The Question of Afghanistan and its Impact on U.S. Relations with Pakistan: The Need for Pragmatic Engagement

Abstract: Relations between the U.S. and Pakistan have always been cyclical, oscillating from collaboration and friendship to noncooperation and enmity. A core reason for this is a failure by consecutive American administration to understand the nature of the Pakistani political system, in which social groups are central. Accordingly, U.S. policymakers have expectations and make demands that often manifest through the rubric of democracy promotion. The paper identifies two key obstacles to democracy promotion in Pakistan: ungoverned territories and social identity groups. The section examines these elements in respect to Afghanistan. The reason for that is because the second section expands the argument by shifting attention to U.S. policymakers who appear to have place Afghanistan at the heart of U.S. engagement in South Asia. In doing so, it is argue that as long as Afghanistan remains key to U.S. national security concerns, American interaction with Pakistan remains limited because the relations are not about the U.S. and Pakistan per se, but rather on how Pakistan can help the U.S. meet its national security interests in Afghanistan.

Students of history and politics quickly learn that nothing is certain nor absolute, as even definite and incontrovertible evidence may obscure deeper complexities that define inter-state relations, as far too often, common interests trump values. This may explain why foreign policy analysis tends to be grounded in case studies, and less in theoretical scrutiny. 1 Such observations typify U.S. relations with Pakistan, which are affected by the fact that Pakistan has to balance the forces of modernity and globalization with tradition and cultural norms.

The 9/11 attacks made Pakistan a frontline state in the international campaign against transnational, jihadi terrorism, and key to U.S. national security necessitating an approach that focused on problem-solving, as opposed to seeking lofty idealistic goals. 2 Issues regarding democratic principles, human rights violations, sectarian violence, corruption, and other abuses common to Pakistan were marginalized as the focus was with defeating al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and international Islamic terrorism. 3 By the mid-to-late 2000s, Washington assumed that the inability to end the Taliban and al-Qaeda threats in Afghanistan stemmed from the safe-havens and support that they found in Pakistan. Thus, U.S. policymakers reacted by demanding democratic

2 Pervez Musharraf recounts how secretary of state Colin Powell and the deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage made it clear that Pakistan had a simple choice, either stand with the United States and its war on al-Qaeda and international terrorism, or be placed with the terrorism. Pervez Musharraf, In the Line of Fire, (London: Simon & Schuster, 2006), pp. 201-202.
reforms, including the removal of the army from power and greater accountability by the governing elites, as a way to change what was occurring in Afghanistan. The key tenant within this approach was that rebuilding Pakistan’s democratic institutions would prevent the Taliban and al-Qaeda from receiving the support that empowered them to challenge the U.S. in Afghanistan. These demands however led to tensions and culminated in a major fissure between the two countries in 2011 that included a major controversy over a CIA contractor (Raymond Davis), a strongly worded critique of the U.S. drone campaign by the then Army chief, General Ashfaq Kayani; and, finger pointing and waving by both sides. By 2012 one could discern a reversal of policy, with Washington realizing that it cannot turn Pakistan into a strong, neoliberal, democratic state, leading to less public, open statements by U.S. senior policymakers on Pakistan and affairs. Nevertheless, the U.S. remains unable to engage with Pakistan on its own, consistently seeing its relations with the South Asia country through U.S. concerns with Afghanistan.

The central thesis promoted in this paper is that U.S. relations with Pakistan when constructed through a pragmatic engagement lens as opposed to some ideologically-inspired, neoliberal agenda understood as democracy promotion do not lead to disappointments, disapprobation and reproaches. Interspersed within this observation is the argument that U.S. relations with Pakistan are determined by U.S. security concerns vis-à-vis Afghanistan. The paper aims to show that in the post-9/11 period, U.S. decision-making vis-à-vis Pakistan instead of being centered on Pakistan per se, are structured on along two lines: how to ensure stability in

