whom have been interviewed for this paper – provide a nuanced and detailed account of the 'inner life' of Pakistan's largest province, especially with regard to the interdependent network of tribal relationships (Axmann, 2008; Marx, 2007; 2013). Whilst Marx's work, however, emphasises more generally the covert war that is being fought with the help of Western intelligence agencies in the Iranian part of Baluchistan, Axmann cautions against the euphoria of many of his regional colleagues by pointing to the on-going insurgency as well as to the infrastructural challenges the port faces (Axmann, 2008, 9). Finally, in contrast to both Axmann's and Marx's account of the inner workings of Baluchistan, Murtha's paper for the US Naval Postgraduate School provides the perhaps most comprehensive account of the global dimension of the situation in and around Gwadar (Murtha, 2011). Tying together the various economic prospects of Gwadar, whilst at the same time outlining the history of foreign involvement in Baluchistan, as well as China's tremendous interest in a successful completion of the port project, Murtha underlines the high potential for international conflict in this strategically important region. Nevertheless, he fails to dig deeper into allegations of possible US involvement in Pakistan's largest province – a decision that is perhaps understandable considering his *alma mater*. Moreover, since he aims to embed his analysis of the strategic importance of Baluchistan into a Great Power politics framework, it comes as a surprise that one does not find the heroes of traditional geopolitical analysis, such as Spykman, Mackinder, or Brzezinski in his work. Whilst thus succeeding in providing an in-depth analysis of Pakistan's largest province, he does not embed his analysis into a wider theoretical framework, such as traditional geopolitics and/or IR theory through which it might be better understood and conceptualised.

The same criticism, however, can be made against the reviewed material in general. Analysing the comparatively small amount of papers concerning the focus of this paper, it appears as if they all highlight crucial issues that need to be considered in order to achieve a thorough analysis. Indeed, the available articles and books seem only to be loosely connected, whilst not tying together all the crucial features related to Gwadar and the wider region into a 'bigger picture'. Surely, there is a need to link it to a particular theoretical framework through which it can then be better understood and its magnitude better realised. Simply put, the literature studies Gwadar, like this paper, but tends to see it in isolation of the greater geopolitical dimension and largely unconnected to a wider theoretical framework.

## 3.2 Geopolitical Theory and the Discipline of IR

The shortfall in 'geopolitical embeddedness' that has been the weak spot of the aforementioned literature is made up for by the bulk of academic literature that focuses on geopolitical theory as well as contemporary geopolitical developments. Given the relative power shift away from Europe onto Asia, much attention in IR and security studies has been paid to the rising powers of the East, notably China and India, and the West's (meaning: America's) reaction to it (Brzezinski, 1997a, 1997b; Ferguson, 2004; 2011; Kemp, 2010; Ikenberry, 2008; Kissinger, 2011; Kissinger et al., 2011; Mearsheimer, 2014). Drawing on this 'bigger picture', several scholars have identified the Indian Ocean as one of the 'central theatre[s] of conflict and competition' (Kaplan, 2010, 9; see also Brewster, 2015). Moreover, whilst there is slight disagreement with regard to the potential strength and depth of it, there appears to exist a consensus that the 21<sup>st</sup> century will witness an emerging Indo-American alliance, aiming to contain and deter growing Chinese influence. Moreover, the same scholars argue that to balance such an alliance, that might even be extended to a quad comprised of Australia, Japan, India and the United States the political community will witness an ever stronger bond between Islamabad and Beijing (Twining, 2015). It goes without saying that the formation of such

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a coalition would come at the expense of US-Pakistani relations, whose strength is being increasingly called into question (Haqqani, 2013, 2015).

Fortunately, and in refreshing contrast to the aforementioned 'regional scholars', this literature draws heavily on the old guard of geo-strategic thinkers, such as Mackinder, Mahan and Spykman. It thus manages to provide a broader theoretical framework through which 'The New Great Game' can be better understood and analysed (İşeri, 2009; Kelly, 2010; Scott, 2008). The analysis is even more enriched by the academic work on the geo-strategic concept of 'offshore balancing', which has enjoyed renewed attention since its first articulation in the post-Cold War years. Naturally, there exist internal variations as to the practical and theoretical configuration of it. Simply speaking, however, the concept suggests a *divide et impera* approach in American foreign policy that considers direct military intervention as a last resort and proposes to 'resolve' and balance conflicts and hostile powers through allied countries and organisations (Holmes, et al., 2012; Layne, 1997, 2007; 2009; Walt, 2010, 2011). If viewed through the lenses of offshore balancing, for example, the alleged US-Indian cooperation to support the Baluch insurgency in this vitally important region of the world that is starting to feel growing Chinese influence might be seen as the practical consequences of such a wider strategy.

However, it is to the disadvantage of the literature that it does not provide precisely such a case study, which could be embedded into a wider theoretical framework. In overcoming this disadvantage one might find help in Clausewitz's famous assertion that 'tactics is the theory of the use of military forces in combat. Strategy is the theory of the use of combats for the objects of the war' (Clausewitz et al., 2006, 46). Translated into the context of this paper, the first part of the literature must be identified as the *tactical* part as it offers mainly Gwadar/Baluchistan-focused analysis without, however, embedding its examination into a wider theoretical framework. The second part of the review, although lacking a case study, offers a *strategic* vision on the global Great Game that is being played and highlights what strategies are being employed to further the respective goals of the players involved. Each cluster of literature in and of itself would not be sufficient to provide an enriching and comprehensive picture of what is at stake in and around Gwadar. What this dissertation thus aims to do is to weave together both the tactical and strategic part of the literature. In other words, whilst embedding Gwadar into a geopolitical framework to underline its wider importance, it will use the Baluch insurgency as a case study to demonstrate the potential practical consequences of strategies such as offshore balancing so as to highlight how 'The New Great Game' might be played 'on the ground'.

## CHAPTER 4 – Research Findings

### 4.1 Background

*O Allah, seeing Thou hast created Baluchistan,*

*What need was there of conceiving Hell?[1]*

So writes an unknown Arab Poet of Pakistan's largest province. Indeed, Baluchistan's mountainous, dry and desert lands does not lend it a very inviting appearance and neither do its borders with Iran and Afghanistan, which each host large portions of ethnic Baluch within their respective territories. And yet, the eyes of history have rested on this region more than once.

It was through this 'land by water', as it is referred to in Pashto, that Alexander the Great's armies retreated back to Persepolis. Centuries later, before her disastrous Afghan War in 1839, the British Empire sent emissaries to the Kahn of Baluchistan to ask for a guarantee of safe passage through his territory. Against this background, it remains an irony of history that the Empire's Anglophone successor on the world stage again using Baluchistan as a supply route for its war in the 'graveyard of empires'. More than a 100 years later, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the province found itself in the spotlight of international media attention when National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski made it clear that Baluchistan was considered to be of such vital importance in the Persian Gulf region that its defence would be in the strategic interest of the United States (Harrison, 1981, 1). Hence, one might get the impression that the area has always been a battlefield for power, domination and expansion of major world powers. As one might expect, the Baluch themselves have not been idle during all these turbulent times and, starting after

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their territory became part of Pakistan in 1948, have fought in five major and on-going uprisings against the central government in Islamabad and the Pakistani armed forces. One bone of contention between the Baluch insurgents and Islamabad has been added recently as the construction of a warm-water deep-sea port in the Gwadar District of Baluchistan has progressed speedily under Chinese supervision. Gwadar, at the time a rather small fishing village, had long been an enclave of Oman and was eventually purchased by the government of Pakistan in 1958. Soon plans of turning it into a major port emerged, but were not seriously developed until 1993 and the start of construction work in 2002 (Dawn.com, 2008). The port itself is in the hand of the Gwadar Port Authority, owned by the Pakistani government, and was initially operated by PSA International, one of the world's largest port operators based in Singapore. However, due to slow progress and little business activity, the Pakistani government eventually asked the People's Republic of China to take over operations at Gwadar and in 2013 the state-run China Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC) was formally awarded the multi-billion contract for construction and operation of the port. By taking this decision Pakistan and China deliberately ignored the 'raised eyebrows from the U.S., India, several western and Gulf countries, including Iran' (Jafar, 2013). Interestingly in this regard, I was told during my research in the country that Pakistan had no choice but to hand over control to China as PSA International, allegedly bowing to Arab and Western pressure, carried out the work consciously in a slow pace so that Gwadar would be confined to wishful thinking alone. Having said all this, it is perhaps necessary to take a step back and address the question why a former fisher village in the Pakistani province of Baluchistan 'raises eyebrows' in world capitals and allegedly is the reason for a cabal behind the scenes involving one of the biggest global port operators and leads the People's Republic to commit so much attention, financial resources and manpower to its construction.

## *4.2 On the Board: Gwadar through the Eyes of Geo-Strategists*

To answer these questions it is necessary to view Gwadar and Baluchistan through the prism of geopolitical analysis. Generally speaking, there exists an overuse of the term 'geopolitics' and due to the resulting ambiguity there is no consensus on a single definition. The most 'neutral' definition might be found in the Encyclopedia Britannica, which states that geopolitics refers to the 'analysis of the geographic influences on power relationships in international relations' (2013). To identify these power relationships around Gwadar and understand their purpose, it is, first and foremost, necessary to look at Baluchistan through one of the most fundamental theoretical perspectives in geopolitical thinking in order to realise its supreme geographical position. Geopolitical theories, the drawing of borders on maps that go right through people's lives and talk about control and domination might not just appear as a way of thinking from the age of Metternich and Co., but also, it might be argued, a bit abstract, even megalomaniac. However, from the research for this paper, and especially from my conversation with Hughes, one has to conclude that the following considerations have been a key determinant for US grand strategy and consequently a catalyst for actual historical realities on the ground. Yet, such way of thinking is not confined to the way of thinking in the United States, or other Western powers for that matter, alone. From my interviews and conversations with senior Pakistanis (and also Indians), especially those figures from the military, I know that Spykman, Brzezinski et al. are being read in the corridors of power and shape the way decisions are made and projects like Gwadar are viewed. Against this background, presenting Gwadar and Baluchistan in the light of geo-political theory fulfils the purpose of highlighting its actual supreme strategic position on the world map, whilst also providing an insight into the very way it is thought of and acted upon by the people concerned with it.

