

PAKISTAN'S ANXIETIES ARE INCURABLE, SO STOP TRYING TO CURE THEM

C. CHRISTINE FAIR

JUNE 21, 2017

For the last 16 years, the Washington policy community has debated how the United States should deal with its problematic partner in its war in Afghanistan: Pakistan. During the Obama administration, there was a growing consensus that Pakistan was the problem, even if there was no agreement on how to manage it. Despite disagreements, at the end of the Obama administration, there was a grudging acknowledgment that the Washington needed to show some real stick while pulling back on the carrots. In apparent protest to this growing conviction that a more coercive suite of policies is needed, on June 16, Steve Hadley and Moeed Yusuf argued in [*The New York Times*](#) that any successful U.S. strategy in Afghanistan requires the “[United States must understand and address Pakistan’s strategic anxieties](#),” which center around India and its neuralgic fantasies about India’s imagined pernicious role in Afghanistan. Both men should know better. This argument is not only flawed — it is deadly. Not only can the United States not address Pakistani anxieties, but U.S. efforts to do so have undermined vital U.S. interests in the region.

First, this is an old argument, which Pakistan has peddled since its birth. Pakistan cried foul when it did not get the “Muslim majority state” of Kashmir when the British partitioned the Raj into India and Pakistan in 1947. Kashmir was a princely state and was not bound by the [Indian Independence Act of 1947](#). Despite signing a standstill agreement with the sovereign of Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh, Pakistan invaded Kashmir in effort to snatch it using a combination of state and non-state actors. Despite Pakistani claims to the contrary, the work of Shuja Nawaz demonstrates that this was very much a [state-sponsored adventure](#). Singh asked for India to come to Kashmir’s defense. India agreed on the condition that Singh would join the Indian dominion. Upon receiving his signed instrument of accession, India airlifted troops to defend what was now sovereign Indian territory.

When the war was over, Pakistan’s raiders had successfully wrested away one third of Kashmir’s territory. India referred the matter to the U.N. Security Council, which promulgated [Resolution 47 in 1948](#). That resolution called for three sequential steps. First, Pakistan was to withdraw all forces from Kashmir. Second, India was to withdraw, with the exception of a defensive force. And third, when both sides satisfied the sequential withdraws, India was to facilitate a plebiscite under the auspices of the United Nations to discern Kashmiris’ wishes. While Pakistani officials continue to opine about the plebiscite, the fact is that Pakistan never fulfilled its obligation to demilitarize. Pakistan alone is responsible for derailing the plebiscite when it was still feasible and relevant.

Although Pakistan was not legally entitled to Kashmir, it has built its entire national security architecture around illegally securing territory there through bloodshed. To do so, from the earliest years of independence, Pakistani civilian and military leadership [begged the United States to incorporate it into its alliance structure](#) such that it could obtain needed armaments and resources to fortify its rag-tag

army against the much more robust forces of India. In fact, as [Husain Haqqani has brutally demonstrated](#), during every period of this alliance Pakistan has promised to service U.S. interests while in reality using American resources to expand its conventional and later nuclear assets to counter India. Despite being keenly aware of Pakistani duplicity, Washington has obliged because it believed that it needed Islamabad to secure its strategic objectives during the Cold War and later during the Global War on Terrorism.

Imploring the United States to understand the nature of the existential threat it claims to face from India sits at the center of Pakistan's rent-seeking strategy. However, the facts suggest that while Pakistan may have such fears, it is responsible for its own anxieties. India is a territorially satisfied state and has no interest in invading, much less conquering, Pakistan. The *last* thing that India wants is 190 million more Muslims. While some Hindu nationalists demand that Pakistan return the territory that it seized from India in Kashmir in 1947 — some of which it subsequently illegally [ceded to China in 1963](#) — most prudent observers believe that India would be willing to convert the current Line of Control, which divides the Indian- and Pakistani-administered portion of Kashmir, into the international boundary. In fact, India would have little concern about Pakistan if not for the simple fact that it has used terrorists to as tools of foreign policy for decades. If Pakistan wants peace with India, maybe it would do better to knock off the jihadi habit and stop seeking to illegally change maps through brutality and bloodshed.

Hadley and Yusuf want us to believe that by appeasing Pakistan, we can secure peace in Afghanistan. This is weapons-grade mendacity. Both know full well that this is exactly what President George W. Bush tried to do. During the eight years of the Bush administration, Bush foolishly believed the commitment articulated by Pervez Musharraf that Pakistan was committed to the U.S. objectives in Afghanistan and beyond. Yet it was precisely during this period that Musharraf's army

renewed its policy of protecting, training, arming, and organizing the Taliban who settled into Pakistan's Balochistan province after the Americans and Afghanistan's Northern Alliance drove them out of Afghanistan. Without Pakistan's unstinting support to the Taliban, it would hardly be a credible force in Afghanistan. If Hadley and Yusuf had their way, the United States would hand Afghanistan over. This is deeply insulting to Afghans who have resisted Pakistani efforts to cultivate their country as a client since the 1950s.

