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Chapter 12: American Foreign Policy Toward Pakistan **By Frank Schell, Richard E. Friedman, and Lauren Bean**

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Introduction

Pakistan, which means the “land of the pure” in Urdu, was once envisioned to be a secular country. It was founded at the partition of India in 1947 by Mohammed Ali Jinnah. Pakistan and India have fought three major wars over Kashmir and Bangladesh since partition, and there was an undeclared conflict in the Kargil area of Kashmir in 1999. This history serves to make South Asia especially tense, and there is potential for failed states and disintegration.

In view of its proximity to Russia, a shared frontier with China, and its borders with India and former Soviet republics that are principally Muslim, Pakistan is strategically important to the United States. Despite possessing a military ranking in the world’s top seven, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is currently challenged by an ideologically driven Taliban, which has laid claim to much of the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and Baluchistan—two of the country’s four provinces—and to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), located northeast of Baluchistan on the border with Afghanistan.

The locus of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda continues to be in neighboring Afghanistan and Pakistan, sometimes known as “Af-Pak,” where a porous border through remote and rugged terrain permits easy hit and run operations by Taliban and Al-Qaeda insurgents. For some observers, Pakistan’s security is challenged by the Taliban, a deadly enemy of the United States. However, these observers believe there is no immediate threat to the government and they think that the Taliban, while it cannot be eradicated, can be diminished and controlled. For others, the Islamic republic’s life is in danger and time is running out.

During the months of May and June, 2009, the National Strategy Forum conducted a series of seventeen telephone interviews and two meetings in person with Pakistani leaders, past and present, in the fields of security, military and intelligence, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the political establishment, civic and religious leaders, medicine, law, business, and financial services – all without attribution. The purpose of this special report is to:

- Gauge Pakistan’s importance to the U.S. and review the historical relationship.
- Define the strategic objectives of the U.S. and Pakistan, and Pakistan’s perceptions of the U.S.
- Examine Pakistan’s unmet social and economic needs and the message of the Taliban.
- Discuss geopolitical issues pertaining to Afghanistan and the Kashmir territory.
- Review the U.S. role in meeting these challenges to Pakistan’s security.
- Recommend policy actions for the U.S.

History of the U.S. - Pakistan Relationship

For decades, the United States has treated Pakistan without sufficient regard to the long term. There has been no comprehensive strategy, and U.S. efforts have largely been reactive to events and directed at the particular regime in power, as opposed to the country or region as a whole.

Pakistan’s membership in the Central Treaty Organization, established in 1955, alongside border countries such as Turkey, Iran, and others, made it a key partner in containment of the Soviet Union during the Cold War. For example, Peshawar, the capital of the NWFP, was the site of a major U.S. airbase for U-2 flights over the Soviet Union. Also, the Pakistani President, General Yahya Khan, facilitated President Richard Nixon’s 1972 visit to Beijing.

In the 1970s, General Zia-ul-Haq introduced Islamic Sharia law, encouraged the development of madrassa schools with religious teachings, and Islamicized the Pakistan army and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), the intelligence apparatus. When the armies of the Soviet Union crossed the ancient Oxus River, now known as the Amu Darya, to invade Afghanistan in 1979,

Pakistan became a sanctuary for the U.S. equipped mujahedin – ultimately helping to force Russia's withdrawal from Afghanistan. No longer useful and soon abandoned by the United States, many of those well-armed and religiously inspired mujahedin evolved into the Islamist jihadists of today, with Taliban and Al-Qaeda associations.

After Pakistan tested its nuclear weapons in 1998, U.S. support declined and Pakistan was subjected to sanctions. At the same time, rogue Pakistani nuclear scientist A.Q. Khan was spreading nuclear technology to North Korea, Libya, and Iran. He is still regarded as a national hero. The full extent of cooperation within Pakistan has not been fully disclosed, further straining relations between the U.S. and Pakistan.

