

SOURCES AND IMPACT OF THE TRUST DEFICIT IN PAKISTAN – US RELATIONS (2008-2014)

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Abstract

The history of Pakistan US relations is an excellent example of on-again, off-again partnership and marked by convergence and divergence of national interests. The current relationship is strained due to many issues creating mistrust and resentment between the two states. The prevailing mistrust and dissatisfaction creates hurdles in the way of attaining mutual goals and objectives and obstruct cooperation between the two countries. A strong Pakistan US alliance is important for peace and stability of the whole South Asia. This paper focuses on the need for strong bilateral relationship, mutual trust and close cooperation between Pakistan and United States for attaining both countries objectives in Afghanistan and South Asia. It also aims at exploring the causes of prevailing mistrust and dissatisfaction that obstruct cooperation and progress in Pak-US relationship. This qualitative study identifies; misconceptions about policies, conflicts of interests, US covert military operations and drone strikes, the US-India nuclear deal and increasing US- India relations , internal disturbances in Pakistan, Pakistan's relations with China and the US demand to do more as the major contributing factors for the strained US-Pakistan relations. This paper concludes that a viable, stable and healthy relationship is possible only when there is an increased trust and mutual respect between the two states. Moreover, both US and Pakistan must work on identifying mutual interests and increased relations in trade and social sector besides war on terror.

Keywords: Pakistan US Relations, Close Cooperation, Mistrust and Dissatisfaction.

Introduction

Pakistan is vital to the US interests because of its geographic location in the region. Pakistan's borders with Afghanistan, Iran, China, India, and its proximity with Indian Ocean make it attractive for the US South Asian region has always remained a focus of great power politics. United States needs strong, bilateral, and mutually beneficial relations with Pakistan in order to secure its long-term interest in the region. Pakistan and the US share common objectives of eliminating terrorism, defeating Al-Qaeda and Taliban and other extremist groups, peaceful solution of Afghanistan, and promoting peace and development

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in the region. There is a crucial need of close cooperation between the US and Pakistan for attaining these objectives. Recently the relations between the two countries are declining because of mutual distrust and resentment. United States and Pakistan also pursue some conflicting goals and interests creating security deterrence and the struggle of one state for achieving its own objectives and interests create hurdles for the other. Both the US and Pakistan hold each other responsible for failure in attaining their goals and interests.

The need for close cooperation between the US and Pakistan is not limited to terrorism but also in economic, political, social, and diplomatic fields. Strong bilateral and mutually beneficial relations with Pakistan are essential for United States for attaining its objectives in Afghanistan and South Asia. The US core goal of disrupting, dismantling, and defeating Al-Qaeda and its safe haven in Pakistan and prevention their return to Pakistan or Afghanistan requires Pakistan's active support.¹ Pakistan also need close ties with the US for advancing its objectives in the region. However, some recent events have spiraled down relations between Pakistan and the US to their lowest point. This study is an attempt to highlight the root causes of mistrust between the US and Pakistan and the effects of this mistrust on Pak- US relations and recommend ways for overcoming the prevailing mistrust and dissatisfaction.

Causes of Mistrust

A combination of the US and Pakistan policies are the root causes of mistrust and dissatisfaction. The continuous US allegation against Pakistan, especially its military, NATO military actions on Pakistan's western border, the increasing unmanned drone attacks on sovereign Pakistani territory, and CIA covert military operations inside Pakistan has created mistrust and anti-American sentiments in Pakistan. Moreover, Pakistan's support to the Afghan Taliban and Haqqani network and other policies are the cause of concern for the US.

Conflicting Goals and Interests

US goal and interests in Pakistan and the region are in direct conflict with that of Pakistan. US wants Pakistan's continuous support in war on terrorism, peaceful settlement of Afghanistan, control over the natural resource of Baluchistan and Central Asia, support to India to emerge as a dominant regional player, containment of Chinese advancement in economics and military

fields, access to Gwadar port and Iran nuclear technology. The US wants access to Gwadar port constructed with heavy Chinese investment and China's access is unacceptable for the US.² Pakistan wants to improve its military capability against India and reduce Indian influence in Afghanistan.³ While Pakistan interest towards US include legitimate space and a pro-Pakistani government in Afghanistan, good and friendly relations with neighboring countries without the US dictation, sufficient economic and military aid without conditionality and accountability from the US, similar treatment with that of India, realization of Pakistan's difficulties and sufferings in war on terrorism and promoting Pakistan's stability.

