

European Centre for Information Policy & Security©



June 6

2012

Pakistan-US relations have been seriously strained because of recent events. This has happened primarily because of the logjam on the Afghanistan issue. Lack of vision and straight thinking in both American and Pakistan's leadership circles is mainly responsible for the sharp deterioration in these relations.

**The Crisis in
Pakistan-US
Relations Ref
No**

By Dr Sohail Mahmood

Dr. Sohail Mahmood is Chairman of the Department of Politics & International Relations at International Islamic University, Islamabad.

European Centre for Information Policy and Security (ECIPS)
3rd Floor ,207 Regent Street LondonW1B 3HH
United Kingdom
T + 44 709 218 4991
F + 44 709 218 4991

On November 26, 2011 in a brazen incident NATO attacked the Salala post on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in which 24 Pakistani soldiers were killed. Pakistanis were shocked at the incident since it was unprovoked. The Government of Pakistan reacted by immediately closing the Ground Lines of Communications (GLOCs) for NATO supplies into Afghanistan from the Karachi port. Also, it demanded an apology and an investigation from the United States for the incident.

Later on, an investigation was conducted by NATO which suggested that mistakes had been committed on both sides. Pakistan firmly rejected the NATO version and insisted that it was at fault in the Salala incident. It characterized the incident as “unprovoked, deliberate and planned. The United States seemed to be forthcoming at the apology demand but later backed down because of another terrorist incident in Kabul blamed on the Haqqani network based inside North Waziristan inside Pakistan. Resultantly, relations between the United States and Pakistan were severely strained reaching to the lowest ebb in history.

Finally, some seven months after the Salala incident Hillary Clinton the United States said sorry and on July 3, 2012 Pakistan and the United States reached an agreement to reopen the closed GLOCs. However, the United States still characterized the Salala incident as being the result of a mutual mistake and did not touch upon the key Pakistani demand of cessation of drone attacks inside North Waziristan, inside Pakistan.

More importantly, Pakistan was assured by the United States that there would not be any repetition of such an incident. Pakistan’s reaction in closing GLOCs cost the United States at least \$700 million, as it rerouted supplies across more expensive northern routes. It was reported that the final bill may have been significantly greater. Prime Minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf said on July 5, 2012 that the decision to open the GLOCs was taken in the national interest and in light of parliamentary recommendations. The agreement was announced as a “turning point” by Hina Rabbani Khar Foreign Minister of Pakistan who further stated that “the progress achieved so far would now help the two countries to engage seriously on other issues. Raja Pervaiz, Prime Minister of Pakistan said The News International Friday, July 06, 2012:

As the drawdown of NATO and ISAF forces got underway, Pakistan wanted to facilitate the process in the interest of regional peace and stability, because peace and stability in Afghanistan was closely linked to peace and stability in Pakistan. Pakistan was a partner of the international community and playing a leading role against terrorism as a frontline state...that the prolonged deadlock over the issue of supplies could have hurt the country’s relations with the NATO countries, including friendly and brotherly Muslim states such as Turkey, Qatar and UAE...that it was for the first time in the country’s history that a bipartisan parliamentary consensus was evolved on the broad contours of foreign policy....Pakistan made it clear that its red-lines should be respected and in the same context the new terms of engagement as approved by Parliament were visibly heeded to by the US and Nato countries.

Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, PML (Q) leader and a coalition partner of the ruling PPP also supported the government’s decision to open NATO supplies and said:No country could afford international diplomatic isolation...that the presence of US, NATO and ISAF forces in Afghanistan represented 50 countries under the UN mandate.... the diplomatic impasse over the issue could have created problems for Pakistan at the UN. Foreign policy decisions

needed to be taken in a dispassionate and cool-headed manner as the stakes were too high to be left at the mercy of emotions and irrational behavior.

