

## Pakistan's Changing Counterterrorism Strategy: A Window of Opportunity?

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**ABSTRACT:** In spite of growing US uncertainty about Pakistani intentions, a window of opportunity may be opening for the United States to put in place new counterterrorism measures with Pakistan.

Over the past decade, Pakistan has been increasingly viewed in US foreign policy circles as a reluctant, almost recalcitrant, partner in efforts to end the long Afghan war and to combat global terrorism. While steadfastly India-centric in its defense posture, Pakistan's regional role in South Central Asia is widely viewed as indispensable. To help the United States engage more effectively on counterterrorism, American analysts advocate a wide range of policy options. Some scholars such as Ambassador Peter Tomsen argue that "Washington should stop praising Pakistan's generals for their cooperation on counterterrorism, stop showering them with unconditioned military aid, and stop embracing them with benign diplomacy sprinkled with ambiguous warnings that current conditions are not acceptable."<sup>1</sup> Others, like former Pakistani Ambassador Hussain Haqqani, seem to agree, "since 1947, dependence, deception and defiance have characterized US-Pakistan relations. We sought US aid in return for promises we did not keep. Although even strong allies do not have 100 percent congruent interests, in the case of Pakistan and the United States, the divergence far exceeded the similarities."<sup>2</sup>

In spite of growing US uncertainty about Pakistani intentions, most observers, and Washington, hew to a middle course. US-Pakistan relations became tense after the killing of Osama Bin Laden in northwestern Pakistan in May 2011; since then, policymakers sought greater continuity and cooperation with Pakistan. On the eve of Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's visit to Washington in October 2013, White House Press Secretary Jay Carney noted, "We want to find ways for our two countries to cooperate even as we have differences on some issues, and we want to make sure the trajectory of this relationship is a positive one."<sup>3</sup> Despite the need for improved US-Pakistan relations, however, so-called "transformational" steps needed to reinvigorate Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts along its 1,640-mile border with Afghanistan and to forge more preemptive measures against global terrorism have been avoided in favor of risk-averse business-as-usual. Pakistan's evolving security interests may be converging with the Coalition's counterterrorism efforts; these

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1 Peter Tomsen, *The Wars of Afghanistan: Messianic Terrorism, Tribal Conflicts, and the Failures of Great Powers* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), 694-95.

2 Hussain Haqqani, *Magnificent Delusions: Pakistan, the United States, and an Epic History of Misunderstanding* (New York: Public Affairs, 2013).

3 United Press International, "Obama-Sharif Meeting Described as Important" *UPI*, October 22, 2013.

new developments may open a window for stronger engagement with Pakistan on the joint Afghanistan and global terrorism fronts.

### **A New Window?**

A window of opportunity may be opening for the United States to put in place a new set of counterterrorism measures with Pakistan, coupled with badly needed visibility on future financial assistance to the country, if the US Congress buys into a confidence-building approach. This new approach requires nesting Afghanistan's transition, US counterterrorism policies, the intra-Afghan peace process, and endorsement by Coalition states and other allies. While such a future course is complex, its promise of better traction on counterterrorism results in Afghanistan may outweigh the risks of the current open-ended US policy that seems to be "playing not to lose" rather than achieving clear goals permitting a permanent drawdown of Coalition forces in Afghanistan.

This policy opening cannot be described as transformative, however, because it remains uncertain if Pakistan's complex civilian-military authority structure can and will agree on identifying specific terrorist groups as internal security threats. Pakistan's civilian and military leaders are not unified in their perceptions of national priorities and interests. As a result, the central thesis argued here is that the United States needs to engage with those officials who are supportive of broader counterterrorism engagement while using aid more explicitly to bring other quarters on board.

The first part of this article will outline three key objections to the explicit linkage of US counterterrorism assistance to Pakistan. The second part will describe recent developments that appear to provide a new policy opening for broader US-Pakistan counterterrorism talks. The final part will propose four steps that could be taken in such talks.

### **Part One**

#### *First Objection: Losing US Leverage*

US policymakers appear concerned that linking military assistance to counterterrorism results could be counterproductive, eroding US influence within the Pakistan Army. The Army might view the linkage as a coercive "stick" and reject its application. In this scenario, the United States may find its use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) curtailed in Pakistan's tribal areas as well as losing influence over other potential issues such as discouraging (1) a military takeover of a civilian-led government, (2) its use of terrorist proxies to challenge India's control of Kashmiri territory, and (3) any newly emerging nuclear proliferation opportunities. Taking into account these realpolitik issues, however, the United States should acknowledge that it has little influence to lose. Thus, it should focus on establishing stronger cooperative mechanisms with Pakistan to prevent and deter such developments while also permitting the United States to reduce its counterterrorism efforts in the region.

