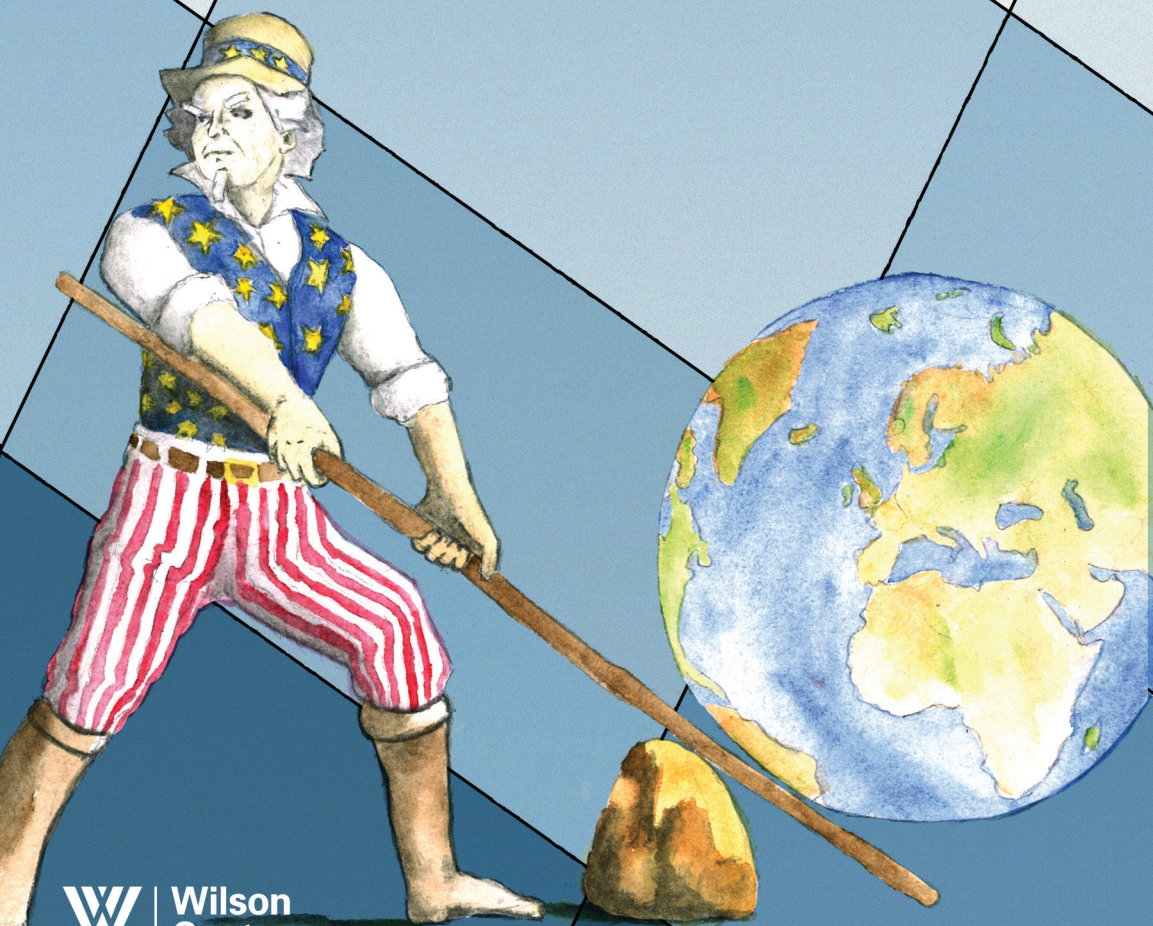


# THE LEVERAGE PARADOX

PAKISTAN AND THE  
UNITED STATES





# THE LEVERAGE PARADOX

PAKISTAN AND THE  
UNITED STATES

BY ROBERT M. HATHAWAY  
WITH A PREFACE BY LEE H. HAMILTON



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One Woodrow Wilson Plaza  
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20004-3027

[www.wilsoncenter.org](http://www.wilsoncenter.org)

ISBN: 978-1-938027-74-1

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Cover illustration by Joshua Spooner

***Give me a lever and a place to stand, and I will move the earth.***

Archimedes

***The strong do what they can, while the weak suffer what they must.***

Thucydides

***When you owe the bank a hundred dollars, you have a problem; but when you owe the bank \$100 million, the bank has a problem.***

J. Paul Getty



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# PAKISTAN

## Administrative Divisions



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Source: Central Intelligence Agency

# Executive Summary

**O**n an August evening in 2017, U.S. President Donald Trump unveiled his long-awaited strategy for Afghanistan. In neighboring Pakistan, his words sparked uneasiness—and a wearied sense of *déjà vu*. “We can no longer be silent about Pakistan’s safe havens for terrorist organizations,” the American president declared. “We have been paying Pakistan billions and billions of dollars at the same time they are housing the very terrorists that we are fighting. But that will have to change, and that will change immediately.” Not for the first time, Pakistanis mused, the United States was threatening them instead of facing up to its own failings.

In the seven decades since World War II, few countries have frustrated American diplomats and policy makers more than Pakistan. Pakistanis would retort by saying that no nation has been more unfaithful to a friend than the United States. The current status of the relationship between Islamabad and Washington is a microcosm of the entire history of their ties. The two are ostensibly allied against a shared foe. But their interactions are governed not by cooperation and camaraderie, but by bitter disagreement over both the identity of the adversary and the appropriate strategy to be used in the common effort. Each side views the other with deep distrust driven by feelings of betrayal and duplicity.

This monograph originated as an attempt to answer a relatively straightforward question: why, over a period of seventy years, has the United States so frequently failed in persuading, bribing, or coercing Pakistan to follow policies that Washington desired, and which seemed to U.S. policymakers to reflect Pakistani interests as well? Why has the United States, the most powerful nation history has ever known, so often and so spectacularly failed to leverage that power so as to achieve its objectives in and with Pakistan?

But this look at American power and leverage quickly led to two additional questions. One, how has Pakistan succeeded in accommodating, deflecting, and



resisting the power of the far stronger United States? Two, how has Pakistan, with some frequency, maneuvered Washington for Islamabad's own purposes—indeed, seemingly wielding leverage over the United States?

At another level, this essay also constitutes a modest effort to understand the use of power and the practice of diplomacy. It employs the concept of leverage as the prism through which to explore how power shapes diplomacy. Leverage is the advantage that comes from possessing the capability to meet a need, satisfy a desire, exert pressure, or pose a threat. Leverage is the stuff of everyday diplomacy, for great and small powers alike. It is part of the diplomatic toolkit for persuading other governments to act in ways desired by the country exercising leverage.

As a routine component of diplomacy, leverage has a relevance that extends far beyond the U.S.-Pakistan relationship. Indeed, assumptions about leverage influence, in one way or another, most substantive discussions of foreign policy. Opponents of the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement criticized the Obama administration for failing to effectively use the vast leverage provided by international sanctions. Much of the current debate over how to halt North Korea's nuclear weapons program revolves around the extent of Chinese leverage over North Korea, or U.S. leverage over China.

American politicians, policy analysts, and voters share an easy assumption that there is a direct correlation between a country's overall power and its leverage over others, its ability to entice or compel other countries to act in specific ways. Measured against these expectations, what is striking to many Americans is how frequently Washington fails to exploit its leverage. In this sense, this essay is far more than simply an exploration of the challenging relations between the United States and Pakistan. By looking closely at one particularly troubled but important relationship, this essay hopes to provide insights into the broader swath of U.S. foreign policy since World War II.

### *A multi-directional process*

Like his predecessors in the White House, Donald Trump appears to believe instinctively in the diplomatic leverage U.S. power gives him. Long before he ever thought of running for the presidency, Trump voiced a striking confidence in America's ability to compel others to act as he thought they should. Writing in 2000, he counselled that "We need to tell Russia and other recipients [of U.S. assistance] that if they want our dime they had better do our dance. . . . These people need us much more than we need them. We have leverage, and we are crazy not to use it to better advantage." During the 2016 presidential campaign, he told Fox News that because Islamabad received so much U.S. aid, he would

need only “two minutes” to force Pakistan to release an imprisoned Pakistani doctor accused of helping the CIA. One ought to be cautious about ascribing too much importance to campaign rhetoric. Even so, his hashtag #TimeToGetTough reflects general inclinations Trump has articulated for decades. He seems to instinctively believe that toughness and an in-your-face approach can produce results.

In truth, there is little in the historical record to support the contention that Pakistan can be bludgeoned into taking steps it believes dangerous to its security. To the contrary, repeated U.S. attempts to condition its aid to Pakistani behavior failed to induce the better behavior Washington had hoped for. Instead, they merely reinforced the Pakistani belief that its putative friend sought only to advance a U.S. agenda at odds with Pakistan’s security. For Pakistani governments from the 1950s to the present, U.S. foreign assistance, military sales, debt relief, and the numerous other benefits that flowed from American favor were welcome but not essential—prizes worth working to acquire, but not at any price. Washington’s inability to recognize this reality repeatedly led U.S. decision makers to overestimate the leverage their power gave them.

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**Leverage, in short, is a multi-directional process, and not simply the prerogative of the strong.**

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Of course, Pakistan was not simply a passive victim or target of American initiatives.

Rather, Islamabad has been a full partner in a diplomatic two-step that has reflected Pakistani as well as American policy goals. Generally, Pakistan played its hand well to blunt the force of American power. Take the example of Pervez Musharraf, the general ruling Pakistan at the time of the 9/11 attacks. The Musharraf government skillfully manipulated Washington’s need for its cooperation in Afghanistan. It insisted that Pakistan was not a mercenary hired to fight America’s war, but a loyal friend that deserved to be treated with respect and liberality. It cultivated a sense of obligation on the part of the Americans with a narrative that emphasized past U.S. betrayals. It carefully nursed real grievances, such as the U.S. failure to give Pakistani textiles greater access to the U.S. market. It emphasized the constraints posed by Pakistani public opinion and America’s poor reputation in Pakistan. It threatened that if Washington made unreasonable demands upon Pakistan, the government could collapse, thereby opening the door to genuinely dangerous extremists. A weak country relative to America’s immense strength, Pakistan nonetheless demonstrated that great power does not automatically convey unlimited leverage.

Leverage, in short, is a multi-directional process, and not simply the prerogative of the strong. In dealing with the Americans over the decades, Pakistan has held three hugely valuable assets:

- It **occupied strategic geography**;
- It **possessed considerable strength in its own right**; and
- It was able to **capitalize on the needs of the stronger state** to further its own ends.

Particularly when it could draw upon one or more of these advantages, Pakistan was able to defy, even manipulate, the mighty Americans. It could, in other words, avoid being leveraged and at times even exert leverage itself. This is equally true for other weaker countries facing stronger ones.

Not all states are fortunate enough to possess one or more of these three prized assets. But in managing relations with the Americans, Pakistan also adopted other tactics that could have relevance for any country finding itself being targeted by a more powerful state.

- **Partial cooperation.**
- **Provision of an unrelated service.**
- **Bargaining.**
- **Accept, then backtrack.**
- **Cultivation of alternative sources of support.**
- **Wooing American opinion.**
- **Encouraging U.S. guilt.**
- **Warning of unwanted consequences.**
- **Pleading the constraints of public opinion.**
- **Retaliation and harassment.**
- **Après moi, le delugé**, or threatening governmental or even state collapse.

Employing all these stratagems in its dealings with the Americans, Pakistan demonstrated that it would not simply be the helpless target of U.S. designs. Yes, its national power paled in comparison to the mighty United States. Yet it mobilized its assets as well as its weaknesses to thwart—and when need be, to accommodate—the United States, and to turn American power toward Islamabad’s own ends. Power and the ability to exert leverage did not reside only with the strong.

Still, for all the frustrations experienced by successive U.S. governments, this relationship also reveals a number of useful insights about mobilizing national power to achieve influence and leverage. While drawn from the history of U.S.-Pakistan relations, these lessons possess a wider applicability. Indeed, they may be relevant for any state, weak or strong, seeking to exercise leverage over another.

- **The exercise of leverage requires a clear-headed understanding of the perspectives and priorities of the party to be leveraged.**

- **A country attempting to use leverage should not overestimate the value of its favor or the attraction of its carrots.**
- **Leverage is inversely related to the commitment of the other party.**
- **Efforts at leverage are more likely to work if the country attempting leverage can persuade the target that it is safe to accept the former's requests.**
- **A country attempting leverage must minimize its dependence upon the target country.**
- **Successful leverage requires prioritization.**
- **Successful efforts at leverage cannot afford to ignore the domestic politics of the target country.**
- **Leverage is inextricably linked to perceptions in the target state of the country attempting leverage.**
- **Tone and style matter. A lot.**

Many analysts conversant with the history of the bilateral relationship, American and Pakistani alike, wondered whether Trump's Afghanistan policy adequately took these lessons into account. Asked what leverage Washington possessed to persuade the Pakistanis to help implement the new policy, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson responded, "[O]bviously, we have some leverage . . . in terms of the amount of aid and military assistance we give them, their status as a non-NATO alliance partner. All of that can be put on the table." It was a safe bet that Pakistan would have some ideas of its own on this matter.

### *The limits of leverage*

If the 70-year history of Pakistan-U.S. relations is any guide, leverage is about paradox. Even though it's coercive, leverage should be more about seduction than compulsion—drawing upon relationships, creating obligation, fostering a sense of shared purpose. Leverage should be about making the other side want to satisfy you, not forcing it to do so. Indeed, the most effective use of leverage occurs when the target barely realizes it is being leveraged.

But even if applied adroitly, leverage will not work if the core interests of the two parties cannot be reconciled. If the two sides have fundamentally different conceptions about the nature of the world they face and the threats that world poses, the skillful exercise of leverage is not likely to bridge that chasm. More than any other reason, this is why the United States, for all its power, has so frequently experienced frustration in working with Pakistan. The leaderships of the two countries simply weren't operating, intellectually and emotionally, in the same world. Their perceptual maps didn't align.

In the hard world of global politics, power matters, but it does not decide all

matters. It is good to have on one's side, but by itself is insufficient to ensure success. Americans, in dealing with Pakistan in the years ahead—and with other nations—need to be more modest in their expectations for leverage. They should understand that there are limits to the leverage that even great power provides. Paradoxically, recognizing these limits is the first step toward maximizing U.S. leverage and using American power effectively.

# PREFACE

Lee H. Hamilton

When I was first elected to Congress in 1964 and took a seat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, America towered over the world. Its economy was by far the world's largest. Its military outclassed that of the Soviet Union, our principal rival and the only real challenger to our position as the global leader. U.S. political and diplomatic clout reached into the farthest corners of the globe. People in other countries admired our political stability, envied our innovative capabilities, sought admittance to our colleges and universities, followed American styles, delighted in Hollywood films, and dreamed of emulating our consumer culture. It was hardly a perfect world. Indeed, it was a scary one; the threat of nuclear annihilation was ever-present. But it was a world ordered to a remarkable degree by the United States.

And yet, as Americans looked beyond their shores, they often saw a world that seemed all too eager to thwart U.S. hopes and stymie U.S. policies. It wasn't merely the Soviets, or Mao Zedong's communists in China. Cuba's Castro, Kim Il-sung in North Korea, and Ho Chi Minh in North Vietnam were implacable enemies. Sundry revolutionaries and dictators in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, the Mideast, and Southeast Asia all challenged the American order. So did supposed friends such as de Gaulle in France and a succession of unruly generals in South Vietnam. No matter where Americans looked, it seemed, their vast power had not delivered the results they had hoped for.

More than fifty years later, the United States remains the world's mightiest nation, even if the gap between America and everyone else has narrowed considerably. But again, the world appears stubbornly unwilling to acknowledge American power or accede to American plans. Russia invades Ukraine, annexes the Crimea, and props up a murderous regime in Syria. China seizes territory and builds military installations in the South China Sea, places unfair and sometimes illegal restrictions on U.S. business, and provides a life line to North Korea. Even third-rate dictators such as Bashar al-Assad and Kim Jung-unsucessfully defy U.S. power.

Americans have long wondered why their country, the mightiest in history, so often experiences frustration if not downright failure in foreign affairs. Why are smaller, weaker countries unimpressed by our strength? Why aren't we able to turn our impressive might into diplomatic leverage? How to explain this apparent disconnect between power and results?

These are the questions Robert Hathaway seeks to understand and explain in this splendid study. These questions go right to the heart of American foreign policy, past, present, and future. They are on the minds of thoughtful Americans. They are also the questions that the Trump administration must answer if it is to succeed in the international arena.

In exploring these matters, Dr. Hathaway uses U.S.-Pakistan relations as his prism. This choice was not accidental. Hathaway's first visit to Pakistan, while serving on the staff of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, occurred more than 30 years ago; since then he has returned to Pakistan regularly. For twelve years he had a lead role in shaping congressional policy toward Pakistan. Since leaving Capitol Hill, he has continued to focus his activities on Pakistan and U.S.-Pakistan relations. Trained as an historian, Hathaway examines this important but frequently problematic relationship over a period of seven decades. This historical perspective enables him to look beyond the policy exigencies of the moment, as well as the personal idiosyncrasies of any particular leader, to draw conclusions and offer policy recommendations that have broad relevance for the future of the bilateral relationship.

This book, however, is not simply an examination of U.S.-Pakistan relations, or even of American power. Rather, Hathaway is interested in the exercise of power more generally, in how countries use their power as leverage against others.

One of the most revealing aspects of this study is the way in which it illustrates how Pakistan mobilized its strengths—and its weaknesses—as leverage against the far more powerful United States. Hathaway describes more than a dozen “weapons of the weak”—stratagems that enabled Pakistan to avoid U.S. attempts at leverage or exert leverage itself. He makes clear that leverage is not simply the prerogative of the strong, and suggests that many of these tactics can be used by any country finding itself dealing with a more powerful state.

Of special interest to American and non-American readers alike will be his ideas on how a country can maximize its leverage. He cautions those contemplating the use of leverage not to overestimate the value of their favor, or the attraction of the carrots they offer. He counsels that efforts at leverage are most likely to work if the country attempting leverage can persuade the target that it is safe to accept the former's requests. And most provocatively, he argues that leverage is

most apt to succeed when it is less about muscle and more about seduction. Hathaway writes that precisely because relative U.S. power has declined in recent decades, skillful diplomacy and the leverage that inevitably accompanies diplomacy will be more important than ever. I think he is correct in this assessment—which makes this book as timely as any you will read this year. It may also help close the gap between America’s power and the frequently disappointing results that power achieves.

**Lee H. Hamilton**

**U.S. House of Representatives, 1965-1999**

**former chair, House Foreign Affairs Committee**





# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As every author knows well, the process of writing a book produces a long list of those whose support—intellectual, emotional, and financial—makes the final product possible. My thanks first of all to my Wilson Center colleagues, who leaven erudition with humor, good fellowship with seriousness of purpose, and to the Center’s leadership, which offered me a nurturing environment in which to write. Robert Litwak, the Center’s vice president for scholars and academic relations, encouraged this project from its inception, and I am immensely grateful for the confidence he displayed in me. Kent Hughes, Duncan Wood, and Meg Lundsager helped elucidate matters that lay beyond my ken, while Lindsay Collins never failed to ask about my progress. Janet Spikes, Michelle Kamalich, and Katherine Wahler—librarians *extraordinaire*—solved literally dozens of challenges for me.

In listing those who inspired this monograph, I think first of countless friends in Pakistan, who, I hope, will find signs of their tutelage in these pages. It was they who first kindled what has become a passion for more than thirty years.

My warmest appreciation to the U.S., Pakistani, and third country diplomats who sat down with me to share their experiences and opinions. I offered them anonymity in order to encourage candor on their part. Thus, except in a few instances where I had their permission, I have refrained from identifying my interviewees in either the text or the citations. I am, however, humbled by their willingness to share their insights with me.

These pages are stronger because of the many helpful suggestions offered by friends who were willing to give that most precious of commodities, their time, to review earlier drafts. Bill Milam and Michael Kugelman deserve special mention, and my boundless thanks, for their fortitude in reading the entire manuscript. Javed Burki, Ishrat Husain, Robert Litwak, and Doug Makeig read some of the chapters, and offered critiques that helped sharpen my argument

and save me from errors of both fact and interpretation. Alan Kronstadt, Akbar Ahmed, and David Anderson responded to my queries with helpful generosity. I am very much in the debt of each of these individuals. Needless to say, if I failed to take full advantage of their suggestions, they are not to be faulted for my lack of wit.

Working with my friends and colleagues in the Wilson Center's Asia Program to bring this essay into print has been one of the most enjoyable aspects of this entire enterprise. Thanks in particular to Michael Kugelman, the program's deputy director, who believed in this project from the start and who encouraged me to undertake it; to Mary Ratliff, who with great good patience oversaw the process of converting typescript into a real-life monograph; and to Joshua Spooner, whose artistic talents produced the striking cover illustration.

I have been helped on this project by two exemplary research assistants provided by the Wilson Center, Sungtae (Jacky) Park and Alicia Chen. I learned at least as much from them as they might have from me. It is no exaggeration to say that without the smarts, creativity, and diligence of these two young people, this study would have been much the poorer.

Vital assistance of a different sort was provided by a group of friends who supported the publication of this essay financially. Central to this effort was Shahid Javed Burki, who encouraged this project early on by word and deed, and who took it upon himself to recruit other backers. Nisar Chaudhry, a friend for nearly three decades and someone who has worked tirelessly for better U.S.-Pakistan relations, played a similarly vital role in urging me to write this monograph, and in securing financial support for this project. So did Shimmi Kidwai, who made a leap of faith in helping a stranger. In addition, I am indebted to Fauzia Rashid, Nigar Husain, Wasim Ashraf, Mishbah and Mateen Awan, Ziad Aladhad and Zeenut Ziad, Dana Marshall, and Nazir Jahan, all of whom demonstrated their commitment to the U.S.-Pakistan partnership by providing tangible assistance.

The publication of this essay also gives me an opportunity to thank three individuals who have shaped my career in ways too numerous to enumerate: Samuel F. Wells, who taught me to think like an historian; the late Stephen J. Solarz, who introduced me to Pakistan, and who rightly insisted that knowledge and understanding must precede the fashioning of policy; and Lee H. Hamilton, whose long career in and outside government amply demonstrates that influence and renown are not incompatible with humility and public service. Special thanks to Congressman Hamilton for his willingness to provide a preface for this monograph.

The future my generation has bequeathed those who follow will require fact-based reason, searching curiosity, and a willingness to confront uncomfortable truths—traits not always prized in today’s public sphere. As I tried to sort through the challenge explored in these pages—how to use power wisely and well—I was urged on by the conviction that the coming generation won’t have the luxury to make the mistakes mine has made. Those young people, tomorrow’s decision makers, leaders, and citizens, were and are my most important audience: Connor and Holly McGuire; Zoe, Dylan, and Ellis Hansen; Landrie Paiz; and Caleb, Chandler, Caroline, and Dean Copeland.

And always, with profound appreciation for her patience, tolerance, and (usually) good humor, my undying thanks to Susie. Without her forbearance, this essay would have remained an unfulfilled dream.



# INTRODUCTION

In the hours after hijacked airliners slammed into the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center and plowed into the Pentagon, Pervez Musharraf, the military ruler of Pakistan, took a call from U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell. As Musharraf would later recount, Powell wasted no time on diplomatic niceties. "You are either with us or against us," Musharraf quoted Powell as saying. "I took this as a blatant ultimatum," the Pakistani later recalled.

Powell's deputy, Richard Armitage, was even more direct in a meeting with Pakistan's intelligence chief, who happened to be in Washington on September 11. "In what has to be the most undiplomatic statement ever made," Musharraf would relate in his memoir, Armitage delivered "a shockingly barefaced threat." If Pakistan did not help Washington punish those responsible for the 9/11 attacks, Armitage warned, the United States would bomb Pakistan "back to the Stone Age."

Armitage subsequently insisted that he would never have spoken so crudely. Even so, the U.S. deputy secretary of state was well-known for his forceful personality. It is not difficult to imagine that the Pakistanis fully understood Washington's views, no matter how delicately they might have been phrased: Pakistan had no option but to enlist in the campaign to punish those responsible for 9/11.<sup>1</sup>

Musharraf writes that he unemotionally examined whether Pakistan had the strength to resist U.S. demands, and concluded that his country would pay an unbearably heavy price for not cooperating with the Americans. The general found he had little choice but to comply with U.S. requirements, but the taste was bitter. "It goes against the grain of a soldier," he would later write,

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1 Multiple knowledgeable sources have challenged the veracity of the "Stone Age" threat. For the possible genesis of this story, see Riaz Mohammad Khan, *Afghanistan and Pakistan: Conflict, Extremism, and Resistance to Modernity* (Washington and Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 88, n. 53.

employing a thinly veiled euphemism, “not to be able to tell anyone giving him an ultimatum to go forth and multiply, or words to that effect.”<sup>2</sup>

In the fearful days immediately after September 11, 2001, the administration of George W. Bush had secured the cooperation of a state deemed strategically vital for the fight against al Qaeda, the group behind the 9/11 attacks. It was a brutally effective display of American power wielded for the attainment of an important diplomatic objective.

Or was it? In the months and years that followed, frustration with the nature and extent of Pakistan’s support replaced the administration’s earlier self-satisfaction. Although it initially worked closely with the United States to arrest or kill members of al Qaeda and the Taliban government of Afghanistan that had provided refuge to al Qaeda, Islamabad rather quickly eased its pressure. By early 2002, U.S. officials had begun to worry that Pakistan was providing Taliban fighters safe haven in Quetta, capital of the country’s western province of Baluchistan, and in the largely untamed tribal areas along the Afghan border. Reports that the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI), Pakistan’s premier intelligence agency, was actively supporting the Taliban grew in number and credibility. U.S. officials and other analysts were soon complaining of Pakistani duplicity and double-dealing.

American power, which in the days after 9/11 had seemed so awesome, had proved inadequate in either persuading or compelling the Pakistanis to work with Washington to bring to justice the individuals and groups responsible for the 9/11 atrocities.

How was this possible? Why couldn’t the Bush administration (and subsequently, that of Bush’s successor, Barack Obama) deploy its vast power so as to persuade Pakistan to do what, in American eyes, it had promised to do? Yet more mystifyingly for Washington, moving against the 9/11 terrorists and other extremists appeared so patently in Pakistan’s own interest, since Pakistan itself had become the target of attacks from Islamist radicals. Musharraf himself had been targeted. Twice in late 2003 the Pakistan president only narrowly escaped assassination attempts by groups owing allegiance to Mullah Omar, the leader of the Taliban, and affiliated with other domestic Pakistani terrorist organizations. Why couldn’t Islamabad see the wisdom of America’s post-9/11 counterterrorism agenda?

But this is to frame the question too narrowly. Over a period extending back to the mid-1950s, Pakistan and the United States have ridden a roller coaster of alliance and estrangement, shared goals and conflicting interests. Thrice—in

<sup>2</sup> Musharraf’s rendering of these events may be found in Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 199-207. The quotes used here are on pp. 201 and 204.

the Cold War-driven 1950s, after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, and after the September 11 al Qaeda attacks—the United States and Pakistan have joined together to confront what was described as a common adversary. Thrice these partnerships have crumbled amidst bitterness, recrimination, and accusations of bad faith and even betrayal.

For Americans, the great quandary was and is: Why, over a period of seven decades, has the United States so often and so spectacularly failed to achieve its objectives in and with Pakistan? How has Pakistan succeeded in blocking successive U.S. administrations in their efforts to leverage American power in pursuit of important U.S. objectives? How was it that Pakistan itself seemed to wield leverage over the United States?

Some, perhaps many, Pakistanis will dispute this American characterization of the U.S.-Pakistan relationship. This picture of a floundering United States often stymied in its dealings with Islamabad runs contrary to the impressions and convictions of most Pakistanis. The notion that Pakistan and its governments have regularly thwarted the powerful Americans is at odds with widely held Pakistani views that the United States has dominated and selfishly manipulated Pakistan. The idea that their nation has successfully leveraged the mighty United States will strike many Pakistanis as contrary to both reason and experience.

Both sides, however, hold one belief in common: the certainty that the bilateral relationship has not delivered on its promises. For Americans, the leitmotif behind this disappointing history is of frustrated power and failed leverage; for Pakistanis it is of U.S. power wielded callously, even cruelly.

### *Great power, indifferent results*

This is an essay on power. More precisely, it is an inquiry into how a strong country, the United States, has sought to use its power in dealing with a weaker state, in this case Pakistan. It is also an inquiry into how Pakistan accommodates, deflects, and resists the power of the far stronger United States. And finally, it is an inquiry into how Pakistan, with some frequency, maneuvers Washington for Islamabad's own purposes.

This monograph explores the interplay between national power and diplomatic leverage—how strong states seek to utilize their power as leverage over weaker states; how weaker states respond to such attempts; and how weaker nations exploit their weakness to leverage stronger states. It uses the often contentious U.S.-Pakistan relationship to examine the seeming disconnect between American might and influence, the gulf between sweeping U.S. power and the frequently



unsatisfactory results that power produces. It explores strategies and tools for exercising, and deflecting, leverage. And it seeks to draw broader policy-relevant conclusions about the exercise of power and the use of leverage.

In some respects, this essay takes up what political scientists Simon Reich and Richard Ned Lebow have called “one of the principal anomalies of contemporary international relations”: “*the extraordinary military and economic power of the United States and its increasing inability to get other states to do what it wants.*”<sup>3</sup>

To be sure, the United States has had great success over the years in leveraging its power to produce desired results. Consider, for instance, the wildly successful rebuilding of Western Europe and Japan after World War II, or the forging of a global system of alliances that ultimately defeated the Soviet Union and ended the Cold War on American terms. Or recall that in the 1950s, most experts assumed that dozens of countries around the world would develop nuclear arsenals. Instead, thanks in part to American diplomacy, only nine countries today possess nuclear arms, and all others have formally renounced the legal right to acquire these weapons. The United States has also played an important role in promoting democratic freedoms and human rights in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Even where these values are not respected, they still carry great potency. This list could be easily expanded; the United States has achieved remarkable things with its power.

Nonetheless, measured against the expectations that accompany the possession of great power, what is striking to many Americans is how frequently Washington fails to successfully exploit the leverage they expect from U.S. power. In this sense, this essay is far more than simply an exploration of the challenging relations between the United States and Pakistan. By looking closely at one particularly troubled but important relationship, this essay hopes to provide insights into the broader swath of U.S. foreign policy since the end of the Second World War.

International relations scholars have long understood the fallacy of assuming that power routinely if not automatically provides the wherewithal to get others to do as one wishes. And yet, there remains, among politicians, policy analysts, and voters, an easy assumption that there is a direct correlation between a country’s overall power and its leverage over others, its ability to persuade, entice, bribe, or compel other countries to act in specific ways.

Every American president since World War II (and many before that time) has believed that his country’s might could be turned into leverage. Barely a

3 Simon Reich and Richard Ned Lebow, *Good-bye Hegemony! Power and Influence in the Global System* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 3. Italics in original.

week after succeeding to the presidency following the unexpected death of his predecessor, Harry Truman acknowledged that the United States could not expect to get 100 percent of what it wanted from the Soviet Union. But, the new chief executive breezily asserted, on important matters he believed he could get 85 percent. As one historian later put it, Truman's "sense of righteous power" led him to assume that "America's economic-military-moral superiority assured that he could order the world on its terms." If the Russians opposed him, they could "go to hell."<sup>4</sup>

In this wide-ranging and largely unexamined belief in the efficacy of American power, and in the leverage this power offers, Truman was the norm among American presidents, not the exception. All three of America's post-9/11 presidents have embraced this idea that U.S. power gives them diplomatic leverage, although Obama was markedly more cautious than either his predecessor or his successor in basing policy upon this assumption. Even so, Obama's administration regularly featured talk about "shaping" the world order and "influencing" the trajectory of events overseas. The administration's 2015 *National Security Strategy* baldly asserted that U.S. military strength provides "essential leverage for our diplomacy."<sup>5</sup> One could not ask for a more direct claim that power can be harnessed for political ends.

The current president appears to believe instinctively in the diplomatic leverage U.S. power gives him. Long before he ever thought of running for the presidency, Donald Trump voiced a striking confidence in America's ability to compel others to act as he thought they should. Writing in 2000, he counselled that "We need to tell Russia and other recipients [of U.S. assistance] that if they want our dime they had better do our dance. . . . These people need us much more than we need them. We have leverage, and we are crazy not to use it to better advantage."<sup>6</sup> During last year's presidential campaign, Trump spoke repeatedly about American power and the failure (in his mind) of the Obama administration to wield it effectively. "We have tremendous power over everybody . . .," he declared in March, in a typical statement. "We have great, great power. The problem is we have politicians who truly, truly, truly don't know what they're doing." Trust me, he assured supporters, to put that power to good use.<sup>7</sup>

In the American political context, leverage is an equal opportunity promise.

4 Arnold A. Offner, "'Another Such Victory': President Truman, American Foreign Policy, and the Cold War," *Diplomatic History* 23:2 (Spring 1999): 132, 154.

5 "National Security Strategy," *The White House Archives*, Feb. 2015, [https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015\\_national\\_security\\_strategy.pdf](https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015_national_security_strategy.pdf). Also see "National Security Strategy," *The White House Archives*, May 2010, [https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/rss\\_viewer/national\\_security\\_strategy.pdf](https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf).

6 Donald J. Trump, *The America We Deserve* (Los Angeles: Renaissance Books, 2000), 134.

7 "Donald Trump's Super Tuesday Victory Speech," Mar. 2, 2016, <http://time.com/4245134/super-tuesday-donald-trump-victory-speech-transcript-full-text/>.

Both Republicans and Democrats believe in it, both conservatives and liberals. Since the Vietnam War, Democrats have been more skeptical about the utility of military power as an instrument of national policy, and less likely than Republicans to assume that U.S. military might provides the country with leverage. These doubts have become even more pronounced since the post-9/11 wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

But in other areas, such as human rights and the promotion of democracy, Democrats have displayed great confidence in the ability of the United States to leverage its military and economic strength to compel other nations to alter their domestic political arrangements. They have also supported military intervention for humanitarian reasons—for instance, to prevent genocide. Most strikingly, Democratic members of Congress have generally been as ready as Republicans to turn to economic sanctions as a means to exert leverage.

### *What is power?*

Power is a slippery concept, imprecise and elastic. The Harvard scholar and sometime U.S. government official Joseph Nye has defined power simply as “the ability to produce the outcomes you want.”<sup>8</sup> Moises Naim, for many years the editor of the influential magazine *Foreign Policy*, has added a whiff of coercion by describing power as the “capacity to get others to behave as we want.”<sup>9</sup>

Scholars of the realist school of international relations—a school that has heavily influenced the study of global politics since the end of the Second World War—argue that power and the perception of power are the currency of the realm and govern the actions of nation states. For realists, size matters. When realists find that a country is powerful, they usually have in mind its material resources—population size, GDP, size and quality of armed forces, natural resources, financial reserves, and the like. Realists would lead one to expect that, absent other factors, the more powerful state will usually prevail.

But many scholars and policy analysts believe that the classical realists give insufficient attention to what Nye has called *soft power*. Soft power incorporates intangibles such as a country’s cultural or ideological attractiveness, technological prowess, entrepreneurial and innovative vitality, and reputation.<sup>10</sup> The concept of soft power has been extraordinarily influential in recent years, although not all scholars are convinced of its persuasiveness. Two prominent political scientists, for instance, have asked why we should assume that an attraction to American culture or a taste for American products produces

8 Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “The Velvet Hegemon: How soft power can help defeat terrorism,” *Foreign Policy*, 136 (May/June 2003): 74.

9 Moises Naim, *The End of Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2013), 20.

10 See Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

support for U.S. foreign policies. “Every anti-American demonstration in Europe and Asia,” they acidly note, “features protesters clad in jeans.”<sup>11</sup>

To be useful as an analytical tool, power calculations must reflect not only material capabilities and ideological or cultural attractiveness, but skill and will. Other things being equal (and they rarely are), able leadership and astute diplomacy will generally prevail over clumsiness and ineptitude. Some analysts would add that ruthlessness also augments a state’s power. Vladimir Putin has successfully employed a ruthless approach to enhance Russia’s power, they suggest, whereas American democracy and a greater concern in the United States for global rules and norms have limited Washington’s ability to harness the full extent of its material resources. As a consequence, this argument runs, Putin and others of his ilk (many would place China in this category) are better able to mobilize their power vis-à-vis weaker states.

This reasoning may too cavalierly dismiss the costs to Russia of its ruthless behavior, including reputational costs and Moscow’s ability to exert influence in the future. And most certainly, many of those on the receiving end of U.S. pressure would scoff at the idea that Washington is incapable of acting with equal ruthlessness.

For our purposes we need not overly worry about precise definitions of power. Like pornography (as U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart famously observed), one knows it when one sees it. This is equally true for nations as for individuals.

A closely related question pertains to the distinction between power and influence. Power, at least hard power, carries connotations of compulsion; influence more often suggests the capacity to persuade without the threat or use of force. Influence is not necessarily commensurate with raw strength. Take Singapore, for instance. By virtue of its strong economic performance, its history of corruption-free governance, its geostrategic position on the map, and decades of disciplined leadership, Singapore wields an influence in world affairs far beyond what one would expect from a small city-state whose population is less than Laos or Sierra Leone. In these instances, countries are said to “punch above their weight.” Norway, with a population of not much more than 5 million, is frequently put in this category as well because of the vigor with which it promotes peaceful conflict resolution.

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Soft power incorporates intangibles such as a country’s cultural or ideological attractiveness, technological prowess, entrepreneurial and innovative vitality, and reputation.

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<sup>11</sup> Reich and Lebow, *Good-bye Hegemony!*, 34.

In any event, a simple glance at a newspaper on any given day would remind us that power does not automatically result in influence, let alone in control or domination. If it did, the Castro brothers would not have been a thorn in the American side for more than half a century.

In a well-received 2013 book titled *The End of Power*, Naim has identified four tools of power: coercion, persuasion, incentives (or bribes), and moral codes and cultural mores.<sup>12</sup> Of the four, international relations scholars and analysts have given the most attention to the first, coercion, which at its most extreme entails the use of armed force. Yet, in the normal course of events, the use of brute force is frequently costly, often counterproductive, and sometimes dangerous. And increasingly futile. One study has found that in the wars of the second half of the 20th century, the weaker side prevailed more than half the time.<sup>13</sup>

As the political and financial costs of force have risen in today's globalized and technologically connected world, threats have lost some of their utility for even strong nations. Indeed, one scholar has written, "in a world of social and economic interpenetration, to punish or threaten another nation is to some extent tantamount to self-punishment."<sup>14</sup> Still, while the resort to force may carry substantial liabilities in the modern world, Russia's recent manhandling of Ukraine would suggest that hard power and military might have not fully lost their utility. In the harsh world of nation states, it is still better to have power than to be without. But the mere possession of power is only the beginning of the story.

### *How to Measure Power*

Power is relevant only in comparison to the power of others. Yet determining relative power balances is hardly an exact science. Long gone are the days when distinguishing between great and small powers consisted, as one scholar has put it, of little more than "counting the number of available infantrymen."<sup>15</sup> We now think of power in far more encompassing terms, which can include health indices, educational attainment, and governance. Nor do the traditional markers, such as GDP or military spending, accurately measure intangibles such as legitimacy, alliance vitality, diplomatic agility, or geographic exposure to risk.<sup>16</sup>

12 Naim, *The End of Power*, 23-24.

13 Ivan Arreguin-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars," *International Security*, 26:1 (Summer 2001); Naim, *The End of Power*, 113-14.

14 Giulio M. Gallarotti, *The Power Curse: Influence and Illusion in World Politics* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2010), 29.

15 Robert L. Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 13-14.

16 On this, see David A. Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 65, 177.

The problem of measuring relative power is further complicated by another paradox: the acquisition of more, or more fearsome, weapons does not necessarily make a nation more secure, if the acquisition of those weapons prompts that country's adversaries to similar arming.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, a marginally higher GDP produced by ill-advised investment or massive public expenditure does not automatically make a nation richer or more economically sound. More is not necessarily better.

But sometimes it is. By developing even a rudimentary nuclear arsenal, for instance, North Korea has obtained a power out of all proportion to its economic decrepitude or other modern measures of power. Its nuclear weapons have permitted Pyongyang to set the diplomatic agenda in East Asia for a quarter century, and to thumb its nose at most of the world's strongest countries.

Moreover, a nation that by most standard measures of power is weak may nonetheless not be weak in one particular area where it enjoys unique advantages—for instance, vast reserves of oil or gas, or a strategically vital geographic location. In addition, a nominally weak state may possess intangible sources of strength on a specific issue, where the matter is considered of great import, or where that state's tolerance of cost, even pain, is large. Intensity of feeling or of desire is a great equalizer that must enter the calculations of relative power balance. If a small state cares intensely about an issue and is prepared to pay a considerable price, even to fight, for it, while a great power feels only mild interest or indifference in the matter, then the power disparity between the two is less relevant.

This helps explain how North Korea has managed, for more than a quarter century, to thwart efforts by virtually all the world's strong powers to roll back its nuclear weapons program. At the end of the day, the regime in Pyongyang has been prepared to inflict upon its populace any degree of pain imposed by outside powers rather than accept limitations on its nuclear program, which it considers vital to its own continued existence. And of course this mismatch of intensity also explains how small powers or low-tech insurgencies have defeated militarily superior forces in places as dissimilar as Algeria, Indonesia, Indochina, and yes, 18th century British North America. It may also have something to do with the current stalemate in Afghanistan.

This essay will not worry about precisely measuring national power. Instead, it will examine the relationship between two countries, Pakistan and the United States, where the power differential between the two is too large to permit confusion as to which is the stronger and which the weaker. By virtually every measure, the United States is markedly more powerful than Pakistan.

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<sup>17</sup> Scholars refer to this phenomenon as the "security dilemma."

## Power and Leverage

Power and leverage are inextricably linked, though not necessarily in the way commonly assumed. *The Diplomat's Dictionary*, a compendium of terms associated with diplomacy and statecraft, defines leverage as “[s]trategic advantage conferred by the ability to punish.”<sup>18</sup> But this emphasis on coercion and punishment surely offers too limited an understanding of the term. A somewhat better definition is that leverage is the use of power, by offering inducements or threatening coercion, to persuade another state to do what it otherwise might not do. As we shall see, however, those with limited power are frequently able to employ leverage against stronger states. So a definition emphasizing “the use of power” does not do full justice to the concept of leverage.

To be sure, the idea of leverage does generally carry connotations of strength on the one hand, weakness or dependency on the other. To assert that a nation possesses leverage implies that it is in an advantageous position vis-à-vis another. Leverage, like power, has meaning only in comparison to a second party.