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9 Nicolas Bouchet defines democracy promotion “as the widest possible range of actions that one state can take to influence the political development of another towards greater democratization.” Nicolas Bouchet ‘Barack Obama's Democracy Promotion at Midterm’, The International Journal of Human Rights, Vol. 15, No. 4 (2011) 573. See also the various essays in Michael Cox, John Ikenberry, and Takashi Inoguchi, American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies and Impacts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
Afghanistan\textsuperscript{10} and how to support international counterterrorism efforts.\textsuperscript{11} Such an agenda is inherently paradoxical as it requires on the one hand close interaction, understood as general diplomatic methods that help promote the objectives of a state,\textsuperscript{12} with Islamabad. At the same time, U.S. policymakers distrust their Pakistani counterpart and are more interested in defeating al-Qaeda and the Taliban. In advocating for a pragmatic engagement, the aim is to highlight the value of pragmatism to foreign policy analysis, especially as pragmatism has rich philosophical tradition,\textsuperscript{13} albeit not so much in the field of international relations.\textsuperscript{14} Thus, in the context of this research, pragmatic engagement amounts to an anti-doctrinal approach to international relations that focuses on ‘what works.’\textsuperscript{15} Notably, methodologically pragmatism provides ways to appraise and judge progress through experience, as opposed to Kantian reasoning which is often devoid of empirical content\textsuperscript{16}. Thus, in attempting to shed light on U.S. relations with Pakistan and its future, the paper underlines some of the historical objectives of U.S. foreign policy vis-à-vis Pakistan, before shifting attention to 9/11, when a commitment was made to defeat Islamic terrorists, particularly those that had sanctuary in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{17} However, whereas under President Bush the interaction was pragmatic, under President Obama, the U.S. attempted to pursue a more active, liberal policy aimed at democracy promotion in respect to


\textsuperscript{11} On October 14, 2014, Dan Feldman, the special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan in remarks before the Atlantic Council acknowledged this, though he seems to suggest that this had advantages and disadvantages for Pakistan – it received political attention and access to resources, but it also experienced more terrorist activities that resulted in the deaths of over 50,000 Pakistanis. Dan Feldman, Remarks on Pakistan at the Atlantic Council,’ Oct. 14, 2014, http://www.state.gov/p/sca/rls/rmks/2014/232900.htm.


\textsuperscript{14} Over the last few years however there has been a growing call for the use of pragmatism in international relations. John Kaag and Sarah Kreps, ‘Pragmatism’s Contributions to International Relations’, \textit{Cambridge Review of International Affairs}, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2012), pp. 191-208; Friedrich Kratochwil, ‘Ten Points to Ponder about Pragmatism: Some Critical Reflections on Knowledge Generation in the Social Sciences’ in Harry Bauer and Elisabetta Brighi (eds.) Pragmatism In International Relations (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 11-25.

\textsuperscript{15} Pragmatic engagement is different from realism in that first it does not seek to build a research program nor engage in paradigmatic battles, but to focus on language and methods and in doing so recognize focus on the present. Helena Rytövuori-Apunen, ‘Abstractive Observation as the Key to the ‘Primacy of Practice”, \textit{International Studies Review}, Vol. 11, No. 3 (2009), pp. 641-645;

\textsuperscript{16} John Kaag recognizes that centrality of experience in classical pragmatic thought, leading him to state “Pragmatism is difficult to define because it is not one thing. It bespeaks ways, directions, and pathmarks that guide us in traversing the rough terrain of the experimental landscape.” John Jacob Kaag, ‘Pragmatism and the Lessons of Experience’, \textit{Daedalus}, Vol. 138, No. 2 (2009), p. 71.

Pakistan. The policy led to increased tensions between the two countries, causing a major rift that eventually led Washington to revert to a pragmatic engagement with Islamabad based on functional cooperation. This has meant that the U.S. continues to work with the Pakistani Army and ignores illiberal practices or even comment on political crises that Pakistan seems to plague post-Musharraf Pakistan. Such an approach is grounded in pragmatic engagement, as pragmatism helps explain and helps to understand not only what is being undertaken, but also what ought to be done. That is, U.S. policymakers shape their interactions with their Pakistani counterparts on the basis of their experiences and views of Pakistan. The question however that naturally emerges is whether these experiences are well-founded, particularly because they are shaped by what is occurring in Afghanistan. In other words, by focusing on Afghanistan and managing its interaction with Pakistan on how things would impact Afghanistan, the U.S. not only further alienates the Pakistani political elite, it ensures a weak policy towards the region because the U.S. reacts instead of generate policy.

