



## THE U.S.-PAKISTAN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP: A TRACK-TWO DIALOGUE FOR LONG-TERM SECURITY COOPERATION

Project organized by the Center for Contemporary Conflict, U.S. Naval Postgraduate School  
with support from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pakistan is a nervous nuclear-armed country undergoing traumatic experiences. Leadership across its institutions is stunned by the gravity of the situation at three levels: the intensity and multitude of terrorist attacks within the country, the speed and depth of the growing U.S.-India relationship, and the rapid deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan. Pakistan believes it is caught in a dilemma between fear of abandonment and fear of entrapment.

Key highlights are as follows:

- Pakistan seeks clarity regarding both short- and long-term U.S. objectives in the region, particularly in terms of its “Af-Pak” strategy and its relationship with India. It wants to be better integrated into the process.
- Pakistani participants seek clarification regarding what they perceive as India’s growing role in Afghanistan. As strategic partners, Pakistanis expect the U.S. to take responsibility for curtailing India’s activities deemed detrimental to Pakistan’s security.
- The Pakistani participants defined four categories of their extremist problem: al Qaeda, Afghan-Taliban, Pakistan-Taliban, and religious factions that are sympathetic to the previous three. They made clear that each of these must be dealt with separately and with various elements of national power.
- Pakistan’s primary objective is to secure the areas within its own borders. This means that dealing with the Pakistan-Taliban and sympathetic religious factions takes precedent; the Afghan-Taliban is of secondary concern, considered to be the prime responsibility of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).
- Afghanistan leadership—tainted by widespread corruption and rigged elections—is likely to lose legitimacy. Moreover, lack of adequate Pashtun representation in the Afghan government and army, in conjunction with increasing Indian influence, is expected to contribute to continued instability.
- U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan will potentially leave behind a hostile regime in Kabul (e.g. Taliban). Therefore, the U.S. and Pakistan must work together to bring a balanced and legitimate Afghan government into power in order to avoid such consequences.
- Extremist militancy continues to spread throughout most of Pakistan due to lack of law enforcement, judicial processes, and education; these sectors need to be reformed and better equipped in order to provide a buffer against radical ideology.
- Pakistan faces a two-front war: India and linked instability in Afghanistan. That said, Pakistan’s dilemma is seen to be a choice between either weakening its counterinsurgency (COIN) operations or maintaining its defensive position against India.
- COIN operations have forced Pakistani conventional forces to be ‘spread-thin’ across the country. As India’s conventional presence or growth continues, Pakistanis believe they will eventually be compelled to lower their state’s nuclear threshold, replacing conventional forces with in-

creased nuclear deterrence. The region would thus get closer to forward deployment, rather than maintain the recessed deterrence that currently exists.

- Pakistani participants are seeking a clearer understanding of what kind of Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) the U.S. is offering to Pakistan. They are concerned that the context of the CTR framework can potentially bring both countries to a deadlock, as the Pakistanis see CTR as an attempt to denuclearize their state.
- Pakistani participants questioned the purpose of seeking transparency on nuclear matters. They contend that Pakistan's transparency with American scholars and diplomats has, ironically, been counterproductive toward such ends.
- Pakistanis are keen to learn about the parameters and scope of the global nuclear security summit in March 2010.
- U.S. participants believe it would actually behoove Pakistan to get ahead of India on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT).
- Many participants consider the Kerry-Lugar Bill as not pro-democracy, rather anti-military, and are concerned about the various clauses in the legislation that encroach upon the sovereignty of Pakistan with respect to budgetary, military, and nuclear issues.

Notwithstanding the difficulties described above, participants were unanimous in their desire for continued friendship and strengthening of the relationship in both the short and long term. Participants agreed that U.S. support is critical for the future of Pakistan, even if Pakistan seeks other allies in the future. An important point made was that anti-Americanism in Pakistan is a result of policies, not about the United States, per se.

## Introduction

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The Center for Contemporary Conflict (CCC), with support from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), convened on October 8-9, 2009, the fifth iteration of the U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue at the Grand Hyatt, Dubai, UAE. Over the years, this track II dialogue has helped bring together top American and Pakistani scholars, former officials, and observers to focus on the critical strategic relationship between the two countries. Given the evolving operational environment in the region, as well as the new leadership in both the United States and Pakistan, this dialogue remains an important venue for an informed discussion, particularly on WMD-related issues.



