

**U.S. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN PAKISTAN:  
CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE**

Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy Thesis

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## **Abstract**

The US-Pakistan relationship has historically oscillated. Today, a strong partnership between the United States and Pakistan is critical to the success of the U.S. war effort in Afghanistan and to the broader goal of countering violent extremism. However, the relationship is plagued by a significant trust deficit and suffers from a major disconnect between official relations and public perceptions. If Pakistani public opinion of the US remains acutely negative it may limit the extent of Pakistani cooperation on U.S. policy initiatives and threaten bilateral relations. Effective public diplomacy will be a critical component for transforming US-Pakistan relations and establishing an enduring partnership. This paper assesses the variety of public diplomacy methods and instruments the United States is currently employing in Pakistan, the greatest challenges to their success, and prospects for the future. It emphasizes the need to elevate the role of public diplomacy in US strategy toward Pakistan and concludes that through strategic dialogue, media engagement, educational and professional exchanges, development assistance and a number of other effective tools and instruments, the United States is beginning to create a new narrative about its relationship with Pakistan, based on shared values and interests.

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## List of Acronyms

AFCP	Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation
DoD	Department of Defense
DSPD	Defense Support to Public Diplomacy
ECA	Bureau for Educational and Cultural Affairs
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FY	Fiscal Year
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GOP	Government of Pakistan
HEC	Pakistani Higher Education Commission
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IO	Information Operations
IRCs	Information Resource Centers
IVLP	International Visitor Leadership Program
MISTs	Military Information Support Teams
NESA	Near East South Asia Student Exchange Program
OIG	Office of Inspector General
PA	Public Affairs
PAO	Public Affairs Officer
PAS	Public Affairs Section
SRAP	Special Representative to Pakistan and Afghanistan
UGRAD	Global Undergraduate Exchange Program for Pakistan
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USEFP	United States Educational Foundation in Pakistan
VOA	Voice of America

## I. INTRODUCTION

Since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1947, US-Pakistan relations have oscillated. Today, a strong partnership between the United States and Pakistan is critical to the success of the U.S. war effort in Afghanistan and to the broader goal of countering violent extremism. As President Barack Obama articulated, “The future of Afghanistan is inextricably linked to the future of its neighbor, Pakistan.”<sup>1</sup> Pakistani cooperation is imperative to stabilizing Afghanistan as insurgents move across porous borders and conduct attacks from safe havens in the northwest areas of Pakistan. U.S. national security priorities and regional stability in South Asia hinge on the strength of the US-Pakistan relationship.

It is not the US alone that stands to benefit from this relationship or risks losing a great deal should it rupture. Pakistan is in dire straits economically, facing extraordinary development challenges, and has long grappled with territorial insecurity due to a perceived threat from India. Since the 9/11 attacks rendered it a crucial partner in combating violent extremism, Pakistan has received over \$20 billion in civilian and military assistance from the United States.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, the US and Pakistan are long-term partners that are bound to each other for reasons of national interest.

However, the US-Pakistan relationship suffers from a major disconnect between official relations and public perceptions. The Pakistani public has long perceived this relationship as transactional rather than strategic. The United States, for all intents and purposes, has shifted its position on Pakistan from staunch ally to international pariah all too often in the eyes of many Pakistanis. As a result, it faces a hostile, overwhelmingly anti-American environment in Pakistan

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<sup>1</sup> Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan” (Speech, Eisenhower Executive Office Building, March 27, 2009), [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-a-New-Strategy-for-Afghanistan-and-Pakistan/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-a-New-Strategy-for-Afghanistan-and-Pakistan/).

<sup>2</sup> Alan Kronstadt, “Direct Overt US Aid and Military Reimbursements to Pakistan, FY2002-FY2011” (Congressional Research Service, January 4, 2011).

and will not find it easy to dispel the legacy of mistrust it has engendered. Despite improvements at the official level, if Pakistani public opinion of the US remains acutely negative it may limit the extent of Pakistani cooperation on U.S. policy initiatives and threaten bilateral relations.

The US must convince the Pakistani people that it seeks a partnership based on mutual trust and respect with Pakistan, and not merely a continuation of the transactional relationship of the past. The challenges are great and the setbacks are frequent, but should the relationship be allowed to collapse, both nations run the risk of a larger failure. Public diplomacy efforts will be essential to positively transforming historically tense relations into a long-lasting strategic partnership in the future. The Obama administration has put a great deal of emphasis on public diplomacy as a tool for achieving its policy objectives in Pakistan. The US must continue to engage in a massive and rejuvenated public diplomacy campaign in Pakistan using a combination of traditional and innovative new tools. This paper will assess the variety of public diplomacy methods and instruments the United States is currently employing in Pakistan, the greatest challenges to their success, and prospects for the future.

## **II. WHAT IS PUBLIC DIPLOMACY**

While public diplomacy is defined in many different ways, the term is generally used to describe the process by which governments seek to conduct foreign policy and promote national interests through direct engagement and communication with foreign publics.<sup>3</sup> Whereas traditional diplomacy consists primarily of government-to-government relations and is generally limited to official interaction between professional diplomats, public diplomacy deals directly with the citizens, community leaders, civil society organizations, media, and other influential

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<sup>3</sup> Nicholas J. Cull, "Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (March 1, 2008): 31.

individuals and groups of another country. It seeks to inform and influence the public opinion of foreign audiences regarding the United States and its culture, values and policies. In this sense, public diplomacy is a means of employing what Joseph Nye coined as “soft power,” which is the power of “attraction” rather than the power of “coercion.”<sup>4</sup>

U.S. public diplomacy has traditionally consisted of a range of activities targeting foreign audiences in the fields of information, education and culture, with the objective of influencing a foreign government by influencing its citizens.<sup>5</sup> Examples of established public diplomacy efforts include providing foreign publics with information through broadcasting, libraries and resource centers, and the Internet and social media; conducting educational programs such as international academic and professional exchanges; and promoting American culture through cultural presentations and exhibits.<sup>6</sup> These efforts seek to build lasting relationships with citizens of foreign nations and emphasize people-to-people contact in order to expose foreign audiences to American culture and values, promote open dialogue and encourage mutual understanding.

The ultimate goal of public diplomacy is to foster a receptive environment in which to carry out foreign policy objectives and advance national interests.<sup>7</sup> Shaping and influencing public opinion is a means of achieving this goal. While these efforts have traditionally been carried out by the U.S. Department of State, other government agencies are increasingly engaging in activities with similar objectives. For example, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) has focused increasingly on “strategic communication,” which is described by the federal government as the synchronization of words and actions as well as deliberate efforts to

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<sup>4</sup> Nye, Joseph S., Jr. "Think Again: Soft Power," *Foreign Policy*, March 1, 2006, Reprinted in YaleGlobal Online.

<sup>5</sup> G. Szondi, “Public diplomacy and nation branding: Conceptual similarities and differences,” *Discussion Papers in Diplomacy* (2008): 7.

<sup>6</sup> Kennon H. Nakamura, Matthew C. Weed, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: Background and Current Issues* (Congressional Research Service, December 18, 2009), 1.

<sup>7</sup> Szondi, “Public diplomacy and nation branding,” 7.

communicate and engage with target audiences.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has been tasked with “branding” its humanitarian and development initiatives in order to “increase the visibility and value of U.S. foreign assistance,”<sup>9</sup> and promote America’s image in regions where anti-Americanism persists.

Public diplomacy is often conflated or used interchangeably with strategic communication and branding. While these concepts overlap to an extent, there are also significant differences among them to note. One major distinction involves the direction of messaging. The two-way nature of public diplomacy sets it apart from strategic communication and branding, which have typically focused more on projecting messages outward. Public diplomacy reflects the need to both send messages and listen to foreign audiences in order to promote dialogue and build relationships, whereas strategic communications and branding have placed more of an emphasis on one-way messaging to inform and influence the opinions and actions of a foreign audience. Another key distinction among these activities is the audience toward which they are directed. For example, public diplomacy engages well-defined foreign publics, such as journalists and other opinion shapers, while branding targets largely passive, mass audiences, relying primarily on logos and slogans and leaving little room for interaction or dialogue.<sup>10</sup>

Since the 9/11 attacks, increased attention has been drawn to public diplomacy as an important element of American foreign policy. The Obama administration has emphasized the need for revitalized U.S. public diplomacy towards regions critical to national security that have been characterized by persistent anti-Americanism, particularly Pakistan. While the relationship

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<sup>8</sup> *National Framework for Strategic Communication* (The White House, March 16, 2010), 2.

<sup>9</sup> “USAID Branding Initiative: Redefining the Image of America” (U.S. Agency for International Development, n.d.), [pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PDACN483.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACN483.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> Szondi, “Public diplomacy and nation branding,” 13.

between the US and Pakistan has historically been defined by traditional ties, a noticeable shift to “soft power” diplomacy is emerging under the current administration and will become increasingly important for advancing U.S. interests in these regions. In the words of Mark Davidson, Public Affairs Officer (PAO) at U.S. Embassy Islamabad, “This is the public diplomacy moment for the State Department and for the United States.”<sup>11</sup>

### III. US-PAKISTAN BILATERAL RELATIONS

The checkered history of US–Pakistan relations can be divided into three main phases: The Cold War period, the post-Cold War era, and the current post-9/11 phase. The levels of U.S. aid to Pakistan, which have waxed and waned as U.S. geopolitical interests in the region have shifted, have largely defined the bilateral relationship. The oscillating nature of this relationship has generated a long-standing mistrust between the two nations that will not be easily overcome.

During the Cold War, the United States and Pakistan established diplomatic ties and forged a transactional relationship rooted in geopolitical interests; Pakistan’s primary concern was India, while U.S. grand strategy was focused on the containment of Communism. The two countries negotiated a mutual defense assistance agreement in 1954. As an early Cold War ally, Pakistan received almost \$2 billion in military and economic assistance until the 1965 Indo-Pak war, when the US halted military aid to the country.<sup>12</sup> This suspension of assistance chilled the US-Pakistan relationship and resulted in a widespread feeling among Pakistanis that the United

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<sup>11</sup> Mark Davidson, “Interview with Counselor for Public Affairs, U.S. Embassy Islamabad,” Telephone interview by author, October 28, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> “U.S. Aid to Pakistan by the Numbers,” *Center for American Progress*, August 21, 2008, [http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2008/08/pakistan\\_aid\\_numbers.html](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2008/08/pakistan_aid_numbers.html).

States was not a reliable ally.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, relations improved over time and arms sales recommenced, continuing until 1975.

In April 1979, President Carter suspended aid to Pakistan in response to Islamabad's secret construction of a uranium enrichment facility.<sup>14</sup> However, with the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, U.S. and Pakistani interests converged and Pakistan once more became viewed as an ally. It again became a major recipient of aid, with the two nations agreeing on a five-year, \$3.2 billion military and economic assistance program in 1981.<sup>15</sup>

Following the expulsion of the Soviets from Afghanistan, and the subsequent end of the Cold War, the strategic necessity of the partnership seemed to wane, particularly from the American perspective. The end of the Cold war triggered a reprioritization of U.S. interests, bringing non-proliferation to the forefront. Consequently, differences arose between the two nations on the nuclear issue; in 1990, when President George H.W. Bush failed to certify that Pakistan did not possess a nuclear explosive device, the US imposed military and economic sanctions on the country under the Pressler Amendment, cutting off most aid to Pakistan through the next decade.<sup>16</sup> Tensions over non-proliferation between the two nations were heightened in 1998 when India conducted nuclear tests and Pakistan retaliated with tests of its own, legally obligating the US to initiate another round of sanctions under the Glenn Amendment.<sup>17</sup>

From the Pakistani point of view, it was no coincidence that the suspension of aid and imposition of sanctions came at the end of the Cold War, after the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and the collapse of the Soviet Union; at a time when Pakistan's cooperation

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<sup>13</sup> K. Alan Kronstadt, *Pakistan-US Relations* (Congressional Research Service, February 6, 2009), 32.

<sup>14</sup> "U.S. Aid to Pakistan by the Numbers."

<sup>15</sup> Kronstadt, *Pakistan-US Relations*, 32.

<sup>16</sup> "Aid to Pakistan by the Numbers," *Center for Global Development*, 2010, [http://www.cgdev.org/section/initiatives/\\_active/pakistan/numbers](http://www.cgdev.org/section/initiatives/_active/pakistan/numbers).

<sup>17</sup> "Background Note: Pakistan," *U.S. Department of State, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs*, October 6, 2010, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3453.htm>.

was no longer vital to U.S. interests. The United States' strategic oscillation when it came to its relationship with Pakistan left most Pakistanis feeling exploited and betrayed. Many felt that they had been "abandoned and discarded" by the Americans, like a "used Kleenex."<sup>18</sup>

The events of September 11, 2001 again transformed the US-Pakistan relationship. Pakistan became an ally once more, pledging its support to U.S. counterterrorism efforts and its campaign to rid Afghanistan of the Taliban. The US, in turn, lifted sanctions and significantly increased foreign assistance to Pakistan. Most of this aid went to military operations and was directed at combating terrorism.<sup>19</sup> In effect, the US left Pakistan little choice but to enter into this alliance. Furthermore, the US forged a relationship with President Musharraf, not Pakistani political institutions or the Pakistani populace. The United States' largely uncritical support of Musharraf, a military leader who had little support within the country, fueled further Pakistani resentment. This flawed policy backfired when he declared a state of emergency in November 2007, suspending the Constitution and dismissing the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Under imminent threat of impeachment, Musharraf was forced to resign in 2008.

The Obama administration has prioritized building a strategic partnership with Pakistan. Soon after taking office, Obama appointed the late Richard Holbrooke as Special Representative to Pakistan and Afghanistan (SRAP), who has since been succeeded by Ambassador Marc Grossman. In October 2009, Congress passed the "The Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009," otherwise known as the Kerry-Lugar-Berman bill, authorizing \$7.5 billion in non-military aid to Pakistan over the next five years, a time frame that "is meant to signal to

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<sup>18</sup> Dennis Kux, "The United States and Pakistan, 1947-2000: A Special Essay by Dennis Kux," *The Johns Hopkins University Press*, n.d., [http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/supplemental/2886\\_4.html](http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/supplemental/2886_4.html).

<sup>19</sup> "U.S. Aid to Pakistan by the Numbers."

Pakistanis that the U.S. commitment will not be episodic as it has been in the past.”<sup>20</sup> Later that month, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Pakistan, where she met with top-level Pakistani officials and engaged in massive public diplomacy efforts. During the Secretary’s visit, she and Foreign Minister Mahmood Shah Qureshi agreed to hold a US-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue, which they subsequently co-hosted on March 24-25, 2010 in Washington, D.C.<sup>21</sup>

While these developments have been promising, US-Pakistan relations have persistently been characterized by periods of cooperation and contention. Any small gains made in this tenuous relationship risk being set back by one misstep due to the long-standing feelings of distrust among Pakistanis, who do not view the US as a reliable partner. It will take time and effort to dispel mutual suspicions and repair and rebuild the relationship between the two nations. In this context, public diplomacy is an essential tool for improving the US-Pakistan relations.