United States Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton held a three-way meeting with the Khar Pakistani Foreign Minister and Afghan Foreign Minister Zalmi Rassoul in Tokyo, Japan on July 8, 2012. Clinton said her discussions with Khar covered “stalled Afghan reconciliation efforts”. They spoke as well about “enhancing US-Pakistani economic ties to make it a relationship defined more by trade than aid”. She “acknowledged the lingering difficulties hindering US-Pakistani cooperation, without getting into details”. She expressed hope on July 8, 2012 that Pakistan’s recent reopening of the GLOCs might lead to a “broader rapprochement in US-Pakistani relations after a difficult period for the reluctant allies”.

Clinton further said:

We are both encouraged that we’ve been able to put the recent difficulties behind us so we can focus on the many challenges ahead of us....We want to use the positive momentum generated by our recent agreement to take tangible steps on our many shared, core interests. The most important of these, was fighting the militant groups who’ve used Pakistan as a rear base to attack American troops and jeopardize the future of Afghanistan....focused on the necessity of defeating the terror networks that threaten the stability of both Pakistan and Afghanistan, as well as the interests of the United States... a challenging but essential relationship....I have no reason to believe that it will not continue to raise hard questions for us both...But it is something that is in the interests of the United States as well as the interests of Pakistan.

The Recent Politics of the Pakistani Opposition

As expected, the Opposition parties, nationalist groups, and Islamic radicals in Pakistan were greatly angered at the development of the GLOCs reopening. The Zardari Government wasn’t caught by surprise at the reaction and did anticipate such a reaction. The Difa-e Pakistan Council (DPC) announced protest march from Lahore to Islamabad on July 8, 2012. It was commonly known that the DPC was supported by the ISI. The DPC was headed by Maulana Samiul Haq of the JUI. The DPC was composed of a group of Islamist parties and other right-wing groups, including but not limited to, JUI, Jamaat-i Islami, the banned Jamaatud Dawa headed by Hafiz Muhammad Saied, Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed, Hameed Gul, Hafiz Rehman Makki (Dawn, July 5, 2012). Maulana Samiul Haq said that the Zardari Government had “defied the parliament which had clearly decided not to resume the supply as long as drone attacks were not stopped (Dawn, July 5, 2012). The main Opposition party the PML (N) and the Pakistan Tehrik-i Insaaf (PTI) also condemned the restoration of the GLOCs calling it a “violation of the parliament’s resolutions” and also announced protest marches. Undoubtedly, the popular outcry against the United States was immense. Given the high anti-Americanism in Pakistan, these protest marches would attract the people of Pakistan. The Opposition was bent upon simply riding the wave of the popular disgust against the United States. Mistaken politics at its best.

Was this really a breakthrough in United States-Pakistan relations as depicted by the Government of Pakistan and its coalition partners? Was the stalemate in Pakistan-United States relations been really broken and a new beginning made? Clearly the Government of Pakistan was in a damage control exercise. What actually happened was aptly captured by the Wall Street Journal which commented:

Pakistan had backed down as its anti-Americanism had exacted a diplomatic price...Pakistan is spinning the deal with the US to reopen NATO supply routes to Afghanistan as a triumph of its diplomacy. But it was Islamabad that climbed down from its extortionate demands and accepted the status quo ante. That's a big change from previous situations when it was able to extort more aid out of Washington...The deal ended a seven month-long diplomatic standoff that began with a Nato incident on the Af-Pak border in November and led to the closing of land routes through Pakistan. Islamabad sought a full apology from the US for provoking the firefight in which 24 Pakistani troops died. But Washington says the Pakistanis opened fire first in the border clash, and even now it offers a carefully worded statement that it's 'sorry for the losses... Pakistan's demands were partly bluster from the military, which has been looking to salve its pride since the Osama bin Laden raid. But the Obama Administration wasn't exactly eager to make nice with a country Americans increasingly believe is acting in bad faith. The generals also noticed that Defence Secretary Leon Panetta last month reached out to their traditional rivals in New Delhi, and their usual paranoia probably kicked in. It's useful to remind Pakistan it's not indispensable. The other reason Islamabad adopted such a stance and stuck to it for so long is more worrying. The ruling party beleaguered at home had whipped up so much jingoism that it feared a political backlash if it backed down easily. Opposition politicians, mostly from religious parties, are now threatening protests against the government, so Islamabad could yet try to back out of the deal. Pakistan's leaders find it convenient to open the Pandora's Box of radical Islam and anti-Americanism for short-term gains. It's Pakistan itself that has paid the highest price for that ugly bargain."

