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THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP AND IDIOSYNCRASY IN US FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS PAKISTAN

Dr. Muhammad Nadeem Mirza*

Abstract

How does leadership in the United States specifically affect its foreign policy decision-making towards Pakistan? Using the poliheuristic theory of decision-making, this paper explores how idiosyncratic factors such as leaders' perceptions, past experiences, and ideological orientations – along with the dynamic geopolitical environment of the world – affect the US foreign policy making process. It argues that the role of leadership increases when issues involve high-risk situations – for example after the 9/11 attacks, President Bush was autonomous 'enough' to devise the national security strategy vis-à-vis Pakistan. In a low-risk situation the role of leadership is either constrained by different actors, or the leadership utilizes the same actors such as the US Congress as leverage against Pakistan to entice or force it to bring its policy in line with the US national interests as perceived by the decision-makers.

Keywords: *Poliheuristic Theory, Leadership, Idiosyncratic Factors, United States, Decision Making, Pakistan*

Introduction

The precarious national security concerns of the United States vis-à-vis South Asia, both in the immediate aftermath of Soviet Union's demise and after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, reinforced Pakistan's geostrategic significance for the US. These concerns also strengthened the role of US leadership in devising the direction and priorities of its foreign policy towards Pakistan. Coupled with certain other variables such as the nuclear capabilities of Pakistan, and the geopolitical setting of the world, the role of leadership often acts as one of

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the most important variables affecting the foreign policy formulation process in the given case. For example, the dynamic geopolitical setting of South Asia resulted in the transformation of the role of leadership in the US 'nuclear' policy towards Pakistan – this transformation is quite evident from the nuclear policies of President Eisenhower to President Kennedy and subsequent American administrations. The US President Eisenhower's 'Atom for Peace', while being supportive to all countries, provided incentive to Pakistan to use nuclear technology through the similar program for peaceful purposes. Since the South Asian strategic environment changed because of India's desire to become a nuclear weapon state, the successive US administrations were quite sceptical of providing Pakistan and many other countries with the nuclear technology. Leadership, thus, at times affects the decision making process, and at other times is itself constrained by the geopolitical environment of the world.

Tchantouridze notes that "political decision making is not a set of algebraic processes, and decision makers do not follow unbreakable laws of classical mechanics."¹ Leaders usually conduct a subjective analysis of available and at times vague data provided by different institutions of the state such as intelligence agencies. Although they 'try' to follow principles of objectivity, yet their personal preferences, history, ideology and several other attached factors do transform this rather objective phenomenon into a subjective one. Theories of international relations often do not emphasize upon the link between objective material capabilities and decision maker's subjective assessment, which indeed is one of the important issues in the decision making process. Poliheuristic theory of foreign policy decision making attempts to explain this anomalous behaviour of the leaders by saying that: the leaders while analysing the situation do not 'necessarily' go for the option which is in the best interest of the state, but also the one which is in congruence with their personal self-interests and less risky for their political life. Decision-makers thus reject the policy-options utilising non-compensatory principle.²

Associated constraints on foreign policy decision-making, most important being time, cost, quality and quantity of information, and the cognitive abilities of the leaders, –also play significant role in influencing leaders' perceptions. Resultantly the final decision that leaders make may not necessarily be 'optimal'. Herbert A. Simons discusses this problem

¹ Lasha Tchantouridze, "Review: Integrating Cognitive and Rational Theories of Foreign Policy Decision Making by Alex Mintz," *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue Canadienne de Science Politique* 38, no. 1 (March 2005): 256–58.

² Alex Mintz, "How Do Leaders Make Decisions? A Poliheuristic Perspective," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, no. 1 (2004): 3–13.

while elaborating the theory of 'bounded rationality.'³ He opines that most of the decisions are not the 'optimal' ones rather are 'satisficing' decisions i.e. those are *satisfactory* to the existing conditions and *sufficiently* address the constraints on the decision makers.⁴

Pakistan, since 9/11, has never been 'off the radar' of US public debates; every presidential candidate, during his election campaign, has to present a strategy about dealing with the country. After the elections, although the unfolding events dictate the terms of engagement, the 'general outline' of foreign policy is primarily dictated by the president himself.⁵ Change in the administration at the White House has thus always had a profound impact upon the US foreign policy towards Pakistan.⁶ The US leadership has been very cautious since 9/11 in dealing with Pakistan, fearing a popular backlash in Pakistan that might support the rise of extreme right-wing forces in the country, or can contribute to anarchy therein - a nightmare for US interests in the region.⁷ On the other hand, there is a worry about Pakistan's alleged 'two-faced' role in the war against terrorism, especially in Afghanistan. In addition, the United States desires strong ties with India to cater its own economic interests in general and geopolitical interests in particular.

In order to address multifaceted challenges in the region, the US

³ Herbert A. Simon, "Theories of Bounded Rationality," *Decision and Organization* 1 (1972): 161-176.

⁴ Guru, "Herbert Simon," *The Economist*, March 20, 2009, <http://www.economist.com/node/13350892>; Simon, "Theories of Bounded Rationality."

⁵ Micah Zenko noted, 'the goal of policymakers ... is to develop the best means based on the available resources to implement the ... national strategy.'; Micah Zenko, "U.S. National Security Strategy: Rhetoric and Reality," *Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)*, August 15, 2011, <http://blogs.cfr.org/zenko/2011/08/15/u-s-national-security-strategy-rhetoric-and-reality/>.

⁶ Scholars usually raise certain questions that, what would have been the situation of the world had President Clinton, or for that matter, Al Gore might have been the president of United States at the moment of 9/11? Whether they might have attacked Afghanistan or not? Whether they might have pursued the policies as being pursued by President George W. Bush? Iraq War might have been started or not?