The conference spanned two days and framed the strategic issues within the context of the evolving security situation in the Pakistan-Afghanistan region. The first day was dedicated to contextualizing the strategic dialogue. Three panels addressed the following issues: "Af-Pak" border situation and policy; the internal stability situation; and relations with India, specifically with regard to the military situation in balancing contingencies on two fronts. The second day was dedicated to three additional issues: promoting nuclear stability and avoiding nuclear war, improving the Pakistani nuclear security culture, and seeking Pakistani cooperation with President Obama's new initiatives on multilateral approaches to disarmament and nonproliferation.

Over the course of the conference, the recently passed Kerry-Lugar Bill dominated the discussion.<sup>1</sup> The conference concluded in seeking new ideas from participants in broadening the dialogue, as well as steering toward a more positive bilateral relationship.

## “Af-Pak” Policy

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The situation in both Afghanistan and Pakistan remains tenuous. While both the U.S. and Pakistan understand the objective of defeating cross-border strongholds of the Taliban and al Qaeda, their approaches to addressing the situation are not cohesive.

From the Pakistani perspective, there was an acknowledgement of various limiting factors: scarce control of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) that gives rise to terrorist sanctuaries; a declining economy that has strengthened terrorist recruitment; and the mushrooming of *madrassas*, dating back to the 1980s, which continue to produce violent extremists.



The Pakistani participants defined four categories of the extremist problem: al Qaeda, Afghan-Taliban, Pakistan-Taliban, and religious factions that are sympathetic to the previous three. Pakistani participants believe that the scope of their responsibilities priori-

tizes the elimination and expulsion of al Qaeda, as well as the destruction and dismantlement of Pakistan-Taliban; dealing with Afghan-Taliban is considered secondary. To defeat political sympathizers in Pakistan, other instruments of policy are required. The following major points were brought up during the discussion:

- The term “Af-Pak” is considered an insult. Pakistanis resent hyphenation policy and point to their own distinct history and culture. They insist on recognition of their prestige as a secondary nuclear and military power in the region.
- Pakistani participants see the U.S. and NATO operation in Afghanistan as a failure that, in large part, is responsible for the volatile security situation in Pakistan, which is perceived as giving rise to the following:

One view is that U.S. occupation in Afghanistan stirs popular resentment and fuels the insurgency. Moreover, the ISAF considered impotent for defeating the Afghan-Taliban. Though they see conditions in Afghanistan as central to gaining stability within their own borders, it is the responsibility of ISAF and the government in Kabul to harness such gains on *the Afghan* side of the border.

Other Pakistanis fear the consequences of U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. This will leave Pakistan to choose between the ‘deep sea and the devil’—in other words, a hostile government in Kabul under Indian influence, or an extremist Taliban takeover of Kabul that would threaten the state and society of Pakistan.

- The Pashtun influence in Afghanistan has been underappreciated. Pakistanis point to the lack of proportional representation both in the Afghan Army and government. This has created fissures in an already fractured and complicated society. So long as Afghans believe that they are under occupation, with minorities at the helm, peace will remain elusive in the region.
- The recent elections in Afghanistan have not only highlighted widespread, systematic corruption, but have drastically lowered the legitimacy of Afghanistan’s political process. The credibility of the national government, as well as the ability of ISAF to bring about change, is under question. Regardless of the election’s final outcome, it is expected that Afghanistan’s political climate will

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<sup>1</sup> The Kerry-Lugar Bill, also known as the Foreign Assistance Revitalization and Accountability Act of 2009 (S.1524), and the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act, passed the U.S. Senate on 24 September 2009 and the U.S. House of Representatives on 30 September 2009, and went into effect on 15 October 2009.

remain feeble, and the prospect for further delegitimization of the national government remains high.

- Pakistanis are asking for clearly defined U.S. objectives in Afghanistan and expectations for Pakistan's role in achieving them.
- Pakistanis believe that their security interests cannot be subservient to U.S. security objectives and that the battle against extremists is also their priority.
- Opinions about a potential U.S. military surge appeared to be divided between Pakistani participants. The surge makes sense only if it leads to coordinated military operations with Pakistan that complement those conducted across the border; however, if a surge fails to bring stability to Afghanistan, it defeats its own purpose, which, in turn, makes Pakistan's policy choices even more difficult.
- U.S. participants continued to question the actual motivations of Pakistan. Suspicion of congruity and coordination between elements of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and various Taliban factions continues to grow in the U.S.
- Among Americans, doubts remain with regard to whether or not U.S. aid is being used for the purposes that it was originally intended.

