

## US-Pakistan Relations in the Summer of 2011 (ARI)

*Dennis Kux\**

**Theme:** This ARI discusses the current crisis in US-Pakistan relations and analyses the interaction between Washington and Islamabad since the events of 9/11.

**Summary:** In the wake of Osama bin Laden's killing, relations between the US and Pakistan have deteriorated. Islamabad has reduced military and intelligence cooperation and demanded an end to drone attacks. In Washington, members of Congress have sharply criticised Pakistan's ambiguous stance towards terrorist groups. The Obama Administration has suspended the disbursement of US\$800 million of military aid. Just before retiring as Defense Secretary, Robert Gates described US-Pakistan relations as a bad marriage. Does this mean that the two countries are headed for a messy divorce? I think not. The US and Pakistan need each other too much for that to happen. Relations are likely to continue to rock along as they have ever since Pakistan and the US became allies in 1954.

**Key words:** Pakistan, US, terrorism, military aid, economic aid, intelligence cooperation, bin Laden.

**Analysis:** In the wake of the assassination of Osama bin Laden and the earlier storm over Raymond Davis, the CIA contractor who killed two Pakistanis in late January, relations between the US and Pakistan have plummeted. Mutual distrust has reached a new high. Pakistan has sent 100 US military trainers home, terminated joint counter-insurgency operations, restricted intelligence cooperation and demanded an end to Predator drone attacks. In Washington, members of Congress have sharply criticised Pakistan's 'two-faced policies' towards terrorist groups and called for slashing aid. Baring its teeth, the Obama Administration has deferred the disbursement of US\$800 million of military aid. As the White House Chief of Staff William Daley told ABC Television News on 10 July, Pakistan's actions 'have given us reason to pause... until we get through these difficulties, we'll hold back some of the money that the American taxpayers have committed to give'.<sup>1</sup> The retiring Secretary of Defense Robert Gates described the relationship like a bad marriage.

Does this mean that the two countries are headed for a messy divorce? I think not. The relationship may indeed be like a bad marriage, but it is like a marriage in a country where divorce is not possible. Despite the current crisis, Washington and Islamabad are likely to find a way to stumble along. Pakistan desperately needs US economic and military aid to stave off a collapse of its sagging economy and to bolster its army, engaged in a harsh

\* *Retired State Department South Asia specialist, currently a Senior Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington.*

<sup>1</sup> Karen De Young (2011), 'US Withholding Military Aid to Pakistan', *Washington Post*, 11/VII/2011, A1, 8.

---

struggle against a fierce Pakistani Taliban insurgency. The US needs Pakistan's agreement to transport two-thirds of the supplies used by NATO from the port of Karachi to Afghanistan. Success in Afghanistan also depends on getting Pakistan to shut down the havens supporting the Taliban insurgency. Finally, the possibility that Islamic terrorists might lay their hands on Pakistan's nuclear weapons causes nightmares in Washington and other capitals.

Yet, like any bad marriage, serious differences do exist. Both the US and Pakistan regard al-Qaida and the Pakistani Taliban as terrorist groups. But agreement stops there. The Americans consider the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani network, and militants led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar as terrorists; Pakistan sees them in another light, as useful proxies to protect its equities in Afghanistan after US and NATO forces depart and as a tool to pressure President Hamid Karzai 'to behave'. The fact that these groups directly undercut US interests in a stable Afghanistan (and are killing and wounding American soldiers) has not deterred Pakistan from providing covert support while denying it is doing so.

#### *US-Pakistan Relations: A Half-Century Roller Coaster Ride*

Although the stakes today are vastly higher, the current crisis fits into a well-established pattern. Ever since the US and Pakistan became allies 57 years ago, their relationship has been extraordinarily volatile, a veritable ride on a roller coaster. It was on 14 May 1954 that the two countries signed a mutual defence security agreement making Pakistan part of the Eisenhower Administration's containment belt around the Soviet Union and China. By becoming a member of both the South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Baghdad Pact, in President Ayub Khan's words, his country became America's 'Most Allied Ally in Asia'.<sup>2</sup>

The alliance, however, had a fundamental disconnection. While Pakistan was anti-communist, India was its main security concern. Even though the US and India were estranged, Washington never considered New Delhi an enemy. The relationship prospered during the Eisenhower Presidency, but faltered over this disconnection during the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations. When the October-November 1962 Sino-Indian border war prompted US military aid to New Delhi, Islamabad was infuriated. In turn, Pakistan's burgeoning friendship with China and criticism of US involvement in Vietnam angered Washington. In 1965, after Pakistan went to war with India over Kashmir, Johnson cut off both military and economic aid. For all practical purposes, the alliance was dead.