Leverage is the advantage that comes from possessing the capability to meet a need, satisfy a desire, exert pressure, or pose a threat. President George H.W. Bush, recalling the politically charged decision in the early 1980s to station U.S. nuclear-tipped missiles in Europe, triumphantly declared in 1989 that “those deployments gave us the *leverage* that we needed to negotiate the first-ever nuclear arms reduction treaty,” the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty.<sup>19</sup> Addressing the deteriorating situation in Syria in mid-2012, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called for the international community “to use all possible *leverage* to pressure both the regime and the opposition” to accept the latest UN peace plan. “Some of us have *leverage* with certain parties and others with additional parties,” she observed. But every concerned country must use “all the *leverage* at our disposal.”<sup>20</sup>

But perhaps President George W. Bush put it most succinctly. “In order for diplomacy to be effective,” he observed near the end of his presidency, “there has to be *leverage*. You have to have a—there has to be consequential

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18 Chas W. Freeman, Jr., *The Diplomat's Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 2010), 125. Considering the huge amount of writing on the theory and practice of international relations, it is surprising how infrequently scholars actually define the term “leverage.” But for a treatment of leverage that extends far beyond diplomacy, see David M. Anderson, ed., *Leveraging: A Political, Economic and Societal Framework* (New York: Springer, 2014).

19 George H.W. Bush, “Remarks Upon Arrival at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Summit Meeting in Brussels,” May 28, 1989, <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/archives/public-papers/463>. Author's italics.

20 Hillary Rodham Clinton, “Press Availability Following the Meeting of the Action Group on Syria,” June 30, 2012, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2012/06/194328.htm>. Author's italics.

diplomacy.”<sup>21</sup>

The word *leverage* need not refer to a stratagem used against another. Sometimes the term simply means to employ or mobilize, or to use as a force multiplier. Hence, the Obama administration’s 2015 *National Security Strategy* could promise that by “leveraging our improved economic and energy position [vis-à-vis the rest of the world], we will strengthen the global financial system” and promote deeper trade ties.<sup>22</sup> But that meaning of the word is far different from the idea of leverage over a second party. This essay considers only the latter use of the term, what we might think of as negotiating or bargaining leverage.<sup>23</sup>

Leverage can consist of inducements or penalties, rewards or threats, carrots or sticks. It can employ cooperation or coercion or, in many cases, elements of both. Even dressed in cooperative trappings, leverage usually carries a hint of coercion. Nations being leveraged can comply or resist, accommodate or contest, evade, modify, or simply ignore the leverage attempt. Seldom are the policy options for the party being leveraged as stark as defiance or acquiescence. Leverage is not the monopoly of the strong; weak states as well as strong ones can engage in leverage. At times, it is not clear which state is trying to leverage the other.

Nor is the concept of leverage restricted to relations between nation states. Shortly after the Republicans solidified their majorities in the U.S. Congress with the 2014 mid-term elections, the *Washington Post* reported that the Obama White House held considerable leverage in its budget negotiations with Congress. The explanation for this apparent anomaly, the *Post* explained, arose from the determination of the Republican congressional leadership to avoid a government shutdown and demonstrate its ability to get things done.<sup>24</sup> Used in this manner, leverage denotes an advantage in negotiations produced not because of a mismatch in the power of the two actors, but because of one actor’s political need for concrete accomplishments.

In like fashion, a mother may have leverage over a rebellious teenager by virtue of her ability to dispense or withhold inducements—an allowance, for example. This mother may also employ leverage by threatening punishment—say, refusal to permit use of the family automobile. But this sulky teenager is not without power himself, due to his mother’s desire for harmony within the family. This

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21 “President Bush Discusses North Korea,” June 26, 2008, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2008/06/20080626-9.html>. Author’s italics.

22 “National Security Strategy,” *The White House Archives*, Feb. 2015.

23 On this see G. Richard Shell, *Bargaining for Advantage: Negotiation Strategies for Reasonable People*, 2nd ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 89-113.

24 Lori Montgomery and Steven Mufson, “On budget, Obama now has leverage,” *Washington Post*, Feb. 3, 2015.



gives him a certain degree of bargaining strength, or leverage, even within a relationship where it would seem that the clear balance of power lies with the parent.

When it comes to foreign affairs, most Americans are instinctively realists. That is, they assume that their country's considerable power entitles it to achieve commensurate influence and regular success on the world stage. In this expectation, they are routinely disappointed. Confronted with this apparent disconnect between vast power and less than satisfactory results, between might and leverage, they search for likely explanations. In many cases, the political opposition will blame the White House for incompetence or naiveté. The administration, the president's critics will assert, wasn't tough enough or hard-nosed enough in its dealings with other countries. It didn't understand how to use power. It didn't make the issue a priority, and therefore didn't try hard enough.

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**Even decision makers acutely aware of their own frustrations regularly fall into the trap of assuming that other strong powers can command weaker states at will.**

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Occasionally the explanations for this failure to exercise the leverage seemingly offered by U.S. power become more poisonous. Charges of incompetence shade into accusations of treason. This was the indictment Senator Joseph

McCarthy and others of his ilk lodged against the Truman administration for setbacks such as the "loss of China" and the development by the Soviet Union, more quickly than most had expected, of a nuclear weapons capability. Only through the machinations of traitors and subversives, McCarthyites claimed, could America's astonishing power position have suffered such severe reverses.

But the United States has hardly been alone in finding itself frustrated over its inability to control or manipulate smaller or weaker states, even those thought to be client states. During the Cold War, at a time when U.S. policymakers regularly described the Soviet Union and its allies as a monolithic communist bloc, those "fraternal allies" regularly, and often successfully, resisted Soviet direction. Indeed, Moscow's lack of leverage over its "satellites" was so pronounced as to necessitate the extreme step of sending in the Red Army to crush rebellions in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. Similarly, contemporary China and India have found that impressive political, economic, and military strength does not necessarily enable them to impose their will upon weaker neighbors.

Yet even decision makers acutely aware of their own frustrations regularly fall into the trap of assuming that other strong powers can command weaker states

at will. For decades diplomats from India have harangued the United States for its unwillingness to force Pakistan to cease its sponsorship of terrorist activities directed against India. If Washington were to designate Pakistan a state-sponsor of terrorism, New Delhi has asserted, Islamabad, cut off from American and other international aid (especially U.S. military assistance, equipment, and spare parts), would have no choice but to get out of the terrorism business. Pakistani diplomats just as regularly have complained that if the United States used its power to compel India to renounce its anti-Pakistan policies, Islamabad would then be able to abandon its obsession with India and redirect its efforts toward combatting its many domestic ills.

Neither of these countries would willingly bow to American pressures on an issue it considered central to its identity and interests. Yet each casually assumes that the United States, if only it wished, could compel the other to give up policies pursued for decades. When their rival fails to act as desired, Indians and Pakistanis alike attribute this failure to American insincerity or perfidy. U.S. power is limitless, they seem to believe, at least insofar as their adversary is concerned. Accordingly, the United States bears responsibility for virtually anything that occurs, or fails to occur. Frustration and anger at America's refusal to use its supposed leverage then ensue, hampering U.S. ties with each.

### *Leverage of the weak*

Scholars no longer write as if smaller countries are little more than powerless pawns of the strong. Much of the best work produced by international relations historians over the past generation demonstrates how successfully weaker countries have manipulated their stronger patrons. Narratives emphasizing one-way exchanges between unequals have given way to a more complex picture where even the strongest state is seen as much a recipient as a demander. Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman has written of the new paradigm employed by diplomatic historians "that shows the United States as an incredibly powerful participant in a world that is nonetheless not easily malleable to its touch."<sup>25</sup>

Political scientists and other social scientists, often employing the concept of agency, have also produced compelling work on how weak states can ward off pressure from or otherwise maximize their influence over larger countries. One scholar has described 15 different options available to weaker states trying to resist pressure from stronger countries.<sup>26</sup> Another study has produced a continuum of nine distinct responses to hegemonic behavior, ranging from

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<sup>25</sup> Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman, "Diplomatic History and the Meaning of Life: Toward a Global American History," *Diplomatic History* 21:4 (Fall 1997): 500.

<sup>26</sup> Davis B. Bobrow, "Strategies Beyond Followership," in *Hegemony Constrained: Evasion, Modification, and Resistance to American Foreign Policy*, ed. Davis B. Bobrow (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008), 13.

opposition to resistance to neutrality to accommodation.<sup>27</sup> Clearly, the simple dichotomy of compliance or defiance badly misses the mark when looking at strategies available to targeted states.

At times, even extremely weak states can leverage their weakness into strength, as when powerful nations have invested their prestige in the success, or even the continued existence, of fragile governments or clients facing internal opposition. Arguably, their vulnerability allowed dictators and military regimes in South Korea, Taiwan, South Vietnam, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and elsewhere around the globe to resist calls from their Washington patron for political liberalization or a greater respect for human rights and the rule of law. Carried to an extreme, the threat of regime collapse gives these weak countries powerful leverage over their far stronger protectors. Of all history's great powers, the United States has been uniquely vulnerable to this form of leverage by the weak, since it alone has periodically (though by no means constantly) given priority in its dealings with other countries to the internal political arrangements of those countries.

Under a different set of circumstances, the willingness and ability of a weak country to absorb pain can offset the ability of a strong country to inflict it. The North Korean example has already been mentioned. Three generations of the Kim regime, covering a span of two-thirds of a century, have so controlled the organs of power in their country that they were able to resist all manner of outside pressure without fearing internal dissent. North Korea is hardly unique, however. In the years since 1945, China, Cuba, Iran, Vietnam, Libya, Burma (Myanmar), and a number of other relatively weak states have successfully resisted the pressure of American and international sanctions because they developed a high threshold for economic pain.

It is no accident, of course, that none of these countries gave their populations a voice in deciding how much pain was tolerable. Authoritarian governments are traditionally held to be relatively impervious to popular opinion. While this overstates the matter, it is true that governments that do not need to face periodic public referenda in order to remain in power are freer to discount popular sentiment. Such governments are better able to ignore international censure even when this leads to punishing economic sanctions that weigh heavily on their populations. The governing regimes have the ability to punish anyone who dares complain about the privations imposed as a result of the regime's policies. In these cases, then, efforts to apply leverage are less likely to succeed.

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27 Neal G. Jesse, Steven E. Lobell, Galia Press-Bernathan, and Kristen P. Williams, "The Leader Can't Lead When the Followers Won't Follow," in *Beyond Great Powers and Hegemons: Why Secondary States Support, Follow, or Challenge*, eds. Kristen P. Williams, Steven E. Lobell, and Neal G. Jesse (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 14.

## *Leverage's uncertain locus*

Not infrequently, leverage cuts both ways—that is, each state in a bilateral pairing possesses certain advantages vis-à-vis the other that give it bargaining strength, provide it with the ability to pressure the other, or enable it to ward off pressure. Consider the contentious U.S.-China relationship. The past quarter century has seen an extraordinary growth in commerce between the two countries, coupled with an immense trade imbalance in favor of Beijing. Bilateral trade grew from \$17.7 billion in 1989 to \$578.6 billion in 2016.<sup>28</sup> For American consumers, this has meant cheaper products and a wider variety of choices. For the Chinese, their burgeoning exports have fueled the dramatic growth in their economy, from a country whose GDP per capita was \$311 in 1989 to one where GDP per capita today stands at more than \$8,000.<sup>29</sup> China also owns more than a trillion dollars of U.S. Treasury notes, roughly 20 percent of all foreign holdings and second only to Japan among overseas bond-holders.

Some Americans have worried that the ever larger trade imbalances the United States runs with China, financed by overseas borrowing, much of it from the PRC, make the American economy highly vulnerable to pressure from Beijing. All China would have to do to crater the U.S. economy would be to call in its debts. International markets would be thrown into turmoil, the dollar would collapse, and the U.S. economy would slide into a recession whose magnitude could eclipse the Great Recession of the 2000s.

But others scoff at such a doomsday scenario. China is a rational actor, they assert, and would never take such drastic action, for the simple reason that such a step would harm the Chinese economy as much as the American. China needs cash from U.S. consumers to fuel its continued economic growth, which its leaders use to justify their monopoly on political power. It needs American investors and especially the cutting edge technology U.S. firms operating in China bring with them. It is nearly inconceivable, this argument runs, that China would deliberately sabotage its own growth in order to punish the United States. Each economy is hostage to the strength of the other; each has a very real interest in the success of the other. Just who holds leverage over whom under these conditions is impossible to determine.

## *The paradox of leverage*

This monograph originated as an attempt to answer a relatively straightforward question: why has the United States, with all its might, so frequently failed in persuading, bribing, or coercing Pakistan to follow policies that Washington

28 U.S. Census Bureau statistics, <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c5700.html#1989>.

29 World Bank statistics, measured in current U.S. dollars, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=CN>.

desired, and which seemed to U.S. policymakers to reflect Pakistani interests as well? But this look at American power and leverage quickly led to a consideration of two additional questions. One, how has Pakistan succeeded in resisting or deflecting U.S. attempts at leverage? Two, how has Pakistan successfully leveraged the vastly stronger United States?

Many Pakistanis may bristle at the characterization of Pakistan as an object of American power, and find the idea of U.S. leverage over Pakistan as presumptuous and even offensive. No offense is intended. Readers will discover that Pakistani officials regularly and successfully wielded leverage against the United States, sometimes using their country's assets, other times its weakness. Rather than merely a target or victim of American power, Pakistan has been a full partner in a diplomatic two-step that has reflected Pakistani as well as American policy goals.

Other Pakistanis may be unhappy at the portrayal of their nuclear-armed country as a *weaker* state. But all power is relative. By many measures Pakistan is a *strong* state. It will soon have the fifth-largest population in the world, if it doesn't already. Its GDP, though perhaps disappointing for a country of its size, ranks in the top 20 percent of the world's countries. It fields the sixth-largest army. Some analysts predict that it is close to overtaking the United Kingdom as the world's fifth-largest nuclear power; indeed, in a decade or less, its nuclear arsenal may approach or surpass those of China and France and give Pakistan the world's third-largest nuclear arsenal.<sup>30</sup> The country's geographic location, its standing in the Muslim world, and its ties to major countries such as China, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia give it a diplomatic and strategic heft befitting a substantial country. Only in direct comparison to the United States can Pakistan accurately be described as *weaker* or *less powerful*.

This is a story, on both sides, of lofty promises and dashed hopes, of bruised sensibilities and repeated disappointment. If Americans were often frustrated in their dealings with Islamabad, Pakistanis just as regularly felt ill used by a hectoring and ungrateful United States. Yet there were also successes in this relationship. Indeed, the U.S.-Pakistan partnership in Afghanistan in the 1980s helped to trigger the collapse of the Soviet Union, one of the most significant geopolitical events of the second half of the 20th century.

This essay also constitutes a modest effort to understand the practice of diplomacy and the use of power. It employs the concept of leverage as the prism through which to see how power shapes diplomacy. Leverage is the stuff of everyday diplomacy, for great and small powers alike. It is part of the

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30 On the size of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, see Naeem Salik, "Pakistan's Nuclear Force Structure in 2025," June 30, 2016, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/06/30/pakistan-s-nuclear-force-structure-in-2025-pub-63912>.

diplomatic toolkit for persuading other governments to act in ways desired by the country exercising leverage. Generally speaking, diplomacy aims to persuade others without resorting to armed force. A resort to force, or at least to force above a minimal level (itself an imprecise term), indicates, by definition, that diplomacy—and leverage—has failed.

Assumptions about leverage influence, in one way or another, most substantive discussions of foreign policy. Opponents of the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement criticized the Obama administration for failing to effectively use the vast leverage over Tehran provided by international sanctions. Much of the debate over how to halt North Korea's nuclear weapons program revolves around the extent of Chinese leverage over North Korea, or U.S. leverage over China. Washington and its NATO partners worry about growing Russian and Iranian leverage in the Middle East. India is similarly anxious about what it perceives as China's expanding leverage in South and Southeast Asia. As a routine component of diplomacy, leverage has a relevance that extends far beyond the U.S.-Pakistan relationship.

Finally, this is an exploration into a seeming paradox: the weak frustrating the strong. Joseph Stalin's foreign minister, V.M. Molotov, is said to have boasted that "the time of small nations has passed."<sup>31</sup> In this as in so much else, Molotov was wrong. No nation is without power. The issue is how even the weakest country uses the power it does possess. This leads to a variety of questions about the concept of leverage that this essay will explore.

- How can a country most effectively use its power to influence the behavior of other countries?
- What conditions maximize the likelihood of successful leverage?
- When are rewards or inducements more likely to be effective than pressure or threats for persuading a country to act in a certain way?
- What are the risks of failed attempts to use leverage?
- What are the options for weaker states that find themselves the target of a leverage attempt?
- What conditions enable a weaker country to employ its weakness as leverage against a stronger power?
- As power becomes more diffuse in today's world, does leverage become more or less attractive as a tool for exerting influence?
- As the exercise of military power becomes more politically and economically costly, does this increase or decrease the efficacy of leverage?
- And finally, what are the limits of leverage?

The hope if not the expectation of turning power into leverage is not unique to Americans. Indeed, strong countries throughout history have routinely

31 James E. Goodby, "The Survival Strategies of Small Nations," *Survival* 56:5 (Oct.-Nov. 2014): 32.

assumed that power confers leverage. Like Americans, they have been regularly disappointed in this assumption.

In good measure this is because they have not understood that leverage is about paradox. Even though it's coercive, leverage should be more about seduction than compulsion. It should be about making the other side want to satisfy you, not forcing it to do so. Indeed, the most effective use of leverage occurs when the target barely realizes it is being leveraged. And this brings us to the troubled relationship between Pakistan and the United States.

# CHAPTER I

## ROLLER COASTER PARTNERSHIP

Pakistan was born amidst fire and blood. Carved out of the British raj in India in 1947, the new nation of 70 million people (split into two parts, with a vast expanse of Indian territory in-between) almost immediately stumbled into war with India. The country was short of resources and bereft of the institutions and established bureaucracies of sovereignty. Within weeks of independence, the new government in Karachi (the country's first capital) sounded out Washington about a \$2 billion loan, only to be unceremoniously turned down by the Truman administration. Yet this initial U.S. rejection was followed in time by financial assistance, diplomatic support, military equipment, and in 1954, a mutual defense assistance agreement.

From the U.S. standpoint, the payoff for American patronage was an increasingly robust security linkage between the two countries. Within a decade of its creation, Pakistan had tied itself to the U.S. Cold War agenda through membership in the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Baghdad Pact (subsequently known as the Central Treaty Organization, or CENTO). By the end of the 1950s, it was clandestinely providing the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency with airbases from which the Americans launched secret U-2 surveillance flights over the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup>

The partnership, of course, was not one of equals. Washington was the world's richest and most powerful country, and the leader of a global alliance created to block the spread of communism and the influence of the USSR, international communism's command central. Pakistan was of an altogether different

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1 Dennis Kux's *The United States and Pakistan, 1947-2000: Disenchanted Allies* (Washington and Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001) remains the best history of the first half century of this relationship. Also helpful is Husain Haqqani, *Magnificent Delusions: Pakistan, the United States, and an Epic History of Misunderstanding* (New York: Public Affairs, 2013), which carries the story through the first post-9/11 decade. Shirin Tahir-Kheli, *The United States and Pakistan: The Evolution of an Influence Relationship* (New York: Praeger, 1982), covers the first 35 years of the relationship. Though now dated, it stands out as an early study concluding that the United States had little influence over Pakistani decision making.



ranking, one of America's many junior partners in Washington's web of Cold War alliances. Neither entirely independent of nor fully dependent upon the United States, Pakistan was beholden to Washington and keen to retain the financial, economic, political, and security benefits of its ties with the United States. This reliance upon U.S. favor gave American policy makers considerable influence on, if not leverage over, Islamabad. At least that was the expectation of most Americans.

Yet America's agenda for Pakistan, in combination with a Pakistani calculation of national interest far different than Washington's, proved more than the relationship could bear. In 1965, Pakistan provoked an unwise war with the much larger India over the disputed territory of Kashmir. Six years later, Islamabad blundered into another war with India, in good measure because of its misrule of the eastern half of the country, soon to become the independent nation of Bangladesh. In both instances, the United States suspended military and economic assistance to both Pakistan and India. Pakistanis felt betrayed. What, they asked, of their close security partnership with the United States? While the aid stoppages applied to both combatants, the impact of the suspensions was not equal; Pakistan was far more dependent upon U.S. arms and other military supplies than the Indians, who had consistently resisted American efforts to enlist them in Washington's Cold War partnerships.

By the latter half of the 1970s, two other issues further disrupted U.S.-Pakistan relations. In 1977, Gen. Mohammad Zia ul-Haq overthrew the democratically elected prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and two years later hanged Bhutto in what was widely seen as a politically motivated murder. Determined to give democracy and human rights a greater prominence in American foreign policy, and personally sympathetic to the democratic traditions of India, U.S. President Jimmy Carter made known his displeasure with Pakistan.

Simultaneously, the Carter administration had also become increasingly concerned about Pakistani moves to acquire a nuclear weapons capability. Should Pakistan persist in these efforts, Washington warned, the administration would have no choice under American law but to suspend U.S. assistance. Zia was neither dissuaded nor deterred. Only months after the 1977 coup, Washington announced the suspension of its economic assistance program because of Islamabad's nuclear activities. After France halted its nuclear reprocessing project with Islamabad a few months later, the Americans lifted the aid suspension, but not before many Pakistanis had concluded that their nearly quarter century partnership with the United States was over.

In 1979, presented with new intelligence that Pakistan was still covertly pursuing the nuclear option, the Carter administration suspended economic assistance for a second time. News of this move became public two days after Bhutto's

execution, leading many Pakistanis to link the aid termination to that event. In November 1979, inspired by the example of Iranian mobs overrunning the U.S. embassy in Tehran, Pakistani demonstrators besieged the U.S. embassy in Islamabad. They failed to seize control of the facility, but did cause considerable damage and killed two Americans and two Pakistani embassy employees. For all practical purposes, the Cold War partnership was dead.

For five weeks, that is. On December 24, 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, drove out the old leadership, and installed its own choice as president. American thinking about the value of its ties to Pakistan changed, quite literally, overnight. The following month, President Carter reversed his long-standing antipathy to Gen. Zia, and offered Pakistan \$400 million in U.S. military and economic assistance in an effort to bind the Pakistanis to U.S. policy opposing the Soviet presence in Afghanistan.

Zia, aware that aligning his country with the United States would expose Pakistan to new dangers from a Soviet Union now ensconced in neighboring Afghanistan, rejected the overture. No doubt still smarting from Carter's oft-expressed disdain for the general and the sanctions Carter twice imposed on Pakistan for its nuclear activities, the Pakistani strongman derisively dismissed the U.S. offer as "peanuts." Such a trifling sum, he explained, "will buy greater animosity from the Soviet Union which is now much more influential in this region than the United States." Zia's foreign minister added, "The assistance must be commensurate with the size of the threat."<sup>2</sup> Pakistan had concluded that with peril came leverage.

A year later, after Ronald Reagan turned Carter out of the White House, the United States came back to Pakistan with a far larger offer, which included F-16 fighter aircraft that would subsequently become the source of great contention between Washington and Islamabad.<sup>3</sup> Zia, having made his point that Pakistani help would not be bought for a pittance, then accepted. U.S. financial assistance to Pakistan skyrocketed. In 1980, Carter's final year in office, U.S. aid to Islamabad totaled \$59 million, all of it economic or development assistance. By 1983, U.S. assistance to Pakistan reached \$540 million, split almost evenly between economic and military aid.<sup>4</sup>

The 1980s saw a rebirth of the U.S.-Pakistan security partnership, as military and intelligence officials of the two countries worked together to punish the Soviets for their occupation of Afghanistan. Unlike the alliance of the 1950s, this collaboration was not sanctified by formal treaty; much of it was clandestine, the province of shadowy intelligence operatives. CIA officers provided their

2 Quotes by Zia and Foreign Minister Agha Shahi are in Kux, *The United States and Pakistan*, 249.

3 Islamabad had become the Pakistani capital in 1966.

4 For a year-by-year breakdown of U.S. aid transfers to Pakistan, see the chart beginning on p. 157.

Pakistani counterparts in the ISI with large amounts of money and weaponry—most notably, Stinger shoulder-held missiles that, after 1986, exacted a huge toll on Soviet helicopters and other aircraft. The ISI, in turn, funneled the money and weapons to its favorites among the resistance groups (known as the *mujahideen*) fighting the Soviets and their Afghan allies.

By early 1989, what many had once thought inconceivable took place: the Soviets, mired in an endless war, withdrew their troops from Afghanistan. The Afghan resistance forces who had battled the Red Army for more than nine years deserved primary credit for this astonishing Soviet defeat. But Washington and Islamabad also exalted. The U.S.-Pakistani security partnership, it seemed, had vanquished, even humiliated, one of the world's two superpowers.

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Yet less than two years later, this partnership once again lay in tatters.

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Yet less than two years later, this partnership once again lay in tatters. As during the Carter years, the precipitating factor was Washington's inability to ignore Pakistan's unceasing drive toward acquiring a nuclear weapons capability, a drive propelled by Islamabad's consuming anxiety about India. Making the situation even more urgent, Pakistanis believed, the Americans had done virtually nothing to restrain India's own nuclear program.

More broadly, the dissolution of the partnership so soon after the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan demonstrated how thin had been the bonds that had bound the two countries together, how divergently they viewed their respective national interests. The entire decade of the 1990s was a sterile one for the bilateral relationship, punctuated on the American side by threats and sanctions, on the Pakistani side by anger and a profound sense of grievance.

### *The nuclear conundrum*

In 1985, the U.S. Congress adopted the Pressler amendment, named for its chief Republican sponsor, Sen. Larry Pressler of South Dakota. The legislation was intended as a Pakistan-friendly measure, to permit the continuation of U.S. assistance to Pakistan notwithstanding U.S. law banning such aid to a nation developing a nuclear weapon. By the mid-1980s, the U.S.-Pakistan partnership, supporting the Afghan *mujahideen* in their fight against the Soviet Union, was in full flower. Severing this collaboration in pursuit of non-proliferation objectives struck most Washington decision makers as an act of stupidity that would undermine important national priorities.

Accordingly, congressional members of both parties cobbled together a legislative fix, the Pressler amendment, that permitted the U.S. president to

continue assistance to Pakistan so long as he could annually certify that Pakistan did not possess a “nuclear explosive device.” This language proved sufficiently imprecise to allow the White House to issue such certifications until 1990, even though no one doubted the seriousness of Pakistani efforts to develop nuclear arms. The U.S. government would pretend to take Islamabad at its word when Pakistan insisted it was not developing nuclear weapons, while simultaneously warning Islamabad not to cross certain technical red lines. For official Washington, prosecuting the war in Afghanistan took precedence over efforts to slow the spread of nuclear weapons.

By the late 1980s, this annual certification process had become a charade. For five years beginning in 1985, the administrations of first Reagan and then George H.W. Bush, resorting to legalisms and hiding behind intelligence that by its very nature was ambiguous or inconclusive, issued the Pressler certifications that permitted the continuation of U.S. aid to Pakistan. Each year the struggle within the executive branch to justify the certification became increasingly difficult. As one State Department participant in these discussions would later recall, by 1988 “we practically had to hold Secretary Shultz down and force his hand to sign.”<sup>5</sup> Still, the American officials who supported recertification were not simply being disingenuous. If Washington cut aid to Pakistan in order to enforce the U.S. nonproliferation agenda, Islamabad’s resulting insecurity could lead it to accelerate its work on its nuclear program. Ironically, cutting aid could produce the very behavior American assistance was designed to prevent.

Many members of the U.S. Congress were also alarmed by Pakistan’s relentless drive toward a full-blown nuclear weapons capability. In the fall of 1987, Congress allowed legislative authorization for the Pressler certification to expire. Briefly the U.S. aid pipeline shut down, until after two-plus months, Congress passed a new waiver authority. But the legislators refused to renew the waiver authority for six years, as the administration had requested. Instead, hoping to tighten the reins not only on Pakistan but also on executive permissiveness, they authorized only an additional two and a half years.

Islamabad undoubtedly came to believe that this kabuki theater could continue indefinitely, and dismissed repeated warnings from Washington that the United States would be unable to make future certifications unless Pakistan slowed its program. But as we shall see shortly, Pakistan, fixated on India, would not have terminated its nuclear activities even had it believed U.S. threats.

Finally, in the fall of 1990, Pakistani pledges of abstinence lost their last fig leaf of plausibility, and the Bush administration reluctantly determined that the evidence of an active Pakistani nuclear program was too conclusive to

<sup>5</sup> Interview with retired U.S. diplomat, Mar. 2016. The Secretary of State, in this case George Shultz, had to recommend that the White House issue the annual certification.

make further certification possible. Most forms of U.S. economic and security assistance to Pakistan were terminated. In addition, further shipments of F-16 fighter aircraft, which for many Pakistanis had acquired almost mythical potency as a symbol of their country's status and power, were cut off, even for those aircraft already partially paid for. While aid already in the pipeline continued for several years, no new assistance for Islamabad was authorized, and what in the 1980s had become a robust relationship gradually withered.<sup>6</sup>

At the time of its adoption in 1985, the Pressler amendment seemed a clever way to handle a difficult problem: how to maintain the flow of aid to the Afghan *mujahideen* without seeming to undercut America's nonproliferation policies. The amendment's proponents hoped that the threat of an aid cutoff would persuade Islamabad to moderate its nuclear activities. This way, they reasoned, the amendment would never be triggered and Washington would not have to face the consequences of carrying out its threat. It didn't work out that way. Instead, the Bush administration found itself compelled to back away from Pakistan, even though few U.S. officials believed this would halt or even slow Islamabad's pursuit of a nuclear capability. To the contrary, it was likely that Pakistan, stripped of its close ties to the American superpower, would accelerate its efforts to build a bomb.

Seldom has an attempt to use American assistance as leverage backfired so completely. The aid cutoff occasioned by the Pressler amendment seared itself into the Pakistani psyche, and contributed heavily to a Pakistani narrative that emphasizes how the United States uses Pakistan for its own purposes, and then discards Pakistan (as the saying goes) "like a used tissue." That the triggering of the amendment occurred only after the withdrawal of the last Soviet troops from Afghanistan reinforced the perception that Washington cared about Pakistan only when the Americans needed something. In Pakistan the Pressler amendment has become synonymous with American perfidy. Few remember that its intent was to sustain the relationship.

There can be little doubt that Washington's pre-1990 willingness to overlook damning evidence concerning Pakistan's nuclear program encouraged Islamabad to believe that American forbearance would last indefinitely. Even so, the Pakistanis clearly misread the U.S. situation. Islamabad correctly understood that the Bush administration valued the Pakistan relationship and wished to maintain it. But the Pakistanis misinterpreted the political dynamics in a Washington worried about the global spread of weapons of mass destruction and, once the Soviets departed Afghanistan, overestimated the value that the Americans placed on the maintenance of a good relationship with Islamabad.

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<sup>6</sup> U.S. assistance to Pakistan in 1990 totaled \$542 million. By 1992 it had dropped by 96 percent, to only \$22 million.

Still, even had Pakistan known with certainty that its nuclear activities would result in the severing of U.S. ties and the loss of the benefits those ties conferred, Islamabad would have found the price for maintaining the relationship too costly. India had conducted a nuclear test as far back as 1974, and virtually no one believed Indian claims that its nuclear program was for exclusively peaceful purposes. For Islamabad to refrain from pursuing its own program would have been, for virtually all Pakistanis, criminally negligent. As one U.S. diplomat working this issue in the 1990s ruefully conceded later, “We didn’t have a good argument. . . . We didn’t have a better idea” on how a non-nuclear Pakistan could adequately protect itself against a nuclear-armed India.<sup>7</sup>

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s public promise that Pakistanis would “eat grass” if that’s what it took to develop a nuclear deterrent found near-universal support in Pakistan.<sup>8</sup> Decades later, a senior Pakistani diplomat recalled that the indispensability of the country’s nuclear program was quite possibly the only issue on which all the country’s fractious political parties agreed.<sup>9</sup> For Pakistani decision makers, both strategic necessity and popular opinion argued for a continuation of the nuclear program.<sup>10</sup> The civilian government in 1990 led by Nawaz Sharif was far too weak to oppose this consensus, even had it wished to do so. Compared to the dangers inherent in abandoning the nuclear option, the benefits of American aid and the sanctions threatened by the Pressler amendment seemed modest.

### *The 1998 nuclear tests*

Eight years later, the nuclear issue arose in a different context. On May 11 and 13, 1998, India detonated five nuclear devices, its first tests since 1974. The Bill Clinton administration went into overdrive to persuade Pakistan not to follow suit. Washington slapped wide-ranging military and economic sanctions on India, as required by U.S. law. Clinton telephoned Sharif (who had become prime minister for a second time a year earlier) on four separate occasions within a two-week span and, in exchange for a Pakistani pledge not to test, offered Islamabad renewed U.S. financial assistance, hinted at releasing the F-16s whose delivery had been blocked by the Pressler amendment, and dangled an official visit to Washington. Strobe Talbott, the U.S. deputy secretary

7 Interview with the author, Jan. 2017.

8 Patrick Keatley, “The Brown Bomb,” *Manchester Guardian*, Mar. 11, 1965. Bhutto was Pakistan’s foreign minister at the time. Bhutto’s statement is worth quoting in full. After observing that his government must of necessity assume that India could “go nuclear” without advance notice, Bhutto was asked what Pakistan’s response would be. “There was a deep pause,” Keatley wrote. “The Foreign Minister glanced at the face of his colleague, Mr. Ahmed; then he spoke—softly and with great determination: ‘Then we should have to eat grass and get one, or buy one, of our own.’”

9 Tariq Fatemi, “Revising ‘98 nuclear tests,” *Dawn*, June 3, 2006.

10 The South Asia scholar Stephen Cohen has rightly observed that for Pakistan, the bomb was “a magic bullet that could resolve any problem.” Stephen Philip Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 81.

of state, jetted off to Islamabad to urge “restraint and maturity.”<sup>11</sup> Hoping to induce Pakistan to forego tests of its own, influential senators announced they would introduce legislation to repeal the Pressler amendment.

But American efforts to persuade Islamabad not to emulate India’s tests never had a chance of success. For Pakistan, India’s 1998 nuclear tests posed an existential crisis. A Pakistani refusal to demonstrate its own nuclear capabilities, many believed, would be interpreted in India not as forbearance, but as an admission that Pakistan did not yet possess a nuclear deterrent. Such a belief could be highly dangerous; it might encourage New Delhi to make unreasonable demands on Pakistan, and provide India with the leverage to do so. In the worst case (so some Pakistanis worried), India would be tempted to move once and for all to emasculate, even dismantle Pakistan. Bellicose rhetoric from senior Indian politicians did nothing to lessen these anxieties. A loosely-sourced intelligence report reaching Islamabad that India and Israel were planning a strike on Pakistan’s nuclear facilities also seems to have played a role in Pakistan’s decision to match India’s tests with its own.

Moreover, powerful domestic political considerations made it unlikely that Nawaz Sharif would heed American pleas for restraint. A decision to forego testing would be widely unpopular in Pakistan, and could possibly lead to the fall of the government. “How can I take your advice if I’m out of office?” the prime minister plaintively asked Talbott.<sup>12</sup>

None of this, however, stopped the Pakistanis from attempting a little leverage of their own. Realizing how badly Washington wanted his country to refrain from testing, Sharif sought to ascertain how much the Americans might pay for a decision not to test. After Talbott raised the possibility of a presidential visit to Pakistan, the prime minister countered by asking if the U.S. envoy could guarantee that Clinton would bypass India on this trip. The Pakistanis also hinted that if Washington were to compel India to accept a plebiscite for the Kashmiris, or commit itself to mediating the Kashmir dispute, then the need for an immediate Pakistani nuclear test might not be quite so compelling. If the United States devoted just ten percent of the energy to Kashmir that it was expending for peace in the Middle East, the prime minister observed a bit later in the year, the world could “rest easy” since the most likely cause for war between India and Pakistan would be removed.<sup>13</sup>

Not finding the Americans prepared to negotiate on either Kashmir or a presidential trip, Sharif turned to blackmail, threatening dire consequences

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11 As recounted by Strobe Talbott, *Engaging India: Diplomacy, Democracy, and the Bomb* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 59.

12 *Ibid.*, 65.

13 *Ibid.*, 109.

should Islamabad comply with American wishes. If his government fell because he buckled to U.S. pressure not to test, he warned Talbott, the Americans would find themselves dealing not with a clean-shaven moderate like himself, but with an Islamist fundamentalist “who has a long beard.”<sup>14</sup> Several months later, Sharif reiterated this point. Had he not tested, he told an American visitor, “someone else would be sitting in the prime minister’s house right now. That someone probably would be a fanatic. We have no dearth of those.”<sup>15</sup> Accept my political judgment here, Sharif seemed to be saying, or suffer the consequences. Even under intense pressure, the Pakistani prime minister was not above applying a little leverage of his own.

Yet even had the Americans met some or all of the conditions Sharif put forward, it seems inconceivable that Pakistan would have refrained from testing. Sharif, after all, did not hold the power of decision on such a momentous step. In 1998, as throughout Pakistan’s history, the military had the decisive voice on truly important matters, especially involving issues of security. And the military high command, like militaries the world over, believed that stark security threats could be neutralized only by equally stark military responses.

Once again, as in 1990 with the Pressler amendment, U.S. inducements for Pakistani forbearance were not sufficient to dissuade Pakistanis from taking steps deemed essential for their security. In 1998, U.S. promises of Pressler relief and suggestions that Washington might finally deliver the F-16s Pakistan had long sought were nothing more than “shoddy rugs you’ve tried to sell us before,” Pakistan’s foreign minister complained.<sup>16</sup> The leverage American largesse offered was not nearly as great as some in the Clinton administration had supposed.

If the prospect of carrots did not sway the Pakistanis, neither did the threat of further sticks, American or international. Islamabad had become accustomed to living with U.S. sanctions, which had proved more fearsome in theory than in actuality. Equally important for the Pakistanis, it quickly became apparent that they need not worry about angering other major donor countries. Days after India’s tests, a G-8 summit of the world’s richest industrialized nations issued what struck many Pakistanis as a perfunctory and pro forma condemnation of New Delhi. The West, they concluded, was not going to impose tough penalties on India for its tests; accordingly, Pakistan too could survive international censure. Some Pakistanis bitterly noted that the focus of the U.S.-orchestrated international effort was not to punish India for its tests, nor to persuade New Delhi to give up its nuclear weapons, but to threaten Pakistan with dire consequences should it emulate the Indians.

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 65.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 108.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 60, quoting the foreign minister.



Some analysts have since speculated that Washington's inability to dissuade Pakistan from testing in May 1998 was the direct result of the U.S. decision eight years earlier to trigger the Pressler amendment. Invoking Pressler, according to this line of reasoning, had so diminished U.S. influence in Islamabad that American diplomats no longer possessed the contacts and relationships that might have enabled them to press their case in 1998. Such an argument is not convincing. If the United States was unable to stop the Pakistani nuclear program at the height of its influence in Islamabad in the 1980s, why would one suppose that in 1998, at a moment of supreme crisis occasioned by India's tests, Washington could have prevailed? There may well be good reason to judge the Pressler amendment a failure, but the argument that it undermined U.S. efforts in May 1998 to persuade Pakistan not to conduct nuclear tests is not one of them.

Not even an ironclad security guarantee from the United States, affirmed in American legislation so as to commit future U.S. administrations, could have induced Pakistan to forgo testing. A dramatic tilt toward Islamabad in Washington's regional policy, including active diplomacy to resolve the Kashmir sore on terms acceptable to Pakistan, would probably have to have accompanied that guarantee. But the Clinton administration (quite rightly) was not interested in reorienting American policy in South Asia so drastically, nor in subordinating U.S. policy to the political or security imperatives of Pakistan. And given Pakistani fears about U.S. constancy and reliability, there is little reason to believe that Islamabad would have been assuaged by such guarantees had Washington offered them. Against such fears, U.S. arguments that Pakistani restraint would allow it to "occupy the high ground in the eyes of a nervous world" stood no chance.<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, it is impossible to conceive of any combination of American inducements and threats in May 1998 that would have convinced Islamabad it could safely shelve its search for a nuclear deterrent against India. No mix of U.S. pressures and promises would have produced the leverage sufficient to alter Pakistani thinking on this. Islamabad responded to India's five tests by exploding six nuclear devices of its own in late May 1998. The United States then imposed on Pakistan the same set of sanctions it had placed on India earlier in the month.

### *Competing U.S. priorities*

Twice in the decade, in 1990 and again in 1998, American power proved insufficient for the achievement of Washington's non-proliferation objectives for Pakistan. In both instances, U.S. actions meant to advance its non-

<sup>17</sup> The quotation comes from Howard B. Schaffer and Teresita C. Schaffer, *How Pakistan Negotiates with the United States: Riding the Roller Coaster* (Washington: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2011), 102.

proliferation agenda inflicted heavy damage on good relations with Pakistan, also an important U.S. policy goal. This entangling of objectives and priorities underscores another facet of U.S. policy over the years that has reduced the leverage U.S. power might otherwise have offered. As far back as the 1950s, but particularly since the mid-1970s, U.S. thinking about Pakistan has suffered from a fragmented focus and a surplus of objectives, not all of which were easily reconciled.

One might assume, for instance, that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan handed Carter an immense opportunity to push Pakistan hard on two of his highest priorities, democracy and non-proliferation. In theory, the presence of the Red Army on the Pakistani border could have given the United States huge leverage over Zia, since Pakistan's endangered security made American support desirable if not essential.

But to argue that Washington missed a prime opportunity to leverage Zia is to maintain that in 1980, the United States should have placed democracy and non-proliferation ahead of containing the spread of Soviet power. Historians can and will debate the ordering of American priorities during the Cold War. Suffice it to say that most Americans endorsed Carter's decision in 1980 to support Zia rather than to use the moment of Pakistan's vulnerability to press Islamabad on these other issues.

In addition to its security concerns relating to the Soviet Union (and later al Qaeda), its desire to slow the spread of nuclear weaponry, and its (sometimes) hope for political democratization, Washington's agenda for Pakistan grew to include a huge array of other items: regional stability (including a reduction of Indo-Pakistani tensions), cross-border terrorism, Islamist extremism (within both Pakistan and Afghanistan), narcotics trafficking, human rights, women's rights, religious freedom and the protection of religious minorities, good governance, anti-corruption, the creation of an economic environment friendly to American investors, and others. For Islamabad, American demands (often but not always couched in the form of suggestions or requests) seemed endless.

From the American standpoint, each of these objectives was eminently reasonable. Indeed, most reflected the hopes and aspirations of many Pakistanis. But U.S. policy did not always distinguish between short-term and long-term aspirations, nor recognize the reality that some of its goals were less likely than others to be achieved. Moreover, some of its objectives for Pakistan

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**U.S. policy did not always distinguish between short-term and long-term aspirations, nor recognize the reality that some of its goals were less likely than others to be achieved.**

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were conflicting. Washington wished to help Pakistan create a vibrant economy, for instance, yet again and again imposed sanctions designed to punish Islamabad for its coups and its nuclear ambitions.

In truth, America's ambitious agenda for Pakistan sometimes undercut U.S. leverage and undermined U.S. effectiveness. Because successive U.S. administrations pursued so many goals simultaneously, they sent contradictory signals about their most pressing concerns. This gave Islamabad an opportunity to pick and choose among U.S. objectives in a way that reflected Pakistani rather than American interests.

