



Vector Check

Prospects for U.S. and Pakistan Air Power
Engagement

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Preface

This report is based on research conducted in the project “U.S. Air Force-Pakistan Air Force Partnering Post-Operation Enduring Freedom,” sponsored by the office of the Secretary of the Air Force/International Affairs. The purpose of this project is to better define the long-term relationship between the U.S. Air Force (USAF) and the Pakistan Air Force as the drawdown from Afghanistan continues and eventually concludes; it aims to help USAF shape its engagement with its Pakistan counterpart by better understanding Pakistan’s security requirements and to examine future trends to plan for a range of potential scenarios. This report aims for broad dissemination of the project’s findings throughout USAF and the wider U.S. security policymaking community.

As an examination of issues involving air power in South Asia, this study builds on RAND Corporation work, much of it conducted for USAF under RAND Project AIR FORCE, including:

- Jonah Blank, Christopher Clary, and Brian Nichiporuk, *Drivers of Long-Term Insecurity and Instability in Pakistan: Urbanization*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-644-OSD, 2014.
- Seth G. Jones and C. Christine Fair, *Counterinsurgency in Pakistan*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-982-RC, 2010.
- Larry Hanauer and Stephanie Pezard, *Security Cooperation Amidst Political Uncertainty: An Agenda for Future Research*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, WR-1052, 2014.
- Andrew Scobell, Ely Ratner, and Michael Beckley, *China’s Strategy Toward South and Central Asia: An Empty Fortress*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-525-AF, 2014.
- Jennifer D. P. Moroney, Joe Hogler, Lianne Kennedy-Boudali, and Stephanie Pezard, *Integrating the Full Range of Security Cooperation Programs into Air Force Planning: An Analytic Primer*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, TR-974-AF, 2011.
- Michael J. McNerney, *Assessing Security Cooperation as a Preventive Tool*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-350-A, 2014.

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Summary

Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) transitioned on January 1, 2015, to Operation Freedom's Sentinel, formally ending a combat operation in Afghanistan that had lasted more than 13 years. In the post-OEF environment, the security relationship between the United States and Pakistan will enter a new phase. The U.S. Air Force (USAF), like the rest of the U.S. military, will have to reconceptualize its goals and missions in Pakistan. It will need to retool its strategy for engagement and partnership with the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) to reflect an environment in which U.S. forces are not combatants but are operating in, near, or over territory that is far from peaceful. Moreover, it will have to do so in the context of a security relationship between the United States and India that is likely to become deeper and more durable over time. Formulating a strategy for such engagement requires a deep understanding of Pakistan's *own* security imperatives—that is, the factors that determine what types of partnership are realistic, and the geopolitical forces that shape Pakistan's decisions about what types of cooperation with the United States and USAF to undertake.

For an outside observer, Pakistan's security calculations can be difficult to unravel. In particular, there is a tendency for U.S. policymakers to view Pakistan solely through the prism of a highly prioritized and well-funded (albeit often problematic) security partnership after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11). However, this prism presents a distorted view. Islamabad's policymakers are well aware of the history of security engagement between Pakistan and the United States: The current phase of partnership, now tapering off after a rapid buildup early in the new millennium, is the third such cycle between the two nations since 1947. Moreover, Pakistan's security decisions are made in a much wider geographical context: Choices are evaluated in light of Pakistan's relationship with the United States, but also in light of Pakistan's relationship (as friend or as adversary) with other players, including China, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and especially India.

Key Findings

The Current Up-And-Down Cycle of U.S.-Pakistan Relations Is Nothing New. There Have Been Two Similar Cycles in the Past.

U.S. observers look at the large sums sent to Pakistan in security assistance, and they often wonder why billions of dollars in military and development aid do not buy Pakistani support for U.S. goals in the region. Part of the answer lies in history. Americans sometimes view the U.S.-Pakistan relationship largely in a post-9/11 context. Pakistani observers have longer memories: They recall two prior periods of intense U.S. security partnership, as well as the precipitous

downgrading of relations after the period of crisis had passed. For many Pakistanis, the United States has already proven itself an untrustworthy ally in the past, and there is every reason to believe that this pattern will repeat itself.

During the first period of intense engagement, in response to India's increasing tilt toward the Soviet Union, Pakistan and the United States were early Cold War allies. Between 1956 and 1962, the United States provided Pakistan with 132 jet fighters (120 F-86F Sabres, 12 F-104A Starfighters) and 26 bombers (B-57B Canberras). In 1965, however, the Indo-Pakistani war caused a shutdown of U.S. military engagement that lasted a decade. Despite Pakistan's assistance in arranging the landmark visit of President Richard Nixon to China in 1972, and the posting of USAF Brig Gen Charles "Chuck" Yeager, the legendary aviator, to Islamabad as defense representative from 1971 to 1973, Pakistan was largely ignored by U.S. policymakers until external events again caused an overnight re-engagement.

When Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan on December 27, 1979, the United States immediately reached out to Pakistan as a partner. From 1979 to 1989, the two countries (along with Saudi Arabia, China, and several peripheral players) ran a multibillion-dollar covert operation to arm and equip the *mujahideen* forces fighting the Soviets. For a decade, Pakistan was one of the United States' most important partners in the world. Until, shortly after the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan, suddenly it was not: In 1990, the U.S. administration declined to provide the nuclear certification necessary to prevent Pressler Amendment sanctions from shutting down assistance to Pakistan. From Islamabad's standpoint, the United States had used Pakistan for as long as it suited Washington's interests, then promptly cast it aside. To make matters worse, Pakistan had already paid for 28 F-16s, which Washington refused to either deliver or refund; it even charged Pakistan fees for warehousing the aircraft.¹

On September 11, 2001, the partnership was again revived literally in a matter of hours. The day before the attacks, the two countries had a barely functional relationship; before the dust

¹ Before the imposition of Pressler Amendment sanctions, Pakistan ordered 111 F-16A/B Block 15 aircraft. Of these, 40 were delivered between 1982 and 1987 under the Peace Gate I and II programs. On October 6, 1990, the United States announced that future arms deliveries to Pakistan were suspended by Pressler restrictions. Of the 71 F-16 aircraft remaining to be transferred at this time, 28 either had already been built or were near completion; these aircraft were stored at USAF's Aircraft Maintenance and Regeneration Center at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. (Construction of the last 43 aircraft in the pre-Pressler order was either halted or canceled.) The dispute over the undelivered F-16s is centered on these 28 aircraft for which Pakistan had already paid \$658 million before the imposition of Pressler and was subsequently charged storage costs for them at Davis-Monthan. The U.S. government was legally barred from delivering the aircraft, but it was unable to find a mechanism to refund the purchase price to Pakistan. It attempted to resolve the issue by trying to sell the aircraft elsewhere but could not attract a buyer. After nuclear tests by India and Pakistan in 1998 raised the stakes for the continuing stalemate, the United States agreed to pay Pakistan \$326.9 million in cash and up to \$140 million in other compensation (including \$60 million in wheat); the United States said that \$157 million had already been paid, through U.S. sales of Pakistan-bought aircraft components to other nations. In 2002, the United States abandoned efforts to sell the stored F-16s, and assigned them to the U.S. Navy and USAF as aggressor aircraft. Of those assigned to USAF, 14 were later transferred to Pakistan as Excess Defense Articles. For more details, see F-16.net, "Pakistan," web page, undated.

from Ground Zero had fully settled, they were de facto allies again. The alliance was formalized in 2004, and the United States provided 32 F-16s in the next three years; in 2009, the U.S. Congress authorized \$7.5 billion in development aid under the Kerry-Lugar-Berman legislation. But 2010 marked the apex of U.S. support, and both security and economic assistance has dropped sharply since then. The third cycle of engagement—and subsequent disengagement—appears to be reaching the same conclusion as its two predecessors.

Pakistan's Geostrategic Security Equation Is a Multilateral, not Bilateral, Calculus: The United States Is Only One Among Several Key External Actors.

Another answer to the question posed—i.e., why has lavish U.S. patronage not succeeded in securing Pakistan's acquiescence to U.S. policy goals?—lies not in history but in geography. Pakistan's neighbors and near-neighbors are as important to Islamabad's calculations as is the United States—often, significantly more.

India is always at the forefront of Pakistan's security decisionmaking. After three wars and several additional sustained conflicts, Pakistan considers India a threat to its very existence. No amount of U.S. dollars or technology will override the fundamental imperative—as Pakistan sees it—to survive. This was the case in the past, and it will be even more true as U.S.-India security ties deepen. Moreover, there is a gap between Pakistan's official security doctrine and its “submerged intent”: Official statements describe a balance between preparation for *potential* conflict with India and conduct of *actual* counterinsurgency (COIN) actions, such as the current Operation Zarb-e Azb against the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan since 2014. But the nation's submerged intent—i.e., the policy as actually implemented, displayed by force posture and by unguarded statements in Urdu rather than English—remains squarely focused on conflict with India.

Historically, China has been an even larger supplier of arms to Pakistan than the United States has, providing 40 percent of the nation's military hardware. As Pakistan's “all-weather friend,” China is likely to grow in importance in the years to come. With coproduction of the JF-17 fighter jet, China has moved from supplier of low-tech to high-tech hardware. And unlike the United States, China tends to provide its support with few strings attached. Moreover, Chinese President Xi Jinping has pledged \$46 billion in infrastructure development for a China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. If even a significant fraction of this sum materializes, the effect on Pakistan's economy, politics, and security calculation will be immense. The Chinese-built and Chinese-operated port at Gwadar, in Pakistan's Baluchistan province, is still in the early stages of development, and it remains largely unconnected to the industrial centers (in Pakistan and China) that would be necessary for it to realize its economic potential. If and when it is completed, however, Gwadar could provide not only a major financial boost but also a port for servicing China's People's Liberation Army Navy vessels.

Afghanistan is Pakistan's inseparable neighbor—although both nations might wish for greater distance between them. Pakistan desires a friendly regime in Kabul capable of providing

“strategic depth” to balance India’s numerical, economic, and military advantages. Since the Soviet invasion of 1979, however, Afghanistan has represented more of a threat than an opportunity for Pakistan. Relations between Islamabad and Kabul were poor during the tenure of Afghan President Hamid Karzai, and they have since been only tentatively improving. Pakistan retains its goal of establishing a friendly, perhaps even a client, regime in Afghanistan. From Pakistan’s perspective, such an outcome would ideally extend to the central government in Kabul but, at a minimum, in the provinces directly bordering its territory (especially Kandahar, Helmand, Zabul, Paktika, Paktia, Khost, and Nangarhar). In its policy toward the Quetta Shura Taliban and the Haqqani Network, Pakistan can be assumed—as any nation would—to advance its own interests above those of its neighbor, let alone a distant and seemingly fickle ally.

Saudi Arabia is Pakistan’s quiet and generous patron: It has supplied unknowable amounts of money and unfathomable barrels of oil, with little public attention. It has also supplied a convenient site of sanctuary for exiled Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in between his second and third terms. In return, Pakistan has permitted Saudi Arabia to spread its ideological influence by the funding of madrasas, and it might implicitly provide the Kingdom with a “virtual” nuclear capability. Islamabad does not always accede to requests from Riyadh—for example, in 2015, it refused to join Saudi Arabia in its military campaign against Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen—but Saudi patronage certainly commands a great deal of attention.

Iran and Pakistan have a relationship that is sometimes awkward but accommodating out of necessity: Each nation has enough problems on its other border to provide strong incentive for avoiding trouble in the deserts of Baluchistan. After squaring off through proxy militias in Afghanistan during the 1990s, the nations have reached an understanding of each other’s redlines *vis-a-vis* their shared neighbor. Pakistan is not likely to become a close partner of Iran, but—as the Saudis learned in Yemen—it is also not likely to antagonize Tehran to serve the interests of even a solid patron.

Future Trends for USAF-PAF Engagement Suggest That USAF Will Be the Loss Leader for the Overall U.S.-Pakistan Relationship. Despite Hazards, the Future Presents Possible Pathways and Pitfalls.

The universe of possible futures for U.S.-Pakistani relations is not infinite, but it does span a wide range of potential scenarios. On the positive side of the spectrum, the two countries could conceivably become genuine allies, rather than partners of convenience—although the benefits of such a scenario would likely be outweighed by the losses to the growing relationship between the United States and India. At the most pessimistic end of the spectrum, Pakistan might become either an outright antagonist of the United States or a failed state with which no meaningful partnership is possible. This study examines key drivers assessed to influence which future scenario is actually realized, as well as the assumptions underlying this analysis and several potential wild cards in the deck.

In almost any plausible future, USAF will be the “loss leader” of the overall U.S.-Pakistan relationship: That is, USAF will “give” more to PAF than it “gets” institutionally in return—and the overall benefits will accrue to other parts of the U.S. security establishment.² For example, USAF-PAF security cooperation (SC) may result in the transfer of advanced aircraft and aviation technology to Pakistan, without USAF acquiring basing, access, or overflight rights; instead, the United States may receive intelligence cooperation (for the Central Intelligence Agency), regional stability (of particular interest to the National Security Council, the Department of State and U.S. Central Command), and human intelligence (HUMINT) for counterterrorism and tactical cooperation (for the Joint Special Forces Command).

In the most likely future scenario, the United States will face higher risks in dealing with Pakistan—and fewer rewards. In such a potential future, Pakistan would likely see its security decisions continue to be dominated by its Army, would likely increase its military and economic reliance on China, would remain a central source of regional terrorism, and would likely endure a constant stream of internal strife.

Perhaps the least predetermined, and possibly the most important, variable is the course of Sino-Pakistani partnership. Since the early years of the 21st century, China has moved toward edging out the United States as a provider of high-tech military hardware, including the JF-17 fighter and, possibly in the near future, even more-advanced aircraft. President Xi’s \$46 billion infrastructure pledge would dwarf all other external patronage. But, as interviews conducted in Beijing and analysis of Chinese-language documents suggest, the “all-weather friendship” may not be quite as weatherproof as it seems: Pakistan and China have very different understandings of the Xi economic promise, and the extent to which China is able or willing to give Pakistan technology as advanced as the level already provided by the United States remains to be seen.

Recommendations

At the Policy Level

- **USAF should prepare now for the next cycle of overnight engagement.** This shift in thinking might be described as moving from an “on-demand” approach (i.e., engaging with Pakistan only when immediate U.S. needs dictate) to an “on-retainer” approach (i.e., engaging during times of calm to lay the foundation for rapid ramp-up in times of crisis). If history is any guideline, there is no telling when the next cycle will begin—but there is good reason to expect that it will begin. When it does, it may come (as on December 27, 1979, and September 11, 2001) as a sudden shock, with little advance warning. USAF, like all entities of the U.S. government, would be well-advised to maintain its engagement in the interim, rather than ramping up next time from a standing start. It should do so, however, without sacrificing its equities in India.

² USAF contribution comes directly in some instances and by way of USAF-permitted contractors in other instances. For more discussion, see Chapter 4.

- **USAF should recognize that it has historically been—and in the future is likely to be—the loss leader of U.S.-Pakistan relations.** It should not expect institutional equity from the relationship—that is, USAF will certainly “give” more to PAF than it “gets” institutionally in return. The balancing equity will come (if it comes at all) in the form of requests granted to other parts of the U.S. security establishment: counterterrorism HUMINT, for example, or Islamabad’s cooperation in facilitating a negotiated settlement between the Taliban and Kabul.
- **USAF and U.S. policymakers should understand the limits of U.S., and particularly USAF, leverage over Pakistan’s choices.** While Pakistan has a strong desire for U.S. air power cooperation, this desire will always be balanced by competing domestic and geopolitical demands.
- **USAF and U.S. interlocutors should calibrate Pakistan’s expectations about what is politically feasible in the United States.** The biggest impediment to good relations is the continuing cycle of raised and dashed hopes: It is much better to maintain steady, realistic engagement than a relationship characterized by booms and busts.
- **U.S. policymakers should recognize the effect of U.S. actions and rhetoric on Pakistani choices: Tone and nuance matter.** Pakistan’s national sovereignty is fiercely guarded, a fact which helps explain the popular reaction to drone strikes (even when conducted with Islamabad’s tacit approval, against targets often of Islamabad’s choosing) and to the Abbottabad raid (although it targeted a terrorist leader whom Pakistan itself purportedly was seeking, and who was hiding within yards of the nation’s most elite military academy). Treating Pakistan with more respect does not suggest any reordering of U.S. vital priorities: For example, few responsible analysts would suggest forgoing a strike against al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri if his location should be found. The point here is one of tone rather than policy.
- **At the same time, Washington’s objective should not be to maximize engagement with Pakistan for its own sake but to maximize the *positive effects of engagement*.** More economic and military assistance, more foreign military sales (FMS) and more foreign military financing (FMF) will not automatically translate into better results. In recalibrating SC measures, U.S. policymakers should focus on building Pakistani capabilities in areas for which they have previously had to rely on U.S. assistance (such as humanitarian assistance/disaster relief [HA/DR], counterterrorism, or COIN), rather than areas that might jeopardize regional stability by encouraging adventurism against India.

At the Operational Level

- USAF and the United States should continue maintenance, training, and support for existing PAF F-16s, while exercising caution when considering any possible termination (or expansion) of future sales. F-16s have symbolic value quite possibly outweighing their operational utility. Any discussion of shutting down transfers or even of limiting them to FMS rather than FMF has a negative effect on overall U.S.-Pakistan relations. But this does not mean that the United States has to accede to every request for F-16 upgrades. The U.S. Department of Defense might be able to alleviate some concerns within Congress by providing F-16s “fitted for but not with”—i.e., aircraft *capable* of more-advanced missions but not *equipped* for them.

- USAF and the United States should increase nonlethal International Education and Training (IMET) for PAF students. IMET is a valuable tool in building and maintaining partner relationships—and could be used to greater effect in fostering USAF-PAF ties. Specific IMET training requests could be focused on additional slots, where available, for Air War College, Air Command and Staff College, Air Force Institute of Technology, Squadron Officer’s School, maintenance officer courses, and equivalent programs that focus on professionalizing the military student.
- USAF should consider inviting PAF to send an officer to serve as an instructor at a USAF school. In the Pakistan military, instructor billets are coveted assignments that often lead to rapid career advancement. Providing such opportunities for PAF’s best and brightest would strengthen the air force-to-air force relationship and would offer U.S. airmen insight into the ways in which PAF prepares to fight.
- USAF should focus USAF-PAF exercises and training on capabilities that support or enable HA/DR. As the humanitarian disasters caused by an earthquake in 2005 and flooding in 2010 demonstrate, Pakistan’s military HA/DR capabilities are insufficient for the challenges it faces. PAF C-130s could benefit from greater attention, as could a variety of related fixed-wing and rotary-wing platforms.
- The United States should consider sales of technical systems that support improved collaboration in areas of shared interests or provide defensive capabilities to PAF aircraft conducting counterterrorism or COIN missions. Such technologies might include communications systems to enable more-effective participation in international coalitions; defensive countermeasures against man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS); and improvements in flight safety, navigation, and aircraft control systems.

These recommendations are indicative of a disconnect between the outcomes often requested by U.S. policymakers (i.e., significant shifts in Pakistan’s security policies and priorities) and the limited tools available for bringing such changes about (ramping provision of a subset of Pakistan’s overall military hardware or economic support up or down, modestly reconfiguring cooperation inputs). Perhaps the most important recommendation is a suggestion that policy-shapers in USAF and throughout the U.S. government keep this disconnect squarely in mind: A realistic assessment of what can be done with the tools on hand is the first step to a stronger, more enduring USAF-PAF engagement.

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Abbreviations

9/11	September 11, 2011, terrorist attacks
AAM	air-to-air missile
AFIT	Air Force Institute of Technology
AOR	area of responsibility
BCIM	Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Corridor
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (U.S.)
CoAS	Chief of Army Staff
COIN	counterinsurgency
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
CSF	Coalition Support Funds
DG-ISI	Director-General of the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate
DoD	U.S. Department of Defense
DSCA	Defense Security Cooperation Agency
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FMF	foreign military financing
FMS	foreign military sales
FOB	forward operational base
GLOC	ground line of communication
HA/DR	humanitarian assistance/disaster relief
HQN	Haqqani Network
HUMINT	human intelligence
IMET	International Military Education and Training
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
JCSC	Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee
JeM	Jaish-e-Muhammad
JKLF	Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front

LeJ	Lashkar-e-Jhangvi
LeT	Lashkar-e-Taiba
LoC	Line of Control
MANPADS	man-portable air-defense systems
MBT	main battle tank
MFN	Most Favored Nation
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEO	noncombatant evacuation operations
OBOR	One Belt, One Road
ODRP	Office of the Defense Representative Pakistan
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
PACOM	U.S. Pacific Command
PAF	Pakistan Air Force
PLAAF	People's Liberation Army Air Force
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
PML	Pakistan Muslim League
PPP	Pakistan People's Party
PTI	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf
QST	Afghan Taliban
SA	security assistance
SC	security cooperation
TTP	Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan
TAPI	Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India
UAV	unmanned aerial vehicle
UN	United Nations
USAF	U.S. Air Force

1. Introduction

Background

Since October 2001, the partnership between the U.S. Air Force (USAF) and the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) has been centered on support for Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan. On December 31, 2014, OEF officially concluded, transitioning to the smaller-scale Operation Freedom's Sentinel. USAF role in support of U.S. military operations in Afghanistan will continue to be an important mission. However, even with the increased troop levels announced in September 2017, USAF's role will not be the size and complexity of the support for OEF at its height.¹ This leads to the question at the heart of this study: What is the nature of the long-term relationship between USAF and PAF as the U.S. mission in Afghanistan eventually concludes?

In order to address this question, one must ask two others that have been asked, in one form or another, by policymakers throughout the U.S. security establishment:

1. Why, despite billions of dollars in U.S. security assistance (SA) and development aid, does Pakistan frequently opt for policies directly at odds with core American interests?
2. Is there anything the United States can do to exert greater influence over Pakistani security decisions?

By addressing these questions, this study aims to identify the nature of USAF-PAF engagement after an eventual Afghanistan drawdown and provide recommendations for strengthening this relationship over the long term to better advance U.S. interests.

The first question has a domestic and an international component. The domestic pressures on Pakistani decisionmakers are quite often determinative but lie outside the scope of this study; researchers at RAND and elsewhere have delved deeply into this topic, and USAF planners would be well advised to familiarize themselves with the domestic forces that influence the actions of their counterparts.² The international component, however, is one in which the U.S. security establishment—and, in particular, USAF—plays a key role. There are two contexts in which to address this question:

In *historical* context, today's security partnership between the United States and Pakistan bears the burden of six decades of baggage. Ever since the early days of the Cold War, the

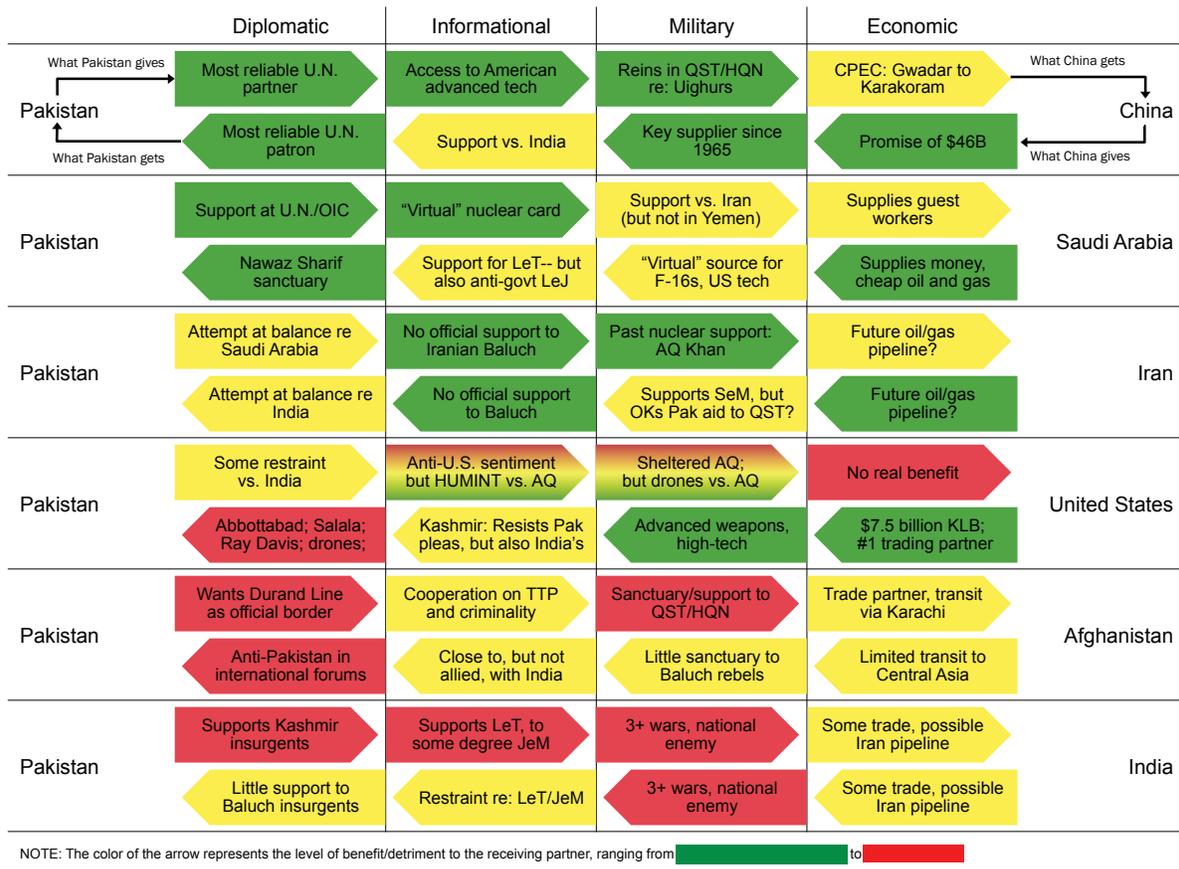
¹ "Mattis Says Over 3,000 Additional U.S. Troops Will Deploy to Afghanistan," *CBS News*, September 18, 2017.

² For a general discussion of Pakistan's strategic outlook, see Peter R. Lavoy, *Pakistan's Strategic Culture*, Washington, D.C.: Defense Threat Reduction Agency, Advanced Systems and Concepts Office, October 31, 2006. For more information on Pakistan's domestic factors influencing security policy, see Jonah Blank, Christopher Clary, and Brian Nichiporuk, *Drivers of Long-Term Insecurity and Instability in Pakistan: Urbanization*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-644-OSD, 2014; and Daniel S. Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan: America's Tortured Relationship with Islamabad*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013, pp. 29–72.

United States had engaged intensively with Pakistan when such partnership advanced U.S. interests—but then let the relationship taper off when the moment of crisis had passed. Before the current (post-2001) phase of partnership began, there were two prior boom-and-bust cycles: one during the early Cold War (1954–1965) and one during the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan (1979–1989); both cycles began with heavy USAF-PAF partnership, and both were followed by a near-total shutdown of engagement. U.S. planners sometimes view the U.S.-Pakistan relationship as an outgrowth of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11), and OEF. Pakistani planners have a much longer view—and often hedge against the day when (they believe) the United States will abandon its partner as it has twice in the past.

In *geostrategic* context, Pakistan, like other nations, bases its security decisions on the *totality* of its perceived set of interests rather than on any one bilateral relationship. When Pakistani policymakers decide whether to grant or deny a specific request from the United States, they take into account not merely how that decision would affect their nation's relations with the United States but also what effect it might have on relations with India, China, or other key players. The reverse is also true: Actions of *other* key players affect Pakistan's security decisions relevant to the United States. Like cogs in a complex piece of machinery, the motion of one can indirectly affect the motion of all others. From a U.S. policymaking perspective, it is crucial to understand that the United States is seldom the most important factor in Pakistan's geostrategic calculations. What Pakistan gets from each of its most important patrons and adversaries (as well as from the United States), and what it in turn provides, is described in greater detail in Chapter 3; in brief shorthand, it may be depicted in graphic format (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1. Pakistan's Strategic Relationships at a Glance



NOTE: AQ = al Qaeda; A.Q. Khan = Abdul Qadeer Khan; CPEC = China-Pakistan Economic Corridor; HQN = Haqqani Network; HUMINT = human intelligence; JeM = Jaish-e Muhammad; KLB = Kerry-Lugar-Berman aid package; LeJ = Lashkar-e Jhangvi; LeT = Lashkar-e Taiba; OIC = Organization of the Islamic Conference; QST = Afghan Taliban; TTP = Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan; U.N. = United Nations.

The historical and geostrategic contexts interact with each other—that is, historical trends are affected by geostrategic ones, and vice versa. The U.S-Pakistan relationship during the 1980s, for example, cannot be viewed in isolation from Pakistan's long-term dynamic with India, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and, to a lesser extent, Iran and China. Likewise, Pakistan's present-day relationships with each of these countries must be viewed in light of the U.S.-Pakistan collaboration in the anti-Soviet campaign of the 1980s. When analyzing a current development, it is necessary to take account of both the past and the neighborhood: For example, was Pakistan's decision to undertake codevelopment of JF-17 fighters with China based on history (i.e., perception of the United States as an unreliable provider) or geography (i.e., desire to strengthen security ties with a rising patron right next door)? The answer, of course: Both.

Taken together, the historical and geostrategic contexts yield brief answers to the questions posed above:

Why does U.S. aid not buy Pakistani compliance with U.S. goals? In historical terms, because Pakistan hedges against the next cycle of abandonment that it believes will inevitably follow each surge of engagement. In geostrategic terms, because the United States is only one of the countries shaping Pakistan’s decisions—and the amounts of aid offered do not come close to providing the United States with the degree of leverage many believe.

What could the United States do to increase its leverage? Given the weight of historical distrust and overwhelming geostrategic importance of other nations (particularly India and China), the United States is unlikely *ever* to gain enough leverage to determine Pakistan’s security choices. But a fine-grained understanding of Pakistan’s web of influences can enable the United States to apply its limited leverage far more effectively and target both its policy “asks” and its material deliverables in a way more likely to advance U.S. goals. Moreover, the tone and nuance of statements by U.S. policymakers can bolster or detract from whatever leverage the United States may possess.

USAF-PAF Security Cooperation Post-OEF

Security cooperation (SC) has been perhaps the most potent tool in the United States’ toolbox of military diplomacy with Pakistan. Guided most often by those areas where the two nations have had shared policy interests, the bilateral relationship was built on and strengthened by service-to-service SC programs. These programs were designed, in large part, to provide the United States with access to, visibility into, and influence over Pakistani security decisions.

Throughout every past cycle of U.S.-Pakistan engagement, USAF SC has led the way. In the first cycle of engagement, during the early Cold War, the relationship served the institutional interests of both air forces: USAF gained a valuable base in Peshawar, and PAF acquired advanced U.S. fighters and bombers. In the second cycle, during the 1980s, USAF remained the leading-edge facilitator of the relationship—the provision of F-16s was the most important U.S. deliverable—but received little institutionally from the exchange; the benefits of the U.S.-Pakistan partnership flowed largely to PAF on the Pakistani side but to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)—through Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) facilitation of the anti-Soviet jihad—on the U.S. side. USAF was, to use a business term, the U.S. security establishment’s “loss leader.”³

During OEF, the USAF-PAF partnership was again somewhat balanced: PAF got F-16s, upgrades, and other valuable technology; USAF got overflight rights without which support for

³ As discussed in Chapter 4, in the business world, a *loss leader* is a department providing goods at less than full cost, with the expectation that customers will compensate by increasing their spending in other departments of the larger company. In a security setting, the concept may be understood as a department (in this case, USAF) that provides more than it receives back as an institution, with the expectation that an external actor (in this case, Pakistan) will compensate by increasing its cooperation with other parts of the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) or U.S. government.

OEF would have been a logistical nightmare. In the aftermath of OEF, however, USAF may once again play the role of loss leader. This is a vital mission—without USAF playing such a part in the 1980s, for example, the U.S. goal of defeating the Soviet Union in Afghanistan might not have been achieved. But USAF, and (more importantly) the wider U.S. security establishment, should be aware that the Air Force will be “giving” more than it will be “receiving” institutionally.

That is not to say that the United States and Pakistan do not have overlapping national interests. They do, as reaffirmed most recently in the 2016 U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue Joint Statement.⁴ Without understating the very real divergence of interests between the two nations, shared goals include regional and international security and prosperity; a strong, prosperous, and democratic Pakistan; respect for human rights and the rule of law; regional stability; and “ongoing collaboration on measures to counter violent extremism and combat terrorism.”⁵ Not explicitly included in the joint statement, but implied in the concept of “regional stability,” are subsidiary goals that support the concept of stable and secure borders with both Afghanistan and India.⁶ In the case of high-level strategic goals and subsidiary goals like these, access, visibility, and influence are considered integral to the success of high-level relationships between the United States and Pakistan. At the service-to-service level, however, some divergence in goals becomes apparent.

Due to a degree of top-level divergence of national priorities, PAF’s operational goals include some missions that are in harmony with U.S. interests and some that are not. When PAF engages in counterterrorism operations against the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), it is advancing U.S. goals, as well as those of Pakistan; the same is true for PAF missions related to peacekeeping operations or humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR). PAF’s missions focused on India, however, could run counter to U.S. goals for closer ties with India and peace on the subcontinent. USAF should be mindful of this distinction when determining what sorts of SC with PAF to undertake. The acquisition of capabilities and development of doctrine that support such missions as close air support and personnel recovery would enhance PAF’s capacity to conduct counterterrorism missions. Similarly, capabilities and doctrine, including airlift and emergency medical assistance, would enable it to take on a greater role in such nontraditional missions as peacekeeping and HA/DR. However, capabilities and doctrines that are designed to enhance its capacity for counter-air or long-range strike missions could be directed only toward India. A rapid expansion of such capabilities risks upsetting the regional balance of power, degrading stability in a way that runs counter to U.S. interests.

⁴ U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesperson, “U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue Joint Statement,” Washington, D.C., media note, March 1, 2016.

⁵ U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesperson, 2016.

⁶ Pakistan accepts the Durand Line as its border with Afghanistan, but Afghanistan does not. Pakistan and India recognize an international border along the parts of their territories outside of Kashmir, but neither recognizes the dividing line in Kashmir as anything other than a Line of Control (LoC).

