OPPORTUNITY 08
Independent Ideas For Our Next President

Expand the U.S. Agenda toward Pakistan

Prospects for Peace and Stability Can Brighten

Bruce Riedel

Summary

Pakistan is the most dangerous country in today's world. There, the forces that threaten global peace and security all come together: proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the risk of nuclear war, terrorism, poverty, dictatorship, radical Islam, and narcotics.

Pakistan's fragile politics reflect a history of alternating military dictatorships with periods of weak elected civilian rule. Recently, violence has become a dominant feature of the political landscape—most notably in the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in December 2007. But, following the February 2008 elections, Pakistan may have embarked on a tortuous path toward democracy.

The United States has failed democratic forces in Pakistan. With some history of democratic traditions and a predominantly Muslim population of almost 170 million, Pakistan would appear to be the perfect candidate for the declared American strategy, proclaimed by President Bush in his Second Inaugural Address, "to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture." Instead, the Bush administration chose to continue the 50-year American tradition of befriending Pakistani dictators.

In most respects, the administration's policy has not paid off. Polls now show Pakistani approval of America at all-time lows. Many, if not most, Pakistanis, see the war against *jihadis* in the nation's western badlands as Mr. Bush's war, not their own.

The next President must change the agenda with Pakistan and seek to alter the mood, by revamping Pakistani visions of America. He or she must work to persuade the Pakistani people that America supports democracy in their country, that we can be a long-term and reliable ally, and that the struggle against Al Qa'eda and its allies is their war as well as ours.

The immediate and urgent requirement is to eliminate Al Qa'eda's safe haven in Pakistan before the terrorists use it to attack America again here at home—perhaps around our presidential election or shortly after Inauguration Day. This effort requires substantially greater Pakistani cooperation in the war against Al Qa'eda and its allies in the badlands near the Afghan border.

The next U.S. administration should engage in a new public diplomacy and launch new aid programs, both economic and military. It should fully support Pakistan's democratically elected leadership, even if the two countries disagree on some key issues, ranging from how to prevent nuclear proliferation to how to contain terrorist threats.

Reordering our aid, we should initiate a multi-billion and multi-year effort to improve Pakistan's educational and transportation infrastructure. This initiative should include a "democracy bonus," as proposed by Sen. Joseph Biden, which would increase the aid level automatically every year the President certifies that Pakistan is a democracy. It also should include the convening of a donors' conference.

Increased military aid should be directed to the development of a counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism approach. The increase should be conditioned on an end to both military interference in politics and consorting with terrorist elements by Pakistan's intelligence apparatus, the ISI.

The next President also should take advantage of opportunities to improve the security situation in South Asia by:

- working with Kabul and Islamabad to gain a public agreement, guaranteed by the United States, that the Durand Line, which is the disputed border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, can be altered only with the consent of both governments
- quietly seeking an agreement between New Delhi and Islamabad on Kashmir, probably based on a formula that would make the Line of Control between Indian and Pakistani authority in Kashmir a permanent and normal international border (perhaps with minor modifications) and render it a permeable frontier, so that the Kashmiri people can live more normal lives
- pursuing a special agreement allowing India and Pakistan to cooperate on social and economic issues in Kashmir, and
- greatly intensifying efforts to ensure the security of Pakistan's weapons arsenal, while avoiding reckless talk about using unilateral means to secure the Pakistani systems.

In dealing with Pakistan, the next President must go beyond threats and sanctions, beyond commando raids and half-hearted intelligence cooperation, beyond poorly directed aid and aircraft sales. It is time to come to grips with the ideals and interests motivating Pakistan's behavior and to help Islamabad make peace with itself and its neighbors.

Context

The Most Dangerous Country

Pakistan is the most dangerous country in today's world. There, the forces that threaten global peace and security all come together: proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, poverty, dictatorship, radical Islam, and narcotics.

