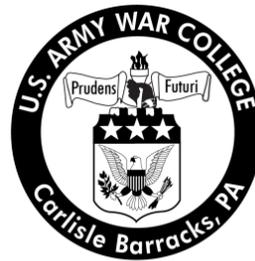


US and Pakistan Relations:
Muddling Towards Compelling
Coincident Interests

by

Brigadier Naeem Ashraf
Pakistan



United States Army War College
Class of 2012

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COINCIDENT INTERESTS**

by

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ABSTRACT

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The US and Pakistan relationship is at a critical juncture during its tempestuous 65-year history. How that relationship unfolds over the next 5 years will likely dictate the future security of Pakistan and the stability and prosperity of South and Central Asia. A critical driver will be what ensues in the aftermath of the US withdrawal and transition in Afghanistan and how both countries respond to those events. Thus, this relationship is that important and the stakes are that high because of the volatile and ominous context of the near-term strategic and operational environment. What is paramount is the full recognition and refinement of existing compelling coincident interests of Pakistan and the United States. This paper provides a brief history of the US-Pakistan relationship to set the context for current and future relations and examines the US-Pakistan exigent issues from each nation's perspective. The paper concludes with recommendations on a way forward that outline specific measures across social, political, diplomatic, informational and military areas that promise to strengthen this critically important relationship.

US AND PAKISTAN RELATIONS: MUDDLING TOWARDS COMPELLING COINCIDENT INTERESTS

The US and Pakistan relationship is at a critical juncture during its tempestuous 65-year history. How that relationship unfolds over the next 5 years will likely dictate the future security of Pakistan and the stability and prosperity of South and Central Asia. A critical driver will be what ensues in the aftermath of the US withdrawal and transition in Afghanistan. Thus, this bi-lateral relationship is that important and the stakes are that high because of the volatile and ominous context of the near-term strategic and operational environment. There is cause for optimism, but it will take a major effort by both the US and Pakistan to close a widening trust-deficit and secure the cooperation of several key regional actors.

A tsunami of both related and independent movements is sweeping through the region placing both the security of Pakistan, the region and the United States in peril. Resilient terrorist elements in Afghanistan and Pakistan continue to threaten the internal security of both countries and the stability of the region. The US's attempt to establish a strong central government within Afghanistan collided with Afghan intransigent cultural resistance and the related entrenched corruption of its national political bureaucracy. Now the US's announced withdrawal has also undermined the accommodation of *moderate* Taliban in the eventual Afghan federal and local governments and set the context for a resurgent and increasingly radical Taliban insurgency following the US departure. Concurrently, what has been termed the "Arab Spring" is sweeping through the countries of the North Africa and the greater Middle East region as their populations revolt against social, political and economic inequities. Although, these movements may

drive much needed reforms, they also increase instability and provide even more opportunities for extremism and al Qaeda to expand and take root.

The advent and widespread application of Information technology has also enabled al Qaeda and other religious extremists in recruiting more followers and soliciting sympathetic supporters of their radical movements while simultaneously fomenting unrest and violence with their anti-west and sectarian(anti-Sunni or anti-Shiite) invectives. Similarly, Iran's invasive support of violent Shiite movements throughout the region and apparent pursuit of a nuclear weapons program, coupled with the potential military responses of Israel or the US, is also destabilizing the region. Within this tumultuous environment, a strong and improved US-Pakistan relationship can at least assuage the impacts of many of these strategic challenges and possibly divert a regional and even a potential global crisis. Although Pakistan can be a possible springboard for improved regional stability, it and the US must resolve some mutual challenges in their relationship and build upon what both must recognize as compelling coincident interests.

This paper provides a brief history of the US-Pakistan relationship to set the context for current and future relations; it then examines the US-Pakistan relationship from both the nations' perspectives and concludes with recommendations on a way forward.

Historical Perspective

The US-Pakistan relationship has experienced wide swings throughout its 65-year history. Since its formation as a separate nation, US-Pakistan mutual interests over external threats drove cooperation during three periods: 1948-1965; 1979-1990; and 2001-present. Conversely, Pakistan's territorial disputes and conflicts with India coupled

with the pursuit of their related competitive nuclear programs generated discord between the US and Pakistan and strained relations during two periods: 1965-1979 and 1990-2001. The corresponding relationship has been exceptionally volatile and transactional in nature and the whipsawed association itself has undermined the trust of both countries. An examination of their 65-year relationship can provide insights to the source and nature of the current dissonance and frame the way forward.

US-Pakistan Relations: 1947-1965. The US-Pakistan's relations began almost immediately with Pakistan aligning with the US and western nations against the Soviet Bloc. Although both the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the US wooed Pakistan to join their camps, for a number of reasons, Pakistan chose the West.¹ From its inception, Pakistan was faced with serious security challenges. First Pakistan was divided into two parts (West Pakistan and East Pakistan) that were separated by 1000 miles of a hostile India; second there existed highly contentious border and territorial disputes with India with a focus on India's annexation of the largely Muslim populated princely state of Kashmir (the source of five key rivers flowing into and through Pakistan); and finally India (with vastly greater resources and a Hindu population that had opposed the formation of Pakistan) posed a clear threat to Pakistan security.²

