

His Excellency

General Jehangir Karamat
Ambassador of Pakistan
to the United States

The Future of Pakistan-U.S. Relations

Ever since it came into being Pakistan has been an ally of the United States. Even when we were under sanctions, pressures, and all kinds of difficulties, we were still allies with the United States. In the '50s, when the relationship was particularly good and we were receiving lots of economic and military aid from the United States, the expectations were different. The U.S. thought it was assisting Pakistan to withstand Soviet expansion; it was the Cold War period. Pakistan thought it was being given military and economic assistance to strengthen it, give it security against a hostile and bigger neighbor. So it came as a rude shock to Pakistan when after the India-Pakistan War this aid suddenly stopped, because there were different perceptions, different expectations. That's when Pakistan started the relationship with China, in the '60s. So that was Pakistan's first interaction with the U.S. and an understanding that there were differences and things could go wrong.

It was a particularly difficult time for Pakistan for coping with blowback from Afghanistan, coping with the freedom struggle across the border in Kashmir and trying to sustain a democracy, and things did go wrong in Pakistan.

Then came the Afghanistan situation. The Soviets invaded northern Afghanistan and once again Pakistan was allied with the United States, a frontline ally. The U.S. and Pakistan together were fighting with the resistance against the Soviets in Afghanistan. Now, when you have a resistance or when something like that occurs there is a lot of debris that comes with that resistance movement. You have weapons proliferation and weapons moving across borders. Anybody who wanted to fight the Soviets, Chechens, Arabs, everybody was there; they were welcomed and moved into Afghanistan to fight. So when the Soviets and the U.S. withdrew from South Asia, Pakistan again weathered a shock because Pakistan thought that the U.S. was going to be with them to see them through this whole thing. Instead, Pakistan was coping with the situation of civil war in Afghanistan, with a large faction being supported by Iran, Central Asia, and Russia, and Pakistan was stuck with the factions in the south. So this was the second awakening in Pakistan that this is how things could happen. Also, about this time, Pakistan's decade of democracy, from '88 to '98, started. This is also the time when the Kashmir freedom struggle started.

So with all this happening at the same time, the U.S. decided to put Pakistan under sanctions, stall all aid and increase pressure on Pakistan to stop its nuclear program. So, this was the third sort of lesson to Pakistan—things can go wrong. This relationship was not what Pakistan expected it to be. It was a particularly difficult time for Pakistan for being on one side, or coping with blowback from Afghanistan, coping with the freedom struggle across the border in Kashmir and trying to sustain a democracy, and things did go wrong in Pakistan. We had the Taliban coming in Afghanistan, you had the Arab takeover of the Taliban in Afghanistan. And that was the situation when 9/11 happened and Pakistan had to make a choice at that time, whether it was going to continue to cope with this situation or make a strategic orientation, and Pakistan chose, in its own interest, not under external pressure, to ally itself with the United States against the war on terror. Now, having chosen this path there were implications for Pakistan. Pakistan's policy in Afghanistan had to change. Pakistan's policy in Kashmir had to change. Pakistan had to change its internal outlook in support of the policy that it had chosen; the choice that it had made. Really, you could say that Pakistan underwent a strategic reorientation and it began to cope with the consequences of that, consequences that it is still trying to manage and cope with.

Now, the point that I wanted to make is that with this history of different

perceptions and different expectations you come to a situation where the U.S.-Pakistan relationship is the best that it has ever been. We are allies, we have common interests, U.S. concerns are being addressed and there is total commitment by Pakistan in the fight

The only difficulty can be if U.S. expectations are such that Pakistan cannot fulfill them

against terror. I'm sure this relationship has a great future, it's moving on many tracks, and it's going to endure because this time we think that with the Cold War behind us, with 9/11 behind us, the U.S. is on a separate track with India, separate track with Pakistan. Russia doesn't have the kind of influence that it did, Central Asia is now free, Afghanistan is stabilizing, and the relationship with India is improving. So, there's a totally changed environment in which this alliance, in my opinion, has a great future.

The only difficulty can be if U.S. expectations are such that Pakistan cannot fulfill them. And those expectations could be a desire that Pakistan should transform; how and to what extent I don't know. You can answer that question better, but I just want to point out that Pakistan is an Islamic Republic and it's going to stay the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Pakistan wants to be moderate, wants to be stable, wants to be economically viable and capable of defending itself. This is the kind of Pakistan that can best serve the U.S. interest in Asia and I hope that this is what the U.S. wants, because if there is this convergence, then there is going to be no problem in the relationship at all. It is my impression from the time that I've spent here that this is exactly what the U.S. also wants from Pakistan.

