Chapter-V
US Military Action in Afghanistan and its impact on South Asia
CHAPTER-5
US MILITARY ACTION IN AFGHANISTAN AND ITS IMPACT ON SOUTH ASIA

South Asia before 9/11

The end of the Cold War changed United States South Asia policy in two ways. First, the Soviet Union was no longer the decisive factor in the United States’ South Asia policy. Instead, Washington began to view the Subcontinent from a regional perspective and started to deal with India and Pakistan in a different manner. Second, United States interests and threats to those interests came from within, rather than from outside the region. Economic liberalization, non-proliferation and democracy promotion became the main United States policy goals in South Asia.1

The United States has had several identifiable interests in South Asia during the post-Cold war period:

- Developing a strong economic and strategic relationship with India;
- Preserving the integrity of the Pakistani state;
- Curbing Islamic extremism;
- Containing terrorist activity in Pakistan and Afghanistan where possible;
- Preventing a potentially dangerous nuclear arms race on the subcontinent; and
- Promoting a peace process in Kashmir.2

However, the US government’s principal foreign policy dilemma in South Asia has been the impossibility of applying global paradigms to the subcontinent. During the Cold War, India resisted US efforts to draw it into the East-West system. From the US point of view, South Asia had rarely been viewed as strategically important in itself. Rather, it had

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usually been seen as a neighbour to regions of more utmost concern to US foreign policymakers. It can, thus, be said that since the end of the Cold War, the US South Asia policy has essentially been on autopilot, governed by inertia and habit rather than any considered strategy.

In the 1990s, United States based its South Asia policy on the Non-Proliferation Treaty and other similar global non-proliferation regimes, essentially defining US interests in the region through the nuclear proliferation issue. This approach was undermined by the three-way arms race between India, Pakistan, and China, which made accession to any US-backed non-proliferation system a losing bet for any single player. For example, after India’s 1998 nuclear tests, the United States dramatically stepped up its diplomatic cooperation with China to put severe economic and political pressure on India to “roll back” its advances in nuclear weapons technology. India viewed this with alarm, seeing it not as a norm-based initiative but rather as an attempt by the United States to strengthen a latent Indian enemy, effectively ignoring Chinese nuclear capabilities while denying India a counterweight to China’s arsenal. Eventually, the Clinton administration simply accepted the status quo, the basis of which remains a traditional balance of power among these three countries.

Nuclearisation of the region was indeed a turning point in the relations between South Asia and the United States. While South Asia had demonstrated immense potential for growth, the region also had the potential to fall into chaos since it was nuclearised. Such an apprehension was evident in the public utterances of several US policy makers. For instances, Congressman Joseph Crowley speaking in 2003 said, “The threat of nuclear weapons in South Asia is a concern not just for the region but the world”.

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Similarly, the Bush administration’s emphasis on building a community of liberal, capitalist democracies as the core principle of US security strategy was a difficult policy to be implemented in South Asia. Whereas embracing and building up India economically and militarily ran the danger of alienating Pakistan and China, whose support was needed in the war on terror and in containing North Korea, Pakistan’s obsession with the Kashmir issue, partly because of the weak domestic legitimacy of the current military regime was another challenge. China too wanted to prevent the emergence of an alternate primary power in Central and Southeast Asia. These contending national interests severely constrained US options and undermined US policy coherence in the region.

Until the 9/11 attacks, a significant attention had been devoted to India, the region’s rising power. “Washington was on shaky terms with Pakistan, having failed to persuade it to slow its nuclear weapons program or to end its support to the Taliban. The United States had blamed Pakistan for provoking a near-war with India in Kashmir in 1999 that had the potential to escalate to nuclear conflict.”

New Delhi was seen by the Clinton and Bush administrations as a possible Asian strategic partner, and Indians, Americans, and others spoke of New Delhi extending its economic, military, and cultural influence throughout the Indian Ocean area and working closely with the United States in keeping regional peace. “The Bush Administration was close to publicly recognizing India as a special partner, having concluded, like the Clinton Administration before it, that India must be the linchpin of US policy in South Asia despite American unhappiness about the Indian nuclear weapons program.”

Till 9/11, while India was widely seen to be “rising” by many American observers, Pakistan was seen as a failing and a floundering state. There was widespread consensus that India had ridden out the storm of anger triggered by its nuclear tests of May 1998, and that accommodation by the major powers, especially the United States, was at hand. India’s economy continued to grow at a healthy rate. India’s domestic politics appeared

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7 ibid.
chaotic, faction ridden and violent in many states. However, it was accepted as a normal and acceptable phenomenon in a country undergoing several simultaneous economic, class, caste, and ideological revolutions. Democracy was India’s best guarantee. It did contain the potential of nullifying the fissiparous tendencies even though its capability to foster rapid economic growth was somewhat doubtful. In contrast, Pakistan was widely perceived to be on the verge of failure. It was also becoming an ideologically divided state. There were only divided opinions on the ability of the military, which had returned to power in October 1999 to contain the increase in domestic terrorism. And clearly, the slide of Pakistan towards a chaotic future was continuing at a rapid pace.

Thus, South Asia presented a mixed picture in late 2001. Relations between India and Pakistan were badly strained, with India refusing to resume its strategic and political dialogue until Pakistan ceased its support for terrorists in Jammu & Kashmir. Unwilling to restrain even its own domestic extremists, Islamabad continued its support of the Taliban in Afghanistan and allowed a variety of militant groups to operate from its territory.

Consequences for South Asia

Consolidating United States ties with India, securing a moderate Muslim state in Pakistan, actively encouraging peaceful relations between Pakistan and India, ensuring an Afghanistan where terrorists can never again find shelter were the broad US objectives as it finalised its new priorities in South Asia. A major challenge for the United States policy makers, after the 9/11 and subsequent intervention in Afghanistan, was to secure a sustained approach with the major South Asian countries in order to influence the major regional developments. As a report noted, “Success in dealing with South Asia will require sustained and high-level attention, sensitive diplomacy, a realistic view of what is possible, and, especially with Pakistan and Afghanistan, investment of substantial resources.”