Pakistani decision makers played this game adroitly. As we have already seen, in the 1980s, America's need for a partner to combat the Soviets in Afghanistan—by any reckoning a top-tier U.S. policy objective—enabled Islamabad to circumvent U.S. pressure to abandon its nuclear efforts, another American priority. The Zia government correctly calculated that when forced to choose, Washington would give way on its nuclear agenda rather than jeopardize its ability to support the Afghan *mujahideen*.

A decade later, following Zia's death, a succession of civilian-led governments in Islamabad used their fragility to blunt U.S. pressure on Kashmir, Afghanistan, and other matters. Strobe Talbott has written that in his discussions with Nawaz Sharif, the Pakistanis "seemed to think that the sheer desperateness of their situation gave them leverage over us rather than the other way round. They were betting that since the United States could not afford for Pakistan to become a failed state, we would cut them the slack they needed to protect themselves against a nuclear-armed India."<sup>18</sup> This bet proved a shrewd one. Despite its stature as the world's sole superpower, America found its leverage inadequate to bribe, cajole, or coerce the much weaker Pakistan

No issue created more challenges for the American image in Pakistan than Washington's repeated subordination of its democracy agenda in favor of its security needs. Washington greeted military coups toppling elected civilian governments in 1977 and 1999 with dismay. In both instances, the United States responded with aid cutoffs, the suspension of arms sales, and other concrete signs of displeasure. Yet after each military takeover, American discomfort with the new political dispensation in Islamabad did not keep Washington from seeking Pakistani partnership in the security arena. Indeed, the Dwight D. Eisenhower administration signed a new bilateral security agreement with Pakistan less than five months after the 1958 coup.<sup>19</sup>

This U.S. willingness to subordinate its democracy agenda in the service of

<sup>18</sup> Talbott, *Engaging India*, 106-07.

<sup>19</sup> There is little evidence that Pakistan's 1958 coup caused much angst for the Eisenhower administration.

security objectives led to a nearly universal belief in Pakistan that despite its fine words about democracy, Washington was perfectly content to countenance military rule in Pakistan. This impression was strengthened by the American practice, common to nearly every U.S. administration, of dealing directly with Pakistan's military chieftains, rather than working through their putative civilian superiors. When senior American officials visited Pakistan, they customarily met with the army chief as well as Pakistan's civilian leaders. This might have reflected a realistic assessment of the actual locus of power in Pakistan, but it also undercut those Pakistanis seeking to uphold the principle of civilian supremacy over the military.

Many Pakistanis carried this logic one step farther, and concluded that only American forbearance kept their generals in power. The conviction that America "always" sides with military dictators against the Pakistani people has stoked the fires of anti-Americanism in Pakistan for decades, and made it problematic for any government, civilian or military, to be seen as working too closely with the United States. This in turn has made it more difficult for Washington to either persuade or compel Islamabad to take actions or pursue policies desired by the United States.

While many Pakistanis came to believe that the United States had the power to unseat the country's military rulers and bring democracy to Pakistan, if only Washington wished to do so, they were not alone in this belief. A 2000 commentary in the *Los Angeles Times*, for instance, called on the Clinton administration to "stop coddling" the military regime in Pakistan and "use its economic leverage to promote an early return to civilian rule." Islamabad desperately needed debt rescheduling and other financial assistance, the author wrote. Musharraf also wanted Clinton to visit Pakistan during a trip to the region then being planned. This gave the United States "enormous leverage," which Washington should use to insist on a return to constitutional, civilian-run government.<sup>20</sup>

Given the priority Americans across the political spectrum accorded their Cold War agenda, successive U.S. administrations would have found it exceedingly difficult to allow somewhat abstract concerns about Pakistani democracy to impede actions designed to meet the security exigencies of the moment. Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, other geopolitical considerations often pushed democracy concerns aside in U.S. decision making circles. Nonetheless, Washington paid a substantial price for these policy choices by alienating large segments of the Pakistani population for whom resistance to military rule and the creation of genuine democracy were priorities.

20 Selig S. Harrison, "Use Leverage on Pakistan While We Can," *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 18, 2000. This idea that Washington possessed the ability to force democracy upon Pakistan regularly appeared in the U.S. press.

Worse yet from the American standpoint, the United States failed to receive the full measure of Pakistani cooperation it had expected from subordinating its democracy agenda. As we have already seen, none of Pakistan's military regimes embraced American security priorities more than half-heartedly. Pakistan's ruling classes—not only its generals but also its often self-serving civilian elite—knew that giving lip service to U.S. geopolitical concerns would inoculate them from undue American pressure for free elections and actual democracy.

Competing U.S. priorities also colored thinking in the Clinton administration about other facets of the U.S.-Pakistan relationship. As the sanctions imposed in 1998 by both the United States and other international donors took hold, Pakistan's financial situation became more and more precarious. Eventually Islamabad concluded that it had to ask the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for an infusion of funds to avoid bankruptcy. With the most powerful voice in IMF decision making, Washington was in a position to up the pressure on Islamabad. Yet the Clinton administration refused to pull the IMF trigger. Instead, Washington agreed to a new IMF program for Pakistan, which would help the country get through the crisis caused in part by U.S. sanctions.

Why would the United States follow such an inconsistent policy toward Pakistan? Why, at a moment when Washington seemed to have maximum leverage, would it refuse to squeeze Islamabad? Quite simply, because the administration judged that it could not stand by and see Pakistan fail. Pakistani insolvency, Washington worried, would unleash too many dangers: rising economic distress that could sweep away Pakistan's already weak democratic institutions, heightened anti-Americanism, growing support in Pakistan for those pushing anti-Western agendas, additional concerns about the security of the country's fledgling nuclear assets, greater regional instability. A Pakistani collapse was unthinkable, Washington decided; Pakistan was too big, too important to fail. In a twist of irony, the country's financial fragility offered it protection against the use of American power.<sup>21</sup>

The fight against narcotics trafficking presented the Clinton administration with a similar dilemma. Much of the heroin pouring into American cities was produced in or transited through Pakistan, and by the 1990s, counter-narcotics had become a prominent issue on the U.S.-Pakistan agenda. In

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21 Bruce Riedel, who was the National Security Council's lead staffer on Pakistan during the second Clinton term, offers another, complementary explanation for Washington's refusal in 1999 to take advantage of Pakistan's financial distress. Clinton, Riedel has recalled, had become convinced that the United States, in imposing the Pressler sanctions so soon after the great triumph over the Soviets in Afghanistan, had treated Pakistan unfairly and in an overly legalistic manner. This attitude colored Clinton's views about imposing the 1998 nuclear test sanctions, which he did only reluctantly, initially led him to resist triggering coup-related sanctions when Musharraf seized power in 1999, and led him to decline using Pakistan's financial troubles to cause Pakistan still more economic pain. Interview with Bruce Riedel, Nov. 2016.

order to qualify for U.S. assistance of various types, countries associated with narcotics trafficking had to receive an annual State Department certification that they were adequately cooperating in the anti-drug fight. By the late 1990s, Washington found it more and more difficult to issue such a certification for Pakistan. Yet, rather than slap still more penalties on the beleaguered Sharif government, Clinton (as permitted by law) waived the certification requirement in three successive years. Combatting drug trafficking was a serious matter no doubt but, the administration concluded, not at the cost of further roiling U.S.-Pakistan relations. Once more, diplomatic priorities led Washington to sheathe the full extent of its power.

The vexing problem of Kashmir provides still another example of competing U.S. objectives complicating American policy toward Islamabad. Pakistan's support for groups fighting the Indian army in the portion of Kashmir controlled by New Delhi had been a source of contention between Washington and Islamabad throughout the 1990s. Many of these groups were based in Pakistan or in the part of Kashmir held by Pakistan, and credible intelligence suggested that many operated with the support and even under the orders of the ISI.

Pakistan admitted to providing diplomatic and moral support to the Kashmiris but denied more direct involvement. India, unsurprisingly, insisted Pakistan was at the root of the problems in Kashmir and repeatedly demanded that Washington rein in its friends in Islamabad. Because many of these groups engaged in actions meeting the customary definition of terrorism, the 1990s saw rising calls for the United States to designate Pakistan a state sponsor of terrorism. Such a step would have resulted in still more restrictions on U.S. assistance, defense sales, and so-called "dual use" exports. Pakistanis retorted that it was India that was guilty of employing terror in Kashmir, and asked why Washington appeared indifferent to Delhi's harsh treatment of the Muslim inhabitants of the region.

The Clinton administration was split over how hard to press Pakistan on the issue of its support for the Kashmiri insurgents, even after a Pakistani incursion into the Kargil sector of India's portion of Kashmir nearly triggered a full-scale war with India in the spring of 1999. Madeleine Albright, Clinton's secretary of state during his second term, ultimately sided with those who sought to avoid further damaging relations with Islamabad in the wake of Washington's previous sanctions. She seems to have been influenced by the belief that designating

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Pakistan a state sponsor of terrorism would eliminate whatever little remaining influence Washington had over Islamabad. Many in the administration also worried that further U.S. pressure would destabilize a country with both nuclear weapons and a growing number of domestic extremists.<sup>22</sup>

Neither of these considerations was unreasonable. Yet each regularly dissuaded the United States over the years from unleashing upon Pakistan the full force of its dissatisfaction, and allowed Islamabad to fend off American threats without abandoning the policies that had drawn Washington's displeasure.

### *The Taliban problem*

During the final Clinton years, the White House also hoped that Islamabad would help persuade the Taliban, who had seized control of most of Afghanistan in 1996, to surrender Osama bin Laden, the al Qaeda leader behind the 1998 attacks on the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. In January 2000, the State Department dangled the possibility of a presidential visit to Pakistan in return for Musharraf's assistance with Kabul. U.S. officials saw this as an enticing carrot. Musharraf, they believed, whose coup only months earlier had triggered yet another round of U.S. sanctions, badly needed a Clinton visit as a mark of legitimacy.

The arguments against a Clinton stopover in Pakistan at the conclusion of a planned visit to India were powerful. A Pakistan visit would sanitize Musharraf's seizure of power and discourage Pakistani friends who looked to Washington for support of their democratic hopes. It could undercut the impact in India of what was promising to be a highly successful visit. And warnings about a possible attack on the American president in Pakistan could not be dismissed. Yet, Islamabad took no meaningful actions to entice Clinton to visit.

Nonetheless, U.S. officials who favored a quick presidential stopover in Pakistan prevailed, arguing that only in this way could Washington hope to retain even a modicum of leverage over Islamabad.<sup>23</sup> In March 2000, Clinton, at the conclusion of a five-day visit to India, made a five-hour stop in Islamabad, where, he would later recall, "I offered [Musharraf] the moon . . . in terms of better relations" with the United States "if he'd help us get Bin Ladin [sic] and deal with another issue or two."<sup>24</sup> Yet not even the moon proved sufficient to obtain Pakistani assistance.

A month later, Washington reverted to a tougher approach. Meeting with

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<sup>22</sup> *9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2004), 123.

<sup>23</sup> For this argument specifically, see Talbott, *Engaging India*, 191.

<sup>24</sup> *9/11 Commission Report*, 183.

Pakistan's intelligence chief, a senior State Department official bluntly asserted that al Qaeda had killed American citizens and intended to do so again. "People who do that are our enemies, and people who support those people will also be treated as our enemies." Pakistan should not put itself in that position, the American diplomat warned.<sup>25</sup> But the threat proved no more effective than the bribe in persuading the Pakistanis to press the Taliban to surrender bin Laden.

Following the inauguration in January 2001 of George W. Bush, the new U.S. administration continued these efforts. Bush wrote Musharraf in February, and again in early August, to urge the Pakistani leader to push the Taliban on bin Laden and al Qaeda. Al Qaeda constituted "a direct threat to the United States and its interests that must be addressed," the new U.S. president declared.<sup>26</sup> Meeting with the Pakistani foreign minister in June, Bush's national security advisor, Condoleezza Rice, "really let him have it" about al Qaeda, she later remembered.<sup>27</sup> Again, no tangible results.

Throughout the summer of 2001, Bush's secretary of state, Colin Powell, subsequently recalled, "we took every effort that was available to us to put pressure on Pakistan to cut its losses with the Taliban and . . . to make sure that Pakistan understood the need to bring Afghanistan around" by ejecting al Qaeda.<sup>28</sup> Powell and his State Department lieutenants considered the possibility of offering Islamabad greater inducements to help on the al Qaeda problem, but rejected the idea as impractical. Congress was not likely to lift existing sanctions on Pakistan. Nor, they concluded, were the additional incentives Washington might be able to offer attractive enough to persuade Musharraf to take the domestic political heat that helping the Americans would create for him.<sup>29</sup> The al Qaeda-orchestrated attacks on New York and Washington shortly thereafter made the issue moot.

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, former and current executive branch officials explained the failure of these efforts to induce Pakistani cooperation on the Taliban by referencing their lack of leverage. "We did not have a strong hand to play with the Pakistanis," Albright would later say. "Because of the sanctions required by U.S. law, we had few carrots to offer."<sup>30</sup> Strobe Talbott, Albright's top deputy, characterized U.S. policy toward Pakistan as "stick-heavy."<sup>31</sup> While

25 Barton Gellman, "Broad Effort Launched After '98 Attacks," *Washington Post*, Dec. 19, 2001. Madeleine Albright recounts this conversation in her memoir, Madeleine Albright with Bill Woodward, *Madam Secretary* (New York: Miramax Books, 2003), 370.

26 *9/11 Commission Report*, 207. The quotation is from Bush's February letter.

27 *Ibid.*

28 Colin L. Powell, "Opening Remarks Before the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States," Mar. 23, 2004, *U.S. Department of State Archive*, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/30689.htm>.

29 *9/11 Commission Report*, 207.

30 *Ibid.*, 183.

31 *Ibid.*, 123.



accurate insofar as they go, these comments must be seen in the context of a distaste generally shared by executive branch officials for legislatively mandated sanctions that limit the executive branch's freedom of action.

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## In his memoirs, Musharraf freely conceded that Pakistan had assisted in the rise of the Taliban in the 1990s.

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Equally to the point, they imply that a more generous package of inducements might have tempted Islamabad to lean upon its Taliban friends in Kabul. There is little to sustain such a belief, and even less to support the conclusion that more vigorous Pakistani diplomacy might have persuaded the Taliban to abandon its hospitality to bin Laden.

In his memoirs, Musharraf freely conceded that Pakistan had assisted in the rise of the Taliban in the 1990s. But once they came to power in Kabul, he wrote, "we lost much of the leverage we had had with them."<sup>32</sup> Even if this account is self-serving, it is probably essentially accurate. Just as the United States had repeatedly discovered, Pakistan too found that superiority in virtually all traditional measures of power did not automatically give it leverage over another country.

### *Same history, different lessons*

Almost from the beginning, back in the 1950s, Washington's relationship with Islamabad was built around a series of rewards or inducements—"bribes" would be a cruder but not inaccurate word—meant to encourage Pakistani behavior Washington deemed desirable. American power gave U.S. officials a vast array of potential inducements, including development aid, concessional loans, credits, military assistance and training, arms sales, access to the U.S. market for Pakistani exports, technical assistance, investment capital, preferential visa treatment, access to energy supplies, and diplomatic support vis-à-vis third countries. Pakistan received all these manifestations of American favor, and many others as well. According to the U.S. Congressional Research Service, between 1948 and 2001, the United States provided Pakistan with \$8.9 billion in economic and development aid and \$3.0 billion in security assistance.

Yet American policy makers, at an historical moment when U.S. power was at its height, regularly discovered that the inducements they offered could not always be relied upon to prod Pakistan into compliance. In some cases, such as Carter's 1980 offer of \$400 million in assistance, or George H.W. Bush's demand that Pakistan roll back its nuclear program, U.S. incentives, even sizable ones, were simply not large enough to persuade Islamabad to take actions that it believed ran counter to Pakistani interests. At other times, including Pakistan's 1998

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<sup>32</sup> Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, 203.

decision to conduct nuclear tests, domestic pressures and political imperatives swayed Pakistani decision makers far more than the promise of American carrots. At still other times, as when Washington pressed Islamabad to abandon the Kashmiri insurgents, considerations of national honor made the acceptance of U.S. bribes not simply unpalatable but politically impossible.

The other side of the carrot coin featured sticks—pressure, penalties, and threats. A reward given—trade concessions, for example—can just as easily be revoked. Benefits conveyed can be retracted, pledges of friendship and support reversed. When inducements have proved insufficient for eliciting desired results, strong powers have not hesitated to turn to more coercive forms of persuasion, beginning with modest steps such as aid cuts but potentially escalating all the way up to threats of armed invasion.

Threatening the imposition of sanctions has been a regular component of U.S. policy toward Pakistan when more positive incentives have failed to produce desired behavior. Pakistan, the beneficiary of so much American largesse over the years, has also been targeted by more U.S. sanctions over a longer period of time than probably any other nominally friendly country in the world. By the end of the 1990s, Pakistan was simultaneously subject to sanctions triggered in 1990 by the Pressler amendment, additional sanctions after the 1998 nuclear tests, and still more sanctions following the Musharraf coup in 1999. Only a White House waiver allowed Islamabad to escape other sanctions required by U.S. counter-narcotics laws.

Yet sanctions once imposed often lose their fearsomeness. The threat of sanctions is intended to dissuade a country from certain actions. Once the country has taken those actions, the threat of sanctions has failed as leverage. The United States may now feel compelled to impose the sanctions (or may be legally required to do so) even though the intended purpose, to dissuade the target from taking an action, can no longer be achieved. Repeatedly over the decades, Washington found itself trapped into imposing sanctions it did not wish to impose, either to meet the requirements of U.S. law or to maintain the credibility of U.S. threats. In many instances, these sanctions proved counterproductive to the achievement of the specific goals at hand and harmful to other important American priorities.

The exercise of leverage, whether through incentives or threats, requires a well-informed, sensitive understanding of the perspectives, priorities, and political needs of the party to be leveraged. When it came to Pakistan, Americans often believed what they found convenient to believe. This misreading, sometimes willful, sometimes arrogant, of the Pakistani bottom line regularly worked to negate whatever leverage capabilities U.S. power might otherwise have possessed.

In the 1950s, U.S. officials convinced themselves that Islamabad shared their strategic judgment that international communism posed the most serious threat to world peace and regional security in South Asia. Accordingly, they brought Pakistan into a series of alliances, including SEATO and CENTO, whose purpose (for the Americans) was to block the spread of communist—that is, Soviet and Chinese—influence.

Islamabad, however, never accepted this U.S. threat assessment. For Pakistan, from the very moment of the country's creation in 1947 and up to the present, the most serious external threat lay across the border in India. Partnership with the Americans was useful only to the extent that it enabled Islamabad to guard against Indian aggression and seize Muslim-populated lands in Kashmir that were unjustly occupied by India.

Similarly, Washington never fully appreciated the depth of Pakistan's conviction, as early as the 1970s, that the only way it could deter aggression from a larger, stronger India was to develop a nuclear weapons arsenal. American officials were not blind to Pakistani efforts to acquire a nuclear weapons capability. Indeed, U.S. intelligence analysts warned that U.S. friendship would never be sufficient to induce Pakistan to abandon its nuclear program.<sup>33</sup>

Nonetheless, a succession of U.S. presidents based American policy toward Pakistan on the belief, or more accurately, the hope, that a combination of inducements and threats, rewards and sanctions would keep Pakistan from crossing certain technical red lines—such as enriching uranium above a certain level, or conducting a nuclear test—beyond which it became impossible to pretend that Pakistan was not a nuclear weapons state. By underestimating Pakistan's pervasive anxieties about India, the United States overvalued both the importance to Islamabad of American friendship and the threat of U.S. displeasure. This in turn led Washington to place unfounded confidence on the leverage American favor or disfavor conferred.

Pakistan of course was not merely a passive target of leverage attempts by the more powerful United States. To the contrary, a succession of Pakistani governments recognized the strategic value for America that their country held, and leveraged this favorable geopolitical situation to their advantage. As the historian Robert McMahon has observed of the years before 1965, Pakistan proved “extraordinarily adept in forcing the United States to respond to its agenda.” As America's “most allied ally in Asia” (as the country's first military ruler put it), Pakistan had learned “an important lesson in alliance politics: the weaker partner can often exercise considerable leverage over its stronger associate.”<sup>34</sup>

33 See, for instance, Bruce Riedel, *What We Won: America's Secret War in Afghanistan* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2014), 116.

34 Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India, and Pakistan* (New York:

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 opened yet more possibilities for Pakistan. One former Pakistani foreign secretary, reflecting on the 1980s, remembers feeling that Pakistan was “in a sense in the driving seat” with the Americans. “I used to talk then of the tail wagging the dog,” he recalled many years later—that is, his smaller country was in the unanticipated position of making demands and imposing conditions upon the far larger United States.<sup>35</sup>

Indeed, from the early years of the relationship, Pakistani governments manipulated Washington’s desire for their cooperation to deflect U.S. threats and to pry substantial benefits from the Americans. When they judged the risks of complying with U.S. wishes too great, they refused until they had extracted greater recompense. They told Washington what it wanted to hear, even while moving forward with their own plans. At times they openly defied the Americans, correctly calculating that the United States valued their cooperation too highly to impose serious punishments. And when, as with the 1998 nuclear tests, they found the cost of compliance with U.S. demands too great, they opted to accept American sanctions rather than take actions thought detrimental to their own security.<sup>36</sup>

This is not to suggest that Pakistanis were master puppeteers, pulling Washington’s strings to advance Pakistani interests. In recalling their experiences, Pakistani diplomats seldom concede that they were consciously engaged in leveraging the United States. Small states do not leverage powerful countries, they insist. From their offices in Islamabad and Rawalpindi (where the military high command was located), Pakistani leaders felt themselves continually under siege from a steady barrage of American requests and, often enough, demands. Few saw themselves playing a cleverly designed long game. To the contrary, their posture was usually reactive, fending off unwelcome U.S. advances.

Yet the fact remains that Pakistani governments rarely felt they faced no choice except to genuflect before the powerful Americans. And in their ability to resist U.S. desires and to turn their material shortcomings into diplomatic assets, they were exerting something that looks very much like leverage. Rather than meekly accepting the American diktat, Islamabad—sometimes clumsily, sometimes adroitly—insisted that Pakistan would also have a voice in the U.S.-Pakistan relationship.

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Columbia University Press, 1994), 169, 205.

<sup>35</sup> Email correspondence with the author, Feb. 11, 2017.

<sup>36</sup> I do not include the 1990 triggering of the Pressler amendment as an instance of Pakistan deliberately accepting U.S. sanctions rather than stopping actions deemed essential for its security. I am not persuaded that Islamabad believed U.S. warnings in 1990 that Washington would be compelled to invoke the Pressler amendment if Pakistan did not cap its nuclear program. Reagan and Bush administration officials had threatened this repeatedly without following through; Islamabad may simply have discounted U.S. warnings in the summer and early fall of 1990 that this time would be different.

By the autumn of 2001, the United States and Pakistan had acquired a long, sometimes productive, but deeply troubled history of interaction. In 2001 the relationship between the two countries was at one of its lowest points ever. And then, as in 1979, an earlier period of strained ties, outside events intervened once more. Out of the flames of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon arose a fresh commitment to partnership.

As they embarked upon a new alliance following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the experiences, often unhappy, of the previous half century shaped the memories and the expectations of both U.S. and Pakistani decision makers. The former, stung but not chastened by the terrorist strikes, believed more than ever in the efficacy of American power and the leverage power conferred. The latter, on the other hand, had learned that Pakistan could survive the withdrawal of American favor and the lash of U.S. displeasure. Whether these divergent lessons from half a century of history could be reconciled so as to lay the groundwork for a more constructive relationship moving forward formed one of the questions Washington and Islamabad contemplated amidst the fire and rubble of September 11.

# CHAPTER II

## ALLIANCE RESTORED

“What a difference a war makes,” marveled an Associated Press reporter in early November 2001.<sup>1</sup> Two months earlier, Pakistan had been an outcast for Washington officialdom, and Pervez Musharraf a pariah. Now Musharraf was about to receive the red carpet treatment from Washington. The Bush administration’s tough “with us or against us” ultimatum, no matter what precisely Armitage had threatened, had seemingly produced its intended effect. The Pakistani general, the *New York Times* observed in early November, had “metamorphosed, almost overnight, from an embarrassment to a man who is central to America’s hopes for victory.” He was, the *Times* declared, the “indispensable ally.”<sup>2</sup>

Nor was it only Musharraf whose standing had changed. The weeks since mid-September, analysts agreed, had witnessed an astonishing turnaround in relations between Pakistan and the United States. This “isn’t just a temporary spike in the relationship,” Secretary of State Colin Powell declared in mid-October. As a result of steps taken by Pakistan since the 9/11 attacks, “we’re truly at the beginning of a strengthened relationship, a relationship that will grow and thrive.”<sup>3</sup> “Standing with Pakistan now is the best way for the United States to root out terrorist groups and bring stability to the nation and the region,” editorialized the *New York Times* a few months later.<sup>4</sup>

Powell had ample reason to praise Pakistan and its leader. Following Musharraf’s decision, however grudging, to accede to American demands for help in punishing those responsible for 9/11, Pakistan provided the United States with an immense array of invaluable assistance. Islamabad granted

1 Greg Myre, “Once shunned, Pakistan’s military ruler expects warm reception in the West,” *Associated Press*, November 7, 2001, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/872968/Once-shunned-Pakistans-military-ruler-expects-warm-reception-in-the-West.html>.

2 John F. Burns, “Musharraf, the Indispensable Ally, Grows More Confident,” *New York Times*, Nov. 5, 2001.

3 Colin L. Powell, “Remarks with President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan,” Oct. 16, 2001, *U.S. Department of State Archive*, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2001/5392.htm>.

4 “General Musharraf’s Travails,” *New York Times*, Mar. 25, 2002.

the Americans access to Pakistani air bases and permitted the deployment on these bases of Marine combat search-and-rescue teams and U.S. airborne units. It consented to the use of Pakistani airspace in support of operations in Afghanistan. It authorized teams of U.S. Special Forces soldiers to embed with Pakistani military units in the semiautonomous tribal areas along the Afghan frontier, and acquiesced in clandestine U.S. military operations on Pakistani soil along the Pakistan-Afghan border. It promised to seal the Afghan border, so that Taliban and al Qaeda fighters would not be able to escape into the wilds of Pakistan's western tribal regions.

Nor was this all. Prior to the 9/11 attacks, Pakistan had been one of only three countries with formal ties with the Taliban, but by the end of November, it had severed diplomatic relations with its former friends. It agreed to halt fuel and other critical supplies to Afghanistan. It arrested fugitive al Qaeda members and other suspected terrorists and promised to share intelligence on al Qaeda operations. It pledged to block the use of Pakistani banks as conduits for al Qaeda funds. It permitted the U.S. FBI and CIA unprecedented freedom of operation inside Pakistan. And perhaps most importance of all, it allowed the Americans and their NATO allies to convoy via ground routes through Pakistan the huge quantities of matériel needed to sustain operations in Afghanistan.

Musharraf placed his personal imprimatur on this dramatic reversal of Pakistani policy. He fired long-time friends in the military and intelligence service whom the Americans distrusted. He ordered the arrests of senior nuclear scientists thought to harbor al Qaeda sympathies. And in a bid to assuage American sensibilities (and to dampen opposition to his one-man rule), he pledged to restore civilian government within a year.

Individually and collectively, these were consequential actions. Indeed, it is difficult to exaggerate the value Washington placed on these very tangible demonstrations of Pakistani cooperation. At this point it is impossible to judge the extent to which they were the result of Washington's stark demands in the days immediately after 9/11, rather than of a broader calculation by Musharraf of Pakistani interests. Undoubtedly both considerations were at work, pushing toward a revitalized U.S.-Pakistan partnership. In Washington, Islamabad's new willingness to do American bidding reinforced a perception already widespread in the Bush administration about the omnipotence of American power.

The Americans, however, were not the only ones who understood that the events of September 11 offered opportunities to extract benefits. Officials in Islamabad (and army headquarters in Rawalpindi) realized very quickly that the U.S. need for Pakistani assistance in Afghanistan presented them with great opportunities to exert (usually) gentle leverage on the Americans. Within weeks of the 9/11 attacks, the Pakistani finance minister visited Washington

seeking additional U.S. aid, debt relief, and reductions or elimination of U.S. tariffs and quotas on Pakistani textile exports. The minister found his American hosts broadly sympathetic; U.S. financial assistance to Pakistan rose from \$188 million in 2001 to \$2.1 billion a year later. In early 2002, Musharraf asked for a reactivation of military ties with Washington and resumption of arms transfers, including upgraded F-16s and possibly AWACS (airborne warning and control reconnaissance aircraft). He sought direct reimbursement for the military costs of supporting the war in Afghanistan. He secured UH-1 Huey helicopters and C-130 cargo planes for the Pakistani army. He lobbied against a proposed U.S. sale of new defense systems to India.

Musharraf also used Washington's new-found need for Pakistani assistance to rehabilitate his own international standing. He met with Bush at the United Nations in New York in November 2001, and was accorded a highly visible visit to Washington three months later. Standing beside the Pakistani leader at a White House press conference, Bush urged the Pakistani people to "think about the future and not dwell in the past."<sup>5</sup> Ostensibly he was reassuring Pakistan that the United States would remain engaged in the region even after the conclusion of the war in Afghanistan. He might just as well have been describing his own country's attitude toward the man who, six months earlier, had been *persona non grata* in Washington.

An elated Bush administration moved quickly to solidify Pakistan's position as a full-fledged partner in the war on terror. The administration, with bipartisan congressional support, lifted the whole array of sanctions that had been placed on Pakistan since 1990, and announced a robust new program of debt relief and financial assistance. U.S. aid to Pakistan in the year after 9/11 rose by a factor of ten. Over the next seven years, through the end of the Bush presidency, openly acknowledged U.S. assistance to Pakistan totaled \$5.6 billion.<sup>6</sup> Included in this figure was \$2.4 billion in direct cash transfers to the Pakistani government for budget support to pay down the country's debt, and \$963 million in development assistance, food aid, humanitarian aid, and other economic-related assistance, including a widely praised response to a devastating earthquake in October 2005.<sup>7</sup>

Pakistan's military establishment also profited from the new American connection. The Bush administration ultimately provided Pakistan with \$2.2 billion in foreign military financing and other security-related aid. In addition,

5 Bush news conference with President Musharraf, Feb. 13, 2002, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=63820>.

6 This figure does not include Coalition Support Fund payments, which are discussed below. By way of comparison, between 1952, when the United States first provided \$11 million in economic assistance to Pakistan, and September 2001, U.S. economic and military aid to Pakistan totaled \$11.85 billion.

7 These totals do not include classified transfers, which were, by most estimates, also extraordinarily large by historical measures.



the Pentagon established a Coalition Support Fund (CSF) whose ostensible purpose was to reimburse the Pakistan army for expenses incurred in the joint fight against terrorists, but whose accounting procedures were so flexible that the program served as something of an open-ended faucet for the army. In the seven years after 9/11, the Pakistani military garnered an additional \$6.7 billion under this program. In 2004, the administration named Pakistan a “major non-NATO ally,” thereby making Islamabad eligible for privileged treatment in arms purchases and other Pentagon programs. And it resumed arms sales to Pakistan, seldom distinguishing between equipment useful for counterterrorism and items of limited utility in the war against al Qaeda but of considerable utility against India.

Washington’s decision to resume sales of F-16s to Islamabad aptly demonstrated the open-ended nature of the post-9/11 partnership. For Pakistan, the F-16s, once the source of great pride to the average Pakistani, had come to symbolize American perfidy and unreliability. The Bush administration’s decision to make the warplanes available once again was greeted in Pakistan not only with huge satisfaction, but also as confirmation that the country had been badly used by earlier U.S. administrations. Washington officials made half-hearted efforts to link the new sales to the war on terror, notwithstanding credible reports suggesting that Pakistan had reconfigured some of its existing F-16s to make them nuclear-capable. New Delhi, unsurprisingly, warned that Islamabad had potential targets other than al Qaeda in mind.

The Bush administration also continued to provide political cover for Musharraf’s personalized rule. Having feted the general during his visit to Washington in February 2002, it winked at a sham referendum two months later that gave a legal veneer to Musharraf’s claims on the presidency for another five years, and which he won with a reported 98 percent of the vote. Asked in August 2002 about Musharraf’s inroads into the Pakistani constitution, Bush replied: “My reaction about President Musharraf, he’s still tight with us on the war against terror, and that’s what I appreciate.”<sup>8</sup> While U.S. officials consistently spoke of their hopes that Pakistan would soon return to a more democratic form of governance, they appeared entirely comfortable with pretty words but few actions from Musharraf.

Not even intelligence detailing Pakistan’s continued commerce in nuclear and missile technology with North Korea—a member of Bush’s “axis of evil”—could derail the administration’s courtship of Musharraf. Under U.S. law, the administration was required to suspend economic and military assistance to any country transferring nuclear enrichment technology without full international safeguards. U.S. intelligence was unequivocal in reporting that Pakistan had

8 Office of the White House Press Secretary, “President Tours Area Damaged by Squires Fire,” Aug. 22, 2002, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/08/text/20020822-1.html>.

engaged in such exchanges with North Korea long after administration claims that Islamabad had halted such practices after 9/11.

In early 2004, credible press reporting revealed that A.Q. Khan, the nuclear engineer lionized in Pakistan as the father of the country's atomic bomb, had been transferring nuclear technology and know-how not just to North Korea, but to Libya and Iran. The response by the Bush administration illustrated just how far it was prepared to go to avoid rocking the partnership. Administration spokesmen dismissed the logical conclusion that Khan could have acted only with the knowledge and connivance of Pakistan's military and intelligence agencies. Instead, Washington allowed Musharraf to deal with Khan as he saw fit. Following a staged confession by Khan, Musharraf pardoned the nuclear engineer. U.S. requests to question Khan directly were rebuffed; all American inquiries were routed through Pakistani intermediaries, who then decided how much to reveal to the Americans.

Asked why Washington had not responded more forcefully to the revelations of Khan's misdeeds, Paul Wolfowitz, the deputy secretary of defense and one of Bush's senior advisers on security issues, explained that the administration believed that the Khan affair "gives us more leverage" over Pakistan. Specifically, it would strengthen Washington's hand in insisting that Islamabad step up its hunt for al Qaeda fighters hiding in Pakistan. Moreover, Wolfowitz continued, the Khan debacle might also help Musharraf prevail against domestic opponents who were not eager to crack down on al Qaeda. "The international community is prepared to accept Musharraf's pardoning of Khan for all that he has done, but clearly it is a kind of IOU, and in return for that there has to really be a thorough accounting. Beyond that understanding, we expect an even higher level of cooperation on the al Qaeda front than we have had to date."<sup>9</sup>

Wolfowitz's expectations about the leverage Khan's proliferation might provide proved unfounded. Washington never received the "thorough accounting" of Khan's activities Wolfowitz called for, nor the "even higher level of cooperation" against al Qaeda. Nonetheless, administration spokesmen continued to defend their Pakistani ally. Musharraf, one State Department official claimed a few years later, had a "superb record addressing the legacy" of the Khan network.<sup>10</sup> Many outside analysts found this patent nonsense.

In all these ways and others, the events of September 11, 2001, transformed the nature of U.S.-Pakistan relations in a fashion that would have been unfathomable before the attacks. In 2006, the two countries celebrated the

9 Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (New York: Viking, 2008), 289-290.

10 Stephen Graham, "U.S. Seeks to Alter Pakistan-Terror Bill," *Associated Press*, Jan. 26, 2007, <https://defence.pk/pdf/threads/u-s-seeks-to-alter-pakistan-terror-bill.3715/>.

sweeping turnaround in relations by declaring the existence of a “strategic partnership” linking Islamabad and Washington. The estrangement and diplomatic dead-end of the 1990s had become a relic of the past—or so both sides claimed. In this, they were seriously in error.

### *Differing agendas in Afghanistan*

Afghanistan provided not only the reason for the resurrection of the U.S.-Pakistan alliance in 2001, but also the most serious impediment to the realization of the hopes occasioned by that renewed alliance. Pakistan was the first to question the benefits of the new partnership. Almost from the moment U.S. forces and paramilitary operators entered Afghanistan in October 2001, things went badly for Islamabad. Washington had promised Pakistan that the United States would not allow Kabul to be captured by the Northern Alliance—the anti-Taliban group whom the Americans had aided for several years, but which Rawalpindi considered an Indian ally and therefore inimical to Pakistani interests. Yet, by mid-November, the Northern Alliance was in Kabul. The result, in the eyes of senior Pakistanis, was a “strategic debacle” raising the specter of Pakistan finding itself sandwiched between two hostile neighbors. “Pakistan’s worst nightmare has come true,” ISI officials darkly commented.<sup>11</sup>

Other developments in the early months after 9/11 suggested that Pakistan and the United States did not share a common vision for the new struggle against terrorism. Islamabad initially resisted the Bush administration’s insistence that Pakistan turn its back on the Taliban. An entire generation of Pakistanis, after all, had been taught to regard the Taliban as Islamic heroes. While pledging “full support” in the hunt for the 9/11 terrorists, Musharraf’s spokesman stated a few days after the attacks, Pakistan would “continue to act in conformity with its support of the state of Afghanistan”—i.e., its Taliban rulers.<sup>12</sup> Islamabad also insisted that it would not wage war outside its borders and avoided any public promises of military support for U.S. operations in Afghanistan. While rounding up hundreds of al Qaeda fighters and other extremists, Islamabad also seemed incapable of or uninterested in closing the escape routes that permitted many al Qaeda and Taliban to escape the American dragnet.

As the years unfolded and, after 2004, the military situation in Afghanistan deteriorated, it became increasingly difficult to pretend that the United States and Pakistan were fighting the same enemy. By then, it was indisputable (at least to Washington) that Taliban and al Qaeda fighters who were battling—and killing—NATO soldiers in Afghanistan enjoyed virtually unhampered sanctuary in Pakistan’s tribal areas (collectively known as FATA, or Federally Administered

11 Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 87; Susan B. Glasser and Kamran Khan, “Alliance’s Rise Catches Pakistan Off-Guard,” *Washington Post*, Nov. 21, 2001.

12 John F. Burns, “Pakistan’s Antiterror Support Avoids Vow of Military Aid,” *New York Times*, Sept. 16, 2001.

Tribal Areas) and were allowed to pass freely back and forth across the Afghan border. The Taliban leadership lived securely, even openly, in Quetta, the capital of Pakistan's Baluchistan province. U.S. officials claimed to have credible intelligence that the ISI provided al Qaeda and the Taliban with money, arms, and logistical support, as well as safe havens in FATA.

Bush administration officials repeatedly urged Pakistan to act more vigorously to deny sanctuary to Taliban and al Qaeda fighters who passed with impunity back and forth across the Afghan border. Islamabad refused. To do so, it feared, would invite retribution upon Pakistan from its own extremist elements. Instead, the Pakistani military periodically negotiated peace accords with tribal militants that, Americans claimed, allowed Taliban forces to regroup and retrain. In early 2007, the U.S. director of national intelligence warned that al Qaeda members hiding in Pakistan could be plotting an attack on the United States.

In retrospect, it seems clear that the cumulative impact of nearly limitless American support for the Pakistani military and government undercut Washington's pleas for more effective action against al Qaeda and the Taliban. By the end of the Bush presidency, most Americans found a gaping disconnect between the strong backing and abundant assistance Washington had provided Islamabad since 9/11, and the benefits the United States had received from Pakistan in return.

Why, Americans in growing numbers asked, was Washington so unsuccessful in persuading, or compelling, Pakistan to live up to its end of the bargain struck in the days after the Twin Towers fell? Why hadn't billions of American dollars bought Pakistani cooperation? It was not simply that Pakistan was defying the United States. Worse, the blood of American soldiers in Afghanistan was on Pakistani hands. Why couldn't the United States, with all its might, get the Pakistanis to do what, after all, was so patently in their own interests? Where was the leverage of U.S. power?

### *The rift becomes public*

As the fighting in Afghanistan stretched on year after year, agitated American lawmakers increasingly questioned whether Washington had blundered by providing Pakistan with such liberality. More and more voices on Capitol Hill

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threatened to close the spigot of U.S. aid unless Islamabad moved to prevent al Qaeda and the Taliban from operating on Pakistani soil. Particularly galling to the legislators was the fact that the Pentagon was paying the Pakistan military tens of millions of dollars each month, supposedly to reimburse the costs of Pakistani military operations against the Taliban, even as Rawalpindi was negotiating truces with the militants.

In February 2007, as congressional unhappiness mounted, an alarmed White House sent Vice President Dick Cheney to Islamabad to urge Musharraf to act with greater dispatch against al Qaeda and the Taliban. Unless Islamabad stepped up its military pressure on the militants, Cheney warned (employing a good cop, bad cop tactic used by all U.S. presidents), Congress could move to cut military payments to Pakistan. Musharraf parried Cheney's demands by claiming that Pakistan was the victim of Afghan-based terrorism, not its cause. The solution to Afghanistan's problems, the president asserted, lay solely within that country, not in Pakistan.<sup>13</sup>

Publicly, the Pakistani response was less restrained. "Pakistan does not accept dictation from any side or any source," a foreign ministry spokesman pointedly declared in the wake of Cheney's visit.<sup>14</sup> The National Assembly's Standing Committee on Defense unanimously passed a resolution demanding a reduction or complete halt in counterterrorism cooperation with the United States if the U.S. Congress followed through on its threats to make military aid conditional. No Pakistani government could submit to public demands of this nature and stay in office, Pakistanis privately informed the Americans. Pakistani analysts darkly warned that congressional pressure on Islamabad to go after the Taliban reflected India's increased influence on Capitol Hill.

Showing it too could play the public relations game, Pakistan periodically responded to U.S. pressure by rounding up militants. Just hours after Cheney departed Islamabad, Pakistani authorities arrested a senior Taliban leader in Quetta. Pakistani officials no doubt calculated that this would win them gratitude in Washington and take some of the heat off Islamabad. To the contrary, for many Americans the arrest merely confirmed their belief that Pakistan could move more vigorously against the Taliban leadership based in Pakistan. Rather than demonstrating Pakistan's commitment to the counterterrorism partnership, it showed how meaningless were past Pakistani claims that it was doing all it could.

Here as elsewhere, U.S. efforts to use the carrot of American assistance to

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13 Pakistan's foreign minister has written of the Musharraf-Cheney meeting in Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, *Neither a Hawk Nor a Dove: An Insider's Account of Pakistan's Foreign Relations Including Details of the Kashmir Framework* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2015), 649-650.

14 David E. Sanger, "Cheney Warns Pakistan to Act Against Terrorists," *New York Times*, Feb. 27, 2007.

elicit greater assistance in the struggle against terrorism ran afoul of the fierce nationalism most Pakistanis felt when presented with what looked like U.S. bullying. The more the United States pressed, the more Pakistan resisted. “We are already standing on our head,” Pakistan’s ambassador in Washington complained in the midst of the 2007 talk about conditioning U.S. assistance. The Americans “should not blame us for their failures.”<sup>15</sup>

The notion that Washington was scapegoating Pakistan for its own lack of success in Afghanistan found broad acceptance in Pakistan and further served to dilute the impact of American pressure. Islamabad protested that it was hardly to blame for the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan. The United States had dropped the ball ever since 2001, not least in allowing itself to become distracted by a conflict in Iraq that sapped resources and the attention of senior U.S. policymakers. The U.S.-created government in Kabul, Pakistanis asserted, had shown itself singularly ineffectual in providing stability, establishing a political regime that would gain the loyalty of the Afghan people, or laying the groundwork for a thriving economy.

