

PAKISTAN'S STRATEGIC INTERESTS, AFGHANISTAN AND THE FLUCTUATING U.S. STRATEGY

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Contrary to some optimistic estimates and expectations, Afghanistan and the adjoining tribal areas of Pakistan still present a serious strategic challenge for U.S. policymakers. Even after more than eight years, the United States—along with NATO forces—has not been able to eradicate terrorists in the region. The Taliban resilience in defying foreign forces is intact. The Al Qaeda leadership and its infrastructure are believed to be in place, albeit curtailed and damaged. The Taliban are still receiving arms from various sources and are not short on finances. At the same time, Afghan President Hamid Karzai's government is seen as inept, corrupt and dysfunctional. The second Afghan presidential election held in August of 2009 was counterproductive to establishing national unity, despite being urgently needed to repair a fragmented Afghanistan.

Although much was expected from the Afghan election, it did not live up to the hopes of the world community. The election failed to transform Afghanistan from a tribal society into a modern democratic state. In the previous election of 2004, it was predicted that elected officials would bring stability and cohesion to the fragmented country. An experiment in enforced democracy, it was accompanied by the increased detachment of the nation's largest ethnic group, the Pashtuns. The central authority in Kabul exercised little writ over the provinces, and most of the tribes in the southeastern region of the country remained independent of any administrative control. In the social sphere, the Afghan people saw little improvement in the education and health sectors. Vital elements of a modern state, such as political parties, struggled to establish themselves. To make matters worse, the influence of corrupt warlords remained dominant in every sphere of life. Hopes for building a new Afghanistan were effectively shattered.¹

Afghanistan received considerable foreign aid to build new institutions, solidify existing ones and improve the quality of life of its people. In the last eight years, Afghanistan received around \$38 billion dollars from the United States alone. This

massive amount of aid was provided to facilitate an exit strategy for U.S. forces by stabilizing the regime. Under this logic, aid was meant to reorient local support away from the Taliban and toward the Americans. This, however, has not had the desired effect, as the Taliban have only grown in number.²

President Karzai applied all means at his disposal, including employing the services of various warlords, to win the 2009 elections. He appointed Muhammad Qasim Fahim, a warlord with a criminal record including human rights violations,

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as his running mate. This choice came in spite of the displeasure of U.S. President Obama's administration as well as opposition from European states and the United Nations. As one Afghan-based observer wrote, "People will tend to vote for the local strongman who has daily power over their lives. This is hardly surprising in a country more familiar with the Kalashnikov than the ballot box."³

Karzai, desperate to gain support from various ethnic groups, allowed Uzbek warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum to return from seven months of exile in Turkey. Dostum enjoyed considerable support among another Turkic population, the

Turkmen. To make matters worse, he was given back his previous status of chief of staff of the Afghan army. The Uzbek general has been accused by various independent sources in and outside Afghanistan of the torture and brutal murders of thousands of prisoners of war in 2001. The British *Daily Telegraph* has described him as "one of Afghanistan's most brutal leaders from the 1990s civil war onwards," noting that "he is notorious for disciplining a thieving soldier by running him over in a tank and faced allegations—which he denies—that his forces oversaw the suffocation of up to 2,000 Taliban prisoners packed into steel shipping containers in 2001."⁴ It is generally believed that, in spite of pressure from U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to keep Dostum away, he was allowed to return as "part of a backroom deal with President Karzai."⁵ Karzai's plans to win the election at any cost put at risk his credibility and legitimacy as president. Such tactics signify that the Afghan presidential election was won not on the basis of public support, but rather through the influence of warlords.

Inducting the over-represented ethnic minorities and their notorious leaders into the Karzai government could start a violent ethnic reaction, splitting the country along the fault lines of ethnic divide. If so, it will gravely endanger the already delicate security landscape of Afghanistan. The Taliban could further gain Pashtun support, having an adverse effect on the military goals of the NATO and

American forces. This ethnic-related support could also have a negative spillover effect across the border areas of Pakistan.

