United Kingdom's Pakistan policy post-9/11

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This article assesses the United Kingdom's policy towards Pakistan since September 2001 attacks on the United States - including its context, evolution, attributes and motivations. It makes four main arguments: First, the UK's perspective on Pakistan is shaped largely by its military engagement in the Afghan war, in line with NATO's exit strategy. Second, while the British policy towards Pakistan is essentially focused on counter-terrorism, it does cover other areas of enduring significance such as trade, development and education. Third, this policy is linked with Britain's domestic security concerns arising out of Pakistan-linked instances of radicalisation and terrorism involving British Muslim/Pakistani community. Finally, the UK tends to mostly follow the US lead in its dealings with Pakistan - even though noticeable differences exist in their respective counter-terrorism stances. A related observation in this regard pertains to relative stability of UK-Pakistan relations as compared to the disruptive nature of US-Pakistan ties.

The UK is a principal US ally, and has been at the forefront of European states cultivating US interests in recent regional conflicts, including the Afghan war. Its relationship with Pakistan is also of long-standing nature, shaped by historical connections and the existence of a sizeable Pakistani Diaspora in the UK. Given that, any deterioration in US-Pakistan relations creates a dilemma for the British government, which is often resolved through mediating between the two countries—as reportedly happened during the most recent deterioration in US-Pakistani relationship from early 2011 to mid-2012. Theoretically speaking, the British counter-terrorism engagement in Pakistan seems to display both realist and liberal streaks—the former is driven by security interests as an outcome of British global alliance relationship with the US, and the latter is reflected in developmental pursuits denoting UK's role as an important member of the European Union.

The following pages first lay down the broader, historical context for the British policy towards Pakistan in the post-9/11 period, and then elaborate the main arguments of the study - a section that also covers the evolution of this policy under three successive British prime ministers, including Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and David Cameron. The final section covering the comparison

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between British and American approaches towards Pakistan in the post-9/11 period, including the UK's role in defusing tensions in US-Pakistan relations, is followed by a few concluding observations.

Broader Context

The broader context for the post-9/11 British policy towards Pakistan is historical and includes some inescapable realities of UK-Pakistan relationship. With the downfall of the British Empire, the UK may have lost the ability to independently determine the course of world affairs in the last over six decades. However, factors such as its close partnership with the US during and after the Cold War as a crucial European NATO country, and its status as a veto power at the UN Security Council, important player in the European Union, G-8 or G-20 and other international institutions, a founding leader of the Commonwealth of Nations and the world's sixth largest economy duly empower Great Britain to remain proactively engaged in global affairs. This explains why Pakistan considers its relationship with the UK as vitally important. However, there are at least three additional reasons for the existence of a largely uninterrupted and deep relationship between the two countries since the end of the British rule in India and Pakistan's creation in 1947.

First, Pakistan's civil-military, bureaucratic-political elites have continuingly maintained deep, multifaceted connections with the former colonial power. In a sense, there has never been a break in the post-colonial state's relationship with imperial history. So much so that Pakistan's political battles are now fought in London by political elites—old and emerging, in exile or otherwise—with considerable personal and business stakes in the UK.[1] While this factor sustains the broadly cooperative spirit in British-Pakistan ties, it also enables the UK to remain interested in and possibly influence Pakistani politics.[2] Beyond politics, there exists a multiplicity of British connections spanning security, economic and social domains, by virtue of both history and family ties. A host of institutional linkages and cooperative mechanisms exist between the two countries' militaries. Economically, the UK is the second largest bilateral overseas investor in Pakistan[3] and the fourth largest trading partner among OECD countries. About £1.2 billion of trade flows between the two countries annually, and it may double by 2015[4] through enhanced institutional arrangements.

A second reason that guarantees cooperative sustenance in UK-Pakistan ties is a million-strong community of British citizens of Pakistani origin having strong family and national bonds with the motherland. Pakistani Diaspora in the UK retains these connections through frequent travelling back and forth[5] and

being glued to local Urdu and Pakistani TV channels, as well as by contributing to Pakistan's economy in the form of remittances and charitable assistance during national calamities such as recent floods and earthquake. Even though constituting only a fraction of the UK population, 1.5 per cent - with 85 per cent hailing from Azad Jammu and Kashmir

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region - British Pakistanis also play an important role in UK politics by populating important constituencies or becoming members of the House of Commons and House of Lords. Over a dozen of them currently populate the two houses of British parliament. They, along with notable businessmen,[6] are believed to constitute "a skilful and far-reaching Pakistani lobby."[7] The House of Commons' debate on the Kashmir issue in September 2011, for instance, was an outcome of such lobbying. It is, however, questionable whether this lobby has the capacity to credibly influence the UK's over all policy towards Pakistan.

Third, British-Pakistani relations have not been as chequered and unstable as US-Pakistan ties have been in their respective historical evolution. The two countries have maintained a broadly cooperative spirit in their relationship, even amid serious deterioration in US-Pakistan ties such as from early 2011 to mid-2012. However, UK-Pakistan relations did display enhanced cooperation whenever Pakistan's strategic value for the US-led West surged - for instance, during the Cold War period, when the country acted as a bulwark against Soviet Communism in Afghanistan and the region until the late 80s. Pakistan's consequent sponsorship of the Taliban in Afghanistan and its nuclear programme, alongside the economic rise of India and its recognition by the West in the 90s, did strain British-Pakistani relationship. But the impact was only temporary, and largely an outcome of the British stance on democracy and nuclear non-proliferation in South Asia. The UK joined the international sanctions regime against India and Pakistan after they tested nuclear weapons in 1998. The 1999 military coup by General Pervez Musharraf led to Pakistan's expulsion from the British Commonwealth. It was only after the attacks of September 11, 2001 in the United States that the British, like their American and other Western counterparts, re-acknowledged Pakistan's strategic significance for waging the war in Afghanistan—and began cooperating with its military regime. Economic sanctions against Pakistan were removed, and its Commonwealth membership restored.