In recent years the dangers have taken many forms:

- *Potential war of mass destruction.* Nowhere is the risk of nuclear war higher than in South Asia, where Pakistan and India already have fought four wars.
- *Nuclear proliferation.* Pakistan has sold nuclear technology to North Korea, Iran, and Libya, and acquired it partly by theft in the Netherlands.
- *Organizing acts of terrorism.* The September 11 plot against America was planned and carried out from Pakistan's neighbor, Afghanistan, and the alleged tactical mastermind of the plot, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, was arrested in Pakistan.
- *Haven for terrorists.* The top leaders of Al Qa'eda, Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, fled to Pakistan after the collapse of Afghanistan's Taliban regime in 2001, along with Taliban leader Mullah Omar. All three scoundrels are believed still hiding somewhere in the borderland between the two countries.
- *Drug trafficking.* The country is a pathway for opium from Afghanistan to the world market.

The Path to Democracy

Pakistan's internal politics are brittle. The lack of stability reflects the nation's underdeveloped conditions, as more than half of Pakistanis live in grinding poverty and most women are illiterate.

The first country created after World War II and the first created as a Muslim state, Pakistan has alternated between weak elected civilian regimes and military dictatorships. In many frontier areas, its central government exercises only nominal authority. Further, resource-rich Baluchistan has been in a state of revolt since 2000; Karachi, the largest city, has been plagued by intense gang warfare for years; and the civilian institutions of state—the judiciary, parliamentary processes, law enforcement authorities, regulatory agencies, financial controls, and other mechanisms for assuring civil order—are all weak.

Until the spring of 2008, Islamist political parties have steadily gained strength. Violence and terrorism have emerged as familiar features of the current landscape:

there were 56 suicide bombings attacks in 2007, culminating in the shockingly public assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on the streets of Rawalpindi on December 27.

Today Pakistan is in the midst of a complicated transition from the military rule of Pervez Musharraf, who as Army chief of staff took power in a bloodless coup in 1999, to what many Pakistanis *hope* will be democracy. This process is extremely fragile, and the future of Pakistan's government—perhaps along with the very survival of the state—is uncertain. Pakistan has already fought one civil war, when Bangladesh seceded in 1971.

The U.S. Role to Date

The United States has largely failed democratic forces in Pakistan. As a nation with impressive democratic traditions and a predominantly Muslim population of 170 million, Pakistan would appear to be the perfect candidate for the declared American strategy, proclaimed by President George W. Bush in his Second Inaugural Address, "to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture." Unlike Saudi Arabia or many other Muslim states, Pakistan offers political parties that have strong voter support, a history of elections (although all have been riddled with controversy), and a tradition of functioning secular institutions and society.

Unfortunately, instead of supporting these democratic initiatives, the United States historically has backed Pakistan's military dictators. This is a bipartisan history. On the first U.S. presidential visit to South Asia, Dwight D. Eisenhower praised Pakistan's first military ruler, Ayub Khan. John F. Kennedy went Eisenhower one better, hosting a lavish state dinner for Khan at Mount Vernon—the first use of George Washington's mansion to entertain a foreign leader.

Lyndon B. Johnson continued the conspicuous support for Ayub Khan. Richard Nixon then went so far as to endorse the brutal and unsuccessful war in Bangladesh initiated under Ayub Khan's successor, Yahya Khan. Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan both

supported another dictator, Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, due to his participation in Afghanistan's war against the Soviet Union. (Carter, however, was deeply angered by Zia's execution, also in Rawalpindi, of the democratically elected Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, father of Benazir Bhutto.)

When Musharraf seized power, Bill Clinton imposed sanctions and pressed for an early end to military control. He worked to assure that ousted Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif would not suffer the same fate as Ali Bhutto. But, Clinton also became the first head of state to visit Pakistan after the 1999 coup, thus providing Musharraf with his first measure of international legitimacy.

George W. Bush went much further to support Musharraf. His administration acted to repeal all sanctions and provide $11 billion in aid, more than half through direct funding to the Army with little or no accounting. When Musharraf staged phony elections in 2002 and 2007, Bush did not object. When he sacked the head of the Supreme Court and the nation's lawyers went into the streets to protest, the Bush team backed the general. Even while Musharraf was clearly losing popular support in the run-up to the February 2008 elections, the administration still touted him as "the indispensible man" of Pakistan.