With the US also driven by the concern for Soviet expansionism and the prospects of Pakistan countering its increased influence into South Asia, the US and Pakistan entered into a mutual defense assistance agreement in 1954. By 1955, Pakistan had further aligned itself with the West by joining two regional defense pacts: the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). In retrospect, the period from 1954 to 1965 marked the apex of the alliance

relationship when both economic and military aid flowed from the US into Pakistan.³ This cooperation ended with Pakistan's initiation of 1965 Indo-Pak war. Although the original mutual defense bilateral alliance specifically limited the use of US provided equipment to self-defense and internal security, the SEATO and CENTO multilateral agreements required the signatories to provide military help to any member of either treaty in the event of an attack on any member. However, because the conflict had been initiated by Pakistan to seize the disputed Indian-held Kashmir territory⁴ and, from the US perspective, the SEATO and CENTO agreements were designed for attacks initiated by communist countries, the US refused to help Pakistan and instead instituted an embargo on both Pakistan and India.⁵ Unfortunately, the embargo affected Pakistan more because India had other external sources of support (USSR) and thus Pakistan's dependency on the US and its embargo placed it at comparably greater risk. The US essentially cut off all security assistance to Pakistan until the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1979. The US refusal to help Pakistan when its survival was at risk because of a technical use violation of the mutual defense agreement revealed the shallow commitment of the US towards Pakistan and was viewed as a betrayal by the Pakistani public.⁶

US-Pakistan Relations: 1965-1979. During the period from 1965 to 1979, the US-Pakistan relationship reached a nadir as Pakistan continued to face internal and external crises and aggressively pursued a nuclear weapons program. The following is an abbreviated list of the major crises:⁷

- The transfer of power from Gen Ayub Khan to Gen Yahya Khan in 1969 and the imposition of martial law;

- The revolt in East Pakistan and Pakistan military response in 1971.
- The subsequent 1971 Indo-Pak War resulting in the dismembering of East Pakistan.
- The subsequent handover of Yahya Khan's military government and instalment of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto as Prime Minister in Dec 1971.
- Political unrest in Balochistan in 1973 leading to four years of increasingly bitter insurgency.
- India's 1974 peaceful nuclear explosion and assumed imperative for Pakistan to pursue a nuclear weapons program.
- The imposition of US non-proliferation laws such as the 1976 Symington Amendment (which was later modified by the 1977 Glenn Amendment) that called for halting economic or military assistance to any country which delivered or acquired after 1976 nuclear enrichment materials or technology (the provisions of which exempted the current nuclear capable countries including India).
- The coup by General Zia-ul-Haq and the arrest and execution of PM Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.
- Announcement by Gen Zia of Pakistan's continued pursuit of nuclear weapons capability.

Throughout these chaotic and challenging times, the US provided little support except to impose additional sanctions driven by a combination of factors including Pakistan's violation of the 1954 mutual defense agreement with the offensive use of the US military equipment against India, the take-over of Pakistan's democratic government

by a military dictator and Pakistan's continued pursuit of a nuclear weapons program in violation of the US enacted non-proliferation laws. Thus, security assistance all but ceased after the Indo-Pak War of 1965 and economic assistance also declined until 1981; two years after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. See Figure 1.

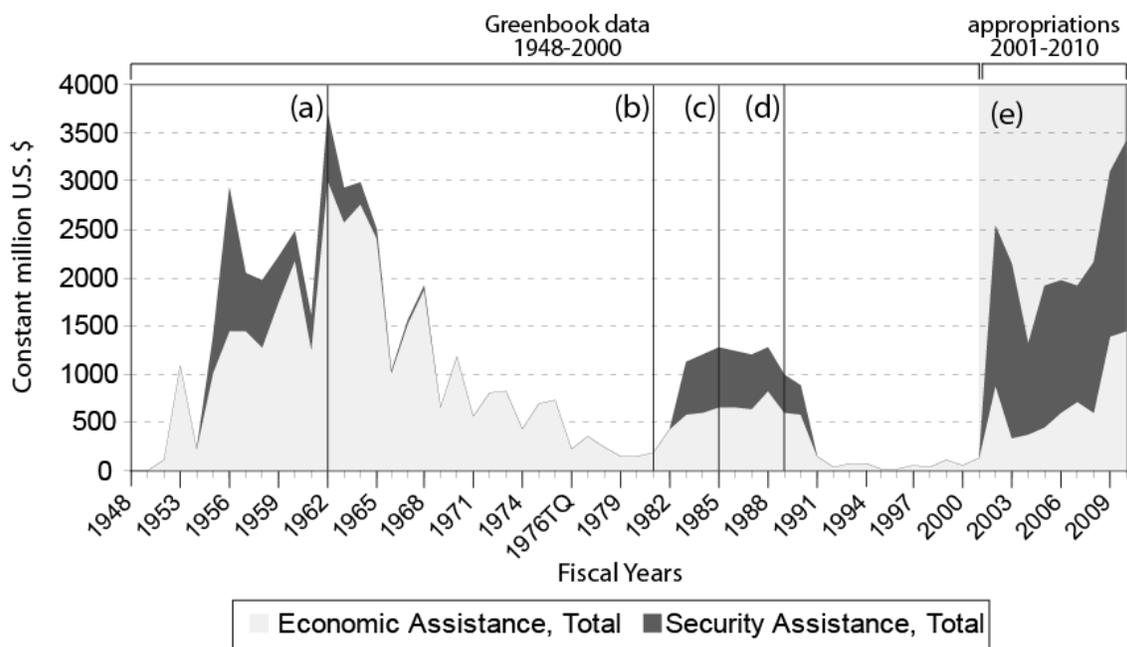


Figure 1 U.S. Aid in Current and Constant Dollars⁸

Source: U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants (Greenbook), U.S. Agency for International Development, The Department of State's Congressional Budget Justifications, FY2002-FY2012, and CRS calculations.

Notes: Figures 1948-2000 = obligations; 2001-2010=appropriations. (a) 1962 Peak aid. Pakistan aligned with West; signed two defense pacts. (b) 1981 Reagan administration negotiated five year \$3.2 billion security economic aid package with Pakistan. (c) 1985 Pressler Amendment, Reagan and George H. W. Bush certified Pakistan to get aid until 1990. (d) 1989 - Soviet Army withdrew from Afghanistan. George H. W. Bush suspended aid in 1990 because of Pakistan's nuclear activities. Aid lowest in 1990s. (e) Post 9/11 aid to Pakistan.