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9 ibid.
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In a testimony before the House Committee on International Relations Subcommittees on Asia and the Pacific, and on International Terrorism, Non-proliferation, and Human Rights, Christina Rocca, Assistant Secretary for South Asian Affairs summed up the US engagement in the region.

"Around the world, we have worked closely with friends and allies to limit and where possible, destroy the ability of terrorists to act against the United States and others. Within South Asia itself, since 9/11 we have helped establish a democratic government, and dismantled the repressive regime of the Taliban, in Afghanistan. We continue to support dialogue and peaceful solutions to disagreements in the region, and oppose the use of violence, whether it be generated by the Maoists in Nepal, the LTTE in Sri Lanka, or militants in Kashmir. Across the region we are involved in training military or police to better combat terrorists, and providing military and law enforcement personnel with the necessary resources to do the job. Our Anti-Terrorism Assistance in South Asia totalled over $37 million in FY 03. Together, through the UN 1267 Committee, we block the financial assets of terrorist groups and individuals, thus limiting their ability to move money and fund activities. Our tools are plentiful, and we are using all of them, as appropriate, to destroy terrorist groups. Across South Asia the United States continues to work with our allies to limit the ability of terrorist groups to work and move around. We are supporting these governments through intelligence sharing where appropriate, resources and training. We work both bilaterally and multilaterally with these governments through such organizations as the UN 1267 Sanctions Committee for terrorist financing, and fully support the involvement of regional multilateral organizations.¹⁰

Since the 9/11 events, counterterrorism policy had risen to the top of American priorities. 9/11 made South Asia the initial theatre for the ‘war on terrorism’ declared by President Bush and reordered US relations with the region. As Stephen Cohen sums up, it “set in motion complex diplomacy that sorely tested the new Indian-U.S. relationship and revived U.S. ties to Islamabad. It also produced a major India-Pakistan crisis that just might lead to a fundamental transformation of regional politics. This transformation in turn could liberate India from its ‘Pakistan problem’, enabling it to play a more significant role as a major Asian power rather than a mere regional one.”¹¹

Pakistan

Pakistan presented one of the most complex and difficult challenges facing United States diplomacy. Its political instability, entrenched Islamist extremism, economic and social weaknesses had cast dark shadows over this nuclear-armed nation. Before the 9/11 attacks “ignoring, if not isolating, Pakistan was only an extension of the Bush administration's policy toward South Asia. Unilateralism in the realm of foreign policy promised to become a hallmark of the Bush presidency.”

The events of September 11 changed all that. The focus of the most radical shift in America's policy toward Asia was in South Asia. Within a matter of weeks, if not days, Pakistan emerged as an important partner, an indispensable player in America's war on trans-national terrorism. Degradation of the operational capabilities of the Al Qaeda and affiliated Taliban remnants became an impossibility for the Bush administration without tactical cooperation from Pakistan.

Engaging with Pakistan necessitated some major policy changes. As a result, economic sanctions on both Pakistan and India were also lifted, and the policy of confronting China was put on hold. All apprehensions associated with Pakistan disappeared or at least took a back stage once it showed willingness to cooperate with the United States. In fact, it could be easily summarized that Pakistan was saved by September 11.

Pakistan’s adroit, if opportunistic; decision to align itself with the United States was more of an opportunity than a threat to President Pervez Musharraf. Till then, Musharraf had faced the immediate danger that his government would not survive expected challenges by radical Islamist elements inside Pakistan, who were supportive and, in many cases,
closely linked to the Taliban as well as to Al Qaeda.\textsuperscript{15} Cooperation with the United States, thus, presented the scenario for the stability of Musharraf regime and the gradual weakening of the radical outfits. The Pakistani strategists also thought it to be a revival of the Cold War bonhomie between the US and Pakistan. They also sensed an opportunity to internationalise the Jammu & Kashmir issue and continue with their policy of supporting the terrorists operating there. In his seminal speech of January 12, 2002, President Pervez Musharraf tried to justify his actions of supporting the efforts of the United States even though he camouflaged his real intentions with his proclaimed objective of making Pakistan “a modern, progressive, and dynamic state.”\textsuperscript{16} The United States was more than willing to be convinced with such declaration. Given Pakistan’s new found policy of cooperating and working with the United States in its war on terror, it became central to the US policy in the region.

The US-led “war on terrorism” had significant ramifications on Pakistan as the United States moved from a strategy of containing Pakistan to one of re-engagement. Operation Enduring Freedom was extended to Pakistan’s Federal Administered Tribal Area (FATA) in April 2002. These operations generated considerable information about Al Qaeda’s global networks, yet only a few of the top leaders were captured or killed and the organization still retained sufficient strength to mount large-scale terrorist attacks. Several terrorist attacks in Pakistan, including the bombing of a church in Islamabad, a suicide car bomb that killed over a dozen French technicians in Karachi, the murder of U.S. journalist Daniel Pearl, and an attack on the American Consulate in Karachi were indicators of this trend. All these incidents showed signs of Al Qaeda involvement, although no organization has claimed responsibility for them.

September 11 produced closer ties between the United States and Pakistan. In response to a “US ultimatum to join the war on Al Qaeda and the Taliban, or risk becoming a target, President Musharraf dumped the Taliban, which had been viewed for years by successive


\textsuperscript{16} Gabriel Kolko, ibid.,p.65.
Pakistani governments as its best hope to ensure a friendly government on its western border so it could focus on India to the east.\footnote{17}

Recognizing that Islamabad’s cooperation would be vital to any operation in Afghanistan, the Bush administration turned to Pakistan within a day of the attacks, wielding sticks but also offering carrots. Washington made seven demands of Islamabad, and Pakistan’s President Pervez Musharraf agreed at once to the U.S. ultimatum. These demands included: 1) stopping Al Qaeda operatives at the Pakistan border and ending all logistic support for Osama bin Laden; 2) providing blanket overflight and landing rights to the United States; 3) access to Pakistani naval and air bases and along the border; 4) immediate intelligence and immigration information; 5) condemnation of the September 11 attacks and the curb of “all domestic expressions of support for terrorism against [the United States], its friends or allies”; 6) termination of fuel shipments to the Taliban and the flow of Pakistani volunteers going to join the Taliban in Afghanistan; and 7) breaking diplomatic relations with Afghanistan and providing assistance to the United States in bringing down the Taliban and Al Qaeda if the evidence strongly implicated Al Qaeda and the Taliban continued to harbour it and bin Laden.