#### *Second Objection: Pakistani Response to Terrorism is Sufficient*

Even though many Western analysts contend Pakistan is playing a two-faced game with Taliban groups, since 9/11, the Pakistan Army

has sustained over 50,000 casualties in its effort to dismantle, disrupt, and destroy al Qaeda, the Taliban, and other terrorist groups operating in the Federally-Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) adjacent to Afghanistan. Concomitantly, Pakistan's economy has likely suffered approximately \$100 billion in lost revenue, as foreign investors steered clear of what they saw as a relatively unstable country among emerging market countries.<sup>4</sup>

Pakistani government and Army leaders nonetheless insist they remain committed to the counterterrorism effort. Their standard response to US requests is, "Tell us where they are and we will take action. Seek our covert permission to launch UAVs but do not otherwise operate in our country."<sup>5</sup> Since Pakistan has "done all it has been asked to do" and maintains Coalition supply lines into Afghanistan, there is no need to seek additional cooperation through explicit aid linkage. Moreover, the Pakistan Army may not be able to deliver on new steps in light of its India-dominated focus and might even disagree with its civilian leadership over key counterterrorism measures, contributing to political instability.

### **The Pakistan Army is India-Centric<sup>6</sup>**

Having unsuccessfully fought four wars with India, Pakistan remains vigilant on her eastern border, facing the world's third largest Army, after China and the United States; its military forces overall rank eighth after North Korea, Russia, Turkey, and South Korea. Pakistan's military annually lavishes about 10 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) on the Army budget and its nuclear arsenal. As a result of growing US military assistance after 9/11, Pakistan agreed to station roughly 150,000 troops along the Afghan border beginning in early 2002, while keeping 100,000 troops oriented towards India and Kashmir.<sup>7</sup>

Given this background, it is not surprising to find that in May 2010, when Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director Leon Panetta sought then Pakistan Army Chief of Staff Ashfaq Kayani's help following the arrest of Pakistani-American Faisal Shahzad for attempting to bomb Times Square, Kayani replied, "I'll be the first to admit, I'm India-centric."<sup>8</sup> Even after Shahzad revealed that he had been trained by the Haqqani Network, a Pakistani Taliban group in North Waziristan, US officials failed to budge Kayani beyond permitting more UAV strikes in North Waziristan.<sup>9</sup> This objection is primarily based on accepting the

4 Ashan Guirez, "Pakistan Briefing," lecture, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, January 13, 2014.

5 Jon Boone and Peter Beaumont, "Pervez Musharraf Admits Permitting 'a Few' Drone Strikes in Pakistan," *The Guardian*, April 12, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/apr/12/musharraf-admits-permitting-drone-strikes>.

6 The Pakistan Army's defense posture has been India-centric since its inception in 1947, largely shaped by its aim to win disputed Kashmiri territory from India. Former Ambassador Haqqani emphasizes, "In the case of Pakistan and the U.S., Pakistan's primary interest, as defined by its elite, is to become India's military equal and to wrest control of Kashmir. Those two interests are not in America's interests. And yet America has built up Pakistan's military potential over the years and continues to arm Pakistan, assuming that Pakistan will eventually use those arms for agendas the Americans set for them. That is not going to happen. That has not happened in the last 66 years." Hussain Haqqani, "Pakistan-U.S.: Doubtful Friends," *Lahore Times*, December 1, 2013, 1.

7 Ahsan Guirez, "Pakistan Briefing."

8 Robert Woodward, *Obama's Wars* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 366.

9 Ibid.

Pakistan Army's India-focused threat posture, which we will return to below.<sup>10</sup>

### *Third Objection: Pakistan Sees Terrorist Groups Differently*

Our current relationship with Pakistan contrasts starkly with the one defined by the George H. W. Bush administration. In January 1993, Secretary of State James Baker sent a letter to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif warning that Pakistan could be designated as a state sponsor of terrorism, chiefly because of terrorist activity in Kashmir and the Indian Punjab.<sup>11</sup> This step was not pursued by President Clinton. A decade later, Pakistan was listed as a Major Non-NATO Ally of the United States in 2004, following the post-9/11 decision taken by President Pervez Musharraf to increase Pakistan Army operations along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. This *volte-face* in our relationship reflects the fact that we need to work with Pakistan even if it remains more committed to opposing its historic antagonist, India.