The widely held belief that the United States was responsible for the worsening situation in Afghanistan made it even less likely that Musharraf and his successors would defy Pakistani opinion or allow themselves to be seen bowing to U.S. demands. Most Pakistanis disapproved of America’s war in Afghanistan (and even more, of the U.S. invasion of Iraq). Pakistan itself, it was commonly thought, had become the victim of the war in Afghanistan; the rising tide of terrorism in Pakistan, they believed, was a direct outgrowth of U.S. military operations across the border. Many Pakistanis carried this logic train one step farther: Washington’s antiterrorism agenda merely masked a plot to seize Pakistan’s prized nuclear assets. Why, Pakistanis more and more asked as the fighting in Afghanistan dragged on, should they be expected to fight America’s war?

Always so conscious of their own domestic opinion, U.S. policymakers did not always pay adequate heed to the domestic constraints faced by their counterparts in Islamabad because of America’s growing unpopularity in Pakistan. By downplaying the political climate in Pakistan, Washington decision makers got less leverage than they thought they ought to have.

### *The ever-present India factor*

And always, looming large in the minds of Pakistani policy makers and analysts, stood India. Bush’s close Afghan ally, President Hamid Karzai, publicly courted India in a manner that was certain to alarm and antagonize Islamabad.

15 Ambassador Mahmud Ali Durrani, quoted in Anwar Iqbal, “US legislation seeks ban on assistance to Pakistan,” *Dawn*, Jan. 25, 2007.

Convinced that the United States would eventually tire of Afghanistan and once again withdraw from the region, the Pakistani military and intelligence services regarded many of the groups Washington deemed “terrorists” as necessary hedges in the inevitable renewed competition with India for influence in Afghanistan once the Americans departed. Pakistani anxieties about India jumped exponentially when the Bush administration negotiated a civil nuclear energy agreement with New Delhi that seemed to accept India (but not Pakistan) as a legitimate nuclear weapons state. The nuclear deal served to emphasize Pakistan’s isolation and gave it even more reason to make certain that Afghanistan did not also become an outpost of Indian influence.

Indeed, from the very beginning of the resurrected U.S.-Pakistan relationship, developments related to India had demonstrated the limits of that partnership. Only three months after 9/11, a suicide attack on the Indian parliament carried out by extremist groups based in Pakistan killed nine Indians and very nearly took the lives of senior Indian politicians.<sup>16</sup> New Delhi attributed the attack to groups supported by, if not acting directly on orders from, Pakistan’s ISI. Following the Parliament House attack, Indo-Pakistani tensions rapidly spiraled upward. Both sides mobilized troops along their common border and for a time in the spring of 2002, full-scale war between these two nuclear-armed states struck many as a serious possibility.

Aside from the risk of history’s first war between two nuclear-armed states, Bush administration officials found this crisis singularly ill-timed, inasmuch as it drew Islamabad’s attention away from the Afghan border and diverted Pakistani military resources that could have been used to block the escape from Afghanistan of Taliban and al Qaeda fighters. Washington revved up an active preventive diplomacy with both South Asian countries while pressing Musharraf to make a clean break with extremist groups. Pakistan took tentative steps in that direction, leading Bush’s national security advisor, Condoleezza Rice, to report that Islamabad was “buckling under U.S. pressure.”<sup>17</sup>

U.S. diplomacy probably contributed to the ultimately peaceful resolution of the crisis, an accomplishment of considerable importance. But Rice was premature in claiming success in persuading Islamabad to renounce terror. The attack on Parliament House served notice, and subsequent events would confirm, that the ISI, if not Musharraf himself, was not yet prepared to abandon terrorism as an instrument of state policy.

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<sup>16</sup> Some months later, a senior U.S. military officer based in Islamabad reported that Pakistani general officers, without exception, believed that the Indian intelligence service had staged the attack on Parliament House. This belief, which seems highly unlikely to an outsider, suggests the extent of the distrust that handicapped those Pakistanis who hoped for a less adversarial relationship with India. Private discussion with the author, July 2002.

<sup>17</sup> Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2011), 125.

An even more egregious attack on the Indian commercial capital of Mumbai in November 2008, taking the lives of 166 people (including 6 Americans), raised the issue of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism to new heights. India—which viewed this attack as its own 9/11—claimed to possess compelling evidence that the attack was carried out by Lashkar-e-Taiba, a Pakistani group with long-standing ties to the ISI. Washington provided the Indians with U.S. intelligence data that substantiated these claims. In discussing the attack, U.S. officials described India as a victim of terrorism and Pakistan as its perpetrator. Pakistan’s already vastly diminished store of good will toward the United States dropped further.

India provides the best one-word answer as to why Washington and Islamabad found themselves at cross purposes on Afghanistan. Even after enlisting with the Americans post-9/11, Islamabad and Rawalpindi viewed continued ties to the Taliban as a hedge against the uncertainty that could follow the inevitable withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan. For senior Pakistani decision makers, the army above all, the Taliban were not a threat. They were an insurance policy, since an Afghanistan governed by the Taliban was not likely to come under the influence of India.

Washington’s vision for Afghanistan failed to make adequate provision for the extent to which Pakistan believed it needed to ensure that whoever governed in Kabul would not pursue policies hostile to Pakistani interests, nor be too open to Indian influence. Because of this failure, the Bush administration was slow to admit that Islamabad did not share its view of the Afghan Taliban as a threat (and a human rights disaster) that had to be eliminated. Long after denial became difficult, Washington resisted the policy implications of concluding that the Pakistani military and intelligence services were providing the Taliban with sanctuaries and other essential protection. Failing to fully take the Pakistani obsession about India into account, the administration wanted to believe in a Pakistani partnership against a common foe that Islamabad never bought into. As the *New York Times*’ David Sanger would observe, “the Pakistanis were not fooling Washington. Washington was fooling itself.”<sup>18</sup>

### *The growing threat within*

Fear of domestic blowback also worked to keep Islamabad from moving against the Taliban. Even before 9/11, Pakistan had discovered that it was not immune from the terrorism of the extremist groups it hosted and in many respects fostered. By the middle of the first decade of the new century, suicide bombings and mindless violence had become increasingly common in the settled (non-tribal) areas of Pakistan. Terrorist attacks took the lives of 3,598 Pakistanis in

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<sup>18</sup> David E. Sanger, *The Inheritance: The World Obama Confronts and the Challenges to American Power* (New York: Harmony Books, 2009), 262.



2007, 6,715 a year later.<sup>19</sup> Armed groups spouting Islamist rhetoric, some with links to al Qaeda, seemed to operate at will over large portions of the country. Journalists and other analysts spoke ominously of a “creeping Talibanization” of Pakistan.

Complicating the domestic situation further, Pakistan hosted three million Afghan refugees, perhaps more, most of whom had fled the invading Soviets in the early 1980s. For a quarter century these refugees had lived on the margins of Pakistani society, tolerated but seldom welcomed. Moving against their Pashtun kinsmen in the Taliban as the Americans wanted, Islamabad worried, would be certain to inflame the deeply conservative refugees and unleash more extremist violence in Pakistan. It would be utterly foolhardy to antagonize the country’s refugee population and its other Islamists simply to placate the United States.

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**Pakistanis rightly claimed that rising domestic extremism was first of all a threat to Pakistan.**

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Pakistanis rightly claimed that rising domestic extremism was first of all a threat to Pakistan. Musharraf, who twice narrowly escaped assassination attempts by these groups, regularly condemned extremist violence and pledged that Pakistan would be a tolerant, progressive Islamic state marked by religious diversity and secular education. His government detained thousands of suspected militants, banned extremist groups, froze bank accounts linked to their activities, and pledged “reform” of religious schools to ensure that they did not foment jihadism.

Yet the threat posed by domestic extremism remained untamed and often even unchallenged. The authorities would arrest militants, only to set them free after claiming credit for the arrests. The government banned extremist groups, then turned a blind eye as they reconstituted themselves under different names. While Musharraf (and his successors) would periodically promise to rid the madrassahs of extremism, they backed down from even modest steps at the first sign of pushback. Islamabad continued its long-standing support for extremist groups infiltrating into India-administered Kashmir and refused to dismantle jihadist camps in the Pakistani portion of Kashmir. Musharraf himself worked tirelessly to marginalize the mainstream secular political parties, thereby opening the door to religious parties that frequently sympathized with the extremists.

With the advantage of hindsight, many Pakistanis today would concede that

<sup>19</sup> “Fatalities in Terrorist Violence in Pakistan 2003-2017,” *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, last updated Apr. 23, 2017, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/casualties.htm>. Americans got a taste of this new danger as early as January 2002, when Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl was kidnapped in Karachi and murdered by Pakistani extremists with long-standing links to the ISI. Less than two months later, an American diplomat and her daughter were killed in a Protestant church bombing in Islamabad.

this coddling of domestic extremism was a serious blunder. But at the time, the lure of partnering with individuals and groups prepared to take up the gun proved too powerful for the Pakistani security establishment to resist. The India-focused militant groups in particular, such as Lashkar-e-Taiba, were viewed as “force multipliers”—and equally importantly, deniable assets—in the all-consuming rivalry with India, a consideration that rose in importance as Pakistan continued to fall behind in its ability to compete with India. This embrace of terrorists and terrorism proved a huge miscalculation for which Pakistanis continue to pay a steep price.

### *The democracy irritant*

As the decade unfolded, the popular approval which Musharraf had enjoyed in the early years of his rule dissipated. Large numbers of Pakistanis came to oppose what they saw as a despotic regime, and many concluded that the only reason why the general remained in power was because the United States was propping him up.

There was some justification for this conclusion, even though it vastly overstated the extent of America’s influence in Pakistan. In the rosy early days of the renewed partnership post-9/11, Musharraf had skillfully manipulated American opinion, saying the right things about democracy and promising to hold elections within a year—a promise he upheld. Following the shocking (to Americans at any rate, but also to many Pakistanis) gains of Islamic parties sympathetic to the Taliban in the October 2002 elections, the secular-minded Musharraf seemed even more attractive to the Bush administration, which came to view him as a barrier to the continued rise of Islamist radicalism.<sup>20</sup>

The Bush administration, however, was hardly alone in tolerating Musharraf’s steady inroads into Pakistan’s weak democratic ethos. The normally skeptical *Washington Post* counselled that Musharraf was a suitable partner for America. In December 2001, a scant two weeks after the attack on India’s parliament by Pakistan-based militants, the *Post’s* lead editorial asserted that Musharraf was “the only Pakistani leader who may be able to decisively end the creeping entanglement of the country’s military and political institutions with Islamic extremists.”<sup>21</sup> Musharraf might be a flawed instrument, this line of reasoning ran, but he still represented the best available option in Pakistan.

Six months later, the *New York Times* editorialized that the United States had “an incalculable interest in maintaining friendship with Pakistan at this delicate

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20 Few Americans understood that U.S. military action against the Taliban, so utterly justified in American eyes but hugely unpopular among Pakistanis, garnered votes for the Islamists, who were the most vocal critics in Pakistan of America’s war in Afghanistan.

21 “Face-Off in South Asia,” *Washington Post*, Dec. 30, 2001.

moment.” Washington, it argued, had “no more important ally” in the war against terrorism. Only after establishing the indispensability of a supportive government in Islamabad did the *Times* then urge Musharraf to take steps in the direction of democracy and civilian rule, “as the best guarantor of stability and popular support for the alliance with the United States.”<sup>22</sup> This was hardly a principled, fall-on-your-sword declaration for democracy.

The idea that Musharraf was America’s “indispensable” partner appeared in a *New York Times* story as early as November 2001.<sup>23</sup> In the following years, this refrain was repeated countless times, until even senior administration officials embraced the term.<sup>24</sup> They did so out of conviction as much as calculation, since the administration saw Musharraf as its best bet for the successful prosecution of the war on terror. Administration officials also came to believe that they could not afford to see Musharraf fail, lest others less moderate and less secular take power, perhaps even assume control over Pakistan’s nuclear assets.

There were other reasons for playing on the general’s vanities. The often peremptory nature of American demands repeatedly affronted Musharraf’s dignity. Accustomed to command, he did not much care for being commanded, even if he frequently ignored Washington’s wishes. At one point late in 2007, obviously irritated by American harping on democracy, Musharraf upbraided foreign diplomats attending the ceremony marking his being sworn in to a new presidential term. “There is an unrealistic or even impractical obsession with your form of democracy, human rights and civil liberties,” he lectured. “We want democracy; I am for democracy. . . . [B]ut we will do it our way.”<sup>25</sup> Publicly lauding the prickly Musharraf as indispensable must have seemed in Washington small enough price to pay to retain his cooperation.

U.S. hesitancy to push Musharraf harder on issues of democracy also stemmed from the obvious failures of Pakistani democracy in the past. Each of Pakistan’s two principal civilian political parties had ruled the country twice in the 1990s, and each had failed miserably in providing good governance. No one in Washington wanted a return to the instability and misrule that existed prior to Musharraf’s coup in 1999. Supporting the general seemed reasonable when set against the available alternatives.

Finally, Bush aides recall that the U.S. president felt a strong personal loyalty to Musharraf. “When America needed Pakistan, Musharraf was there,” Bush told his staff at one point.<sup>26</sup> Surely it would be unconscionable to repay Musharraf

22 “Political Quicksand in Pakistan,” *New York Times*, July 3, 2002.

23 John F. Burns, “Musharraf, the Indispensable Ally, Grows More Confident,” *New York Times*, Nov. 5, 2001.

24 See, for instance, the comment of Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns, in Reuters, “Musharraf dismayed at U.S. condition on Pakistan aid,” Aug. 7, 2007, <http://in.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-28864920070807>.

25 Carlotta Gall, “Musharraf Defends Actions After Taking Oath,” *New York Times*, Nov. 30, 2007.

26 As recounted by Shirin Tahir-Kheli, who staffed Bush’s National Security Council, in public remarks on Apr. 13,

for his support by pushing him to make too many concessions to his domestic opponents.

Yet linking America's agenda with Musharraf's held unfortunate consequences. By identifying the general rather than the nation of Pakistan as America's ally, Washington alienated the millions of Pakistanis who came to oppose the Pakistani leader. The more his domestic political support eroded, the more administration officials felt the need to tout his virtues. "President Musharraf had done superb work for establishing a frame-work for holding free and fair elections," one State Department official declared in early 2007, even as domestic dissatisfaction with Musharraf's rule was more and more apparent.<sup>27</sup> Two months later, after Musharraf's suspension of the nation's popular chief justice had resulted in the police using force against large-scale protests, the State Department spokesman blandly declared that Musharraf was "acting in the best interest of Pakistan and the Pakistani people. He is . . . a Pakistani patriot and is going to act in the best interest of Pakistan."<sup>28</sup> It probably did not seem that way to those on the receiving end of police batons.

It is neither fair nor accurate to say that the Bush administration was indifferent to democracy in Pakistan. In November 2007, for instance, after Musharraf imposed emergency rule and suspended the constitution, the U.S. president telephoned the Pakistani general and, according to U.S. press reports, "bluntly told him that he had to return Pakistan to civilian rule, hold elections and step down as chief of the military." Bush himself publicly described the phone call like this: "My message was that we believe strongly in elections, and that you ought to have elections soon and you need to take off your uniform."<sup>29</sup>

But in fact the Bush administration, for which the war on terrorism trumped all other concerns, did not attempt very strenuously to push Musharraf toward a more democratic political dispensation. The very same day that Bush telephoned Musharraf to urge a return to civilian rule, the deputy secretary of state, John D. Negroponte, repeated the refrain that Musharraf was an "indispensable" ally. The general, Negroponte told a congressional panel, had made Pakistan a "more moderate, more prosperous partner" that shared "most basic strategic imperatives" with the United States.<sup>30</sup> A White House spokesperson further diluted Bush's message to Musharraf. While the administration believed that the Pakistani leader had "made a mistake," she

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2017, Washington, DC.

27 Associated Press of Pakistan, "US fully supports President Musharraf's efforts against terrorism: American official," Jan. 26, 2007, [http://www.app.com.pk/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=2851&Itemid=2](http://www.app.com.pk/en/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2851&Itemid=2).

28 Sean McCormack, "Daily Press Briefing," Mar. 16, 2007, U.S. Department of State Archive, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2007/mar/81838.htm>.

29 David Rohde, "U.S. Prods Musharraf to End Emergency Rule," *New York Times*, Nov. 8, 2007.

30 Robin Wright, "Bush Pushes Pakistan's Musharraf to Give Up Military Leadership," *Washington Post*, Nov. 8, 2007.

explained, the administration had to “make sure that we do not undermine any of our counter-terrorism efforts. . . . Pakistan is a country where extremists . . . are trying to take hold and have a safe haven, and we had to deny them that.”<sup>31</sup>

A few days later, Bush and his secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, offered what the *Washington Post* characterized as “their most extensive defense” to date of Musharraf’s value as an ally, lauding Musharraf’s efforts to promote democracy and fight terrorism. The United States, Rice asserted, must “remain engaged” or risk greater extremism in Pakistan.<sup>32</sup> Not long afterwards, Bush told reporters that Musharraf “truly is someone who believes in democracy.”<sup>33</sup> It was hardly surprising, then, that the typical Pakistani concluded that the United States cared little for democracy in Pakistan, or for anything other than its own agenda.

Indeed, polls consistently showed that a vast majority of the Pakistani people held negative views of the United States. Polling in 2007 by the respected Pew Research Center revealed that 68 percent of Pakistanis held an unfavorable opinion of the United States—a total surpassed only in Turkey and the Palestinian territories—while barely 15 percent viewed America favorably.<sup>34</sup> Under these circumstances, it was not surprising that few Pakistanis were eager to be closely identified with American policies. As the Bush administration headed into its eighth and final year, the hopes kindled by the 9/11 attacks for a revitalized alliance between Islamabad and Washington lay in wreckage. Both sides continued to pay lip service to the partnership, but neither side believed in it any more.

As in earlier periods of the U.S.-Pakistan relationship, American expectations that U.S. friendship and support, backed by the leverage conferred by American power, would buy cooperation and even gratitude proved illusory. Pakistan, for all the inducements Washington offered, remained an unsatisfactory partner in the fight against al Qaeda and its Taliban allies. The United States had become a toxic brand for many Pakistanis.

But of course Pakistanis, even those inclined to be well disposed toward the United States, had their own disappointments. Why was America so ungrateful? Why couldn’t it understand the frightful price Pakistan was paying for America’s war in Afghanistan? Why were the Americans always harping on Pakistan to do more? And why had Washington, in defiance of its professed ideals as well as the aspirations of most Pakistanis, propped up a military regime that was broadly despised in Pakistan?

31 Anwar Iqbal, “US patience not never-ending,” *Dawn*, Nov. 8, 2007.

32 Michael Abramowitz, “Bush, Rice Defend Musharraf as an Ally,” *Washington Post*, Nov. 11, 2007.

33 Jay Solomon and Peter Wonacott, “Pakistan Alerted U.S. It Planned Emergency Rule,” *Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 23, 2007.

34 Pew Global Attitudes Project, “Global Unease With Major World Powers,” June 27, 2007, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2007/06/27/global-unease-with-major-world-powers/>.

To compare the grievances widely nursed in each country is to see how little seven years of putative partnership had done to close the gap between the two countries.

### *Reverse leverage*

An old saying cautions that if you want something bad, you'll get something bad. Stated more grammatically, in the post-9/11 environment, Bush and his senior officials believed that success in Afghanistan required Islamabad's cooperation because of Pakistan's geographic position next door to Afghanistan. The priority Washington gave to punishing those responsible for the 9/11 attacks, coupled with the conviction that it needed Pakistan in this task, often left administration officials with few options other than to tolerate Pakistani behavior that the United States found duplicitous and dangerous to the success of its Afghan project. Washington could push Islamabad only so far on the imperfect nature of its cooperation against al Qaeda and the Taliban. For its part, Pakistan, recognizing the high priority the United States accorded Afghanistan, felt free to ignore American requests that seemed inimical to its own interests.

As Musharraf makes clear in his memoirs, he had no illusions about the relative power balance between his country and America; by virtually every measure, the United States outstripped Pakistan in power. And yet Islamabad frequently displayed a confidence that belied this imbalance. In an extraordinary tirade aimed at both the United States and its United Kingdom ally during a 2006 BBC interview, Musharraf made no attempt to hide his view that Pakistan enjoyed the upper hand. "You'll be brought down to your knees if Pakistan doesn't co-operate with you. That is all that I would like to say. Pakistan is the main ally. If we were not with you, you won't manage anything. Let that be clear. And if ISI is not with you, you will fail."<sup>35</sup> We can dismiss some of this as the bluster of a proud man humiliated by his country's relative powerlessness. Even so, Musharraf's outburst also demonstrates how America's need for Pakistani cooperation allowed the weaker country to outmaneuver the far stronger United States, and why the United States so often failed to turn its power into leverage over Pakistan.

Geography may not be destiny, but in the years after 9/11 (as in the 1980s, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan), Pakistani geography negated American muscle, and gave Islamabad what some scholars have called "reverse leverage" over the far stronger United States.<sup>36</sup> America's perceived need for Pakistan's assistance made the superpower hostage to a far less powerful

35 BBC, "West 'will fail' without Pakistan," Sept. 30, 2006, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/5394278.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/5394278.stm); Barbara Elias, "America's Missing Leverage in Afghanistan and Pakistan: a structural analysis," *Third World Quarterly* 34:8 (2013): 1398.

36 See, for example, T.V. Paul, "Influence Through Arms Transfers," *Asian Survey* 32:12 (Dec. 1992): 1091.

Islamabad. The U.S. ambassador to Pakistan, reflecting views common in Washington by the end of the Bush era, candidly noted in 2009 that the relationship between the two ostensible allies “is one of co-dependency. . . . Pakistan knows the U.S. cannot afford to walk away; the U.S. knows Pakistan cannot survive without our support.”<sup>37</sup>

True, the United States, so long as it remained enmeshed in war in Afghanistan, could not simply walk away from its frustrating partner. Yet the American diplomat erred in thinking that Pakistan’s survival depended upon continued American assistance or support. For Pakistani governments from at least Zia’s day, U.S. foreign assistance, military sales, debt relief, and the numerous other benefits that flowed from American favor were welcome but not essential, prizes worth working to acquire, but not at any price. Washington’s inability to recognize this reality repeatedly led U.S. decision makers to overestimate the leverage their power gave them.

### *Face to face with a wolf*

Leverage may be a function of power, but successful leverage rests on reputation as well as on standard calculations of national might. Officials of the Bush administration understood the necessity of repairing the unfavorable American image that had been the norm in Pakistan throughout the 1990s, and devoted considerable effort and expense toward this end. Yet eight years later, the American brand in Pakistan was even more tarnished, an unhappy fact that goes far in explaining why Washington failed in leveraging its power into influence.

To a substantial degree, the Bush administration had itself to blame for this failure; many of the wounds to the American image in Pakistan were self-inflicted. The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, justified in official Washington as the logical next step in the war on terrorism, seemed anything but that to most people in Pakistan. To the contrary, Pakistanis of all political persuasions viewed the Iraq intervention as part of America’s war against Islam, evidence of the antipathy toward Islam and Muslims said to be endemic in the United States. Reports of secret renditions and “black” detention centers holding Muslims, the imprisonment of hundreds of Muslims (including many Pakistani citizens) at Guantanamo, tales of waterboarding and other forms of torture, and shocking photographs of the mistreatment of detainees at Abu Ghraib reinforced this image of an America implacably hostile to Muslims.

Pakistanis were further alarmed by Bush administration arguments justifying pre-emptive strikes and preventive war against nations armed (or even potentially armed) with nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons. Might

<sup>37</sup> Karin Brulliard, “In WikiLeaks cables from Pakistan, U.S. officials struggle for leverage,” *Washington Post*, Dec. 7, 2010.

not such doctrines be used one day to justify U.S. action against Pakistan's own nuclear arsenal? Worse yet, what would keep India from utilizing these justifications as a pretext for a military strike against Pakistan's nuclear assets?

U.S. customs and visa procedures put into place after 9/11 to keep terrorists from entering the United States also fed into this trope of an America hostile to Muslims and alienated many Pakistanis who otherwise found the United States an attractive country. While the tightening of visa restrictions was not directed against Pakistanis specifically, Pakistani citizens frequently found themselves barred from entering the United States. Even for the students, journalists, businesspeople, and other visitors who successfully crossed the immigration hurdle, the experience was frequently humiliating and demeaning. The situation became sufficiently irritating that Musharraf himself raised the issue with Bush.

Overblown anxieties about "Islamist terrorism" led some Americans to regard all Muslims with wariness. There were isolated episodes of violence against Muslims in the United States, which were widely reported in the Pakistani press. These and similar incidents further undercut the image of America that Washington sought to promote in Pakistan, and constrained Musharraf's ability to work openly with the United States in its war in Muslim-majority Afghanistan. They also further diminished whatever leverage U.S. power might otherwise have provided.

The style or tone used by some Americans in their remarks about Pakistan—members of Congress seemed particularly guilty

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**'When you are face to face with a wolf, your only option is to work with it, until it becomes a pet.'**

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of this practice—reinforced the negative image of the United States among Pakistanis. In talking to or about Pakistan, Americans often appeared arrogant, hectoring, demanding, and insensitive to any but their own perspectives. Washington seemed prone to making public demands on Pakistan, often accompanied by implicit or explicit threats. Bush officials usually tried hard to avoid conveying such an impression, but to Pakistani ears, even they frequently came across as ungrateful bullies always asking more of Pakistan, without acknowledging the extent of Pakistan's sacrifices on behalf of the United States. As a former Pakistani diplomat complained in a 2007 newspaper article, "the more Pakistan does, the greater the demand for it to do more."<sup>38</sup>

Pakistanis nursed their grievances and their humiliations. Barely a year into the new partnership, an article in Pakistan's leading English-language newspaper expressed the angst shared by many Pakistanis about what even then seemed

<sup>38</sup> The quote comes from Tariq Fatemi, "US pressure to 'do more,'" *Dawn*, Jan. 20, 2007, but is a refrain repeated by countless Pakistanis over the years.



a one-sided relationship. “We are told that Pakistan would have ceased to exist if it had resisted [U.S.] demands and not cooperated in the war against terrorism in Afghanistan and elsewhere,” one commentator bitterly observed. “‘When you are face to face with a wolf, your only option is to work with it, until it becomes a pet.’ Unfortunately the American wolf does not make a very good pet. There can be no friendship between the cat and the mouse. There can be no friendship between the strong and the weak or between unequals.”<sup>39</sup> In subsequent years, Pakistani resentment of this sort only became deeper and more frequently expressed.

### *Pakistan plays the leverage card*

It is critical to understand, however, that Pakistan was not simply the hapless target of American power. The Musharraf government, following a pattern established by its predecessors, skillfully played the hand offered by its own strengths, including a large and capable army, longstanding ties to many of the Afghan tribes and clans, and a vital geostrategic location on the map.

In the years after the 9/11 attacks, Islamabad regularly reminded the Americans that it was Washington that had come to Pakistan for help, not the opposite. It was the United States that needed Pakistan’s cooperation and assistance. It was America that was the supplicant, not Pakistan. Islamabad used the American conviction that Pakistani support was essential to extract huge benefits from the Americans, even while shying away from any suggestion of a quid pro quo. No, Pakistan was offering vital support to its friends in the United States because that’s what friends do. Under those circumstances, Washington should be happy to reciprocate with its own signs of friendship.

When appeals to mutual friendship proved insufficient to elicit the desired American response, Islamabad turned to guilt. The history of Pakistan-U.S. relations, Pakistani officials repeated ad nauseam, was one of Pakistani loyalty and American betrayal. From the U.S. arms suspensions during the 1965 and 1971 wars with India, to the Carter sanctions of the 1970s, to the triggering of the Pressler amendment in 1990, to the nuclear- and democracy-related sanctions of the 1990s, the United States had consistently used Pakistan, only to turn its back on its loyal friend once Pakistani help was no longer required. Anyone with a sense of history, Pakistanis insisted, knew that just as soon as the current war in Afghanistan was concluded, America would once more walk away from the region, leaving Pakistan to clean up the mess.

Recitation of this narrative was not mere playacting on the part of Pakistanis. The overwhelming majority of the country, including the well-educated and

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39 Roedad Khan, “The Iraq tinderbox,” *Dawn*, Sept. 25, 2002.

informed, believed this both an accurate rendering of the past, and a likely indicator of the future.

Missing from this Pakistani narrative was any recognition that Islamabad had used its Cold War partnership with the United States for its own purposes, especially its rivalry with India. American arms meant to shore up Pakistani defenses against possible Soviet aggression were employed instead against India, an at least episodic American friend. U.S. political and diplomatic support was repaid with Pakistani efforts to smuggle sensitive nuclear technologies out of the United States, in direct violation of U.S. law. Solemn Pakistani pledges to forgo nuclear weapons were flagrant lies. If Pakistanis believed the United States had been an unfaithful friend, Americans had every reason to complain that Pakistani governments since the 1950s had consistently deceived the United States. But this version of reality did not fit within the Pakistani narrative of American disloyalty and treachery.

Instead, Pakistan quite deliberately cultivated a sense of betrayal and, on the American side, guilt. Many Americans with only an incomplete understanding of the relationship's history bought into this rendering of the past. Islamabad, portraying Pakistan as repeatedly let down by an ungrateful America, successfully used this narrative to deflect U.S. requests and buttress Pakistani claims for concessions or additional benefits.

This betrayal narrative was effective, moreover, because in one important respect it played on existing U.S. guilt. The Bush administration (like its successor), despite its promises, failed to provide Pakistan with the one thing virtually everyone agreed Pakistan needed: greater access to the U.S. market. The Musharraf government viewed exports as one of the best ways to provide jobs and steer young Pakistanis away from radicalism. Washington agreed. In the early weeks following the re-establishment of the U.S.-Pakistan partnership after 9/11, the White House proposed that Congress give the president legal authority to ease U.S. tariffs and quotas on Pakistani textiles. The U.S. ambassador to Pakistan told journalists that it was “patriotic” for Americans to buy Pakistani products.<sup>40</sup>

But not even the warmth of a new relationship sufficed to overcome resistance from American legislators who feared that increased textile imports would harm the domestic industry and take jobs from their constituents. Judging that this was a battle it could not win, the administration quietly told Islamabad that the timing for a full-fledged push on Capitol Hill was not right. Embittered Pakistanis were hardly surprised. Once more America was asking much of Pakistan without being willing to provide much in return. Once more Pakistani friendship was

40 U.S. Ambassador Wendy Chamberlin, quoted in Brian Faler, “Jobs in Pakistan or in North Carolina?” *National Journal*, Jan. 5, 2002, 44.

met with American betrayal. U.S. officials privately acknowledged there was considerable accuracy in these complaints.<sup>41</sup>

Of course, Pakistan had its own domestic politics, which impeded Islamabad on how fully and how quickly it could act on American requests. If U.S. domestic politics on market access were too tough to overcome, Pakistani officials suggested, then surely Washington could understand that Pakistani domestic politics also made certain steps impossible. Given Washington's rock bottom standing in Pakistan, this argument was not implausible, even when offered by a military regime. For Islamabad, this reference to public opinion proved a useful tactic for deflecting U.S. pressure to close Taliban sanctuaries in the tribal areas, prevent armed fighters from crossing the border into Afghanistan, and crack down on Pakistan's own militants. "Don't ask us to get too far in front of our public," Musharraf officials warned again and again.

Closely linked to this argument about domestic opinion were warnings about the country's fragility. Pakistan faced an existential threat from extremism, Islamabad cautioned. Ask too much and the entire government could collapse. As two American analysts observed in 2007, Pakistan always seemed "in perpetual crisis, just one event away from going over the edge."<sup>42</sup> The scholar Stephen P. Cohen has written that Pakistanis have developed into a fine art the practice of negotiating by pointing a gun to their own heads: "Don't push us too hard or else we'll collapse, and what follows will be much worse for you."<sup>43</sup> Pakistani officials skillfully played this extremism card, Musharraf's version of Louis XV's *après moi, le déluge*.

Such arguments found traction in Washington, in part because Pakistan did frequently seem in crisis. The United States needed Pakistan to succeed, to become a healthy, moderate country, lest it sow chaos and violence throughout the region. It needed Pakistan to be a responsible steward of its nuclear assets. It needed Pakistan to find ways to live in peace with India. It needed Pakistan to refrain from destabilizing Afghanistan once the war was over. Pushing Musharraf too hard might topple the government and open the door to groups who shared none of those interests. Given the possible alternatives to Musharraf, the Bush administration concluded, prudence dictated that Washington not press Pakistan beyond a certain point. To do otherwise might risk catastrophe.

41 Early in 2002, the administration, using executive authorities, announced a limited opening of the U.S. market estimated to be worth \$160 million annually. Pakistan understandably thought this a trivial concession when compared to Pakistani apparel exports to the United States in 2000 valued at \$1.9 billion, or the \$1.4 billion in additional sales Islamabad requested in order to offset the costs of the war. Pakistani officials also remembered that Washington had granted Turkey a 50 percent increase in textile quotas as a reward for its help in the 1991 Persian Gulf war. On this see Edward Alden, "Pakistan rewarded with apparel market deal," *Financial Times*, Feb. 15, 2002; and Keith Bradsher, "Pakistanis Fume as Clothing Sales to U.S. Tumble," *New York Times*, June 23, 2002.

42 Craig Cohen and Derek Chollet, "A Push for a Pakistan Plan," *Washington Post*, Jan. 12, 2007.

43 Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan*, 270.

Pakistan played its hand well to blunt the force of American power. The Musharraf government skillfully manipulated Washington's need for its cooperation in Afghanistan. It insisted that Pakistan was not a mercenary hired to fight America's war, but a loyal friend that deserved to be treated with respect and liberality. It cultivated a sense of obligation on the part of the Americans with a narrative that emphasized past U.S. betrayal. It carefully nursed real grievances, such as the U.S. failure to give Pakistani textiles greater access to the U.S. market. It emphasized the constraints posed by Pakistani public opinion and America's poor reputation in Pakistan. It threatened that if Washington made unreasonable demands upon Pakistan, the government could collapse, thereby opening the door to genuinely dangerous militants. A weak country relative to America's immense power, Pakistan nonetheless demonstrated that great power does not automatically convey unlimited leverage.

### *Owing the bank*

Pakistan's contributions in the fight against terrorism, although never as sizable as Washington would have liked, were nonetheless substantial. The possibility of Islamabad withdrawing those contributions, were it pressed too hard on Afghanistan, Kashmir, democracy, or other matters, could not be ignored in Washington, an advantage Musharraf adroitly pressed.

Moreover, Pakistan seldom refused the United States explicitly. Musharraf and his officials avowed that they and the Americans faced a common enemy in al Qaeda. Pakistani officials insisted that they wanted and needed a stable Afghanistan. They agreed that Islamist-inspired terrorism represented an existential threat to their own security and well-being. And they took meaningful steps that Washington valued, and which made a rupture with Islamabad costly for the United States.

To little avail. Pakistanis came to believe that an arrogant bullying United States had compelled their country to fight a war that ran counter to Pakistani interests. Yet Americans with equal conviction gradually concluded that Pakistan was a false friend and unworthy partner responsible for the deaths of countless American soldiers in Afghanistan. Such was the nature of the post-9/11 Pakistan-U.S. partnership.

In a remarkably prescient article in May 2002, *Washington Post* columnist Jim Hoagland complained that Pakistan was not honoring its promises for sustained action against al Qaeda and the Taliban. Musharraf was "managing" the Bush administration, he warned; "Washington is now negotiating with Musharraf, not forcing him to act." Hoagland went on to say that the Bush administration's "moral and diplomatic drift" on Pakistan strongly resembled the failure in the

late 1980s of the president's father, President George H.W. Bush, to warn Iraq against invading Kuwait. "Iraq was seen as too important to confront—or even to describe its actions truthfully." The current Bush administration, Hoagland asserted, was in danger of making the same mistake with Pakistan.<sup>44</sup>

Subsequent events bore out Hoagland's warnings about Islamabad's lack of commitment to the fight America was waging in Afghanistan. But they also demonstrated that Hoagland was badly wrong in ascribing to Washington an ability to "force" Musharraf to conform to U.S. desires.

A November 2007 story in the *New York Times* more accurately described the dynamics of the increasingly embittered partnership between the United States and Pakistan. Speaking about Washington's inability to persuade Musharraf to follow U.S. advice, an unnamed administration official observed that the United States had few options in dealing with Islamabad that wouldn't undercut U.S. goals. Conceding Washington's lack of influence on Musharraf, he remarked: "When you owe the bank a million dollars, you have a problem; but when you owe the bank \$100 million, the bank has a problem."<sup>45</sup> The United States, he was saying, had a problem; Washington had too much invested in Musharraf to see him fail.

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## The United States had invested too much to walk away from Islamabad.

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But it wasn't simply Musharraf. By the end of the George W. Bush presidency, this was equally true for the U.S. partnership with Pakistan in its entirety. The United States had invested too much to walk away from Islamabad. Yet, American power had failed to give Washington the leverage many in the administration

had assumed. In what struck U.S. officials as a perverse reversal of what could have been expected, Pakistan seemed to hold leverage over the far stronger United States.

The widely held Pakistani belief that the United States cleverly orchestrated events in their country struck American officialdom as nonsensical. From their vantage point, Washington had remarkably little influence in Pakistan. It had been powerless to prevent Islamabad from proceeding down the nuclear path in the 1980s, or from crossing the final threshold and testing a nuclear weapon in 1998. U.S. efforts to encourage Islamabad to abandon its obsession with India in favor of tackling its many domestic challenges had failed abysmally. Pakistan refused to treat its internal extremist threat with the seriousness it deserved, and had consistently disappointed American hopes that it would

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<sup>44</sup> Jim Hoagland, "Pakistan: Pretense of an Ally," *Washington Post*, May 28, 2002.

<sup>45</sup> Mark Mazzetti, "Bush Urges Musharraf to Reverse Course but Signals No Penalty if He Doesn't," *New York Times*, Nov. 6, 2007.

prove a stalwart partner in the fight against al Qaeda. Great power, Americans concluded, had failed to convey great leverage.

Pakistanis of course saw relations between the two nations far differently. America was a domineering but ungrateful ally, always badgering Pakistan for more action and ruthlessly threatening reprisals if Islamabad did not dance to Washington's tune. Rather than appreciating the magnitude of Pakistani sacrifices in the common fight against extremism, the Bush administration engaged in scapegoating Islamabad for its own failures. "Those who want Pakistan to 'do more,'" *Dawn* editorialized in 2007, "should have an appraising look at their own performance."<sup>46</sup> Pakistan was the aggrieved party in this partnership, the target of U.S. pressure and coercion.

As 2007 gave way to 2008 and both countries moved toward elections and a change in political leaderships, this divergence of viewpoints offered a sobering caution. New governments in Islamabad and Washington would not by themselves produce a less contentious, more fruitful partnership. The issues dividing the two lay deeper, buried in the complexities of two nations unequal in power but equally resolved to stand up for their interests, rights, and national honor.

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<sup>46</sup> "Who should 'do more'?" *Dawn*, Feb. 28, 2007.



# CHAPTER III

## ALLIANCE STALEMATE

**G**rowing political unrest, economic turbulence, and a dramatic rise in the number of suicide bombings and other extremist-fueled violence badly eroded Musharraf's political position throughout 2007. During the autumn, leading opposition figures Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, both former prime ministers, returned to Pakistan from exile, to tumultuous welcomes. In early November Musharraf declared a state of emergency—suspending the constitution, jailing thousands of his opponents, and placing Bhutto and Sharif under house arrest. Weeks later, with the country in turmoil, Musharraf reluctantly gave up the army chief post that had been the base of his power, although he retained the presidency. The last week of the year saw the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, which touched off massive demonstrations around the country.

Parliamentary elections in February 2008 seemed to point the way toward the restoration of political calm in Pakistan. Bhutto's widower, Asif Ali Zardari, emerged as the dominant political player in the country. Amidst continuing instability, the increasingly unpopular Musharraf was forced to resign the presidency in August 2008, but not before many Pakistanis concluded that Washington was still working behind the scenes to help the general retain power. Several weeks later, Zardari became the new president amidst a worsening economic crisis. In November, Pakistan was forced to go to the IMF for a \$7.6 billion stand-by loan.

Simultaneously with the political upheaval and rising economic anxiety, armed extremist groups, collectively known as the TTP, or Pakistani Taliban, extended their reach beyond the tribal areas of Pakistan and into the settled parts of the country.<sup>1</sup> In July 2007, central Islamabad took on the look of a battleground as the government stormed the Lal Masjid, or Red Mosque,

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1 The TTP, or *Tehrik-i-Taliban*, is an umbrella organization of loosely-affiliated groups, not all of whom have identical goals. The TTP is not directly affiliated with the Afghan Taliban and, unlike the latter, directs its efforts almost exclusively against the state of Pakistan. Even so, the two Taliban organizations share common ethnic roots and at times work together.



which had become headquarters for radical mullahs and religious students who defied the government's writ. More than 150 people died before government forces gained control. Slightly more than a year later, terrorists launched a deadly suicide attack on one of Islamabad's most prominent hotels. And in late November 2008, terrorists based in Pakistan carried out a deadly strike on the Indian commercial capital of Mumbai, bringing the city to a virtual standstill for three days.

For the United States, 2008 was nearly as tumultuous. Unpopular wars in Afghanistan and Iraq eroded Bush's political clout, and the president increasingly came to be seen as an ineffectual lame duck. In the autumn, Wall Street collapsed, banks crumbled, and the country entered its most serious economic recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Two thousand and eight was also an election year in the United States. After a heated contest, the country elected its first African-American president, Barack Obama.

And still the war in Afghanistan lumbered on, the Taliban seemingly oblivious to the idea that they were incapable of standing up to American power. Indeed, 2008 took the lives of more American soldiers than any of its predecessors. As the war continued, so too did the strains this placed on U.S.-Pakistan relations.

### *Unveiling a new U.S. approach*

Barack Obama entered office believing that success in Afghanistan required the cooperation of Pakistan. Although he had demonstrated only modest interest in Pakistan while serving in the U.S. Senate, he was determined to broaden U.S. ties with that country, in part by reorienting American policy so as to give greater priority to the non-security dimensions of the relationship.

But if cooperation were not forthcoming, the United States would use other means. In 2007, while still contending for the Democratic presidential nomination, Obama warned that he would be prepared to send U.S. troops into Pakistan if the Pakistanis refused to move against Islamist sanctuaries along the Afghan border.<sup>2</sup> Within weeks of Obama's inauguration, the press reported expanded U.S. missile and drone strikes on extremist targets in western Pakistan. For the first time, moreover, the attacks targeted the Pakistani Taliban, not simply al Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban. Pakistani military and intelligence officials had long urged Washington to target the TTP and as a consequence said little about this new violation of Pakistani sovereignty.