No matter the politics and the spin of the so-called breakthrough in Pakistan-United States relations, the reopening of the GLOCs can be seen as an overall a positive development for both the United States and Pakistan. Contrary to the impression given by the Government of Pakistan and the Opposition political parties, the drone attacks were happening with the permission of both the Zardari Government and the Pakistan Army. The only thing was that the Pakistanis were not willing to admit it because of the fear of a political backlash. Increasingly, Pakistanis had turned against the United States and the politicians as well as the Army brass knew full well that saying so would be a political risk for them. In some ways the drone strikes was a fake issue. There was a convergence of national interests, as seen by the Pakistan military and Government of Pakistan, on allowing these drone strikes inside Pakistan. Therefore, the lingering issue of drone strikes in North Waziristan can be resolved in some manner like sharing responsibility in some ways.

The real sticking point in Pak-US relations and the main divergence of national interests wasn't the war on terror inside Pakistan but the one in neighboring Afghanistan. This problem is real and remains. The real issue of conflict is the playing out of the so-called endgame in Afghanistan after the United States and NATO /ISAF troops depart by the end of 2014. Obviously, the Government of Pakistan would like to see the Taliban in power in Afghanistan. At least, this seems to be the present thinking in the power corridors of Pakistan today. Whether this actually happens or not is dependent on a number of factors though. Anyway a lot depends on how this endgame is played out between the US and Pakistan. It remains to be seen whether the United States and Pakistan join hands on Afghanistan or not. . In the interest of regional peace it can be argued that both countries must join hands to earnestly plan for a viable endgame in Afghanistan. Nothing can be more significant than a doable Afghan endgame strategy for both the United States and Pakistan. Is Pakistan ready for the challenge? Unfortunately, the Zardari Government is too preoccupied with the internal political and economic crisis to do much in this foreign policy area. Plus, it simply doesn't have the capacity to take any meaningful action. Given the control of the army over foreign

and security policy, not much can be expected of the Zardari Government. Also, the Foreign Office doesn't have a viable strategy in place to deal with the situation. It must be emphasized that peace in Afghanistan remains a formidable challenge.

Post-2014 Afghanistan?

The departure of US & allied troops from Afghanistan by end 2014 doesn't suggest that there will necessarily be peace in the country. There is a real danger of a civil war erupting in Afghanistan after the departure of these troops. The politics of Afghanistan is complex. Country is weak and fragmented on ethnic lines. The Afghan Taliban are somewhat supported by Pakistan, while the Northern Alliance is supported by the US & India. The Hazaras are supposedly supported by Iran. In the eventuality of the departure of United States and ISAF/NATO troops, the Taliban will make a bid for power in Afghanistan. The Taliban can be expected to be resisted in taking over Hazara, Tajik and Uzbek areas, however. Today, the Taliban control the Southern portion of Afghanistan only. Meanwhile, the United States has signed a strategic partnership agreement with Afghanistan to assist it in building the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) to strength of 230,000 at a cost of \$4 billion. Given the reality of Afghanistan, the chances of a half decent national army are very slim. The present Karzai Government in Afghanistan is not only very corrupt but also weak and ineffective. Therefore, Karzai isn't expected to last long after most Nato-led foreign combat troops leave Afghanistan in 2014. Then the Karzai Government will assume responsibility for most of its own security.