Pakistan apparently calculates that by fighting the Tehrik-e-Taliban but providing tacit support to other groups such as the Haqqani Network, Pakistan (1) stays close to a bloc that could emerge as a key power-broker in Afghanistan; (2) sustains asymmetric proxies harassing an Indian presence in Afghanistan and Kashmir; and (3) secures Pakistan's north-western border by restraining some Taliban groups from coalescing with others to oppose Pakistan's secular authorities. Accepting this objection, however, boxes the United States into maintaining a middle-of-the-road foreign policy with Pakistan that neither accomplishes nor risks much.

### *Pakistan's Role in the AF-PAK War*

As the nascent Barack Obama administration began positioning itself during the 2008 US presidential election campaign, the Afghan conflict was widely portrayed as an ongoing war of necessity and Pakistan as key to its conclusion. The acronym, AF-PAK, was introduced to indicate that both countries, Afghanistan and Pakistan, should be considered a unified theater of operations requiring a joint policy.<sup>12</sup> In tandem with this term, an Iraq-inspired military surge strategy was launched in mid-2009 to protect Afghan population centers and give the fledgling Afghan state time to train its security forces and deliver basic services to its people.

At present, more work needs to be done on the NATO coalition's missions of stability and transition; and the future remains cloudy for Afghanistan, despite over 3,000 Coalition casualties and about \$700

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10 The United States designated the Haqqani Network as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) in September 2012. This group joined the already designated Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan rooted in South Waziristan, both supporting the Afghan Taliban mainly fighting in Afghanistan's South and East. The so-called Quetta Shura, representing the former Afghan Taliban leadership led by Mullah Mohammed Omar, constitutes a moral center of gravity for the Afghan Taliban in Pakistan's Baluchistan province. In light of Pakistan's harboring of these and other Taliban groups operating on the Afghan side, the United States has routinely called for stronger Pakistani actions to close down sanctuaries and training camps used by these terrorist groups, particularly as the Taliban began to regroup and fight more effectively in Afghanistan beginning in 2005.

11 Peter Tomsen, *The Wars of Afghanistan*, 513.

12 The inventor of the term was, perhaps, Ambassador Richard C. Holbrooke. Richard C. Holbrooke, *Hampton Roads International Security Quarterly*, March 22, 2009.

billion in US costs alone.<sup>13</sup> A key pillar of the Coalition strategy was the hammer-and-anvil approach launched with the Pakistan Army to deny (to the Taliban and other extremist groups) sanctuaries along the AF-PAK border to regroup and continue the conflict within Afghanistan. As the surge wound down in mid-2010, US policymakers stopped making references to AF-PAK, despite the fact that Pakistan was receiving significant military aid to serve as the anvil to the Coalition's hammer.

Coalition and Pakistan Army operations sustained a high operational tempo throughout 2009-12 before slowing down in 2013. This slower tempo coincides with newly trained Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) leading military operations on the Afghan side and stop-go efforts to start peace talks with Taliban groups. As international actors wait to see if the US-Afghan Bilateral Security Agreement can be concluded in 2014, Afghanistan's future remains uncertain.

## Part Two

### *At a Crossroads?*

Despite more than three decades of war and an Indian presence in Afghanistan, Pakistan Army strategists reportedly still regard Afghanistan as their country's "strategic depth" a rear engagement area in case India invades Pakistan.<sup>14</sup> According to this construct originating in the 1980s, Afghan territory would permit Pakistan to disperse assets (including nuclear weapons) across the border, thereby increasing its ability to absorb an Indian attack and to strike back.<sup>15</sup> Just as importantly, the Pashtun area lying on both sides of the Durand Line defining the AF-PAK border constitutes a prime recruitment ground for dual-use religious madrassa and training camps that have fueled Afghan and Kashmiri insurgencies for more than three decades. Indeed, terrorist groups in Pakistan represent a key asymmetric offensive capability against India and reportedly carried out the coordinated Mumbai attacks of 2008.<sup>16</sup> Since these geopolitical realities seem deeply rooted in Pakistani strategic calculus, why would they suddenly be open to critical reexamination and change within Pakistan?

### *First Development: A New Chapter*

In early 2013, the Pakistan Army doctrine incorporated a new chapter entitled "Sub-conventional Warfare," spelling out military operational preparedness, capacities, and objectives.<sup>17</sup> According to this new doctrine, guerilla actions stemming from the tribal areas along the Afghan border and improvised explosive device (IED) attacks on the Army and civilians have been identified for the first time as the "great-

13 Anthony H. Cordesman, "The US Cost of the Afghan War: FY2002-2013," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, May 15, 2012, <https://csis.org/publication/us-cost-afghan-war-fy2002-fy2013>; National Priorities Project, "Cost of War in Afghanistan since 2001," <http://nationalpriorities.org/cost-of/>.