Despite the Karzai administration's weakness, the Obama administration still supports him as Afghan president. Although he has been unable to win the support of his entire ethnic community, he is still a Pashtun, and thereby likely to maintain support from Afghanistan's largest ethnic group. Abdullah Abdullah, his main opponent in the August elections, is not expected to rally the much required Pashtun support, especially in the southeast region of the country. By publicly providing support for Abdullah, Americans and Europeans may risk ruining any future chance of opening a dialogue with the "moderate" Taliban. The Taliban come primarily from Pashtun tribes, whose cooperation is a pre-condition for achieving stability in the war-torn country. A *Washington Post* editorial states that, "Unless the fraud can be reversed or repaired through a UN-backed complaints commission or a runoff vote, Mr. Karzai may emerge as a crippled winner, his already weak and corruption-plagued administration facing further discredit or even violent protests."⁶

While all Taliban may be considered Pashtuns, not all Pashtuns are Taliban. On the Pakistani side of the border, the Pashtuns are in the mainstream of society in terms of politics, the economy and shared cultural sentiments. Pakistani Pashtuns are generally considered to be more educated, sophisticated and politicized than their counterparts in Afghanistan. That is also true when it comes to the art of entrepreneurship. Pakistani Pashtuns are part of a society whose development ranges from agrarian to high-technology sectors (a small portion is tribal but with increasing linkages to advanced sectors), while the Afghan Pashtun society is purely tribal, where warlords operate freely and administer vicious control with great force and brutality. During Taliban rule in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, the Pakistani tribesmen living in the border region had little or no political strategic contact with the regime in Kabul. During this time, the Taliban placed little focus on the Pakistani tribes. Instead, the supreme Taliban leader Mullah Omar and his commanders aligned themselves with the military establishment of Pakistan, especially the Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI), whose agents came from various ethnic backgrounds. The Afghan Taliban were closer to their Saudi Arabian allies than their fellow ethnic tribes of Pakistani Pashtuns who lived just across the border. The emergence of a Pakistani Taliban came much later as a reaction to various military assaults in the tribal areas. The linkage between the Pakistani Taliban and the war-hardened Afghan Pashtuns has

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remained disjointed, irregular and delicate.

Given these differences between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the neologism of AfPak irritates every section and shade of the Pakistani society. These resentments are further reinforced by the rapid change in the U.S. perception of Afghanistan's security situation. In an interview with the *Financial Times*, Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari rejected President Obama's strategy of binding Afghanistan and Pakistan together, saying, "Afghanistan and Pakistan are distinctly different countries and should not be lumped together in the generic label of AfPak."⁷

BACKGROUND

Since 1947, serious differences and tensions have existed between the two respective governments at various phases of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations. Even during times of extreme hostility between the two countries, however, the Pakistani tribes remained loyal to Pakistan. Since Pakistan's independence in 1947, Afghan leaders cultivated relations with India, Pakistan's archrival. It was only during

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Taliban rule from 1996 to 2001 that Afghan rulers were seen as strategic partners, though not always trusted by Islamabad. Under the faulty concept of Strategic Depth, the army leadership gave martial and logistical support to Mullah Omar, who was the de facto ruler of Afghanistan under the title Amir al-Momineen (Commander of the Faithful).⁸ Pakistan's aspirations to establish trade links with the landlocked Central Asian nations in order to give them access to the Arabian Sea port of Gwadar required a cooperative Afghanistan given its geographical position. Another Pakistani interest has been the potential 1,040 mile gas pipeline from Turkmenistan.⁹

Ultimately, under U.S. pressure after 9/11, the military rulers of Pakistan were forced to change course, provoking General Pervez Musharraf to give unconditional support to U.S. forces in their fight against Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. The suspicion that Musharraf and his fellow army generals had two faces, one for the international community and another for the Taliban and Al Qaeda, became a sore point in relations between Islamabad and Washington. Pakistan was repeatedly blamed for harboring terrorist groups, while at the same time General Musharraf was criticized by a large segment of the Pakistani public for conceding too much to the Americans. It was alleged by various political and religious leaders that Musharraf was fighting an American war at the expense of