Between Ungoverned Territories and Social Identity Groups

Two key factors are obstacles to Pakistan’s stability and ability to conduct foreign relations, specifically with the United States. The first obstacle is the presence of three social identity groups that dominate the political system – the army, the landed gentry, which includes the elite industrialists, and the religious polity – and control the state and its resources. There are a number of ways to examine the development of social groups, although it ultimately the process begins with identity and the individual. Drawing on the work of Max Weber, who identified groups as a product of the belief system of their members, which means that individuals focus on their role within society, Asef Bayat emphasizes fluidity and fragmentation within social movement. Under this interpretation, the development of a group rests with a person’s identity, seen as a "social category": Pakistani woman, Muslim employee and so on. Social groups emerge when individuals recognize or develop certain social characteristics leading them to identify themselves or be identified by the larger community as a group. The process entails social comparison whereby those that for the group do so because they claim to have norms, values, expectations that allow them to isolate or distinguish themselves from others and in doing reinforce their own in-groupness. In Pakistan, the main social groups are the army, which is largely homogenous in that

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19 This may explain why the Obama administration has not only been surprisingly quiet on the Nawaz Sharif government’s decision to seek peace talks with the Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, TTP) but has curtailed much of the drone program, focusing only on al-Qaeda and less on the TPP. Karen DeYoung and Greg Miller, ‘U.S. said to curtail drone strikes in Pakistan as officials there seek peace talks with Taliban’, Washington Post, Feb. 4, 2014. http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-curtails-drone-strikes-in-pakistan-as-officials-there-seek-peace-talks-with-taliban/2014/02/04/1d63f52a-8dd8-11e3-833c-33098f9e5267_story.html.

by joining the military one accepts certain standards and norms, as well as services designed to illicit homogeneity, which is why historically the army has always claimed that it is the only institution that is truly Pakistani. The two other groups – the religious (Sunni) polity and the feudal, landowning, industrial class – are more heterogeneous in nature, making the process of social identity far more difficult turbulent as they are prone to in-group infighting and necessitating a more stringent process of self-identification. Nonetheless, the key emphasis is on the social aspect that brings individuals to support these groups. In contemporary Pakistan, each group has a substantial following, which mean that their importance to the Pakistani political system is that, that only when they form of an understanding over sharing governance is the political system stable. That is, the groups embrace a pragmatic assessment that boils down to what service and interest the group receives from being supportive of the government. Afghanistan has come to play a crucial role in each of the aforementioned groups. For the Army, Afghanistan provides both security and insecurity. On the security aspect, the Pakistani Army sees Afghanistan as providing it with strategic depth should India attack Pakistan. Simply put, the assumption being that the Pakistani army could retreat into Afghanistan from which it would continue to fight the Indians. Conversely, Afghanistan also poses a security threat to Pakistan because of the Durand Line, which separates the Pashtun population, some of whom live in Pakistan and some in Afghanistan ensuring constant friction between the two countries for decades, as Pakistan fears Pashtun irredentism. It is arguably this fear that encourage Pakistan to support the Taliban, with the hope that a religious, Pashtun-based regime in Kabul would control those calling and demanding for the Pashtunistan. The importance of Afghanistan varies, though for the more conservative Pakistani religious groups, as groups such as Jamaat-i-Islami entered the Afghan refugee camps with the purpose of instilling a militant interpretation of Islam to encourage Afghans to partake in a holy war (jihad) against the Soviets, whereas a group such as Lashkar-e-

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Taiba have used Afghanistan to emphasize their commitment to protect Muslim lands and oppose the United States.\textsuperscript{25}