The past performance of the Karzai Government has been dismal. In total Afghanistan has received nearly \$60 billion in civilian aid since 2002. The World Bank says foreign aid makes up nearly the equivalent of the country's gross domestic product. On July 8, 2012 international donors pledged \$16 billion in a major donors' conference held in Tokyo, attended by about 70 countries and organizations. The conference aimed at setting aid levels for the crucial period through and beyond 2014. The US portion is expected to be in the decade-long annual range of \$1 billion to this year's \$2.3 billion. The total amount of international civilian support represents a slight decline from the current annual level of around \$5 billion. Japan, the second-largest donor, says it will provide up to \$3 billion through 2016, and Germany has announced it will keep its contribution to rebuilding and development at its current level of \$536 million a year, at least until 2016. The \$4 billion in annual civilian aid comes on top of \$4.1 billion in yearly assistance pledged last May at a Nato conference in Chicago to fund the Afghan National Security Forces from 2015 to 2017. But the flow of aid is expected to sharply diminish after international troops withdraw, despite the ongoing threat the country faces from the Taliban and other militants.

Along with security issues, donors had become wary of widespread corruption and poor project governance. The aid was intended nevertheless to provide a stabilizing factor as Afghanistan transitions to greater independence from international involvement. But it will come with conditions. The pledges were expected to establish a road map of accountability to ensure that Afghanistan does more to improve governance and finance management, and to safeguard the democratic process, rule of law and human rights, especially those of women. Meanwhile, Karzai had vowed to "fight corruption with strong resolve." But he still faces international weariness with the war and frustration over his failure to crack down on corruption. Clinton had acknowledged that corruption was a "major problem." The donors planned to set up review and monitoring measures to assure the aid is used for development

and not wasted by corruption or mismanagement, which has been a major hurdle in putting aid projects into practice.

The Next Steps

What is happening in Afghanistan must be carefully analyzed from the perspective of different stakeholders, especially Pakistan. The Pakistan military is worried that India is making inroads in Afghanistan and desires a role in the future of the country. More importantly, it believed that the United States was encouraging India in this development. The military leadership was apprehensive of any Indian role in Afghanistan and also firmly believed that these developments were happening at the cost of Pakistan. The reality is different, however.

What should Pakistan and United States do now in Afghanistan?

1. They should join hands to broker a power sharing arrangement in Afghanistan. Different power groups in the country, especially the Taliban and Northern Alliance, are brought on the negotiating table for this exercise.
2. Intense and coordinated diplomatic activity shall be required for any meaningful intra-Afghan dialogue. These negotiations will surely be tedious but are needed nevertheless.
3. Pakistan must facilitate a Taliban-United States deal to the extent possible. The United States work with Pakistan on this one.
4. Both hold a series of meetings in Islamabad to chalk out the contours of a viable endgame in Afghanistan.
5. Later, invite other regional players like India, Russia, China, CARs and Iran to contribute their share in finalizing the endgame.

There are a number of things for Pakistan to do immediately:

1. Convince the US that Pakistan knows Afghanistan like no other and therefore must be trusted to play a key role in the endgame. A number of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) are suggested:
 - a) Renounce the old discredited policy of 'Strategic Depth' and 'a friendly Western border' propounded by the Pak Army. Most importantly, the Zardari Government must wrest control of the Afghanistan policy from the hands of the military. It must immediately announce a stopping of support for the Haqqani network and the Lashkar-i-Taiba. Pakistan must engage the United States which is counting on it to help convince the Taliban and other groups fighting the Afghan government to halt violence and enter into a political dialogue.
 - b) Stop the Defa-e Pakistan Council from going overboard in protesting against the United States.
 - c) Joint efforts with the United States to tackle the Islamic extremist problem.

The United States, on its part, must also take immediate action in a number of areas:

1. Stop covert CIA activity in Pakistan
2. Reach out to the Pakistani Civil Society in a new effort at 'winning hearts and minds'.
3. Acknowledge that some past actions are responsible for a great deal of animosity among the Muslims.
4. Support the Palestinian cause and stop Israeli military subjugation and occupation of Palestine.
5. Support a final solution of the lingering Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan
6. Openly support Pakistan in taking a final and decisive military campaign against terrorist's hideouts in North Waziristan. Remember the Pakistan Army is exhausted and badly stretched to do this alone.

7. Stop threatening Iran over the nuclear issue. Give diplomacy a fuller chance.
8. Release the stuck up CSF money to Pakistan.

