



## U.S.–Pakistan Relations in the Twenty–First Century

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### Introduction

Dramatic changes in the post-9/11 international security environment have brought the United States and Pakistan together as partners of necessity in the common struggle against violent extremism and terrorism. Will this partnership prove more durable than the state interests and governing administrations that established it in 2001 or will it dissolve if Washington and Islamabad conclude that their respective political priorities diverge more than they coalesce around any single strategic goal—much like the situation that prevailed after Pakistan, the United States, and the Afghan *mujahideen* forced the Soviet Union out of Afghanistan at the end of the Cold War?

Over the past five years U.S. policy attention in South Asia has focused on identifying and destroying transnational terrorist networks, altering conditions in an around Pakistan that breed violent extremism, and maximizing the safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear weapons arsenal. Far less attention has been devoted to building a foundation for close U.S.–Pakistan strategic cooperation in the years and decades ahead. With this consideration in mind, the Naval Postgraduate School's Center for Contemporary Conflict (CCC) teamed up with Pakistan's National Defense University (NDU) to bring together top U.S. and Pakistani security experts from academia, defense establishments, and diplomatic circles in a February 2007 conference in Islamabad to examine the future of the bilateral relationship. This was the first in a series of events that will be conducted to explore the pressing issues that will shape the long-term U.S.–Pakistan relationship.

At the inaugural conference in Islamabad, which was extremely well organized by the National Defense University and very well attended by an impressive assortment of U.S. and Pakistani diplomats, military officials, and policy analysts, American and Pakistan experts exchanged fresh perspectives on a broad set of subjects including defense cooperation, the nuclear world order and nonproliferation, countering terrorism and violent extremism, and regional stability in South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East.<sup>[1]</sup> This special edition of *Strategic Insights* features seven papers that were presented at the U.S.–Pakistan Strategic Partnership Conference and subsequently revised for this publication.

For each of the subjects considered, the paper writers were asked to analyze likely future developments and challenges in their respective regions and issue areas and then consider how U.S. and Pakistani interests might be affected over the next five or ten years. The overarching purpose was to identify potential areas of mutual interest (or discord) and delineate ways in which

the two governments might enhance bilateral cooperation (or minimize bilateral tension) and devise novel strategies to achieve common objectives.

## General Trends in U.S.–Pakistan Relations

The first article in the special issue is written by General (ret.) Jehangir Karamat, former Chief of Army Staff and ambassador to the United States (and one of the key project collaborators). Gen. (ret.) Karamat emphasizes that close scrutiny and advocacy of the U.S.–Pakistan partnership is long overdue. Despite six years of a revitalized strategic relationship that has witnessed extraordinarily close cooperation between the political leadership, armed forces, and social, economic, and political organs of the United States and Pakistan, numerous issues of contention still remain. U.S. and Pakistani perspectives have not been in harmony on several subjects, including the strategy for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, the Kashmir dispute, democratic reforms, and the means for assuring the safety and security of nuclear weapons.

Karamat argues that although the United States will remain the dominant world power for decades to come, U.S. power has its limits. The United States will continue to need trusted and time-tested allies such as Pakistan, a frontline state in the Global War on Terror (GWOT)—much as it needed allies during the Cold War. Karamat argues that the United States and Pakistan will have much to offer each other in the years ahead even though their bilateral relationship will be affected by political change and sectarian divisions in Pakistan and throughout the Islamic world, each country's relations with China and India, the Israel–Palestine dispute, and nuclear proliferation. Karamat points to the political stability, internal integrity, and security of Afghanistan as probably the most critical factor for the durability of U.S.–Pakistan relations in the decades ahead.

Mr. Dan Flynn of the U.S. National Intelligence Council (NIC), presents a short summary of the NIC's highly influential report on possible future developments, titled *Mapping the Global Future: 2020*. The Executive Summary of the report outlines several interesting topics that are analyzed in depth in the full report, including: globalization; the rise of new global actors, primarily China and India; new challenges of governance fueled by globalization and growing domestic demands for resources; and a more pervasive international insecurity—resulting from the conflicting issues of an integrated market and increased terrorism. Also treated in the report are broader issues pertaining to future strategic, economic, and social developments affecting Pakistan and South Asia.<sup>[2]</sup> For the 2008 report, initial themes for what will shape global futures in 2025 are Iraq and its role in regional and global security; concerns over global climate change; and secure access to energy by large and emerging economic powers.

## Defense Cooperation

The article written by Col. (ret.) David Smith, a former U.S. Army Defense Attaché to Pakistan, examines the historical ups and downs of the U.S.–Pakistan defense relationship, and refutes the idea that extensive defense cooperation between the two states is a recent phenomenon. Between 1954 and 2002, the United States provided Pakistan a total of \$12.6 billion in economic and military assistance, and since 9/11, the United States has provided over \$9 billion, which includes \$4.4 billion in direct economic and military assistance to Pakistan, in addition to the \$4.5 billion in reimbursement for Pakistan's military contribution to Operation Enduring Freedom.

These numbers, however, do not reflect the three instances of U.S. abandonment of Pakistan, as perceived by the Pakistanis, specifically during the 1965 and 1971 wars with India, the U.S. withdrawal from South Asia after the Soviets left Afghanistan, and the subsequent Pressler sanctions on Pakistan that were levied because of its covert nuclear weapons program. With heightened rhetoric heard lately by various American officials and policy analysts that Pakistan is not doing enough against the Taliban, has more to do to end the damage caused by the A.Q.