### **Confronting Militancy and Internal Stability**

This panel segued from the first and focused on various military operations within Pakistan. There were two contradictory trends: on the one hand, Pakistani society has decisively rejected Talibanization and generally supports the military operation against it; yet, on the other hand, the Taliban has expanded into Southern Punjab where both its hard and soft influence continues to prevail. Participants explored possible causes for these developments and identified lack of social reforms as the primary reason for Talibanization:

- The panel identified problems in three major areas—law enforcement, judicial processes, and education—as the root causes of Talibanization in Pakistan. Reform in these sectors is considered essential to defeating the Pakistan-Taliban.
- From the Pakistani perspective, the Kerry-Luger Bill ought to be focused on improving services and addressing problems in these three critical

areas if it is to assist the people of Pakistan and defeat the Taliban.

- The Pakistan government's public diplomacy has been very poor despite a strong media. The inability of the government to construct a positive narrative against the Taliban has proven to be an important factor. A proactive and sustained effort is required to expose the violent nature of this extremist group.



### **Military Operations and Power Balance**

Pakistan believes it faces a two-front war: India and a linked instability in Afghanistan. Pakistan's dilemma is seen to be a choice between either weakening its counterinsurgency (COIN) operations, or maintaining its defensive position against India. Points made during the discussion were as follows:

- Pakistan's conventional defense on its eastern frontier with India is weakening as COIN requirements increase elsewhere.
- This trend will eventually compel Pakistan to lower its nuclear threshold, replacing conventional forces with increased nuclear deterrence. The region would thus move toward forward deployment rather than maintain the recessed nature of its nuclear program.
- Pakistan is being compelled toward deployment so as to counterbalance India's Cold Start conventional threat.
- Pakistani participants made it clear that only a few fronts can be effectively open at a time. They acknowledged multiple threats and emphasized that geography alone makes it very difficult to operate effectively across their periphery.

- Military exigencies demand careful distribution and force deployment between the borders. There will be a continuous need to preserve adequate reserve capability for unforeseen contingencies.



- Pakistan has pulled out nearly four to five infantry divisions for COIN duties that were originally meant to fight against India. Pakistan would like the U.S. to help increase Pakistan's conventional capabilities or ask India to scale back their conventional powers. The vacuum will need to be filled by raising new formations, which is more difficult under the Kerry-Lugar Bill.
- U.S. participants attempted to convince the Pakistanis that India is concerned with Pakistan's coherence and rising instability as a threat to its security as well. An Indian strategy to aggravate Pakistan's internal security problems would not enhance India's own security and is thus an unlikely objective of India.

### **Nuclear Security Culture and State Capacity**

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The perils of a nuclear Pakistan are often highlighted in Western media. This continues despite acknowledgements of constructive Pakistani efforts by senior U.S. government officials, including President Obama. Pakistani participants were agitated about persistent pressures applied through the media and the confusion and distrust they help foster. Key points include:

- Pakistani Strategic Plans Division (SPD) presenters explained the series of measures Pakistan has implemented over the past decade including: standing up SPD, implementing export control laws, and joining the fight against nuclear terrorism. However, there is still a lack of confidence

on both sides. Mainly, there is high concern on the part of U.S. officials about terrorist groups being in close proximity to nuclear weapons. This is a serious issue given that the Pakistani nuclear security matrix relies heavily on deterrence. U.S. participants acknowledged that Pakistan has been quite transparent on this issue.

- One concern from the U.S. side is that if there is any significant budget crisis in Pakistan, maintaining warheads will trump overall defense, thus weakening Pakistan's overall security capacity.
- The nuclear security culture between the scientific and military communities is starkly different in Pakistan than in the U.S. Pakistan is tightening its military facet of nuclear security, which limits scientific culture. These two sectors are currently in the process of striking a balance between their interests.
- U.S. sharing of its experiences from its own best practices in nuclear-related issues would be of great benefit to a nascent nuclear power like Pakistan.
- The Pakistani participants questioned the purpose of seeking transparency on nuclear matters. They contend that Pakistan's transparency toward American scholars and diplomats has actually been counterproductive. Pakistan's frank admittance of the A.Q. Khan failures has resulted in deliberate media leaks to the western press. The net result has been a loss in confidence and enhanced skepticism from the U.S., affecting its intentions even as it offers assistance.
- Reference in the Kerry-Lugar Legislation regarding nonproliferation and access to nuclear personnel of interest, followed by CTR proposals, has made Pakistan more nervous than comforted.

