Pakistan-US Relations: 
A Critical Analysis of Influence in post 9/11 Era

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Abstract:
Pakistan and the United States relations are experienced the various ups and downs. The events of 9/11, altered the relation in a way that most sanctioned friend then became pivotal ally in the U.S., led “War on Terror.” It was due to its geopolitical significance. Yet, it was a relationship of a big state and a small state for the quest of seeking their national interests through—hunting al Qaeda and defeating Afghan Taliban. The problem with that new partnership was the coercive influence of the United States that compelled Pakistan to make a virtual U-Turn in her long nourished Afghan policy. Therefore, a problem arose that how a small power with any ranges of freedom, attempt to maximize its influence viz-a-viz a Big power. The objective of the study is to understand who influenced whom in what area and to what degree, vulnerabilities, leverages and limits of influence of both the states have.

Keywords: Power, Influence, leverage, vulnerabilities, Leverage, Coercion, Taliban, Al-Qaeda

I. Introduction
Interstate relationship between Pakistan and the United States experienced the oxymoron of engagement and estrangement; forming a binary of on-again and off-again sort of relationship. But the fact remained constant, that both states did not set in motion any outright hostility despite having extreme trust deficit. However, 9/11, transformed the relation in a way that most sanctioned friend then became pivotal ally in the U.S., led “War on Terror,” due to its geopolitical significance. Hitherto, it was a relationship of a big state and a small state for the quest of seeking their national interests through—hunting al Qaeda and defeating Afghan Taliban regime. The problem with that new partnership was the coercive influence of the United States that compelled Pakistan to make a virtual U-Turn in her long nourished Afghan policy. Therefore, a problem arose that how a small power with any ranges of freedom, attempt to maximize its influence viz-a-viz a Big power coercive influence. The objective of the study is to understand who influenced whom, how, what kind of vulnerabilities both the states have and what kind of leverages both can exercise to influence each other for their national interests.

II. Power and Influence in Realism
Realist paradigm is the theoretical framework of the study. It revolves round the concept of power and influence deeply rooted in human yearning for life and security. The common cultural definition of power might be the success of a man or an organization
depends on the possession of accumulated power greater than the amount of power held by opponents. (McClelland, 1971, p. 61) In modern expressions, influence in interstate relations can be termed as “Power of state an ability to control, or at least influence, other state’s behavior or outcome of events. Kegley (2008) defines power as an ability of a state to promote national interest.” (Malhotra, 1999) Martin Griffiths (2008, p. 258) divides power into two prongs; internal and; external. On the national level, this influence is based on relations between state A and another actor B with A seeking to influence B to act in A’s interest by doing X, by continuing to do X, or by not doing X. (p. 259) To achieve these ends, state A can use various techniques of influence. Influence is dynamic and exercised by means of leverages vis a vis state’s vulnerabilities. Mearsheimer (2001) avers i.e., anarchic International system; element of uncertainty about other states’ intentions; and quest for survival as prime objective. These reasons encourage states to develop power and influence over others. (pp. 29-31)

III. The Perspective

“The only means of influencing Pakistan has been through economic incentives and the threat of their withdrawal.” (Lieven, 2011)

Pakistan has a history of relations with the U.S.A., since her independence. The two-fold nature of relations stayed mostly disenchanting, but on the other, there were spans of stable friendship. Historically, the United States ignored Pakistan and kept her aloof; sometime upheld very close partnership due to her strategic needs. She sometime, recognized Pakistan as untrustworthy and unreliable, but sometime much-admired as “Most Allied Ally in Asia’, Front Line State and Non-NATO ally, all combined together created a binary of on-again and off-again sort of relationship. Kheli, (1982) commented pertinently,

‘Few relationships in the post-World War 2 have experienced such wild variations from friendship and alliance to recrimination and alienation as that of United States and Pakistan. It was a marriage of convenience but one that both partners sought quite eagerly, at first.’