The second barrier is the presence of ungoverned territories – areas over which the central government has little to no real control, many of which are located along the border with Afghanistan, such as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. These territories have become havens for actors engaging in national, regional, and international acts of violence that threaten peace and security.\textsuperscript{26} Their significance to U.S. relations with Pakistan is the fact that contemporary American counterinsurgency doctrine underlines the need to challenge terrorist safe-havens, which often emerge in ungoverned territories or in failed/weak state through infrastructure building and military activity.\textsuperscript{27} The issue however as noted correctly by one commentator is that the Pakistani State is not only “hampered by its physical lack of presence in the FATA, but longstanding tribal codes known collectively as Pashtunwali, which among other things demand the provision of hospitality to strangers, create social safe havens for criminal elements and anti-state insurgents.”\textsuperscript{28} Simply, there is a sense, often found in the United States, that the Pakistani political establishment accepts the existence of these territories and the groups that dominate them, as long as those that live in those areas do not threaten the center or the establishment, which often explains the willingness to sign ceasefire agreements with the non-state actors – local Taliban groups and/or tribal militias – that control the areas in return for these actors confining their activities to the territories. Nevertheless, over the last few years, the inability to impose the government’s remit on the large swath of territory, coupled with the increase in domestic terrorism, has been identified as a major problem, which explains why successive governments have sought to meet some local demands in terms of governance and investment as well as greater attempts to assimilate people from those locales into mainstream political institutions, particularly the army.\textsuperscript{29} The issue however is that the measures are actually not designed to address the reasons as to why the local community tends to support non-

state actors – perpetual underinvestment, alienation and historical animosities – as the establishment is more concerned with keeping those individuals and groups at bay.\footnote{Isaac Kfir, ‘Sectarian Violence and Social Group Identity in Pakistan’, \textit{Studies in Conflict & Terrorism}, Vol. 37, No. 6 (2014), pp. 457-472.}

These two obstacles are intimately linked as by controlling territory, the social groups have a basis to persuade, cajole, or compel the established actors to cede some power and resources of the state to them, as they are able to employ violence, which ultimately threatens the state and the power of the established actors.

\textbf{U.S.-Pakistan Relations & Afghanistan}


U.S.-Pakistani relations changed drastically following 9/11. U.S. ambassador to Pakistan Wendy Chamberlain delivered several demands, which set the tone for U.S.-Pakistani relations immediately after the attacks. The demands ranged from stopping al-Qaeda from operating on Pakistani territory to providing the U.S. blanket overflight and land rights with respect to all necessary military and intelligence operations to public denunciation of terrorism to ending all support for the Taliban.\footnote{Pervez Musharraf, \textit{In the Line of Fire: A Memoir} (London: Simon & Schuster, 2006), pp. 204-205.}

Notably, no specific demands were made regarding democracy, despite the Musharraf government being a product of an illegal coup that resulted in U.S. sanctions under the Foreign Operations Act. In fact, the Musharraf government was greatly empowered, culminating in an invitation for Pervez Musharraf to meet with President Bush at Camp David.\footnote{Aqil Shah, ‘Democracy on Hold in Pakistan’, \textit{Journal of Democracy}, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2002), pp. 67-75.} The argument in favor of this policy was two-fold: first, Islamic terrorism was an immediate threat to the United States, and to international peace and security; second, removing the terrorist threat makes it possible to develop democracy
in the region. In return, Washington made three commitments to Islamabad. First, ensuring that the Northern Alliance, whom many in Pakistan saw as an Indian proxy, would not form a government in Kabul. Second, Washington would take a more proactive stance in resolving the dispute over Kashmir, especially as Pakistanis feel that India is obstructing any meaningful progress over Kashmir. Third, Pakistan’s nuclear weapons and delivery systems would remain intact. Clearly both sides did not nor could not fulfill each other’s demands, mainly because there were far too ambitious. However, relations between the two would probably have remained stable, by which the U.S. would make no meaningful demands on Pakistan, accepting Pervez Musharraf’s questionable policies which were delaying the return for civilian government to Pakistan, had the Afghanistan situation not deteriorated (increased Taliban activity), which U.S. policymakers came to believe was linked to the political situation in Pakistan. Simply, over the last decade or so, U.S. relations with Pakistan have not been structured strategically but rather by events and conditions in Afghanistan, which essentially mean that Pakistan is often an after-thought in U.S. foreign policy consideration.