One of the most influential perspectives on geopolitics is Nicholas Spykman's Rimland theory. At its core lies the conceptualisation, first promoted by his colleague Halford Mackinder, of the Eurasian landmass as a 'World Island' with its pivot point, the 'Heartland', and the 'Inner and Outer Crescent' surrounding it. Building on this, Spykman also shares Mackinder's worry that the Heartland's sheer size, in conjunction with the abundant amount of resources in it, would enable any power dominating it to achieve virtual world domination (Mackinder, 1996, 106).

However, in contrast to Mackinder, who believes that Eurasian land power would triumph over maritime powers, Spykman, following in the traditions of Admiral Mahan, insists that the latter's ability to influence events on the world island would still hold an advantage over the former. Accordingly, he refines Mackinder's work by rebranding the 'Inner Crescent' as the 'Rimland', which, he believes constitutes the true geopolitical pivot area. Hence, paying particular attention to the United States as an offshore island with huge maritime potentials, he emphasises the need to prevent any power from controlling the Rimland. This could be achieved through domination of the global



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commons and power projection from the sea onto the continent and the Heartland. Using Russia's establishment in the Heartland and its repeated attempts 'to break through the encircling ring of border states and reach the ocean' as an example, he underlines that both 'geography and sea power (...) persistently thwarted her' (Spykman, 2008, 182; 33). Moreover, the Rimland, this 'great circumferential maritime highway of the world' and 'great concentric buffer zone' (186), he asserted, holds, due to its demographic weight, its enormous resources and industrial development, the key to controlling the World Island. Accordingly, Spykman warns that the greatest threat to US security 'has been the possibility that the Rimland regions of the Eurasian land mass would be dominated by a single power' (Spykman, 2008, xxvii) – a threat that had essentially required the United States to fight two World Wars (Dueck, 2013). Foreshadowing the US Cold War policy of containment, he thus asserted his famous dictum:

*Who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia;*

*who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world.[2]*

Spykman's ideas about Eurasian grand strategy found a receptive audience when America stood at the pinnacle of global power after WWII, and were eventually implemented into US policies during the Cold War and its aftermath (Blouet, 2005, 6; İşeri, 2009, 33-34). Indeed, a closer look at US military involvement and its strategic positioning around the globe illustrates that such talk has not merely been confined to the Ivory Tower but represents an actual reality 'on the ground'. Moreover, it also bears remarkable similarity to Spykman's strategic vision. As can be seen, American military bases are dotted all over the Rimland, particularly around the oil fields of the Middle East. Further reinforcing the impression that Spykman and Mackinder have left behind a lasting legacy. Henry Kissinger underlined, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, that 'the domination by a single power of either of Eurasia's two principal spheres— Europe and Asia —remains a good definition of strategic danger for America. Cold War or no Cold War' (Kissinger, 1994, 810). Similarly, his old rival from their days in Harvard, Zbigniew Brzezinski, added in clearly Spykmanian terms that 'it is imperative that no Eurasian challenger emerges, capable of dominating Eurasia and thus also of challenging America (...) For America the chief geopolitical prize is Eurasia (...) and America's global primacy is directly dependent on how long and how effectively its preponderance on the Eurasian continent is sustained' (Brzezinski, 1997, XIII-XIV, 30-31). To maintain this preponderance, he concluded that 'the three grand imperatives of imperial geo-strategy are to prevent collusion and maintain security dependence among the vassals, to keep tributaries pliant and protected, and to keep the barbarians from coming together' (40).

Hughes further emphasises the actuality and importance of this guiding geo-strategic idea in American policy when he states that 'this has always been the US strategy (...) The US is essentially a maritime power (...) the idea is that it can control events through what some have called 'offshore balancing' and it can do that through forward-deployed power and allies, which sounds similar to Spykman, (...) a lot of the general US strategy has been that as long as it controls the global commons, as long as it controls the seas, as long as you can prevent other powers from dominating this, then you can control and contain events on the continent' (Appendix I).

Having said all this, it becomes clear just how critically important Gwadar's and Baluchistan's geographic location really is in the context of Spykman's Rimland theory and, crucially, as how important it must also be *perceived* by people who, as mentioned above, are deeply influenced by it. The very word 'Gwadar', I was told, is a combination of the two Baluchi words *Gwat* (wind) and *Dar* (gateway). Yet, from a Spykman-inspired perspective, it does not only constitute a gateway for wind, but a gateway for any Eurasian power to 'the great oil-producing regions of the Eurasian land mass and the overland routes to the heartland' (Spykman, 2008, xxiv). Thus, if it is indeed key to influence and dominate the Rimland, and, even more important, prevent any other power from doing so, Gwadar and Baluchistan constitute enormous geopolitical prizes. Having said this, however, we are still left with the question how the theoretical setting from the Rimland/Heartland theories can be translated into the context of contemporary geopolitics.

## 4.3 The Prize of the Game: Gwadar's Importance in Contemporary Geopolitics

During the 1990s and most parts of the 2000s the benevolent and triumphalist West it had long been thought that the end of the Cold War would finally bring the so-called 'end of history'. However, just as history had other plans when

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Georg Wilhelm Hegel first announced its end after the Prussian defeat at Jena-Auerstedt in 1806, the world witnessed the rise of yet another Eurasian challenger, the People's Republic of China. To be sure, the division within the discipline of IR between status quo and revisionist powers can look back on a long history (Carr, 1946; Mearsheimer, 2014; Morgenthau et al., 1985). As Schweller sums it up: 'The key question is whether the rising power views the protection and promotion of its essential values as dependent on fundamental changes in the existing order; or whether it is merely dissatisfied with its prestige and position within that order' (1999, 19). However, whilst the debate on how China's rise ought to be defined raged in academic circles, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton threw down the gauntlet on China in November 2011 when she wrote: 'As the war in Iraq winds down and America begins to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan, the United States stands at a pivot point' (Clinton, 2011). Calling it 'America's Pacific Century', her statements initiated a substantial and ever increasing military involvement in Asia. Indeed, it would be hard to identify any other purpose in the Obama administration's pivoting to Asia but to contain China's rise (Lin, 2015; Kelly, 2010; Stratfor.com, 2012). Moreover, whilst there might be an argument over whether the US is containing China or not, the fundamental fact remains that the United States Navy, by controlling the Strait of Malacca through which the bulk of China's oil is shipped, exercises an effective veto power over the Middle Kingdom's energy supply. Moreover, the United States military also dominates the oil fields of the Middle East, which has been described as 'a stupendous source of strategic power, and one of the greatest material prizes in world history' (United States Department of State, 1945). Naturally, as Zubir et al. highlight: 'Any disruption in oil supply will have a significant impact on China's economic growth and will be as a threat to China', whose 'import of Middle East oil (...) is expected to increase to 70 per cent by 2015' (2005). In the words of Hughes: 'on the high seas (...) the US is still supreme and the US together with India could shut down all shipping entirely if it need to and the same applies to the Strait of Malacca' (Appendix I).

As one would expect, there has been a reaction on part of China which has been referred to as the 'string of pearls strategy' (Stratfor, 2013; The Washington Times, 2005). Following in the best tradition of British imperial expansion with its coal stations spread across the globe, the Chinese have started to build a network of strategically located ports and maritime hubs all over Asia that would eventually help them to escape the Malacca Strait dilemma – and here the circle closes. During my conversation with General Hamid Gul, former Director of the ISI, I was told that 'Gwadar will become the gem in China's string of pearls'. Why so? Firstly, there is its close proximity with the US-dominated Strait of Hormuz, a critical chokepoint through which 17 million barrels, that is almost 20% of oil traded worldwide per day, are being transported to fuel the global economy (Eia.gov, 2012; 2014). Secondly, although China has rejected this offer by Pakistan for now, the port might also provide the People's Liberation army with a strategic listening point and potential naval base to gain a substantial foothold near the Middle Eastern oil fields (Bokhari et al., 2011; Kaplan, 2013; Khan, 2012). Thirdly, there is the potential economic connection to the Central Asian Republics (CARs). As President Musharraf himself underscored at the opening ceremony of Gwadar: 'this whole region, it is like a funnel. The top of the funnel is this wide area of Central Asia and also China's western region. And this funnel (...) goes through Pakistan and the end of this funnel is Gwadar port (...) Pakistan and Gwadar port provides the real input, the inlet and the outlet into it' (Musharraf, 2005; see also: Jafar, 2013; Malik 2012). Finally, there is the fact that whilst Baluchistan itself might not have been granted peace, it has certainly been blessed (or cursed, depending on the perspective) with abundant natural resources. As Ghosh points out: 'Aside from its oil-and-gas reserves, the region also boasts gold, coal, copper, iron ore, lead-zinc, titanium and uranium deposits'. Most of Pakistan's 25.1 trillion cubic feet of proven gas reserves and 300 million barrels of oil are located in Baluchistan (2013). With Gwadar as a cornerstone of its policy in the country, the People's Republic is already building key roads in Pakistan and a high-speed railway track that will connect Gwadar to China's Western province of Xinjiang and the wider Central Asian area. Considering these factors, it becomes more than clear why China is willing to invest around 46 billion dollars into what is known as the 'China Pakistan Economic Corridor', 'a centrepiece of Beijing's ambitions to open new trade and transport routes across Asia and challenge the U.S. as the dominant regional power' (Page, 2015; see also: Masood et al., 2015). Or, as Sajid neatly sums it up: 'The Pakistani-Chinese relationships are getting stronger day by day and the Chinese interest is very immanent in Pakistan, for instance if you look at Gwadar. The road that is being built from Gwadar to China, the pipeline (...) it is all being funded by the Chinese government. Gwadar suits China and not the US' (Appendix V). Indeed, considering these figures, one finds it rather hard to believe Axmann's assertion that 'Gwadar is a rather marginal issue from Beijing's perspective' (Appendix II). At the same time, however, China does not act in isolation and the question arises whether the other players in this Great Game will stand idle by and let it walk away with one of the biggest geo-economic prizes on the Eurasian Rimland.