⁷ In the case of contemporary Pakistan, American leadership has certain fears which if materialized could cost hugely not only to United States, but also to the South Asian region and to the world as a whole. One such fear is its lurching into extreme rightists' hands. In such a situation, American leadership feared of a backlash against West - especially in the scenario that Pakistan has the nuclear weapons. It will also prove to be a bad sign for the American war in Afghanistan.

de-hyphenated Pakistan and India⁸ and hyphenated Pakistan with Afghanistan in the form of Af-Pak – and designated a Special Representative on Afghanistan and Pakistan (SRAP) with the purpose to “coordinate across the government to meet U.S. strategic goals in the region while engaging NATO and other key friends, allies, and those around the world who are interested in supporting these efforts.”⁹ In the final years of his administration and with the draw-down of the US presence in Afghanistan, President Obama had initiated the phasing out of the office of SRAP. In June 2017, President Trump further circumvented the office and appointed an Acting Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (Alice G. Wells), as the Acting SRAP.¹⁰ Another sign of the US’ limited engagement with Pakistan is President Trump’s Afghanistan and South Asia Strategy, which he announced in August 2017. Although its major contours could have been predicted much earlier, yet the details indicated several important elements. First, it contained the usual allegations that Pakistan is not doing well with targeting those elements creating trouble for the US in Afghanistan. Second, the US will increase its involvement in Afghanistan. Third, the operational details will not be disclosed in advance. Fourth, greater role should be played by India in Afghanistan. And fifth, it included a warning to Pakistan in case it continued to support the belligerent elements.¹¹ Pakistan had conveyed several reservations on the strategy, yet had we learned any lessons from history, this was a long shot in the making. It could well be predicted that whenever the US’ interests in the region would get served, it’ll minimize

⁸ Teresita C. Schaffer, *India and the United States in the 21st Century: Reinventing Partnership* (Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2009), 121; Stanley A. Weiss, "America's De-Hyphenating India-Pakistan Approach," April 19, 2009, http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle.asp?xfile=data/opinion/2009/April/opinion_April88.xml§ion=opinion&col.

⁹ Department Of State, 'Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan', US Department of State, November 5, 2009, http://www.state.gov/s/special_rep_afghanistan_pakistan/.

¹⁰ Mark Landler, "State Dept. Moves to Shut Office Planning Afghanistan Strategy," *The New York Times*, June 23, 2017, Asia Pacific, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/23/world/asia/trump-obama-afghanistan-pakistan.html>; Alice G. Wells, "Acting Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, and Acting Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (SRAP)," U.S. Department of State, 2017, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/biog/230750.htm>.

¹¹ Donald Trump, "Remarks by President Trump on the Strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia", White House, August 21, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/08/21/remarks-president-trump-strategy-afghanistan-and-south-asia>; Donald Trump, 'President Unveils New Afghanistan, South Asia Strategy', US Department of Defense, August 21, 2017, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1284964/president-unveils-new-afghanistan-south-asia-strategy/>.

its engagement with Pakistan.¹²

President Obama's decision of de-hyphenating India and Pakistan was resented by the leadership in Pakistan, which considered it as being contrary to the ground realities in the region, but the American leadership since is trying to pursue its policy objectives in this direction. President Trump has completed the process of further alienating Pakistan and aligning with India in his recent South Asia strategy – the process that was started by President Obama with his 2009 Af-Pak Strategy.¹³

While reading all these policy statements, one question that comes to mind is that whether and how the American leaders are different from each other as far as their foreign policy outlook is concerned. Whether President Trump is different from President Obama as far as the US policy towards Pakistan is concerned, or is it just a change of the person in the office? This paper addresses the question as to how the leadership in the United States affects its foreign policy in general and towards Pakistan specifically. It builds upon the empirical evidence taken from history of US leaders, while trying to dissect the effects of idiosyncratic factors on their overall policy outlook.

Poliheuristic Theory: Simplifying the Decision-Making Matrix

Most of the US foreign policy decisions generally and vis-à-vis Pakistan specifically are taken by the President with the help of his advisors such as Secretary of State, Secretary of Defence, National Security Advisor, and Special Representatives.¹⁴ In other words, the President's team does the job of 'problem representation', which is "a mental model of goals, constraints, preferred solutions, and expectations about the effectiveness of various tactics."¹⁵ For this purpose the team invites input from different experts, agencies, institutes, and think tanks. The final detailed account of the situation, with the possible policy options is drafted and presented before the president, thus simplifying his job of decision making. At times, the advisors hold different and often contrasting pre-dispositions about the issues, resulting in a variety of input reaching the President. For example, in President Jimmy Carter's era,

¹² Muhammad Nadeem Mirza, "American National Interest Vis-a-Vis Pakistan: A Retrospect," *Pakistan Journal of American Studies* 32, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 57.

¹³ Bureau of Public Affairs Department Of State. The Office of Electronic Information, "President Obama's Afghanistan-Pakistan (AFPAK) Strategy," March 27, 2009, <http://fpc.state.gov/120965.htm>.

¹⁴ Steven B. Redd, "The Influence of Advisers on Foreign Policy Decision Making An Experimental Study," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46, no. 3 (January 6, 2002): 335–364.

¹⁵ Thomas S. Mowle, "Worldviews in Foreign Policy: Realism, Liberalism, and External Conflict," *Political Psychology* 24, no. 3 (2003): 564.

it was the often diverging viewpoints held by his National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, and the Secretary of State Cyrus Vance that shaped his administration's general foreign policy outlook.

The role of leadership falls under the unit level of analysis – in which individuals become the focus of an analytical endeavour. Supporting the individual level of analysis, Jenice Gross Stein noted, "It is a well-established fallacy to give the properties of an individual to a collective entity. Bureaucracies and states do not think or feel—the individuals within them do. A government, as a collective entity, does not calculate and make rational choices, policy makers do."¹⁶ Similarly Goldgeier and MacFaul support the argument by stating, "Individual actors — not states, structures, or bureaucracies — make choices about what foreign policy to pursue. People with names and faces, not the 'United States' or 'Russia' or 'globalization' or 'the international balance of power,' make foreign policy."¹⁷ Leaders formulate the foreign policy according to their estimations and perception of the situation. Poliheuristic theory (PHT) postulates that, "in reaching a final decision, foreign policy makers use a set of heuristics"¹⁸ to drop the policy options unacceptable to them on the basis of their perception about the national and personal political interests. They "measure success and failure, costs and benefits, gains and losses, and risks and rewards using political units"¹⁹ because they have to look for their winning prospects in the next elections; hence domestic politics works as an important constraint while making a decision. PHT states that the first phase of decision-making involves the cognitive-psychological processes in which the leaders drop some of the policy options unacceptable to them on the domestic political front and also because of being too risky for the state interests. It results in the simplification of the decision matrix. The second stage involves the rational decision-making phase in which "the remaining of alternatives are considered in more detail, again by using heuristic reasoning."²⁰

¹⁶ Jenice Gross Stein, "Foreign Policy Decision-Making, Rational, Psychological and Neurological Models," in *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases*, ed. Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield, and Tim Dunne (Oxford University Press, 2012), 113.