It needs to be stated that Pakistan was the most public defender of the Taliban movement when it was in power. It, along with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates had formally recognized it as the legitimate government. Pakistan purportedly viewed the Taliban as an instrument with which to build an Afghanistan sufficiently friendly and pliable to provide Pakistan strategic depth against rival India. This policy underwent dramatic change. Pakistan ended its public support for the Taliban and started clamping down—although intermittently and incompletely—on Islamist militant groups based in Pakistan.\footnote{18}

Musharraf’s cooperation with Washington brought Pakistan important gains. It ended the country’s international diplomatic isolation. Washington lifted nuclear sanctions,\footnote{17 Poly Nayak, ibid. \footnote{18 ibid.} 143}
suspended the “democracy” sanctions that had been in place since the 1999 coup, and put together a package of nearly $1 billion in debt relief, the result of past sanctions. Pakistan also received at least one payment of $100 million for the use of its air bases. It also brought desperately needed international aid from the United States, Japan, Europe and international financial institutions. Whereas US humanitarian aid before 9/11 had been viewed partly as a means to keep Pakistan from becoming a “nuclear basket case,” the theme after 9/11 was terrorism prevention, including the provision of alter-natives to anti-Western madrassa-based education that has been widely blamed for stoking jihadism.

However, some irritants remained and the United States and Pakistan became uneasy partners in a marriage of strategic convenience. Washington refused to sell Pakistan any new weapons. Pakistan had expressed the hope that Washington would become more active on the Kashmir dispute, but the United States was in no mood to endanger its new relationship with New Delhi. Pakistan also asked for military equipment and sought economic help in the form of increased textile quotas (textiles are Pakistan’s most important export), but the Bush administration was unable to persuade Congress. It gradually was giving rise to a feeling in Pakistan that the US wanted to keep their country on a short tether. However, subsequently Washington did pledge that it would pursue the Kashmir problem in exchange for President Musharraf’s pledge to cease Pakistan’s support for cross-border militants.

Together with Al Qaeda, Taliban leaders have carved out new bases on the Afghanistan–Pakistan border. They even operate from areas within Pakistan. The Taliban movement is partially directed from Quetta, in Pakistan’s Balochistan Province, where it has been allowed to flourish largely undisturbed by the military regime of President Pervez Musharraf. For example, Ahmed Rashid wrote in 2003, “In Quetta, the capitals of Pakistan’s Balochistan province, thousands of Taliban fighters reside in mosques and madrassas with the full support of a provincial ruling party and militant Pakistani groups. Taliban leaders wanted by the United States and Kabul governments are living openly in nearby villages, and the families of Taliban have found safe haven in refugee camps
inside Pakistan, where approximately 1 million Afghan refugees are living." Rashid had provided another instance earlier. "Taliban leaders and their families are now living openly in Quetta. Mullah Dadullah, the notorious Taliban corps commander who organized attacks in southern Afghanistan, attended a lavish wedding in a village near Quetta where some 50 members of his extended family live." 

The Karzai government in Afghanistan on numerous occasions has blamed the Pakistan authorities for not doing enough about it. For example on a February 2006 trip to Islamabad, Karzai presented the Pakistani president and his aides with a list of names, addresses and phone numbers of ranking Taliban figures, more than implying that their presence and movements were with the knowledge and perhaps approval of Pakistan's ISI. Similarly in March 2006, Afghan leaders openly asserted that Pakistan was exerting insufficient efforts to prevent Taliban remnants from operating there. Similarly, Said T. Jawad, Afghanistan's ambassador to the United States, in an interview on June 13 said, "We appreciate what Pakistan is doing. We consider terrorism to be a threat to [both countries] and, therefore, we expect sincere cooperation on behalf of Pakistan. Pakistan could do a lot more in controlling the infiltration of Taliban into Afghanistan, shutting down some of the terrorist training grounds, and making it [more] difficult for the Taliban leadership—who are living semi-openly in Pakistan—to operate out of Pakistan." 

There is little doubt that top Taliban commanders find sanctuary within Pakistan and opportunity to plan and launch operations. Islamabad's efforts to check extremism and prevent the infiltration of anti-regime insurgents are accurately described as inconsistent, incomplete, and at times insincere. In reaction, President Pervez Musharraf said that Afghanistan's information on Taliban suspects operating in Pakistan is old and unreliable.

20 ibid.
North of Balochistan, in the Pakistani Pashtun tribal areas of North and South Waziristan and adjacent provinces in Afghanistan, a more international kind of insurgent movement has taken root. It is led by Al Qaeda and Pakistani Taliban, and includes members of the Afghan Taliban, Central Asians loyal to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Chechens, Uighur and Chinese Muslims, and other Afghan groups led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Jalaluddin Haqqani. They are fighting largely in the east and northeast of Afghanistan, but have also demonstrated an improved capacity to set off car bombs and mount suicide attacks in Kabul and other major cities. They have been able to hold off Pakistani troops who were sent to Pakistan’s border areas by Musharraf under considerable US pressure in 2004.

Pakistan on the other hand, is wary that any Afghan government might fall under the influence of India. It wants “a friendly government in Afghanistan to secure what they see as their vulnerable rear area. For this and internal political reasons, they support the Pashtun- the majority tribe and the traditional rulers of Afghanistan who make up the vast majority of the population of Pakistan’s tribal areas bordering Afghanistan.”

