

PAK-US HOOKUP IN AFGHANISTAN: A BLAME GAME TO END THE GAME? *

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***Abstract:** Pakistan has experienced US policy towards her shifting from that of a most allied ally to that of utter negligence and even that of hostility. A diverse and variegated spectrum of ostensible explanations exists for inconsistency, confusion, reactive nature, and therefore, vacillation of US foreign Policy towards Pakistan; ranging from hackneyed clichés to unnerving conspiracy theories, each endowed with respective reasoning. One of these explanations considers Afghan conundrum a key factor in this vacillation. Afghanistan has almost always been crucial, to say the least, in shaping US foreign policy towards Pakistan, at least since 1979. The prevalent mist over Pak-US relations, resulted from the flagrant blame-game between the two states, has heralded yet another shift in cyclic dialecticism of their mutual relations. The paper identifies this blame game as a prelude to end game in Afghanistan, harbingering the end of yet another Pak-US alliance made in the wake of 9/11; and appraises the role of Afghan conundrum in shaping already complex Pak-US hookup in Afghanistan.*

Keywords: US foreign policy, Pakistan, Afghanistan, end game, blame game, strategic depth, Taliban, War on Terror, 9/11

Introduction

US foreign policy has profound implications – sometimes immediate and direct, sometimes indirect and underlying – for economy, security, freedom, and even everyday lives of people, not only of the US but that of the whole world, hence important to study

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and understand.¹ Pakistan is certainly not immune to it; as the unremitting primacy attached to Washington, dovetailed with former's aid-oriented policy, has now virtually hitched Pakistan's security and economic development with US foreign policy towards her. In spite of shifts in global and regional scenarios, embalming of Pak-US ties has always remained a top priority in Pakistan's foreign policy calculus. Furthermore, the relevance and significance of US foreign policy for Pakistan is likely to continue, and possibly increase, in coming decades; hence important to study and understand.

While the prevalent mist over Pak-US relations, manifest in ongoing flagrant blame-game, can be attributed to startling ambivalence over aims and methodology of the War on Terror; it also heralds yet another tergiversation in cyclic dialecticism of their mutual relations. The thesis and antithesis of this cyclic dialecticism take forms of constructs like 'most-allied ally' and 'non-NATO ally' to 'double game' and 'trust deficit' – unfortunately never resulting in some sort of synthesis.

The much avowed 'trust-deficit,' which characterizes the prevalent terms between the two countries, sharply contrasts with pretentious knighthood of 'non-NATO ally' awarded to Pakistan not too long ago. Even this 'Peripeteia'² has not occurred for the first time in the history of Pak-US relations. US foreign policy first veered towards Pakistan in 1953-54, making Pakistan most allied ally in South Asia; which followed by the first Peripeteia in 1962, making Pakistan insignificant in the wake of Sino-Indian border conflict. The second Peripeteia occurred in 1989, when the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan brought Pakistan down in US foreign policy calculus to the pre-1979 level. This paper is about the third Peripeteia – now in the making – and identifies Afghan conundrum

¹ Muhammad Usman Amin Siddiqi and Dr. Khalid Manzoor Butt, "The Past is Prologue: A Thematic Discourse on the History of US Foreign Policy (1776–1940s)," *The Journal of Political Science* XXIX (2011): 3.

² Aristotle's literary construct meaning a change by which the action veers round to its opposite.

as a stimulus to shift Pakistan up or down in US foreign policy calculus. In order to do that, a context of the Pak-US blame game is given in the following paragraphs.

Returning the Pound of Flesh

Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with the US or you are with the terrorists.

(President George W. Bush, September 20, 2001)

The stunning attacks of September 11, 2001, led the US launch a worldwide campaign against forces of international terrorism. Afghanistan was obvious point to start the ball rolling, as it was where the US negligence³ had created a greenhouse for terrorists from all around the world – and the US knew it well. In turning away from Afghanistan in early 1990s, the US had not only turned a blind eye to the formation of a new post-Cold War construct: the ‘failed state’ in Afghanistan, making it a home to the aggrieved Arab extremists, but also had disavowed even its resolute ally: Pakistan.⁴ Now in 2001, once again, the US inevitably needed

³ “The senior officials of President George H. W. Bush’s administration did not look back to that former war zone, their energies instead consumed by the stunning denouement of the Cold War.” Milton Bearden, “Afghanistan, Graveyard of Empires,” *Foreign Affairs* 80, no. 6 (November – December 2001): 23–24, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20050325>. Ahmed Rashid writes: “The Arabs, the Islamic extremists in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and other jihadis were left to their own devices... There was no funding for international efforts to revive Afghanistan, little help for the five million refugees eager to return, no diplomatic pressure to force the Mujahidin to come to a political compromise.” Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The US and the Disaster in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 11.

⁴ No longer able to stave off congressionally mandated sanctions, triggered by its nuclear weapons development program, Pakistan fell out of Washington’s favor. See Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 24–25.

partnership with the second most important country in this regard: Pakistan.⁵

This was somewhat déjà vu of what happened in 1979, when the US overwhelmingly felt the need of improvement in her relations with Pakistan after the Soviets stormed Afghanistan with around eighty thousand troops, 1800 tanks, and 2000 AFVs on December 27.⁶ Soviet invasion in Afghanistan was a highly disturbing development for both Pakistan and the US.⁷ It drove the

⁵ It took just a few hours for the US administration to conclude that the attacks had probably originated from Afghanistan, and that any effective counter-attack would require the co-operation of Pakistan. Owen Bennett Jones, *Pakistan: Eye of the Storm* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 1.

⁶ The first strike was followed by two more divisions and aircrafts making a total of 4,000 flights into Kabul in second week alone. Hafizullah Amin was killed and a soviet protégé, Babrak Karmal, was installed as third President of Afghanistan. For details, see David C. Isby, *Russia's war in Afghanistan*, Men-at-arms Series 178 (London: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 1986), 5–6. For Soviet strategic aims in Afghanistan, command and control, operational approach, troops, tactics, conventional and chemical weapons, and casualties, see *ibid.*, 9–17. For internal developments in Afghanistan shortly before and after Soviet invasion, see Thomas Taylor Hammond, *Red Flag over Afghanistan: The Communist Coup, the Soviet Invasion, and the Consequences* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984). Also see Kuldip Nayar, *Report on Afghanistan* (New Delhi: Allied, 1981); and, K. P. Misra, ed., *Afghanistan Crisis* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1981), both referred in, Hassan Askari Rizvi, "Pakistan's Defence Policy," in *Readings in Pakistan Foreign Policy, 1971-1998*, ed. Mehrunnisa Ali (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 224–25. For Soviet interests in Afghanistan, reasons for invasion, and methodology, see J. Bruce Amstutz, *Afghanistan: The First Five Years of Soviet Occupation* (Washington DC: Diane Publishing, 1994), 3–9, 40–47, 51–57.