Change the Agenda and the Mood

The cost of the Bush administration's policy has been the alienation of most Pakistanis from the United States and our interests. Polls now show Pakistani approval of America at record lows. In the eyes of too many Pakistanis, the war against *jihadis* in the nation's western badlands is Bush's war, not their own.

The next President should try to change the agenda with Pakistan and recast Pakistani visions of America. He or she must work to persuade the Pakistani people that America supports democracy in their country, that America can be a long-term and reliable ally, and that the struggle against Al Qa'eda and its allies is their war as well as ours.

Gain Support for Fighting Terrorists along the Border

The Need Is Urgent

The immediate and urgent requirement is to eliminate Al Qa'eda's safe haven in Pakistan before the terrorists use it to attack America again in the region or here at home. Eighty percent of the suicide bombers attacking U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan are trained in Pakistan by the Taliban or Al Qa'eda, and Pakistan has done far too little to prevent this cross-border carnage.

For a dramatic illustration of how dangerous the Al Qa'eda network remains, consider this spring's London trial of Al Qa'eda members charged with plotting to blow up 10 jumbo jets *en route* from Heathrow Airport to Chicago, Montreal, New York, Washington, San Francisco, and Toronto. Had the British not foiled the plot at the last minute, in August 2006, it would have killed hundreds, if not thousands.

The British trial has shown that the explosives worked, that the martyrs were already selected and had made their obligatory martyr videos, and that the plot was linked directly to the Al Qa'eda leadership in Pakistan. The plotters also calculated that they could conduct the same operation repeatedly, because all the forensic evidence would lie at the bottom of the Atlantic.

The masterminds got away in Pakistan. Only one person, Rashid Rauf, was arrested, and he escaped custody while being transferred from one jail to another by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). This unimpressive performance illustrates the problem in a nutshell. Pakistan is only a half-hearted ally in the war against Al Qa'eda, and even less committed to the struggle against the Taliban and Kashmiri groups.

Initiate a New Diplomacy

Just targeting Al Qa'eda is a strategy that has proved a failure. Al Qa'eda swims in Pakistan in a sea of *jihadis*—the Kashmiri group Lashkar-e Tayyiba, the anti-Shia group Sipah-e Sahaba, the Taliban, and others. The ISI itself created much of this nexus of

terror, either to fight the Soviet Union in Afghanistan (in order to increase Pakistani influence there) or to fight India in Kashmir. The local ties to Al Qa'eda are deep; every major Al Qa'eda figure arrested in Pakistan since 9/11 has been caught in a safe house operated by one of these groups.

But, while the need is pressing and Al Qa'eda may well plan to strike either before the November elections in the United States or shortly after the inauguration of a new U.S. President, there is no quick fix or unilateral option available. *We need substantially greater Pakistani cooperation in the war against Al Qa'eda and its allies in the badlands of South Asia.* There is no alternative. Predator strikes or commando missions into the badlands cannot eliminate the safe haven. Even a full-scale American invasion and occupation (which is beyond our military's reach and could provoke a nuclear war) would only spread the virus more deeply into Pakistan.

We must find a way to embrace the new Pakistani leadership and persuade it to work with us. This will be a difficult undertaking, given the bad blood the Bush team has created and the legacy of the last half century. It requires, in sports terms, a full-court press. The next administration should engage in a new public diplomacy and launch new aid programs, both economic and military. Finally, it should vigorously undertake an altogether new diplomatic approach.

Our public posture should be one of full support for the democratically elected leadership. We should embrace the Pakistani peoples' choices, despite shortcomings of some of the new leaders (actually, many are not new at all, which is why their defects are known). Accordingly, we should no longer stand by Musharraf. His fate should be decided in Pakistan by Pakistanis without our meddling and commentary.

On many issues, the new democratic government in Pakistan will not enthusiastically back our positions. We will differ over how to deal with Islamism, over the idea of negotiating with the Taliban, over nuclear weapons development, over the fate of the nuclear pirate (and Pakistani national hero) A.Q. Khan, and other issues.