“To ensure the dependence of an Afghan Pashtun-dominated leadership on Pakistan, Islamabad is often accused of promoting adversarial relations between Pashtuns and other ethnic groups. Many Afghans are convinced that cross-border clientalism represents a deliberate effort by Pakistan to exploit Afghanistan’s ethnic mosaic for its strategic interests. Islamabad’s favouritism toward the Pashtun mujahideen against other anti-communists parties through 1992 is cited, as is the political and military assistance furnished the largely Pashtun Taliban movement beginning in 1994. Whatever the regime in Kabul, Pakistan’s policies have usually seemed aimed at creating accommodating if not subservient Afghan governments.”

The Pakistani cooperation with the United States is said to have alienated the radical jihadi groups within the country from the regime. However, while some jihadi groups

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have parted ways with Musharraf, even targeted him, others remain under the unofficial protection of the government. By keeping jihadi organizations mostly intact and their mission alive, the government hopes to better monitor them and channel extremist forces away from anti-regime activity. Were the jihadi movements to be entirely dismantled, it is feared that many indoctrinated and armed people would be seeded across the country, adding to the violence in urban areas. Pakistan alleges that India is using its diplomatic facilities in Afghanistan to train and recruit anti-Pakistan insurgents. “Few actions rankle the Pakistanis more than the opening of Indian consulates in several Afghan cities, where they seem designed mostly as listening posts to monitor Pakistani influences and activities. But Pakistan sees more sinister motives than simple intelligence gathering, accusing the Indians through its consulates in Kandahar and Jalalabad of fostering an insurgency inside Pakistan’s Balochistan. Pakistan takes this especially seriously because of the Chinese built port at Gwadar stands at the southern boundary of the province. The port is central to Pakistan’s plans to create a new international route for sea traffic that could serve China but also Afghanistan and Central Asia.”

Pakistan has arrested over 550 Al Qaeda fighters, some of them senior operatives, and turned them over to the United States. Among those captured by Pakistan are top bin Laden aide Abu Zubaydah (captured April 2002); alleged September 11 plotter Ramzi bin Al Shibh September 11, 2002; top Al Qaeda planner Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (March 2003); and most recently a top planner, Abu Faraj al-Libbi (May 2005).

Pakistan has worked closely with the US forces against the Al Qaeda cadres. Following failed assassination attempts in December 2003 against President Musharraf, Pakistani forces accelerated efforts to find Al Qaeda forces along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. In March 2004, about 70,000 Pakistani forces began a major battle with about 300-400 suspected Al Qaeda fighters in the Waziristan area, reportedly with some support from US intelligence. Pakistan now has approximately 74,000 forces poised near the north

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24 Ibid., p.16.
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Waziristan area of Pakistan. The US military acknowledged in April 2005 that it is training Pakistani commandos to fight Al Qaeda fighters in Pakistan.26

The United States finds Pakistan's cooperation in counterterrorism efforts commendable. The Assistant Secretary for South Asian Affairs, Christina Rocca in a testimony before the House Committee on International Relations Subcommittees on Asia and the Pacific, and on International Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Human Rights, stated,

"Despite skeptical public opinion and bitter criticism from a coalition of opposition parties, President Musharraf has maintained Pakistan's policy of supporting United States OEF operations, with practical results. Our two nations have coordinated with intelligence, law enforcement, finance, and military authorities to successfully apprehend well over 500 suspected Al Qaeda and Taliban operatives, to date, including Al Qaeda operational commander Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and September 11th conspirator Ramzi bin al-Sheikh".27

Further, in the same testimony Christina Rocca, pointed out to the important role of Pakistan in the counterterrorism efforts by stating,

"We look to Pakistan to do everything in its power to prevent extremist groups operating from its soil from crossing the Line of Control. The Government of Pakistan has taken many steps to curb infiltration, but we are asking it to redouble its efforts. The United States supports all these counterterrorism efforts by providing funds for enhanced border security, including intense training, equipment, road building and logistics support. Investing in Pakistan's capacity to interdict terrorists has begun to pay off. Earlier this month Pakistan forces killed 8 and captured 18 suspected Al Qaeda along with foreigners and local tribesmen, on the Afghan border, followed a week later by detention of 32 people suspected of collaborating with or harboring Taliban remnants. Pakistan is bearing its share of the human costs of fighting the war on terror - over a dozen of its soldiers have been killed in such operations".28

At the same time, American officials have periodically pressed Musharraf to do more to reign in the Taliban and others engaged in anti-Kabul activities. Meanwhile, the United

26 Ibid., p.34.
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States has given Musharraf considerable slack in owning up to his commitments to deal with domestic extremism or his promises to restore authentic democracy. The American partnership with Pakistan would probably be on firmer footing through conditioned programs more dedicated to building the country's political and social institutions than rewarding its leadership.

President Pervez Musharraf and other top Pakistani military leaders are defying the United States on key policy issues, including nuclear proliferation and pipeline construction, as relations between the two countries plummet. The downward spiral in US-Pakistani relations began following President George W. Bush's brief visit to Pakistan in early March 2006. Bush ruffled Pakistani sensitivities by spending a relatively short time in Islamabad after spending several days in India. While Bush refused to accede to the Pakistani demands that the country be given a similar nuclear treaty as was being signed with India, the American President reportedly exacerbated Pakistani displeasure by berating Musharraf for not doing enough to stop Islamic militant incursions into Afghanistan from Pakistan.

It is a common complaint, especially by the NATO military officials that the Pakistan army has stood idle as hundreds of Taliban fighters infiltrate into Afghanistan. Pakistan has further declined repeated US, NATO and Afghan requests to take action against Taliban leaders, many of whom are known to be operating in Balochistan Province. Pakistani officials, however, deny that they have knowledge on the whereabouts of Taliban leaders.