⁷ For Pakistan, it added another dimension to its security scenario, which hitherto was somewhat non-existent, and the threat scenario had indeed become overwhelming. For further study of new dimensions to Pakistan's defense and security environment added by Soviet invasion, see Rizvi, "Pakistan's Defence Policy," 213–14. Also see,

US back to its enthusiasm to ‘remake’ the world and reminded her that she had a frontline ally in Pakistan for securing peace in the world.

Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, coincided with several other developments, inevitably dragged Pakistan into a quagmire of Cold War politics. Soviet presence on Pakistan’s northern frontiers; the puppet government in Kabul; alleged Soviet intentions to proceed further southwards to reach warm waters through Pakistan, posing imminent threat from north; Khomeini’s revolution of 1979 in western neighboring country of Iran; and Indira Gandhi’s re-election to power in the east squeezed Pakistan from all sides. Not to forget, the domestic milieu that was to dictate Pakistan’s deadly choices in future. In addition to Pakistan’s incessant economic and security needs, in the wake of Bhutto’s hanging in 1979, General Zia needed foreign support to strengthen and prolong his regime. Furthermore, his policy of Islamization dovetailed with US support to mujahidin in Afghanistan.

The US was in desperate need of a formidable ally in South Asia to counter what was perceived as the Soviet threat to the free world. There were divergent views in Pakistan regarding Soviet intentions to proceed further southwards;⁸ but the only possibility of

Robert G. Wirsing, *Pakistan’s Security under Zia, 1977–1988: The Policy Imperatives of a Peripheral Asian State* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1991), 25–62. For the US, it influenced President Jimmy Carter to pull the SALT II Treaty from Senate consideration and to ask for a dramatic increase in defense spending and strategic forces. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was interpreted by the US as a clear threat to American interests in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, and it challenged their perceptions with regard to Soviet intentions, “calling into question the Soviet interpretation of détente.” See Mujtaba Razvi, “Pakistan’s Geopolitical Environment and Security,” in Ali, *Pakistan Foreign Policy*, 191–93. Also see Anthony Arnold, “US Policy: Before and After,” in *Afghanistan, the Soviet Invasion in Perspective* (New Delhi: Hoover Press, 1987), 128–43.

⁸ Even in the US, let alone Pakistan, there were divergent views regarding Soviet intentions. According to Professor Stephen Cohen, who was working with the US State Department at the time, the opinion in the

acquiring much needed US military and economic aid was through convergence of views between the two countries. The impact of Pakistan's Afghan policy on Pak-US relations was conspicuous. The anti-Communist ballyhoo in the US – grown especially after Ronald Reagan's call for the rollback of communism – dovetailed with Zia's propaganda about Soviet intentions, and stirred US sympathies for her forgotten alley in South Asia.

So, Pakistan enjoyed the blessings of the US throughout the Soviet war in Afghanistan;⁹ the biggest among them was turning a blind eye to Pakistan's nuclear programme.¹⁰ Military and financial

American Congress was divided. Twenty per cent of members thought that the USSR's objective was merely the invasion of Afghanistan; 60 per cent thought it was to establish influence in the Gulf; and only 10–20 per cent were of the view that there were plans to invade Pakistan.” Ayesha Siddiq Agha, *Pakistan's Arms Procurement and Military Buildup, 1979–99: In Search of a Policy* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 14.

⁹ However, it should also be mentioned here that the alliance was a costly business for Pakistan on many fronts. The costs included negative impact of influx of about three million migrants from Afghanistan on the country's economy and ecology; menace of the narcotics trade and small arms proliferation that deeply anchored in society; unfortunate casualties in Pakistani villages stretched along Durand line as collateral damage in the war; sectarian strife that periodically erupted between Sunnis and Shiites; violence in Karachi between Pashtuns and mohajirs; overall radicalization of the society; corruption that increased within the military during this period; enmity of, and heated exchanges with Moscow; and Indo-Pak standoffs owing to aggravated Kashmir issue.

¹⁰ Pakistan, at the height of the Brasstacks crisis, sent clear information to India, through an interview Abdul Qader Khan gave to an Indian journalist, that it had acquired nuclear weapons. In the interview Dr. Khan stated, “Nobody can undo Pakistan or take us for granted. We are here to stay and let it be clear that we shall use the bomb if our existence is threatened.” Kuldip Nayar, “We Have the A-Bomb, Says Pakistan's Dr. Strangelove,” *Observer* (London), March 1, 1987, quoted in, Saira Khan, *Nuclear Weapons and Conflict Transformation: The Case of India-Pakistan* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 103.

assistance was extended to Pakistan and her nuclear programme was 'deemphasized.' In 1981, the Congress authorized a \$3.2 billion five-year aid package, including 40 F-16 aircrafts. The Reagan administration pledged to provide further assistance of \$4 billion for next five years (1987–1993) and exempted Pakistan from the Symington and Glenn Amendments for a period of 6 years, ending in 1987. The US policies also encouraged General Zia's Islamization and his consequent foreign policy that resulted in providing Pakistan with all those 'facilities' which would have been felt necessary in the future to declare it a 'Terrorist State.'¹¹

All these favors turned out to be the 'pound of flesh' that was to be retuned at the beginning of the next millennium. The collapse of the Twin Towers in Manhattan, New York, along with other terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 marked a watershed in the history of global politics in general and that of Pak-US relations in particular. The consequent global 'War on Terror' dictated a paradigm shift in US policy towards Pakistan, as it catapulted Pakistan to an higher echelon of strategic significance in US foreign policy calculus.

General Pervaiz Musharraf was approached by the US in the aftermath of 9/11, and the message was very clear: are you with us or against us? The initial conversation between Richard Armitage, the then Deputy Secretary of State, and General Mehmood, the then

¹¹ For General Zia's quest for Islamization under US patronage in the wake of Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, see Stephen Burgess, "Pakistan's Security Dilemma and Quest for Strategic Stability," in *Strategic stability in Asia*, ed. Amit Gupta (Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008), 128–30. The ISI and CIA worked together to aid Afghan, Pakistani, and foreign mujahidin in a jihad against the Soviet Union. See Ahmed Rashid, "Pakistan and the Taliban," in *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban*, ed. William Maley (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 72–88. For the US policy and support to Taliban, see, Richard Mackenzie, "The United States and the Taliban," in *ibid.*, 90–103.