#### **IV. PAKISTANI PUBLIC OPINION**

By and large, America’s image in Pakistan remains extremely negative. According to a poll conducted by the Pew Research Center in June 2010, of the 22 nations surveyed, Pakistanis give the US its lowest ratings. Along with Egyptians and Turks, only 17% of Pakistanis hold a favorable view of the US. In fact, 59% of Pakistanis view the US as an enemy, while only 11% consider it a partner.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> James Traub, “Our Money in Pakistan,” *Foreign Policy*, March 17, 2010, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/03/17/our\\_money\\_in\\_pakistan](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/03/17/our_money_in_pakistan).

<sup>21</sup> “U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue,” *Embassy of the United States Islamabad, Pakistan*, October 13, 2010, [http://islamabad.usembassy.gov/sd\\_march\\_24\\_2010\\_1.html](http://islamabad.usembassy.gov/sd_march_24_2010_1.html).

<sup>22</sup> *Pew Global Attitudes Project: Concern About Extremist Threat Slips in Pakistan* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, July 29, 2010), 2, <http://pewglobal.org/2010/07/29/concern-about-extremist-threat-slips-in-pakistan/>.

President Barack Obama is unpopular among Pakistanis, receiving lower ratings in Pakistan than in any other country surveyed in 2010. According to the poll, “Pakistan is the only predominantly Muslim country surveyed where more express confidence in Osama bin Laden than in the American president.” While 18% of Pakistanis have at least some confidence in bin Laden to “do the right thing in world affairs,” only 8% of Pakistanis have the same confidence in Obama.<sup>23</sup> Only 13% believe that he has a better understanding of Pakistan than most Western leaders; 42% say he does not.<sup>24</sup>

The President’s dismal approval ratings in Pakistan are due, in part, to dissatisfaction with his foreign policies and his treatment of a few key issues. The majority of Pakistanis disapprove of how Obama is dealing with Afghanistan (55%), Iraq (53%), Iran (52%), and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (51%).<sup>25</sup> Opposition to the US-led war in Afghanistan in particular is widespread. 65% of Pakistanis want U.S. and NATO troops withdrawn from Afghanistan as soon as possible.<sup>26</sup> In Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in particular, most people have negative perceptions of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan and the broader “war on terror.” 77% of FATA residents view the campaign as a war to weaken the Muslim world, while 75% believe the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan is motivated by the desire to secure natural resources.<sup>27</sup>

When it comes to U.S. policy toward India and Pakistan, 47% of Pakistanis say the US tends to side with its archrival.<sup>28</sup> Pakistanis express more concern about the perceived external

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>27</sup> Peter Bergen, Patrick C. Doherty, and Ken Ballen, *Public Opinion in Pakistan’s Tribal Regions* (Washington, D.C.: New America Foundation and Terror Free Tomorrow, September 28, 2010), 3, [http://newamerica.net/publications/policy/public\\_opinion\\_in\\_pakistan\\_s\\_tribal\\_regions](http://newamerica.net/publications/policy/public_opinion_in_pakistan_s_tribal_regions).

<sup>28</sup> *Pew Global Attitudes Project: Concern About Extremist Threat Slips in Pakistan*, 17.

threat from India than the internal threat posed by extremist groups in Pakistan. In fact, 53% of Pakistanis consider India “the greatest threat to their country,” while 23% point to the Taliban, and 3% to al Qaeda.<sup>29</sup> The Taliban and al Qaeda remain generally unpopular in Pakistan, but concerns about these extremist groups coming to power are less prevalent now than they were a year ago.

In fact, support for U.S. involvement in combating extremist groups in Pakistan has decreased over the course of the last year. 53% of Pakistanis now want US aid directed at areas where extremist groups operate, as compared to 72% in 2009. Likewise less than half of respondents (48%) want the US to provide intelligence and logistical support to Pakistani troops fighting extremists, down from 63% in 2009.<sup>30</sup>

Few Pakistanis support US drone strikes against extremist leaders, and Obama’s low approval ratings may, in part, be due to his decision to pursue this policy. 93% of those who are aware of the strikes are opposed to them. 56% consider them unnecessary, while 90% think that they kill too many civilians. Many Pakistanis express outrage that the United States carries out what are perceived as extrajudicial murders using drones in Pakistan and yet are not held accountable by the international community, but rather “kill civilians and get away with murder on a daily basis.”<sup>31</sup>

The Pakistani media constitute some of the key actors shaping public opinion in the country. According to a survey of 395 Pakistani journalists conducted by Lawrence Pintak and Syed Javed Nazir, the vast majority of journalists oppose U.S. military operations in Pakistan. Yet, on the whole they are not blatantly anti-American. Their issues are with American foreign

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>31</sup> Huma Yusuf, “Interview with Pakistan Scholar, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars,” Personal interview by author, March 22, 2011.

policies, regarding drones and military operations in Afghanistan, not with the American people. While under a quarter hold a favorable view of U.S. foreign policy, just over three-quarters of those surveyed view the American people favorably.<sup>32</sup>

Despite their overwhelmingly negative views of the United States, most Pakistanis desire better relations with the superpower. 64% place importance on improving relations with the U.S., up from 53% in 2009.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the findings of the September 2010 opinion poll conducted by the New America Foundation in FATA support the idea that low public opinion among Pakistanis does not signify deep-seated anti-American sentiments. The poll results suggest that effective public diplomacy and development initiatives could significantly improve Pakistani public opinion of the United States. For example, when asked, “what would improve the opinion of the United States among FATA residents?” 72% cited increased visas and educational scholarships to study in the United States. Also, 68% of those polled said that building schools, providing teacher training, and offering medical aid would raise their opinion of the U.S.<sup>34</sup> These statistics highlight the need for more robust public diplomacy efforts as a significant part of U.S. strategy toward Pakistan moving forward.

In reference to the consistently low ratings received by the United States in Pakistani public opinion polls, Former Counselor of Public Affairs in Islamabad, Larry Schwartz, remarked, “I have to ask a rhetorical question: Are we running for President in Pakistan? Are we searching for love?” In Schwartz’s perspective, the US does not need to “win friends and be popular” in Pakistan. Rather, it desires a partnership that will allow the two nations to work

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<sup>32</sup> Lawrence Pintak and Syed Javed Nazir, “Inside the Muslim (Journalist’s) Mind,” *The New York Times*, February 12, 2011, sec. The Opinion Pages, [http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/02/12/opinion/20110213\\_pakistanipart.html?emc=eta1](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/02/12/opinion/20110213_pakistanipart.html?emc=eta1).

<sup>33</sup> *Pew Global Attitudes Project: Concern About Extremist Threat Slips in Pakistan*, 3.

<sup>34</sup> Bergen, Doherty, and Ballen, *Public Opinion in Pakistan’s Tribal Regions*, 11.

together towards greater security and stability in the region, which requires Pakistan's acceptance of the sincerity of U.S. intentions.<sup>35</sup>

According to Schwartz, as the US and Pakistan are countries with very different backgrounds, worldviews and visions of themselves and their roles in the world, it is not surprising that they diverge in their opinions about each other or on how to address regional issues. However, he contends that,

“Pakistanis want the same things that everybody else does in the world—a chance for a better life. If they see America as their partner in this enterprise, then America's image will be different. But while they feel that they are the powerless victims of forces larger than themselves, which is a persistent narrative in Pakistan's political culture, then they'll blame everybody.”<sup>36</sup>

Many Pakistanis may be interested in engagement with the United States; they are simply dissatisfied with the nature of that engagement. The goal of US public diplomacy moving forward will be to establish a strong partnership between the United States and Pakistan and to create a new narrative based on shared values and mutual interests.

## **V. TARGET AUDIENCE**

Determining the target audience of U.S. public diplomacy efforts in Pakistan is challenging, given that anti-Americanism does not appear to be limited to one segment of society. In fact, Pakistani journalist Huma Yusuf asserts that one of the major problems with the U.S. approach toward Pakistan is the erroneous perception held by many that anti-Americanism in the country is solely an “ignorant, illiterate, knee-jerk response that feeds purely from [an] al-Qaeda militant narrative,” when in fact the reality on the ground is that anti-Americanism extends across class and is quite possibly “one of the few things that all Pakistanis have in

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<sup>35</sup> Larry Schwartz, “Interview with former Counselor for Public Affairs, U.S. Embassy Islamabad,” Telephone interview by author, December 3, 2010.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

common.” However, the United States has shown an inability to parse this out, instead exhibiting a tendency to portray anti-Americanism as a “lump phenomenon,” and failing to acknowledge that it may actually be quite rational, well-informed and textured.<sup>37</sup>

The rural population that often hears about U.S. aid coming into Pakistan but has yet to see it may harbor anti-American sentiments as a result. Much of the urban middle-class, which is English speaking, has had frequent interaction with people outside of Pakistan and has gained exposure to the US via exchange programs, is often already somewhat Westernized or partial to the US. Yet even the liberal demographic cohort is disgruntled with the United States.<sup>38</sup> This small urban pool can coherently and maturely distinguish between American citizens and values and U.S. foreign policy, which they often find to be hypocritical and anti-human rights.<sup>39</sup> For the most part, their issues seem to be with the U.S. government, not the American people. But as the U.S. government is carrying out public diplomacy activities, these efforts are subject to a certain taint that may undermine their effectiveness.

With anti-Americanism so pervasive in Pakistan, a question the U.S. government must answer is: who is it seeking to influence and which opinions is it attempting to shape? The US must distinguish which Pakistani public it is targeting with its public diplomacy efforts in order to tailor them to the right audience.

## **VI. THE NEW PAKISTAN PLAN**

The Obama administration has identified the development of a strong partnership with Pakistan as essential to securing regional stability and protecting U.S. national security.

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<sup>37</sup> Yusuf, “Interview with Pakistan Scholar, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.”

<sup>38</sup> Michael Kugelman, “Interview with Program Associate, Asia Program, Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars,” Personal interview by author, March 22, 2011.

<sup>39</sup> Yusuf, “Interview with Pakistan Scholar, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.”

However, broadening and deepening the U.S. relationship with Pakistan, which has historically been described as transactional, will be a challenge. During a December 2009 address at West Point, President Obama affirmed that, “In the past, we too often defined our relationship with Pakistan narrowly. Those days are over. Moving forward, we are committed to a partnership with Pakistan that is built on a foundation of mutual interest, mutual respect, and mutual trust.”<sup>40</sup> Acknowledging the pervasive perception among Pakistanis of the U.S. as an unreliable long-term partner, Obama continued, “Going forward, the Pakistani people must know America will remain a strong supporter of Pakistan’s security and prosperity long after the guns have fallen silent, so that the great potential of its people can be unleashed.”<sup>41</sup>

The Obama administration has articulated a revised plan to achieve a lasting partnership with Pakistan and accomplish key objectives in the region. The recognition that information and communication are a significant element in the dynamic within Pakistan led to the overhaul of public diplomacy efforts in the country. The office of the Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy, Judith McHale, in coordination with Embassy Islamabad, the office of Special Representative Holbrooke, USAID and DoD developed a new strategy, called the Pakistan Communications Plan. This plan encompasses four main areas of initiatives. The first is a much greater, more robust effort to engage the media; second is building communications capacity; third, is strengthening people-to-people ties; and fourth is countering the extremist narratives that pose a challenge to stability and progress in the region.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan” (Address, United States Military Academy at West Point, West Point, New York, December 1, 2009), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan>.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Judith A. McHale, *Future of U.S. Public Diplomacy* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2010), <http://www.state.gov/r/remarks/2010/138283.htm>.

First, the revised plan prompted a change in posture and approach in terms of engaging with the media. In describing this new approach, Pakistan Public Diplomacy Desk Officer at the U.S. Department of State, Joe Zilligen, said,

“Engagement is the idea that you can never turn off your cell phone. 24-hour accessibility to the press—that kind of thing was made very clear in the implementation of this policy. You’ve got people answering every call; going out of their way to make themselves accessible; bending over backwards to try to engage and develop relationships with the press.”<sup>43</sup>

One important aspect of increased engagement with the media was an expanded effort to correct the press when they were wrong. As former Counselor of Public Affairs, Larry Schwartz, remarked, “One of the most important things that I did is actually kind of the silliest, and that is that I started putting out press releases calling people liars.” Conspiracy theories run rampant among the Pakistani media and Schwartz became frustrated with constantly reading what he described as “the most bizarre, untruthful fabrications of US foreign policy” in the newspapers on a daily basis. He decided to begin holding people accountable for what they printed by putting out press releases whenever he came across a story that was factually incorrect, calling them “Corrections for the Record.” According to Schwartz, these corrections “...actually had an ameliorative effect. People don’t like to be criticized in public. Fewer and fewer people wanted to be called wackos in the press.” Over time the number of corrections he needed to issue noticeably decreased. In Schwartz’s perspective, “Shaping the narrative and defending our turf was the most important thing that we did; it was the most successful and it was not a program...it was an effective press engagement strategy.”<sup>44</sup>

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*Future of U.S. Public Diplomacy*, SFRC Subcommittee on International Operations and Organizations, Human Rights, Democracy, and Global Women's Issues (March 2010) (Testimony of Judith A. McHale, Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs).

<sup>43</sup> Joe Zilligen, “Interview with Pakistan Public Diplomacy Desk Officer, U.S. Department of State,” Telephone interview by author, November 29, 2010.

<sup>44</sup> Schwartz, “Interview with former Counselor for Public Affairs, U.S. Embassy Islamabad.”

The second major part of the plan is strengthening people-to-people ties, which has long been in the repertoire of the U.S. State Department. Under the current administration, public diplomacy practitioners are taking traditional programs and enhancing them. These include educational exchange programs, such as the Fulbright, and professional exchanges like the Humphrey Scholarship and the International Visitor Leadership Program. According to Joe Zilligen, “You can almost run down the list of all those standard programs and Pakistan has just about the biggest in the world in every case now, because they’ve really ramped up these efforts to bring Pakistanis and Americans together again.”<sup>45</sup>

The third main area is building communications capacity in Pakistan, focusing initially on the capacity of the Pakistani government and working towards developing that of the private sector and the media market. As communications capacity in Pakistan is quite low, there is much room for improvement in this area. The Pakistani government does not have adequate resources for communications-specific activities and its ability to communicate both externally and to its own people drastically needs to be enhanced. Also, while the media market is expanding rapidly in Pakistan, the media is still a relatively immature institution that needs to be developed.<sup>46</sup>

The US is working with the Pakistani government to help build communications capacity through infrastructure and human capital. It has worked with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to increase the number of radio towers functioning at a quality level. It has also partnered with the Ministry of Information and Technology to identify the information technology needs of the Pakistani government and people in terms of facilitating communication.<sup>47</sup> In order to build human capacity, the US is helping to develop the professional

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<sup>45</sup> Zilligen, “Interview with Pakistan Public Diplomacy Desk Officer, U.S. Department of State.”

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

expertise of journalists and communications experts in the Pakistani government. For example, the US offered 125 scholarships to Pakistani journalists during 2011, as well as 80 internships to officers from Pakistan's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.<sup>48</sup> In this way, the US seeks to improve capacity on the technical end but also on the human side.