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## 4.4 Countermoves: Violent Unrest in Baluchistan and Intervention

*'We should regard the establishment of a naval base or of a fortified post on the Persian Gulf by any other power as a very grave menace to our interests and we should certainly resist it with all the means at our disposal.'*

– Lord Lansdowne, Foreign Secretary and former Viceroy of India in 1903<sup>[3]</sup>

*'All eyes are on that hot zone, including India's!'*

– A Baluch politician living in exile, who wishes to remain anonymous

Against the background of Lord Lansdowne warning from more than 100 years ago, one feels reminded of Victor Hugo's old dictum that history is essentially 'an echo of the past in the future; a reflex from the future on the past' (1869, 285). Indeed, history seemed to repeat itself when the Indian Naval Chief, Admiral Sureesh Mehta, expressed his concerns about 'Chinese designs on the Indian Ocean' and 'Gwadar's serious strategic implications for India' (The Times of India, 2008; see also: Bagchi, 2013).

One of those strategic implications, appears to be a growing Indo-American cooperation and partnership, aimed to hamper and contain a growing Chinese presence across the Rimland (İşeri, 2009, 41; Xuetang, 2006, 123). As Hughes points out: 'India, under Modi in particular, is getting quite close to the US' (Appendix I). Talk about such cooperation has increased significantly ever since India's prominent mention in the 2012 'Strategic Guidance' of the US DoD (Department of Defense, 2012, 2; Latif, 2012, 43). Further reinforcing such notions, Kelly maintains that in America's containment of China, 'India will be pivot' and even goes as far as to predict that 'American bases in India will likely pop up (...) to block incipient Chinese encirclement' (2010, 716). Indeed, India, 'as the premier "Rimland" power' (Karnad, 2005, 62), it is argued, 'is the best bet to restrict a future strong China, as per U.S. regional strategy in Asia' (Lijun, 2006, 14; see also: Scott, 2008; Van Praagh, 2003). Against this background, it appears only natural that the containment of India is seen as 'China's Great Game', in which Gwadar will serve the purpose of becoming the 'hub for operations that target Central Asia, West Asia and North Africa' (U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2005; see also: Griffin, 2006; Guihong, 2005; Nanda, 2002).

As mentioned before, the strategy employed against the perceived or actual Chinese expansion by the Indo-American alliance, which has even been thought of as a possible 'quad' of the US, India, Japan and Australia (Twining, 2015; Appendix I), has been described as 'offshore balancing' (Appendix I; İşeri, 2009; Rudolph, 2006). Surely, there exists disagreement about the exact meaning and degree of application by it. However, on a more general level 'offshore balancing' might be referred to as an 'outsourcing of intervention', or what the Romans called 'divide et impera', that is, 'you let the contending regional forces play out against each other and then you can tilt the balance' (Mohan quoted in: Friedman, 2011).

Naturally, there are many areas in which India and America, in concert, or alone, are trying to counter growing Chinese influence in Pakistan and its very manifestation in Gwadar port. There is, for example, the backing of rival ports in Chabahar, Iran, and the Omani port of Duqm, over which 'China will never have the influence (...) as they have at others around the Indian Ocean' (Stratfor, 2014b; see also: Khan, 2012; Mohan, 2014; Stratfor, 2014a; Appendix III). Surely, comparing ports, analysing grand strategy doctrines and pointing at developments such as increased naval cooperation would certainly honour the 'god's eye view' of geopolitical thinking (Toal et al., 1998, 16). Moreover, it would also provide a 'bigger picture' of how offshore balancing in the Indo-American alliance would work in traditional great-power-politics-thinking. Yet, although cautioning against such an approach, Keller points out that such 'geopolitical theories are essentially flawed as they do not consider actors such as rebel groups' (Appendix IV). Hence, as already mentioned, it would clearly miss how 'The New Great Game' is being played 'on the ground' – and what is happening there is indeed telling.

Right at the start of the latest uprisings in 2004, three Chinese port workers were killed in an attack at Gwadar, several others been kidnapped or killed ever since (BBC, 2006; Haider, 2005, 95; Pike, 2015). In 2013 'at least eighteen attacks on railroad infrastructure, gas pipelines, and fuel-tankers disturbed the country's power supply',

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leading the Heidelberg Conflict Research Institute to put the intensity of the conflict at level 3 – one stage from a ‘limited war’ (HIIK, 2014, 115). Moreover, clearly sending a clear message to China’s President Xi Jinping before his visit to Pakistan in April 2015, Baluch rebels launched an attack on a coastal radar station near Gwadar Port and a convoy of security forces (Birsell, 2015; Masood et al., 2015) – and the list goes on. As a reaction, Pakistan pledged to create a 10,000 men strong ‘new special division of the Pakistani Army to protect Chinese workers in Pakistan’ (Riedel, 2015). At the same time, several voices in the United States have been calling for an independent Baluchistan, including Harrison, author of *In Afghanistan’s Shadow*, who urges the United States to ‘aid the 6 million Baluch insurgents fighting for independence from Pakistan in the face of growing ISI repression’. In fact he explicitly points out that ‘Pakistan has given China a base at Gwadar in the heart of Baluch territory. So an independent Baluchistan would serve U.S. strategic interests’ (Harrison, 2011; see also: Goldberg, 2008). In this context, Col. Peter’s ‘Blood Borders Map’, which has allegedly been used in the NATO War College and the US National War Academy and includes a ‘Free Baluchistan’, has gained a particularly sad notoriety. Of course, the hearing before the US Senate in which both Col. Peters as well as several Baluch exiles have expressed their desire for a Baluchistan has only increased its fame (Committee on Foreign Affairs, 2012).

Taking all this into account, one surely does not have to work for an intelligence agency to wonder whether there might be ‘something rotten in the state of Denmark’. Some, including even the Pakistani Taliban, have pointed to the clandestine operations of Blackwater (now: Academi) and the US JSOC (Joint Special Operations Command) to explain the repeated outbreaks of violence across the country and inside Baluchistan (Ambinder et al., 2012; Jalazai, 2011; Mackey, 2009; Malik, 2013; Presstv, 2014; Scahill, 2009, 2010). Others have hinted at possible UAE backing of the BLA (Baluchistan Liberation Army) so as to prevent Gwadar from becoming a considerable commercial threat to Dubai (Malik, 2013; Sharma, 2013). Yet, whilst there might be some truth to these allegations, there is certainly ‘more than one way to play The Great Game’ (Walt, 2011).

Most interestingly, however, during my research in the country I have repeatedly been told that the Baluch insurgency is largely fuelled by India’s premier intelligence agency RAW (Research and Analysis Wing) so as to counter Chinese influence in Gwadar and further destabilise Pakistan. Despite strongly opposed views, such as Axmann’s view that ‘those allegations are nonsense’ and ‘as old as the Baluch nationalist movement itself’ (Appendix II), several indications seem to suggest the opposite.

Commenting on such notions the US State Department maintains that most of the attacks can be traced back to ‘indigenous separatist elements’, but still appears to believe that ‘outside support to the Baloch insurgency from Indian intelligence and its agents in southern Afghanistan is plausible’ (Wikileaks.org, 2009; 2006). Furthermore, it has also become public that former Afghan President Karzai, who developed very strong ties with India during his time in office (Bajoria, 2009; The Economist, 2013), sheltered Brahamdagh Bugti, a leader of the nationalist insurgency in Baluchistan and grandson of Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti, who was killed in a military assault (Walsh, 2010a). Naturally, such revelations have further strengthened the belief in Pakistan that this constitutes a “deliberate” attempt of Kabul and New Delhi to destabilize Balochistan’, as former President Musharraf put it (The Guardian, 2010; see also: Boone, 2015; Dawn.com, 2015; Outlookindia.com, 2015). Such accusations also seem to be shared by the British intelligence community, which, in a leaked cable, expresses ‘fears of “ramped-up” Indian aid to militant nationalists in Balochistan’ and ‘strongly believes New Dehli is covertly supporting the insurgency’ (Walsh, 2010b). Furthermore, Jahanpour, who first introduced me to the *Blood Borders Map* of Col. Peters, is also convinced of foreign meddling in the region and points at the militant *Jundallah* (Soldiers of God) organisation, which is based in the Iranian part of Baluchistan. For him, there is no question that, especially in the context of the clandestine war against Tehran’s nuclear program, ‘the Americans (...) have been giving them funding in order to weaken both the central governments in Iran and Pakistan (...) they are using these groups’ (Appendix III; see also: Ravid, 2012). Further reinforcing this impression, Keller claims that it would be ‘rather likely that weapons for Jundallah end up in hands they were not meant for’. This he holds to be particularly true since it would be ‘very rare’ if there was not ‘some type of donor’ for an insurgency, considered to be close to a limited war (Appendix IV). Moreover, one of the most interesting and telling pieces of information regarding foreign activities has been entrusted on me during a conversation with a senior Indian official with close ties to the military and intelligence community of his country. Explaining to me the various Intelligence Collection Disciplines, he underlined the difference between Human Intelligence (HUMINT) and Signals Intelligence (SIGINT). As the name suggests, the former ‘is provided by people

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rather than by technical means and is very often provided by spies and covert agents', whilst the latter 'refers to electronic transmissions that can be collected by ships, planes, ground sites, or satellites' (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015). According to this source, there exists a sort of 'division of labour' between the United States and India in which the former mainly passes on SIGINT to the latter, which is gathering HUMINT and eventually forwards both to various insurgent elements in Baluchistan. It clearly follows that a strategy of 'clandestine offshore balancing' with India against China would not just conveniently offer 'plausible deniability' for Washington, but would also constitute, as Keller highlights, the 'most used version' for it and New Delhi since both 'can always deny that they supported that group' (Appendix IV). Moreover, such an 'outsourcing' of countering growing Chinese influence in such a critical area would also appear plausible if one takes into account that 'intelligence cooperation between India and the US has grown dramatically since 26/11' [the terror attacks in Mumbai] and is expected to become 'the closest partnership the superpower has outside the "Five Eyes" Treaty' (Swami, 2015).