Director General ISI, was confrontational,¹² while the latter was on his trip to Washington to convince the US of Taliban's support and Pakistan's role in capturing Osama.¹³ The next day, he was presented with a list of seven demands from the US to Pakistan to comply with.¹⁴ Even to Washington's surprise, General Musharraf consented to all of these demands.¹⁵

Except Lt. General Mehmood Ahmed and Lt. Gen. Muzaffar Hussain Usmani, all the corps commanders consented to Musharraf's decision to side with the US and to renounce the Taliban, in case, they refuse to handover Osama bin Laden. These two generals held important positions in his government, as the two had played significant role in toppling previous government of Mian Nawaz Sharif. General Mehmood was reportedly sent to Afghanistan to talk to Mullah Omer in deserting Osama bin Laden and not to resist the US operation in Afghanistan. But he allegedly asked Mullah Omer to resist the US and assured him of ISI's

¹² Timothy D. Hoyt, "The War on Terrorism: Implications for South Asia," in *South Asia in World Politics*, ed. Devin T. Hagerty (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 285.

¹³ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 24–25.

¹⁴ The demands were later published in *The 9/11 Commission Report*: 1) Stop Al Qaeda operatives at its border, and end all logistical support for bin Laden. 2) Give the United States blanket over flight and landing rights for all necessary military and intelligence operations. 3) Provide territorial access to the US, allied military intelligence, and other personnel to conduct operations against Al Qaeda. 4) Provide the United States with intelligence information. 5) Continue to publicly condemn the terrorist attacks. 6) Cut off all shipments of fuel to the Taliban, and stop recruits from going to Afghanistan. 7) If the evidence implicated bin Laden and Al Qaeda, and the Taliban continued to harbor them, to break relations with the Taliban government. Thomas H. Kean et al., *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 311, accessed August 19, 2011, <http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>.

¹⁵ Hoyt, "War on Terrorism," 285.

support. On his return, both the generals were removed from their positions by President Musharraf.¹⁶

Musharraf, first in abovementioned corps commanders' meeting and then in his book, reported Richard Armitage's threat to Pakistan to 'bomb her to stone age.' This was negated by President Bush, General Mehmood, and by Richard Armitage himself. General Mehmood, however, was told that 'history begins today' for the US. General Musharraf exaggerated the expression of seriousness and promptitude of the US in acting against Afghanistan and the Taliban in order to convince his corps commanders. The dissenting opinion from his colleagues was because they thought the Taliban were important for Pakistan and that deserting them would have negative impacts on Pakistan's internal security environment – a fear that later came true.

Finally, having consent of all of his lieutenants, General Musharraf delivered a speech renouncing the Taliban and assuring the US of Pakistan's support in the War on Terror. The main consideration in his decision was US assurances to ensure Pakistan's security, long term economic growth, settlement of Kashmir dispute, and protection of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. The assistance, that Pakistan pledged to provide to the US in the War on Terror, included intelligence sharing, base rights, and logistic support. Furthermore, Pakistan talked the Taliban in not resisting to US operation in Afghanistan. That was why Kabul fell so easily; though, Pakistan's role in success of the Operation Enduring Freedom was understated.

India's rapacious promptitude to take Pakistan's position was evident from her offers to the US of air bases for the operation and intelligence from her sources in Northern Alliance. But that intelligence was of less value than what Pakistan had – thanks to

¹⁶ For details of initial reactions, and making of the Pak-US alliance for fighting terrorism, see Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 24–32; Hoyt, "War on Terrorism," 285–86, 297; Jones, *Eye of the Storm*, 1–3; Tariq Ali, *The Duel: Pakistan on the Flight Path of American Power* (New York: Scribner, 2009), 145–48.

Pakistan-Taliban relations in the previous decade. However, the establishment of Pak-US alliance dashed all Indian hopes.

Pakistan provided the US all that was pledged in 2001, including deployment of more than ever troops to its northwestern borders. But 2002 military standoff between India and Pakistan dictated Pakistan to shift its military deployment to its eastern border with India. Another development at this time was US engagement in Iraq, which diverted US attention and energies from Afghanistan. These two developments dovetailed to provide the Taliban an opportunity to flee from Afghanistan and find safe havens in Pakistan. The later terrorist waves that swept almost all important cities of Pakistan and the emergence of Pakistani Taliban were the results of that mass migration of the Taliban from Afghanistan to Pakistan.

Pakistan's security and intelligence agencies allegedly kept supporting the Taliban. It was because of the fear that Pakistan's U-turn in 2001 has helped the Northern Alliance strengthen its position in Afghanistan. The Northern Alliance has always been a threat to Pakistan because of its backing from Iran, Russia, and most importantly, India. A Sudden increase in Indian presence in Afghanistan also threatened Pakistan. Pakistan accuses India of having several consulates in Afghanistan, which are instrumental in funding and arming militants in Baluchistan; and that India is making her stronghold in Afghanistan to squeeze Pakistan from both sides through these embassies.

Even prior to 9/11 and the Operation Enduring Freedom, when the Taliban had stronghold in Afghanistan, the opposing groups of Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras, under previously exiled leadership, had started to come back to Afghanistan to resist the Taliban. With the Operation Enduring Freedom, these groups got reinvigorated, as with the fall of Kabul, the Northern Alliance fighters entered the city soon after the BBC's war correspondents.

Furthermore, US involvement in Iraq and resultant ignorance towards Afghanistan made Pakistani military establishment think that the US would soon withdraw from Afghanistan, like in 1989. So the military establishment thought of keeping the Taliban as a

strategic asset to steer Afghan domestic politics in Pakistan's favor once the US would be out of Afghanistan. The prevalent trust deficit between Pakistan and the US proves Pakistani military and ISI's apprehensions.

Notwithstanding her fears and skepticism, Pakistani military has moved against Al-Qaeda and some factions of the Taliban. Pakistan has arrested or killed high target leaders of Al-Qaeda like Khalid Sheikh Muhammad, Abu Zubaydah, Yassir al-Jaziri, Khalid bin Attash, Tohir Yuldashev, Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani, Abu Faraj al-Libi, Mustafa Setmariam Nasar, Abu Laith al-Libi, and Sabir Shah;¹⁷ and Taliban leaders including Mullah Akhter Usmani, Mullah Dadullah, Mullah Obaidullah, Mullah Abdul Salam, Mullah Mir Mohammad, and Baitullah Mehsood.

