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Pakistan - Afghanistan Relations

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(C) Pakistan's Interests

Pakistan has long been concerned about the stability of Afghanistan, its neighbor to the west, as Afghanistan has profound influence on Pakistan's own stability and prosperity. Afghanistan's activities in drug and arms trafficking are shared on the Pakistani side of the border, particularly in the Northwest Frontier Provinces (NWFP). The lawlessness and lack of social control spawned by Afghan narcotics, drug money and the arms culture poses a serious threat to Pakistan. Recent bombings and assassinations in Peshawar, the NWFP's capital, have been linked to Afghans. Pakistan also suspects that the Kabul regime may be behind some of these incidents.

However, not all Afghan prospects are negative: Pakistan is eager to establish commercial, cultural and political links with Central Asia and has been actively discussing gas pipelines, railroads and increased truck commerce through Afghanistan with Central Asian leaders. Afghanistan's stability is crucial to the success of these projects. Pakistan wants a friendly government in Kabul that would allow it to realize its regional objectives, and stability which would draw back to Afghanistan the one million Afghan refugees who remain in Pakistan after fleeing Communist regimes in Kabul. Moreover, the two countries share a Pashtun population of 16 million -- 10 million in Pakistan and 6 million in Afghanistan.

(C) Actively Involved

Pakistan served as the base for numerous mujahhedeen (resistance) groups who fought the Soviets with material support from Pakistan, the U.S., and others. Over the decade-long occupation (1979-1989), many Pakistani individuals, tribes, organizations, parties and government agencies pursued their own "Afghan policies," seldom in concert with one another, and some continue to do so today. In 1992, when the Soviet-backed Najibullah regime collapsed, Pakistan was instrumental in getting the Afghan resistance groups to agree to an interim governing arrangement. In early 1993, Pakistan convinced the nine major Afghan parties to accept a government led by Burhanuddin Rabbani and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. This government never really came into existence as various factions including Hekmatyar's continued to battle the authorities in Kabul. However, despite the lapse of his legitimacy, Rabbani has continued as president, even though he controls only a fraction of Afghanistan.

(C) Support for the Taliban

The Taliban, a movement of Afghan religious students trained in Pakistani religious schools, emerged in late 1994. The Taliban helped to realize some of Pakistan's hopes for free commerce through Afghanistan by opening roads, disarming local warlords and

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brigands and ending the practice of illegal "toll" collections. Promising peace and stability in areas under their control, the Taliban were generally welcomed by the Afghan people, long wearied of war and the continued fighting between the Afghan factions. In less than a year's time, the Taliban established control over half of the country's provinces, mostly in the western and southern areas. The major players have now been reduced to the Taliban, Gen. Dostam in the north and Rabbani and his de facto defense minister Masood in Kabul and the Tajik provinces of the northeast.

Rabbani believes that the Taliban are entirely a tool of Pakistan. Pakistan has given material and tactical support to the Taliban, but the Taliban have clearly demonstrated their independence of mind. Although the Pakistanis continue to support the Taliban, they privately admit they do not want to see the Taliban in power in Kabul. Pakistan was blamed by Rabbani for the Taliban's stunning capture of Herat last September which consolidated its hold on Afghanistan's west. The event also precipitated the burning of the Pakistani embassy in Kabul and the severe beating of the Pakistani ambassador by a mob. Pakistan responded by expelling Afghan diplomats. Islamabad has since established a quasi-embassy in its consulate in Jalalabad, headed by the same once-beaten ambassador.

### (C) Foreign Interference

As Rabbani has sensed losing his grip on power, his party has intensified its verbal attacks on Pakistan, through its media and the UN. Relations are at an all-time low. Since Herat fell to the Taliban, Pakistan has been assiduously working the Afghan factions, including the Taliban, to get them to oust Rabbani from Kabul and establish an interim government comprised of all the main factions. To date, the Taliban has opted for a military solution and currently surround Kabul, although fighting has lessened with the harsh winter. Taliban forces have besieged the capital since last October. Meanwhile, Rabbani, too, has been actively trying to win over Dostam and Hekmatyar. The Iranians, Russians and Indians have intensified their support for Rabbani; Tehran and Moscow have increased the flow of weapons and ammunition to Kabul. Iran in particular, in the person of Deputy Foreign Minister Borujerdi, has been working tirelessly to get Dostam to work with Rabbani. The Russians, meanwhile, angered by the Taliban's 5-month detention of a Russian air crew that was ferrying ammunition to Kabul, remains staunchly pro-Rabbani.

### (C) U.S. Views

The Pakistanis do not have a well-conceived end-game for their policy of supporting the Taliban and opposing Rabbani. However, they are beginning to be concerned both with their failure to put together a Taliban-centered alliance against Rabbani and what

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they see as the emergence of a "Moscow-Tehran-New Delhi" axis supporting Rabbani. Pakistan's professed support for the UN Special Mission on Afghanistan, headed by former Tunisian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Mestiri, has been lukewarm at best. While the UN mission has not yet secured agreement among the major Afghan factions to a ceasefire and interim government, we view the UN as a disinterested broker and the best possible facilitator for a political settlement. The Pakistanis recently indicated they want to send Foreign Minister Assef Ali and a top intelligence official to Washington in early February for high-level talks on a coordinated U.S.- Pakistan Afghan policy.

## (U) U.S. Policy

- The U.S. seeks the peaceful emergence of a broad-based government representative of all Afghans which can begin to address the issues of narcotics production, militant extremism, and humanitarian concerns.
- We support the peace efforts of the UN Special Mission on Afghanistan and encourage the Afghan parties to cooperate with the UN special mission to achieve a lasting peace.
- We support no particular Afghan faction, movement, group or individual.
- We will work with whatever government may eventually emerge in Kabul, holding it strictly accountable to international norms of conduct.

## (C) TALKING POINTS

- We share Pakistan's concern over the current impasse in Afghanistan and its hopes that progress can be achieved on moving forwards toward a political settlement.
- We wish to work closely with you and other governments to enhance the prospects for success of the UN mission.
- We recognize that Pakistan has legitimate concerns about the continuing conflict as do Afghanistan's other neighbors.
- Whatever influence Pakistan has with the Taliban should be used to persuade them to act in responsible ways such as freeing the Russian air crew and observing basic human rights.
- Everyone must work towards an end game for Afghanistan that envisions a future for the country beyond the time when Rabbani and Masood leave Kabul.
- We would welcome a visit by your Foreign Minister and others to Washington to discuss Afghanistan.

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Cleared by:  
SA/PAB:LOColdren  
SA/RA:MFitzpatrick  
EUR/RUS:KForder  
SA/INS:BKiesling  
NEA/NGA:GSibley  
IO/UNP:AKaragiannis

Approved by:  
SA:RLRaphel

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