Pakistan's national interests. The *Christian Science Monitor*, acknowledging the general's utility to America, wrote at the exit of Musharraf, "The United States lost a stalwart ally in its war on terror...when Pervez Musharraf resigned as president to avoid a looming impeachment."¹⁰

AFGHANISTAN'S DISARRAY AND THE FALLOUT FOR PAKISTAN

Pakistani society paid a heavy price for taking an unwarranted interest in the affairs of Afghanistan. Afghanistan's recent history of conflict has changed the complexion and psyche of its people, introducing a culture of extremism, bigotry and intolerance. These adverse impacts can be categorized in two manners: Pakistan's identification with terrorists and an ideological degeneration in society. The first is illustrated by the widespread suspicion of Pakistan's involvement with terrorism, which has served to isolate Pakistan in both regional and international environments.¹¹ This has served to increase scrutiny on Pakistan as a nuclear power and strain Pakistan's relations with other countries, including Iran and Turkey, along with others in the larger Middle East and the Central Asian republics. China became irritable about Pakistan's pro-Taliban posture and its fallout in the Xinjiang province bordering Pakistan and Afghanistan. The most damaging consequence on Talibanization in Pakistan, however, came when India linked the indigenous Kashmir freedom struggle to extremist elements in Pakistan.¹²

Islamabad's links with the Taliban, however, remained one-sided. The Afghan government has ignored requests by the Pakistani government on at least two vital occasions. The first regarded the safety of Iranian diplomats in Herat in September 1998, when nine Iranians were killed in spite of the fact that "on the day of the attack, Pakistani diplomats had relayed to Teheran an assurance from the Taliban that the safety of the Iranian consulates and diplomats in Mazar-i-Sharif would be guaranteed."¹³ The second dealt with the unwarranted demolition of centuries-old Buddha statues in March 2001 despite stern warnings from Pakistan. Pakistan's close ties with the Taliban regime, though dubious, helped turn Afghanistan into a rogue state not only for the non-Pashtun Afghan population but also for the international community.

In some Pakistani circles, any government in Kabul, whether friendly or not,

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was regarded as a threat to Pakistan's security; however, given Afghanistan's geography, any government in Kabul has little choice but to rely on Pakistan for its land route to the Arabian Sea. Pakistan could provide a significant helping hand for this conflict-ridden land, in a number of ways:

- » It has the longest border with Afghanistan and thus the capacity to provide logistical support to the landlocked country.
- » Afghanistan owes its trade and social support to the liberal passage policies of its eastern neighbor.
- » Pakistan has close religious and ethnic links with Afghanistan.
- » Pakistan provided a safe haven to the three million Afghan refugees that fled after the Soviet invasion. The Afghan *mujahideen* were provided with Pakistani passports, and the borders were kept open for those who sought asylum in Pakistan.
- » All Afghan leaders were given extensive Pakistani support during the Soviet invasion, and they operated from Pakistani territory, thus subjecting Pakistan to frequent Soviet bombardment and sabotage activities in which thousands of Pakistani citizens lost their lives.

Since the days of Soviet occupation in the 1980s, Pakistan has been intertwined with Afghanistan's security and stability in a variety of ways. Most recently, Afghan militancy has increased due to a resurgence of the Taliban, and Pakistan is blamed for harboring insurgents in the safe havens of the FATA. BBC commentary, however, explains the reasons for the resurgence of 2005-2006 Afghan terrorist acts as follows:

The powerful drugs trade is undoubtedly intertwined with the current violence. Local power holders who feel marginalized may find themselves allied to the Taleban, at least in the short term. In some areas it's difficult to distinguish between attacks by the Taleban and those by other radical Islamic groups or individuals. These include Hezb-e Islami, headed by former Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, or those loyal to Jalaluddin Haqqani, a former *mujahideen* leader who also served in the Taleban government. The situation is further complicated by a complex web of shifting allegiances, tribal, ethnic and local rivalries and feuds within Afghan society. Afghans have been known to denounce rivals or enemies as members of the Taleban for political

or economic gain.¹⁴

In 2005, Pakistan deployed more than 80,000 troops in tribal and adjoining areas in Afghanistan, and by 2008 the number had increased to 120,000 troops. Though borders were sealed with the latest reconnaissance devices, the movement of militants continued in porous and difficult terrain.