Certainly, when it comes to what is happening in what former Vice President Cheney once famously called 'the dark side (...) the shadows in the intelligence world' (Danner, 2014), researchers can never be entirely sure since 'we just do not have the same toolset as governments that are putting in billions into their intelligence', as Keller correctly points out (Appendix IV). However, both the publically accessible sources as well as the dozens of off-the-record interviews conducted for this dissertation suggest a reasonable and strong suspicion that Gwadar is simply too much of a geo-economic and geo-strategic prize than to be left to Chinese control. Thus, whilst it is clear that the respective powers cannot openly intervene in a nuclear-armed Pakistan, one can discern the patterns of an American offshore balancing strategy with India against growing influence of the PRC in a critical area of the Eurasian Rimland. The tactics chosen for this approach are thus confined to the shadows world of intelligence and further 'outsourced' to the Baluch insurgents, who appear to be the pawns of vastly more powerful forces in this New Great Game about power, domination and wealth in this young century.

## CHAPTER 5 – Conclusion

*'When everyone is dead the Great Game is finished. Not before.'*

- *Rudyard Kipling[4]*

If the Great Game in Kipling's *Kim* was a tale of imperialism, knowledge and power, a cynic might maintain that nothing much has changed in the centuries since the British lion and the Russian bear were facing each other in their grim struggle over the treasures of Central Asia. Having looked at the Gwadar Port project in Baluchistan through the lenses of seemingly timeless geo-strategic theories, it has become clear that it holds a supreme geographical location on the Eurasian Rimland, which cannot be ignored by any power eager to control 'the destinies of the world'.

Moreover, its close proximity to the Persian Gulf also constitutes a tremendous strategic opportunity for a rising Middle Kingdom, determined to break out of its dependence on the good will of the United States Navy, which jealously guards the Strait of Malacca and could tighten its iron fist around it at any time. In this context, the 46 billion dollars, which China has recently pledged to invest in energy-related infrastructure in Pakistan, almost speak for themselves when it comes to the importance the People's Republic is attaching to the project.

Gwadar, it has become clear, is much more than just a port, but should rather be seen as a symbol for a much wider geopolitical struggle, which seems destined to define the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Drawing on this, the paper has also demonstrated how the other big players in this New Great Game, namely the United States and India, find themselves fighting shoulder to shoulder in a shadowy fight against greater Chinese influence in such a critical area of the world. By focusing on the role of the Baluch insurgency and its Indo-American backing, the paper deliberately ignored the tendency of the IR discipline to portray the struggle for power and domination in world politics on a grand chessboard with its listing of economic power, battleships, manpower etc. Admittedly, this has been done in a rather indirect way and thus invites for a more rigorous investigation into how one could come closer to an accurate picture of the 'geopolitics of practice', using a different, non-Westphalian epistemology.

Ultimately, it can be concluded that if recent history and the findings of this paper are taken as parameters, Kipling's

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gloomy forecast about the end of the Great Game should be seen as an indicator of what the future might hold for Gwadar, Baluchistan and the wider region.

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# Pakistan in The New Great Game: On Gwadar Port

Written by Markus Markert

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## Appendix I: Interview Prof. Hughes

Chris Hughes is Professor of International Politics and Japanese Studies in PAIS, a Research Associate at the Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation, and former Head of the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Warwick. Previously he was Research Associate at the Institute for Peace Science, Hiroshima University (IPSHU). From 2000-2001 he was Visiting Associate Professor, and in 2006 he held the *Asahi Shimbun* Visiting chair of mass Media and Politics, both at the Faculty of Law, University of Tokyo. He holds degrees from the Universities of Oxford (BA and MA), Rochester (MA), and Sheffield (MA and PhD). He is an honorary Research Associate at IPSHU, and has been a Research Associate at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), and Visiting Scholar at the East Asia Institute, Free University of Berlin. From 2009 to 2010 he was the Edwin O. Reischauer Visiting Professor of Japanese Studies at the Department of Government, Harvard University, and is currently an Associate in Research at Harvard's Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies. Research Scholarships have been received from the Japanese Ministry of Education, the Japan Foundation Endowment Committee, the European Union, the British Council, and the British Academy.

*Is there a new confrontation between the Chinese and the United States?*

It depends on how you look at it. There are different kind of perspectives on this. There are some who see that kind of dynamic. Those who look at it from a fairly straight kind of realist point of view, they are interested in the rise and fall of great powers...

...Kennedy

...Precisely the Paul Kennedy types, but also the John Mearsheimer sort of thesis who see this seismic shift in the international system and see China as fundamentally revisionist, dissatisfied with the status quo, it wants access to resources, it wants status and overcome humiliation of the past and it is all fuelled by a new sense of patriotism and nationalism in China. And on the other hand they see the US as a relatively declining power, under threat...and then they say that such a hegemon in order not to be replaced by a rising power will take measures, potentially offensive measures in order to stop this.

*What is your view?*

I think it is a bit more complicated than that, surprisingly enough. There is certainly that dynamic going on, there is certainly the dynamic of a power shift in the region. I mean the United States is still the dominant power, it still has plenty of mileage left in its dominance and primacy in the region and as the US economy recovers, we will see a bit of a resurgence of confidence in the US – within the US itself but also within the region. Clearly the US is trying to

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rebalance, or pivot to Asia. So we are seeing it putting more and more capabilities there. But I think the US will find it quite difficult to do all of these things because economically it is doing better but not quite powering ahead and in terms of budgets....it does not have the budget it had in the past, and is facing problems in passing the budget and investing it in the region. All this is making allies a bit nervous in the region. So the US is there to stay, it will still be the primary power, it still has tremendous economic and military capabilities that it can bring to the region but it just looks less dominant than in the past. So there is this slow decline and of course China has lots of problems...it is not as if it is going to just rise in a linear fashion and there will not be any problems along the way. It has got plenty of internal problems, in terms of demographics, in terms of economic issues around state-owned enterprises, increasingly high labour costs, the environment, political problems etc. etc., but it will continue to rise. So there is this power dynamics and a lot of it really depends on how that is being played. I do not think the United States or China are looking for confrontation. I think China is looking for greater space for itself to portray its credentials as a great power but I do not think it necessarily wants to overturn the current system since it has benefitted from it a great deal globally. I think China is relatively content with the system and the institutions that exist. Regionally there is some dissatisfaction with the idea that the US will be in the region forever and some contestation as in that China is trying to create its own institutions. But there is not this sort of 'relentless drive' to push the United States out or look for confrontation anyway, but it will continue to grow and butt up against US interest and the United States likewise is going to hedge against China's rise. The US is not looking for confrontation. The US has very deep economic interest in China so it does not really want conflict. The US, I think, is very worried about China's rise with regard to some of the military aspects of it. But there is still quite a lot of confidence that China can be engaged, can be brought into the system potentially. So there is this sort of two extremes. One is China's rise and there will be conflict. The other one is that it can be gradually integrated into the system. I suppose it is somewhere in between...this is really hard to know, but there is always the possibility of miscalculation for conflict. I would not rule that out. But there will not necessarily be a clash. We are in a slightly messy situation. But this grants both for optimism and pessimism. So I am sitting on the fence here but this is the reality. I do not think that they are dying for conflict really. I mean there are some red lines both sides are very careful not to cross. Obviously for China, Taiwan is one of those but I think the Taiwanese are being quite sensible. They are not trying to do anything unpredictable that would destabilise the situation. The Korean peninsula is a very difficult one. There is always the potential of a North Korean collapse and how this will be handled. I do not think that the US and China really know how to work this out. China is granting North Korea a life support line and they are doing this to intimidate Japan and to make life a little bit more difficult for the United States...

*...to tie them down. I went to a Chatham House lecture given yesterday by the former Pakistani ambassador to the United States, Haqqani, and he pointed out that China is now allying herself with Pakistan to tie down Indian troops at its Western borders just as it does with Japan and Korea...*

...yeah it is really trying to make things a bit awkward for the United States. But on the other hand, I do not think that it wants North Korea running around, producing huge numbers of nuclear weapons and putting them on missiles to threaten the United States because that is not really in China's interest either. North Korea is certainly a difficult one, I am not quite sure whether any of the great powers really knows how to deal with it but I do not think they are looking for a clash over that, they are looking for managing this somehow. And then there are other things: Japan, for example, which is my area of expertise.

*There was an article in Foreign Affairs the other day about Asia's new triple alliance between India, Japan and the US trying to contain China...is that a realistic prospect?*

Put it this way: there is an element in terms of how to respond to this changing environment. I think there are a number of moves. There is some kind of internal balancing going on...some countries are building up their own capabilities against China, like Japan...

*...with the help of the US...*

...with the help of the US! They have some independent capabilities but most of it is designed to serve the US-Japan alliance and keep the US engaged in the region. So there is this sort of internal balancing, but really this is for purposes of what we call external balancing with an ally. So that kind of dynamic is going on and Japan is very



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interested. Obviously its main effort is to work with the United States but also it wants to begin to work with other US partners and allies to sort of create more options for itself. First of all to strengthen the relationship with the United States, but also to give it a bit more diplomatic weight elsewhere in the region and even to develop bilateral partners separate from the United States. So this is very interesting with Australia and the other partner is India. So there is some truth to it because there is this idea of that there are these triangular...