The question is that how the United States, on several times, facilitated the opponents of democracy in Pakistan and instrumental in the growth of very foes it is now fighting. The study will undo this oxymoron of torturous trail of relations between two nations, yoked with each other. 9/11 transformed Pakistan-U.S., relations from estrangement to warm embrace. (Riedel, 2012) What previously had been a limited friendship due to army take over and nuclear detonation, became an intimate association as ‘Pivotal Ally.’ Politically, in difficulty after coup d’état’, militarily important General Pervez Musharraf, gambled that he could influence the US to extract benefits essential for national interest. America had always exerted her influence on Pakistan by means of financial assistance, diplomatic and political means for her strategic interests. Being a superpower in Uni-polar world, the USA, was enjoying ascendancy in diplomatic, military and socio-economic realm felt insufficient to respond such new threat naming terrorism—that was dispersed, nebulous, covert and complex involving both state and non-state actors. The geostrategic position of Pakistan was once again very relevant for this new engagement and object of American influence.
IV. The Critical Analysis of Influenced Relationship

The three tier critical analysis of influence—the systemic level, the state level and the human level—particular decision makers, is applied to examine the influence interaction of Pakistan and the United States after 9/11 to arrive at the picture in its totality. The influence in different forms manifests its presence in the context of realism. It is issue specific, identifies in policy choices and diplomatic activity. The influence is structural as well as decisional; the former explains dependency, power distribution and reverse influence of the small states in international order, while the latter clarifies decisional influence of the big state on domestic level of the small state. Pakistan participated in war on terror due to immense US systemic influence and further changed its policies in line with the United States’ policy advantages. However, the adversarial relations of Pakistan with India dominantly shaped the interplay of influence between the US and Pakistan. Despite the coercive policies of the United States, it remained successful to large extent in attaining its perceived national interests. (Hathaway, 2017, p. 4).

V. Pakistan’s Vulnerabilities

In comparison to the United States, Pakistan has its own vulnerabilities. The first is if Pakistan alienates the United States, it would go further to the Indian side, that’s the leverage of the United States. The second vulnerability is that US is not declining power, it wields enormous economic influence in IMF and WB whereas Pakistan badly needed loans, therefore, US influence has not been declined to such extent that Pakistan considered China the only ally viz a viz the US. The third vulnerability, and US coercive leverage is Drone attacks inside Pakistani territory. Either Pakistan cooperates with the United States or not, the latter will continue to press Pakistan hard by droning on perceived anti-American militants hiding in the tribal region. America will continue sticks and arm twisting regardless of security sensitivities of Pakistan. The fourth vulnerability is Afghanistan specific. Irrespective of the incompetency of the Kabul regime, and US ineffectiveness in eliminating Afghan Taliban’s fighting capacity, the United States is linking Afghanistan’s internal instability with the sanctuaries inside Pakistan where as it perceives, Haqqani group in North Waziristan, planned attacks on Afghan National army and US forces.

The fifth vulnerability is escalating Sino-US rivalry, US coercion and China’s soft power with the drive of infrastructure development will force Pakistan to align itself more closely with China. There is a fluid situation taking shape between the established power—USA and encountering rising rival—China. Subsequently, Pakistan will face even greater US pressure and coercion including Afghanistan, terrorism, nuclear and missile issues. Relations with China carry both dimensions of vulnerability and leverage against the United States. The sixth vulnerability, might be the public opinion of the United States. The US administration may not ignore American public opinion as happened after 9/11 attacks. The discovery of Osama Bin Laden at Abbotabad, Raymond Davis case, proliferation of A.Q. Khan, and lastly, the killing of Taliban leader on Pakistan’s soil, all combine together portrayed a sufficient bad image in public perception. In this context, any terrorist attack in future takes place in the United States with any link to Pakistan, the US public opinion—mostly anger, will turn to worse against Pakistan. The United States seems to use it as a leverage to command compliance.
VI. Pakistan’s Leverages to influence the United States

The strengths Pakistan possesses to deal with the mighty United States are 1) its ever relevant geographic location, 2) it possesses considerable strength of its own right, 3) the capacity of Pakistan to capitalize on the needs of the stronger state to further its own ends. (Hathaway, 2017, p. 4). The United States’ first tactical vulnerability is its dependency over Pakistan’s strategic geography regarding supply line route overwhelmingly ran through Pakistan to landlocked Afghanistan where US and International forces are positioned. The second leverage is India-US relations—the more the United States tilts towards India, the more the Pakistan will get close to China or other States as an alternative. The third leverage is the extent Pakistan redounds to American policy advantages is matchless as compare to any other state in South Asian Continent. Pakistan is fundamentally westward looking state and ever ready to embrace the US relationship.