In turn, Pakistan's Inter-services Intelligence (ISI) accuses Washington and NATO of turning a blind eye to alleged Indian efforts to stoke an insurgency in Balochistan. New Delhi denies meddling in Balochistan. ISI officials are also convinced that US and Afghan officials are allowing Indian spy agencies unparalleled access and influence among the Pashtun tribes in southern Afghanistan, from where they supposedly are conducting operations designed to destabilize Pakistan.29

Many in Islamabad believe that winning the hearts and minds of Afghanistan’s Pashtuns is a key for ensuring Pakistan’s stability. Thus, Pakistan wants the Americans and NATO to effectively recognize Pakistan’s sphere of influence in southern Afghanistan. Washington shows no sign of extending such recognition.

Pakistani authorities announced the closure of their investigation into the activities of Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan -- Pakistan’s top nuclear scientist, who was taken into custody in 2004 in connection with a proliferation scandal. The announcement came at a time when Washington was seeking Islamabad’s permission for US authorities to directly interrogate him. The nuclear scientist, who reportedly enabled the transfer of nuclear weapons technology to several states, including Iran, remains under house arrest in Islamabad. In addition, Islamabad is brushing aside US objections as it pushes ahead with plans to build a $7.2-billion gas pipeline that would run from Iran, via Pakistan, to India. 30

Such defiant moves are being cheered by many Pakistanis, who have long resented what they perceive to be Washington’s bullying of Islamabad. Musharraf isn’t doing anything to reverse the current trend, viewing it as an opportunity to shore up his dwindling domestic support. Despite this, the Pakistani president hopes to retain US support for his expected re-election bid in 2007. 31

The problem for Pakistan, and also for the United States, is that a continuation of military rule would not be in the country’s best interest. Military rule has run its course in Pakistan. It is deeply unpopular and lacks the credibility to contain in Islamic radicals. Pakistan’s security climate will only start to improve if the country obtains a genuinely elected government, which does not necessarily confront the military, but works with it to deliver greater benefits to the people. Such a government would also have to develop a

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30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
new framework for relations with the West, clearly specifying what Islamabad is capable and incapable of doing in the both the anti-terrorism and anti-proliferation struggles.  

Marvin G Weinbaum in a June 2006 report summed up the Pakistani policy towards Afghanistan.

"The Islamabad government can be seen as pursuing a two-track foreign policy toward Afghanistan. At the official level, good relations with the Kabul government are sought through policies that promote Afghan stability and economic recovery. Islamabad can live with a strengthening central government in Afghanistan as long as it is reasonably friendly and, above all, sensitive to Pakistan’s security needs. A regime that is pliable or openly pro-Pakistan would of course be preferred; but Islamabad has little choice at present but to respect the Afghan political process. To charges that the Pakistan government or specifically the ISI is complicit in the insurgency, Musharraf and others are quick to point out that over 70,000 troops are deployed in the border areas and that Pakistan has arrested more than 700 it labels as terrorists. Pakistan’s army has lost more than 600 Pakistani troops in these operations, though mostly in fighting with uncooperative local tribesmen. Indeed, the Islamabad government has incurred heavy domestic political costs for engaging militarily in the heretofore off-bounds tribal agencies, and for acknowledging its coordination with the United States in intelligence gathering."

Pakistan’s ability to sustain effective cooperation with the United States over the long term remains, however, in question. Not only is Pakistan’s internal law and order structure deficient and largely inutile, it remains riddled with corruption, a cross-agency interoperability, insufficient technical support and resources. The country also remains plagued by a multitude of criminal and extremist threats, many of which have direct impact on the US regional objectives.

India

India’s relationship with the US has been marked by several ups and downs. During the 1950s and 1960s, the United States looked to India as a large, poor, democratic challenger to large, poor, communist China. In 1956, India was the largest recipient of
United States economic assistance. The United States responded to a widespread famine in 1965-66 both with a food aid program and with technology that supported the controversial chemical-intensive agriculture of the Green Revolution. Yet throughout this period, India, as a founding member of the non-aligned movement, which claimed political independence from both cold war superpowers, was an important voice for developing countries, a role it continues to play today.\(^{34}\) India’s stand on non-alignment was looked at favourably in the hey days of the Cold War by the United States.

Infrequently, the United States and India assist one another on security issues. During India’s 1962 war with China, the United States sent an aircraft carrier to the Bay of Bengal in response to an Indian request. After the 1965 war between India and Pakistan, the United States largely lost interest in a subcontinent whose cold war implications were, at best, ambiguous. After 1971, India built a robust relationship of convenience with the Soviet Union: India received military equipment at low prices and the Soviets successfully limited United States and Chinese influence in India. However, during the Gulf War in 1991, India allowed United States aircraft en route to the conflict zone to refuel in Bombay.\(^{35}\)

From the United States’ perspective, the most challenging aspect of India’s security policy is its longstanding position regarding nuclear weapons. Since well before the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) negotiations concluded in 1968, India has regarded global nuclear disarmament as a paramount common security interest. However, Indian officials have insisted on the right to retain India’s nuclear option as long as other countries retain their nuclear armaments. India has viewed United States insistence that India unilaterally renounce its right to produce nuclear weapons as hypocritical, and this difference of opinion was magnified after India’s nuclear tests. Since then, India’s position has insisted on the right to maintain a “credible minimum nuclear deterrent.”\(^{36}\)


\(^{35}\) ibid. Also see Gabriel Kolko, ibid., p.63.

