

# INDIA-PAKISTAN RIVALRY IN AFGHANISTAN

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Indian and Pakistani competition in Afghanistan long precedes the advent of the Hamid Karzai regime. Both states, since their emergence from the break-up of the British colonial empire in South Asia in 1947, have had ties with a range of Afghan governments. This essay will trace the origins of the Indo-Pakistani rivalry in Afghanistan, assess India's current status and role in Afghanistan in the context of the Indo-Pakistani rivalry and discuss the implications for American policy.

## EARLY INDO-PAKISTANI COMPETITION IN AFGHANISTAN

Despite Pakistan's physical proximity to Afghanistan, the two have not always enjoyed the most cordial relations thanks to differences over the Durand Line. Indeed, during the long rule of King Zahir Shah (1933-1973), India actually had better relations with Afghanistan than did Pakistan, barring a brief rupture during the 1965 Indo-Pakistani conflict.

Even after Zahir's overthrow in 1973, India managed to maintain close ties with the subsequent communist regimes. Contrary to popular belief, India was less than pleased with the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, after failing to engage Pakistan with the prospects of a regional solution to the Soviet invasion and faced with substantial American military and economic assistance to Pakistan (\$3.2 billion for six years), India avoided any public censure of the Soviet occupation. It chose instead to work with successive Soviet puppet regimes in Afghanistan because it cared little for the Islamist ideological orientation shared by a bulk of the Afghan *mujahideen* groups that Pakistan was supporting on behalf of the United States.<sup>2</sup> India was also loath to cede its military superiority over Pakistan and relied on the Soviets to provide advanced weaponry at bargain-basement prices.<sup>3</sup> During the course of the Afghan war, India came to support Ahmed Shah Massoud's Northern Alliance because of its hostility toward the Pakistani-supported *mujahideen* groups. Moreover, a long-standing rivalry over

the Afghanistan-Pakistan border had exacerbated the tensions between the two countries since the end of British rule in India. The ethnically Pashtun and Baluch belts straddling the Durand Line made that demarcation illegitimate in the eyes of many in the tribal areas. India was soon able to exploit this rivalry following partition. Pashtun nationalists, who had already been advocating for a "Pashtunistan," took the matter to a *loya jirga* in 1949. The *jirga* believed that Pakistan, being a new state at the time, was not an historic extension of British India, and therefore all treaties signed prior to independence were nullified. This included the demarcation of the Durand Line and thus Pakistan's putative annex of tribal areas more closely aligned with Afghanistan. Throughout the Cold War, India would be able to pay lip service to the idea of a "Pashtunistan" with the goal of keeping Pakistan's army occupied on its restive western border.<sup>4</sup>

India's ability to maintain good relations with Afghanistan drew to a close with the Pakistani-aided and abetted Taliban victory in 1996.<sup>5</sup> The Taliban victory finally gave Pakistan's politico-military establishment a long-sought goal: namely, what they believed to be a pliant regime in Afghanistan, one that would grant it strategic depth against India. India, on the other hand, was forced to abandon its embassy and withdraw its diplomatic personnel from Afghanistan. It was during this period that Pakistan managed to bolster its ties with the Taliban regime until after the tragic events of 11 September 2001.

Given Pakistan's close ties to the Taliban regime, India did not abandon its links with the Northern Alliance. In early 2001, as the Northern Alliance was engaged in battle with Taliban forces, India reportedly provided Massoud's forces with high-altitude warfare equipment, defense advisors and helicopter technicians. Indian medical personnel also apparently treated wounded Northern Alliance members at a hospital in Farkhor in Tajikistan near the Afghan-Tajik border. It is also believed that India supported anti-Taliban attacks from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.<sup>6</sup>

#### THE END OF THE TALIBAN REGIME

Despite Massoud's assassination on the eve of the developments of 9/11, India did not sever its ties to the Northern Alliance. It also quietly supported the American-led effort to dismantle the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. India managed to secure a place during the Bonn Conference on Afghanistan in December 2004. It found it quite advantageous that the United States chose to throw in its lot with Hamid Karzai and his supporters at Bonn. The Taliban had assassinated Karzai's father in Pakistan, and Karzai had long lived in India and had even obtained an undergraduate degree from Himachal Pradesh University. Consequently, India had much reason to be pleased with his emergence as both the consensus and the U.S.-

supported candidate for president of Afghanistan.