The Obama administration, frustrated with the Taliban blocking progress in Afghanistan, and to justify the demand for a larger commitment to Afghanistan particularly in terms of troop contribution, emphasized Pakistan’s democratic shortcomings. Simply, the Obama administration’s position appeared to be that the reason why the international and U.S. led efforts in Afghanistan were not bearing fruits was because spoilers in Pakistan were enabling the Afghan Taliban, and not the way reconstruction was structured and developed by the key stakeholders in 2001. This stance was discernable when Barack Obama was campaign for the presidency during which time he was not only critical of the Pakistanis and their contribution to the campaign in Afghanistan, but advocated viewing Pakistan as a “combat zone” if the Pakistani Army did not provide more

effective support against the Taliban.\textsuperscript{41} With this in mind, one can understand why Hilary Clinton in her confirmation hearing as Secretary of State asserted, “President-Elect Obama and I believe that Afghanistan and the Pakistani border are the central front in the war on terror.”\textsuperscript{42}

Richard Holbrook, the U.S. special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan credited with coining the term, maintained that AfPak neologism expressed the new U.S. approach to the conflict in Afghanistan\textsuperscript{43} that identified Pakistan and Afghanistan as a single theater of operations that required better management of resources but also a regional solution that includes India.\textsuperscript{44} AfPak made two key assumptions. First, the root cause of the U.S. and the international community’s failure to defeat the Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda while rebuilding the country lay with Pakistan’s willingness to provide sanctuaries in its territory for Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda forces to conduct operations against allied forces and the Karzai government. Second, these sanctuaries continue because members of the Pakistani military and security services collude with the Taliban and al-Qaeda. In the words of Holbrooke, AfPak was not an effort

“…to saved eight syllables. It is an attempt to indicate and imprint in our DNA the fact that there is one theater of war, straddling an ill-defined border, the Durand Line, and that on the western side of that border, NATO and other forces are able to operate. On the eastern side, it’s the sovereign territory of Pakistan. But it is there on the eastern side of this ill-defined border that the international terrorist movement is located. Al Qaeda and other organizations of its sort and we have to think of it that way, not to distinguish between the two.”\textsuperscript{45}

AfPak’s objectives were to disrupt the terrorist networks in Afghanistan and “especially Pakistan” to prevent attacks on international targets; to promote capable, accountable, and effective governance in Afghanistan; to develop an Afghan security force to meet insurgency and terrorism threats; to assist civilian control of the Pakistani government, including the promotion of a vibrant economy; and to involve the international

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\footnotetext[42]{‘Questions for the Record: Senator John Kerry’, Nomination of Hilary Clinton, Department of State, Secretary of State, text available at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/files/KerryClintonQFRs.pdf. See also, General Petraeus for example noted ‘It’s not possible to solve the challenges internal to Afghanistan without addressing the challenges, especially in terms of security, with Afghanistan’s neighbors. A regional approach is required’ Michael J. Carden, ‘Petraeus Discusses Way Ahead for Afghanistan’, Jan. 9, 2009, http://www.defense.gov/News/newsarticle.aspx?id=52604.}
\footnotetext[43]{Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy, Department of State, (Washington: Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, January 2010, Updated February 2010), http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/135728.pdf.}
\footnotetext[44]{Richard Holbrooke, ‘Coordinated Support for Afghanistan and Pakistan’, Hampton Road International Security, (Spring/Summer 2009), p. 2829.}
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community in achieving these objectives. The policy rested on pillars of military, civilian, and partnerships. The second and third pillars called for greater civilian interaction between the U.S., its allies, and Afghans to address the rebuilding of Afghanistan. Specifically, AfPak pursued an “ends, ways, and means” analysis that requires a comprehensive military and civilian approach where the U.S. would work with Pakistan and the international community (including Russia, China, and Iran) to rebuild Afghanistan. The military pillar was designed to show two key aspects of Washington’s commitment to the rebuilding effort. The first element was a surge in troop numbers in Afghanistan to accord with General Stanley McChrystal, Commander of the International Security Assistance Force and Commander of US Forces in Afghanistan population-centric counter-terrorism strategy. The second element was developing Afghan military capabilities so that they could lead the resistance to the Taliban insurgency.