Pakistan, being the most-allied ally of the US in War on Terror, has extended political, diplomatic, and logistic support to the US; captured Taliban and Al-Qaeda operatives; launched highly successful military operations in Swat and Waziristan; shared intelligence reports; and most importantly, has deployed more troops than ever to the western border of the country. Not to mention, thousands of casualties in blasts and suicide attacks (over 35000); deteriorating law and order situation; economic turmoil, growing militancy, and exorbitant public resentment, which are the fruits of being the 'frontline state' in US War on Terror.

Pakistan's 'services' have been reimbursed with some \$11 billion from 2001 to 2008. On the other hand, this War on Terror has cost Pakistan, in economic terms, more than 50 to 60 billion US dollars. This economic aid pales insignificantly against such huge losses. Moreover, its psychological impact on nation's collective psyche is incalculable. Whereas, their paltry economic aid (with many strings attached) is the total price for Pakistan's regional security apprehensions.

¹⁷ "Top al-Qaeda Leaders Captured or Killed on Pakistani Soil," *The News* (Lahore), May 03, 2011; and, Ahmed Rashid, "The Afghan Conundrum," in *Pakistan: Beyond the 'Crisis State,'* ed. Maleeha Lodhi (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011), 308.

The Blame Game

In 2001, Pak-US alliance to ‘combat terrorism’ was the writing on the wall, as “Pakistan had to choose between making an enemy of the US and taking a quick and dirty deal sweetened with the promise of a lot of cash.”¹⁸ But on the eve of 10th anniversary of the Pak-US counter terrorism alliance, the following statements from both sides portrayed a dismal picture of their mutual relations:

“We need to end this ‘blame-game.’”¹⁹

Pakistan’s Foreign Secretary, Salman Bashir

Pakistan “needs to ‘do more’ so that India and the United States are safe from the savagery of terrorist attacks.”²⁰

US Ambassador to India, Timothy J. Roemer

“Four drone attacks claim 52 lives in 24 hours”

Dawn, July 13, 2011

“The drone attacks would continue.”²¹

Senator John Kerry (Democrat - Massachusetts)

President Asif Ali Zardari urges the United States to stop drone attacks and provide the technology to Pakistan’s civil armed forces.²²

¹⁸ Aryn Baker, “Why We’re Stuck with Pakistan,” *Time Magazine*, May 23, 2011, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2071131,00.html>.

¹⁹ “Pakistan Says Stop ‘Blame Game’ at US, Afghan Talks,” *Dawn* (Lahore), June 28, 2011.

²⁰ “Pakistan Needs to Do More: Roemer,” *Statesman* (New Delhi), May 12, 2010, http://www.thestatesman.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=327725&catid=35&show=archive&year=2010&month=5&day=12&Itemid=66.

²¹ “Drone Attacks to Continue in Pak,” *Statesman* (New Delhi), October 28, 2009, <http://www.accessmylibrary.com/article-1G1-210643513/drone-attacks-continue-pak.html>.

There is a “very real...trust deficit” separating the US and Pakistan. “That has made it more difficult for us to work together to confront the common threat of extremism.”²³

Former US Defense Secretary, Robert Gates

“When there’s a ‘trust deficit,’ there will be problems in intelligence sharing. (And) It’s not from our side. Ask them.”²⁴

Prime Minister, Yousuf Raza Gilani

“Our relationship with Pakistan is not what we wish it were. There is... a deficit of trust, in their view because the USA has abandoned them on several occasions in the past; most recently, in 1989 after the Soviets left and then with the Pressler Amendment.”²⁵

Robert Gates

“We left them in a dark hole from about 1990 to 2002, and they don’t trust us. We are trying to rebuild that trust... but you don’t rebuild it overnight.”²⁶

The United States CJCS, Admiral Mike Mullen

“What was done? How could they not know? Who knew what?... Did nobody have some questions about who the hell was living behind those walls?”²⁷

²² “Zardari Urges US to Stop Drone Attacks,” *Dawn* (Lahore), April 26, 2011.

²³ “Gates Sees ‘Trust Deficit’ in Pakistan,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 22, 2010, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/237927558?accountid=26351>.

²⁴ “Working with US could Imperil Govt., says Gilani,” *Dawn* (Lahore), May 13, 2011.

²⁵ “Pakistan is Very Important for the USA: Gates,” *The Statesman* (New Delhi), May 25, 2011, http://www.thestatesman.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=370754&catid=37&show=archive&year=2011&month=5&day=25&Itemid=66.

²⁶ “Betrayed Pakistan Doesn’t Trust Us,” *The News* (Lahore), October 04, 2010.

Senator John Kerry, referring to the bin Laden raid.

“Any country that again seeks to raid its territory would face consequences from Pakistan’s military.”²⁸

Salman Bashir

“Either the Pakistani government is incompetent or in cahoots.”²⁹

Senator Mark Udall (Democrat - Colorado)

“Who allowed the Americans to come to Pakistan and carry out this attack?”³⁰

Chairman Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf, Imran Khan

“US media might scream about the “billions of dollars” of aid to Pakistan, but the fact remains that its impact on Pakistan is insignificant. The truth is that aid from this bankrupt country creates more problems than it is worth.”³¹

²⁷ Karen DeYoung and Karin Brulliard, “US Presses Pakistan for Information on Osama bin Laden Compound,” *The Washington Post* (Washington DC), May 3, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/pakistan-defends-role-condemns-unilateral-us-action/2011/05/03/AFrZ4lgF_story_1.html.

²⁸ “Pakistan Warns against Further Raids inside its Territory,” *Dawn* (Lahore), May 5, 2011.

²⁹ “Reported Killing of Osama Bin Laden Exposes Pakistan, Raises Issues,” *The New American* (Appleton), May 23, 2011, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/868916335?accountid=26351>.

³⁰ “Pakistan has Lost Dignity, Self-Esteem following US’ Osama Operation: Imran Khan,” *Economic Times*, Times of India, May 04, 2011, http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2011-05-04/news/29509012_1_pakistani-army-prime-minister-gilani-pakistan-government.

³¹ Humayun Gauhar, “The Myth of US Aid to Pakistan,” *Pakistan Today* (Lahore), July 26, 2011.

“... the US agency CIA responsible for the Swabi suicide attack on a rally to be addressed by JUI-F Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman... because he was exposing the American designs against the country.”³²

JUI-F leader, Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haidri

In sharp contrast to high praise for Pakistan's performance in the War on Terror in initial years of the alliance, US concerns over Pakistan's alleged support to Taliban and Al-Qaeda mark later years of the alliance. The ongoing US mantra to Pakistan to 'do more,' and Pakistan's continued reprehensions, if not outright denunciation, of violation of her sovereignty have brought the mutual trust-deficit between the allies into broad daylight. Islamabad considers that US expectations from Pakistan in her counter-terrorism efforts are unrealistic, over-optimistic, and most importantly, do not take into account Pakistan's domestic, political, and strategic compulsions. On the other hand, Washington holds that elements in Pakistan underpin some militant groups as 'strategic asset.'