Before the reopening of the GLOCs Pakistan-United States relations were at its lowest ebb but there are signs that they can still be repaired. Both sides must resolve their differences with a new determination. The US and Pakistan have a convergence of national interests in seeking a stable and peaceful Afghanistan. Therefore, both can, and should, work as real partners rather than rivals. Pakistan and United States also have much in common at the societal and cultural level also. There is no reason for the deep mistrust to prolong any longer. Undoubtedly, the United States has enemies inside Pakistan. Some Islamic radicals and other nationalists are convinced that the United States is their perpetual enemy. They believe that the United States is an enemy of Islam. Bad experiences and history has sharpened these perceptions. Circumstances change and so can perceptions. The people of Pakistan dislike the state policies of the United States but not just hate America as such. Media reports exaggerate these negative perceptions on both sides. The point is that these misperceptions cannot and should not come in the way of sensible policy making. Both need each other to build lasting peace in the region. Dreams of a prosperous, peaceful and secure Pakistan are the aspiration of all Pakistanis and Afghans. However, dreams of peace and prosperity aren't just made without sustained effort at achieving them. Proper planning and wise policy making is required. Prudence is the need of the hour and not just emotions. It is pertinent to add that Pakistan will lose more if the Afghanistan endgame falters. Most importantly, Pakistan must act immediately. The US-Pakistan Relations and the Issue of Afghanistan

Pakistan-US relations have been seriously strained because of recent events. This has happened primarily because of the logjam on the Afghanistan issue. Lack of vision and straight thinking in both American and Pakistan's leadership circles is mainly responsible for the sharp deterioration in these relations.

Continuing American drone strikes inside Waziristan in Pakistan is causing a swell of anti-American feelings in the country. The Obama administration is not going to stop them any time soon. Meanwhile, the level of mutual distrust has created a crisis situation now. The shortcomings Zardari government in power in Pakistan is simply incompetent and preoccupied with the domestic political mess to take any bold decisions on the Afghanistan issue.

Unfortunately, the military establishment is still calling the shots on matters of national security and foreign policy. This is largely happening by default because the civilian government is too weak to take charge. The Zardari Government has failed to give any reasonable direction on foreign policy or national security.

The US troops will pull out in 2014 and the future power arrangements in Kabul are the main bone of contention between Pakistan and the US. Meanwhile, the negotiations between the US and Taliban in Qatar have stalled. Meanwhile, the US is losing patience with Pakistan as it is still backing the Afghan Taliban who are fighting the ISAF-NATO military forces in Afghanistan from safe havens established inside the country.

This is an open secret now. Incredibly, the presence of these terrorist safe havens inside the country is officially denied by Pakistan. Why is Pakistan hedging its bets on the Afghan Taliban? This is happening because of Pakistan's legacy in Afghanistan, especially during the Soviet occupation in 1979 and eventual ouster in 1989. Pakistan and the US had a

convergence of interests then and both supported the Mujahedeen against the Soviet occupation force. It helped create the Taliban back in the mid-1990s and these connections supposedly matter, given the presence of a large Pakhtun population in the KPK province on the Pakistan-Afghan border area inside Pakistan.

Plus, the Pakistan military believed in the infamous doctrine of 'strategic depth' inside Afghanistan as a national interest priority. Supposedly this was part of a larger strategic plan in its combat posture with arch enemy India. However, things have changed and the old doctrine is no more valid. India-Pakistan relations have improved somewhat and Pakistan is less threatened than before. Pakistan is a nuclear power and has formidable military muscle to deter India from any adventure against it. Reportedly, Pakistan has the fastest development in its nuclear establishment in the world.

Undoubtedly, Pakistan's military might is awesome and India would never attack Pakistan for the fear of unleashing a nuclear Armageddon in South Asia. Pakistan does not have to fear India now. In other words, Pakistan has attained the stapes where it is reasonably protected against India and other enemies as well. Therefore, Pakistan has the luxury of shifting focus to human security and development areas. The economy of Pakistan faces a formidable challenge and requires immediate attention of its rulers. Pakistan has achieved a lot in the military area and now must focus on the welfare of its people.