US-Pakistan Relations: 1979-1990. The relationship between the US and Pakistan acquired a new life after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979. The decade of close political and military co-operation followed when in 1981, the Reagan administration swept into office and, recognizing Pakistan's central role in supporting the insurgency in Afghanistan against the Soviets, offered Pakistan a \$3.2 billion dollar economic and military aid package.⁹ In response, the US Congress modified the very

restrictive non-proliferation Symington Amendment with the Pressler Amendment to enable substantial aid to once again be offered to Pakistan. The Pressler Amendment required only that the US President annually certify that Pakistan did not possess a nuclear device and that the receipt of US aid would likely reduce the possibility of obtaining such device. Presidents Reagan and Bush provided such certification from 1985 to 1990.¹⁰ In 1986, they made available 4 billion dollars over six years despite the military rule in Pakistan and with clear knowledge that Pakistan was actively pursuing a Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) program.¹¹ In the latter half of the 1980s, the US and Pakistan collaborated in funding, arming, and training the Afghan Mujahedeen in its insurgency against the Soviets. With US military support, Saudi funding, Pakistan assistance and the heroic fighting by the Mujahedeen, the Soviets were forced to withdraw from Afghanistan and the Soviet Union began to self destruct. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the US turned to other challenges and almost immediately renewed its concern for Pakistan's nuclear program. Concurrent with the Soviet pullout, Pakistan's military president, General Zia, was killed in an air crash. In a sudden change in assessment in 1990, President George Bush refused to certify that Pakistan did not have a nuclear weapon and the provisions of the Pressler Amendment were evoked which again suspended all military and most economic aid.¹² See Figure 1. Additionally, the US precipitous withdrawal from the region also created a void that caused substantial hardships for Pakistan.

Pakistan on its part hosted over three million Afghan refugees on its soil where many were trained as Mujahedeen (holy warriors) and imbued with the spirit of Jihad (holy war) in the name of Islam. The Afghan refugees spread out the entire length and breadth of Pakistan bringing with them the culture of guns, drugs, intolerance and militancy. By the time the Soviet Union conceded defeat in 1988, the social fabric of the nation had

been mutilated beyond recognition and the country has not yet recovered from its after effects.¹³

Another trend illustrated in Figure 1 is that the three spikes in US aid were during periods of military rule and the two dips in US aid occurred during periods when democratically elected governments were, for the most part, in power.

Post Cold War Period: 1990 to 2000. The imposition of the Pressler Amendment in 1990 provided an ominous start to the US-Pakistan relations in the 1990s. The subsequent events would further erode US-Pakistan relations and reinforce public sentiment already cynical of what appeared to most as US's duplicitous and largely transactional commitment to the bilateral alliance. This was aggravated by the decision of the US to also withhold military equipment contracted prior to 1990, worth about \$1.2 billion, which included the F-16 fighter aircraft ordered and partially paid for by Pakistan in 1989.¹⁴ In May 1995, Senator Hank Brown moved for an amendment to ease Pressler sanctions. This modification removed from its ambit of sanctions all non-military assistance, as well as authorized the provision of IMET (International Military Education Training) funding while releasing the embargoed military equipment. However, also considered was the sensitive release of the 28 F-16s for which President Clinton had made a pledge to reimburse Pakistan the money it had paid.¹⁵ Later, the United States agreed to pay Pakistan 324.6 million dollars, as well as to provide 140 million dollars in goods, including agricultural commodities that Pakistan neither asked for nor wanted.¹⁶

However, further sanctions were imposed when Pakistan carried out its nuclear tests in May 1998. In Oct 99, the military coup in Pakistan appeared to be the final straw as the US stopped nearly all remaining economic assistance.¹⁷ Concurrently, the

George Bush administration continued to draw India closer to it for strategic reasons and push Pakistan into increasing international isolation.¹⁸ As Summit Gunguly wrote the “Bush administration had nearly relegated Pakistan to the category of “rogue state” because of its military dictatorship, its support of the [Afghanistan] Taliban regime and its acquisition of ballistic missiles from China and North Korea.”¹⁹ Owing to the coup and Pakistan’s nuclear tests in 1998, the country again became one of the most sanctioned states in the world.

2001-present. The US-Pakistan relationship was rekindled after the 9/11 attacks as the US needed Pakistan’s help with operations intended to depose the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, bring its al Qaeda allies to justice, and deny safe havens from which terrorist could launch any further attacks.²⁰ Not surprisingly, there is an obvious concern in Pakistan that its current alliance with the US will again prove to be ‘transactional’ and that it will be abandoned once more when US interests are served. Signposts of rising discontinuities are already surfacing. The recent incidents including undercover CIA contract operative Raymond Davis’ shooting of two Pakistanis, the violation of Pakistan sovereignty with the conduct of operations by the US to kill Osama Bin Laden within Pakistan, US drone attacks within Pakistan²¹ and the recent incident of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) bombing on Pakistani posts in Mohmand agency²² have further widened the trust gap between the two nations. These incidents are being combined with vehement disagreements between the two countries over the conduct of Pakistani military operations against terrorist safe havens within the North Waziristan Agency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the Northwest Frontier Province [now called the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province].²³ Should

the disagreements continue to escalate, history may repeat itself and Pakistan may well find itself left alone to deal with a deteriorating internal and external (Afghanistan) security environment. Conversely, there are many American intellectuals and leaders, as well as sizeable number of Pakistani counterparts, who remain optimistic that the US and the West will not repeat their historic pattern of abandonment. Generally, they believe that the potential threats to Pakistan, Afghanistan and the US/West by the expanding terrorist movements will drive cooperation. Significantly, both the US and Pakistan share a compelling national interest to eliminate threats to their security posed by terrorist elements within the region.²⁴