The US failure in achieving its goals in Afghanistan and Pakistan, frustration over the US drone attacks, NATO military actions on western border, CIA covert military operations, and the US strategic partnership with India brought the two countries in direct confrontation with each other. In fact, both the US and Pakistan pursue conflicting goals and interests, which not only deteriorate the security of Pakistan and Afghanistan but also disturb the peace and security of the whole region. This mutual distrust and dissatisfaction between the two countries are the main hurdles in the way of achieving durable peace and stability in Pakistan, Afghanistan as well as in the whole region.

Misperceptions

Misperceptions regarding each other policies are perhaps the most significant factor that has created a huge gulf between Pakistan and the US. United States wants to secure its interests in the region at the cost of Pakistan national interests, which reaffirm the belief that United States is not a reliable ally and will abandon it once its interests are achieved. Pakistanis are frustrated with the recent US covert military actions inside Pakistan without taking Pakistan into confidence. Being a non-NATO ally in the war on terrorism, Pakistan has suffered more than the US and NATO forces in Afghanistan. There is a wide spread perception in United States that Pakistan supports the Afghan Taliban and is also responsible for cross border skirmishes in Afghanistan. Pakistan's notion of good and bad Taliban is also controversial and not acceptable to the US. Both the countries have their own notion of good and bad Taliban.⁴ Matt Waldman believes that there is an extensive cooperation between the ISI and the Afghan Taliban at both operational and strategic levels.⁵ These negative perceptions about each other create resentment and mistrust which hampers the durability and efficiency of Pak-US relations.⁶

Drone Attacks

US drone strategy designed to execute Al-Qaeda, Taliban and other extremist targets in western part of Pakistan is a controversial and unpopular strategy, which has resulted in flaming insurgencies and militancy. The drone attacks on sovereign Pakistani territory and the US increasing political pressure on Pakistan have jeopardized Pakistan's sovereignty and stability. Although these attacks may be effective in targeting the militants yet they have also contributed to strain relations between the Washington and Islamabad.⁷ The Pakistani government officials strongly condemn the strikes and regard them as illegal, counterproductive, unacceptable and a violation of territorial integrity.⁸ The perception that drone strikes are a clear violation of Pakistan sovereignty leads to high anti-American sentiments among the Pakistani public.⁹ Drone attacks are a constant source of irritation in Pakistan, leading to misunderstanding among the public, and rising anti-American sentiments in Pakistani. Although the drone strikes target high value terrorists but they also kill and injure innocent civilian which promote protest against the strikes.¹⁰ The death ratio of civilians in drone attacks is more than that of terrorists as shown in the figure below:-

Table: Drone attack in Pakistan: 2005-2013

Year	Incidents	Killed	Injured
2005	1	1	0
2006	0	0	0
2007	1	20	15
2008	19	156	17
2009	46	536	75
2010	90	831	85+
2011	59	548	52
2012	46	344	37
2013	24	158	29
Total	286	2594	310+

Source: <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/.htm>

US Covert Military Actions inside Pakistan

US military actions inside Pakistan are a source of perpetual disturbance in Pakistan that further broadens the trust deficit, creates anti-American sentiments, and demoralized Pakistani institutions. Growing US covert military actions are the result of her dissatisfaction with the level of Pakistan's support. The Raymond Davis affair has reinforced the perception that the US is involved

in covert military actions inside Pakistan.¹¹ The recent US covert military operations produced vibration between the already complex Pak-US relations. The killing of Osama bin Laden on May 2, 2011 in Pakistani city Abbottabad has created a sense of insecurity, further infuriated the Pakistani public and military against the US, and fueled anti-Americanism. This unilateral action of the US without informing Pakistan's security agencies has widened the trust deficit between the two countries.¹² NATO forces conduct military actions on western Pakistani border. Although these cross-border strikes are in hot pursuit of fleeing militant but they violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan. On November 26, 2011, NATO forces attacked on Salala air base (a check post near Pak- Afghan border), killed twenty-four Pakistani soldiers, and injured thirteen. The incident was a grave violation of Pakistan's sovereignty and received strong protest from the public, military and government. In response, Pakistan closed NATO's ground logistics routes, boycotted Bonn conference on Afghanistan, vacated Shamsi airbase from the US and demanded formal and unconditional apology from the US¹³ These US and NATO military operations against its own ally which has suffered more in US war on terror badly damage US image of a reliable friend, created gulf and broadened mistrust between the two countries.