14 George Garner, "The Afghan Taliban and Pakistan's Strategic Depth," *Stanford Review: Bellum Project*, May 17, 2010, <http://bellum.stanfordreview.org/?p=2184>.

15 Ibid.

16 Pamela Constable, "Mumbai Attacks in 2008 Still Divide India and Pakistan," *The Washington Post*, April 6, 2011, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/mumbai-attacks-in-2008-still-divide-india-and-pakistan/2011/04/03/AFJjDUoC\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/mumbai-attacks-in-2008-still-divide-india-and-pakistan/2011/04/03/AFJjDUoC_story.html).

17 "Pakistan Army sees 'Internal Threats' as Greatest Security Risk," *Dawn.com*, Islamabad, Pakistan, January 2, 2013.

est threat” to Pakistan’s national security.<sup>18</sup> While doctrine is merely guidance and not an operational order, this chapter may have staked out common ground for the United States and Pakistan to cooperate more effectively on counterterrorism. It is premature to declare the chapter as a game changer, but it does afford an opportunity to broaden bilateral counterterrorism consultations. At the same time, the concept of “strategic depth” is no longer cited as a basic assumption.

### *Second Development: The Punjabi Taliban*

Concerned by the spread of terrorism from Pakistan’s hinterland, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif established an anti-terrorism force to counter emerging terrorist groups in Punjab in October 2013. Sharif committed to give the Force higher salaries and advanced equipment but keep it separate from Pakistan police and army units. At the same time, the Northwest Pakistan provincial government established a special counterterrorism task force headed by the province’s police chief. Provincial leaders asked the federal government to return frontier constabulary platoons to the province to be deployed in sensitive areas.<sup>19</sup> Apparently, the possible emergence of a Punjabi Taliban group that could increasingly link with similar groups to launch coordinated attacks warrants a new approach and considerably more resources than have been devoted so far.

### *Third Development: Pursuing Taliban Peace Talks with a Stick*

In October 2013, several Quetta Shura leaders met in Islamabad at the behest of Prime Minister Sharif to discuss their participation in future peace talks in the wake of Afghan elections and a US withdrawal.<sup>20</sup> Sharif gained an all-party endorsement for peace talks with the Taliban shortly after he took office in June 2013. He appears to be offering an olive branch to Pakistani Taliban groups backed up by military force. As Sharif told Pakistan’s Parliament in January 2014, Taliban groups have continued killing innocent civilians and soldiers. While “the government is doing what it can to stop drone attacks,” which have bolstered extremism and anti-Americanism, “we can no longer allow the massacre of innocent civilians” by terrorists, and “the situation is no longer tolerable.” Sharif emphasized that “the whole nation will stand behind” a military offensive against the extremists if peace efforts fail.<sup>21</sup>

Before resorting to military means, Prime Minister Sharif appears committed to fostering a credible peace process in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. The former talks face formidable obstacles since the Tehrik-e-Taliban demand the immediate withdrawal of the Pakistan Army from tribal areas.<sup>22</sup> The latter talks—currently being pursued

18 Ibid.

19 Moshin Ali, “Anti-Terrorist Force for Punjab Approved,” *Gulf News*, October 18, 2013, (<http://gulfnews.com/news/world/pakistan/anti-terrorist-force-for-punjab-approved-1.1244553>)

20 Ron Moreau, “Taliban’s Quetta Shura Meet in Islamabad to Press for Peace,” *The Daily Beast*, November 1, 2013.

21 Karen DeYoung and Greg Miller, “U.S. said to curtail drone strikes in Pakistan as officials there seek peace talks with Taliban,” *The Washington Post*, February 4, 2014, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-curtails-drone-strikes-in-pakistan-as-officials-there-seek-peace-talks-with-taliban/2014/02/04/1d63f52a-8dd8-11e3-833c-33098f9e5267\\_story.html?wpisrc=emailtofriend](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-curtails-drone-strikes-in-pakistan-as-officials-there-seek-peace-talks-with-taliban/2014/02/04/1d63f52a-8dd8-11e3-833c-33098f9e5267_story.html?wpisrc=emailtofriend).