Thus, an environment of mistrust and suspicion continues to strain their mutual relations. The Haqqani network operating in Afghanistan, ostensibly with Pakistani support, is generally held responsible for numerous coalition and Afghan casualties. Pakistan, after years of dithering and political posturing, now finds her back against the wall, as international community is hard-pressing to eliminate safe-havens for Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups allegedly working under Pakistan's patronage. It is generally believed that seminaries in Pakistan are not only hothouses for the nascent extremists but are serving as 'safe havens' for terrorists, providing them life support system against international campaign to fight terrorism.³³

³² "JUI-F Blames CIA, KP Govt for Suicide Attack," *Dawn* (Lahore), March 31, 2011.

³³ A Briton, who trained with Lashkar and was later convicted as the ringleader of a foiled 2004 plot against London by al-Qaeda, testified that ISI officers screened and trained foreign recruits in Lashkar camps in 2000. See, Sebastian Rotella, "The Man Behind Mumbai,"

US intelligence reports impute some elements in Pakistani establishment, most notably the ISI, having connections with terrorist elements.³⁴ They claim that Pakistan is supporting the Taliban and other militant groups in Afghanistan³⁵ to ensure a pro-Pakistan regime in Kabul in anticipation of an eventual US withdrawal. They ascribe the alleged Pakistani support to the Taliban to a number of so-called miscalculations and perceptions held among Pakistan's military establishment. The support to the Taliban is perceived to ensure 'strategic depth'³⁶ in Afghanistan.

ProPublica, November 13, 2010, accessed August 14, 2011, <http://www.propublica.org/article/the-man-behind-mumbai>.

³⁴ See, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, "Patterns of Global Terrorism," US Department of State, accessed August 14, 2011, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2000/2441.htm>. The US investigation of the 2008 Mumbai attacks has built a strong case that officers in Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) collaborated with the Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorist group in the plot that killed 166 people, six of them Americans. Sebastian Rotella, "Mumbai Case Offers Rare Picture of Ties between Pakistan's Intelligence Service and Militants," *ProPublica*, May 2, 2011, accessed August 14, 2011, <http://www.propublica.org/article/mumbai-case-offers-rare-picture-of-ties-between-pakistans-intelligence-serv>. "Lashkar is not just a tool of the ISI, but an ally of al-Qaeda that participates in its global jihad," said Jean-Louis Bruguiere, a French judge who investigated Sajid Mir, Lashkar-i-Taiba's project manager for Mumbai attacks. He further stated "that Sajid Mir was a high-ranking officer in the Pakistani Army and apparently also was in the ISI." "The FBI investigation focused on a half-dozen accused masterminds who are still at large: Mir, top Lashkar chiefs and a man thought to be a major in Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI)." Rotella, "Man Behind Mumbai."

³⁵ See Mark Mazzetti and Eric Schmitt, "Pakistanis Aided Attack in Kabul, US Officials Say," *The New York Times*, August 1, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/01/world/asia/01pstan.html>.

³⁶ A military doctrine, conceived as a counter to an Indian attack, with the Pakistan Army having little geographical depth to wage a counter attack from. Elements of the Pakistan Army could retreat or regroup in Afghanistan, where Pakistani aircraft and even some of its nuclear arsenal and rockets could be kept out of harm's way. Rashid, "Afghan

Furthermore, the peculiar geographical spread of Pashtun community, along the (disputed) Durand Line, threatens Pakistan's national integrity, as India and Afghanistan are accused of having inflamed the Pakhtoonistan issue in past.³⁷ Thus, Pakistan's support to Pashtun Taliban is believed to aim at deterring such adventures in future. Pakistan, on the other hand, persistently repudiates these imputations, citing her extended cooperation with the US in war against terrorism, which has cost Pakistan a great deal.

The cloudy issues regarding Pakistan's role in the War on Terror got further setback with the surprising end of the biggest manhunt in world history, when US Navy Seals killed Osama bin Laden on May 1, 2011, in military dominated city of Abbottabad.

Conundrum," 314. For details, also see Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (London: New Haven, 2001), 186–87; and Hoyt, "War on Terrorism," 284.

³⁷ Afghanistan, displeased with creation of Pakistan, demanded the formation of an independent entity in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province. The people on both sides of the border are closely related, but the Afghans have never suggested either adding the Pathan-inhabited area of Pakistan to their own state, or ceding the Pashtun-inhabited area of Afghanistan to a new state carved out of Pakistan. Thus there was no attempt to reunite a people divided by a colonial boundary. It seemed instead to be an artificial political issue, created by Afghanistan for its own purposes, waxing and waning according to political conditions in the two countries and relations with the Soviet Union, Iran, Arab States, and others. It may also be related to Afghan desire for a seacoast, as evidenced by a map of the proposed new country produced by an Afghan diplomat. It has resulted in the border closings, broken relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and even warfare in 1947. Martin Ira Glassner and Harm J. De Blij, *Systematic Political Geography* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1980), 48–52. Also see Rashid, "Afghan Conundrum," 312–13. The map of the proposed new country produced by an Afghan diplomat claimed nearly all of Pakistan's west of the Indus River, including all of Baluchistan, but none of the adjacent area of Afghanistan occupied by Pashtu-speaking people. For the map, see Rahman Pazhwak, *Pakhtunistan: The Khyber Pass as the Focus of New State of Pakhtunistan* (London: Afghan Information Bureau, 1951), cited in Glassner and Blij, *Systematic Political Geography*, 51.

His death in an acre-large, made-to-order, high-security, walled compound, only 75 miles north of Islamabad, and not in some cave along the Durand Line, as many had expected, stirred an immediate and ardent reaction in US political circles. Bin Laden's residence 1000 yards from the Pakistan Military Academy strengthened the cliché that Pakistan is playing 'double game'³⁸ with the US. This is a setback, which will take a long time for the country to live out of.