In this context, we must disagree without being disagreeable. We need to take our differences to the elected leadership, not to the Army leadership or the ISI director, in order to get results. To go to the Army on political issues is to undermine the rule of law and proper civil-military relations once again, repeating and solidifying the errors of the past.

Increase Economic Aid—and Re-channel Military Aid

Behind a new public posture should emerge a vast expansion in our aid relationship and a qualitative change in its nature. Of the $11 billion dollars in aid since 9/11, very little has gone to meet Pakistan's desperate need for economic help.

We should provide a multi-billion and multi-year commitment to help rebuild Pakistan's deteriorating educational system and to construct new highways and other modern transportation infrastructure. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Joseph R. Biden (D-Del.) has proposed several useful ideas, including a "democracy bonus" that would increase the aid level automatically every year the President certifies that Pakistan is a democracy. Besides implementing a democracy bonus, the next President should organize a donors' conference to obtain help from other key friends of Pakistan, including Saudi Arabia, the EU, and China.

Increased assistance to the Pakistani military and security forces also makes sense. The forces need to refocus their orientation and infrastructure. Instead of concentrating on fighting a war with India, along the lines of the last four wars, they should work toward becoming an effective counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism force. This will be expensive and difficult; it means changing doctrine and thought processes, not just equipment, but clearly such change falls within our mutual national interests.

In practical terms, more worthwhile military aid means fewer F-16 fighter jets and more helicopters, fewer tanks and more night vision devices. Increased aid to the Pakistani Army should be conditioned on two premises. First, the Army needs to stay in the barracks and out of politics. Civil-military relations need to change forever.

The second condition is that the ISI needs to be entirely on the side of fighting terror, not working both sides of the fence at once. In conversations with the author early this year, senior Afghan and senior Indian officials both stressed a committed ISI as the *sine qua non* of real change in Pakistan. Congress should require an annual secret certification from the CIA that ISI is on one side only: ours.

Help Islamabad Deal with Kabul and Kashmir

Toward a Stable Border with Afghanistan

Joint U.S. and Pakistani diplomacy should focus on two critical issues: Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan and with India.

The Afghan-Pakistan border region, 1,610 miles long, is the heart of Al Qa'eda's sanctuary in South Asia. The border recognized by Pakistan has never been accepted by any Afghan government, largely because it was unilaterally imposed by the British colonial government, in 1893. This so-called Durand Line divides both the Pashtun and Baluchi peoples and has never been popular in Afghanistan. Kabul governments have always been unwilling to forfeit their claim to a larger "Pashtunistan."

Former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Ronald E. Neuman rightly characterizes the current situation as "borderline insanity" and suggests that resolving its ambiguity is part of the required "big think" solution to the threat posed from the badlands. It is unlikely that the government of President Hamid Karzai could accept the Durand Line formally and finally any more than its predecessors could. But, the United States should work with Kabul and Islamabad to gain a public agreement that the line can be altered only with the consent of both governments.

Such an acceptance of the *de-facto* permanence of the border also should set the stage for greater willingness on both sides to police the line and to regard it as a real international frontier. Improved policing would not immediately stop smuggling and infiltration, but it would provide a basis for long-term cooperation between Kabul and

Islamabad—a critical ingredient for progress against Al Qa'eda and something seriously lacking in the past.

Because we have so much at stake in the stabilization of this border and the end to the Al Qa'eda safe haven that exists along it, the United States should be prepared to endorse an agreement and guarantee the integrity of the border. Pakistan, for its part, would need to treat its badlands region as part of its national domain, policing and administering it like any other region.

Toward a Negotiated Agreement with India

The other critical issue for American diplomacy is the underlying problem that drives Pakistan's relationship with terror: India and Kashmir. The Pakistani state and Army have been obsessed with confronting India since the two nations achieved independence in 1947. It is to fight India asymmetrically that ISI created much of the modern *jihadi* infrastructure in South Asia, both in Kashmir and in Afghanistan.