*...or quad as they call it: The US, Japan, India and Australia...*

...Indeed this as well, there also is a quad! How much content? I mean the one between Japan and Australia is actually becoming quite meaningful in things like military-to-military contacts, peacekeeping operations, logistical arrangements. Japan is trying to sell submarines to Australia, diplomatically they are quite close. So Japan-Australia-US has some length to it. India, on the other hand, is a more difficult partner because India is traditionally quite keen on its own autonomy. But India, under Modi in particular, is getting quite close to the US as we could see during Obama's visit last month. And Japan is definitely enthusiastic to deal more with India. So they are doing things like doing maritime exercises together, they have defence officials meetings on a regular basis, they have talks about a strategic partnership, Japan is trying to sell military equipment to India, they want to do more sea lane patrols, India is also very important to Japan in terms of the oil shipment, which is one of Japan's key interests when it comes to dealing with China. One is the issue about the islands in the South China Sea...the US can put presence there, Japan can put presence there but it is a little bit touch and go as China rises. And then you go around the corner into the Indian Ocean on the way to the Gulf then both the US and India are key players, which is why China is trying to get a maritime presence in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf...

*...they are building a harbour down here in Sri Lanka, for example...I have a map of this 'string of pearls strategy' here...so Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Gwadar, Birma...*

I mean China pours a lot of money into these things...how much presence China has there at the moment is kind of questionable. But there is of course something going on here...

*...just like the British with their coal stations back in the days...*

...you create the foothold which you can then expand. From a Japanese point of view...they do not like this very much. So India is obviously the key player to keep the Indian Ocean along with the United States.

*So talking about sea lanes...some point out that China's biggest weakness at the moment is that it is at the mercy of the US navy, especially when it comes to the Malacca Strait dilemma and that the oil supply to the growing economy in China is its biggest Achilles heel...*

I think this is true...I mean the US still controls the global commons. The global commons is big...it has become the centre of a lot of the talk about strategy and justification for why the US is still so central. I mean it has always been a concept that has been around, but now it has become a very key policy concept. So the US is still the dominant navy power and it will be for a long, long time...

*...and China does not have a blue water navy...*

...not really an effective one. China cannot really project navy power yet. They are acquiring better destroyers and they now have an aircraft carrier, which they are learning to use...

*...and they have the anti-aircraft carrier missiles...*

...true, but these are more access-denial weapons. They are very effective stopping the US getting into Taiwan. I suppose it could be effective around South China Sea and if China militarises even more it could potentially deter the US even more from intervening. But on the high seas away from the coast the US is still supreme and the US together with India could shut down all shipping entirely, if it needed to, and the same applies to the Strait of Malacca.

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So China is getting there as a maritime power, it has clearly ambitions, it is investing in capabilities, it is getting more powerful but far from its own coast it cannot project power. China has one ex-Soviet aircraft carrier and is acquiring all the other elements of an aircraft carrier group like destroyers and supply ships to build a carrier group. But China has one and the US has around 12. And in the Asia-Pacific it has one carrier group home-ported in Japan, there is one in Hawaii, and then there is usually one around in the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean. Surely, it is not all about carriers as they are expensive and vulnerable in some way...especially when it comes to anti-ship missiles. But to deny access is still something else than sea control and the US has that...

*...and it does not have to control the greatest prize in human history, as Eisenhower called the Middle East, it just has to deny access.*

Yes, the US can do that but China cannot. They do not have this kind of power.

*So it is in a trap.*

They are extremely vulnerable, yes, which is why they are trying to get their oil from elsewhere, but the Gulf is still pretty damn important. I am sure it is trying to diversify in Central Asia, to get more gas from Australia, nuclears, renewables. But shaking off this dependency on the Middle East is quite hard. The US, on the other hand, is making progress with his shale gas revolution...

*...that would also have been one of my questions: whether that is a game-changer in international relations plus the free trade agreements with Europe and Asia...*

Indeed, the US has become a main exporter of gas and is no longer importing as much energy as before, so the US looks a lot stronger than it did with regard to dependence on Middle Easter oil...

*...conservative estimates claim that the reserves are enough for the next 100 years...*

...so this is a reason for a renewed strength of the US. Things like the free trade areas...again it is another attempt by the United States to bring itself back into Asia and to...you know there has always been this sense under Bush, which I think is incorrect, that Asia had been neglected vis-à-vis the Middle East. I believe the US never really went away from Asia, it just did not have the same focus as under the Obama administration, where they are clearly trying very hard to focus on Asia. And there is the sort of three pillar strategy: one is diplomatic...the US has signed up to various Asia summits, they signed up to a lot of ASEAN protocols and are trying to show that it is a good citizen and is taking part in diplomatic summits. The second one is a military rebalance, to reinvigorate alliances and put new capabilities into the region, shift the weight of its navy into the Asia-Pacific and then third one is the economic engagement with things like the Trans-Pacific Partnership and trying to make sure that the US determines the standards for doing trade in the region.

*...which brings up the question where Europe is left in all of this...*

...I was in a conference in America until yesterday and it seems as if Europe is kind of being forgotten...in Asia anyway! And as far as they are concerned the US is back! There is a lot more confidence now.

*I have one last question. Mackinder and Spykman are arguing about Heartland and Rimland. According to Spykman, "Who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia, who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world." So as long as the US can dominate the global commons and pretty much contain any continental Eurasian power...*

...yes, this has always been the US strategy since before 1945 and certain post-1945. The US is essentially a maritime power. It does not want to get too involved on the continent. It got sucked into Korea. But the idea is that it can control events through what some have called 'offshore balancing' and it can do that through forward-deployed power and allies, which sounds similar to Spykman. So a lot of the general US strategy has been that as long as it controls the global commons, as long as it controls the seas, as long as you can prevent other powers from

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dominating this, then you can control and contain events on the continent. Moreover, you are also doing your job as a superpower, which is to provide these public goods of security, financial institutions, common currency, but also to militarily make sure that the sea lanes and trade routes are free...

*...the New Rome.*

Indeed. And there are some who say that the US can pull back even further and that the US does not even need to be forward-deployed anymore. You can project a lot of power from the United States. As long as you have bases which you can use in crisis time and a minimum forward-deployed presence, you can project power into the region and you are far less exposed to the risks of counterattacks.

*Thank you very much indeed for your time, Professor Hughes!*

### **Appendix II: Interview Dr. Martin Axmann**

Dr. Martin Axmann is a political scientist and project supervisor of the Hanns-Seidel Foundation in Pakistan and Afghanistan, headquartered in Islamabad, Pakistan. He received his degree from the Albert-Ludwigs-University of Freiburg, Germany and works as a research associate at the Bertraesser Institute in Freiburg, which is investigating ethno-nationalistic autonomy- and secessionist movements in South-East Asia. His research is mainly focused on nation-building in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran with a particular emphasis on the transnational movements of the Baluch and Pashtun tribes in post-colonial and modern Pakistan. The interview was conducted in German and has been translated by the author.

*It appears as if we are witnessing a development in Asia that is moving the United States closer towards India, whilst Pakistan seems to enjoy warmer and warmer relations with China. Do you believe that this is a long-term development? Will we see two blocs emerging in Asia?*

Well, this has been the case for many decades. The Pakistani-Chinese relations are very good and close ever since the days of Ayub Khan in the 1960s. It is really not a new development.

*...so more of a continuum?*

Yes. Pakistan and China have been very good friends ever since the 1960s. They celebrate the Karakorum Highway and the allegedly good relationship on an annual basis and at every possible opportunity. But this is nothing new.

*There is an article in Foreign Affairs which talks about a so-called 'Quad' of the United States, India, Japan and Australia, who allegedly form a coalition to contain China's rise. On the other hand, it is being suggested that China, by following Britain's way, attempts to counter such moves by building strategically located ports in places like Myanmar, Sri Lanka, or Gwadar.*

I have also heard of those considerations, but again: this is nothing new: the military-economic ascendance of China has been going for the last three decades and the same questions that are being asked today have been asked before. A network of pipelines through which large amounts of oil and gas could be shipped to China – these are no new theoretical constructs.

*So there is no new development?*

I cannot see any. But at the same time I have to tell you in all honesty that I have not really dealt with Gwadar in any meaningful way for the last 10 to 15 years when I wrote the article I sent you. But the very fact that I have not heard anything substantial, makes me believe that there has not been any major change in the situation. I think we have been running in circles for the last ten years. The same questions that were asked 10 years ago are being asked today and they are just as relevant – but there has not been any major development for the last 10 years.

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*In a recent interview Robert Kaplan pointed out, just like you did, that the infrastructure necessary to make Gwadar fully operational is still lacking behind...*

This might indeed take decades, if it succeeds at all! I think Gwadar is a rather marginal issue from Beijing's perspective. In my Email to you I have already indicated that there is great geographical distance that needs to be overcome. Moreover, with all its instability, Pakistan constitutes a gigantic challenge and of course there is the Himalaya and Karakorum, the highest mountains of the planet, which have to be connected with China via railways, streets – this is something I cannot imagine to become an actual reality!

*Moreover, there are the Uyghurs in Western China and the allegations that India is arming the Baluch insurgents. To what extent are these accusations true?*

They are as old as the Baluch nationalist movement itself. In the 1920s and 1930s they were accused of colluding with Gandhi against the 'Muslim Nation on the Indian Subcontinent'. Back then and today those allegations are nonsense, especially if you consider material or financial help. There were allegations during the civil war in the 1970s. But according to my research the Indians only expressed sympathy and I have been told that nothing has changed ever since the 1991 conflict. I believe there is no substantial support of the Baluch nationalist movement through India.

*Pakistan's former ambassador to the United States, Haqqani, is saying the same thing. According to him there is no evidence suggesting any Indian involvement...*

I would certainly agree with this. Ever since its beginning, there has been no significant support of the Baluch nationalist movement. There were allegations in the 1980s that the Soviets would help them, but this is just as nonsensical. They have always been on their own.

*Is it not particularly interesting that Selig Harrison, who wrote this famous book on Soviet desires in Baluchistan, is now engaged in the campaign for an independent Baluchistan, together with Senator Rohrbacher and Colonel Ralph Peters? Are those only thought experiments?*

Yes! These Senators in the United States have no idea what they are talking about and have been influenced by some Baluchis living in exile in North-America and Europe. But they have really no idea what they are talking about.