To understand what PAF can bring to the table as a partner for USAF, it is necessary to understand the limitations of PAF's institutional power within the Pakistani system of security policymaking.

Pakistan Air Force Goals as Subset of Pakistan's Broader Security Goals

The institutional goals of PAF are a subset of Pakistan's overall security goals. This is the case for all nations' air forces, but even more so in Pakistan than in many other countries. In the Pakistani military establishment, security decisions for *all* services rest ultimately with the Chief of Army Staff (CoAS). In theory, the Chief of Air Staff is co-equal with the CoAS and reports directly to the civilian minister of defense or secretary of defense, president, or prime minister of the nation. There are only a quartet of four-star officers in the Pakistani military: The CoAS (holding the rank of full general), the Chief of Air Staff (holding the rank of air chief marshal), the Chief of Naval Staff (full admiral), and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee.

In practice, however, the CoAS is more than the first among equals: He is the most powerful officer in the security establishment, and it is Pakistan's Army that largely determines major policy choices for all three of the services.⁷ The CoAS typically acts with the consensus of his Army Corps Commanders, but there has never been an instance in Pakistani history of a CoAS being deposed or overruled by the Corps Commanders, let alone by commanders of the Air Force or Navy. The policy decisions of PAF are determined by the CoAS, with the input and guidance of the Chief of Air Staff. Therefore, the final decisionmaker for air power policy is not the Chief of Air Staff, but the CoAS.⁸

A measure of the Army's primacy can be gleaned from the comments of Gen. Pervez Musharraf, CoAS from 1998 to 2007. In a memoir published while he was in full control of all branches of the military,⁹ Musharraf barely mentions PAF—and the few references he does make are almost all dismissive.¹⁰ He admitted that when planning the 1998 Kargil incursion that led to the most serious conflict with India in a quarter-century, “all military information is shared on a ‘need to know basis . . . the foregoing should also explain why the naval and air force chiefs

⁷ See, for example: Stephen P. Cohen, *Shooting for a Century*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2013, pp. 92-95; and Stephen P. Cohen, “The Army,” in Ayesha Jalal, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Pakistani History*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

⁸ For a detailed examination of the institutional role of the Army in Pakistan's security structure, see Shuja Nawaz, *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, Its Army, and the Wars Within*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

⁹ Musharraf concurrently served as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee in Pakistan from 1998 to 2001; as minister of defense from 1999 to 2002; following his ouster of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on October 12, 1999, as chief executive from 1999 to 2002; and as president of Pakistan from 2001 to 2008. For nearly a decade, therefore, Musharraf was the apex decisionmaker in all aspects of Pakistan's security policy. Musharraf's memoir, *In the Line of Fire*, was published in September 2006, more than a year before he gave up his military post of CoAS (see Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir*, New York: Free Press, 2006).

¹⁰ There are only four entries for “Pakistan Air Force” in the book—fewer than for the Civil Aviation Authority or Pakistan Airlines: Musharraf, 2006, pp. 340 (Civil Aviation Authority), 341 (Pakistan Airlines), and 349 (Pakistan Air Force).

were ignorant about it until the Indian response bordered on war hysteria.”¹¹ Musharraf notes that when Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif set up the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (JCSC) as a way to limit the power of the Army chief, and then tried to maneuver Musharraf into accepting the chairmanship if he would give up his Army billet, the general refused what would nominally be a promotion: “As far as I was concerned, he could make anyone from the navy or air force chairman of the JCSC; I didn’t care.”¹² When Musharraf, as president, set up the National Security Council with the explicit goal of creating a check on future Army chiefs, he explained the addition of other service chiefs alongside civilian officials with the off-hand comment, “inter-service sensitivity demands the inclusion of all four four-star commanders.”¹³

The Policy Problem

Question

Since October 2001, USAF has had a relatively straightforward goal shaping its engagement with PAF: support for OEF and for counterterrorism and related missions (such as Operation Freedom’s Sentinel) in the region. With the conclusion of OEF and an expected long-term ramping down of U.S. military presence in Afghanistan, USAF must reconceptualize its goals and priorities for partnering with its Pakistan counterpart. Since Pakistan’s military policymaking is highly centralized rather than delegated to the individual services, this task requires a deeper understanding of Pakistan’s strategic calculus writ large.

What is the historical context for Pakistan’s security engagement with the United States? What is the geostrategic context of Pakistan’s nested security relationships? What trends are likely to shape the parameters of U.S.-Pakistan security engagement in the future? To what degree is it possible to partner with both Pakistan and India simultaneously? These questions form the foundation for identifying pathways and pitfalls for future USAF-PAF engagement.

Methodology

The research in this report is based on a multiple-method approach relying on a literature review of Western and regionally sourced documents, semistructured interviews, and analysis of open-source information in English, Chinese, Urdu, Hindi, and Punjabi. Methods include field research (interviews, obtaining hard-copy documents in the languages mentioned above) and analysis (open-source media, social media, imagery). All sources cited in this analysis are listed

¹¹ Musharraf, 2006, p. 97.

¹² Musharraf, 2006, p. 112.

¹³ Musharraf, 2006, p. 171. In Musharraf’s case, the institutional lack of interservice collegiality may have crossed the line into outright hostility: Musharraf notes that, in a 2003 assassination attempt, “almost all of [the plotters] were from the Pakistan Air Force” (see Musharraf, 2006, p. 247), and suggests that PAF sided with Prime Minister Sharif during Musharraf’s 1999 coup (see Musharraf, 2006, p. 132).

in the References section of this report; in order to streamline the References section and clarify which sources provide the foundation for analysis, additional sources that were consulted but not directly cited are excluded from that section. In addition to the sources listed below, the RAND team also used geospatial imagery from Digital Globe and informal exchanges with a range of U.S. government personnel to focus analysis. Sources of data used for analysis include

- **interviews:** 36 interviews with retired senior leaders, officials, think-tank analysts, and academics based in Pakistan, India, China, and Singapore¹⁴
- **open-source and discourse analysis:** analysis of open-source information in multiple languages, including speeches, public appearances, and news articles
- **social media analysis:** comparative analysis of information revealed in YouTube videos, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter
- **imagery analysis:** analysis of multiple years of imagery of specific sites of interest in Pakistan, India, and China.

Many possible sources of information in vernacular languages were considered, vetted, and then either used or set aside. Those that provided insight into national-level perceptions of strategic goals or relationships with Pakistan, or helped to reveal differences or nuances in what Pakistani officials said in Urdu or Punjabi as compared with English, were included in this report. The most common avenue for discourse analysis was YouTube, which began posting videos in 2005 and has gradually attracted a larger Pakistani following in each subsequent year.

Additional avenues included Urdu- and Punjabi-language nonvideo social media outlets, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Virtually all of the records located come from the past decade rather than earlier years: This is due not only to the advent of YouTube and other social media platforms in the mid-2000s but also to the introduction of the iPhone in 2007, which greatly increased the number of videos taken and eventually uploaded to platforms. All information was obtained and analyzed between October 2015 and September 2016.

Purpose of This Document

This project aims to better define the long-term relationship between USAF and PAF as the drawdown from Afghanistan continues and eventually concludes; it aims to help USAF shape its engagement with its Pakistani counterpart by better understanding Pakistan's security requirements and the geostrategic context of these requirements (including the U.S.-India relationship) and to examine future trends to plan for a range of potential scenarios. The purpose of the report is to more broadly disseminate the findings of the project throughout USAF and the wider U.S. security policymaking community.

¹⁴ In accordance with RAND's Human Subject Protection Committee protocol, interviewees are not identified by name, and descriptions of their personal backgrounds are minimized. In general, interviews are cited by date and location. For interviews conducted in Pakistan, an additional level of anonymity is provided due to the potential sensitivity of certain subjects discussed: The dates of interviews are cited by month and year, but not date; the location (Islamabad and Rawalpindi) is given in combined format rather than broken down by specific site.

In brief, this report offers the following arguments:

- Pakistan’s periodic unresponsiveness to U.S. security interests is best understood by historical and geostrategic context: Historically, the two nations are in their third boom-and-bust engagement cycle, and Pakistan is likely to continue hedging as a result; geostrategically, the United States is only one among Pakistan’s interlocked set of partners and rivals, with India, China and other nations often influencing Pakistani policymaking more powerfully than the United States does.
- USAF can be understood as the loss leader of U.S. engagement with Pakistan. In some phases of engagement, USAF achieves rough parity between what it “gets” institutionally (basing during the Cold War, overflight during OEF) and what it “gives” (primarily, advanced U.S. aircraft and technology). This has not always been the case in the past and will not necessarily be the case in the future. As U.S. involvement in Afghanistan winds down, USAF will likely give more than it gets institutionally from its engagement with PAF, and the benefits of the relationship will accrue instead to other parts of the U.S. security establishment (for example, counterterrorism cooperation for the intelligence community and Joint Special Operations Command).
- A crucial but underappreciated goal for USAF partnership with PAF is to provide ballast to the larger U.S.-Pakistan security relationship, particularly during periods (such as the post-OEF back-surge) when overall levels of engagement may wane. The past two cycles of U.S.-Pakistan engagement were initiated almost literally overnight, and both had to ramp up from a standing start. Well-calibrated USAF-PAF partnership in areas of mutual interest, without impinging on U.S.-India equities, can lay the foundation for the next cycle of stepped-up partnering whenever it may arrive.

Organization of This Report

Chapter Two of this study reviews the historical context of U.S.-Pakistan security engagement, outlining its three boom-and-bust cycles: the surges during the early Cold War (1954–1965), the anti-Soviet Afghan jihad (1979–1989), and OEF (2001–2014), along with the tapering-off of engagement that followed each surge. The partnerships launched in 1979 and 2001 came in response to sudden and unforeseen external events—the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the al Qaeda attack of 9/11, respectively; in both instances, the United States had permitted its security relationship with Pakistan to wither away almost completely and had to rebuild an alliance virtually from scratch.

Chapter Three examines the geostrategic context in which Pakistan makes its security decisions. It looks most closely at Pakistan’s two most important regional relationships: those with its traditional adversary, India, and its “all-weather friend,” China. The India-Pakistan relationship is relatively well understood in U.S. policymaking circles, but no examination of Pakistan’s security calculus would be complete without an overview of the nation’s adversarial relationship with its self-perceived existential threat. Pakistan’s relationship with China is less well understood—and likely to become an increasingly important factor in Islamabad’s security decisions as Beijing rapidly increases both its military and economic engagement with Pakistan.

To round out the picture, the chapter also examines three other nations that influence Pakistani security policy, whether as a potential challenge (Afghanistan), a patron (Saudi Arabia), or something in-between (Iran).

Chapter Four projects these historical and geostrategic contexts from the present into the future. It examines the trends and drivers likely to shape Pakistan's security calculus in the coming years and posits a potential future scenario in line with these trends. This chapter identifies pathways for future USAF-PAF engagement and pitfalls for USAF to avoid in attempting to strengthen this partnership.

Chapter Five presents specific recommendations for USAF, with a particular focus on SC.

2. Historical Context for USAF-PAF Engagement

The previous chapter began with two questions often posed by U.S. observers of the security relationship between the United States and Pakistan:

1. Why, despite billions of dollars in U.S. SA and development aid, does Pakistan frequently opt for policies directly at odds with core American interests?
2. Is there anything the United States can do to exert greater influence over Pakistani security decisions?

Chapter 3 of this report will address these questions in a geostrategic context. This chapter addresses them in a historical context. The chapter examines three historical cycles of security engagement and subsequent disengagement between the United States and Pakistan: 1947 to 1979 (Cold War allies), 1979 to 2001 (Afghan jihad), and 2001 to 2016 (uneasy OEF allies). The data presented here suggest the following answers from a historical perspective:

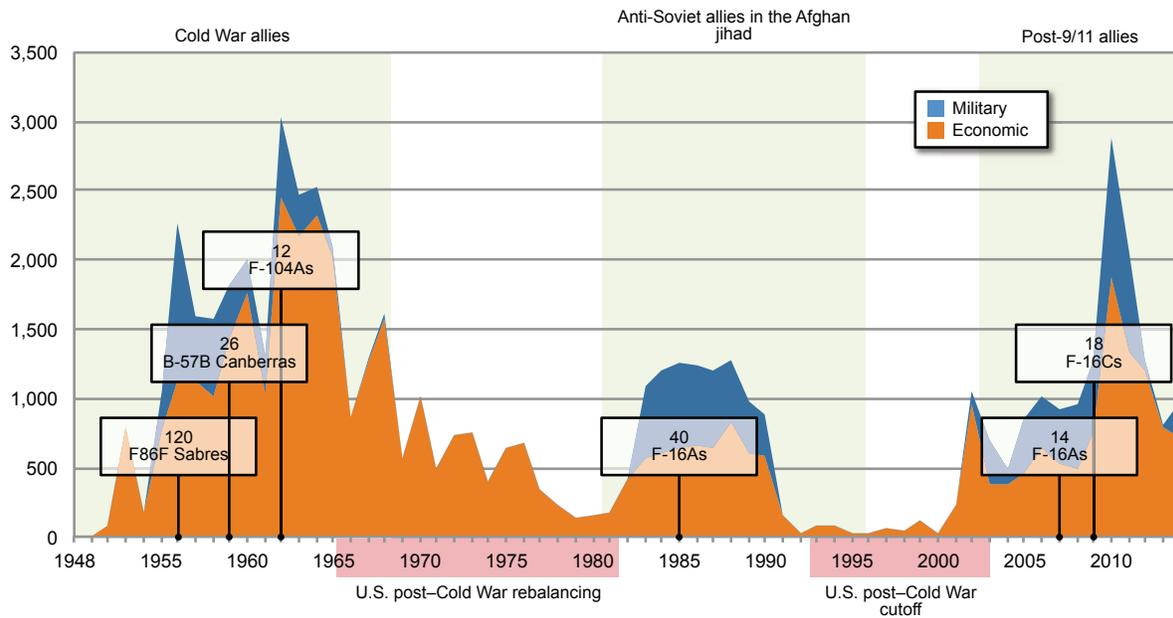
Why does U.S. aid not buy Pakistani compliance with U.S. goals? Because U.S. aid has historically fluctuated wildly, pouring in at times of urgent U.S. need for cooperation—but then drying up precipitously once the moment of urgency has passed. Pakistani decisionmakers are well aware of this history. They aim to maximize their leverage during periods of intense U.S. need without giving up any more of their own interests than absolutely essential. They believe, based on past history, that the United States' attention will not last, and therefore that long-term Pakistani interests should not be compromised for short-term U.S. assistance.

What could the United States do to increase its leverage? The most-effective step might be to stabilize U.S.-Pakistan security engagement at a steady long-term level (always subject, of course, to the imperative of Pakistani support for U.S. interests in such fields as counterterrorism and nonproliferation), rather than see it buffeted by repeated booms and busts. A lower baseline for assistance, if maintained over the course of decades, would be more effective at building mutual trust than a series of aid surges that taper off (or are shut off completely) over the course of a few years.

To a U.S. observer, relations with Pakistan may appear to have been exceptionally volatile since 2011—the year of Ray Davis, Abbottabad, Salala, and the closing of the ground lines of communication (GLOCs). As discussed below, the recent volatility may be less of an anomaly than a norm: The U.S.-Pakistan relationship has always been a roller-coaster ride, with giddy rises and precipitous drops. The United States has historically engaged heavily with Pakistan when external factors have raised the importance of Islamabad for U.S. interests and has disengaged once these external factors have receded. This cycle has repeated at least three times: The current boom (correlated with OEF) was preceded by similar surges during the early Cold War (1956–1965) and the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan (1979–1989) (see Figures 2.1 and 2.2). Each surge was followed by a rapid drop in U.S. support, which led to Pakistani feelings of

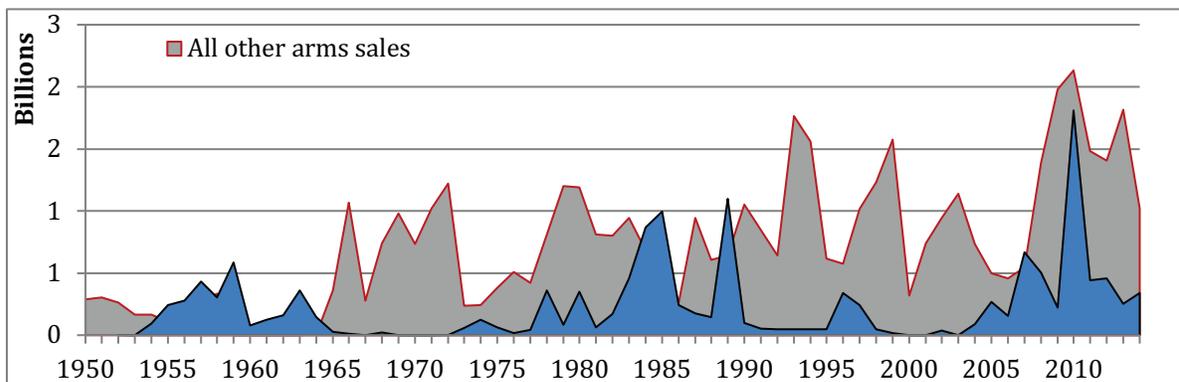
betrayal and distrust. Each time, Pakistan’s subsequent actions led to U.S. feelings of betrayal and distrust in turn.

Figure 2.1. U.S.-Pakistan Historical Engagement, 1947–2014



SOURCE: U.S. Agency for International Development, *U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants: Obligations and Loan Authorizations, July 1, 1945–September 30, 2015*, Washington, D.C., 2015.
 NOTE: Amounts along y-axis in millions, in constant 2014 dollars.

Figure 2.2. Arms Exports to Pakistan: U.S. (Blue) Versus All Other Suppliers



SOURCE: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “SIPRI Arms Transfers Database,” undated.

The current volatility in the security relationship between the United States and Pakistan is the historical norm rather than an anomaly. The OEF period was the third bout of intense military engagement between the countries—and the current tapering of U.S. support mirrors the

steep drops following both prior periods of partnership. This history underlies Pakistani charges of “abandonment” and Pakistan’s strategy of ruthless hedging against what Islamabad believes will be a third U.S. desertion post-OEF.

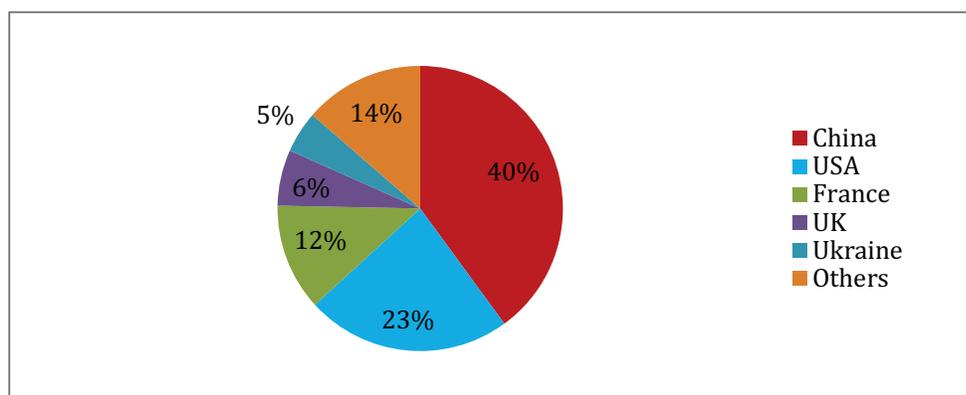
From a USAF perspective, the most noteworthy fact about this history is that each cycle of engagement began with air power assets as the leading U.S. deliverable. Each time U.S. policymakers have decided to increase engagement with Pakistan, USAF has been called on to lead the way. If the past is any guide to the future, USAF should take two lessons from a brief look at the history of U.S.-Pakistani SC: First, at some point in the future, the level of engagement with Pakistan is likely to spike again—and to do so with little advance notice, driven by external factors unrelated to Washington-Islamabad relations. Second, when the United States next decides to re-engage, USAF will likely be called on to provide the air assets, material, and training to jump-start a lagging partnership. While there is no guarantee that the past will be prologue to the future, for a nation with Pakistan’s unique combination of size, location, history, and nuclear capability, it would be prudent to take account of this real possibility.

Key takeaway: Increased or decreased U.S. sales to Pakistan will not affect transfers from China. One might expect to see an inverse relationship between Pakistan’s arms transfers from the United States and China, with one provider rising when the other drops off. That is not always the case: When the United States cuts arms transfers, Pakistan does shift to other suppliers—but even during periods of heavy U.S. engagement (such as 2007–2010), Pakistan sometimes experiences a parallel surge in transfers from China and other states. China represents the largest source of arms for Pakistan since 1950 and accounts for the majority of non-U.S. transfers (see Figure 2.3). After the United States cut transfers in 1965, Pakistan diversified its sources, leaning especially heavily on China, but also on France and other nations. When U.S. transfers declined again in the 1990s, Pakistan had already-established relationships (especially with China), which grew marginally. Importantly, these transfers from non-U.S. sources have dominated Pakistan’s imports and continued to grow irrespective of the U.S. position. They were not offset or affected in any obvious way after the resumption of U.S. sales post-9/11. Even in the period from 2000 to 2014, when the United States resumed significant transfers, Chinese sales have dwarfed U.S. sales, constituting 46 percent and 24 percent of Pakistan’s imports, respectively.

1947 to 1979, the First Cycle of Engagement: Cold War Allies

When India and Pakistan gained independence in 1947, U.S. planners had every reason to see India as the better bet: It was far larger, democratic norms were institutionalized from its earliest days, and Indian leaders had often been inspired by the United States’ own ideals. But when Pakistan sent troops into Kashmir in 1947, the United States refrained from taking sides. From Pakistan’s standpoint (at least as articulated in later years), the United States had failed to stand up for its principles, by permitting a new “colonial” power to deny the Kashmir people the right

Figure 2.3. Source of Pakistan's Arms, 1950–2014, in Aggregate



SOURCE: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, undated.

of self-determination. From the U.S. perspective (again, at least from the perspective crystalizing in the years immediately afterwards), Pakistan had violated the basic norms of the fledgling post–World War II global order that was essentially a U.S. creation and stood at the center of U.S. strategy.¹

India's founding prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, much to the chagrin of U.S. strategists, helped create a Non-Aligned Movement as a purported counterweight to both the United States and the Soviet Union. In 1953, Nehru's ambassador to the UN described his nation's policy of nonalignment in a speech before the General Assembly; in 1954, the United States and Pakistan signed the Mutual Defense Agreement, thereby forging a formal security alliance. Air power cooperation began in earnest almost immediately, with the first of what would be 120 F86F

¹ The roots of the Kashmir conflict are complex but can be summarized as follows: When India and Pakistan gained their independence from Great Britain in August 1947, the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir sought to avoid joining either new nation. At the end of the colonial period, approximately 560 princely states existed throughout the subcontinent, and their rulers were required to join either India or Pakistan. They could choose whichever nation they wished, but they were strongly encouraged to base the decision on geographical contiguity and the dominant religion of the populace. Kashmir was contiguous to both nations, and it had a mixed population with a Muslim majority and a Hindu ruler. Both the Hindu maharajah and the most credible of the Muslim popular leaders sought complete independence for Kashmir—something that neither India nor Pakistan would accept. Pakistan's army was still commanded by British general officers, so the new nation's leaders raised irregular Pashtun forces and sent them across the unrecognized border in hopes of stirring up a rebellion. Maharajah Hari Singh appealed to Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru for assistance, and Nehru willingly provided it—so long as the ruler formally acceded to India. After the departure of its British officers, Pakistan's national army joined the battle in May 1948. A ceasefire was signed on January 1, 1949: Under its terms, the LoC would be monitored by the UN, and both national combatants would withdraw their forces from all of the pre-independence princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. Neither nation has withdrawn its troops, and the LoC today is almost identical to the demarcation of 1948. For more detail, see Victoria Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan and the Unending War*, London: I.B. Taurus, 2003; Navnita Chadha Behera, *Demystifying Kashmir*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2006; and Šumit Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir: Portents of War, Hopes of Peace*, New York: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Sabre fighter jets arriving the same year that the agreement was inked. The United States subsequently provided 26 B-57B Canberra bombers to Pakistan in 1959 and 12 F-104As in 1962. U.S. economic assistance would peak at just over \$1 billion in 1961—a level not seen again until the Kerry-Lugar-Berman aid package passed in 2009.²

The United States and Pakistan cooperated closely in these early Cold War years, and USAF was in the forefront of the partnership. In 1959, USAF and the CIA jointly operated the Peshawar Air Station, which served as the center for both overt and covert operations.³ Peshawar Air Station served as a listening post into the Soviet Union and the base for U-2 spy flights. On May 1, 1960, former USAF Capt Gary Powers piloted a CIA flight from Peshawar and was shot down over the Soviet Union. Peshawar Air Station remained in operation until 1970.

Under President John F. Kennedy, U.S.-India relations warmed considerably. Kennedy sent his close adviser, the celebrated economist John Kenneth Galbraith, to serve as ambassador in New Delhi; throughout his administration and that of President Lyndon Johnson, only career Foreign Service officers served as ambassadors to Pakistan. Following a disastrous war with China in 1962, Nehru became disillusioned with both of the global Communist powers: China for invading his country, and the Soviet Union for refusing to come to India's aid despite warm relations throughout the 1950s.

In 1965, Pakistan went to war with India again. As was the case in the 1947–1948 war, Pakistan initiated the hostilities by infiltrating forces into Kashmir in hopes of sparking an uprising against India's rule there. Also mirroring 1947, Pakistani strategists badly misjudged the United States' reaction: The result was not U.S. support, but a decadelong shutoff of U.S. military aid and mutual feelings of betrayal. From Pakistan's perspective, the United States should have supported its treaty ally; from the U.S. perspective, Pakistan had recklessly endangered U.S. interest in exploiting the opening with India caused by its 1962 war with China.

After Nehru's death in 1964, his daughter Indira began restoring India's tilt toward the Soviet Union. By the time of President Richard Nixon's inauguration in 1969, and spurred partly by opposition to the U.S. war in Vietnam, New Delhi was once again in Moscow's orbit. President Nixon, partly in response and partly with an eye toward China, began restoring the U.S. tilt toward Pakistan.

But the pattern of Pakistan-U.S. relations being sabotaged by Pakistan-Indian war was repeated yet again in 1971—and USAF Brig Gen Chuck Yeager, the legendary aviator, was serving as Defense Representative in Pakistan at the time. In December 1970, about a month

² The amount for 1961 is in 2014 dollars. For discussion of U.S.-Pakistan engagement during the early Cold War period, see Husain Haqqani, *Magnificent Delusions: Pakistan, the United States, and an Epic History of Misunderstanding*, New York: Public Affairs, 2013, pp. 56–123; and Dennis Kux, *The United States and Pakistan, 1947–2000: Disenchanted Allies*, Karachi, Pakistan: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 66–114. A more skeptical view of the relationship during the 1950s, including discussion of the Pakistani perception that the United States was providing far less aid than expected, can be found in David O. Smith, “Facing Up to the Trust Deficit: The Key to an Enhanced U.S.-Pakistan Defense Relationship,” *Strategic Insights*, Vol. VI, No. 4, June 2007.

³ Peshawar Air Station is located near Peshawar, Pakistan.

before Yeager took up his post, Pakistan had held the first general election in its history. The vote was won by the Awami League, a Bengali-nationalist party based in East Pakistan, more than 1,000 miles from the country's capital and center of political gravity. The nation's military and political elite, overwhelmingly centered in West Pakistan, refused to accept the outcome. On March 25, 1971, the military imposed martial law in East Pakistan. Estimates of the death toll in its anti-independence campaign range from 200,000 to 3 million. India supported the insurgency, prompting a December 3 preemptive strike by PAF on three Indian air bases. India counter-attacked. Within two weeks, Pakistan surrendered, and Bangladesh was independent.

Pakistan had again misjudged the response from Washington: President Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger provided diplomatic assistance, and Yeager's presence was interpreted both in Islamabad and in New Delhi as a signal of U.S. support, but such gestures stopped short of military engagement.⁴ Pakistan again felt betrayed, and the United States felt that Pakistan had placed the United States in an impossible position through its brutality and lack of realistic strategy. As in 1947 and 1965, Pakistan had squared off against a militarily superior adversary, with the apparent expectation that once the battle was joined, the United States would be forced to enter the fray. As in these prior wars, the expectation was unmet. In Pakistan's lasting narrative of the 1971 war, the United States had failed to support its loyal friend, even when India was tearing the nation of Pakistan literally in two; the Soviet Union stood by its Cold War partner, but the United States did not. This Pakistani version of history overstates the role of the Soviet Union and understates the role of the Bangladeshis themselves, but it remains a narrative of which U.S. planners should be aware.

The Pakistani narrative of U.S. betrayal is even more noteworthy when considered in the context of what was going on behind the scenes at the time: Throughout the buildup, execution, and aftermath of the 1971 war, Pakistan's government was quietly providing vital assistance to the most important and successful foreign policy initiative of Nixon's presidency. After the 1965 U.S. aid cut-off, Pakistan had developed increasingly close ties with China. When Nixon sought a back-channel to facilitate rapprochement with Beijing, Pakistan served as the interlocutor. The Sino-Pakistan friendship that had been building throughout the 1960s served the United States' interest in effecting a sea-change in global alignments, by helping orchestrate the 1972 summit between Nixon and Chinese leader Mao Zedong.

On May 18, 1974, India conducted its first successful test of a nuclear device. The operation, termed "Smiling Buddha," caused enormous concern in Pakistan. The United States did little to allay these concerns: From Pakistan's standpoint, the United States had again used it when U.S. interests were at stake—first to spy on the Soviet Union in the early Cold War, then to seal China's shift away from its on-again-off-again Communist partner and perhaps toward a partnership with the United States. When Pakistan's own interests were at stake—three wars

⁴ The United States deployed Task Force 74, a unit of the U.S. Navy's 7th Fleet, to the Bay of Bengal in December 1971; these warships, however, took no role in the combat. For more detail on the events leading up to and surrounding the 1971 independence of Bangladesh, see Gary Bass, *The Blood Telegram*, New York: Vintage, 2014.

with India, and now its bitter enemy possessing the ultimate existential weapon—the United States backed away. It was at this time that Pakistan, partly through the industrial espionage of scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan, began efforts to acquire a nuclear capability of its own.

1979 to 2001, Second Cycle of Engagement: Afghan Jihad

While the United States had begun supplying arms again to Pakistan in 1975, relations remained low-key throughout the 1970s. Pakistan was still smarting from U.S. failure to provide support during the “dismemberment” of 1971, or to prevent India from gaining nuclear capability. In 1977, Gen. Muhammad Zia-ul Haq seized power from Pakistan’s first elected Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto; two years later, Zia executed Bhutto by hanging. From the perspective of President Jimmy Carter, who won election in 1976 and made democracy promotion and human rights a cornerstone of his foreign policy, Pakistan was a military dictatorship out of step with U.S. moral values and national interests.

The second half of this equation changed instantly on December 27, 1979. When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, Pakistan suddenly became extremely relevant to U.S. goals. The second surge of U.S. security engagement—the late Cold War surge, following the early Cold War surge of the 1950s—began almost immediately and lasted until the withdrawal of Soviet troops a decade later. President Carter initiated a covert program to supply the anti-Soviet *mujahideen* in Afghanistan, and President Ronald Reagan expanded the operation; by necessity, they relied heavily on Zia. The United States and Saudi Arabia supplied most of the funding for the effort, but Pakistan’s ISI selected which *mujahideen* groups were favored. Zia directed U.S.-funded support not to the most effective groups and leaders (such as the Tajik commander Ahmed Shah Massoud) but to those most amenable to Pakistani interests (like Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Jalaluddin Haqqani). To reward Pakistan for its cooperation, the United States supplied 40 Block A F-16 fighter jets to PAF.

Throughout the 1980s, Washington subordinated all other regional goals to the overarching mission of turning Afghanistan into the “Soviets’ Vietnam.” The most prominent congressional champion of this mission was Rep. Charlie Wilson, a Texas Democrat who occupied a powerful seat on the House Appropriations Committee. Moreover, he provided across-the-aisle support to the Reagan administration’s policy of funding *mujahideen* groups through ISI channels. After leaving Congress, Wilson would become Pakistan’s primary Washington lobbyist throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s.

If not for the overriding concern of the Afghan jihad, Zia’s regime might have found little favor with Washington because of its harsh internal policies. Pakistan has experienced four military regimes: the tenures of Field Marshal Ayub Khan (1958–1969), Gen. Yahya Khan (1969–1971), Gen. Zia (1977–1988), and Gen. Musharraf (1999–2008); of these, Zia’s rule was the most dictatorial. Moreover, Zia instituted a program of social Islamization that provided fertile soil for a range of anti-Western, anti-American, and militantly antisecular groups to take

root and flourish. The effects of Zia's Islamization program, including his promotion of Saudi-funded madrasas to compete with the secular public-school system, are being felt to this day. On August 17, 1988, Zia was assassinated by unknown assailants, in a bombing that also took the life of U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Arnold Raphel.

Once the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan, the United States began to withdraw support from Pakistan. In October 1990, the United States imposed sanctions that effectively shut down almost all assistance to Pakistan. The sanctions were mandated by the Pressler Amendment, passed in 1985 but not triggered—from Pakistan's standpoint, a suspicious coincidence—until eight months after the last Soviet troops left Afghanistan. Under Pressler, aid to Islamabad was contingent on presidential certification that Pakistan did not possess a nuclear device; Pakistan's nuclear program had been progressing throughout the 1980s, but Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush provided such certification until the anti-Soviet jihad was over. From 1989 to 1992, the United States continued to channel covert aid to Pakistan for onward delivery to *mujahideen* units, and the Soviets supported the puppet regime in Kabul headed by President Muhammad Najibullah. When the Soviet Union dissolved and Najibullah fell, U.S. interest in Afghanistan followed suit.

In 1990, President Bush declined to provide Pressler certification. After a decade of close cooperation, many policymakers and policy-implementers within the U.S. government retained warm feelings toward Pakistan and tried to maintain the relationship as best they could. Because Pressler only blocked aid covered by the Foreign Assistance Act, the cut-off was not complete. Economic aid already in the pipeline, unlike scheduled deliveries of military hardware, continued to flow. Certain categories of nonlethal military equipment were permitted to continue as commercial sales.