The subsequent period has seen consolidation of UK-Pakistan relations in political, security, economic, and social domains through enhanced interaction between top officials of the two countries. Since late 2001, Pakistan, alongside Afghanistan, has been a subject of utmost concern for the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). Perhaps that is why, in April 2011, a new position of Director General (Afghanistan and Pakistan) was created in the FCO's department for South Asia and Afghanistan. Since June 2010, the UK also has a Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. In May 2010, the Cameron government established the National Security Council (NSC) - which is presently the principal institution "reviewing threats of British national security, and offering a unified governmental response by coordinating the work of foreign, defence, intelligence, home, and other arms of government contributing to national security." Since the UK officially identifies Afghanistan and Pakistan as two important sources of these threats, issues pertaining to Pakistan policy fall within the NSC preview. There is, however, parliamentary scrutiny of this policy. In February 2011, for instance, the House of Commons' Foreign Affairs Committee published a comprehensive report titled *The UK's Foreign Policy approach to Afghanistan and Pakistan,*[8] taking the government to task on a number of issues and offering various alternative policy options. The report is based on several written statements and testimonies from scholars and officials, including Foreign Secretary William Hague.

The UK's policy towards Pakistan is expressed through pronouncements by top British leaders, including the prime minister, foreign secretary and other top ranking political, diplomatic and defence officials—as well as by the tangible steps the government takes for implementing the goals of its foreign and national security strategy and policy. These goals, and the interests and motivations underpinning them, are enunciated in some recent official publications. Among others, they include the written evidence from the FCO underlining the current British perspective on Pakistan, enclosed in the afore-mentioned House of Commons' Foreign Affairs Committee report; the April 2009 report by the Brown government titled *The UK Policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan: The Way Forward*,[9] whose key points remain substantively relevant to the current British approach towards Pakistan; as well as two additional documents, one describing the UK's National Security Strategy[10] unveiled in October 2010 and another titled *CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism*[11] published in July 2011, which have provisions relevant to the UK's Pakistan policy. These and other source material—including official statements, public disclosures by former diplomatic and defence officials, media reports, independent policy papers, and recently published literature—form the basis of the present study's key contentions.

Main Arguments

The United Kingdom's post-9/11 Pakistan policy seems to display four distinct features. First, the UK's military engagement in the Afghan war, with a troops' contribution second only to the US's, seems to predominantly shape its approach towards Pakistan. While urging Pakistan to address the issue of support to Afghan insurgency from its tribal regions, the UK appreciates Pakistan's counter-terrorism efforts while recognising the difficulties they entail. However, as the process of drawing down foreign troops from Afghanistan proceeds in accordance with the NATO's exit strategy announced at its Chicago summit in May 2012, the UK government's focus has shifted to entailing Pakistan's cooperation in Afghan reconciliation.

Much of the reason why Pakistan remains on top of the UK's present coalition government's foreign policy priorities, and has been since 9/11, is because of the extensive British military and civilian engagement in Afghanistan. The British military has the second largest number of troops in Afghanistan after the US, with its force levels at the start of 2013 numbering over 9,000. At the November 2010 NATO summit in Lisbon, Prime Minister Cameron had announced to withdraw all British combat troops from Afghanistan by 2015. In December 2012, he announced to withdraw 3,800 British combat troops by the end of 2013, which will bring the British troops' level down to 5,200 at the start of 2014.[12] Frustration with the military effort, unaffordability of the war in terms of the troops' casualties (438 dead as of January 2013[13]) and financial cost of the war (which may run to £20 billion by 2014[14]) as well as significant erosion in public support for it are major motivations behind the UK government's declaration of a firm troops' withdrawal deadline. However, whatever the number of British troops engaged in the Afghan war is, their safety and security will remain a principal British priority.

Even though, under UK's counter-terrorism strategy announced in July 2011, the threat from al-Qaeda in Afghanistan had receded, the organisation and terrorist groups linked to it were still present in Afghanistan and Pakistan's tribal areas. CONTEST described "the greatest threat to the UK" in the last two years [until mid 2011] as coming "from terrorist groups based in Pakistan," while considering the "threat level in the UK from international terrorism" during the period as "severe."[15] According to the FCO, "reducing the threat emanating from within Pakistan is a top foreign policy priority and that in its engagement with Pakistan it continues to urge Pakistan to dismantle all militant and terrorist groups operating on, and from, Pakistani soil."[16] Therefore, in its view, "Pakistan's commitment to tackling this threat is important both for regional

stability and the security of the UK, in denying operational space to both domestic and international terrorists."[17]

While UK's successive leaders since late 2001 have mostly preferred to cooperatively resolve this core counter-terrorism issue with Pakistan, they have sometime expressed impatience over it. The most serious of such instances occurred in July 2010, when Prime Minister Cameron during a visit to India accused Pakistan of double-dealing on terrorism by saying, "we cannot tolerate in any sense the idea that this country [Pakistan] is allowed to look both ways and is able in any way to promote the export of terror, whether to India or whether to Afghanistan, or anywhere else in the world." The statement generated a crisis in UK-Pakistan ties. However, in February 2011, the House of Commons' Foreign Affairs Committee also criticised Prime Minister Cameron by saying "it was inappropriate and unhelpful for the Prime Minister to have made negative remarks about Pakistan's record on counter-terrorism in India," but simultaneously mentioning "that the substance of his concerns remain pertinent."