*Thank you very much for your time and effort, Dr. Axmann.*

### **Appendix III: Interview with Dr. Farhang Jahanpour**

Professor Farhang Jahanpour is a British national of Iranian origin. He received his First Class BA Degree in Persian Literature from Shiraz University, followed by BA Degree in English Literature from Leeds University, MA Degree in American Literature from Hull University and PhD Degree in Oriental Studies from the University of Cambridge.

He is a former professor and dean of the Faculty of Languages at the University of Isfahan, and has also taught at the universities of Cambridge, Oxford and Reading, as well as teaching online courses for Oxford, Yale and Stanford. He spent a year as a Senior Fulbright Research Scholar at Harvard, teaching comparative literature and doing research on the influence of Persian literature on the American Transcendental Movement.

He spent many years as Editor for Middle East and North Africa at the BBC Monitoring Service.

He has lectured widely both in Europe and the United States, including at the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, Wilton Park, Temenos Academy, the Royal Asiatic Society and various annual conferences of the British Institute for Middle Eastern Studies. In 2003 he was the guest speaker at the New Haven Festival of Arts and Ideas and also lectured on the Middle East peace process at Yale University. He has been a guest speaker on 'East-West Relations' on a number of Queen Mary 2 voyages as a part of Oxford University Discovery Programme. In March 2006 he gave

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the keynote address at the International Hotel Investment Forum Conference in Berlin attended by more than 1,350 delegates, speaking about the dialogue of civilisations.

He has edited and written an introduction to *Nuzhat Nama-ye 'Ala'i*, an 11th-century encyclopaedia of natural sciences, history, and literature. He has translated Arnold Toynbee's *Civilization on Trial* into Persian, in addition to publishing the *Directory of Iranian Officials*. His articles have appeared in numerous academic journals, and he has contributed chapters to a number of books.

His main areas of interest are international relations, Middle East politics, comparative religion, religion and politics and Islam and the West. He has been a part-time tutor at the Department of Continuing Education, University of Oxford, for more than twenty years, and is a member of Kellogg College, Oxford. He is also a member of the Board of Advisors of Globalisation for the Common Good.

*Dr. Jahanpour, the topic for one of my essays is 'The War on Terror is over. Discuss.' – a statement by Obama from 2013...*

Did you listen to him this morning? He was saying that America should now move out of the period of war and conflict and that it cannot go into a new major one...

*But is that even possible for the United States...?*

No. At the same time they are intensifying their drone attacks, at the same time they are sending more troops...I mean this is a complete nonsense!

*So would you say that the US is conducting a different kind of war?*

I think what he called the 'pivot to Asia' some time ago...so the main aspect of his policy is to gradually decrease boots on the ground in the Middle East and concentrate more in the Far East and China. Because now you see a competition going on there. I mean, there are so many contradictory things going on. Because at the same time they want to target China, they are also getting into a new Cold War with Russia and at the same time the problems in the Middle East have not gone away. So they have their commitments there. ISIS is growing and they have to deal with it somehow. Just last night they said that 1000 new forces will go. 400 to Qatar and the rest to Jordan and Saudi Arabia to train the terrorists – moderate opposition fighters. This is not well thought out! They really do not know what they are doing!

*There is even a statistic that stipulates that well over 1800 mercenaries are now fighting in Iraq for the United States, which exceeds the number of training personnel...*

Yeah, that is true, but they had these mercenaries there before. When America left Iraq, they left behind quite a number...a few thousand of these contract soldiers to take care of the embassy and so on.

*That brings up an interesting point I have been thinking about. Because private contractors are, as the name already suggests, driven by the desire to increase profit. So could you argue that there is even an interest behind prolonging the War on Terror because there are corporate profits being made through the war?*

I think that is a very good point! These people have an interest in keeping the conflict going because it is business. So that is a fair point to make.

*I am thinking...Clausewitz talks about how policy must have a continuous influence on the conduct of war, to the extent that the liberated forces of war can permit it. So it seems as if America always comes up with different threats. After the Second World War they had this huge military-industrial complex and Eisenhower warning about it, then you have all these fairy tales about the missile gap, the bomber gap, and then at the end of the Cold War you have Colin Powell saying 'I'm running out of demons, I am running out of enemies, I am down to Fidel Castro*

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*and Kim Il Sung again'...Hence can we not make the argument that the War on Terror is nothing but old wine in new bottles?*

I think if you really look at not only America but practically all other countries...if you have a military-industrial complex, or just even a military, and you want to justify your existence, to get money. I think it is logical for any organisation, which wants to make money...I mean if you want money, you have to expand. So you must have an enemy, it is a core part of the whole discussion. It is classical. The best way to control your public, to influence public opinion and particularly for the military to get more resources and more money is to have either a real or an imagined enemy. So there was always this enemy, which was exaggerated. The power of the Soviet Union, as you said, the missile gap and tanks gap and all that stuff. And of course this went, immediately almost, after the collapse of the Soviet Union to Islamic Terrorism. You had Iraq. The Iraq war was by itself a pointer to show that the Cold War with Russia, the Soviet Union has ended. We are the Masters. Bush was saying that they no longer needed Russia's permission anymore. So the constraints of the Cold War were over and they had become the sole superpower. I think with regard to the first Gulf War there were ways to avoiding it. Gorbachev, Saddam Hussein and especially his foreign minister Tariq Aziz were talking about plans of what Iraq could do so that there would be....he made a number of conditions which were quite reasonable actually to get out of Kuwait if, he said, Americans do not keep changing their gulf policies and things like that. But, of course, this was not the idea. It was not the idea to settle it nicely and calmly. The idea was that it had to end up in a war which aim was partly to get rid of Saddam Hussein, partly to win the support of the Arabs in the region, partly justify American presence in the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia, but also to partly just show that an era has ended and we are the boss and we do not care anymore.

*So what is America fighting in the war on terror then? Another created enemy?*

I do not want to be completely negative and cynical. It would be just that to say that this is the only rationale and the reason for it. I do not think that this is the case. We are facing a terrorist threat. But you also have to look at it and ask: how did it come to be? How was al-Qaida formed in Afghanistan? How were the Mujaheddin formed in Afghanistan? Where did the terrorism in Iraq come from? Before the Americans invaded there was none! How did ISIS come out of nothing? What are these hundreds of billions of dollars, which Congress has ratified to pay for a Syrian national army to fight against the regime? It is simplistic to say that there is something there called 'terrorism' and we are fighting it. One has to look at the causes, at the background, and, above all, to see how it can be tackled. So going the military way of just bombing them or droning them out is one way. But there is another way of finding the root causes and dealing with those. The issue is: Syria has a domestic element. The regime against the rest. It is not this Sunni-Shia divide. That is really nonsensical because a lot of the people in the army and the regime are supporters of Assad and are Sunnis. His Ba'ath Party is not a Shia regime. It is basically a secular regime. It stands for Socialism, Secularism and Arabism. But basically what it is...terrorism against Assad started in the wake of the Arab uprising, the so-called 'Arab Spring'. And here, just as in Libya, the West got involved and some of its local supporters such as the Arab League. And now Libya is a mess. In the case of Syria: rather than being a Shia-Sunni divide...the Saudis were trying to portray it that way in order to hold their own people at bay and say this has really nothing to do with independence and freedom – that is strictly Shia-Sunni business and Iran is supporting them. It looks more like a Sunni-Sunni conflict. You have Turkey, the heir to the Ottoman Empire with an Islamist movement that is very close to the Muslim Brotherhood...

*...do you mean Gülen's or Erdogan's movement...?*

Erdogan's present government. They travelled to Egypt as soon as Mursi came to power. So they were trying to provide their version of Islam, which to them is a moderate Islam, just like the Muslim Brotherhood tried in Egypt, as an alternative to previous dictatorial regimes. And now you have another line-up by the Sunnis, namely by the Saudis and the UAE, which is a very militant, Wahabi form. And as you can see: Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries pay 20 bn dollar to al-Sissi, whilst Turkey has stopped relations with them because they were supporting Mursi. You really have this very complex situation. It is a question of dominance in the Middle East basically by three, four major powers. The Saudis, representing Wahabism and a very militant form of Islam and regarding themselves as the heartland of Islam because they are in charge of Mecca and Medina, and their allies in the Gulf like Bahrain and the UAE. You had the Muslim Brotherhood which was allied with Turkey and came to power to some extent with the help

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of Qatar in Egypt. And now after they were toppled, the Saudis are paying billions to strengthen al-Sisis government. As result Saudi Arabia and Turkey are not getting on well together. Qatar initially supported the Muslim Brotherhood and in fact gave refuge to some of their major leaders. But since the meeting in Riad, in which Saudi Arabia pressured Qatar to really have a unified command in the Persian Gulf, they had to let them go. So what you really have is a dynamism between Wahabi Sunnism, which is represented by Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain. You have got moderate Sunnis like Turkey and the Muslim Brotherhood. And then you have the Shi'a element, which is Iran, of course, and Iran's friend in Iraq and they have the ruling regime in Syria, although you have the leading figures coming from an Alawite background. What you really have here are geopolitical dynamics and the West is in a way using this, especially the Israelis, to cause problems between these factions. And this has always been the idea. Divide and rule. Create problems between neighbours. Between Iraq and Syria. Between Saudi Arabia and Turkey and so on. So that they can then sit more securely and this is something that they have been saying for a very long time that is really the aim. To weaken the neighbours, especially immediate neighbours. The main preoccupation of the Israelis at the moment is Hezbollah, which is in Lebanon. So it is a very complex situation. But it is more a geopolitical fight, rather than a sectarian fight.

*In his first essay on the 'Clash of Civilisations', Huntington urges the West 'to exploit differences and conflicts among Confucian and Islamic states to support in other civilizations groups sympathetic to Western values and interests. To strengthen international institutions that reflect and legitimate western interests and values, and to promote the involvement of non-western states in those institutions'...So what you are saying is that you have all these different factions clashing, plus you have the West, led by the Americans, intervening under the pretence of the war on terror. That makes me think back to an era of American foreign policy when the motto was 'offshore balancing'. When it was not so much about controlling the Middle East, 'the greatest material prize in human history' according to Eisenhower, but rather stopping any potential hegemonic power from rising.*

This is it! I mean even during the Iran-Iraq war they helped both sides. Because the idea was that neither side should win. If you have two enemies, it certainly helps you when they fight each other rather than you. And you see the same phenomenon right now. Terrorism is a very convenient way to get these groups and countries at each other's throats.