US officials started questioning the extent to which Pakistan knew, aided and protected US villain and his associates in Al-Qaeda. Could the most wanted human being on the earth, hunting for whom began a decade ago, involving thousands of US and Pakistani troops, have taken up residence virtually next door to the epitome of power in Pakistan without Pakistan's knowledge and permission? "Almost impossible," said Sen. Carl Levin; 'Impossible,' declared Fox News' Greta Van Susteren; 'Inconceivable,' stated former Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger; 'Not credible' opined former Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage."³⁹

Pakistan is now confronting criticism for being 'selective' in her operations against terrorists. The US claims that Pakistani government and intelligence agencies have a selective policy regarding terrorist groups, as they are not only turning a blind eye to pro-Pakistan Taliban but are also aiding and abetting them. This has

³⁸ See Sebastian Rotella, "Trial Testimony Intensifies Allegations Pakistan is Playing Double Game," *ProPublica*, May 23, 2011, accessed August 14, 2011, <http://www.propublica.org/article/chicago-trial-focuses-on-pakistans-role-in-terrorism>. Also see Sebastian Rotella, "Witness: Pakistani Intel Officer Ordered Hit on Mumbai Jews," *ProPublica*, May 24, 2011, accessed August 14, 2011, <http://www.propublica.org/article/headley-testifies-about-meeting-with-pakistani-officers>. For more news and reports on Pakistan's alleged connections with terrorist groups, see "Pakistan's Terror Connections," *ProPublica*, accessed August 14, 2011, <http://www.propublica.org/topic/mumbai-terror-attacks>.

³⁹ "Reported Killing of Osama Bin Laden Exposes Pakistan, Raises Issues," *The New American* (Appleton), May 23, 2011, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/868916335?accountid=26351>.

also invoked a reaction within Pakistani media and civil society regarding successive governments' Afghan policy and Pakistan's role and national interests in the War on Terror. The policy of pursuing strategic depth and safeguarding militant elements as strategic asset is under debate and is being severely criticized by liberal intelligentsia in Pakistan.

Parallel to Pak-US blame game, Pakistan is also busy in a blame game with Afghanistan, as Afghanistan often blames Pakistani government for shoring up the Taliban insurgency.⁴⁰ Pakistan, on the other hand, blames Afghanistan for sheltering militants, particularly, in eastern Kunar province. Both the countries blame each other for being responsible for permeability of Pak-Afghan border, providing militants an opportunity to keep playing hide-and-seek with the coalition and Pakistani forces.

What went wrong during the War on Terror that has led the partners to this point? The answer to this question is not a simple one. The alliance was bitter from the very start and the other stakeholders not only included sovereign states like India, Iran, Russia, and Saudi Arabia but also various stateless militant groups. We cannot comprehend the present scenario, unless we unravel the complex Afghan conundrum having vacillating interests of all these stakeholders.

Afghan Conundrum in Pak-US Relations

Afghanistan, as a neighbor as well as a war theatre in which Pakistan is engaged along with the US, is extremely crucial to US foreign policy towards Pakistan. Wars in Afghanistan, first in 1979 and then in 2001, has brought Pakistan up in Washington's foreign policy calculus. Indian interests and involvement in Afghanistan further complicates the already complex Afghan conundrum for Pakistan.

⁴⁰ Islamabad has recently been under fire from Kabul over its alleged support for Taliban insurgency that has claimed a record number of civilian, Afghan, and American lives this year. See Zulfiqar Ali, "Back to Camp," *Herald* (Karachi), July 2005, <http://www.dawn.com/herald/jul05.htm#1>.

Islamabad harbors certain fears and interests, emanating from long-festered issues with Afghanistan, let alone the labyrinthine upshots of the War on Terror. Afghanistan repudiated her border with Pakistan in 1947, and was the only country to vote against Pakistan's entry into the United Nations. Afghanistan's claim over major chunk of Pakistan's territory severed her diplomatic relations with Pakistan in 1955 and 1962. Afghanistan claimed that the British had illegally seized large parts of Afghanistan's territory, which Pakistan inherited in 1947 as part of Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (the then NWFP) provinces. Later, Afghanistan fitfully kept triggering and patronizing secessionist movements in Pakistan aiming at creating 'Greater Pakhtoonistan.'

Despite antagonism, the bilateral relations intermittently remained normalized, owing to ethnic and economic compulsions. Pakistan had to adopt a policy of appeasement towards Afghanistan during the Cold War, as the US did not want Afghanistan to fall in Soviet camp. Afghanistan is a landlocked country, and for trade, depends on Karachi as a port, which Pakistan never denied to her. Afghanistan, on the other hand, has remained neutral in Indo-Pak wars. Moreover, people-to-people relations always remained intact, as the tribes on both sides of the border do not conceive the border in actual sense of the term, and therefore, freely travel to and fro across the Durand Line.

The decade of 1970s witnessed a surge in Afghanistan's significance in Pakistan's foreign policy calculus. In Afghanistan, Sardar Muhammad Daud, with the Soviet backing, replaced Monarchy with a Republic government in 1973. In Pakistan, the tug-of-war between Islamabad and Baluchistan provincial government came to a sad end on February 14, 1973, when Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto dismissed the first ever elected government of Baluchistan. The Pashtun and Baloch leaders fled to Afghanistan, where they were provided sanctuary by President Daud. Later, Tarakai regime kept pursuing the same policies.

So Islamabad's strategic interests, rather compulsions, in Afghanistan had developed well before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. A friendly regime in Kabul appeared a sine qua non for

Islamabad for various reasons: a) a pro-Pakistan regime in Afghanistan would recognize the Duran Line as an international border and would not eye Pakistani territories of Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; b) it would ensure that irredentist movements like that of Pakhtoonistan would never threaten Pakistan; c) would stop providing sanctuary to Pakistani dissidents; and most importantly, d) would not connive Indian foothold in Afghanistan; and thus, e) would provide 'strategic depth' to Pakistan.

The unceasing Indian threat to Pakistan since its inception, especially after Indo-Soviet treaty of friendship in 1970, played its part to shape Pakistan's Afghan policy aiming at ensuring strategic depth in Afghanistan. It was generally held that Indo-Soviet alliance was primarily aimed at destroying Pakistan, at least, as far as India was concerned. Soviet presence in Afghanistan created a scenario that squeezed Pakistan from two sides, making Pakistan conscious of her limited strategic depth. The Brasstacks Crisis⁴¹ of 1986–87 confirmed this perception.

Indian threat, dovetailed with the perception of Pakistan's military intelligence that Afghanistan was a state inimical to her security interests, led ISI to tailor a policy aimed at ensuring strategic depth in Afghanistan. The policy sought to link the future of Afghanistan with Pakistan, and vice versa. A pro-Pakistan regime in Afghanistan was, and is still, considered a politico-strategic compulsion for the security of Pakistan. It is because of the fact that Afghanistan is viewed as a territory that could provide strategic depth to Pakistani armed forces in the northwest against eastern threat from India. Furthermore, the trained and pro-Pakistan mujahidin were considered a strategic asset against India.