The hope that the September 2005 parliamentary elections could create stability in Afghanistan, thereby substantially improving the overall situation, did not come to fruition. According to a report by the London-based Senlis Council (renamed the International Council on Security and Development, or ICOS) in December 2008, the Taliban still had a permanent presence in 72 percent of the country, up from 54 percent in 2007. The report elaborated:

[The Taliban] is now seen as the de facto governing power in a number of southern towns and villages. The increase in their geographic spread illustrates that the Taliban's political, military and economic strategies are now more successful than the West's in Afghanistan. Confident in their expansion beyond the rural south, the Taliban is at the gates of the capital and infiltrating the city at will.¹⁵

PAKISTAN'S ONSLAUGHT AGAINST THE MILITANTS

While addressing the Pakistani nation on 7 May 2009, Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani vowed that the time had come to take stern military action against the growing capacity of the insurgents, saying, "We will not bow down before terrorists and extremists and force them to lay down arms."¹⁶ He made it clear that the government's policy of engagement with the militants was taken as a sign of weakness. Army spokesman Major General Abbas, supporting the military action against the militants in Swat and other parts of the Malakand Division, refuted the allegations that this action was at the behest of the Americans. He said, "We analyse the threats keeping in view our national interest, and not on the dictates of external powers."¹⁷ He explained that in spite of U.S. and NATO pressure, efforts were made by the government to reconcile with the militants and establish peace. "The operation will continue till its logical conclusion and complete elimination of extremists from the area," he asserted.¹⁸

Between April and July 2009, 12,000 to 15,000 Army personnel were launched by Pakistan against some 4,000 insurgents, comprised largely of locals though including cross-border militants. Afghanistan, conversely, relies almost entirely on foreign troops for its security needs, with adverse repercussions.

Waziristan along with some other regions of FATA are areas in which deter-

mined and war-hardened tribes reside. Two military operations in Waziristan in 2003 and 2004 were not successful, resulting in conciliatory peace agreements with the tribal leaders in which Pakistani armed forces agreed to withdraw from the area. This has been routine practice going back to British times. The strategy typically adopted to settle disputes among Pakistan's warring tribes is to go to a *jirga* (assembly of elders to settle disputes), where tribal members present their

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arguments before an assembly that then resolves the matter. With the emergence of a new socio-political configuration in the tribal belt of Pakistan, these principles of conflict resolution and peace no longer held. The militants have replaced the traditional *malik* (leader of a tribe), and the representative of the federal government is too weak to even visit the area of his appointment, let alone exert any power there.

Under the leadership of Baitullah Mehsud, the Waziri tribe formed the Pakistani Taliban, known as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, in December 2007. Earlier in 2002, Pakistani troops took limited and perfunctory military action in the area against the fugitive fighters who had crossed borders from Afghanistan and were planning attacks against NATO troops. In February 2005, the Pakistani government signed a peace deal with the Mehsud tribe, after which the tribe controlled the landscape with negligible writ of the state in Waziristan. Mehsud was known to be a close ally of the Taliban and Al Qaeda leadership in Afghanistan. Another difficulty that the Pakistani government faces—and one often overlooked by Western nations—is that Pashtuns are well-entrenched in Pakistani society and cannot be separated from the mainstream of Pakistan. In spite of the fact that a consensus has developed against the militants, the Pakistani people will not support the troops if they fight against their fellow countrymen to further the security needs of Afghanistan.

