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THE COUNTERTERROR COALITIONS

Cooperation with Pakistan and India

C. Christine Fair

Prepared for the United States Air Force

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Summary

This report examines U.S. strategic relations with India and Pakistan, both historically and in the current context of the global war on terrorism and Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. The study documents the very different motivations for and nature of these two states' contributions to the Global War on Terrorism. While Pakistan and India are both important for what they can contribute in a *positive* sense, each state also has the potential to seriously interfere with U.S. operations in Afghanistan, specifically, and in the war on terrorism more generally.

Pakistan's unwillingness to jettison its active role in supporting, training, guiding, and launching militant operations in Indian-held Kashmir and elsewhere (e.g., the Parliament attack in December 2001 and the Red Fort attack in December 2000) directly challenges U.S. interests in diminishing the capacity of terrorist organizations and degrading their force projection capabilities. Moreover, Pakistan's prosecution of low-intensity conflict within Indian-held Kashmir has exacerbated New Delhi's vexation with Islamabad. This has compelled India to find new "strategic space" wherein New Delhi can punish Pakistan for its support of civilian militants and compel it to abandon this policy—while keeping the conflict well below the nuclear threshold.

India could do more to lessen Pakistan's threat perceptions, but it apparently does not believe that addressing Pakistan's equities would facilitate a significant degree of normalization of relations. India has much to contribute to the war on terrorism by providing

intelligence, naval escorts of high-value vessels through the Strait of Malacca, as well as by providing diplomatic and political support. Equally important, India can contribute to U.S. efforts by not militarily challenging Pakistan while Pakistani forces are needed for operations on the eastern border with Afghanistan.

One of the inescapable conclusions drawn from this work is that the intractable dispute over the disposition of Kashmir is and will remain a critical flashpoint between these two states and poses continual security challenges for the United States and the international community. There is little reason to be optimistic that this issue will be resolved any time soon. In the absence of effective intervention, Kashmir will persist as a recurrent source of intense conflict. Both states will consistently depend upon the United States and others to acquire exit strategies from an escalating conflict, to compel the adversary to make concessions, and to find support for the political and diplomatic position of the state in question. The ongoing dispute over Kashmir frustrates and complicates the efforts of the United States to pursue relations with both states independent of each other.

The December 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament stemmed from the dispute in Kashmir and precipitated the largest Indian military mobilization of forces since the 1971 war. The confrontation persisted on the Indo-Pakistan border for most of 2002 and served as a staunch reminder that the war on terrorism does not mitigate or ameliorate other salient U.S. regional interests (e.g., missile and nuclear nonproliferation, nuclear non-use, and diminishing the prospect of Indo-Pakistan conflict). Rather, the gravity of these ongoing concerns became more apparent during this prolonged period of force aggregation.

The significance of the Kashmir dispute and its consequences for regional stability suggests that some sort of intervention may be salubrious for all. To this end, this monograph presents a number of policy options on how the United States can proceed in crafting policies toward India, Pakistan, and the persistent security competition over Kashmir. Specifically, this report proffers five different options:

- Maintain the status quo of pursuing relations with both countries and playing the role of crisis manager on an as-needed basis.
- Take an active role in resolving the dispute, acknowledging that in the near term neither state will likely be satisfied with this approach and that the assertion of U.S. and other national equities in this dispute may complicate near-term engagement with both states.
- Effectively signal that the United States will not intervene in resolving any dispute that may arise between the two actors. This would essentially deprive the two of a convenient exit strategy and encourage a different path to escalation and de-escalation.
- Explicitly side with India, acknowledging that in the long term, India's interests and futures are more consonant with those of the United States and that Pakistan is likely to continue to fester as a source of internal and regional insecurity. This approach would seek to "contain" Pakistan while expanding the strategic relationship that is developing with India.
- Align with Pakistan's position on the Kashmir issue and other security concerns pertaining to India. This alternative approach assumes that over time India and the United States, as "natural allies," would evolve as is inherently in the interest of both Washington and New Delhi. This option requires dedicated attention to rehabilitate Pakistan and to endow it with security required to discourage it from misadventures. It also demands fortifying Pakistan's civilian institutions, rehabilitating its macroeconomic outlook, and investing in its stock of human capital. Provision of security guarantees are also likely to be needed to alleviate Islamabad's multifaceted threat perception vis-à-vis its large neighbor to the east and uncertainty with the political future of its unsettled neighbor to the west.

Each of these five options is discussed in the final chapter along with an exposition of the various costs and benefits of each option in terms of U.S. pursuit of counterterrorism coalitions as well as the other U.S. regional objectives. We recognize that these are extreme

options, and that, in reality, the most practical approach will likely draw elements from several of these varied proposals.