⁴¹ In the wake of increased violence in Kashmir by Islamist insurgents and alleged Pakistani support to the Sikh insurgency in Punjab, the Indian army conducted a massive military exercise in Rajasthan desert in 1986, code-named Brasstacks; which Pakistan perceived as a crisis and deployed armed forces. Further deployment from Indian side resulted in a stand-off between the two countries. For further details, see Saira Khan, *Nuclear Weapons and Conflict Transformation: The Case of India-Pakistan* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 101–2.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan provided Pakistan an opportunity to strive for the realization of this policy imperative. Pakistan's pursuit of strategic depth, in tandem with the US global policy to contain and defeat Communism, dovetailed with the Saudi fears vis-à-vis spread of Shiite political Islam in the wake of Iranian revolution. Pakistan waged a proxy war for the US in Afghanistan. The course of this war provided the region with all the prerequisites for the prevalent conundrum in Afghanistan.

The rise of the Taliban in the wake of Civil war following the Soviet withdrawal was welcomed in Islamabad. The Taliban were the extension of the mujahidin who had defeated the 'godless' Soviets; exposed to Saudi influence in madrassa system that was continuing to churn them out long after the Soviet withdrawal. Pakistan was the only country to recognize Taliban government in Afghanistan, other than UAE, and obviously, Saudi Arabia. Islamabad considered the Taliban, like the mujahidin in 1980s, a strategic asset against India.

Pakistan had no option but to ally with the US in her War on Terror after 9/11. Islamabad apparently took a U-turn vis-à-vis her Afghan policy but ostensibly continued her tacit support to the Taliban. However, Pakistan out rightly denounced and waged war against Al-Qaeda; launched highly successful military operations against militants in Pakistan; and extended support to the US in her War on terror. Until 2007, the US did not question Pakistan's efforts in combating terrorism. But then began what we are referring her as 'Blame Game' between the two allies.

What has gone wrong with the Pak-US relation vis-à-vis Afghanistan? What has made US foreign policy towards Pakistan exhibit yet another shift? There are two generally held explanations for this: One is 'not enough'⁴² and the other is 'Pakistan.' The first explanation is held by liberal interventionists, some Afghans, and scholars like Ahmed Rashid (a leading scholar on Afghanistan). It says that the US did not do enough in Afghanistan. Contrary to the maxim, "a good start is half done," US troops in Afghanistan in

⁴² "The Good War, Still to Be Won," *New York Times*, November 5, 2006, cited in Ali, *Duel*, 218.

2001 were not sufficient to start with. The troops and resources were further decreased as the US began to prepare for the Iraq War in 2002. Furthermore, the lack of some concrete strategy for state building in Afghanistan was what later resulted in revival of the Taliban.

The other explanation holds Pakistan responsible for what went wrong in Afghanistan. This is put forward by the Western media, the White House and, most notably, by President Karzai. According to them, Pakistan has continued her tacit support to the Taliban and other pro-Pakistan militant groups in Afghanistan and in her own northwestern territories. That has served as life support system for the militants, and that is how they have survived, resisted and then rejuvenated in 2008–09.

None of these two explanations completely unravel the prevalent Afghan conundrum with regard to Pak-US relations. But if we combine them both and add to it the regional intricacies of South Asia, we can have a better understanding of the problem. Yes, the US troops initially deployed in Afghanistan were not sufficient and further attenuated with the diversion of US energies to Iraq. Meanwhile, the Indo-Pak standoff on Pakistan's eastern border in 2002–03 caused reduction in the Pakistani troops deployed along the Duran line in the northwest. These two developments provided an opportunity to the Taliban to flee from Afghanistan and take refuge in Pakistan.

Pakistan, on the other hand, allegedly harbored and supported those Taliban and provided them safe havens. This ostensible Pakistani support to Taliban can be attributed to the following reasons:

a) Pakistan had taken a U-turn vis-à-vis Taliban in 2001. The Taliban harbored grudge against Pakistan, as the latter deserted them against time-honored Pashtun values. Many in Pakistani establishment discerned the looming dangers emanating from the Taliban enraged against Pakistan, and therefore, favored complaisance towards the Taliban.

b) As the US troops thinned out in Afghanistan in the wake of Iraq War, Islamabad conceived US withdrawal forthcoming. If

that was the case, Pakistan badly needed the Taliban, as discussed earlier, to ensure her longtime interest of having pro-Pakistan regime in Kabul.

c) Lack of ground forces in Afghanistan meant more reliance on air strikes, resulting in numerous innocent civilian casualties. This helped the Taliban recruit more and more people from Pakistan as well as Afghanistan, weary of US involvement in their areas. The alleged Pakistani support to the Taliban could make them complicit towards Pakistani population.

Furthermore, as the Taliban decamped from Kabul in October 2001, the Northern Alliance and Indian presence suddenly increased in Afghanistan. Islamabad's ancestral fears and compulsions vis-à-vis Afghanistan have become all the more compelling in the wake of increased Indian presence in Afghanistan through her unjustifiable number of consulates. These consulates are ostensibly harboring anti-Pakistan elements and are supporting Pakistani dissidents in Baluchistan, and militants in FATA and Swat. Pakistan has provided substantial evidences to the US vis-à-vis Indian involvement in Baluchistan, Federally Administered Tribal Areas and, Swat through her consulates in Afghanistan. The US government has apparently verified the evidences and has asked India to close or reduce the number of her consulates in Afghanistan, especially the ones near the Durand Line, i.e., in Jalalabad and Kandahar. "Senior US diplomat William Burns has given Indian officials a 'wish-list' or a terse and cryptic 'directive' to shut down Indian consulates in Afghanistan, reduce presence in Kabul, stop sending mercenaries across the Durand Line, and resume dialogue with Pakistan."⁴³

A strong Indian presence has always remained a nightmare for Pakistan. New Delhi always maintained friendly relations with whatever government was in Kabul until early 1990s when Islamist militants took over. Throughout the 1990s, India had supported any group in Afghanistan that was anti-Pakistan. India strongly condemned public execution of former Afghan President Najibullah

⁴³ S. M. Hali, "Pak-India Peace Process?" *The Nation* (Lahore), July 1, 2009.

by the Taliban. Prior to that, India had remained a staunch ally of Soviet backed Afghan communist regimes. So during the 1990s, India, for the first time, supported and patronized anti-government elements in Afghanistan, especially the Northern Alliance, as the ruling mujahidin, and later, the Taliban were pro-Pakistan.

