

# WAR ON THE ROCKS

Good commentary requires resources and we work to generate those resources through web traffic. When possible, please share this article using the hyperlink rather than printing it or copying-and-pasting.

## How Pakistan Beguiles the Americans: A Guide for Foreign Officials

 [warontherocks.com/2015/06/how-pakistan-beguiles-the-americans-a-guide-for-foreign-officials/](http://warontherocks.com/2015/06/how-pakistan-beguiles-the-americans-a-guide-for-foreign-officials/)

C. Christine Fair

6/23/2015



Over the years, I've had the occasion to meet various officials from the Indian Embassy in Washington. They have all at one point or another asked the same questions: "How do the Pakistanis keep beguiling you Americans? How does this rogue state continue to receive billions of dollars of aid and military assistance while supporting terrorism and being an irresponsible nuclear weapons state?" The short answer is that the Pakistanis can extract such resources from the Americans precisely because it is a nuclear-armed menace perpetrating terrorism through its varied proxies. But Pakistan also operates through "soft power" to cultivate American sympathies through "hospitality," well-spoken lies, and military tourism. Notwithstanding these myriad charms, Pakistan can do so only because the various Americans on the Pakistan portfolio, especially at the operational level (in the field and even at

the desks back home), are too often well-intended ingénues, serving their country under difficult circumstances, but nonetheless unfamiliar with the region and America's vexing relations with Pakistan.

This is a "how to guide" that should enable India's own Ministry of External Affairs to join the game heretofore mastered by Pakistan.

### The Liability of Newbiness

Pakistanis would not get away with much of their rent-seeking shenanigans if their American counterparts knew more about [Pakistan generally](#) and the [U.S.-Pakistan relationship in particular](#). Perhaps, the root problem is structural: the U.S. Department of State lacks a South Asia cadre. And since there is [no language community within the U.S. Department of State](#) — as there is with Mandarin, Japanese and Arabic — growing such a cadre is extremely difficult. (In contrast, the U.S. Army has a [South Asia Foreign Area Officer](#) (FAO) program that produces a small cadre of extremely knowledgeable people who must study a South Asian language. Unfortunately, a South Asia FAO is not promoted beyond the rank of colonel.)

Without such a corps of dedicated South Asia experts, Pakistan's silver-tongued hustlers at the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI), the Ministry of Information, and the [Inter-Services Public Relations \(ISPR\)](#) find it easy to shape beliefs among U.S. diplomats about the Land of the Pure. Moreover, since Pakistan is a [hazard post](#), personnel deploy without their families for one-year tours. Persons serving in hazard posts receive [additional pay](#) and [there is a perception \(with some resentment\)](#) that promotion within the Foreign Service requires a tour in "AIP," or Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan. Although these tours can be renewed, many diplomats choose one and one. This is best captured in one [foreign service officer's blog](#): "Although I'm still over a month away from arriving in Pakistan, the time has come for bidding the follow-on post."

In addition to the incentive issues and the lack of a South Asia community within the diplomatic corps, the security conditions in Pakistan make it difficult for FSOs to learn as much about Pakistan as they could or should during their time in country. [Regional security officers](#) at the posts, depending on their disposition, are often extremely risk averse and may not approve non-essential travel around the country. At one point, U.S. diplomatic personnel were not even allowed to visit popular local establishments (e.g. restaurants) in Islamabad. This is a significant constraint on personnel who wish to meet with Pakistani interlocutors openly. It should be noted that security is a serious issue: [foreign service officers have been killed in the line of duty](#).

[Alexander Evans](#), in his study for the [Asia Society Policy Institute](#), interviewed various U.S. State Department personnel. One of his interlocutors identified another crucial impediment to developing and retaining a core of South Asia expertise:

*The main problem was that senior positions — from DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] to section chiefs — were often given to officers with very little experience in the area. Under such circumstances, it is very difficult to build a sturdy cadre of experts in South Asia — even if it is one of several specialties that an officer might have. Our officers are no fools; they see who is assigned to Delhi and Islamabad as Deputy Chief of Mission or political counselor or as chief of the economic section. They notice that, too often, the assignment is given to someone with European or East Asian or Middle East experience.*

Although Evans speaks to South Asia generally, it has been my observation that the Pakistan post suffers more than its Indian counterpart. With the re-alignment of U.S.-Indian relations beginning in 2000, India has become a very desirable and competitive post in contrast to Pakistan. It is also a post where FSOs typically spend more than one year.