Each of the first three elements of the Pakistan Plan play into the fourth longer-term objective of countering the extremist narrative. Achieving this long-term goal will require increased engagement with the media and local population to dispel misconceptions; building the capacity of Pakistani institutions to deal with the numerous challenges they face; and strengthening people-to-people ties to establish a strong US-Pakistan partnership. Moving forward, the United States will need to present itself as a reliable partner by bolstering its words with actions.

## VII. THE PUBLIC DIPLOMACY TOOLBOX FOR PAKISTAN

Under the framework of the Pakistan Communications Plan, the US is engaging in both traditional and public diplomacy efforts to reverse anti-American sentiments, counter misunderstandings and misinformation about America, and improve bilateral relations between the US and Pakistan. According to career diplomat John Brown, the three pillars supporting effective public diplomacy are information programs, educational exchanges, and cultural presentations.<sup>49</sup> US public diplomacy efforts in Pakistan employ a variety of tools in each of these areas to reach and build relationships with Pakistanis at the official and local level.

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<sup>48</sup> "US agrees to offer 125 scholarships for Pak journalists," *Geo Television Network*, October 21, 2010, <http://www.geo.tv/10-21-2010/73189.htm>.

<sup>49</sup> John Brown, "The Purposes and Cross-Purposes of American Public Diplomacy," *American Diplomacy*, August 15, 2002, [http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/archives\\_roll/2002\\_07-09/brown\\_pubdipl/brown\\_pubdipl.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/archives_roll/2002_07-09/brown_pubdipl/brown_pubdipl.html).

## A. Information

### High-level visits

The U.S. Embassy in Islamabad regularly hosts a large number of high-level visitors. According to a 2010 OIG report, it has “one of the heaviest visitor loads in the world.”<sup>50</sup> In order to manage the workload involved with hosting high-level administration and congressional visitors, the Embassy established the Visitor Support Unit in June 2009.<sup>51</sup> In 2009, over 70 high-level delegations and visitors came to Pakistan, including visits by Special Representative Richard Holbrooke in February, and Secretary of State Clinton in late October.

Secretary Clinton engaged in traditional diplomacy, attending meetings with Pakistani government officials, including Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Prime Minister Yousef Raza Gilani, and President Asif Ali Zardari. But she also engaged in massive public diplomacy during the trip, connecting with and directly addressing the Pakistani people. She held town hall meetings at universities in Pakistan, met with lawyers and civil society leaders, and engaged in media roundtable interviews with print, radio and television journalists, fielding tough audience questions on a range of issues. Clinton also visited important sites of religious and cultural significance in Pakistan, such as the shrine of the Sufi Saint Shah Abdul Latif Kazmi in Islamabad, and one of the largest mosques in South Asia, the 17<sup>th</sup> century Badshahi mosque in Lahore.<sup>52</sup>

Secretary Clinton emphasized the importance of repairing relations between the U.S. and Pakistan and building a broad partnership. At a news conference in Islamabad she asserted, “This is a critical moment and the United States seeks to turn the page, to a new partnership, with not

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<sup>50</sup> *Report of Inspection: Embassy Islamabad and Constituent Posts, Pakistan* (U.S. Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors. Office of Inspector General, June 2010), 33.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>52</sup> “Secretary Clinton Concludes 3-Day Visit to Pakistan,” Press Release, *U.S. Department of State*, October 30, 2009, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2009/oct/131155.htm>.

only the government, but the people of a democratic Pakistan...we hope to build a strong relationship based on mutual respect and mutual shared responsibility.”<sup>53</sup>

According to Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, Judith McHale, Secretary Clinton’s visit was planned and carried out in line with the goals of the Pakistan Communications Plan. In a March 2010 testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, McHale lauded Clinton’s efforts, asserting, “Her extensive series of public engagement activities carried out the Plan’s emphasis on rejuvenating our personal, face-to-face diplomacy. Her visits to historical and cultural venues underscored American respect for and desire for partnership with the people of Pakistan.”<sup>54</sup>

The visit was considered a great success among Pakistanis, who appreciated Clinton’s clear efforts to reach out to the Pakistani public by engaging directly with students, women’s groups, and the media on the issues of importance to them. According to journalist Huma Yusuf, Clinton’s willingness to discuss contentious issues and engage with criticism bestowed a sense of dignity on the Pakistani people, and as such was a hugely effective public diplomacy effort.<sup>55</sup>

### **Strategic Dialogue**

During her visit, Secretary Clinton and Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi also agreed to establish a US-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue aimed at building ties between the two nations. The dialogue “represents the shared commitment of the U.S. and Pakistan to strengthening the bilateral relationship as a broad partnership based on shared democratic values, mutual respect, trust and interests.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> “Clinton vows to support Pakistan,” *BBC*, October 28, 2009, sec. South Asia, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8329166.stm>.

<sup>54</sup> McHale, *Future of U.S. Public Diplomacy*.

<sup>55</sup> Yusuf, “Interview with Pakistan Scholar, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.”

<sup>56</sup> “U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue.”

On March 24, 2010, the initial Strategic Dialogue was held at the ministerial-level in Washington, overseen by the Secretary of State and with Foreign Minister Qureshi and Army Chief Ashfaq Kayani in attendance. The Pakistani officials arrived in Washington with a list of demands, ranging from a civilian nuclear deal to enhanced market access to Pakistan's exports.<sup>57</sup> The US was prepared to listen even if it could not comply with many of these demands, and while it made few concessions by the end of the talks, according to Pakistani author Ahmed Rashid, "the most concrete results were reflected in a sector-by-sector dialogue by relevant ministries on each side, as to how the US can help rally Pakistan's faltering economy, lack of energy and improve its agriculture and infrastructure."<sup>58</sup>

The dialogue prompted 13 working groups focusing on sectors of importance identified by both sides, which have since been meeting regularly in Pakistan and Washington to determine achievable goals and deliverables. While security is the primary interest of the United States, the groups represent the U.S. perspective of Pakistani priorities and address a range of other issues from energy, water and agriculture, to communications and public diplomacy. These are areas of mutual interest that also embody the key issues of importance to the people and government of Pakistan.<sup>59</sup> The dialogue serves as an opportunity for the United States to demonstrate its interest in helping Pakistan economically and to define the relationship in terms other than security-centered ties.

The Strategic Dialogue constitutes the engagement of the Pakistani people and civilian government, not only the military and intelligence agency, and is thus by definition a public diplomacy effort. The talks are about what the US and Pakistan can accomplish together and the

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<sup>57</sup> Hussain Zaidi, "Overcoming irritants in Pak-US relations," *Dawn*, November 7, 2010, <http://www.dawn.com/2010/11/07/overcoming-irritants-in-pak-us-relations.html>.

<sup>58</sup> Ahmed Rashid, "US-Pakistan dialogue with a difference," *BBC*, April 2, 2010, sec. South Asia, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/8592472.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8592472.stm).

<sup>59</sup> Zilligen, "Interview with Pakistan Public Diplomacy Desk Officer, U.S. Department of State."

message is that of partnership rather than transaction. According to Pakistan's Ambassador to the US, Husain Haqqani, "We seek a relationship in which there is close identity of views between not only the Governments but more importantly the people of the two countries where each side will see tangible benefits of engagement." Haqqani has referred to the dialogue as "a wide-ranging exercise to lend the relationship depth and durability."<sup>60</sup>

While Pakistanis were initially tepid about the dialogue, viewing it as merely another photo opportunity, many are beginning to approach it more seriously. General Kayani's active preparation for and participation in the dialogue and the civilian government's nascent investment in it has gradually begun to suggest to the Pakistani public that perhaps there is another track to the US-Pakistan relationship than just terrorism and Afghanistan. Many are starting to view the dialogue as a genuine effort to engage Pakistan, involve it in the conversation and change the dynamic of the relationship.<sup>61</sup>

Yet, as one Pakistani journalist speculated, "The Strategic Dialogue may help remove the trust deficit. However, it may also raise the expectation level on both sides, which if not realised may widen the trust deficit."<sup>62</sup> Thus, while there is genuine interest in the dialogue, it will take time before it has a considerable impact and will require additional steps to make it effective. The Strategic Dialogue may signal a new chapter in the bilateral relations between US and Pakistan, but it must be viewed as an ongoing process; the relationship will not change overnight.

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<sup>60</sup> "Pakistan, US working to forge sustained partnership: Haqqani," *Dawn* (Washington, DC, December 3, 2010), <http://www.dawn.com/2010/12/03/pakistan-us-working-to-forge-sustained-partnership-haqqani.html>.

<sup>61</sup> Yusuf, "Interview with Pakistan Scholar, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars."

<sup>62</sup> Zaidi, "Overcoming irritants in Pak-US relations."

## Broadcasting

While Pakistan has a thriving and relatively free media, anti-American bias is pervasive in the Urdu and English language media. This often hostile media environment poses a major public diplomacy challenge for the United States in Pakistan. Voice of America (VOA), the official international broadcasting service of the U.S. government, aims to advance U.S. public diplomacy objectives by offering a reliable alternative source of news in Pakistan that provides a more balanced representation of the US and its policies.<sup>63</sup>

### VOA Urdu

VOA began Urdu broadcasts to Pakistan on May 13, 1951.<sup>64</sup> It launched its recent Urdu initiative, *Radio Aap ki Duniyaa* (Your World), on May 10, 2004. Airing 91 hours a week,<sup>65</sup> *Radio Aap ki Duniyaa* broadcasts news, information and music to millions of Pakistanis and other Urdu speakers. VOA also launched an Urdu language television program, *Khabron Se Aage* (Beyond the Headlines) on November 14, 2005.<sup>66</sup> The half-hour program airs five hours a week on GEO TV,<sup>67</sup> VOA's affiliate in Pakistan and one of the country's most popular stations. The program targets a young, urban Pakistani audience, featuring reports on politics, international affairs, social issues, education, entertainment and other issues of interest. Steven Simmons, a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), described the program as an "important

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<sup>63</sup> *Report of Inspection: The Broadcasting Board of Governors' Operations in and Broadcasting to Pakistan* (United States Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors, Office of Inspector General, September 2005), 5.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>65</sup> Alan Heil, "Interview with ret. deputy director of VOA," Email interview by author, April 5, 2011.

<sup>66</sup> "VOA Launches Urdu TV For Pakistan," Press Release, *U.S. Embassy, Islamabad, Pakistan*, November 13, 2005, <http://islamabad.usembassy.gov/pakistan/h05111301.html>.

<sup>67</sup> Heil, "Interview with ret. deputy director of VOA."

new channel of communication between the American people and Pakistan.”<sup>68</sup> VOA’s Urdu broadcasting enjoys a weekly listenership of 9.1 million adults, making it the leading international broadcaster to Pakistan. BBC Urdu, in comparison, reaches 8.1 million adults in the country weekly.<sup>69</sup>

### **VOA Pashto**

VOA broadcasts also have the potential to serve as a powerful tool of public diplomacy in the tribal areas of Pakistan, a region where extremism is prevalent. The 30 million Pashtuns living on the Pakistani side of the border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan are viewed as “a prime target audience” by Embassy Islamabad.<sup>70</sup> However, the Pashto spoken in Pakistan differs from that of Afghanistan. In October 2006, VOA launched *Deewa Radio* (Illumination Radio) to reach this underserved audience. According to BBG and VOA, “the role of *Deewa Radio* is to provide Pakistan’s Pashto speakers with reliable news and information in the VOA tradition; its role is not to provide a propaganda counterweight to Taliban efforts.”<sup>71</sup>

While it is not possible to conduct comprehensive listener surveys in areas such as the Swat valley and FATA, the record number of phone calls received by *Deewa Radio* provides some indication of its impact. According to service chief Nafees Takar, during the last week in August there were 6,600 calls, ranging from “eyewitness accounts of Taliban beheadings and clashes between Pakistan’s army and the insurgents” to “reaction to lifesaving information provided by Deewa to displaced civilians about where to find food, shelter and medical help.”<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> “VOA Launches Urdu TV For Pakistan.”

<sup>69</sup> Email exchange with Alan Heil.

<sup>70</sup> *Report of Inspection: The Broadcasting Board of Governors’ Operations in and Broadcasting to Pakistan*, 9.

<sup>71</sup> *Report of Inspection: Review of Voice of America’s Deewa Radio Journalistic Controls* (United States Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors, Office of Inspector General, July 2009), 7.

<sup>72</sup> Alan L. Heil, “Pakistan’s Radio Wars: An Expanding Arena”, October 14, 2009.

The 2009 OIG Inspection Report on Radio Deewa concluded that it maintains credibility and relevance in its reporting, indicated by a growing listenership among its target audience. In Pakistani Pashto, VOA reaches 14.2% of the audience in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.<sup>73</sup> A challenge to expanding its audience is obtaining the permission of the Pakistani government, particularly the military, for relays on local FM stations. These stations generally have larger audiences, though much less range, than VOA programs on shortwave. According to former Deputy Director of VOA, Alan Heil, “Although Deewa Radio was on Peshawar local FM for about a month in late 2009, that service was abruptly terminated by the Pakistani military for what it claimed were security reasons and has not been restored.”<sup>74</sup>

### **VOA English**

In June 2010, VOA and Pakistani cable news channel Express 24/7 launched an English-language television talk show called *The Platform*. The twice-weekly 50-minute program is co-hosted from Express studios in Islamabad and VOA studios in Washington, marking the first English-language television program to be jointly produced by stations in Pakistan and the United States. *The Platform* focuses on key issues in the US-Pakistan relationship and the fight against terrorism. For example, the first show delved into the history of US-Pakistan relations, while the second dealt with the issue of U.S. drone attacks in Pakistan. In addition to studio guests, the program will feature live reports from the State Department, the Pentagon, the U.S. Congress, the United Nations, and domestic and international VOA bureaus.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Heil, “Interview with ret. deputy director of VOA.”

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> “VOA and Pakistani Cable News Station Unveil Joint TV Project,” Press Release, *Voice of America*, June 28, 2010, <http://www.insidevoa.com/media-relations/press-releases/a-13-34-2010-06-28-Platform-launch-111607064.html>.

In a VOA press release on the joint project, VOA Director Dan Austin described the program as an opportunity to dispel misconceptions on both sides. He said, "The Platform gives newsmakers and analysts in Islamabad the opportunity to present opinions on issues related to the United States and its foreign policy...while guests in Washington will provide the U.S. perspective."<sup>76</sup> In this way, the program may serve U.S. public diplomacy objectives in Pakistan by opening up an avenue for dialogue between the two nations.

