

## BOOK REVIEW

***No Exit from Pakistan: America's Tortured Relationship with Islamabad.*  
Daniel S. Markey. New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2013.  
Pp. 248.**

In our present times, no two countries have had a relationship more conflicted than the one shared by Pakistan and the United States. Of all the metaphors, similes and examples used to describe this torturous relationship, perhaps none fits more aptly than the one drawn upon by Daniel Markey in his latest book, *No Exit from Pakistan: America's Tortured Relationship with Islamabad*. In describing this relationship, Markey draws his inspiration from Jean-Paul Sartre's play *Huis Clos*, which is based on three sinners trapped in hell who are subjected to eternal torment by each other. At the very outset, Markey makes it abundantly clear that like the sinners in Sartre's play, America and Pakistan have tormented each other for decades, behaving "more like adversaries than allies". But he does admit that while both sides often tell conflicting versions of their relationship, there is an element of truth in Pakistan's lamentations that the country has been used by America when it suited the latter's agenda. Nevertheless, the American in Markey clarifies in the same breath that Pakistan has also used America, "dipping into America's pocket to serve their purpose."

While seasoned analysts of Pakistan-US relations will not find anything new that Markey has to offer in terms of the nature and history of this relationship over the last six and a half decades, the structure of Markey's analysis makes for an interesting read. Set in the context of America's War on Terror following the incident of 9/11, the study explores the main concerns that have occupied American officials in their experiences of counterterrorism cooperation with Pakistan, acting on some occasions in tandem with Pakistan, and at others unilaterally, amid fears of compromising American plans. The book is neatly divided into seven chapters that seek to understand the three kinds of threats that Pakistan poses for American policy-makers: immediate, vital and emergent; to learn from how Pakistanis perceive America after the 9/11 incident and the events thereafter (Chapter 3), which form the subject of the following chapters that look at how American officials have dealt with Pakistan during and after General Pervaiz Musharraf's rule (Chapters 4 & 5); thinking about the future course of Pakistan-US relations by gauging how Washington is likely to interact with Pakistan's regional neighbours – China and India – and how America's relationship with these neighbours is likely to influence its ties with Pakistan

(Chapter 6). In his final chapter, Markey delves into the future options available to America in dealing with Pakistan in the background of its concerns regarding terrorism, Pakistan's nuclear weapons, and regional geopolitics.

*No Exit from Pakistan* seeks to answer some pressing questions regarding Pakistan-US relationship post-9/11 – how and why has it soured? But while Markey's analysis lays out policy prescriptions that the US can adopt to improve matters, it fails to suggest policy recommendations that Pakistan can adopt in overcoming the extent to which both countries have gotten on each other's nerves.

For Pakistani readers, Markey's book is a mirror- held by Washington - to view our own selves. It discusses in depth Pakistan's own problematic behaviour, and the problem US policy-makers face in getting a clear portrait of Pakistan in the presence of the many faces that Pakistan presents: from an elite-dominated "basket case" to a "garrison state", from "terrorist incubator" to a "youthful idealist". Markey's policy analysis of Pakistani state and society acknowledges the fact that in its future dealings with Pakistan, Washington finds itself in an impossible bind, and it is hard to believe that top policy-makers will place greater and sustained attention on Pakistan after 2014, which along with Afghanistan is viewed by US officials as holding "radioactive, career-ending posts". Nevertheless, over the long run, Washington will be forced to grapple with the challenges posed by Pakistan. A number of reasons are cited and repeated throughout the book, including a variety of militant groups that attack both US and Pakistani government targets, a growing nuclear arsenal, a precarious relationship between military and civilian authorities, and internal conditions in Pakistan which threaten its own stability and its neighbours', and also vital US interests.

It is because of these reasons, Markey explains, that Pakistan is too important to neglect and too complicated for a "single magic-bullet" US grand strategy. Markey presents three options to US policy-makers for dealing with Pakistan beyond 2014. These include:

1. *Defensive Insulation* - Under this strategy, America is advised to address the threat of Pakistan-based terrorism at multiple levels, including the use of drone campaign, possible cruise missile strikes, air strikes, and even helicopter-borne commando assaults if terrorist groups take advantage of a Pakistan-US rift. This strategy would also require policies of coercion and deterrence, including targeted sanctions and covert operations on the ground to go after groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba that

operate inside Pakistan's populated regions. From the Raymond Davis case to the Abbottabad raid and the drone strike that killed Hakimullah Mehsud, America has already tested a range of efforts.

2. *Military-First Cooperation* - This policy option entails that America would focus on cultivating a "Chinese-style strategy", based on refraining from sharp public criticism of Pakistan's military. Just as the Bush administration had chosen a military-first strategy, the Obama administration, despite its stand in favour of democracy, recognises that all major security issues are still the "bailiwick" of the military in Pakistan. Therefore, in all closed-door negotiations with Pakistan, the US will use transfer of high-tech military equipment as a bargaining chip. According to Markey, a good working relationship with Pakistani generals would also come in handy if China seeks to "Finlandise" their country. This strategy offers the best way to address short- and medium-term American concerns.
3. *Comprehensive Cooperation* - The third option for America would be to attempt a wider cooperation with the Pakistani civilian and military leadership, as well as the Pakistani civil society. Such a strategy, Markey explains, is the only way to achieve long-term security goals in Pakistan. However, according to Markey, Washington is now home to very few legislators who would be enthusiastic about this kind of a strategy. Pakistan is seen as too big, too broken, and too hostile for American influence to be brought into a cooperative US embrace.

Markey admits that while these options may have their flaws, any one of them would be better than seeking a "clean escape" from Pakistan that will, by the middle of this century, grow to be the world's fourth largest, and the largest Muslim nuclear armed country bordering two other Asian giants, India and China. Pakistan, therefore, cannot be ignored by US policy-makers, who must calibrate their expectations to the nature of circumstances they are trapped in, much like the anguish of the characters of Sartre's *Huis Clos*, with no option but to "get on with it".

Najam Rafique, Director (America/ Programmes Coordinator)  
*Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad.*

\*\*\*