With the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in December 2007 and widespread terrorist attacks on the civilian population, Pakistani public opinion began to rally against the Taliban and similar outfits. Even after the exit of Musharraf in August 2008, there was a large section of public opinion, including members of the legislature, who believed that they were being dragged into a war that was not Pakistan's to fight. This cohort argued that the Afghan conflict was a messy American war into which Pakistan should not be drawn. They believed that the Pakistani government should instead negotiate with tribes angry because of U.S. and NATO mili-

tary assaults on the Afghan people. The Swat military operations in the summer of 2009, however, ultimately helped build a consensus amongst all sections of the population, who vowed strict military action against the insurgents.

FLUCTUATING U.S. REGIONAL STRATEGY

The future U.S. policy in the region was presented by President Obama's announcement on 27 March of the AfPak strategy for fighting Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan and the tribal areas of Pakistan. According to the Obama administration, both countries have similar interests and features, and therefore a single strategy should be adopted to fight the insurgents and terrorists.

This change of course began as soon as the president assumed office in January. During the presidential debates, Obama had made it clear that Afghanistan and the tribal areas of Pakistan would be a priority, as Al Qaeda and the Taliban leadership were still active in those areas. He was critical of the Bush administration for diverting forces to Iraq at the expense of Afghanistan. Obama made this point in the first presidential debate held on 14 October 2008 when he said, "The question is, was this wise [to leave Afghanistan]? We have seen Afghanistan worsen, deteriorate. We need more troops there. We need more resources there."¹⁹ He went on to emphasize,

...Keep in mind that we have four times the number of troops in Iraq... than we do in Afghanistan. And that is a strategic mistake, because every intelligence agency will acknowledge that Al Qaeda is the greatest threat against the United States and that Secretary of Defense Gates acknowledged the central front—that the place where we have to deal with these folks is going to be in Afghanistan and in Pakistan. So here's what we have to do comprehensively, though. It's not just more troops. We have to press the Afghan government to make certain that they are actually working for their people. And I've said this to President Karzai.

No. 2, we've got to deal with a growing poppy trade that has exploded over the last several years.

No. 3, we've got to deal with Pakistan, because Al Qaeda and the Taliban have safe havens in Pakistan, across the border in the north-west regions, and although, you know, under George Bush, with the support of Senator McCain, we've been giving them \$10 billion over the last seven years, they have not done what needs to be done to get rid of those safe havens.

And until we do, Americans here at home are not going to be safe.²⁰

Departing from the previous policy of President Bush, the Obama administration pledged to concentrate on the Al Qaeda leadership and its Taliban allies, who were thought to be present in southwestern Afghanistan and the tribal areas of Pakistan, especially Waziristan.

President Obama's new policy announcement was accompanied by a White House white paper, which explained the objectives and recommendations for the new policy. Some of the main goals highlighted in the white paper include:

- » Disrupt, dismantle and defeat Al Qaeda and its safe havens in Pakistan, preventing their return to Pakistan or Afghanistan.
- » Assistance for enhanced civilian control and a democratic government.
- » Help in building up Pakistan's economic structures.
- » Conditional assistance for the Pakistani military, depending on their willingness to eliminate the sanctuaries Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups within the country.
- » Engage the Pakistani people in a long-term commitment for a revived economy, democracy and civil society.²¹

As a follow-up to this strategy, the U.S. Congress passed the Kerry-Lugar legislation in September 2009, according to which Pakistan will receive \$1.5 billion a year for five years for the development of social and economic institutions.²² This bill also authorizes military aid, drawing from the \$400 million Pakistan Counterinsurgency Capability Fund (PCCF), on the condition that the U.S. administration certify Pakistan's commitment to combat militants.²³ The bill contains other strict conditions which have deepened tensions between the military establishment and the Zardari regime. Within days of Congress passing the final bill, Pakistani public opinion showed grave resentment and rejected many conditions mentioned in the bill. It was felt that Pakistan's sovereignty was being compromised and that the United States desired to micromanage Pakistan's strategic affairs. Ironically, although the bill was intended to create a long-term partnership between the United States and the people of Pakistan, it turned out to be a source of misunderstanding and suspicion between the two countries. The Kerry-Lugar Bill conditions also annoyed the Pakistani military at a critical juncture, when it was busy engaging the insurgents on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. A leading Pakistan daily highlighted the displeasure of the military:

The army has, unusually, made its feelings public. The terse press release issued after the corps commanders' meeting evoked immediate panic at the presidency and in government corridors, with no room left for doubt over what the military made of the Kerry-Lugar Bill. The statement expressed 'serious concern' over some of the provisions of the legislative bill and warned that these could affect 'national security.' Clauses referring to Pakistan's nuclear programme, cross-border militancy and civilian government control over military appointments and promotions are reported to have caused most agitation, given their implications for Pakistan's sovereignty.²⁴

In an interview with the Pakistani television channel *Express News*, the U.S. ambassador to Pakistan said that some of the clauses in the financial bill might be poorly drafted. She also argued that some people in the U.S. Congress might not have understood the full content of the bill, but that the United States was acting on good intentions.²⁵

After the AfPak strategy was announced in March 2009, the U.S. administration and military leadership struggled to agree on a strategy for Afghanistan. Amid this confusion in Washington came an assessment report by General Stanley McChrystal, commander of the U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan. The report painted a doomsday picture of Afghanistan and asked for more troops. It was further complicated by the rigged Afghan presidential election, during which the Karzai government lost legitimacy and credibility amongst the Afghan people.

General McChrystal has asked for as many as 40,000 more U.S. troops in Afghanistan in addition to the roughly 68,000 already authorized. If the request is approved, the combined force of nearly 110,000 will approach the size of the Soviet troop deployment in Afghanistan at its height in the 1980s. Conversely, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden and other civilian members of the Obama administration oppose any increase in the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan, preferring instead to focus on going after the leadership of Al Qaeda, especially in Pakistan. In a meeting on 30 September 2009 at the White House, Obama's national security team was split over whether to send in additional troops. According to a report:

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and special Afghan and Pakistan envoy Richard Holbrooke appeared to be leaning toward supporting a troop increase. . . . White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel and Gen. James Jones, Obama's national security adviser, appeared to be less supportive. . . . Vice President Joe Biden, who attended the meeting, has been reluctant to support a troop increase, favoring a

strategy that directly targets al-Qaida fighters who are believed to be hiding in Pakistan. . . . Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Gen. David Petraeus, the top commander for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, both support McChrystal's strategy. . . . Defense Secretary Robert Gates is on the fence. . .²⁶

As a result of changing circumstances in Afghanistan, President Obama faces a dilemma in defining a final strategy for Afghanistan, one which will most likely differ from the AfPak strategy launched in March. In a CNN interview he said, "I don't want to put the resource question before the strategy question . . . there is a natural inclination to say, if I get more, then I can do more. But right now, the question is, the first question is, are we doing the right thing? Are we pursuing the right strategy?"²⁷

CONCLUSION

In the war against terror, Pakistan strongly prefers to be dealt with individually and separately from Afghanistan. Being two sovereign nations, both countries have specific security interests. Indian interests and interference in Afghanistan further complicate the strategic equation of the region. Moreover, Pakistan's needs are different from that of its northwestern neighbor, with the development of socioeconomic and political institutions varying to a great extent. That is the reason for Pakistan's discomfort with the neologism of AfPak.

Pakistan was being used as a scapegoat by some in the United States to hide their ineffectiveness in Afghanistan.