Four years later, Richard Nixon became President and the relationship revived. Pakistan's vice (its intimate relations with China) became its virtue. Islamabad played a key role in brokering the US opening to China, arguably Nixon's most significant foreign policy achievement. During the 1971 Bangladesh war, the US 'tilted' towards Pakistan, labelling India the aggressor. Good relations continued when Gerald Ford became President after the Watergate scandal caused Nixon's resignation.

Under Jimmy Carter, nuclear nonproliferation, democracy and human rights became central planks of US foreign policy. Relations with Pakistan soured on all three counts. They hit rock bottom on 21 November 1979 after an angry mob sacked the US embassy in Islamabad. Four embassy employees died and another 137 trapped in the security vault were minutes from asphyxiation when the mob fortunately dispersed of its own

---

<sup>2</sup> Mohammed Ayub Khan (1967), *Friends Not Masters*, Oxford University Press, London, p. 130.

---

accord. The Pakistani police and army responded languidly, arriving on the scene only after the attackers had gone.<sup>3</sup>

But just a month later, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan made Pakistan a 'frontline' state. Although President Zia ul-Haq spurned Carter's offer of US\$200 million in economic aid as 'peanuts', he approved covert cooperation between the CIA and the InterServices Intelligence Directorate (ISI) to support the anti-communist Islamic resistance movement in Afghanistan. With Ronald Reagan in the White House during the 1980s, relations prospered. Even so, problems over Islamabad's clandestine effort to develop nuclear weapons simmered just beneath the surface. After the Red Army left Afghanistan in 1989, Pakistan's nuclear aspirations became the critical bilateral issue. A year later, US intelligence agencies firmly concluded that Pakistan possessed a nuclear device. A reluctant George H.W. Bush felt compelled to impose Pressler amendment sanctions, suspending military and economic aid.<sup>4</sup> Differences over nuclear issues and ISI support for Islamic militants continued to mar relations during the 20<sup>th</sup> century's final decade.

As the new millennium began, Pakistanis remained bitter over US sanctions. The Americans were upset over Pakistan's support for Islamic terrorists operating in Kashmir as well as ISI's intimate ties with the pariah Taliban regime in Kabul. The Clinton Administration was further annoyed that the Pakistan army, for the fourth time in the country's short history, ousted a civilian government in October 1999. Clinton's steely five-hour visit to Islamabad on 25 March 2000, coming on the heels of five wildly successful days in India, captured the sombre bilateral mood.

#### *After 9/11, US and Pakistan 'Allies' Once Again*

Then came the tragic events of 9/11. Once again, geography made Pakistan a pivotal player for US operations in Afghanistan. President Pervez Musharraf quickly decided to align his country with the Americans and to abandon the Taliban. In the bargain the two countries reached, Islamabad agreed to:

- Renewed intelligence cooperation between the ISI and the CIA.
- Limited US use of base facilities in Pakistan.
- Smooth transit across Pakistan for supplies destined for US forces in Afghanistan.
- Over-flight rights for US military aircraft.

In turn, the Americans agreed to:

- Provide substantial security and economic assistance as well as debt relief.
- Urge international financial institutions and US allies to open their wallets to help Pakistan.
- Reimburse Islamabad for expenses incurred in supporting the struggle against terror.
- Bolstered by US assistance, Pakistan's police and intelligence agencies had considerable success in capturing or eliminating al-Qaida remnants that fled into Pakistan. At the same time, Pakistan did not go after the Taliban leadership that had

---

<sup>3</sup> Dennis Kux (2001), *The United States and Pakistan, 1947-2000: Disenchanted Allies*, Woodrow Wilson Center and Johns Hopkins University Press, Washington, p. 242-245.

<sup>4</sup> Adopted in 1985 and introduced by Sen. Larry Pressler (R.-North Dakota), the amendment required the president to certify annually that Pakistan did not possess a nuclear device for economic and military assistance to continue. The Reagan administration supported this as an alternative to a tougher amendment proposed by Sen. John Glenn (D.-Ohio) that required a certification that Pakistan neither possessed nor was developing a nuclear device.