22 Mohsin Ali, “Pakistan Taliban Gives ‘Positive’ Response to Talks,” *Gulf News*, February 10, 2014.

by President Hamid Karzai—face similar hurdles even though the Coalition is withdrawing from Afghanistan.<sup>23</sup> Pakistan's promotion of Afghan peace talks appears designed to ensure a future Taliban role in the Afghan government and to prevent a gradual Afghan tilt towards India and Iran, two neighboring countries that offer greater aid and trade potential. However, it is too early to tell if the entire Pakistani government is convinced of the efficacy of talks or the potential need to roll up Taliban terrorist groups. In particular, any new decisive Pakistan Army action appears to require linkage with military assistance to give them the resources to conduct this new campaign. At the same time, some quarters of the Pakistan government must be enjoined to give up their apparent gamble that the current ANSF, mainly led by a non-Pashtun officer corps, will fail to stabilize Afghanistan, especially its South and East.

#### *Fourth Development: Calling for an End to UAV Strikes*

Prime Minister Sharif issued a high-profile appeal to President Obama during his October 2013 visit to end UAV strikes on Pakistani territory. His request received widespread press attention and dovetails with President Obama's own policy objective recorded in his May 2013 speech:

In the Afghan war theater, we must support our troops until the transition is complete at the end of 2014. However, by the end of 2014, we will no longer have the same need for force protection, and the progress we have made against core al Qaeda will reduce the need for unmanned strikes... and I will not sign laws designed to expand this mandate further. Our systematic effort to dismantle terrorist organizations must continue. But this war, like all wars, must end. That's what history advises. That's what our democracy demands.<sup>24</sup>

These words may apply even more to Pakistan. At present, a majority of the Pakistani people objects to UAV strikes and believes their leaders should halt them.<sup>25</sup> In the Federally-Administered Tribal Areas alone, an earlier United Kingdom (UK) poll indicated that negative opinion rose from 59 percent in 2010 to 63 percent in 2011, peak years for unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) strikes.<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, the most compelling reason for Pakistan's stronger commitment to counterterrorism and Afghan stability lies in Pakistan's own security. The more Pakistan proves unable to combat internal threats posed by its own terrorist actors, the more public opinion is likely to gravitate against its elected leaders. At present, Taliban and other extremist groups in Pakistan threaten internal order more than they provide security insurance policies against Afghanistan and India.

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23 Azam Ahmed and Matthew Rosenberg, "Karzai Arranged Secret Contacts with the Taliban," *The New York Times*, February 3, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/04/world/asia/karzai-has-held-secret-contacts-with-the-taliban.html?hpw&rref=world&r=0>.

24 President Barack Obama, *On the Future of the War on Terror* (Washington DC: Office of the Press Secretary, May 23, 2013), 5, 14.

25 "Drones Increasingly Opposed: Poll." *Express Tribune*, July 19, 2013, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/579054/drones-increasingly-opposed-poll/>.

26 Jamie Doward, "UK Funds Poll in Pakistan on U.S. Drone Attacks," *The Guardian*, May 18, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/18/poll-drone-attacks-pakistan>.

*Rethinking UAV Strikes*

UAV strikes remain one of the most scrutinized and controversial military activities attributed to the United States. Is it conceivable that such strikes can be reduced without seeing a corresponding increase in terrorist activities, particularly in areas beyond the rule of law in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and elsewhere in the world?

A 2010 National Bureau of Economic Research study found that for every Afghan civilian killed by Coalition forces, anti-Coalition violence increased significantly over the next six months.<sup>27</sup> This finding appears to militate against the use of UAV strikes in the absence of greater precision.

In 2010, 118 UAV strikes were reportedly launched in Pakistan, of which 14 were successful.<sup>28</sup> (Success may have been too narrowly defined as a strike in which a militant “leader” was killed.) The bulk of studies, to date, contradict this finding and detail the erosion of core al Qaeda and Tehrik-e-Taliban leaders. UAV strikes are designed to deplete or incapacitate enemy ranks and deter future attacks. However, they produce a “vengeance effect,” where targeted groups are spurred to commit further acts of violence. In general, at least one study concluded there is little or no [statistically significant] effect of drone strikes on Taliban violence in Afghanistan but “only on Taliban violence in Pakistan.”<sup>29</sup>

However, it may well be the case in Pakistan that UAV strikes are facing better countermeasures while creating more terrorists than they have eliminated. In October 2010, Osama bin Laden himself recognized the need for better countermeasures, writing in a memo that his men should abandon Pakistan’s tribal regions where UAV strikes were concentrated.<sup>30</sup> Concomitantly, Pakistani opinion condemning the United States for these attacks remains virulent, promoting the perception that the United States is waging a war against Islam and spurring recruitment into terrorist ranks. When do the advantages of UAV strikes (mainly, preventing al Qaeda from reconstituting itself in Afghanistan or Pakistan’s tribal regions) outweigh its costs (such as spurring new recruitment to related groups)? It is impossible to say with certainty if the UAV tactic advances the US strategy of combating terrorism, although it has demonstrably eroded al Qaeda. Just as importantly, the potential loss of UAV basing rights in Afghanistan at the end of 2014 calls for reassessing the UAV tactic.

