

# The U.S.-Pakistan Crisis: Watershed Or Waterloo? Towards a Broader Af-Pak War?

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Global Research, September 29, 2011

[The News International \(Pakistan\) and Stop NATO](#) 29 September 2011

Region: [Asia](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

*Since the initiation of wars by the US has been part of a jaundiced but unchanging strategy of cultivating strife to keep its arms industry going and to physically occupy all sources of energy, there has been no let-up in its scope or intensity, and there will not be any. Region after region has been mercilessly subjected to US brutality.*

The manner in which governance has been abdicated; state institutions brutalised; rule of law subverted; apex court's injunctions rubbished; parliament marginalised with its unanimous resolutions consigned to the bin; alleged acts of subversion overlooked; and crooks, criminals and those given reprieve through presidential pardons appointed at key government positions, are just some of the manifestations of a captive political leadership doing America's job in Pakistan.

The inherent artificiality of US-Pakistan relations was bound to assert itself as it has now. After a spate of bellicose statements from the US military hierarchy directly targeting the military and the ISI, it was the COAS who showed the grit to defend Pakistan's legitimate strategic interests. The responsibility for doing so rested on the shoulders of the political leadership, but they constitute an important component of the problem that Pakistan is faced with today.

The US is losing the war in Afghanistan just like all previous invaders have. It has lost wars in the past that it started with intention of stamping its illegitimate hegemony on various regions. In the process, it destabilised the world, causing untold mayhem and impoverished millions of people who are still struggling to cope. Since the initiation of wars by the US has been part of a jaundiced but unchanging strategy of cultivating strife to keep its arms industry going and to physically occupy all sources of energy, there has been no let-up in its scope or intensity, and there will not be any. Region after region has been mercilessly subjected to US brutality.

Today, at the receiving end of the US pounding stands Pakistan – a country that has repeatedly compromised its sovereignty considerations to serve an alien cause. I call it alien because there are numerous inherent factors that separate US interests from those of Pakistan.

The US preoccupation with establishing effective control over political and economic developments in Central Asia, to the exclusion of China, is not congruent with Pakistan's interests while the latter's strong relations with China and their potential to expedite Pakistan's development are not convergent with US strategic interests.

The frenetic US endeavour to establish Indian hegemony in this region, as its proxy flag bearer, runs counter to Pakistan's priorities. Pakistan's desire to promote reconciliatory initiatives aimed at bringing peace to Afghanistan do not tally with the US aim of securing long-term presence in that country. Pakistan's nuclear capability is viewed by the US as a threat to its interests and that of its principal ally in the region, India, while Pakistan and its allies view this as an essential requisite for stability in the region.

If Pakistan's leadership thought that the US would stand down in the face of its military's increasing assertiveness once its immediate interests had been secured, it was a fatal fallacy. US interests run permanently counter to those of Pakistan and are not likely to change with the passage of time. To force total and unconditional capitulation, the US has wantonly used its vast network of non-state militant collaborators and paid agents to destabilise Pakistan as has been evident from scores of incidents in the recent past.

It is here that one begins to understand the need for crafting the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) and the induction of a tainted and servile political leadership to replace a pliant dictator. The manner in which governance has been abdicated; state institutions brutalised; rule of law subverted; apex court's injunctions rubbished; parliament marginalised with its unanimous resolutions consigned to the bin; alleged acts of subversion overlooked; and crooks, criminals and those given reprieve through presidential pardons appointed at key government positions, are just some of the manifestations of a captive political leadership doing America's job in Pakistan. In this, it has been extended support by those who are complicit in endeavours to denude this country of its wealth, employing fraudulent means and push it into permanent enslavement and those who, because of an unmitigated hatred for the armed forces, would tolerate even the most corrupt and complicit government to the exclusion of the army. While it may serve their bloated egos, it is doing no service to Pakistan and its strategic interests.

It may sound trite to state that Pakistan faces its most gruesome existential challenge, but it really does. There is widespread internal strife due to the government's inability and unwillingness to control the vitiating factors. Pakistan also confronts external threats from many directions. Across the eastern border is an unfriendly India and across its western border is a belligerent Afghanistan ruled by a US stooge who will do as commanded. Then there is this adversary garbed as an ally who is pounding Pakistan with incessant drone strikes in connivance with its political leadership and is now threatening to go for over 300 targets inside Pakistan's territory. Meanwhile, Pakistan's economy is on a life-support system while it is being systematically stripped of its wealth by a vast network of corrupt and complicit political mafias.

Pakistan's ailment is discernable and there may even be doctors to write a prescription, but there is no one who would like to perform the bitter procedure. The army looks patently disinterested and the judiciary hides behind a heavy pile of cases that lie in pendency. There is no easy cure. It is a complicated operation involving numerous vital organs that need serious attention, even replacement. The system is corrupt beyond repair and those who have done the trick still have the reins in their hands.

Pakistan is precariously perched at the edge: on one side is a government that is complicit and on the other are a string of vultures with their mouths open. One false step and there is no rescue. Watershed or Waterloo? Pakistan's plunge can only be stopped through a display of raw courage. It is time for people to stand up for their country that may not have given them anything, but that remains their only source of hope and inspiration.

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