US India Strategic Partnership

After 9/11, event brought in drastic changes in Indian foreign policy towards the US and offered full support and cooperation to the US in the war on terror. The two countries also implemented a cooperative framework of relationship based on democracy, economy, and security. Recently both countries established strategic partnership on nuclear energy through the US-India civil nuclear cooperation. This civil nuclear deal will assist India's nuclear weapons program directly or indirectly which is against article 1 of NPT.¹⁴ India is not eligible to import controlled nuclear goods from the US or any other member of NSG¹⁵ because it has not signed NPT and has refused to open all nuclear installations to IAEA inspection. The US-India civil nuclear cooperation agreement will disturb the balance of power between India and Pakistan and will lead to nuclear arm race in South Asia. The strategic partnership between the US and India will assist India not only in Nuclear weapons but also in sophisticated conventional arms, which will further widen the already prevailing conventional imbalance between the two countries. Moreover, the US endorsement to support India for permanent seat in UNSC will raise a number of challenges for Pakistan

because after having seat in UNSC India will exploit Pakistan's interests through veto power.

Demand to Do More

Pakistan is a non-NATO ally of the US in the ongoing war on terrorism and actively struggling for eliminating Al-Qaeda and other extremists, capturing terrorist activists, banning the organizations that support extremism, and undertakes military operations against militants in various parts of the country. In spite of all Pakistan's efforts, the US senior officials pressurize it to do more. The US secretary of state Hillary Clinton during her visit to India in May 2012 warned Pakistan to do more and clear its territory from terrorist sanctuaries.¹⁶ The US constantly pressurizes Pakistan to expand its military operations to other areas especially North Waziristan and other tribal areas irrespective of the fact that military are engaged on many fronts. It is very difficult for Pakistan to fulfill the increasing US demands.

Pressure Tactics

The US pressure tactics also increase the already existing mistrust and lead to anti-Americanism in Pakistan. Pressurizing statements of the US high rank officials, do more, conditionality on economic and military aid and assistance, and strengthening ties with India, are the tactics which the US uses to pressurize Pakistan and gain its cooperation with minimum cost. Senior U.S officials and diplomats frequently issue statements that fuel frustration and feelings of being pressurized by the US Pakistanis view these pressure tactics as insensitive and overbearing.¹⁷ Donald Trump said in interview to Fox News that Pakistan is a real problem because of their nuclear weapon and until they get rid of their nuclear weapons, the US should not give any money to it. He added that Pakistan and China are the same and both are not friends of the US.¹⁸ On one occasion, Senator John Kerry who visited Pakistan after Osama Bin Laden death said that he has not come to Pakistan to apologize for US raid and warned Pakistan's intelligence agency that road ahead will be defined by action instead of words. The trust deficit further broadened between the two countries when the US government offered reward of 10 million dollars for those who inform about Pakistani citizen Hafiz Saeed.¹⁹

US Policies towards the Muslim World

United States wants to install western type political and economic system in the Muslim countries in order to increase its soft power and influence in the Islamic world. Nevertheless, the Muslims feels that the US is struggling to reshape the Islamic system and tries to install a pro-western clients Islamic world that would work on the dictates of the US. Moreover, the Muslims feel that US intervention of Muslim countries were not about democracy, human rights or elimination of terrorism but were about removing threats to the US global security.²⁰ The US supports westernization process in the Muslim world and work for liberal habits of thought and social change. Because of these efforts of the US reactionary elements, the Islamic world is resisting the US influence with force.²¹ Pakistanis being a part of Muslim Ummah is frustrated with the US policies towards the Muslim world.