### **Nuclear Order and New Initiatives**

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In stark contrast to past U.S. governments, the Obama Administration has set clear benchmarks on nuclear nonproliferation and security issues. Moreover, the goals of the upcoming nuclear summits in 2010 will be of profound interest to Pakistan. Major points were as follows:

- Pakistanis are keen to learn about the parameters and scope of the global nuclear security summit in March 2010. Pakistan's standard posi-

tion has been to support non-discriminatory approaches; they take offense at being treated both as a partner and a target at the same time.

- The desire of Pakistan is that new global security engagements be equitable, just, and nondiscriminatory.
- Pakistan is not a member of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) but believes that the outcome of the March 2010 nuclear security summit will overshadow the NPT review conference in December 2010.
- With regard to the push toward global zero, neither side believes that this is going to happen. The Pakistanis pointed to the lack of seriousness of this initiative by citing President Obama's speech in Prague, where he noted that such disarmament would not happen during his lifetime.
- Concern was expressed about the procedural delays on the commencement of the FMCT by Pakistan. The Pakistani delegates pointed toward a recent statement from India and the lack of conditions placed on it in the U.S.-India nuclear deal as one reason for Pakistani foot-dragging.



- U.S. participants believe it would behoove Pakistan to get ahead of India on the CTBT and FMCT. They believe the Pakistan position to be short-sighted, and that India has the ability to outrace them if the numbers game becomes an issue. An effective FMCT, they contend, will box in India and be in Pakistan's best interest.

- According to the Pakistanis, the context of the CTR framework can bring both countries to a deadlock, given that the Pakistanis see this as an attempt to denuclearize their state. This changes Pakistan's threat perception to one where the U.S. is seen not as a partner but more as a threat. This will create massive challenges within the security arrangement, as well as increase the risk of having the incorrect balance against possible internal threats to that of external threats. CTR is simply not acceptable to Pakistan. Overall concerns were that nonproliferation, nuclear-security issues, and talk about nuclear cooperation are all aimed at eventually denuclearizing Pakistan.

### **Future of U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Relationship and the Kerry-Lugar Bill**

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Pakistani sentiment toward the Kerry-Lugar Bill was that it left out one key player: Pakistan. Not one participant, however, doubted the good intentions behind this initiative, but the caveats and provisions implemented associated with the funds have had an opposite effect. Pakistanis interpret the conditions as a humiliating affront to Pakistani nationalism and sovereign sensibilities. Key points were:

- Many participants consider the Kerry-Lugar Bill as not prodemocracy, but rather anti-military.
- Of particular concern was the questioning of Pakistan's right to budget its nuclear force quotes. Further, the mention of civilian oversight of army promotion was resented and seen as an attempt to require U.S. approval to appoint their Army Chief.
- The U.S. side explained that Kerry-Lugar provides some oversight to its citizens. Not since the Marshall Plan has U.S. foreign aid become so unpopular with regard to supporting a state that may not be in line with U.S. interests.
- Perceptions associated with this bill are unfortunate since the bill is intended to be in appreciation for and support of Pakistani efforts to deal with internal security problems.

Regardless of the intent and purpose, the Kerry-Lugar Bill has widened the gap in the trust deficit, as opposed to closing it.

## Key Suggestions

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1. There is an urgent need for a broader dialogue at the official level to bridge perception gaps. The Pakistanis believe they are being punished, while India is courted. To increase Pakistani confidence, both sides should expand the scope of U.S. involvement in the region by factoring in India's role in the security calculus of South and Central Asia more broadly.
2. There is a requirement for a broader strategic communication plan in addition to track II strategic dialogues. A broader arena is needed where these discussions can be absorbed by larger audiences. This will help elucidate perceptions and misperceptions, as well as accentuate the realities on the ground; the inverse is the status quo.
3. Building confidence in the nuclear security of Pakistan should become a key goal of the U.S. A specific suggestion by a DoE representative is to hold a workshop and exercise where allies, friends, and IAEA personnel would be invited to gain confidence in Pakistanis' nuclear security regime. Pakistani participants were apparently supportive of this idea, which would be a major breakthrough if it were to come to fruition.
4. Pakistan and the U.S. must continue to discuss bilaterally WMD and nuclear-related issues to improve best practices, understand multilateral positions, and alleviate each side's concerns at the official level. Strategic dialogues, such as this, could serve as a complementary body to discuss the substance of new ideas between the two governments.
5. Constructive ideas for removing misperceptions regarding U.S. cooperative nuclear engagement include further discussion of objectives, intent, and mechanisms at the track II level. The suggestion is to discuss the new form of CTR offered to Pakistan at a track II level and gradually seek official cooperation over time.