As a partner in the global war on terror, Pakistan has been criticized by the U.S. for a lack of resolve in engaging the Taliban, despite having received more foreign aid from the U.S. than most countries. For example, the U.S. has provided \$12 billion in aid since 9/11, most of it in military assistance. There is now a proposal in Congress, the Kerry-Lugar Bill, to provide \$1.5 billion in non-military assistance per year for five years, with another \$7.5 billion for the following five years. In addition, military assistance will be \$3 billion per year for the next five years. From the early 1950s until last year, Pakistan has received \$73 billion in aid from all sources. Since the Mumbai attacks in 2009, Pakistan has received aid or commitments of \$23 billion, including a \$7.6 billion IMF loan (source: *Japan Times*, April 25, 2009). Recently, the International Monetary Fund approved Pakistan's request for an additional \$4 billion in aid funds.

U.S. and Pakistan: Strategic Objectives

Combating the Taliban and Al-Qaeda is a shared U.S.-Pakistan objective, one that has been more prominent on the U.S. agenda since 9/11 and has been elevated by Pakistan in recent months due to increasing violence there. The Af-Pak region may be seen as a whole in view of the dysfunctional border, which has never been recognized by the local Pashtun (Pathan) since 1893, when the Durand Line was established by British cartographers. In recent years, U.S. strategy in Af-Pak has been protean and confusing, initially directed at the hunt for Osama bin Laden. It then evolved into support for democracy, drug interdiction, maintaining the dictatorial Musharraf and Karzai governments, winning over warlords, averting disintegration, and now fighting a rejuvenated Taliban insurgency to prevent the takeover of a nuclear armed nation while protecting the Afghan countryside. U.S. objectives toward Af-Pak tend to be seen principally through a military prism, or as some might say, through the target acquisition sensors of a Predator drone.

The Pakistani objective has been, in large part, to secure foreign aid and to assure regime survival – with enough engagement with the Taliban to placate the U.S., but not enough to provoke a domestic crisis or *coup d'état* by Taliban members or sympathizers within the army and ISI. Further, Pakistan has used the strategic threat of India to justify the high profile and

voracious appetite of its professional army, the most respected and capable of its institutions, and to rally public opinion behind various military and civilian governments.

U.S. Intentions – Pakistan's Perceptions

There is a widespread perception in Pakistan that the U.S. is interested only in its own selfish objectives, such as counterterrorism, military engagement with the Taliban, and the security of Pakistani nuclear weapons, rather than in the underlying social causes of unrest in Pakistan. Some Pakistanis attribute U.S. interest in Pakistan to shared borders with China and Iran, and its proximity to Russia and the Caspian oil region.

The presence of the U.S. coalition in Afghanistan is identified as a cause of instability in FATA and NWFP, in view of the conflict being pushed into Pakistan. Some Pakistanis believe that prior to 9/11, the situation in those areas was relatively manageable.

There is also a view that the lack of hands-on monitoring of U.S. aid, administered over decades, has contributed to a culture of corruption of major proportions, with very little support getting through to the intended recipients. Furthermore, some observers maintain that the U.S. will abandon Pakistan as soon as U.S. objectives are substantially met—above all, suppression of the Taliban and its influence. In the meantime, the U.S. is perceived as supporting an unstable and corrupt Pakistani government, all the while professing its commitment to democracy. The street in Pakistan reportedly harbors anger toward its own government and toward the United States, which it considers a facilitator of corruption. The Predator drone strikes, with their collateral civilian casualties, have incensed rural populations. The intelligentsia is generally less anti-American than the street, although it continues to be cynical about the U.S. and its intentions.

Pakistan's Unmet Needs and the Message of the Taliban

The economy of Pakistan has weakened to the point that a \$7.6 billion emergency IMF loan was announced in November of 2008. Added to that is a rate of inflation that reached 25 percent late last year, although it is now receding somewhat.

