

## No Exit

During the final dark days of the Second World War, the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre first staged his play, *Huis Clos*, in Nazi-occupied Paris. In English, the title is usually translated as *No Exit*.

Sartre's drama featured three sinners, all dead to the world, who learn to their surprise that hell is not a land of fire, brimstone, and devils, but an oddly furnished living room where they are subjected to eternal torment by each other. The more they interact, the more the sinners come to appreciate that they are perfectly suited to the task, each vulnerable to precisely the psychological torture meted out by the others, and each capable of inflicting similarly devastating punishment in return.

In a moment of epiphany, one of Sartre's characters exclaims, "Hell is other people!" And yet, when the living room door swings open and the three have a chance to make a run for it, they cannot. The moment the escape option is presented, the sinners recognize it as an illusion. The only possible path to salvation is through struggle against their special tormentors. And that means there is truly no exit; they are stuck "for ever, and ever, and ever."

For American and Pakistani diplomats, policymakers, military officers (and a handful of think tank analysts like this author) who have been condemned to work with one another, this vision of perpetual mutual torment strikes close to home. For much of the past decade, Pakistan has been rocked by internal turmoil and exceptional levels of violence. Over the same period, relations between Washington and Islamabad have run from frustrating to infuriating.

This is nothing new. Well before Pakistan so routinely made headline news in America, the relationship was also a tortured one. Like Sartre's sinners, the United States and Pakistan have tormented each other for decades, if in very different ways. Both sides believe they have been sinned against. Even

at high points in the relationship, there were still underlying irritations and disagreements that got in the way of building any sort of strong, sustainable cooperation.

In the early Cold War era, when Pakistan joined America's global effort to contain the Soviet Union, contentious negotiations over the scale of U.S. assistance nearly derailed the nascent alliance. Later, during the 1980s when the two sides worked hand in glove to assist the Afghan mujahedeen in their war against the Soviet Union, the Pakistanis secretly pursued a nuclear weapons program that Washington opposed. When the Cold War ended, Pakistan's nuclear program moved ahead at full steam as the U.S.-Pakistan relationship fell into a disastrous, decade-long tailspin.

At the lowest points in the relationship, such as the late 1970s, the two sides behaved more like adversaries than allies. When Pakistani student protesters ransacked the U.S. embassy in Islamabad in 1979, Pakistan's ruling general Zia-ul-Haq cynically decided to let the protest burn itself out rather than to venture a serious rescue attempt. Two Americans died that day, and only the stout walls of the embassy vault and some lucky timing allowed another 139 American and Pakistani personnel to escape the smoldering embassy grounds alive.<sup>1</sup> Had the story ended differently, an already tense relationship between Washington and Islamabad might have collapsed into outright hostility.

Few Americans or Pakistanis now recall that episode in 1979, but many young Pakistanis are taught to recite a litany of other low points in the relationship. These include several instances of what they call American "abandonments," such as when the United States did not adequately rise to Pakistan's defense in its wars with India in 1965 or 1971, or in 1990 when Washington slapped sanctions on Pakistan for pursuing a nuclear weapons program. American historians describe these events differently. They correctly observe that Pakistan's own choices – to go to war and to build a nuclear arsenal – led to predictable American responses, not betrayals.

Thus, Pakistanis and Americans tell conflicting versions of their shared history. There is at least a nugget of truth to the Pakistani lament that America has used their country when it suited the superpower's agenda and then tossed it away when inconvenient. Ever since Pakistan gained independence from British India in 1947, Washington has viewed the country as a means to other ends, whether that meant fighting communism or terrorism. When Pakistan was helpful, it enjoyed generous American assistance and attention. When Pakistan was unhelpful, the spigot was turned off.

Yet for all the Pakistani complaints about how the United States has never been a true friend, the fact is that Pakistan also used America. Pakistani leaders dipped into America's deep pockets to serve their purposes, sometimes

<sup>1</sup> For a full account of the attack on the Islamabad embassy, see Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars* (New York: Penguin, 2004), pp. 21–37.

parochial or corrupt, oftentimes driven by persistent geopolitical conflict with neighboring India.