Pakistan's Position

In the best case, the international community, led by the United States, would disrupt Pakistan's preoccupation with India by resolving the two countries' underlying dispute over Kashmir. From the Pakistani perspective, an optimal resolution of Kashmir would lead to the unification with Pakistan of the entire province, or at least the Muslim-dominated Valley of Kashmir—including the scenic city of Srinagar, currently the capital of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir.

With Kashmir "reunited" with Pakistan, the motivation to have nuclear weapons would be reduced, if not removed, and the need for a *jihadi* option to compel India to withdraw from the valley would disappear. This is precisely the outcome that Pakistani leaders have in mind when they urge American leaders to devote diplomatic and political energy to the Kashmir issue.

India's Position

Pakistan's preferred scenario is completely unrealistic. India has made it clear it will not withdraw from Kashmir. On the contrary, India argues it has already made a major concession by accepting the *de-facto* partition of the province among itself, Pakistan, and China. India is probably prepared to accept the Line of Control, in effect the ceasefire line of 1948, as the ultimate border with Pakistan. But, it is not prepared for a fundamental redrawing of borders to put the valley under Pakistan's sovereignty.

Still, India's position does not preclude a subtle effort to resolve the Kashmir problem on a realistic basis, complementing the ongoing Indo-Pakistani bilateral dialog. Already that dialog has produced a series of confidence-building measures between the two countries, including reopening transportation links, setting up hot lines between military commands, and holding periodic discussions at the foreign-minister level on issues that divide the two nations.

U.S. Non-involvement

Unfortunately, the current Indo-Pakistani dialog has not seriously addressed the Kashmir issue, due to the wide gulf between the two parties and India's refusal to negotiate while still a target of terrorist attacks planned and organized in Pakistan. Meanwhile, the United States has been reluctant to engage more actively in the Kashmir dispute in light of the Indian posture that outside intervention is unwarranted and that Kashmir is a purely bilateral issue. Faced with the likelihood of Indian rejection of U.S. involvement, American diplomacy relegated the Kashmir problem to the 'too hard' pot and left it to simmer.

The results have been all too predictable. The Kashmir issue periodically boils over, forcing the United States and the international community to step in to prevent a full-scale war. This was the case during the Kargil crisis in 1999, after the terrorist attack on the Indian parliament in December 2001, and again in 2002, when India mobilized on the Pakistani border.

Opportunity for Progress

A unique opportunity for quiet American diplomacy to help advance the Kashmir issue to a stable solution may occur in 2009. The U.S.-India nuclear deal, agreed to during President Bush's July 2005 visit to South Asia, should create a more solid and enduring basis for U.S.-Indian relations than ever before existed.

The deal (if implemented) removes the central obstacle to closer strategic ties between Washington and New Delhi: the nuclear proliferation problem, which has held back the development of the relationship for two decades. The deal should be implemented once India concludes its arrangements with the IAEA and the Nuclear Supplier Group.

In the new era of U.S.-Indian strategic partnership, Washington should work with India on many issues in the subcontinent and be able to encourage New Delhi to be more flexible on Kashmir. It is clearly in the American interest to defuse a lingering conflict that has generated global terrorism and repeatedly threatened to create a full-scale military confrontation engulfing the subcontinent.

It is likewise in India's interest to find a solution to a conflict that has gone on far too long. And, since the Kargil War in 1999, the Indians have been a bit more open to an American role in Kashmir, because they sense Washington leans toward a resolution on the basis of the *status quo*, which favors India.

The United States currently enjoys better relations with India than at any time in the last several decades and is in a position to gain the confidence of Pakistan as well. The rapprochement with India, begun by President Clinton and advanced by President Bush, is now supported by an almost uniquely bipartisan consensus in the American foreign policy establishment and the Congress. At the same time, the sanctions that poisoned U.S.-Pakistani ties for decades have been removed by legislation supported by both Republicans and Democrats. This is a unique moment.