¹⁷ James M. Goldgeier and Michael Anthony MacFaul, *Power and Purpose: U.S. Policy Toward Russia after the Cold War* (Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 8.

¹⁸ Tchantouridze, "Review: Integrating Cognitive and Rational Theories of Foreign Policy Decision Making by Alex Mintz," 257.

¹⁹ Nehemia Geva and Alex Mintz, *Decision making on War and Peace: The Cognitive-Rational Debate* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997), 82.

²⁰ Tchantouridze, "Review: Integrating Cognitive and Rational Theories of Foreign Policy Decision Making by Alex Mintz," 257. Heuristic reasoning is a problem-solving method that closely resembles human reasoning. According to heuristic models in computational sciences, a decision is reached after considering a set of 'yes' and 'no' alternatives.

As the process involves heuristic reasoning, there are plenty of chances that errors are committed because in the decision making process, perceptions of the leaders are involved and subjective analysis is being done by the president and his team. One example of such errors was the US decision to withdraw from Afghanistan in the late 1980s, after Soviet withdrawal and leaving Pakistan alone. They still consider it a result of leadership's failure to fully appreciate the situation, resulting in disastrous consequences for the US interests in the region, and in the international system.²¹

Leadership Change and its Impacts on US Foreign Policy

In the United States, the intellectual community generally forecasts foreign policy of the president even before he is elected. Every president in his election campaign draws the general foreign policy outline about important issues. Although, at times, those campaign slogans remain only rhetoric, yet they provide a glimpse of the president's mind-set and his possible future foreign policy priorities. Though the Democrats and Republicans have different foreign policy orientations, it does not imply that their foreign policies are radically different. Since the issues faced remain the same most of the times, the difference only occurs in how each leader prioritizes these as foreign policy concerns, and the means or tools chosen for achieving the ends defined by policy. Difference between the foreign policy priorities of Democratic Presidents Carter, Clinton, Obama, and Republican Presidents Reagan, Bush Sr., Bush Jr., and current President Trump is evident from the actions they have taken in their respective administrations.

With the onset of Obama's presidency in 2008, certain foreign policy priorities regarding Pakistan and Afghanistan saw radical change, and there was a strategic shift in the policy formulation process. He discarded Republican President Bush's expression of "global war on terror" and "replaced it with a covert, laser-like focus on Al-Qaida and its

²¹ Hillary Clinton stated in a testimony that, "We also have a history of kind-a 'moving in and out' of Pakistan. Let's remember that people we are fighting today, we funded twenty years ago... but let be careful, because what we sow, we will harvest. So we then left Pakistan. We said, OK, Fine! You deal with the Stingers that we have left all over your country. You deal with the mines that are along the border. And by the way, we don't have anything to do with you, and fact that we are sanctioning you. So we stopped dealing with the Pakistani military and ISI "; Hillary Clinton, *Hillary Clinton Testimony: American Leaving Pakistan Alone after Afghan Jihad*, Youtube (US Congress, 2011), http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dpx8VrFmd3U&feature=youtube_gdata_player.

spawn."²² Obama even changed its title from 'Global War on Terror' to 'Overseas Contingency Operations.'²³ The role of US leadership in the policy formulation process increased with the changing geopolitical environment in the region. President Trump has been blunter in his approach towards Pakistan and has even used a threatening tone to pressurise the country for desired gains. In the past decade, the US leaders could not corner Pakistan despite their wish to do so. Pakistan was repeatedly accused of playing a 'double game'²⁴ given its role in the war against terrorism and the American desire to find an honourable exit from Afghanistan. President Trump has now adopted a harsher tone towards Pakistan because he failed to give a time-bound plan to exit from Afghanistan. Hence with a change in leadership at the White House, coupled with the changing global geostrategic environment, the US foreign policy outlook has undergone change.

Presidents do not always succeed in implementing what they campaign about, but they do succeed, most of the time, in at least imparting a new outlook to the foreign policy. For example, during the election campaign while President Obama gave 'hope'²⁵ to the American people and the world, he also repeatedly called for allowing bombing of terrorist safe-havens (credibly known) in Pakistan without its approval-

²² Michael Hirsh, "On the Verge of Appeasement in Syria," *National Journal*, May 5, 2011, sec. Vantage Point. <https://www.nationaljournal.com/s/71521/verge-appeasement-syria>. Very quickly upon taking office as president, Obama reoriented the Iraq War back to where, in the view of many experts, it always belonged. He discarded the idea of a "global war on terror" that conflated all terror threats from al-Qaida to Hamas to Hezbollah.

²³ Al Kamen, "The End of Global War on Terror," *The Washington Post*, March 24, 2009, http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2009/03/23/the_end_of_the_global_war_on_t.html.

²⁴ Thomas L. Friedman, "The Great (Double) Game," *The New York Times*, July 31, 2010, sec. Opinion, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/01/opinion/01friedman.html>.