The British prime minister responded to this criticism by visiting Pakistan in April 2011 and stating in Islamabad that he wanted to "clear up the misunderstandings of the past" and "mark a new chapter" in ties between the two countries.[18] On the occasion, Mr. Cameron also re-affirmed the British commitment to the UK-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue, which was launched in May 2009 and enhanced during President Asif Ali Zardari's visit to the UK in August 2010. The aim of the Enhanced UK-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue is to transform relations between the two countries from short-term tactical cooperation to long-run strategic partnership. In May 2012, former Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani and the British leader chaired the First Annual Summit of the UK-Pakistan Enhanced Strategic Dialogue in London, which reviewed cooperation in five areas of mutual cooperation covered under the

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dialogue; including trade, economic growth and development, cultural co-operation, security and education. The two leaders also pledged to foster UK-Pakistan cooperation in defence and counter-terrorism spheres, while reviewing progress made in the October 2011 session of the Working Group on Counter-Terrorism and in bilateral discussions pertaining to enhanced defense cooperation.[19]

Afghanistan-specific counter-terrorism concerns have, indeed, underpinned

the British perspective on Pakistan. However, simultaneously, the UK government does recognise Pakistan's successes and sacrifices in combating domestic insurgency and terrorism. The FCO's stand, as included in the afore-cited Foreign Affairs Committee's report, is that Pakistan is "increasingly recognizing that it has suffered, particularly in the border areas, from instability in Afghanistan" and that this has prompted Islamabad to increase military and security co-operation with Kabul. The same document refers to Foreign Secretary Hague's November 2010 testimony before the Foreign Affairs Committee, in which he stated, "we have seen a greatly increased willingness on the part of Pakistan to confront insurgencies on its own territory and to take action against terrorist groups. I would like to emphasize that [...] rather than be critical."[20] Moreover, during a visit to Islamabad in June 2012, Mr Hague urged the world for a "greater understanding" of the challenges the country was facing, "including the fact that Pakistan has suffered more than any other country from terrorism." However, more recently, as the British priority has shifted from war fighting to peace making in Afghanistan, in line with NATO's exit plan, the UK government has begun to focus on the Afghan reconciliation process while emphasizing the crucial role Pakistan can play for the purpose.

A second attribute of the UK's post-9/11 policy towards Pakistan is that while this policy is essentially focused on counter-terrorism issues, it does cover areas of bilateral cooperation beyond counter-terrorism, such as trade, development and education—progress on which the British government deems important for addressing the root-causes of extremism and terrorism in a country whose relevance to UK's foreign policy is considered "long term and strategic."

Since 9/11, successive British governments have viewed Pakistan mostly through counter-terrorism prism. In CONTEST, which has four components of 'pursue, prevent, protect and prepare,' Pakistan fares prominently in relation to the pursuit of terrorist "threats at the earliest possible stage" and their prevention by stopping "people becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremists." Consequently, cooperation to combat terrorism is identified as the "most crucial part" of the Enhanced UK-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue. For the purpose, the UK has assisted Pakistan in improving its capabilities against insurgency and terrorism, even though its financial support for the purpose has been quite meagre[21] as compared to the multi-billion dollar assistance provided to Pakistan under US Coalition Support Fund. As part of its Security Development Plan for Pakistan, Britain has trained the country's paramilitary, police and other law-enforcement agencies. It has additionally supported the development of border cooperation centres designed to promote co-ordinated operational planning between ISAF and the Afghan and Pakistani security forces.

However, the British counter-terrorism approach is not merely security-centric. The UK government's 2010 Strategic Defense and Security Review stresses the importance of tackling conflict and instability and emphasizes the centrality of development assistance in this effort.[22] CONTEST also states: "For terrorism we need to address not only the immediate threat of attacks but the longer term factors which enable terrorist groups to grow and flourish."[23] The British policy on development and security has centered on three key narratives: that conflict negatively affects development and more attention needs to be paid to promote peace; that conflict presents major risks to UK and international security; and that tackling conflict requires collaboration across government departments. These have been consistent themes in UK government policy and there have been concerted efforts at engaging with conflict-affected countries, which are now major receivers of the UK's development aid.[24]

Pakistan emerges as the major UK aid recipient in the future, with bilateral aid increasing from £12.5 million in 2000-01 to £215 million in 2010-11, with a projected rise to £446 million by 2014-15. This will make Pakistan the largest aid recipient for the UK in 2015, the rationale for which is that Pakistan presents particular security threats. The Department for International Development (DFID)'s 2011-2015 Operational Plan for Pakistan emphasizes investment in primary education, maternal health, micro finance and wealth creation, as well as governance and security. The focus is on dealing effectively with an 'education emergency' to counter radicalisation in the country,[25] through "getting more than four million more children in to school; recruit and train an additional 90,000 new teachers; and provide more than six million text books" by 2015".[26]