In the mid-1990s, some Pakistani officers returned to U.S. Senior Service and Staff Colleges. After a 1995 visit to Pakistan by Defense Secretary William Perry and a summit meeting between President Bill Clinton and Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, Congress passed the Brown Amendment: This measure, spearheaded by Sen. Hank Brown, modified Section 620E(e) of the Foreign Assistance Act to permit aid for counternarcotics operations, military-to-military contacts, International Military Education and Training (IMET), aid to humanitarian and civic assistance projects, and aid for peacekeeping operations and antiterrorism assistance.⁵

Despite these attempts, some of which were barely visible to the general public, the relationship between the United States and Pakistan languished throughout the decade. Particularly before passage of the Brown Amendment, and, to a large degree, afterward as well,

⁵ The Brown Amendment also provided a one-time waiver that enabled the return of military equipment that had been sent for repair in the United States at the time of the Pressler cut-off; authorized the U.S. government to seek a third-party customer for the 28 F-16 aircraft placed in storage since 1990, with proceeds dedicated to reimbursement for Pakistan; and authorized the transfer of \$368 million worth of military equipment other than F-16s, including three P-3C Orion maritime patrol aircraft, 28 Harpoon antishipping missiles, and 360 AIM 9L air-to-air missiles (AAMs). The authors are grateful to Retired COL David O. Smith for this detail and other information in the paragraph above (see David O. Smith, personal communication with authors in review process, January 5, 2017).

the public narrative in Pakistan centered on themes of U.S. betrayal and abandonment. To add insult to injury, from Pakistan's standpoint, throughout the 1990s, the United States refused to either deliver the 28 F-16s or refund the money Pakistan had paid for them—and even charged Pakistan a storage fee for warehousing the aircraft. This fact, often amplified by harsh rhetoric from congressmen, senators, and other members of the policymaking and policy-shaping community, helped stoke anti-American sentiment in the Pakistani population.⁶

Already heavily sanctioned, Pakistan expanded its nuclear activities in the 1990s. A. Q. Khan ran a global distribution ring that would later be termed a “nuclear Wal-Mart.”⁷ The extent to which Khan's network was sanctioned by the Pakistani state remains uncertain, at least in unclassified discussion. The official Pakistani position is that Khan ran a rogue operation without the knowledge or cooperation of the Pakistani government.⁸ Members of Pakistan's political parties admit that Khan received official support—for example, a shipment of equipment to North Korea was sent in PAF C-130s;⁹ they maintain, however, that this support came from the Pakistani military and was never sanctioned by civilian authorities.¹⁰ Observers outside of Pakistan often regard Khan's operation as something essentially under the control of Pakistani military officials at all times, albeit sometimes under loose control, and sometimes providing opportunities for personal enrichment to both Khan and his associates within the military. Nations that had dealings with Khan's network included North Korea, Iran, and Libya.

Throughout the 1990s, Pakistan sponsored a rebellion against India in Kashmir. The Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir had been essentially peaceful since 1965. However, in 1987, an indigenous protest movement arose in response to India's rigging of local elections; by 1989, this

⁶ For example, in 1998, Rep. Benjamin Gilman stated that “Islamabad has not only countenanced the Afghan terrorist training camps, it has also provided crucial diplomatic support for the Taliban. They have done so out of interest in agitation by Muslim extremists in the disputed Indian territory of Kashmir, and in hopes that the Taliban, after gaining control throughout Afghanistan, will be dependent on Pakistan, thus providing not only strategic depth in the region, but a corridor to the important energy reserves of Central Asia.” Benjamin A. Gilman, “The Taliban: Protectors of Terrorists, Producers of Drugs, H. Con. Res. 336,” remarks to House of Representatives introducing House Resolution 336, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 144, No. 141, October 9, 1998. The *Bremer Commission's Report of the National Commission on Terrorism*, published in June 2000, proposed that the President should consider designating Pakistan a state “not cooperating fully” with U.S. counterterrorism efforts. U.S. Senate, *Countering the Changing Threat of International Terrorism: Report of the National Commission on Terrorism, Hearing Before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, June 15, 2000.

⁷ U.S. House of Representatives, *A.Q. Khan's Nuclear Wal-Mart: Out of Business or Under New Management?* Joint Hearing Before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia and the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2007.

⁸ David Albright, Paul Brannan, and Andrea Scheel Stricker, “Self-Serving Leaks from A.Q. Khan Circle,” Washington, D.C.: Institute for Science and International Security, December 9, 2009, p. 2.

⁹ David E. Sanger, “Threats and Responses: Alliances; in North Korea and Pakistan, Deep Roots of Nuclear Barter,” *New York Times*, November 24, 2002.

¹⁰ For example, in 2012, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) denied A.Q. Khan's allegations that Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto had “directed him to transfer nuclear materials and technology to two countries,” (see “Nuclear proliferation: PPP Denies AQ Khan's Allegations,” *Express Tribune*, September 16, 2012).

movement had burst into outright insurgency, with the secular Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) in the forefront. By 1990, the JKLF was joined by the Pakistan-backed group Hizb-ul Mujahideen: While the JKLF favored independence for all parts of Kashmir—those held by Pakistan and those held by India—Hizb-ul Mujahideen favored union with Pakistan for all of the former princely state. India’s brutal crackdown and rampant abuse of human rights turned a small-scale political protest into a broad-based popular revolt.¹¹ JKLF took some support from Pakistan but did not take marching orders; Hizb-ul Mujahideen took both. By the mid-1990s, however, both groups would be overshadowed by such non-Kashmiri groups as Lashkar-e Taiba (LeT). These groups were composed largely of Punjabis and served as proxy militias of Pakistan’s ISI in most cases.¹²

Tensions over Kashmir became more dangerous when the Hindu Nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power in India in 1998 and almost immediately undertook a new set of nuclear tests. Pakistan responded with nuclear tests of its own a few weeks later, the first it had ever conducted. The following year, Pakistan infiltrated troops from the Northern Light Infantry Regiment into high-altitude terrain in Indian-held Kashmir. The two armies had jockeyed for position in uninhabited glacial ridges for decades, but the 1999 incursion above Kargil crossed an Indian redline: It extended much farther into Indian-held territory than previous forays, and it directly threatened India’s sole line of communication between the Valley of Kashmir and neighboring Ladakh. If the Pakistani forces had been permitted to remain in their posts, one of the only two roads into Kashmir Valley would have been potentially cut off. The result was the most ferocious fighting between India and Pakistan since the 1971 war—and the first such conflict since either nation had developed nuclear capability. After an Oval Office meeting between President Clinton and Pakistani Prime Minister Sharif, Pakistan agreed to withdraw from the terrain it had captured—from the standpoint of Pakistan’s military, yet another U.S. betrayal. Sharif blamed the incident on CoAS Musharraf, who in turn claimed that he had kept the prime minister fully in the loop; the deterioration of relations led to Musharraf deposing Sharif in military coup on October 12, 1999.

Pakistan also remained active on its western front. While the United States withdrew from active involvement in Afghanistan once the Soviets ramped down support for Najibullah in 1992, Pakistan stayed deeply involved in the Afghan civil war. It continued to support its favored leaders, particularly Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. By the mid-1990s, however, Hekmatyar had proven himself an ineffective proxy: His tendency to ally with and then betray virtually every faction in Afghanistan had left him largely friendless and reliant on sheer brutality to maintain any standing. ISI helped foster the Taliban, a group growing out of the Afghan refugee population

¹¹ Steve Coll, “Indian Crackdown in Kashmir Helps Fuel Separatist Cause,” *Washington Post*, 1990; and Human Rights Watch, *Abdication of Responsibility: The Commonwealth and Human Rights*, New York, 1991, pp. 16–20.

¹² Jonah Blank, “Kashmir: All Tactics, No Strategy,” in Šumit Ganguly, ed., *The Kashmir Question: Retrospect and Prospect*, London: Frank Cass, 2003. For a more general overview, see Alastair Lamb, *Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy*, Karachi, Pakistan: Oxford University Press, 1992.

inside Pakistan. In 1994, the Taliban took the city of Kandahar. In 1996, it took Kabul and declared itself the government of Afghanistan. The only nations to recognize the government were Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Around this time, the Taliban offered sanctuary to a little-known terrorist named Osama bin Laden. On August 20, 1998, the United States executed Operation Infinite Reach, a cruise missile strike on al Qaeda camps in both Sudan and Afghanistan. To reach landlocked Afghanistan, the missiles launched from four U.S. surface vessels and one submarine had to fly over Pakistan. Relations between Washington and Islamabad were so bad at this point that President Clinton did not inform Prime Minister Sharif of the violation of his nation's airspace until the Tomahawks were already under way.¹³

2001 to 2016, Third Cycle of Engagement: Uneasy OEF Allies

After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, relations between the United States and Pakistan were transformed. As in 1979, the shift came in a matter of days, if not hours. On September 10, 2001, Pakistan had been burdened with more U.S. sanctions than all but a handful of nations: In addition to Pressler, Pakistan faced sanctions stemming from its 1998 nuclear test and 1999 military coup. Shortly after 9/11, these sanctions were lifted. In 2004, Pakistan was given the status of Major Non-North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Ally.¹⁴

The two overriding issues shaping the U.S.-Pakistan relationship post-9/11 were support for OEF—the U.S.-led military campaign in Afghanistan—and cooperation in counterterrorism. Pakistan was rewarded handsomely: 14 F-16As in 2005, 18 F-16Cs in 2007, and a surge of both security and economic assistance almost as large as that delivered during the peak of the Cold War. What Pakistan provided in return was of exceptional valuable—and, sometimes, simultaneously quite the opposite.

On the plus side, without the use of Pakistan's airspace, air basing, and GLOCs, OEF would have been an exceptionally difficult mission to execute; in counterterrorism, Pakistan provided invaluable human intelligence (HUMINT) and other assistance in capturing top al Qaeda operatives, such as Khalid Sheikh Muhammad, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, and Abu Zubaydah. On the minus side, Pakistan has provided sanctuary to the Quetta Shura Taliban, the Haqqani Network, and other forces targeting U.S. troops in Afghanistan; when bin Laden was located in 2011, he was living in a compound adjacent to the Kakul Military Academy in Abbottabad—Pakistan's version of West Point.

¹³ For more detail on ISI support for the Taliban and subsequent Taliban sheltering of al Qaeda during this period, see Bruce Riedel, *The Search for Al Qaeda*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2008a, pp. 61–84; Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000, pp. 1–30, 82–94; and Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars*, New York: Penguin Books, 2004, pp. 187–369.

¹⁴ Designation as a Major Non-NATO Ally enables the United States to provide Pakistan with an increased slate of SC, and to do so under terms not accorded to many other countries, but it does not (as would be the case for NATO allies, for example) obligate the United States to defend Pakistan from external attack. For deeper discussion of U.S.-Pakistan engagement during the Musharraf years, see Markey, 2013, pp. 72–105.

In the early 2000s, the Abdul Qadeer Khan nuclear proliferation ring was shut down—either several months before 9/11 or after President George W. Bush and CIA Director George Tenet presented Pakistani leader Musharraf with clear evidence of Khan’s actions.¹⁵

Relations took a turn, paradoxically, for the better after an episode of terrible tragedy: In the wake of a horrific earthquake in Pakistan’s Azad Kashmir in 2005, the U.S. military embarked on an HA/DR mission. Chinook helicopters, which delivered massive amounts of relief aid and rescued many stranded survivors, became iconic symbols of U.S. commitment to Pakistan (see Figure 2.4). For a brief time following the earthquake relief operation, the United States was more popular among Pakistani citizens than any militant group and nearly as popular as the government of Pakistan itself.¹⁶

Islamabad’s unimpressive earthquake response served to delegitimize Musharraf’s military-led regime and helped fuel pressure for a return of democracy.¹⁷ Elections were held in February 2008, just two months after the assassination of two-time former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto—the daughter of executed prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto—who had been leading in the polls; her widower, Asif Ali Zardari, assumed leadership of Bhutto’s PPP, and turned the previously ceremonial office of president into the de facto center of power during the five years he held this office (2008–2013).

Hoping to build on the success of the earthquake HA/DR effort, the U.S. Congress in 2009 passed the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act, also known as the Kerry-Lugar-Berman bill. This legislation authorized \$7.5 billion over five years for economic development and infrastructure projects—a tripling of aid levels prior to the bill’s passage. The following year, Pakistan experienced disastrous floods, and the U.S. military again responded with large-scale HA/DR assistance. Unlike in 2005 and 2006, however, U.S. assistance in this case did not lead to a similar surge in pro-U.S. sentiment. Part of this was due to the failure of the United States to find a visible and iconic method of aid delivery comparable to that of the Army’s in 2005 and 2006; the other part was due to the general deterioration of U.S.-Pakistan relations in the

¹⁵ According to Musharraf, the ring was shut down when A.Q. Khan was forced to retire from his post as chairman of Khan Research Labs in March 2001 (Musharraf, 2006, p. 290). Musharraf describes his September 2003 meeting with Bush and Tenet as occurring after the ring’s operation had already ceased (Musharraf, 2006, pp. 292–293). Whether the Abdul Qadeer Khan ring continued to conduct any operations between these two events is a topic that cannot be fully explored through unclassified sources alone.

¹⁶ Terror Free Tomorrow, “A Dramatic Change in Public Opinion in the Muslim World: Results from a New Poll in Pakistan,” Washington, D.C., November 28, 2005, p. 2.

¹⁷ Ashma Jehangir, chair of the Pakistan Human Rights Commission, noted that Islamist groups had stepped into the void left by government inaction: “They were in the forefront of giving relief People had rightly praised them that they were there when we needed them. And they asked the question, where was our military? Where was our government?” (as quoted in Gary Thomas, “Earthquake Galvanizes Pakistani Islamists,” *Voice of America News*, November 2, 2005). For discussion of internal criticism leveled at Musharraf, see Steve Coll, “Fault Lines,” *New Yorker*, November 21, 2005.

interim—driven, in large part, by the U.S. surge of forces in Afghanistan beginning in 2009, a move highly unpopular next door in Pakistan.¹⁸

Figure 2.4. U.S. Army CH-47 Chinook Preparing to Deliver Aid After 2005 Kashmir Earthquake



SOURCE: Photo courtesy of U.S. Air Force/Tech Sgt. Joseph McLean.

Relations hit their low point in 2011. On January 27, 2011, CIA contractor Raymond Allen Davis fatally shot two armed men whom he believed were about to rob him in Lahore. On May 1–2, 2011, U.S. forces conducted a successful assault on bin Laden’s sanctuary, next to the Pakistan Military Academy at Kakul in the town of Abbottabad. On November 26, 2011, in a tragic episode of “friendly fire,” U.S.-led NATO forces based in Afghanistan mistakenly attacked two military posts inside Pakistan, killing 24 Pakistani soldiers. The Salala attack prompted Pakistan to close the GLOCs supplying OEF, until the United States in July 2012 issued an apology and released reimbursements for Coalition Support Funds (CSF) held up during the standoff. The denial of land access to Afghanistan for eight months is one of the clearest examples of how the tone of U.S. communications can have a direct and detrimental

¹⁸ For more on the deterioration of U.S.-Pakistan relations from 2009 and the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act, see Jane Perlez, “U.S. Push to Expand in Pakistan Meets Resistance,” *New York Times*, October 5, 2009; and David Ignatius, “Legislation to Needlessly Stir Up Pakistan,” *Washington Post*, October 11, 2009.

impact on policy: Had the apology been issued immediately after the incident and there been fewer inflammatory statements by U.S. officials during the preceding years, it is possible that the GLOCs would never have been shut down.¹⁹

In June 2013, Sharif began his third term as prime minister.²⁰ This represented a significant milestone in Pakistan's democratization: His predecessor's departure marked the first time in the nation's history that any elected civilian government had left office at its constitutionally mandated time, rather than being ousted by the military; it also represented the first orderly handoff of power from one civilian government (PPP) to another (Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League, or PML) without intervening military action. While Zardari and the PPP had a reputation of being slightly more pro-American than Sharif and the PML, the security policies most relevant to U.S. interests contained more overlap than divergence. Regardless of whether the PPP, the PML, or the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (led by former cricket star Imran Khan) holds power in Islamabad, relations with the U.S. are unlikely to be free of tension. The 2016 decision by Congress to block foreign military financing (FMF) funding for eight F-16Cs served as a reminder of this basic fact, and increasingly harsh rhetoric in 2017 by top U.S. policymakers during the Trump administration²¹ suggests that tense times are far from over.

¹⁹ U.S.-Pakistan relations began to sour in the years leading up to 2012; tensions arose over the tone of and conditions set forth in the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009 (known as the Kerry-Lugar-Berman bill), and U.S. officials made a number of remarks perceived as inflammatory by Pakistan. In October 2009, the *New York Times* reported that "steps by the United States to vastly expand its aid to Pakistan, as well as the footprint of its embassy and private security contractors here, are aggravating an already volatile anti-American mood as Washington pushes for greater action by the government against the Taliban." Additionally, many in Pakistan, especially in the Army, "object[ed] to the conditions [of the Act] as interference in Pakistan's internal affairs, and they are interpreting the larger American footprint in more sinister ways" (see Perlez, 2009; Ignatius, 2009). Rep. Howard Berman, a co-sponsor of the bill, was also quoted in the media, saying, "billions [had] gone down a rat hole in the past" in Pakistan (see Karen DeYoung, "U.S. Seeks to Ease Pakistanis' Concerns Before Obama Signs Aid Bill," *Washington Post*, October 14, 2009). In September 2009, the *Washington Post* reported that U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Anne Patterson said that Pakistani and U.S. counterterrorism priorities did not align, with Pakistan less concerned about Taliban attacks in Afghanistan than inside: "She noted that Pakistan had once trained Islamist fighters to operate against India and elsewhere and that the same groups have now turned against the state 'You cannot tolerate vipers in your bosom without getting bitten Our concern is whether Pakistan really controls its territory. There are people who do not threaten Pakistan but who are extremely important to us'" (see Pamela Constable, "U.S. Says Taliban Has a New Haven in Pakistan," *Washington Post*, September 29, 2009).

²⁰ On July 28, 2017, Sharif stepped down after Pakistan's Supreme Court barred him from office (as a result of a corruption and money-laundering case) for a period of ten years. At the time of writing, Sharif's party still maintains control of Parliament, under the prime ministership of Shahid Khaqan Abbasi.

²¹ Shashank Bengali and Aoun Sahi, "After Tough Trump Speech, Pakistan Scrambles to Answer U.S. Demands in Afghanistan," *Los Angeles Times*, September 18, 2017; Huizhong Wu, "Tillerson Talks Tough on Pakistan's Harboring of Terrorists—But Will It Have Any Effect?" *CNN*, October 27, 2017; Idrees Ali and Phil Stewart, "Mattis Says Will Try to Work with Pakistan 'One More Time,'" *Reuters*, October 3, 2017.

3. Geostrategic Context: Pakistan's Nested Security Relationships

When making plans for engagement with PAF, USAF can benefit from viewing Pakistan's security relationships in their broader geographical context. This chapter examines Pakistan's most important security relationships, both friendly and adversarial, with nations other than the United States: India, China, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran.

The bilateral U.S.-Pakistan relationship, let alone the institutional USAF-PAF relationship, is seldom the only factor determining whether a U.S. request will receive a positive or negative response. Instead, every security decision of Pakistan's policymakers is grounded in a complex web of international relations. This dynamic is likely to grow more pronounced as security ties between the United States and India deepen and expand. The following two hypothetical examples can demonstrate how U.S. interests are often indirectly affected by Pakistan's set of interwoven security relationships.

In the first hypothetical case, Pakistan's growing economic and security relationship with China results in an acceleration of work at Gwadar Port in Baluchistan, including facilities for potential use by the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN). In response, India steps up its construction at Iran's Chabahar Port, with facilities potentially relevant to Indian naval operations. The indirect impact on U.S. security interests is negative: increase of Iranian naval basing capabilities, increased Iranian economic activity outside the reach of U.S. sanctions, and increased Indo-Iranian military cooperation.

In the second hypothetical case, tensions rise between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. The Saudis decrease their financial support to Islamabad and increase their covert backing of Sunni militias, such as Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LeJ) operating inside Pakistan, against the interests of the Pakistani state. In response, Pakistan seeks drastically increased support from China—and Beijing delivers. The level of military cooperation causes India to set aside its traditional distaste for superpower alignment and to become a full-fledged security partner of the United States. The indirect impact on U.S. interests could be positive: In this hypothetical case, the benefits to U.S. security of a full partnership with India might outweigh the harm of Pakistan's reliance on China rather than the United States as a patron.¹

A more granular understanding of Pakistan's interlocking set of security relationships—both friendly and unfriendly—would help USAF planners execute their missions more effectively. This chapter explores the five most important of these relationships apart from the United States: India as an adversary, China as an “all-weather friend,” Afghanistan as a challenge, Saudi Arabia

¹ For a discussion of the India-China rivalry and potential scenarios in the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) area of responsibility (AOR), see Jonah Blank, Jennifer D. P. Moroney, Angel Rabasa, and Bonny Lin, *Look East, Cross Black Waters: India's Interest in Southeast Asia*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1021-AF, 2015, pp. 143–168.

as a patron, and Iran as a bit of each. Where the United States fits in this hierarchy of friends and foes varies considerably from one year to the next, perhaps from one month to the next. In no time period, however, is the United States the sole determinant of Pakistan’s security policy—and, at all times, the United States is merely one among several important geostrategic players.

India

Relationship in Brief

India is not merely Pakistan’s traditional rival. It is—in the view of many Pakistani military officials—a life-or-death enemy. As Musharraf said in a 2013 interview in Urdu, “We have a neighboring country which is an existential threat to us from the east, since 1947. Our neighbor hasn’t reconciled to our existence.”² Given the fact that India has defeated Pakistan in three wars and several bloody border conflicts just short of all-out warfare—yet has never attempted to press its victory beyond its own borders—this may strike an outside observer as hyperbole. But Pakistan’s view of history is rather different: In the Pakistani narrative, each of the wars was a *defensive* endeavor: The 1947–1948 and 1965 wars (this narrative runs) were outgrowths of Pakistan’s support for the Muslim inhabitants of Indian-held Kashmir, who were Pakistan’s moral and legal responsibility under the terms of partition; in 1971, (the narrative continues) India incited and supported separatism in East Pakistan, and literally tore the nation in half by creating a separate state of Bangladesh. Without constant vigilance, many Pakistanis believe, India’s next target could be Baluchistan or Azad Kashmir—and eventually Sindh and Punjab.³ After Pakistan-based terrorists launched an attack on India’s Parliament House in December 2001, India developed a “Cold Start” doctrine to enable mobilization and deployment of armor formations along the border with Pakistan before defending forces might have time to prepare.⁴

Why does Pakistan continue to challenge a neighbor that has far superior resources and has won every past contest? National pride is one factor: Few Pakistanis (and far fewer members of

² Pervez Musharraf, “Pervez Musharraf in *Naeem Burkhari Kay Sath*,” trans. from Urdu by Abdul Tariq, interview on television program, *Dawn*, February 13, 2015.

³ For example, in 2016, Munir Akram, former Ambassador of Pakistan to the UN, writes that “India has adopted a complex strategy to wear down Pakistan’s resistance,” and that “Subversion, involving infiltration, sponsorship and support for dissident or disgruntled groups within Pakistan, is a third element of this strategy. The sponsorship of the Baloch Liberation Army and terrorism in Balochistan and Sindh has now been confirmed by the recent capture and confession of the Indian spy. Disaffected groups in Karachi, rural Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkwa have been encouraged for many years to disrupt peace and security” (see Munir Akram, “India’s Pakistan Strategy,” *Dawn*, September 2, 2016).

⁴ This doctrine shapes the Pakistan Army’s ground defense doctrine and has given rise to a potential counterstrategy—mooted in theory, but not formally adopted in public—involving the use of tactical nuclear weapons against Indian armor on Pakistan’s own soil. From 2002 to 2016, Indian officials typically denied the existence of the Cold Start doctrine. In a January 2017 interview, the newly appointed CoAS Gen. Bipin Rawat provided perhaps the first public acknowledgment by a top-level Indian official (see Sandeep Unnithan, “‘We Will Cross Again,’” *India Today*, January 4, 2017).

the Pakistani military) are willing to see their country as a junior sibling to India rather than a genuine peer. Another factor is institutional self-interest: The Pakistani military enjoys higher prestige and more power than its counterparts in neighboring states and has governed directly or indirectly for most of the nation's history. The armed forces of India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka have stayed out of politics, as have the military services of Bangladesh since 1991; if not for the prospect of war with India, the Pakistani Army might have difficulty sustaining its dominant position.

Pakistan was founded as a homeland for South Asian Muslims, but it has never been a theocracy.⁵ For the Pakistani military, with certain exceptions (such as Gen. Zia-ul Haq), Islamization is a matter of statecraft rather than personal piety.⁶ Even with the rise to power in India of the Hindu Nationalist BJP, currently led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the India-Pakistan rivalry is *not* a conflict over religion. It is more properly seen as a conventional inter-state rivalry, in which religion is an integral part of one (to some degree, both) of the parties' national identity.

Security Relationship

Conventional Warfare

In the conventional military arena, Pakistan's army can challenge India's army only defensively or in limited border engagements. The armies regularly engage in artillery duels along the LoC in Kashmir. However, apart from small areas of uninhabitable terrain on Siachen Glacier and similar battlegrounds, no territory has been exchanged since 1948. The most recent major clash between the two was the 1999 Kargil Conflict, when troops from Pakistan's Northern Light Infantry infiltrated Indian-held portions of Kashmir and were ousted after nearly two months of combat.⁷

Pakistan's navy poses no significant threat to India's status as the dominant maritime regional power. In a full-scale war, the Indian Air Force is generally believed to be capable of gaining air superiority—if not air supremacy—over PAF.⁸

⁵ For examination of the rise of Islamist radicalism in Pakistan and its relationship to the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan, see Graham Fuller, *Islamic Fundamentalism in Pakistan: Its Character and Prospects*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, R-3964-USDP, 1991. This analysis is noteworthy in that it is authored by a former CIA official who served as chief of several stations during the period and was written contemporaneously with many of the events discussed elsewhere in this report.

⁶ For more detail, see Stephen P. Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004, pp. 110–115.

⁷ For discussion of this conflict from the perspective of a Pakistani general officer who rose to the rank of Brigadier General in the Pakistan Army after beginning his career in PAF, see Shaukat Qadir, "An Analysis of the Kargil Conflict, 1999," *Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) Journal*, April 2002.

⁸ Christopher Clary writes: "The air balance between India and Pakistan is also thought to heavily favor the larger and more technologically sophisticated Indian Air Force. While India has a qualitative and quantitative advantage, the air capabilities gap narrowed rather than widened in the last decade While over the course of a prolonged conflict, there is little doubt that the Indian Air Force would win an air superiority battle, that battle would be hard

Unconventional Warfare/Terrorism

Since the late 1980s, Pakistan has supported militant groups conducting acts of both insurgency and terrorism in India's Jammu and Kashmir state.⁹ Over the past 17 years, Pakistan-based terrorist groups, including LeT and Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM), have extended their field of action beyond Kashmir into India proper. These attacks include a December 13, 2001, assault on India's parliament in New Delhi and a multiday, multisite attack on Mumbai in November 2008 that left 164 dead.

The government of Pakistan denies any involvement in all such attacks. Outside observers generally see Pakistan's spy service as having continuing ties to LeT but significantly less of a connection to JeM; the degree of operational control exercised by ISI over LeT or any other Pakistan-based terrorist group is highly debated.¹⁰ Whatever operational linkages may or may not exist, Pakistan has declined to extradite LeT founder Hafiz Saeed or JeM founder Masood Azhar to India, and both figures have addressed large rallies while under loose forms of confinement in Pakistan.¹¹

2016 saw two major attacks on Indian military facilities attributed to JeM, both in Kashmir: a January attack on an Indian Air Force base in Pathankot and a September attack on an Army base at Uri.

Nuclear Warfare

The one point of rough equality is nuclear capability. As Musharraf himself put it, nuclear weapons provide Pakistan with "military parity."¹² Both nations are believed to have approximately 100–120 operational nuclear warheads. India's nuclear tests are considered to have displayed greater technical sophistication, but Pakistan's arsenal is believed by some analysts to be slightly larger and, in some respects, more reliable.¹³ One of the most important reasons that Pakistan is so eager to acquire the most advanced versions of U.S. F-16s is the

fought and take time" (see Christopher Clary, "What Might an India-Pakistan War Look Like?" MIT Center for International Studies, Spring 2012; also, see Appendix A for more detail on the PAF order of battle).

⁹ For discussion of ISI support for such groups, see Haqqani, 2013, pp. 271–317.

¹⁰ For more detail, see Stephen Tankel, "Lashkar-e-Taiba, Mumbai, and the ISI," *Foreign Policy*, May 2011b; Ashley Tellis, "The Menace That Is Lashkar-e-Taiba," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Policy Outlook*, March 2012; Geoffrey Kambere, Puay Hock Goh, Pranav Kumar, and Fulgence Msafir, "The Financing of Lashkar-e-Taiba," *Combatting Terrorism Exchange (CTX)*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2011; and Stephen Tankel, *Storming the World Stage: The Story of Lashkar-e-Taiba*, London: C. Hurst and Co., 2011a.

¹¹ For example, LeT founder Hafiz Saeed spoke to a crowd of 10,000 at a 2013 rally in Islamabad (see *Reuters*, "Hafiz Saeed Leads Mass Rally in Islamabad," *Dawn*, September 7, 2013). Saeed also led an anti-India rally in Islamabad in February 2016 (see Press Trust of India, "Hafiz Saeed Leads Anti-India Rally on 'Kashmir Solidarity Day' in Pakistan," *Indian Express*, February 5, 2016a). India also "slammed Pakistan" for allowing Masood Azhar to address a January 2014 rally in Muzaffarabad (see "Masood Azhar's Address to Rally in Muzaffarabad Draws Indian Ire," *Express Tribune*, February 21, 2014).

¹² Musharraf, 2006, p. 202.

¹³ Paul K. Kerr and Mary Beth Nikitin, *Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, August 1, 2016.

capability these platforms provide for nuclear weapon delivery. Pakistan has several missiles capable of hitting targets deep inside India, including the Ghauri, Shaheen I, and Shaheen II, but only its F-16s bring the advantages of an aircraft-based nuclear deterrent.¹⁴ The combat radius of Pakistan's F-16s extends through the northwestern third of India (including the capital of New Delhi), but the ferry range—i.e., the distance an F-16 is capable of flying with external drop tanks and without conventional ordnance, on a one-way nuclear delivery mission—reaches all points on the Indian mainland.¹⁵

Some Pakistani leaders see the United States as a potential threat to the nation's nuclear capability. In an Urdu-language 2012 television interview, former Director-General of the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (DG-ISI) Lt. Gen. Ehsan ul-Haq said, "America and other Western nations were not happy with the success of Pakistan's nuclear program. They did everything to hinder our progress, so it is understandable to think that they might do something to de-nuclearize Pakistan."¹⁶ Musharraf cited the possibility of a U.S. attack on Pakistan's nuclear forces as a key factor in his decision to side with the United States rather than the Taliban after 9/11.¹⁷

"Submerged Intent"

Pakistan's security goals, as expressed in official doctrine and formal public statements by top military officials, balance external threats (specifically, from India) and internal threats (various groups in Baluchistan and the TTP). Even before the initiation of Operation Zarb-e Azb in 2014, members of Pakistan's security establishment had described COIN as a top priority.¹⁸ The prioritization of combat against the TTP, in particular, would align with U.S. regional goals, and it is unsurprising that such statements should come in the context of discussions with U.S. interlocutors. Indeed, the U.S. government's official justification for the provision of various

¹⁴ Hans M. Kristensen, and Robert S. Norris, "Pakistani Nuclear Forces, 2015," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 71, No. 6, 2015.

¹⁵ IHS Jane's, "Lockheed Martin F-16 Fighting Falcon," *Jane's All the World's Aircraft*, June 20, 2016c.

¹⁶ Ehsan ul-Haq, "If United States Attacks Nuclear Installations of Pakistan (Ex-Pakistani Intelligence Chief)," trans. from Urdu by Abdul Tariq, television interview, YouTube.com, January 24, 2012.

¹⁷ Musharraf, 2006, p. 202.

¹⁸ On April 28, 2015, CoAS Gen. Raheel Sharif described the internal security challenge as paramount: "[A] peaceful environment in and around the country is the army's top priority . . . [we] can't take focus away from targeting terrorism in FATA [Federally Administered Tribal Areas], breaking their linkages in rest of country" (see "Peace in and Around Pakistan Top Priority: Army Chief," *Express Tribune*, April 28, 2015). On August 18, 2016, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif described eliminating terrorism the topmost priority of his government (see "Eradication of Terrorism Top Priority: PM," Radio Pakistan, August 18, 2016). On March 29, 2008, Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani stated: "Terrorism and extremism are our greatest problems. They have put the country in danger. Therefore, it is our first priority to bring peace to the country and fight terrorism" (see Kamran Haider, "Pakistani PM Gilani Says Terrorism Main Priority," *Reuters*, March 29, 2008).

types of military hardware to Pakistan in the years since 2001 has often been that these weapon systems would be used in Pakistan's COIN and counterterrorism efforts.¹⁹

But Pakistan's "submerged intent"—that is, the underlying goals that are not expressed in formal statements—may be at odds with official pronouncements. Rather than a balancing of internal and external threats, let alone a prioritization of COIN over all other missions, Pakistan's security focus appears to remain fixed squarely on India.²⁰ While Zarb-e Azb is one of the most serious COIN efforts ever undertaken by the Pakistani military (including PAF), it does not appear to have shifted the security establishment's overall priorities. The submerged intent is suggested by the unofficial statements made by top military officials in the vernacular rather than English-language mediums, and demonstrated by action in decisions regarding force posture and order of battle.