Clearly, Pakistan has been the frontline state for the last decade in the global war on terrorism and the worst affected nation due to terrorism. It has deployed over 150,000 soldiers on its western borders to fight terrorism and suffered more total casualties than the entire NATO alliance. So far over 35,000 Pakistanis have been killed or injured including 12,000 military casualties.²⁵ Moreover, there is increasing militancy and violence in the cities, deteriorating economic conditions, shrinking foreign investments, and political, ethnic and ideological polarization.²⁶ According to some modest estimates, Pakistan has suffered approximately \$70 billion in losses during the last decade.²⁷ No nation in the world has suffered and sacrificed as Pakistan. Although these sacrifices are recognized by the US, distrust and dissatisfaction by both nations continue to characterize their public pronouncements and permeate the corresponding public opinions. Importantly for both the United States and increasingly for Pakistan, public opinion frequently drives policy. What is critical is that both countries exercise restraint when dealing with inevitable areas of dissonance and recognize the influence

that public pronouncements may have on their own populace as well as each other. Perhaps what is most imperative is to develop a consistent theme for justifying mutual cooperation and resolve areas of dispute in closed sessions.

Compelling Coincident Interests

In the present interdependent world, no state can survive in isolation. Its geo-strategic, political and domestic environments will have a direct bearing on its relations with other nations. However, internal vulnerabilities are oftentimes exploited by regional or extra-regional powers to serve their own self-interests. Moreover, in large measure, geo-politics have been surpassed by geo-economic interests. Correspondingly, Pakistan's geo-strategic importance is accentuated by its location in the center of militarily powerful or resource rich states, i.e., India, China, the Central Asian Republics (CARs) and Russia. Arnold Toynbee in his book "*Between Oxus and Jumna*" describes the area between the two rivers as the "Crossroads of the World; area of the future and an area of great historical events."²⁸ Pakistan lies in the heart of this area at the crossroads of South, Central and South West Asia. Nicholas J. Spykman rim-land theory states, "Whoever controls the Rimland (the peripheral area of Eurasian Continent – Heartland) rules Europe and Asia; who rules Europe and Asia controls the destinies of the world."²⁹ Both Afghanistan and Pakistan occupy this position and it was this and several other factors that drove the former Soviet Union's to attempt to maintain its influence on the southern rim land with the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.³⁰ Additionally, Pakistan's important geo-strategic location is positioned at the mouth of the Gulf (lifeline of the world's economy) and at the gateway to the resource rich Central Asian Republics. Most likely, the quest for energy resources by the extra regional powers will involve Pakistan, probably unwillingly, in future conflicts. Likewise, the oil

and gas supplies from the Central Republics must traverse Pakistan if they are to reach India. Thus, India also has compelling rationale to develop manageable relations with Pakistan. All these factors serve to make Pakistan's an important ally whose stability is critically important if not vital.

As indicated previously, the US has frequently depended upon Pakistan's geo-strategic position. Whether it be during the cold war to help counter the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan or to exploit its proximity for US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan or for coordinated operations in the war on terror, the US needed Pakistan's support and vice versa. Pakistan is also the second largest Muslim country which is both democratic and a nuclear power. Husain Haqqani, the ex-ambassador to Washington stated that "[b]oth countries need each other."³¹ He was of the opinion that even the closest of allies may develop differences of opinion, but they can and should be resolved through dialogue and discussions.³²

Conversely, Pakistan is also a developing country with many internal challenges. It needs help and support from the US and its allies across all sectors: military, economic and political. The current war on terrorism provides inimitable challenges that transcend the more routine and conventional diplomatic interactions. The ubiquitous and invasive terrorist threats demoralize and weaken the social fabric of the nations it touches with its arbitrary and capricious consequences. With the truly devastating and seemingly senseless 9/11 attack on the twin towers in Manhattan to what the US National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) reports as more than 25 terrorist attacks each week in Pakistan in 2010³³ both countries share in the current and future consequences of terrorism and both must work together to defeat these threats at home and abroad. A

critical enabler for both countries is to rid South Asia of the menace of extremism and terrorism and establish a stable, secure and progressive Afghanistan. Both countries look at a similar end state but with different ways and means to achieve those conditions. With these compelling coincident interests, what needs to be addressed is reconciling the differences in the ways and means that they are pursued and developing a better appreciation of both the US and Pakistan political constraints, concerns and perspectives.³⁴

US Concerns

The US has expressed several concerns that need to be recognized, respected and accommodated. These concerns span nuclear non-proliferation and WMD security, Pakistan's perceived tolerance and exploitation of various brands of extremism in pursuit of their own interests, India-Pakistan relations and Pakistan's increased reliance on China to include Chinese construction of civilian nuclear reactors in Pakistan.³⁵

Nuclear Non Proliferation. The possibility of Pakistan being a source for the proliferation or their actual employment of nuclear weapons remains a primary US concern. The US has never approved of Pakistan's acquisition of nuclear weapons and the corresponding delivery systems. The US perceives that Pakistan is in a dangerous nuclear arms race with India and also views Pakistan as a future potential source of nuclear weapons to other countries. However, at this point in time, because Pakistan's assistance is urgently required in war on terrorism, the US tolerates Pakistan nuclear armament. Notwithstanding, sooner or later there will likely be a divergence of interests on this issue which may be compounded by the fact that the US does not view India's nuclear weapons programs and delivery systems with as much concern. This is clearly visible from India-US civil nuclear and anti ballistic missile agreements. Moreover, there

is an ever growing concern in Washington about the physical security of the nuclear weapons in Pakistan and the US is fearful that Pakistan's nuclear weapons may inadvertently fall into the hands of terrorists.³⁶ Repeatedly senior US officials have expressed these concerns diplomatically as well as in the public media.