---

resettled around Quetta nor did Bush press Musharraf to arrest Mullah Omar and his top lieutenants. Badly discredited by their harsh rule, the Taliban chiefs seemed relatively harmless in exile in Pakistan.

The Bush-Musharraf bargain served both countries. Having suffered from the decade-long US aid embargo, Pakistan's military benefited from the renewed inflow of American arms. The economy, in shambles after mismanagement by civilian governments during the 1990s, received a needed shot in the arm. The US benefited from Islamabad's cooperation with operations in Afghanistan and its efforts to root out al-Qaeda elements.

Yet, many in Islamabad had mixed feelings. Pakistanis deeply resented the 1965 and 1990 cut-offs of military and economic aid. They viewed the Americans as fickle and fair-weather friends who would probably again dump Pakistan when they no longer needed its help. The man in the street in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi, influenced by the pro-Islamist chorus in the media, took an even bleaker view. Along with grievances about Washington's treatment of Pakistan, opposition to US military involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq and to American policy toward the Israel-Palestine dispute inspired a widely held belief that the US was fundamentally anti-Muslim and set on destabilising Pakistan.

On the US side, many South Asia specialists criticised the arrangement as overly 'transactional', addressing short-term needs but ignoring Pakistan's underlying political and socio-economic weaknesses. Critics believed the relationship too narrowly based on personal ties between Bush and Musharraf. They worried that Washington was again embracing a military dictator to the detriment of Pakistan's democratic aspirations.

Pleased with the partnership, the Bush Administration praised Pakistan as the 'indispensable ally' and gave Musharraf a pass on domestic matters, remaining tight-lipped about the rigged 2002 parliamentary elections. Washington also reacted tamely to news that AQ Khan, the father of the Pakistani nuclear weapon, had been peddling nuclear secrets to 'axis of evil' countries -North Korea, Iran, Iraq, and Libya-. In public, at least, the Bush Administration swallowed Musharraf's contention that the military knew nothing about Khan's nuclear black marketeering.

For its part, Islamabad was happy when Washington designated Pakistan as a non-NATO ally and agreed to provide F-16 fighter-bombers.<sup>5</sup> Pakistanis, however, were very unhappy about the continuing improvement in US-India relations, especially the 'nuclear bargain' that Bush reached with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in 2005. In this, Washington agreed to lift the ban on non-military nuclear exports to India in return for Delhi's placing its civilian nuclear power reactors and other civilian facilities under international safeguards. When the Pakistanis asked for a similar arrangement, Bush turned them down. In 2008, the increased US use of remote-controlled Predator drones to launch missile attacks against militants in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) stirred a strong nationalist backlash. In the face of aroused domestic opinion, Pakistan's

---

<sup>5</sup> F-16s had great symbolic value for the Pakistanis. In 1990, when the Pressler sanctions were imposed, the US refused to allow the Pakistanis to take possession of F-16s that they owned which were in the US for maintenance. The controversy over the F-16s continued until 1998 when President Clinton agreed to reimburse the Pakistanis for the aircraft.

---

leaders publicly protested the drone attacks as violating Pakistan's sovereignty; in private, however, they acquiesced in them.<sup>6</sup>

Post-9/11 developments in Afghanistan badly upset Pakistan's army leadership. The brass feared that far from providing strategic depth, Afghanistan could become a strategic nightmare allowing India to gain a position of strength on Pakistan's eastern borders. Even though most of Pakistan's national security establishment disliked the Taliban's bigoted version of Islam, the fact that the Northern Alliance, with its friendly links with India, formed the core of Hamid Karzai's government caused much teeth gnashing in Islamabad.

By 2004, the Afghan Taliban and militant groups led by Haqqani and Hekmatyar -all closely linked to the ISI- succeeded in mounting a nasty insurgency in Afghanistan, using Pakistan's tribal areas as a haven. The inability of the Karzai government to provide security and basic services helped the Islamic extremists gain a substantial foothold in Pashtun-populated areas near the border. Pakistan's generals knew the militants were undercutting US interests in a stable Afghanistan; they doubted Washington would take retaliatory action because NATO depended on Pakistan for shipment of supplies to Afghanistan.