Now, having said that, let me just review the standards of the present relationship between the U.S. and Pakistan. These days, and for quite some time, we have very high-level exchange visits between the two countries. It's an ongoing process. Senators are going, congressmen are going, our ministers are coming, our president was here in September, he was here again in December, the Secretary of State is going to Pakistan. These are just examples, because there are a whole lot of these exchanges taking place. There are people who visit from here for a first-hand experience of the state of Pakistan today. They meet people, they get briefed, they look around, they travel and they understand and see what is happening in Pakistan. I think this is invaluable because we're so closely allied on the war on terror that we need to understand what Pakistan is all about today and where it is headed tomorrow. We don't want perceptions in the U.S. to be based on the Pakistan that was yesterday or an earlier environment of Pakistan. It's undergone a change.

As I said, we have interests, the U.S. and Pakistan, and there are concerns, which are being addressed. I've seen some of these concerns being written about in the news. You know, saying things like Pakistan is not fully committed to U.S. core interests in the region; Pakistan is keeping terrorists for future use; and Pakistan is not doing enough, and things like that. I just want to say that the things Pakistan has chosen, the steps that it has taken, has taken it so far down the implementation road that there is no coming back, there's no turning back. They're irreversible and Pakistan is going to go all the way with the U.S. against extremism, against terrorism, and that is what is happening in Pakistan.

We have also begun a series of joint working groups, consultative groups, we're working in the social sector, in the

defense sector, in the economic sector and the political sector. They meet either in Washington or in Islamabad, they view the state of the relationship, they chart fresh courses, they assess needs and requirements, and it is on that basis that the decisions are made to take this relationship further. Just to give you an example, we have a defense consultative group which meets in Islamabad or in Washington. They review all of the requirements for the war on terror, for border security forces, for defense purposes, training requirements, and so on and then those requirements are met. After suspension in funding of the International Military, Education and Training Program (IMET), it has been reintroduced. Now, I'm a product of the original IMET program. I went to service school there, staff college, and I can tell you that this exposure to this part of the world, to this culture, that this forging of relationships is something that endures.

The foreign military sales program has been reintroduced. We are getting security assistance for defense from the United States

I have people who went to the IMET with me and we still write and talk. So that suspension did great harm to the U.S.-Pakistan military relationship and a whole generation of officers grew up without any experience of the United States. I'm happy to tell you that IMET is back on track, and today we have about 72 officers training in various schools in Pakistan and U.S. officers come to take courses in our staff college and our war college.

The foreign military sales program has been reintroduced. We are getting

security assistance for defense from the United States. Pakistan understands, like the U.S., that counter-terrorism is going to be ongoing, it's going to be a war which may continue for some period of time in one form or another and both are gearing up for that. Most importantly, I think there is an understanding here of the balance of power that has to exist in

The India-Pakistan relationship is important; it's important because on that depends the stability of South Asia

South Asia, the balance between India and Pakistan. We could, perhaps, substitute balance with imbalance. Pakistan recognizes that India is a bigger country with a bigger economy, able to spend much more on defense and with bigger armed forces. But Pakistan also knows that it has to selectively make sure that this imbalance between it and India never becomes of such a magnitude that it cannot be managed. So that's all we ask—that this imbalance be kept at manageable levels and I think there's an understanding there.

On nonproliferation, which is another ongoing subject between the U.S. and Pakistan, we had a regrettable proliferation, which we are over, domestically. It has international ramifications. The U.S. is interested in specific aspects of that international situation, and Pakistan and the U.S. are cooperating on that. Arrangements have been worked out to ensure that it continues until U.S. objectives are met as far as international proliferation is concerned. We also get assistance from the United States to make sure that our assets are secure. The India-Pakistan

relationship is important; it's important because on that depends the stability of South Asia. It's also a relationship that the U.S. has been facilitating for quite some time and moving it towards stability. Right up to 2002, there was conflict and hostility between India and Pakistan. In fact, in 2001-2002 there was a confrontation of the borders and a real fear of war. Since the mid-summer of 2002, it started to normalize. So, first there was a period of normalcy where you had embassies being established, travel permitted and so on, and now we have dialogue, an ongoing dialogue between India and Pakistan which is meant to resolve issues and improve the situation. Significant things that have happened in spite of ups and downs, the significant things that have happened are: one, a cease-fire on the line of control which has been holding for almost 15 months now, the longest that a cease-fire has ever held on the line of control; and two we have an agreement on transit across the line of control between the people of Kashmir without international documents being required.

These are the important steps and while they are not solutions of the Kashmir issue—on this Pakistan has a point of view and India has a point of view—they are steps which push hostility and conflict into the background and bring up other lesser issues between India and Pakistan for resolution, like the potential of economic cooperation between India and Pakistan. There is talk of banking cooperation. There are peace lobbies coming out of both sides. There is some tourism taking place and there is even talk and discussion on a joint pipeline between India and Pakistan from Iran to India. So, it is really the economic

It is the economy that is center stage between Afghanistan and Pakistan

benefits which both came to see that are driving this relationship.