## List of Participants

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**Sartaz Aziz**, Consultant

**Khalid Banuri**, Strategic Plans Division

**Christopher Bidwell**, Defense Threat Reduction Agency

**Elaine Bunn**, Institute for National Strategic Studies

**Shahzad Chaudhry**, Consultant

**Christopher Clary**, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

**Tariq Nadeem Gilani**, Armed Forces War College, Pakistan

**David Hamon**, Defense Threat Reduction Agency

**Rodney Jones**, Policy Architects International

**Michael Keifer**, Defense Threat Reduction Agency

**Feroz Khan**, U.S. Naval Postgraduate School

**Michael Krepon**, Henry L. Stimson Center

**Salma Malik**, Quaid-i-Azam University

**Nick Masellis**, U.S. Naval Postgraduate School

**Doug Rohn**, U.S. Department of State

**Naeem Salik**, National Defence University, Pakistan

**Adil Sultan**, Strategic Plans Division

**Maria Sultan**, South Asian Strategic Studies Institute

**Joshua White**, The Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies

## MEETING AGENDA

### WEDNESDAY, 07 OCTOBER

1000 – 2200 **Conference Pre-Registration**, Lobby, Grand Hyatt Dubai Hotel

### THURSDAY, 08 OCTOBER

0900 – 0930 **Opening Remarks**

David Hamon, Defense Threat Reduction Agency  
Feroz Khan, Center for Contemporary Conflict, NPS

0930 – 1050 **Panel 1: The “Af-Pak Policy:” Regional Politics and Strategic Stability**

*Chair and Discussant:* Michael Krepon, Henry L Stimson Center  
*Presenter:* Sartaj Aziz, Former Foreign Minister, Pakistan

1100 – 1300 **Panel 2: Tackling Militancy: Political Developments and Internal Stability**

*Chair and Discussant:* Feroz Khan, Center for Contemporary Conflict, NPS  
*Presenter:* Salma Malik, Quaid-i-Azam University  
*Presenter:* Joshua White, The Johns Hopkins University, SAIS  
*Remarks:* Sartaj Aziz, Former Foreign Minister, Pakistan

1300 – 1400 **Lunch**

1400 – 1615 **Panel 3: Military Operations: Balancing Western Borderlands and Cold Start**

*Chair and Discussant:* Naeem Salik, National Defense University  
*Presenter:* Tariq Nadeem Gilani, Armed Forces War College  
*Presenter:* Shahzad Chaudhry, Former Ambassador

1615-1630 **Closing Remarks:** Feroz Khan, Center for Contemporary Conflict, NPS

1930 – 2100 **Hosted Dinner**, Grand Hyatt, Dubai

### FRIDAY 09 OCTOBER

0900 – 1115 **Panel 4: Developing Nuclear Security Culture: New Threats and Organizing Best Practices**

*Chair:* Feroz Khan, Center for Contemporary Conflict  
Panel A: *Presenter:* Elaine Bunn, National Defense University  
*Presenter:* Maria Sultan, South Asian Strategic Studies Institute  
Panel B: *Presenter:* Khalid Banuri, Strategic Plans Division  
*Presenter:* Adil Sultan, Strategic Plans Division, JSHQ, Pakistan  
*Remarks:* Toby Dalton, U.S. State Department

1130 – 1330 **Panel 5: Nuclear Order and New Initiatives: Disarmament and Nonproliferation**

*Chair and Discussant:* Michael Krepon, Henry L Stimson Center  
*Presenter:* Naeem Salik, National Defense University  
*Presenter:* Rodney Jones, Policy Architects International  
*Presenter:* Christopher Clary, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

1330 – 1430 **Lunch**

1430 – 1530 **Panel 6: Roundtable, The Future of the U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Partnership**

*Chair:* Feroz Khan, Center for Contemporary Conflict

1530 – 1630 **Closing Remarks**

David Hamon, Defense Threat Reduction Agency