Likewise, the continued tension between Pakistan and India and the possibility of a nuclear conflict between the archrivals are a serious concern for the US and the international community. Pakistan's hostile relationship with India impinges on short and long-term American interests.³⁷ Logically, this concern should motivate the US to take more aggressive measures to defuse the primary dispute between India and Pakistan (resolve the Kashmir issue) but the US seems reluctant to do so.³⁸ The US appears more concerned with maintaining its precarious relations with both countries by avoiding involvement in this issue; except for advocating that it be resolved peacefully through bilateral negotiations between Pakistan and India.

Trends of Extremism in Pakistani Society. The US is extremely concerned that Pakistan retains and increases their role as a moderate Islamic state. With Pakistan's radical extremists strengthened after years of foreign support and patronage from Inter-Service Intelligence/Central Intelligence Agency (ISI/CIA), these elements need to be brought under control in the shortest possible time. Further, America wants to preserve a liberal regime in Afghanistan. Only a moderate Pakistan could possibly cooperate with the United States in this regard and also serve as a link with the Muslim world. In this regard, a special area of interest for the US and Pakistan is ensuring moderate education and associated madrasa reforms. There is a complete convergence of interests between the two States in this area.

Perception that Pakistan is being Duplicitous with Terrorist Groups. The US believes that Pakistan is being duplicitous regarding their participation in the war against terrorism and suspect patronage and support of Pakistan to the Taliban, especially the Haqqani network.³⁹ The US perceives that Pakistan is choosing to cooperate with the US only to apprehend al Qaeda militants and pursue Taliban insurgents that are active within Pakistan (directly threaten Pakistan). The US believes Pakistan, at the same time, is secretly supporting other extremist groups like the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani network that attack Indian facilities and oppose their presence in Afghanistan.⁴⁰ Several analysts, and even the ex-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mullen, have alleged that there are covert communications and support from the ISI to Haqqani operatives in Afghanistan. The US believed that the September 10, 2011 bombing of the US base in the Wardak Province and the September 13, 2011 bombing of the NATO Headquarters and US Embassy in Kabul was done by the Haqqani network with ISI's support. This actually drove the US Government to publicly condemn Pakistan. Apparently, the US had overlooked previously suspected Pakistani involvement with the Haqqani network because it needed ISI's cooperation to fight al Qaeda militants and also depended upon the continued use of supply routes going through Pakistan.⁴¹ However, these recent attacks have brought this issue to the fore and require a focused effort by both countries to resolve these misperceptions.

Perceived Threat of the Growing China-Pakistan Bilateral Relationship. US views Pak-China relations as a possible threat to US interests in the region. China, for its part, has been an all-weather friend of Pakistan. In addition to diplomatic support, China has also made substantial investments across almost every area within Pakistan.

Significantly, China is currently involved in assisting in the development of Gawadar Port. However, the development of a road/rail link from Gawadar to China is viewed with concern by the US as it would provide China a shorter and more direct link to the Arabian Gulf. Conversely, China also views US presence in the region with concern, as it provides the US the ability to more closely monitor and possibly counter China's activities in the area.⁴²

The Sino-Pakistan entente has functioned for nearly 40 years without being formalized into an alliance. China and Pakistan both see India as a threat, albeit to different degrees. Equally, US increasingly views China as a strategic rival and sees the growth in Chinese economic and military capabilities as eventually posing a threat to US interests. Thus, the US-Indo relations are apparently intended to counter China's increasing regional influence over the long-term. Conversely, the US relationship with Pakistan appears focused on Pakistan's immediate utility in countering terrorism and may be much more limited in duration and commitment. Thus, the likely long-term bilateral alignment in South Asia is with Pakistan and China on the one hand, and India and the US on the other. The degree of divergence between these two alliances, however, remains uncertain, ambiguous and dependent primarily on the US's near- and long-term policies with Pakistan and India. The role of the US within this triangular relationship (US-India-Pakistan) could prove crucial to regional stability.

Pakistan Concerns

Pakistan also harbors serious concerns about US relations which also need to be recognized, respected and accommodated. These include the past and possible future unreliability of the US as a long-term ally; the US opposition to Pakistan's nuclear program as a needed deterrent and defense against India's capability; the treatment of

Pakistan as an un-equal and untrustworthy partner in the war against terrorism; US's growing affinity towards India, marginalization of the Kashmir issue; and the issue of Pakistan's sovereignty.

Unreliability of US as an Ally. The US and Pakistan relationship is flawed by distrust.⁴³ The preceding section addressing the history of the relationship identifies the wide swings in that relationship that continues to foster suspicion and undermine trust. As indicated, the current strategic environment has brought the two countries together in the war against terrorism in which the US again needs Pakistan's support and cooperation. The current circumstances portend a repeat of the recent history and again show it to be 'transactional' in nature. The current US-Pakistan 'marriage' appears to be one of convenience and almost solely dependent upon the "mercy of terrorists."⁴⁴ Correspondingly, Pakistan views the US as an unreliable ally and is concerned that it will again abandon it when the terrorist threat fades and when another discordant crisis unfolds.

Threat to Pakistan's Nuclear Program. Pakistan, unlike India, has been an unwelcome member of the elite club of declared nuclear States. Moreover, India considers a 'nuclear' Pakistan as a stumbling block to her regional hegemony.⁴⁵ The fear of nuclear proliferation and the likelihood of these weapons falling into the hands of terrorists is a serious concern with the international community.⁴⁶ But the focus of the US previous sanctions and the nature of the US current rhetoric imply that the US advocates the forcible removal of Pakistan's nuclear capabilities. This creates a pervasive fear within Pakistan that the essence of the US agenda is to weaken the country to such a point where it is unable to resist what may become a global effort to

neutralize its nuclear arsenal.⁴⁷ With the nuclear weapons gone, Pakistan believes that its ability to resist unwanted external influence would be significantly diminished thus compromising its security and conceding to Indian hegemony.⁴⁸ Pakistan considers her nuclear capability as the guarantor of her territorial integrity and sovereignty. The US must recognize that the entire Pakistani nation is unanimous on this issue and regards its nuclear program as the most coveted National asset.⁴⁹

Perceived Role as an Unequal and Distrusted Partner. As per Ex President of Pakistan Zia-ul-Haq, the Pak-US relationship is a “relationship of unequals,” with both parties having different perceptions of security and interests.⁵⁰ The interactions between the countries is one in which the weaker (Pakistan) has to be continuously mindful of the stronger (US) sensitivities while continually adjusting Pakistan’s national interests to comply with US expectations. The net effect is that Pakistan perceives that the US violates Pakistani sovereignty in ways that the US would not tolerate if perpetrated on its homeland.