In addition to Karzai, India has excellent relations with the Tajik former Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah, who as of writing is locked in a second-round run-off debate for the presidency. It also has long-standing links with Mohammed Fahim, who ran for the vice presidency. The current minister of education, Mohammed Haneef, is believed to be well-disposed toward India; a substantial number of Indian education officials are providing technical assistance to his ministry.<sup>7</sup> Finally, another Tajik, a former Northern Alliance commander and current speaker of the Afghan parliament Younus Qanooni is also known for his pro-India sympathies.

Disturbingly, a division of sympathies between a Tajik-dominated northern Afghanistan and a Pashtun-controlled central government could prove to be a new battleground considering the heated responses to vote tampering in the August presidential election. Accusations have been rampant, especially in the North where support for Abdullah was expected to be high. In the first round of elections, however, Hamid Karzai received what many claim to be a higher than reasonably expected vote total in these predominantly Tajik areas. In fact, an international audit conducted in October deemed 28 percent of Karzai's nearly 3.1 million votes to be fraudulent. As of writing it is not clear what proportion of these fraudulent votes came from northern Tajik regions, but the assessment ultimately raised Abdullah's percentage of the vote and reduced Karzai's support below the majority requirement to prevent a second round of voting.<sup>8</sup> Whether Karzai rejects the electoral commission's assessment or if a power-sharing agreement is adopted, both scenarios present constitutional challenges for Afghanistan that could potentially exacerbate an ethnic divide. A recent report has noticed the demand for arms rapidly increase in northern Afghanistan during past months, presumably as a build-up should the election results stoke the ire of a northern population that perceives themselves as disenfranchised.<sup>9</sup> This is not to say that a civil war is imminent, but the possibility of violence between a pro-Indian Tajik leadership and a U.S.-backed Pashtun regime should arouse concern for those countries' vested interests in Afghanistan.

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#### THE SCOPE AND AIMS OF INDIAN ASSISTANCE

India's foreign policy toward Central Asia was once seen as "directionless."<sup>10</sup>

Since 2000, however, and especially since the end of 2001, India has developed an arsenal of economic, diplomatic and military tools in its pursuit of a more coordinated strategy in the region. This is in contrast to the paltry development aid that Pakistan is able to provide to Kabul. The monetary value of India's assistance to Afghanistan far surpasses that of Pakistan. Perhaps this is due to the simple incongruity between those countries' respective economic situations. In April 2009, however, on the condition of anonymity, one former high-ranking

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Afghan official revealed that Afghanistan is wary of Pakistani aid due to past indiscretions and meddling with its affairs. In other words, Kabul turns a suspicious eye toward aid from Islamabad due to its past support for the Taliban.<sup>11</sup> This is in part due to ongoing disputes over the Durand Line, which have never been resolved between Afghanistan and Pakistan, a debate that centers on the fate of the predominantly Pashtun tribes along the border. In the words of Barnett Rubin and Abubakar Siddique, "The long history of each state offering sanctuary to the other's opponents has built bitterness and mistrust between the two neighbors."<sup>12</sup>

India, for its part, is seeking a broader pan-Asian influence, not just as a major power on the subconti-

nent but also as a major player in the larger region and beyond to the whole world. India has a history of unilaterally granting central Asian neighbors favorability in trade and economic agreements. This is not least due to Central Asia's burgeoning position as a major resource provider in the oil and natural gas sectors. Moreover, its efforts to form an "extended security horizon," focused on but not limited to Pakistan, has also brought enhanced military and diplomatic engagement. Stephen Blank of the Strategic Studies Institute concedes that it was the security dimension, rather than economics, that first piqued India's interest in the region. The rise of China and of Islamist militancy in the region led it to aggressively pursue its economic and strategic interests in the area. The demise of the Soviet Union had earlier stoked Indian fears about a power vacuum developing in Central Asia.<sup>13</sup>

In the aftermath of the fall of the Taliban regime, India moved with considerable dispatch to ensure that it had a substantial footprint in the country. In addition to reopening its embassy in Kabul, it established two new consulates in Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif and reopened the ones in Kandahar and Jalalabad.