The fourth leverage is counterterror policy against Islamic militants of global reach based in its tribal region have the potential to launch the next 9/11 like attack inside the United States or its allies, therefore, relations with Pakistan became imperative for its capacity building in counter terrorism efforts. The fifth leverage Pakistan has to address this vulnerability is the Taliban insurgency. As it is gaining momentum and seems to be winning the battle will compel the United States either to prolong its stay or to exit from Afghanistan both offer a leverage to Pakistan. The sixth leverage is the capacity of Pakistan to capitalize on the needs of the stronger state to further its own ends. The United States needs Pakistan more than Pakistan needs the United States.

VII. Pakistani diplomatic strategy to deflect US influence

Pakistan adopted various diplomatic strategies to manage American pressures.

A. Partial cooperation

Pakistan knew the needs of the United States and provide it in bits and pieces, (Haqqani, 2013, p. 274) therefore, US administration concluded that the cost of breaking with Islamabad would be too greater. (Hathaway, 2017, p. 118)

B. Bargaining

In response to initial US coercion, Musharraf proposed a quid pro quo by presenting a long list include lifting Pressler sanctions, resumption of military sales, provision of F-16 and economic aid. (Hathaway, 2017, p. 119) Moeed Yousaf asserts that Pakistani military and civilian leadership is not for sale, they pretend to be that’s a negotiating tactic, but ultimately they don’t change strategic interests.

C. Using lower hand strategy

The United States needed Pakistan more than Pakistan needed the United States. This strategy made Pakistan able to capitalize on the needs of the stronger state to further its own ends. Pakistan adopted a lower hand strategy and exploit sense of vulnerability as tactic—coercive deficiency.

D. Yes-but Approach

Another tactic appears to be worked was Pakistan’s positive disposition with “yes-but” strategy allowed a tactical flexibility in tandem with U.S. expectations and policy modifications. Therefore, it could later, make enough room to maneuver in order
to evade those very demands, as happened in Pakistani strategy manifested in selective engagement with militant groups. (Rashid, 2008)

E. Accept, then backtrack

Insist of turning US demands down, Islamabad agreed to what American wanted and later ignored compliance. On the one hand Musharraf was an ally against terrorism, on the other overseeing support for Afghan Taliban leadership. Explicitly defying the superpower could be dangerous; better to feign cooperation, even if one had no intention of complying. (Hathaway, 2017, p. 119)

F. Cultivation of alternative sources of support

From the nation’s earliest days, Pakistan’s leadership understood that one of the surest ways to get Washington’s attention was to be seen seeking friends elsewhere. Islamabad has looked first to China, as most reliable ally. In addition, it has provided a shield from U.S. leverage attempts. (Hathaway, 2017, p. 120)

G. Wooing American opinion.

Islamabad has long recognized that through multiple channels it might influence American thinking. Visiting Pakistani officials routinely reached out to the Pakistani-American community, as did the embassy in Washington and Pakistan’s consulates in New York, Chicago, Houston, and Los Angeles. (Haqqani, 2013) The tools of lobbying by means of ethnic Pakistani diaspora in domestic politics remained effective.

H. Encouraging U.S. guilt.

Pakistani officials rarely missed a chance to repeat an historical narrative that emphasized U.S. betrayal and abandonment during the 1965 Indo-Pakistani war, sanctions as U.S. perfidy. This narrative of victimization enabled Pakistan to play upon an Americansense of guilt and obligation that worked to deflect U.S. pressure. It provided Islamabad with a powerful instrument of leverage against its far stronger partner. (Hathaway, 2017, p. 121)

J. Warning of unwanted consequences

Islamabad has used tactic of insisting that an unwelcome U.S. demand could trigger a reaction in Pakistan that Washington would not like. Responding to US leaning to India, Islamabad has warned that unless Washington restrained New Delhi’s designs against Pakistan, they would have no choice but to move their forces eastward to the Indian border, thereby lessening Pakistan’s ability to block infiltration on Pakistan-Afghan border. (Hathaway, 2017, p. 122) Pakistani diplomats asserted that suspension of U.S. military assistance might compel Islamabad to divert development funds to the military and such a step, might reduce U.S. influence in Islamabad. As one U.S. diplomat regretfully noted, sometimes you have leverage but you cannot livewith the consequences of using it. (Hathaway, 2017, p. 122)