The offensive acts of US-led Coalition Forces to target the so called Taliban/miscreants from across the border in the FATA by employing the ‘Predators’ regularly violates the sovereignty of Pakistan. Additionally, the killings of innocents in Angoor Adda, Saidgai, Issori, Mussaki, Damadola, Killi Dande Saidgai, Anghar Killi and Bajaur villages are evidence of the deleterious effect that these attacks have on the overall counterterrorist campaigns. Shireen Mazari, an eminent scholar, notes that “partnership with the US in the WOT has eroded the sovereignty of the country in an incalculable manner.”⁵¹ The Nov 26, 2011 incident of the NATO bombing on Pakistani posts in FATA and resultant killing of 24 Pakistani soldiers was not only a clear violation

of Pakistan's sovereignty but is a reflection of mistrust between the two coalition partners.⁵² This incident has further widened the already existing trust deficit between the US and Pakistan.⁵³ Resultantly, Pakistan stopped NATO supplies from transiting Pakistan, directed the allies to vacate the Shamsi Air Base and boycotted the Bonn Conference on Afghanistan future in December 2011. At present the US-Pakistan relationship is in a nose dive.

Growing US Affinity towards India. Pakistan perceives that the US is seeking a durable strategic partnership with India at almost any cost. To achieve this improved partnership, the US appears willing to accommodate Indian aspirations in Afghanistan (even while jeopardising Pakistani security) and indefinitely delay the resolution of the Kashmir dispute. To Pakistan, the US-India relationship seems to be enduring, reflecting a basic convergence of national interests in establishing an Asian counterweight to the rising power of China. Enhanced Indian influence in Afghanistan is another concern for Pakistan in that it believes that India is deliberately creating a two-front security challenge for Pakistan.⁵⁴ This would establish India, its historic enemy, on its eastern border and with a potentially unwelcome regime in Kabul on the west and with the implicit support of the US.

National security is considered by the Pakistani populace to be under constant threat.⁵⁵ Pakistan believes that India has used the US military as cover to increase its intelligence assets on Pakistan's western border, which would allow India to foment insurgency in the Pakistan province of Baluchistan.⁵⁶ The situation is aggravated with the fact that the Afghanistan ruling elite has also been pro-India. Notably, in late August 2010, Afghanistan's National Security Adviser Rangin Spanta told an Indian journalist,

"We would like to expand cooperation with India in order to strengthen Kabul's ability to secure itself.⁵⁷ Hence the worst case scenario for Pakistan would be an Afghanistan government with close ties to India, which may allow India to continue and even increase hostile activities against Pakistan after the US departs.⁵⁸ The present Afghan Government, supported by India and ignored by the US, has already allowed the establishment of a Baluchistan Liberation Army headquarters in Kabul which has been involved in supporting the insurgency in Pakistan's Baluchistan Province.

Additionally, a strategic US-Indo partnership would allow India to use its increased leverage with the US to favorably resolve disputes with Pakistan.⁵⁹ Pakistan perceives that it is migrating towards becoming a 'tactical' partner of US while India is emerging as a 'strategic' partner.⁶⁰ "[T]o have India as a partner in two very sensitive regions [Africa and Afghanistan] sends a signal to important countries like Pakistan and China."⁶¹ This signal is being felt by Pakistan who feels it is being marginalized from any significant role in post-US Afghanistan as well as sees a lessening of any US interest in helping resolve the festering Kashmir dispute.

Pakistan perceives that the US is rapidly transitioning their role in Afghanistan without any regard for Pakistani equities. Undoubtedly, Pakistan will be called upon to deal with the lion's share of the negative consequences of an apparent US precipitous withdrawal. This could be in the form of an increase in the insurgent presence in the Pakistan Afghanistan border regions or with another influx of Afghan refugees fleeing a deteriorating economic, social or political environment in Afghanistan. Despite Pakistan's offers of assistance, the US and the current Afghan government allows more access to India than to Pakistan. Clearly, the end-game inside Afghanistan is being

sculpted with Pakistan standing on the outside. Paradoxically, the US has continuously exerted pressure on Pakistan to conduct operations against the Taliban in the FATA while at the same time the US is attempting to negotiate and reconcile with these same elements, which reflects a dichotomy in the US approach. All these factors combine to undermine the trust between the US and Pakistan.

Finally, Pakistan is frustrated with the apparent indifference by the west in general and the US in particular about helping to resolve the Kashmir issue. The Kashmir dispute looms as the most important issue obstructing the normalization of the Indo-Pak relations and long term stability in South Asia. Remarkably, there is a growing awareness that Pakistan-Indian rapprochement is in the long term interests of both countries. Unfortunately, the Kashmir issue has taken on a political weight and import for both countries that transcends the mere objective measures of cost-benefit. It is the kind of passion that drives irrational decisions to go to war and thus causes an inordinate amount of blood, treasure and time from both sides to prepare for it. Resolution will require the intervention of a powerful third party that has significant influence and credibility with both sides and promises to be an objective mediator...the US.