Possible Formula

A Kashmir solution would have to be based around a formula that would accomplish two things at once: make the Line of Control between Indian and Pakistani authority in Kashmir a permanent and normal international border (perhaps with minor modifications); and render it a permeable frontier so that the Kashmiri people could live more normal lives.

In addition, a special condominium might be created to allow the two countries to work together on issues that are internal to Kashmir, such as transportation, the environment, sports, and tourism. For example, the two currencies of India and Pakistan could become legal tender on both sides of the border, an idea recently floated in India.

It is unlikely the two states will be able to reach an agreement on their own, given the history of mistrust that pervades both sides. A quiet American effort, led by the next President, is probably essential to any timely effort to move the parties toward a solution. This should not be a formal, public initiative; discretion and privacy are essential.

Fruits of an Agreement

Resolution of the Kashmiri issue would go a long way toward making Pakistan a more normal state, less preoccupied with hostility toward India. It would also remove a major rationale for the Army's disproportionate role in Pakistani governance and would facilitate genuine civilian democratic rule in the country.

A resolution of the major outstanding issue between Islamabad and New Delhi would reduce the arms race and the risk of nuclear conflict. And, it would defuse Pakistan's desire to find allies to fight asymmetric warfare against India—allies that could include the Taliban, Lashkar-e Tayyaba, and Al Qa'eda.

Of course, it would not resolve all the tensions between the two neighbors or dissolve the threat of the Taliban in Afghanistan. But, more than anything else that could

realistically be achieved, it would set the stage for a different era in the subcontinent and for more productive interactions between the international community and Pakistan.

The alternative to diplomatic engagement is to let Kashmir simmer. In the long run, this approach is virtually certain to lead to another crisis. Sooner or later, the two countries will again find themselves on the precipice of war. In a worst-case scenario, a terrorist incident like the July 2006 metro bombings in Mumbai or the December 1999 hijacking of Indian Airlines flight 814—both linked to ISI—could spark an Indian military response against targets in Pakistan suspected of planning and orchestrating terrorism. And that could lead to nuclear war.

Make Nuclear Weapons More Secure

For 25 years the United States sought to keep Pakistan from becoming a nuclear weapons state. Ultimately, that effort failed. We now have a strong interest in ensuring the security of the weapons stockpile Pakistan is developing—somewhere between 50 and 200 bombs.

On paper Pakistan has an impressive national command structure to ensure the weapons are kept under its control, a system designed in part with American help. But, civil unrest, extremism within the Army or ISI, or international conflict could lead to a diversion of part of the nuclear arsenal. Even the theft of one weapon could be a disaster. One area for progress would be to account for so-called “orphan” material, items that Khan and his ilk may have kept off-line in the past.

Former Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet describes in his memoirs the efforts of Al Qa’eda to get its hands on a nuclear weapon. Pakistan’s arsenal is its most likely target, due to geographic proximity and Al Qa’eda’s penetration of the Pakistani security services.

The next President of the United States should greatly intensify efforts to ensure the security of Pakistan's weapons arsenal. To this end, he or she should avoid reckless talk about using unilateral means to secure the Pakistani systems. We in America do not know where the warheads are stored, so we cannot "seize" them. Any attempt to do so will be resisted by the Pakistani armed forces, steadfastly committed to keeping the nation's nuclear deterrent (their crown jewels of defense) out of foreign hands. Talking about such contingency options only reinforces the suspicion of many Pakistanis, including vocal elements of the officer corps, that we have an ulterior motive for cooperating on nuclear security issues.

In this, as in other policy areas, the next President must adopt a more sophisticated approach to Pakistan and its terror nexus that goes beyond threats and sanctions, beyond commando raids and intelligence cooperation, beyond aid and aircraft sales. It is time to come to grips with what motivates Pakistan's behavior and to help Islamabad make peace with itself and its neighbors.

About the Authors and the Project

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Opportunity 08 aims to help 2008 presidential candidates and the public focus on critical issues facing the nation, presenting policy ideas on a wide array of domestic and foreign policy questions. The project is committed to providing both independent policy solutions and background material on issues of concern to voters.