On the Afghanistan-Pakistan situation, again this is a relationship that has improved and is better than ever before. Pakistan is cooperating in stability operations inside of Afghanistan. It's carrying out massive military operations on its western border with Afghanistan to reduce the insurgent activity in southern Pakistan and to make sure that there is never a resurgence of any such activity from Pakistan soil. Our president recently made a categorical statement that Pakistan's territory in the future would never be used for any terrorist activity.

It is the economy that is center stage between Afghanistan and Pakistan. A stable Pakistan and a stabilized Afghanistan can use Pakistan's coastline for goods that transit through Pakistan into Afghanistan. Pakistan, as you know, is the nearest coast to Afghanistan.

There are other problems, of course. There is the drug situation in Afghanistan. It's had a bumper poppy crop this year and world attention is focused on that. So the only way it's going to go is a declined poppy crop. It

had implications for Pakistan. The population of drug addicts has been increasing and we don't want the pressure of drug smugglers moving drugs through Pakistan. So that

is an area where Pakistan is working closely with the U.S.

Not always fully understood is that the president is the head of the country and chief of the army staff at the same time. Now, on this let me just say that for various reasons, which we cannot go into here, several military relations have

already stabilized. Institutional development has never been balanced; the military has had inordinate importance as an institution—it's developed and risen above the other institutions. There are various reasons for that but the one thing which has happened is that unlike the previous enormous emphasis on military for security, you are looking now more and more in this globalized world at economic viability for security. So the focus not only in Pakistan but worldwide is shifting from militaries to economies. Business relationships create other relationships, economies are dominating governments' foreign policy, and that's happening in Pakistan.

We had elections in 2002 and we are heading for elections in 2007. If we have elections in 2007 this will be the first time in Pakistan where an elected government has completed its tenure of five years, which for us is a great achievement. In the U.S. you have very strong institutions and have really established a tradition of democracy and institution of strength. This is something that hasn't happened in Pakistan yet and either a civilian democratically elected government could bring this about, or the military has to bring it about, there is no third party that can do this for Pakistan. At the moment, with the military in control, it is what you would call a guided democracy that Pakistan is going through. It is very important for the unstable conditions around us, very important to prevent sliding back into chaos and difficulties, and very important for a level playing field in the 2007 elections, which should eventually lead to a balancing of civil and military relations.

There are many things that this government in the last four years has achieved. Women have been empowered

like never before. There are about 40- to 45,000 in various elected offices in Pakistan. Many of them are in parliament, ministers, heading corporations. They're doing a lot of work. Human resource development is getting a lot of attention. The social sector is getting a lot of attention in terms of health care and education, and I know that people sitting here that work in Pakistan who have philanthropic organizations are doing their share in health care and education.

If we have elections in 2007 this will be the first time in Pakistan where an elected government has completed its tenure of five years, which for us is a great achievement

It is on the economy that this government has had the greatest success and all the indicators at the moment are positive. Growth has been 6.4 percent and it's moving towards 7.5 to 8 percent. Inflation is between 7 and 8 percent, there are some pressures because of the international rise in oil prices, but otherwise it's under control. Defense spending is down from 6 percent to 3.4 percent and the main reason is the resumption of the relationship with the U.S. The banking sector is robust—87 percent of it is in private hands. We have excellent access to international financial institutions, very good terms. The World Bank is funding a series of studies in Pakistan; the one on education is just starting, the one on madrassas is just completed and that's really worthwhile

because it changes many perceptions of the madrassas. It gives us the total figure of school children in Pakistan and it points out that the total number of children going to madrassas is between 0.7 to 1 percent, the rest are all going to schools. The reforms that are taking place in education are meant to reform the madrassas.

So, revitalization, as I said, is moving very fast. Deregulation. We want foreign investment, and for that a climate has been created. There is no difference between domestic and foreign investors in Pakistan. There are the same opportunities for both. The mainstay of our exports, which are up by 30 percent, is textiles, and this is something where we hope to compete with China and India. China, of course, is bigger and so is India, but we hope to be number three in the world market as far as textiles are concerned. We are looking at trade arrangements with the U.S., financial investment treaties being negotiated. We want to move to a free trade agreement with the U.S. of the type that the U.S. has with other countries, like Jordan and Bahrain. The concerns over a free trade agreement are being addressed by Pakistan internally.

So, based on this sort of survey I will say that the future for U.S.-Pakistan relations receives consistent U.S. interest because of the changed environment. We are confident of working with the U.S. in pursuit of our common interests, we are confident of addressing any concerns that the U.S. might have in that part of the world. We are improving relations with India and Afghanistan bilaterally, and we hope that in the globalized world we will be able to take our place as a moderate, liberal, economically viable Islamic state.

Thank you.

*Speeches to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council are edited for readability, not content.
The Council is a non-partisan organization. The views expressed herein are solely those of the individual authors.
The Council is a non-profit organization that pays neither honoraria nor expenses to its speakers.*