\(^{36}\) Sumit Ganguly and David Stuligross, ibid.
The fundamental improvement in United States-India ties in recent years marks a major turning point. With more than one billion people, democratic institutions, a large defense establishment, and a steadily growing economy, India represents a partner of great value. As the twenty-first century unfolds, India will have one of the world’s largest economies and will become an increasingly significant security factor in the Indian Ocean region and in Asia as a whole. Despite policy disagreements with the United States (for example, regarding Iraq and international economic and trade issues), India’s government and people find increasing overlays between their interests and those of the American people.37

Before the strategic alliance with Pakistan took place, the United States had developed a close relationship with India on the Afghanistan issue. In September 1999, Indian and US government officials held high-level talks in Washington focusing on their countries' common interest in opposing Afghanistan's Taliban regime. Over two days, India's Joint Secretary for the Americas, Alok Prasad, and Joint Secretary for Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, Vivek Katju, met with senior State Department, National Security Council and Pentagon officials, including President Clinton's Deputy National Security Advisor, John Steinberg.38 "Indian and US officials have frequently discussed Afghanistan, but, according to an Indian newspaper account, they have never before held such "long, intensive discussions on Afghan developments and their implications for the region and beyond."39

In 1999, both the US and India imposed sanctions against Afghanistan, whose Taliban regime has been officially recognized by just three states, although it has held power since the end of 1996. US and Indian diplomats have worked together at the United Nations to press for international action against the Taliban, citing its support for "terrorism" and drug trafficking and its human rights record.40 The close relationship was

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37 New Priorities in South Asia, ibid.
39 ibid.
40 ibid.

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used by India to extract a favourable approach from the United States on India’s approach towards the state-sponsored terrorism from Pakistan.

The Bush administration tried to define its relations with India as one with an emerging power. "Soon after taking office, President Bush outlined his vision of a transformed and deepened US-India partnership, one that reflects India’s emergence as a major regional power and the shared values that unite the world’s two largest democratic countries." However, at the same time the Bush administration was averse to announce dramatic departures from President Bill Clinton's approach to the country. "While an 'India first' strategy will probably be pursued, it is unlikely to be an 'India only' policy... Secretary of State Colin Powell has articulated the administration's belief that India should occupy an increasingly important position on the US foreign policy agenda. Nonetheless, it is not yet possible to discern the precise trajectory of the Bush team's South Asia policy."

U.S. policy on the eve of September 11 had the long-term objective of developing a closer relationship with India. Its high technology, professional military, shrewd, realistic political leadership, and rapid economic growth suggested that India could be an important partner. Additionally, its democratic government and the large Indian-American community provided an incentive for close ties with New Delhi.

The events of September 2001 led to closer ties between India and the United States. They seemed to validate India’s views regarding the threat of Islamic terrorism and increased India’s sense of righteousness. They also enhanced India’s willingness to threaten Pakistan with the use of force. India had long argued that Pakistan was a particularly dangerous state, supporting terrorism in India and Afghanistan, and New Delhi was frustrated by Washington’s seeming apathy toward the issue. The attacks of September 11 seemed to vindicate India’s position that terrorism rather than nuclear proliferation or Kashmir was the major strategic issue in South Asia. The events of

41 United States Relations with South Asia, Christina Rocca, Assistant Secretary for South Asian Affairs, Testimony before the House International Relations Committee Subcommittee On Asia and the Pacific, Washington, DC, March 20, 2003.
42 Stephen P. Cohen & Sunil Dasgupta, ibid.
September 2001 strengthened the core beliefs of the Indian strategic elite. These include assumptions about India’s special quality as a state, its place in the world, and the policies of other important states. After the attacks, New Delhi immediately found a more attentive audience in Washington and other western states as far as terrorism-related matters were concerned.

Any improvement with the US relationship with India has not been at the cost of its relationship with Pakistan. In fact, the post 9/11 developments have zero-sum nature that marked the relationship between United States, India and Pakistan. This simultaneous revival of close U.S.-Pakistan ties following September 11 was, however, not well received in India. New Delhi was indignant when 9/11 prompted a US about-face in relations with Pakistan and skeptical when Washington declared separate partnerships with both India and Pakistan. “The US and India also still differ on Pakistan. Despite Washington’s effort in recent years to break a longtime pattern of balancing between the two antagonists, many Indians still measure US policy by its impact on the India-Pakistan seesaw. Some saw the US removal of sanctions from Pakistan in 2001, in tandem with lifting those on India, as an affront to India’s counterterrorism concerns, given Pakistan’s failure at the time to close down militant operations against India”.43

To India’s chagrin, Pakistan was transformed overnight from a “failing state” to a “frontline” state, and became the recipient of western (especially American) attention, aid, and praise. The United States tried to balance its interests: while there were loans to Islamabad to rescue it from economic catastrophe and some sanctions were lifted, Washington tried to accommodate India by pressing Islamabad to cease its support for Muslim radicals and for cross-LOC operations in Kashmir. The Bush administration also assured Indian leaders that the forces based in Pakistan and military and economic assistance provided to Pakistan were designed to assist the war against terrorism, and were not directed against New Delhi.

43 Poly Nayak, ibid., p. 11.
Despite the events of September 11, Washington also wanted to preserve President Bush’s “one big idea” concerning South Asia. This idea was that India was the regional power that counted, and that there was an opportunity for long-term strategic, economic, and political cooperation between two states that were once characterized as “estranged democracies.” Thus, Indo-American military cooperation increased dramatically, much of it designed to improve India’s counter-terrorist capabilities.

As for Kashmir, the most visible issue dividing India and Pakistan, the Bush administration at first demonstrated that its pre-September 11 pro-India policy was intact by steadfastly refusing to discuss “mediation” between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. Indeed, two days after President Bush met President Pervez Musharraf, the United States also ruled out “facilitation”—a lesser form of engagement.

The 9/11 events allowed the Indian government to successfully reframe the South Asian debate over peace and war. Echoing the US and Israeli responses to terrorism, Indians argued that the issue facing the international community in South Asia was no longer “Kashmir” but terrorism. This strategy neutralized Pakistan’s long-standing argument that peace would come to South Asia once India began to negotiate on Kashmir. India had found a way to bring international pressure to bear upon Pakistan.

The interests and activities of India in Afghanistan are almost the reverse of those of Pakistan. India’s goal is to deny Afghanistan from providing “strategic depth” to Pakistan. In fact, “the quest for strategic depth dominated Pakistani thinking beginning in the late 1980s. Afghanistan was designated to provide safe harbour for Pakistani forces in the event of conflict with India. A cooperative, if not altogether satellite Afghan state would also provide assurance that India or any forces aligned with New Delhi would not pose a threat to Pakistan from across its northwest frontier. Supporting the cause of a pure Islamic state in Afghanistan not only promised to neutralize Pashtun irredentism but also helped to train and indoctrinate *jihadis* for the struggle against India in Kashmir.”