### ***Credibility and Relevance***

In an address at George Washington University's Institute for Public Diplomacy and Global Communication on April 6, 2010, VOA Director Dan Austin spoke on the changing face of public diplomacy and the new role of VOA. According to Austin, "Both in Pakistan and Afghanistan, our mission couldn't be more clear: counter the mullah radios, the virulent anti-Americanism and, in some cases, the unbelievably sensationalist commercial media with reporting that is credible, accurate and fair."<sup>77</sup> However, U.S. international broadcasting must strike a fine balance in order to maintain credibility in the eyes of foreign audiences while continuing to support U.S. foreign policy objectives abroad. According to Alan Heil, VOA strikes that balance by reporting the news objectively and presenting information of use to Pakistanis, including events in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and other parts of Pakistan. Furthermore, Heil notes that VOA has a respectable audience size, reaching roughly 15 million Pakistanis

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Danforth Austin, "The New Faces of VOA" (Speech, George Washington University, Institute for Public Diplomacy and Global Communication, April 6, 2011), <http://www.insidevoa.com/media-relations/events/119503034.html>.

weekly on radio and TV, a significantly larger number than one might expect if its services were not credible.<sup>78</sup>

However, there is some contention on this point. For example, journalist Huma Yusuf notes that many Pakistanis have questioned VOA's credibility, due to its "shamelessly pro-American" programming. Other criticisms leveled against the organization have included inaccurate reporting, poor oversight of broadcasters, financially corrupt practices and personnel and management issues. Yusuf claims VOA is subject to a "taint" as a result of these issues and is often seen as misconstruing the story and presenting distorted versions of security issues in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. However, while it may be viewed negatively in these areas, she concedes that there is a more positive perception of VOA programming in other areas of the country, such as Sindh, Punjab and parts of Balochistan.<sup>79</sup>

Meanwhile, Heil maintains that VOA is very popular in the northern regions of Pakistan adjacent to the border with Afghanistan. He points out that "its humanitarian programming is one of the best examples of U.S. public diplomacy: provision of information useful to refugees both of the fighting in the north and the devastating floods of 2010."<sup>80</sup> During the floods, VOA published maps of the hardest hit areas on its website and provided dozens of on-scene reports on international assistance to Pakistan during the tragedy. It also published the addresses of humanitarian organizations where contributions could be made to aid the flood victims, including the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR).

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<sup>78</sup> Heil, "Interview with ret. deputy director of VOA."

<sup>79</sup> Yusuf, "Interview with Pakistan Scholar, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars."

<sup>80</sup> Heil, "Interview with ret. deputy director of VOA."

These somewhat conflicting portrayals of VOA's programs in Pakistan indicate the need to further investigate the public diplomacy role broadcasting plays in the country and how it might be improved.

## **Public Diplomacy 2.0: Social Media**

The rapidly expanding and constantly evolving global communications environment in which diplomats must operate today poses a host of new challenges and opportunities for U.S. public diplomacy efforts in Pakistan. The rapid availability of information and global reach provided by the Internet and social media has complicated the ability of the US to shape and influence the actions and perceptions of foreign publics. These developments have rendered traditional government-to-government diplomacy insufficient. In order to be effective in this new environment, it is necessary to undertake new forms of public diplomacy that directly address a global audience.

One relatively new tool being utilized to conduct public diplomacy in Pakistan is social networking media. Public Diplomacy Desk Officer Joe Zilligen described initial efforts on this front as being, "in nascent stages, with everyone recognizing that there is huge potential."<sup>81</sup> For example, during Secretary Clinton's visit to Pakistan in October 2009, she launched Humari Awaz ("Our Voice"), Pakistan's first mobile phone-based social network.<sup>82</sup> Using SMS technology, it enables Pakistanis to build cellular phone-based groups around shared interests. With about 100 million mobile subscribers as of July 2010, Pakistan has one of the largest

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<sup>81</sup> Zilligen, "Interview with Pakistan Public Diplomacy Desk Officer, U.S. Department of State."

<sup>82</sup> "U.S. Secretary of State Encourages Use of New Media Communications in Pakistan: 'Our Voice' Cell Phone Social Networking on #7111," Press Release, *U.S. Department of State*, October 29, 2009, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2009/oct/131042.htm>.

populations in the world that use cellular phones.<sup>83</sup> Through this initiative, Secretary Clinton demonstrated her support for the use of new social media to facilitate increased people-to-people interaction, and provide a platform for the exchange of ideas and information among Pakistanis across the country.

Following the devastating floods that plagued Pakistan in July 2010, Humari Awaz proved crucial to connecting Pakistanis to flood recovery efforts. People used the network to share the latest updates on relief efforts by texting the word FLOODS to the free SMS shortcode 7111.<sup>84</sup> Mobile phone users countrywide were able to subscribe to the FLOODS Group and send real-time messages to its members. Humari Awaz served as an essential forum for information sharing in this time of crisis, helping to keep people up-to-date on the latest recovery efforts and connecting them with the necessary resources to support the efforts.

In addition, the State Department utilized popular social media networking sites to communicate information on U.S. flood relief efforts.<sup>85</sup> The U.S. Embassy provided Pakistan's online community with the latest updates through its website, <http://islamabad.usembassy.gov> and its Facebook page, <http://www.facebook.com/pakistan.usembassy>. Also the State Department posted videos of U.S. relief efforts on its YouTube site, <http://www.youtube.com/StateDepartment>, as well as photos on the State Department's Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/statephotos>. Finally, the State Department promoted text donations for flood recovery efforts on its official blog, DipNote, at <http://blogs.state.gov/>.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> "USAID Administrator Launches Pakistan Flood Relief Info Sharing on the 'Humari Awaz' Cell Phone Network," Press Release, *U.S. Consulate, Lahore, Pakistan*, August 26, 2010, <http://lahore.usconsulate.gov/l-10082601.html>.

<sup>85</sup> "Social media connects Pakistanis to flood relief effort," *U.S. Central Command*, August 7, 2010, <http://www.centcom.mil/news/social-media-connects-pakistanis-to-flood-relief-effort>.

As one report puts it, social media networks have enabled individuals “to connect with one-another on a global scale, providing opportunities for “many-to-many exchanges of information that bypass the “one-to-many” sources that formally dominated the information landscape.”<sup>86</sup> U.S. efforts to build communications capacity in Pakistan, one of the major initiatives of the Pakistan Plan, helped put the necessary technological infrastructure into place to support social networks like Humari Awaz. The mass utilization of this tool to communicate effectively before and after the floods demonstrated the as yet relatively untapped potential of new media in Pakistan. U.S. public diplomacy efforts would be well served to continue to develop Pakistan’s capacity to exploit this tool in the future. Yet while the U.S. should harness the power of social media and Internet to advance its national objectives, it must also be aware of the challenges presented by this new environment. It must recognize the two-way nature of these new forms of information sharing, and be willing to listen to messages as well as transmit them.

## **B. Education and Professional Development**

The Obama administration has increased support for educational and professional exchanges on the grounds that increased interaction between the people of the United States and Pakistan will result in better-informed perceptions of one another and engender mutual understanding among citizens of both nations.<sup>87</sup> This shared understanding will in turn help build the foundation of trust necessary to improve relations between the countries. Public diplomacy initiatives that may help achieve this goal include academic exchanges, professional development programs and English teaching.

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<sup>86</sup> Nakamura, Matthew C. Weed, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: Background and Current Issues*, 2.

<sup>87</sup> “FY 2012 Department of State Congressional Budget Justification” (U.S. Department of State, February 18, 2011), 496, <http://www.state.gov/s/d/rm/rls/statecbj/2012/index.htm>.

## **United States Educational Foundation in Pakistan**

In 1950, the U.S. and Pakistani governments jointly established the United States Educational Foundation in Pakistan (USEFP). According to its mission statement, the Foundation seeks to promote “mutual understanding between the people of Pakistan and the people of the United States through educational and cultural exchange.” Headed by a binational commission made up of an equal number of Pakistanis and Americans, USEFP receives support and guidance from both countries but “is not an agency of either.”<sup>88</sup> The Foundation oversees a range of programs that bring Pakistani students and scholars to American campuses, while sending American scholars to universities in Pakistan. These programs provide not only an academic opportunity, but also a chance for Americans and Pakistanis to gain a more nuanced understanding of each other’s cultures and traditions by experiencing them first-hand. Ideally, Pakistanis who participate in these programs will share their positive experiences with their peers, colleagues, and families upon returning to Pakistan. In this sense, these programs may help dispel common misconceptions about the US and advance U.S. public diplomacy objectives in the country. Over 3,000 Pakistanis and Americans have participated in USEFP programs since its establishment in 1950; approximately 2305 Pakistanis have come to the US and 827 Americans have gone to Pakistan as grantees.<sup>89</sup>

### ***Fulbright Program***

Among the many scholarship programs USEFP administers is the Fulbright program, with the Foundation acting as one of 51 “Fulbright Commissions” around the world.<sup>90</sup> In 2010, the United States celebrated 60 years with the Fulbright program in Pakistan, which was

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<sup>88</sup> “About USEFP,” *United States Educational Foundation in Pakistan*, 2004, <http://www.usefpakistan.org/aboutUSEFP.html>.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

established through a bilateral treaty in 1950. In terms of funding, the US-Pakistan Fulbright Program is the largest in the world. The U.S. Department of State's Bureau for Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) and the Government of Pakistan (GOP) provide funding for the program, with additional support from the Pakistani Higher Education Commission (HEC) and USAID.<sup>91</sup> The governments of Pakistan and the United States contributed over \$20 million to the Fulbright program in 2010.<sup>92</sup>

According to Sue Borja, Branch Chief of the South and Central Asia Academic Exchange Programs at the U.S. Department of State, the three pillars upon which the Fulbright program is based are: two-way exchanges, open merit-based competition, and diversity.<sup>93</sup> The Fulbright program is binational in its governance and mutual in that exchanges go in both directions. In 2010 almost 450 Pakistani students, teachers and professionals took part in the Fulbright program in the United States. Under the Fulbright U.S. Scholar program, American scholars also teach and conduct research at universities in Pakistan. Although the exchanges are meant to work both ways, the number of Pakistanis that have come to the United States through the Fulbright is almost three times the number of Americans that have gone to Pakistan. While admitting that the program is currently lopsided, with Pakistani graduate students making up roughly 90% of participants, Sue Borja emphasized the commitment of the US government to the two-way exchange, saying, "Getting Americans to Pakistan has been a cautious business that we're working on."<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Carrie L. Massey, "Fulbright Program Celebrates 60 Years in Pakistan," Archive, *U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Information Programs*, May 3, 2010, <http://www.america.gov/st/educ-english/2010/May/20100503132824kJleinaD0.5377771.html>.

<sup>92</sup> "United States-Pakistan Fulbright Celebrates 60th Anniversary," Press Release, *U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesman*, November 16, 2010, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2010/11/151034.htm>.

<sup>93</sup> Sue Borja, "Interview with Branch Chief, South and Central Asia Academic Exchange Programs, U.S. Department of State," Telephone interview by author, November 30, 2010.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

Fulbright recipients from both countries are determined through a transparent, peer-reviewed selection process based on academic merit and leadership potential. Diversity among participants from both sides is also highly valued, in terms of gender, geography and academic interests. According to Borja, “We work hard to get people from outside the capital, outside Lahore, outside Punjab to represent Pakistan.” She added, “They are ambassadors. They are going to graduate school...but they are here to represent their country.” In terms of fields of interest Borja remarked, “We want a certain mix. We don’t want everyone in engineering—which would be easy to do.”<sup>95</sup>

Meanwhile, achieving socio-economic diversity among Fulbright participants has proven more difficult. American graduate programs have relatively high academic requirements that only the Pakistani elites tend to be able to meet. Other educational exchange programs administered by USEFP target students from diverse backgrounds with little international experience that come from more remote and economically disadvantaged areas of Pakistan. In 2010, for example, 111 students participated in the Global Undergraduate Exchange Program for Pakistan (Global UGRAD-Pakistan), which provides full-time undergraduate students from Pakistan with the opportunity to spend a semester at an American university in a non-degree status. 29 students took part in the Pak-US Student Leadership Program, a 6-week program that offers Pakistani students the chance to study international relations alongside American students at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.<sup>96</sup> This program aims to give Pakistani students a deeper understanding of the United States while developing their leadership skills. In addition, six students came to the US under the Near East South Asia (NESA) Student Exchange Program. A wider range of candidates can participate in these programs as non-degree seeking students

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Mahtab Bashir, “160 Pakistani students to study in US on scholarship,” *Daily Times* (Islamabad, May 23, 2010), [http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010%5C05%5C23%5Cstory\\_23-5-2010\\_pg11\\_3](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010%5C05%5C23%5Cstory_23-5-2010_pg11_3).

and acquire a taste of what it is like to study at an American institution. At times this brief exposure encourages students to attempt to return for higher education.<sup>97</sup>

Educational exchanges seem to be the most consistently successful instruments of U.S. public diplomacy towards Pakistan. As they are people-to-people and not government-to-government, exchanges tend to continue regardless of the political conditions or state of governmental relations, which have notoriously fluctuated between the US and Pakistan. Educational exchanges are a resilient and effective public diplomacy tool in that they can weather the ebb and flow of bilateral relations. According to Borja, even at unsteady points, “These exchanges quietly go on and what we get are people on either side who know each other’s worlds.” When program alumni bring their experience home with them it becomes “...a seed that grows, with their family and their community. It’s a small investment that has a long-lasting impact.” Furthermore, a large number of program alumni become influential leaders and opinion shapers in their respective fields, taking with them a better understanding of the people and culture of the United States.

While it is difficult to measure the impact of these programs, the people-to-people contacts and institutional linkages that develop as a result of student and faculty exchanges speak for themselves. Programs such as the Fulbright act as catalysts, making possible relationships between participating students, scholars and professionals, as well as educational institutions. Unlike many other programs, the effects of educational exchanges are discernible almost immediately. From Joe Zilligen’s perspective,

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<sup>97</sup> Borja, “Interview with Branch Chief, South and Central Asia Academic Exchange Programs, U.S. Department of State.”

“You see, at least at the micro-level, those relationships changing and you see connections being made between students and academics. At the macro-level, really changing the relationship between the countries is a much longer-term thing. The challenge is continuing those relationships.”<sup>98</sup>

This is particularly difficult when dealing with two countries with as mercurial a relationship as the United States and Pakistan. The people-to-people ties forged through educational exchanges are a step towards strengthening this relationship.

## **Professional Exchanges**

### ***Humphrey Fellowship***

Along with educational exchanges, Pakistan boasts some of the largest professional exchange programs in the world. For example, the Hubert Humphrey Fellowship is a non-degree program designed for mid-career professionals. It consists of 10-12 months of graduate-level study as well as an opportunity to gain professional experience in a specific field of interest. Fellows hail from a range of professions, from Agricultural and Rural Development to Communications and Journalism.<sup>99</sup>

### ***International Visitor Leadership Program***

Administered by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the Office of International Visitors, Pakistan’s International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) is also the largest in the world. The IVLP and all other comparable exchange programs seek to break down the sense of distance between Pakistanis and Americans by partnering professionals from Pakistan with their direct counterparts in America and offering them an opportunity to build relationships. In 2010, the IVLP brought nearly 200 Pakistanis to

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<sup>98</sup> Zilligen, “Interview with Pakistan Public Diplomacy Desk Officer, U.S. Department of State.”

<sup>99</sup> “Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Competition,” *United States Educational Foundation in Pakistan*, 2011, <http://www.usefpakistan.org/Humphrey.html>.

the United States on a broad range of issues, including public administration, communications and water management.<sup>100</sup>

According to Larry Schwartz, these exchange programs are remarkably effective public diplomacy tools because they, “Let America speak for itself.” He said, “There’s a certain formal part where you sit and listen to American policy but then you get to have these people go out and talk to Americans out in the wild, who are out there being Americans. What they find is that Americans are among the most amazing people in the world.”<sup>101</sup>

### **English Teaching**

One of the traditional educational programs carried out by the State Department that has been successful in Pakistan is English teaching; an area State has been excelling in for years. The State Department has increased support for English teaching programs and activities, investing a great deal of energy and money into improving them. These efforts have been well received among Pakistanis who view English language ability as a tool for social and economic advancement in Pakistan, as it can lead to better academic and career opportunities. Providing English teaching services also represents another opportunity for people-to-people contact and to build relationships by working with Pakistanis one-on-one to develop their skills and enhance their future prospects for success.