Pakistani antipathy towards AfPak lay in three core issues. First, resentment at a policy that placed the two countries under the same umbrella. Pakistan is larger and more powerful, and the policy fails to recognize its differences from Afghanistan. Additionally, AfPak ignored the threat that Pashtun nationalism poses to Pakistan’s territorial integrity (there are approximately 40 million Pashtuns in Pakistan as opposed to 15 million in Afghanistan), which feeds Pakistan larger concern vis-à-vis India. Pakistanis consider peace in Afghanistan to be dependent on Islamabad and Delhi working out their differences, whether in relation to Kashmir or over the growing Indian presence in Afghanistan. After all, one of Islamabad’s earliest demands to Washington before the Afghanistan invasion was that the Northern Alliance would not take Kabul, as many Pakistanis saw it as an Indian proxy. Moreover, Washington’s linking the two countries into a single theater of operation completely ignored Pakistan’s other pre-invasion request, support vis-à-vis Kashmir, which never developed at all. In other words, in linking Afghanistan and Pakistan, U.S. policymakers appear to ignore the omnipresent question of Kashmir and how important it is to Pakistanis, leading many in Pakistan to interpreted Washington’s failure to fulfill its various promises as the U.S. taking the Indian side. This has become even more important in the post-Cold War, with successive U.S. administration seeking improved relations with India, which would often come at the expense of U.S.-Pakistani relations.

48 President Barack Obama, Inaugural Address, January 20, 2009, text available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/read_the_inaugural_address/.
Second, Pakistan had spent over a decade as the lead nation supporting Western efforts to dislodge the Soviets from Afghanistan. Consequently, linking the two countries overlooked Pakistan’s sacrifice in that earlier war, whether in allowing millions of Afghan refugees into Pakistan or the harm that comes from being a neighbor of a country embroiled in heavy conflict.\(^{51}\) That is, whereas many in the United States, may have forgotten or choose to forget the role that Washington played in creating and sustaining the mujahedeen, many of whom either became Taliban or were a *cause belli* in the emergence of the Taliban, Pakistanis remember and express anger that they held solely responsible for the what has emerged in South Asia. This is not to say that Pakistan is completely blameless in what has transpired within its border and in Afghanistan, but rather to recognize that others must also bear some responsibility.\(^{52}\)

Finally, the linkage had a deep psychological impact on Pakistan, which had to contend with the perception of being the problem country in South Asia,\(^{53}\) and of being described as “duplicitous” to the more unforgiving “ally from hell” and “a greedy and total spoiler.”\(^{54}\) These claims and accusations often ignore the nature of the Pakistani state and its history, especially when it comes to Pakistani concerns vis-à-vis India. Interspersed within this is a sense that the U.S. sees Pakistan’s fear of India as exaggerated or unrealistic, particularly when it comes to Afghanistan.\(^{55}\) Members of the Pakistani Army argue that it internal and external factors compel them to engage in politics, while the Inter-Service Intelligence Directorate could successfully assert that its nefarious activities are not that different than the behavior of any other intelligence agency.

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\(^{53}\) Pervez Musharraf summed up Pakistani opposition to the term by stating, “I am totally against the term AfPak. I do not support the word itself for two reasons: First, the strategy puts Pakistan on the same level as Afghanistan. We are not. Afghanistan has no government and the country is completely destabilized. Pakistan is not. Second, and this is much more important, is that there is an Indian element in the whole game. We have the Kashmir struggle, without which extremist elements like Lashkar-e-Taiba would not exist.” Interview with Pervez Musharraf: Obama ‘Is Aiming at the Right Things’, *Spiegel online*, Jun. 7, 2009. http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/spiegel-interview-with-pervez-musharraf-obama-is-aiming-at-the-right-things-a-628960.html.