²⁵ AP, "Economic Meltdowns, Global Warming, and No End to Guantanamo: How the World Is Disappointed in Obama's Performance (and His Broken Promises)," *Daily Mail*, May 13, 2012; William Michael Davis, *Barack Obama: The Politics of Hope* (OTTN Publishing, 2007); Marc Hujer, "Dashed Hopes: How Obama Disappointed the World," *Spiegel Online*, August 9, 2011; Kevin McCullough, *No He Can't: How Barack Obama Is Dismantling Hope and Change* (Thomas Nelson Inc, 2011); Mitch Michener, *Barack Obama: Hope Destroyed* (Tate Publishing, 2011); Barack H. Obama, *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream* (Canongate Books, 2007). On the contrary, there are scholars such as Michener and McCullough who claimed that he had actually destroyed the hope and promises made in his election campaign. Marc Hujer noted, "His decline in popularity has also destroyed the hope that Obama could bring new momentum to America and the world."

and that is exactly what he claimed after his entry into the White House.²⁶ Some Pakistanis were quite hopeful for betterment of the situation after Obama's victory in the United States. They were optimistic because of Obama's campaign promises for addressing Islamophobia in the world – such a step, had it succeeded, would have resulted in decreased terrorist recruitment worldwide. Pakistanis were also hopeful regarding a reduced frequency of drone attacks based on a presumption of US understanding of Pakistan's sensitivities. The approval rating in Pakistan, of the US leadership, rose from 13 percent in 2008 to 24 percent in 2011. However, it has gone down since 2011 and the disapproval rating increased to about 92 percent in 2012.²⁷ Main reasons for the increase in the disapproval rating can be listed as: increase in drone attacks, new strings being attached to assistance to Pakistan, and increased cross-border attacks on Pakistani posts. These factors brought an all-time low in Pak-US relations, especially in 2011. Preble notes that “for all his talk of change, Obama has continued on the path set by his predecessors. Like George W. Bush and Bill Clinton before him, he sees the U.S. military as the world's sole policeman.”²⁸ Similarly during his election campaign, President Trump had

²⁶ Jason Burke, "Barack Obama's Election 2012 Win: The World Reacts," *The Guardian*, November 7 2012, sec. World news; Anwar Iqbal, "Pakistanis in US Show Soft Corner for Obama," *Dawn*, March 28, 2013; Peter Walker, "The World Reacts to the New US President", *The Guardian*, November 5, 2008, sec. World news. Some Pakistanis were happy for Obama's election in 2008 elections ... Walker noted that Pakistan's former prime minister, Yousaf Raza Gilani said, the election “marks a new chapter in the remarkable history of the United States”. Iqbal noted that most of the Pakistanis living in Pakistan favoured Republican Romney in 2012 elections – because of the bad experience they had with President Obama – yet those living in United States supported Democrat Obama. Burke noted that in a BBC World Service pre-election opinion poll around the world, conducted between July and September, Pakistanis said they favoured Romney. Pakistan was the only country out of more than 20 sampled to do so. However, large numbers of people polled said they were indifferent to, or unaware of, the election ... “There is some apprehension. There are fears of more drones, more demands, a sense that [Obama] was going to be bad for Pakistan. Pakistanis in general didn't like Obama and identified their anti-Americanism with him so were rooting for [Romney]”.

²⁷ Andrew Dugan and Mohamed Younis, "Pakistani Disapproval of U.S. Leadership Soars in 2012," *Gallup*, February 14, 2013, http://www.gallup.com/poll/160439/2012-pakistani-disapproval-leadershipsoars.aspx?utm_source=alert&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=syndication&utm_content=morelink&utm_term=All%20Gallup%20Headlines%20-%20USA.

²⁸ Christopher Preble, "A Plan B for Obama: Cut (Really Cut) Military Spending," *Foreign Policy*, November 2010, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/10/11/a_plan_b_for_obama?page=0,8. ²⁸ It is this all-encompassing

used harsh words for Pakistan because of its allegedly dubious role in the war against terrorism and specifically cajoled Indian audience. After the elections and since the declaration of Trump's South Asia strategy, he could be seen as enacting what he had campaigned for, putting Pak-US ties on a downward spiral set in motion by President Obama.

The study conducted by Margaret G. Hermann found a strong causal relation between the personality factor and the foreign policy decision-making process.²⁹ In the case of Pakistan, the personalities of former US presidents did play an important role. For instance, President Eisenhower had a military background and thus, his priority list included recruiting maximum number of allies to contain the Communist Soviet Union. Defence contracts with Pakistan were signed and it received considerable weapons' supplies to modernise its military.³⁰ With the onset of Kennedy era, especially after 1962, weapons supply to Pakistan was reduced, and by the end of Johnson administration, it was almost halted.³¹ Similarly President George W. Bush being the son of a former President, and having an aristocratic background, lacked a public "touch" to his foreign policy and most were 'hawks' in his administration who affected his general foreign policy orientation.³² This time again, the personality traits, along-with the geopolitical setting of the world played its part and the US foreign policy towards Pakistan got 'refashioned' and unabated assistance started flowing.

Afterwards as President Obama ascended the office, the situation changed. He did not have any aristocratic background. His personality gave a "humane" impression to his foreign policy. He was an "everybody's man" but he proved more insensitive in his dealings with Pakistan.

mission that requires a large military -- and a very expensive one. Americans today spend more on their military, adjusting for inflation, than at any time during the Cold War, even though the threats that they face are quite modest.

²⁹ Alan S. Gerber et al., "Personality and Political Attitudes: Relationships across Issue Domains and Political Contexts," *American Political Science Review* 104, no. 01 (2010): 111-133; Margaret G. Hermann, "Personality and Foreign Policy Decision Making: A Study of 54 Heads of Government," in *Foreign Policy Decision Making: Perception, Cognition, and Artificial Intelligence*, ed. Donald A. Sylvan (Praeger, 1984), 53-80.

³⁰ It does not imply that personality is the only factor that determined US foreign policy towards Pakistan in that era. Geopolitical setting of the world, and other variables also played their part in the decision making process.

³¹ Besides personality, international issues, like Cuban Missile Crisis, Sino-Indian war, Indo-Pak War, also played crucial role in the policy options chosen by the presidents. Internationally geopolitical setting were undergoing transformation in that era and diplomatic channels between Eastern and Western Blocs were strengthened thus easing down the tensions.

³² Michael Lind, "The Weird Men behind George W Bush's War," *New Statesman*, April 7, 2003; Ed Vulliamy, "Two Men Driving Bush into War," *The Guardian*, February 23, 2003, sec. World news.