America's Anti-Islamic Propaganda

Islam is a religion of peace and aimed at reforming humanity. For centuries, the West has carried out an ongoing campaign in an attempt to dominate the rich natural resources of the Muslim World, which has led to widespread anti-American sentiment in the Muslim world.²² The Western countries especially the US are attempting to disgrace the true religion of Islam. The recent offensive of the Euro-American Zionist bloc is the anti-Islamic US-made propaganda film 'The Innocence of Muslims' which is against the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him), Islam and the Muslims. The Innocence of Muslims genuinely incensed the Muslims of the world as they see it as an attack on the image of their beloved Prophet (PBUH) and as a part of series of attacks on their religion.²³ This has frustrated the Muslims of the world and lead to high anti-Americanism in the Muslim world. The Muslims of Pakistan view this anti-Islamic propaganda film as an attempt to demean and disgrace Islam. The people of Pakistan are deeply concerned about the negative propaganda of the Western countries against Islam. They share the same anger and anxiety common elsewhere in the Muslim world that feed on the perception that US is deliberately attacking the Muslims and inflaming the very scourge it seeks to eradicate.²⁴

Nuclear Weapons

Nuclear weapons are a guarantee of Pakistan's survival as a nation-state and are instrumental in advancing Pakistan standing as a nuclear weapon state

on international level. The safety, command, and control arrangements are important component of Pakistan's nuclear deterrence.²⁵ The western commentators on Pakistan fear the proliferation of nuclear assets and the growing Islamic militancy in Pakistan and its misuse against the US or her allies.²⁶ The security of Pakistan's nuclear weapon is still the top US priority. Recent reports show that Pakistan is rapidly growing its nuclear weapons with the help of China perhaps in response to the US-India civil nuclear deal. China is planning to build up two nuclear reactors in Pakistan for which the United States wants China's international justification.²⁷ Historically, United States has undermined Pakistan's security concerns and underestimated its strong commitment to its nuclear program.²⁸ The continuous US concerns about Pakistan's nuclear program angers the Pakistani public, military, and lead to mistrust between the two countries.

Role of Religious Political Parties

The role of religious political parties in the politics and society of Pakistan have been a point of concern for the US and a factor for mistrust. The US has great concern about Islamism, Islamic militancy, and religious political parties in Pakistan. There are fears in the west that Pakistan is on the brink of a takeover by the Taliban and Islamic militant groups that will destabilize the region and will enable terrorist networks to gain access to Pakistan's nuclear weapons. The US is also concerned with the rise of religious political parties in Pakistan. There are two main religious parties the Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam. Jamaat-e-Islami work for the replacement of secular government with that of Islamic rule and has close ideological linkages with the Muslim Brotherhood Movement of Middle East.²⁹ Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam is the second largest religious party in Pakistan working for protecting and advancing the interests of Madrassas.³⁰

The US believes that the increasing influence of these religious parties will endanger its interests and destabilize the region. The combine electorate influence of these religious parties is quite modest and there is no chance of their dominance on political scene.³¹ Pakistan alliance with the US as frontline state in the war against terrorism and its support to unpopular US policies has created resentment and hatred among the public in Pakistan. They believe Pakistani government work on the dictation of the US providing support to the US against the Muslims. Such beliefs frustrated the people and attracted people towards Islamic militant groups. Numerous militant groups, which were previously

hostile towards each other come together and increase their level of coordination and planning.³² These militant groups meet, train and raise funds throughout Pakistan and sought observance of strict Islamic rules and are notable for expression of anti-American sentiments. The realization of South Asian stability requires combine efforts of both the US and Pakistan to break the nexus that bred and nurtured militant groups.³³

Disturbance in Baluchistan

The deteriorated security situation in Baluchistan indicates the ground realities of the US “Great Game” which is a part of the US efforts to redraw the map of the Muslim world in the Middle East and West Asia, and a part of its plan of Broader Middle East, which will have serious implications for Pakistan’s security.³⁴ Baluchistan, the longest province of Pakistan with its borders with Iran and Afghanistan gained strategic importance in post 9/11 scenario because of its natural resources, strategic location, and specially Gwadar port. The February 2012 hearing of the US Congressional committee on Baluchistan infuriated Pakistan.³⁵ The terrorist attacks become more extensive in Baluchistan since 9/11. These sophisticated acts of terrorism indicate strong external linkages to what is going on in Baluchistan.³⁶ The US occupation of Afghanistan and the collapse of Taliban government provided India an opportunity to gain strategic space in Afghanistan. India has opened consulates in Afghanistan along Pakistani border with the purpose of creating instability in Pakistan from its western border. United States and India wanted to separate Baluchistan from Pakistan to create a corridor from Afghanistan to Arabian Sea which will not only bypass Pakistan but also deprive it of a major source of natural resources and Strategic value.³⁷ The ongoing security situation in Pakistan especially in Baluchistan is enough for understanding US objectives and its dual policies toward Pakistan. Pakistan must realize the changed priorities of the US in South Asia.