There are other negative statistics (source - *CIA World Factbook*). Much of the 176 million population is separated from the mainstream and either conducts subsistence agriculture or lives in urban squalor. Nearly 40 percent of the people are under the age of fifteen, with a median age of about 21. Many in urban and rural areas have no prospects for any meaningful employment or life ahead of them. Per capita GDP (Purchasing Power Parity) is \$2,600. Also, low literacy rates inhibit broad-based communications: male literacy is 63 percent and female literacy is 36 percent. The information vacuum created by the absence of radios and televisions in remote areas creates fertile ground for conspiracy theories. Information is often passed by word of mouth, and is frequently anti-U.S.

Although education, public health, infrastructure, and human services are among the top priorities of the Government of Pakistan, it has failed to deliver them to the interior and to parts of the cities. There is a deep cynicism expressed as to how the elites of the country have failed the rest of the population by living cloistered lives, amassing great wealth, participating in systemic corruption, siphoning off aid monies, and maintaining their own wealth in offshore havens. NGOs are also met with some skepticism because some are reportedly owned by powerful Pakistani political elements.

The Taliban is now comprised of many segments: foreign parties, displaced refugees, Sharia law fanatics, criminal elements, warlords and mercenaries who associate for circumstantial reasons, the followers of the toppled Mullah Omar now in hiding, the other tribal insurgents from NWFP to FATA to the southeast province of Baluchistan, and unemployed Pakistani youth who see the Taliban as a source of income. While ethnically Pashtun in major part, it is by no means the same Pashtun Taliban that abetted Al-Qaeda prior to 9/11. It is now a Taliban with less religiosity and more revolutionary fervor – increasingly a peasant revolt. The Taliban message of jobs, food and nutrition, clean water, tractors, shelter, clothing, medicine, and the dispensation of justice for children and adults alike resonates with the disenfranchised, who own only the clothes on their backs. In view of these unmet social needs, the Taliban are viewed in some quarters as saviors who protect the people from the vested interests and the aloof government in Islamabad. The Taliban, which is funded by its narco-operations in Afghanistan and from offshore sources, is using poverty to gain strength. For example, they are reportedly paying rural people \$300-\$400 per month to enlist, a significant sum, with promises of Jeeps and AK-47s. Although the Pakistan army has made recent progress in suppressing the Taliban in the Swat Valley, we are already seeing retaliation in regions such as Waziristan (FATA) and through bombings in urban areas. The price of this military progress has been an estimate of approximately three million displaced persons, constituting enormous collateral damage. This population is sure to harbor resentment against the army and the government. With its treasury dependent in part upon opium as a cash crop, the Taliban provides compensation to the families of suicide bombers, a relatively new phenomenon in Pakistan.

In Pakistan's two largest cities, Karachi and Lahore, with respective populations of 12 million and 6 million, there is some fear that the Taliban ideology will potentially be adopted by the unemployed and perhaps by some in the working classes. A major cleavage in Karachi is between local Sindhis and immigrants from the north and those with earlier Indian antecedents, also known as muhajirs. There is a significant Pashtun ethnic minority in Karachi, which generally holds the lower paying jobs, but has reportedly not yet shown affinity for the Taliban. Lahore is a more homogeneous and affluent Punjabi city and is seen as less vulnerable. The general public in Pakistan does not support the Taliban and its methods. The major cities are places of moderate and secular liberal values. Public displays of Taliban brutality, often broadcast via cell phone video images, have swayed public opinion against such methods, constituting a backlash.

The Pakistani armed forces need substantial retooling to fight the Taliban and their Al-Qaeda cohorts in a counterinsurgency (CI) and human intelligence (HUMINT) environment. The army is long on the modern hardware needed to fight a land war against India, but short on equipment, training, and techniques for urban warfare to combat extremists who resemble the local population. Uncertain of the political backing and will power of Islamabad, the army has until recently been hesitant to engage the Taliban with force and resolve. This situation is further complicated by Taliban loyalties – and perhaps even members – within the army and ISI, who partnered with the Taliban to eject the Soviet army from its nine year occupation of Afghanistan. The Taliban and allied extremists are seen as a useful, asymmetric, and provocative offset to India in the region of Kashmir. Given the cadre of Taliban sympathizers within the ISI and Pakistani military, there is the question of the degree of control within the Pakistan army. Failure to defeat the Taliban in NWFP and FATA will be read by the people of Pakistan as a failure by their government and armed forces, setting the stage for more instability.