Our analysts examined Urdu- and Punjabi-language speeches and interviews by top Pakistani military officials in recent years and found a more bluntly anti-India set of positions put forward in the vernacular pronouncements.²¹ For example, in 2015, Musharraf said in an Urdu television interview, "We have a neighboring country [i.e., India] which is an existential threat to us from the East, since 1947. Our neighbor hasn't reconciled our existence; they want to dominate and

¹⁹ In February 2003, the U.S. Department of State formally notified Congress that "FY 2004 funds will be used for communications, including air-ground radios, to enhance interoperability with the U.S. military, as well as P-3C aircraft for airborne surveillance for the navy to help track maritime smuggling of drugs and al-Qaida operatives" (see U.S. Department of State, "South Asia," in *FY 2004 Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations*, Washington, D.C., February 13, 2003, p. 436). More context for this transfer is given later in this chapter.

²⁰ Some observers may take this analysis as self-evident: The prospect of Pakistan genuinely redirecting a significant portion of its security assets from the Indian front to counterterrorism operations might be seen as far-fetched; this is certainly the reaction of most Indian analysts interviewed for this report. But other close observers of Pakistan are more willing to credit Rawalpindi for a true rebalancing of its security priorities. Retired U.S. Army COL David O. Smith, who has tracked Pakistan's military for 35 years, notes that Pakistan's army has roughly one-third of its 550,000 end strength dedicated to COIN operations in FATA—that is, about the same number of troops Pakistan has stationed on the LoC in Kashmir and the international border with India. He expresses the view that "it is more accurate to say that there is a rough parity between the Army's concerns with India and its effort to fight militants" (Smith, 2017).

²¹ RAND researchers examined Urdu and Punjabi speeches and interviews for the following current (at time of research) and former military officials: CoASs Gen. Raheel Sharif, Pervez Musharraf, and Ashfaq Kayani; DGs-ISI Lt. Gens. Rizwan Akhtar, Zaheerul Islam, Ahmad Shuja Pasha, Nadeem Taj, Ehsan ul-Haq, and Mahmud Ahmed; and Chiefs of Air Staff Air Chief Marshals Tahir Rafique Butt, RAO Qamar Suleman, Tanvir Mahmood Ahmed, Kaleem Saadat, Mushaf Ali Mir, and Parvaiz Mehdi Qureshi. Researchers also examined Urdu and Punjabi statements by Prime Minister Sharif and his brother (and closest adviser) Shahbaz Sharif. Researchers focused on vernacular speeches or interviews with the following keywords: India, China, US/America/United States, Kashmir, Nuclear, Afghanistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Jihad/Mujahideen, Lashkar-e Taiba/Jamaat-ud Dawa, Hizb-ul Mujahideen, F-16, J-17/J-10, Kargil.

The most common avenue for the research was YouTube, which began posting videos in 2005 and has gradually attracted a larger Pakistani following since then. Additional avenues included Urdu- and Punjabi-language nonvideo social media outlets, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Virtually all of the records are from the past decade rather than earlier years: This is due not only to the advent of YouTube and other platforms in the mid-2000s but also to the introduction of the iPhone in 2007, which greatly increased the number of videos taken and eventually uploaded to social media platforms.

have us to submit to them.”²² His successor as CoAS, Gen. Ashfaq Kayani, used an Urdu speech in 2013 to implicitly accuse India and Afghanistan of supporting proxy attacks inside Pakistan: “Our foreign rivals are busy stoking the flames of terrorism.”²³

This submerged intent to remain focused on a potential war with India rather than prioritize counterterrorism missions is displayed more concretely in Pakistan’s order of battle.

Pakistan’s army remains firmly entrenched and intensely focused on the Indian army to its east. Of the army’s nine corps headquarters, six are situated in close proximity to the Indian border, and seven command forces are responsible for initial defense against Indian aggression. The remaining two corps, 11 Corps at Peshawar and 12 Corps at Quetta, are each ostensibly responsible for defense of the western border but have been deeply involved in internal security and COIN operations in both the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan provinces.²⁴

Pakistan’s navy has been given weapon systems specifically described as counterterrorism or COIN platforms but that the Pakistani military regards primarily as assets to be used in potential conflict with India. For example, in February 2003, the U.S. State Department justified the transfer of P-3C Orion aircraft on the grounds that they would “help track maritime smuggling of drugs and al-Qaida operatives,”²⁵ in an interview after he had left office, however, Musharraf (who was both CoAS and president of Pakistan at the time of the P-3C transfer) said, “We also acquired P-3C Orion with anti-submarine capabilities with such range that if India attacks us, we can go to Mumbai.”²⁶ The Pakistan Navy, along with the Pakistan Coast Guard and the Army’s 5 Corps, is entrusted with the mission of preventing or delaying any amphibious landings or mining operations along Pakistan’s exposed and vulnerable southern coastline.²⁷ It does not face a seaborne terrorist or insurgent threat other than occasional bouts with piracy, and it is neither organized nor equipped for fast offshore patrolling against unconventional maritime threats.

The principal mission of PAF is to defend Pakistan’s national airspace, or as the PAF website suggests, to “provide, in synergy with other services, the most efficient, assured and cost effective aerial Defence of Pakistan.”²⁸ As a secondary mission set, PAF is tasked with conducting retaliatory strikes, including nuclear weapon delivery; support of ground operations, including air transport; fleet protection and maritime strikes; and search and rescue operations. A

²² Musharraf, 2015.

²³ Ashfaq Pervez Kayani, “Chief of Army Staff General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani Speech on Youme-Shuhada—30th April 2013,” trans. from Urdu by Abdul Tariq, YouTube.com, April 30, 2013.

²⁴ Julian E. Barnes, “Pakistan to Crack Down on Rebels,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 29, 2008; and Seth G. Jones and C. Christine Fair, *Counterinsurgency in Pakistan*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-982-RC, 2010, pp. 37–38. The location of the corps headquarters, it should be noted, has only a rough correlation to the number of forces deployed on the eastern and western sectors. As Smith, the retired colonel who served two tours as U.S. Army Attaché in Pakistan, noted, roughly equal numbers of troops are devoted to the Indian front and internal security duties (see Smith, 2017).

²⁵ U.S. Department of State, 2003, p. 436.

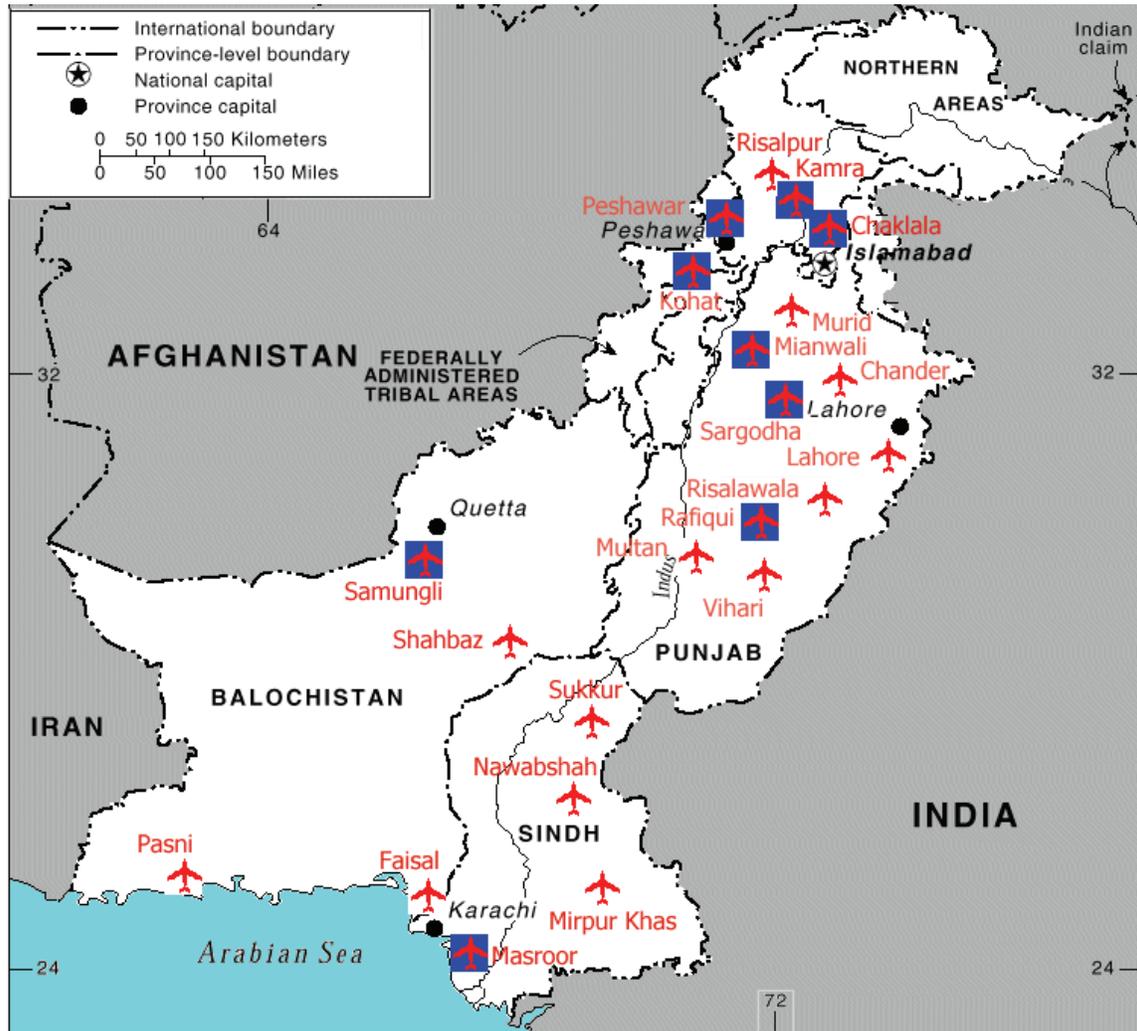
²⁶ Musharraf, 2015.

²⁷ “Pakistan—Navy,” *MilitaryPeriscope.com*, July 1, 2015.

²⁸ Pakistan Air Force, homepage, undated.

number of PAF forward operational bases (FOBs) line the Indian border; these are active during peacetime and become operational during wartime (see Figure 3.1). Limited fighter ground support missions are conducted in support of the Pakistani Army’s ongoing military operations against militants in the northwest.²⁹

Figure 3.1. Pakistan Air Force Bases



SOURCE: Robert Sherman, “Pakistan Air Force Bases,” Federation of American Scientists, 2000. Blue squares represent major operational bases from which aircraft operate in peacetime. Other sites represent FOBs that are actively maintained in peacetime but only become fully operational during times of potential conflict. According to some reporting, Risalpur and Faisal have transitioned from the status of FOB to major operational base.

Economic Relationship

India and Pakistan share a long border, but bilateral trade remains surprisingly limited. In 2013, only 4.3 percent of merchandise trade imports to Pakistan came from India, compared with

²⁹ Eric Schmitt, “Pakistan Injects Precision into Air War on Taliban,” *New York Times*, July 29, 2009.

17.7 percent from the United Arab Emirates, 15.1 percent from China, and 10 percent from the European Union.³⁰ The majority of India-Pakistan trade is routed through third countries in the Middle East (and through Dubai, in particular).³¹ There are only three points for licit cross-border trade by land: the Wagah border crossing in Punjab and two checkpoints along the LoC at Muzaffarabad-Uri and Poonch-Rawalakot. Unwieldy procedures have hindered the flow of trade, although India and Pakistan reached an agreement in 2014 to allow 24-hour movement of trucks through the border crossing.³² Cross-border trade is also vulnerable to the ebb and flow of broader India-Pakistan relations. Cross-LoC trade has repeatedly been suspended, most recently in August 2016.³³

The two nations share a compatible and potentially integrated network of rail connections dating from colonial times, but political tensions have drastically limited cross-border railway operations. At the time of writing, there are only three crossings per week in each direction: the once-weekly Thar Express from Karachi, Pakistan, to Jodhpur, India; and the twice-weekly Samjhauta Express from Lahore, Pakistan, to Attari, India. The volume of dutiable goods carried on these rail connections is minimal.

Trade barriers persist between India and Pakistan, limiting the extent and depth of economic cooperation. India granted Pakistan Most Favored Nation (MFN) status in 1996. Pakistan, however, has not reciprocated this step, in large part due to domestic opposition. Instead, Indian trade with Pakistan is regulated by a “negative list” of roughly 1,200 products that cannot be imported from India.³⁴ Until 2012, Indian imports were limited to a more restrictive “positive list” of roughly 2,000 items. This loosening of restrictions on Indian imports boosted bilateral trade significantly: It increased by 21 percent to \$2.4 billion.³⁵ Progress remains slow and MFN-status seems unlikely, but Pakistani officials talk about offering India “non-discriminatory market access,” which would further reduce the number of products on the negative list and enable even more trade.

As trade flows have grown, so too have prospects for the 1,800-kilometer Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline that aims to increase these energy-hungry countries’ access to natural gas. Construction began in Turkmenistan in December 2015, and the project is scheduled for completion by 2019. Security and financing concerns plague the project, which will pass through parts of southern Afghanistan at risk from the Taliban, but if it is completed, the pipeline would have a capacity of 33 billion cubic meters of gas per year.³⁶

³⁰ World Trade Organization, *Trade Policy Review—Report by the Secretariat: Pakistan*, June 2, 2015, pp. 20, 26.

³¹ “Trade Between India and Pakistan Surges 21% to \$2.4 Billion,” *Express Tribune*, May 14, 2013.

³² Manoj Kumar, “India, Pakistan for Greater Trade Through Wagah Border,” *Reuters*, January 19, 2014.

³³ *Reuters*, “India-Pakistan Cross-Border Trade to Resume Next Week,” *Express Tribune*, August 6, 2016a.

³⁴ World Trade Organization, 2015, p. 9.

³⁵ “Trade Between India and Pakistan Surges 21% to \$2.4 Billion,” 2013.

³⁶ *Reuters*, “Turkmenistan Starts Work on Gas Link to Afghanistan, Pakistan, India,” December 13, 2015; and Agence France Presse, “TAPI—Pipeline or Pipe Dream?” *Dawn*, September 28, 2014.

Water-sharing in the disputed territory of Kashmir remains an area of contention. Pakistan is heavily dependent on the Indus watershed and also suffers from flooding in the Indus River Basin. The 2010 floods displaced millions and caused \$25 billion to \$40 billion in damage.³⁷ Pakistan objects to Indian construction of hydropower dams, which Islamabad says diverts shared resources and jeopardizes the nation's water security. Some in Pakistan also believe that India can exploit control of rivers upstream to "dump" water on Pakistan and cause flooding—a fear exploited by Pakistani militants, such as Hafiz Saeed.³⁸ In 1960, India and Pakistan signed the Indus Waters Treaty, but increasing agricultural and energy needs strain both countries' resources. In 2010, the two countries agreed to set up a telemetry system on the Indus to monitor water flows.³⁹

India's economic power dwarfs Pakistan's—India's GDP of \$2.1 trillion far outpaces Pakistan's of \$270 billion—and this economic disparity between Pakistan and India is directly related to the security equation. "The gap between Pakistani and Indian military capabilities will continue to grow," a retired Pakistani general officer told a RAND researcher, "because the economic gap between our two nations will continue to grow."⁴⁰ Air Chief Marshal Sohail Aman, in an Urdu-language interview during his tenure as Chief of Air Staff, made a similar point: "We are a resource-constrained country. We cannot match our enemy in numbers so we focus on training quality."⁴¹

Pakistan's trade is funneled primarily through its single major port: An absolute majority (60 percent) of the nation's inbound and outbound cargo passes through the port of Karachi.⁴² This overreliance on a single port presents a potential vulnerability during a war with India and a rationale for the rapid completion of Gwadar Port 390 miles to the west. In the 1971 war, India launched Operations Trident and Python to impose a blockade on Karachi, which might have inflicted even more economic pain than it did if the fortnight-long conflict had run longer.

India-Pakistan economic relations, however, are vulnerable to the ebb and flow of the broader political and security relationship. Following the September 2016 terrorist attack in Uri (and accusations of Pakistani involvement), Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced plans to "review" Pakistan's MFN status.⁴³ Water-sharing agreements have also been impacted. The prime minister chaired a meeting of officials to "discuss the government's options" on the Indus Waters Treaty. India suspended talks on the Permanent Indus Commission (a dispute resolution

³⁷ "Pakistan Floods: Damage and Challenges," BBC News, August 27, 2010.

³⁸ Mehreen Zahra-Malik and Asim Tanveer, "Pakistani Islamists Use Floods to Turn Opinion Against India," *Reuters*, September 17, 2014.

³⁹ "Pakistan and India Agree to Install Telemetry System," *Dawn*, July 23, 2010.

⁴⁰ Interview with retired Pakistani general officer [General A] Islamabad/Rawalpindi, March 2016.

⁴¹ Sohail Aman, "Air Chief Marshal Sohail Aman's Exclusive Interview Pakistan Air Force," trans. from Urdu by Abdul Tariq, YouTube.com, September 8, 2015.

⁴² Salman Siddiqui, "Trade via Karachi Port Records 15% Increase," *Express Tribune*, July 5, 2016.

⁴³ "Modi Set to Review Most Favoured Nation Status to Pakistan," *Express Tribune*, September 27, 2016.

mechanism) until “terror comes to an end.”⁴⁴ Reports later emerged that India would accelerate construction of hydropower plants along rivers flowing into Pakistan.⁴⁵

Political Relationship

Pakistan’s political interaction with India has traditionally ranged from cool to hostile. In May 2014, Pakistani Prime Minister Sharif attended the inauguration of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi—the first time a leader from either nation had witnessed the swearing-in of his or her counterpart. However, the basic tenor of the relationship remains, at best, civil rather than cordial.

The primary political issue in contention between the two neighbors remains Kashmir. The LoC separating the portions of colonial-era Kashmir controlled by India and by Pakistan has not significantly changed since 1948 (the date of the UN ceasefire). On the Indian side of the line, the territories of Jammu, the Valley of Kashmir, and Ladakh have been integrated into the Indian Union as the state of Jammu and Kashmir. On the Pakistan side, Gilgit-Baltistan (formerly known as the Northern Areas) and Azad (“Free”) Kashmir retain an administrative status that differs from full integration more in theory than in practice. The only variations in the LoC since 1948 have come in uninhabitable stretches of very high-altitude terrain, such as portions of the contested Siachen Glacier. In three prior conflicts (1947–1948, 1965, and 1999), India refrained from seizing habitable territory in Azad Kashmir or Gilgit-Baltistan, and the likelihood of any future land-grab remains quite remote.

Kashmir has always been a part of Pakistan’s political rivalry with India: The peaceful integration of a Muslim-majority state into Hindu-majority India would challenge the “Two Nation” theory of Pakistan’s founding father, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and implicitly question the ideological rationale for Partition.⁴⁶ Moreover, no Pakistani leader has wished to be seen as abandoning the nation’s co-religionists across the LoC. Musharraf and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh came close to striking a deal on Kashmir, but whatever window of opportunity for such a settlement appears to have closed, at least in the near term. Gen. Raheel Sharif, who preceded current CoAS Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa, essentially disavowed Musharraf’s approach:

⁴⁴ Shushani Haider, “India Suspends Talks on Indus Water Pact,” *The Hindu*, September 27, 2016. When asked about India’s continued devotion to the treaty after the Uri attack, a Foreign Ministry spokesman refused to affirm the pact: “For any such treaty to work,” Vikas Swarup said, “it is important for mutual trust and cooperation. It cannot be a one-sided affair” (see Michael Kugelman, “Why the India-Pakistan War over Water Is So Dangerous,” *Foreign Policy*, September 30, 2016).

⁴⁵ *Reuters*, “India to Speed Up Hydropower Building on Rivers Flowing into Pakistan,” *Dawn*, September 27, 2016b.

⁴⁶ For more discussion of the ideological role of Jinnah’s Two Nation theory on Pakistan’s security strategy, both in Kashmir and more broadly, see Akbar Ahmed, *Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic Identity: The Search for Saladin*, London: Routledge, 1997; and Sumantra Bose, *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003.

“Kashmir is Pakistan’s jugular vein,” the general said (in Urdu) in 2014.⁴⁷ “Without resolving the Kashmir issue,” he said the following year (also in Urdu), “there is no hope for peace in the region.”⁴⁸ In 2016, two major attacks on Indian military facilities in Kashmir left 20 Indian airmen and soldiers dead; Delhi charged the Pakistan-based terrorist group JeM with responsibility, while Islamabad has denied involvement.

On its other front, Pakistan has faced an insurgency in Baluchistan that has flared up and simmered down periodically over the course of decades. Islamabad blames New Delhi for stoking these flames, trying to portray Indian support for Baluch insurgents as the precise parallel of Pakistani support for those in Kashmir. Whatever involvement India may have in Baluchistan, however, falls very far short of Pakistani involvement across the LoC. Expert opinion is mixed on whether India has any operational involvement in the Baluch insurgency, with some analysts seeing a fairly modest covert engagement and others seeing nothing but diplomatic and rhetorical support.⁴⁹ In August 2016, Prime Minister Modi explicitly highlighted Baluchistan in his Independence Day address, prompting a harsh rebuke from Pakistan.⁵⁰

China

Relationship in Brief

China and Pakistan have considered each other “all-weather friends” since the late 1960s, in contrast to the fair-weather friendships that both have found elsewhere. They share a rivalry with India, against which both have fought wars and border skirmishes. The bond between the two nations, however, is based less in a shared antipathy for India than in a shared lack of alternative friendships: Neither state has any other partner with which its relations have been so consistently untroubled.

For more than half a century, China has been Pakistan’s largest source of military hardware. This has mostly been low-tech equipment, but with the joint production of the JF-17 fighter jet, China has moved squarely into the high-tech realm. Both nations expect this trend to continue, and Pakistani generals talk of China replacing the United States within 20 years as the high-tech

⁴⁷ Raheel Sharif, “General Raheel Sharif Full Speech on Youm-e-Shuhada,” trans. from Urdu by Abdul Tariq, YouTube.com, April 30, 2014.

⁴⁸ Raheel Sharif, “Pakistan COAS General Raheel Sharif Speech in GHQ on Defense Day,” trans. from Urdu by Abdul Tariq, YouTube.com, September 7, 2015.

⁴⁹ Larry Hanauer and Peter Chalk, *India's and Pakistan's Strategies in Afghanistan: Implications for the United States and the Region*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, OP-387-CAPP, 2012, p. 14; C. Christine Fair, “False Equivalency in the ‘Indo-Pakistan’ Dispute,” *War on the Rocks*, June 16, 2015; and Frederic Grare, *Balochistan: The State Versus the Nation*, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 2013, p. 29.

⁵⁰ Shubhajit Roy and Anand Mishra, “Narendra Modi’s Independence Day Speech: PM Throws Down Balochistan Gauntlet,” *Indian Express*, August 16, 2016.

supplier of choice.⁵¹ In April 2015, Chinese President Xi Jinping pledged \$46 billion to Pakistan in infrastructure investment.

This kind of patronage brings considerable deference. When China talks, Pakistan listens. Given the historic strength of this relationship, and the current trend lines suggesting a significant upswing in its depth across the security, economic, and political arenas, the China element of Pakistan's geostrategic calculus deserves a deeper look than perhaps that presented by any other nation. India will remain Pakistan's primary concern—but, in the near future, China may supplant the United States as Pakistan's primary patron at *all* times, rather than (as some might predict) largely surging during periods when U.S. interest and commitment have ebbed.

Security Relationship

For more than 65 years, China has provided 40 percent of Pakistan's arms (see Figure 2.3). Since 1964, Pakistan is the only nation to which China has sold arms every single year—and China is the only nation from which Pakistan has bought arms every single year.⁵² For most of that time, the arms that Pakistan received from China were primarily small arms, munitions, and relatively unsophisticated versions of larger weapon systems. The biggest change in Sino-Pakistani security partnership in the coming years may well be China's transition from a low-tech to high-tech supplier. Indeed, the transition is well under way. Perhaps the most noteworthy example of this is the joint development and joint production of the JF-17 Thunder multirole combat jet (China's version is called the FC-1 Xiaolong).⁵³

In 2009, Pakistan contracted to purchase 36 Chengdu J-10 multirole combat aircraft and is cooperating with Chengdu in the development of a multipurpose fighter based on the MiG-33.⁵⁴ Pakistani military officials have suggested that they intend the JF-17 to eventually replace U.S. F-16s,⁵⁵ and when the U.S. Congress balked at President Obama's request to supply F-16s to

⁵¹ Ehsan ul-Haq, "Jirga on Geo News (General (R) Ehsan ul-Haq, Exclusive ...) 1st June 2015," trans. from Urdu by Abdul Tariq, interview on Geo TV, June 1, 2015, 28:00 mark.

⁵² Jonah Blank, "Thank You for Being a Friend: Pakistan and China's Almost Alliance," *Foreign Affairs*, October 15, 2015b; analysis of data from Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, undated.

⁵³ Much has been written on the JF-17's capabilities and comparison with other aircraft, such as the F-16. For a brief description, see IHS Jane's, 2016c; and Farhan Bokhari, "Pakistan Reveals Plans for JF-17 and J-10 Fighters," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, March 10, 2009.

⁵⁴ J-10 deal: Siva Govindasamy, "Pakistan Signs Deal for Chinese J-10 fighters," *FlightGlobal*, November 13, 2009. Cooperation with Chengdu on MiG-33 variant: Syed Fazl-e-Haider, "Pakistan and China Prove Powerful Combination in Aviation," *The National* (Dubai), November 25, 2013.

⁵⁵ In one such example, a retired Pakistani general officer said that he expected JF-17s to replace F-16s within 20 years (see Interview with retired Pakistani general officer [General B], Islamabad/Rawalpindi, March 2016). Such talk must be taken with a certain degree of caution: While Pakistan clearly intends to diversify its supply of highly capable multirole jet aircraft and is eager to free itself of reliance on the United States, military officials are unequivocal in conversations with U.S. interlocutors about their desire to maintain the supply of F-16s (the point was reiterated by then-CoAS Gen. Raheel Sharif during his visit to Washington, D.C., in November 2015).

Pakistan under FMF in 2016, Pakistani leaders suggested turning to China or Russia for fifth-generation fighters.⁵⁶

While the JF-17 is a less capable aircraft than the most modern forms of the F-16, it costs approximately half as much and may well be capable enough to fill most of Pakistan's air power requirements. It is clearly capable of use in such missions as COIN and close air support to ground forces. Whether it could effectively challenge Indian air force fighters for air superiority in a major conflict is a more difficult question. But the fact that Pakistan has chosen to deploy JF-17s at Masroor Air Force Base (among other sites) is telling: Masroor is far from the site of Zarb-e Azb COIN operations on Pakistan's western frontier in the FATA, instead situated right on the eastern border with India.

This Sino-Pakistani air power cooperation also extends to the realm of exercises. The People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) has few partnerships with other nations' air forces yet has conducted a multidimensional joint exercise with Pakistan every year since 2011. This event is known as Shaheen, and the fifth version of it ran from April 9–30, 2016. Shaheen-4, the exercise conducted the previous year in China, reportedly featured PAF platforms, including JF-17, Dassault Mirage III/5, and F7/PG.⁵⁷ Shaheen-3, held in 2014 in Pakistan, included Chinese J-10s and J-7s, in addition to Pakistan's JF-17s, Mirages, and F7PGs.⁵⁸

Covert High-Tech Cooperation: Reverse-Engineered U.S. Technology, Nuclear, and Missile Capabilities

Co-production of the JF-17 was the first major publicly acknowledged example of Sino-Pakistani cooperation in the high-tech arena—but in the covert realm, such cooperation has occurred for decades. Two areas are worth particular note: The reverse-engineering of U.S. technology (particularly in the realm of air power) and development of Pakistan's nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities.

Pakistan's provision of U.S. technology to China for investigation and reverse-engineering dates back to the Cold War era, and at some points may well have occurred with tacit U.S. permission. In 1982, for example, the United States sold an AN/ALR-69 radar warning system to Pakistan as part of an F-16 fighter jet package—even after the CIA had warned that Islamabad would be likely to transfer this technology to China.⁵⁹ Nor was Pakistan the only pathway used by Beijing to acquire Western technology, with tacit permission from Washington. Two years after Richard Nixon's 1972 visit to Beijing, the United States gave its implicit sanction for the

⁵⁶ According to Pakistani officials, such plans might include China's J-20 stealth fighter, currently in development: Franz-Stefan Gady, "Blocked F-16 Deal: Pakistan Threatens to Buy Chinese or Russian Fighter Aircraft," *The Diplomat*, May 11, 2016b.

⁵⁷ Franz-Stefan Gady, "China and Pakistan Air Forces Launch Joint Training Exercise," *The Diplomat*, April 12, 2016a.

⁵⁸ Mateen Haider, "Pakistan, China Air Forces Begin Joint Drills 'Shaheen-III,'" *Dawn*, May 24, 2014.

⁵⁹ Small, 2015, p. 38 (citing CIA memorandum declassified on June 14, 2007).

United Kingdom to sell the PLAAF 50 Spey fan-jet engines and the factory parts to start its own production line.⁶⁰

With the end of the Cold War, such efforts no longer received an American wink and nod. They did not, however, come to a halt. For example, on August 20, 1998, the United States executed Operation Infinite Reach, in which approximately 75 Tomahawks were launched from U.S. naval vessels in the Arabian Sea at al Qaeda targets in Afghanistan; these cruise missiles flew through Pakistani airspace, and at least one veered off course to crash in Baluchistan. Pakistan is believed to have provided this Tomahawk to China for reverse-engineering and to have facilitated the sale of several other salvaged Tomahawks to China by the Taliban. The result of this reverse-engineering is visible in China's DH-10 cruise missile, which Beijing subsequently shared with Islamabad for production as the Babur.⁶¹ China's Rainbow CH-3 unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) is rumored to have benefited from reverse-engineering of U.S. drones, and this technology was also transmitted back to Islamabad for Pakistan's nominally indigenous Burraq and Shahpar UAVs.⁶² Perhaps the most famous example occurred after the May 1, 2015, U.S. raid on the hideout of bin Laden at Abbottabad: According to U.S. intelligence officials, Pakistan permitted Chinese technicians to examine a downed MH-60 Black Hawk extensively modified for Special Operations and to take samples of the helicopter's stealth-technology skin away with them for reverse engineering.⁶³

The support historically given by China to Pakistan's nuclear and ballistic missile programs has been extensively discussed in both classified and unclassified documents.⁶⁴ Chinese investment in Pakistan's civil nuclear programs is overt and ongoing, with Beijing recently committing to provide \$6.5 billion for construction of a nuclear power-generating facility near Karachi.⁶⁵ Pakistan claims that its nuclear weapon program is entirely indigenous, and China has never officially confirmed providing assistance to either Pakistan's nuclear or missile programs. A recent piece of writing by the Chinese scholar Shen Dingli, however, is noteworthy for what it *does not* say as much as for what it *does*:

With regards to whether China and Pakistan are cooperating over sensitive military nuclear technology and ballistic missile technology, the author can

⁶⁰ S. Mahmud Ali, *U.S.-China Cold War Collaboration: 1971-1989*, Oxford: Routledge, 2005, p. 142.

⁶¹ Small, 2015, pp. 41, 127; Mohan Malik, *Dragon on Terrorism: Assessing China's Tactical Gains and Strategic Losses Post-September 11*, Carlisle, Penn.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, October 2002, p. 8.

⁶² Sara Scorchler, "Pakistan Wants Drones, and Doesn't Need America's Permission to Get Them," *National Journal*, May 15, 2014. A retired Pakistani general officer interviewed for this study confirmed connections between Pakistan and China in the development of UAVs (see interview with retired Pakistani general officer [General C], Islamabad/Rawalpindi, March 2016).

⁶³ Mark Mazzetti, "U.S. Aides Believe China Examined Stealth Copter," *New York Times*, August 14, 2011.

⁶⁴ Small, 2015, pp. 39–42. For a more general discussion of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, including its provenance and current security measures, see David O. Smith, "The Management of Pakistan's Nuclear Arsenal," *Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 21, No. 3–4, 2014, pp. 275–294.

⁶⁵ Mehreen Zahra-Malik, "Exclusive: China Commits \$6.5 Billion for Pakistani Nuclear Project," *Reuters*, December 24, 2013.

neither confirm nor, based on his understanding of the situation, deny this. The author believes that as China becomes more and more involved [in] regional and global cooperation, and even if this or that kind of bilateral transfer occurred in the past, the threshold for such transfers has now been greatly raised. This is due to China promulgating multiple relevant laws strengthening export controls. China has made these adjustments not only to improve cooperation with the United States. More often, they were self-conscious actions taken in consideration of China's own increasingly broad national interests.⁶⁶

Shen occupies a semiofficial position: Vice Dean of Institute of International Affairs, and Director of Center for American Studies, at Fudan University. The writing appeared in an officially sanctioned publication. The semiofficial position expressed here is that China may or may not have assisted Pakistan's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs in the past—but has chosen not to do so in the present. This position is consistent with the views typically expressed by Chinese analysts in interviews for this study: What may or may not have occurred in the past is unknown and is not continuing. In a larger view, Chinese scholars expressed little concern about—or interest in—the potential for Pakistani nuclear proliferation, including to terrorist groups hostile to Chinese interests. “We're not worried much about Pakistani loose nukes,” said one scholar. “We hear so much concern about this in the U.S., but we have greater confidence in the ability of the Pakistani military to maintain control of their nuclear assets.” The prospect of Indo-Pakistani nuclear conflict or the potential for Chinese-assisted nuclear programs to boomerang back to Beijing does not appear to be often discussed, at least in open fora: “We do not talk much about nuclear deterrence with Pakistan. Despite Pakistan's unwillingness to adopt a no-first-use doctrine, we do not feel nuclear weapons are suitable for war-fighting.”⁶⁷

Chinese Fear of Radical Islam: Security Impact of Economic Development

China sees Pakistan as both a potential source of—and a potential solution to—one of its greatest security concerns: The threat of Islamic radicalism among its Muslim population, particularly the Uyghurs inhabiting the western province of Xinjiang. At a Beijing conference on religion in April 2016, President Xi told the attendees, “We must resolutely guard against overseas infiltrations via religious means and prevent ideological infringement by extremists.”⁶⁸ A Chinese-speaking analyst based outside of China reported that the message delivered by Xi is said to have gone considerably further than official statements, with Xi reportedly expressing the

⁶⁶ Shen Dingli, “Developing Sino-Pakistan Strategic Relationship in the New Century,” in Du Youkang (杜幼康), ed., *A Model of State-to-State Relations: Retrospects and Prospects of the China-Pakistan Ties Since 1951* (國家間關係的典範- 中巴建交後兩國關係的回顧與展望). Beijing: Shishi Publishing House (時事出版社), 2012.