**Part Three***Four Steps Forward*

The year 2014 is unfolding as one of critical transition for Afghanistan. Pakistan authorities may be recognizing that a Coalition

27 Luke N. Condra et al., “The Effect of Civilian Casualties in Afghanistan and Iraq,” *National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 16152*, July 2010, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w16152>.

28 Christopher Olver, “Are drone strikes effective in Afghanistan and Pakistan? On the dynamics of violence between the United States and the Taliban.” Harvard Kennedy School, Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, February 12, 2013.

29 Ibid.

30 Peter Bergen, “Bin Laden’s Final Days: Big Plans, Deep Fears,” *CNN Opinion*, March 19, 2012, [http://www.cnn.com/2012/03/16/opinion/bergen-bin-laden-final-writings/index.html?\\_s=PM:OPINION](http://www.cnn.com/2012/03/16/opinion/bergen-bin-laden-final-writings/index.html?_s=PM:OPINION).



withdrawal from Afghanistan provides a larger front for the Tehrik-e-Taliban, the Haqqani Network, the Baluchistan Liberation Army, and other groups to operate against the Pakistan Army. Accordingly, the United States and Pakistan—too often characterized as uneasy, disenchanted, or suspicious allies—appear to have converging national interests that call for new cooperative measures to combat terrorism and to define specific terrorist threats. The United States needs to discard its accusatory belief that Pakistan has prolonged and diverted US military assistance to counter India. Pakistan also needs to set aside its paranoid concern that the United States will abandon it over the long haul. In short, both countries should consider taking four steps that will attract stronger public support to deal with evolving terrorist threats. This process will need support from AF-PAK's neighbors, Coalition states, other key allies, and international organizations.

*Step One: Condition US Military Aid to Rolling Up the Haqqani Network*

The Haqqani Network is one of the most lethal and resilient threats facing ANSF and NATO forces. Reportedly viewed as “good Taliban” by the Pakistan Army because the group eschews violence against it, the Network remains an unreconstructed enemy fighting for the NATO Coalition's withdrawal from Afghanistan and the imposition of Sharia Law in Afghanistan and Pakistan's tribal areas.<sup>31</sup> The United States continues to offer a \$5-million reward for information leading to the capture of the Network's operational leader, Sirajuddin Haqqani, whose group was reportedly instrumental in the escape of Osama bin Laden from Tora Bora, the detention of US Army Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl, the training of the would-be Times Square bomber, and the September 2011 coordinated attack on the US Embassy in Kabul. Despite the group's hostility, Pakistani, Afghan, and US officials have periodically reached out to the Haqqani group to gauge its interest in renouncing violence in Afghanistan, to no avail.<sup>32</sup>

US policymakers should consider linking a major portion of its military assistance and sales to the Pakistan Army's actions to roll up the Haqqani Network in Waziristan. Decisive action against the Haqqani Network, if taken, would constitute a resolute signal that 2014 will close on a substantially reduced threat from Pakistan's border areas and send a strong message to other Taliban groups to begin discussing a cease-fire or face similar action. Are there any recent signs that Pakistan's leaders might agree to take on the Haqqani Network in return for military aid? Indeed, why would the Pakistan Army renege on any agreement, however informal, to “live and let live” with the Haqqani Network in the tribal areas?

The main reason might be that the Army's strategic costs of tacit support for the Haqqani Network could quickly outweigh its benefits. The Pakistan Army must assess the possibility of a nightmare scenario in which the Haqqani Network and other terrorist groups cooperate more effectively to attack Pakistan's secular authorities in a joint

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31 Bill Roggio, “Good Taliban leader Fazal Saeed Haqqani kills 39 civilians in Kurram suicide attack,” *Threat Matrix: A Blog of the Long War Journal*, February 17, 2012, 1, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2012/02/good\\_taliban\\_leader\\_fazal\\_saeed.php#ixzz2rExQgI8y](http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2012/02/good_taliban_leader_fazal_saeed.php#ixzz2rExQgI8y)