### ***Access Program***

An example of a program that is thriving is the U.S. government-sponsored English Access Microscholarship Program (Access). Access aims to develop the English language skills of 14-18 year old underprivileged students through intensive afterschool classes and summer

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<sup>100</sup> Schwartz, “Interview with former Counselor for Public Affairs, U.S. Embassy Islamabad.”

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

learning activities over a two-year period. The mission of the Access program is threefold; it enables participating students to “gain an appreciation for American culture and democratic values, increase their ability to participate successfully in the socio-economic development of their countries, and gain the ability to compete for and participate in future U.S. exchange and study programs.”<sup>102</sup>

## Challenges

While academic and professional exchange programs have typically been well regarded on both sides, these programs do face a few key challenges. First, many of these programs are inherently geared towards engaging the upper echelon of society, which is not necessarily the public that needs to be won over by U.S. public diplomacy. Much of the Pakistani elite has already had exposure to American people, values and culture and need not be convinced of its merits. Also, the exchanges are severely lopsided; the number of Americans going to Pakistan must increase in order to achieve the full potential of these exchanges.

Another issue to consider is that while these programs have by and large been successful in promoting international understanding by the State Department’s standards, this desired outcome might not necessarily be a reality in the case of Pakistan. For example, the US has begun offering a large number of professional development fellowships to Pakistani journalists, in part as a public diplomacy effort. Yet, according to one journalist, when these recipients return to Pakistan they are often “more rabidly anti-American than they were before just to prove to their colleagues and audiences that they have not been co-opted or bought out by the CIA.”<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> “English Access Microscholarship Program,” *U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs*, n.d., <http://exchanges.state.gov/englishteaching/eam.html>.

<sup>103</sup> Yusuf, “Interview with Pakistan Scholar, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.”

Thus, there is no guarantee that recipients of these fellowships or participants in these programs will promote a more balanced image of America upon returning home.

These programs may be most valuable for Pakistanis who have had little to no first-hand experience in the US or direct contact with Americans. Many of their perceptions may be shaped by what they gather from the media, which is often extremely negative, portraying the United States as an intolerant and xenophobic society. For example, the burning of the Qur'an under the direction of pastor Terry Jones of Florida on March 20, 2011 caused an outcry in Pakistan. Pakistani President Zardari publicly condemned the act, saying "This has deeply hurt the feelings of the people of Pakistan and Muslims all over the world."<sup>104</sup> Dozens of reports covering the story appeared in Pakistani media outlets in the days that followed. Unbalanced coverage of events such as this, coupled with minimal coverage of positive events can form the basis of people's perceptions of the United States. This negative attitude toward the US could be mollified with an opportunity to come to the United States and base opinions on first-hand experience. Furthermore, acts such as the Qur'an burning only emphasize the need for increased mutual understanding that is the basis of two-way exchanges.

Also, despite these types of incidents, the perception of the United States as the "land of opportunity" is still widespread in Pakistan, which is an idea that should make it into the narrative, according to Huma Yusuf. Educational programs are an important public diplomacy tool in the sense that they play into the notion of the "American dream," and the belief that an American education will improve opportunities both in the United States and in Pakistan.<sup>105</sup> By and large, relative to other programs, educational and cultural exchange programs supported by the U.S. government are considered highly effective instruments of public diplomacy.

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<sup>104</sup> AFP, "Pakistan condemns Quran burning in Florida," *Dawn* (Islamabad, March 22, 2011), <http://www.dawn.com/2011/03/22/pakistan-condemns-quran-burning-in-florida.html>.

<sup>105</sup> Yusuf, "Interview with Pakistan Scholar, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars."

## C. Culture

Traditional cultural diplomacy has lost much prominence as an element of U.S. public diplomacy and has been consistently underfunded since the early 1990s. As career diplomat John Brown points out, Undersecretary Judith McHale does not stray far from this trend, making little reference to cultural diplomacy as a tool in her strategic plan for U.S. public diplomacy.<sup>106</sup> Though not generally a governmental priority, by presenting American culture overseas and showing respect for foreign cultures, cultural diplomacy can play a significant role in forging stronger cross-cultural connections and international understanding. Although the security environment in Pakistan is not always conducive to the types of cultural programming done in other more stable locales, cultural diplomacy is being carried out to the extent possible.

### U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation

The U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) is a worldwide initiative administered by the ECA's Cultural Heritage Center. It supports the preservation and restoration of cultural sites and objects through direct grants. Recently, the U.S. AFCP awarded the Department of Archaeology and Museums in Pakistan an \$850,000 grant for the restoration of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Sheikhpura Fort in Punjab, a prominent symbol of Mughal and Sikh culture in Pakistan. It will partner with the Pakistani government, which will contribute \$190,000 to restore the national monument over the next three years. This marks the biggest historical renovation project undertaken by the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan to date.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> John Brown, "America as a Shopping Mall? U.S. Cultural Diplomacy in the Age of Obama," *Huffington Post*, June 9, 2010, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-brown/america-as-a-shopping-mal\\_b\\_606233.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-brown/america-as-a-shopping-mal_b_606233.html).

<sup>107</sup> "Agreement To Restore Sheikhpura Fort Signed," Press Release, *U.S. Embassy Islamabad, Pakistan*, November 3, 2010, <http://islamabad.usembassy.gov/pr-10110303.html>.

Previously, the U.S. AFCP has provided funds for 17 restoration projects in Pakistan, including the renovation of the beautiful 15<sup>th</sup>-century Hazrat Jalaluddin Bukhari Shrine, one of the most visited Sufi shrines in Pakistan; the restoration of the 17<sup>th</sup>- century Alamgiri Gate of the Lahore Fort, a World Heritage Site; and the preservation of the ruins of a 5<sup>th</sup> century Buddhist monastery in Taxila, Punjab.<sup>108</sup> These projects demonstrate the depth of the America’s respect for the history and cultural heritage of Pakistan. In addition to demonstrating the U.S. commitment to cultural preservation in Pakistan, these restoration projects also signify the broader nature of the US-Pakistan relationship.

### **Cultural Presentations**

In February 2010, the U.S. Consulate brought a U.S. performing arts group, American Voices, for a weeklong visit to Lahore. The group of Broadway singers and dancers engaged Pakistani students and artists in theatre workshops and subsequently put on performances incorporating music, dance and comedy in Lahore, Islamabad and Karachi.<sup>109</sup> This type of cultural programming in Pakistan is infrequent and was very well received. It was a positive experience for those who participated, and exposed young Pakistanis to American music and culture. In terms of these types of cultural diplomacy efforts in Pakistan, there is much potential that remains to be tapped.

### **American Speakers Program**

The Cultural Affairs Office of the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad has expanded one of its more traditional public diplomacy initiatives in the past year—its American Speakers

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<sup>108</sup> “Ambassadors Fund For Cultural Preservation: Searchable Project List,” Database, *U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs*, Accessed November 29, 2010, [http://eca.state.gov/culprop/afcp/project\\_listings/search\\_results.cfm?search=pakistan&submit=Search](http://eca.state.gov/culprop/afcp/project_listings/search_results.cfm?search=pakistan&submit=Search).

<sup>109</sup> “U.S. Consulate General Brings Broadway To Lahore,” Press Release, *Consulate of the United States, Lahore, Pakistan*, February 11, 2010, <http://lahore.usconsulate.gov/l-10021101.html>.

program.<sup>110</sup> Speakers programs facilitate dialogue between Pakistanis and Americans on a variety of topics, ranging from international security and trade, to democracy and human rights. The American speakers who come to Pakistan hail from various fields, including academia, journalism, government and business to name a few. These speakers offer lectures, seminars and workshops both on site at the U.S. Embassy and at partnering institutions around Pakistan.<sup>111</sup> Imam Hendi, a Muslim chaplain at Georgetown University, was a notable participant in the speakers program in Pakistan who led a discussion about tolerance and religious pluralism that was overwhelmingly well received.<sup>112</sup>

### **American Corners**

According to a 2010 report by the Office of Inspector General (OIG), “In effect, security concerns have taken the public out of public diplomacy” in Pakistan.<sup>113</sup> Due to the unstable security environment and history of violence against U.S. government personnel in Pakistan, all American Centers in the country were closed and staff was moved to secure buildings. American Corners, or Information Resource Centers (IRCs) replaced American Centers. While American Centers were open to the public and staffed by American officials who could answer visitors’ questions directly, American Corners are staffed by Pakistani personnel and have more stringent security measures, making them less effective and more difficult to access by the general public.

There are four American Corners in Pakistan that had a reported 28,000 Pakistani visitors in 2009. While they have had some success, “they are a success only because there is no

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<sup>110</sup> Zilligen, “Interview with Pakistan Public Diplomacy Desk Officer, U.S. Department of State.”

<sup>111</sup> “Cultural Affairs Section,” *U.S. Embassy Islamabad, Pakistan*, n.d., <http://islamabad.usembassy.gov/caopakistan.html>.

<sup>112</sup> Zilligen, “Interview with Pakistan Public Diplomacy Desk Officer, U.S. Department of State.”

<sup>113</sup> *Report of Inspection: Embassy Islamabad and Constituent Posts, Pakistan*, 33.

alternative to American Corners at present.”<sup>114</sup> Much like American Centers, American Corners offer Pakistanis with information and resources about the United States, its people, culture and policies. However, while an American Center is typically a freestanding structure with multiple rooms, an American Corner is a nook or small space within another building, such as a library or a university. Due to the security environment, American personnel do not staff American Corners; consequently, almost no visitors in the past year interacted with an American. The opportunity for interaction had been one of the greatest advantages of American Centers. For this reason, Embassy Islamabad has requested that American Centers be reestablished in Pakistan.<sup>115</sup>

Many people feel strongly about this initiative, especially those who remember fondly the times they spent at the Centers. According to Joe Zilligen, there are some who cite the shutdown as symbolic; “as an example of how we abandoned Pakistan.”<sup>116</sup> Legislation enacted to ensure the safety of U.S. government personnel<sup>117</sup> may prevent the reinstatement of the Centers, as it calls into question the security of these buildings and those staffing them. However, those in favor of reestablishing the Centers contend that while security at American Centers is an important issue, “security interests should not trump engagement with foreign publics.”<sup>118</sup>

## VIII. OTHER ACTORS

While the State Department is formally charged with leading U.S. public diplomacy efforts, other government agencies also engage in activities that are closely tied to U.S. public diplomacy objectives abroad. The Department of Defense and the U.S. Agency for International

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>115</sup> Zilligen, “Interview with Pakistan Public Diplomacy Desk Officer, U.S. Department of State.”

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Secure Embassy Construction and Counterterrorism Act of 1999

<sup>118</sup> Nakamura, Matthew C. Weed, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: Background and Current Issues*, 50.

Development are two agencies that, “by virtue of their missions,” increasingly undertake communications with foreign publics.<sup>119</sup> As these two agencies operate abroad where their work affects foreign publics, they must be able to explain the motives and objectives of their policies and activities. In this age of rapid global communication, these organizations must take into account the effect their messaging has on foreign audiences. This is particularly the case in Pakistan, where the words and actions of the United States, however well intentioned they may be, are often met with skepticism and mistrust.

### **A. Department of Defense: Strategic Communication**

While DoD does not directly engage in public diplomacy, it plays a key role in supporting and facilitating the State Department’s public diplomacy initiatives in Pakistan. It has increasingly made efforts to improve its communications with and gauge the effect of its words and actions on the Pakistani public. DoD has begun shifting its attention from traditional military operations to the “non-kinetic,” information-based activities associated with the process of “strategic communication.”<sup>120</sup> DoD defines this concept as:

“Focused United States Government efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of United States Government interests, policies, and objectives.”<sup>121</sup>

According to a 2009 DoD report, the purpose of strategic communication efforts is to enhance U.S. credibility vis-à-vis that of a competitor, and to influence target audiences to act in support of U.S. objectives, while deterring an adversary from taking specific actions that undermine them.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> “strategic communication,” *DOD Dictionary of Military Terms*, January 31, 2011, [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod\\_dictionary/data/s/18179.html](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/data/s/18179.html).

<sup>122</sup> *Department of Defense Report on Strategic Communication* (Department of Defense, December 2009), 2.

The main DoD components involved in strategic communication include: Information Operations (IO), Defense Support to Public Diplomacy (DSPD) and Public Affairs (PA), all of which work together to achieve military objectives, and in turn support national objectives.<sup>123</sup> In contrast to public diplomacy, which focuses on communication with foreign publics, strategic communication activities as carried out by DoD address and engage with both foreign and domestic audiences.

DPSD activities are designed specifically to facilitate the State Department's public diplomacy efforts.<sup>124</sup> These range from "...community service activities performed by military personnel, to the provision of Military Information Support Teams (MISTs) to embassies upon the request of the Ambassador, to DoD logistical or transportation support for State Department public diplomacy activities."<sup>125</sup> Yet even those activities overseas that are not explicitly designed to support public diplomacy affect its mission. It is thus imperative for DoD to take into account how its actions will be perceived among foreign publics. As PAO Mark Davidson observed, "The combatant commanders in DoD fully understand that they cannot blast and shoot their way to victory. There needs to be an element of hearts and minds."<sup>126</sup>

As countering violent extremism has taken a more prominent role in DoD's mission in Pakistan, communicating with and "winning the hearts and minds" of those populations most susceptible to extremist narratives has become increasingly important to the success of U.S. military operations in Pakistan. As the Pakistani government currently lacks the capacity to

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<sup>123</sup> *National Framework for Strategic Communication*, 9.

<sup>124</sup> *Department of Defense Report on Strategic Communication*, 5.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> Davidson, "Interview with Counselor for Public Affairs, U.S. Embassy Islamabad."

develop messages for and communicate with a wide audience, a key objective of DoD is to develop that capacity.<sup>127</sup>

Messages conveyed through actions matter just as much, if not more, than those delivered through words. Consequently, DoD considers humanitarian assistance activities to be a major component of its strategic communication efforts in Pakistan. Its PA office engages in efforts to publicize and explain the source of U.S. assistance to Pakistan. However, it often faces resistance on this matter from the Pakistan Army. For example, as Pakistan faced a major crisis with internally displaced persons (IDPs) after military operations in the Swat Valley displaced thousands in 2009, the U.S. military came to its aid bringing food and shelter to affected populations. According to Lieutenant Commander Marc Boyd, when seeking permission to wrap bottles of water with an American flag or stamp prepackaged meals, the Pakistani military responded with a resounding ‘No.’ Their reasoning was that the American symbol could endanger those using the items by making them targets should extremist groups infiltrate the IDP camps.<sup>128</sup> The U.S. military deferred to the Pakistan Army in this matter, forgoing an opportunity to inform the Pakistani people of its aid, and to improve its image in a region reeling under deep-seated anti-Americanism.