*And this, of course, has been going on for much longer than 9/11. Having outlined this, I was wondering what you would identify as the driving force behind US foreign policy today?*

I believe that President Obama is sincere. He really came with a hope of changing America's relationship with the Middle East. I think as we have seen with the case of Ukraine and definitely in the Middle East, he is not the only person who can decide and who runs the American foreign policy. The Neocons even now are still very strong and I think to some extent, they have influenced policy as you can see with regard to the negotiations about the Iranian nuclear programme. They are allegedly advising him about policies towards Iran. Very good advisors! Just as good as when they were advising presidents throughout the Arab-Israeli conflict. You really have a bunch of people with really a very narrow idea. They think that Israel's interest is paramount. So they are trying to manipulate America to what they see as Israel's interest. Under Clinton they did not reach any agreement because the people who were in charge were not really sincere and I think with the Iranian nuclear programme, too...a lot of the people who are running or organising the discussion, the debates are very close to the Neocons. This is not a secret. I mean it is not as if I am making some sort of new revelations. The fact of the matter is that they themselves say that they are proud to be pro-Israeli. Their argument is that Israel is good for America. There is not interest between their interests. Israeli interest is the same as American interest and so they see Iran as a hostile enemy and try to weaken Iran by every means. And so the nuclear issue...the DIA said in 2007 that Iran has no nuclear programme. They repeated it in 2011. The Israeli intelligence said that Iran does not want nuclear weapons. Even now the talks are not about 'we want you to get rid of your nuclear programmes'. But 'we want to make sure that the breakout, The period that if you decide to go for a nuclear weapon is long enough so that we can stop you'. So everybody knows...the Iranians want six months, to one year. The West wants five to ten years so that Iran cannot even conceivably get close to have the preparations for a nuclear weapon. So they are not talking about Iran with nuclear weapons. They are saying that 'we want to stop Iran to attain the capability of ever thinking of acquiring a nuclear weapon'. Israel is the only country in the Middle East with nuclear weapons and there is no problem. But Iran should not only not have nuclear weapons...up to recently, up to President Obama, the West was adamant that Iran could not have a single centrifuge!

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In 2006 Iran asked whether they could even have a little R&D. And the West said no because America was adamant. If you read Jack Straw's book...he talks about how he talked to Iranians and the West – Germany, Britain, France – wanted to reach an agreement and Iran was prepared to reach such an agreement for a very small nuclear programme so that they could say that they had something. But America was adamant that there should not be any centrifuge. There should be no nuclear activity whatsoever! And this is what the hawks in congress and the Israelis want: Iran should completely stop any nuclear activity. But President Obama, a few years ago, agreed that Iran is entitled to peaceful nuclear activity. But the main idea should be that Iran will not even have the possibility in the future to work towards a nuclear weapon. So this is really the major issue at the moment.

*But to what extent is there really a difference between President Bush and President Obama? Whilst you have President Bush perhaps relying on more conventional methods...sending F16s and putting boots on the grounds...there are some who say that former Bush administration officials are shaking their head with amazement as to how little Obama has departed from George Bush...*

That is what I am saying! The influence of the Neocons has not been erased. The people who are running the show have essentially stayed! With the big exception that President Obama himself, I believe, is sincere. He really wanted to turn a page, but his ability is constrained, so he cannot lift the sanctions, which are imposed by the Congress. All a President can do is to suspend them for a period. But, of course, there is not guarantee that the next President will continue to suspend them and there is no guarantee in fact that if Congress gets 67 senators, they can override a veto by the President. There are two bills in the House and Senate now that want to increase sanctions on Iran and the President Obama said last night that he will veto it. But his veto is only powerful if Congress does not get 67 senators voting against it. Now, if you are Iran and you are negotiating with America and you are about to give up your entire nuclear programme, or most of it and stick to only a little R&D, and then what you are getting in return is a suspension of the sanctions gradually...so this would go on for ten to twenty years...for something which they have not even done...they do not have a nuclear weapon...so you have four lots of sanctions: you have sanctions by executive order of the President, you have sanctions by Congress, which only Congress can take back, and then you have the Security Council Resolutions, which only the Council can change, and then you also have the European sanctions, which followed America...or even made the first step such as England when they imposed SWIFT- and other banking-restrictions before America did it. So you really have four lots of sanctions and what Iran is looking for is that 'okay, if we give up verifiably any ambition that might lead to a nuclear weapon...what do we get in return?'. And President Obama cannot tell them 'your sanctions will be lifted'. All he can say is that 'I have the power to suspend them for a while'. But Congress, which is very hawkish at the moment, not only does not want to take these back, but also wants to increase them, is in charge. And Europe probably, if you have enough determination, they can lift them but I do not think that they will do so without America saying so. And the third element, of course, is the Security Council that can lift the sanctions imposed because of Iran's alleged threat of international security for having a nuclear weapons programme, which, of course, they do not have. So it is a very complex issue and Iran is in a no-win situation basically. And this is why I am rather doubtful about the results of even the latest talks.

*So we have a Cold War going on with Russia, we have the encirclement of China, we have the Middle East in turmoil...*

And if they were really sincere about fighting terrorism, they should have engaged with the Russians and the Chinese to take on this menace. But they are not doing that! At the same time they are trying to fight terrorism, they are pivoting towards Asia and adjusting to China. At the same time they have started a new Cold War against Russia. So they are really fighting on three fronts at the same time. And this is what it makes extremely difficult.

*Having now talked at great length about the Middle East, I was wondering whether you could just briefly comment on the 'Blood Borders' map, drawn by Colonel Ralph Peters, for my dissertation on Gwadar Port. I mean if you look at it, especially the part that used to be Iraq, looks remarkably similar to what is going on right now...the Indians are building a port in Chabahar, while strengthening their alliance with America...*

Of course...they want to get to Central Asia and Iran has a direct line...in fact, they are building a railway, which is



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much quicker than going through Pakistan and the Hindukush. They could go from here straight to Afghanistan – the distance is much shorter. So I think this has not so much to do with the Americans although they are much closer now than they used to be. It is more between rivalry between Pakistan and India and the latter trying to get to Central Asia.

*It looks as if Pakistan really has a geographical curse...*

And Iran as well has an amazing geopolitical position. They have access to both the Caspian Sea, as well as to the Persian Gulf. Therefore you have all the fighting about pipelines etc...it is right in the middle.

*And it is interesting, because as far as I know, or as far as the map of different ethnicities in Pakistan suggests it, the Baluch are of Iranian descent. So do we have a similar situation as with the Pashtun, who neither respect the authority of Islamabad nor Kabul...?*

That is the problem we are having at the moment, really....because in the recent elections in Afghanistan...many people said that Abdullah Abdullah actually won not because they have a majority, he is from the Northern Alliance, but because the Pashtun did not take part in the vote.

*In International Relations we are being told that we have to think in terms of nation states, but not in terms of tribes or ethnicities etc. So it appears strong string ties exist between the Baluch and the Iranians...*

To be honest, that is Iran's weakest point. Because many people, such as the Israelis and others in the West, are trying to get Azerbaijan separated from Iran, but that is rubbish. My grandparents were Azerbaijanis and they were very strong Iranian nationalists. The Kurds...they want to separate them and join them with the Iraqi Kurds, but again they would not, because they are Iranians...the original Achaemenids who created the first Persian Empire. The only place where the push is more towards Pashtun and towards Pakistan is in Baluchistan. They have had historical links with Iran, but if you have a place anywhere in Iran where you have a weak spot...this is probably it.

*I talked to people in Pakistan and they have these big tribes in Baluchistan. One of them is the Bugti tribe and Bugti was killed by Musharraf in 2006 and, according to the sources I interviewed, they found weapons made in India, the UK and the United States...so there seems to be a sort of interest in the West to arm a rebellious movement to rise up against the central authority in Islamabad...*

They are! And of course also against Iran. The Rigi movement or Jundallah, a very militant Sunni movement....and there is no question about that the Americans were helping him. In fact, he was allegedly on the flight over Iran to an American base in Central Asia when Iranians brought the plane down, arrested him and executed him. He said on TV, I do not know how much we can trust this, but he said that Americans helped him. But there are other indications...if you want to weaken the Iranian government, there are some weak spots. The Kurds are one but they have not really managed to get far with that. Azerbaijan has become very pro-Israel and very pro-West because of the oil is another place to put pressure on Iran. And the next place is Baluchistan and they are certainly helping them there. They have been giving them funding in order to weaken both the central governments in Iran and Pakistan. They are using these groups.

*So divide et impera – divide and rule, again.*

Divide et impera indeed!

*Dr. Jahanpour, thank you very much for your time and effort!*

### **Appendix IV: Interview Mr. Christopher Keller**

Christopher Keller is a Specialist on Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa at the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (HIIC). He is an expert in the organisation, strategy and movements of rebel groups and insurgency movements.

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*Mr. Keller, what is your take on the situation in Baluchistan at the moment?*

Well, we have already talked about the content and background of your dissertation and as you well know there is an insurgency going on in Baluchistan against the central government. I am an expert on Sub-Saharan Africa but basically, there are two parts of Baluchistan, one in Iran and one in Pakistan – if you exclude the one in Afghanistan for now. The Baluch insurgents operating in Iran are known as Jundallah and are allegedly backed by the US and Britain to cause some trouble over there and fight a proxy clandestine war. Now the allegation is that the Pakistani part of the Baloch insurgents are also financed and equipped by India primarily but also by Afghanistan through Helmand province.