Islamabad launched a campaign to shape U.S. opinion and the new administration's Pakistan policy. Barely a week after Obama's inauguration,

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2 Dan Balz, "Obama Says He Would Take Fight to Pakistan," *Washington Post*, Aug. 2, 2007.

Zardari, employing a tactic used earlier by Musharraf and Benazir Bhutto, set down markers for the new president in a *Washington Post* op-ed. He urged the White House to support greatly expanded civilian assistance for Pakistan, which “would signal to our people that this is no longer a relationship of political convenience but, rather, of shared values and goals.” Adopting an idea first pushed (unsuccessfully) by the Bush administration, he called for the creation of Reconstruction Opportunity Zones to promote economic development in Pakistan’s tribal regions along the Afghan border. He asked for upgrades for Pakistan’s military arsenal. He requested U.S. help in resolving the Kashmir dispute and to defuse tensions between Pakistan and India.

But Zardari also added a note of warning to his list of requests. Washington should not question Pakistan’s will to eradicate extremism. “With all due respect, we need no lectures on our commitment. This is our war.”<sup>3</sup>

Barely settled into the White House, Obama named Richard Holbrooke as his special envoy to the region—known in Washington bureaucratese as the Special Representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan, or SRAP—and directed long-time Pakistan analyst Bruce Riedel to undertake a review of U.S. policy toward the two southwest Asian countries. To Islamabad’s considerable disappointment, Holbrooke’s mandate did not cover Kashmir or India, an omission that led many Pakistanis to conclude that Washington was not interested in understanding, let alone addressing, Pakistan’s fundamental strategic concerns.

Obama rolled out his new AfPak strategy in late March 2009.<sup>4</sup> Seven years after the Taliban had been driven from Afghanistan, the president declared, the situation in the region was “increasingly perilous.” Indeed, the remote areas of the Pakistani frontier had become, for the American people, “the most dangerous place in the world.” To counter this threat, he pledged, his administration would “engage the Pakistani people based on our long-term commitment to helping them build a stable economy, a stronger democracy, and a vibrant civil society.”

The U.S. president reassured the Pakistani people that the United States had great respect for them. Al Qaeda and its extremist allies constituted the single greatest threat to their future, “and that is why we must stand together.” To assist Pakistan in confronting the danger within its borders, the United States would increase and broaden its financial assistance to Pakistan and help boost Pakistan’s military capabilities. Congress should pass legislation then under

3 Asif Ali Zardari, “Partnering With Pakistan,” *Washington Post*, Jan. 28, 2009.

4 The term AfPak was used in Washington to underscore the Obama administration’s view that the two South Asian neighbors comprised a single theater of operations, not only militarily but diplomatically. Many Pakistanis resented the term for seemingly putting Afghanistan on the same level as Pakistan and obscuring India’s responsibilities for fomenting instability in the region. By 2010 the Obama administration had largely stopped using the term.

consideration that would triple U.S. civilian support to \$1.5 billion annually for the next five years, and provide duty-free treatment for specified goods from Reconstruction Opportunity Zones in Pakistan’s tribal areas (and in Afghanistan). Washington would help Islamabad and Kabul overcome their long-standing differences in order to fight the common enemy. And the United States would work with other friends and allies to see that Pakistan received the support it required.

But, the new president warned, the days of the U.S. blank check for military assistance were over. Instead, the administration would create performance benchmarks to ensure that U.S. security aid was going for its intended uses. More ominously to Pakistani ears, he added, Pakistan “must demonstrate its commitment to rooting out al Qaeda and the violent extremists within its borders. And we will insist that action be taken—one way or the other—when we have intelligence about high-level terrorist targets.”<sup>5</sup>

Riedel, who spearheaded the review that shaped Obama’s AfPak policy, later remembered being very skeptical that Pakistan could be persuaded, or compelled, to make the changes in its strategic thinking that would render Pakistan a genuine partner in the fight against terrorism—“less than ten percent,” he judged. More than seven years after the 9/11 attacks, he recalled, “we were [still] as much at risk and the Pakistanis weren’t going to do anything about it.” The CIA was clear in telling the president that Pakistan was actively colluding with “known threats to the United States”—both al Qaeda and the Taliban. Still, Riedel recommended, Washington needed to try engagement. If it failed, “we could at least say we tried being reasonable and it didn’t work.”<sup>6</sup> Assuming Riedel’s memories are correct—and there’s no reason to think otherwise—Obama entered the White House with few expectations that he could turn American power into diplomatic leverage over Pakistan.

Meanwhile, Islamabad was heading in a different direction. A month before Obama announced his new AfPak strategy and called for Pakistan to root out its domestic extremists, the Zardari government had signed a cease-fire with militants who had overrun the Swat Valley. The agreement effectively ceded the area to the Taliban and permitted the imposition of sharia, or Islamic law. Rather than consolidating their gains, however, the TTP immediately began expanding into adjacent districts.

Less than a month after the administration unveiled its AfPak strategy, the new secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, declared that the Pakistani government “is

5 See Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Mar. 27, 2009, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-a-new-strategy-afghanistan-and-pakistan>, and the administration’s accompanying White Paper of the same date, [https://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/afghanistan\\_pakistan\\_white\\_paper\\_final.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/afghanistan_pakistan_white_paper_final.pdf).

6 Interview with Bruce Riedel, Nov. 2016.

basically abdicating to the Taliban and to the extremists.” Clinton’s complaint, the *Washington Post* judged, was “an unusually blunt statement” reflecting administration anxieties.<sup>7</sup> U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates spoke equally bluntly: U.S.-Pakistan ties would suffer if Islamabad did not take appropriate action to deal with its domestic extremists.

Was this the new approach toward Pakistan that Obama had promised, Pakistanis asked? Was the administration’s pledge to engage the Pakistani people to consist primarily of threats? Islamabad’s ambassador in Washington warned that “ordinary Pakistanis have begun to wonder if our alliance with the West is bringing any benefits at all.”<sup>8</sup>

### *Kerry-Lugar-Berman*

With the blessing of the new administration, the U.S. Congress in October 2009 adopted legislation (which the Bush administration had also supported) that promised a substantial new U.S. commitment to its South Asian ally. The Kerry-Lugar-Berman (KLB) bill,<sup>9</sup> named for its principal congressional sponsors, pledged \$7.5 billion in economic aid to Pakistan over the next five years, a figure that tripled the previous level of U.S. civilian assistance to Pakistan.<sup>10</sup> This expanded aid, the bill’s authors explained, would help Pakistan consolidate its democratic institutions, build the capacity of government institutions, support the rule of law, and promote economic freedoms and respect for human rights.

To the backers of this expanded aid package, KLB represented tangible proof that the United States was serious about assisting Pakistan’s civilian leadership in its efforts to build a stable, prosperous, and democratic nation. That the legislation was adopted at a time of substantial American discontent with the extent of Pakistani cooperation in the war against Islamist-inspired terrorism underscored American good intentions toward Pakistan. KLB reversed the overwhelmingly pro-military slant of previous U.S. aid. Instead of going almost entirely to the armed forces, American dollars would flow to schools and clinics, economic development, and efforts to promote democratic governance. Pakistan’s friends in the United States were jubilant. Washington had backed with concrete action its commitment to forging a mutually productive partnership between the two countries.

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7 Glenn Kessler, “Clinton: Pakistani Government ‘Abdicating’ to Extremist Forces,” *Washington Post*, Apr. 23, 2009.

8 Husain Haqqani, “How Pakistan Is Countering the Taliban,” *Wall Street Journal*, Apr. 30, 2009, ProQuest (308745337).

9 Formally, the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act, Pub. L. 111-73.

10 Other spigots of funding, including humanitarian assistance, anti-narcotics support, and food aid, meant that total U.S. civilian aid designated for Pakistan exceeded the annual \$1.5 billion in KLB funds. However, there was always a considerable time lag between congressional authorization of aid monies and their actual disbursement in Pakistan, an implementation problem that encouraged Pakistani perceptions that U.S. aid promises were routinely broken.

Yet what followed demonstrated how difficult it is to use U.S. foreign assistance as an instrument to build good will, let alone to promote desired policies from another government. For most Americans, KLB represented an unprecedented expression of generosity, all the more remarkable given America's own economic distress in the midst of the Great Recession. Many in Pakistan, however, saw KLB as an almost trivial dollop relative to Pakistani needs, or to the assistance provided by the IMF and other international financial institutions. For example, KLB support for education, at \$80 million per year, represented only a little over two percent of annual Pakistani government spending on education.<sup>11</sup> The different lens of the two countries led one side to view KLB as an unparalleled act of generosity, while the other saw it as paltry and inconsequential.<sup>12</sup>

Other Pakistanis used a different logic train to arrive at the same conclusion regarding the insignificance of the \$7.5 billion promised by KLB. Pakistan had paid an enormous price for joining the United States in its fight against terrorism, they maintained, not only in lives lost but also in economic costs. A few billion dollars from the U. S. Congress would not even begin to cover the expenses Pakistan had incurred since 2001. Surely fairness and plain decency required the Americans to reimburse Pakistan for the economic hardship its loyalty to Washington had imposed. Why should Pakistanis get excited over \$1.5 billion a year?

Pakistani objections to conditions accompanying U.S. assistance stirred even greater controversy. KLB imposed no conditions on the civilian aid it authorized (a fact that Pakistanis and many Americans did not always recognize). Other portions of the legislation, however, linked the provision of military assistance to Pakistani policies on terrorism and domestic extremism. Before military aid could be disbursed, the U.S. secretary of state had to certify that Islamabad was working to end government support for extremist and terrorist groups. Rawalpindi correctly regarded this as a direct challenge to its long-standing reliance on Islamist proxies to counter the more powerful Indians. The Pakistani army became KLB's harshest critic.

Many Pakistanis, almost certainly stirred up by press reports inspired by the army, came to see these conditions as demeaning, a threat to Pakistani sovereignty and an affront to Pakistani honor. U.S. conditions, many concluded,

11 Over the five years of the program, KLB provided Pakistan with \$400 million in educational support. In 2010, the education budgets for Pakistan's federal and provincial governments totaled about \$3.5 billion. See Nadia Naviwala, "Pakistan's Education Crisis: The Real Story," July 2016, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/pakistanseducationcrisistherealstory2.pdf>.

12 Had Pakistanis known how slowly KLB assistance was to reach them, their lack of enthusiasm for the program would have been even greater. As of the end of September 2015, six years after Congress enacted KLB, only \$1.8 billion of the projected \$7.5 billion had actually been disbursed. On this, see USAID, Office of the Inspector General, "Competing Priorities Have Complicated USAID/Pakistan's Efforts To Achieve Long-Term Development Under EPPA," Audit Report No. G-391-16-003-P, Sept. 8, 2016, [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PBAAE839.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PBAAE839.pdf).

were nothing more than an attempt to manipulate Pakistan for American ends. They demonstrated that the United States did not really care about Pakistan, but only wished to use the country for its own purposes. Both the substance of the conditions and their tone and language were offensive, explained Maleeha Lodhi, who twice served as Pakistan's ambassador to the United States; they reinforced the "transactional" nature of the bilateral relationship. "The measure's [intended] hearts-and mind effect was all but lost."<sup>13</sup>

To the surprised consternation of KLB supporters in Washington, therefore, congressional passage of the legislation touched off an immediate firestorm in Pakistan. The Pakistani foreign minister dashed to the American capital, where he obtained an explanatory statement from the act's sponsors aimed at dispelling Pakistani anger. KLB's primary intention, Sen. John Kerry declared, was "to demonstrate the American people's long-term commitment to the people of Pakistan." The legislation "does not seek in any way to compromise Pakistan's sovereignty, impinge on Pakistan's national security interests, or micromanage any aspect of Pakistani military or civilian operations."<sup>14</sup>

These reassuring words had little impact. This was not an aid package, one Pakistani legislator complained; it was a treaty of surrender. Tariq Fatemi, another former Pakistani envoy to Washington, wrote that "far from building trust and confidence" between the two countries, the act's "many conditions, especially those viewed as accusatory and intrusive, have given rise to fresh doubts and misgivings among Pakistanis."<sup>15</sup> Rarely have good intentions backfired so sweepingly.<sup>16</sup>

### *The rift widens*

The administration did not rely solely on KLB to prod Islamabad into more vigorous steps against Islamist extremists. The White House also dispatched a steady stream of high-level visitors to court the Pakistanis. In the immediate aftermath of the controversy touched off by KLB, Secretary Clinton journeyed

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13 Maleeha Lodhi, "Terms of friendship," *The News*, Oct. 20, 2009, <http://www.opfblog.com/9461/terms-of-friendship-dr-maleeha-lodhi/>. Lodhi at this writing serves as Pakistan's permanent representative to the United Nations. On this question of conditionality, see Alicia Mollaun, "US Aid to Pakistan: Nation-Building and Realist Objectives in the Post 9/11 Era" (PhD diss., Australian National University, 2016), 136-145, <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/109277>.

14 "Chairman Kerry and Chairman Berman Release Joint Explanatory Statement to Accompany Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009," U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations press release, Oct. 14, 2009, <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/press/chair/release/chairman-kerry-and-chairman-berman-release-joint-explanatory-statement-to-accompany-enhanced-partnership-with-pakistan-act-of-2009>.

15 Tariq Fatemi, "Kerry-Lugar: the fallout," *Dawn*, Oct. 22, 2009.

16 For a discussion of some of the problems associated with KLB, see *Aiding Without Abetting: Making U.S. Civilian Assistance to Pakistan Work for Both Sides*, a 2011 report by a Woodrow Wilson Center working group, <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/aiding-without-abetting-making-civilian-assistance-work-for-both-sides>. For a recent critical internal evaluation of KLB, see USAID, Office of Inspector General, "Competing Priorities Have Complicated USAID/Pakistan's Efforts."

to Pakistan in late October 2009 determined to demonstrate that the U.S. commitment was to the people of Pakistan, not just the government. Other senior officials traveled to Pakistan with unprecedented frequency, signaling the administration's desire to build a broad-gauged partnership. After massive flooding ravaged much of Pakistan the next year, Washington responded with \$150 million in emergency aid. Obama continued to urge Congress to approve the creation of Reconstruction Opportunity Zones (ROZs) to promote economic development along the Afghan border. And the administration stepped up its efforts to build a better U.S. image in Pakistan and demonstrate that the United States did not care about Pakistan only for instrumental reasons.

Yet in most respects, growing recriminations and ill-tempered exchanges between the two sides predominated and set the tone, both public and private, for the relationship. As before, each country felt itself the aggrieved party. Fed up with what they viewed as unceasing U.S. insistence to do more, Pakistan's military and intelligence services countered with their own pressure—refusing to approve or extend visas for U.S. officials in Pakistan (including visas for auditors tasked with overseeing KLB spending), frequent searches of American diplomatic vehicles, placing obstacles in the way of U.S. development programs. Officials at the U.S. embassy in Islamabad regarded these actions as deliberate harassment. Pakistani officials defended them as justified responses to American arrogance and insensitivity.

An accidental tragedy in the autumn of 2010 illustrated the cycle of tit-for-tat to which the relationship had deteriorated. In late September, U.S. helicopter gunships attacked a Pakistani border post in FATA's Kurram agency in the mistaken belief they were firing on insurgents. The strike killed three Pakistani paramilitary soldiers. Pakistan retaliated by closing the main supply line into Afghanistan through the Khyber Pass for more than a week.

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## Nothing underscored American arrogance for many Pakistanis more than the Obama administration's growing reliance on drones.

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Nothing underscored American arrogance for many Pakistanis more than the Obama administration's growing reliance on drones. Washington's use of unmanned aerial vehicles—UAVs or, more commonly, drones—had begun during the Bush years but dramatically rose once Obama entered office. While U.S. officials correctly argued that targeted drone strikes resulted in far fewer non-combatant casualties than other forms of

force, the strikes inevitably killed innocent civilians. Each new mistake fueled greater Pakistani anger. Moreover, because the drone program was classified, senior U.S. officials felt unable even to express sympathy for civilian casualties,

further fostering images in Pakistan of an uncaring America.<sup>17</sup>

The sudden death from the skies that the drones delivered reinforced the Pakistani conviction that the United States was all-powerful even in Pakistan. But the drones were also a source of humiliation, highlighting the military's inability to protect the country's national borders or provide basic security for people within those borders. Thoughtful Pakistanis also worried that the stepped-up U.S. military operations in Pakistan's tribal regions (and in Afghanistan) were driving extremists deeper into Pakistan. America must not destabilize Pakistan in the process of trying to stabilize Afghanistan, Islamabad cautioned. Many also worried that the civilian casualties caused by U.S. drone strikes handed extremist groups a propaganda windfall.

Yet Pakistani government and military officials played a double game with their own populace about the drones. Drones launched from Pakistani territory, one typical statement from the military declared, were "not acceptable under any circumstances. There is no room for ambiguity in this regard."<sup>18</sup> But of course there was ambiguity aplenty. Despite the widespread unpopularity of drones throughout the country, Islamabad and Rawalpindi, while publicly denouncing drone strikes in Pakistan's tribal areas, privately acquiesced in them. The CIA launched its drones from Shamsi airbase in Baluchistan, obviously with Pakistani knowledge. CIA and ISI officers negotiated the terms under which the drones could operate, including the "flight boxes" over which drones could fly. At times the ISI even provided the CIA with targeting intelligence.<sup>19</sup>

This limited (though important) cooperation notwithstanding, Washington and Islamabad differed in fundamental respects on counterterrorism issues. Pakistan continued to hedge its bets by refusing U.S. entreaties to expel al Qaeda and the Taliban from the tribal borderlands. Americans noted with bitterness the frequency with which Taliban targets seemed to abscond shortly after U.S. authorities alerted the ISI to their presence on Pakistani soil. Islamabad moved with glacial speed against the individuals thought to be responsible for the 2008 Mumbai attack and continued to protect other groups plotting strikes against India. The ISI maintained its close ties with a multitude of domestic groups sympathetic to extremist ideology.

Their very different attitudes toward the Haqqani network illustrated the broader U.S.-Pakistan disagreement on counterterrorism. The Haqqani network consisted of a loosely linked collection of families and clans based in North Waziristan along the Afghan border. The Haqqanis worked closely with

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17 See, for example, Hillary Rodham Clinton, *Hard Choices* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), 184.

18 Karen DeYoung and Griff Witte, "Pakistan relations reach a new low," *Washington Post*, June 16, 2011.

19 See, for instance, Mark Mazzetti, *The Way of the Knife: The CIA, a Secret Army, and a War at the Ends of the Earth* (New York: Penguin Press, 2013), 108-09.



and pledged allegiance to both al Qaeda and the Taliban. They attempted in 2008 to assassinate the Afghan president, Hamid Karzai, masterminded a July 2008 attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul that killed 54 people, and repeatedly launched high-visibility and high-casualty attacks on Kabul hotels and restaurants frequented by Americans and other westerners. In December 2009, the Haqqanis orchestrated the bombing of a CIA outpost in eastern Afghanistan that killed seven CIA officers, making this the deadliest attack on U.S. intelligence personnel in CIA history.<sup>20</sup> U.S. intelligence officials came to believe that elements of the ISI supported, perhaps even planned, Haqqani strikes in Afghanistan.

Washington repeatedly pushed Islamabad to clean out Haqqani camps in North Waziristan, strongly hinting that if Pakistan were unwilling to do this, America would. But Islamabad demurred on the grounds that its military was already stretched fighting extremists targeting Pakistan; the Haqqanis, they noted, were not anti-Pakistan. The Pakistani security establishment, however, had other reasons not to renounce its ties to the Haqqanis. America would leave Afghanistan sooner or later, Pakistani analysts reasoned. In post-American Afghanistan, having friendly allies along the border would offer a hedge against Indian influence. Not until mid-2014 did the Pakistani army move in force into North Waziristan. Even then, however, the ease with which Haqqani network fighters escaped Pakistani soldiers raised doubts in Washington whether the ISI was finally prepared to sever its ties to the group.<sup>21</sup>

### *Annus horribilis*

By early 2011, it was apparent that the installation of an elected government in Pakistan and the inauguration of a new U.S. president had done little to reset U.S.-Pakistan ties. In the year that followed, a new crisis in U.S.-Pakistan relations surfaced seemingly every month. Had the relationship been healthy, none of the 2011 incidents would have derailed it. But by 2011, the bilateral partnership, burdened by tension and unaddressed frictions, was anything but healthy. As a consequence, the relationship was unable to absorb the series of shocks that would make 2011 the *annus horribilis* in Pakistan-American relations.

The year's disruptions began in January when an American CIA contractor, Raymond Davis, killed two Pakistanis, whom he claimed had attempted to

<sup>20</sup> Making this episode even more painful for CIA officers with long memories was the fact that during the Afghan war in the 1980s, the CIA had funneled arms and money to Jalaluddin Haqqani, the patriarch of the clan, to fight the Soviets.

<sup>21</sup> Following the July 2015 announcement of the death of Taliban leader Mullah Omar, Sirajuddin Haqqani was named deputy *emir* of the Taliban and is thought to oversee Taliban military operations in Afghanistan. For useful background on the Haqqani network, see Marvin G. Weinbaum and Meher Babbar, "The Tenacious, Toxic Haqqani Network," Sept. 7, 2016, <http://www.mei.edu/content/tenacious-toxic-haqqani-network>.

rob him. To make matters worse, the CIA director falsely assured the ISI chief that Davis had no connection to the agency. Davis spent nearly seven weeks in a Pakistani jail before being released. The ISI retaliated by exposing the CIA station chief in Islamabad (forcing him to leave Pakistan) and expelling hundreds of U.S. intelligence personnel and military trainers, in the process bringing intelligence collaboration between the two countries to a virtual halt.

Scarcely had the Davis affair receded from the headlines than an even bigger story broke. In the early hours of May 2, American helicopters crossed into Pakistani airspace and landed in the compound of a private residence outside the garrison town of Abbottabad, more than 100 miles inside Pakistan. A squad of elite U.S. special operations soldiers disembarked, entered the house, and killed Osama bin Laden, the head of al Qaeda and the mastermind behind the September 11, 2001, attacks.

The all-powerful Pakistani military was stunned by the Americans' ability to penetrate undetected so deeply into Pakistan, and humiliated by this very public demonstration of its inability to protect Pakistani borders. The ISI arrested alleged CIA informants who had provided the Americans with intelligence about bin Laden, and in other ways shut down intelligence coordination and joint counterterrorism operations with the United States. The army blocked the resupply of food and other provisions to the Shamsi airbase used for American drones. The provincial government in Punjab canceled six USAID projects in health care, education, and solid waste management totaling \$127 million.

For a growing number of Obama officials, Abbottabad underscored the undeniable fact of Pakistani duplicity. Americans openly questioned whether bin Laden could have lived in an important garrison city less than 70 miles from Islamabad without the knowledge and connivance of Pakistani security and intelligence officials. The fact that Obama dismissed any suggestion of informing the Pakistanis prior to the Abbottabad raid or conducting the operation jointly with the Pakistanis suggests just how pervasive American distrust of its putative ally had become by May 2011. As Hillary Clinton recalled in her memoirs, the difficulties of working with Pakistan over the previous two years had shown that "our relationship with Pakistan was strictly transactional, based on mutual interest, not trust."<sup>22</sup>

When, a few weeks later, word leaked of secret U.S.-Taliban talks, conducted without Islamabad's knowledge let alone participation, Pakistanis felt further betrayed. Shortly after the Abbottabad raid, Washington began to slow Coalition Support Fund (CSF) payments, which had originally been intended to reimburse Pakistan for its counterterrorism expenses, and more directly tie the disbursement of American monies to Pakistani counterterrorism cooperation.

<sup>22</sup> Clinton, *Hard Choices*, 193.

In July U.S. law enforcement officials accused the ISI of funneling at least \$4 million to American politicians in a clandestine effort to influence U.S. policy on Kashmir and other issues. The ISI was also reported to be running covert operations inside the United States to keep tabs on Pakistani-Americans.

Things got even worse. On September 13, the Haqqani network launched an attack on the U.S. embassy in Kabul. A clearly exasperated Adm. Michael Mullen, the chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, who perhaps more than any other senior American official had spent years trying to build better relations with the military and intelligence agencies in Pakistan, finally exploded, publicly accusing the Haqqani network of acting as “a veritable arm” of the ISI. “The government of Pakistan and most especially the Pakistani army and ISI” have chosen “to use violent extremism as an instrument of policy” to maintain leverage in Afghanistan, Mullen told a Senate hearing. The “first order of business right now,” the U.S. defense secretary testified, “is to, frankly, put as much pressure on Pakistan as we can” to sever its links to the Haqqani network. As the *New York Times* described it, “never before has the United States chosen to expose its grievances in such unvarnished language in the most public of forums.”<sup>23</sup>

Senior Pakistani officials, asserting Pakistani innocence and blaming the United States for the crisis in relations, responded in kind. The Pakistani defense minister warned that his country was a sovereign nation “which cannot be threatened.” The foreign minister declared that it was “unacceptable” for one ally to “humiliate” another. If the Americans “are choosing to do so,” she added, “it will be at their own cost.” Another senior Pakistani diplomat observed that relations between the two countries “are headed towards a breakdown if the U.S. continues its coercive approach of threats and public accusations.” Pakistani analysts declared that given the year’s accumulated irritants, bowing to American demands to move against the Haqqanis was unthinkable. The army leadership, they reported, continued to bet that the United States needed Pakistani supply routes into Afghanistan.<sup>24</sup>

Meanwhile, the irritants continued to pile up. In late September Burhanuddin Rabbani, the former president of Afghanistan, was assassinated. Hamid Karzai, the current Afghan president and viewed in Pakistan as an American tool, publicly charged that Pakistan was involved in the killing. A Karzai visit to India a few weeks later reinforced the conviction in Islamabad that an Afghan-Indian-American cabal was plotting against Pakistani interests. The Pakistani finance minister, visiting Washington at that moment, told American interlocutors that Indian machinations in Afghanistan were one of the principal problems facing

23 Karen DeYoung, “U.S.: Pakistan backed attacks,” *Washington Post*, Sept. 23, 2011; Jane Perlez, “Pakistan Scorns U.S. Scolding on Terrorism,” *New York Times*, Sept. 23, 2011.

24 Perlez, “Pakistan Scorns U.S. Scolding on Terrorism.”

his country. The Pakistani media, noting that the United States had escalated its drone attacks on Haqqani strongholds in North Waziristan, reported that U.S. troops were massing in eastern Afghanistan for a cross-border strike against the Haqqanis. In October, news reports surfaced that Pakistan's ambassador to the United States had asked Washington to intervene in Pakistan's domestic political affairs to block a military coup. Although based on dubious sourcing, these stories touched off new protests about American "meddling" in Pakistan's internal affairs. Islamabad's ambassador was forced to resign.

In late November, errant U.S. airstrikes accidentally killed two dozen Pakistani soldiers at a military checkpoint at Salala along the Afghan border. Incensed Pakistanis, many of whom believed the attack deliberate, found U.S. expressions of remorse tardy and inadequate. The "assault on Pakistan's border posts" was "a breach too far," wrote former Ambassador Lodhi. Pakistan could be a target or a partner; it could not be both.<sup>25</sup>

Islamabad responded by shutting down NATO supply routes into Afghanistan, (known as GLOCs, or ground lines of communication). It also suspended high-level visits, terminated training programs with the U.S. military, delayed or denied visa requests from U.S. government personnel, and demanded that the Americans leave Shamsi airbase, from where the CIA launched drones. Already deeply strained at the beginning of 2011, relations between the two countries appeared on the verge of collapse by the end of the *annus horribilis*.

### *Leveraging the giant*

The closing of the GLOCs after Salala provides perhaps the single best example in the entire history of U.S.-Pakistan relations of the smaller country openly, defiantly showing the larger that Pakistan would not be pushed beyond a certain point—not even by the world's mightiest power. The United States paid an immediate and tangible price for this declaration of Pakistani independence. According to Defense Department estimates, using alternative supply routes increased Pentagon costs by 300–400 percent.<sup>26</sup> The transit lines remained closed until July 2012, when Secretary of State Clinton offered what the Pakistanis deemed a sufficient apology. Getting a strong country to say it is sorry is hard, a senior Pakistani legislator reminisced some years later, but nothing else would do. The country's dignity and honor demanded nothing less.<sup>27</sup>

Not all Pakistani officials who were involved in this episode are prepared to say that the closure of the GLOCs and the other measures Islamabad adopted in

25 Maleeha Lodhi, "A crisis foretold," *The News*, Dec. 6, 2011. Some sources put the number of Pakistani soldiers killed as high as 28.

26 In mid-2012, the U.S. defense secretary estimated that Pakistan's closing of the ground lines of supply had added about \$100 million a month to the cost of the war in Afghanistan.

27 Interview with the author, Oct. 2016.

the aftermath of Salala were meant to leverage the United States. Leverage is a tactic, they argue, a diplomatic tool to achieve a specific result. But this measured matching of means and ends, they insist, was not how Islamabad approached the issue. As one official privy to the debates within the Zardari government later explained, shutting down the GLOCs “wasn’t thought of as leverage, it was the last resort. What else could we do? Here’s our partner, larger than life, shooting up people all over the place.” Worse yet, Washington had extended its apologies to Kabul under similar circumstances, yet could not bring itself to offer Pakistan anything more than “regrets.”<sup>28</sup>

The battle within both governments over how to resolve the Salala apology issue is a fascinating story, but beyond the scope of this essay. Leon Panetta, the U.S. secretary of defense, has provided a flavor of the sharp debate in Washington with his scornful reference to the State Department’s “apology caucus.”<sup>29</sup> The debate in Pakistan was equally pointed, although all sides agreed that American high-handedness had to be rebuked. Pakistani legislators across the political spectrum denounced U.S. arrogance and demanded a voice in the government’s handling of the matter. “There was a fire in parliament all day long” about reopening the GLOCs, one Pakistani insider recalls.<sup>30</sup> For some in Islamabad, the issue was not about using leverage, but about fireproofing the government from charges it was soft on the Americans. Musharraf might have been able to ignore parliamentary outrage, they noted, but the Zardari government did not have this luxury. The United States, they added, claimed to support democracy in Pakistan, but then failed to understand that the government was accountable to Pakistani public opinion in a way Musharraf had not been.

Yet, even as explosive for Pakistanis as the Salala issue was, Islamabad refrained from crossing certain lines in challenging the Americans. For instance, while the government discussed imposing new financial charges on the Pentagon for using Pakistani airspace, it eventually decided not to take this step. NATO convoys and the ground transit routes had become a staple of Pakistani televised news reports nearly every day. U.S. planes transiting Pakistan into Afghanistan, however, were far less visible, and the calls to shut Pakistani airspace less pronounced. This decision to forgo the additional pressure closing air routes over Pakistan might have offered supports the idea that Islamabad was focused more on managing political realities in Pakistan than on leveraging the United States.

Still, even if many in Islamabad were not thinking specifically in terms of leverage, the steps the Zardari government took to pressure Washington after

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28 Interview with the author, Jan. 2017.

29 Leon Panetta, with Jim Newton, *Worthy Fights: A Memoir of Leadership in War and Peace* (New York: Penguin Press, 2014), 380.

30 Interview with the author, Jan. 2017.

Salala had the effect of leveraging the United States. Islamabad got its apology, even though it took the Obama administration seven months to offer one.

Throughout the troubled year of 2011, Pakistani officials seized every opportunity to remind the Americans that Pakistan was not a mere supplicant in this relationship. Despite the difference in power between the two, they insisted, Washington needed Pakistan at least as much as Pakistan needed the United States. Stung by Adm. Mullen's charge that the ISI was actively colluding with the Haqqani network, Foreign Minister Hina Khar warned the Americans that such accusations were not without cost. "You will lose an ally. You cannot afford to alienate Pakistan."<sup>31</sup> Zardari's prime minister, Yusuf Raza Gilani, put it equally starkly: "The message for America is: 'They can't live with us, they can't live without us.'"<sup>32</sup>

U.S. officials grudgingly agreed. "I'm sure we will continue to have our ups and downs," Secretary Clinton told reporters early the following year. "But this relationship is too important to turn our back on—for both nations."<sup>33</sup> Statements of this nature, even if accurately reflecting administration views, weakened the American position vis-à-vis Pakistan. Some well-placed Pakistanis told American friends that Washington must change this narrative of mutual dependence. "The more you say you need Pakistan, the more leverage you give Pakistan."<sup>34</sup>

### *Different lenses for Afghanistan*

After the turmoil of 2011, Obama seems to have largely lost interest in Pakistan—with the very major exception of how Pakistan could help extract the United States from its frustrating war in Afghanistan.

As had been the case for a decade, Afghanistan continued to provide the lens through which Washington viewed Pakistan. Obama remained convinced that success in Afghanistan was possible only if Islamabad and Rawalpindi cooperated. Washington needed the supply routes to and from Afghanistan and the other tangible military assistance Pakistan offered. Washington needed Pakistan's help in sealing the border to prevent Taliban fighters from shuttling back and forth into Afghanistan. Washington needed Pakistan's help in shutting down Taliban sanctuaries in the tribal areas. It needed Pakistan's help in finding

31 Qasim Nauman and Missy Ryan, "Pakistan warns U.S.: 'You will lose an ally,'" Sept. 23, 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-usa-idUSTRE78M7EF20110923>.

32 *Ibid.*

33 Matthew Lee, "Clinton: US eager to resume Pakistan contacts," Feb. 23, 2012, [http://archive.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2012/02/23/clinton\\_us\\_eager\\_to\\_resume\\_pakistan\\_contacts/](http://archive.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2012/02/23/clinton_us_eager_to_resume_pakistan_contacts/).

34 Private conversation with the author, Feb. 2012. Recognizing the truth in this observation, the Pentagon negotiated agreements with several Central Asian countries to serve as alternative transit routes into Afghanistan.

and arresting senior Taliban and al Qaeda figures, including the supreme Taliban leader Mullah Omar, widely believed to be hiding in Quetta. It needed Pakistan's help to build a stable Afghanistan once the fighting was over.

Not least, a break in relations with Islamabad would further complicate the already difficult task of negotiating a way out of the Afghan imbroglio. The United States needed Pakistan to press the Afghan Taliban to open a negotiating process, and once talks had begun, to negotiate in good faith. Pakistan, administration officials believed, wielded substantial influence over many of the Taliban groups that would have to sign on to any successful political settlement. A Pakistan well-disposed toward U.S. purposes could pressure the Taliban into negotiating peace in Afghanistan. A Pakistan with no interest in accommodating American hopes would be, in all likelihood, a deal breaker for a political settlement to the war.

But if Afghanistan was the lens through which Washington saw Pakistan, India remained the prism through which Islamabad and Rawalpindi viewed Afghanistan. Strategic analysts in Pakistan never wavered in their belief that the United States would depart the region just as soon as it could, leaving Pakistan to deal with the consequences of an unstable Afghanistan susceptible to Indian influence. Pakistanis understood that a weak and chaotic Afghanistan, quite possibly hosting anti-Pakistan militants, would pose a serious threat to their own security. Nonetheless, for most Pakistani strategists, this possibility seemed preferable to a stable Afghanistan closely aligned with India.

Pakistani fears about Indian influence in Afghanistan were not simply paranoid fantasies spun out of thin air. Karzai took few pains to hide his distrust of Pakistan and his interest in maintaining warm ties with New Delhi. Much of the military equipment Karzai sought from Washington, including jet fighter aircraft and tanks, was more suitable for conventional war with Pakistan than for counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations against the Taliban. Ashraf Ghani, who succeeded Karzai as Afghan president in 2014, made a brief effort to court Islamabad; one of Ghani's first actions after becoming president was to cancel an order for military equipment from India, as part of his strategy to build a more constructive relationship with Pakistan. But when this produced little diminution in the number of Taliban attacks staged from Pakistani soil, Ghani reverted to a far more antagonistic approach toward Pakistan and once more tilted back toward New Delhi. The Afghan and Pakistani militaries periodically exchanged fire across their common border, and both sides took military as well as civilian casualties.

Washington's own rapidly growing partnership with India, launched in the last years of the Clinton administration but accelerating under George W. Bush and then Obama, created even greater angst in Pakistan. Indeed, the transformation

in the relationship between the United States and India—from suspicion and ill will to a widely held sense of partnership—is one of the most remarkable developments in global politics over the past two decades—and for Pakistan, one of the most alarming. Typical of Pakistani anxieties was the assessment offered by an anonymous Pakistani diplomat on the eve of Obama’s first official visit to India in 2010: “on core issues, the U.S. continues to stick to its traditional anti-Pakistan policies.” This official then listed Afghanistan as well as civilian nuclear energy, Kashmir, and Pakistani relations with India as issues where U.S.-India convergence threatened vital Pakistani interests.<sup>35</sup>

The electoral triumph in 2014 of Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) further inflamed Pakistani anxieties. The BJP was regularly characterized as a Hindu nationalist party with significant anti-Muslim and anti-Pakistan elements. Prime Minister Modi had first gained prominence beyond India in 2002 when, as the BJP chief minister of the Indian state of Gujarat, he was accused of doing nothing to stop anti-Muslim rioting that took more than a thousand primarily Muslim lives. For many Pakistani analysts, Modi’s election as prime minister in 2014 signaled a new era of heightened insecurity. Yet Modi’s elevation did nothing to slow the development of close ties between Washington and New Delhi, especially in the sensitive defense sector.

### *Expanding the war into Baluchistan*

Obama was sworn in for a second presidential term in January 2013. A few months later, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif won a huge electoral victory and succeeded Zardari as Pakistan’s leader. For Sharif, toppled by the Musharraf coup in 1999, his return to the prime minister’s office must have been particularly sweet.<sup>36</sup> Yet fresh mandates from the voters in each country did little to change the dynamics of the U.S.-Pakistan relationship. Afghanistan continued to dominate, and to roil, ties between the two.

Washington persisted in its complaints about FATA sanctuaries and the ease with which the Taliban and fighters from the Haqqani network crossed into Afghanistan. The administration continued to urge—Pakistanis thought “hector” was a more accurate term—Pakistan to “do more” against its own extremist groups. Even after Pakistan, claiming that it no longer distinguished between “good” and “bad” militants, launched an extensive offensive in North Waziristan

35 David Nakamura, “Obama’s India trip stirs fears in Pakistan about power balance,” *Washington Post*, Nov. 5, 2010.

36 In 2010, the 18th amendment to the Pakistani constitution stripped the presidency of many of its powers and returned them to the prime minister. Throughout the rest of his time in office, President Zardari remained the most important political figure in the country. Following the 2013 election, however, the prime minister’s office became the center of political power. Both before and after adoption of the 18th amendment, the military high command, in the person of the chief of army staff, retained immense power, especially in the areas of national security, foreign affairs, and internal security.



in 2014, many Americans judged that Pakistani military operations appeared designed to permit Afghan Taliban to escape across the border or into other parts of Pakistan.

Pakistan had its own litany of complaints related to the war in Afghanistan. It was offended by U.S. badgering, rejected U.S. insistence that the ISI retained ties with Afghan militants, and found the Americans insensitive to the growing number of casualties the army was taking. Islamabad opposed U.S. plans to create an Afghan security force numbering well over 300,000 troops and police. It resented what it saw as an American reluctance to give Islamabad a substantial voice in determining Afghanistan's future. It worried that U.S. military operations in eastern Afghanistan drove extremists across the border and served to destabilize Pakistan. And in a situation laced with irony, it complained of Afghan safe havens for Pakistan Taliban fighters.

Many of these frictions were on display following a U.S. drone strike in the spring of 2016 that killed the leader of the Afghan Taliban, Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour, while he was riding in a taxi in Baluchistan.<sup>37</sup> Further investigation revealed that Mansour was returning from Iran and was traveling, under an alias, on a Pakistani passport. Passport stamps confirmed that this was not Mansour's first foreign trip. Here, Washington insisted, was yet further proof that elements within the Pakistani government were colluding with the Taliban, permitting overseas travel for fund-raising and other purposes and even providing the necessary travel documents.

Indignant U.S. lawmakers called for the administration to turn up the heat on Pakistan by cutting off all U.S. funding to Islamabad, declaring Pakistan a state sponsor of terrorism, and imposing economic sanctions on its uncooperative ally. The U.S. House of Representatives held a hearing titled "Pakistan: Friend or Foe?" Pakistan was "making chumps out of us," complained the chairman of the Asia subcommittee. "[W]e have been patsies," a former U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan testified. "Pakistanis are very clever in manipulating us."<sup>38</sup>

Pakistanis were embarrassed by this confirmation that senior Taliban leaders could be found in the settled portions of the country, not simply in FATA. More pertinently, they were incensed at such a highly visible attack in one of the four Pakistani provinces; nearly all previous U.S. strikes had been directed against targets in the tribal areas.<sup>39</sup> The attack, moreover, raised even more unsettling questions. What would keep Washington from striking next in the heartland of Punjab, many wondered, or at other targets that had drawn American

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37 Mansour had succeeded Mullah Omar, whose death had been confirmed the previous year.

38 Anwar Iqbal, "Vicious criticism of Pakistan by US Congress panel," *Dawn*, July 14, 2016.

39 Pakistanis viewed the attack as crossing a Pakistani red line and as a provocative escalation in the long-standing tensions with the United States over Taliban safe havens in Pakistan

disapproval, including the country's nuclear facilities? Calling the United States a "selfish friend," Sartaj Aziz, Sharif's *de facto* foreign minister, charged that Washington had "sabotaged the Afghan reconciliation process" by killing Mansour.<sup>40</sup>

That a successful visit to Washington by Indian Prime Minister Modi, featuring a highly coveted address to a joint meeting of Congress, came on the heels of the strike that killed Mansour did nothing to assuage Pakistani anger or quieten Islamabad's apprehensions. Resurrecting a long-standing Pakistani mantra, Aziz declared that the United States "abandons us when it doesn't need our help. This has been happening for the last 60 years," he asserted. "The U.S. approaches Pakistan whenever it needs our help but abandons us when its objectives are achieved." Relations between the two countries "need to be reassessed," he warned, because Pakistan's importance had not diminished despite the growing ties between India and the United States. "We are still relevant as far as Afghanistan is concerned, no one can replace Pakistan's role."<sup>41</sup>

But Aziz was wrong. As America drew down its presence in Afghanistan, Pakistan's relevance—and its leverage over the United States—was declining. With fewer U.S. and NATO troops dependent on supplies ferried over the transit routes through Pakistan, Islamabad was losing its most potent tool for exerting leverage on Washington.

### *Pakistani leverage over the Taliban*

Until the final year or two of his presidency, Obama's thinking about Pakistan was influenced by the belief (increasingly, more a hope than a belief) that the road to peace in Afghanistan ran through Islamabad (or more accurately, Rawalpindi). Surely the Taliban's reliance upon Pakistani forbearance gave the ISI leverage over the Taliban, U.S. officials reasoned. After all, the Taliban's impressive resilience was derived in large measure from the logistical and financial support the ISI provided, the FATA safe havens it enjoyed, its access to the Pakistani media, its freedom to move throughout Pakistan and from there to travel abroad for fundraising. If Pakistan could be induced to place sufficient pressure on the Taliban—by shutting down Taliban camps, for instance—the Afghan insurgents would have little option other than to negotiate seriously with the government in Kabul.

