After September 11, 2001, Pakistan and India played critical, albeit different, roles in U.S. counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Pakistan provided access to bases, ports, and air space and permitted the United States to use special forces and agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation to track down al Qaeda and Taliban fugitives inside Pakistan. India provided intelligence, naval escorts through the Strait of Malacca, and diplomatic and political support to the United States. Although both countries can continue to make positive contributions to U.S. counterterrorism efforts, policy decisions by each state have the potential to seriously interfere with U.S. operations in Afghanistan and the war on terrorism generally. This is especially true in light of the ongoing dispute between Pakistan and India over Kashmir and its potential to erupt into conflict.

RAND Project AIR FORCE (PAF) studied the roles that Pakistan and India will likely play in future U.S. counterterrorism strategy and identified policy options that the United States might pursue to ensure continued cooperation by each country. Major findings include the following:

- **Pakistan is an important—but uncertain—partner in counterterrorism.** Pakistan remains unwilling to jettison its active role in supporting, training, guiding, and launching militant operations in Indian-held Kashmir and elsewhere. This support directly challenges U.S. interests in diminishing the capacity of terrorist organizations and degrading their force projection capabilities. Moreover, Pakistan’s prosecution of a low-intensity conflict with Indian-held Kashmir has exacerbated New Delhi’s vexation with Islamabad. Pakistan is unlikely to ease its policy of supporting militants until the major sources of conflict with India are resolved, most prominently the disputed disposition of Kashmir.

- **India is a long-term partner in counterterrorism, although it will not follow U.S. policy in every instance.**

- **Kashmir poses a serious challenge to the counterterrorism coalition.**

- **The United States has a variety of policy options to ensure continued cooperation by each country.**

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**Key findings**

- Pakistan is an important partner, but support for militant operations in Kashmir challenges U.S. interests.
- India is a long-term partner in counterterrorism, although it will not follow U.S. policy in every instance.
- Kashmir poses a serious challenge to the counterterrorism coalition.
- The United States has a variety of policy options to ensure continued cooperation by each country.

- India is a long-term partner in counterterrorism. Cooperation is fostered by the natural overlap between India’s core strategic interests and those of the United States. 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. Nevertheless, India is not likely to follow U.S. policy in every instance. New Delhi is less inclined to give Islamabad the strategic and political space it needs to stop supporting militants. India also chose not to participate in Operation Iraqi Freedom. In the long run, however, India will continue to share many U.S. interests and will continue to play an important role in the war against terrorism.

- Kashmir poses a serious challenge to the counterterrorism coalition. Without effective diplomacy to resolve the conflict, the ongoing dispute over Kashmir is likely to frustrate and complicate U.S. efforts to pursue bilateral relations with Pakistan and India.
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 political and diplomatic support. These factors suggest that some kind of U.S. intervention in the region may be beneficial for all.

PAF identifies five policy options that the United States may consider in crafting its policy in this region:

- **Maintain the status quo.** The United States may continue its bilateral relations and play the role of crisis manager on an as-needed basis.
- **Take an active role in resolving the Kashmir dispute.** This policy would complicate bilateral relations in the short term, but the long-term benefits could be worthwhile.
- **Completely disengage from the Indo-Pakistani conflict.** This approach would deprive Pakistan and India of a convenient exit strategy, leading either to a de-escalation of the conflict or to the emergence of new paths to escalation.
- **Explicitly side with India.** In the long term, India’s interests may be more consonant with those of the United States than Pakistan’s. This approach would seek to “contain” Pakistan while expanding the U.S. strategic relationship with India.
- **Side with Pakistan on the Kashmir issue and other security concerns pertaining to India.** This approach would seek to endow Pakistan with the security it needs to ease its policy of supporting militants against India. The strategy assumes that over time, India and the United States would remain close as “natural allies.”

This research brief describes work done for RAND Project AIR FORCE and documented in *The Counterterror Coalitions: Cooperation with Pakistan and India* by C. Christine Fair, MG-141-AF, 2004, 150 pages, ISBN: 0-8330-3559-2. Copies of this research brief and the complete report on which it is based are available from RAND Distribution Services (phone: 310-451-7002; toll free: 877-584-8642; or email: order@rand.org) or online at www.rand.org/publications/MG/MG141/.