Khan affair, and should not get in the way of the growing U.S.–India partnership, any attempt to enhance defense cooperation will be a complicated endeavor. Col. Smith delivers valuable suggestions about future measure both states could employ to create a genuine strategic dialogue. A more productive bilateral dialogue is something that needs to be institutionalized and regularly monitored at a high level in order to deal with contentious issues. Col. Smith concludes that Pakistan is the linchpin to success in the GWOT. No other country can serve as an alternative, and there must be another way to end the historical pattern of distrust and doubt.

Professor Zafar Jaspal of the prestigious Quaid-i-Azam University observes that from the Pakistani perspective, the impetus behind Pakistan's policies of strategic reliance on the United States comes from predominant and longstanding concerns with India. Pakistan time and time again has hoped that the defense relationship with Washington will assist in offsetting its conventional military asymmetry with India. Prof. Jaspal argues that four major issues will affect the U.S.–Pakistan defense relationship in the future: the protracted efforts of NATO forces in Afghanistan, the misplaced U.S. apprehensions regarding Pakistan's nuclear program and policies, China's rising military capability, and the unwillingness of the United States to side with Pakistan on the Kashmir dispute with India.

## **Nuclear World Order and Nonproliferation**

Dr. Neil Joeck of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories writes that nuclear nonproliferation remains at the center of U.S.–Pakistan relations, but not in the way it has played out in the past. The centerpiece is now to stem the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction both “vertically” and “horizontally.” Joeck views vertical proliferation in terms of India and Pakistan and the ongoing debate whether more nuclear weapons (for one nation) or fewer makes the region safer. The Indian and Pakistani governments each have declared that they will organize their nuclear weapons postures around minimum deterrence only. Second, because India and Pakistan have chosen the nuclear route, they are now responsible for managing bilateral, internal, and regional stability. Further, with the A.Q. Khan proliferation network still fresh in everyone's minds, the United States will continue to nervously look at Pakistan over lingering concerns about the onward proliferation of sensitive technology. Pakistan had laws on the books to stop proliferation during the time when the A.Q. Khan network operated, and passing new laws today is insufficient to ease international concerns. What is more important is how Pakistani authorities implement these laws.

Dr. Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema of the Islamabad Policy Research Institute writes that states acquire nuclear weapons in order to protect themselves from perceived threats. During the Cold War, a stable nuclear world order existed; now the threats existing in international environment are more ambiguous. Dr. Cheema expresses concern as to whether the United States fears nuclear proliferation in the present era for international security reasons or whether it is a matter of its own national interests. He expressed concern over the degradation of the NPT in light of the growing trend of nations to develop nuclear weapons for the purpose of power projection. He observes that the United States and NATO allies are continuously in violation of articles 1 and 2 of the NPT, and argues that Washington's interest in arms control treaties is on the decline. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction seems to be easier in the post-Soviet, unipolar environment. This, in tandem with the U.S.–India nuclear deal, encourages new states to seek nuclear weapons.

## **Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism**

Ms. Farhana Ali of the RAND Corporation discusses how Western concern in the South Asian region is not simply focused on acts of terrorism, but on extremist Islamists taking hold of governments. In Pakistan, one must understand the diversity of its Islamists and their ability to exacerbate religious conflict. A perpetrator of terrorist acts may be among the destitute and

illiterate, but the leadership that plans these attacks is usually well educated. Further, there is a need to understand why Americans are hated all over the world. Usually the root of this animosity stems from unsettled issues in the Middle East: Palestine–Israel, Iraq, Afghanistan. Ms. Ali discusses three possible outcomes for Pakistan in the near future: a strong central government ruled by either moderate Islamists, hardline Islamists, or the armed forces; a participatory government structure based on a democratic model; or social unrest, which may culminate in clashes based on religious, ethnic, and tribal identities. In order for Pakistan to take the path toward moderate and potentially participatory government, both the United States and Pakistan have to coordinate strategies to minimize the appeal of extremism and reciprocal terrorist acts.

## Conclusion

The first session of this CCC track-two dialogue revealed multiple issues for further discussion and deliberation. Such issues included the GWOT and Afghanistan, U.S.–India partnership, nuclear proliferation, energy security, shifting demographics, and the Kashmir dispute. Under the surface of these potential challenges to the partnership is the issue of trust between Pakistan and the United States. Based on the up-and-down historical pattern of the U.S.–Pakistan relationship, Pakistanis are concerned that this strategic partnership will turn into a “one-time contract.” Within the Pakistani population, the United States is seen as the only beneficiary of the relationship. The United States, however, still has misgivings about Pakistan’s nuclear program and the A.Q. Khan network that reciprocally came to existence. Further, lack of control in the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) and along the border has pushed some U.S. policymakers to question the integrity of the alliance.

The purpose of dialogues and projects such as this one organized by the Center for Contemporary Conflict is to enable experts from both sides to air their concerns, but also identify common goals in an open, frank, and collegial platform. The hope for forthcoming track-two conferences on specific topics generated in this kick-off session is not only to expand on the potential benefits of a stable U.S.–Pakistan partnership, but also to devise practical steps to manage thorny issues that fuel the trust deficit and to avoid an eventual lull in the relationship.

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## References

1. For a summary of the conference proceedings, see Peter R. Lavoy and Adam Radin, [Conference Report: U.S.–Pakistan Strategic Partnership: A Track-Two Dialogue](#), February 2007.
2. For the full unclassified report, go to: [http://www.dni.gov/nic/NIC\\_globaltrend2020.html](http://www.dni.gov/nic/NIC_globaltrend2020.html).