Professor Mead noted, "President Obama, precisely because he seems so liberal, so vacillating, so nice, is a more effective neoconservative than President Bush ... (He) is pushing a democracy agenda in the Middle East that is as aggressive as President Bush's; he adopts regime change by violence if necessary as a core component of his regional approach and, to put it mildly, he is not afraid to bomb."³³ The Bureau of Investigative Journalism named Obama's term as "Reaper Presidency"³⁴ because of the increase in the number of drone attacks, and the covert operations throughout the world.

Autonomy of Leaders in Decision Making Process

Another issue that needs elaboration is autonomy of leadership in conducting foreign policy. There is no doubt that domestic politics have a profound impact on foreign policy; proponents of poliheuristic theory claim that the "domestic is the most important dimension in the foreign policy decision making."³⁵ Given that, there are certain areas where the leadership enjoys relatively higher level of autonomy, including decision-making in the 'high risk situations' related to national security i.e. situations where state security is at stake, the leadership enjoys greater autonomy in decision making. In such cases the US Congress and the general public usually follow the decisions taken by the president and his team, considering those as best for national interests. Referring again to 9/11 attacks, President Bush had almost a freehand in devising the US national security strategy in its aftermath. Although Congress may make certain modifications in the decisions made by the president, yet they mostly choose to follow the policy lines set by the President in such high-risk situations.

Since 9/11, President Bush was autonomous 'enough' regarding the US foreign policy decision-making vis-à-vis Pakistan. By 2006-07, war in Afghanistan was relegated to the background and the Iraq war dominated the policy discourse, making the Afghan war a low risk situation. As a result, the 'autonomous' status of the US leadership with regard to Pakistan diminished and the US Congress, along-with many other factors/actors started influencing the decision making process – hence more strings being attached to aid given to Pakistan, and asking president for certifications about Pakistan's behaviour.

³³ Walter Russell Mead, "W Gets a Third Term In The Middle East" *The National Interest*, August 22, 2011.

³⁴ Alice K Ross, Chris Woods, and Sarah Leo, "The Reaper Presidency: Obama's 300th Drone Strike in Pakistan," *The Bureau of Investigative Journalism*, December 3, 2012; Reaper is a type of an armed drone extensively used by the US in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

³⁵ Mintz, "How Do Leaders Make Decisions?"

Idiosyncratic Factors, Perceptions, and Foreign Policy

How do various psychological, ideational, and cultural factors affect the decision making process? How do political actors perceive their own and others' intentions and capabilities, and which intervening processes translate these perceptions into foreign policy? An American president's personality traits which include his convictions, past experiences, cognitive-psychological characteristics, his assumptions about the world, and his ideological orientations, matter a lot while making the decisions about Pakistan. His perceptions or misperceptions about Pakistan's role in the international and regional system influence not only the foreign policy processes but also its outcomes. Little knowledge of Pakistan, of its political and strategic culture, its social norms and values, and inaccurate depictions by the Indian-American lobby (United States India Political Action Committee – USINPAC), and other interest groups have been major concerns for Pakistan. These have resulted in the formulation of short-term and often counter-productive policies by the US towards the country.

Preston mentions two types of characteristics in leaders: “static leader characteristics [such as the ones which have cognitive complexity and the need for power] and non-static, changeable leader characteristics [such as the one preferring the policy experience or expertise].”³⁶ He noted that the interplay of these two characteristics gives rise to two leadership styles: First involves the “leader control and involvement in which leaders desire to personally control or be involved in the policy process in a given issue-area.” In the second leadership style “leader's general sensitivity to context, their general cognitive need for information, their attentiveness and sensitivity to the characteristics of the surrounding policy environment, the views of others”³⁷ are involved. Similarly, different psychologists have discussed the personality traits of the American presidents and have divided them into certain categories such as, “Three Dominators - Andrew Jackson, Lyndon Johnson , Richard Nixon ; two Inventors - John Adams, Woodrow Wilson ; two Good Guys - Dwight Eisenhower , Gerald Ford ; one Innocent - Ulysses S. Grant; two Actors - Warren Harding, Ronald Reagan ; two Maintainers - Harry Truman , George H.W. Bush ; three Philosophers - Thomas Jefferson, Abe Lincoln, Jimmy Carter ; three Extraverts - Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, John Fitzgerald Kennedy ; and special cases - George

³⁶ Thomas Preston, *The President and His Inner Circle: Leadership Style and the Advisory Process in Foreign Affairs* (Columbia University Press, 2012), 14–20.

³⁷ Ibid.

Washington, Bill Clinton."³⁸ President Obama is considered an extravert, and President Trump an outsider.

Another pertinent question is, whether the election of the president and his being in the White House affects his psychology and has any impact on his personality traits and the decision making, i.e., whether it is the 'chair of presidency' that affects the presidents, or is it the other way round? George Reedy noted that the Oval Office "neither elevates nor degrades a man. What it does is to provide a stage upon which all of his personality traits are magnified."³⁹ These traits, along with the historical experiences, have affected the important decisions made by different US leaders in history.⁴⁰ Secretary of State under President Eisenhower, John Foster Dulles, was the son of a Presbyterian minister. His uncle and grandfather had been the Secretaries of State in different US administrations. He was a staunch believer in the Christian morality of good vs. evil.⁴¹ This legacy affected his perception of the worldview and he adopted a *black* and *white* shade in the US foreign policy. He favoured Pakistan over India which he disliked because of two factors: First, Nehru's socialist tendencies and second, India's Non-Aligned posture. He, along with President Eisenhower, had the perception that "either you are with us, or you are against us," considering non-alignment to be a curse in the era of intense global geopolitical rivalry. Eisenhower's team acquainted him with the newly independent state of Pakistan and its strategic importance, and above all Pakistan's willingness to join the Western alliance system. It was during his era that Pakistan gained importance in the US foreign policy discourse regarding the region and became part of South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO).

President Kennedy was second among nine children from an overly disciplinarian mother and a dominant father. "Growing up with tough family expectations made him tougher" and a competitor, especially after recovering from a childhood illness.⁴² He was open-minded and often

³⁸ Steven J. Rubenzer and Thomas R. Faschingbauer, eds., *Personality, Character, and Leadership in the White House: Psychologists Assess the Presidents* (Potomac Books, Inc., 2004).

³⁹ George E. Reedy, *The Twilight of the Presidency* (World Publication Company, 1970), 18–19.