There is another incentive problem with the U.S. mission in Pakistan: There are many personnel in the mission whose performance is judged by how well they build the relationship or how much assistance they can execute, irrespective of whether this assistance or their relationship-building efforts produce positive, negative or no results for the United States. This makes it much harder for personnel in country to step back and assess whether or not the United States is being gamed by Pakistan.

What are the consequences of this [endless parade of persons without specialized knowledge of Pakistan churning](#) through the U.S. mission in Pakistan and the relevant desks back home? They are numerous and they range from advocating assiduously for Pakistan (often referred to “clientitis”), to underwhelming reportage, to a shallow understanding of the country that in turn feeds into a shambolic process through which policy towards Pakistan churns. Such novitiates are easily manipulated by Pakistani officials who — unlike their American counterparts — know their briefs.

A favored Pakistani lamentation is that the Americans have used and misused Pakistan when required and then tossed it away like a used tissue when the need passes. The American neophyte, touched by the feigned sincerity of these entreaties and the world-renowned hospitality of their official interlocutors, inevitably concede and vow that, this time, it will be different. This time, the money will continue to flow. So far, it has.

### *Selling Pakistan's Version of History*

The United States and Pakistan have been [partners of convenience](#) but the relationship has not always been at the behest of the Americans; rather Pakistan has been extremely solicitous, in an effort to monetize its various sources of relevance. In this way, Pakistan has always been anxious to render itself a [rentier state](#).

In fact, the first “alliance” that began in 1954 — with the signing of the [Mutual Defense Agreement](#) and the inclusion of Pakistan in the [Central Treaty Organization \(CENTO\)](#) and [South East Asia Treaty Organization \(SEATO\)](#) — was the culmination of years of Pakistani pleading to be included in America’s security system. The United States, which deferred to the United Kingdom on South Asia, was [uninterested until the Korean War](#), at which point the Americans decided to become more aggressive. The Americans were very clear that the various pacts that Pakistan insisted upon joining (CENTO and SEATO) were not meant to be used against India, but rather as a deterrent to an attack from a communist aggressor. When [Pakistan started its war with India](#) in 1965, the United States sanctioned both countries. Pakistan, which had become more dependent upon U.S. weapons systems, was hurt more. Pakistani officials carped that the United States did not help a treaty partner. The claim was outrageous because the treaties did not apply to Pakistan, the aggressor, who started a war with India, a non-communist state.

[Pakistan similarly cried foul in 1971](#). After years of exploiting the ethnic Bengalis in what was then East Pakistan, the [Bengalis began rising up against the state](#). At first, they wanted federalism. However, after vicious Pakistani repression, they demanded independence. As Pakistani brutality deepened, India began training rebels known as Mukti Bahini. India also provided artillery and other significant military support. The 1971 war technically began when [Pakistan's air force attacked Indian forward airbases](#) and radar installations on Dec. 3, 1971. The war was short and swift and ended on Dec. 16 with Pakistan’s surrender and the birth of an independent Bangladesh from what was previously East Pakistan.

Again, the Pakistanis grumbled that the United States did not support its treaty ally. This complaint was misplaced for two reasons. First, Pakistan was still under sanctions from the 1965 war. Second, as [Gary Bass](#) has brilliantly detailed, the United States actually did provide Pakistan with military support in complete violation of U.S. law. President Richard Nixon and his national security advisor, Henry Kissinger, believed that it was necessary to help the military general-cum-president, Yahya Khan, because Khan was facilitating the famed opening to China. As Bass details, Khan was not the only option for this opening. However, Nixon and Kissinger had personal feelings for him and deep contempt for India’s Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

While Pakistanis decry America’s “failure” to come to its aid when the United States had no obligation to do so, [Pakistan courted communist China](#) during the same period that it insisted upon being included in pacts that were



explicitly designed to counter communism. Moreover, despite its treaty obligations to the United States through SEATO, [Pakistan did not participate](#) in the Korean or Vietnam Wars and demurred from citing China as the aggressors.

