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# **Afghanistan-Pakistan Relations: History and Geopolitics in a Regional and International Context**

*Implications for Canadian Foreign Policy*

**Final Report  
Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation**

*By*

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# Afghanistan-Pakistan Relations: History and Geopolitics in a Regional and International Context

## Executive Summary

### I. Issue of Focus

My Fellowship research focussed on the nature of Afghanistan-Pakistan relations over the previous sixty years to present day. The intention behind the research is to emphasize the importance to Canada of having an independent Pakistan policy and to view relations between the two countries and the region in a more nuanced and historicized light. This paper is attached to the Executive Summary herein.

A second paper setting these relations within a structuralist theoretical framework of state formation in post-colonial societies in general and in Afghanistan and Pakistan in particular, will be made available shortly. The object of the second paper is to understand not just *what* the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have been, but also to ask *why* they have been so. From my perspective, it is an effort to rationalize the pathology of relations between the two countries that can not always be understood within the limits of a realist framework.

Mr. Kamran Bokhari, the Director of Middle East Analysis with Strategic Forecasting, Inc (Stratfor), served as my mentor for the purposes of the above papers. I acknowledge his contribution with much gratitude, as well as all the support that I have received from everybody at the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation.

### II. Methodology

The research for the reports was conducted between September, 2007 and October, 2008. The primary methodology was an extensive literature review, both of historical record as well as the constant onslaught of current events. This was supplemented (and in some cases framed) by highly instructive discussions and interviews with policy makers and civil society leaders in Canada,

Afghanistan and Pakistan. Further, I sought conversations with policy makers with a view to better understanding and influencing policy direction.

A number of those I was able to interview and have discussions with were uncomfortable going on the record with some of the more sensitive information. They have not been identified in my report, though their insights were extremely useful.

### **III. Results**

The results of historical research indicated that the present crisis-laden relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have numerous historical antecedents that stretch back to Pakistan's predecessor state in the modern state system, that of British India. Historical antipathy and mistrust runs deep. Many of the paths to peace and stability in Afghanistan and Pakistan require such a broader and deeper understanding of their relations. Further, the two countries inhabit prime geopolitical and geo-strategic real estate. As a result, the (often contradictory and hostile) interests of regional and global powers often intersect there. An external hegemonic agenda can not simply be superimposed onto the region without creating the kind of turmoil that we are presently witnessing.

### **IV. Analysis**

Building on the findings, it is vital to engage Pakistan more fully and forcefully and to understand the dilemmas of its security and insecurity. One must also remain cognizant of and closely analyse the regional dimension Afghanistan-Pakistan relations. There have been no strictly local conflicts in the region. The nationalist border clashes, the Soviet invasion, the subsequent civil war in Afghanistan and the ascendancy of the Taliban, to the present so-called War on Terror have all been regionalized and/or internationalized conflicts between actors with transnational links. Though the paper does not present a host of specific policy recommendations, it notes that it would be a mistake to not involve all key regional and international actors in moving towards a resolution to the present crisis.

Thus, there is an urgent need to move beyond narrow management strategies and adopt more comprehensive political analysis and solutions that consider the substantive roots of the imbroglio.

## **V. Future Plans**

My immediate plans include making a second paper publicly available with a theoretical framework relevant to the present paper.

I will also disseminate the findings of my research paper as widely as possible. Dissemination strategies include publications and presentations to policy makers and members of civil society.

**Further, I have planned a conference for the middle of January, 2009, where expert panellists will discuss the issues of Canada's foreign policy towards Pakistan and the region in general. I welcome – and indeed invite – being contacted for further details.**

I also intend to remain involved in an upcoming international conference in support of a comprehensive peace plan for Afghanistan.

I continue to explore further opportunities that will allow me to further develop my research work.