⁴⁰ F. Ugboaja Ohaegbulam, *A Concise Introduction to American Foreign Policy* (Peter Lang Publishing, 1999), 75–84.

⁴¹ Richard H. Immerman, ed., *John Foster Dulles and the Diplomacy of the Cold War* (Princeton University Press, 1992), 18; Spencer C. Tucker, ed., "John Foster Dulles," in *The Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War: A Political, Social, and Military History* (ABC-CLIO, 2011), 315; The son of a Presbyterian minister, Dulles's public record is replete with seemingly evangelical diatribes.

⁴² Jonathan Dunder, "John F. Kennedy Biography," *The Free Information Society*, 2013, <http://www.freeinfosociety.com/site.php?postnum=118>.

took bold decisions contrary to the general trend in American foreign policy towards Pakistan. He always asked his advisors to give him more policy options to the problems he faced, and searched for 'out-of-box' solutions. Though there was a prevalent dislike between President Kennedy and Prime Minister Nehru, yet in his era the United States got much closer to India and seeds of discord were sown in Pak-US relations – the US' changing priorities in South Asia, particularly after the Sino-Indian war also acted as an intervening variable in the decision making.

President Carter promoted human rights, global peace, economic development, and nuclear non-proliferation. In the 1920s, his mother "crossed the then-strict lines of segregation in 1920s' Georgia by counselling poor African American women on matters of health care."⁴³ Though a Southerner, he held close acquaintances with African Americans during his childhood. In 1950s and 1960s, he supported the civil rights movement for desegregation and ending racial discrimination in the United States. His parents were deeply religious and brought him up in Christian moralism. Pakistan by his time was undergoing revolutionary changes - opposition groups were up against Prime Minister Bhutto, who was using all possible means to deal with the situation, which resulted in rampant human rights violations. Soon General Zia -ul-Haq imposed Martial Law and political freedoms and certain basic human rights were withheld by the state.⁴⁴ Parallel to this, Pakistan had started seeking a nuclear program/capability using all possible means. All this was against Carter's aspirations and his stated goals. The obvious result was severe pressure on Pakistan to be eased only by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

President Woodrow Wilson shared somewhat similar history as Carter. His father was a pastor of church, and his mother was a priest's daughter.⁴⁵ Wilson once mentioned, "I was swollen with pride as I listened to my father's preaching."⁴⁶ During his childhood, he had a first-hand experience to see the horror of war – American civil war of 1861. With such a background, his election gave him a chance to exercise his ideas at the domestic and international level; he was a humanist and advocated policies based on moralism. Initially he kept the US out of the First World War for about three years and later entered war only to fight a 'war to end

⁴³ Robert A. Strong, "Jimmy Carter: Life Before the Presidency," Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, October 4, 2016, <https://millercenter.org/president/carter/life-before-the-presidency>.

⁴⁴ Peter R. Blood, *Pakistan: A Country Study* (US Federal Research Division, 1996), XXXV.

⁴⁵ Jan Willem Schulte Nordholt, *Woodrow Wilson: A Life for World Peace*, trans. Herbert H. Rowen (University of California Press, 1991), 6–11.

⁴⁶ Robert Alexander Kraig, *Woodrow Wilson and the Lost World of the Oratorical Statesman* (Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 14.

all wars'.⁴⁷ Certain scholars object to this line of reasoning, considering him to be a typical Southern white supremacist. Pakistan did get the benefits from his idea of national self-determination during the independence movement, though under Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Truman, the US was against the idea of Pakistan.

President Ronald Reagan was a conservative, nationalist, and had a thirty years long acting career.⁴⁸ The result was the introduction of novel and dramatic terminology in the American politics such as 'star wars' and 'evil empire'. He also coined the term 'War on Terror' in the American politics. As Pakistan had already started supporting the Afghan *mujahedeen* against Soviet supported government in Kabul, Reagan's coming to the White House proved very helpful for Pakistan. It soon started one of the biggest guerrilla operations in Afghanistan with the help from the United States and other allies.

Moving on, Presidents Bush Sr. and Bush Jr. had aristocratic backgrounds. They had held high offices; resultantly they lacked the "common touch" in their foreign policy towards Pakistan in particular. Bush Sr. decided to withdraw from Afghanistan and Pakistan without taking care of the sensitivities and the future repercussions of his actions, thus pushing Afghanistan into a civil war having adverse consequences for Pakistan. His proposed *New world Order* brought the US and India closer to each other while distancing Pakistan from the US. Several sets of sanctions were imposed on Pakistan in his era. President Bush Jr.'s foreign policy towards Pakistan was determined by the high-risk situation in which his administration held sway over foreign policy decision making. As mentioned earlier, he lacked the 'common touch' in his foreign policy and was strongly influenced by a group of highly influential foreign policy elite – the neoconservatives such as Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice.

⁴⁷ Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (Oxford University Press, 1992). Max Boot had distinguished between 'soft' and 'hard Wilsonians' as: "Liberal 'soft Wilsonians', such as former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and ... Woodrow Wilson himself, share a faith that multilateral organizations such as the League of Nations of the United Nations should be the main venues through which the United States promotes its ideals, and international law should be the United States' main policy tool. They are willing to use force, but preferably only when (as in Haiti and Kosovo) the intervention is untainted by any hint of national interest " ... the neocons are hard Wilsonians, "who place their faith not in pieces of paper but in power, specifically U.S. power." Max Boot, 'Myths about Neoconservatism', in *The Neocon Reader*, ed. Irwin M. Stelzer (Grove Press, 2004), 49.

⁴⁸ Jules Tygiel, *Ronald Reagan And the Triumph of American Conservatism* (Longman Publishing Group, 2006).