After Condoleezza Rice replaced Colin Powell as Secretary of State in 2005, relations cooled somewhat. The schoolmarmish Rice could hardly emulate the 'general-to-general' ties that General Powell had established with General Musharraf. Rice also gradually came to believe that the relationship was too narrowly based on personal links between the two presidents. In 2007, Musharraf's position began to crumble. Overstaying his welcome, his popularity --and that of the army- -plunged as he clumsily manoeuvred to hang on as President and to rig upcoming parliamentary elections. Discarding its 'Musharraf can do no wrong' attitude, Washington helped broker the return from exile of the former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, hoping that the inclusion of her Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in the government would broaden the base of support in the struggle against terrorism.

The tragic assassination of Bhutto in December 2007 was followed by elections two months later. In line with orders from General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani, Musharraf's successor as Chief of Army Staff and former ISI chief, the military refrained from interfering in the polls. The PPP, led by Benazir's widow, Asaf Ali Zardari, and Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML) re-emerged as the country's largest political parties. The vote for the pro-Musharraf PML (Q) and for pro-Islamist parties sharply declined. In August 2008, Musharraf resigned rather than face likely impeachment. Despite his lack of political experience and reputation for corruption, Zardari was elected President. It was soon, however, clear that the army, not the civilian leaders, still called the shots on national security issues. Attempts to assert civilian control over the ISI and to soften Pakistan's nuclear doctrine towards India were quickly squelched.

When George Bush left the White House in January 2009, Pakistan's political scene had greatly altered. The military was back in the barracks. A democratically-elected civilian government held power even if the army still dominated decision-making on key foreign and national security issues. Since 9/11, the US had provided Pakistan with US\$8.9 billion

---

<sup>6</sup> There were only 10 Predator strikes in the years 2004-07. In 2008 they increased to 35. See Brookings Institution (2011), *Pakistan Index*, 27/V/2011, p. 6, and Bob Woodward (2010), *Obama's Wars*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 26, p. 209.

---

for defence aid and offsets and US\$3.2 billion for economic assistance; 73% of transfers were security-related and 27% for economic aid.

Although Condoleezza Rice praised Musharraf as 'one of the world's most committed partners in the war against terrorism', the Pakistani leader's deeds did not match his words. Musharraf failed to clamp down on the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani network, and Hekmatyar despite his public pledge not to let militants use Pakistani territory as a base for cross-border attacks. Still, bowing to US pressure, Musharraf had deployed the Pakistan army for the first time since independence in the tribal agencies. Trained for a conventional war against India, the soldiers fared poorly against the fierce Pashtun tribals long expert in guerrilla warfare. After sustaining significant casualties, Islamabad agreed to several cease-fire accords. None of these deterred the militants from continuing cross-border operations against Afghanistan.

*Obama: More Assistance and Also More Pressure*

During the 2008 election campaign, Barack Obama called the Afghan-Pakistan borderland 'the most dangerous place in the world'. By the time the new President entered the White House, Pakistan was itself suffering from a wave of terrorist attacks by the Tehrik-e-Taleban Pakistan (also known as the Pakistani Taliban). After Musharraf ordered the army to oust its supporters from the Lal Masjid (Red mosque) complex in downtown Islamabad in July 2007, the TTP 'declared war' on the Pakistan state and launched numerous, bloody attacks against army, police and intelligence installations.

About the same time, the Northwest Frontier Province government allowed the Pakistani Taliban to control the lush Swat valley on the understanding they would implement Shar'ia in a manner acceptable to the local population. The Islamists, however, reneged on their promise, sparking a strong backlash throughout the country. After they advanced closer to Islamabad, the military decided to strike back. Deploying some 15,000 troops, the army drove the TTK out of Swat.

Far larger numbers of soldiers, about 140,000, moved against militant positions in South Waziristan and five other tribal agencies. Kayani would not, however, extend the campaign into the North Waziristan agency, the main staging area for cross-border attacks. Asserting his forces lacked the technical capability for this task, the army chief was also reluctant to weaken the country's defences against India by shifting additional troops to the tribal areas. Still, the army paid a heavy price in fighting the militants, losing 2,800 dead or about twice the number of fatalities that the US suffered in Afghanistan.

Shortly after entering the White House, Obama approved an additional 21,000 troops for Afghanistan and had Bruce Riedel, a retired CIA specialist and veteran of the Clinton National Security Council (NSC), review Afghanistan-Pakistan policy. The first recommendation, Riedel told the President was for him to focus on 'the real central threat –Pakistan-' where al-Qaeda was based. 'These guys are serious', Riedel said, 'They are clever and they are relentless. Until we kill them they are going to try to kill us'. The US goal should be to convince Pakistan to place a higher priority on the dangers Islamic militants posed than those from India. He cautioned Obama that achieving this would not be easy and, indeed, might not be possible.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, p. 108-109.