For the same reason, the Enhanced Strategic Dialogue between the two countries covers non-security objectives such as "people-to-people links and public diplomacy; business and trade; financial, macro-economic and political governance; service delivery; defence and security; and regional stability." It aims to utilize and build upon the existing bilateral institutional mechanisms like Pakistan Education Task Force, the Defence Cooperation Forum, Counter-Narcotics and Organised Crime, and the Joint Judicial Cooperation Working Group. Equally significant for Pakistan has been the UK's proactive diplomacy in generating concrete international support[27] for the country, while recognising its predicament of simultaneously combating terrorism and calamities such as floods, and suffering from their consequences in the form of millions of displaced people.[28] For instance, the UK has extensively lobbied in the European Commission for increased market access for Pakistan's exports, mostly textile, to EU countries. Consequently, in September 2010, the European Council

announced a substantial package of immediate and longer-term support for Pakistan. A core component of the support was a commitment to grant exclusively to Pakistan increased market access in the EU "through the immediate and time limited reduction of duties on key imports from Pakistan" and a commitment to look favourably to Pakistan's eligibility for GSP Plus in 2014.[29] This component of the British approach towards Pakistan contrasts with that of the US policy towards the country: for Washington has consistently ignored repeated appeals by Pakistan's successive leaders for greater market access in the US for primarily textile products.[30]

A third feature of the UK's Pakistan policy is that it cannot be seen in isolation from the UK's internal security concerns arising from instances of radicalisation and terrorism, and their alleged Pakistani linkage in terms of terrorist training, involving British Muslim/Pakistani immigrant communities. The presence in the UK of a million-strong Pakistani origin community leaves it with little choice but to pursue sustained relations with Pakistan and perceive a "stake in its future."[31] The Pakistani Diaspora in the UK, despite its relative salience in national politics and business, remains cut off from social life. Its relative inability to adjust and adapt to the British culture lies in a set of complicated issues pertaining to religious beliefs, social roots and demographic origins. Of course, such issues of integration also arise due to the native community's unwillingness to absorb immigrant communities—be they of Pakistani origin or Muslim by religion. However, British multiculturalism has been under significant strains in the past decade with the growth of radicalism in its Muslim or Pakistani community and consequent rise of Islamophobia being articulated by the country's far-right fascist groups such as English Defence League.

Contest identifies factors driving radicalisation among the British Muslim community as "a perception of [the UK's] foreign policy, in particular towards the Muslim majority world; a sense and experience of Islamophobia; and counterterrorism powers, which have sometimes been regarded as discriminatory or disproportionate."[32] While recognising that only 1-3 per cent of people among all faith groups support violence as a way of dealing with injustice, the British counter-strategy document links the growth of Muslim radicalisation with the rise of terrorist instances.[33] In October 2011, the Home Office reported that 1,963 individuals had been arrested under the Terrorism Act 2000. 36 per cent of those arrested for terrorism-related offences were charged, 55 per cent were released and ten per cent had alternative action as a result. The report, however, suggests a relative decline in the annual number of arrests. There were 121 terrorism arrests

in 2010/11, down from 178 in 2009/10 and lower than the annual average of 206 since 1 April 2002.[34]

A 2011 study by the London-based Henry Jackson Society states that a majority of individuals arrested for or charged with terrorism in the UK were 'home-grown', and had not been trained abroad. "30 per cent of the 37 cell members involved in the eight major terrorism plots in the UK had direct links to al-Qaeda, making it disproportionately well represented as an associated organisation among cell members…Of the 28 per cent who had attended one or more training camps, the most common location was Pakistan. 16 per cent of individuals trained there, including members from six of the eight major terrorist cells." [35] However, the head of British intelligence also stated in September 2010 that the "percentage of plots linked to al-Qaeda in the tribal areas of Pakistan had dropped from around 75 per cent in 2007-2008 to around 50 per

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cent. The period since mid-2011, when the British counter-terrorism strategy was last announced, has also seen "reorientation of the UK's military posture overseas, which will see Britain moving out of South Asia and increasingly focusing on new security threats that are emerging in North Africa and the Middle East."[36] This was partly due to pressure exerted on al-Qaeda in Pakistan—but also partly due to increased terrorist activity in Somalia and Yemen." British officials have subsequently reiterated the same regional shift insofar as the primary source of international terrorism is concerned.[37]

The relative decline in home-grown instances of terrorism involving British Muslim or Pakistani community, coupled with the narrowing down of Pakistani space for international terrorist activity, should overtime reduce the UK government's concern about domestic radicalisation and terrorism, including its Pakistani linkage. However, since radicalization has complex causes, completely reversing its course in the UK will take a long time. Integrating Pakistani Diaspora into mainstream British society will particularly remain a long-term challenge in the UK. Domestic security concerns may not play as important a role in shaping UK's Pakistan policy, as they did until recently, but their relevance for the purpose cannot be ruled out altogether at least in the near future.

A final feature of the UK's post-9/11 policy towards Pakistan arises of its special relationship with the US. British-US strategic interests in Afghanistan and

Pakistan are so closely intertwined that the UK, as America's chief European ally, appears to mostly follow the US lead in its dealings with Pakistan. However, noticeable distinctions exist in their respective policies towards Pakistan, especially on issues of reconciliation in Afghanistan and combating terrorism in Pakistan.