K. Pleading the constraints of public opinion.

Islamabad regularly claimed that Pakistani public opinion would not permit them to accommodate U.S. requests. This argument held force when elected governments ruled Pakistan but Musharraf also used this reasoning to ward off unwanted U.S. pressure. Pakistani leaders, both military and civilian, fortified these anti-American sentiments to get leverage. The tactic is to whip up anti-American feelings, and then use this hostility to explain inability to meet U.S. requests. (Hathaway, 2017, p. 122)
L. Retaliation and harassment.

When American pressure became intolerable, Pakistan pushed back in more direct ways. U.S. diplomats (and American intelligence officers operating under diplomatic cover) were subjected to travel restrictions and other forms of harassment, and sometimes expelled. Several CIA station chiefs in Islamabad had to be withdrawn from Pakistan out of concern for their physical security. Even a weaker country, Americans were reminded, could make life difficult for a more powerful nation. Later, however Pakistan, off and on, also exercised reverse influence with the medium of coercive diplomacy, i.e., General Kiyani gave Admiral Mike Mullen toughest warning against hot pursuit. Pakistan closed NATO supply line in reaction to Salala incident, U.S. had to apologies. (Lieven, 2011, p. 202) Pakistan deflect US influence following the US invasion on Iraq in 2003. (Kasuri, 2015, pp. 592-93)

M. Après moi, le déluge. (State Collapse Narrative)

Musharraf argued that if the United States weaken him, Pakistan’s extremists would have their hand strengthened. (Karen DeYoung and Joby Warrick, 2007) Citing domestic frailty was a way to sidestep U.S. demands. As one American scholar has rightly noted, “Pakistan’s trump card in dealing with Washington has been its own internal frailty. . . . Islamabad plays these fears for all they are worth to gain leverage in its relationship with Washington.” (Hathaway, 2017, p. 123) Thomas Simons, one of Bill Clinton’s ambassadors to Islamabad, put it more succinctly: Pakistan, he complained, was “adept at bullying from weakness.” (Talbott, 2004, p. 107)

VIII. Tactical strategy to influence US policies

A. Bandwagon

Pakistan used to bandwagon the alliance to appease the most threatening state avoiding its ire. In case of non compliance, the most sanctioned, economically weak state was vulnerable to potential Indo-US alliance. The bandwagoning, certainly deflected the threat immediately, but on long term basis, Pakistan refused to abandon its core goals when it perceived that the US did not realize its pledges with Pakistan.

B. Structural strategy: A Talibanized Belt

One more effective leverage of Pakistan created by default—a Talibanized belt counter to U.S. and Afghan influence, when on run Taliban and al Qaeda operatives were pushed into Pakistan’s tribal region without intimation of Tora Bora Operation. They consolidated their hold there with money and old ties. Their presence later proved a source of great pressure on Karzai government and that evolved a “Buffer Zone” to counter any US hot pursuit. To contain such potential aggression, the militant littered tribal belt could prove a lose but tough viable defense shield to contain US military pressure or potential threat of invasion on Pakistan. The MMA government in KPK further consolidated the nexus of Taliban and their religious political masters in the adjoining province of Afghanistan. Rashid (2008) avers that it was unsafe to assume the serious formulation of such policy but the working policies created the same effect. (p. 270)

C. Sub-conventional warfare—Abalancer Tactic

Proxy war in the Afghanistan is a strategic compulsion for Pakistan due to other regional states’ continuous indulgence in the same tactic. If Pakistan withdraws its support from favorable groups, the gap might be filled by the hostile states. Such implicit collusion with the Taliban fits in the standered notion of balancing that aims to balance
Indian influence while in turn eventually effects, the American interests. The implicit and
defensive policy was due to the excessive use of coercion on the part of big power,
provided Pakistan less scope to maneuver, but had to comply explicitly. There were
certain reasons led Pakistan to support Afghan Taliban.