Recommendations for Reducing Mistrust

Drone attacks have been a source of perpetual disturbance, causing uncountable collateral damage and resulting in hostile attitude towards the US motives in Pakistan. The US needs to rethink this strategy if it really wishes to restore the confidence and trust of Pakistani public. There is a need for greater coordination between the US and Pakistan military and intelligence for the selection of drone targets. The do more policy of US cause resentment and frustration not only in governing circles, military but also creates mistrust among

Pakistani public. United States exit from Afghanistan is impossible without Pakistan's help. Keeping in view this fact US must abandon its do more policy. Instead the US itself need to do more to win the trust and confidence of Pakistani public, achieve cooperation of its military especially the ISI and gain the support of government.

US covert military actions inside Pakistan create anti-American sentiments among Pakistani public, frustrates the military, and damages the image of Pakistan as a sovereign independent state. These unilateral actions not only paint negativism in Pak- US relationship but also reaffirm the belief that United States is not a reliable friend that violates the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its non-NATO ally. United States must abandon this strategy if it wants to restore its image of a reliable friend. Furthermore, United States use economic and military aid and assistance as a mean to gain support of Pakistan and frequently withhold and suspend aid and assistance in order to ensure irresistible and unquestionable Pakistan's support. US should avoid accountability and conditionality on economic and military aid and assistance because Pakistani view fluctuations in the US aid and assistance policies as insulting. In addition, United States needs to target Pakistani opinion about its intentions in the region specially its involvement in Baluchistan disturbance.

US Indian strategic partnership through civil nuclear deal, which would directly or indirectly advance Indian Nuclear weapons and consequently disturb balance of power between Pakistan and India is of great concern for Pakistan. United States should rethink its civil nuclear agreement with India or provide similar status to Pakistan. Despite the fact that South Asian security complex is always dominated by Pakistan India rivalry, US encouragement to India to emerge as dominant regional power is one of the causes of strained Pakistan US relationship. India's emergence as dominant regional player will create serious threats to the security of whole South Asian region.

United States hold Pakistan's Intelligence agency responsible for instability in Afghanistan and accused that ISI play both sides of the road. Pakistan on the one side is a non-NATO ally of US in war on terrorism and strives to eliminate terrorism, extremism, and Islamic fundamentalism and on the other side support Afghan Taliban against the foreign forces. United States should realize Pakistan's legitimate interests in Afghanistan. Pakistan wants to secure its western border, reduce Indian influence in Afghanistan and demand

due role in post withdrawal from Afghanistan. Being a strategic partner in war on terror US should recognize and accommodate Pakistan's legitimate interest in Afghanistan. United States need to involve Pakistan strategically if it wants durable peace in Afghanistan. In this connection, US should build a comprehensive trilateral partnership among Pakistan, Afghanistan, and United States.³⁸

Conclusion

Since Pakistan joined, the US led war on terrorism, the relationship between US and Pakistan have never been at ease and presently there is total trust deficit relationship and deep suspicions are observed in their policies towards each other. The relations remained strained over a number of issue and both countries do not trust each other and the consequent events have created anti-Americanism and mistrust among Pakistani public. US is also not satisfied with Pakistan's efforts in eliminating terrorism, extremism, and Islamic fundamentalism and pressurizes it to do more. The west has been facing difficulty in deciding about Pakistan as an ally or an obstacle.³⁹ Tension between Pakistan and US has reached at alarming levels because of a combination of US policies hostile to Pakistan's interests. Pakistan is playing the role of a client state fighting the US war and accepting its strategic interests of defeating Al-Qaeda, Taliban and religious extremists. Instead of giving due respect and recognition to Pakistan's sacrifices the US continuously show dissatisfaction over Pakistan's efforts; pursue policies hostile to Pakistan's interests and shaking the very existence of Pakistan.

NOTES

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