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U.S. Complementary Strategy: The Pakistan Opportunity

By Richard E. Friedman

In 1788, during a lowpoint of the Revolutionary War, John Adams and George Washington expressed their perspective on aid from France.

John Adams: "France kept their hand under our chin to prevent us from drowning, but not to lift our heads out of water."

George Washington: "It is a maxim founded on the universal experience of mankind that no nation is to be trusted farther than it is bound by its own interest."

The 18th century dictum applies with force today: states are best served when they identify their enlightened self-interest, identify clearly their strategic objectives, and implement them with a nuanced, light touch.

U.S. policy makers have awakened belatedly to several realities. September 11th was an historic event that led, for better or worse, to the Bush II Global War on Terror policy. The U.S. economic recession that began in 2008 is likely to continue for several years and degrade U.S. economic and political primacy. An honest and objective evaluation of U.S. foreign policy suggests that we have acted arrogantly, without need, in many situations. We have fretted about the loss of U.S. international prestige and realized belatedly that much of the world no longer holds us in high esteem.

America's great state tragedy is that we lead the world in providing protection for other states and in sharing our largesse with people in need. This noble and almost unique humanitarian impulse and action is accepted, but frequently not reciprocated.

The fix will not be found in public diplomacy—the notion that the U.S. should create a better image of itself. Rather, the U.S. should look inward and examine its international policy and the cumulative negative effect of the uncomfortable notion of U.S. policy arrogance.

The need for U.S. introspective self-bashing is a relatively easy first step towards rehabilitation and progress. The second phase involves *complementary strategy*: understanding the strategic objectives of friend and foe, and incorporating these findings into the establishment of U.S. strategic objectives and a national security strategy.

Pakistan provides a near perfect opportunity for the U.S. to exercise its complementary strategy.

Pakistan is important to the U.S. for several reasons.

- Its 170 million Muslim population is pivotal to the region.
- There is a contemporary and growing anti-American trend, notwithstanding the massive U.S. financial aid packages provided to Pakistan.
- Pakistan has nuclear weapons, and has shared its nuclear technology with America's enemies, and could provide nuclear capabilities to non-state actors.
- Pakistan has provided aid and comfort to the Afghan Taliban and it is thwarting U.S. objectives in Pakistan.

The U.S. goal should be to recognize the downside gravity of these thwarts and attempt to convert them to our advantage. Consider Pakistan's many weaknesses, their strengths, and how they relate to the U.S. for their survival.

Pakistan needs to address the following issues solely from its self-interest perspective, and to communicate clearly to the U.S., warts and all, their strategic objectives, in hopes that the U.S. is in a complementary strategy mode. If there would be a private, non-governmental conference convened by Pakistan's highly qualified non-governmental leadership, the following agenda items would be addressed by Pakistan's participants.

Pakistan's Strategic Objectives

What are Pakistan's most important strategic objectives (*for example, economic prosperity; internal terrorism; recovery from the 2010 monsoon flooding*)? Are there other first-rank strategic objectives?

Pakistan's Domestic Political Stability

What is the present status of Pakistan's political stability? What are the destabilizing factors? How important is corruption in government and the private sector? Is there the need for emphasis on democracy? If so, how can this be achieved? What are the competing forces of democracy, secularism, and religious theocracy? What are the reasons for political instability? How can Pakistan address these barriers that contribute to political instability? What could be done to prepare for the 2013 national election?

What is the Present Condition of Pakistan's Strategic Relationship to the U.S.?

What elements of the Pakistan/U.S. strategic relationship are positive, and what elements are negative? What should be the ideal Pakistan strategic relationship with the U.S.? How can Pakistan and the U.S. jointly address and cure the negative elements of this relationship? How can Pakistan's new policy towards the U.S. be communicated to U.S. policy makers, and to Pakistan's public? What steps should the U.S. take to strengthen its strategic relationship with Pakistan's political leadership and Pakistan's public?

Pakistan's Regional Perspective

What facts should be included in Pakistan's regional objectives? What should be Pakistan's regional strategic perspective? This would include India, China, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel.

Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Security

The U.S. is very concerned about the security of Pakistan's nuclear weapons. Particularly worrisome is the possibility of the Pakistan Taliban diminishing Pakistan's nuclear security. What steps, if any, are being taken by Pakistan to prevent its nuclear technology from being acquired by other states and non-state actors? Is there a Pakistan/Saudi Arabia secret nuclear weapons sharing agreement?

The U.S. Concerns Regarding Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Insurgency

The U.S. is very concerned about Pakistan's ISI supporting the Afghan Taliban insurgency. Is this perception correct? If so, is this in Pakistan's best interest? How can the U.S. and Pakistan cooperate given Pakistan's possible support for the Afghan Taliban?

Pakistan and India

How can Pakistan's relationship with India be improved? What specific action could be taken by Pakistan, and what actions, if any, could be taken by India to improve this relationship? What could the U.S. do to persuade India to accommodate Pakistan? Would Pakistan's support for India's permanent membership on the UN Security Council be a positive step towards improving the relationship?

What is Pakistan's Strategic Interest in Afghanistan?

What is Pakistan doing and what should it be doing in Afghanistan to address its strategic objectives there? What is Pakistan's perspective of U.S. strategic objectives in Afghanistan? What are the consequences for Pakistan and the region, if/when the U.S. withdraws its military forces from Pakistan?

Pakistan's Self-Help Policy

What can Pakistan do using a self-help mode to improve the internal domestic situation, including political stability, economic prosperity, the military, internal national security, education, healthcare, and social services? What can the U.S. do to assist Pakistan in this regard? How can Pakistan and the U.S. shape the U.S. financial aid package to Pakistan?

Although answers on all of these issues may not emerge, there would be zones of agreement that would provide a strategic architecture going into Pakistan's 2013 general election. Both Pakistan and the U.S. should strive to create new, mutually enforcing national security strategies.

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