Firstly, Pakistan operated as a conduit for US supplies but remained a non-
decisive partner in the conduct of war in Afghanistan. It neither had voice in decision
making nor could establish institutionalized formal agreements, made it further unable to
initiate its preferences. Secondly, despite US assurances anti-Pakistan Indian influenced
Northern Alliance took Kabul. Thirdly, the US failed to invest significant effort to resolve
decades long Kashmir dispute. Fourthly, US began to deliver a substantial boost to
Indian abilities with the Indo-U.S. civil nuclear deal signed in 2005. Later, the war in
Iraq; and the skepticism over the staying will of the United States in Afghanistan;
question of the ownership of the war in Pakistan; unclear war objectives of the US shaped
Pakistan’s behaviour. Consequently, in realistic terms, Pakistan began its implicit support
to the Afghan Taliban to counter Indian influence while hunt down shared enemy al
Qaeda. The United States later, accused it as double game. This policy of strategic realism
made the relations shaky and disenchanting.

IX. Examples of Pakistani Success

The first, it can be argued that, despite Pakistan’s failure to develop any ongoing
influence with the United States, it succeeded in acquiring instrumental influence and
leverage by extending access to the bases and supply line route as a means of achieving
its goals. The second, while the possible confrontation that could have developed on the
nuclear proliferation issue after 2005 regarding Khan’s Network and its amicable finale
reflected the significance of Pakistan’s cooperation that halted U.S., administration and
legislature to go too far against Pakistan. The third, while the unworking of influence
attempts further manifested on the implicit Taliban policy, where the United States could
not persuaded Pakistan over military operation in North Waziristan against Haqqani
Network.

The fourth, Pakistan, though offered significant flexibility over Kashmir in line
with U.S., persuasion to take measures essential for the peace building efforts between
the rivals, but essentially Pakistan did not alter its position. The fifth, Pakistan, off course,
initially yielded against pervasive U.S. coercive influence to crack down on extremist
organizations like Jaish-e-Muhammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba but later let them work with
certain immunity and freedom though they assumed different names. The sixth, the
Communication flows, as reflected in the two Musharraf’s state visits to Washington
must also be weighed in context of their domestic payoff for Musharraf. He was able to
win a good deal of U.S., economic support. It was also a valuable diplomatic signal that
Pakistan was not without a friend in the United States.

X. United States Vulnerabilities

The United States’ tactical vulnerability is its geo-strategic dependency over
Pakistan for supplyline ran through Pakistan to Afghanistan where US-Allied forces are
positioned. Its close links with the tribes straddling on either sides, knowledge of the
land, and people assigned it a degree of influence to shape events inside. The second
vulnerability is the US relations with India that has the potential of driving Pakistan
closer to China, further strengthen its implicit support to Taliban. The third vulnerability
is that the extent Pakistan redounds to American policy advantages is matchless as
compare to any other state in South Asian Continent. The example may be quoted as its strategic alliance with the US in containment of former U.S.S.R or on going War on Terror against al Qaeda and the Taliban.

The fourth US vulnerability is economic assistance and military supply to Pakistan proved ricochet, therefore, could not be used as an effective leverage against Pakistan’s troubled relations with insurgents in Afghanistan. This US off cited leverage has faced two strains, (1) Pakistan’s policy of lower hand strategy that the United States needed Pakistan more than Pakistan needed the United States, (2) U.S., Congress’ strict measures of scrutiny and conditions on assistance. The fifth grave US vulnerability is Pakistan’s future ineffectiveness in curbing Islamic militants of global reach stationed in its tribal region have the potential to launch the next 9/11 like attack inside the United States or its allies, therefore, relations with Pakistan became imperative for its capacity building in counter terrorism efforts.

XI. US Leverages to Influence Pakistan
A. Coercive diplomacy
The excessive use of sanctions as a coercive tool, after 1990s’ left no leverage to the United States over Pakistan, therefore, it had to take resort in coercive diplomacy after 9/11. It also suited to the military regime, as the single person fearful of US might, isolated in international community, with a small group of corp commanders, was easy to be coerced. The Coercive diplomacy carried high level of US motivation, focus on single issue, posed a credible threat together with incentives and ultimately, created a sense of urgency to Pakistan to change side with the USA. (Collins, 2008, p. 08)

B. Personalization of Relations
In the pursuance of same historical tradition, the United States attempted to make personal relations with the military dictator who made all the decisions and was unencumbered by the parliament, elections or politicians. (Schaffer, 2011)

