

# ISSUE BRIEF

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## Pakistan Missed Opportunity to Repair Ties with U.S.

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Pakistan missed a valuable opportunity to create goodwill with the U.S. and other NATO members when it failed to announce a reopening of NATO supply routes to Afghanistan at the summit held Sunday and Monday in Chicago. Not only has Pakistan's closure of the supply routes over the past six months made the war effort more expensive for NATO members, but its failure to crack down on Taliban and Haqqani network sanctuaries on its soil has prolonged the war and undermined the overall NATO mission in Afghanistan.

Unless Pakistan demonstrates that it is willing to make greater efforts to help bring peace and stability to Afghanistan, the U.S. and NATO should shift their diplomatic focus to working more closely with other countries in the region,

including the Central Asian states and India.

### **Pakistani Price Gouging.**

Pakistan received a last-minute invitation to the NATO summit with the expectation that it would announce a reopening of the supply routes that it shut down six months ago following a NATO attack that accidentally killed 24 of its soldiers along the border with Afghanistan. However, U.S. and Pakistani negotiators failed to come to agreement over the price of reopening the routes before the conclusion of the summit. Pakistan seems to have overplayed its hand in the negotiations by demanding a 30-fold increase in transit costs—a proposal at which U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta balked and which he referred to as “price gouging” by the Pakistanis.

While reopening the NATO routes could help reduce costs for shipping supplies to and from Afghanistan, the U.S. has demonstrated that it is capable of developing alternative routes. Pakistani officials have long believed that their ability to provide land access to Afghanistan gave them a strong source of leverage in their relations with the U.S. But now that this trump card has been played, and it did not result in the unmitigated disaster everyone expected, the U.S.

has come out in a stronger position to make demands on Pakistan, including taking decisive action against the Taliban and other terrorist groups within its borders.

U.S. officials have indicated that it has been about three to four times more expensive (or about \$38 million more per month) for the U.S. and NATO to rely solely on the so-called Northern Distribution Network through the Baltic states, Russia, and Central Asia. But the cutoff of Pakistani routes did not force the U.S. to alter the tempo of its military operations inside Afghanistan. Moreover, many of the countries involved in the Northern Distribution Network showed eagerness to continue to serve as supply routes both into and out of Afghanistan in order to receive transit fees.

In fact, Russia is reportedly considering allowing NATO to use one of its airfields to move troops and non-lethal cargo to and from Afghanistan. While Pakistan still represents potentially the cheapest and most efficient transit route for supplies, the U.S. and NATO have other options if Pakistan continues to make unrealistic demands. The Pakistani routes are also less secure—and thus potentially much more

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costly—than the northern routes. Pakistan’s reopening of the routes would reportedly unfreeze over \$1 billion in U.S. military aid that has been suspended.

**U.S. Losing Patience.** Pakistan’s hard bargaining comes amid growing frustration with Pakistan among Members of Congress, as evidenced by new conditions on U.S. aid to Pakistan contained in the National Defense Authorization Act for 2013, passed last week in the U.S. House of Representatives. The bill calls for a bar on preferential procurement of goods and services from Pakistan until the NATO supply routes are reopened. The bill also contains a requirement for the Secretary of Defense to certify that the Pakistani government is committed to supporting counterterrorism operations against al-Qaeda, the Haqqani network, and other domestic and foreign terrorist organizations, as well as dismantling improvised explosive device networks and preventing proliferation of nuclear materials, before providing coalition support reimbursement funding.

A separate bill wending its way through Congress, the State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill, calls for restrictions on military and economic assistance to Pakistan until the Secretary of State certifies that Pakistan is taking action against terrorist networks. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in March 2011 made a similar certification for Pakistan to receive military aid as part of a requirement contained in the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009. The fact that lawmakers are now considering conditioning economic aid demonstrates

that their patience with Pakistan is wearing thin.

**U.S. Should Hold the Line on Counterterrorism Objectives.**

Repairing U.S.–Pakistan relations should be a priority for the U.S. so long as it does not come at the expense of U.S. counterterrorism objectives. Moving forward, the U.S. should:

- **Convince Pakistani leaders to build economic and diplomatic ties with the Afghan regime.** The signing of the U.S.–Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Agreement commits the U.S. to supporting Afghanistan financially and bolstering its democratic institutions and civil society through 2024. It also provides a broad framework for the U.S. to maintain a military presence in the country post-2014, which signals to both the Taliban and Pakistani leaders that the U.S. will not abandon the country as it did in 1989. The agreement should help convince Pakistan’s leadership that building positive relations with the Afghan government provides a better chance of retaining influence within the country than would continuing to support insurgents, which would eventually lead to Pakistan’s regional isolation.
- **Pressure Pakistan to act against any terrorist groups and/or individuals linked to Osama bin Laden.** Without Pakistani action against terrorist groups and individuals linked to bin Laden, it is likely that they will continue to facilitate al-Qaeda

and its ability to plot, plan, and train for terrorist attacks. As former Pakistani Ambassador to the U.S. Husain Haqqani (no relation to the Haqqani network) points out in a recent op-ed in *The New York Times*, Pakistanis are still in the dark about who enabled bin Laden to shelter inside the country.<sup>1</sup>

- **Make clear that Pakistani failure to cooperate with the U.S.-led strategy in Afghanistan will result in decreased U.S. military aid and diplomatic engagement.** Some Administration officials believe that Pakistan will never cooperate with U.S. goals in Afghanistan and thus advocate immediate aid cuts or even a complete severing of U.S.–Pakistan relations. A better strategy is to convince Pakistani military leaders that pursuing a broad crackdown on violent Islamist groups in the country will strengthen Pakistan’s economic and political outlook and overall regional position. Islamabad’s practice of relying on violent Islamist proxies in Afghanistan (and India) has backfired badly on Pakistan. U.S. officials should build on this sentiment by convincing Pakistani leaders that unless they use their resources now to force the Taliban to compromise in Afghanistan, Pakistan will suffer from an emboldened Taliban leadership that will project its power back into Pakistan.

**Remain Firm.** The past year has seen a near breakdown in relations

1. Husain Haqqani, “How Pakistan Lets Terrorism Fester,” *The New York Times*, May 10, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/11/opinion/how-pakistan-lets-terrorism-fester.html> (accessed May 22, 2012).

between the U.S. and Pakistan. While both sides have an interest in backing away from the brink, the U.S. should remain firm on its counterterrorism demands of Pakistan. American use of northern supply routes over the past six months demonstrates that Pakistan has less leverage than previously assumed. Unless Islamabad shows greater willingness to join U.S. and NATO efforts to stabilize Afghanistan and cracks down on the terrorist network that has facilitated al-Qaeda over the past decade, the relationship will continue on its downward course.

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