In terms of foreign assistance, India has spent some \$750 million in developmental funds in the war-ravaged country.<sup>14</sup> To date, it has promised to spend as

much as \$1.6 billion, making it the sixth largest bilateral donor to the country.<sup>15</sup> It sought to build goodwill in Afghanistan through a series of simple but targeted forms of assistance. For example, it offered to help rebuild the Afghan national airline, Ariana. To that end, it donated to Ariana three Airbus 300 aircraft in 2002, despite a shortage in its own fleet, and also offered to train Afghan commercial pilots.<sup>16</sup>

India has donated 400 buses and 200 minibuses and has provided telecommunications personnel who have successfully restored and digitized telecommunications networks in at least eleven provinces. Furthermore, it has enabled some 2,000 Afghan nationals to undergo professional training in a variety of fields in India.<sup>17</sup> It has also been involved in the construction of power transmission lines in northern Afghanistan, digging wells in six provinces, running sanitation projects in Kabul and using solar energy to light up 100 villages.<sup>18</sup> Its most significant developmental activities, however, have been the construction of a road that connects Delaram in western Afghanistan with Zaranj on Afghanistan's border with Iran and another that links Kandahar with Spin Boldak, a town near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.<sup>19</sup> The construction of these particular roads is hardly surprising as they enable Iran, which has little fondness for the Taliban or Pakistan, to develop closer ties with the present regime in Kabul and to work in concert with India.<sup>20</sup> They also provide access to strategic ports, which can be greatly utilized if and when India taps into the burgeoning fossil fuel resource deposits in Central Asia. Whether or not they also enable India to pursue intelligence-gathering operations or espionage against Pakistan remains a matter of speculation and debate.

India has also been involved in other projects that have considerable symbolic value. It has been instrumental, for example, in the construction of a new Afghan parliament in Kabul at a cost of \$25 million.<sup>21</sup> India also played a key role in ensuring Afghanistan's inclusion in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in November 2005. Even though the organization's mandate is quite limited, it is the only regional organization in South Asia, and so Afghanistan's entry into it carries considerable symbolic value.

Finally, even though India has ruled out any formal military presence in Afghanistan thus far, it should be noted that in April 2008, Afghanistan's defense minister, Abdul Rahim Wardak, visited New Delhi and met with his Indian counterpart, A.K. Antony, to discuss possible military cooperation. Wardak also visited the headquarters of the Indian Army's 15<sup>th</sup> Corps located in Srinagar, the capital

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of the Indian-controlled portion of the disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir. It is also believed Wardak may seek India's assistance in maintaining Soviet-era helicopter gunships.<sup>22</sup>

#### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INDIAN PRESENCE IN AFGHANISTAN

It would be chimerical to assume that the very substantial Indian presence and humanitarian role in Afghanistan simply stem from a desire to promote the security and stability of the state. Instead, India's principal goals in Afghanistan are, broadly speaking, two-fold.

First, India seeks to prevent a restoration of any form of a resurgent Taliban regime in the state. Moreover, India seeks to limit Pakistan's influence over any emergent regime in Afghanistan and to ensure that no regime emerges in Afghanistan that is fundamentally hostile toward India. As has been seen in many studies of the Afghan Taliban and the militant groups that have thrived within

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Pakistan, one major imperative of Indian policy in Afghanistan is to prevent the rise of the brand of Islamist militancy that has been prevalent over the past six decades. It is therefore a central concern of India's to foster good relations with the Pashtun majority in Afghanistan, especially now as that majority holds at least nominal power in Kabul. This is not simply to influence the Afghan ability to prevent a re-emergence of an anti-India militant milieu. The rise of Islamist militancy on both sides of the Durand Line also correlates strongly with the rise in militant capabilities in Kashmir and across the Line of Control. The Islamist militant groups supported by Pakistan, at least its clients such as, *inter alia*, the Lashkar-e-Taiba and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, are well known to coordinate training,

resource allocation and logistical support with groups operating out of northwest Pakistan. Thus, as long as central control and legitimacy continues to elude Kabul, the conflagration in Kashmir will have a ready supply of tinder. India's security and diplomatic concerns in Afghanistan are therefore well-founded.<sup>23</sup> India aspires to develop a sufficient diplomatic and intelligence network within the country to be able to monitor Pakistan's activities within Afghanistan and, if necessary, to work to curtail them.