President Clinton was enthusiastic and gave hope to the United States and the world. During his era, it was suggested that the sanctions put on Pakistan were counter-productive, so through Brown's Amendment the sanctions were somewhat eased, allowing humanitarian aid flow to Pakistan.⁴⁹ President Obama having a modest background was outspoken, open minded, and took certain bold steps. His stay in a Muslim country, in his childhood, gave him first-hand experience with Muslim societies – indeed he even held a Muslim middle name: Hussain.⁵⁰ All these factors affected his foreign policy postures positively or negatively - he had to live at a distance from Muslims for not giving the opposition a chance to make an issue over his Islamic leanings (if there were any). Also the response of Muslim states to his foreign policy decisions was influenced by these facts mentioned above. As far as his foreign policy towards Pakistan is concerned, he proved more of a hard-liner than his predecessor. Since 2008, the relations between Pakistan and the United States saw a downward trajectory.

President Trump – a billionaire and a business tycoon having a conservative orientation, a brash attitude, and an overtly chauvinistic and xenophobic outlook is attracted more towards India and believes its claims of being also a victim of terrorism. Besides, India offering a market of more than a billion people is a huge economic opportunity for the US. The American grand strategy in the region – encompassing Afghan war, access to the Central Asian natural resources, containing China,⁵¹ aligning with India – are few of the factors affecting Trump administration's decision making regarding Pakistan.

Launching covert operations against the assumed terrorists hiding in foreign lands such as Pak-Afghan border region, Somalia, Syria, Libya and Yemen has become a 'new normal' in the US foreign policy behaviour. US leadership usually authorises such operations without taking care of Congress' views and general public opinion. President Bush, for example, throughout his tenure, launched several covert operations in South Asian, Middle Eastern and African countries. He had even tried sending American soldiers in pursuit of militants inside Pakistani territory, but because of severe Pakistani response he had to halt the boots-on-ground operations.

⁴⁹ Michael Benson, *Bill Clinton* (Twenty-First Century Books, 2003); David Maraniss, *First In His Class: A Biography Of Bill Clinton* (Simon and Schuster, 2008).

⁵⁰ Andrea Elliott, "Muslim Voters Detect a Snub From Obama," *The New York Times*, June 24, 2008, sec. U.S. / Politics; Radhika Parameswaran, "Facing Barack Hussein Obama Race, Globalization, and Transnational America," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 33, no. 3 (2009): 195–205.

⁵¹ Muhammad Nadeem Mirza, "Contending Interests of Big Powers in Central Asia: China's Perspective," (Regional Security and Foreign Policy in South, Central and West Asia, Islamabad: Strategic Vision Institute-SVI, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung-KAS, 2017)

President Obama, soon after oath-taking, changed the battle procedures and started relying more on technology i.e. the use of drones became a norm.⁵² In his State of the Union address in February 2013, he announced that while the bulk of American forces will be out of Afghanistan by the end of 2014, yet “we will continue to take direct action against those terrorists who pose the gravest threat to Americans.”⁵³ In other words, he was directly pointing to the continued use of drones in Pakistan and elsewhere. Covert operation resulting in Osama Bin Laden’s death deep inside Pakistan is one such example, where President Obama and his team took the decision unilaterally. While discussing the covert operation that killed Osama Bin Laden, author Rachel Kleinfeld drew differences between different presidents’ approaches in dealing with the militants abroad. She noted:

President Clinton was deliberate -- so much so that he was famously risk-averse and more concerned with popularity. That meant that he shot cruise missiles rather than committing ground troops when Osama bin Laden was in Sudan, missing a crucial early chance in the 1990s. President Bush had the opposite character: a lot of bluster and risk-taking, little deliberation or follow-through. As a result, we lost Osama bin Laden at Tora Bora because of poor planning and closed down the C.I.A. unit in 2005 that was dedicated to catching bin Laden. It took a leader (Like Obama) who could combine deliberation -- waiting months while special forces practiced on a mock compound built to exact specifications on U.S. soil -- with the risky strategy of committing ground forces to finally get our target.⁵⁴

A Leader’s Power of Persuasion

A related question that may be asked is, whether it is the leadership which engineers the public opinion or is it the domestic public pressure which forces the leaders to make the appropriate decisions? The answer can be: it is not a one-way business but a two way process. Although the leadership is at the deciding end, yet at times it has to engineer public opinion especially if the decisions involve some ‘high risk’ situations such as intervention in other countries. For example, Roosevelt did not jump immediately into World War-II. American public opinion was against Germany, but not enough to declare war against it; it was possible

⁵² Muhammad Nadeem Mirza et al., "Unmanned Aerial Vehicles: A Revolution in the Making," *South Asian Studies* 31, no. 02 (December 2016): 625 – 638.

⁵³ Barrack H. Obama, quoted by Anwar Iqbal, "US War in Afghanistan will be over by End of 2014: Obama Direct Attacks on Militant Hideouts to Continue," *Dawn*, February 14, 2013.

⁵⁴ Rachel Kleinfeld, "Presidential Temperament," *The New York Times*, May 3, 2011, sec. Room for Debate.

only after the Pearl Harbour attacks.⁵⁵ Similarly Woodrow Wilson joined World War-I when the American public opinion was ripe against Germany after the sinking of *RMS Lusitania* by German subs, and the publishing of *Zimmerman Telegram* which not only challenged the basic principle of the US foreign policy of that time i.e. Monroe Doctrine, but also threatened its survival.⁵⁶ It takes some time to 'tame' the general public opinion and thus getting the domestic support for such actions. America's president, as the political scientist Richard Neustadt once noted, may be the most powerful man in the world, but he has only one real power i.e. "the power of persuasion."⁵⁷

Using this power the leader tries to mould the public opinion in favour of the policy options he wishes to pursue. For this purpose he has different tools at disposal, most notably the media. In the case of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, President Bush did not jump-start the invasion. It took months of homework and producing 'fabricated' reports⁵⁸ by intelligence agencies claiming that Iraq was developing the WMDs, so as to convince American public of the dangers posed by Saddam regime.⁵⁹ A report issued as early as September 2002 by the Department of State noted, "Iraq has stepped up its quest for nuclear weapons and has embarked on a worldwide hunt for materials to make an atomic bomb."⁶⁰ Similarly CIA reported in October 2002 that "Iraq has continued its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs in defiance of UN resolutions and restrictions. Baghdad has chemical and biological weapons as well as missiles with ranges in excess of UN restrictions: *if left unchecked, it probably will have a nuclear weapon during this decade* (italics added)."⁶¹ All these reports helped President Bush to build up his case for invading Iraq in front of the public. This process may also be termed as

⁵⁵ Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade: Franklin D. Roosevelt, American Public Opinion, and the War against Nazi Germany* (Oxford University Press, 2001); Waldo Heinrichs, *Threshold of War: Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Entry into World War II* (Oxford University Press, 1988).