*It seems to me that the vast bulk of geopolitical literature seems to think and write in terms of nations: The United States is containing China through a policy of offshore balancing with India etc. But, as an expert on rebel groups, is this not simply insufficient to portray world politics? Are there not other actors that need to be analysed?*

Generally speaking: Even a rebel group in an inner-state conflict can arise to the occasion to create intra-state conflicts. Look, for example, at all the countries that have been taken over by rebel groups. Those groups would rise up, topple the government and would then try to do whatever suits them to another country. The prime example is CAR (Central African Republic) taken over by a rebel group a year or two ago. Then you had South-Sudan who broke up due to rebel groups. Then you have the LRA – The Lord's Resistance Army – which is operating in Africa too and it has become a huge threat. In Africa it bleeds over so many different border. It was in Congo, it was in South Sudan, it was in CAR and all sorts of different countries went to battle this specific group, including the US. So all in all you can see that rebel groups or insurgents play a huge role in world politics and you are right in pointing out that this is not really considered by major IR theories.

*It is interesting with the Baluch since they seem to act on all sorts of different levels. They lobby political forces in the United States, such as Senator Rohrbacher or Colonel Ralph Peters to raise awareness for their cause and also do this at the US Senate. They have their websites, they lobby the EU...*

I would say a rebel groups becomes accountable once it starts forcing the legitimate power of the state to make certain decisions and make it react in a certain way on the international playing field. So the Baluch are obviously trying to put pressure on Islamabad here.

*So we have this one group, Jundallah, operating in Iran and some others in Pakistan. Let us assume that Jundallah is indeed supported by the US and other Western powers. How likely is it that the weapons will end up on the other side?*

Let's put it this way: Considering all the drug trafficking that is going on there, all the emigration back and forth, I would say that it is rather likely that weapons for Jundallah end up in hands they were not meant for.

*In what ways could other powers, such as the US or India, supply a rebel group and how would they do it?*

There is a lot of different ways one country could help boost another rebel group. They can give them intelligence, which is probably the most used version because other states do not want to arm a rebel group that could then use these weapons against them. Moreover, the US, or any country for that matter, can always deny that they supported that group...

*...plausible deniability.*

Yes. So there is intelligence, then there are weapons, and then there is obviously food, aid and money. But there is also the possibility to help the rebel group with its strategy, which would be a very crucial form of intelligence. Probably the last version of that would be helping out with propaganda of some sort...

*...the Senate hearing and raising awareness etc..*

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There are so many rebel groups around the world and they could be either looked at as positive or negative. It can either be looked at as freedom fighter, fighting for a just cause, or as this really big problem. If one government is liked by a state then a rebel group that is rising up would be called horrific and all these things. But if there is a dictator that the US is not too fond of, then the rebel group starts appearing in a different light.

*The current Baluch insurgency has been going on since 2004. Considering what we have talked about, is it not rather unlikely that they have fought the entire time on their own?*

Oh yes, that would be very rare! There must be some type of donor or what have you. There are dozens of states that support rebel groups every day. Some of them must be giving them money, guns, ammunition or whatever...

*...especially if we consider that Baluchistan is so close to the Persian Gulf, which is one of the most important regions on the planet. So there must be definitely something going on...*

Remember: It is not just Western powers that are being able to support things. Uganda, for example, was supporting the rebels of South Sudan against the government. They were giving them money, weapons, intelligence and all sorts of supplies. And what South Sudan did was starting to support the rebel groups of Uganda, like the LRA, and they were giving them weapons etc. So it is not just the big Western powers. In this respect, I have to admit that the world appears as portrayed in Realism. And this brings us back to what we talked about earlier. Yes, geopolitical theories are essentially flawed as they do not consider actors such as rebel groups, but at the same time we have to face the fact that the analysis of such actors relies on constantly changing information. To adjust one's theory accordingly would be a tremendous task, only major intelligence agencies could manage. It is very difficult to assess who is backing whom and this is where you will run into the biggest problem. Basically, there is a theory of geopolitics and then there is the geopolitics of practice.

*But, speaking from an analytical standpoint, would it not be more enriching to recast some maps along to, say, tribal lines instead of Westphalian states?*

Yes and No. The complexity would be enormous. It would certainly be possible, but the complexity of this ever-changing map would be something else by far. Of course, intelligence agencies can do this sort of stuff and actually do it. But for researchers...we just do not have the same toolset as governments that are putting in billions into their intelligence. In Congo, for example, a rebel group could own Goma on one day and then the next the day the government owns Goma etc. etc.

*Thank you very much for your time and effort, Mr. Keller.*

### **Appendix V: Interview Raje Sajid**

Raje Sajid is an Islamabad-based businessman whose companies are mainly involved in construction and land development. Because of his close ties with the Pakistani armed forces, in which Mr. Sajid takes great pride, the interview was held on October 12, 2014 at his home in the district of the Army Combatant General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi.

*Mr. Sajid, how does the "average Pakistani" think about the American drone campaign in Pakistan? What impact does it have on people? How do they talk about it?*

We have different views. What I think is that it was not as accurately done, it could have been more accurately done. Instead we had more collateral damage, innocent peoples died. The Americans always said that the technology was very precise, but no – the technology was not precise. Many innocent people died and in retrospect the family who suffered reacted: They became suicide bombers and promoted terrorism. Instead of diminishing terrorism, the US drone campaign promoted terrorism. The people became very aggressive and reacted very badly.

Moreover, it did affect the Pakistani-American relationship and the image of Pakistan was destroyed...

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*...in the US?*

In the US , yes. I think the US was not very just in it. They have been doing whatever they want. They have been playing a double-game and treated Pakistan very badly: They did not take Pakistan into the conflict and there was a blame game going on all the time. So I do not think that the drones helped Pakistan.

*So you think that Pakistan should conduct this war itself?*

This is what the Pakistani army is doing right now and it is doing it very effectively! So Pakistan could have done it much better earlier if it had been involved in the American decision-making process.

*Would you go as far as to claim that the drone campaign is a deliberate attempt by the US to destabilise the country? Especially because Pakistan is getting closer and closer to China and is in fact drifting away from the US camp?*

Yes, it is! The Pakistani-Chinese relationships are getting stronger day by day and the Chinese interest is very immanent in Pakistan, for instance if you look at Gwadar. The road that is being built from Gwadar to China, the pipeline...it is all being funded by the Chinese government. Gwadar suits China and not the US.

*I remember watching an interview with General Musharraf who told the audience that the day after 9/11, Colin Powell or Richard Armitage called him and threatened him that if Pakistan would not comply with US demands, America would "bomb Pakistan back to the Stone Age"....*

*...as if Pakistan was some kind of Tora-Bora...*

*...do you think that there has been a shift away from that with the new US President, Barack Obama, in office?*

Yes. You see when General Musharraf was in power he allowed all things do be done – no matter whether they were right or wrong – and did whatever the Americans wanted him to do and no one could stop them. But Americans keep shifting their policies. Whatever suits them, they go for it. You are like a tissue paper for them. They use you and throw you away. This is what they did to Pakistan and this is also what they are doing to Afghanistan. They are leaving now, but they really should not. They are leaving both Pakistan and Afghanistan in very insecure states, especially when it comes to the border region. They are leaving behind a chaos.

*So you could say that people are very hostile to the United States because of the drone campaign and because of the assassination of bin Laden as well...?*

No. Not because of bin Laden. It is the drones that has damaged the relationships between us and the Americans. The killing of bin Laden affected the relationship a little bit, but not so much as the drone campaign did and still does. Look at North Waziristan and the Tribal Areas: So much collateral damage has been done. So many innocent people have died. Siblings have suffered. Wives have suffered. Husbands have suffered. Entire families have disappeared.

*There is an often-voiced opinion in the West that the Pakistani government is only officially denouncing the drone strikes, whilst privately it welcomes the strikes...*

Well, the people feel that the government has no choice. It was done by the Americans. It was their free choice and they chose to do whatever they wanted...

*...you might argue that they did because the large amount of US aid to Pakistan gave her a great leverage...*

That used to be the case, but it is no longer. Furthermore, it did not bring them good results.

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*So in a nutshell the whole thing has been rather counterproductive, it has damaged US-Pakistani relations, it is pushing Pakistan towards China...*

Yes. But, you know, the Americans are an arrogant people. They should have involved the Pakistani government in their campaign and should have at least tried to explain their actions to the general public – with the support of the Pakistani government.

*Is there a sense of powerlessness and humiliation among the Pakistani people that the US is basically just doing whatever she wants?*

Very true! Especially in these times! We have a unique historical situation now in Pakistan. For the first time in the history of our country there has been a successful and peaceful transition from one elected government to another. So, democracy is taking hold in Pakistan. Yet, at the same time the United States is destabilising the country. So the US is not promoting democracy, as it always says, but, on the contrary, is rather taking measures to prevent democracy from spreading in Pakistan. And it is not just democracy. It is also corruption. If America was genuinely interested in helping Pakistan and reducing the threat from the Taliban it should focus on these issues. Instead it is wielding its immense power in a way that is not beneficial to its own cause and objectives.

Let me tell you another very important thing: the drone campaign and its portrayal in the media has created a terrible image of Pakistan. People think that everyone in Pakistan is a terrorist and I bet you that some of your friends in the West advised you not to go to Pakistan because they have this distorted image of Pakistan in their minds. There is an anti-Pakistan campaign going on in all the media. But when you come to Pakistan, the reality is totally different. But obviously there is a purpose behind portraying Pakistan in that way. With all these negative discourses we will never ever be able to promote tourism here in Pakistan just like India has managed. With all this it is getting harder to attract developmental aid to the country, it is getting harder for countries to show interest in Pakistan. So to come back to your original question: The impact the American drone campaign has had on Pakistan is devastating for both sides and both sides have suffered as a result of it.

*Thank you very much for your time and help, Mr. Sajid.*

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[1] Quoted in: Percy Sykes. (1910). *The glory of the Shiah world*. London: Macmillan and Co, p.4.

[2] Spykman, 2008, xxvii.

[3] Quoted in: Charles Townshend. (2011). *Desert hell*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, p.13

[4] Rudyard Kipling. (1966). *Kim*. Garden City: Doubleday, p.353.

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Written by Markus Merkert

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*Written by: Markus Merkert  
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