⁶⁷ Interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst C], Beijing, May 28, 2016. The tendency to view nuclear weapons as doomsday devices rather than tools of warfare is squarely in line with Chinese nuclear doctrine.

⁶⁸ “Xi Calls for Improved Religious Work,” *Xinhua*, April 23, 2016.

hope that Uyghurs would forsake Islam for atheism, and blaming Islamist groups in Pakistan for exporting radical ideology across the border.⁶⁹

Chinese analysts interviewed for this study expressed a range of opinions on whether security considerations advanced or set back the case for economic development projects. “I don’t think it plays a great role,” said one scholar, noting that if Beijing’s primary concern was preventing Islamic radicalism from permeating Xinjiang, the logical policy would be to close the border rather than facilitate transport links.⁷⁰ Another scholar saw the security impact as a net negative: “There is a concern that if we build a rail-line from Xinjiang to Pakistan, we’ll see more radicals coming in.”⁷¹

Most Chinese and external analysts interviewed saw a greater danger from radical ideology than from radical groups themselves. “Uyghurs go to Pakistan for jobs and education,” said a Chinese analyst in Singapore, “and what they learn, they bring back with them.”⁷² “ETIM [the East Turkestan Islamic Movement] has merged with the IMU [the Islamist Movement of Uzbekistan]—that’s a big issue, and anyone who doesn’t recognize it does not know what’s going on,” one Beijing scholar said. But he notes that China contains many Muslim groups outside of Xinjiang (for example, in Yunnan province, bordering Myanmar), so the issue is not limited to the Uyghur community and is more diffuse than any particular set of organizations. “We’re not too concerned about official Pakistan support for specific terrorist groups—we’re more concerned about the export of ideology, especially from FATA.”⁷³

Ever since the 1990s, Beijing has relied on Pakistan’s military and intelligence agencies to keep Islamist movements from crossing the border. The program has been quite successful: Despite the wide array of radical Islamist groups operating in Pakistan, the plight of the Uyghurs has not become a major part of regional (let alone global) Islamist discourse. The groups with the closest links to ISI, such as LeT, have no history of operation across the border in Xinjiang. When Uyghurs are identified as belonging to Pakistan-based Islamist groups, their field of operation is almost always Afghanistan, Kashmir, or Pakistan itself. Moreover, Islamabad has facilitated discussions between Beijing and a variety of regional Islamist groups, ranging from

⁶⁹ Interview with analyst of East Asian security [Analyst D], Rajaratnam Institute of Strategic Studies, Nanyang Technical University, Singapore, May 30, 2016.

⁷⁰ Interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst C], 2016.

⁷¹ Interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst B], Beijing, June 8, 2016.

⁷² Interview with analyst of East Asian security [Analyst D], 2016.

⁷³ Interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst A], Beijing, June 7, 2016. The United States put East Turkestan Islamic Movement on the list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations in 2002, but some analysts believe this was due to the desire to enlist China in the post-9/11 coalition against al Qaeda rather than an accurate reflection of the group’s capacity or intent at the time. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan has a much clearer record: It was a well-established terrorist group operating throughout the former Soviet Central Asian Republics since 1998; fought alongside the Taliban against U.S. forces during the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan; was a close operational affiliate of al Qaeda, the QST, and the HQN throughout the subsequent years; and, in 2015, formally affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Pakistani political parties (such as the Jamaat-i Islami and the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam/Fazlur) to the Quetta Shura Taliban.⁷⁴

But few observers believe that hard power and intelligence action alone can effectively combat the spread of radicalism. The implicit bargain—development aid and military cooperation from China, containment of Islamic radicalism from Pakistan—is unlikely to prove sufficient in the long term. “The real question,” a retired Pakistan general asked rhetorically, “is this: Will *we* uphold *our* side of the deal?”⁷⁵ A Chinese analyst expressed skepticism about the efficacy of hard power: “We give Pakistan whatever counterterrorism assistance they request: drones, aircraft, surveillance. But we recognize that radicalism is fueled by deprivation. We believe that economic development will slow down, even largely destroy, these terrorist groups.”⁷⁶

All of the Chinese sources interviewed, to varying degrees, agreed with the premise that economic investment in Pakistan could yield security benefits for China.⁷⁷ “We see economic growth as the best way to prevent radicalism, and recognize the threat of a poor, underdeveloped neighbor,” said one analyst. “But Pakistan *itself* has difficulty understanding that economics is the core of security: It’s the mindset of the China and East Asia, but Pakistan has more of a Middle Eastern [i.e., hard power] view.”⁷⁸

“The purpose of [China-Pakistan Economic Corridor] CPEC is to help Pakistan develop,” said another Beijing scholar. “Without a prosperous, stable Pakistan, there will be problems for China.” The corridor from Xinjiang to Gwadar will succeed or fail on the basis of its economic benefit to China—but, if successful, it could also have a security impact. This security gain will only accrue, the scholar noted, if the benefits of CPEC reach ordinary Pakistani citizens rather than merely the wealthy industrialists. If Pakistani textile workers are hurt by increased Chinese competition, for example, CPEC might actually be a net security negative for China.⁷⁹

Another analyst noted the reputational impact to China if its “time-tested ally” were to slide deeper into dysfunction. “We can’t afford to see Pakistan fail: What message would that send to our other would-be friends?” CPEC cannot be evaluated in purely economic or purely security terms: It has both aspects, and they are interrelated. On the economic side, we must create a

⁷⁴ According to a Chinese source, connections with Pakistan-based radicals are often facilitated by the ISI, and Maulana Fazlur Rahman (leader of the radical Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam/Fazlur) was twice received at the ministerial level in Beijing (see Interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst A], 2016).

⁷⁵ Interview with retired Pakistani general officer, [General A], March 2016.

⁷⁶ Interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst A], 2016.

⁷⁷ A 2009 RAND report found evidence, however, that the conventional wisdom—that poverty and economic underdevelopment increase risks of radicalization—is mistaken. Rather, “the findings suggest that those with higher educational attainment and higher living standards are more likely to participate in terrorist activity.” See Paul K. Davis, Kim Cragin, Darcy Noricks, Todd Helmus, Christopher Paul, Claude Berrebi, Brian A. Jackson, Gaga Gvineria, Michael Egner, and Benjamin Bahney, *Social Science for Counterterrorism: Putting the Pieces Together*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-849-OSD, 2009, p. 155.

⁷⁸ Interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst B], 2016.

⁷⁹ Interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst C], 2016.

model showing that Chinese firms can successfully operate in environments shunned by Western investors. On the security side, we need to ensure a stable, functional Pakistan: “CPEC isn’t just about China’s access to the Arabian Sea—it’s about creating a safe, successful neighborhood.”⁸⁰

Economic Relationship

Chinese Infrastructure Investment in Pakistan

One point on which all Chinese sources interviewed agreed was that Chinese economic investment in Pakistan was *not* meant as charity, and *not* primarily intended to achieve a security goal: “We haven’t talked about any trade-for-security aspect of the Pakistan corridor,” said one analyst, “we focus on the business aspect of the project. We do have an internal debate, but only on whether CPEC is worth the cost.”⁸¹

“I was surprised that many people in Washington see CPEC and One Belt, One Road [OBOR] in military rather [than] economic terms,” said another. “That isn’t how we see these investments.”⁸² A third noted, “Western observers see OBOR as having little economic sense, and conclude that there must be a security rationale behind it. But that’s not our purpose. China views Pakistan the same way it views Africa: An underappreciated economic opportunity.”⁸³

Of the six major OBOR plans, two are slated for South Asia: The Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Corridor (BCIM), and CPEC; the Pakistan corridor is sometimes included in the OBOR framework—one source interviewed termed it the “flagship” of OBOR⁸⁴—but it is often treated as an entity unto itself. In the past, sources agreed, China’s investment strategy was often directed by political or military goals more than purely economic ones; most agreed that this was rapidly changing, with economic goals now dominant. Part of the economic rationale for CPEC, one source said, is a matter of supply more than demand: China has more investment capital than its own economy can absorb, so it has to be directed externally. While Afghanistan had appeared promising for a time, the analyst said, today’s draw of rare earths and mineral resources is barely worth the security risk, and only two major Chinese projects (a copper mine, and an oil-exploration study) are currently under way in that country.⁸⁵

Another analyst, interviewed on a particularly smoggy day in Beijing, put China’s willingness to invest in Pakistan in starker terms: “China has far more tolerance for risk than the U.S. You think pollution is a threat, but we just get used to it!”⁸⁶

⁸⁰ Interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst A], 2016.

⁸¹ Interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst C] 2016.

⁸² Interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst A], 2016.

⁸³ Interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst B], 2016.

⁸⁴ Interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst A], 2016.

⁸⁵ Interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst A], 2016.

⁸⁶ Interview with Chinese analyst of South Asia [Analyst E], Beijing, June 8, 2016.

Energy Security and Gwadar Port

The backdrop of CPEC is energy. One Chinese survey edited by Dai Yonghong and Yuan Yong notes:

Economically, Pakistan's strategic significance to China is that it can serve as an important energy channel. From the perspective of geopolitics and energy strategy, Pakistan is in a relatively special position—neighboring the Middle East to its west, connecting with Central Asia in its north and bordering India and China in its east.⁸⁷

Fudan University's Ge Jingjing makes a similar point:

Geopolitically speaking, Pakistan connects Central, South, West, and East Asia and, furthermore, is a major bridge and transit point for China to Africa and the Middle East and a channel to the Indian Ocean. As the only country willing to serve as China's energy and commercial corridor, Pakistan is extremely significant in resolving the "Malacca Dilemma" and protecting China's energy security.⁸⁸

As one Chinese source interviewed for this study put it, "There are different views in China about whether to link the Corridor to OBOR: OBOR is much bigger, more strategic. The corridor is about *energy security* for China. And the Gwadar-to-China oil pipeline will be very important in this regard."⁸⁹

Many sources in China and Pakistan speak of Gwadar as the centerpiece of both nations' economic and security ambitions, and the rhetoric can be soaring. Dai and Yuan describe the project as a prize befitting the Soviet Union at its height:

Possessing a deep-water port in the Indian Ocean like Gwadar was once the dream of the Soviet Union, but with the failure of the invasion of Afghanistan, this ultimately came to nothing. Now, Gwadar Port will become an important chess piece in China's global energy layout. If Pakistan's conception of an "energy corridor" can be realized, it could aid China in breaking through a possible "Malacca dilemma" as soon as possible Gwadar Port is a networked facility that combines ports, highways, railroads and aviation facilities. Its primary function is contributing to the improvement of political and economic relations between Pakistan and India. It can also help in getting energy resources from Central Asia and the Middle East and can impact the production, refinement and sale of petroleum products.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Dai Yonghong and Yuan Yong (戴永红, 袁勇主编) eds., *A Study of Sino-India Overseas Energy Strategies—From the Perspective of Geo-Politics and Geo-Economics* (中印海外能源战略研究 地缘政治经济的视角), Beijing: Shishi Publishing House (时事出版社), 2014, p. 173.

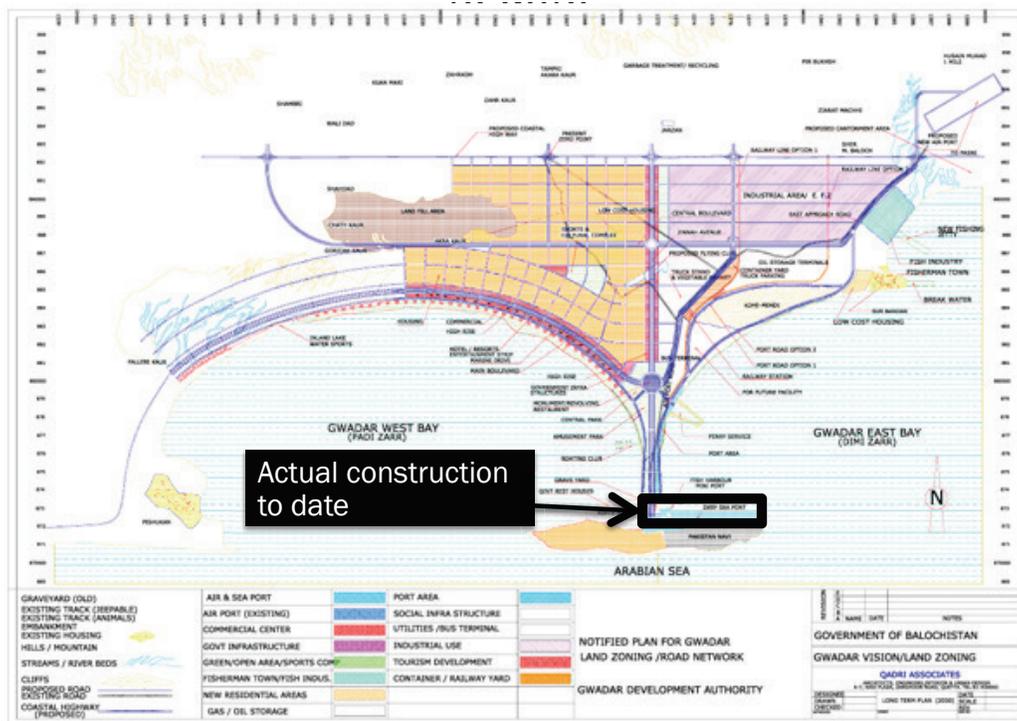
⁸⁸ Ge Jingjing (葛静静), "The India Factor in 21st Century Sino-Pakistan Relations" (新世纪中巴关系中的印度因素), in Du Youkang (杜幼康), ed., *A Model of State-to-State Relations: Retrospects and Prospects of the China-Pakistan Ties Since 1951* (国家间关系的典范- 中巴建交后两国关系的回顾与展望), Beijing: Shishi Publishing House (时事出版社), 2012, pp. 146–147.

⁸⁹ Interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst C], 2016.

⁹⁰ Dai and Yuan, 2014, p. 177.

Often lost in the rhetoric about Gwadar is the fact that this project is still a work in progress. Both supporters and opponents (such as Indian planners, who fear its potential as a base for the PLAN) tend to see Gwadar as a port near completion. A comparison of the plans with the construction actually finished shows a different picture (see Figure 3.2).

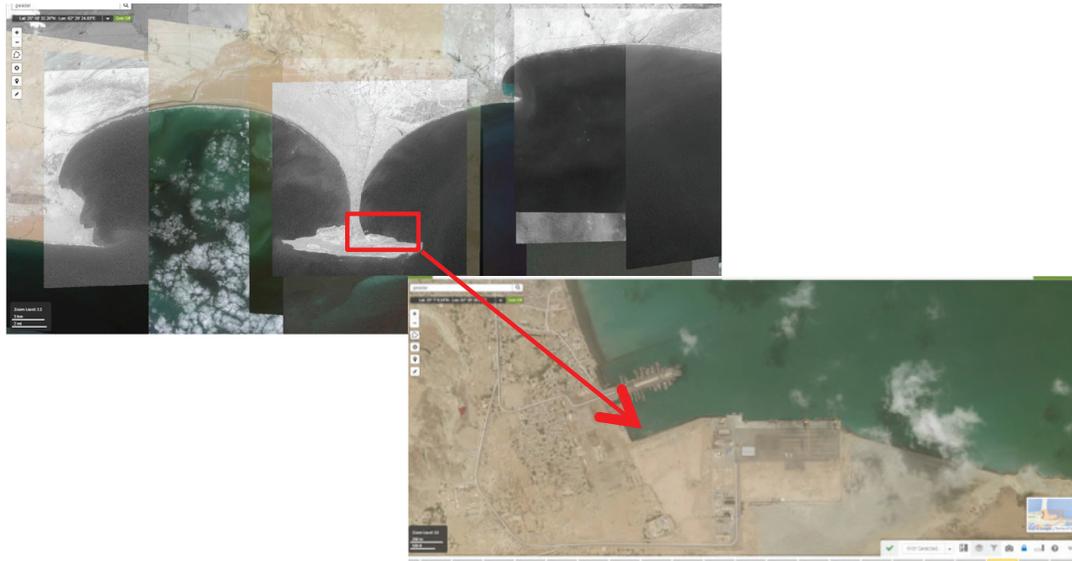
Figure 3.2. Plan for Gwadar Port Versus Construction Completed as of June 13, 2016



SOURCE: Gwadar Development Authority, "Gwadar Master Plan," 2006.

On satellite imagery, the lack of construction is clearly visible (see Figure 3.3; the completed portion is in the red box, with enlargement below it).

Figure 3.3. Satellite Imagery of Planned Site for Gwadar Infrastructure Versus Construction Completed



SOURCE: Digital Globe Imagery, homepage, undated.

Observers outside of China and Pakistan express skepticism about Gwadar’s near-term impact. “A port isn’t of much use unless it’s connected to something,” said one Singapore-based analyst, who is a native Mandarin-speaker and follows the region closely. Will the rail and road infrastructure link Gwadar to Western China in time to be commercially viable? “Technological improvements have already brought the costs of transporting cargo by rail from Xinjiang to China’s coast way down. Rail is already faster and more efficient than shipping, and the China-to-Europe shipping costs have also decreased.”⁹¹ He saw China’s interest in Gwadar as motivated by both economic and security considerations, in large measure as a hedge against denial of passage through the Strait of Malacca.

Another Singapore-based colleague, also a native speaker of Mandarin and expert on China’s security strategy, expressed mystification at how Beijing had handled Gwadar: China built the existing port facilities but then outsourced the management to a Singaporean firm. Before long, it revoked the firm’s charter and was managing Gwadar itself. If China’s goal were primarily security-based (the scholar asked), why let a foreign firm bid at all? And if it were primarily

⁹¹ Interview with analyst of East Asian security [Analyst D], 2016.

economic, why take management back from an island-nation with a sterling track-record in such ventures?⁹²

Such skepticism is not limited to observers in the region. Andrew Small, one of the closest Western observers of the Sino-Pakistan relationship, suggests that the Karakoram highway permitting Chinese commercial traffic to reach Gwadar “would have been killed off quickly if its economic value had been the only thing going for it.” As for the security justification, Small writes that “its direct military utility is questionable.”⁹³

Value and Viability of Xi’s Pledge: Possible Point of Sino-Pakistan Tension?

In April 2015, Chinese President Xi Jinping promised \$46 billion in infrastructure investment for CPEC. He was the first Chinese president to address a joint session of Pakistan’s National Assembly, and he received a rapturous welcome. “[Xi] Jinping’s trip to Pakistan is being viewed as one of game-changing proportions,” the leading newspaper *Dawn* reported.⁹⁴ Mushahid Hussain, chairman of parliament’s defense committee, said, “China treats us as a friend, an ally, a partner and above all an equal—not how the Americans and others do.”⁹⁵

But a deep gap exists between Pakistani and Chinese understanding of what Xi’s pledge actually represents. In Pakistan, the \$46 billion pledge is commonly viewed as a grant, and compared with the \$7.5 billion development aid pledged as grant funding by the United States under the Kerry-Lugar-Berman legislation of 2009.⁹⁶ In China, however, the understanding is radically different.

“It will not be in the form of grants,” said one Chinese analyst interviewed, who predicted that the actual figure delivered may be 50 percent of that pledged.⁹⁷ “It will be loans and investments—not grants,” said a Singapore-based analyst: “China has been very clear about this.”⁹⁸ For Pakistan, “It’s like Halloween,” said another Singapore-based Mandarin-speaker. “Where can we line up and get free candy?”⁹⁹

Three other analysts interviewed in Beijing agreed that the pledge referred strictly to an effort by the Chinese government to encourage private investment by Chinese firms, not to grants.¹⁰⁰

⁹² Interview with analyst of East and South Asian studies [Analyst G], Rajaratnam Institute of Strategic Studies, Nanyang Technical University, Singapore, May 30, 2016.

⁹³ Andrew Small, *The China-Pakistan Axis: Asia’s New Geopolitics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, p.106.

⁹⁴ “Pakistan Was with Us When China Stood Isolated: Xi Jinping,” *Dawn*, April 21, 2015.

⁹⁵ Mateen Haider, “Chinese President to Visit Pakistan, Hammer Out \$46 Billion Deal,” *Dawn*, April 16, 2015.

⁹⁶ During Xi’s visit, *Dawn* noted that the pledge “would far exceed U.S. spending in Pakistan.” “Xi Jinping’s Warm Welcome in Pakistan,” *Dawn*, April 20, 2015.

⁹⁷ Interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst C], 2016.

⁹⁸ Interview with analyst of East Asian security [Analyst D], 2016.

⁹⁹ Interview with junior analyst of East Asia [Analyst H], Rajaratnam Institute of Strategic Studies, Nanyang Technical University, Singapore May 30, 2016.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Chinese analyst of South Asia [Analyst E], 2016; interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst B], 2016; interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst A], 2016.

As a Chinese scholar put it, “In Pakistan, they want clarification. But we can’t give perfect clarity—we don’t know which companies will decide to invest. But it will *not* be grants. Maybe China has been clear, but Pakistan hasn’t understood.”¹⁰¹ Another said that some Pakistanis had already become aware of the disconnect: “They criticize us, say, ‘You should not treat us like that—we’re brothers!’”¹⁰²

Chinese observers are well aware of the difficulties facing infrastructure projects in Pakistan. Physical security for Chinese workers is a major issue: Sources interviewed in Beijing said that Chinese workers do not venture far from their army-guarded barracks and face hostility from Pakistanis who feel that the investment is only benefiting corrupt industrialists rather than ordinary citizens. They also noted that political challenges pose greater barriers than those of security: Whenever a road needs to be built, there is intense competition among local Pakistan power-brokers to ensure that it is routed and subcontracted in a way most economically beneficial to them personally.¹⁰³ A South Asian analyst in Singapore said that Pakistan has devoted an entire Army division to protect Chinese personnel.¹⁰⁴

Political Relationship

Pakistan as China’s Hedge Against India

China’s decision to co-produce JF-17s with Pakistan and to sell such advanced aircraft as JF-10s to Pakistan appears to be a continuation of longstanding SC rather than a deliberate effort to increase pressure on the two countries’ shared rival, India. But Pakistan’s status as India’s historic adversary plays a part in China’s strategic calculations—and if Sino-Indian relations warm in the coming years, the Sino-Pakistani partnership could be challenged. Chinese scholar Ge notes:

During the Cold War, the Indian threat was the foundation upon which friendly relations between China and Pakistan were established and developed Developing Sino-Indian relations have also, to a certain degree, caused Pakistan to become concerned that China no longer sees India as a military rival or potential enemy China’s adjustments to its South Asia policy are aimed at breaking the established patterns of the Cold War and at linking Sino-Pakistan and Sino-Indian relations. This would allow the two bilateral relationships to develop in non-contradictory ways and establish a relatively balanced and stable Sino-Indian-Pakistan trilateral relationship.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst C], 2016.

¹⁰² Interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst A], 2016.

¹⁰³ Interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst C], 2016; interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst A], 2016.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with analyst of South Asian security studies [Analyst I], Rajaratnam Institute of Strategic Studies, Nanyang Technical University, Singapore, May 30, 2016.

¹⁰⁵ Ge Jingjing, 2012, pp. 131, 139.

One of the Chinese analysts interviewed in Beijing for this study downplayed the importance of the Pakistan-India rivalry in China's calculations: "That aspect *very* rarely comes up for us. There is very, very little talk of it. Just as the [United States] decided to 'de-hyphenate' its India-Pakistan relationships, so have we."¹⁰⁶ Another scholar, however, suggested that "as long as India holds a Cold War mindset toward China, we must continue to have strong relations with Pakistan. But if we improve relations with India, then Pakistan may be frustrated, and relations may face some uncertainty."¹⁰⁷

Overall, most observers, both inside China and outside, acknowledge Pakistan's significance as a factor in China's geopolitical rivalry with India.¹⁰⁸ Ge writes:

No matter how things may change internationally, Pakistan is still a strategic pillar for China Pakistan will continue to see its relations with China as the cornerstone of its foreign policy and, out of consideration for its own security, will not wish to see the development and importance of the Sino-Indian relationship to exceed that of the Sino-Pakistan relationship.¹⁰⁹

Pakistan as China's Sole Ally in an Unfriendly World

Chinese analysts interviewed for this study often cited a different type of political engagement: Pakistan as China's most steadfast ally not merely *vis-à-vis* India, but *vis-à-vis* the world. "We have a great *emotional* tie to Pakistan," said one analyst. "During the Cold War, neither state had many friends. Pakistan set up our diplomatic relationship with the United States, and [after the Cultural Revolution isolation] helped us re-engage with the outside world. China *needs* Pakistan."¹¹⁰ Others noted both the longevity of the ties across a variety of geopolitical circumstances, ranging from the U.S.-Soviet Union détente to partners in anti-Soviet Afghan jihad to the globally networked present. The two nations support each other almost unfailingly at international fora, such as the UN. After the January 2016 attack on an Indian Air Force base near the Kashmiri town of Pathankot, for example, China blocked India's request to add Masood Azhar (leader of the Pakistan-based terrorist group believed to be responsible for the attack) to a UN sanctions list.¹¹¹

This close and enduring friendship comes despite a lack of shared language, religion, or history. Pakistan has deep cultural connections with all of its other neighbors, dating back centuries or, in many areas, millennia. With China, however, contact has always been sparse. "There are zero cultural or historical ties between our countries," noted one Pakistani

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst C], 2016.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst A], 2016.

¹⁰⁸ Blank et al., 2015, pp. 143–168.

¹⁰⁹ Ge Jingjing (葛静静), 2012, pp. 144–145.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst A], 2016.

¹¹¹ Press Trust of India, "At UN, China Blocks India Bid to Ban JeM Chief Masood Azhar," *Indian Express*, April 1, 2016b. The UN had banned JeM in 2001, but India's attempts to add the terrorist group's founding leader have consistently been blocked by China.

interlocutor. Government exchanges are generally conducted by simultaneous translation. Both Pakistani and Chinese sources noted that when scholars from the two nations meet, or when government officials interact without translators, their only shared medium is likely to be English.¹¹²

Some sources sounded notes of caution: “China is Pakistan’s great savior and great love,” said a retired Pakistani general, “but will we be disappointed? They’ve disappointed us before.”¹¹³ A Chinese scholar at least partially agreed: “We’ll remain the all-weather friend, but there are many problems we can’t solve. India, for example, Pakistan will have to deal with on its own. We’re not Pakistan’s security savior. But—unlike the U.S.—we’re not Pakistan’s problem.”¹¹⁴

Afghanistan

Relationship in Brief

The histories of the territories that today comprise Afghanistan and Pakistan have been intertwined for millennia. Even today, the border between them is largely fictional. Dynasties based in Kabul, Kandahar, Ghor or Ghazni (in Afghanistan), Lahore (in Pakistan) or Delhi (in India) often governed across all three territories. Historically, Afghan rulers dominated the territory of modern-day Pakistan much more frequently than vice versa—but Pakistan’s strategists tend to view the relationship from the other end of the telescope. In their narrative, a succession of warlike Afghans brought Islamic rule to the subcontinent—but only when they settled down in the Punjabi city of Lahore did these barely civilized tribal hordes (as later Pakistanis would regard them) turn into the masters of empires.¹¹⁵ While the actual rulers of the Delhi Sultanate, the Mughal Dynasty, and their predecessors were Afghan and Turkic, Pakistanis regard these regimes as their own. It is through this Afghan legacy that Pakistan sees itself as the one-time master of all of India.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Interview with Chinese analyst of Pakistan [Analyst C] 2016; interview with Chinese analyst of South Asia [Analyst E], 2016; and interview with retired Pakistani general officer [General A], March 2016.

¹¹³ Interview with retired Pakistani general officer [General A], 2016.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Chinese analyst of South Asia [Analyst E], 2016.

¹¹⁵ The first such invader was Mahmud of Ghazni, whose dynasty lasted from 1010 to 1187. Muhammad of Ghor supplanted the Ghaznavids and fought battles as far afield as Gujarat and Bengal. A slave of Muhammad of Ghor, Qutb-ud-din Aibak, established the first dynasty of the Delhi sultanate, which extended Islamic rule through most of the land that is now Pakistan and India. In 1526, the Delhi sultanate was succeeded by the Mughal dynasty: Like the Delhi sultans, the Mughals had bloodlines and court culture heavily reliant on Turkic and Afghan predecessors.

¹¹⁶ For example, Jamaat-ud-Dawa, LeT’s political wing, identifies “the whole of India” (including Kashmir, Hyderabad, Assam, Bihar, and Junagarh), as well as Nepal and Burma, as Muslim lands that must be reclaimed (see Abdul Salam bin Mohammad, *Why We Do Jihad?* Muridke, Pakistan: Department of Communication and Publications of Al-Dawa, May 1999, as cited in Behera, 2006, pp. 157 and 318).

In today's geostrategic calculation, Pakistan sees a friendly Afghanistan as providing "strategic depth" to counter India's advantages in size, population, and economy.¹¹⁷ Islamabad considers Afghanistan to be its own natural sphere of influence and bitterly resents India (or other nations) playing any role there.

During the 1980s, Pakistan controlled the spigot for the U.S.- and Saudi-funded covert effort to support *mujahideen* fighters challenging Soviet rule in Afghanistan; in the 1990s, Islamabad attempted to shape political conditions there by backing Pashtun warlords, including Gulbuddin Hekmayar and Jalaluddin Haqqani, and subsequently the Taliban. Afghanistan's government and most of the country's population regard Pakistan's post-Soviet actions as unwarranted interference.

U.S. observers sometimes wonder why Pakistan continues to provide sanctuary to such Afghan groups as the Quetta Shura Taliban and the Haqqani Network despite intense pressure to turn against groups fighting against U.S. and NATO troops. The answer is simple: geography. The United States is powerful, but far away. Afghanistan is weak, but right next door. Long after the last U.S. soldier flies out of Bagram, Pakistan will have to live alongside the Haqqanis, the Taliban, and other groups much like them.

Security Relationship

Instability in Afghanistan has led to instability in Pakistan since the 1980s. During the anti-Soviet jihad, millions of Afghans fled the conflict and settled—temporarily, they believed—in border areas of Pakistan. In the 1990s, jihad faded into civil war; in the 2000s, it morphed into interminable insurgency. An entire generation has grown up in Pakistani exile, with radical Islamist groups providing much of its education and other social services. From Afghanistan's standpoint, Pakistan fueled the fires that drove these refugees from their homes and prevented them from returning long after the Soviets withdrew.

From Pakistan's standpoint, however, these refugees brought with them the scourges that plague their host nation today: the pervasive "gun-culture," widespread trade in narcotics, Sunni-Shi'a sectarian violence, and a wide range of illicit activities (smuggling, kidnapping, trafficking in persons, corruption of police and other officials) to which people shut out of the legal economy often gravitate. It is common for Pakistanis to state that there were few internal problems before the flood of Afghans began—and now this flood has spread far beyond the border areas to engulf urban centers as far away as Karachi.

The post-9/11 security relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan is largely negative: Each nation presents far more of a challenge than an opportunity to the other. Pakistan's pre-9/11 patronage of the Taliban regime and its sponsorship of Hekmatyar and other brutal warlords

¹¹⁷ K. Alan Kronstadt, *Pakistan-U.S. Relations: Issues for the 114th Congress*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, May 14, 2015, p. 7.

during the 1980s and 1990s have not been forgotten.¹¹⁸ Afghanistan's post-9/11 government has been an awkward amalgam of Northern Alliance warlords (primarily Tajik) who had always regarded Pakistan as an adversary and Pashtun tribal leaders who had generally seen Pakistan as at best an unreliable friend. From Afghanistan's viewpoint, Islamabad has meddled in its territory for more than 35 years to advance its own interests at the cost of Afghan lives. From Pakistan's viewpoint, Islamabad led the fight to liberate its neighbors from vicious Soviet control and has been rewarded only by top-level ingratitude and grassroots-level exportation of all of Afghanistan's woes into Pakistan itself.

The insurgent and terrorist forces afflicting each nation take sanctuary in the other's territory, but the dynamic is not parallel. Islamabad has actively facilitated the sanctuary of both the Quetta Shura Taliban and the Haqqani Network, while the sanctuary of the TTP on Afghan soil is due to the weakness rather than the active collusion of the Kabul government.¹¹⁹ In 2014, Pakistan launched Operation Zarb-e Azb against the TTP, its largest COIN operation since 9/11 and one for which it would like—but has not generally received—the Afghan military to serve as an “anvil” to the Pakistani “hammer.”¹²⁰ Pakistan charges Afghanistan with support for Baluch insurgents, as well as the TTP, but this too seems to owe more to ineffective central government control more than to deliberate policy.¹²¹

Pakistan has accepted the reality of an international security presence in Kabul and Bagram but remains intent on maintaining strong influence over the Afghan provinces directly neighboring its own territory: most importantly, the Pashtun heartland of Paktia, Paktika, Kandahar, Helmand, Khost and Zabul; secondarily, the more sparsely populated Konar, Badakhshan, Nimruz, and Nurestan.

Economic Relationship

Pakistan is Afghanistan's largest trading partner and commercial gateway: 80 percent of Afghanistan's licit trade is believed to pass through Pakistan. The port of Karachi provides Afghanistan essential access to international markets, and Pakistan derives significant revenue

¹¹⁸ For more discussion of this legacy, and its lasting impact, see Rashid, 2000, pp. 1–30, 82–94; Haqqani, 2005, pp. 159–197; and Coll, 2004, pp. 187–369. For a more complete overview, see Barnett Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002.

¹¹⁹ See Anwar Iqbal, “TTP Provides Core Fighting Group for IS: U.S. General,” *Dawn*, February 12, 2017. Afghan authorities allege that Pakistan's ISI offers covert support to the Haqqani Network, and U.S. officials have said that Pakistan's government has not put “adequate pressure on the Haqqanis.” See Ayaz Gul, “Pakistan Not Doing Enough Against Haqqani Network, U.S. General Says,” *VOA News*, September 24, 2016.