Second, India is seeking to develop long-term diplomatic ties and economic arrangements with a stable, popular and pro-Indian regime in Afghanistan, which

then enables India to leapfrog Pakistan and build robust strategic and economic ties with the energy rich states of Central Asia. In what Stephen Blank characterizes as a “great game” strategy, India’s goals reflect the desire to control overland routes to maritime ports for Central Asian resources by denying both China and Pakistan the ability to threaten Indian assets in the region.<sup>24</sup> As discussed below, even if its involvement in Afghanistan disconcerts Pakistan, it is highly unlikely that India will curb its activities, humanitarian or otherwise, anytime soon. This is primarily due to the fact that for the first time in recent history the interests of India and the United States in Afghanistan dovetail. Both states seek a peaceful, secure and non-Talibanized Afghanistan. It was recently reported that in order to further these goals, the United States has agreed to directly mediate back channel talks between India and Pakistan regarding the regional war on terror and “the establishment of a ‘fair bargain’ between India and Pakistan over their respective interests in Afghanistan.”<sup>25</sup>

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It is therefore interesting to note, and important to underscore, that unlike the Cold War years, India has no neuralgic hostility toward either the American role in Afghanistan or the presence of the International Security Assistance Force in the country. Indeed, were it not for Pakistan’s deep-seated anxieties of *any* Indian activity within Afghanistan, many in India’s policymaking circles would not be averse to an Indian military presence within the country.

#### WHY PAKISTAN’S HOSTILITY?

What makes the issue of Indian and Pakistanis actions in Afghanistan so thorny is that, to some observers, all three parties have overriding national interests in the situation.<sup>26</sup> For India, there are the issues of interest to a rising regional and global power, including access to valuable resources. New Delhi sees its efforts going hand-in-hand with the needs in Kabul. Presidential candidate Abdullah Abdullah sees current Indian support as essential to Afghan peace and development, something over which Pakistan categorically has no veto power. But Barnett Rubin sees Pakistan’s concerns over India’s involvement in Afghanistan as one of its “legitimate interests.”<sup>27</sup> Regardless of whether Pakistan’s desires for its own strategic involvement in Afghanistan are outdated, Islamabad nonetheless sees itself as surrounded by inimical forces, with China viewed as its only friendly neighbor. In many ways, Pakistan appears to be applying the same gravity—as well as the same concerns for its historically nebulous national identity issues—to India’s involve-

ment in Afghanistan as it does to the Kashmir issue.

India's growing presence and influence in Afghanistan undercuts the Pakistani military establishment's long-term obsession with the quest for "strategic depth" against India. This quest, which has its origins in Pakistan's disastrous defeat in the third Indo-Pakistani conflict in 1971, is not one that Pakistan's military establishment will easily abandon. Consequently, it will relentlessly work, and go to considerable lengths, to undermine a cordial Indo-Afghan relationship and threaten

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Indian officials and personnel within Afghanistan. It is hardly surprising that the United States identified Pakistani involvement in the suicide bombing of the Indian embassy in July 2008.<sup>28</sup>

Pakistan has seen India's rapid insertion of material support into Afghanistan as a strategic loss and as rolling back decades of efforts to establish an Islamic alliance between Islamabad and Kabul. This assumed alliance had for years kept India away from Pakistan's western border but now Pakistan asserts

that Delhi's consulates close to the Durand Line serve as hubs for aiding the Baluch insurgency. Pakistan assumes that any Indian involvement in Afghanistan is pernicious. This is especially true amid the calls for secession in some circles of Baluch nationalists and the alliance of northern Baluchis with tribes in FATA in an effort to form an ethnically Pashtun province in Pakistan.<sup>29</sup>

Afghanistan has a history of aiding Baluch nationalists as part and parcel of the tit-for-tat support that each country supplies to the enemies of the other. According to Barnett Rubin and Abubakar Siddique, the Afghan government extended aid to some 30,000 Baluchi tribesmen in the 1970s.<sup>30</sup> Pakistan is now worried about similar aid from an Afghan-allied India; to Pakistan the claims are legitimate.