---

In September 2009, Obama initiated a comprehensive NSC policy review. Following 10 lengthy sessions, Obama convened senior White House aides in the Oval Office to think out loud about his upcoming decision. 'We need to make clear to people that the cancer' (ie, al-Qaida and related militant groups) 'is in Pakistan', the President ruminated, 'The reason we are doing the target, training and transfer in Afghanistan is so the cancer doesn't spread there. We also need to excise the cancer in Pakistan'.<sup>8</sup>

Obama unveiled his decision to send an additional 30,000 soldiers to Afghanistan (raising the total to about 100,000) and to commence the drawdown of US forces in July 2011 in a speech at the US Military Academy at West Point, New York on 1 December 2009. He should not have been surprised that Islamabad and other capitals interpreted the announcement about troop withdrawals as signalling the President's intention to pull out of Afghanistan shortly thereafter. This conclusion only reinforced the importance -in Islamabad's eyes- of having proxies (ie, the Taliban and other militants) on tap to protect Pakistan's interests after America and its allies left Afghanistan.

#### *Obama and Bush: Different Approaches towards Pakistan*

Obama's policy towards Pakistan, which can be characterised as 'tough love', differed significantly in style and substance from Bush's approach.

To underscore a long-term US commitment to Pakistan's political stability and economic well-being, Obama strongly supported a bipartisan congressional initiative, the Kerry-Lugar-Berman bill, to dramatically boost economic aid to US\$1.5 billion annually over a five-year period. Increased military and economic aid in US fiscal years 2009 and 2010 saw Pakistan receive US\$4.4 billion in defence transfers and US\$6.6 billion in economic help. Reversing the pattern under Bush, 60% of aid was economic and 40% security-related.

Washington sought closer relations with the military, becoming more responsive to Pakistani requests, especially for items such as helicopters that would improve counter-insurgency capability. Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, made an astonishing two dozen trips to Islamabad to cultivate General Kayani. With the TTP publicly proclaiming its goal to transform Pakistan into a Taliban-like state and aggressively targeting security installations, Washington and Islamabad faced a common enemy. Still, Mullen was unable -even before the bin Laden affair- to convince Kayani that al-Qaida, the Taliban (both Afghan and Pakistani versions) and other Islamic militants posed a greater danger to Pakistan than India. The Pakistan army chief did, however, agree to an enhanced US military training role and some limited American participation in Pakistani counter-insurgency operations.

Obama was far more aggressive than Bush in using Predator drones to strike targets in the tribal areas. The US launched 170 drone attacks in 2009 and 2010; during 2008, Bush's last year as President, the number was 35.<sup>9</sup> Washington considered drone attacks a highly effective way of killing terrorists while minimising civilian casualties because of the accuracy of the Predators.

The Administration launched a major public diplomacy campaign in the hopes of improving the US image. Giving this high priority, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton held

---

<sup>8</sup> Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, p. 302-303.

<sup>9</sup> Brookings Institution (2011), *Pakistan Index*, 27/V/2011, p. 7.

frank, unscripted 'town hall' sessions with a wide range of student and civil society groups. Anti-American opinion was, however, too deeply rooted for the campaign to have much effect. Indeed, the June 2010 Pew Research Center poll revealed that only 17% of Pakistanis held a favourable view of the US (a year later, after the Davis and bin Laden episodes, it slumped to a paltry 12%).

To ensure greater organisational coherence, Obama appointed the foreign policy heavyweight Richard Holbrooke as his Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. Putting the veteran diplomat in charge of all non-military matters reflected Obama's belief that policy and actions toward the two countries were inextricably linked. Holbrooke broadened ties with Pakistan through a high-level 'strategic dialogue' involving 13 bilateral working groups (energy, agriculture, trade, education, etc.) Holbrooke's unexpected death in December 2010 left a major void even though his successor, the retired diplomat Marc Grossman, was highly regarded and had served in Pakistan.