Above all, the Pakistani military viewed relations with the United States as a means to balance against India, Pakistan's larger sibling with which it has maintained a more or less hostile relationship since birth. The Indo-Pakistani relationship explains a great deal about how the Pakistani state views the world, and more than a little about how it functions at home as well. When the United States failed to provide money, diplomatic backing, or equipment that would be useful against India, Pakistan hardly reconsidered its hostile stance. Islamabad simply looked elsewhere to meet its perceived needs: to nearby China, to an independent nuclear weapons program, and even to nurturing violent anti-Indian insurgents and terrorists. Pakistan took these steps even when it knew full well that they would anger Washington and threaten the basis of any lasting alliance with the United States.

In short, the United States has been the more fickle partner, its approach to Pakistan shifting dramatically across the decades. Pakistan, however, has been guilty of greater misperception, claiming support for American purposes while turning the U.S. partnership to other ends. As a consequence, both sides failed repeatedly to build a relationship to serve beyond the immediate needs of the day. There was neither a special relationship of the sort that exists between America and Britain, nor a mature alliance like the United States has developed with countries, such as Japan and South Korea.

Worse, the on-again, off-again pattern of U.S.-Pakistan cooperation resulted in growing mistrust. That historical pattern and its implications for anti-American sentiment in Pakistan is the central theme of the third chapter in this book. In Pakistan, mistrust of the United States extended well beyond the foreign policy elite. Today, Pakistanis high and low wade in a swamp of anti-Americanism. The muck seeps into every debate over how best to manage relations with the United States, but it does not stop there. In their public and private conversations, Pakistanis routinely hold America responsible for an enormous range of events inside their country, sometimes by way of tangled conspiracy theories. Whether the conversation turns to government corruption, suicide bombers, or routine electrical blackouts, the United States usually takes a share of the blame.

Differences of perception and interest, not to mention a litany of historically bound grievances, now divide the two countries. No U.S. public relations campaign, no matter how sophisticated, will redefine Pakistani attitudes. That said, few Pakistanis hate Americans for who they are or what they believe. Tens of millions of Pakistanis would gladly live in a society that allowed the personal freedoms and opportunities afforded in America. This leaves a narrow but important space for hope. Pakistani anti-Americanism is a noxious by-product of the interplay between U.S. foreign policies, wider trends within the Muslim world, and Pakistan's own domestic politics. If some or all of these dynamics

were to shift, it is conceivable that America would find new allies and partners in Pakistani society.

Pakistanis are not, however, the only aggrieved party in this relationship. A decade after 9/11 the U.S.-Pakistan relationship also has very few fans left in Washington. In the corridors of U.S. power, from the White House and State Department to the Pentagon and CIA, a gallows humor hangs over most Pakistan policy debates. Best-laid plans and high hopes have been dashed too often for anyone to champion costly new agendas.

Having spent billions of dollars in military and civilian assistance to Pakistan, many representatives and senators have reached the conclusion, as Gary Ackerman, a Democratic congressman from New York, put it in May 2012, that “Pakistan is like a black hole for American aid. Our tax dollars go in. Our diplomats go in, sometimes. Our aid professionals go in, sometimes. Our hopes go in. Our prayers go in. Nothing good ever comes out.”<sup>2</sup>

Whereas the Obama administration spent its first two years seeking a grand transformation in the U.S. relationship with Pakistan, most of 2011 and 2012 were devoted to salvaging a minimal degree of cooperation. By early 2011, analysts in American government and academic circles began to contemplate how a total rupture in the U.S.-Pakistan relationship might look, and whether, for instance, the threats posed by terrorists and Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal could be contained within its borders if the official relationship turned completely hostile. They conducted a range of “contingency planning exercises” to assess how hypothetical crises in and around Pakistan might escalate into full-scale wars.

Underneath those bloodless planning drills and calculations, passions ran deep. Increasingly, Washington’s top policymakers felt a personal animus toward Pakistan. After reading scores of incriminating intelligence reports and experiencing firsthand the frustrations of dealing with Pakistani counterparts, many concluded that Pakistan’s military and intelligence forces were guilty of a cruel, immoral, and deceptive strategy that helped Afghan Taliban insurgents kill hundreds of U.S. troops and made another major terrorist attack against Americans and their allies more likely.

In addition to poisoning cooperation in the short run, such experiences leave lasting scars. In the tumultuous years immediately after 9/11, American officials tended to give their Pakistani counterparts the benefit of the doubt, hoping that over time the relationship would mature and improve. A decade later the opposite is true. The generation of U.S. officers who served in the Afghan war is likely to emerge from that conflict perceiving Pakistan as an enemy more than an ally. Their views are already influencing policymakers and legislators in Washington.