Many Baluchis are unhappy with the disproportionate employment of non-Baluchis in local development projects. Furthermore, they are not happy with what they perceive as an unfair distribution of royalties generated from their province's natural resources. India has a vested interest in Baluchistan as a likely overland route for a future natural gas pipeline but it is unclear how fomenting instability in Baluchistan could possibly benefit India on this account. One argument is that Baluchistan's detachment from Islamabad would divest it from any future Indo-Pakistan tensions by placing it squarely in Delhi's court. In the light of India's involvement in stabilizing Afghanistan, however, it does not follow that India would want to destabilize Baluchistan. Conflict in that province would incur the same obstacles for Indian resource control that would be present in a



fractious Afghanistan. Hamid Mir believes, "there is no harm for India to discuss Baluchistan with Pakistan because stability in Baluchistan will ultimately benefit India."<sup>31</sup>

Some participants in a recent Council on Foreign Relations roundtable raised the notion that India's intelligence services may wish to bleed Pakistan in areas such as Baluchistan as repayment for the decades of covert warfare orchestrated by Pakistan in Kashmir.<sup>32</sup> As much as Indians might boast about their ability to channel actions against Pakistan using interlocutors in the border areas, questions remain as to why the actual evidence is so thin.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, some members of the roundtable acknowledged that it would probably not be in India's best long-term interest to support groups who could instantly turn against them.<sup>34</sup> Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh even encountered domestic opposition to his allowance for Baluchistan to make its way into the joint India-Pakistan statement in Sharm-el-Sheikh in July 2009. There are reports that Pakistani Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani pressured Singh by presenting a dossier of Indian incursions into Baluchistan to interfere with the construction of Gwadar Port.<sup>35</sup> The Gwadar Port, located on the coast of Baluchistan and funded by China, has strategic implications for both India and Pakistan as a deep-water port on the Indian Ocean for shipments of Central Asian resources. While there is no evidence that such a dossier was seen by Singh, Pakistan's strategy, it seems, was to stoke tensions: first, by suggesting that Baluch militants were targeting Chinese engineers at India's behest and, second, by intending that news of the attacks would garner further anti-India sympathies among Islamist militants and their supporters.

Additionally, Pakistan fears that India will exploit its expanding diplomatic presence to exploit extant indigenous tensions within Pakistan, particularly in the long-troubled province of Baluchistan, which abuts Afghanistan.<sup>36</sup> As noted American journalist Robert Kaplan has written, "In the mind of the ISI, India uses its consulates in Afghanistan to back rebels in Pakistan's southwestern province of Baluchistan, whose capital, Quetta, is only a few hours drive from Kandahar."<sup>37</sup> Pakistan's anxieties notwithstanding, it is important to note that Richard Holbrooke, President Obama's special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, stated in response to a direct question from a Pakistani interviewer that "there is no evidence at all that Indian are supporting miscreants" in Pakistan along its border with Afghanistan.<sup>38</sup> In further briefings, Holbrooke has reiterated that Pakistan has not been able to provide any convincing support to the alarming proliferation of allegations in the media that India is aiding the nationalist Baluchi struggle. Some have equated Holbrooke's statements to an explicit "bail out" of New Delhi by the United States.<sup>39</sup> Other American sources also believe that India's role in Afghanistan is constructive.<sup>40</sup>

There have even been debates within Pakistan over India's alleged involvement in Baluchistan. Rehman Malik, the prime minister's adviser on interior affairs, directly accused India and Afghanistan of supporting the Baluch National Army. He also accused the Baluch Liberation Army (BLA) of the February 2009 kidnapping of UNHCR official John Solecki, saying the BLA wants to draw world attention to their demands for secession. The accusation came during April's Pakistan parliament investigations into the death of three Baluch politicians in the province. Several Baluch MPs walked out of the hearings in protest, and others believed that the timing was very unfortunate because interjecting direct foreign involvement on the Baluch issue would mar the investigation and create further enmity. Malik was adamant, however, that Brahamdagh Bugti, the son of former BLA leader Nawab Akbar Bugti, was training thousands of men on Afghanistan soil.<sup>41</sup>

Given long-term Indian-Pakistani competition, Pakistan seeks to hobble India's expanding strategic, diplomatic and economic ties with the states of Central Asia. Moreover, the aid that India has provided for the construction of major infrastructure—power plants, transmission lines, schools, hospitals and roads, including the Zaranj-Delaram highway—is ending Afghanistan's dependence on Pakistan, especially for access to Indian Ocean ports.<sup>42</sup> India is also assisting in the building of schools in the volatile Afghan province of Kunar. As a result, it seems that India has not only developed a concerted Afghan strategy, but has also become the “preferred” ally in that country, having invested much more than Pakistan's \$300 million.<sup>43</sup> According to an ABC poll conducted between 30 December 2008 and 12 January 2009, 74 percent of Afghans hold favorable opinions toward India, while 8 percent hold favorable opinions toward Pakistan.<sup>44</sup>

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR AMERICAN POLICY

After nearly four decades of mutual distrust and neglect, the United States and India have had significantly overlapping interests in South Asia in general and in Afghanistan in particular for the past decade or so. A discussion of the convergence of Indian-U.S. interests in South Asia can be found elsewhere.<sup>45</sup> The present discussion will be confined to the convergence of Indian-U.S. interests in Afghanistan.