¹²⁰ For discussion of the Pakistan military's ambiguous relationship with the TTP, see Anatol Lieven, *Pakistan: A Hard Country*, New York: Public Affairs, 2012, pp. 405–442.

¹²¹ Pakistan charges both India and Afghanistan with supporting Baluch insurgents based in eastern Afghanistan: see Musa Khan Jalalzai, “Afghanistan: In Anger There Is No Intelligence,” *Daily Times*, January 31, 2017; and M. Ilyas Khan, “What Lies Behind Pakistani Charges of Indian ‘Terrorism,’” *BBC News*, May 6, 2015. For more on the TTP in Afghanistan, see “TTP in Afghanistan,” *Dawn*, February 14, 2017.

from the transit of Afghan goods across its territory. The United States Institute of Peace reports that a 2010 transit trade agreement was meant to strengthen bilateral trade relations and streamline the transit of Afghan products through Pakistan, but “implementation has been mixed, with many on both sides of the border complaining of continued barriers to exchange.”¹²² In April 2015, Pakistan scaled back screening of Afghan cargo at the port of Karachi in an effort to speed up the clearance process.¹²³ An important constituency that profits from Afghanistan-Pakistan trade is the so-called “Pashtun trucking mafia,” who “[reap] big profits in payoffs to see that the convoys reach their destinations,” and can pressure both governments and insurgents to keep trade routes open.¹²⁴

Transnational and international projects form a key component of the Afghanistan-Pakistan economic relationship. The 1,800-kilometer TAPI pipeline should increase both Afghanistan’s and Pakistan’s access to natural gas (if completed, the pipeline would have a capacity of 33 billion cubic meters of gas per year).¹²⁵ Security concerns plague the project, which will pass through part of southern Afghanistan at risk from the Taliban insurgency, but it is scheduled for completion by the end of 2019.¹²⁶

Political Relationship

Pakistan’s political relationship with Afghanistan experienced a 180-degree shift over the course of a few weeks in the fall of 2001. Before the 9/11 attacks, Pakistan was one of only three nations in the world that accepted the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan (the other two were Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates). After the attacks, Pakistan attempted to serve as broker between the United States and the Taliban; but, in November 2001, it publicly withdrew its recognition and uneasily joined the international community in helping shape a transitional regime.¹²⁷ Afghans who had spent seven years fighting the Taliban never believed that the movement’s primary sponsor had truly switched sides; others, particularly Pashtuns, felt that Pakistan had sold them out to the warlords of the Northern Alliance.

Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai had a particularly contentious relationship with Pakistan. He long considered Islamabad the source of many of his nation’s woes and frequently made public statements to that effect.¹²⁸ His successor, Ashraf Ghani, has been more diplomatic, but relations between the governments remain frosty.

¹²² Ishrat Husain and Muhammad Ather Elahi, “The Future of Afghanistan-Pakistan Trade Relations,” United States Institute of Peace, August 17, 2015.

¹²³ Tahir Khan, “Speedy Transit: Pakistan Cuts 80% of Afghan Cargo Screening,” *Express Tribune*, April 17, 2015.

¹²⁴ Corey Flintoff, “Dispute Reveals Weakness in Afghan Supply Route,” NPR, October 4, 2010.

¹²⁵ *Reuters*, 2015.

¹²⁶ *Reuters*, 2015; and Agence France Presse, 2014.

¹²⁷ Akhtar Jamal, “Pakistan Withdraws Recognition of Taliban Government,” Eurasianet.org, November 19, 2001.

¹²⁸ Golnaz Esfandiari, “South Asia: Afghan President Reignites Feud with Pakistan,” Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, May 19, 2006.

The main political issue between the two governments is Taliban reconciliation. Both governments strongly desire a negotiated settlement to the insurgency, and Islamabad is better positioned than any other nation to bring the Quetta Shura Taliban to the negotiating table. It has facilitated a series of confidence-building measures in the past, including the opening of a Taliban political office in Doha, Qatar. Whether Islamabad can—or wants to—induce the Quetta Shura Taliban leadership to accept terms agreeable to Kabul remains an open question.

Another key political issue is the status of the border. The 1,600-mile Durand Line separating Afghanistan from Pakistan was imposed in 1893 by the British after the Second Afghan War. Pakistan accepts this line as a legitimate border, but Afghanistan rejects it as a colonial-era diktat. The mostly Pashtun populations in portions of each nation living near the Durand Line have always considered it largely irrelevant. Ethnic Pashtuns are a plurality of the population of Afghanistan and have dominated the nation politically since the 18th century; they also comprise about 15 percent of Pakistan's population, including almost all of the FATA and most of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. From Pakistan's standpoint, one of the most serious political challenges presented by Afghanistan is how to set both a border and a *modus operandi* for the border areas that does not result in a *de facto* "Pashtunistan" stretching across the frontier territories of both nations.

Saudi Arabia

Relationship in Brief

Saudi Arabia is Pakistan's most uncomplicatedly generous financial patron: U.S. support ebbs and flows, China often promises more than it delivers, but Saudi Arabia quietly comes through. Moreover, it does so with little conditionality and even less public accounting. After Pakistan's 1998 nuclear tests brought global sanctions, former ISI chief Lt. Gen. Ehsan ul-Haq said that several nations expressed support but "Saudi Arabia was the only one that provided tangible help."¹²⁹ When Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif needed a comfortable exile after his 1999 ouster and Musharraf needed a place to keep him, the Saudis obliged. During the 1980s, Saudi Arabia sent billions of dollars to Pakistan to fund the anti-Soviet campaign in Afghanistan; how much of the money actually reached the *mujahideen* will never be known.

In return, Saudi requests of Pakistan are largely intangible: support at international fora, implicit backing against potential Iranian expansionism, perhaps the prospect of a "virtual" nuclear capability.¹³⁰ Not every Saudi request is granted: For example, Pakistan turned down a 2015 appeal to send its military forces alongside those of the Kingdom into combat against Shi'a militias in Yemen. But on those rare occasions when Riyadh asks for a favor, Islamabad usually says yes.

¹²⁹ Haq, 2015.

¹³⁰ Jonah Blank, "Defining the Relationship: What Pakistan and Saudi Arabia Want from Each Other," *Foreign Affairs*, June 16, 2015a.

Security Relationship

The Yemen case is an unusual example of Saudi overreach: If Pakistan had agreed to join the fight against the Houthi rebels in Yemen, it would have joined a proxy battle against its neighbor Iran: Tehran backs the Shi'a Houthis, while Riyadh backs the Sunni-led Yemeni military.¹³¹ This would have been highly uncharacteristic for Pakistan, which has seldom engaged in combat operations against any nation other than India. Pakistan has been one of the top contributors to the UN's peacekeeping operations, and its troops have sometimes been caught in conflict during these deployments—for example, the 1993 Battle of Mogadishu, made famous by the book and movie *Black Hawk Down*—but these have never been intended to be combat missions. When Saddam Hussein threatened to invade Saudi Arabia after Iraq's annexation of Kuwait in 1991, Pakistan sent up to 13,000 troops and 6,000 advisers to the Kingdom in a show of support, but these troops did not participate in the subsequent invasion of Iraq.¹³²

Saudi Arabia and Pakistan have a longstanding and robust security engagement, focused on joint exercises and training—and PAF has been in the forefront of the partnering. In the 1960s, PAF helped build the Royal Saudi Air Force, and PAF pilots even flew Saudi Arabia's BAC Lightning jet fighters during a 1969 border skirmish with Soviet-aligned South Yemen.¹³³ On November 20, 1979, Saudi Arabia received a vivid notice of the need for security partnership: When a small band of religious extremists seized the Grand Mosque in Mecca—the holiest site in Islam, guardianship of which is the core of the Saudi ruling family's legitimacy—the Saudi military was unable to dislodge them without the aid of French commandoes. In response to this, as well as to the Iranian Revolution and in concert with covert Saudi-Pakistani cooperation in Afghanistan, Riyadh and Islamabad signed a protocol in 1982 permitting Pakistani troops to be stationed at strategic sites throughout the Kingdom. During the 1991 Gulf War, a Pakistani division helped protect Saudi Arabia from potential Iraqi invasion.¹³⁴

Both PAF and the Royal Saudi Air Force are heavily reliant on U.S. aircraft, particularly F-16s, so they have a high degree of interoperability. Saudi Arabia has the world's third-largest military budget—higher than that of Russia, trailing only the United States and China—and

¹³¹ The Houthis follow the Zaidi branch of Shi'a Islam, while the state religion of Iran is Ithna-Ashari Shi'ism; unlike the Shi'a communities in Iraq, Lebanon, and elsewhere, the Houthis have no doctrinal ties to Iran. The conflict in Yemen breaks along Sunni-Shi'a lines, but the Saudi-Iranian proxy battle here is as much about politics as it is about faith.

¹³² Sehar Kamran, *Pak-Gulf Defense and Security Cooperation*, Rawalpindi, Pakistan: Center for Pakistan and Gulf Studies, January 2013.

¹³³ Bruce Riedel, "Saudi Arabia: Nervously Watching Pakistan," Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, January 28, 2008b.

¹³⁴ Riedel, 2008b. Within nationalist Pakistani circles, it is sometimes reported that the Pakistani Army's Special Service Group played a key role in ending the 1979 occupation of the Grand Mosque, and even that a young Musharraf took part in the operation (see, for example, "General Pervez Musharraf a Major Save Khana-e-Kaaba Attack in 1979," *Wake Up Pakistan*, February 2014.); whatever role the Special Service Group played, if any at all, is not noted in Musharraf's memoir—and Musharraf himself was posted as an instructor at Pakistan's Command and Staff College at the time (Musharraf, 2006, p. 65).

spent more than \$87 billion on its military in 2015.¹³⁵ Funding for SC with Pakistan is an easily manageable expense.

Perhaps more important for Saudi Arabia than conventional military support, however, is Pakistan's provision of a "virtual" nuclear capability. Pakistan steadfastly denies that it would give nuclear know-how to the Saudis, but until 2003 A.Q. Khan was running an operation described as a "Nuclear Wal-Mart," with customers that included Iran, North Korea, and Libya; he remains a national hero in Pakistan, received an immediate pardon for his past transgressions, and has never spent a day in jail. After decades of running a clear surplus in the favor bank with Pakistan, the Saudis may well view Islamabad's mere possession of a sophisticated nuclear program as an implicit guarantee of their own security: Even if they never have to make the ultimate request, any potential adversary would be given pause by the fact that Riyadh *might* have access to a ready-made stream of deliverable nuclear weapons.

Economic Relationship

The economic relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia flows very strongly in one direction. Saudi economic support includes remittance earnings from Pakistani nationals working in Saudi Arabia; in 2015 alone, Pakistani workers in Saudi Arabia sent home \$5.9 billion in remittances.¹³⁶

Saudi Arabia provides direct financial support, as well as cheap or free supplies of oil and gas. It is impossible to quantify this economic assistance accurately, since much of it is provided without public accounting. In 2014, for example, Saudi Arabia reportedly helped Pakistan avoid a financial crisis with a \$1.5 billion soft loan; when asked for the source of the funds, Pakistan's Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said, "Why do you want to expose our friends? The countries who have helped us don't want us to disclose the source."¹³⁷

Unlike the relationships Pakistan has with most other nations, its economic ties to Saudi Arabia are dictated almost entirely by political concerns. According to career CIA official Bruce Riedel, "During the 1980s, the Saudis financed more than half of the jihad to support the Afghan insurgency;"¹³⁸ this funding flowed almost entirely through Pakistani channels, and the inevitable spill-off that remained in the hands of ISI or other parts of the Pakistani military does not appear to have caused any concern in Riyadh. The week before Pakistan's 1998 nuclear test, Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince (and subsequently King) Abdullah reportedly made a promise to

¹³⁵ Ishaan Tharoor, "Saudi Arabia Passes Russia as World's Third Biggest Military Spender," *Washington Post*, April 5, 2016.

¹³⁶ Kazim Alam, "Saudi Arabia Remains Largest Source of Remittances for Pakistan," *Express Tribune*, July 16, 2016. Figure is for the fiscal rather than calendar year.

¹³⁷ Mehreen Zahra-Malik, "Saudi Arabia Loans Pakistan \$1.5 Billion to Shore Up Economy," *Reuters*, March 13, 2014.

¹³⁸ Riedel, 2008a.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of 50,000 barrels of oil a day to weather any international sanctions that the test might provoke.¹³⁹

Another source of economic support, even more difficult to quantify, is Saudi funding of madrassas (religious schools). Pakistan's public education system is woefully underresourced and fails to provide basic education to a significant portion of the nation's school-aged children. In many parts of the country, this void is filled by madrassas funded by donors closely linked to the Saudi state.¹⁴⁰

Political Relationship

Riyadh's return for this economic investment shows up on the political balance sheet. Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal publicly said, "Nawaz Sharif, specifically, is very much Saudi Arabia's man in Pakistan."¹⁴¹ The same might be said, to varying degrees, of many other members of Pakistan's civilian and military governing class.

Saudi Arabia's arch-rival, in both political and religious terms, is Iran. Pakistan—a powerful majority-Sunni nation neighboring Iran, is seen as a valuable counterweight to Iranian (and Shi'a) regional and global influence. At international fora, Pakistan is a reliable diplomatic supporter of Saudi Arabia. This political partnership works both ways: Saudi Arabia gives Pakistan much-valued ideological credibility in the Islamic world and returns Islamabad's diplomatic support with its own.

The most noteworthy, and most contentious, form of political partnering between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan may be the shared promotion of Salafi or Wahhabi ideology both in Pakistan and throughout South Asia. In Pakistan itself, Saudi funds not only madrassas but also mosques and *waqfs* (Islamic trusts) that carry out both humanitarian and ideological missions. These institutions serve the interests of some Pakistani citizens—but they unquestionably advance the political and ideological interests of their Saudi sponsors. The forms of Islam historically practiced in Pakistan range from the Sufi-inflected Barelvi tradition to the more literalist Deobandi School; even the Deobandi version of Islam, however, is quite distinct from the strict Salafi ideology promoted globally by Saudi Arabia.

The Pakistani government permits such ideological influence, in part, as the price for Saudi economic support and, in part, to advance its own agenda. Pakistan's military and civilian leadership has a strong institutional tilt toward moderate forms of Islam and a generally secularist outlook. Military leaders have cooperated with Islamist parties and groups to promote their institutional and security objectives, but (with the exception of 1980s Army chief Gen. Zia-

¹³⁹ Farhan Bokhari, Stephen Fidler, and Roula Khalaf, "Saudi Oil Money Joins Forces with Nuclear Pakistan," *Financial Times*, August 5, 2004.

¹⁴⁰ Blank, 2015a.

¹⁴¹ Matthew Kaminski, "Prince Alwaleed bin Talal: An Ally Frets About American Retreat," *Wall Street Journal*, November 22, 2013.

ul Haq) have done so out of political expediency rather than personal conviction.¹⁴² Often, these political objectives have meshed neatly with the more ideologically driven ones of Saudi Arabia; for example, ISI has historically supported the radical group LeT as a proxy to destabilize India's hold on Kashmir, while Saudi patrons have backed the group's push to spread Salafi practice (in LeT's case, the Ahl-e Hadith school of Sunni Islam) throughout Pakistani society.

The political interests of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia diverge, however, when Saudi-backed groups are unwilling to subordinate their actions to the control of the Pakistani state. In addition to tacitly permitted groups like LeT,¹⁴³ Saudi Arabia supports Sunni militias in Pakistan, such as LeJ, that are effectively at war with Pakistan's security forces. This remains a significant point of tension between the two governments—and one of the reasons that the flow of Saudi funds must be considered *mostly* (rather than *completely*) uncomplicated.

Iran

Relationship in Brief

Iran, like Afghanistan, is a neighbor with whom Pakistan shares many bonds of history and culture. Persian was the court language of many dynasties ruling the territory that is now Pakistan and northern India. The Sufi-inflected form of Islam dominant in Pakistan has many commonalities with Iranian Shi'ism—for example, an attachment to devotional music and art that would be deemed sacrilegious by Salafi clerics in the Middle East. Approximately 15 percent to 20 percent of Pakistan's population follows the form of Ithna Ashari Shi'ism that is the state religion in Iran, although there is little or no evidence to support allegations sometimes made by Sunni sectarians of “dual allegiance.”¹⁴⁴

Also like Afghanistan, however, Iran brings Pakistan a history of political troubles. As former DG-ISI Lt. Gen. Ehsan ul-Haq put it, “In the '80s, '90s, and in the last 15 years, Pakistan and Iran have been on opposite sides of some issues: Afghanistan, Gwadar, Chabahar, Pakistan-India relations, or Pakistan-U.S. relations, or Pakistan's wish to be a key player in Middle East issues.”¹⁴⁵ The neighbors have an often-prickly relationship but get along because they have to: Each has too many worries on its opposite border to afford a two-front war. After a 1990s proxy

¹⁴² Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military*, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005.

¹⁴³ While LeT was officially banned by the Pakistani government in 2002, it continues to operate under the umbrella of its purportedly humanitarian affiliate.

¹⁴⁴ For discussion of sectarian strife and Shi'a revivalism in Pakistan, see Jonah Blank, *Mullahs on the Mainframe: Islam and Modernity Among the Daudi Bohras*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001, pp. 262–272, 279–282; for more on the Sunni-Shi'a conflict in Pakistan, see Human Rights Watch, “*We Are the Walking Dead: Killings of Shia Hazara in Balochistan, Pakistan*,” New York, June 29, 2014.

¹⁴⁵ Haq, 2015.

conflict in Afghanistan, they now share a desire to prevent a return to utter chaos—but also to keep the United States and other outside powers from dominating the state.

Security Relationship

Iran falls more into the “challenge” than the “partner” category for Pakistan’s security calculus. During the early Cold War years, the two nations were generally aligned: Both were partners and sometime-allies of the United States, and both saw the Soviet Union as a looming threat. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 changed this equilibrium: The militant Shi’a state headed by Ayatollah Khomeini caused deep concern in a secularist Pakistani military establishment, led by a general (Zia-ul Haq) with deep personal adherence to Sunni Islam. The advent of theocratic “Velayat-e Faqih” (Rule of the Islamic Jurist) in Iran prompted Pakistan to tighten its bonds with Saudi Arabia, as well as with the United States.

But less than a month after Khomeini was officially designated Supreme Leader on December 3, 1979, Pakistan and Iran found that they had been cast together as de facto security partners by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Each state supported its own favored *mujahideen* factions, and the two nations tacitly cooperated to advance their shared goal of evicting the Soviets from the region. Iran’s support flowed primarily to Shi’a Hazara groups, while Pakistan’s support was directed principally to Sunni Pashtun ones; both nations also provided some support to Tajik forces led by such capable commanders as Ahmed Shah Massoud and Ismail Khan: As Persian-speaking Sunnis, the Tajiks straddle the cultural spheres of both Iran and Pakistan.

Following the Soviet withdrawal, both Pakistan and Iran continued their support for their preferred militias—but, by the 1990s, these groups were often fighting against each other rather than on the same side. Iran continued its patronage of Hazara militias, and joined with India and Russia to back the Tajik-led Northern Alliance. Pakistan continued its support to the Haqqani clan and by 1994 shifted its support from Gulbuddin Hekmatyar to the Taliban. The twists and turns of Afghan politics were labyrinthine: When the Taliban solidified its rule in 1997, Hekmatyar found refuge not in Pakistan, but in Iran.

Since the fall of the Taliban, Pakistan and Iran have tacitly cooperated to prevent Afghanistan from developing a centralized government strongly allied with the United States or any other external patron. This cooperation has sometimes included Iranian facilitation of the Taliban insurgency.¹⁴⁶ Both Pakistan and Iran have jockeyed for influence within Afghanistan’s central government, as well as in the governments of Afghan provinces bordering their respective territories. Both have supported warlords and private militias throughout Afghanistan.

In the nuclear realm, the two nations have also engaged in what might be termed cooperative rivalry: Members of Pakistan’s security establishment have sometimes helped advance Iran’s

¹⁴⁶ Alireza Nader, Ali Scotten, Ahmad Rahmani, Robert Stewart, and Leila Mahnad, *Iran’s Influence in Afghanistan: Implications for the U.S. Drawdown*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-616, 2014, pp. 13–14.

goals in the short term, at the apparent cost of Pakistan's security interests in the long term. During the 1990s, Pakistan's A.Q. Khan sold nuclear technology and information to Iran, in what Pakistani military and civilian authorities insist was a rogue operation.¹⁴⁷ Khan's nuclear traffic with far-off North Korea bears evidence of Pakistan military cooperation: For example, equipment was shipped to Pyongyang in PAF C-130s.¹⁴⁸ But it is difficult to see how a nuclear-armed Iran could be squared with Pakistan's own national goals. As one retired Pakistani general put it, "If Iran acquired nuclear weapons, Pakistan would be in a bad sandwich."¹⁴⁹

Economic Relationship

Iran and Pakistan share a mutually beneficial economic and trade relationship. Iran sells energy-hungry Pakistan electricity at relatively low cost, providing a boost to Pakistan's economy.¹⁵⁰ In March 2016, the two countries signed an agreement to increase bilateral trade to \$5 billion per year by 2021.¹⁵¹ One economic goal shared by both nations is the construction of a pipeline across Pakistan for the sale of Iranian natural gas to India, as well as Pakistan. The project, dubbed the "peace pipeline," has been under discussion since 1995 and has faced multiple delays, but Iran plans to supply Pakistan with natural gas via this pipeline in the near future. The \$7 billion pipeline originally aimed to connect Iran's South Pars gas fields to India, although India pulled out of the project in 2009 "citing costs and security issues."¹⁵²

Political Relationship

In addition to overlapping (and often conflicting) interests in Afghanistan, Iran presents Pakistan with a sectarian political challenge closer to home: that of Sunni-Shi'a conflict within Pakistan itself. Since the 1990s, Iran has been fighting a sectarian proxy battle against Saudi Arabia on Pakistani soil. Iran has supported Shi'a militias, such as Sipah-e-Muhammad, while the Saudis have supported Sunni militias, such as LeJ and Sipah-e-Sahaba. From Islamabad's perspective, both represent unwelcome foreign meddling.¹⁵³

Pakistan is wary of increasing economic and political ties between Iran and India. While Islamabad welcomes the prospect of a pipeline carrying Iranian oil or gas across its territory to India, it is not at all sanguine about India's development of Iran's Chabahar Port. India variously

¹⁴⁷ Musharraf, 2006, pp. 287–290.

¹⁴⁸ Sanger, 2002.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with retired Pakistani general officer [General A], 2016.

¹⁵⁰ Ahmad Fraz Khan, "Iran Offers Electricity at Low Tariff," *Dawn*, February 11, 2015.

¹⁵¹ Iran-Pakistan trade volume was only \$432 million in 2010 to 2011 but had been as high as \$1.32 billion in 2008 to 2009 (see Mehreen Zahra-Malik, "Iran's Rouhani Says Can Provide Pakistan Gas Through Pipeline Within Months," *Reuters*, March 26, 2016).

¹⁵² Zahra-Malik, 2016.

¹⁵³ For discussion of Sunni-Shi'a conflict within Pakistan, see Farahnaz Ispahani, *Purifying the Land of the Pure: A History of Pakistan's Religious Minorities*, Noida, India: Harper Collins Publishers India, 2016.

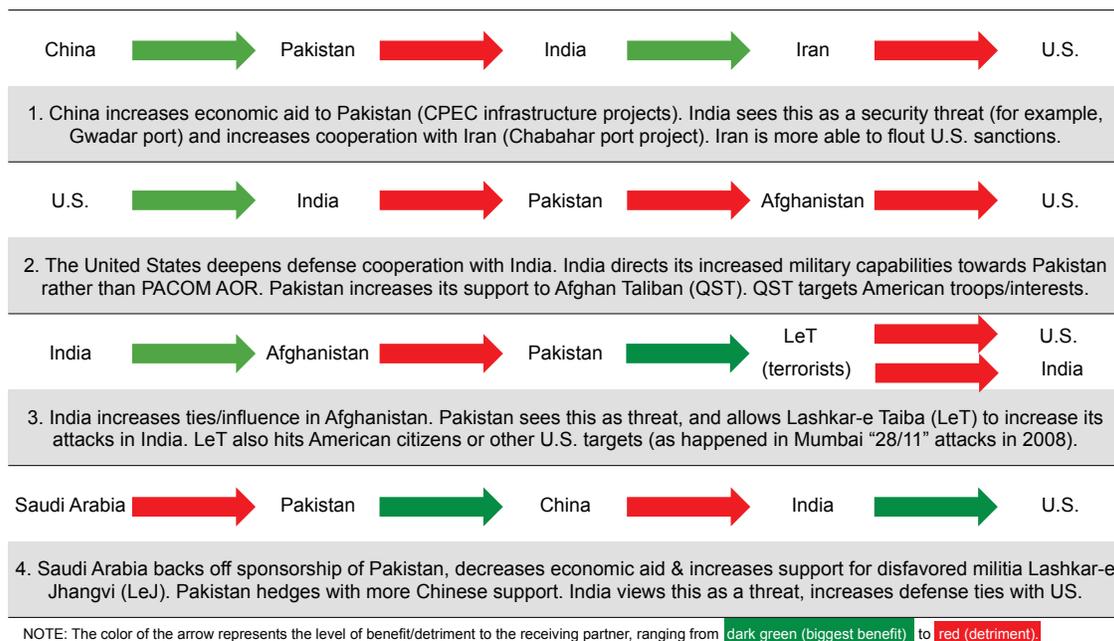
portrays Chabahar as a purely commercial enterprise or as a potential counterweight to Pakistan’s port of Gwadar, under construction by China. Neither Chabahar nor Gwadar has been completed, and neither is yet clearly planned as a military facility—but either or both could potentially support operations by the navies of India and China, respectively.

From Islamabad’s perspective, a stronger Iran-India partnership would raise the terrifying prospect of a war on two fronts. From Tehran’s perspective, a stronger Pakistan-Saudi partnership would present exactly the same threat. For this reason, both Pakistan and Iran have a shared interest in maintaining a regional balance. Islamabad and Riyadh also share an interest in suppression of overlapping insurgencies by Baluch rebels in both nations.

Chapter Summary

Each of Pakistan’s geostrategic security relationships has a potential impact on U.S. security interests, whether directly or indirectly. Sometimes the impact is obvious (for example, Pakistan’s relationship with Afghanistan had a direct impact on OEF), while more often the impact is less immediately apparent. As outlined in Figure 3.4, the range of potential impacts on the United States is immense. USAF would be able to partner more successfully with PAF, and to carry out its missions throughout Pakistan’s neighborhood more successfully, if it maintained situational awareness of Pakistan’s complex web of nested security relationships.

Figure 3.4. Pakistan’s Nested Security Relationships: Hypothetical Cases of Impact on United States



4. Future Trends for USAF as the Loss Leader in the Relationship: Pathways to Success, Pitfalls to Be Avoided

Chapter 2 of this study deals with the past, and Chapter 3 deals with the present. This chapter examines the future and what USAF planners can do to both prepare for and help shape the U.S. security relationship with Pakistan. It outlines five potential future scenarios: (1) Pakistan becomes a full-spectrum ally of the United States; (2) Pakistan remains a partner of convenience for the United States; (3) Pakistan engages in increased geopolitical rent-seeking; (4) Pakistan becomes a full-spectrum ally of China; or (5) Pakistan unravels politically. The chapter then explores the hybrid scenario that is assessed as the most likely outcome, discusses the assumptions and wild cards underlying this assessment, and suggests what this might mean for USAF planning.

Several themes run straight through past, present, and future, of which two have perhaps the most significant implications for USAF: First, USAF has often been the loss leader in the United States' security partnering with Pakistan and is likely to play this role in the future. Second, USAF is uniquely situated among the services to provide ballast to the U.S.-Pakistan relationship during periods of relative disengagement so that the next cycle of rapid re-engagement has a sounder foundation from which to take off.

In the terminology of business, a loss leader can be a department that provides goods or services at less than full cost, with the expectation that customers will more than compensate by increasing their spending in other departments. For example, the home electronics department of a large store may serve as the loss leader by offering plasma televisions at wholesale price, in hopes that a customer will balance his or her bargain with full-price purchases of a washing machine and refrigerator.

In the security relationship between the United States and Pakistan, USAF often plays a similar loss leader role: The assets for which USAF facilitates transfer (advanced aircraft and technology, particularly F-16s) are worth a lot more to PAF than whatever institutional benefit USAF gets from its engagement with PAF in return. The benefits of the relationship, rather, go to other parts of the U.S. security establishment. In the example above, USAF supplies the plasma screen TV, while the salesperson of washing machines (perhaps the Intelligence Community, or agencies focused on nuclear nonproliferation) pick up the sales commission. This relationship benefits the "United States Government Department Store"—but USAF should be fully aware of its loss leader role. Without such awareness, USAF may devalue the importance

of its relationship with PAF, because the institutional value of partnering will indeed decline in most future scenarios.¹

The loss leader framing also helps chart a pathway forward for USAF in a future where overflight rights and basing may not be routinely requested or granted. The mission of USAF is, in large measure, to help keep the U.S.-Pakistan security relationship running smoothly, in preparation for the next period of intense partnering. This does not necessarily imply *increased* engagement, merely *steady* and *well-targeted* engagement. The mission of a loss leader is to persuade the potential customer (Pakistan) to engage with the store (the U.S. government). To keep this mission going over the course of years will require a variety of approaches, several of which are discussed in the final chapter of this report. During the periods of relative lull, the items provided by USAF may not necessarily be the aviation equivalent of plasma televisions; they might be the equivalent of lower-value DVD players or cell phones—just as long as they keep the customer engaged and the relationship maintained.

To go solely by current metrics, the U.S.-Pakistan relationship might seem destined for a downward trajectory. In the wake of OEF's 2014 conclusion, U.S. economic and military assistance, as well as arms sales, are already declining;² even with an uptick in U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan under the Trump administration, there is no expectation of a return to the logistical dependence on Pakistan required by OEF. Washington has moved decisively to embrace India as its preferred regional security partner, in clearer terms than perhaps ever before.³ With the Abbottabad raid of 2011, the Obama administration launched a far higher-profile attack on Pakistani soil than any ever before undertaken, and did so without even the pretense of prior consultation and cooperation; in the aftermath of Abbottabad, Washington has signaled its growing impatience with Pakistan's ambivalent approach to terrorism.⁴ Moreover,

¹ It should be emphasized that *loss leader* does not suggest that USAF has its institutional interests *harmed* in the transaction, nor that the material and services provided by the United States all come *directly* from USAF itself. Rather, the framing is that USAF—either directly or by way of contractors dependent on USAF training, technologies, and legal permission—provides more benefits to Pakistan than it receives back as an institution. For example, the aircraft provided to Pakistan in the 1950s and 1960s were generally not the most advanced models flown by USAF: The 120 F-86F fighters were, by the time of transfer, being built primarily for export, and the B-57B bombers were on their way to obsolescence. Likewise, during the post-9/11 buildup, USAF was already moving toward a future in which F-16s would give way to F-35s and UAVs. Only with the provision of F-104As in the 1950s and 1960s and F-16s in the 1980s was USAF called upon to provide its own cutting-edge aircraft.

² Missy Ryan, "Pentagon Withholds \$300 Million in Military Aid to Pakistan," *Washington Post*, August 3, 2016.

³ Admiral Harry B. Harris, Commander PACOM, noted that the India relationship would "not only be the defining partnership for the Rebalance, it will arguably be the defining partnership for America in the 21st century" (see Harry B. Harris, "Let's Be Ambitious Together," U.S. Pacific Command, Raisina Dialogue Remarks delivered in New Delhi, India, March 2, 2016).

⁴ The latest U.S. State Department Country Report on Terrorism for Pakistan noted that "Pakistan has also not taken sufficient action against other externally-focused groups such as Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), which continued to operate, train, organize, and fundraise in Pakistan" (see U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism, "Chapter 2: Country Reports: South and Central Asia Overview," *Country Reports on Terrorism 2015*, Washington, D.C., June 2016).

since 2014, the United States and India have undertaken a historic increase in bilateral engagement, and this trend is likely to continue in future years.

But the U.S. relationship with Pakistan is complex and will be shaped by a wider range of factors than the need for overflight rights to supply U.S. troops next door, or even the state of U.S.-India relations. While the winding down of OEF removes the priority driving the most recent cycle of engagement, the United States is unlikely to walk away from Pakistan entirely. A variety of inter-related and often competing issues will require Washington's attention, issues ranging from Pakistan's internal security challenges to its blossoming partnership with China. As has been the case in the past, unpredicted and unpredictable events will likely reshuffle the priorities of both nations. Due to this complexity and uncertainty, the future of the U.S.-Pakistan relationship defies any definitive forecasting.

This chapter offers an outlook of the relationship that highlights that uncertainty and risk. Future trends in the relationship suggest that engagement may well be more challenging than in the past—but that the United States cannot easily turn its back on Pakistan. First, this chapter sketches a range of possible futures that could define the relationship. Second, it outlines the future scenario that RAND analysts assess to be the most likely, focusing on the key trends that make U.S.-Pakistan partnering possibly costlier and riskier than such cooperation has historically been. Third, it focuses on what USAF can do to shape that trajectory in a way that mitigates new risks and maintains U.S. access in case of future security emergencies.

Scenarios of the Future U.S.-Pakistan Relationship

The logistical and political requirements of supporting the U.S. mission in Afghanistan will continue to be a key driver of Washington's policy toward Pakistan, but such needs will hardly be the only factors at stake. A wide range of geopolitical issues and domestic Pakistani events will also play a role, quite possibly more determinative (at least in aggregate) than whatever may occur on the other side of the Durand Line. The future of U.S.-Pakistan relations might evolve in a positive direction, leading to a comprehensive and stable alliance. Alternately, relations could deteriorate in any number of ways, with potential outcomes including a destabilizing Pakistan on the verge of state failure. This section briefly outlines five plausible scenarios that illustrate the breadth of possibilities presented by future trends, in rough order of benefit to the United States. (In this context, "benefit to the United States" is strictly limited to the U.S.-Pakistan arena: For example, a full-spectrum alliance between the United States and Pakistan might not serve the overall interests of the United States because of its negative impact on U.S.-India relations. This set of five potential future scenarios limits its scope to U.S.-Pakistan engagement, rather than attempting to determine how such scenarios might fit into a globalized U.S. security strategy).