Typical of U.S. sentiment as the Obama presidency neared its end was the call by

40 "US is a 'selfish friend': Pakistan," *The News*, June 10, 2016, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/126786-US-is-a-selfish-friend-Pakistan>; Kamran Yousef, "Pakistan hints at reassessing US ties," *Express Tribune*, June 10, 2016, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1119807/strained-relationship-sartaj-hints-reassessing-us-ties/>. Prime Minister Sharif kept the foreign affairs portfolio himself, but Aziz was widely seen as foreign minister in all but name.

41 Yousef, "Pakistan hints at reassessing US ties."

two former U.S. diplomats with extensive experience in Afghanistan for further restrictions on U.S. military assistance to Pakistan, in order to prod Islamabad to shut down Taliban sanctuaries and the Haqqani network. “At this juncture,” Zalmay Khalilzad and James Dobbins wrote in January 2016, “sustained and intensified pressure on Pakistan offers the only viable path to advancing the reconciliation process” in Afghanistan. Behind this recommendation lay this same belief that Islamabad wielded considerable influence over the Taliban. “Washington and Kabul should focus less on fostering talks [with the Taliban] and more on persuading Pakistan to take action against those engaged in terrorism and violence,” the two American diplomats wrote.<sup>42</sup>

Americans were not alone in looking to Pakistan to force the Taliban to the negotiating table. Ashraf Ghani, assuming that Beijing had considerable influence with its friends in Islamabad, chose China for his first official trip as president. But if the Afghan leader hoped that Beijing would coax Pakistan to lean on the Taliban, he was to be disappointed. Perhaps China never tried. Equally likely, Chinese influence with, even pressure on, Pakistan was not sufficient to induce the Pakistanis to take actions contrary to their perception of the nation’s interests.

To be sure, Pakistan does seem to have applied leverage on the Taliban from time to time. Pakistani authorities selectively arrested and released key Taliban figures, and used Taliban families in Pakistan as *de facto* hostages.<sup>43</sup> Asked in early 2016 if Pakistan could pressure the Taliban to sit down with the Ghani government, Sartaj Aziz conceded that Islamabad did have some influence over the Taliban, since “their leadership is in Pakistan, and they get some medical facilities, their families are here.” Indeed, the Pakistani revealed that the previous summer Islamabad had restricted Taliban freedom of movement and access to medical care, and even threatened to expel the Taliban from their bases in FATA, if they did not participate in talks with Afghan officials held at Murree, northeast of Islamabad. Aziz then added: “So we can use those levers to pressurize them, to say: Come to the table.”<sup>44</sup>

Nonetheless, whatever leverage with the Taliban Pakistan might once have possessed had largely dissipated by this time. Multiple sources reported that Taliban leaders increasingly came to resent Pakistani manipulation and what

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42 Zalmay Khalilzad and James Dobbins, “Pakistan Holds the Key to Peace in Afghanistan,” *Newsweek*, Jan. 8, 2016. Khalilzad served as U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan under George W. Bush. Dobbins was the State Department’s special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan during the Obama administration.

43 On this, see Vanda Felbab-Brown, “Pakistan’s Relations with Afghanistan and Implications for Regional Politics,” in NBR Reports, *Mapping Pakistan’s Internal Dynamics: Implications for State Stability and Regional Security*, Feb. 2016, <http://www.nbr.org/publications/element.aspx?id=883>.

44 Transcript, “A Conversation with Sartaj Aziz,” Council on Foreign Relations, Mar. 1, 2016, <http://www.cfr.org/pakistan/sartaj-aziz-pakistans-foreign-security-policy/p37592>. The Pakistani press registered surprise at Aziz’s candid acknowledgment that the Taliban leadership resided in Pakistan, a situation Islamabad had long denied. On this, see Anwar Iqbal, “Pakistan underlines its influence on Afghan Taliban,” *Dawn*, Mar. 4, 2016.

they saw as the ISI placing Pakistani interests ahead of their own. The split within the Taliban that became apparent following the 2015 revelation of Mullah Omar's death in part reflected disagreement about how closely to work with Pakistan.<sup>45</sup> Taliban battlefield success in 2015, which gave them secure bases in Afghanistan, also lessened their dependence on Pakistan. Even if Taliban leaders in Pakistan remained susceptible to Pakistani pressure, Taliban field commanders, flushed with military gains, saw less and less reason to accept ISI dictates.

A Reuters story from March 2016 quotes an unnamed Pakistani ruefully noting that threats to expel the Taliban no longer carried the same weight.<sup>46</sup> A senior air force officer went further, claiming that even at the height of Pakistani influence with the Taliban in the 1990s, Islamabad's control had been limited. "We couldn't even get them to accept the Durand Line" as the official boundary separating the two nations, he bitterly observed.<sup>47</sup> Another senior Pakistani security officer said simply: "influence [with the Taliban] does not mean control. Those days are long gone."<sup>48</sup> While it served Islamabad's interests to insist that Pakistan had little leverage over the Taliban, that doesn't mean it wasn't true.

But perhaps more fundamentally, Pakistan had no interest in a peace process or a negotiated settlement that could open the way for greater Indian influence in Afghanistan. So U.S. debates over whether Pakistan possessed leverage over the Taliban missed the point.

The expansion of the drone war into Baluchistan with the May 2016 strike that killed Mansour revealed just how badly the Obama administration had lost confidence in Pakistan's ability, or willingness, to bring the Taliban to the peace table. Accordingly, Washington was less reluctant to anger Islamabad with an attack that was certain to be seen as provocative, and less concerned that killing Mansour would set back prospects for peace talks. By this date, the administration had largely abandoned its earlier hope that Pakistan would prod the Taliban into serious negotiations.

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45 A video released by a splinter Taliban group in 2016 castigated certain Taliban leaders for being "servants and slaves of Pakistan." For this see Khaama Press (Kabul), "Taliban Supreme Leader Mullah Akhtar Mansoor is not alive: Taliban leaders," Apr. 14, 2016, <http://www.khaama.com/taliban-supreme-leader-mullah-akhtar-mansoor-is-not-alive-taliban-leaders-0654>.

46 Mehreen Zahra-Malik and Jibrán Ahmed, "In secret meetings, Taliban rejected Pakistan pressure on peace process," Mar. 15, 2016, <http://in.reuters.com/article/pakistan-talibantalks-idINKCN0WG2LP>. Also see Michael Kugelman, "If Reconciliation Fails in Afghanistan, What's Plan B?" Mar. 10, 2016, [http://warontherocks.com/2016/03/if-reconciliation-fails-in-afghanistan-whats-plan-b/?utm\\_source=Sailthru&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=New%20Campaign&utm\\_term=%2AAfPak%20Daily%20Brief](http://warontherocks.com/2016/03/if-reconciliation-fails-in-afghanistan-whats-plan-b/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=New%20Campaign&utm_term=%2AAfPak%20Daily%20Brief).

47 Private conversation with the author, Apr. 2016.

48 Zahra-Malik and Ahmed, "In secret meetings, Taliban rejected Pakistan pressure on peace process."

## *Congress ups the pressure*

The Kerry-Lugar-Berman assistance package, adopted in 2009 and scheduled to run through 2014, represented the high water mark of U.S. efforts to use American economic assistance to forge a close partnership with Islamabad. Congressional appropriations for Pakistan peaked in 2010 at \$4.5 billion, of which \$1.77 billion (39 percent) was civilian aid.<sup>49</sup> After that, annual appropriations moved steadily downward, totaling \$3.6 billion in 2011, \$2.6 billion by 2013, and \$1.6 billion by 2015.<sup>50</sup> For 2016, Congress appropriated only \$226 million in economic assistance to Pakistan, a far cry from the \$1.5 billion promised annually in KLB.

Frustrated in particular by the Obama administration's inability to persuade Islamabad to move against the Haqqani network and other extremist groups along the Afghan border, U.S. legislators also placed new restrictions on American security assistance to Pakistan. In 2015 and again the following year, Congress fenced off a portion of the funds it had authorized for the Pakistan military unless the Pentagon could certify that Islamabad had taken meaningful action against the Haqqani network. Not trusting the administration to abide by the intent of this restriction, the lawmakers also added a provision denying the executive branch the authority to waive the certification requirement. In August 2016, the Pentagon confirmed that it would not certify that Pakistan had taken sufficient action against the Haqqanis and withheld \$300 million in Coalition Support Fund payments; the following year, it withheld an additional \$350 million.

Some legislators viewed these steps as a reasonable U.S. response to Pakistan's unsatisfactory cooperation. Others no doubt hoped that this new certification requirement would give the Pakistani army greater incentive to move against the Haqqanis. But whether envisioned as punishment for past misbehavior or a prod for future action, these steps failed to elicit the Pakistani response their congressional authors had hoped for. To the contrary, because the CSF payments had long been described as reimbursements for Pakistani expenses in the joint fight against terrorism, their denial struck many Pakistanis as one more example of American unreliability and duplicity. Rather than increasing U.S. leverage, these conditions served only to undercut Washington's ability to influence Pakistani decision making.

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49 The vast majority of "civilian aid" consisted of ESF, or Economic Support Funds, monies directly funneled to the Pakistani government, supposedly for civilian-related purposes. Skeptics questioned whether all these funds actually served the purposes for which they were intended.

50 Here as elsewhere, these figures are for U.S. fiscal years. As always, one must exercise extreme caution when discussing levels of U.S. foreign assistance. Appropriation totals are almost always higher than obligation and disbursement totals. And as discussed below, Pakistan was adamant that CSF payments should not be counted as aid at all, but as reimbursement for Pakistani logistical and operational support of U.S.-led military operations.

The U.S. Congress also reinserted itself into the sensitive issue of F-16 sales to Pakistan. In early 2016, the White House announced that it intended to sell Pakistan eight F-16 fighter aircraft. Sen. Bob Corker, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, promptly used senatorial prerogative to block the use of U.S. assistance (under the FMF, or foreign military financing, mechanism) for this purchase, although he was willing to let the sale go forward so long as Pakistan used its own funds to buy the planes. “They (Pakistanis) continue to support the Taliban, the Haqqani network, and give safe haven to al Qaeda,” the legislator explained.<sup>51</sup>

Yet Corker understood the limitations inherent in efforts to turn U.S. security assistance into leverage. “Prohibiting a taxpayer subsidy sends a much-needed message to Pakistan that it needs to change its behavior,” he told Senate colleagues in defending his hold on FMF financing. But blocking the sale altogether would carry unacceptable costs. Preventing the F-16 purchase “would do more harm than good by paving the way for countries like Russia and China to sell to Pakistan while also inhibiting greater cooperation on counterterrorism.”<sup>52</sup> In other words, while it might choose not to subsidize the F-16 purchase, the United States could not afford to block the sale entirely. Neither Corker nor anyone else in Washington was able to solve the riddle of how to use conditions on U.S. assistance to incentivize Pakistan to cooperate on counterterrorism without jeopardizing the achievement of other U.S. objectives.

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Throughout the autumn and into the new year, firing across the line of control separating the two Kashmirs occurred regularly, with fatalities on both sides.

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This scaling back of American military support coincided with a significant rise in tensions between Pakistan and India in 2016. In mid-year, large protests erupted in Muslim-majority Indian Kashmir, touching off a new crackdown by the Indian authorities and inflaming sentiment in Pakistan. In September, Pakistan-based militants attacked an Indian army camp near the Kashmiri village of Uri, killing 19 Indian soldiers in what was described as the deadliest attack of this nature in twenty years. New Delhi retaliated with what it called “surgical strikes” against militant camps in Pakistan’s portion of Kashmir. Throughout the autumn and into the new year, firing across the Line of Control separating the two Kashmirs occurred regularly, with fatalities on both sides. Each side expelled diplomats of the other country.

51 Reuters, “U.S. Senate committee chairman questions Pakistan F-16 deal,” Feb. 23, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/usa-pakistan-aircraft-idUSKCN0VW1X0>.

52 Reuters, “Bid to block Pakistan F-16 sale fails in U.S. Senate,” Mar. 10, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/usa-pakistan-fighters-idUSKCN0WC2L4>

The combination of heightened tensions with India and reductions in U.S. security assistance fed into Pakistani anxieties that were already elevated by numerous signs that India had become entrenched as America's preferred partner in South Asia. Only weeks before India's "surgical strikes" on Pakistan's portion of Kashmir, Washington and New Delhi had initialed what was being heralded as a breakthrough bilateral defense cooperation agreement. Surely India's new aggressiveness in Kashmir could not be unrelated to this pact, Pakistanis reasoned.

Islamabad pushed back. Unless India de-escalated the situation along the Kashmiri Line of Control, Pakistani officials warned Washington in October, Islamabad would be compelled to move troops from the Afghan border eastward, to guard against Indian aggression. Such a troop relocation would inevitably impact Pakistan's efforts to block extremist fighters from crossing into Afghanistan. Once more Islamabad was using America's need for Pakistani cooperation in Afghanistan to press Washington to help on an issue of central importance to Pakistan. But the Obama administration, seeing India as another target of Pakistani-facilitated terrorism, persisted in its refusal to lean toward Islamabad in the latter's long-running dispute with New Delhi.

### *Dialing back U.S. expectations*

After the Abbottabad raid and the tumultuous events of 2011, Obama seems to have largely given up on trying, through either inducements or punishment, to convince Pakistan to change its strategic calculus on either India or the Taliban. Upon entering office, he had attempted to widen the lens through which Washington viewed Pakistan, to encompass more than simply Afghanistan and counterterrorism. But as the situation in Afghanistan deteriorated in 2009 and 2010, and as Pakistan persisted in following its own agenda for Afghanistan, disillusionment replaced his earlier hopes for a broader, more positive relationship with Islamabad. By the end of 2011, the White House seems to have concluded that nothing more than a transactional relationship was possible. Administration officials continued to talk about building a "strategic partnership" with Pakistan, but by then the White House had moved on to other priorities.

There were two competing explanations for the failure of Obama's earlier hopes for an across-the-board partnership with Islamabad. Many Americans pointed to Pakistan's continued obsession with Indian hostility, its conviction that India was out to destroy Pakistan. Pakistanis retorted that Washington willfully refused to recognize the extent of India's determination to crush Pakistan, a threat dramatically escalated after Modi's 2014 election. The United States, therefore, failed to understand how much Pakistani security relied upon a friendly government in Kabul.

Each of these claims holds some truth. This much seems certain: neither George W. Bush nor Barack Obama succeeded in persuading Pakistan that it could safely sign up for the American agenda in Afghanistan. Neither administration was able to convince Islamabad that an Afghanistan free of Taliban influence would not give a deeply hostile India new opportunities to encircle Pakistan. And in this failure lies much of the explanation for America's inability to leverage its power to persuade, bribe, or compel Pakistan to adopt the U.S. vision for Afghanistan.

One important mark of U.S. favor, and a potential source of American leverage, is presidential trips to foreign countries. Obama followed up his 2010 visit to India with a second trip in 2015, where he was accorded the signal honor of being designated as Chief Guest at India's Republic Day celebration. In contrast, during his eight years as president, Obama never found a reason to visit Pakistan. This was an accurate rendering of the relative value Obama placed on each of the two countries. It may not, however, have been good diplomacy.

Nor, unlike his predecessor, did Obama make any real effort to cultivate personal ties with the Pakistani leaders with whom he dealt. "Obama never had proper interaction with any Pakistani chief executive," Zardari complained shortly after Obama left office.<sup>53</sup> Both facets of Obama's inattention to Pakistan—his reluctance to visit and his indifference to personal relations—also help to explain why American assurances of good intentions and a desire for partnership found few takers in Islamabad.

Writing in 2015, the Pakistani scholar and diplomat Husain Haqqani—who had served as Zardari's ambassador to the United States, but who was harshly critical of the oversized role played in Pakistan by the country's military—offered a biting critique of Obama's handling of relations with Islamabad. The U.S. president, Haqqani wrote, "has spent the last seven years alternating between coaxing Pakistan's leaders with economic and military assistance and delivering tough messages. The pretense of toughness has lacked credibility. Diplomacy and inducements have failed because they only reinforce the Pakistani view that the country's geostrategic importance for the U.S. outweighs its resentment of negative Pakistani policies," most particularly continued Pakistani support for the Taliban. "The U.S. has ended up as an enabler of Pakistan's dysfunction by reinforcing the belief of its elite that it is too important to fail or be neglected," Haqqani continued. "Instead of telling Pakistan's elite how important they are, it might be more useful to stop footing the bill for Pakistan's failings."<sup>54</sup>

53 Guy Taylor, "Pakistan's former president urges Trump to send envoy to region," *Washington Times*, Jan. 23, 2017, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/jan/23/asif-zardari-pakistans-former-president-urges-tru/>.

54 Husain Haqqani, "Let down by both carrot and stick," *The Hindu*, Oct. 23, 2015, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/let-down-by-both-carrot-and-stick/article7792987.ece>. For a fuller treatment of these



Haqqani's indictment rings true, but his prescription reflects some of the same mistaken assumptions that characterized American thinking about the Pakistan relationship for much of the period since the 1950s. Haqqani seems to assume that a tougher U.S. approach, one that demanded accountability and performance in exchange for American largesse, would have had greater success in compelling Pakistani cooperation against the Taliban and other extremist groups. Perhaps he is correct, but it is important to understand that this is an argument based upon faith, not evidence.

In truth, there is little in the historical record to support the contention that Pakistan can be bludgeoned into taking steps it believes dangerous to its security. To the contrary, repeated U.S. attempts to condition its aid to Pakistani behavior—from the nuclear-related legislation of the 1980s, to threats to impose sanctions in the case of military coups, to the conditions on U.S. military assistance attached to KLB, to congressional action more recently fencing off CSF payments—failed to induce the better behavior Washington had hoped for. Instead, they merely reinforced the Pakistani belief that its putative friend sought only to advance a U.S. agenda at odds with Pakistan's security.

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## The administration had long understood that its need for Pakistani cooperation gave Islamabad leverage over Washington.

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Haqqani's critique also blamed Obama for reinforcing Pakistan's perception of its indispensability to the United States. But the administration had long understood that its need for Pakistani cooperation gave Islamabad leverage over Washington. Almost from the moment they took office, administration officials worked to reduce U.S.

dependence upon Pakistan. By the summer of 2009, Washington had secured Moscow's agreement to permit the transit through Russia of lethal military supplies for the war in Afghanistan. The administration hoped that the opening of this Northern Distribution Network, Hillary Clinton later wrote, "would give us leverage with Pakistan" by reducing U.S. dependence upon the Pakistan GLOCs.<sup>55</sup>

In a statement of surprising tactlessness—no doubt reflecting the bitter aftertaste of Islamabad's 7-month severing of the supply corridor following the Salala incident in late 2011—Clinton also noted that the new supply lines would afford protection from "temper tantrums by Pakistani officials." The Northern Distribution Network proved an imperfect solution to the massive task of ferrying supplies to and from Afghanistan, but it did demonstrate U.S. recognition of the

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themes, see Haqqani's *Magnificent Delusions*.

<sup>55</sup> Clinton, *Hard Choices*, 233, 237.

need to counter the leverage Pakistan gained with the transit routes.<sup>56</sup>

### *American overreach*

It is also the case, however, that some officials in both the Bush and Obama administrations held stunningly inflated expectations about the leverage provided by U.S. assistance. Perhaps nowhere are the sweeping assumptions about the transformative nature of U.S. aid better illustrated than in an April 2009 cable to Washington from the U.S. embassy in Islamabad (and subsequently leaked by Wikileaks). Describing their plans for spending a projected increase in American assistance to Pakistan, embassy diplomats outlined an agenda staggering in its scope. “[O]ur goal is to introduce new conditionality and leverage equipment and assistance to build [counterinsurgency] capabilities and reduce poverty and poor governance that help breed extremism,” they declared. The embassy recommended conditioning U.S. aid on “measurable steps” by the Pakistani government “to expand democratic political institutions and government transparency and accountability; promote education and health services; and reform policies that are holding back, in particular, the energy and agriculture sectors, such as reform of the tax code.”<sup>57</sup>

But American plans did not stop there. Armed with a heavier checkbook, the embassy intended to encourage Islamabad to dismantle “outdated and inefficient state-controlled pricing and distribution regimes”; to provide adequate protection for intellectual property and patent rights; to improve the country’s investment climate; to maintain humanitarian programs in support of refugees displaced by fighting between the government and extremist groups; and to address “endemic corruption and nepotism.” All of this at a moment when the security situation in Pakistan was “deteriorating rapidly,” and the government had just lost control of the key district of Swat, less than a day’s drive from Islamabad, to armed extremists.

The embassy was not unmindful of the difficulties impeding fulfillment of such an ambitious agenda. Among the challenges it cited were overcoming “wariness” on the part of the Pakistani government “about being seen as working too closely” with the United States; “closing a ‘trust deficit’” based on previous U.S. withdrawals from the region; countering public perceptions that

56 Here as elsewhere, however, leverage cut several ways. According to one State Department official, the White House worried that the alternative supply routes through Russia and central Asia handed Russian leader Vladimir Putin leverage over the United States. “Obama decided he preferred apologizing to Pakistan to depending on Putin,” this official recalled. Vali Nasr, *The Dispensable Nation: American Foreign Policy in Retreat* (New York: Anchor Books, 2013), 89.

57 This and the following two paragraphs come from “Spending Strategically in Pakistan,” U.S. embassy, Islamabad, to U.S. embassy, Kabul, and others, Apr. 21, 2009, in [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09ISLAMABAD832\\_a.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09ISLAMABAD832_a.html).

the U.S. presence in Afghanistan “is the source of militancy in Pakistan”; and “convincing the Pakistani public that they need to make winning an existential battle against extremism a matter of national urgency.”

The after-the-fact analyst must be careful about ridiculing the extent of U.S. hopes for the impact aid might have. In an important sense, these aspirations reflected the “can-do” attitude that has lain behind many American successes. They revealed a genuine conviction that American wealth and power ought to be used to better the lives of the people of Pakistan. And they recognized that in the absence of structural reform in Pakistan, American money and expertise would be inadequate to address the many ills that confronted Pakistanis.

Even so, one cannot help being struck with how casually even well-informed American diplomats and decision makers assumed that a relatively modest amount of U.S. assistance could leverage Islamabad on issues central to the pursuit of political power and economic riches in Pakistan. Moreover, successive Pakistani governments as well as the powerful Pakistani army had resisted many of these steps over a period of decades. Reforming the tax code? Americans themselves had good reason to know how politically difficult that step would be—even assuming a consensus on the definition of reform, which of course was non-existent. Addressing endemic corruption and nepotism? An admirable goal no doubt, but it was hubristic and self-delusional to think that a few billion dollars could persuade or pressure Pakistan to abandon a system that bestowed power on the very people and groups now being asked to cede it. At a very minimum, the bribe was insufficiently large, the advertised benefits of an alternative system of governance speculative and potentially hazardous.

Few would argue with the assessment that U.S. aid since the assistance program was resumed after 9/11 had a beneficial impact in specific sectors, on certain institutions, and for a not inconsiderable number of individual Pakistanis. This is not unimportant. But from the perspective of providing leverage and advancing American interests, U.S. aid failed—badly—in its larger purposes of persuading Pakistan to provide better counterterrorism support and in improving the U.S. image in Pakistan.<sup>58</sup>

Moreover, the sweep of American assumptions about the leverage their aid provided encouraged many Pakistanis to conclude that the United States sought to control all things in their country. While these Pakistani suspicions were

58 Polling in mid-2011, two years after the inception of KLB, found that only 12 percent of Pakistanis held a “favorable” view of the United States, compared with 87 percent who felt this way about China. Griff Witte, “Pakistan courts China as relations with U.S. grow strained,” *Washington Post*, June 22, 2011. Four years later, America’s position had improved somewhat, but a 2015 survey found “unfavorable” views of the United States still running ahead of “favorable” views by nearly a 3-1 margin, at 62-22 percent. See “Pakistan: Opinion of the United States” Indicators Database, *Pew Research Center*, last updated in June 2016, <http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/1/country/166/> and <http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/1/country/166/response/Unfavorable/>.

overblown, public statements by prominent voices in Washington regularly led Pakistanis to interpret U.S. intentions in the worst possible light. In 2011, to cite one example of many, at the height of U.S.-Pakistan tensions during the *annus horribilis*, a scholar at a conservative Washington think tank observed that the United States “is capable of bringing tremendous—and potentially fatal—financial pressure to bear” on Islamabad. It was instructive to recall, he added, that “there’s one diplomatic mechanism with a track record of success in Pakistan”—Armitage’s purported (but probably apocryphal) threat immediately after the 9/11 attacks to bomb Pakistan back into the Stone Age if Islamabad did not join the fight against al Qaeda. Perhaps it was time to resurrect the Armitage approach, the author concluded, as the best way to end Pakistan’s duplicity on terrorism.<sup>59</sup>

This commentator did not speak for the U.S. government, nor reflect official policy. Nonetheless, frequent statements of this nature, some by prominent U.S. legislators, encouraged Pakistanis to regard the Americans as threats, not well-wishers.

### *Pakistani counters*

Set against the immensity of U.S. power, Pakistan seemed to have a weak hand. Yet Islamabad frequently played this hand well, ignoring U.S. requests, deflecting U.S. demands, and staving off U.S. insistence that it “do more” in the fight against extremism. Importantly, Pakistani defiance of American desires was usually cloaked in deniability, and was accompanied by demonstrations, many of them public, of cooperation and shared purpose. Pakistan arrested hundreds of al Qaeda fighters and other dangerous extremists. While it frequently released these figures after taking credit for its actions, Islamabad also turned key individuals over to the United States. While regularly denouncing American drone strikes, it quietly acquiesced in the use of drones and permitted them to operate from bases in Pakistan. Perhaps most crucially, it allowed immense quantities of NATO supplies to transit through Pakistan. Time and again, Pakistan demonstrated its value to the United States by doing just enough to persuade U.S. officials that the costs of a break with Islamabad outweighed the advantages of a rupture. In this manner, Pakistan largely negated the coercive capabilities that America’s vast power seemed to give it.

Islamabad was also adroit at playing the guilt card against the Americans. In a 2011 *Washington Post* op-ed entitled “Talk to, not at, Pakistan,” President Zardari justified his country’s failure to embrace the U.S. counterterrorism agenda fully by pointing to previous American betrayals. Pakistan was merely “attempting to prepare for post-withdrawal realities,” he explained. “The

59 Jeff M. Smith, “US Takes Gloves Off With Pakistan,” *The Diplomat*, Sept. 25, 2011, <http://thediplomat.com/2011/09/us-takes-gloves-off-with-pakistan/>

international community abandoned Central and South Asia a generation ago, triggering the catastrophe that we now find ourselves in.” Nor was his country’s caution simply a reflection of injustices from bygone eras. Congress had failed to approve the Reconstruction Opportunity Zones Pakistan had been promised, Zardari pointed out, which would have countered the siren call of extremism by providing livelihoods for Pakistani workers.<sup>60</sup> Whether called shaming or blackmail, these techniques demonstrated that two could play at the game of leverage.

Pakistanis also understood that Washington would push Islamabad only so far. In 2009, as Obama was struggling to reverse the downward trajectory in Afghanistan, Vice President Joe Biden had flatly stated, “If you don’t get Pakistan right, you can’t win” in Afghanistan.<sup>61</sup> Seven years later, as the Obama presidency wound down, this assessment still prevailed in Washington—and was recognized in Pakistan. The United States “cannot afford the collapse of Pakistan, a state larger than Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria put together and in possession of nuclear weapons,” one Pakistani analyst wrote in the summer of 2016.<sup>62</sup> Whether accurate or not—and it largely was—this conclusion limited Washington’s willingness to unleash its vast power as leverage against its vexing ally.

Pakistan’s confidence in its ability to withstand American pressure was reinforced by its conviction that Islamabad had a reliable ally—China—whose support made America’s favor less important. China had been a valued friend and partner for Pakistan since the 1950s. The U.S. suspension of military aid to Pakistan during its 1965 war with India underscored the danger of counting on the United States and the need for other sources of support. Thereafter, Islamabad accelerated the development of close ties with Beijing. By the 1980s, China was actively assisting Pakistan in its efforts to acquire nuclear and missile capabilities. Beijing provided Pakistan with its first stockpiles of weapons-grade uranium and its early warhead designs.

Over time, especially once China’s economy took off in the 1990s, Islamabad came to value Beijing not only as a military supplier, but as a source of diplomatic and financial support. In the tense days of late June 1999, as it became evident that Pakistan’s Kargil incursion had backfired, Prime Minister Sharif hurried off to Beijing.<sup>63</sup> In the anxious weeks after the Abbottabad raid, Zardari and his prime minister each journeyed to Beijing for consultations and, no doubt, reassurance. When Obama visited India in 2015 as the Chief Guest at India’s Republic Day celebration, Pakistan dispatched its army chief to Beijing

60 Asif Ali Zardari, “Talk to, not at, Pakistan,” *Washington Post*, Sept. 30, 2011.

61 Bob Woodward, *Obama’s Wars* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 167.

62 Ijaz Khan, “Brinkmanship Renewed: The Current Phase of U.S.-Pakistani Relations,” Aug. 9, 2016, <http://warontherocks.com/2016/08/brinkmanship-renewed-the-current-phase-of-u-s-pakistani-relations/>.

63 In this case, however, China disappointed Islamabad by advising Sharif to pull back from Kargil.

to discuss defense issues. A year later, China blocked Indian efforts to add the head of the Pakistan-based extremist group Jaish-e-Mohammed to a UN list of terrorists—yet another reminder of the value of Beijing’s friendship.

As the levels of U.S. assistance to Pakistan declined after 2010, China moved aggressively to fill the void, most notably with CPEC, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a highly publicized investment and loan initiative. By 2017, China had pledged more than \$60 billion in CPEC energy and infrastructure projects for Pakistan.<sup>64</sup> While some analysts warned that hidden dangers lurked behind this largesse, CPEC fired the imagination of Pakistanis and lay behind many of the optimistic projections of Pakistani economic growth.

Pakistanis also came to appreciate China for its disinclination to make public demands on their country. Yes, Beijing defended its interests in Pakistan, one Islamabad diplomat explained, but it was more subtle, more polite in expressing its views. It did not engage in public arm-twisting. Pakistan never felt coerced by China.<sup>65</sup> This is not to suggest that Beijing never leaned on Islamabad. But because China usually operated behind the scenes, most Pakistanis did not think of Beijing as dictating terms or seeking concessions from their country. This made it easier for Pakistani leaders to satisfy Chinese desires, as when Musharraf ordered his troops to clean out the Red Mosque.<sup>66</sup> And it made Washington’s more transparent, sometimes abrasive diplomatic style even more offensive.

In recent years, Pakistan has increased its reliance on Chinese military hardware. In 2015, Beijing exported \$565 million in arms to Pakistan, a figure that dwarfed U.S. arms transfers to Islamabad of \$66 million that year.<sup>67</sup> In 2017, it provided the Pakistanis with a new medium-range surface-to-air missile (SAM) system, and has promised up to eight submarines.<sup>68</sup> Whether considering the relative size of Chinese and American arms sales, or CPEC’s promise of sixty-plus billion dollars, or contrasting public attitudes toward China and the United States, many Pakistani decision makers came to view American aid, military sales, and even foreign direct investment as hardly worth the aggravation. At a minimum, Pakistani ties with China worked to reduce the leverage Washington had hoped its favor might provide.

64 Some accounts put this figure at well over \$100 billion. See, for instance, Nadia Naviwala, “Pakistan’s \$100B deal with China: What does it amount to?,” Aug. 24, 2017, <https://www.devex.com/news/pakistan-s-100b-deal-with-china-what-does-it-amount-to-90872>.

65 Interview with Pakistani diplomat, Aug. 2015; interview with retired U.S. diplomat, Aug. 2015.

66 The attack occurred shortly after Lal Masjid seminarians kidnapped seven Chinese citizens in Islamabad.

Multiple accounts report that the Chinese government placed considerable pressure on Musharraf to rescue the Chinese.

67 Arms sales figures come from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, and are reported in Reuters, “Pakistan in tenth place in list of world’s largest arms importers for 2015,” *Dawn*, Feb. 22, 2016.

68 Stephen Tankel, “Art of the Possible: Restructuring the Defense Relationship with Pakistan,” June 26, 2017, <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/art-of-the-possible>.

## Same question, same answers

A few months after becoming secretary of state, Hillary Clinton asked an old friend, Sandy Berger, how the United States might gain leverage over Pakistan to persuade Islamabad to more aggressively go after al Qaeda. Berger, who had served as her husband's national security advisor in the 1990s, offered some thoughts, only to subsequently confess that his response had been unsatisfactory.<sup>69</sup>

Berger was not alone in his inability to explain how America's vast power could be harnessed for the accomplishment of U.S. purposes. A *New York Times* editorial near the end of the Obama presidency perfectly illustrated the country's continuing failure to fathom how to turn U.S. power into leverage. Thirty-three billion dollars in American assistance and "repeated attempts" to put relations with Islamabad on a more constructive course had failed, the *Times* wrote. Pakistan was a "duplicitous and dangerous partner" that bore much of the responsibility for the ongoing war in Afghanistan. Washington had to find a way to "convince Pakistan to stop fueling" the conflict. It was "time to put the squeeze on Pakistan."<sup>70</sup>

So what was to be done? Given its description of the dangers Pakistan represented and the depth of Islamabad's perfidy, the *Times'* prescriptions were staggeringly underwhelming. Pakistan remained the "key" for negotiating an end to the war, the paper's editors observed. It would be unwise to sever ties with Islamabad, since Pakistan continued to provide important assistance in the fight against the Taliban. Washington must maintain its dialogue with Islamabad, because Pakistan possessed "the world's fastest-growing nuclear arsenal." Sen. Corker might be right in barring the use of American funds to help Pakistan purchase F-16s, but Islamabad should still be allowed to buy the planes.

How this differed in any meaningful way from U.S. policy over the previous 15 years, or why one might reasonably expect better results in the future, was left unexplained. Instead of incisive analysis, the newspaper many considered the nation's best was unable to come up with anything beyond recycled recommendations and wishful thinking.

But this singles out the *Times* unfairly. In truth, the United States has never adequately answered Clinton's question about how best to apply leverage on Pakistan. For Obama, as for his predecessors, drawing a straight line from American power to U.S. leverage proved a frustrating and ultimately

69 Samuel R. Berger to Hillary Clinton, Oct. 3, 2009, <https://wikileaks.org/clinton-emails/emailid/13909>.

70 "Time to Put the Squeeze on Pakistan," *New York Times*, May 12, 2016.

unsuccessful exercise. Donald J. Trump entered the White House in early 2017 with far more robust convictions than Obama's about the efficacy of American power. Many in the U.S. national security establishment were curious to see how the new president would test his ideas on the leverage offered by U.S. power. Many Pakistanis regarded this prospect with rather less enthusiasm.





## CHAPTER IV

# DEFLECTING PRESSURE, MAXIMIZING LEVERAGE

**T**he up-and-down relationship between Pakistan and the United States reveals a great deal about power in international affairs—and about the limits of power. Throughout the 70-year history of this relationship, the United States dwarfed Pakistan by virtually all customary measures of national power. For the most part, these strengths helped ensure that Washington set the agenda for the partnership. Senior Pakistani decision makers often felt that much of their time was spent in responding to American initiatives, reacting to American policies, or deflecting unwelcome American demands.

And yet Pakistan, by far the weaker of the two states, regularly frustrated successive U.S. presidents. Despite the threat of sweeping sanctions, Pakistan persisted in developing a nuclear weapons arsenal. Contrary to U.S. wishes, Pakistan turned a blind eye toward and at times actively nurtured groups engaged in armed terrorist attacks on India and India-controlled Kashmir. Notwithstanding American displeasure, the Pakistani army turned out democratically elected governments and imposed military rule on the country. Even when offered substantial U.S. inducements to encourage good governance, clean up corruption, and respect human rights and the rule of law, Pakistani elites have, as often as not, prioritized individual gain over the common good. And in the face of considerable American anger, Pakistan has supported—and at a minimum continues to tolerate—terrorist groups that directly target U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan.

How is this possible, Americans have often asked? What good is power if others don't genuflect in its presence?

It is not that Washington has been indifferent to the actions of its sometimes ally, or made little effort to mobilize its power to leverage Pakistan into policies closer to American preferences. To the contrary, since the 1950s the United States has courted Pakistan. It has feted Pakistani leaders and offered legitimacy to Pakistani usurpers. It has poured considerable quantities of foreign assistance

into Pakistan. It has provided Pakistan with much of the most advanced weaponry in the Pakistani arsenal. And when inducements failed to elicit the behavior it desired, Washington turned to threats and punishments, including the repeated imposition of sanctions and other penalties.

And still Pakistan persisted in policies that its leaders deemed in the nation's interest (and in their own). Refusing to be either bribed or cowed, Pakistan's political and military elite resisted, deflected, or simply ignored American power when it seemed appropriate, while accommodating the powerful United States when doing so seemed prudent or useful. This is not surprising; it's what national leaderships do. Yet this Pakistani *modus operandi* frequently confounded Americans, who wondered why their unrivaled might did not produce the results they anticipated.

Even less expectedly (for Americans, at any rate), Pakistan mobilized its assets, beginning with its geographic location in a volatile and much-contested part of the globe, to leverage the stronger United States. Mohammed Jinnah, the country's revered founder, had recognized the value of Pakistan's geographic coordinates from the start. "America needs Pakistan more than Pakistan needs America," he told the photojournalist Margaret Bourke-White. "Pakistan is the pivot of the world, as we are placed . . . [on] the frontier on which the future position of the world revolves."<sup>1</sup> Most conspicuously, Islamabad leveraged its geographic position by closing the GLOCs into Afghanistan until Washington offered an acceptable apology for the Salala attacks.

This, however, was not the only occasion where Pakistan's place on the map offered Islamabad leverage over the United States. Pakistan's position near the Soviet Union's southern border provided Washington with intelligence listening posts and bases for clandestine U-2 spy flights—prized benefits that led the Eisenhower administration to overlook the Pakistani military's seizure of power in 1958. Two decades later, following Moscow's 1979 invasion of Afghanistan, Jimmy Carter, who had placed democracy and human rights at the center of his foreign policy, reversed course and reached out to Zia ul-Haq, another general who had overthrown a democratically elected government. Throughout the 1980s, the Reagan administration, needing Pakistani cooperation to combat the Soviets in neighboring Afghanistan, turned a blind eye to Pakistan's crash program to develop nuclear weapons.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), 30.

2 Earlier this spring, Prime Minister Sharif celebrated his country's position at the crossroads of East and West Asia and boasted that CPEC would enable Pakistan to "leverage geography for economic prosperity." "Geo-economics must take precedence over geo-politics, PM says in Beijing," *Dawn*, May 14, 2017. To turn to a different part of the globe, Yugoslavia during the Cold War offers an example of another country skillfully using its strategic geopolitical location as leverage in dealing with both Washington and Moscow.

William Milam, who served as U.S. ambassador to Pakistan between 1998 and 2001, has observed that Islamabad may “lead the league” in its successful use of leverage against a stronger power.<sup>3</sup> But, he continues, this is not an option open to all weaker powers, which points to a central reality that has protected Islamabad from American leverage: only in comparison to the U.S. superpower, and to its two giant neighbors, India and China, can Pakistan be described as a small or weak state. By most standard measures of power—population size, GDP, size and capability of its military, possession of nuclear weapons—Pakistan stands toward the top in global rankings. As Bruce Riedel has noted, if Pakistan were dropped into a different spot on the map—say, Latin America or Africa—it would be one of the dominant countries in its region.<sup>4</sup> Stated far too bluntly, Pakistan is not Paraguay or Palau.

As these pages have repeatedly emphasized, Islamabad also adroitly played upon American needs to deflect U.S. power and increase its own bargaining position with Washington. Even great powers find it useful, sometimes essential, to have cooperative partners. Pakistani leaders recognized that their willingness to work with the United States on matters important to Washington gave them leverage in managing the Americans. This proved true even when their commitment to the U.S. agenda was qualified.

Leverage, in short, is a multi-directional process, and not simply the prerogative of the strong. In dealing with the Americans, Pakistan held three hugely valuable assets:

- **It occupied strategic geography;**
- **It possessed considerable strength in its own right;** and
- It was able to **capitalize on the needs of the stronger state** to further its own ends.

Particularly when it can draw upon one or more of these advantages, the weaker country can defy, even manipulate, the stronger. It can, in other words, avoid being leveraged and at times even exert leverage itself.

### *The weapons of the weak*

Not all states are fortunate enough to possess one or more of these three prized assets. But in managing relations with the Americans, Pakistan also utilized other tactics that could have relevance for countries finding themselves being targeted by a more powerful state.

- **Partial cooperation.** By providing the United States with some of what

<sup>3</sup> Interview with the author, Oct. 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with the author, Nov. 2016.

Washington requested, successive Pakistani governments were able to get away with ignoring American desires when they did not wish to cooperate. In 1992, for instance, at a moment when the Americans were threatening to designate Pakistan a state sponsor of terrorism because of its support for groups battling India in Kashmir, the ISI director shrugged off the danger. The CIA needed the ISI, he confidently declared. “We know how to take care of the CIA. We know what they need and we give it to them in bits and pieces to keep them happy.”<sup>5</sup>

This tactic proved successful again and again. By offering the Americans valuable services, Islamabad made it difficult for Washington to insist on compliance with other U.S. requests. Pakistan’s essential role in the Afghan war against the Soviets allowed Islamabad to deflect U.S. insistence that it shut down its nuclear program. Similarly, Pakistani assistance in the post-9/11 war against the Taliban limited Washington’s ability to demand that Pakistan clean out Taliban sanctuaries in FATA and elsewhere in Pakistan. From the 1950s up to the present, Pakistan did just enough to lead successive U.S. administrations to conclude that the costs of breaking with Islamabad would be too great.

- **Provision of an unrelated service.** Faced with incipient civil war in East Pakistan in early 1971, the government based in West Pakistan resorted to brutal repression. U.S. congressional and media opinion swung violently against Islamabad, and many leading American voices called upon President Richard Nixon to cut off U.S. assistance to Pakistan. Nixon resisted. Eager to reengage China after more than two decades of diplomatic estrangement, he was keen to take up Islamabad’s offer to facilitate Henry Kissinger’s ice-breaking secret visit to Beijing. The priority Nixon gave his China initiative and his hope for Pakistani help made it easy for him to downplay the brutality Islamabad employed in East Pakistan that spring. Only after Congress pressed him did Nixon reluctantly shut down the supply of U.S. arms to Pakistan. Even then, however, he privately directed his subordinates: “To all hands. Don’t squeeze Yahya at this time.” Following the president’s wishes, administration officials initially blocked a proposal to halt World Bank aid to Pakistan.<sup>6</sup>

Three decades later, Islamabad used the Bush administration’s post-9/11 appreciation of Pakistan’s assistance in Afghanistan to deflect American pressure on an unrelated but, for Washington, high-priority matter. In the months preceding the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, Pakistan came under what its foreign minister, Khurshid Kasuri, subsequently remembered as “immense” U.S. pressure to support American plans for military action against Saddam Hussein. Islamabad then held one of the rotating UN Security Council seats, a coincidence

5 Haqqani, *Magnificent Delusions*, 274.

6 Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, 190. Kissinger was Nixon’s national security advisor at this point. Yahya was Mohammed Yahya Khan, Pakistan’s by-then beleaguered president. In mid-July the Nixon administration finally bowed to congressional pressure and suspended all assistance to Pakistan.

that made Islamabad's backing especially desirable for the White House. In light of the intense U.S. pressure on Islamabad, Kasuri later recalled, some Pakistani diplomats wryly observed that election to the Security Council was not the unqualified honor they had expected.