First and foremost, neither India nor the United States is in favor of the resurgence of a reconstituted Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Such a regime would be downright inimical to both Indian and American interests. In this context it needs to be underscored that Al Qaeda and the Taliban have common interests and goals and remain unremittingly hostile toward the Western world, the United States and India. It is also worth noting that the vast majority of the Afghans see no meaningful purpose in negotiating with the “moderate Taliban.”<sup>46</sup> To start, there is

hardly any agreement over whether a distinction between “good” or “bad” Taliban can be made, or is even worth pursuing.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, 58 percent of Afghans see the Taliban as the “biggest danger” in their country and between 86 and 90 percent oppose the presence of the Taliban and “jihadi fighters from other countries” in Afghanistan.<sup>48</sup> To that end, both India and the United States share a common interest in preventing the Taliban from using Pakistan’s borderlands to regroup and reconstitute.


Second, both states would like to see the emergence of a stable, secure and broadly representative government in Afghanistan that does not become a safe haven for any radical Islamist groups. In a May 2009 interview, India’s special envoy to Afghanistan, Satinder Lambah, confirmed that while India is seen as crucial to the development of Afghanistan, his country is not an explicit part of the U.S. AfPak strategy. He believes that when General David Petraeus told a U.S. House committee meeting that India is in Richard Holbrooke’s “portfolio,” that Petraeus is simply stating a factual position that India’s association is required “for every solution in Afghanistan.” According to Lambah, there is no justification for Pakistani complaints about Indian involvement in Afghanistan. Moreover, he rejects Pakistan’s claims that tensions with India are distracting from counter-terrorism efforts by citing the period of 2004 to 2007 during which Indian and Pakistani relations were at an historic high. There is no correlation with Pakistan’s argument, however, because this period also witnessed worsening situations in both Pakistan and Afghanistan.<sup>49</sup>

Third, bilateral rapprochement between India and Pakistan is crucial for the development of Afghanistan. Another large-scale conflict between India and Pakistan would have dire ripple effects on the well-being of Afghanistan. Mir Ahmad Joyenda, deputy head of the Parliamentary Committee on International Affairs, believes that the consequences of a regional war would be two-fold for Afghanistan. First, Joyenda believes the effects would be primarily economic for Afghanistan, referring to a potential drop in foodstuff imports from Pakistan that could result in famine. A second consequence of a conflict would be a massive exodus of Pakistani refugees across the Durand Line, something that Afghanistan would not be able to accommodate.<sup>50</sup> The underlying implications of this broader humanitarian crisis are the potential for militant elements to infiltrate the refugee population and the possibility that the international aid community would shift already scarce resources away from rebuilding efforts in other regions of Afghanistan. Furthermore, there are security

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implications for Afghanistan's southern regions if Pakistan shifts all of its forces toward India.

Given these shared interests, the Indian role and activities in Afghanistan are far from incompatible with American goals and interests. As Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke stated in his April 2009 visit to the region, "Everyone in this part of the world should recognize that for the first time since partition, India, Pakistan and the U.S. face a common threat and a common challenge, and we have a common task." He added, "[N]ow as we face a common threat, we must work together... We know it's going to be difficult, but the national security interests of all three countries are clearly at stake."<sup>51</sup> The task that lies before American policymakers is to put aside past concerns, however legitimate, of Indian ties to and support for various communist regimes and focus on the current convergence of interests. The Pakistan Policy Working Group recommended that Afghanistan must back a neutral relationship with India and Pakistan, in which it does not choose sides and rather calls for amicable relations with both.<sup>52</sup> By the same token, the Government of India should also assure the United States it sees little interest in destabilizing a Pakistan that is caught in a political vortex largely of its own making. 

## NOTES

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