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Countering Pakistan's Duplicity

By [Mushtaq M. Rahim](#) with [Richard L. Benkin](#)

After Osama Bin Laden was discovered and killed in Pakistan, only 1.3 kilometers from Pakistan Military Academy, it should become clear to those who still denied it, that Pakistan was not the ally in the war on terror that it claimed to be. Congressional voices like those of Ted Poe (TX) and Dana Rohrabacher (CA), calling for an end to US support for Pakistan, have been raised. Americans elected a President who made no bones about his dislike for Pakistani duplicity. Little has changed. With the exception of recent cuts in US aid (which is cyclical anyway), Pakistan continues to operate as it has, supporting terrorists while pretending to be an ally of the United States. What should be done about this?

Pakistan is an artificial state, cobbled together by outsiders on the basis of a majority religion. It threw together distinct national groups in an oppressive state with little concern for their own aspirations; little more than a convenience for the colonial powers at the expense of the indigenous peoples: Baloch, Pashtun, Sindhi, and others.

Like other artificial agglomerations, Pakistan is inherently unstable. We saw the results of that kind of instability in the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, created by the victorious powers of World War I, into its six constituent states. We saw it when Czechs and Slovaks threw off their artificial bonds, forced on them by the same outside powers, splitting up Czechoslovakia.

Are Kurds gaining independence from a state created by the League of Nations and British colonizers, Iraq? In his January 29, 2002 State of the Union address, US President George W. Bush called Iraq part of the “axis of evil,” and fourteen months later, that country’s fate was sealed with the start of the Iraq War. On August 22, President Donald Trump [called out](#) Pakistan. Will that country’s demise begin by October 2018?

Pakistan’s elites do not find a true alliance with the US in their interests and never have. And neither would the United States not Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru throw his lot in with the USSR during the Cold War. For years before the September 11, 2001 terror attacks on the United States, Pakistan [nurtured](#) the very regime in neighboring Afghanistan responsible for their part of its “[Strategic Depth](#)” agenda. Even after those attacks, according to former Pakistani dictator Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan continued to [support](#) the Taliban and other Afghan radicals while pretending to ally with NATO in its Afghanistan war. Its Inter Service Intelligence (ISI) even [facilitated](#) safe passage of militants to the Himalayan Mountains in Nepal, which almost led to Islamist takeover in [Bangladesh](#).



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Between September 11 and October 7, 2001 it tried to avoid US intervention by sending then ISI chief Lieutenant Mahmud Al to convince Taliban head Mullah Omar to hand over 9/11’s [perpetrators](#). In a last gasp effort to avoid the inevitable conflict, the Musharraf regime suggested trying the 9/11 culprits elsewhere. When that did not work, Pakistan joined the war on terror -- n

because it wanted to defeat radical Islamist terror, but out of fear. In his memoir, Musharraf admitted that the Pakistanis [were terribly frightened](#) of ending up on the wrong side of the equation in Washington's retaliation after Secretary of State Colin Powell told him, "You are either with us or against us"; and Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage warned the ISI Chief that if Pakistan remained allied with the terrorists, it should be prepared to be bombed back to the stone age.

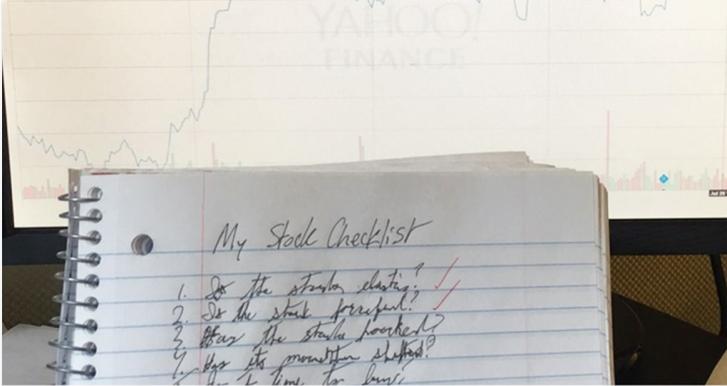
Musharraf turned the threat into an opportunity, securing status as a non-NATO ally in the war, which helped it secure [\\$34 billion](#) over the course of last decade and a half as part of Coalition Support Fund. Add this to the commercial use of Pakistani geography for NATO supplies and it becomes a hefty financial gain for the economically struggling country.

Besides the financial bonanza, the Pakistanis used the opportunity to void pre-2001 arrangements that prevented the military from entering certain areas in order to curb nationalist movements in the North West Frontier Province (currently Khayber Pakhtunkhwa) and Baluchistan. With nationalist sentiment strong in both provinces, the Pakistani military and the ISI used their operations to expose nationalist leaders who threatened the extremist groups. Once they were identified, the Islamists relentlessly targeted them on both sides of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, which is also known as the [Durand Line](#) after the British diplomat who drew it. Between 2005 and 2010, there were over [100 attacks](#) against tribal elders in FATA, killing 149 influential local leaders. The situation in Balochistan, Sindh, and elsewhere in Pakistan were similar. Right now, it looks to many youths in these regions that terrorist groups are the only ones capable of strong action; that is, the window for mobilizing young people to fight for freedom and secularism is closing.

Although we are encouraged that the West recognizes Pakistan's duplicity, we have yet to see real action that will change its duplicitous behavior. There is a treasure trove of potential allies on the ground in the areas where the US and NATO have little effective presence -- and keep in mind, the Durand line separating Pakistan from Afghanistan is artificial. It was drawn by colonizers with no regard to the fact that various tribes occupy both sides of it. That means it is not only the Islamists who do not recognize the current boundary as organic. The challenge for the West is to identify democratic elements who, if properly armed and financed, will provide a formidable force opposing both the Pakistani military and the radical groups the latter continues to support. That is also the best way to lessen the attractiveness of radicalism for youth in the area and provide them with an effective alternative.

Westerners consider Waziristan, Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and other regions in Pakistan and Afghanistan as strongholds for al Qaeda and other radicals. They are, however, at the same time, home to more people who are their victims.

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