Pakistanis also point to the notorious [F-16 fiasco](#). Pakistanis opine that they paid for but did not receive several F-16s due to the imposition of sanctions under the [Pressler Amendment](#) in 1990. Not only did the United States refuse to release the aircraft, it also refused to reimburse Pakistan the amount remitted to the manufacturer, and the United States even had the temerity to charge Pakistan the storage fees that accrued while the aircraft sat in a desert hangar.

As with all Pakistani narratives of U.S. perfidy, this one too is a [kichiri](#) of outright fictions, half-truths and a few [masalas](#). First, the United States sanctioned Pakistan for nuclear proliferation in [April 1979](#), which made it illegal for the United States to provide security assistance to Pakistan. After the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Washington chose to subordinate its nonproliferation policies to other regional interests. According to [Steve Coll](#), National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski told President Jimmy Carter that Washington needs to secure Pakistan's support to oust the Soviets and that this will "require ... more guarantees to [Pakistan], more arms aid, and, alas, a decision that our security policy cannot be dictated by our nonproliferation policy." Despite full knowledge of Pakistan's advancing nuclear program, [Congress added Section 620E to the FAA](#), which endowed the U.S. president with the authority to waive sanctions for six years, allowing the United States to fund and equip Pakistan for the anti-Soviet jihad. Congress next appropriated annual funds for a six-year program of economic and military aid that totaled \$3.2 billion. Despite continued warnings from the United States about its nuclear program, Pakistan continued developing a weapons capability. Pakistan's military dictator, [Zia ul Haq](#), [asserted](#) that it was Pakistan's right to do so.

Pakistanis [routinely distort](#) the intention of the Pressler Amendment as being designed to punish Pakistan. The 1985 [Pressler Amendment](#) permitted American assistance to Pakistan, conditional on an annual presidential assessment and certification that Pakistan did not have nuclear weapons. Prior to its passage, security assistance was possible only with a waiver of the 1979 sanctions. Thus, in effect, Pressler allowed the United States to continue providing assistance to Pakistan even though other parts of the U.S. government increasingly believed that Pakistan either had a nuclear weapon or was close to developing one. Most importantly, the amendment was [passed with the active involvement of Pakistan's foreign office](#), which was keen to resolve the emergent strategic impasse over competing U.S. nonproliferation and regional objectives on one hand and Pakistan's resolute intentions to acquire nuclear weapons on the other.

In 1990, when the United States withdrew from the region after the Soviet Union left Afghanistan, President George H.W. Bush declined to certify that Pakistan did not have a bomb and the sanctions, which had been waived since 1982, came into force. This was not a bolt out of the blue, as the U.S. ambassador to Pakistan, [Robert Oakley](#), repeatedly warned Pakistani leadership of the inevitable consequences of proliferation. Pakistan's leadership made a calculated gamble. And they lost.

Most problematic is the simple fact that the entire issue had long ago been resolved under [President Bill Clinton](#). However, Pakistan's narrative on the F-16 drama ultimately prevailed as [President George Bush](#) announced that he would at least make good and provide Pakistan with F-16s. [Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice defended the decision in 2005](#), arguing that she was "struck by the conclusions of the Sept. 11 commission: 'Basically invest in the relationship with Pakistan, because if you don't, you're going to create the same situation we created in the '90s,' when Pakistan forged close ties with the Taliban in Afghanistan." Needless to say, this logic is flawed. Pakistan has forged ties with Islamist militants in Afghanistan before, during and after the 1990s.

Yet another rent-seeking narrative propounded by Pakistan is that [the United States sucked a naïve Pakistan into its jihad in the 1980s](#). And, when its interests were satisfied with the Soviet Union's exeunt, the United States left Pakistan to contend with the morass that had become Afghanistan on its own and awash with small arms, narcotics and other criminal enterprises. As usual, this is not the entire story and this account ranks very low on the veracity scale. As [Husain Haqqani](#), [among others](#), has shown, Pakistan began its jihad policy between 1973 and 1974, after

Mohammad Daoud Khan ousted the popular King Zahir Shah. At that time, Pakistan's civilian autocrat, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, established the ISI Afghanistan Cell to instrument Islamists who were fleeing Afghanistan following Mohammad Daoud Khan's crackdown on Islamists who resisted his pro-Soviet reforms. By the time the Soviets crossed the Amu Darya on Christmas Day 1979, the main so-called mujahideen parties had already been formed. Pakistan did this all on its own dime because manipulating events in Afghanistan has been an enduring Pakistani strategic objective since 1947.