32 Patrick Goodenough, “Notorious Haqqani Network to be Represented at Taliban-US Talks,” *CNS News*, June 19, 2013.

effort to impose Sharia Law throughout the tribal areas, Afghanistan, and Punjab. Such a scenario requires rethinking the assumption that Pakistan authorities can ride the Haqqani “tiger” without falling off it. In keeping with such a reexamination, a Pakistani official recently stated that an upcoming Pakistan Army operation in North Waziristan would “not discriminate” among militant groups and therefore include the Haqqani Network as an adversary.<sup>33</sup> It is also important to note that Nasiruddin Haqqani, Siraj’s brother and the reputed fundraiser of the Network, was gunned down in Islamabad in November 2013. A fine Arabic speaker, Nasiruddin was a key outreach to Gulf nations and long sheltered by Pakistani authorities. While his death may reflect an internal tribal dispute, it could also indicate that his group is no longer perceived by Pakistani authorities as a reliable chip to be kept on the geopolitical table vis-a-vis Afghanistan and India.

Depending upon the effectiveness of Pakistan Army action against the Haqqani Network, US policymakers could subsequently consider an unannounced halt to UAV strikes in North Waziristan. This move would be widely welcomed in Pakistan, once publicly recognized, and give both the Pakistani government and Army a boost in terms of their commitment to protect their people and their country’s sovereignty. Such a cessation would be consistent with the Obama administration’s stated goal of cutting back strikes in the Afghan theater and reducing our dependence on Afghanistan for basing rights. The UAV capability, if it remains an option, should be clearly tied to Pakistan’s progress in combating terrorist groups. In other words, UAV strikes can and should be replaced by more effective Pakistan Army actions.

### *Step Two: New Afghan Leaders Should Consider a Cease-Fire after the Haqqani Roll-Up*

Perhaps more is at stake for the Afghan people in rolling up the Haqqani Network than in Afghanistan’s upcoming spring election or its signing of a Bilateral Security Agreement with the United States. After all, if the Haqqani group is seriously degraded and its moral leadership eliminated with Pakistan’s help, Afghan leaders will finally be able to negotiate from a position of strength with remaining Taliban groups. In the absence of such strength, however, it is difficult to believe undecided Taliban groups would respect the fledgling ANSF or recognize the need to come to terms with Afghanistan’s elected leaders. In concert with announcing a cease-fire, new Afghan leaders may also wish to consider inviting the United Nations to take a lead in organizing a neutral venue for renewed intra-Afghan peace talks with Taliban parties that observe the cease fire. The UN role would boost credibility in the peace process and actively solicit the support of neighboring countries and other international actors.

For its part, Pakistani leadership should welcome the key role it could play in shaping a more peaceful Afghanistan. Serving as a positive force for peace and stability in Afghanistan, Pakistan could more effectively approach other issues with its neighbors, including India,

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33 Karen DeYoung, “Pakistan plans military operation in North Waziristan, targeting extremist groups,” *The Washington Post*, February 25, 2014, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/pakistan-poised-for-offensive-in-north-waziristan/2014/02/25/10db127c-9e6b-11e3-878c-65222df220eb\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/pakistan-poised-for-offensive-in-north-waziristan/2014/02/25/10db127c-9e6b-11e3-878c-65222df220eb_story.html)

rather than struggling with international doubt and suspicion over its use of terrorist proxies. Indeed, why should Pakistan think it can make any progress on the Kashmir issue without a clear signal that it has abandoned the use of terrorism?

*Step Three: Designate Afghan Taliban as Foreign Terrorist Organizations*

The United States should consider listing Afghan Taliban groups as Foreign Terrorist Organizations in the event they do not observe the cease fire and resort to terrorist means. The US designation of certain Afghan Taliban groups would carry the implicit threat of continued action against those who use terrorism to help attain political ends. President Hamid Karzai is currently following up on Prime Minister Sharif's efforts to sound out Taliban groups on peace talks, and Sharif's initiative reflects the ongoing debate within Afghan Taliban ranks concerning the need for political accommodation with the Afghan government once Coalition forces withdraw.<sup>34</sup> While this third step may be dismissed by some Taliban, it would have greater credibility if the United States, Afghanistan, and Pakistan created a joint security and intelligence-sharing organization committed to preempting terrorist attacks in preparation on their territory. This cooperative and scalable mechanism—a step not taken in the past thirteen years—would improve unity of effort, demonstrate international resolve, and move our trilateral relationship forward at key working levels.