The possible American role in helping resolve the Kashmir issue is a delicate one. Pakistan has always welcomed the proactive involvement from international community especially by the US. However, India remains strongly opposed to any outside role and wants to discuss the issue strictly in a bilateral context. The US thus finds itself in an awkward position given that it requires and aims for a healthy relationship with both South Asian powers. To date, policymakers in Washington have

settled for offering “to urge” both sides which they believe is just enough to keep both sides from completely opposing the American position.⁶² However, the dilemma is that while being diplomatically expedient, such a stance is unlikely to allow the U.S. to play a substantive role in bringing the two sides together and resolve the dispute. Sajjad Shoukat observes that “quite contrary to his earlier statements; President Obama flatly refused to resolve the Kashmir issue, while saying that both India and Pakistan, themselves, can settle this dispute.”⁶³ Shoukat also argues that “the exclusion of Kashmir from Obama’s policy is likely to become a basic obstacle to South Asian peace.”⁶⁴ Although the US may believe that they should defer their involvement in the dispute until they have made some additional progress in transitioning in Afghanistan, now is the time to act.

Mediation will only work if both sides have something to gain if it is resolved and something to lose if it is not. The war on terrorism, China’s increasing influence in South Asia and the corresponding potential threat to India, and the roles of India and Pakistan within post-transition Afghanistan offer the US both carrots and sticks that could lever both parties towards the resolution of this issue and begin genuine rapprochement. Negotiated concessions in these areas could also be used to provide the compelling justification to assuage negative reactions by an impassioned public vehemently opposed to any compromises. In sum, Pakistan perceives that the US is very short sighted in regards to its reluctance to actively mediate and resolve the Kashmir issue for the long term benefit of the region.

The Way Forward

Both Pakistan and the US must act unilaterally and together to exploit their coincident interests and mitigate their differences. To bridge the current trust gap and

rescue their critical bilateral relationship requires both countries to take deliberate measures across social, political, diplomatic, informational and military areas.

Cultivate a Positive US-Pakistan Public Image. US and Pakistan must understand that the US-Pakistan relationship is based on a convergence of interests.⁶⁵ What is important is to clarify those coincident interests and exploit them for the benefit of both countries and the region. To help enable positive action, the government of Pakistan needs to start by reducing the anti-American rhetoric that permeates almost every social and political venue and vice versa. The US is not the source of every problem nor is it the solution for them. "The pervasive anti-American sentiment has not only narrowed the country's foreign policy options but has also pushed it toward greater international isolation."⁶⁶ Unfortunately, the incessant blaming of the US also implies to the Pakistani public that conditions will radically improve after US forces depart Afghanistan.⁶⁷ Except for the reduction in the invasive cross border attacks that violate Pakistan sovereignty, the conditions following the US withdrawal will likely grow much worse, if not better. "Pakistan was not always anti-American even when Pakistanis were not in agreement with the U.S approaches."⁶⁸ Pakistan should attempt to regain some of its former objectivity, dramatically reduce its debilitating anti-US rhetoric, and better manage the public's expectations for the regional conditions following the US withdrawal.

Similarly, the consequences of a further destabilized Afghanistan following the US withdrawal portend drastic consequences for Pakistan including another flood of refugees.⁶⁹ Again, Pakistan needs to openly address these consequences so the public and the entire government understand the stakes that are involved with a fractured or

dysfunctional US-Pakistan relationship.⁷⁰ Clearly, it will take the determined efforts of both countries to preclude or mitigate the ominous consequences of a further destabilized Afghanistan.

Perhaps most important to rescuing the fracturing US-Pakistan relationship is to allay US apprehensions regarding the different Afghan extremist factions thought to be ensconced in the Afghan-Pakistan border area. This is a key friction point between the two countries. At the same time, the US must also recognize that Pakistan does not have the military and financial resources of the US and is unable to conduct operations concurrently against every known or suspected militant cell.⁷¹ There are simply too many militants, dispersed in extremely inhospitable and remote terrain, and, in some cases, hosted by local tribals who are culturally mandated to join the fight if their guests are attacked.⁷² Thus, understandably, Pakistan has set priorities to first eliminate those groups that are primarily threatening the Pakistani state and its population. Next it intends to expand those operations to isolate and eliminate those extremist elements exporting terror to neighboring countries while working to solicit the willing support of the local tribals. The phased campaign must be explained to the US and other Allies so they both understand the rationale and can take actions to coordinate and support with their own operations. In the meantime, both countries can gain a better appreciation for each other's operations, help improve cooperation, and, most important, build trust.

In the same regard, Pakistan also needs to make concerted efforts to address the issue of rampant extremism existing in the society, and control the militant groups and non-state actors which are advocating and spreading violence.⁷³ It should aggressively arrest or eliminate the violent extremists while at the same time negotiate

with the moderate elements and ensure they have a legitimate forum for their social, political or religious issues. Both Pakistan and the U.S. should be careful to restrain their public statements regarding differences in expectations and operational approaches and instead engage in confidential dialog to resolve differences.⁷⁴ Pakistan needs the US's help to create stability inside Pakistan that will allow it to fight the war on poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment. Likewise, "Pakistan needs to improve upon its governance, think long term, and avoid factional politics."⁷⁵ Its military needs the help and support of the public to keep the militancy at bay and also close cooperation with the US to assist in the fight against terrorism and extremism.⁷⁶

Additionally, Pakistan should not be asked to do something that the US is not willing to do. From the beginning of the US declared war on terrorism, the US took a position of 'no talks' with terrorists, and followed that approach for almost a decade. Now, with the pending withdrawal from Afghanistan looming, the US has realized that this approach may not yield the desired results. So by the end of 2011, the US modified the policy and began the process of reconciliation, which Pakistan has been proposing right from the start. Reconciliation includes the recognition of moderate elements of the Taliban as legitimate factions that can both hold positions of authority and participate in the political process. In the pursuit of the same, Mullah Omar, the leader of Taliban, has been removed from the terrorist and 'most wanted' list by the US administration. This development is indicative of a logical shift in the US policy in Afghanistan, but creates a significant dichotomy within Pakistan, especially when these inconsistencies are challenged in the media. Having a dual public announcement of the policy by both

countries that follows an already implemented change in operations, would aid in mitigating the negative public reaction.