Nonetheless, and notwithstanding its new partnership with the United States, Islamabad turned the Americans down. Pakistan opposed Washington's desire for a Security Council resolution authorizing military action against Saddam and, following the U.S. invasion, issued a statement expressing deep solidarity with the people of Iraq and provided them with food and medical supplies.<sup>7</sup> By cooperating with the United States in Afghanistan, Islamabad was able to successfully defy its American partner on Iraq.

- **Bargaining.** Faced with an unpalatable U.S. request, Pakistan sometimes proposed a quid pro quo, often with an asking price Islamabad knew Washington was unlikely to accept. Pushed by President Clinton in the aftermath of the 1998 nuclear tests to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, for example, Nawaz Sharif parried by noting that it might be easier for him to sell this unpopular step in Pakistan if Washington sweetened the pot. Lower-level Pakistani officials explained what the prime minister had in mind: lifting Pressler and all other U.S. sanctions; massive economic assistance; resumption of military assistance and sales, including F-16s; provision of defensive missiles so that Pakistan would feel less threatened by India; active diplomacy to limit global arms sales to India; U.S. help in resolving the Kashmir sore. Similarly, when presented with the U.S. ultimatum (no matter how delicately expressed) after 9/11, Musharraf responded with a long list of items Pakistan wanted from the Americans.

- **Accept, then backtrack.** Rather than turn down U.S. requests and demands, Islamabad often found it expedient to agree to what the Americans wanted, and then simply to ignore its promises of compliance. Zia in the 1980s regularly assured the Reagan administration that his country had no interest in developing nuclear weapons, while all the time pressing forward with work on Pakistan's program. Musharraf repeatedly pledged that Pakistan was a steadfast ally in the fight against terrorism, while overseeing a military and intelligence apparatus that protected al Qaeda and the Taliban and sustained other groups engaged in terror attacks against India. Explicitly defying the superpower could be dangerous; better to feign cooperation, even if one had no intention of complying.

- **Cultivation of alternative sources of support.** From the nation's earliest days, Pakistan's leadership understood that one of the surest ways to get Washington's attention was to be seen seeking friends elsewhere. Piqued by

<sup>7</sup> Kasuri, *Neither a Hawk Nor a Dove*, 592-93.

the Truman administration's offer of a state visit to the Indian prime minister, Pakistani Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan courted Moscow for a similar mark of esteem, even though Pakistan and the Soviet Union had no official diplomatic relations at the time. Liaquat never went to Moscow, but he got what he actually desired all the time: an invitation to come to Washington.

In the decades since then, Pakistan has regularly sought to reduce its dependence upon the Americans by cultivating other friends. In May 1998, wrestling with whether to respond to India's nuclear tests by conducting tests of its own, Islamabad solicited a promise from Saudi Arabia to provide Pakistan with any assistance it might lose because of an American aid cutoff. Today Pakistan seeks to diversify its international support and minimize its dependence upon the Americans by developing closer ties with Russia, while continuing to place great emphasis on traditional friends such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and several of the Persian Gulf states.

For at least fifty years, however, Islamabad has looked first to China, viewing the PRC as its closest friend and most reliable ally. When Pakistan has found itself in trouble, the default position for its prime ministers has been to arrange a hurried trip to Beijing. Its "all-weather friend" has offered Islamabad a valuable alternative to Washington's insistent demands—including and most notably, a far more accommodating response to Pakistan's quest for nuclear weapons. In addition, it has provided a shield from U.S. leverage attempts.<sup>8</sup> As terrorism has gained prominence since the early 1990s, for instance, Beijing has blocked efforts in the UN by the United States, India, and other countries to sanction Pakistan-based extremists accused of terrorist acts.<sup>9</sup> The desirability of diversifying its sources of support also helps to explain why Pakistan has placed such hopes in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor—in addition, of course, to Chinese pledges to invest more than \$60 billion in CPEC projects in Pakistan.

- **Wooing American opinion.** Islamabad has long recognized that the diffuse nature of decision making in Washington gives it multiple channels through which it might influence American thinking. Opinion pieces by Pakistani prime ministers have become a regular occurrence in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Wall Street Journal*, thought to be three of the most influential newspapers in the United States. Senior Pakistani officials visiting Washington nearly always made time to sit down with U.S. reporters.

The Pakistani foreign ministry has spent millions of dollars over the years on Washington lobbyists and public relations firms, in part to court American

8 Interview with senior Pakistani diplomat, July 2015.

9 For recent examples, see "China blocks US move to designate Jaish chief Masood Azhar a terrorist at UN," *Dawn*, Feb. 7, 2017; "China continues shielding Masood Azhar from UN terror tag," *Sunday Guardian Live*, Aug. 3, 2017, <http://www.sundayguardianlive.com/news/10348-china-continues-shielding-masood-azhar-un-terror-tag>

opinion, in part to help navigate the frequently byzantine corridors of U.S. decision making. Zia's lobbyist in the 1980s, when U.S. military and economic assistance poured into Pakistan because of the Afghan war, was thought to be among the best in the business. Pressed by the Americans a decade later to end its support for the Kashmir insurgency, Nawaz Sharif's first instinct was to order a \$2 million public relations campaign geared to sway Congress and influence the U.S. media.<sup>10</sup>

Islamabad also sought to mobilize the Pakistani diaspora to influence Washington decision making. Visiting Pakistani officials routinely reached out to the Pakistani-American community, as did the embassy in Washington and Pakistan's consulates in New York, Chicago, Houston, and Los Angeles. Unfortunately for Islamabad, Pakistani-Americans have yet to achieve the numbers or the organization to make them a potent force in U.S. politics at the national level. Nonetheless, the prominence of many community members has afforded Pakistan numerous opportunities to make its views known in U.S. policy circles.

- **Encouraging U.S. guilt.** As was discussed in Chapter II, Pakistani officials seldom missed an opportunity to repeat an historical narrative that emphasized U.S. betrayal and abandonment. Pakistanis of all classes, political persuasions, and educational backgrounds embraced the idea that they were the aggrieved party, consistently let down by an ungrateful America. The aid suspension during the 1965 Indo-Pakistani war and the triggering of the Pressler amendment in 1990 were often pointed to as the most egregious instances of U.S. perfidy, but in the Pakistani telling, these were hardly the only occasions of dishonorable American conduct. Perhaps more surprisingly, many senior officials in the Clinton, Bush *fiils*, and Obama administrations bought in to some version of this history.

This narrative of victimization enabled Pakistan to play upon an American sense of guilt and obligation that worked to deflect U.S. pressure. It provided Islamabad with a powerful instrument of leverage against its far stronger partner.

- **Warning of unwanted consequences.** Islamabad has perfected the tactic of insisting that an unwelcome U.S. initiative or demand could trigger a reaction in Pakistan that Washington would not like. When Islamabad officials have found U.S. policy leaning toward India, they have warned that unless Washington restrained New Delhi's designs against Pakistan, they would have no choice but to move their forces eastward to the Indian border, thereby diminishing Pakistan's ability to block movement across the Pakistani-Afghan border. On

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<sup>10</sup> Haqqani, *Magnificent Delusions*, 274.



other occasions, Pakistani diplomats have hinted that a suspension of U.S. military assistance might compel Islamabad to divert development and social sector funds to the military. Pakistani officials have also met U.S. threats to withhold American assistance by reminding Washington that such a step, by reducing U.S. influence in Islamabad and Pakistani good will toward America, would also punish the United States.

Skeptics could well say that such arguments served Pakistani interests and ought, therefore, to be dismissed. Even so, just because these warnings dovetailed with Pakistani policies and desires did not invalidate them. As one U.S. diplomat ruefully noted, sometimes you have leverage but you cannot live with the consequences of using it.<sup>11</sup>

- **Pleading the constraints of public opinion.** Governments in Islamabad regularly claimed that Pakistani public opinion would not permit them to accommodate U.S. requests. This argument held particular force when Pakistan was ruled by elected governments that had to be sensitive to popular sentiment, but Musharraf also used this reasoning to ward off unwelcome U.S. initiatives. Given Washington's often low standing in Pakistan, this reference to public opinion was not simply a specious claim or a tactic to deflect American pressure. As with the warning about unwanted consequences, this was an argument Washington could not casually dismiss.

But it is also true that Pakistani leaders, both military and civilian, encouraged these anti-American sentiments, often by selective leaks to friendly journalists. Even officials viewed in Washington as well disposed toward the West employed intemperate language about the United States in addressing Pakistani audiences. Because their denigrations were delivered in Urdu, they were less likely to catch the attention of U.S. listeners. Both Bhuttos, Zulfikar and Benazir, were well-practiced in this art: whip up anti-American feeling, and then use this hostility to explain your inability to meet U.S. requests.

- **Retaliation and harassment.** When American pressure became intolerable, Pakistan pushed back in more direct ways. U.S. diplomats (and American intelligence officers operating under diplomatic cover) were subjected to travel restrictions and other forms of harassment, and sometimes expelled. Routine visa applications for American officials were denied. Requests for senior-level visits were rejected. Several CIA station chiefs in Islamabad had their covers blown and had to be withdrawn from Pakistan out of concern for their physical security.<sup>12</sup> Even a weaker country, Americans were reminded, could make life

<sup>11</sup> Interview with retired U.S. diplomat, Mar. 2016.

<sup>12</sup> In 2016, the *Washington Post* ran an extraordinary story claiming that the CIA believed that the ISI may have poisoned the CIA station chief in Islamabad in retaliation for the U.S. raid that killed bin Laden. The station chief had to leave Pakistan after becoming violently sick with an illness whose origin, five years later, remained unknown. The CIA, this report added, acknowledged that it possessed no concrete proof that its station chief had been poisoned. Greg Miller, "After presiding over bin Laden raid, CIA chief in Pakistan came

difficult for a more powerful nation.

• ***Après moi, le delugé.*** Under heavy pressure from the Clinton administration to withdraw Pakistani troops from Kargil, Prime Minister Sharif warned Washington that an undisguised Pakistani setback without some window dressing of Indian concession would topple his government and open the door to Islamic hard-liners. Musharraf, who had come to power by ousting Sharif, subsequently adopted this same line of argument. If the United States undercut him, the general insisted in conversations with the Americans, Pakistan's extremists would have their hand strengthened.

U.S. decision makers recognized the element of self-interest in these arguments, but still faced a dilemma. As one former official who worked on Pakistan in the Bush White House asked rhetorically about Musharraf in mid-2007, "Could we push him more? You won't know the answer until you've pushed him too hard and he collapses."<sup>13</sup> In a strange irony, during his last years in power Musharraf's political weakness gave him leverage over the Bush administration, which had invested heavily in his rule.<sup>14</sup>

This specter of collapse worked at the state level as well. Citing domestic frailty was a way to sidestep U.S. demands. If pushed too hard, Pakistan might fall apart, unleashing a torrent of dangers upon the region and the world—loose nukes, refuge for extremists of various flavors, a flood of refugees, heightened tensions with India. Did the United States want to risk having Pakistan's nuclear assets fall into the hands of terrorists? As one American scholar has rightly noted, "Pakistan's trump card in dealing with Washington has been its own internal frailty. . . . Islamabad plays these fears for all they are worth to gain leverage in its relationship with Washington."<sup>15</sup> Thomas Simons, one of Bill Clinton's ambassadors to Islamabad, put it more succinctly: Pakistan, he complained, was "adept at bullying from weakness."<sup>16</sup>

Employing all these stratagems in its dealings with the Americans, Pakistan demonstrated that it would not simply be the helpless target of U.S. designs. Yes, its national power paled in comparison to the mighty United States. Yet it mobilized its assets as well as its weaknesses to thwart—and when need be, to accommodate—the United States, and to turn American power toward Islamabad's own ends. Power and the ability to exert leverage did not reside only with the strong.

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home suspecting he was poisoned by ISI," *Washington Post*, May 5, 2016.

13 Karen DeYoung and Joby Warrick, "A Change in Public Tone Toward Pakistan," *Washington Post*, Aug. 5, 2007.

14 This is not to deny that Musharraf's political weakness also made him susceptible to U.S. pressure, such as Washington's desire that he allow the return from self-imposed exile of Benazir Bhutto.

15 Felbab-Brown, "Pakistan's Relations with Afghanistan and Implications for Regional Politics," 136.

16 Talbott, *Engaging India*, 107.

## *Mutual restraint*

Yet for all this, Pakistan and the United States were not enemies, nor even adversaries. If their partnership was frequently turbulent and occasionally strained to the point of breaking, they were, for much of the relationship, partners all the same. Appreciating the advantages of partnership, each country placed limits on how far it would go in responding to the perceived provocations of the other.

Washington, for instance, in dealing with Pakistan eschewed the single most potent weapon in its arsenal. Islamabad “knew” that, except under very limited circumstances, the United States was not prepared to use the ultimate source of its power—its immense military force—against Pakistan. Many Pakistanis worried about a surprise U.S. attack on Pakistan’s nuclear facilities, and Pakistan took numerous steps to hide the whereabouts of its nuclear assets from the Americans. Still, there is no evidence that senior officials in Islamabad or Rawalpindi ever considered such a strike likely.

Since the 9/11 attacks, Pakistanis have also been painfully, angrily aware that the Pentagon and the CIA displayed little respect for Pakistani borders. U.S. drone attacks, to say nothing of the Abbottabad raid, served as constant reminders that the United States would do whatever it found necessary in its quest to quash terrorism. But these limited operations, no matter how infuriating to most Pakistanis, were not targeted at the Pakistani state and did not threaten Pakistan’s continued existence. Pakistanis understood that under all but the most extraordinary circumstances, the most fearsome source of U.S. power—its armed might—was off the table for Washington. Said differently,

American power was negated by Pakistan’s recognition that a large portion of this power would remain sheathed.

In other ways as well, the United States placed limits on the leverage it was prepared to use against Pakistan. Following the 1998 nuclear tests, which triggered a new round of U.S. sanctions on top of the earlier Pressler amendment sanctions, the

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Clinton administration acquiesced in action by the IMF that helped Islamabad escape the full impact of U.S. punishment. After Musharraf’s coup toppling Sharif a year later, the White House dragged its feet on imposing the sanctions required by U.S. law. Clinton, a White House staffer later recalled, believed that the United States had treated Pakistan shabbily following the successful conclusion of the 1980s Afghan war. The president found himself with no

choice but to impose sanctions in both 1998 and 1999, but he did so only “reluctantly” and looked for ways to lessen their sting.<sup>17</sup> Barely two weeks after the Musharraf coup, the White House waived restrictions on some export credits to Pakistan and on loans and credits to the Pakistani government by U.S. commercial banks.<sup>18</sup>

Bruce Riedel, whose time as a senior staff member on the National Security Council bridged the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations, recalls that Bush followed Clinton’s example in declining to press Pakistan as hard as he might have. “If ever we had the leverage, it was September and October 2001,” he remembers. “And the Bush administration, like its predecessors and successor, decided it didn’t want to push too hard.”<sup>19</sup>

Clearly Washington was not as ruthless with Pakistan as its power allowed it to be. Since the very early years of the relationship, the United States has wanted a Pakistan that was stable, secure, and prosperous. As a former U.S. ambassador to Pakistan has observed, “even when cutting assistance programs to make a point,” Washington could not countenance the possibility of “a Pakistan gone bust and in danger of political failure.” Pakistan “was always bailed out. It was, and probably still is, too geostrategically important to fail.”<sup>20</sup> Many would argue that this restraint reflected an accurate weighing of American interests. Nonetheless, these self-imposed constraints reduced the leverage Washington might otherwise have wielded.

Similarly, Pakistan also placed limits on how far it would go in seeking to leverage the United States. During the crisis triggered by the 2011 Salala tragedy, the Zardari government considered but quickly dismissed the idea of imposing stiff fees for the use of Pakistani airspace, which the Americans needed to support the war in Afghanistan. This restraint partly reflected the realization that Washington still possessed unused leverage against Pakistan—an ability to delay World Bank loans, for instance, or to more actively support India’s position on Kashmir. Domestic politics also played a role in this decision. Unlike NATO trucks traversing the GLOCs, videos of American planes flying through Pakistani airspace were not a regular feature of Pakistani news broadcasts. Accordingly, there was little public call to restrict the Americans from using that airspace, and the government was free to refrain from employing that potential lever.<sup>21</sup>

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17 Interview with Bruce Riedel, Nov. 2016. —

18 Congress for its own reasons was also eager to dilute the impact of the testing sanctions on both India and Pakistan. For this, see Robert M. Hathaway, “Confrontation and Retreat: The U.S. Congress and the South Asian Nuclear Tests,” *Arms Control Today* 30:1 (Jan./Feb. 2000), 7-14. Islamabad doubtless drew the logical conclusion: Americans, hypocritical as always, didn’t care about nonproliferation nearly as much as they claimed.

19 Interview with Bruce Riedel, Nov. 2016.

20 William Milam, “Bye, bye American pie?” *The Friday Times*, Sept. 9, 2016, <http://www.thefridaytimes.com/tft/bye-bye-american-pie/>.

21 Interview with a senior Pakistani diplomat, Jan. 2017.

## *Is power passé?*

The exercise of power can be a humbling experience, even for those who possess great power. Madeleine Albright, Clinton's secretary of state, has captured in her memoirs the frustration that accompanied Washington's inability, even at the height of American preeminence, to make the world conform to American wishes. Writing of the challenges of 1998, including the U.S. failure to persuade Pakistan not to emulate India's nuclear tests, she wrote: "wherever I looked, I saw either gridlock or peril. For all the power of the United States, we were not able to dictate events. The North Koreans, Serbs, Israelis and Palestinians, Indians and Pakistanis, Iraqis, Russians, African leaders, even our allies seemed indifferent or hostile to our requests."<sup>22</sup>

Today, nearly twenty years later, the obstacles impeding the United States in wielding its power are far more formidable. Which leads to a question: What good is power? Why should nation states continue to seek power, if weaker states seemingly find it easy to thwart the desires of the strong?

To pose such a question, of course, is a luxury enjoyed only by the strong. Weaker states—and those like Pakistan, which are not weak except in comparison to a handful of countries—know well the continued importance of national strength. In international affairs, possessing power is preferable, as it always has been, to not possessing it.

The success of the Obama administration in persuading the generals in Myanmar to share political power with Aung San Suu Kyi and other elected leaders should remind us of the continued utility of power, even if this political transition to democracy is far from complete. Obama's use of a mix of carrots—aid, engagement, high-level visits, culminating in a presidential trip to the country—and sticks—sanctions, isolation, condemnations in the UN and other international bodies—pushed the military regime into loosening its iron grip on the country it had misgoverned for 50 years.

Similarly, the Obama administration and its international partners succeeded in negotiating a nuclear agreement with Iran in 2015 largely because they were able to bring great power to bear on Tehran. Tough economic sanctions, backed by a wide international coalition and augmented by the ultimate threat of U.S. military action, seem to have overcome widespread opposition to the deal within Iranian governing circles. While Americans remain sharply divided over the merits of the Iranian deal, they can agree that absent U.S. power, the mullahs would never have accepted restrictions of any sort on their nuclear program.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Albright, *Madam Secretary*, 352.

<sup>23</sup> For a handy primer on the nuclear agreement, see Robert Litwak, *Iran's Nuclear Chess: After the Deal*

In his 2015 State of the Union address, Obama laid out his ideas on how best to harness his country's great strengths. "I believe in a smarter kind of American leadership. We lead best when we combine military power with strong diplomacy; when we leverage our power with coalition building."<sup>24</sup> It was this coupling of power and diplomacy, this application of leverage that ultimately led the leaderships in both Myanmar and Iran to conclude that their national interests dictated dealing with the Americans.

For strong and weak countries alike, it is impossible to dismiss the advantages conferred by power. Power offers entrée, a platform from which to make one's voice heard. Power provides the opportunity for initiative and the ability to set the agenda. The possession of power ensures that others think hard on how they can satisfy the powerful. While weaker countries frequently bristle at the arrogance or insensitivity that seems to accompany great strength, they also recognize that sometimes they have no attractive option other than to acquiesce to the wishes of the strong. As a prominent Pakistani journalist has noted, under normal circumstances it is better to be with the king of the jungle than in opposition to the king.<sup>25</sup>

For all its failures to persuade or compel Pakistan to follow a course set by the United States, Washington has achieved notable successes by working with, and leveraging, Pakistan. U.S.-Pakistan partnership in Afghanistan during the 1980s played a central role in causing one of the pivotal geostrategic developments in the second half of the 20th century: the collapse of the USSR. For all the limitations of the current U.S.-Pakistan partnership in the war against terrorism, the United States has not suffered another 9/11-scale attack launched from Afghanistan. More broadly, for nearly seventy years, the United States has usually set the agenda in the bilateral relationship.

Pakistanis know this, and frequently resent it. Historically, Pakistanis have credited the United States with immense influence within their country—far more than Washington actually wields. They have seemed to believe in the nearly inexorable force of American power. Little of importance takes place in Pakistan, runs an oft-repeated saying, unless it is willed by one of the "three A's"—Allah, America, or the army. In the case of America, U.S. power is frequently exerted in the dark, with Americans or their Pakistani agents pulling strings behind the scenes.

It is hard to miss the paradox here. On the one hand, Pakistanis share an almost universal perception that the United States wields a vast influence in

(Washington: Wilson Center Middle East Program, 2015).

24 "Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address," Jan. 20, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/01/20/remarks-president-state-union-address-january-20-2015>.

25 Private conversation with the author, June 2002.

their country that reaches to all corners of Pakistani life. On the other, most U.S. administrations have been stymied again and again by what seems to U.S. officials an exceptionally limited influence over Pakistan.

### *Turning power into leverage*

For all the frustrations experienced by successive U.S. governments, this relationship reveals a number of useful insights about mobilizing national power to achieve influence and leverage. While drawn from the history of U.S.-Pakistan relations, these lessons possess a far wider applicability. Indeed, they are relevant for any state seeking to exercise leverage over another.

- **The exercise of leverage requires a clear-headed understanding of the perspectives and priorities of the party to be leveraged.**

This maxim should be blindingly obvious. Yet, when it came to Pakistan, Americans all too often believed what they found convenient to believe. Washington saw its military alliance with Islamabad in the 1950s and 1960s as an element in its global strategy of containing communism. Instead, Pakistan used the weaponry it acquired from Washington to arm itself against New Delhi. Washington subsequently professed shock to learn that Pakistan used U.S. weapons to fight India, an important country whose good will Washington valued.

After the 9/11 attacks revitalized the U.S.-Pakistan partnership, officials in the Bush administration became progressively more exasperated because Pakistan did not seem “all in” in the war on terrorism as Washington defined that term. They too long ignored the fact that for Islamabad, the principal purpose of the U.S. connection was to ensure that Afghanistan would be governed by a friendly regime and remain largely free of Indian influence.

Again and again, American decision makers failed to give adequate weight to Pakistani strategic perspectives and anxieties. With respect to Pakistan’s near-obsession with India, U.S. officials “knew” it, but never really “got” it. Analytically, they recognized the sweeping extent of the Pakistani conviction of implacable Indian hostility. But Washington never succeeded in tailoring policies toward Islamabad that addressed Pakistan’s strategic fears. This habit of ignoring the Pakistani bottom line worked to negate whatever leverage capabilities U.S. power might otherwise have possessed.

Ignorance and arrogance were responsible for some of this blindness on the part of American policymakers, but much of it was willful. Most of the Pakistan experts in the U.S. government, most of the time, possessed a more or less

accurate reading of Pakistani ambitions and anxieties. U.S. intelligence analysts and diplomats in the region regularly warned Washington that Pakistan was using American military assistance not to guard against communist aggression, but in preparation for the next war with India. The U.S. intelligence community was able to collect an impressive amount of reliable information on Pakistan's nuclear activities. Pakistani support for the Taliban, including the likelihood that senior al Qaeda and Taliban leaders enjoyed the protection of the ISI, was an open secret in Washington from the very early days of the post-9/11 war in Afghanistan.

The dilemma for senior American officials was that to act upon these readings would require difficult or inconvenient policy decisions. To concede that Islamabad was arming itself against India would undercut both the rationale and congressional support for the alliance structure that was central to America's Cold War containment strategy. To acknowledge that Pakistan was working feverishly to acquire a nuclear arsenal would trigger U.S. sanctions just as the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan appeared to be succeeding. In a Washington convinced of the righteousness of punishing the Soviets for their invasion of Afghanistan, deliberately blowing up relations with America's most important partner in this enterprise was unthinkable. Two decades later, admitting that Musharraf and his successors were sheltering the very Taliban who were killing U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan would have similarly destroyed American ties to Islamabad at a time when success in Afghanistan appeared impossible without the substantial Pakistani cooperation that Islamabad (notwithstanding its coddling of the Taliban) was providing.

In each of these cases, a casual assumption in the possibility of leveraging U.S. power to turn Pakistan in a different direction was, from a policy standpoint, far easier than dealing with the conclusions that a different reading of Pakistani views (and of U.S. power to alter those views) would require.

- **A country attempting to use leverage should not overestimate the value of its favor or the attraction of its carrots.**

Throughout the 1980s, the Reagan administration regularly warned Islamabad that unless it capped its nuclear program, U.S. law would require a termination of all assistance to Pakistan. That threat of course turned out to be wholly ineffectual in halting the Pakistani program. More recently, the Obama administration presided over efforts to triple the U.S. economic aid program in Pakistan, in the hope that this concrete demonstration of American friendship would ease Pakistani security anxieties and nudge Islamabad toward policies more to Washington's liking. But KLB didn't change the dynamics of what remained an unsatisfactory partnership any more than earlier U.S. aid programs.



American administrations going back to the 1950s assumed, without sufficient reflection or analysis, that Washington's favors would give the United States considerable clout in and political leverage over Pakistan. But of course they were wrong. Why? While U.S. officialdom viewed its assistance as a tangible expression of America's good will and even generosity, Pakistanis arrived at a more hardheaded conclusion: relative to the Pakistani need, or to assistance provided by the IMF and other international donors, the amounts were actually quite paltry. In 2007, two American analysts pointed out that U.S. aid for Pakistan's education system was less than what Portland, Maine, spent each year to educate its young people. Why, they asked, should Americans expect such a modest sum to impact education in a country of 170 million?<sup>26</sup> A few years later, Gen. David Petraeus, Obama's commander in Afghanistan, made much the same point by observing: "You get what you pay for. We have not paid much for much of anything in Pakistan."<sup>27</sup>

Yes, Pakistan valued American assistance—but only if the price was not too high. Responding to public outrage following the bin Laden raid, Punjab, the largest of Pakistan's four provinces, canceled U.S. aid projects worth \$127 million. This suggests several conclusions about the leverage conveyed by U.S. aid.

- » First, Pakistani leaders (like their American counterparts) were ever sensitive to domestic opinion. Punjabi politicians placed greater stock in lining up with popular anger against the United States than in the benefits these aid projects provided.
- » Second, aid designed to assist primarily the poor is relatively easy to give up. Punjab's governing elite suffered few consequences for refusing assistance that provided healthcare or built schools; their families did not rely upon foreign aid for these services.
- » Third, near-term benefits usually count for more than longer-run costs. For Punjab's leaders, the assumed political advantage of shutting down the aid projects would be immediate, whereas the impact of the aid loss on the lives of the voters would occur only in the indeterminate future.

Moreover, despite numerous Pakistani requests, Washington refused to give Pakistan something that would have been of far greater value than foreign aid: access to the U.S. market for Pakistani textiles. In response to repeated entreaties for more favorable treatment, Islamabad was told that while Washington was sympathetic, the time for taking such a request to Congress was not right. Usually left unsaid, but understood by all, was that in the context of U.S. politics, the issue was too tough. Pakistanis of course took note of this temerity, and wondered about a relationship where only one party was asked to make difficult decisions. For many, Washington's unwillingness to fight for

<sup>26</sup> Craig Cohen and Derek Chollet, "A Push for a Pakistan Plan," *Washington Post*, Jan. 12, 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Nasr, *The Dispensable Nation*, 80.

liberalized treatment for Pakistani exports confirmed the hypocritical nature of American claims about wanting a successful Pakistan.

Perhaps most fundamentally, however, the United States was never prepared to provide the things Pakistan would have valued above all: security guarantees against India, support for Islamabad's position on Kashmir, or a guarantee that no Afghan government would fall under Indian influence. Many analysts would argue that this was the proper strategic decision for Washington; it makes little sense for America to align itself with Pakistan against India. Even so, Washington failed to adequately recognize that by making this strategic choice, it lost much of the leverage it had hoped American financial assistance and other support would provide. In the end, the promise of U.S. partnership brought the Americans neither love nor leverage in Pakistan.

- **Leverage is inversely related to the commitment of the other party.**

If one country cares more about an issue than another, the former is probably prepared to accept a higher cost to prevail on that issue. U.S. power frequently failed to provide leverage because Pakistan's commitment was stronger than Washington's. Islamabad's determination to build a nuclear arsenal, come what may, is perhaps the best example of how firm resolve can trump power. In comparison to the Pakistani belief that the country's very existence depended upon matching Indian nuclear advances, the threat of U.S. sanctions seemed almost insignificant. Similarly, at various moments in the country's history, Pakistani generals placed a higher value on retaining political power than the United States gave to its aspirations that Pakistan abide by democratic norms and practices.

Again and again at key points in the partnership, the stakes were higher for Pakistan than for the United States. The bilateral relationship never raised life-or-death issues for Americans. For many Pakistanis, it did. As a senior Pakistani legislator told a U.S. interlocutor, "You have the capacity to kill, we have the willingness to die."<sup>28</sup> Commitment of that magnitude can negate power and nullify leverage.

- **Efforts at leverage are more likely to work if the country attempting leverage can persuade the target that it is safe to accept the former's requests.**

For leverage to succeed, the leveraging country must convince the target that acquiescence will not jeopardize the latter's security or other important interests. This was the single most important reason why the United States

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Sen. Mushahid Hussain, Oct. 2016.

failed in its efforts to rein in Pakistan's nuclear weapons program. As we have seen, Washington never succeeded in persuading Pakistan's security establishment that their country would be safe against a larger, richer, nuclear-armed India. Similarly, in demanding that the ISI end its support for the Afghan Taliban, the Obama administration failed to give sufficient weight to Pakistani fears that such a step could lead to an Afghanistan where Islamabad had little influence—indeed, one that could be hostile to Pakistani interests. Washington never convinced Islamabad that it could safely cut its ties with the Taliban and the Haqqani network.

Leverage attempts are unlikely to work if the target country is being asked to take steps seen as detrimental to core interests. The country seeking to apply leverage should carefully consider the difficulty of the demands being levied on the target—whether the target will think it safe to comply.

- **A country attempting leverage must minimize its dependence upon the target country.**

These pages are replete with examples where, because of its proximity to Afghanistan, Pakistan's ability to satisfy important American needs gave Islamabad the ability to deflect or ignore U.S. wishes, even those about which Washington felt strongly. The priority the George W. Bush administration gave to punishing those behind the 9/11 attacks left it with few options other than to tolerate Pakistani behavior that it considered duplicitous and dangerous to its war effort in Afghanistan. The same is true to a lesser extent for the Obama administration.

As a general rule, the probability of a weaker country resisting the power of a stronger nation rises in proportion to the former's ability to satisfy the needs of the latter. Indeed, as we have also seen, the needs of the stronger party can give the weaker country substantial leverage over the stronger.

- **Successful leverage requires prioritization.**

Pakistan is a large and important country, with a central role to play not simply in two Afghan wars, but more broadly in America's diplomatic and security agenda for South Asia and the Middle East. In addition, U.S. administrations of both political parties have traditionally defined American interests in Pakistan expansively, to include topics that would more customarily fall into the realm of a country's domestic affairs. Washington has pushed Islamabad to respect the rights of women and minorities, protect religious freedom, foster a free press, promote the rule of law, reform its political institutions, clean up corruption, strengthen its protection of intellectual property rights, and otherwise make its

economy friendlier for American businesses. Many Pakistanis came to believe that Washington's agenda for their country knew no bounds.

Nearly all of these U.S. objectives for Pakistan found wide support within the American foreign policy and national security establishment. Each reflected some combination of U.S. national interests and a broader set of (more or less) selfless ideals. But in the messy everyday world, it was extremely unlikely that Pakistan, or any country in a similar situation, could move forward on all these fronts, even had it desired to do so—which was not always the case. Presented with a smorgasbord of U.S. demands, Pakistan picked from the offerings in a manner consistent with its own priorities, not those of the powerful Americans. Washington's sweeping agenda for Pakistan handed that country the tools with which to ward off U.S. pressure on any specific issue. Leverage is most apt to succeed when the things being required of the target country are finite in number.

- **Successful efforts at leverage cannot afford to ignore the domestic politics of the target country.**

Just as a country has strategic requirements, its leaders also have political needs. U.S. policy makers are constantly, even instinctively, aware of the domestic politics influencing their decision making. Yet they frequently forget that domestic politics are just as powerful in weaker states, even those run by generals.

Successive Pakistani rulers were not simply being disingenuous when they pleaded the constraints of public opinion. This was true whether the leader had acquired his position through a decision of the voters, or as the result of a military coup. Pakistani politicians, like their U.S. counterparts, were continually called upon to balance opposing interests and reconcile conflicting agendas. Political allies had to be assuaged, political opponents checked, those in neither camp courted. Competing bureaucratic interests had to be managed, while powerful business and economic actors had to be rewarded or bought off. No government could ignore the importance of cultivating the media, especially once Musharraf sanctioned liberalization of the country's media in 2002 and television quickly gained a huge voice in shaping public views.

For the most part, politics, in Pakistan as in America, focuses on domestic concerns. For governments in Islamabad, pleasing Washington or meeting American needs was seldom if ever at the top of their "to do" list. This was even more the case since Pakistani leaders usually confronted a multitude of immensely difficult domestic challenges. This prioritization of internal needs and domestic politics over the demands of a powerful but often unpopular

country was even easier when accommodating U.S. concerns could alienate important domestic constituencies, as was often the case.

For Pakistan's military chieftains, their relevant political constituency—their “public opinion,” as it were—included the senior leadership of the army and other services. After the 2011 Abbottabad raid, for instance, the Pakistani army chief—often regarded as the most powerful political actor in the country, particularly on security-related matters—faced intense pressure from his corps commanders to get tougher with the Americans. This reduced whatever desire he might otherwise have held to accede to U.S. demands that the army move against the Taliban.

- **Leverage is inextricably linked to perceptions of the country attempting leverage.**

America's poor image in Pakistan in recent decades has been one of the most serious handicaps U.S. policymakers have faced in their efforts to translate U.S. power into leverage. It is true that large numbers of Pakistanis find aspects of American culture compelling—many want their children educated in U.S. schools, for example. Nonetheless, the prevailing view in Pakistan of the United States and the U.S. government is overwhelmingly negative. In the Pakistani telling, the United States is, and always has been, unreliable, hypocritical, and utterly selfish. It unfairly sides with Pakistan's enemies, most of all India. At every moment of crisis, including Pakistan's supreme national crisis in 1971, when India split the country in two, the United States has abandoned its loyal friend in Islamabad. It is hostile to Muslims in its visa policies, its harassment of Muslim visitors, and even its treatment of Muslim-Americans.

U.S. foreign policy is seen as reflecting this anti-Islam and anti-Pakistan bias. The United States has waged three full-scale wars since 1991, twice in Iraq and once in Afghanistan—all Muslim countries. It insists on maintaining a massive nuclear arsenal and has acquiesced in the possession of nuclear weapons by Hindu India and Jewish Israel, but denies the right of Muslim countries—not only Pakistan, but Iran, Iraq, and Libya—to develop even a defensive nuclear deterrent. Since 2001, U.S. actions in Pakistan—drone strikes, violations of Pakistani territory by U.S. Special Forces operators, the killing of Pakistani soldiers by allegedly misdirected U.S. air strikes, and Washington's apparently cavalier attitude toward the deaths of Pakistani civilians killed by U.S. force—have further hardened these unfavorable views of the United States.

Little wonder, then, that Pakistani governments have found it difficult to be seen as working with the Americans. It is far easier for one country to accede to the wishes of a second if the latter enjoys a favorable image in the former. In the case of Pakistan, it is impossible to overstate the level of mistrust, even hatred,

the majority of Pakistanis harbor toward the United States. No matter how misguided Washington found these perceptions, they served as a powerful force to undercut American leverage.

- **Tone and style matter. A lot.**

This proposition is closely related to the previous two. The manner in which a country deals with another, especially when we are talking about a stronger country's interactions with a less powerful nation, heavily influences both the domestic politics shaping the second country's response and the perceptions of the more powerful party held by the weaker. Diplomatic tone and style are integrally linked to leverage.

Professional diplomats understand this nexus. But the discussion of American policy is not restricted to career diplomats. It is simultaneously the strength and the vulnerability of the American political system that a far broader circle of experts and amateurs alike contributes to the cacophony that is the American policymaking process. Some elements within this larger foreign policy community, when debating U.S. policy toward Pakistan (and other countries), are apt to give short shrift to the more polite forms of discourse—by employing, for instance, terms such as “demand,” “insist,” “require,” “force,” and “compel.”

A think tank analysis from March 2012, entirely representative of the genre, recommended “leveraging Pakistan to prevail in Afghanistan.” Among its recommendations:

- » The United States “should no longer tolerate Pakistan’s complicity” in supporting the Haqqani network.
- » Washington “should demand” that Rawalpindi “take immediate action” against the Haqqanis.
- » U.S. security assistance “should be more assertively linked” to Pakistani cooperation in fighting the Taliban and other extremist groups.
- » The White House “should make clear to Islamabad that consequences will follow” if Pakistan continued its clandestine support for extremist groups targeting U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

Washington’s leverage with Pakistan “should not be understated,” this paper concluded.<sup>29</sup> The issue here is not whether these were solid recommendations. Rather, the tone with which they were offered was certain to provoke resentment and push-back in Pakistan.

Threats, bluster, and public ultimatums can make good political theater at home,

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<sup>29</sup> “FPI Analysis: Leveraging Pakistan to Prevail in Afghanistan,” Mar. 22, 2012, <http://www.foreignpolicy.org/content/fpi-analysis-leveraging-pakistan-prevail-afghanistan-0>.

but probably not good leverage. Threatening a weaker country, particularly in public, often produces the exact opposite response from that intended. All nations want to be treated with dignity and respect, especially by stronger countries. Less powerful countries are sensitive to slights, actual or perceived, and alive to the danger of being “humiliated.”

This expectation that they be treated with dignity helps explain why Pakistanis so strongly resented congressionally imposed conditions on U.S. aid. In an effort to encourage or discourage certain behaviors, successive U.S. aid packages linked American assistance to Pakistani actions on combatting terrorism and drug-trafficking, forgoing nuclear weapons, and promoting everything from democracy and human rights to fiscal responsibility and social sector spending. Americans generally saw these conditions as a reasonable Pakistani quid for the U.S. quo, and moreover, believed that the steps being required were in Pakistan’s own interest. Pakistanis concluded otherwise: the United States was using its aid to dictate Pakistani policies. This perception undermined American hopes that U.S. assistance would buy good will in, and better behavior from, Pakistan. Rather than a symbol of American friendship, aid became evidence of U.S. manipulation and dark designs.

The American diplomats and scholars Howard and Teresita Schaffer have described with great sensitivity how cultural differences complicate diplomacy between Pakistan and the United States. Pakistani culture, they observe, is based upon personal relationships. Such ties create a mutual sense of obligation, which in turn increases the likelihood that the other party will want to please you. This way of doing business contrasts with an American approach that is often transactional or instrumental, based upon an exchange of favors. A transactional relationship runs counter to the idea of mutual respect and of obligation built upon personal relations, and contributes to the idea in Pakistan that the United States is interested in that country only for what it can provide. There is no honor in a purely transactional relationship, they explain; therefore such a relationship does not merit loyalty or require strict compliance with previously agreed upon understandings.<sup>30</sup>

An American diplomatic style that favors the transactional and is often punctuated by public demands and threats conveys an absence of respect and is unlikely to win friends in Pakistan. National pride is important in Pakistan, as it is elsewhere. By always seeming to ask Pakistan to do more, the United States has often come across as ungrateful and hectoring, a bully. Such an approach is almost certainly going to make it more difficult for Pakistani officials to accede to U.S. wishes. Indeed, it is likely to provoke a Pakistani reaction quite different

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30 Schaffer and Schaffer, *How Pakistan Negotiates with the United States* stands alone for its informed analysis of the manner in which cultural differences shape diplomatic interactions between Pakistan and the United States. The authors offer a brief discussion about the role of leverage in the relationship; see pp. 174-78.

from what the United States had hoped for.

In a 2007 interview with the *Washington Post*, a visibly angry Musharraf lashed out at what he considered the demeaning treatment Washington had accorded his country: “you want the developing world to do everything that you wish and desire. . . . Are we that incapable, are we that small? This is not a banana republic.”<sup>31</sup> That the leader of one of the world’s nuclear powers felt compelled to deny that his country was a banana republic was an extraordinary if inadvertent admission of the humiliation the U.S. style in dealing with Pakistan had created.

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When it comes to slights at the hands of the Americans, Pakistanis have long memories.

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The George W. Bush administration was not alone in its failure to understand that an undiplomatic style could undermine Washington’s leverage in Islamabad. A few years after the Musharraf outburst, the *Post* quoted an Obama official remarking in wonder: “The problem with the Pakistanis is that the more you threaten them, the more they become entrenched and don’t see a path forward with you.”<sup>32</sup> Well, imagine that.

When it comes to slights at the hands of the Americans, Pakistanis have long memories. More than half a century after the 1965 Indo-Pakistani war, Musharraf, who in 1965 was a newly minted army lieutenant, was still fuming about the U.S. suspension of arms shipments. The Americans knew all our military assets were oriented eastward, toward India, he complained. They could not have been surprised when Pakistan used U.S.-supplied arms against the Indians. The aid cutoff, he implied, was simply another example of America’s hypocrisy, its penchant for forsaking its friends.<sup>33</sup>

Musharraf’s successor as Pakistani president harbored his own grudges. Half a dozen years after the 2011 Raymond Davis affair that had so roiled U.S.-Pakistan relations, Zardari was still grumbling about American ingratitude for the manner in which he had obtained Davis’s release from jail and arranged his departure from Pakistan.<sup>34</sup> A simple thank-you, expressed with sincerity by a senior American official, could have been more effective in advancing the U.S. agenda in Pakistan than another million dollars of U.S. assistance.

Good diplomatic skills can enhance a country’s leverage; poor technique and execution are likely to undermine it. A willingness to listen and an ability to speak respectfully to people with whom one strongly disagrees are necessary

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31 Lally Weymouth, “A Conversation with Pervez Musharraf,” *Washington Post*, Dec. 16, 2007.