Still, Afghanistan must accept some culpability for Pakistani enmity. [Afghanistan opposed Pakistan's inclusion into the U.N. General Assembly](#). While Afghanistan eventually withdrew its opposition, the damage was done: Pakistan believes — despite the lack of evidence for this conviction — that it did so with India's support. Moreover, Afghanistan used the partition of 1947 to argue — against the consensus of international law — that it does not have to abide by the 19th-century border agreement called the Durand Line. Afghanistan also lays claim to vast stretches of Pakistani territory and has supported insurgencies in Balochistan as well as Pashtun nationalism. As a consequence, Pakistan organied its first "jihad" policy in 1974 under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Islamists were fleeing Sardar Mohammed Daoud Khan 's brutal crackdown on Islamist opposition in Afghanistan and Islamabad was able to put them to good use. While Pakistan implored the United States to aid its efforts in Afghanistan, Washington did not do so until after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan on December 1979. [General Khalid Mahmud Arif](#) has said of these activities that "Pakistan adopted the . . . option to protect her national interest and to uphold a vital principal" by providing "covert assistance to the Mujahideen." [Abdul Sattar, Pakistan's former foreign secretary](#), agrees with Zia. According to Sattar, for more than a year after the Soviet invasion, Pakistan "continued to support the Afghan resistance . . . providing it modest assistance out of its own meager resources." For Sattar, Pakistan's

motives were clear: “[T]he Mujahideen would be fighting also for Pakistan’s own security and independence.”

What Hadley and Yusuf propose is not only insulting to Afghans, it is insulting to the American people, including those civilians and military personnel who have served, bled, and died in Afghanistan. The majority of deaths in Afghanistan are directly and indirectly attributable to Pakistan, which in most significant ways controls, directs, and protects the Taliban as well as the most lethal fighting organization in Afghanistan, the Haqqani Network. U.S. intelligence, among others, believe that both the [Afghan Taliban](#) and [the Haqqani Network](#) are proxies under the control of Pakistan’s intelligence agency, the ISI, as well as the Pakistan Army. Pakistan has engaged in this policy of duplicity despite benefitting from some [\\$33 billion](#) in U.S. assistance since 9/11.

While the Obama administration had a better understanding of the Pakistan problem, President Obama was strong-armed into the surge of 2009 without a coercive policy for Pakistan. The United States was losing in Afghanistan not because of troop levels, but because of enduring and pervasive Pakistani support for the Taliban coupled with soaring levels of corruption in the Afghan government and the international donor community. The surge in fact made international forces more dependent upon Pakistan because of the increased reliance upon Pakistani soil to move war materiel into the theatre. The surge and subsequent Afghan strategy never found a way to do what was really needed: put real pressure on Pakistan with a compelling threat to make life unlivable for Pakistan’s army should it continue to support those the United States and its allies were fighting in Afghanistan.

Contrary to what Hadley and Yusuf would have Americans believe, the United States has *not* had a policy of sticks. The only punishment that Pakistan has endured is that United States opted not give

Pakistan \$300 million out of a total of a \$1 billion in Coalition Support Funds. The United States held back this tranche of funding because Pakistan refused to pursue America's enemies in North Waziristan. How is this punishment?

Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis regrettably seems to share this absurd misreading of U.S. policy. During his confirmation hearing, he reiterated the canard that the "conditionalities" on assistance to Pakistan have not worked. Unfortunately, we cannot say whether such conditionalities would or would not work because most of the conditionalities were honored only in the breach. President Donald Trump has delegated responsibility for this war to Mattis, who will reportedly decide how many more U.S. troops will be sent to Afghanistan. In the continued absence of a coercive strategy for Pakistan, the rumored modest surge of some additional 4,000 U.S. troops will not work any more than did the much larger 2009 surge.

The time to stop rewarding Pakistan for its perfidy is long over. The United States needs to immediately right a course that has been murderously wrong since the earliest days of this war. It needs to signal to Pakistan that it does not consider its Indian fantasies to be credible. It needs to be very clear that if Pakistan does not cease and desist from using jihadis as tools of foreign policy in Afghanistan and India, the United States will declare Pakistan to be a state sponsor of terror. Moreover, the United States should devise special sanctions that will impose specific costs upon Pakistani military and intelligence personnel, as well as civil society actors, who we know are supporting these so-called jihadis. The United States should also cease entertaining Pakistan's entreaties on Kashmir by formally recognizing the line of control as the border. Further, Washington should cut off all strategic military support for Pakistan in preference to platforms and training to enable it more credibly fight internal battles rather than India. It should cease all so-called Coalition Support Funds intended to lucratively reimburse Pakistan for costs associated with its

sovereign responsibilities by eliminating terrorists using its territory. Pakistan can only receive these funds provided that there are terrorists in Pakistan need to be eliminated. This is a moral hazard problem. Instead of rewarding Pakistan to continue to nurture and asset-bank these terrorists, the United States needs to incentivize Pakistan to *not* create these terrorists and deploy them in the first instance.

The Trump administration has yet to articulate a policy for Pakistan and Afghanistan. As with other issues, the administration seems to have multiple policies pursued variously by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Secretary of Defense Mattis, National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster, and special advisor Steve Bannon. The current [news coming out of the White House](#) is that the ongoing review of the Afghan war may well produce a tougher policy on Pakistan. If so, this is would be welcome news, but this is exactly the kind of policy that Hadley and Yusuf seek to pre-empt.

Christine Fair is a Provost's Distinguished Associate Professor in the Security Studies Program at Georgetown University's Edmund A. Walsh School of Service. She is the author of [Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War](#) (OUP, 2014).