Since 2001, the British government's security strategy towards Pakistan has in many respects followed the lead of the US. Following 9/11, the Labour government under Prime Minister Blair decided to partner with the neo-conservative US Republican Administration of President George Bush, with a major military contribution to the war in Afghanistan. It went along with the US in expanding the initially declared goal of defeating Taliban and eliminating al-Qaeda-led terrorism into a winder humanitarian mission in Afghanistan. With Pakistan assuming the role of a frontline state in the US-led counter-terrorism effort in the region, the British government, just as its American counterpart, expected it to offer an unwavering counter-terrorism support. Whenever critical times arose in the process - for instance, during the 2001-2002 India-Pakistan confrontation that risked jeopardising Pakistani support to counter-terrorism mission in the region—British Prime Minister Blair and Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, alongside with their American colleagues, swiftly engaged in crisis management. The conduct of the two subsequent British leaderships has been no different.

One reflection of the UK's policy of working in tandem with the US on counter-terrorism is former Prime Minister Brown's decision to emulate the US Af-Pak strategy. Within weeks of its announcement by President Barack Obama in March 2009, his government issued a comprehensive policy document on the two countries, whose priorities and objectives were remarkably similar to the new American strategy. While stating that Afghanistan and Pakistan, despite being very different countries, "require complementary policies," it argued: "Instability and insecurity in both countries have a direct impact on our national security and the safety of our citizens."[38] It further stated: "Of the six major sources of threat set out in the UK's National Security Strategy, Afghanistan and Pakistan are relevant to at least four," which were identified as terrorism, conflict, transnational crime and weapons of mass destruction.[39] Obviously, such close US-British coordination in dealing with Pakistan, especially the perception of it by Pakistani state and public, does have political costs. For instance, Pakistan's June 2011 decision to 'expel' British military trainers involved in building the counter-insurgency capacity of Frontier Corps fighting the Taliban[40] occurred in the backdrop of a serious deterioration in US-Pakistan relations following the killing of Osama bin Laden on May 2, 2011. Moreover, the

shutdown of NATO supplies through Pakistan after the killing of 24 Pakistani soldiers in a NATO strike on a Pakistani security post at Salala along the Afghan border on November 26, 2011 created a major challenge for all the foreign troops present in Afghanistan, including British forces.

However, one area where British-Pakistani interests seem to have converged more and longer as compared to US-Pakistani interests is the UK government's preference for resolving the Afghan conflict through political reconciliation - an objective that is motivated by the same afore-mentioned factors responsible for its decision to set a firm deadline for British troops' withdrawal from Afghanistan. The British discourse on Afghan reconciliation has particularly gained momentum since the January 2010 London Conference on Afghanistan,[41] which called for conditional reintegration of the forces of insurgency and reconciliation with its leadership, and emphasised the value of Pakistan's role in realising Afghan reconciliation. Pakistan official stand is also in favour of an "Afghan-owned and Afghan-driven" peace, for which it has taken tangible steps in cooperation with Afghan High Peace Council. On the initiative of the UK government, British foreign secretary and his Pakistani and Afghan counterparts met thrice during 2012 to push forward the Afghan reconciliation process. Unlike the US, where Pentagon's preference for continuing the military effort in Afghanistan has impeded Obama Administration's ability to pursue a comprehensive Afghan reconciliation formula,[42] the British government's inclination for an Afghan-led peace process assisted by Pakistan is supported by the parliament as well as the security establishment.[43]

The British parliament's report on Afghanistan and Pakistan commends the Cameron government on "its support of political reconciliation," while asking it to "re-double its diplomatic efforts"[44] to enlist US support on the issue of reconciliation - which, in its view, is needed as "the current full-scale and highly intensive ISAF counter-insurgency campaign is not succeeding."[45] As for Pakistan's role in the process, the FCO stated before the committee that Pakistan "seems to be taking a greater interest in a political settlement in Afghanistan through offering support for an Afghan-led reconciliation effort."[46] Interestingly, the parliamentary committee takes notice of Pakistan's perception that "its security interests in connection with Afghanistan are not being adequately addressed by the West," stating that "it is imperative that the UK encourages the US to adopt a policy in relation to Pakistan which takes account of Pakistan's security concerns and which therefore may help to induce Pakistan's constructive role in reconciliation in Afghanistan."[47]

Such observations by UK's parliamentary and foreign policy institutions suggest relative distinctiveness of British perspective on Pakistan with respect to the American approach towards it. The Obama Administration has thus far either opted for talking directly to the Taliban, a bid that collapsed in early 2012, or has started to support an Afghan-led, Pakistan-assisted reconciliation initiative with the Taliban only since the resumption of US-Pakistan ties since mid-2012. Even on the issue of the Haqqani Network, the British policy contrasts with the US policy of pressuring Pakistan in recent years to act against the insurgent group, which, along with Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, is placed on the UN Security Council's list of international terrorist organisations. For instance, on November 25, 2011, the British envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Mark Sedwill, went so far in saying the UK does not "want Pakistan to take military action against the Haqqani group."[48] He urged Pakistan to use its influence to get the Haqqani Network to come to the negotiation table with NATO and enter a reconciliation process, while arguing that it was "in Pakistan's interest to realize that insurgency in the country would end only once there is enduring stability in Afghanistan."[49]

Another difference between the British and American counter-terrorism approaches towards Pakistan in the post-9/11 period pertains to their overall scope. The British policy of linking security with development ensures long-term engagement of the UK in Pakistan. The first step as part of this policy was taken in 2006, when the UK and Pakistan signed a 10-year Development Partnership Arrangement and the UK announced a doubling of aid for the period 2008-2011 to £480 million.[50] On the contrary, the US has offered Pakistan specifically counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism support under the Coalition Support Fund during much of the post-9/11 period. It was only in late 2009 that the Obama Administration secured Congressional approval for the Kerry-Lugar-Berman Act, which aimed to provide Pakistan with $7.5 billion in civilian assistance for a five-year period. Three rounds of US-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue during March-October 2010 identified over a dozen civilian sectors to be developed with US assistance. However, the dialogue remained suspended due to deterioration in US-Pakistan relations from early 2011 to mid-2012, and was finally revived in September 2012. In retrospect, the prospect of US-Pakistan ties assuming truly long-term dimension remains uncertain. On the contrary, the wider scope of British counter-terrorism policy ensures durability in UK-Pakistan ties.

