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This week, Pakistan-backed militants attacked a military base in Uri, Kashmir. It was the deadliest attack that India has suffered in decades. It has come after months of Pakistan-backed unrest in Kashmir following the killing of a well-known Pakistan-backed terrorist commander, [Burhan Wani](#), by Indian security. Wani worked for the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM), which the [United States](#), the [European Union](#) and [India](#) have designated as a terrorist

organization. Pakistan's civilian-led government denounced his killing as "[deplorable and condemnable](#)" in yet another exhibit of Pakistan's wanton and indefatigable support of terrorism. Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif debased himself by praising the terrorist on the floor of the United Nations during his address to the General Assembly, [calling him a symbol](#) of the Kashmiri "intifada."

Unfortunately, this attack at Uri is just another in a [long string of incidents](#) perpetrated by Pakistan's terrorist proxies. And it won't be the last. The United States must act fast to demonstrate to India and Pakistan where its loyalties and sympathies lie. It must offer its unstinting support to India, while offering unreserved condemnation of Pakistan for its continued use of terrorism as a tool of statecraft.

Many Indians Doubt the U.S. Commitment to India

The world's oldest and the world's largest democracy have worked long and hard to overcome Cold War antagonisms. [Efforts led](#) by President Ronald Reagan and Prime Ministers Indira and Rajiv Gandhi failed, over American fears that India would share technology with the Soviet Union. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, a new opportunity space began to open, but doubts lingered on both sides. President Bill Clinton renewed American overtures with the so-called [Strategic Dialogue in 1997](#), which was to culminate in the president's visit in May 1998. India's nuclear test that month made that visit impossible; Clinton's nonproliferation commitments limited the degree to which the two states could forge a rapprochement. Ironically, India's nuclear test galvanized the [most sustained bilateral dialogue](#), led by Strobe Talbott and Jaswant Singh. One of the outcomes of that engagement was that the United States developed a significant understanding of India's strategic imperatives.

President Bush came into office in 2001 with a [different view](#) about the nonproliferation regime. He withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, and India was the first country to throw support behind the controversial move. The Bush White House, with the intellectual steering of Ashley Tellis and the ambassadorial help vested in Robert Blackwell, sought to offer India a civilian nuclear deal. The Americans were of the conviction that it was in the strategic interest of the United States to help India become a world-class military power, inclusive of robust nuclear capability. The Obama administration has worked with his counterparts, Prime Ministers Manmohan Singh and Narendra Modi, to continue deepening defense and security ties with India.

Despite this unprecedented progress, many Indians are [wary of the United States](#). During this same period of profoundly transformed Indo-U.S. relations, the United States provided Pakistan with [over \\$33 billion](#) in assistance, lucrative reimbursement for its purported partition in the U.S.-led global war on terror and operations in Afghanistan. American assistance has included the provision of military platforms, most notably F-16 attack aircraft, which are [more suitable to fight its next war with India](#) than the militants Pakistan claims to be fighting. Indians are equally confused why the United States continues to endure Pakistan's endless perfidy. After all, almost all of American deaths in Afghanistan are [due to Pakistan's proxy](#), the Afghan Taliban. Needless to say, the United States has lost the war in Afghanistan thanks to Pakistan's unstinting support of the Taliban and allied fighters. Equally vexing for Indians is how the United States can claim to support India as a rising power, yet demur from coercing Pakistan to completely cease and desist its relentless use of terrorism as a tool of foreign policy.

Americans Habitually Pressure India and Indulge Pakistan

In the wake of past terrorist carnage, when the United States has feared that India would respond militarily, the Americans [have inevitably used diplomatic pressure](#) to ensure that India does not engage in provocative—much less—punitive initiatives. The Americans and their international partners habitually offer a well-worn course of counsel that includes urging India to temper its response, to engage in behaviors that will reassure Pakistan that no military threat is imminent and ultimately to counsel both parties to engage in dialogue to resolve outstanding disputes.

This course of actions rewards Pakistan in numerous ways. First and foremost, it shields Pakistan from the consequences of its illegal behavior time and time again. Second, and equally important, such advice suggests that the United States and the international community believe that there is a legitimate dispute and that both sides are equally culpable for the enduring nature of this dispute.

Americans must do a better job of learning history. There is no territorial dispute in Kashmir over which Pakistan has any defensible equities. Neither the [Indian Independence Act of 1947](#) nor the [Radcliffe Boundary Commission](#) accord Pakistan any claim to Kashmir. The Indian Independence Act of 1947 averred that the sovereigns of princely states could choose which state to join. As is well-known, the Maharaja of Kashmir Hari Singh only acceded to India after Pakistan dispatched irregular forces to seize the terrain by force. In fact, Pakistan makes this claim based upon the Two-Nation Theory, its communally bigoted founding ideology. Thus, as I have argued in [Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War](#), Pakistan's claims to Kashmir are almost exclusively ideological.