The role of the judiciary has been controversial. While the Supreme Court and High Court are respected, they hear relatively few cases. The lower courts and the network of magistrates are seen as politicized and corrupt. There are few criteria for judicial appointments and many officials serve despite weak credentials. Further, there is a fundamental lack of access to the legal system for the lower classes. Adding to this deficient legal apparatus is the fact that Pakistani law enforcement personnel are underfunded, underequipped, and undertrained. Many crimes are not reported, and crime data is said to be often manipulated. These conditions combine to create an opportunity for the Taliban to mete out its version of justice.

Many of those interviewed see countering the Taliban threat as a matter of survival for Pakistan. However, the countervailing view among other observers is that the Taliban is a serious but manageable threat. Despite these divergent views, there is consensus about the need for enhanced political will and leadership on the part of the Pakistani government. Without political leadership, even the most effective counterterrorism strategy will fail.

Geopolitical Issues

Pakistan does not wish to see Afghanistan become a hostile country on its frontiers, as it would then be caught in a pincer with India to the east. The increasing Indian consular presence in Afghan cities is seen as a threat, along with the perceived efforts of the Indian intelligence apparatus, known as RAW, to destabilize the southwest Pakistani province of Baluchistan.

While the Kashmir region (part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, with population 10 million) is of little economic value to either India or Pakistan, it is of strategic value to both, as it adjoins China and commands the high ground of the Karakoram mountain range. It is also of emotional importance, a place evoking images of rose gardens, thick forests of deodars, and filigree pavilions. The Urdu couplets of the Kashmiri poets of yore also figure symbolically in the sentimental attachment of both countries to this magnificent land.

Moreover, the cost of Kashmir to Pakistan has been huge, with wars fought over its possession in 1947 and 1965, and undeclared but serious hostilities in Kargil in 1999, as noted. (The other major war with India started in 1971 over Bangladesh, formerly East Pakistan, which opted to secede from Pakistan.)

The Pakistani public believes that India should be more flexible over Kashmir, a subject that repeatedly arises in discussions regarding Pakistan's foreign policy. Kashmir is an historical anomaly – a Hindu maharaja of Kashmir was forced to accede to the Indian union in 1947 as the price of military support from New Delhi against Pashtun invaders. While the United Nations adopted a resolution for a plebiscite, India has shown very little interest in pursuing this course and has also alleged Pakistani infractions as an inhibiting reason. Kashmir continues to be a haven for various Pakistani separatist movements and terrorist organizations, including the potent Lashkar-e-Taiba, which India believes is aided by Pakistan and the source of major terrorist activity within India. It is also believed to be behind the recent terrorist attacks in Mumbai.

The U.S. Role in Pakistan

The United States, while often viewed with suspicion, is the only global power with the economic resources, reach, and access to the highest echelons in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India. The U.S. is valued by the Pakistanis for its aid money and military hardware, and not really much else – certainly not for moral authority. Some informed people in Pakistan accept the U.S. presence in Afghanistan as a necessity for regional security, while others see a pullout from Afghanistan by the NATO coalition as a means to subdue tensions.

The reliance of the Karzai government in Afghanistan on the U.S. for its existence and the new partnership with India (particularly the U.S. India nuclear deal authorized by Congress in October 2008) give the U.S. historically unprecedented influence with all three countries. China and Russia are not seen as constructive influences and there is limited affinity for those two states in either Pakistan or India.

Recommendations

First, it must be recognized that there is no quick fix; it may take a decade or more to stabilize this part of South Asia. The unrest in NWFP, FATA, and Afghanistan dates back many centuries: the Greeks, Mughals with ethno-linguistic affinity, British, and Soviets all paid a high price for their forays into this region. There is no reason to assume that this generation of U.S. political leaders will have the world view, technology, and ability to assure a positive outcome.