A former chief of the Pakistani Army, General Mirza Aslam Beg, wrote that AfPak has presented many challenges for Pakistan, as "the war in Afghanistan has been reversed on Pakistan resulting into a running battle from Swat to Dir, to Waziristan and possibly Baluchistan in the very near future. The occupation forces surge in Helmand province of Afghanistan is causing spillover effects on the ongoing operations in Pakistan."²⁸ Beg and others have long held the view that the presence of the U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan and

the drone attacks on the Pakistani tribal areas have caused the Pashtun tribes to become aggressive, defiant and militant. They have argued that it was the presence and attacks of the U.S. forces on the tribal belt of Pakistan and General Musharraf's policies of belligerence that had ignited suicide bombers and other terrorist activities. Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) chief Qazi Hussain Ahmad said in a public speech, "I guarantee if the government withdraws the army from the Tribal Areas and leaves the restoration of peace to the local *jirgas*, normalcy will return to the

region.”²⁹ Hussain reportedly stressed that dialogue rather than force would solve the situation in the FATA.³⁰ Former chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Mushahid Hussain Sayed has held the view that Pakistan was being used as a scapegoat by some in the United States to hide their ineffectiveness in Afghanistan.³¹ There is also a third view held by conspiracy theorists, who are many in Pakistan and should be taken seriously given their ability to influence public opinion. Ahmed Quraishi, a former journalist at Pakistan’s national television network, represents this view as follows:

In less than two years, the United States has successfully managed to drop from news headlines its failure to pacify Afghanistan. The focus of the Anglo-American media—American and British—has been locked on Pakistan. In order to justify this shift, multiple insurgencies and endless supply of money and weapons has trickled from U.S.-occupied Afghanistan into Pakistan to sustain a number of warlords inside Pakistan whom the American media calls ‘Taliban’ but they are actually nothing but hired mercenaries with sophisticated weapons who mostly did not even exist as recently as the year 2005.³²


The long-established Pakistani fear of Indian influence in Afghanistan is confirmed by General McChrystal’s September 2009 report, which notes that:

Indian political and economic influence is increasing in Afghanistan, including significant development efforts and financial investment. In addition, the current Afghan government is perceived by Islamabad to be pro-Indian. While Indian activities largely benefit the Afghan people, increasing Indian influence in Afghanistan is likely to exacerbate regional tensions and encourage Pakistani countermeasures in Afghanistan or India.³³

General McChrystal’s assessment will likely reinforce opposition to the notion of AfPak by supporting the idea that more than one country’s interests are involved in Afghanistan. Based on this belief, it would be illogical to lump Afghanistan and Pakistan together exclusively for the purposes of formulating strategic policy.

The strategic requirements of Pakistan are worlds apart from those of Afghanistan. It is true that events in Afghanistan had a bearing on Pakistan at least twice in recent history, most notably in 1978 and 2001. These events occurred, however, as a result of choice and improvised policies of Islamabad. Pakistan could otherwise have avoided involvement in Afghanistan’s affairs while still minimizing any strategic impact on its own society. The meddling in Afghanistan caused negative repercussions not only for the tribal areas of Pakistan, but for other parts of

the country as well. These actions wreaked havoc upon the centuries old liberal and accommodating society of what is now Pakistan by introducing alien cultures of bigotry, extremism and fanaticism.

Based on the above discussion, we may reasonably determine that a near consensus has developed in Pakistan calling for meaningful government action to eradicate terrorism. After a vicious series of suicide bombing attacks by the Taliban outfits, this would warrant a forceful response. Nonetheless, the consensus also dictates that Pakistan's security concerns are fundamentally different from those of Afghanistan and that Pakistan should avoid meddling in Afghanistan's internal affairs. 

NOTES

¹ Syed Farooq Hasnat, "The Flawed Afghan Elections," *Nation*, 12 September 2009.

² *Ibid.*

³ Corey Levine, "Free and fair elections in Afghanistan? Don't hold your breath," *Globe and Mail*, 19 August 2009.

⁴ Ben Farmer, "Hamid Karzai condemned for allowing warlord to return from exile," *Telegraph*, 17 August 2009.

⁵ Brian Glyn Williams, "The Return of the Kingmaker: Afghanistan's General Dostum Ends his Exile," *Jamestown Foundation*, 20 August 2009.

⁶ "Setback in Afghanistan," *Washington Post*, 3 September 2009.

⁷ Farhan Bokhari and James Lamont, "Transcript: Interview with Asif Ali Zardari," *Financial Times*, 15 September 2009.