*Step Four: Establish Trip-Wires*

To deal more effectively with the threat posed by the potential loss of nuclear weapons to terrorist groups, US policymakers should consider initiating weapons of mass destruction (WMD) security talks with Pakistan under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Ongoing terrorist attacks against Pakistan Army Headquarters in Rawalpindi, coupled with the emergence of a Punjabi Taliban, underscore the growing need for better WMD dialogue between our two countries. While periodically discussing the issue with Pakistan, the United States, so far, appears unable to exchange detailed information on WMD security, including the persistent rumor that Pakistan may have tapped Saudi Arabia as its weapons repository in case of widespread Pakistani instability.<sup>35</sup> The lack of such exchanges hinders potential dialogue on civilian nuclear cooperation similar to that enacted by the United States with India in 2008. New talks exploring joint protocols and assistance to strengthen WMD protection are in the clear interest of both sides.

The incentive for such talks would be the promise of a multi-year commitment of military aid and sales to the Pakistan Army subject to Congressional concurrence. The stick for such talks would be placing Pakistan on review for possible designation as a State Sponsor of Terrorism, if Army units were involved in the loss of WMD control or in nuclear proliferation efforts with North Korea and other rogue states. Since these talks may admittedly be a long shot for the United States, we should consider exploring China's willingness to sponsor talks with

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34 Ahmed and Rosenberg, "Karzai Arranged Secret Contacts?"

35 See a full discussion in Bruce Riedel, "Enduring Allies: Pakistan's Partnership with Saudi Arabia Runs Deeper," *Force* (New Delhi: December 2011).

Pakistan. Establishing stronger WMD safety protocols appears consistent with China's own efforts to assist Pakistan's nuclear development.<sup>36</sup> China's potential leadership in WMD talks also offers the United States a chance to restart the first and second steps if Pakistan were to rebuff our initial requests and China were to agree to more decisive Pakistani action to stabilize Afghanistan.

### *Diplomatic and Military Partners*

The execution of each step outlined above will require a US whole-of-government approach under the leadership of the National Security Council and Departments of State and Defense. The first step entailing a request to "roll up" the Haqqani Network will depend on prior Afghan concurrence and carefully crafted and virtually simultaneous outreach to three Pakistan counterparts: the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Pakistan Army Chief of Staff's Office. Once a policy decision is reached, the International Security Assistance Force Commander should engage Afghan and Pakistan Army counterparts to put in place a multinational military operation, relying on land power, to round up and detain Haqqani Network leaders and fighters located in some of the most difficult terrain in the world.

Up to now, operational coordination on both sides of the Durand Line has been hampered by communication breakdowns and insufficient information sharing. The challenge for both the United States and Pakistan is not only to strengthen battlefield communications but also to break the mold of past hammer-and-anvil measures by crafting a "fishnet" series of enveloping maneuvers. These actions would aim to isolate and capture a highly mobile and dangerous enemy accustomed to hiding in village society. Relying on both coercion and religious motivation to camouflage itself, the Haqqani group will no longer "fade" as effectively into the background if villagers are accorded the same protection from injury and death Americans enjoy at home. A lower standard will spell failure for this difficult operation designed to create the conditions for a cease-fire and an end to terrorist attacks. Finally, the establishment of detention centers for Haqqani fighters should build and rely on the already in-place prison institutions within Pakistan.

### **Conclusion**

The policy steps proposed above are based not only on our mutual security interests but also the need for stronger US-Pakistan relations. Since its founding in 1947, Pakistan has, *inter alia*, joined with the United States in opposing the Soviet bloc, helped us to reach rapprochement with China, and supported Mujahideen forces on the other side of the Khyber Pass. Such a historically great ally should be recognized as indispensable in the effort to promote peace and stability in South and Central Asia. Moreover, if Pakistan can move beyond a mainly transactional relationship with the United States and the West to shoulder greater regional security responsibilities, it would help unleash the vast economic potential of Central South Asia and underpin Pakistan's role as a major gateway to the region. The alternative is stark: terrorism will

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36 Saeed Shah, "Pakistan in Talks to Acquire Three Nuclear Plants from China," *The Wall Street Journal*, January 20, 2014, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304757004579332460821261146>.

continue to drain Pakistan's resources and keep it mired in relative poverty. As the long war in Afghanistan enters a new phase in 2014, the time to engage with Pakistan is upon us. Once engaged, Pakistani leaders may surprise us with the firmness of their renewed purpose to face down terrorism and contribute to a safer world; they will also expect our fairness, transparency, and resolve to stay the course with them.