In recent years, Pakistani civilian and military leadership continue to mendaciously insist that all UN Security Council resolutions on Kashmir be fulfilled. Maleeha Lodhi, Pakistan's permanent representative to the UN, frequently opines that "non-implementation of UN Security Council resolutions pertaining to the Kashmir issue is a travesty of law." More recently, at the United Nations General Assembly, Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif [submitted to the august gathering that](#):

The Security Council has called for the exercise of the right to self-determination by the people of Jammu and Kashmir through a free and fair plebiscite held under UN auspices. The people of Kashmir have waited 70 years for implementation of this promise. The Security Council must honour its commitments by implementing its own decisions. This General Assembly must demand that India deliver on the commitments its leaders solemnly made on many occasions.

These insistent demands advanced by Sharif, Lodhi and other Pakistanis are flatly disingenuous and advanced on the assumption that bystanders to these rumpuses have never read the defied resolutions. I have, and the [language is clear](#). Pakistan was to first withdraw all non-Kashmiri persons from the area, including regular and irregular security forces. Then, and only then, India was to demilitarize as well. The resolution permitted India to retain adequate forces to safeguard against subsequent Pakistani intrusions. Once both of these sequential steps were taken to the satisfaction of a UN-appointed body, then the arrangements for a plebiscite were to take place. Thus Pakistan—not India—is the culpable party. Moreover, as Pakistani diplomats well know, these resolutions were long ago obviated by the Simla Accord, which formally ended the 1971 war. The 1972 Simla Accord bound both India and Pakistan to resolve any outstanding disputes bilaterally.

Shifting the Paradigm

The United States, in light of historical facts and Pakistan's enduring commitment to use illegal means to prosecute ill-founded grievances, should take a different approach. First, when Pakistani officials raise the issue of Kashmir, American officials should tell them forthrightly that such performances are not dignified and will not be tolerated. Hopefully other international actors will follow suit.

Second, the United States needs to cease pressing Delhi to continue enduring Pakistan's every outrage. Admittedly, during this crisis the United States has avoided many—but not all—of past pitfalls. The State Department [did not make](#) the usual calls for "dialogue." Unfortunately, Secretary Kerry, while [reiterating](#) "the need for Pakistan to prevent all terrorists from using Pakistani territory as safe havens, while commending recent efforts by Pakistani security forces to counter extremist violence" perpetuated the false equivalence by averring "the need for all sides to reduce tensions." Such statements conflate the victim (India) with the perpetrator (Pakistan).

Third, the United States should appreciate—rather than take for granted—India's long-standing, if perpetually strained, policy of [strategic restraint](#). Recently, [India announced](#) that it will seek to diplomatically isolate Pakistan from all forums. The United States should aid this effort in every way, including laying out clear steps that Pakistan must undertake to avoid being labeled a state sponsor of terror. (The United States [should have done this](#) long ago.)

Fourth, the United States should formally change its position on Kashmir. Officially, the United States recognizes this as a dispute. This is a holdover from the distant past. Moreover, the United States should work with other members of the United Nations Security Council to formally anachronize these resolutions about the plebiscite. Pakistan's [force structure](#) in the disputed area is robust, rendering the first requirement of the plebiscite moot.

Fifth, the United States must work with greater alacrity to expand the persons who can be designated under [UN Security Council Resolution 1267](#). Individuals so listed cannot travel, cannot have a bank account, and are not entitled to possess weapons. Admittedly, the third deprivation cannot be enforced when they enjoy state sanctuary like that provided by Pakistan. No doubt, China will bleat about such concerted efforts to list persons associated with Pakistan's terror apparatus, because China is Pakistan's proxy on the security council. The United States should not endure this; China must be persuaded that it is not to China's international standing to continue defending the indefensible. As it is, China's behavior in the international system shows little regard for international norms of behavior. China's complicity in protecting Pakistan's terrorists requires greater political and diplomatic pressure by all members of the security council.

Finally, if India decides to respond by force, the United States should support India. Rather than using its diplomatic weight to persuade India to accept yet another attack in which Indians are killed, the United States should counsel restraint by Pakistan. Should India decide to engage in hot pursuit across the Line of Control in Kashmir, or engage in air operations to degrade terrorist infrastructure and its support of personnel and amenities in the Pakistan armed forces, the United States should encourage Pakistan to accept this incursion as just deserts.

In anticipation of a potential Indian retaliation, Pakistan is once again brandishing nuclear threats. The United States should take a clear stand that should Pakistan use nuclear weapons against India, India will not be left alone to respond. To do otherwise is to demonstrate to Indians that the United States in fact doesn't value the thousands of Indian lives that Pakistan's proxies snuff out with impunity. This impunity must end.

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Image: U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, with Pakistani Chief of Army Staff Raheel Sharif, participates in a wreath laying ceremony at the General Headquarters. Flickr/U.S. Department of State

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