A notable point in this context is that even while US-Pakistan ties recently experienced unprecedented deterioration, the UK's Development Partnership with Pakistan as well as the Enhanced UK-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue continued

uninterrupted. In fact, any downturn in US-Pakistan ties creates a policy dilemma for the UK, caused by the necessity of preserving an enduring relationship with Pakistan, cooperation with which is deemed crucial for guaranteeing internal and external security, and simultaneously serving the regional strategic interests of the US, with whom it shares an extensive global agenda. The British leadership often tries to resolve this dilemma by mediating between the US and Pakistan to defuse tensions in their relations. Foreign Secretary Hague's June 2012 visit to Islamabad was reportedly one such effort,[51] which subsequently led to the resumption of NATO supplies through Pakistan. Interestingly, Pakistan's civilian rulers also perceive Britain as a potentially useful intermediary between Islamabad and Washington, expecting it to resolve tensions in US-Pakistan relations.[52]

That British government, indeed, serves US interests in regional conflicts. However, US-British tensions do crop up when engagement in a regional conflict becomes too costly in human and material terms, as is the case with the Afghan war. Given that, it is understandable why the Cameron government has set a firm deadline for the withdrawal of British troops, in line with NATO's planned military exit from Afghanistan; and why the afore-cited parliamentary committee's report on the British policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan repeatedly urges it to try to persuade the US towards a saner stance on the Afghan war and approach towards Pakistan. Toing a similar line, top British officials[53] who served in Afghanistan have also openly criticized the American militaristic approach to the Afghan war.

Concluding Observations

As clear from the preceding discussion, the main motivation behind the UK's Pakistan policy since the events of 9/11 has been to secure greater cooperation from Pakistan in the international counter-terrorism effort in Afghanistan and Pakistan's Afghan border regions, which the UK government has until recently considered as posing the principal threat to British national security. Its current relationship with Pakistan, with an aid programme that links security with development, aims to tackle the symptoms of extremism and terrorism as much as their root-causes in the country. The UK has, thus, pursued a hotchpotch of short-term security-centric realism and long-term development-driven liberalism in its post-9/11 engagement in Pakistan. Its counter-terrorism-centric policy has shown relative consistency due to the multiplicity of historically rooted political, economic and social links between the UK and Pakistan. These links, particularly the existence of a sizeable British population of Pakistani descent facing complicated issues of identity, integration and immigration, ensure Pakistan's

continuing long-term relevance to the UK's foreign policy and durability of their bilateral relations—an attribute that visibly contrasts with the relatively unstable nature of US-Pakistan relations.

The colonial-time experience of managing conflict in the region equips the UK with greater understanding of its current complexities. This explains why the British have backed the reconciliation option in Afghanistan so consistently in the recent past, across party lines and without any civil-military divide on the issue. Pakistan's preference for the same option in Afghanistan creates an area of convergence in its relationship with the UK. As NATO's exit plan in Afghanistan progresses towards the end-2014 deadline, the UK can be expected to more proactively contribute to the Afghan reconciliation process, by supporting greater cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan, persuading the US towards a viable political option in Afghanistan, and ensuring that US-Pakistan relations do not deteriorate again to impede the Afghan peace process. However, insofar as the British ties with Pakistan are concerned, their scope cannot be restricted to issues concerning Afghan conflict or counter-terrorism. The comparative steadiness in UK-Pakistan relations in the past, including in the post-9/11 period—due largely to the multiplicity of historically rooted political, economic and social links with the UK—means Pakistan will remain a country of crucial concern and interest for the British establishment in the foreseeable future.

Notes & References

[1] For instance, London has been a prime destination for Pakistani political leadership to spend their life in exile and direct party affairs; from late Benazir Bhutto in the 1980s to Muhajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) leader Altaf Hussain (since 1992) and General Musharraf (since 2008). Several top figures currently leading the country's politics as rulers or in opposition—from President Asif Ali Zardari, former Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani and Interior Minister Rehman Malik to Pakistan Muslim League-N's Nawaz Sharif and Shahbaz Sharif brothers and even Imran Khan, the chief of Pakistan Tehrik-e Insaf (PTI)—are believed to have significant personal ties and business stakes in the UK.

[2] It is no surprise, therefore, to see successive British envoys posed in Pakistan in recent years to become overtly active during a political crisis until its amicable resolution. In the process for securing in 2007 the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO), which facilitated the post-Musharraf political transition in Pakistan, the US is believed to have played a part. However, the UK's role for the purpose cannot be discounted, as London witnessed a flurry of political activity during the time. After all, the US motivation behind the NRO-grounded political arrangement, shared by the British, was to secure a moderate political front against extremism and terrorism in the country—one that will ensure the continuity of Musharraf regime's policies for the purpose. More recently, in January 2012, former Prime Minister Gilani was

reported to have called British High Commissioner in Islamabad f Adam Thomson for help in preventing a military coup in the country, a report which both Pakistani and UK governments denied. See "Pakistan, UK Deny Call Expressing Coup Fears," *Associated Press*, January 13, 2012.