⁵⁶ Justus D. Doenecke, *Nothing Less Than War: A New History of America's Entry Into World War I* (University Press of Kentucky, 2011).

⁵⁷ Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan* (Free Press, 1991). Quoted by Gregor Peter Schmitz, "Obama's Weakness Is a Problem for the Global Economy," *Spiegel Online*, August 9, 2011, sec. World.

⁵⁸ Joby Warrick, "Some Evidence on Iraq Called Fake," *Washington Post*, March 8, 2003.

⁵⁹ Conrad Molden, *What Were the Consequences of the Iraq War Contracts? From Eisenhower's Warnings to Halliburton's Profits* (Lambert Academic Publishing, 2012), 4-5.

⁶⁰ Department Of State, *A Decade of Deception and Defiance: Saddam Hussein's Defiance of the United Nations*, (The White House, September 12, 2002).

⁶¹ CIA, *Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs*, (US Government, October, 2002).

'manufacturing fear' or 'manufacturing consent', in order to get public support for the desired policy issues.⁶² Former Head of the Iraq Survey Group David Kay noted in a hearing, "we were almost all wrong, and I certainly include myself here."⁶³

In the case of Pakistan, the United States did not commit its ground troops though they tried to send these across the border many times in the last decade; use of drones has emerged as the US leadership's weapon of choice in this case. However, the use of drones has become distasteful to the American public because of the attached legal and moral constraints especially after some American nationals were killed in drone attacks. Congress and the American public has been demanding since 2010 a more in-depth scrutiny of the drone operations as well as the *kill-list*.⁶⁴ President Obama had to deal with this challenge on the domestic front. Congressmen were so angry over the non-transparency of the drone program that Betty McCollum went so far as presenting an amendment to block the CIA funding being used for conducting drone operations.⁶⁵

Despite such resistance, Obama went ahead with drone operations in Pakistan but the intensity of drone attacks decreased substantially. The US public pressure may have played an important role in reduction in the number of such attacks. In response to the increased domestic pressure, Obama promised to bring in more transparency in the drone operations.⁶⁶ President Trump, though leaving the operational details to be dealt by the

⁶² Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (Random House, 2010).

⁶³ David Kay, "Hearing on Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs", Senate Armed Services Committee (Washington D.C., January 28, 2004) <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu//NSAEBB/NSAEBB80/kaytestimony.pdf>

⁶⁴ Tom Campbell, "Drone Strikes: Who's on the 'Kill List,'" *Los Angeles Times*, February 17, 2013; Julie Hirschfeld Davis, Laura Litvan, and Greg Stohr, "Obama Faces Bipartisan Pressure on Drone Big Brother Fear," *Bloomberg*, March 8, 2013; Joshua Hersh, "Obama Drone Program Secrecy Reaches 'Alice-in-Wonderland' Extremes", *Huffington Post*, February 6, 2013.

⁶⁵ AFP, "First US Drone Strike in Pakistan since Sharif Sworn In," *France 24*, June 7, 2013; Josh Lederman and Rebecca Santana, "Drone Strike Shows That Secret CIA Attacks Will Continue despite Obama Pledge for Transparency", *Fox News*, May 30, 2013; Betty McCollum, Betty McCollum, "The McCollum Amendment to the FY14 Defense Appropriations Bill Prohibiting Funds for CIA Lethal Drone Strikes," Congressional Record Volume 159, Issue 85, (U.S. Government Publishing Office: June 2013) <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CREC-2013-06-14/CREC-2013-06-14-pt1-PgE861>.

⁶⁶ Joshua Hersh, "State Of The Union: On Drones, Obama Pledges Greater Transparency," *Huffington Post*, February 12, 2013; Barack H. Obama, "Obama's Speech on Drone Policy," *The New York Times*, May 23, 2013; Editor, "Barack Obama Promises More Transparency on Drones," *The Telegraph*, February 15, 2013.

troops on ground, has adopted a tone that is suggestive of his harsh approach dealing with Pakistan.⁶⁷

Conclusion

Poliheuristic theory explains how domestic politics, leaders' idiosyncrasies and perceptions play their part in foreign policy decision making process. The role of American leadership in the foreign policy formulation towards Pakistan has changed with the change of geostrategic and geopolitical situation at both international and regional levels. Yet one constant has been the 'relative' autonomy of the American leadership in the foreign policy choices towards Pakistan. Even though the events of September 11 changed the situation and made Pakistan an important part of the domestic discourse, yet policy regarding Pakistan remained one of the domains where the leadership exercised their influence to their fullest. It does not mean that the American leadership is the *only* deciding authority; certain other actors/factors continue to act as intervening, and at times as independent variables affecting the policy - e.g. war against terrorism, geostrategic position of Pakistan, Indian influence in Pak-US relations, and the like. But ultimately all these factors have to be processed through the leaders' cognition and their advisors' feedback.

President Trump refused to certify to Congress that Pakistan is "doing enough" against Haqqani Network and other terrorist groups, thus withholding instalments of Coalition Support Fund in 2017. This process of putting pressure on Pakistan using different economic and military carrots and sticks was started much earlier by President Bush, and was reinforced by President Obama. Pakistan, which went off-the-radar in the US foreign policy priorities after the killing of Osama Bin Laden in 2011, and the announcement of President Obama's 2014 withdrawal plans, has once again come to the forefront since the announcement of Trump's South Asia strategy. It has become a part of the high-risk security situation, thus augmenting the role of US leaders in decision making vis-à-vis Pakistan. Signs indicate that Pak-US relations are going to take a downward trajectory in the coming years, but the continuity of their relations will see several ups and downs in which US leadership and geopolitical environment would play a determining role.

⁶⁷ Max Boot, "Trump's Path to Indefinite Afghan War," *Council on Foreign Relations - CFR*, August 22 2017, <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/trumps-path-indefinite-afghan-war>.