\(^{55}\) Some notable example of improved relations between India and Afghanistan that could have serious implications for Pakistan are: the 218km Zaranj–Delaram highway linking Afghanistan to the Iranian port of Chabahar which provides Afghanistan access to the sea via Iran and also allows India to export to Afghanistan via the Iranian post. Another example is the construction of a 900km rail line from the iron mines in Hajigak to Chabahar. J.K Baral, ‘The Afghan Game: Interests and Move’, *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 37, No. 6 (2013), p. 706.
From Regime Change to Pragmatic Engagement

The U.S. initially welcomed the Zardari government, but its optimism quickly dissipated as policymakers came to understand the limits of any civilian government in Pakistan as they recognize the overreach of the Pakistani army in civilian affairs. In addition, the furor over the killing of Osama bin Laden, including U.S. allegations of Pakistani collusion in hiding the Saudi national only compounded diplomatic tension, especially because the Americans felt that they could not trust the Pakistanis. Consequently, U.S. policy towards Pakistan assumed a more pragmatic stance, encapsulated in the Strategic Dialogue. The Dialogue amounts to a U.S. recognition that engaging with Pakistan called for a comprehensive approach that includes developing and enhancing trade relations, promoting energy security in Pakistan and law enforcement, as a way to support counter-terrorism, as opposed to only focusing on security and military cooperation. Accordingly, U.S. policy towards Pakistan recognizes that Islamic terrorism is a threat to the security and stability of both countries, with neither having the means to comprehensively defeat the militants, necessitating a different approach. Thus, the new approach, as captured by the Strategic Dialogue seems to draw more on promoting human security in Pakistan: provide basic security as a way to discourage recruitment and anti-U.S. and more importantly, anti-federal government opposition.

Recognizing the controversy surrounding the drone program and appreciating that Pakistan itself faces a major terrorist onslaught may explain why the State Department informed Congress early in 2012 that it was invoking U.S. national security provisions to waive the certification process that the Kerry-Lugar-Berman Act requires to provide Pakistan aid. This was the first time the Obama administration waived the certification requirement, a waiver that was common under George W. Bush. The State Department justified the shift by underlining that while the U.S.-Pakistan relationship had faced serious challenges, the aid helps the United States improve relations with Islamabad. Interfused within this consideration is a growing realization as to how fragile the Pakistan’s government is, ensuring that the U.S. provides aid for the dual purpose of preventing the collapse of

57 Leon Panetta, the director of the CIA at the time of the operation, declared, “It was decided that any effort to work with the Pakistanis could jeopardize the mission. They might alert the targets,” Ewen MacAskill, Julian Borger, Jon Boone and Nicholas Watt, ‘Osama bin Laden killing sparks calls for early Afghanistan withdrawal’, The Guardian, May 4, 2011, p. 10.
the Pakistani state and as an attempt to strengthen institutions. Thus, the aid is given with less fanfare, as Washington accepts that constantly reminding Pakistanis how much aid the country receives from the United States is counterproductive, especially when Pakistanis are increasingly distrust the U.S.\textsuperscript{61}

Second, as the U.S. combat operations end in Afghanistan, Pakistan’s status as a frontline state remains, if not grows because Washington remains unable to untangle itself from the Afghan quagmire because of fears of an al-Qaeda-Taliban resurgence. The concern is linked to Washington’s nascent concern with failed states, not to mention seeing its massive investment in Afghanistan go to waste. The discussion over the bilateral security agreement with Afghanistan is indicative of this schizophrenic, discombobulated policy, as when it seemed that there was little hope that the Afghans would ratify the agreement, the U.S. appeared willing and able to leave Afghanistan, and yet in the aftermath of the 2014 presidential election, the agreement was signed ensuring U.S. presence in Afghanistan for another decade.\textsuperscript{62} Thus, U.S. policymakers are in a difficult situation as on the one hand they recognize that Pakistan retains influence on events in Afghanistan through various proxies, including the Taliban,\textsuperscript{63} but there is no clear policy on how to address such a situation possibly because of concerns that to do so would legitimize those Pakistanis that work and understand the Taliban. This is why policymakers in Pakistan and Afghanistan have increasingly pushed to improve bilateral relations, while at the same time engaging in policies that clearly aggravate the other.\textsuperscript{64} Washington for its part, because of its fixation with Afghanistan, is striving to develop a relationship with Pakistan structured on how to shape Afghanistan’s future, specifically regarding the Taliban, as opposed to structuring its relations with Pakistan, independently of Afghanistan.