3   The UK's Foreign Direct Investment to Pakistan was £182 million in 2009/10 and £175 million in 2008/09. Interestingly, there is also Pakistan's inward investment into UK, which was £98 million in 2008. There are over 100 British companies operating in Pakistan. British pharmaceutical firms have a 31 per cent share of the market.

4   "UK Pledges Deeper, Stronger Relationship with Pakistan," *Dawn* (Islamabad), May 10, 2012.

5   On average, approximately 1.4 million journeys take place between the countries each year.

6   For instance, eentrepreneurs like Sir Anwar Pervez, Chairman Bestway Group, and Private Equity celebrity James Caan. The UK's Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industries is a major platform for Pakistani British businessmen operating in the UK while simultaneously maintaining business concerns in the homeland.

7   Written evidence on Pakistan from Professor Shaun Gregory, Pakistan Security Research Unit, University of Bradford, cited in The House of Commons, Foreign Affairs Committee, Fourth Report of Session 2010-11, *The UK's Foreign Policy approach to Afghanistan and Pakistan*, HC 514 (London: The Stationery Office Limited, February 9, 2011), p. 83. The report is hereafter cited as 'Foreign Affairs Committee Report.'

8   Hereafter cited as Foreign Affairs Committee Report.

9   Her Majesty's Government, *The UK Policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan: The Way Forward*, London, April 2009. Hereafter cited as *The UK Policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan*.

10   HM Government, *A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The National Security Strategy*, London, October 2010.

11   HM Government, *CONTEST: The United States Strategy for Countering Terrorism,* London, July 2011. Hereafter cited as *CONTEST*.

12   Nick Hopkins, "David Cameron confirms Afghan withdrawal starting in April," *The Guardian*, December 19, 2012.

13   UK Military Deaths in Afghanistan," *BBC News Online*, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-10629358, (accessed January 7, 2013).

14   James Kirkuk, "Afghan war will cost British taxpayers £20 billion by time mission is complete," *The Telegraph*, May 19, 2012.

15   *Contest*, p. 9.

16   Foreign Affairs Committee Report, Evidence, p 31.

17   Ibid., p. 32.

18   Thomas Penny, "Cameron Calls for a 'Fresh Start' in UK-Pakistan Relations," *Bloomberg Businessweek*, April 5, 2011.

19   "UK Pledges Deeper, Stronger Relationship with Pakistan," op cit.

20   Foreign Affairs Committee Report, op. cit.

21 Counter-terrorism support for Pakistan is funded as part of the FCO's global Counter Terrorism and Radicalisation Programme Fund, which is £38 million in financial year 2010-11. The counter-terrorism-specific British financial support for Pakistan began in December 2008, when the then Labour government announced its "largest bilateral programme, worth £10m" for the purpose.

22 HM Government, *A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The National Defence and Security Review*, London, October 2010.

23 *Contest*, p. 10.

24 Leni Wild & Samir Elhawary, *The UK's Approach to Linking Development and Security: Assessing Policy and Practice*, Working Paper 347 (London: Overseas Development Institute, May 2012), p. 10.

25 *Contest*, p 71. Also see His Majesty's Government, *DFID Pakistan: Operational Plan 2011-2015,* London, April 2011. Hereafter cited as *DFID Pakistan.*

26 British High Commission, *UK Aid to Work with Pakistan to Get Four Million More Children in to School*, Islamabad, March 2, 2011. The report can be accessed at http://ukinpakistan.fco.gov.uk/en/news/?view=News&id=559050682

27 The UK played an important role in establishing the 'Friends of Democratic Pakistan,' a global initiative to assist the country amid terrorism and calamity and consequent economic downturn and social upheaval (even though its outcome has so far been far less than initially expected). The UK is also part of the Canadian-led Dubai Process, which aims to foster Afghan-Pakistan cooperation, as well as the G-8-supported Afghanistan Pakistan Border Region Prosperity Initiative (APBRPI) to realise cross-border infrastructural development projects such as a Peshawar-Jalalabad Expressway.

28 British humanitarian assistance to Pakistan to help the victims of floods in 2010 and people displaced due to counter-insurgency operations in Swat and South Waziristan in 2009 amounted to £54.5 million, with an additional commitment of £134 million; while the UK public donated a further £56 million through the government's Disasters Emergency Committee appeal.

29 Since 1971, the EU has had rules ensuring that exporters from developing countries pay lower duties on some or all of what they sell to the EU. This scheme, aiming to help these countries grow economically, is known as the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). The Commission has now put forward a comprehensive GSP package. This includes: a proposal for the continuation of the existing system ('rollover') until the end of 2013, to avoid the lapse of the scheme and allow eligible countries to submit applications for GSP Plus; and the proposal for a revised scheme ('review'), to come into force on 1st January 2014. (Pakistan's eligibility for GSP Plus, as articulated by the UK through lobbying, is based on its economy being under tremendous pressure from continuing terrorism and recent floods. The UK has also lobbied for an early agreement of a five-year EU-Pakistan engagement plan and to launch the EU-Pakistan strategic dialogue. For details, see European Commission, "Generalized System of Preferences (GSP)", http://ec.europa.eu/trade/wider-agenda/development/generalised-system-of-preferences/

[30] For criticism of the US policy preference for aid over trade, see George Perkovich, *Stop Enabling Pakistan's Dangerous Dysfunction* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 6 September 2011), pp 12-13.