Notwithstanding, it is a positive sign that the US and the west have finally begun to understand that the Afghan problem is too complex to be resolved through the use of force alone. Negotiations are imperative at this stage and Pakistan can play a significant role in bringing both sides to the table.⁷⁷ In this regard, installing an enabling political progress in Kabul would benefit Pakistan-US relations immensely.⁷⁸

As previously indicated, the violation of Pakistan sovereignty with cross border drone attacks and covert operations has strained the US-Pak relationship to the breaking point. Application of drones as an instrument of policy may be helpful in achieving short term objectives but is certainly counterproductive in achieving long term strategic goals.⁷⁹ If the US ever hopes to lessen the menace from al Qaeda to an annoyance, it will be through the combined efforts of US and Pakistan, not with the continuation of independent US drone attacks.⁸⁰ Pakistan wants the relationship with Washington to be one of mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and with an equal consideration of both nations' priorities. Both countries need to take immediate and affirmative action to share operational information and trust each other. No tactical objective is worth more than the close cooperation and strategic relationship of these two countries at this critical juncture.

Regarding Pakistan's nuclear program there is a need for both countries "to engage in an upgraded, sustained, and forward looking nuclear security dialog."⁸¹ Pakistan needs to be more transparent about its elaborate security apparatus and address the issue of the security of its nuclear arsenal in explicit terms that completely

describe the fail-safe security provisions in place. Once these security provisions are thoroughly understood, this issue should not be a major irritant or a source of disagreement between the two coalition partners. Equally, the US must understand the importance of Pakistan's nuclear program to its security and remove the current discontinuity with the US's acceptance of India's capability and its continued denunciation of Pakistan's program. Once Pakistan believes that the US harbors no intent to forcibly disarm or neutralize Pakistan's nuclear program, Pakistan can better allay US concerns regarding the security of its program and the safeguards that are in place to prevent the unauthorized proliferation of enabling technology.

Perhaps the most important measures are for the US and Pakistan to cooperate on social and economic development. There is a common misperception that the US has been paying Pakistan to fight against the terrorists to the overall benefit of Pakistan. However, "U.S. economic assistance can never be sufficient to meet Pakistan's enormous challenges of unemployment, poverty, and illiteracy. They [the economic demands] will be compounded over subsequent decades by rapid population growth...Problems of such magnitude make it clear that more dramatic measures are necessary."⁸²

Economically stimulating the Pakistan economy is an effective 'indirect approach' towards fighting the growth of extremism in Pakistan. One important measure is for the US to reduce tariffs on imports from Pakistan, especially those on textiles. Relaxing these significant tariffs could go a long way in furthering the image of the US with the Pakistani people while helping to stimulate the Pakistan's economic growth. Significantly, Pakistan exports more goods to the US than to any other country.

“Currently, one-quarter of Pakistan’s exports are bound for the US, and one-third of foreign investment in Pakistan comes from US-based investors.”⁸³ Even with reduced tariffs, there are still other significant impediments for Pakistan to gain full access to US markets that need to be overcome. However, these sorts of positive measures would significantly affect the employment opportunities within Pakistan (the textile industry accounts for 38% of industrial employment). This measure alone would provide an alternative for millions of young men who might otherwise pursue militancy.⁸⁴ US steps to stimulate economic growth within Pakistan is the most important US policy action for resolving both Pakistan’s internal problems and empowering it to help stabilize the region. Moreover, US assistance across health, education, and energy (oil and gas) sectors would also help bolster the economy and encourage private investments in Pakistan, as it needs trade and not aid.

Conclusion

The future of the region is fraught with danger. South Asia is a region that is of critical importance to the US and the World. There is a growing awareness that Pakistan will play a decisive role in assisting in achieving strategic success or be swept up in the disaster that may follow the US withdrawal and transition in Afghanistan. Also, the regional and international stakeholders have a tortuous menu of intertwined interests in a multitude of competing and coincident areas spanning nearly every domain (political, economic, military, religious, ethnic) that can derail progress and cause failure. Nevertheless, a strong US-Pakistan bi-lateral relationship can prove crucial towards achieving success and, in many cases, in preventing or mitigating these other actors from derailing progress. The key challenge is for the US and Pakistan to capitalize on

their compelling coincident interests and works to minimize and resolve the differences which may impede their cooperative efforts.

For Pakistan, there are disturbing economic, social and political trends that must be arrested if it is to be part of the solution and retain the capacity to positively influence the outcomes. The combined efforts of the US and Pakistan can make a substantial impact on these same areas so that economic development, political and governance reforms and focused military operations can lead to greater stability and prosperity. For its part, Pakistan must alleviate the concerns of the US to include angst regarding nuclear proliferation and WMD security, Pakistan's perceived tolerance and assumed exploitation of various brands of extremism in pursuit of their own interests, India-Pakistan relations, and Pakistan's increased reliance on China to include Chinese construction of civilian nuclear reactors in Pakistan.

Likewise, the US must realize the critical importance of the relationship with Pakistan and work to accommodate Pakistan's concerns. These efforts include allaying their concerns about the past and possible future unreliability of the US as a long-term ally; the US opposition to Pakistan's nuclear program as a needed deterrent and defense against India's capability; the treatment of Pakistan as an un-equal and untrustworthy partner in the war against terrorism; US's growing affinity towards India and marginalization of the Kashmir issue, and respect for the sovereignty of Pakistan.

Together these two critical allies need to establish a long term partnership rather than rely on transactional /coincidental relations. Both Pakistan and the US must act unilaterally and together to exploit their coincident interests and mitigate their differences. To bridge the current trust gap and rescue their critical bilateral relationship

requires both countries to take deliberate measures across social, political, diplomatic, informational and military areas.

Endnotes

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