Massive corruption, endemic bad governance, mismanagement and misperceived priorities have wrecked havoc in the country. The issue of human security, as opposed to military security, must now be the strategic priority of the government of Pakistan. This requires a paradigm shift as the military establishment is still obsessed with military security issues.

Will the military establishment of Pakistan realize that Pakistan has weakened from within because of the governance crises engulfing it today? Is the military establishment ready to cut its share of the budget pie and divest scarce resources to solve the very serious energy crisis in the country? More importantly, will the Pakistan military establishment give up its policy of backing the Taliban in Afghanistan?

Unfortunately, the answer to all three questions remains in the negative. The problem with Pakistan military establishment is that it fails to see the people's aspirations as legitimate. Given its great power in still calling the shots in Pakistan, the military has lost vision of the true national interest of the country. The people of Pakistan just want stability, peace and economic opportunities and do not desire anything else. They want peace in the region which includes both Afghanistan and India. The Government of Pakistan must facilitate the US pullout in 2014 by immediately reopening the NATO supply routes closed since November last after the Salala incident. Insisting on an apology by the US isn't required now. There is still a basis for repairing the US-Pakistan relationship.

There is a convergence of national interest between Pakistan and the US on the issue of peace and stability in Afghanistan after the pullout. The Government of Pakistan must stop from playing favorites inside Afghanistan. It must reach out to the Northern Alliance groups and other non-Pashtun groups in a bid for reconciliation. The role of India in Afghanistan isn't necessarily a big issue for Pakistan. Afghanistan is a member of SAARC and India has legitimate interests in Afghanistan. Pakistan must negotiate an end of Indian interference in Baluchistan by severing its own links with the Jihadist entities inside India. A quid pro quo can be worked out with some tense diplomacy and patience. It is in Pakistan's supreme

national interest to have peace and stability in Afghanistan by working out a power arrangement that includes the Taliban. Pakistan must have a proactive foreign policy and should take the initiative to arrange negotiations for a transfer of power after the pullout in 2014. Arrangements can be made to include the US, India, China and Iran in this diplomatic initiative. All concerned stakeholders can and should meet to settle a power-sharing arrangement.

In Lebanon different ethnic groups have devised a formula for sharing power and this formula can be applied in case of Afghanistan as well. General elections will have to wait for this formula arrangement. While a Pakhtun can become a President of Afghanistan, other important positions must go to non-Pakhtuns. A sort of balance of power arrangement inside Afghanistan can be worked out and then general elections be held. The point is that the American model of democracy may not work in Afghanistan and a new democracy of ethnic groups power-sharing may be more applicable in tribal Afghanistan. There isn't much time left as these negotiations will be prolonged and tedious at best, and unworkable at worst. In the interest of peaceful and stable Afghanistan it is certainly worth a try.

Only Pakistan can host this negotiations arrangement. No other country has more at stake in the post-western Afghanistan than neighbor Pakistan. Unfortunately, the leadership of Pakistan is too inept and ineffective to take this needed diplomatic initiative. The region will surely loose if timely action isn't taken now to secure Afghanistan after the US & NATO troops have left in 2014. Eventually, a new peacekeeping force will have to replace the Western troops. It is best that an OIC peacekeeping force is placed to secure Afghanistan for some years. Pakistan can be instrumental in setting up this Muslim peacekeeping force for eventual deployment in Afghanistan. Firstly, Pakistan must get its own house in order and resolve its serious governance issues.

A future of peace, prosperity and stability, in Afghanistan beckons both the United States and Pakistan only if they build a true partnership for the purpose. Nothing else will do. Meanwhile, the clock is ticking. Pakistan doesn't have much time to change direction.

Dr. Sohail Mahmood is Chairman of the Department of Politics & International Relations at International Islamic University, Islamabad.

The Crisis in Pakistan-US Relations – No: 2012014TSD for The European Centre for Information Policy and Security (ECIPS)