Second, the focus of the Pakistan government, as well as that of the U.S. and other countries that seek a stable Pakistan, should be on offering a message of hope to the people of Af-Pak as a counter to the Taliban and other extremists' recruitment and appeal. This is a battle of ideas for the minds of young people who have no alternative prospects in life. With a renewed effort at

effective public diplomacy, leveraging global telecommunications, the U.S. may be able to sway public opinion in its favor and strike a blow to the Taliban stronghold.

Third, the long-term solution is the provision of social services to the Pakistani people. The immediate challenge is to assist the three million displaced persons of the Swat Valley who need basic services. There should be a major branding effort to identify the U.S. as the source of these services, including a robust media campaign. It must also be understood that the underlying social conditions in Pakistan and the ‘haves versus have-nots’ conflict are the root cause of unrest in Pakistan. Poverty will continue to burden Pakistan in the absence of a comprehensive national strategy led by their government. Thus, U.S. aid should be directed at education, public health, food, and basic social service needs and at rural reconstruction projects to provide opportunities for employment.

Fourth, a new humanitarian aid distribution and oversight mechanism must be developed and should involve official U.S., foreign NGOs, or neutral party advisors as monitors. Without a robust and hands-on process for controlling and accounting for the distribution, receipt, and expenditure of aid monies, the U.S. will simply perpetuate the pervasive culture of corruption.

Fifth, the U.S. should emphasize and accelerate the training of the Pakistan army in CI, HUMINT, and psychological operations. Continued military aid should be subjected to the same control and scrutiny as humanitarian aid, so that there is confidence that U.S. funding is directed at equipping the Pakistan army for a new type of warfare, and not for more armor, artillery, and aircraft to be deployed against India.

Sixth, the U.S. should engage religious leaders constructively. Many are moderates who believe that the Taliban is distorting Islam to further its objectives. The power and communications network of the approximately 20,000 madrassas should be used, rather than feared.

Seventh, India needs to offer a positive and public signal to Pakistan. It must recognize that if Pakistan disintegrates, it will have a failed nuclear armed territory on its frontiers with a likely hostile and unpredictable orientation. While India’s efforts to ease tensions over Kashmir will have minimal effect on the motivation for the Taliban insurgency in Af-Pak, they would allow Pakistan to redeploy some of its army, and they would be seen to affirm that Pakistan is a respected sovereign power, not a little brother to be patronized. India’s influence is unavoidable, and it can also be a very positive force. The words India uses matter. Even more helpful would be an initial and modest Indian pullback initiated by India from the Line of Control in Kashmir, then reciprocated by Pakistan. These actions would be largely symbolic, but symbolism matters.

Eighth, Pakistan should be encouraged to reciprocate Most Favored Nation (MFN) status to India as envisioned by GATT, which was superseded by the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995. Pakistan’s role in world trade, and more broadly in free markets, needs further study and attention. It has not prospered the way the Indian middle class has since the Indian economy was

liberalized 1991. Advice from India on economic reforms and lessons learned, if offered without looking patronizing, would be useful.

Ninth, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India must be brought to the table together to formulate a long-term strategy formulated to share intelligence, to use the network of madrassas, and to leverage the strengths of each country for the benefit of the others. Thus far, the public dialogue has been mostly accusatory, with too much scolding and finger pointing about who is responsible for bad relations.

Tenth, fear of the Taliban is evident in Tehran, even if the Iranians are now convulsed by their own internal struggles. This could offer both the U.S. and Iran some common ground for constructive engagement. As moderates, youth, women, intellectuals, the middle class, and other voices of reform rise to be heard in Iran, the desire to sever ties to clerics and theocracy will be stronger. By extension, the brand of extremism offered by the Taliban and their Al-Qaeda cohorts will have less appeal in a modernizing Iran.

These recommendations will not be easy to implement—if so, good minds and good people in all countries would have done so already. But the status quo is unacceptable and getting worse. These recommendations are put forward in the hope that sensible policies, sustained over time, can improve the situation in the region – not only for the United States, but for the people of Pakistan.