\textit{Conclusion}

In sum, U.S.-Pakistan relations are turbulent not only because of divergent strategic and national interests, but fundamental misunderstandings, largely by American policymakers, about Pakistan and what Washington


\textsuperscript{64} Nonetheless, a recent decision by the Karzai administration to allow India to finance the supply of Russian arms to Afghan national security forces is bound to cause unease in Pakistan, which is already concerned with Indian increased involvement in Afghanistan and Afghan affairs. Ghanizada, ‘India to finance Russian arms supply to Afghan security forces’, \textit{Khaama Press}, Apr. 18, 2014. http://www.khaama.com/india-to-finance-russian-arms-supply-to-afghan-security-forces-6006?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+khaama+%28KHAAMA+PRESS%29+%7C+Afghan+Online+Newspaper+%26+Magazine%29
can expect from Pakistan. Clearly, the U.S. is entitled to be suspicious and concerned in respect to Pakistan because of Pakistani misrepresentations and obfuscation on a range of issues, from nuclear proliferation to support for militant and extremist groups. Nevertheless, Xenia Dormandy, the former National Security Council director for South Asia, summed up the situation well: “The United States has imposed U.S. policies and interests on Pakistan, rather than working with Pakistanis to help define their objectives and find ways to support their efforts to achieve them (at least when those interests are commensurate with U.S. objectives).” Dormandy concludes, “The United States has therefore facilitated Pakistan avoiding its responsibilities.” Consequently, Pakistani military leaders strive to extract what they can from the United States.

Improving relations requires that Washington accept that the Pakistani state is beholden to social groups whose interests do not necessarily coincide with U.S. or even Pakistani ones. This may explain why sometimes Pakistani leaders and actors may choose to work with terrorist and radical Islamist groups as these entities have the ability to use violence to extract political concessions from Pakistan’s political elite. Consequently, interaction between the United States and Pakistani policymakers must reflect the fragmented nature of Pakistan’s politics, where the civilian polity has limited authority. At the core however as to what undermines U.S.-Pakistani relations is Afghanistan. Washington must cease to view Pakistan through an Afghan lens, and develop a policy that address Pakistan and Pakistan alone. Thus, key to such a program is recognizing that Pakistan remains beholden to its turbulent history, decades of political, social and economic abuses that has left people substantially worse. To successfully engage with Pakistan, U.S. policymakers have to develop a long-term strategy on how the two countries can work together. In doing so, Washington should benefit from taking a look at Sino-Pakistani relations, which are founded on a common interest agenda, which has led to a stable relations and enormous cooperation on a host of issues.

67 J. Andrew Greig notes how Pakistani attitudes changed once President Bush approved the 2005 F-16 deal. Greig implies that the Pakistani military wanted the F-16s as part of their India policy; the planes are not effective for counter-terrorism, as they carry “over-the-horizon” AMRAAM air-to-air missiles, and therefore serve as an effective counterweight to India’s air force, which can lock into air targets before they appear. Greig also recognizes that before 2005, several senior al-Qaeda members such as Abu Zubaydag (captured in March 2002), Ramzi Binalshib (captured in September 2002), and Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (captured March 2003) were turned over to the U.S., but once the F-16 deal was finalized, Pakistani security services captured no major Al Qaeda or Taliban operatives. J. Andre Greig, ‘U.S. and Pakistan: Relations during the Bush-Musharraf Years’, in Ravi Kalia (ed.) Pakistan: From Rhetoric of Democracy to the Rize of Militancy (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 203-204.