Logically, the United States could not have intended to "suck" Pakistan into an American-led jihad, as Pakistanis claim, because Washington had sanctioned Pakistan in April of 1979. Had the United States intended to coerce Pakistan to do America's bidding in Afghanistan, why would it make working with Pakistan illegal even as events began to churn in Afghanistan? As is well known, the United States was not terribly interested in the events in Afghanistan until the summer of 1979. After all, Afghanistan's neighbor, Iran, was mired in an Islamist revolution that began in early 1978. However, once President Ronald Reagan came into the White House, he worked to secure the waivers needed to begin working with Pakistan. It was not until [1982 that security assistance began flowing to Pakistan](#). It should be noted that [Saudi Arabia matched the U.S. contribution](#). It should also be noted that it was Zia ul Haq who insisted upon fighting the Russians in Afghanistan in the lexicon of jihad, not that of the United States. Unfortunately, the Reagan administration enthusiastically embraced the concept with future deleterious consequences for the region.

While it is true that the American withdrawal left Pakistan to clean up the mess, this outcome was not entirely undesired by Pakistan. Pakistan continued manipulating the conflict in Afghanistan and supporting its preferred combatants in hopes of managing its interests there as it had been doing for decades. In fact, the United States more or less "outsourced" its Afghanistan policy to Pakistan, which is exactly what the United States is doing at present. Nothing could please Pakistan more.

The lesson is that with a bit of dedication to perfecting an ossified fiction to a conveyor belt of woefully inexperienced Americans, any number of things can be accomplished.

### **And that Hospitality**

No doubt the secret to Pakistani success in taking the Americans for endless rides around the roundabout is that their American passengers cannot recognize [the ever-replaying scenery](#). However, such ruses would not likely succeed for as long as it has if it were not for Pakistan's legendary hospitality. Here is where India's own Ministry of External Affairs can learn some lessons.

First, to hell with protocol. Whereas Indian protocol requires American officials to meet only their counterparts in India, Pakistanis open the doors. Even a junior analyst at a think tank (like me when I was at the RAND Corporation) can meet virtually anyone. (President Musharraf even autographed a portrait of my beloved, now deceased, canine associate [Ms. Oppenheimer](#).) U.S. Congressional delegates are particularly delighted when they get to meet the army chief. They may have to suffer a meeting with the irrelevant prime minister, of course. But they all swoon at the army chief, who inevitably is seen as a straight shooter with whom the United States can do business. Pakistanis focus less upon what you are and more upon who you influence or may be able to influence in the future. Pakistanis invest in people as if they are assets in a portfolio of human capital.

In contrast to Indian officials who are often stiff, hectoring, disinterested, and seemingly mired in ennui, the (much higher ranked) Pakistani official is engaging, jocular, (seemingly) forthcoming, self-effacing, humorous and, always, charming. Whereas Indian ministry officials will serve you tea in a chipped mug embossed with a faded graphic of the ministry's logo, Pakistani hosts will serve their hosts coffee or tea in a mug ... and they will even gift you with that mug. The Pakistanis have studied what Americans like and how best to cater to these preferences. Right down to the mug. This gives rise to the chattering among diplomats, journalists, scholars and think tank analysts who visit both countries and aver enthusiastically that "The Pakistanis may lie like rugs and kill our troops while robbing us blind, but they sure are friendly!"

Second, India should consider embracing “war tourism.” The Pakistanis cultivate American sympathies for the difficulties they face in their neighborhood by taking scholars, think tank analysts, state department officials, congressional delegations, journalists and anyone else they want to groom on tours of its warzones and conflict fronts. During my decades visiting the country, I was regaled with a trip to the border with Afghanistan and an amazing excursion through the Khyber Pass. Our entourage was equipped with an enormous security detail, with loads of Toyota Hiluxes zooming about, festooned with armed young men, and sirens blaring. The Frontier Scouts delighted us with their dances and we ate piles of kebobs in their mess hall. We also received mugs with the Frontier Scout logo. We were given a scenic overview at a forward operating base where our Pakistani military briefer explained the dangers of this frontier. I had similar tours in North and South Waziristan and Swat. Who doesn’t feel important under such circumstances?