[31] *DFID Pakistan,* p 2.

[32] *Contest*, p 36.

[33] *Contest*, p 26.

[34] His Majesty's Government, Hone Office, "Operation of Police Powers under the Terrorism Act 2000 and Subsequent Legislation: Arrests, Outcomes and Stops and Searches," *Home Office Statistical Bulletin*, 15/11 (October 2011), p 7.

[35] Robin Simcoxm et al, *Islamist Terrorism: The British Connections*, 2nd Edition. London: The Henry Jackson Society (2011), pp xii-xiii.

[36] James Blitz, "Afghan Withdrawal Signals New UK Strategy," *The Financial Times*, December 19, 2012. Also see Jonathan Evans' Terrorism Speech', *Daily Telegraph*, 17 September 2010.

[37] Jason Burke, "Al-Qaida Leadership Almost Wiped out in Pakistan, British Officials Believe," *The Guardian (London)*, December 25, 2011. Also see Hopkins, op cit.

[38] *The UK Policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan,* p 6.

[39] Ibid, p 5.

[40] Declan Walsh, "Pakistan Expels British Trainers of Anti-Taliban Soldiers," *The Guardian*, June 26, 2011.

[41] Even prior to this conference, the talk of reconciling the forces of insurgency in Afghanistan, in place of a potentially failing military option, had started to gain salience in UK's official stance on the Afghan war. For instance, in a BBC interview in November 2009, Prime Minister Gordon Brown said the British "cannot be an occupying army forever." See James Kirkup, "Gordon Brown: British Troops in Afghanistan Cannot be 'Occupying Army Forever'", *The Telegraph*, November 13, 2009. Then, in an official memo revealed by the media around the same time UK government officials proposed the Afghan government reconcile with senior Taliban leaders and have them removed from an international sanctions list. See Ben Farmer, "Afghanistan: British Plan Taliban Reconciliation," *The Telegraph*, November 13, 2009. In March 2010, Foreign Secretary David Miliband declared that "now is the time for the Afghans to pursue a political settlement with as much vigour and energy as we are pursuing the military and civilian effort." His statement is cited in Matan Chorev & Jake Sherman, *The Prospects for Security and Political Reconciliation in Afghanistan: Local, National, and Regional Perspectives*, A Workshop Report (Boston, Mass: Institute for Global Leadership, Tufts University, and the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard Kennedy School, May 2010), p 4.

[42] Maleeha Lodhi, "Ramazan's Lost Chance for an Afghan Peace," *The News International*, August 17, 2011.

[43] In fact, as far back as June 2010, the UK's Chief of the General Staff General, Sir David Richards had stated that NATO could not defeat the Taliban with military force and should soon open peace talks with insurgents in Afghanistan. "There's always been a point at which you start to negotiate with each other," the General

Richards argued. See Jon Swaine, "Britain Will Not Defeat Taliban and Should Open Talks, Says Head of Army," *The Telegraph* (London), June 28, 2010.

44   Foreign Affairs Committee Report, op. cit., p. 9.

45   Ibid, p. 11.

46   Ibid, pp. 58-59.

47   Ibid, p 60.

48   Masroor Hausen, "The UK Doesn't Want Pakistan to Attack Haqqanis: Mark Sedwill," *The Express Tribune* (Islamabad)*,* November 25, 2011.

49   Ibid.

50   See "Pakistan Factsheet 2007. DFID (2007)," http://www.aidsdatahub.org/en/ papua-new-guinea-reference-library/item/5900-pakistan-factsheet-2007-dfid-2007

51   Kamran Yousaf, "US_Pakistan Ties: London to Broker Deal between Estranged Allies," *The Express Tribune* (Islamabad), June 8, 2012.

52   Soon after the November 2011 Salala attack, for instance, Wajid Shamsul Hasan, Pakistan's envoy to the UK, appealed to the British government to use its undoubted influence with the Americans to force them to review their policy towards Pakistan. "We are asking David Cameron to tell Obama to think again about how the US treats Pakistan," he said, while adding that Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar had earlier phoned Foreign Secretary Hague, asking him to act as a mediator to help achieve a "better understanding" between Pakistan and the US. For details, see Simon Tisdall & Saeed Shah, Pakistan Boycotts Talks on Afghanistan and Asks UK to Mediate in Row with US," *The Guardian* (London), November 29, 2011.

53   While former US General David Patraeus and Admiral Michael Mullen, in their respective tenures as ISAF commander and chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, supported the heightened US-led military effort in Afghanistan during Obama Administration's first term, British diplomats and generals (as footnoted before) have openly subscribed to a political strategy in Afghanistan for long. Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles, who served as the British envoy in Afghanistan, has been an arch critic of the US policy in Afghanistan. In his book, *Cables from Kabul: The Inside Story of the West's Afghanistan Campaign* as well as in public talks and media interviews since his "sudden departure" from the position of special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan in June 2010, he has pinpointed the reckless use of US military force as the principal cause of continued Afghan insurgency. In Sir Cowper-Cole's opinion, the Afghan war lacked a military solution, and the sooner this fact was faced, and new emphasis placed on a diplomatic approach, the better for all concerned. See Simon Tisdall, "Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles: A Casualty of the Afghan Policy War," *The Guardian* (London), June 21, 2010.