

Honor our Fallen By Getting Real on Pakistan

By C. Christine
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Yesterday, Americans celebrated Memorial Day to remember and commemorate the millions of men and women in uniform who sacrificed their lives in the service of their country. For many Americans this is not simply a day to light up the barbecue and quench our thirsts with beer; rather, it is a sacred day. We go to cemeteries and place wreathes and flowers upon the graves of loved ones who served in wars past and present. Those whose family members have returned from theater safely give thanks. American officials at the highest level of government declare their respect for the slain, the wounded, and the families who must manage these varied losses. However, when the government gets back to business on Tuesday, many of these same officials will continue to engage in policies that disgrace the memories of our fallen by aiding and abetting the various countries whose policies are responsible for so many of these deaths over the last thirteen years. One of these countries is Pakistan. And it is well past time for Americans to start paying attention.

A history of deadly appeasement

Americans have been fighting in Afghanistan since 2001. It has been our longest war. Since then, [2,215](#) U.S. military personnel have died in that country and another [20,007](#) have been wounded in action. This is in addition to the deaths of [over a thousand civilian contractors, hundreds of allied troops, and tens of thousands of Afghans](#) in and out of uniform. The United States invaded Afghanistan because the Taliban, who then governed that country, were harboring Osama Bin Laden and refused to hand him over in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. While destroying al Qaeda may have been the initial objective, the goal evolved to include degrading the ability of the Taliban to exercise control over Afghanistan and taking steps to ensure that the regime would never again come to power. The vast majority of the fatalities and injuries incurred in Afghanistan have been at the hands of the Taliban — not al Qaeda.

It should outrage Americans that the Taliban enjoy ongoing support from Pakistan, a country that claims to be fighting this war *with* the United States and its allies rather than against it. In exchange for its putative support of the U.S. war effort, Pakistan has received some \$30 billion in economic and military support as well as more than \$10 billion in reimbursements for Pakistan's contributions to the coalition. This reimbursement program, operating under the name of Coalition Support Funds (CSF), was intended to reimburse Pakistan for marginal costs associated with assisting the U.S. efforts in Afghanistan. In 2008, the [Government Accounting Office wrote a scathing assessment of CSF](#) noting Pakistan's dodgy documentation, dubious claims for expenses that were not covered by the program, and inexplicable pricing for services and goods rendered. In fact, CSF operated essentially as a lucrative bribe to keep the transit corridors into Afghanistan open and Pakistan's army on board with U.S. efforts in the region. The U.S. government has reformed the CSF program since the GAO report came out, instituting a more rigorous accounting process. Yet a key rationale for continuing to provide reimbursements remains inducing the Pakistan army to stay in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, essentially paying Pakistan for doing what any sovereign state should do: eliminate terrorists exploiting its territory.

In addition to these copious allurements, the United States has allowed Pakistan to acquire, through various U.S. assistance programs and by allowing Pakistan to use its own so-called "national funds," [extensive naval, ground and air assets](#) that better [enable Pakistan to wage war against America's democratic partner, India](#) than the terrorists at home. The U.S. Department of State justifies these sales by arguing that they [enhance Pakistan's ability to conduct counter-terror and counter-insurgent operations](#). These claims are not entirely risible. Some of these systems are "dual use" meaning that Pakistan *could* use them in counter-terror operations against the militants as well as conventional operations against India. Indeed, transport and attack helicopters are such examples of dual-use

platforms. However, other items such as a Perry-class missile frigate and dozens of nuclear capable F-16s seem more suited to fighting India than the militants inside Pakistan.

All of these remunerations and inducements have proceeded even though Pakistan undermines U.S. war efforts in Afghanistan at every turn. The United States and its international and Afghan partners have paid a heavy price in blood and treasure battling the Taliban and their allies, such as the Haqqani Network and even Lashkar-e-Taiba. Meanwhile, Pakistan has been equally busy providing these same groups with sanctuary, military and financial assistance, operational planning and guidance, as well as political and diplomatic cover. Without Pakistan's extensive support, it is doubtful that the Taliban could have weathered the U.S. and allied operations. It is doubtful that the Taliban could even be a serious insurgent organization in the first instance. Yet despite the thousands of dead American and coalition soldiers and tens of thousands of Afghan partners, American officials in Congress, the U.S. Departments of State and Defense, and even the White House facilitate ongoing support to Pakistan in the face of the mountain of evidence that Pakistan is not a partner — much less an ally — but a hostile state dedicated to undercutting U.S. interests in the region and beyond.

Even the location of Osama bin Laden's compound, a leisurely peregrination from the prestigious Pakistan Military Academy, did not shake American support for Pakistan. Nor has the United States seemed terribly vexed that the country has not made any effort to investigate how he came into the country, how he took up sanctuary in a cantonment town, and what Pakistanis made this possible.

America under Pakistani nuclear coercion

What explains this madness? Why does the United States continue to reward Pakistan when it takes American money with one hand and enables America's enemies to kill its men and women with the other? The answer is appalling yet simple.

Pakistan has cultivated the notion in Washington and in other European capitals that it is “too dangerous to fail.” The United States and partner governments fear that without lucrative bilateral support and unending multilateral support, Pakistan may collapse. In turn, the Islamist terrorists may exploit the chaos and obtain nuclear weapons, materials or knowhow and devastate the western world. Another equally frightening scenario is that the Pakistan army may collapse under financial pressure. An anti-Western rump, sympathetic to the terrorists and their Islamist ideology may hand over the nuclear assets to their newfound terrorist allies who, in turn, devastate the world with Pakistan's nuclear weapons. Pakistan's [well-publicized efforts to acquire “tactical nuclear weapons” exacerbate these fears](#).