C. Economic assistance
Pakistan’s economic dependency on the United states is an effective tool in the hands of USA. It has economic leverage, however proved less workable and effective in changing Pakistani behaviour. (Hathaway, 2017)

D. Diplomatic Doublespeak
The other tactic both the allies used was the language of doublespeak—to say something while meaning other. George W. Bush assured Musharraf that Northern Alliance would not took Kabul but did otherwise led to trust deficit on Pakistan’s side. (Jaffrelot, 2013, p. 527)

XII. Examples of U.S. successful Influence
In spite of the regalia of power, examples of superpower influence are limited. This is established in the U.S.-Pakistani relationship as on the following issues emerged in the entire period of collaboration where the United States can be ascribed as a modicum of influence over Pakistan.

The first issue was the no-change in the flow of generous aid after 9/11. The U.S. commitment to Pakistan was quite genuine during the period of 2001-2008, and Pakistani leaders were pleased to receive the U.S. aid package after years of sanctions. It
revived the US linkages of influence over Pakistan and provided leverage to the United States. The second instance of influence during Musharraf era was reflected in Washington’s ability to line up Pakistani policy on its side on international issue of terrorism. This was the case even though it dented relations with India for the time being which was desperately attempting to fish out of troubled waters. The third, at the very outset, the United States used coercive diplomacy to bend Pakistan in its favor. It took concessions for its military presence and access to Pakistan’s bases, established war supply route through the country to the land locked Afghanistan. It successfully managed to make Pakistan effective in hunting al Qaeda operators who crept into adjacent tribal areas and later in the settled parts of Pakistan.

The fourth, the remarkable success on the part of the United State was that the Pakistani military set in motion the operations in tribal area, first time in the history. These operations initially decelerate the outflow of tribal men into Afghanistan to side with combating Afghan Taliban against the U.S. and NATO forces. The fifth, example of successful American influence manifested on decisional level when Musharraf banned and crack down on extremist organizations. It was considered as a second U-turn by the Musharraf regime redound to the policy advantage of the United States. The sixth, Musharraf further directed U.S. desired purge in the ranks and files of the Pakistan army. Some of his more Taliban-leaning commanders (e.g., General Usmani, General Mushtaq, General Khalid Maqbool, General Ghulam Ahmad, General Amjad and General Gulzar) were unacceptable to the U.S., therefore, Musharraf used it as a convenient pretext for his sacking them. (Abbas, 2005)

XIII. Limits of Influence and Findings

US coercion cannot make Pakistan to take steps, it perceives dangerous to its security. Even the skillful application of leverage cannot compel a country to do something it believes is inherently contrary to its best interests. Leverage has its limits. US attempts to condition its aid to Pakistani behavior failed to induce better behavior Washington had hoped for. The United States had overestimated its economic leverage. The perceptual maps of both states were not reconciled and thus differed on threat perception and core interests. Therefore, US failed to exercise its leverages to bridge this chasm. Pakistan got leverage to influence the United States successfully by extending supply line to Afghanistan, resultantly; at first escaped from the punitive measure of the US in case of refusal, got sanctions lifted; renewed economic assistance, military aid, avoided any further US perusal over A.Q. Khan proliferation matter, restrained any hot pursuit of the US forces on Pakistan’s soil and circumvented US pressure to any action against Haqani Network—a veritable arm of Afghan Taliban. (Perlez, 2011). Small states are inclined to exert implicit influence for their policy advantage—if such advantage is not in line with big power’s interest and where explicit resolve of containing big power is lacking. Pakistan did the same while dealing with the Afghan Taliban.

XIV. Conclusion

Pakistan mobilized its strengths—and its weaknesses—as leverage against the far more powerful United States to influence behavior for its own interests. As a weak small state, Pakistan has several stratagems to avoid US influence attempts by leverages or exert leverage itself while dealing with the United States. The United States overestimated the value of its economic assistance for the change of Pakistani behavior. It used brutal coercive diplomacy effective display of American power wielded for the
attainment of an important diplomatic objective. It disregarded Pakistani security interests. Pakistan accommodated, deflected, and resisted the power of the far stronger United States successfully during Musharraf era. Pakistan did this with its own unique strengths such as the strategic location and ability to capitalize the needs of the United States for its own ends.

**References**