Full-Spectrum Allies

In this future scenario, U.S.-Pakistan relations are greatly improved and founded on a broader range of shared interests and aligned policies. Pakistan has consolidated its democratic governance, with the Army content to take a back seat and allow civil institutional capacity to develop. Pakistan dials back the use of militants as proxies and even takes active measures to rein in the activities of LeT and other Pakistan-based terrorist groups. Meanwhile, China's CPEC investment brings with it a surge of stabilizing economic development. Despite this investment, however, Pakistan sees little need to rely on China as a military bulwark: The U.S.-India alignment has stalled, and Washington has decided to place its emphasis on Pakistan as its most trusted agent in South Asia. Pakistan's internal security situation remains problematic, but the state has restored basic order in the border regions and elsewhere. PAF is a stabilizing force in the region: Instead of prioritizing nation-to-nation capabilities that could threaten India, PAF has focused its attention on close air support and other capabilities best suited for COIN missions. The United States gingerly builds a more comprehensive partnership with Pakistan, reaching beyond the exigencies of a security crisis: It helps Pakistan build its civilian institutions and COIN capabilities, and Washington even enlists Islamabad's help in managing regional crises, such as combined noncombatant evacuation operations (NEO), in the Persian Gulf.

Partners of Convenience

U.S.-Pakistan relations are workable and often mutually useful in this scenario, although the two sides hold divergent values and priorities. Pakistan is more secure and militarily capable than in the present, largely because of increased Chinese economic and military investment. This investment brings Pakistani support for Chinese priorities, such as potential use of Gwadar Port by the PLAN. The United States works well with India on low-level cooperative security measures, but bureaucratic structures and stubbornly divergent interests prevent Washington and New Delhi from advancing the relationship in a way that threatens Islamabad. The Pakistani government is stable, but the Army maintains a controlling hand on security decisions. Internal security threats are problematic but manageable: They tie the Pakistani government down, but this has the collateral impact of limiting its appetite for mischief abroad. Pakistan has not relinquished its proxy action arm and maintains ties to LeT and other groups in Afghanistan and Kashmir. These proxy connections, however, enable Pakistan to influence outcomes in ways that sometimes advance U.S. goals: Pakistan supports Taliban reconciliation efforts in Afghanistan, for example, although the long-term impact of such reconciliation remains unknown. PAF retains its mix of roles, continuing to build nation-to-nation capabilities incrementally (increasingly through China) but not rapidly enough to threaten the regional balance. The United States is able to work with Pakistan in occasional coordinated activities in the Middle East and elsewhere, but it is largely an *ad hoc* and somewhat transactional partnership.

Geopolitical Rent-Seeking

The United States and Pakistan have often been described as uneasy partners, but in this scenario (even more so than in the previous one discussed), the partnership has deteriorated into pure opportunism. Historically, the United States and Pakistan have worked most closely together when faced with security emergencies nearby, especially in Afghanistan. Unlike such previous instances, however, U.S.-Pakistan relations will be more difficult to maintain in this future scenario. The U.S.-India alignment is strong and growing stronger, so any emergency that forces the United States to work closely with Pakistan must be conducted in a way that does not jeopardize broader regional goals. Meanwhile, with CPEC projects well under development, China's voice will be heard ever more powerfully in Islamabad. In a moment of crisis, the foundations for cooperation between the United States and Pakistan are weak and fragile. Such crises, however, may arise with little notice: a new conflict in Afghanistan, for example, or the rise of an ISIL franchise based in FATA. In such a case, the United States might have to partner with a Pakistan run by a weak civilian government, facing mounting internal threats, and juggling adversarial relationships on both borders. Pakistan might deploy its "weapons of the weak"⁵ to extract concessions from a pressured United States while seeking to play the United States and China against each other to gain more support from both. In such conditions, PAF might be able to use the cover of emergency to pursue a radical modernization program funded and supplied by both Beijing and Washington simultaneously.

Full-Spectrum Ally—of China

U.S.-Pakistan relations in this scenario are overshadowed by the deepening Pakistan-China partnership. The Cold War is long over, and the new geopolitical contest in Asia pits the United States and India against China and Pakistan. In this potential future, with the United States unequivocally backing India's more assertive regional role, China successfully leverages its mounting economic and military assistance to Pakistan into dominant political influence. This might come at the expense of democracy, with Beijing preferring to deal directly with the Pakistani military rather than with a squabbling collection of politicians. Rawalpindi (the seat of military headquarters) might be happy to oblige: President Xi's pledged \$46 billion in investment would present lavish opportunities for corruption to anyone controlling the nation's economic decisions. Antistate militants might escalate their campaign against the state, using Islamabad's alignment with Beijing as a powerful recruiting and propaganda tool against the Pakistani state. Alternately, ISI might succeed in redirecting the actions of LeT and other nonstate actors outward, into Kashmir and Afghanistan. Emboldened by its new alliance with

⁵ The term *weapons of the weak* comes from James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985. In the context of this discussion, it is used as a reference not to the individual and local tools of asymmetrical struggle described by Scott, but to the state-level tools utilized by a nation such as Pakistan in a similarly unequal contest against a far stronger adversary.

China, the Army might launch an aggressive campaign to harass and degrade Indian and U.S. interests in the region. In such a case, PAF would likely embark on an aggressive program of acquisitions and modernizations, with funding and technology provided by China.

Pakistan Unraveling

In this scenario—the most dangerous, from a U.S. perspective—Pakistan increasingly resembles a failed state. U.S.-Pakistan relations deteriorate to their historical nadir, as Washington virtually gives up on partnering with Islamabad. The United States works closely with India to plan for contingencies and contain the spill-over from Pakistan—and this cooperation further feeds the cycle of Pakistani paranoia, distrust, and aggression. China, whose investments never came close to the promised figure of \$46 billion and were always premised on a better security environment than Pakistan was able to provide, has drastically downgraded its ambitious plans for CPEC and Gwadar. Instead of doubling down on what it deems the impossible project of ensuring Pakistan's success, Beijing decides to trim its losses: It seeks simply to block the flow of extremists and protect its remaining citizens and investments in Pakistan but abandons plans for a stepped-up partnership.

State institutions in Pakistan, always fragile, lose what little legitimacy and effectiveness they once possessed. Only the military remains a capable actor, and even it is increasingly compromised by factionalism and extremist penetration. The Army's focus narrows, seeking to retain control of such vital assets as nuclear weapons. Pakistan's teeming cities, not merely its frontier areas, are beset by escalating violence and lawlessness. In this environment, the establishment loses control of the proxies (such as LeT) and loosely tolerated terrorist organizations (such as JeM) that it had previously reined in. These groups use Pakistani soil as a base for attacks in Kashmir and Afghanistan, but, unlike in some previous scenarios, this does not serve to decrease extremist activity within Pakistan itself: The jihadi activity is not coordinated by ISI, and foreign fighters from around the world are attracted to a new battlefield. PAF in such a scenario would likely suffer sharp declines in cohesion and professionalism, as the extremism pervasive throughout society at large inevitably works its way into all branches of the military. When absolutely vital, the United States acts unilaterally to defend its counterterrorism and counterproliferation interests, having all but lost a state with which to partner.

These five scenarios are illustrative sketches of the possibilities for the future. Some are more likely than others, although none can be discounted. The future will hinge on a wide range of factors, from regional geopolitics to Pakistani domestic politics. While prediction is impossible, what this discussion shows is that the more favorable scenarios are more difficult to achieve; in order for them to materialize, a wide range of factors all have to go right at once. Conversely, there are more ways the future may evolve negatively from the perspective of U.S.-Pakistan partnering.

The Most Likely Outcome: Combination Scenario, and a Riskier Future

Assumptions and Wild Cards

In constructing a set of potential future scenarios and determining which of these alternative futures is the most likely, RAND researchers relied on a set of assumptions and a set of possible “wild cards.” The key assumptions included:

- The United States maintains significant national security interests in South Asia—especially regarding regional stability and counterterrorism.
- Opposition to India remains the organizing principle of Pakistani strategy.
- Pakistan remains a unitary state and does not fragment along regional or ethnic lines.
- Afghanistan remains unstable, both a threat and an opportunity for Pakistan.
- China continues to be a strategic competitor to both the United States and India—for largely immutable geopolitical reasons—although the intensity and nature of that competition may vary widely.

Any attempt to model the future must acknowledge the potential for strategic surprises, or wild cards, to throw all predictions to the wind. These wild cards are events—often a short-lived catalyst rather than an enduring driver—that can alter the trajectory of the relationship. Some wild cards can be generated by “flipping” the assumptions—for example, an unexpected India-China rapprochement would completely change the calculus of all scenarios examined. Other external shocks could include the following:

- A peace treaty settles the border and territorial control in Kashmir, removing the Kashmir question as a foundational aspect of the Pakistan military establishment’s institutional principles.
- An India-Pakistan war results in Washington siding decisively with India and treating Pakistan as a pariah.
- A terrorist attack on the United States, plotted in Pakistan, brings the United States and Pakistan to open conflict.
- The Pakistani Army succumbs to an internal takeover by Islamist officers, who vow to pursue a security agenda sympathetic to regional jihadi groups.
- Skirmishes along the Line of Actual Control between India and China escalate into a war comparable to that fought between the two nations in 1962, drawing Pakistan in on the side of China.
- The government of Pakistan loses control of some of its nuclear assets or fissile material, raising the potential for an Indian preemptive strike.
- A natural disaster in Pakistan, surpassing the damage of the 2005 earthquake or the 2010 monsoonal flooding, leads to social dislocation and political instability.
- Internal unrest, perhaps spurred by economic collapse or political paralysis, leads to the establishment in Pakistan of a radical Islamist government.

These assumptions appear to be reliable—but, by definition, so do all assumptions. The wild cards appear to be unlikely—but that is why they are called wild cards. It is worth remembering that two of the three cycles of U.S.-Pakistan partnership have been initiated by unexpected, out-

of-the-blue events: The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and al Qaeda's attack on 9/11 were both classic wild cards.

The Likeliest Future: More Risk, Fewer Rewards

The conclusion of OEF ended a period in which U.S.-Pakistan relations were ostensibly close, but also costly and risky for the United States. Washington provided levels of economic and military aid not seen in half a century, but the necessity of maintaining supply lines for OEF drained such aid of the political leverage it might otherwise have generated. The United States tolerated Pakistani support of the Afghan Taliban, which was actively involved in combat against U.S. and coalition troops, as well as de facto Pakistani sanctuary for the leadership of the Haqqani Network, al Qaeda, and other transnational terrorists. During this period, the Pakistan-based terrorist group LeT launched attacks against India that endangered regional stability (most notably, the November 2008 assault on Mumbai),⁶ and A.Q. Khan sold Pakistan's nuclear secrets to such nations as North Korea, Iran, and Libya.⁷

As risky as that period was, the future may well be even riskier. There is little near-term likelihood of Pakistan becoming a failed state: It remains a stubbornly durable society, even in the face of mounting governance shortfalls and internal security threats.⁸ But Pakistan can be threatening without being catastrophic. RAND researchers assess the most likely future scenario as one in which Pakistan continues to be dominated by the Army, increases its military and economic reliance on China, remains a central source of regional terrorism, and endures a constant stream of internal strife. Without the demands of OEF, U.S. interest in a partner with such serious difficulties is likely to wane—as it has twice before, in comparable historical circumstances (after the 1965 Indo-Pakistani war and after the 1989 Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan).

Pakistan has a reasonable prospect of continuing democratic government in the near term, albeit a form of democratic government in which the military continues to determine the nation's security policy. Pakistan successfully held general elections in 2008 and 2013, and there is no reason to doubt that the next general election will be held on schedule in 2018; following the ouster of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on corruption charges in July 2017, Sharif's party selected another prime minister and continued to govern according to established parliamentary norms. By the end of the last period of de facto military rule under President (and, coterminous

⁶ Stephen Tankel, "Lashkar-e-Taiba: From 9/11 to Mumbai," London: International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Violence, April–May 2009.

⁷ See, for example, David Albright, Paul Brannan, and Andrea Scheel Stricker, "Self-Serving Leaks from A.Q. Khan Circle," Washington, D.C.: Institute for Science and International Security, December 9, 2009; and U.S. House of Representatives, 2007. Pakistan's development of tactical nuclear weapons could exacerbate Pakistan's nuclear security challenges. For more details, see David O. Smith, "The U.S. Experience with Tactical Nuclear Weapons: Lessons for South Asia," in Michael Krepon and Julia Thompson, eds., *Deterrence Stability and Escalation Control in South Asia*, Washington, D.C.: Stimson Center, 2013.

⁸ For more detail on the challenges and resilience of Pakistani institutions, see Lieven, 2012, pp. 3–41, 83–124.

with his civilian title, CoAS) Musharraf, Pakistan's Army had been so discredited in the eyes of the populace that the military's leadership has been intent on staying out of politics ever since. Since Musharraf left office, the Army has recovered its traditional place as perhaps the nation's most widely respected institution.⁹ Military leaders will continue to insist on the final word in security policy, but the Musharraf experience has reminded them of the dangers to their own institution if they venture too far into the realm of civilian governance.

The Army has launched three overt coups since independence (1958, 1977, and 1999), however, and it continues to regard itself as the ultimate guarantor against civilian incompetence or mismanagement. If Pakistani politics become increasingly unruly—for example, if Prime Minister Sharif's PML is unable to forge a governing majority in 2018, and neither the PPP nor the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of former cricketer Imran Khan is able to take its place, the military might step in to fill the void. More likely than an open seizure of power would be a continuation of military control over security policy. Even as civilian rule is maintained and strengthened by the 2018 election, the ultimate decisionmaker on security matters will not be the prime minister or the president but the CoAS.

Such an arrangement may increasingly rankle U.S. sensibilities once Pakistan is no longer regarded as a wartime ally. Moreover, without the glue of combat in Afghanistan, the U.S.-Pakistan relationship may come under increasing strain from the divergence between U.S. goals and the institutional interests of the Pakistani military. For example, Pakistan's Army has traditionally been much less willing than its civilian leadership to undertake peace negotiations with India over the status of Kashmir: The dispute with India has proven a heavy economic and political burden to Pakistan, but military leaders have been far more hawkish on this issue than their civilian counterparts.¹⁰

As U.S. attention strays from the region, the Pakistan Army is likely to continue, and perhaps escalate, its use of proxy militants to attack India and shape events in Afghanistan. For decades, Pakistan has used militant groups to wage low-intensity war against India; throughout OEF it has used its influence with the Quetta Shura Taliban to influence the course of the war and possible political resolution in Afghanistan. Proxy militants offer Pakistan a useful agent while providing some degree of deniability and a buffer against escalation. Pakistan's military has considered this a successful strategy for decades, and the continued refusal to turn over terrorist leaders Hafiz

⁹ By 2014, a Pew Global Research poll found that “the Pakistani military receives an extremely high level of public support. Fully 87% give the military positive ratings, an 8 percentage-point increase from 2013” (see Pew Research Center, “A Less Gloomy Mood in Pakistan,” *Global Attitudes and Trends*, August 27, 2014).

¹⁰ One retired Pakistani general officer interviewed for this report noted that while he strongly supported Kashmir negotiations, his was still a decided minority viewpoint among his currently serving and retired former colleagues (Interview with retired Pakistani general officer [General A], 2016). Another retired general officer noted that even Musharraf—holding the posts of both president and Army Chief—had not succeeded, by the time he left office, in persuading his Corps Commanders to accept the Kashmir deal he had negotiated with Indian Prime Minister Singh (Interview with retired Pakistani general officer [General B], March 2016).

Saeed and Masood Azhar to the United States and India, respectively, suggests an intent to maintain this practice in the future.¹¹

Against India, this strategy has included large-scale spectacular attacks (such as in New Delhi in December 2001 and Mumbai in November 2008), which have raised the prospects of a major conventional military response from India. More recently, these Pakistan-based militants have infiltrated India to conduct a succession of smaller-scale attacks (such as in Gurdaspur and Udhampur in 2015, Pathankot in 2016, and, most importantly, Uri in September 2016),¹² seeking to stay below India's threshold for overt military retaliation; the attack of September 18, 2016, prompted an Indian "surgical strike" across the LoC 11 days later, which may have reset the retaliatory threshold to a new baseline. Pakistan-based groups, such as the Haqqani Network and LeT, have also been active in Afghanistan, targeting not only Indian interests in that country but also the Afghan government and security forces and U.S. and coalition troops. Despite regular pledges from Islamabad, there are no indications that the Pakistani Army and intelligence services will desist from this strategy.

In the likeliest future, such activities could increase. With fewer U.S. troops in Afghanistan and therefore less potential for blowback from Washington, Islamabad may give freer rein to these groups. Not only do such proxies often serve to advance Pakistan's goals, but every militant who is not active in Kashmir or Afghanistan may turn to violent activity inside Pakistan itself. The TTP, which represents the most serious internal challenge to Pakistan's government, grew out of disconnected tribal insurgents and radical groups that Islamabad had long sought to channel rather than fight. Pakistan's military leadership often recognizes the dangers posed by the panoply of radical groups it has tacitly fostered—but in the likeliest future, the top generals will continue to regard these groups as a weapon best directed outward than inward.

¹¹ In 1987, Hafiz Saeed co-founded the LeT; he denies serving currently as leader of the group, which is banned as a terrorist organization by the UN, the United States, and Pakistan, but he is *amir* of its purportedly political wing, Jamaat-ud-Dawa. In 2012, the United States offered a bounty of \$12 million for Saeed in connection to the 2008 LeT attacks in Mumbai. JeM was co-founded by Masood Azhar after the terrorist group he formerly led, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, conducted a hijacking of an Indian Air flight, which resulted in his release from prison in India; he is wanted by the government of India for a string of terrorist attacks stretching from the mid-1990s to September 2016. Both Saeed and Azhar remain in Pakistan, and occasionally address public rallies. For discussion of LeT, the Mumbai attack, and potential for future actions out of theater, see Jonah Blank, *Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Threat to the United States of a Mumbai-Style Attack*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, CT-390, 2013.

¹² On July 27, 2015, three gunmen attacked a police post in the Punjabi district of Gurdaspur (near the border of Jammu and Kashmir), killing four policemen and three civilians (see Navjeevan Gopal, "7 Killed in Gurdaspur Terror Strike After 12-Hour Firefight," *Indian Express*, July 28, 2015). On August 5, 2015, two Border Security Force troops were killed and ten injured in an attack on a convoy near Udhampur later attributed to LeT (see Mir Ehsan, "Top Lashkar Commander Abu Qasim, Who Plotted Udhampur Attack, Shot," *Indian Express*, December 25, 2015). On January 2, 2016, an Indian Air Force base was attacked by a heavily-armed team of assailants later reported to belong to the terrorist group Jaish-e-Muhammad; seven security force members and one civilian were killed (Josy Joseph, "Terrorists Storm Air Force Base, First Challenge to Modi's Pak Outreach," *Indian Express*, January 2, 2016). On September 18, 2016, another suspected JeM attack killed 23 soldiers at a base near Uri—the costliest such attack suffered by the Indian military in two decades (see Praveen Swami and Shubhajit Roy, "Uri Attack: Jaish-e-Muhammad Suspects in Hand, Evidence Shown to Envoy," *Indian Express*, October 4, 2016).

Overlaid on these inter-related domestic factors is Pakistan's burgeoning dependence on China for military and economic assistance. China has long been Pakistan's largest supplier of military hardware and has already moved from provision of unsophisticated small arms to joint production of the JF-17 fighter. Into the future, China may well replace the United States as Pakistan's most significant source of advanced military technology. While the United States is unlikely to provide Pakistan with a fifth-generation fighter, such a move by China is well within the parameters of future scenario planning.

If a significant portion of China's pledged \$46 billion infrastructure investment materializes, the impact on Pakistan's economy could be enormous. From a U.S. perspective, the benefits of an increasingly prosperous (and perhaps, but not certainly, increasingly stable) Pakistan may outweigh the costs of ramped-up Chinese influence. Propping up Pakistan's economy and infrastructure could help to expand state revenues and political control along the length of the country. This might serve to help stabilize not only Pakistan but also Afghanistan. But the impact and distribution of benefits from such infrastructure investment remain uncertain: Chinese infrastructure projects in Africa and Asia have typically relied on Chinese workers for manual labor and Chinese products throughout the supply chain, thereby minimizing the benefit to the local communities.

A closer relationship with Pakistan will allow China to extend its influence and military reach more reliably into the Indian Ocean region, thereby complicating U.S. operations and influence there. Also, Chinese assistance will allow Pakistan to more readily shrug off U.S. policy exhortations on everything from nuclear safety to cross-border militant infiltrations into India and Afghanistan. Even at the height of U.S. economic and military assistance during OEF, U.S. influence over Pakistan's actions remained limited; increasing Chinese leverage in Islamabad in the future will make such influence more expensive and more uncertain.

Exacerbating this decline in influence will be the growing strategic alignment between the United States and India. While the pace of the alignment may be uncertain, the trend line under the most likely future scenario is likely to remain constant. A growing alignment between the United States and India will greatly complicate security partnering between the United States and Pakistan. As much as the United States may wish to delink India and Pakistan, such a move would be extremely difficult to achieve. Deepening security ties with India will inevitably be greeted in Pakistan with distrust and a reinforcement of the narrative that the United States is an unreliable partner.¹³ Similarly, as Washington draws closer to India, it will find less and less space to overlook Pakistan's support for proxy attacks on Indian territory and interests.

Closer relations with India are a fundamental element of the U.S. rebalance to Asia and enjoy stable bipartisan support in Washington—they are likely to remain a factor in U.S. policy in Asia in most likely future scenarios. India is seen as a promising balancer for the rising influence of

¹³ Interview with retired Pakistani general officer [General A], 2016; interview with retired Pakistani general officer [General B], 2016; and interview with retired Pakistani general officer [General C], 2016.

China and as a positive contributor to regional stability. But closer relations with India will come at the cost of limiting U.S. influence in Pakistan. This trade-off is necessarily a political decision that must be made by successive U.S. administrations, but India's power potential and inherent counterweight to China will likely propel a United States to tilt toward India—and therefore away from Pakistan—for the foreseeable future.

The picture of Pakistan that emerges from this scenario is that of an internally besieged and externally destabilizing state, with deepening links to the United States' chief global rival. There are many uncertainties of detail, and any number of factors could create a substantially different scenario, but most of the alternative futures would bring other threats at least as serious. This does not mean that U.S.-Pakistan partnership is doomed to failure—merely that it is likely to become more challenging in a post-OEF environment than it has been in the recent past.

In its future dealings with Pakistan, the United States will have to compete more acutely for influence against both China and domestic extremists (some of them supported and funded by Saudi Arabia). To achieve political outcomes comparable to those of the recent past (for example, largely unhindered access to GLOCs and Pakistani airspace), the United States may have to provide higher levels of economic and military assistance—at precisely the time when such levels of funding are *least* likely to be approved by Congress. There is the risk that this dynamic could become a self-reinforcing mechanism: Withdrawal of U.S. interest and funding leads to decreased Pakistani cooperation with U.S. goals—which in turn leads to further U.S. disengagement and further Pakistani hostility.

It is precisely to prevent such a cycle from starting, and to provide circuit-breakers to keep any adverse reactions contained, that U.S.-Pakistan and USAF-PAF engagement should be designed and structured.

Implications for USAF

The preceding discussion has outlined the uncertainty in future U.S.-Pakistan relations. Given the volatile history of bilateral relations, there are no guarantees that Pakistan will remain a willing or suitable security partner for the United States and, by extension, for USAF. Concrete metrics of the relationship, especially the overall levels of U.S. security and economic assistance to Pakistan, suggest that a third phase of disengagement (following those in 1965 and 1990) may have already begun. But as the preceding pages have argued, relations could feasibly deteriorate even further than on previous occasions.

USAF cannot assume that the present represents merely a normal post-war correction; instead, it should prepare for a range of engagement options dependent on rapidly changing circumstances. To further complicate the picture, history suggests that USAF should simultaneously plan for a future in which increased engagement is subsequently mandated with little or no advance notice. That is, future engagement with Pakistan may be riskier than in the past—but potentially every bit as vital.

The precise level and shape of that USAF engagement with Pakistan will depend in large part of the role played by PAF. In the most likely future scenario, PAF will continue to advance its own goals, within the larger institutional framework of the Pakistani military. That is, while it will necessarily support the Army in operations against domestic antistate militants, it will also work even more assiduously to prepare for the Army's primary mission—war with India. This mix of missions and roles will create a tension in PAF's plans, acquisitions, and doctrine—preparedness for one mission set is likely to compromise preparedness for the other.¹⁴

To the extent that PAF focuses on the internal security mission, it would better align with U.S. goals: Prosecuting the fight against Pakistan's sub-state and transnational militant threats aligns with U.S. interests while also avoiding an adverse reaction from India. If this is the course PAF follows, USAF partnering will be relatively frictionless. But if PAF places a greater emphasis on its traditional anti-India missions, USAF partnering will become more difficult. The more that PAF focuses on its external adversary, the more it will be forced to deprioritize its counterterrorism or COIN missions—while also triggering a destabilizing security race with India.

Both PAF as an institution and the Pakistan military and civilian leadership as a corporate whole will seek high-capability air platforms, not only for potential use against India but also as symbols of geopolitical prestige. PAF is most likely to secure those platforms from China, which might provide them to counter India and shore up its influence in Islamabad. China has already recently supplied PAF with JF-17 multirole fighters, ZDK-03 airborne early warning and control aircraft, and UAVs. Beijing may supply more-advanced fighters, possibly including fifth-generation aircraft, and UAVs in the future.¹⁵ With its increasingly capable technology, at relatively affordable prices and no political conditions attached, China is likely to be the supplier of choice for PAF at some point in the future. This transition is likely to occur regardless of whether Pakistan secures future aircraft acquisitions from the United States: It is difficult to imagine a level of U.S. partnership short of that accorded to NATO allies that might persuade Pakistan to forgo parallel partnership with China.

China remains the greatest “known unknown” in the future of U.S.-Pakistan security engagement. Among the key implications for USAF of an assessment of the Sino-Pakistani relationship, several stand out as worthy of particular notice.

First, USAF should view Pakistan through the prism of PACOM and U.S. Central Command: Instead of treating Pakistan primarily as a factor in the Afghanistan and counterterrorism arenas, USAF planners should also consider it in relation to India, China, and the larger Asia strategy.

¹⁴ There is some overlap between the two missions: For example, during Operation Zarb-e Azb in FATA, PAF has increased its ability to provide close air support to ground forces and conduct ISR operations; such capabilities might be useful in operations against India as well. But counterterrorism and COIN missions require no capabilities for air-to-air combat, deep strikes against conventionally defended military targets, or strategic reconnaissance—all of which remain top priorities for PAF in the context of potential combat against India.

¹⁵ IHS Jane's, “Pakistan—Air Force,” *Jane's World Air Forces*, January 9, 2016a.

Second, while China appears intent on deepening its engagement with Pakistan in both the security and economic spheres, there may be disconnects between the two nations' understanding of the relationship. China regards President Xi's \$46 billion pledge as an offer of investment, for example, but Pakistani observers tend to see it as a grant. Just as Pakistan has expected more from the United States than it has been willing to deliver, it may be setting itself up for a similar disappointment when it discovers that Beijing is no more likely than Washington to erase all of Pakistan's economic and security deficits. For USAF, this means that Pakistan's talk of shifting from U.S. platforms like the F-16 to Chinese ones like the JF-17 may be premature.

Third, there is a temptation in USAF and broader U.S. government circles to regard partnership relations between potential rivals as a zero-sum equation: If China is increasing its stake in Pakistan (this thinking goes), the United States must be losing. This is not necessarily true: In many arenas, the United States and China have shared goals for both Pakistan and its neighborhood—for example, a shared desire for regional stability, counterterrorism efforts, the avoidance of Indo-Pakistani conflict, and the survival of Pakistan as a unified, functional state. In the 1970s and 1980s, the United States actively encouraged Sino-Pakistani cooperation, in the pursuit of U.S. interests (in that era, primarily the shared goal of limiting Soviet regional influence). In the near future, the United States may decide that its own interests are advanced by a closer relationship between China and Pakistan. From a USAF perspective, this means that any shift by PAF toward increased engagement with the PLAAF should not *necessarily* be taken as a hostile action.

Despite the growing influence of China and the increased risks outlined above, USAF is unlikely to be shut out of operational benefits from engagement with PAF. That is, in the likeliest future scenario, USAF will still (at least under some circumstances) be able to operate alongside its Pakistani counterpart, using Pakistani access or basing, logistics, and overflight rights. These operational benefits may come at an increased cost—for example, PAF might be able to exploit the United States' reduced leverage to extract more favorable terms of engagement from USAF. That would then become a policy decision for Washington, to judge the merits of paying an extra cost for the anticipated operational benefits. A baseline level of access and influence in Pakistan will remain important, however, should USAF be required to ramp up its engagement with PAF at a later time, in support of a future crisis.

As the preceding analysis of the outlook of the U.S.-Pakistan relationship suggests, the overall U.S.—and, by extension, USAF—capacity to influence outcomes is limited. For example, the United States and USAF are highly unlikely to alter Pakistani threat perceptions, let alone domestic politics or strategic relations with China. Therefore, Pakistan's strategic doctrine will remain firmly fixated on India despite a mounting campaign of militant violence in the Pakistani heartland—and PAF will retain an institutional preference for the anti-India mission. The prospect of marginal increases in U.S. aircraft sales is unlikely to dislodge these deeply entrenched Pakistani views. Most of the key drivers of the bilateral relationship lie outside the

U.S. government's span of control. This mirrors findings presented in Chapter 3 of this report: Pakistan is at least as likely to react to influences and stressors relating to its relationships with China and India (and, to a lesser extent, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran) as to the inducements offered by Washington.

What, then, can USAF do to influence outcomes? U.S. SC can help either build partner-nation capacity or shape partner-nation intent. As argued in the next chapter, USAF will have greater (albeit still limited) capacity to build PAF capacity than to shape its intent. However, as the outlook scenario has argued, shaping Pakistan's strategic posture and intent would be far more consequential in determining the future of the bilateral relationship.

5. Recommendations

USAF Security Cooperation and Pakistan

At the service-to-service level, the relationship between USAF and PAF during OEF was tangible and pragmatic. Influence was based not only on the strength of relationships between senior air force leaders but also on USAF's willingness and ability to provide systems, maintenance, support, training, and other activities that PAF views as necessary to the success of its missions. Trading U.S. technology and training for influence and access at the service level was sanctioned by Congress because of the imperatives of the OEF mission. Close partnering between USAF and PAF not only brought ongoing access to Pakistani facilities, fuel, and airspace, but it also opened a window into the goals, priorities, and operations of Pakistan's military. USAF-PAF engagement has provided visibility into Pakistan's national- and service-level command and control systems and policies, airspace management, and security relationships. This increased flow of information has been beneficial to both parties: It has enabled USAF to operate safely and effectively with PAF while understanding areas of potential disagreement and, to the maximum degree possible, avoiding unnecessary conflict.

OEF officially ended on December 31, 2014, and was succeeded in Afghanistan by Operation Freedom's Sentinel. As the drawdown of U.S. forces from Afghanistan continues and eventually concludes (albeit with ups and downs dictated by the Trump administration's reformulation of regional strategy), the nature of the long-term relationship between USAF and PAF is bound to evolve and change. USAF requirements for access to Pakistan's air bases and airspace may be more limited or even absent in a post-OEF environment, and U.S. officials will have less need to ask their Pakistani counterparts to support USAF operational and tactical missions. But this in no way suggests an end to the need for robust USAF-PAF engagement: Ongoing access to PAF leaders and influence over PAF planning and operations will continue to provide ballast to U.S.-Pakistan relations and a foundation for a future surge of stepped-up partnership.

Why, one might ask, should such access be ongoing? Might it be more efficient simply to downgrade the USAF-PAF relationship during periods of calm and upgrade it during periods of crisis? As detailed in Chapter 2, that approach has been a hallmark of U.S. policy since the 1950s. But it is precisely because such an arrangement was so thoroughly explored in the past that the authors of this report recommend against replaying it in the future: Unless policymakers considers the current (and historical) U.S.-Pakistan relationship to be wholly unproblematic, they would be well advised to seek a different approach.

In the past, the United States has employed what might be termed an "on-demand" security strategy toward Pakistan: That is, it has invested heavily in its security relationship during times

of great need (early Cold War, anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan, post-9/11) but has quickly lost interest during interludes between these phases. An alternate strategy might be termed “on retainer”: That is, even during periods of decreased demand, the United States would devote a modest set of resources to engagement with Pakistan in order to maintain the foundation for rapid ramp-up in times of crisis. Such a strategy would in no way preclude a more robust U.S. engagement with India, nor would it prevent the United States from downgrading its engagement with Pakistan as a response to provocations in such areas as terrorism and nuclear proliferation. There are at least four reasons for undertaking an on-retainer approach in the future, rather than falling into yet another cycle of neglect and subsequent requirement for a sudden acceleration from a standing start.

First, steady engagement may prove less costly than a boom-and-bust approach. Even with the best of will on both sides, it is often far more difficult—and therefore very likely more financially expensive—to operate as partners after years or decades without close cooperation. Absent mutual goodwill (and the harsh rhetoric sometimes employed by officials in both nations over the past two decades has certainly decreased any goodwill stockpile), the costs would be even higher: If the United States treats Pakistan as a purely transactional partner, it should not be surprised when Pakistan responds in kind.

Second, an on-demand approach in the next crisis might not prove successful—and the United States will have little way of assessing the likelihood of failure ahead of time. Each engage-disengage cycle in the past has deepened Pakistan’s reservoir of distrust and weakened the nontransactional ties that are often vital in a pinch. The purpose of a retainer—in statecraft as in business—is to ensure availability in time of need. Absent steady engagement, the next time Washington calls, it cannot be assured that Islamabad will answer.