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44 Marvin G. Weinbaum, ibid.
India had supported the Northern Alliance against the Taliban in the mid-1990s. India saw the Taliban’s hosting of Al Qaeda as a major threat to India itself because of Al Qaeda’s association with radical Islamic organizations in Pakistan dedicated to ending Indian control of parts of Jammu and Kashmir. Some of these groups have committed major acts of terrorism in India.

India is becoming a major investor in and donor to Afghanistan. It is co-financing, along with the Asian Development Bank, several power projects in northern Afghanistan. In January 2005, India promised to help Afghanistan’s struggling Ariana national airline and it has begun India Air flights between Delhi and Kabul. It has also renovated the well known Habibia High School in Kabul and committed to a $25 million renovation of Darulaman Palace as the permanent house for Afghanistan’s parliament. Numerous other India-financed reconstruction projects are under way throughout Afghanistan.45

“New Delhi has contributed $565 million toward Afghan reconstruction—the sixth largest contributor—divided among infrastructure repair, humanitarian assistance, and institutional and human resource development. A wide spectrum of programs include highway repair, communications, energy, health care, and capacity building in contributions to secondary education and the training of diplomats and bureaucrats. India will finance the construction of a new parliament building at a cost of $50 million. Indian-donated TATA buses are a key part of Kabul’s public transportation. Assistance to Afghanistan’s reconstruction advertises India’s claims to be a regional economic power, ready to assume regional responsibilities.”46 India is also building an $80 million road linking Afghanistan’s Kandahar Province with the Iranian port at Chabahar, and providing a 300-man paramilitary force to insure the security of Indian workers.

Terrorism in Kashmir and other parts of India:
Christina Rocca in 2003 summed up the challenge that the problem of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) poses to the United States policy towards South Asia. “One of the greatest

45 Kenneth Katzman, ibid., p.35.
46 Marvin G Weinbaum, ibid., p. 16.
challenges to advancing our goals of moderation, stability and development in South Asia is the continuing tension between India and Pakistan, primarily over Kashmir.\textsuperscript{47}

The United States' complexities over the Kashmir problem was, however, linked to the nuclear capabilities of both India and Pakistan and the danger that any worsening of ties between them posed to the region at large. A commentator suggests:

"Primarily because India and Pakistan both possess nuclear weapons, the United States had a stake in resolving the Kashmir problem even before the 1998 nuclear tests. However, it has never been prepared to take the risk or spend the political capital necessary to do so, and no blueprints of a solution have emerged from successive U.S. administrations. The Bush administration pursues the traditional American position that India and Pakistan need to resolve the issue through bilateral negotiations—as suggested by the 1972 Shimla Accord, which followed the 1971 war, and the 1999 Lahore process, the most recent effort to normalize relations between the two countries—and that the United States will not mediate a dialogue between the two neighbours."\textsuperscript{48}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Terrorists</th>
<th>Civilians</th>
<th>Security Personnel</th>
<th>Force Personnel</th>
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<td>1</td>
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</table>

\textsuperscript{47} 'United States Relations with South Asia', ibid.


US Military Action in Afghanistan and its impact on South Asia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<th>2002</th>
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<td></td>
<td>521</td>
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<td>1000</td>
<td>1739</td>
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</table>

J&K has remained one of the most intractable conflicts as evident from the table above. There has been noticeable impact of the global war on terror on the conflict as far as terrorist violence is concerned. A substantial decline in the fatalities can be safely attributed to the change in the global outlook towards terrorism. Both countries, India and Pakistan, have initiated a series of confidence building measures to take the peace process forward. However, the J&K region continues to be hunted by terrorism, primarily promoted and sustained by Pakistan.

The conflict in J&K holds key to the peace and stability of the region. A commentary noted the linkages between the global war on terror and the situation in the J&K. “If the anti-terrorism campaign has increased the prospect for a stable subcontinent, it has also increased actual tensions due to the escalation of violence in Kashmir.” 50 While India has resisted any foreign intervention of the J&K conflict in spite of the Pakistani attempts to internationalise the issue, the ambiguous stand of the United States over the issue has also blamed for the tough posturing of Pakistan. And over the years, the militant groups operating in J&K have widened their target area to include many urban centres of India, like New Delhi, Varanasi, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Nagpur and Mumbai.

Central to the United States’ policy towards South Asia was an attempt to forge peace between India and Pakistan. However, at the same time “United States found itself severely constrained in pressuring Pakistan on the issue that matters most to India, cross-border terrorism. One of the constraints is that the United States believes it needs Pakistan to prosecute the war on terrorism, a dependence that is unlikely to end in the near future. But even if the war on terrorism had not complicated the issue, the United States is not capable of determining Pakistani behaviour on India and Kashmir.” 51

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51 Rajesh Rajagopalan, The United States and the South Asia tangle, Hindu, May 9, 2003.
In spite of the US attempts to de-hyphenate its simultaneous relationship with both India and Pakistan, both have displayed a tendency to perceive the warming up of US ties with one as highly deleterious to the other’s own strategic interests. Pakistan mounted serious objections to the nuclear deal between the United States and India. A Pakistani commentator summed up the country’s feelings as: “Pakistan has made many sacrifices for the US from time to time. During his visit to Pakistan President Bush demanded more from Pakistan and offered nothing. There was no investment treaty, which had been expected. There was no figure in dollars by way of aid or trade.”