32 Greg Jaffe and Karen DeYoung, “Leaked files lay bare war in Afghanistan,” *Washington Post*, July 26, 2010.

33 Private conversation with the author, Sept. 2016.

34 Interview with a senior Pakistani diplomat, Jan. 2017.



ingredients for leverage. So is a sensitivity to national honor and pride and an awareness of the need to avoid the appearance of entitlement, let alone arrogance. None of this should be surprising; it is what every well-mannered child is taught at an early age. Those lessons are equally applicable for countries, great or small, seeking to wield leverage.

### *The limits of leverage*

Many Pakistanis—and quite often, U.S. executive branch officials—have argued that Pakistan is likely to be most receptive to U.S. wishes when the overall relationship between the two countries is solid. That is, when Pakistan is not under a great deal of pressure from Washington. The absence of a perception of U.S. dictation, so this argument goes, gives Pakistani leaders the political space to make difficult decisions and take political risks. Perceived U.S. hostility, on the other hand, prods Islamabad into intransigence or forces it to act contrary to American hopes. As a former Pakistani ambassador to Washington has asserted, cooperation brings about leverage. Leverage, he insists, is the end result of cooperation, not a mechanism or tool to induce it.<sup>35</sup>

It's a provocative argument: a soft-spoken, unassertive America will produce policies in Islamabad more to Washington's liking. Stated differently, it suggests that the United States has leverage only if it doesn't push, only if it declines to wield this leverage except in the mildest of forms. Of course that's an argument that would appeal to Pakistan, or to any state facing demands from a stronger power. China, its best friend and closest partner, has never coerced Islamabad, this same ambassador assured an American interviewer, implicitly criticizing Washington for its less gentle treatment of his country.

Yet there's a problem with this argument: the history of U.S.-Pakistan relations would not appear to support it. During the 1950s, the 1980s, and the 2000s, during the Eisenhower, Reagan, and Bush *filis* presidencies, the United States came closer to this non-coercive approach than at any other moments in the relationship. And yet, during these very years Islamabad continued to pursue policies—arming itself with U.S.-supplied weapons for use against India, pressing forward on its nuclear program, providing support and sanctuary to the Taliban and allied groups—that ultimately brought the partnership to three of its lowest points: the U.S. aid suspension in the midst of the 1965 Indo-Pakistani war, the triggering of the Pressler sanctions in 1990, and the *annus horribilis* of 2011.

In each instance, the relationship foundered on the hard reality that the core or fundamental interests of the two diverged too sharply to be reconciled. Not even the skillful application of leverage can compel a country to do something it

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with the author, Aug. 2015.

believes is inherently contrary to its best interests. Leverage has its limits.

### *It's not just Pakistan*

Pakistan is not the only country to have successfully deflected U.S. power, or to effectively assert its own agency in defiance of a far stronger country. As one Pakistani told an American friend, “Size does not equal strength. If size equaled strength, you guys would have knocked off the Castro brothers in a jiffy, 90 miles from Florida.”<sup>36</sup>

Cuba does not stand alone in this regard. Recent books by Joseph S. Tulchin and Tom Long illustrate how a number of Latin American countries have successfully challenged U.S. hegemony even in Washington’s backyard.<sup>37</sup> Both studies demonstrate shrewd Latin American leaders maneuvering to escape the superpower’s smothering embrace. A recurring tactic for resisting unacceptable U.S. demands was to promote various types of regionalism, which served to recruit Latin American allies with similar anxieties about their powerful neighbor. Long makes the important point—also true of Pakistan in its dealings with the United States—that smaller countries usually have a more limited and focused diplomatic agenda. By single-mindedly concentrating on a handful of priorities, they are able to avoid the distractions that large powers with a global agenda face. Seemingly weaker nations, both studies show, are able to thrive even when opposing larger, more powerful countries.

Compared with the United States, Jamaica is by any measure small and poor. Yet Jamaica has succeeded in moving its powerful neighbor toward Jamaican positions on issues of critical importance to that country, such as trade preferences, foreign aid, debt relief, and counter-narcotics policy. Understanding how to negotiate the Washington policymaking scene is key, writes Richard L. Bernal, the Jamaican ambassador in Washington throughout the 1990s. Drawing from his own experiences, Bernal emphasizes the importance of establishing personal relationships, building alliances with U.S. corporate interests, working with the Jamaican-American community, and enlisting the assistance of high-visibility Americans with Jamaican roots, such as Colin Powell and the singer Harry Belafonte.<sup>38</sup> The avenues of access and influence will differ for each less powerful nation, but skillful diplomats can and do maneuver in the U.S. domestic political arena to turn Washington’s policies in more congenial directions.

36 Interview with Sen. Mushahid Hussain, Oct. 2016.

37 Joseph S. Tulchin, *Latin America in International Politics: Challenging U.S. Hegemony* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2016); Tom Long, *Latin America Confronts the United States: Asymmetry and Influence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

38 Richard L. Bernal, *The Influence of Small States on Superpowers: Jamaica and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015).

These examples from Latin America are not exceptional. South Korea under Syngman Rhee and later Park Chung-hee, South Vietnam under Ngo Dinh Diem and his successors, Iran under Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the Philippines under Ferdinand Marcos, Egypt under Hosni Mubarak—the list is impressively long. In each instance, the world’s mightiest power defined its interests in such a manner as to render it vulnerable to the machinations of smaller nations and autocratic strongmen. As Eisenhower’s State Department lamented in the mid-1950s, “There is no way in which we can punish ROK [Republic of Korea, or South Korea] without also injuring larger U.S. and Free World objectives.”<sup>39</sup> U.S. officials in subsequent administrations could easily have said the same thing about the other countries on this list. All displayed a noteworthy ability to defy American desires and deflect American efforts at leverage.

Nor is the United States the only strong nation to find that it is not always easy to turn its power into leverage against a smaller country. East Germany, in many ways a creation of the Soviet Union in the years after World War II, proved to be anything but the Soviet “client” or “puppet” U.S. officials claimed. Indeed, one scholar has titled her study of USSR-East German relations *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*.<sup>40</sup> Moscow fared little better with North Vietnam even when, at the height of its war with the United States, Hanoi might have been most interested in retaining Moscow’s favor. By the late 1960s, the Soviet Union supplied North Vietnam with the vast bulk of its arms, ammunition, and other military equipment. Yet its share of political influence in Hanoi was probably no greater than five percent, estimated two journalists, one Vietnamese, the other Russian.<sup>41</sup> As Washington discovered with Pakistan, large aid flows provided the Kremlin with surprisingly little leverage.

This story is replicated again and again. Moscow in the 1950s and 1960s failed completely in keeping a weak China subservient. Despite towering over its neighbors, contemporary China has regularly found the smaller actors on its periphery—Taiwan, North Korea, and Vietnam, for example—stubbornly disinclined to follow Beijing’s lead. Indeed, the North Korean regime of Kim Jong-un seems as intent on provoking Beijing—its sole ally and protector—as on challenging the United States. India, the hegemon in South Asia, has similarly discovered that its less powerful neighbors regularly ignore its wishes. The previous Sri Lankan government, for instance, opened itself to political and economic penetration by China, India’s chief strategic rival, and welcomed Chinese warships into its ports.

39 Gregg Brazinsky, *Nation Building in South Korea: Koreans, Americans, and the Making of a Democracy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 39.

40 Hope. M. Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall: Soviet-East German Relations, 1953-1961* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

41 Ilya V. Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), 72.

Throughout history and into the present, strong states have discovered that a huge advantage in traditional measures of power does not automatically provide leverage or guarantee diplomatic success. The presidency of Donald Trump will test that proposition anew.



## AFTERWORD:

# DONALD TRUMP AND LEVERAGE

**L**ike many, probably most Americans, Donald Trump believes in leverage, in the efficacy of U.S. power to persuade or coerce other countries to pay heed to American wishes.

The United States, he tweeted in 2013, has “tremendous economic power over China if our leaders knew how to use it. . . . China’s economy would collapse without us.”<sup>1</sup> As a presidential candidate, he regularly promised that a Trump administration would harness America’s vast might to compel good behavior from friends and foes alike. Two months before the election, he told CNBC, “[W]e have tremendous power over China because they take so much—they suck so much money out of the United States... We should use our economic power because without us, China would be in serious trouble.”<sup>2</sup> With equal confidence he insisted that he would force Mexico to renegotiate the NAFTA trade agreement and pay for a wall along the southern U.S. border. And he would make U.S. allies in Europe and Asia assume a greater share of the joint defense burden.

Candidate Trump was not alone in his claims for American power. Hillary Clinton, his opponent in the 2016 presidential election, also spoke during the campaign about the leverage offered by U.S. strength. In both the second and third presidential debates, she explicitly referenced the need for leverage over Russia, as the only way to get Moscow to play a more constructive role in Syria. Asked on another occasion about securing Chinese help in constraining North Korea’s nuclear program, she suggested possible deployment of a missile defense system as a way to gain Chinese cooperation. “We have a lot of leverage” on China, she asserted, “and we’re going to exercise that leverage.”<sup>3</sup>

1 Donald J. Trump, Twitter post, Mar. 30, 2013, 12:43 p.m., <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/318085997000806400>.

2 CNBC “Squawk Box” transcript, Sept. 12, 2016, <http://www.cnbc.com/2016/09/12/cnbc-transcript-republican-presidential-candidate-donald-trump-on-cnbc-squawk-box-today.html>.

3 C-SPAN transcript, Sept. 9, 2016, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?415067-1/hillary-clinton-holds-meeting-terrorism&start=529>.

For all their differences, the 2016 presidential candidates shared the same easy assumption about their ability to turn national power into influence and leverage.

## *Trump and Pakistan*

What might Trump's faith in the utility of American power mean for U.S.-Pakistan ties? Although he seldom spoke about Pakistan in the years before his election as president, Trump's few comments conveyed menace. In 2012, he tweeted: "Get it straight: Pakistan is not our friend. We've given them billions and billions of dollars, and what did we get? Betrayal and disrespect—and much worse. #TimeToGetTough."<sup>4</sup> Four years later, in the midst of his presidential run, Trump told Fox News that because Islamabad received so much U.S. aid, he would need only "two minutes" to force Pakistan to release Shakil Afridi, an imprisoned Pakistani doctor accused of helping the CIA pinpoint bin Laden's whereabouts in Abbottabad.<sup>5</sup> One ought to be cautious about ascribing too much importance to campaign rhetoric. Even so, his hashtag #TimeToGetTough reflects general inclinations Trump has articulated for decades. He seems to instinctively believe that toughness and an in-your-face approach can product results.

Upon entering the White House, the new president was surprisingly slow to articulate a Pakistan policy, although key figures in his administration hinted at a tougher stand. During his Senate confirmation hearings, Secretary of Defense James Mattis spoke explicitly about the need for Pakistan to apply greater pressure on the Taliban and other "externally-focused militant groups that operate within its borders."<sup>6</sup> The senior U.S. general in Afghanistan noted that "it's very difficult to succeed on the battlefield when your enemy enjoys external support and safe haven. We need to improve the pressure applied on the Haqqanis and the Taliban on the Pakistan side of the border."<sup>7</sup> And in an interview given shortly before being asked to join the administration, Lisa Curtis, the National Security Council's lead official for dealing with Islamabad, declared that "Pakistan is part of the global terrorism problem." If it remains committed to Afghanistan, she continued, "then the Trump administration will have to adopt a tougher policy toward Pakistan."<sup>8</sup>

4 Donald J. Trump, Twitter post, Jan. 17, 2012, 12:11 p.m., <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/159367254935470080?lang=en>.

5 Pam Constable, "Between panic and euphoria, Pakistan tries to figure out Donald Trump," *Washington Post*, Dec. 13, 2016. In a bit of arm-twisting of its own, the U.S. Congress in recent years has annually withheld \$33 million in aid to Pakistan, \$1 million for each year of Afridi's 33-year sentence. Afridi was imprisoned, Pakistan insists, for crimes unrelated to the Abbottabad raid.

6 Anwar Iqbal, "US to incentivise Pakistan's cooperation, says Mattis," *Dawn*, Jan. 14, 2017.

7 Chris Kay and Kamran Haider, "Pakistan Fears Billions in Military Funds Under Scrutiny Amid Trump Aid Cuts," Mar. 20, 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2017-03-20/pakistan-fears-military-funds-under-scrutiny-amid-trump-aid-cuts>.

8 Ela Dutt, "Pro-India hand to have top-level position on Trump's national security staff," *News India Times*, Apr. 4, 2017, <http://www.newsindiatimes.com/pro-india-hand-to-have-top-level-position-on-trumps-national-security-staff-report>. Shortly before her appointment to the NSC, Curtis also co-authored a report

Trump himself gave mixed signals about how he intended to deal with Pakistan. According to a Pakistani readout of a Trump-Sharif telephone conversation shortly after the U.S. election, the new president exuded charm and expressed a desire to build cordial ties with Islamabad.<sup>9</sup> The positive effect this had on the Pakistanis was somewhat negated in May, however. In a speech in Riyadh, with Sharif sitting in the audience, Trump singled out India, but not Pakistan, as a victim of terrorism—even though, as a Pakistani journalist put it, Pakistan was a target of terrorism exported from India. Moreover, contrary to earlier hopes, Sharif was not given a private meeting with Trump. The new U.S. administration had shown a “clear tilt” towards India, the *Nation* grumbled, and the entire episode “has left Pakistan fuming.”<sup>10</sup> A successful Modi visit to Washington a month later did nothing to improve dispositions in Islamabad. Pakistanis could not help noticing that the administration had shown no interest in a similar visit by their prime minister.

A report released by the Department of Defense in June repeated earlier assessments that the Afghan-Pakistan region was home to “the highest concentration of extremist and terrorist groups in the world.” It also echoed Obama-era statements that the Taliban and Haqqani network “retain freedom of action inside Pakistani territory and benefit from support from elements of the Pakistani Government.”<sup>11</sup> Shortly afterward, the Pentagon announced it was withholding another \$50 million of CSF money from Pakistan because it could not certify that Pakistan had taken sufficient action against the Haqqani network. A month later, Washington designated the Kashmiri militant group Hizbul Mujahideen, alleged to have ties to the ISI, as a “foreign terrorist” organization.

On August 21, Trump unveiled what he billed as a new American strategy on Afghanistan.<sup>12</sup> Even here, however, he revealed few details of his approach toward Pakistan—but Pakistanis found what he did say unsettling. The United States intended to change its approach toward Pakistan, Trump declared. In the past, Pakistan had been “a valued partner.” But “Pakistan has also sheltered the same organizations that try every single day to kill our people.” “We can no

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calling for a “new U.S. approach” to Pakistan, which many Pakistanis viewed as reflecting an anti-Pakistan animus. The Trump administration, the report recommended, must “make it more and more costly for Pakistani leaders to employ a strategy of supporting terrorist proxies.” See Husain Haqqani and Lisa Curtis, “A New U.S. Approach to Pakistan: Enforcing Aid Conditions Without Cutting Ties,” Feb. 7, 2017, <http://www.southasiaathudson.org/a-new-us-approach-to-pakistan/>.

9 The Pakistani record of this phone call, which was not contradicted by the Trump camp, may be found at “PR No. 298 PM TELEPHONES PRESIDENT-ELECT USA, Islamabad: November 30, 2016,” *Press Information Department of Government of Pakistan*, Nov. 30, 2016, <http://www.pid.gov.pk/?p=30445>.

10 Shafqat Ali, “Pakistan fumes over Trump’s ‘indifference,’” *Nation*, May 23, 2017, <http://nation.com.pk/national/23-May-2017/pakistan-fumes-over-trump-s-indifference>.

11 U.S. Department of Defense, “Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan,” June 2017, pp. 1, 18, [https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/June\\_2017\\_1225\\_Report\\_to\\_Congress.pdf](https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/June_2017_1225_Report_to_Congress.pdf).

12 “Remarks by President Trump on the Strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia,” Aug. 21, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/08/21/remarks-president-trump-strategy-afghanistan-and-south-asia>.



longer be silent about Pakistan's safe havens for terrorist organizations. . . . We have been paying Pakistan billions and billions of dollars at the same time they are housing the very terrorists that we are fighting. But that will have to change, and that will change immediately."

Trump spoke about his plans to expand the use of American troops to target terrorists, so that these "killers" would know that "no place is beyond the reach of American might and American arms." While Trump was referring specifically to Afghanistan, Pakistanis feared that the president's words could apply to their own country as well. As Vice President Mike Pence wrote in *USA Today*, the president had put Pakistan "on notice."<sup>13</sup>

Pakistanis found two other aspects of the new Trump policy especially alarming. One was the absence of any serious discussion of a negotiated end to the war in Afghanistan. Other than a token reference to a political settlement, Trump was virtually silent on what appeared to Pakistanis the only way for Afghanistan to move beyond perpetual turmoil.

Even worse from Pakistan's perspective, Trump spoke of further developing the U.S.-India "strategic partnership." One component of this, the president explained, would be for India to assume a larger role in Afghanistan, especially in the areas of economic assistance and development. Keeping Indian influence in Afghanistan to a bare minimum had been one of the touchstones of Pakistani strategy since signing up with the Americans in the days after 9/11. Trump's new policy, it appeared, could not have struck at Pakistan's vital interests more directly.

Islamabad lost no time in pushing back. The Americans "should not make Pakistan a scapegoat for their failures in Afghanistan," the foreign minister observed, repeating a long-standing Pakistani refrain.<sup>14</sup> It was "disappointing" that Trump "ignores the enormous sacrifices rendered by the Pakistani nation" in the common struggle against extremism, a foreign ministry statement declared. "Instead of relying on the false narrative of safe havens, the U.S. needs to work with Pakistan to eradicate terrorism."<sup>15</sup> Following an emergency meeting of the country's civilian and military leadership, Islamabad dispatched the foreign minister to seek reassurances of support from friendly nations. China, unsurprisingly, was his first stop.

13 Mike Pence, "Donald Trump's new American strategy for Afghanistan will undo past failures," *USA Today*, Aug. 21, 2017, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2017/08/21/trump-speech-strategy-south-asia-afghanistan-pakistan-india-mike-pence-column/587639001/>.

14 Syed Raza Hassan, "Pakistan rejects role of 'scapegoat for U.S. failures' in Afghanistan," Aug. 23, 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-pakistan-idUSKCN1B3125?feedType=RSS&feedName=worldNews>.

15 Sardar Sikander, "Pakistan 'disappointed' by U.S. reliance on 'false narrative,'" *Express Tribune*, Aug. 23, 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1488626/pakistan-disappointed-us-reliance-false-narrative/>.

The day after the Trump announcement, his secretary of state, Rex Tillerson, was asked what leverage Washington possessed to persuade the Pakistanis to help implement the new policy. “[O]bviously, we have some leverage . . . in terms of the amount of aid and military assistance we give them, their status as a non-NATO alliance partner. All of that can be put on the table.” Lest his message be misunderstood, he warned, “We are going to be conditioning our support for Pakistan and our relationship with them on them delivering results.”<sup>16</sup>

Those conversant with the history of the bilateral relationship might have winced at the secretary’s self-assured tone. One Pakistani analyst with extensive experience in Washington explained: “The problem for America is this: Pakistan can afford to walk away. A few hundred million dollars isn’t much of a stick anymore,” she wrote. “The China-Pakistan relationship is now worth \$110 [billion], with around \$4 [billion] expected this year. And those billions come easy. For \$900 [million, her estimate of current U.S. aid levels to Pakistan], Pakistan endures a volatile, loveless affair with the U.S. while China offers billions without drama.”<sup>17</sup> It was hard to avoid the conclusion that Washington and Islamabad were once more on a collision course.

### *Immigration and trade with Mexico*

In the early months of the Trump presidency, many skeptics questioned whether Trump’s tough talk and apparent partiality to threats would produce the results promised by the president. Mexico, for instance, is not without leverage of its own in any potential test of wills with the Trump White House. Higher Mexican import duties, perhaps imposed in response to an American “border tax,” could eat into the \$230 billion of goods and services U.S. firms annually sell to Mexico and threaten some of the six million U.S. jobs that depend on trade with Mexico.<sup>18</sup> A Mexico under pressure from Washington could retaliate by slowing down cooperation with the United States in fields as diverse as law enforcement, counterterrorism, counter-narcotics, border control, and deportations.

If Trump persists in pursuing a confrontational approach on trade and immigration, warned Arturo Sarukhan, for many years Mexico’s ambassador in Washington, the Mexican government will put every single issue on the bilateral agenda on the table, “because that’s more or less how Mexico levels the playing field and obtains greater leverage in negotiating other issues.”<sup>19</sup> With a national election scheduled for 2018, Mexican politicians are unlikely to want to be seen

16 Secretary of State Rex Tillerson Press Availability, Aug. 22, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2017/08/273577.htm>.

17 Nadia Naviwala, “Washington bad cop,” *Dawn*, Aug. 24, 2017.

18 Deutsche Presse-Agentur, “Mexican leverage against Trump’s US,” Jan. 27, 2017, <http://www.rawstory.com/2017/01/mexican-leverage-against-trumps-us/>.

19 Adam Chandler, “Can Mexico Block Trump’s New Deportation Rules?” *The Atlantic*, Feb. 23, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/02/mexico-deportation-rules-trump/517587/>.

as bowing to the demands of their haughty northern neighbor.

It is undoubtedly true that Washington has multiple leverage points on Mexico. Many analysts, however, have concluded that relations between the two countries are so integrated and mutually beneficial that Trump will be unable to trigger all this leverage without badly damaging American interests—and provoking opposition even from White House allies in Congress.<sup>20</sup> Here again, the issue is not an absence of leverage, but the unwanted consequences of using it.

### *China and North Korea as a test case*

As he prepared to vacate the presidency, Barack Obama warned his successor that the challenges posed by North Korea's nuclear and missile programs were likely to pose the most urgent foreign policy problem confronting the new administration.<sup>21</sup> The North Korea challenge also offers several tests about the potential use and effectiveness of leverage.

A crucial component of the North Korea question is whether China can be persuaded to pressure Pyongyang to halt its drive to produce nuclear warheads and the missiles to deliver them. China, which supplies most of North Korea's food and energy imports and often protects the North in the international diplomatic arena, is in many respects Pyongyang's sole life line to the outside world. No one believes that North Korea can be compelled to freeze, let alone abandon, its nuclear and missile programs unless Beijing is prepared to lean heavily on its North Korean friends. To date, however, China has not been willing to exert more than episodic pressure on Pyongyang. While Beijing would prefer that the North not acquire a nuclear arsenal, it has apparently concluded that pressing North Korea too much could jeopardize other equally important Chinese interests.

We have already seen that Trump entered office believing that the United States possesses considerable economic leverage over China. He has also explicitly linked that leverage to the threat posed by North Korea. In January 2016, in discussing the North Korean challenge, he told CNN:

China has total control over them and we have total control over China, if we had people who knew what they were doing. . . . We have China because of trade. They're sucking our money out of us, they're taking our money like candy from a baby. And China can come out and frankly they will, you know,

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20 For a helpful introduction to U.S.-Mexico relations as Trump assumed the presidency, see Duncan Wood, ed., *Charting a New Course: Policy Options for the Next Stage in U.S.-Mexico Relations* (Washington: Wilson Center Mexico Institute, 2017).

21 On this, see David E. Sanger and William J. Broad, "Trump Inherits Secret Cyberwar on North Korea," *New York Times*, Mar. 5, 2017.

they say they don't have that much control over North Korea. They have total control, because without China they wouldn't be able to eat. So China has to get involved. And China should solve that problem. And we should put pressure on China to solve the problem.<sup>22</sup>

Several months later, as he was on the verge of wrapping up the Republican nomination, Trump returned to this theme of leverage. Obama, he charged, had refused to “apply leverage on China necessary to rein in North Korea. We have the leverage. We have the power over China, economic power. . . . And with that economic power, we can rein in and we can get them to do what they have to do with North Korea.”<sup>23</sup>

But the matter may not be quite so simple. For one thing, in their minds China's leaders have good reason not to push Pyongyang beyond a certain point. They don't wish to foment North Korean political instability, with all its unpredictable consequences. They don't want to face an influx of refugees that chaos in the North might cause. They fear that a North Korean collapse would lead to a united Korean nation under the influence of the United States. Worse yet, a Seoul-based unified Korea might permit the stationing of U.S. troops close to China's border. Viewing the United States as its primary rival, and ever anxious about instability in the neighborhood, Beijing has always found ample reason to resist American entreaties to get tough with Pyongyang.

Moreover, many who know China well do not share Trump's conviction that a determined Washington can compel Beijing to do its bidding. For these analysts, the extraordinary economic interdependence that has developed between the United States and China over the past thirty years has produced a situation where the source and direction—or even the existence—of leverage is uncertain. Each country has the ability to inflict immense economic pain on the other. But doing so would almost certainly carry equally large self-induced economic costs. The Cold War produced a stalemate of mutual assured destruction, or MAD—the consequence of the fact that both the Soviet Union and the United States possessed huge nuclear arsenals that could destroy the other side many times over. In a strange twist, some argue, the United States and China are now locked in a 21st century version of MAD—mutual assured dependence—which, like its Cold War predecessor, gives each country the ability to destroy the other, but only at the cost of wreaking similar devastation on itself.

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22 Tim Hains, “Donald Trump on North Korea,” *RealClear Politics*, Jan. 7, 2016, [http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2016/01/07/donald\\_trump\\_on\\_north\\_korea\\_china\\_has\\_total\\_control\\_of\\_them\\_south\\_korea\\_should\\_pay\\_us.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2016/01/07/donald_trump_on_north_korea_china_has_total_control_of_them_south_korea_should_pay_us.html); Joseph A. Bosco, “Tough and Tougher: Clinton vs. Trump on North Korea,” *National Interest*, Sept. 15, 2016, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/tough-tougher-clinton-vs-trump-north-korea-17726>.

23 “Transcript: Donald Trump's Foreign Policy Speech,” Apr. 27, 2016, *New York Times*.

Beyond its ability to retaliate to U.S. pressure economically, China possesses numerous other ways to deflect American attempts at leverage. An unfriendly China could create all sorts of headaches for the United States beyond those it currently produces. It could completely ignore UN and other sanctions against North Korea. It could ratchet up pressure against U.S. friends such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. It could adopt more confrontational tactics in its South China Sea and East China Sea territorial disputes. It could walk away from past cooperation with the United States on issues as diverse as Iran, cyber security, and climate change. In the view of many China experts, Washington's ability to leverage Beijing successfully on North Korea is anything but a given.

Ralph Cossa and Brad Glosserman, American scholars based in Honolulu, have offered an interesting twist on this argument. Pyongyang's nuclear provocations, they have written, actually hand Beijing leverage in dealing with Washington, which cares more than China about checking North Korea's nuclear ambitions.<sup>24</sup> Cossa and Glosserman also suggest an analogy between the China-North Korea relationship and that between the United States and Israel. Washington and Tel Aviv, they note, are close friends and allies, and the former provides the latter with considerable aid and other assistance. Yet "every U.S. administration has learned that it cannot compel its Israeli counterpart to do as Washington wishes on national security matters." It is "unrealistic," they argue, "to expect Beijing to have more leverage over Pyongyang."<sup>25</sup>

Suppose, however, that Beijing could be persuaded to step up its pressure on North Korea. Would Pyongyang then have little choice but to submit to U.S. and Chinese demands that it shut down its nuclear and missile programs? Many people believe this to be the case. According to John Brennan, the CIA director under Obama, China has "an extraordinary amount of influence" on the North.<sup>26</sup> Tim Kaine, Hillary Clinton's 2016 running mate and a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, agrees. The Chinese, he has said, "have the leverage. . . . We don't trade with North Korea. Our leverage system is somewhat limited, but China, with a 90-percent trade share, has that leverage."<sup>27</sup>

Yet other experts are skeptical that even immense Chinese pressure would compel North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons program. China's voice resonates in Pyongyang, no doubt, but is it all-controlling? North Korea's Kim

24 In this context it may be worth recalling the amazement expressed in 2011 by a senior State Department official who dealt with China on a daily basis. "The Chinese are experts at leveraging you. You give them a stick and a rubber band and the next thing you know, they are leveraging you. You just scratch your head and ask 'how did that happen?'" Off-the-record remarks at the Woodrow Wilson Center, Jan. 31, 2011.

25 Ralph A. Cossa and Brad Glosserman, "Untying North Korean 'nots,'" Pacific Forum CSIS PacNet #17, Feb. 14, 2017, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/pacnet-17-untying-north-korean-nots>.

26 John Brennan, interview on PBS, Jan. 4, 2017, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/episode/pbs-newshour-full-episode-jan-4-2017/>.

27 Sen. Tim Kaine, Statement on Passage of Sanctions against North Korea, Feb. 10, 2016, <http://www.ncnk.org/resources/news-items/hillary-clinton-bernie-sanders-and-donald-trump-in-their-own-words/tim-kaine>.

family regime, after all, has shown itself perfectly willing to inflict terrible suffering on its people, and in the past has not been deterred by the prospect of international sanctions. By all accounts, its internal security apparatus is so pervasive that even widespread deprivation would be unlikely to destabilize the government. Moreover, unless we are prepared to discount virtually everything Pyongyang has said in recent years, the regime apparently believes that its nuclear arsenal is the only thing that keeps a hostile outside world from using force to bring about regime change. As one Chinese scholar has noted, Beijing has a hammer but not a lever. It can bludgeon North Korea into collapse, but it cannot manipulate Pyongyang to induce better behavior.<sup>28</sup>

“China could solve the problem we have with North Korea in one day if they wanted to,” Trump told CNBC in September 2016.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps, but this is an assertion based upon faith, not fact or experience. It is equally plausible to believe that the Chinese may be correct in maintaining that they have only limited influence on Pyongyang’s decision making. That of course does not mean that Beijing has no influence, or that it could not be doing more than it has heretofore. Nor does it preclude a Chinese reassessment of what its core interests require, which might lead Beijing to decide that the Kim regime has become more of a strategic liability than an asset. But it should caution us not to expect China to fix the North Korea problem for us.

By the autumn of his first year as president, Trump appeared to have moderated his own earlier expectations that Beijing could rein in the North Koreans, but the administration’s stated policy reflected few such doubts. In a *Wall Street Journal* article in mid-August, Trump’s secretaries of defense and state, Jim Mattis and Rex Tillerson, revealed just how much Washington continued to look to China to do the heavy lifting with Pyongyang. Beijing has “dominant economic leverage over Pyongyang,” they wrote. If China wishes to help secure regional peace and stability, from which it has derived such great benefit, “it must make the decision to exercise its decisive diplomatic and economic leverage over North Korea.” In a passage Pakistanis would have found familiar, the two Americans declared that the region and the world “need and expect China to do more.”<sup>30</sup>

Paradoxically, North Korea may be in a position vis-à-vis China analogous to that which Pakistan holds with the United States. Pyongyang appears to have concluded that China needs the North—as a buffer zone keeping U.S. troops away from the border, and as a place stable enough to preclude massive refugee flows—at least as much as the North needs China. This parallels a calculation many Pakistanis have reached in thinking about their relationship

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28 Private conversation with the author.

29 CNBC “Squawk Box” transcript, Sept. 12, 2016, <http://www.cnbc.com/2016/09/12/cnbc-transcript-republican-presidential-candidate-donald-trump-on-cnbc-squawk-box-today.html>.

30 Jim Mattis and Rex Tillerson, “We’re Holding Pyongyang to Account,” *Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 14, 2017.

with the United States. In neither case can the larger power afford to let the smaller country collapse, lest other important interests of the stronger state be jeopardized. In both cases, the fragility of the weaker power gives it a certain leverage, allowing it to defy the wishes of the stronger.

### *Leverage and seduction*

No doubt many readers, including some in the Trump administration, will bristle at the cautions offered in these pages about the ease of turning power into leverage. Many Americans continue to believe that a more muscular approach to diplomacy is far more likely to produce desired results. Dick Cheney, George W. Bush's vice president, to give just one example, has called for an approach featuring the following injunctions:<sup>31</sup>

- Negotiate from a position of strength, and don't take military force off the table.
- Don't be afraid to walk away from negotiations; the other party probably needs a bargain more than you do.
- Don't compromise on fundamental principles or core interests.
- Don't settle for a damaging agreement for fear of getting no agreement at all.
- Don't ignore, let alone reward, bad behavior.
- If you establish a red line, enforce it.

Each of these recommendations is sound in the abstract; no experienced diplomat would take exception to any of them. Yet as a framework for successful diplomacy, they are incomplete. They ignore too many other ingredients that also contribute to diplomatic success—and to leverage. Moreover, some of the injunctions missing from Cheney's list—the need to be sensitive to the core interests of one's negotiating partner, for instance, or the inadvisability of painting the other side into a corner—would seem at odds with the muscularity advocated by the former vice president. Nor is there much evidence that Cheney advocated this get-tough approach with Pakistan during the eight years of the Bush presidency, even as Islamabad regularly disappointed White House hopes for an effective counter-terrorism partnership.<sup>32</sup>

In the real world, as Bush and Cheney found in dealing with Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Cuba, and other problematic actors, toughness and bald efforts to wield U.S. power produce decidedly uneven results. Indeed, leverage is generally most effective when the target country barely recognizes it is being leveraged.

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31 Dick Cheney, with Liz Cheney, *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2011), 491-93.

32 Bush officials angered Pakistanis with their incessant demands that Islamabad "do more," but scolding harangues do not in themselves constitute a get-tough policy.

Paradoxically, leverage should be as much about seduction as compulsion—drawing upon relationships, fostering a sense of shared purpose, creating obligation, making the other side want to satisfy you. In other words, the tasks of diplomacy. One ought not draw too sharp a distinction between *leverage* and *diplomacy*. Leverage is a component of diplomacy, not a substitute for it.

Not all diplomats feel comfortable with the term *leverage*. One Asian diplomat has insisted that Pakistan is not strong enough to leverage the United States. Rather, he argues, the United States from time to time places itself in a position where Pakistan can manipulate Washington.<sup>33</sup> Other diplomats prefer the seemingly less coercive term *influence*.

But the terminology doesn't in any fundamental way negate the idea of leverage. Most of the time, the two concepts—diplomacy and leverage—bleed together, in friendly and adversarial relationships alike. In their candid moments, diplomats will tell you that the calculations of leverage—who has it, how it can be used or deflected—is an everyday aspect of their profession. As one retired U.S. ambassador observed while talking about his chosen profession, “Leverage is literally in the atmosphere. It's part of how you breathe in the job of diplomacy.”<sup>34</sup>

To achieve maximum impact, however, leverage should be employed subtly, even seductively. This maxim is nothing more than a recognition of human nature. “Subordination is an uncomfortable mental state, and an increasingly unacceptable one in an age in which equality and justice are dominant political values,” two leading political scientists have observed. “For this reason, power has to be masked in order to be effective.”<sup>35</sup> Soothing language and a willingness to offer face-saving concessions are as important as coercion in exerting leverage. This is also where the appeal of soft power plays a role. While leverage can be about muscle, it can also be about attraction.

But not always, or under all circumstances. If the core interests of the two parties cannot be reconciled, a non-confrontational approach will achieve no better results than brute force. If the two sides have fundamentally different conceptions about the nature of the world they face and the threats that world poses, the skillful exercise of leverage is not likely to bridge that chasm. More than any other reason, that reality explains why the United States, for all its power, has so frequently experienced frustration in working with Pakistan. The leaderships of the two countries simply weren't operating, intellectually and emotionally, in the same world. Their perceptual maps didn't align.

33 Interview with a Southeast Asian ambassador, May 2015.

34 Interview with retired U.S. diplomat, Mar. 2016.

35 Reich and Lebow, *Good-bye Hegemony!*, 180.



## Henry Luce and Donald Trump

In February 1941, Henry R. Luce, arguably the most influential publisher in America, penned an editorial for the mass-circulation magazine *Life* that heralded “The American Century.” Luce called upon Americans “to accept wholeheartedly our duty and our opportunity as the most powerful and vital nation in the world and in consequence to exert upon the world the full impact of our influence, for such purposes as we see fit and by such means as we see fit.”<sup>36</sup>

Luce’s exhortation constituted a stirring summons for America to take up the task of global leadership. Some may find Trumpian themes in Luce’s *cri de coeur*, with its conviction of American exceptionalism and its confidence in the sufficiency of American power to shape the world in accordance with American purposes. Yet, Luce’s essay spoke to the needs of an earlier era, and even then badly overestimated the potency of U.S. strength.

Today the United States possesses greater power than Luce—writing before the destructive force made manifest at Hiroshima and the creative force demonstrated by the internet and the smartphone—could ever have imagined. Even so, Trump’s America finds itself constrained in its ability to use its power to effect national purposes. So, too, the world’s other strong nations. The costs of wielding power are often too high, the ways in which weaker states can deflect power too numerous. Moreover, many of the threats facing the modern world—climate change, cyberwar and cybercrime, resource scarcities, environmental degradation, the sense of isolation and alienation that fosters terrorism—do not readily lend themselves to traditional solutions that rely on the mobilization of power.

In dealing with Pakistan in the years ahead, the United States, quite properly, is not going to use much of the power at its disposal, particularly its military power. So the apparently huge power differential between the two countries is far smaller than a simple reckoning of the assets on each side would suggest. “Power resources are not power in themselves,” political scientist Barbara Elias reminds us. In comparing the power of two countries, one must also factor in how committed to and dependent on the relationship each party is.<sup>37</sup> In recent years, as the war in Afghanistan ground on and on, Washington’s commitment to the Pakistani connection and dependence upon Pakistan has handed Islamabad huge leverage over its far stronger partner.

36 Henry R. Luce, “The American Century,” *Life*, Feb. 17, 1941, <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~mlassite/discussions261/luce.pdf>.

37 Elias, “America’s Missing Leverage in Afghanistan and Pakistan,” 1393-94.

In a world where standard measures of power based upon wealth, size, and resources do not count as heavily as they once did, diplomacy—and the leverage that invariably forms part of diplomacy—will be an even more important component of a country’s strength and influence. This is equally true whether the purpose is to advance the national interest or to take on the global challenges common to all nations. But in such a world, leverage is often more apt to arise from persuasion and attraction than from crude coercion.

America’s considerable power should give it considerable leverage in the years ahead—but only if the target government is prepared to be leveraged. In the days following the Abbottabad raid that killed bin Laden, some commentators predicted that an embarrassed Islamabad would now be on the defensive. This, Reuters speculated, could give the United States substantial leverage over Pakistan. But as a Western diplomat based in Islamabad shrewdly noted, “The important point . . . is that it takes two to tango. And it would take the Pakistani side to respond positively to United States’ assertion of leverage and its laundry list of requests.”<sup>38</sup> As we have seen, Islamabad’s response in the months after Abbottabad was, from the U.S. perspective, anything but positive. With sufficient commitment, almost any state can avoid being leveraged by a stronger country.

Americans, then, should be more modest in their expectations for leverage, and understand that there are limits to the leverage that even great power provides. Paradoxically, recognizing these limits is the first step toward maximizing U.S. leverage and using American power effectively.

In the hard world of global politics, power matters, but it does not decide all matters. It is good to have on one’s side, but by itself is insufficient to ensure success. Both the Old Testament and the Quran tell the story of David and Goliath,<sup>39</sup> where the callow youth, bearing only a slingshot, felled the fearsome giant. It’s a cautionary tale that strong states, not least the United States, would do well to remember.

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<sup>38</sup> Reuters, “Pakistan response to new US leverage,” *Dawn*, May 7, 2011.

<sup>39</sup> Their Quranic names are Dawud and Jalut respectively.



# Direct Overt U.S. Aid to Pakistan, FY1948 - FY2016

(appropriated, in millions of dollars)

Year	Economic Related Aid	Security Related Aid	CSF <sup>a</sup> Reimbursements	Grand Total
1948	0.1	0	0	0.1
1949	0	0	0	0
1950	0	0	0	0
1951	0.4	0	0	0.4
1952	11	0	0	11
1953	110	0	0	110
1954	23	0	0	23
1955	110	40	0	150
1956	164	167	0	331
1957	172	70	0	242
1958	159	87	0	246
1959	228	61	0	289
1960	285	39	0	324
1961	169	45	0	214
1962	403	95	0	498
1963	362	51	0	413
1964	394	33	0	427
1965	348	14	0	362
1966	150	2	0	152
1967	230	5	0	235
1968	295	5	0	300
1969	111	0.1	0	111.1
1970	210	0.2	0	210.2
1971	108	0.2	0	108.2
1972	165	0.1	0	165.1
1973	178	0.3	0	178.3
1974	102	0.2	0	102.2
1975	181	0.3	0	181.3
1976	203	0.4	0	203.4

1976tq <sup>b</sup>	64	0.1	0	64.1
1977	108	0.3	0	108.3
1978	78	0.5	0	78.5
1979	50	0.5	0	50.5
1980	59	0	0	59
1981	77	0	0	77
1982	200	0.6	0	200.6
1983	279	261	0	540
1984	307	301	0	608
1985	339	326	0	665
1986	356	312	0	668
1987	352	314	0	666
1988	466	261	0	727
1989	352	231	0	583
1990	357	185	0	542
1991	101	0	0	101
1992	19	3	0	22
1993	53	0	0	53
1994	50	0	0	50
1995	17	0	0	17
1996	17	0	0	17
1997	44	0	0	44
1998	28	0	0	28
1999	82	2	0	84
2000	23	0.9	0	23.9
2001	111	77	0	188
<b>Subtotal (1948-2001)</b>	<b>8861</b>	<b>2992</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11,853</b>
2002	711	177	1,169	2,057
2003	286	258	1,247	1,791
2004	317	113	705	1,135
2005	402	349	964	1,715
2006	553	398	862	1,813
2007	576	396	731	1,703
2008	507	517	1,019	2,043
2009	1,366	989	685	3,040

2010	1,769	1,236	1,499	4,504
2011	1,186	1,277	1,118	3,581
2012	1,067	849	688	2,604
2013	834	613	1,438	2,633
2014	608	371	1,198	2,177
2015	561	343	700 <sup>c</sup>	1,604
2016	226	322	550 <sup>d</sup>	1,098
<b>Subtotal (2002-2016)</b>	<b>10,969</b>	<b>8,208</b>	<b>14,573</b>	<b>33,750</b>
<b>Total (1948-2016)</b>	<b>19,830</b>	<b>11,200</b>	<b>14,573</b>	<b>45,603</b>

Source: Congressional Research Service

**Notes:**

- a. Coalition Support Funds (CSF) is Pentagon funding provided to reimburse Pakistan for costs incurred in direct support of U.S. military operations post-9/11.
- b. 1976tq refers to the “transitional quarter” from July 1, 1976, to September 30, 1976, provided to accommodate for the new starting date of the fiscal year (October 1). Prior to 1976, the fiscal year began on July 1 and ended on June 30.
- c. Congress authorized up to \$1 billion in CSF payments, but the Pentagon withheld \$300 million due to its inability to give the mandated certification regarding Pakistani actions against the Haqqani network.
- d. Congress authorized up to \$900 million for CSF, but the Pentagon was unable to give the Haqqani network certification, so only \$550 million was paid to Pakistan.



## About the Author

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