In previous years, they arranged for me to visit “Azad Kashmir.” Foreigners require a permit and thus free travel is not legal. Once I reached Muzaffarabad, my Pakistani official guests placed me in a chair in a dingy shack while numerous women lined up in front of me. I was told that they had been raped by Indian forces and the women, per force, began narrating their rehearsed tales of assault. I put a stop to this immediately and protested that this was hideous. My hosts moved onto the next destination. Despite Pakistan’s efforts to shape my views against Indian behavior in Kashmir and despite their assertions that there were no militants here, I saw loads of signs posted by militant groups. (This is one advantage of reading Urdu.)

India should consider taking a page out this highly successful Pakistani play book. When congressional delegates and the like file through India, why not take them to Kashmir and show them maps of Pakistani terror camps? Why not take them to Aksai Chin or Arunachal Pradesh and show them the problems India encounters with China? How about the problematic areas of the North East and the long, open borders with Bangladesh and Myanmar? Maybe demonstrate how Pakistani militants have long used the border with Nepal as a route of infiltration? India will have one enormous advantage over Pakistan’s industry of war tourism: India’s complaints are based on truth. That counts for something. It should also be noted that when foreigners arrive in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir, they must register and they are often viewed with suspicion. This is unfortunate because India has much to show. Since my first visit to the valley in 1991, much of the area has resumed normal life. In some ways, Kashmir is a slow churning success. This does not mean that all is well. But it does mean that the situation is manageable.

Third, the brass and khaki counts. A lot. Americans love engaging military officials. The more pins and brass the better. Nothing flatters an American visiting Pakistan more than a visit to General Headquarters, the Peshawar or Quetta Corps Headquarters, the Strategic Plans Directorate, ISI headquarters, the majestic headquarters of the Frontier Scouts in Peshawar’s famed Bala Hisar fort, and the like. If one gets to meet the army chief or the ISI chief, a trip is made. She or he will have dinner party fodder for years. Americans find the feigned candor of Pakistani military personnel to be very refreshing, especially in contrast to Pakistani civilians who are viewed with disdain by Americans, and in contrast to Indian officials who seem pained to meet foreign visitors. Americans sympathize with the “threats” that the Pakistani military convincingly demonstrates it faces and they are persuaded by the seemingly genuine efforts that Pakistan’s men in green are making to stem the terrorist menaces threatening Pakistan. Too few Americans seem to know that Pakistan cultivates more terrorists than it kills. But why let facts get in the way of war tourism?

In contrast, it requires any number of approvals from India’s Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Defense to meet anyone in uniform. (This is not impossible. It is just difficult.) Persons in uniform who meet with foreigners without approval are subject to the wrath of the bureaucracy. Americans view this with suspicion and frustration. After all, if India *really* were under such threats from Pakistan and China, why are Indians not doing what Pakistanis do? India should consider providing more access to the military along the lines of “war tourism” noted above. Why not arrange for the 15<sup>th</sup> Corps commander in Kashmir to brief American visitors? That corps has witnessed much Pakistani perfidy. Similarly, access to the police and paramilitary outfits in Kashmir and other areas under threat would benefit India tremendously. After all, seeing is believing.

### **Why Should Pakistan have all of the Fun?**

It is relatively easy to beguile the Americans, as Pakistan's track record amply shows. Despite supporting any number of terrorist and insurgent groups, despite continued [funding of the Afghan Taliban](#) who have killed thousands of our troops and civilians as well as tens of thousands of our allies, and despite developing [tactical nuclear weapons](#), the United States has given Pakistan [over \\$30 billion since 9/11](#) and [access to weapons systems best suited to fight India](#), a democratic partner, rather than the insurgents and terrorists Pakistan claims to be fighting.

As a U.S. citizen who believes that my country's interests are best served by a better and more robust relationship with India, I make the humble request that India's leadership learns from the best and adopts a more flexible way in dealing with the Americans. In the end, both India and the United States will benefit.

*C. Christine Fair is an assistant professor at Georgetown University's Security Studies Program in the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service and a visiting scholar at the Gateway House in Mumbai, India. She is the author of [Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War](#) and co-editor of [Pakistan's Enduring Challenges](#). The views here are her own and do not represent that of Georgetown or the Gateway House. The reader is advised that the author embraces sarcasm robustly.*