In order to be effective, the communication process must also involve active listening and engagement with key stakeholders.<sup>129</sup> According to Commander Boyd, whereas the military has focused primarily on sending messages in the past, it is now beginning to engage in more of a two-way conversation.<sup>130</sup> One means of doing this has been through the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, which provides training to students from “allied and

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<sup>127</sup> Marc Boyd, “Interview with Lt. Commander, U.S. Navy,” Personal interview by author, March 23, 2011.

<sup>128</sup> Interview with Marc Boyd.

<sup>129</sup> *Department of Defense Report on Strategic Communication*, 2.

<sup>130</sup> Boyd, “Interview with Lt. Commander, U.S. Navy.”

friendly nations” on a grant basis. The program exposes students to the U.S. professional military establishment and to American values and ideals while offering a forum for the exchange of ideas between key military and civilian leaders from around the world. Funding for this program is appropriated from the State Department foreign aid budget.<sup>131</sup> However, Boyd recognizes that this program is limited and does not focus on communicating with wider audiences.

## **DoD and State Department**

Many have criticized DoD’s expansion into non-military communications as encroaching upon the domain of the State Department. The DoD response to such objections is that the State Department often lacks the capacity or capability to carry out public diplomacy activities in limiting environments and needs DoD to support civilian efforts.<sup>132</sup> The security environment in certain areas of Pakistan has posed such a challenge to civilian actors, rendering them unable to perform standard activities and necessitating DoD to take the lead at times.

Meanwhile, from the point of view of the State Department, a perceived lack of capacity or capability to conduct public diplomacy is partly due to a lack of funding and resources. Some public diplomacy professionals questioned the nearly \$1 billion authorized to DoD for non-military communications to foreign publics under IO in fiscal year (FY) 2010, up from \$9 million in FY 2005.<sup>133</sup> Secretary Clinton has described the funding that supports diplomats and development experts as a smart investment that pays excellent dividends by preventing conflicts and helping end them more quickly. She points out that, “The State Department and USAID budgets amount to only 1 percent of federal budget overlays...Deploying our diplomats and

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<sup>131</sup> “International Military Education & Training (IMET),” *Defense Security Cooperation Agency*, November 15, 2010, [http://www.dsca.mil/home/international\\_military\\_education\\_training.htm](http://www.dsca.mil/home/international_military_education_training.htm).

<sup>132</sup> *Department of Defense Report on Strategic Communication*, 5.

<sup>133</sup> Nakamura, Matthew C. Weed, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: Background and Current Issues*, 41.

development experts is less expensive than deploying our troops.”<sup>134</sup> On his part, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has long expressed support for providing State and other civilian agencies with adequate resources and funding to effectively conduct public diplomacy activities and strengthen the United States’ ability to wield “soft power.”<sup>135</sup>

An issue to consider is how the message received by foreign publics may differ based on whether it is conveyed by DoD or the State Department. According to Captain Boyd, the support for the Secretary of State during her 2009 visit to Pakistan was effusive, partly due to the types of events she chose to engage in, from discussions with students and women’s groups to visits to cultural sites. However, when Secretary of Defense Gates addressed Pakistani newscasters during his visit, he faced suspicion regarding his reasons for being in Pakistan and accusations that he was not doing enough to secure the border with Afghanistan. Boyd noted that with Secretary Gates, “there was a lot of animosity in their questions,” whereas with the Secretary of State, “it was all about open hearts and building better relationships.” Boyd concluded that, “it does make a difference whether it comes from State or Department of Defense; which goes to show the military needs to do a better job of letting people know that we are helping.”<sup>136</sup>

The success of strategic communication and public diplomacy efforts is contingent on the level of integration between DoD and State Department. While DoD may be better suited to carry out certain activities in support of public diplomacy, problems may arise when they are undertaken without appropriate oversight or coordination with the State Department, which is charged with leading these efforts. Captain Boyd affirmed the importance of ensuring that the messages of all U.S. government agencies are aligned when communicating with foreign

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<sup>134</sup> “Department of State Congressional Budget Justification Fiscal Year 2012” (U.S. Department of State, February 14, 2011), vi, <http://www.state.gov/s/d/rm/rls/statecbj/>.

<sup>135</sup> Robert M. Gates, “Landon Lecture (Kansas State University)” (Address, Manhattan, Kansas, November 26, 2007), <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1199>.

<sup>136</sup> Boyd, “Interview with Lt. Commander, U.S. Navy.”

audiences. Regarding the integration of messages in Pakistan, specifically, Boyd noted, “I have found that there are times when we do walk down the same road and there are times when we are not speaking off the same sheet of music. It is when our interests diverge [that] we really get into trouble because it’s very easy for the Pakistani public and the media to start to pick apart those messages.”<sup>137</sup>

Speaking from a military perspective, Boyd compared the way DoD and State Department typically approach their objectives:

“We want to get things done right away; we want to go in there and attack whatever problem there is, solve it and move on; whereas the State Department wants to sit back and contemplate and discuss. We’re quick to make decisions and move out whereas the State Department wants to get input from all sides and then make a more coordinated decision...”<sup>138</sup>

This approach does not hold water in the case of Pakistan, where there is no silver bullet and making any headway will take time and coordination. Ultimately, many contend that while DoD should continue playing an important role in supporting and facilitating public diplomacy efforts and strategic engagement and communication in Pakistan, it should do so “as a partner—not the principal.”<sup>139</sup>

## **B. USAID: Development and Humanitarian Initiatives**

While not typically considered part of the United States’ primary public diplomacy initiatives, some would argue that USAID plays a major role in fostering goodwill towards the United States through its foreign assistance. Many in the State Department regard USAID as the “human face” of American diplomacy. It builds enduring relationships between the United States

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Kristin M. Lord, “The State Department, Not the Pentagon, Should Lead America’s Public Diplomacy Efforts,” *Brookings*, October 29, 2008, [http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2008/1029\\_public\\_diplomacy\\_lord.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2008/1029_public_diplomacy_lord.aspx).

and people of other countries, which can favorably influence their attitudes and behaviors toward U.S. policies and initiatives.<sup>140</sup>

However, the notion that the US can win “hearts and minds” in Pakistan through economic assistance is contested. While America’s image noticeably improved after it immediately rushed to Pakistan’s aid in the wake of the October 2005 earthquake in Kashmir, public opinion ratings have since fallen to dismally low levels. In a report for the USAID Afghanistan/Pakistan Task Force, Nadia Naviwala writes that, “U.S. assistance to Pakistan is a public diplomacy liability that needs to be transformed into an asset.”<sup>141</sup> However, the US faces major challenges to winning public confidence in Pakistan through development assistance, including the visibility, effectiveness and credibility of aid efforts.

### **USAID Pakistan**

In 1995, USAID closed its mission to Pakistan after U.S. legislation blocked foreign aid to the country. Following the 9/11 attacks, with Pakistan’s pledge of support for U.S. counterterrorism efforts, economic sanctions were lifted and USAID reopened its mission in Islamabad after an 8-year hiatus.<sup>142</sup> Since 2002, USAID has provided \$5.1 billion of assistance to Pakistan in the areas of good governance, education, health, economic growth, agriculture, energy, earthquake reconstruction, and flood relief.<sup>143</sup> Programs range from training teachers and restoring schools, to establishing mobile health clinics and providing safe drinking water. As part of its mission, USAID aims “to deepen a strategic partnership with the Pakistani people and their

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<sup>140</sup> Nakamura, Matthew C. Weed, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: Background and Current Issues*, 31.

<sup>141</sup> Nadia Naviwala, *Harnessing Local Capacity: U.S. Assistance and NGOs in Pakistan* (Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, 2010), 14.

<sup>142</sup> “USAID Reopens Mission in Pakistan and Names Director,” Press Release, *USAID*, July 2, 2002, <http://www.usaid.gov/press/releases/2002/pr020702.html>.

<sup>143</sup> “Mission Overview,” *USAID Pakistan*, February 10, 2011, <http://www.usaid.gov/pk/about/>.

government.”<sup>144</sup> It works with the GOP to build its capacity to provide services to its citizens and address its pressing development requirements, and in partnership with Pakistani organizations to implement programs that improve the welfare of the Pakistani people. Through its programs, USAID seeks to demonstrate its commitment to Pakistan and gain the confidence of its people.

### **Visibility and Communication**

Recipients of billions of dollars of U.S. aid are often unaware of the source or magnitude of American assistance received. Since the 9/11 attacks, USAID has been charged with increasing the visibility of its efforts in the countries in which it operates and better informing aid recipients about U.S. humanitarian and development initiatives.<sup>145</sup> By seeking to increase understanding of U.S. policies and initiatives among target audiences and to cultivate a more receptive environment in which to implement them, USAID’s communication mission supports U.S. public diplomacy objectives. To carry out this mission, USAID employs its own communications specialists, called Development Outreach and Communication Officers, who develop and implement information campaigns to inform host country publics about the Agency’s work.<sup>146</sup>

In Pakistan, they have their work cut out for them. According to the Pew Global Attitudes survey, “There is no consensus among Pakistanis about the size of American assistance to their country.”<sup>147</sup> 23% believe the U.S. provides a lot of financial assistance, 22% think it gives a little, 10% say hardly any, and 16% believe the U.S. provides no aid to Pakistan. 29% say they do not know how much financial assistance the U.S. government gives to Pakistan. Of those who

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<sup>144</sup> “Pakistan - Overview,” *USAID Asia*, April 5, 2011, <http://www.usaid.gov/locations/asia/countries/pakistan/>.

<sup>145</sup> “USAID Branding,” *USAID*, n.d., <http://www.usaid.gov/branding/>.

<sup>146</sup> Nakamura, Matthew C. Weed, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: Background and Current Issues*, 31.

<sup>147</sup> *Pew Global Attitudes Project: Concern About Extremist Threat Slips in Pakistan*, 5.

believe Pakistan receives at least some aid, 33% are under the impression that it is decreasing.<sup>148</sup> Meanwhile, under the Kerry-Lugar-Berman bill, Pakistan is positioned to receive \$1.5 billion per year from the United States for fiscal years 2010 through 2014, for a total of \$7.5 billion in non-military economic assistance.<sup>149</sup> Part of the reason for this discrepancy is the lack of visibility of U.S. assistance. While Pakistanis often hear about U.S. aid, they rarely see it. USAID has become increasingly aware that its assistance must be more visible in order to achieve public diplomacy objectives.

### **Branding**

In keeping with U.S. government regulations, USAID requires that all assistance be marked with the Agency's logo and the words "from the American people."<sup>150</sup> Branding is necessary in order to ensure transparency of aid efforts and to communicate to recipients the source of aid and the extent of U.S. foreign assistance. According to PAO Mark Davidson, the US is heading a huge aid mission in Pakistan, and is aware of trying to better leverage the assistance it provides to the people of Pakistan for humanitarian and philanthropic reasons. "First comes the humanitarian need, second comes the credit, no one is mistaken about that," Davidson said. He added, "But I think there's general consensus that where it is appropriate and doesn't put people in danger, we should have our logo on something...these things don't fall from the sky."<sup>151</sup>

However, the reality on the ground is that this policy does at times pose a risk to humanitarian aid workers, when association with U.S. assistance programs can turn them into

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>149</sup> "The Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act," *USAID/Pakistan*., April 4, 2011, <http://www.usaid.gov/pk/about/klb.html>.

<sup>150</sup> "USAID Branding." Section 641 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 requires USAID to appropriately identify overseas programs as "American Aid."

<sup>151</sup> Davidson, "Interview with Counselor for Public Affairs, U.S. Embassy Islamabad."

targets for violent attacks. When security risks outweigh the perceived benefits of branding aid, the U.S. government must grant exceptions to the branding policy in order to allow NGOs to carry out their operations safely. In areas of Pakistan where security is an issue, such as FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the US has waived branding requirements for certain periods of time and development activities have been carried out quietly, often without announcing the source of the aid.<sup>152</sup>

## **Type of Assistance**

### ***High impact***

Another factor affecting the visibility of assistance is the type of aid projects the US undertakes. The US is committed to “high impact” and “high visibility” initiatives in Pakistan, such as dams and municipal sanitation facilities. While these types of projects are crucial for Pakistan in the long-term, they do little to improve the United States’ image in Pakistan right now, as they take time to complete and their impact is not immediately tangible. Also, as these projects tend to be expensive, they can often fall prey to corruption and require a lengthy accountability process before aid can be disbursed.

South Asia specialist Michael Kugelman suggests that simple types of aid projects could be more directly effective; for example, handing out water purification tablets in Sindh, one of the driest parts of the country. This type of aid offers direct assistance to Pakistanis, with immediate impact. However, it does not have high impact and offers less visibility to U.S. efforts than larger, infrastructure related projects.<sup>153</sup> Moeed Yusuf of the United States Institute of Peace contends that people in Pakistan would be more appreciative of aid that resulted in uninterrupted

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<sup>152</sup> Mark Ward, “USAID Assistance in Pakistan,” *USAID Impact Blog*, October 9, 2010, <http://blog.usaid.gov/2010/10/usaaid-assistance-in-pakistan/>.

<sup>153</sup> Kugelman, “Interview with Program Associate, Asia Program, Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars.”

electricity supply than the construction of dams.<sup>154</sup> As continuing power outages are a persistent complaint among Pakistanis in parts of the country,<sup>155</sup> US efforts to address this issue might better serve its image problems in the short-term.

Thus, when considering the objectives of economic assistance, it is necessary to balance short-term U.S. public diplomacy goals with the long-term development needs of Pakistan. As Yusuf puts it,

“The point here is not to discourage assistance which would reap dividends over the long run—these are obviously crucial. Rather, it is to highlight that these cannot be conceived as image correcting measures; such measures inevitably have to be ones that produce tangible gains for people immediately, even if the gains are relatively small and have little value beyond the short term.”<sup>156</sup>

### ***Emergency Relief Aid***

The type of assistance that has the greatest impact and has most appreciably improved America’s image among Pakistanis is the humanitarian assistance the US has provided in the wake of natural disasters. When an earthquake devastated Pakistan in October 2005, the US led relief and reconstruction efforts, providing \$1.4 billion in humanitarian and reconstruction aid.<sup>157</sup> USAID’s \$200 million Earthquake Reconstruction Program has since rebuilt schools and healthcare facilities destroyed by the earthquake, improved education and healthcare by training teachers and medical staff, and helped populations reestablish livelihoods by developing local economic capacity in earthquake affected areas.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Moeed Yusuf, *Correcting America’s Image Problem in Pakistan*, Peace Brief (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, August 20, 2010), 3.

<sup>155</sup> “Power outage poses serious problems to industry,” *Daily Times* (Islamabad, April 26, 2011), [http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011%5C04%5C26%5Cstory\\_26-4-2011\\_pg5\\_13](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2011%5C04%5C26%5Cstory_26-4-2011_pg5_13).

<sup>156</sup> Yusuf, *Correcting America’s Image Problem in Pakistan*, 3.

<sup>157</sup> Andrew Wilder, *Humanitarian Agenda 2015: Perceptions of the Pakistan Earthquake Response* (Feinstein International Center, February 2008), 13.