Similarly, subsequent to the July 11, 2006 serial explosions targeting the railway network in Mumbai, India postponed the secretary level meetings with Pakistan and called for a sincere approach towards reigniting in the militants from Pakistan. At this point of time the United States administration appeared to have interceded on Pakistan’s behalf. “Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher gratuitously advised India to ‘find the evidence’, adding further that ‘some of the groups that are suspected in these bombings are actually outlawed in Pakistan’. Warming up to the theme, he observed further, "no country has done more than Pakistan in the ongoing fight against terrorism.... And no country has lost more people than Pakistan.”

Indian strategic analysts, and its officialdom, are loath to accept the American claim that Pakistan is a ‘stalwart’ ally in the war on terrorism, and with some reason. Washington’s own acceptance of its failure to control Pakistani actions in Kashmir, and Pakistan’s complicity in the increasing violence in Afghanistan, point to the apparent hollowness of American claims. From the Indian perspective, America’s commendation of Pakistani cooperation in the war on terror betrays either American naivete or hypocrisy.

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55 Ehsan Ahrari, ibid.
But, from the American perspective, the picture is somewhat more complex. Islamabad has made a careful distinction between terrorism directed at the United States and terrorism in the pursuit of Pakistani objectives in India, Afghanistan and other parts of the region. Islamabad has discouraged any terrorism of the first kind, and has been quick to cooperate with Washington in apprehending those that have targeted the United States and extraditing them, sometimes even in contravention of domestic law. Clearly, self-interest dictates that the United States cannot but acknowledge such cooperation, even if it is a tactical move designed to forestall American pressures in other areas. 56

Bangladesh:
In 2003, Christina Rocca, Assistant Secretary for South Asian Affairs in her testimony before the House International Relations Committee Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific summed up essentially what US perceived of Bangladesh. She said,

"Bangladesh, a moderate, democratic Islamic nation, is the eighth most populous country in the world. It is the top contributor of manpower to UN peacekeeping missions, and is an active player in regional and international organizations. It is a voice of moderation among developing countries, in the Islamic world and in South Asia. The country has made impressive strides in economic development, dramatically reducing its birth rate, improving literacy, delivering more social services and empowering women through education and employment. Major challenges remain. Deep and bitter rivalries between the two main political parties as well as continued corruption threaten political stability and impede economic reform and growth. Serious law and order problems need to be addressed. It is in the interest of the United States to keep Bangladesh firmly in the moderate, democratic camp and to help its economy prosper." 57

However, within next two years, Bangladesh's moderate image had undergone serious change. The country witnessed a steady rise in Islamist extremism. The Islamist outfits in the country were widely speculated to have established contact with the Al Qaeda elements from Afghanistan and Pakistan. Reports in the Time magazine and the Far Eastern Economic Review predicted Bangladesh's slide into a chaotic future. Regional

56 ibid.
57 United States Relations with South Asia, ibid.
media too carried out various reports on the training camps of the militant outfits in various parts of the country.

Initially the ruling regime appeared to have promoted the Islamists as an antidote to the left-wing extremists in the country. The fact that Islamist parties like the Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Oikya Jote (IOJ) are constituents of the coalition government led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Islamist extremism made steady gains. The government, till 2005 kept on denying the existence of Islamist the outfits.

Although in February 2005, under international pressure, the government notified the proscription of two outfits, the Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) and the Jama’atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), it still maintained a level of ambiguity about its approach towards dealing with the outfits. Following the country-wide blasts, in August 2005, Bangladesh government came under serious international pressure and was forced to initiate several steps against the terrorist outfits. Outlining the threats posed by Islamist terrorism US Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Dick Lugar said that “Bangladesh's traditional commitment to democracy, religious pluralism, and women’s empowerment is now being challenged by extremists who want to establish Islamic rule in the country”.58 By the first half of 2006, the government succeeded in arresting all the terrorist leaders in the country and claimed to have successfully neutralised terrorism in the country. It can be said that the global war on terror had a significant impact on the Bangladesh government’s actions against the Islamist outfits, although the remnants of many of the outfits carry the potential of regrouping.

US South Asia Relations: Defining the New Priorities
The fact that the United States is in search of a durable engagement with the South Asian region is evident from the numerous utterances by its key functionaries. “Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Christina Rocca said South Asia is a region of "remarkable social, economic and technological transformations," situated on the front

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deline of the global war on terrorism and facing the danger of nuclear war. Rocca, speaking to the Asia Society in New York on February 3, 2004 outlined the region’s importance to the Bush administration and said the United States policy toward South Asia “is firmly founded on the president’s belief in expanding freedom -- for individuals as well as nations -- on promoting economic prosperity and on never, never giving up in the search for peace.”

The war on terror has led to an unequivocal shift in United States policy focus and Washington has, among other things, abandoned sanctions that had epitomized its commitment to WMD reduction and bestowed a gamut of rewards on Pakistan, a state that had been on Washington’s waitlist for states sponsoring terrorism. These actions probably made perfect sense while the world was caught in the anti-terrorism momentum. However, such actions do run the danger of training and equipping two nuclear states with an unceasing history of hostility toward each other.

On the other hand, with such cooperation both India and Pakistan could in fact be Asian economic powerhouses with reliable leaderships engaged in dialogue over Kashmir and exercising maximum nuclear restraint. Such a scenario, though bleak, is a possibility in case the Pakistan regime manages to rein in the anti-India orientation of its foreign policy. The United States can help avert a future crisis by complementing its new economic and military magnanimity toward South Asia with a demonstrated intolerance of Pakistani support for insurgents in Kashmir.

The war on terror has provided India and Pakistan the opportunity to resolve their differences. Whereas Musharraf has taken resolute and politically risky steps to support the global anti-terror coalition, such actions have not extended to his policy towards India. “Further evidence of Pakistan’s detachment from Kashmiri insurgents - a task far


more difficult for Musharraf than his resolute detachment from the Taliban - will greatly reassure Washington and Delhi. It would then be up to Delhi to reciprocate Pakistani measures by withdrawing its massive troop deployment at the border." In all event, both the states would need to focus on reducing the danger of an all-out war, deliberate or accidental, and from there seize the new opportunities of the post-9/11 environment for dialogue and cooperation.