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Why did Osama Bin Laden have a copy of my book?

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<http://qz.com/412231/my-book-was-in-bin-ladens-library-and-im-incensed-about-it/>



Last week, I learned that the introduction of my book, *Fortifying Pakistan* (co-authored with Peter Chalk), was part of Osama Bin Laden's [Abbottabad library](#). While some other members of the Bin Laden book club were amused to be included, I was incensed. Our book is about Pakistan's unwillingness to avail itself of American assistance in order to be a more effective partner in combatting terrorism. We argue that Pakistan's recalcitrance is rooted in its commitment to using terrorism as a tool of foreign policy in India and Afghanistan. One has to wonder why Bin Laden would be interested in reading about that. After all, by the time the book came out, he was already in Pakistan. He, of all people, knew full well the practical implications of our research. He was safely ensconced in a Pakistani sanctuary, a leisurely stroll down the road from Pakistan's premier military academy, at Kakul.

The research project that culminated in the 2006 publication of *Fortifying Pakistan* began in 2004, when I was a new researcher at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP). My boss, Paul Stares, (now at the Council on Foreign Relations) hired me to initiate a South Asia research program. This project was not an

easy sell. Most of Washington had long decided that Pakistan was our most allegiant ally in the war on terrorism. That attitude endured until the Obama administration came into office.

Simply put: It was blasphemous to suggest, in 2004, that then-president Musharraf was playing a both sides with Washington. The Bush administration could not countenance such a possibility, or even consider the plausibility of it, given that its attention and resources were focused on Iraq.

Prior to joining USIP, I served as a Senior Political Scientist at the RAND Corporation. (Note: I am not, nor have I ever been, an actual political scientist.) During one of my last projects for RAND, I had briefed a senior Department of Defense official in early 2004, after returning from a January fact-finding trip I had made to Peshawar. I learned from numerous persons that the Pakistanis, through elements of the Frontier Corps, were facilitating Taliban operations in Afghanistan and movements into and out of Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

This was no surprise to me. After all, Pakistan's army and intelligence agency (the ISI) had long used the Frontier Corps to train Islamist militants operating in Afghanistan. The official seemed nonchalant at the time of the briefing, which puzzled and discomfited me. He seemed to be playing tic-tac-toe while the Pakistanis were playing three-dimensional chess.

A few years later, that same official phoned me to personally apologize that he had dismissed my claims of official Pakistani support to the Taliban as, "crazy." He called because, by 2006, events had proven me correct, and he wanted my thoughts about what could be done to reverse course. By then, it was too late. Pakistan's duplicity and America's cupidity had already allowed the Afghan Taliban to regroup and launch the insurgency that persists to date, with Pakistan's assistance.

Fortifying Pakistan was the first of many pieces in which I tried to hold the Pakistani and American governments to account for the billions of US taxpayer dollars squandered upon Pakistan, with meager returns to those investments. In *Fortifying Pakistan*, we focused upon American efforts to help Pakistan address its myriad internal security challenges that permitted Pakistan to perdure as a terrorist sanctuary. We examined programs to enhance tactical policing skills and crime scene management; to teach basic

forensics capabilities; to provide technological assistance to help Pakistan better control who crosses its borders; to forge cooperative programs to build upon Pakistan's anti-narcotics capabilities; and to extend the writ of the state to diminish the freedom of operation enjoyed by terrorists and criminal elements ensconced in remote areas of the country, as well as within its sprawling metropolises.

We concluded that the programs had some impacts, but ultimately the biggest problem with these American efforts is that they presumed Pakistan wanted to be a responsible partner in the war against terrorism. Unfortunately, even when we were conducting this research in 2004, we found too much evidence that Pakistan was busy aiding, abetting, and facilitating the operations of some terrorists, even while cooperating with the US against others. Again, Bin Laden, from his Abbottabad sanctuary, knew this too well.

Since late 2001, the US has indulged Pakistan with a variety of economic and security assistance packages. It has allowed Pakistan to recycle American and international funds as its own "national funds," in order to purchase strategic weapons systems from the US, such as nuclear-capable F-16s. Pakistan has preferred to acquire weapons systems better suited to fight India rather than the various militants ensconced throughout its own territory. And the United States has facilitated these acquisitions, because of Washington's perverse belief that it needs Pakistan more than Pakistan needs the US. To ensure access to ground lines of resupply, to ensure that war materiel made it to Afghanistan, and to garner some degree of access to Pakistan's burgeoning nuclear weapons program, Washington has endured any number of Pakistani perfidies: even the harboring of Bin Laden.

Historians will judge the American Pakistan policy with confusion and contempt. They will logically ask why the Americans continued to treat Pakistan as a partner when it undermined so many salient American interests in the region. They will ask why the American tax payer continued to aid and arm Pakistan, even though it was responsible for the deaths of thousands of Americans and NATO allies in Afghanistan and the deaths of tens of thousands of Afghan allies, in and out of uniform. They will ask why the US government was unable or unwilling to see that Pakistan was not a problematic ally, but rather, a hostile state that cynically manipulated and exploited an impotent and incompetent America.

For years, I hoped that American policy makers would begin appreciating these facts, and change course, rather than wait for our sons and daughters to write this scathing history long after such revelations ceased to matter.

With the US military presence in Afghanistan winding down, there is still time to hold Pakistan to account and begin treating it like the hostile state it is, rather than as the challenging ally so many policy makers delude themselves into believing. This will require courage and leadership across the political spectrum. Unfortunately, such qualities seem chronically lacking in the contemporary American landscape. The next generation will surely inherit Pakistan, the “problem from hell.”

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