#### *Obama's Policy towards Pakistan: A Train Wreck?*

While a December 2010 NSC policy review concluded it premature to judge how well the strategy toward Pakistan was faring, a series of disasters since then has thrown the train off the rails. On 27 January 2011, the CIA contractor Raymond Davis shot to death two Pakistanis attempting to rob him in downtown Lahore. After Davis spent three weeks in jail, the US obtained his release by paying US\$5 million 'blood money' to the families of the victims. The incident was a major setback, 'confirming' widespread Pakistani fears of CIA officers roaming Rambo-like around the country. Angry that the agency kept Davis' mission a secret,<sup>10</sup> the ISI retaliated by restricting intelligence cooperation. The Americans responded *inter alia* by postponing an upcoming session of the Strategic Dialogue. It has yet to be rescheduled.

The successful 2 May 2011 US Special Forces operation against Osama bin Laden caused an even greater furore. Although Americans applauded Obama's bold action and rejoiced at the death of the man responsible for the horrendous 9/11 attacks, Pakistanis were furious about the violation of their territory and US unwillingness to inform them in advance. The proud Pakistan army felt humiliated that the world's most wanted terrorist had been living for five years just a few hundred metres from the country's premier military academy. For the first since the 1971 war, the formerly sacrosanct military became the target for sharp public attacks. The ISI, critics charged, was either incompetent for failing to locate bin Laden or complicit in hiding the al-Qaeda leader.

A few days later, the military suffered further humiliation when half a dozen al-Qaeda terrorists occupied the main naval base in Karachi for 16 hours, blowing up two US\$35 million dollar P-3 maritime reconnaissance aircraft. The murder of journalist Saleem Shahzad, who reported that al-Qaeda had links inside the navy, was a fresh blow to the military's reputation. Relations with Washington were additionally strained when Admiral Mike Mullin publicly charged that Pakistani authorities had 'sanctioned' Shahzad's killing. Pakistan's Information Minister rejected Mullin's allegation as 'extremely irresponsible and malicious'.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Davis was part of a clandestine operation shadowing the Punjabi militant group, the Lashkar-e-Taiba, whose terrorist acts included the November 2008 attacks on Mumbai that killed 167 people, including five Americans. Although on the US terrorist list and banned in Pakistan, the LeT, which has links to the ISI, has not been shut down by Islamabad.

<sup>11</sup> 'Pakistan Rejects US Claims over Saleem Shahzad Murder', BBC South Asia News, 8/VII/2011, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-14080211](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-14080211).



---

In the bin Laden backlash, US-Pakistani military relations deteriorated. Responding to criticism within the ranks that he was too pro-American, Kayani ordered the withdrawal of the 100 US army trainers, refused visas for US military equipment technicians, stopped joint counter-insurgency operations, and demanded an end to drone attacks. Washington, in turn, has got tougher with the Pakistanis, holding up some US\$800 million in military transfers, including US\$300 million to reimburse Pakistan for expenses incurred in fighting the militants. Pakistan's Defence Minister responded by threatening that his country might have to withdraw troops from the Afghan border. In short, relations have spiralled downward to their lowest point since 9/11.

**Conclusion:** At present, Washington is emphasising 'toughness' rather than 'love' in dealing with Pakistan, pressing Islamabad to stop being selective about the terrorists it opposes. In a typically nuanced but candid manner, President Obama gave his assessment to the Voice of America on 30 June:

'I think that what has happened is that the [US-Pakistan] relationship has become more honest over time. That raises some differences that are real. Obviously, the operation to take out Osama bin Laden created additional tensions, but I had always been very clear to Pakistan that if we ever found him and had a shot, that we would take it. We think that if Pakistan recognizes the threat to its sovereignty that comes of the extremists in its midst, that there's no reason why we can't work cooperatively to make sure that both US security interests, Pakistan security interests, and Afghan security interests converge'.<sup>12</sup>

Will Obama's approach succeed? The record of US inability over the past half century to bend Pakistan to its will is hardly ground for optimism. With one exception -Musharraf's decision to join the US after 9/11- Pakistan has refused to modify its security policies to suit the Americans. Yet as Bob Gates commented just before leaving the Pentagon, 'We need each other, and we need each other not just in the context of Afghanistan'.<sup>13</sup> This analyst believes that US-Pakistan relations, like a bad marriage where divorce is impossible, are likely to continue to rock along.

*Dennis Kux*

*Retired State Department South Asia specialist, currently a Senior Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington*

---

<sup>12</sup> Obama interview with VOA's Andre De Nesnera, 30/VI/2011, <http://rferl.org/articleprintview/24244397.html>

<sup>13</sup> 'US, Pakistan "need each other": Gates', *The Express Tribune*, 30/VI/2011, <http://tribune.com/story/199582/us-pakistan-need-each-other-gates/>