

Foreword



As Howard and Teresita Schaffer note, there are several fine histories of the relationship between the United States and Pakistan, and overviews of Pakistan's state and society. There are also valuable studies of regional relations, covering Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan. America's current military entanglement in Afghanistan has generated a large and angry literature, some of it directed against Pakistan, which has been supporting both sides of the war from the beginning of the United States-International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) struggle against the Taliban.

This book is quite different from anything else: it brilliantly uses the vehicle of negotiating culture to probe deeply into Pakistan's politics, society, and bureaucracy. It is thus far more than the story of how the United States and Pakistan negotiate with each other; it joins the select list of "must read" books on Pakistan. It is also revealing of American diplomacy and negotiating style, notably how Washington has repeatedly succumbed to persuasive Pakistani negotiators (military and civilian), who used to argue that Pakistan was a reliable, staunch ally that had been repeatedly let down by the United States but who now say that Pakistan's weaknesses make it even more important given its shared border with Afghanistan and reignited tensions in Kashmir. In other words, a failing Pakistan is no less a threat to U.S. interests than a successful Pakistan was an asset to American diplomacy. They may well be correct.

The authors describe the trajectory of U.S.-Pakistan relations, both through analysis and numerous mini case studies, and the narrative shows how the two states have found themselves (sometimes unwillingly) engaged across a broad range of issues. These include the spread of nuclear weapons, Pakistan's support for the U.S.-ISAF effort in Afghanistan, and conflict

avoidance with India. Pakistan would like to see the United States more active on Kashmir. Americans have resisted this request, although the uprising that began in Kashmir in June 2010—almost another *intifada*—means that Kashmir can no longer be totally ignored by American diplomats in Washington's regional diplomacy.

The two states are also engaged in discussions over Pakistan's social and economic development, now for the first time a high priority concern for American policymakers thanks to the initiative of then senator (now Vice President) Joe Biden and Senator Dick Lugar that now takes the form of the Kerry-Lugar bill which provides \$1.5 billion in nonmilitary assistance to Pakistan. Americans are concerned not only about Pakistan's nuclear program, and its relationship to terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda, the Afghan Taliban, and Lashkar-e-Taiba (and its victimization by these groups), but ultimately the very identity and existence of Pakistan. It is not just a question of "whither" Pakistan but fundamentally of "whether" Pakistan.

Discussions of the country's future are part of public conversations in Pakistan (in the press, on its vibrant television channels, in drawing rooms and coffee houses) but also in the army's officer messes. The Pakistan army, no hotbed of radicalism, but certainly willing to use radical Islamists for strategic purposes, remains close to Pakistan's political center of gravity, despite its inability to actually govern and administer the state. It is now led by the taciturn General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, whose term was extended for three years on July 24, 2010. This was the first time a Pakistani army chief received a term extension from a democratically elected government. The extension was a vote of confidence in Kayani, a tribute to his central role in relations with the United States (he had developed close personal ties to numerous American political and military leaders, who saw in him a channel by which Pakistani policy could be influenced) and proof of the weakness of Pakistan's political order. The game, in short, continues: Pakistan's civilian governments need the military, but this only leads to greater distortions in Pakistan's politics and encourages other countries to listen more to the armed forces as they deal with Islamabad (or Rawalpindi, as is more often the case). Other democracies, including India, also debate the wisdom of negotiating with the generals, while the Chinese have no problem in anchoring their diplomacy in the army—China is by far Pakistan's biggest arms supplier.

The recent catastrophic floods reveal additional information about how Pakistan negotiates with the United States and other countries. The floods, which affected Pakistan from July 2010 onward, constituted the country's third major natural disaster (the first being the 1970 East Pakistan cyclone, the

second the 2005 earthquake, both of which caused far more loss of life). Some have characterized the floods as a “black swan” event that might tip Pakistan into chaos, as the economic consequences are likely to be felt for years.

Pakistan tried to negotiate with the international community for disaster assistance, but its reputation as a corrupt state has hurt these efforts—as did the ill-timed European tour of Pakistan’s president, Asif Ali Zardari, who wanted to show off his son, Bilawal Bhutto, while also visiting family properties in Great Britain and France. The flood seemed to offer an opportunity for the United States and others to demonstrate their support for the people and state of Pakistan. American officials were in the vanguard of the money-raising effort, eagerly expecting a public relations payoff.

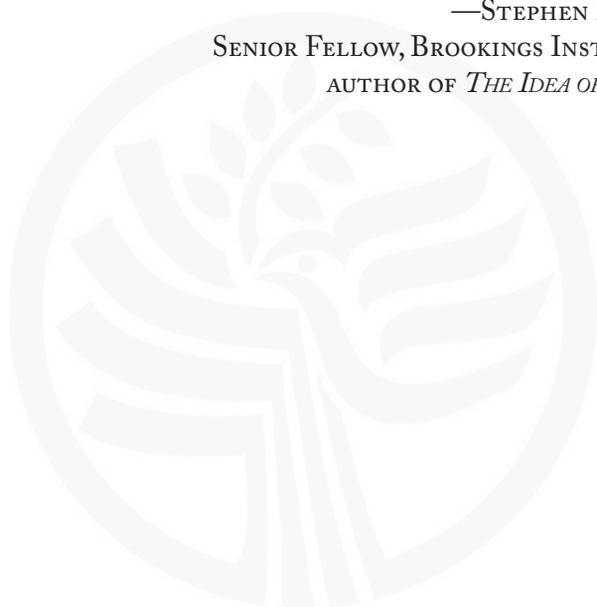
This has not materialized, and the widespread hatred of the United States in Pakistan (India is more popular than America) perversely strengthens the hands of Pakistani negotiators, who are, in effect, pointing a pistol at their own heads and saying, “Help me, or else.” Six months after the initial floods, the American aid effort was a case of too much too late, as the damage to Pakistan was in large part the cumulative consequence of years of neglect of the country’s irrigation and flood control infrastructure. The army, which performed well in relief efforts, is faced with the problem of a too-weak civilian government, yet it knows that another round of military intervention will do nothing to improve the situation and might further weaken the army itself.

Revelations in Bob Woodward’s *Obama’s Wars* (2010) also shed light on Pakistan’s negotiating style. Woodward’s revelations of policy debates at the senior levels of the Obama administration—unchallenged publicly and privately verified—point to the difficulty that the Obama administration has had in negotiating with Pakistan. The term “liars” is frequently deployed by American officials to describe Pakistani negotiators, but then American dealings with Pakistan remain less than credible given the American record vis-à-vis that country over the years. Pakistanis believe that they must be flexible with the truth when vital interests are involved. As one Pakistan told me in 1987, they were lying publicly about America’s covert anti-Soviet operations in Afghanistan, so why should Americans cavil at their denial of a quest for a nuclear bomb, which would protect Pakistan from an Indian attack? To bring the story up to date, why should Americans object to Pakistan’s support of the Taliban in Afghanistan when it is the Taliban that can serve Pakistan’s interests there against Indian encroachment?

As the Schaffers hint, these are positions that cannot be sustained much longer—it may well be that the United States and Pakistan are headed for another break sustaining the up and down that has been the pattern of the

relationship for five decades. If this is the case, there is no better explanation to be found than in this extraordinary book of how things went wrong most of the time, even as they went right some of the time.

—STEPHEN P. COHEN
SENIOR FELLOW, BROOKINGS INSTITUTION,
AUTHOR OF *THE IDEA OF PAKISTAN*



Copyright by the Endowment of the
United States Institute of Peace