Third, the boom-and-bust model reinforces Pakistan’s narrative of abandonment and betrayal. Such a narrative encourages Pakistan to treat the United States as little more than a temporary partner of convenience rather than an actual ally. The consequences of this will likely be increased Pakistani hedging against perceived U.S. desertion and subversion of U.S. interests whenever they are not in perfect accord with Pakistan’s own. Many observers would say that such hedging and subversion have defined the relationship since 9/11: If so, the legacy of an on-demand strategy may be partly to blame.

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, lack of steady engagement deprives the United States of vital influence over Pakistan during periods without a crisis—and thereby increases the likelihood that such a crisis will arise. A few examples from the 1990s alone (that is, the period between the two most recent surges of U.S.-Pakistan security engagement) illustrate the phenomenon: During these years when U.S. SA to Pakistan was essentially cut off, Islamabad turned a blind eye to the A.Q. Khan nuclear proliferation ring; sponsored terrorist organizations, such as LeT and JeM, which subsequently killed U.S. citizens and jeopardized U.S. interests; and materially supported the Taliban in its bid to establish itself as the government of Afghanistan. Would Pakistan have undertaken these activities if the United States had maintained a steady

security engagement during this period? An on-demand approach clearly failed to prevent them—but an on-retainer approach has not truly been attempted.

The objective of USAF in a post-OEF environment, whether in an on-retainer or on-demand structure, should *not* be simply to maximize security cooperation with Pakistan: SC is a means to achieve policy goals, not an end in and of itself. As a 2010 RAND report on Pakistan argues, too much military assistance, or assistance that is improperly balanced—particularly when combined with weak accountability measures—can turn out to be counterproductive in advancing U.S. policy goals.¹ The objective of SC should be to maximize operational and political effects that support overarching U.S. and USAF strategic goals. In a post-OEF environment, that might mean decreasing certain types of USAF SC to increase other programs and recalibrating the mix of engagement tools to ensure the best fit for ever-changing circumstances. For example, USAF planners should always bear in mind that forms of SC that could potentially destabilize Pakistan’s security balance with India might prove costlier to overall U.S. interests than any benefit to U.S.-Pakistan engagement would warrant.

The future trends analysis in Chapter 4 suggests that many of the key drivers of Pakistan’s security posture, and hence of the foundation for U.S.-Pakistani partnering, lie beyond Washington’s capacity to influence. The future will not necessarily resemble the recent past, and U.S. SC policy should not continue unchanged. For the United States and, in particular, USAF, post-OEF policy toward Pakistan should serve to *mitigate threats* to U.S. interests to hedge against the bleakest of the plausible future scenarios.

Doing nothing more than maintaining its OEF-era focus on building PAF’s counterterrorism-focused capabilities could, in a post-OEF environment, incur new and significant strategic risks for the United States. As discussed in Chapter 3, Pakistan retains a submerged intent in strategic doctrine that focuses on India, despite its exhortations of pursuing a counterterrorism strategy in line with U.S. interests. With the gradual withdrawal of U.S. forces from the region and shift of U.S. funds and attention elsewhere, Pakistan is likely to pay even less heed to U.S. preferences in the future than it does in the present. China’s mounting influence in Islamabad, the frailty of Pakistani democracy, and a warming security relationship between the United States and India add up to a scenario in which U.S. interests are not necessarily advanced by a more combat-capable PAF.

Therefore, USAF should seek to rebalance its SC strategy toward Pakistan by focusing at least as much on Pakistani *intent* as Pakistani *capabilities*. Service-level USAF SC is unlikely to be able to effectively alter Pakistani political intent in a major way—that is, such programs probably cannot build a strong constituency for continued partnership with the United States or greatly advance moderate political values more broadly in Pakistan. But USAF SC programs could still seek to shape Pakistani strategic intent through the provision of training and other

¹ C. Christine Fair, Keith Crane, Christopher S. Chivvis, Samir Puri, and Michael Spirtas, *Pakistan: Can the United States Secure an Insecure State?* MG-910-AF, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2010, pp. 181–182.

noncombat services. Forms of SC engagement focused on areas away from the battlefield—logistics and overflight, for example—could help to ensure latent access arrangements and to lend Washington greater insight into Pakistani strategic intent in case of future contingencies in the region.

Where USAF SC is structured to improve PAF capabilities more directly related to combat, the programs might be targeted to areas in which Pakistani and U.S. interests are aligned. A focus on capabilities related to HA/DR would prove less risky than combat capabilities ostensibly designed for counterterrorism. Building such Pakistani capabilities would mitigate the strategic risk of Pakistan acquiring platforms notionally for use in counterterrorism or COIN missions but actually intended for state-to-state warfare. For that same reason, USAF SC should recalibrate SC programs designed to build PAF capabilities for the sake of burden-sharing, interoperability, or coalition operations in a way that does not upset the regional balance of capabilities between Pakistan and India. U.S. efforts should focus on maintaining access and influence without inadvertently acting against wider regional interests in the U.S. rebalance and the partnership with India.

The remainder of this chapter examines programs already established and managed under Title 10 and Title 22 of the U.S. Code² and makes specific recommendations for a potential range of SC activities USAF might consider in a post-OEF environment.

Policy-Level Recommendations

USAF should prepare now for the next cycle of overnight engagement. As discussed in Chapter 2, the United States has seen three distinct engagement-disengagement cycles since Pakistan attained its independence in 1947. Two of these cycles were launched literally overnight by events outside the control of U.S. policymakers: on December 27, 1979 (by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan), and September 11, 2001 (by al Qaeda’s attack on the United States). The United States can prepare for the next such cycle by moving from an on-demand approach (engaging with Pakistan primarily at times of immediate U.S. need) to an on-retainer approach (maintaining a modest level of security engagement during calm periods in order to establish the foundation for more-intense ramp-up in a crisis). As a volatile nation, in a volatile neighborhood, in possession of a nuclear arsenal, Pakistan is not a nation that the United States can or should ignore. By moving from a boom-and-bust model to a steadier engagement at a lower level of intensity, the United States can preserve leverage for such equities as counterterrorism and nuclear proliferation. By keeping security engagement with Pakistan at a steady and modest level, the United States can maintain its budding security relationship with India.

USAF should recognize that it has been and, in the future, is likely to be the “loss leader” of U.S.-Pakistan relations. As argued in Chapter 4, USAF can expect to “give” more to

² For a discussion of the programs under these authorities and of the structure of U.S. SC in general, see Appendix B.

the Pakistan Air Force than it “gets” institutionally in return. If there is balance in the overall relationship between the two countries, it will accrue to *other* parts of the U.S. security establishment: For example, Pakistan’s cooperation in such areas as counterterrorism, nuclear proliferation, or diplomacy involving Afghanistan, India, or China.

USAF and U.S. policymakers should understand the limits of U.S., and particularly USAF, leverage over Pakistan’s choices. As discussed in Chapter 3, the United States is only one of several key geopolitical players influencing Pakistan’s security decisions. While Pakistan has a strong desire for U.S. air power cooperation, this desire will always be balanced by competing geopolitical demands, as well as by domestic considerations that lie outside the scope of this study.

USAF and U.S. interlocutors should calibrate Pakistan’s expectations about what is politically feasible in the United States. They should also recognize the impact of the tone of rhetoric by members of the U.S. policy community. As discussed at various points in this report (Chapters 1, 2, and 3), the tenor of communication can have an outsized role on policy outcomes. In Pakistan, as in the United States and perhaps all nations, popular opinion is strongly influenced by perceived slights to national honor. Policymakers there, both civilian and uniformed, cannot ignore popular opinion—and they often either share anti-American sentiment enflamed by harsh rhetoric from Washington or simply use it to advance their own interests. The biggest impediment to good relations between the United States and Pakistan is another cycle of hopes that are raised and subsequently dashed, feeding a narrative of betrayal and abandonment. USAF can help lessen the likelihood of such an outcome by helping PAF interlocutors distinguish the signal from the noise—that is, helping explain which statements by a policy-shaper or television pundit to take seriously and which to write off. Likewise, USAF and all members of the U.S. security establishment can educate U.S. interlocutors on the impact that harsh rhetoric might have on the ground in Pakistan.

Specific Recommendations

Continue to approve maintenance, training, and support for existing PAF F-16s, and be very wary of calls to forgo (or drastically accelerate) future transfers. F-16s are more than just a high-tech system that provides PAF a perceived balancer for the Indian Air Force. F-16s are the single most important symbol of a historic and long-term security relationship between the United States and Pakistan; for Pakistan, they are a concrete manifestation of U.S. friendship and support. Terminating F-16 transfers could further reduce the already limited influence that the United States enjoys with Pakistan and drive Islamabad into an even closer military partnership with Beijing. While China is Pakistan’s largest overall supplier of military hardware, F-16s remain a vital U.S. leverage point. Pakistan’s continued desire for F-16s, and the United States’ willingness to provide them, may be the lynchpin for long-term agreements related to access, airspace, and logistics. At the same time, the United States should be cautious of providing any new capabilities sufficiently destabilizing as to damage U.S. engagement with

India. A brief rundown of several drawbacks and benefits of continued provision of F-16s and related military hardware may be instructive:

Drawbacks include the following:

- Continued provision of F-16 technology provides Pakistan with its aircraft most capable of carrying out missions against India, thereby possibly increasing the potential for conflict between these nations.
- It provides Pakistan with the most capable aircraft for potential delivery of nuclear warheads to targets in India.³
- It fosters the perception that the United States is unwilling to cut off its highest-profile security cooperation program even after decades of allegations of Pakistani support for international terrorist organizations, such as al Qaeda, the Taliban, and LeT.
 - Given India’s superiority in the conventional air power arena, and effective parity (perhaps operational superiority) in the nuclear arena, this last point remains the most potent, and to the authors of this report the most persuasive, argument for severing the F-16 supply.

Benefits include the following:

- Continued provision of F-16 technology provides continued U.S. leverage over Pakistani decisions—not as much leverage as the United States would like, but far more leverage than if F-16 technology were shut off.
- It provides USAF with continued visibility into PAF capabilities and intentions: Without the ongoing exchange of information that accompanies provision and operation of F-16s, USAF would lose a valuable source of insight into what PAF is able to do and what Pakistan’s apex decisionmakers *want* it to do.
- It prevents Pakistan from becoming a full-fledged security partner of China. When China becomes Pakistan’s supplier not only of the most military equipment but also of the highest level of military technology in its arsenal, the balance of influence in Asia will shift in Beijing’s direction.
- It provides *political symbolism* outstripping the actual military utility of the aircraft itself. For Pakistan, as for perhaps no other nation, an F-16 is far more than a fighter jet: It is a source of national pride—and a clear marker of U.S. commitment.⁴
 - In the authors’ view, this last point is probably the most important one. Given the history of the F-16 program, a cut-off in the present would be interpreted as a replay of the “betrayal and abandonment” Pakistani narrative of the 1990s. The F-16 is a very capable aircraft—but it may be even more capable as a tool of policy and statecraft than of actual war-fighting.

³ IHS Jane’s, 2016a.

⁴ For example, when complications arose regarding the financing of an F-16 purchase deal in 2016, former Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari wrote in the *New York Times* that it “demonstrate[d] how far apart our two countries have grown,” and that he hoped the United States would “take this opportunity to assure us that they remain committed to supporting [Pakistan’s] security needs” (Asif Ali Zardari, “‘Frayed’ Relations Between the U.S. and Pakistan,” *New York Times*, May 20, 2016).

There may be a way of reconciling the drawbacks and the benefits of continued F-16 provision. DoD might be able to alleviate some concerns within the U.S. Congress over F-16 sales to Pakistan by providing F-16s “fitted for but not with.” For example, while F-16s may be capable of firing beyond-visual-range AAMs, the United States does not have to include the most advanced weapons in the arms transfer. This is especially true for transfers that are clearly intended for state-to-state combat and have little or no counterterrorism utility. But policymakers should understand the limits of U.S., and particularly USAF, leverage over Pakistan’s choices: While Pakistan has a strong desire for U.S. air power cooperation; this desire will always be balanced by competing domestic and geopolitical demands.

In cooperation with the Office of the Defense Representative Pakistan (ODRP), request an increase in nonlethal Pakistan-focused IMET for PAF students. IMET is a Department of State program, jointly managed by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) and the State Department, that funds military education and training courses for international military and related civilian personnel.⁵ It is a key component of SC as it promotes regional stability and defense capabilities through professional military and technical courses and specialized instruction. IMET courses are provided primarily at military educational institutions in the United States, which will allow exposure of PAF students to U.S. culture, military students, practices, standards, and professionalism, especially in regard to respect for human rights and the rule of law. The utility of IMET and other types of military education and exchanges is not merely to refocus the intent and capabilities of Pakistan’s officer corps but also to build mutual trust, enable U.S. officers to better understand Pakistani security thinking, and forge officer-to-officer bonds that often yield fruit as the participants rise through the ranks of their respective services. Specific IMET training requests could be focused on additional slots, where available, for Air War College, Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT), Air Command and Staff College, Squadron Officer’s School, maintenance officer courses, and equivalent programs that focus on professionalizing the student.

Offer the opportunity for PAF to send a select PAF officer to serve as an instructor at a USAF school. In the Pakistan military, instructor billets are coveted assignments that are only available to those with the highest grades and with specific recommendations from senior instructors. Serving as an instructor, especially at a school like Defence Services Staff College or National War College in Pakistan, marks an officer for potential service as a flag officer later in his or her career. Attending a military school in the United States is also seen as a great honor and privilege, and limited school slots for the United States are usually given to the best officers. Combining both of these coveted opportunities into one position, by creating an opportunity (or opportunities) for PAF officers to teach at a U.S. military school, would strengthen the military-

⁵ DSCA, *Security Assistance Management Manual*, Washington, D.C., undated, last updated August 2017.

to-military relationship and provide additional insight and visibility into the ways in which PAF trains and prepares to fight.

Focus USAF-PAF exercises and training on existing technical capabilities and especially those that support or enable HA/DR capabilities. Recent Pakistani demands for arms transfers have focused on combat capabilities ostensibly for counterterrorism missions but which also have applications for India-focused missions. Shifting the focus of arms transfers to noncombat platforms (such as airlift) could at least partially satisfy Pakistani requirements without jeopardizing U.S. regional priorities. For example, PAF flies C-130s and benefits from U.S. assistance and training with its current platforms. Future training and exercises involving C-130s that emphasized the important capabilities provided by the aircraft and that enhanced existing capabilities or provided new or additional nonlethal capabilities to support HA/DR in times of domestic disaster would support U.S. strategic goals.

Pakistan suffered the worst earthquake in its history in 2005, and U.S. assistance at the time provided a powerful counterbalance to anti-U.S. sentiment in the nation. In 2010, this disaster was followed by some of the worst flooding Pakistan had ever experienced—and the U.S. military was again there to help. Somewhat smaller earthquakes in 2015 and 2016 have many in Pakistan talking about the nation's ability to provide disaster relief and support the next time tragedy strikes. This is a matter of great concern to the Pakistani military, for reasons much more strategic than humanitarianism: At an institutional level, Pakistani military leaders were embarrassed in 2005 and 2006 and again in 2010 by the fact that they had to rely on U.S. and other foreign troops to perform a mission that many Pakistanis felt should have been executed by the nation's own army and air force. Providing PAF additional HA/DR capabilities would achieve several goals at once: It would raise the institutional importance of PAF in Pakistan's policymaking circles, it would bolster the Pakistani military's domestic credibility with its own populace in a realm removed from combat or fostering cross-border insurgency, and—assuming HA/DR operations were operated under civilian authority, as was the case in 2010—it would reinforce democratic norms and the paradigm of successful civil-military cooperation.

Consider sales of other technical systems that support improved collaboration in areas of shared interests, or provide additional defensive capabilities to PAF aircraft conducting counterterrorism or COIN missions. Pakistan is one of the largest suppliers of troops to UN peacekeeping operations, and such participation in multinational operations advances the interests of Pakistan, the United States, and global community writ large. Such participation, however, often presents PAF with a range of logistical and operational challenges. Advanced communications systems might allow PAF to participate more effectively in international and regional coalitions and contingencies. Defensive countermeasures to increase PAF aircraft protection from man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS) and other potential insurgent systems might enable PAF to take on potentially dangerous missions that would otherwise be rejected by top decisionmakers: After Pakistan's experience in the 1993 Battle of Mogadishu, Islamabad's tolerance is justifiably limited for any peacekeeping operation that might generate

another conflict as depicted in *Black Hawk Down*. Technologies that improve PAF interoperability with other USAF partners can advance a seamless impromptu engagement in times of sudden crisis. Improvements in flight safety, navigation, and aircraft control systems could provide PAF useful technical advances that would support U.S. strategic goals without adversely impacting the balance of power between PAF and the Indian Air Force.

Discuss the possibility of sharing service lessons learned and best practices in aerospace medicine through Subject Matter Expert Exchanges. PAF Aeromedical Institute at PAF Base Masroor, Karachi, supports PAF by promoting flight safety and reducing human error. The institute provides PAF officers training and builds awareness about the hazards of modern flying and the possible protective measures against them. PAF could be interested in exchanges of information with experts on USAF aerospace medicine training, research, and practice. In return, Pakistan might be willing to provide information in areas where it has conducted extensive research: For example, PAF has operated for nearly 70 years in Himalayan theaters of combat at some of the highest altitudes in the world—it has gained a great deal of specialized knowledge in high-altitude medicine and high-altitude illnesses.

Closing Thoughts

The challenges faced by USAF in crafting a strategy for engagement with its Pakistani counterpart closely mirror the challenges of the United States and Pakistan more broadly. In the air power realm, as in most others, a few knotty questions confront U.S. policymakers. These are the questions posed in Chapter 1 and discussed throughout this report:

- Why, despite billions of dollars in U.S. SA and development aid, does Pakistan frequently opt for policies directly at odds with core American interests?
- Is there anything the United States can do to exert greater influence over Pakistani security decisions?

The answers suggested by this study may be summarized very briefly:

- **Why does U.S. aid not buy Pakistani compliance?** Because U.S. interests are seldom the most important consideration for Pakistani planners. In historical context, as discussed in Chapter 2, Islamabad’s policymakers are well aware that Washington has built up, and then abruptly forsaken, its security relationship with Pakistan before—not once, but twice. In geopolitical context, as discussed in Chapter 3, Pakistan must consider how its security decisions affect its relations with at least five other nations: China, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and particularly India.
- **What could the United States do to increase its leverage?** Not nearly as much as Washington might wish. As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, China is already poised to expand its military and economic support for Pakistan to levels that the United States would be highly unlikely to match—and to do so without the conditionality that must accompany American support as a matter of both law and politics.

Given these realities, two overarching conclusions present themselves:

First, as the current cycle of engagement with Pakistan winds down, USAF should prepare for the *next* cycle—now. This can and should be done in a manner which does not jeopardize the growing security engagement between the United States and India. But if past is prologue to the future, there will likely be another such turn of the wheel with Pakistan, and it may well arrive (as it has the past two times) quite literally overnight. As is the case for all branches of the U.S. military and the broader U.S. government, USAF would be wise to maintain a steady level of engagement with PAF throughout, rather than trying to scramble for a rapid engagement when the next cycle begins.

Second, as discussed in Chapter 4, USAF should understand and accept its role as “loss leader” of U.S.-Pakistan relations. This role is currently exemplified by the provision of high-tech aircraft, such as the F-16. In the next cycle of engagement, the iconic manifestation of air power might be UAVs, fifth-generation fighter aircraft, or a technology not even currently on the table. USAF should not expect its relationship with PAF to be one of institutional parity: PAF has less to offer USAF than vice versa, while the benefits provided by Pakistan (HUMINT for counterterrorism, facilitation of Taliban reconciliation, nonproliferation cooperation, policy guarantees of regional stability) will accrue to other parts of the U.S. security establishment.

This set of challenges is not new for USAF. The dynamic has existed since the United States and Pakistan forged their first alliance in 1954 and was very much in place when Brig. Gen. Chuck Yeager served in Islamabad during perhaps the most trying time in the two nations’ relationship. For USAF in Pakistan, completion of a challenging mission under adverse circumstances is a long and well-honored tradition.

Appendix A. Pakistan Military Order of Battle: Key Elements

Table A.1. Pakistan Air Force

Type	Quantity
FTR	211
F-7PG Airguard	50
F-7P Skybolt	74
F-16A MLU Fighting Falcon	24
F-16B MLU Fighting Falcon	21
F-16A ADF Fighting Falcon	9
F-16B ADF Fighting Falcon	4
FT-7	21
FT-7PG	6
Mirage IIIB	2
FGA	190
F-16C Block 52 Fighting Falcon	12
F-16D Block 52 Fighting Falcon	6
JF-17 Thunder (FC-1)	49
Mirage IIID (Mirage IIIOD)	7
Mirage IIIE (IIIIEP)	63
Mirage 5 (5PA)/5PA2	40
Mirage 5D (5DPA)/5DPA2	3
Mirage 5PA3 (ASuW)	10
ISR	10
Mirage IIIR (Mirage IIIRP)	10
ELINT	2
Falcon 20F	2
AEW&C	3
Saab 2000 Erieye	1
ZDK-03	2
TKR	4
II-78 Midas	4
TPT	33
<i>Medium</i>	16
C-130B Hercules	5
C-130E Hercules	10
L-100-20	1
<i>Light</i>	12
Cessna 560XL Citation Excel	1
CN-235M-220	4
EMB-500 Phenom 100	4
F-27-200 Friendship	1
Y-12 (II)	2

Type	Quantity
<i>PAX</i>	5
B-707	1
Falcon 20E	1
Gulfstream IVSP	2
Saab 2000	1
TRG	143
K-8 Karakorum	29
MFI-17B Mushshak	80
T-37C Tweet	24
Total	450

SOURCE: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance*, London: Routledge, 2015, pp. 276–279.

Pakistan Army

Pakistan’s two armor-heavy “Strike Corps,” 1 Corps at Mangla and 2 Corps at Multan, each comprise an armored division, two infantry divisions, an independent armored brigade, an independent mechanized infantry brigade and organic artillery, and engineer and signals brigades. The mission of riposte and holding the Indian army at bay until the international community brokers a ceasefire falls to the two Strike Corps—therefore, it is within these corps that the army has equipped its most modern armored vehicles, the Al-Khalid main battle tank (MBT) (jointly developed by Pakistan and China). Both of these corps have deployed some forces to Khyber Pakhtunwala and other western areas on Afghan border defense and internal security duties, but the bulk of their formations remain in place at garrisons along the Indian border.¹

The three infantry-heavy corps, 4 Corps at Lahore, 30 Corps at Gujranwala, and 31 Corps at Bahawalpur, are assigned the mission of holding terrain against Indian advances in their AORs. Each comprises two infantry divisions; an independent armored brigade; an independent mechanized infantry brigade; and organic artillery, engineer, and signal brigades. Corps, division, and brigade cantonment (garrison) locations are mainly located along the eastern border with India and are principally for rapid deployment in the event of a war with India. Some subordinate units have been detailed for internal security duties, but the bulk of the force remains postured toward the east.

5 Corps, headquartered in Karachi and comprising the 15th and 18th Infantry Divisions and three independent armored brigades, defends the eastern and southern Sindh provinces and has the mission of countering any Indian efforts to cut the main Karachi-Lahore highway, the

¹ IHS Jane’s, “Pakistan—Army,” *Jane’s World Armies*, January 9, 2016b.

principal route from the port of Karachi to the Pakistani heartland. 5 Corps is also reportedly responsible for preventing potential coastal landings by Indian special forces or marines.

10 Corps at Rawalpindi commands formations along the LoC with India and is responsible for defense of Northern Pakistan and Pakistan-held Kashmir. Comprising the 12th, 19th, and 23rd Infantry Divisions, as well as the 8th Armored Brigade and the 111th Mechanized Infantry Brigade, the 10 Corps shares responsibility for defense of northern Pakistan with Force Command Northern Areas, a division-sized organization commanding five independent infantry brigades. Units assigned to the LoC in this region are often engaged in low-level conflict with India. Exchanges of fire between Indian and Pakistani units are cyclical and ongoing, with the media of each nation accusing the other of having opened fire first, often on border posts and troops, or on “unprotected” civilian villages along the border. Because of this close proximity and continuous historical exchange of fire, the likely wartime focus of many units along the LoC are readily apparent even in peacetime.

Pakistan Navy

Table A.2. Naval Aviation

Unit	Base	Type	Role
27 Squadron	PNS Mehran	F27-200	Surveillance/transport
27 Squadron	PNS Mehran	ATR 72-500	Transport/trainer
28 Squadron	PNS Mehran	P-3C Orion	Maritime patrol
93 Squadron	PNS Mehran	Defender	EEZ patrol
111 Squadron	PNS Mehran	Sea King Mk 45/45A	ASW/attack
333 Squadron	PNS Mehran	SA-316	Surveillance/ASW/search and rescue
N/A	PNS Mehran	Uqab II	Coastal and maritime interdiction

SOURCE: IHS Jane’s, “Pakistan > NAVY,” *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment—South Asia*, November 24, 2015.

Table A.3. Other Naval Elements

Class	Manufacturer	Role	Original Total	Now in Service	Commissioned
Surface Fleet					
<i>Alamgir (Oliver Hazard Perry)</i>	Bath Iron Works	Frigate	1	1	2011
<i>Sword (F-22P)</i>	Hudong Zhonghua Shipbuilding	Frigate	4	4	2009
<i>Tariq (Amazon)^a</i>	Vosper Thornycroft	Frigate	2	2	1974
<i>Tariq (Amazon)^a</i>	Yarrow Shipbuilders	Frigate	6	6	1975
<i>Jalalat</i>	PN Dockyard	Fast attack craft—missile	2	2	1997
<i>Jurrat</i>	Karachi Shipyard	Fast attack craft—missile	2	2	2006

Class	Manufacturer	Role	Original Total	Now in Service	Commissioned
<i>Azmat</i>	Xingang Shipyard	Fast attack craft—missile	2	1	2012
<i>Kaan 33</i>	Yonca-Onuk Shipyard	Fast attack craft	2	2	2007
<i>Defender</i>	Safe Boats International	Fast patrol craft	9	9	2010
<i>Larkana</i>	PN Dockyard	Patrol craft—large	1	1	1994
<i>Town</i>	Brooke Marine	Patrol craft—large	1	1	1965
<i>Kaan 15</i>	Yonca-Onuk Shipyard	Fast intervention craft	2	2	2004
Military assault craft	Marsun Shipyard	Fast intervention craft	4	4	2004
<i>SOF Thunder TM-1025^b</i>	Techno Marine	Rigid inflatable boat	30	30	n/a
<i>Munsif (Éridan)</i>	Lorient	Minehunter	2	2	1989
<i>Munsif (Éridan)</i>	Lorient/PN Dockyard	Minehunter	1	1	1998
<i>Griffon 2000 TDX(M)</i>	Griffon	Hovercraft	4	4	2004
Auxiliaries					
<i>Fuqing</i>	Dalian Shipyard	Utility vessel	1	1	1987
<i>Poolster</i>	Rotterdamse Droogdok Mij	Utility vessel	1	1	1964 ^c
N/A	Karachi Shipyard & Engineering Works	Utility/tanker	2	2	2011
Coastal tankers	Karachi Shipyard	Tanker	2	2	1984
<i>Attock</i>	n/a	Tanker	1	1	1957
<i>Behr Paima</i>	Ishikawajima	Survey ship	1	1	1982
Coastal tugs	Giessendam Shipyard	Tug—coastal	2	2	1991
Coastal tugs	Karachi Shipyard	Tug—coastal	3	3	1990
<i>Town</i>	n/a	Training ship	1	n/a	1965
Submarines					
<i>Khalid (Agosta 90B)</i>	DCN	Attack	1	1	1999
<i>Khalid (Agosta 90B)</i>	DCN/PN Dockyard	Attack	1	1	2003
<i>Khalid (Agosta 90B)</i>	Karachi Shipyard & Engineering Works	Attack	1	1	2008
<i>Hashmat (Agosta 70)</i>	Dubigeon Normandie	Attack	2	2	1979
SX-756 midget submarines	Cosmos (Italy)	Attack	4	4	1988

SOURCE: IHS Jane's, 2015.

^a These were recommissioned in 1993–1994. They are sometimes described as destroyers.

^b These are used by the special forces.

^c PNS *Moawin* was recommissioned in 1994.

Appendix B. Security Cooperation Basics

DoD and the military departments undertake missions that are in the strategic or economic interests of the United States; are authorized and guided by U.S. law; and driven are by DoD regulations, policies, and directives. Relationships between U.S. and foreign militaries are governed by many of the same policies, ensuring, for the most part, that there is benefit to the United States in any bilateral or international mission, exercise, training event, and more, even while seeking to assure that some benefit accrues to the foreign partner(s). *Security cooperation (SC)* is defined as those activities undertaken by DoD to “encourage and enable international partners to work with the United States to achieve strategic objectives . . .” that are focused on meeting the national or strategic objectives of both partners in the relationship.¹ This can be a difficult undertaking when the strategic interests of two nations do not align perfectly or where the intersection of national interests are not easily observable by both nations.

SC includes all DoD interactions with defense and security establishments, including all DoD-administered SA programs, that build defense and security relationships; promote specific U.S. security interests, including all international armaments cooperation activities and SA activities; develop allied and friendly military capabilities for self-defense and multinational operations; and provide U.S. forces with peacetime and contingency access to host nations. It is DoD policy that SC is an important tool of national security and foreign policy and is an integral element of the DoD mission.²

In most SC and SA programs, benefit to the United States is justified and measured in terms of access, visibility, and influence in a host nation or region, and where possible, is specifically tied to the strategic and operational needs of the service executing the program on behalf of DoD or the relevant combatant command.

Security Cooperation Purposes and U.S. Strategic Goals

As mentioned above, SC is designed to further U.S. strategic interests, to foster U.S. relationships with foreign partners, and to build partner-nation capabilities. More specifically, it may be useful to think of SC as serving seven broad purposes. These seven purposes fall into two groups: operational and political.

The operational purposes are:

1. SC enhances the burden-sharing capabilities of foreign partners to more effectively take military action against internal or regional threats—ideally, against threats that the United States also assesses are threats.

¹ DSCA, undated.

² DSCA, undated.

2. SC helps to reduce future contingency requirements for major U.S. involvement by enabling more interoperable and effective coalitions.
3. SC provides enablers for U.S. military operations—e.g., refueling or maintenance access, overflight rights, and other operations.
4. SC provides visibility of partner-nation plans, doctrine, operations, personnel/command changes, and more.

The political purposes are:

5. SC helps to build a constituency for continued partnership with the United States.
6. SC more broadly helps to encourage moderate (democratic, secular, pro-Western) political values.
7. SC supports broader regional strategy, shaping partner-nation capabilities in a way that advances the United States' regional or global interests.

SC activities and programs are usually justified, whether explicitly or implicitly, in these terms. Understanding these purposes may help us evaluate which activities are most useful or appropriate for any given country—in this case, Pakistan. Aligning the SC purposes listed above to what will most likely continue to be ongoing U.S. national goals for Pakistan³ helps provide a framework for thinking about specific SC activities USAF might consider.

Each of the following seven purposes is followed by the U.S. strategic goals outlined in the U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue Joint Statement that are most specifically supported by programs within that purpose:

1. SC enhances the burden-sharing capabilities of foreign partners to more effectively take military action against internal or regional threats—ideally, against threats that the United States also assesses as threats. This supports the U.S. goals of fostering regional and international security, ensuring regional stability, and collaborating on measures to counter violent extremism and combat terrorism.
2. SC helps to reduce future contingency requirements for major U.S. involvement by enabling more interoperable and effective coalitions. This supports the U.S. goals of fostering regional and international security, ensuring regional stability, and collaborating on measures to counter violent extremism and combat terrorism.
3. SC provides enablers for U.S. military operations—e.g., refueling or maintenance access, overflight rights, and more. These enablers are less likely to be actively required in a post-OEF environment, absent follow-on missions in the region. Maintaining latent access arrangements, such as Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreements and military overflight and landing agreements, however, should remain a high priority in the event of regional contingencies.
4. SC provides visibility of partner-nation plans, doctrine, operations, personnel/command changes, and more. This supplies ongoing information to support U.S. decisionmaking with respect to national goals and objectives in the region and in Pakistan.

³ Those goals are laid out in the U.S. Pakistan Joint Statement of 2016 (see U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesperson, 2016).

5. SC helps to build a constituency for continued partnership with the United States. This continues to provide a conduit for access and influence in the event of national or service-to-service need.
6. SC more broadly helps to encourage moderate (democratic, secular, pro-Western) political values. This broadly supports stability and security goals and directly supports respect for human rights and rule of law and a strong, democratic, and prosperous Pakistan.
7. SC supports broader regional strategy, shaping partner-nation capabilities in a way that advances the United States' regional or global interests. This supports the U.S. goals of fostering regional and international security; regional stability; and a strong, democratic, and prosperous Pakistan.

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As U.S. military action in Afghanistan stabilizes at levels well below the Operation Enduring Freedom peak, the security relationship between the United States and Pakistan will enter a new phase. Formulating a strategy for future engagement requires a deep understanding of Pakistan’s own security imperatives—i.e., the factors that determine what types of partnership are realistic, and the geopolitical and historical forces that shape Pakistan’s cooperation with the United States. This report examines such factors from a variety of angles: It discusses the historical context of U.S.-Pakistan engagement, highlighting the two prior cycles of deep partnership and precipitous downgrade; it outlines Pakistan’s strategic calculus with five nations (India, China, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran), which inform most important security decisions, and highlights Pakistan’s overarching focus on potential conflict with India; and it looks at future trends for partnering, while examining several potential scenarios. A key finding presented is that U.S. leverage over Pakistan’s security choices is limited, and that the U.S. Air Force effectively serves as the “loss leader” in the relationship. A key recommendation is for U.S. planners to be mindful of the cyclical pattern of the relationship. Given the growing security relationship between the United States and India, any future partnership with Pakistan may face a new set of challenges. If history is a guide, however, the United States would be well advised to maintain its engagement in the interim rather than ramping up next time from a standing start.



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