<sup>158</sup> “Earthquake Reconstruction Program,” *USAID Pakistan*, March 3, 2010, <http://www.usaid.gov/pk/sectors/earthquake/>.

American humanitarian assistance to earthquake victims caused a significant shift in Pakistani public opinion, resulting in higher favorability ratings of the US than at any point since 9/11. According to a poll conducted by Terror Free Tomorrow, the percentage of Pakistanis holding a favorable opinion of the United States doubled from 23% in May 2005 to 46% in November 2005; 78% of Pakistanis surveyed said they held a more favorable opinion of the US because of the American response to the earthquake.<sup>159</sup> The immediacy and magnitude of U.S. assistance led Pakistanis by and large to believe that the United States responded to the earthquake for humanitarian reasons rather than out of political motivations. Dr. Andrew Wilder of the United States Institute of Peace reported a local Pakistani religious leader as saying, “The reputation of foreigners in this area is much better after the earthquake. Foreign agencies...were not at all involved in promoting political or religious agendas. Nearly everyone thinks that whatever NGOs did, whether lots or little, was done for humanitarian reasons.”<sup>160</sup>

This perception was widespread, and not only restricted to the earthquake-affected population. In the nation-wide survey of Pakistani journalists conducted by Lawrence Pintak and Syed Javed Nazir in early 2011, when asked why the US gave millions to Pakistan after the 2005 Kashmir earthquake, 63% of those surveyed believed it was out of a “sincere desire to help” and 72% agreed that it was “good, whatever the motive.”<sup>161</sup> For once, US assistance was not mired in suspicion and mistrust.

On the part of the United States, an element of “winning hearts and minds” and desire to improve its poor image in Pakistan undoubtedly fueled the magnitude of U.S. assistance, if not

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<sup>159</sup> *A Dramatic Change of Public Opinion in the Muslim World: Results from a New Poll in Pakistan* (Terror Free Tomorrow, 2005), 5, <http://www.terrorfreetomorrow.org/articlenav.php?id=71>.

<sup>160</sup> Wilder, *Humanitarian Agenda 2015: Perceptions of the Pakistan Earthquake Response*, 26.

<sup>161</sup> Pintak and Nazir, “Inside the Muslim (Journalist’s) Mind.”

the response itself.<sup>162</sup> However, as Tahir Andrabi and Jishnu Das pointed out in a 2010 study, it is precisely because this notion was not explicitly stated as an objective of aid efforts that they managed to change public opinion and attitudes.<sup>163</sup>

Across Pakistan, favorable reactions to humanitarian assistance were fleeting. Within a year after earthquake aid was delivered, favorability ratings had fallen to even lower levels than prior to the disaster, with only 15% of Pakistanis reporting favorable opinions toward the United States.<sup>164</sup> Thus, it seemed that while humanitarian aid could improve public opinion for a brief period, it could not do so over sustained periods of time.

According to Das and Andrabi's study, though, those Pakistanis in earthquake-affected areas that had direct interaction with foreign aid workers seemed to demonstrate a long-lasting increase in trust of foreigners as a result. The authors concluded that it was the "boots-on-the-ground" presence of relief workers, "rather than media images or financial aid to the government" that led to this sustained change in attitudes.<sup>165</sup>

According to Undersecretary Judith McHale, the new U.S. public diplomacy strategy toward Pakistan aims "to increase positive American presence on the ground in Pakistan"<sup>166</sup> and promote increased interaction between the people of the US and Pakistan in order to foster engagement, dialogue and shared understanding among citizens in both nations. Das and Andrabi's findings indicate that this strategy is well guided, boding well for the potential of constructive American presence on the ground to help build trust between Pakistan and the

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<sup>162</sup> Wilder, *Humanitarian Agenda 2015: Perceptions of the Pakistan Earthquake Response*, 47.

<sup>163</sup> Tahir Andrabi, Jishnu Das, *In Aid We Trust: Hearts and Minds and the Pakistan Earthquake of 2005*, September 2010, 32.

<sup>164</sup> *Flag on the Bag? Foreign Assistance and the Struggle Against Terrorism* (U.S. Congress, 2009), 8.

<sup>165</sup> Andrabi, Jishnu Das, *In Aid We Trust: Hearts and Minds and the Pakistan Earthquake of 2005*, 31.

<sup>166</sup> McHale, *Future of U.S. Public Diplomacy*.

United States. The people-to-people contact provided by humanitarian aid efforts may have a large role to play in changing Pakistani attitudes toward the United States in a sustainable way.

### ***Kerry-Lugar Legislation***

With the Kerry-Lugar bill, the United States sought to recreate the image boost that it had experienced after responding to the 2005 earthquake. A statement issued by the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations regarding the bill asserted, “We can materially and powerfully demonstrate the true friendship of the American people for the Pakistani people, without waiting for a natural (or man-made) disaster.”<sup>167</sup> This \$7.5 billion aid package of civilian assistance was intended to serve as a pledge to the people of Pakistan and to change the widely held perception that the United States was only interested in supporting the Pakistani military.

However, rather than leading to more favorable public opinion among Pakistanis, the bill was met with widespread outrage over the conditionalities attached to it. Under Kerry-Lugar, U.S. assistance is contingent upon Pakistan’s military being under civilian oversight and cooperating with the United States on counterterrorism efforts in Pakistan.<sup>168</sup> These terms have been viewed by many as too intrusive and as undermining Pakistani sovereignty. Yet the conditions imposed by Congress regarding this bill are over the U.S. government, not Pakistan.

According to USAID,

“The bill places no conditions on the Government of Pakistan. The conditionalities in the bill place requirements on the President or Secretary of State of the United States to certify that Pakistan is making progress in the fight against terrorism. Waivers apply

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<sup>167</sup> Anwar Iqbal, “Bill to triple US aid tabled in Senate,” *Dawn*, May 5, 2009, <http://archives.dawn.com/archives/42319>.

<sup>168</sup> Omar Waraich, “How a U.S. Aid Package to Pakistan Could Threaten Zardari,” *Time*, October 8, 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1929306,00.html>.

should such certifications be impossible to make and the President or Secretary of State determine that it is still in the interest of the United States to continue the assistance.”<sup>169</sup>

Nevertheless, this perceived U.S. interference has engendered resentment and suspicion among Pakistanis.

Furthermore, the people of Pakistan have yet to see the aid authorized by the bill. In fact, only a small percentage of the \$1.5 billion of civilian aid allocated for FY 2010 has actually been disbursed. According to a report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), only \$179.5 million had been disbursed as of December 31, 2010.<sup>170</sup> Disbursal has been delayed due to various bureaucratic issues and was further slowed down by the floods that ravaged Pakistan in 2010. According to a spokesman for Senator John Kerry, “The floods last summer changed the Pakistani landscape, literally and figuratively, and required us to take a step back and reexamine all of our plans.” He added, “Bureaucracies move slowly and redirecting aid at this level requires time and some patience. It is difficult to allocate billions of dollars in a responsible way without proper vetting, which takes time.”<sup>171</sup>

The funds that were disbursed were directed toward flood assistance, the Pakistani Higher Education Commission, and the Fulbright program, among other projects, with \$1.2 billion remaining unspent. None of the aid was used on the types of water, energy, and agricultural infrastructure projects for which former Special Representative Richard Holbrooke had advocated.<sup>172</sup> While the US has established its intentions to undertake these development initiatives in Pakistan, which in theory could serve public diplomacy objectives well by

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<sup>169</sup> “The Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act,” *USAID Pakistan*, April 4, 2011, <http://www.usaid.gov/pk/about/klb.html>.

<sup>170</sup> *Department of State’s Report to Congress and U.S. Oversight of Civilian Assistance to Pakistan Can Be Further Enhanced* (U.S. Government Accountability Office, February 17, 2011), 6, <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-11-310R>.

<sup>171</sup> Josh Rogin, “Most U.S. aid to Pakistan still in America’s hands,” *Foreign Policy, The Cable*, March 1, 2011, [http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/03/01/most\\_us\\_aid\\_to\\_pakistan\\_still\\_in\\_america\\_s\\_hands](http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/03/01/most_us_aid_to_pakistan_still_in_america_s_hands).

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

demonstrating that the US sincerely wants to reach out and help Pakistanis get what they need most, there has been little to show for the Kerry-Lugar money as of yet.

The lack of visibility of aid and the fact that USAID cannot always take credit for its efforts leaves many Pakistanis believing that the Pakistani government pockets U.S. aid with American compliance, as the US needs its cooperation in combating terrorism. As the GOP under President Zardari is widely viewed as corrupt, this assumption has led to an even greater “image problem” for the United States.<sup>173</sup> According to the 2010 Pew Global Attitudes Report, only 20% of Pakistanis hold a favorable view of President Zardari, and 77% believe he is having a negative influence on the country.<sup>174</sup> In terms of the national government, 71% say that it is having a bad influence on the state of affairs in Pakistan and 74% view corrupt political leaders as a very big problem.<sup>175</sup> Thus the hostile response toward the Kerry-Lugar bill in Pakistan is also fueled by negative perceptions of the civilian government under the leadership of President Zardari.

In a report for USAID, Nadia Naviwala rightly asserts that the Kerry-Lugar bill could “eventually be used against the United States if people perceive that it is fueling corruption, furthering elite interests, or wasted.”<sup>176</sup> She suggests that if the United States wants to convince Pakistanis of its genuine interest in improving their welfare, “USAID’s public diplomacy objective should be to ensure that (1) Pakistanis understand how assistance is being spent and (2) assistance is visible.”<sup>177</sup> Former U.S. ambassador to Pakistan Wendy Chamberlin echoes this idea, recommending that the US carry out a countrywide communication campaign to engage the

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<sup>173</sup> Naviwala, *Harnessing Local Capacity: U.S. Assistance and NGOs in Pakistan*, 14.

<sup>174</sup> *Pew Global Attitudes Project: Concern About Extremist Threat Slips in Pakistan*, 33, 35.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 30, 35.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

Pakistani public in dialogue about the motives, objectives and conditions of the Kerry-Lugar legislation.<sup>178</sup>

In Pakistan, perception is just as, if not more, important than reality. The widely held perception of the Kerry-Lugar bill among Pakistanis is that it is essentially a tactical effort to win people over and allow the United States to accomplish its goals. From the perspective of many Pakistanis, the bill serves an instrumental purpose, and is not seen as a genuine intention to help Pakistanis.<sup>179</sup> The widespread view that the US is only offering this aid to improve its popularity undermines U.S. objectives in Pakistan. As Kristen Lord advises, “U.S. representatives overseas should therefore take care not to create the impression that the United States gives aid only to get something in return.”<sup>180</sup> This only perpetuates the perception of the US-Pakistan relationship as transactional and intensifies the growing trust deficit between the two nations.

### **Credibility: “The U.S. Taint”**

Journalist Huma Yusuf describes a major problem facing U.S. development assistance in Pakistan as “the U.S. taint.” According to Yusuf, Pakistanis will do anything to be disassociated from the U.S. dollar, a tendency that has thwarted U.S. public diplomacy efforts in the country. Pakistanis are suspicious of even the most well-meaning efforts due to the US-Pakistan trust gap. The commitment of a large amount of U.S. civilian aid to Pakistan in the Kerry-Lugar bill has been met with skepticism and viewed as merely a token gesture. Some regard even flood efforts with cynicism. In the aftermath of the 2010 floods in Pakistan that directly affected 20 million

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<sup>178</sup> Wendy Chamberlin, “Rebuilding Trust Begins with Trust,” *Middle East Institute*, February 3, 2010, <http://www.mei.edu/Scholars/WendyChamberlin/tabid/426/ctl/Detail/mid/1932/xmid/879/xmfid/13/Default.aspx>.

<sup>179</sup> Kugelman, “Interview with Program Associate, Asia Program, Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars.”

<sup>180</sup> *Flag on the Bag? Foreign Assistance and the Struggle Against Terrorism*, 9.

people and left one-fifth of the country under water, the United States was at the forefront of relief efforts. The US touted that it was the “first with the most,” contributing more to the relief efforts than any other country.<sup>181</sup> Pakistanis recognized the validity of this statement and largely appreciated the magnitude of the assistance. The immediate impact of U.S. aid and relief efforts provided an opportunity for the US to demonstrate to Pakistan the tangible benefits of its relationship with the United States and to make them value it in a way that it has not been able to with the Kerry-Lugar bill. However, even these efforts are plagued with a level of distrust due to the climate of anti-Americanism in which they are operating. As an article by the Center for Global Development asserts, “the more the country tries to take credit for their aid and aims to improve its image, the less genuine their motivation will be perceived.”<sup>182</sup>

The bottom line is that the Pakistani public does not trust the United States and perceives its every action as a ploy to win popularity. Given the reality on the ground, leveraging aid to gain favor among Pakistanis may ultimately prove to be a fruitless endeavor. As Nadia Naviwala asserted in a 2010 report, “In a culture that can be cynical towards government efforts and socially transactional, Pakistanis are likely to accept U.S. gestures without excusing Americans for their policies.”<sup>183</sup> One interviewee in Naviwala’s study put it best when she said, “We will take your money, but our hearts and minds are not for sale.”<sup>184</sup> The idea that the US can essentially buy their support does not sit well with Pakistanis.

There remains an inherent tension in the notion that development assistance can be leveraged to win hearts and minds. It seems unlikely in a climate as wrought with anti-

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<sup>181</sup> Richard Holbrooke, “Remarks on Pakistan Flood Relief Efforts,” *U.S. Department of State*, September 20, 2010, [http://www.state.gov/s/special\\_rep\\_afghanistan\\_pakistan/2010/147430.htm](http://www.state.gov/s/special_rep_afghanistan_pakistan/2010/147430.htm).

<sup>182</sup> Center for Global Development, “Can US aid change minds in Pakistan?,” *Guardian Development Network*, October 20, 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2010/oct/20/us-aid-humanitarian-pakistan-winning-hearts-minds>.

<sup>183</sup> Naviwala, *Harnessing Local Capacity: U.S. Assistance and NGOs in Pakistan*, 14.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

Americanism and mistrust as Pakistan. Ultimately, U.S. aid can and should play a role in improving US-Pakistan relations, but the limitations of this approach must be recognized, as the trust deficit can nullify even the most well-intentioned efforts.

## **IX. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY CHALLENGES**

The United States faces a number of challenges to public diplomacy efforts in Pakistan. Most notably, the growing trust deficit between the two nations, the precarious security conditions, and the nascent and often conspiratorial media pose potential barriers to progress. In order to advance its objectives in Pakistan, the US must take into account and address these challenges moving forward.

### **Trust Deficit**

The historically fluctuating and seemingly transactional nature of the US-Pakistan relationship has led to a “trust deficit” between the Pakistani and American people that may constitute the greatest challenge to US public diplomacy measures in Pakistan. The vast majority of the population does not view the US as a reliable partner and is hostile to U.S. policies. According to South Asia specialist Michael Kugelman, public diplomacy efforts require a baseline or some minimum level of trust and acceptance of the country undertaking them in order to be effective. As it stands now, this is lacking in Pakistan. The current environment of distrust and hostility will be a major hurdle for the US to overcome in establishing a long-term partnership with Pakistan.