The problem with these threatening scenarios is that Pakistan cultivates them itself for purposes of extracting these rents from the international community, which knows too little about Pakistan and succumbs to such coercion. Pakistan's media management specialists in the ISI (Pakistan's intelligence agency), the ISPR (the armed forces' press organization), and the Ministry of Information deftly manage international and domestic coverage of Pakistan's twinned menaces of nuclear proliferation and terrorism. By stoking these fears, Pakistan is assured that the United States will never abandon the land of the pure.

When I have proposed treating Pakistan like a normal state and allowing it to bear the costs of its own behaviors, American officials have bristled with discomfort. They offer several counter arguments. Most immediately, Americans believe that the United States benefits in some way or another from Pakistan's selective war on terror. The rationale goes that it's better they target some of the terrorists than none. There is some truth to this. However, unless Pakistan makes a strategic move away from using terrorism as a principle tool of foreign policy, Pakistan can use this argument to receive recompense in perpetuity. This is likely part of Pakistan's scheme to monetize its insecurity in the first instance. Second, and more distally, American officials defend the status quo by contending that, without this assistance, Pakistan may fail and the afore-noted nuclear-doomsday scenario may ensue. Third, without massive American spending in Pakistan, the United States will have no influence over Pakistani behavior whatsoever. Fourth, these programs grant the United States some degree of visibility into Pakistan's ever-expanding nuclear weapons program and its persistent instrumentalization of Islamist militant groups as tools of foreign policy in Afghanistan and

India.

The same officials are at a loss to explain the tangible benefits from this so-called influence or insight allegedly bought with American monies. Worse, given the fungibility of funds, there is a very good chance that the United States has subsidized Pakistan's investments in nuclear weapons and Islamist terrorism, the various tools Pakistan uses to extort resources from the United States.

A new way forward

Americans must understand that Pakistan will not change. Pakistan pursues these reckless policies [not out of security concerns, as Americans presume, but out of its Islamist ideology](#). The United States government cannot reshape Pakistan through ongoing policies of appeasement. The sooner it realizes this, the better.

Instead, the United States must take advantage of our diminished troop presence in Afghanistan to wean itself off of the poisoned Pakistani teat. India is the most important U.S. partner in South Asia. However, U.S.-India cooperation has been stymied by the American habit of indulging Pakistan. The United States needs to make a serious pivot towards India. The world's oldest democracy and its biggest democracy share, among other things, concerns about Islamist terrorism, the rise of China, and the stability of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

While the United States re-optimizes its relations in the region, it must work to adopt a different policy for Pakistan. The United States should cease engaging in a strategic dialogue process with Pakistan. Pakistan cannot be a strategic partner with the United States in the region when it undermines virtually every American strategic objective there. I advocate pursuing a policy of containment. This does not mean that the United States should cut Pakistan off. But it does mean that the United States should treat it as a hostile state. This new policy should prohibit providing strategic weapons systems that have utility in fighting India. If Pakistan wants material and other forms of support to fight its domestic terrorists, the United States should comply with the proviso that Pakistan stop supporting other terrorists.

What should the United States ask of Pakistan in exchange for ongoing counter-terror and counter-insurgency assistance? The United States should look for verifiable evidence that Pakistan has shut down the various training camps for the so-called Kashmiri group that continue to operate with impunity. This can be verified by national technical means. Pakistan should act to eliminate the Haqqani Network, including its senior leadership safely tucked away in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Pakistan should shut down terrorist social media network sites as effectively as it shuts down Youtube. It can detain and prosecute terrorist leaders such as Hafez Saeed and Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi. It can seize the assets of numerous terrorist organizations operating within Pakistan and it can discontinue political partnerships with key terrorist leaders. That Pakistan has long balked at these actions simply underscores my point that it makes little sense for the United States to arm Pakistan to kill some terrorists that it considers enemies while continuing to nurture and raise militant groups that Pakistan considers allies.

The United States should continue its various the International Military Training (IMET) program should Pakistan be interested. If such training continues, it should focus on peacekeeping, counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency, disaster relief and professionalization issues such as the importance of civilian control over the military. In fact, the United States should expand these efforts, should Pakistan be amenable. However, it is very likely that Pakistan will demure when it is denied the coveted weapons systems it desires most. But the opportunities should remain open if for no other reason than that Pakistan is a regular contributor to peacekeeping operations, confronts disasters such as earthquakes and floods with some frequency, and desperately needs mentoring in how to have a professional military under civilian control.

The United States should invest in Pakistan's people with the intent of aiding those who want a safer Pakistan that neither uses terrorism abroad nor suffers the wrath of proxies gone wild at home. However, for U.S. human development assistance to have meaningful impacts, USAID needs to revamp its business model.

Finally, the United States must stop bending its laws to accommodate Pakistan on the basis that it is too dangerous to

fail. Currently, [U.S. assistance is going to Pakistan under various waivers](#) because numerous Pakistani behaviors make this support illegal under U.S. law without such waivers. Only CSF, which is technically a reimbursement program, has requirements that cannot be waived. When the United States does this, it makes a mockery of our laws and reassures Pakistan that by continuing to terrorize the United States, the U.S. government will keep writing the checks.

U.S. government officials must understand that most soldiers who are slain or injured in Afghanistan have suffered because of Pakistan. American service personnel do not set the policies that result in their demise or permanent disability. Elected politicians may not get re-elected due to their bad decisions, but our soldiers bare the cost of this policy folly with their lives. There is no better place to start righting the wrongs that undergird American policies than Pakistan.

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