⁸ Some members of the Pakistani military had thought that a friendly Afghanistan could provide Pakistani troops a cushion in case of Indian onslaught. The reality, that Afghanistan is comprised of a highly complicated tribal structure and is extremely difficult to control, was ignored.

⁹ Testimony by John J. Maresca, Vice President, International Relations, UNOCAL Corporation to House Committee on International Relations [Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific], 12 February 1998, 5., quoted in Mohsen M Milani, "Iran's Policy Towards Afghanistan," *Middle East Journal* 60, no. 2, (Spring 2006), 243.

¹⁰ Mian Ridge, "After Musharraf's exit, joy and challenges," *Christian Science Monitor*, 19 August 2008.

¹¹ Syed Farooq Hasnat, "Afghan Crisis; a Dilemma for Pakistan's Security and International Response," *Perceptions* (Spring 2005), 45.

¹² *Ibid.*, 47.

¹³ Douglas Jehl, "Iran Holds Taliban Responsible for 9 Diplomats' Deaths," *New York Times*, 11 September 1998.

¹⁴ Pam O'Toole, "Who are the militants in Afghanistan?" *BBC News*, 18 August 2006.

¹⁵ "Struggle for Kabul: The Taliban Advance," *The International Council on Security and Development*, (December 2008).

¹⁶ Iftikhar A. Kahn, "Army told to crush Swat militants," *Dawn*, 7 May 2009.

¹⁷ Muhammad Anis, "Militants on the Run: ISPR," *South Asian News Agency*, 9 May 2009.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

- ¹⁹ “Transcript of first presidential debate,” *CNN*, 14 October 2008.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ United States Government, *White Paper of the Interagency Policy Group's Report on U.S. Policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan*, 27 March 2009.
- ²² *A bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal years 2010 through 2014 to promote an enhanced strategic partnership with Pakistan and its people, and for other purposes*, S. 1707, 111th Congress, 1st session.
- ²³ For the text authorizing security funds, see *ibid.* The PCCF was established in *Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2009*, H.R. 2346, 111th Congress, 1st session.
- ²⁴ “Storm brewing?” *News* (Pakistan), 9 October 2009. Another newspaper editorial remarked about the Kerry-Lugar Bill, “There is now a national consensus across the board in Pakistan that the present form of the Kerry-Lugar Bill is unacceptable for Pakistan as it further compromises its sovereignty; brings in neighbors into Pakistan's affairs; puts all the onus on Pakistan to prove that it has done what is expected of it; and targets sensitive segments of the state, including the nuclear programme and the military, in an intrusive and controlling fashion. Even in the context of terrorism, Pakistan has been pronounced guilty as a starting point of the Bill! So the aid that may flow from it simply has too many strings attached to it—conditionalities that the nation and most state structures are not prepared to accept.” In “PPP isolated on KLB,” *Nation*, 9 October 2009.
- ²⁵ Anne W. Petterson, American Ambassador to Pakistan, on Kerry-Lugar Bill, interview with *Express TV*, 9 October 2009.
- ²⁶ Philip Elliott, “Council split complicates Obama's Afghan decision,” *Associated Press*, 1 October 2009.
- ²⁷ “State of the Union with John King: Interview with Barack Obama, Interview with Senator McConnell,” *CNN*, 20 September 2009.
- ²⁸ General Aslam Beg, “AfPak strategy and Pakistan,” *Nation*, 14 July 2009.
- ²⁹ “Qazi guarantees normalcy in FATA if troops withdrawn,” *Daily Times*, 24 January 2009.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*
- ³¹ “US goads Pakistan to do more against Taliban,” *Dawn*, 27 January 2007.
- ³² Ahmed Quraishi, quoted in Robert Mackey, “A Grand Conspiracy Theory From Pakistan,” *Lede: The New York Times News Blog*, 12 May 2009.
- ³³ “COMISAF Initial Assessment (Unclassified),” *Washington Post*, 21 September 2009.