Even prior to 9/11, when international pressure on the Taliban was mounting, the anti-Taliban groups began to return to Afghanistan, which had fled to Iran, Turkey, and Europe during the Taliban regime. These groups allegedly had tacit Indian patronage. Now, the overstretched Indian presence in Afghanistan through her consulates has virtually acquired a nightmarish quality for Pakistan. Against these developments, Pakistan would continue to ensure strategic depth in Afghanistan.

Thus, the Afghan conundrum has led to divergence of Pak-US interests. The US wants a peaceful Afghanistan; as only a stable and pro-US regime in Afghanistan can assure US oil and gas interests in the Caspian region. Afghan President Ahmed Karzai is virtually a US puppet; but his regime is everything but stable, and has everything but writ outside the presidential palace. The 'endgame in Afghanistan' – a speedy and honorable US military withdrawal from Afghanistan – is also an economic compulsion for the US, because it is costing the US a fortune annually.

Pakistan, on the other hand, cannot afford to let things go in Afghanistan on their own, unless they are happening in her favor. The US, because of Pakistan's alleged 'double game,' does not want Pakistan to play an important role in post-withdrawal Afghanistan. But for Pakistan, a pro-Pakistan regime in Kabul is a strategic security compulsion. For Pakistan, endgame in Afghanistan without pro-Pakistan elements in future government in Kabul means a checkmate in South Asian zero-sum game with India. India is critical vis-à-vis Pakistan's reservations for endgame in Afghanistan. So, this divergence of Pak-US interests would perpetuate a blame-game between the two allies, which heralds yet another shift in US foreign policy towards Pakistan.

Conclusion

As long as Pakistan kept hunting Al-Qaeda leadership, the US “asked no questions about the Afghan Taliban until 2007.”⁴⁴ Lieutenant General Karl Eikenberry, for the first time, publically told the White House and the Congress in 2007 that Taliban’s safe havens in Pakistan must be inevitably eliminated to secure success in Afghanistan.⁴⁵ By then, Musharraf regime had entered a politically volatile situation at home because of the judiciary crisis. Musharraf’s preoccupation with securing his regime further derailed already stumbling Pak-US alliance; and a Blame Game started.

With the advent of Obama’s ‘Policy of Change’ – which has not changed anything home or abroad – situation further deteriorated. His emphasis on Af-Pak concoction, determined to stabilize war-torn countries and safeguarding their populations as against earlier policy of hunting terrorists, put more pressure on Pakistan to act on its own to deal with the militants. London Conference in January 2010 heralded a new dimension in the US war in Afghanistan – the possibility of negotiations with the Taliban. Negotiations were conditioned with giving up arms and accepting constitutional framework in the country by the Taliban.

Another development was a sudden rise in the number of drone attacks. In 2009 alone, 53 drone attacks were carried out in Pakistan, compared to 42 in previous 5 years combined (drones started in 2004). 118 attacks in 2010 and 54 in 2011 (up to August 17), depict the same tempo.⁴⁶ Drone attacks are taken in Pakistan as an attack on her sovereignty and elicit severe public resentment, which in turn results in Blame Game from Pakistani side.

⁴⁴ Rashid, “Afghan Conundrum,” 315.

⁴⁵ Lt. Gen Karl Eikenberry’s testimony on a hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Washington DC, February 13, 2007, quoted in *ibid.*, 308.

⁴⁶ “The Year of the Drone: An Analysis of US Drone Strikes in Pakistan, 2004–2011,” Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative, New America Foundation, last modified January 10, 2011, accessed August 20, 2011, <http://counterterrorism.newamerica.net/drones>.

So we are right back where we started from – the prevalent Blame Game. The US did not look back to Afghanistan or Pakistan, once she withdrew from here in 1989. In mid and late 1990s, the US found herself attracted to the region because of her oil interests in Caspian region. The best available route of pipeline, for exploration of oil and gas from the Caspian region, was through Afghanistan and Pakistan to Indian Ocean. This made Afghanistan significant in US foreign policy calculus. That was why the US was complaisant towards the Taliban, who had control over the proposed route of pipelines. But Pakistan was not of such significance in that phase. Incidents of 9/11 and subsequent War on Terror necessitated Pakistan's partnership.

Now, when the US once again has a pro-Washington government in Afghanistan, she no more needs Pakistan. With Karzai's puppet government in Kabul, the US does not need Pakistan to fulfill any sort of interests. But the situation is not so simple; as the Karzai's government in Afghanistan does not have writ outside Kabul. Still, the US wants a withdrawal from Afghanistan, as War in Afghanistan has been a costly venture.

For this, the US needs complete peace in Afghanistan; which is not possible without unequivocal support from Pakistan. But for Pakistan, endgame in Afghanistan, without ensuring pro-Pakistan elements in any future government in Kabul, amounts to a checkmate in the 'zero-sum' game with India. So now, divergence of interests of Pakistan and the US is evident. And this would perpetuate a blame-game between the two allies.

India is critical vis-à-vis Pakistan's reservations for endgame in Afghanistan. With Pakistan's relinquishing the Taliban in 2001, the Northern Alliance got strengthened in Afghanistan, which is considered a threat to Pakistan, because of its strong ties with Russia, and more importantly, with India. Furthermore, suddenly increased Indian presence in Afghanistan, primarily through its consulates, also threatens Pakistan.

Now the prevalent reinvigorated blame game between the two partners is a direct result of the end game in Afghanistan. As the end game in Afghanistan is drawing near, the already existing trust

deficit escalates to snowball into a furious blame game. As the US interest in Pakistan evaporates, two fallouts become manifest. First, India becomes all the more important in the eyes of US policy makers as a potential rival to Chinese global reach. It can also be attributed to change of administration in the US from Republicans to Democrats, which are traditionally inclined towards India as against Pakistan. The more important India becomes in the policy calculus of the US, the less significant Pakistan appears to US policy makers.

Second, the US does not want Pakistan, especially ISI, to play any significant role in Afghan domestic politics in future. But Pakistan cannot afford to have an anti-Pakistan regime in Kabul. Pakistan wants to ensure that any future government in Afghanistan should have pro-Pakistan elements. This was why Pakistan was not appreciative of London Conference, which was aimed at reconciling with the Taliban.

Even more dreadful for Pakistan is the fact that these two fallouts are interrelated; and in tandem with already prevailing distrust between Pakistan and the US, can further deteriorate the situation for Pakistan. As Pakistan wants a future role in Afghanistan because of Indian factor, and enhanced Indian importance for the US, in tandem with US desire to keep Pakistan out of Afghanistan, heralds a situation which Pakistan dreads: a strong Indian presence in Afghanistan. So the two partners not only have different strategies to follow but they also have different aims to achieve. An alliance between two countries with so divergent interests merits exactly what is already on – the blame game.