### **Security Conditions**

U.S. public diplomacy efforts in Pakistan face a volatile security environment. There has been a history of bombings, attacks and terrorist threats against American government personnel

in the country.<sup>185</sup> This precarious, high-stress environment inhibits the U.S. Embassy and consulates from undertaking normal diplomatic operations. As Pakistan presents a dangerous operating environment, it is considered a hardship post, where living conditions are deemed more difficult than those in the United States. In fact, Peshawar in particular is regarded as the most dangerous U.S. diplomatic post in the world.<sup>186</sup> In addition to precluding USAID from branding U.S. assistance in parts of the country, and necessitating the involvement of DoD in typically civilian operations, as discussed earlier, the security environment is the source of a number of personnel and programming issues for the U.S. Embassy and consulates in Pakistan.

### **Staffing and Programming**

Security issues have led to a host of problems related to U.S. government staffing and programming in Pakistan. The lives of American officials and locally employed staff are at risk daily, and the environment also places limits on accompanying family members. As such, it is difficult to recruit for such assignments. Embassy Islamabad's Public Affairs Section suffers from a severe shortage of officers and a dearth of public diplomacy experience. As of June 2010 there were six PD officers in the embassy's Public Affairs Section (PAS): a senior PAO with 25 years of PD experience, and five other junior-level officers with a total of less than five years of experience in public diplomacy work. Meanwhile, over the course of 2010, the program budget of PAS Pakistan increased from about \$1.5 million to over \$30 million, making it one of the largest public diplomacy programs in the world. As stated in a 2010 OIG inspection report, "To expect an understaffed, inexperienced (albeit hard-working and willing) staff to implement a large, complicated and important PAS program is not good management."<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> *Report of Inspection: Embassy Islamabad and Constituent Posts, Pakistan*, 11.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 33, 35.

Of those Americans who are recruited to work in Pakistan, most exhibit a lack of language skills. The vast majority of U.S. personnel posted in Pakistan do not speak Urdu, and even less speak Pashto. There are several levels of disincentives to learn these languages well; they tend to be more difficult than romance languages, there are not as many posts where they are spoken, and most assignments necessitating these languages are only one-year tours. Without these language skills, the ability to effectively engage in those media that use the local vernacular is limited.<sup>188</sup>

Current staffing levels also place an overwhelming workload on embassy staff and hinder them from regularly engaging in extensive outreach work, without which U.S. public diplomacy efforts cannot be fully effective.<sup>189</sup> Even arranging meetings with Pakistanis is unusually difficult, as it is hard for the average Pakistani to make it inside the embassy or consulate due to heightened security measures, and there are few other places where U.S. officials can establish personal contact.<sup>190</sup> Increased opportunity for interaction is one reason why there has been an appeal to reestablish American Centers in Pakistan, which were closed down as a security measure.

Additionally, most US direct-hire personnel are only assigned to Pakistan on one-year tours as opposed to two or three years, due to the security conditions that render it a hardship post. This shortened service is not conducive to establishing contacts, building long-term relationships or developing job expertise. According to the OIG report, “Many mid-level positions are also filled by officers serving in a cone for the first time...To expect officers on a one-year tour to learn both what the job entails and how to perform that job well in Pakistan has

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<sup>188</sup> Zilligen, “Interview with Pakistan Public Diplomacy Desk Officer, U.S. Department of State.”

<sup>189</sup> *Report of Inspection: Embassy Islamabad and Constituent Posts, Pakistan*, 33.

<sup>190</sup> Zilligen, “Interview with Pakistan Public Diplomacy Desk Officer, U.S. Department of State.”

not proven to be realistic.”<sup>191</sup> These conditions are hugely challenging to developing a broad, deep partnership in a high contact society such as Pakistan’s.

The security environment in Pakistan also makes it difficult to carry out people-to-people programs such as educational and professional exchanges, rendering them lopsided. Exchanges are meant to go both ways but in the case of the US and Pakistan, the vast majority of participants are Pakistanis coming to the United States. This is a problem, because, as Larry Schwartz put it, “Most Pakistanis don’t know what an American is—they never saw one, they never met one, they have no idea what we’re talking about. It’s easy to hate people you don’t know anything about. You have to know about them, meet them, talk to them—that’s how we change perceptions.”

## **Media Environment**

The US must also grapple with the vast and developing nature of the Pakistani media, which often exhibits a lack of professional expertise and an anti-American bias. The media is a powerful force that impacts public perceptions of the US in Pakistan, and while it is not the only factor fueling anti-Americanism, it certainly tends to exacerbate it.

Pakistan has witnessed a dramatic expansion of print and electronic media since the early 2000s. Whereas there was only one state-owned television station in Pakistan in 2002, today there are over 90 private channels as well as a myriad of newspapers and magazines.<sup>192</sup> The media has become a powerful arbiter of Pakistani public opinion. 76% of those surveyed in a 2010 Pew poll expressed confidence in it, regarding it is a good influence on the country.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> *Report of Inspection: Embassy Islamabad and Constituent Posts, Pakistan*, 15.

<sup>192</sup> Karin Brulliard, “U.S. embassy launches campaign to correct errors in Pakistani media,” *The Washington Post*, June 27, 2010, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/26/AR2010062604390.html?wpisrc=nl\\_headline&sub=AR](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/26/AR2010062604390.html?wpisrc=nl_headline&sub=AR).

<sup>193</sup> *Pew Global Attitudes Project: Concern About Extremist Threat Slips in Pakistan*, 35.

With this dramatic increase in media outlets, the market has become increasingly competitive and the standards for accurate reporting are often overshadowed by the drive to sell stories. Consequently, many Pakistani journalists seem ever “willing to capitalize on stereotypes,” and display conspiratorial tendencies.<sup>194</sup> According to Pakistan Public Diplomacy Desk Officer Joe Zilligen, the Pakistani media environment is completely market and profit-driven; some reporters have described it as “a race to the bottom,” with journalists competing with one another to break the more salacious story, and perpetuate the wilder conspiracy theory.<sup>195</sup>

The United States is more often than not the principal culprit in these theories. In fact, according to Julie McCarthy of NPR, “The most popular conspiracy sweeping the land is that the United States and India are engaged in a global conspiracy to bring down Pakistan. The chief weapons: the CIA and Blackwater.”<sup>196</sup> However, the fact is that stereotypes and conspiracy theories are usually grounded in a grain of truth. The case of Blackwater is a notorious example. Despite repeated denials on the part of the U.S. and Pakistani government, Pakistani media was rife with speculations that the U.S. contractor Blackwater was secretly operating in Pakistan. Eventually it surfaced that the CIA had contracted Blackwater employees to load missiles onto U.S. drones at a Pakistani airfield,<sup>197</sup> confirming suspicions that had been circulating in the Pakistani media. Thus, while at times these theories are completely outlandish, in some instances they are not too far off base.

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<sup>194</sup> Brulliard, “U.S. embassy launches campaign to correct errors in Pakistani media.”

<sup>195</sup> Zilligen, “Interview with Pakistan Public Diplomacy Desk Officer, U.S. Department of State.”

<sup>196</sup> Julie McCarthy, “Conspiracy Theories ‘Stamped In DNA’ Of Pakistanis,” National Public Radio, December 24, 2009, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=121880229>.

<sup>197</sup> James Risen and Mark Mazzetti, “C.I.A. Said to Use Outsiders to Put Bombs on Drones,” *The New York Times*, August 21, 2009, sec. US, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/21/us/21intel.html>.

However, the conspiracy theories devised and disseminated by the media enable Pakistanis to deflect the blame for anything that goes wrong in the country toward the United States and to thus renounce all ownership of their problems. As a result, a “narrative of national victimhood”<sup>198</sup> has taken shape that makes it difficult to hold open and constructive dialogue about Pakistan’s problems and potential solutions and impedes US efforts to develop an enduring partnership with the country.

Of course the shroud of secrecy constantly surrounding the opaque US-Pakistan relationship lends itself to conspiratorial thinking and serves only to bolster stereotypes and engender rumors in the absence of credible facts. Furthermore, this noise turning out to be true only strengthens suspicion-laden narratives.

### **Case Study: The Raymond Davis Debacle**

In January 2011, an American citizen named Raymond Davis shot and killed two Pakistani men on a crowded Lahore street. In a bizarre twist, a U.S. consulate vehicle rushing to the scene hit and killed a third Pakistani civilian. The drama was heightened by the subsequent suicide of his widow, due to her belief that justice would not be served. These incidents turned into a nightmare for US-Pakistan relations and further fueled conspiratorial rhetoric in Pakistan due, in part, to the lack of transparency with which they were handled. Initially describing the shooting as an act of self-defense and Davis as a U.S. consulate employee, U.S. officials left many questions unanswered about the circumstances surrounding the incident. The vibrant Pakistani media all too eagerly filled these gaps, with speculations that Davis was a spy. The subsequent disclosure that Davis was, in fact, a CIA contractor, further complicated an already messy scenario. After a several week gridlock during which Pakistani authorities held Davis, a

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<sup>198</sup> Sabrina Tavernise, “U.S. Is a Top Villain in Pakistan’s Conspiracy Talk,” *The New York Times*, May 25, 2010, sec. World / Asia Pacific, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/26/world/asia/26pstan.html>.

settlement was reached entailing the payment of blood money to the families of the victims. Davis was released, but not before the case had wreaked havoc on the already tense US-Pakistan relationship.

The Raymond Davis incident represents a confluence of the many factors plaguing US-Pakistan relations: the volatile security conditions, the conspiratorial media and the widening trust deficit between the two nations. According to Pakistani journalist Huma Yusuf, the case is “a microcosm of every complaint that Pakistanis have about the US,” sustaining the widely held narrative that the United States uses Pakistan, and holds its entire civilian and military infrastructure “on puppet strings.” For Pakistanis, the outcome of the Davis case proves that the United States can literally get away with murder, a complaint that originally stemmed from U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan and military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, which many consider to be “senseless wars.” Due to the policies and actions of the United States, Yusuf claims that there is a deeply held belief among Pakistanis that the US “thinks that their life is cheap; that Muslim life is cheap.”<sup>199</sup>

Some contend that the Davis case went so awry because anti-Americanism was already so high in Pakistan. The fatal shooting perpetrated by Davis caused a public outcry, with some calling for him to be hanged, while his release was widely condemned among the Pakistani public and press and led thousands to take to the streets in protest. Huma Yusuf expressed doubt that such a violent reaction would have occurred had there not already been such an entrenched climate of hate and suspicion toward the United States. Given that such an environment did exist in Pakistan, the issue was poorly managed on both sides, with a blatant lack of transparency.

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<sup>199</sup> Yusuf, “Interview with Pakistan Scholar, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.”

Quietly settling the matter with the exchange of blood money again engendered the sense among Pakistanis that they were being bought out by the US. As Yusuf put it,

“This idea of being a cheap prostitute available for the U.S. dollar is offensive to Pakistanis. I don’t think that the US gives enough credence to the fact that there is this notion of dignity. It can be deluded, it can be misplaced, but you can’t take 180 million people and ignore their desire for dignity. If they want a better public diplomacy effort, [the US] has to acknowledge that.”<sup>200</sup>

In the context of public diplomacy, the Raymond Davis case poses yet another setback. While Davis’ release was technically according to Pakistani and Islamic law, Pakistani perceptions of the matter have been colored by the extensive public discussion of the case in the Pakistani press and by Western media. As a result, many have been left viewing it as nothing more than the “micro-managed, negotiated release” of an American citizen from Pakistani authorities that, in the process, has undermined the Pakistani government and judicial system as well as the media.<sup>201</sup>

The media is a powerful force in Pakistan and the fact that it at times takes liberty with the truth can be detrimental to U.S. interests in the country. However, incidents such as the Raymond Davis case show that often these allegedly baseless conspiracy theories have significant elements of truth to them. Cases like this only reinforce and perpetuate the tendency of the Pakistani public to believe stories that are sensational and conspiratorial—a tendency that seriously undermines U.S. public diplomacy efforts in Pakistan. When the claims of the U.S. government are consistently exposed as false by the media, it shatters the credibility of the US in the eyes of the public and makes it increasingly difficult to move forward or sustain any sort of counter-narrative.

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

## X. CONCLUSION

There is no silver bullet or quick fix for the US-Pakistan relationship. Repairing and rebuilding this relationship requires patience as well as sustained efforts on both sides. Overcoming a significant trust deficit – forged over decades of neglect and distrust between these two countries – will not be easy. Developing mutual trust will take time, and, as the Raymond Davis case has demonstrated, just one incident can set back considerable progress. Although difficult, strengthening this relationship is in the interest of both Pakistan and the United States and allowing it to deteriorate due to setbacks like these would run the risk of a larger failure for both sides.

The lesson that the United States must take away from its historically tumultuous relationship with Pakistan is that in order to build a long-term relationship with the nation, it must engage with the Pakistani people, not only the government. Growing anti-Americanism and the absence of public acceptance of policies limits the ability of the U.S. and Pakistani governments to carry out their agendas and achieve desired outcomes in Pakistan. By facilitating dialogue and cultivating relationships between citizens of both nations, public diplomacy assures linkages between the United States and Pakistan that can persist even when government-to-government relations sour. Effective public diplomacy and a strong relationship with the Pakistani people are critical to transforming US-Pakistan relations and establishing an enduring partnership. Through strategic dialogue, media engagement, educational and professional exchanges, development assistance and a number of other effective tools and instruments, the United States is beginning to create a new narrative about its relationship with Pakistan, based on shared values and interests.

While achieving a lasting partnership requires the United States to elevate the role of public diplomacy in its strategy toward Pakistan, it must be cognizant of the challenges these efforts face as well as of their limitations. Investing in public diplomacy is necessary, but it rarely brings about immediate, palpable change. These efforts require continued, long-term investment in order to be effective. Furthermore, measuring the effectiveness of public diplomacy activities can be difficult. Approaches more sophisticated than fleeting and often-flawed public opinion polls, and dichotomous success-failure metrics are needed.

Furthermore, public diplomacy alone cannot repair America's standing in the world or rebuild its tenuous relations with Pakistan. Policy-makers and public diplomacy professionals must work in concert to further U.S. interests and objectives in Pakistan. As Philip Seib, Director of the USC Center on Public Diplomacy, asserts:

“American public diplomats cannot do their job as long as people at the top of government see public diplomacy as primarily a smokescreen for ineffective or wrongheaded policy. The assumption that public diplomacy can move in one direction while policy goes in another shows how little understanding exists of what public diplomacy can and cannot do...policy making and public diplomacy planning must move forward in tandem.”<sup>202</sup>

Ultimately, public diplomacy is only as effective as the policies it represents. It cannot compete with bad policy, particularly in a country like Pakistan where, as well-intentioned as U.S. public diplomacy efforts may be, they cannot counteract policies as hotly contested as drone strikes. Bridging the gap between policy and public diplomacy will be necessary to bridge the even greater gap in trust between the United States and Pakistan.

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<sup>202</sup> Philip Seib, “Connecting Public Diplomacy and Policy,” *Layalina Productions* I, no. 5 (September 2009), <http://www.layalina.tv/Publications/Perspectives/PhilipSeib.html>.

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