<sup>2</sup> Ackerman, quoted in Richard Leiby, “Pakistan’s Power Crisis May Eclipse Terrorist Threat,” *Washington Post*, May 27, 2012, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/pakistans-power-crisis-may-eclipse-terrorist-threat/2012/05/27/gJQAPhOSuU\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/pakistans-power-crisis-may-eclipse-terrorist-threat/2012/05/27/gJQAPhOSuU_story.html).

In May 2011, America closed the first chapter of the post-9/11 era by killing Osama bin Laden. U.S. and allied leaders have resolved to withdraw the lion's share of their troops from Afghanistan in 2014. Frustration and disgust with Pakistan shows little sign of abating. Perhaps now is the moment for the world's sole superpower to escape from this particular torment. The situation feels a lot like the dramatic point in Sartre's play when the living room door swings open, offering his sinners the chance to make a run for it. Can't America simply leave Pakistan behind?

No. However appealing it might seem for America to wash its hands of Pakistan, to move on and let Pakistanis, or someone else, pick up the mess, it would be little more than wishful thinking to believe that neglecting the challenges posed by Pakistan will make them go away. This is the essential meaning of "No Exit."

Unfortunately, this does not mean the United States has any easy solutions. The situation is troubling and, in a deep sense, tragic. It requires Americans to appreciate that some problems may be too big to solve, and yet still too important to avoid.

#### MUTUAL VULNERABILITY

The U.S. experience of the twentieth century, from two world wars to the Cold War, convinced most American policymakers that the world was shrinking. One could no longer trust that the United States would be insulated by its surrounding oceans from the repercussions of decisions in far-off places like Berlin, Tokyo, or Moscow.

The twenty-first century has only accelerated the speed and density of global interconnections. Threats of disease, climate change, economic crisis, terrorism, and war routinely spill across countries and leapfrog continents. All countries, including the United States, are vulnerable. By this logic, even though Pakistan is on the other side of the world, America is not necessarily protected from what happens there.

Yet even if world is shrinking, some places matter more to the United States than others. As an extreme example, in the late 1990s a brutal war started in the Congo. Neighboring states were sucked into the conflict that brought death, displacement, and destruction to millions of Africans over the subsequent decade. The suffering went almost entirely unnoticed in Washington. One can debate the morality of this fact, but it is necessary to recognize that states are typically moved to action by what they perceive to be their own interests. That may or may not lead them to make sacrifices for humanitarian or altruistic purposes. In Pakistan's case, tens of millions of people suffer from poverty, disease, and violence, but none of this necessarily compels the United States to do anything about it.

On close examination, however, it is clear that the U.S.-Pakistan relationship is one of mutual vulnerability. Each side has the potential to threaten the other's

interests, even vital ones. This is true in spite of their many other differences in power, wealth, culture, and history.

### **Pakistan's Vulnerability**

Pakistanis, who crave a respite from the exhausting trials of America's post-9/11 campaign against terrorism, find themselves trapped in a humiliating position of dependence upon the United States. Islamabad is addicted to U.S. assistance dollars, whether in the form of grants, projects, or loans. Similarly, Pakistan's military jealously guards its supply of American-made weapons and spare parts, especially its sixty-three F-16 fighter jets, aircraft that rival some of the best in neighboring India's arsenal.

Even if Pakistan were somehow to free itself from these crutches, it would still confront a global economy in which the United States remains the most influential player. It would still confront a regional security environment in which the United States maintains the most powerful military. Unlike nearby China or Russia, Pakistan lacks sufficient strength, wealth, or easily exploited natural resources to insulate itself from American influence.

Pakistanis old enough to recall the 1990s will remember that at the end of the Cold War when relations with the United States took a nosedive, the country's friendships with China and Saudi Arabia failed to save it from a decade of terrible economic and political turbulence. The country cycled through a series of ineffectual and weak governments and ran up an astronomical debt along the way. Today Pakistan is having an even harder time getting its house in order. This makes the country more vulnerable to outside pressure and more dependent on outside aid.

As has been the case for decades, and as explained at greater length in the second chapter of this book, Pakistani society is dominated by a small, elite class of feudal land barons and industrialists, usually in collusion with the most powerful institution of the land: the army. Together, these power brokers have suppressed radical change, but more and more they are besieged along two fronts.

A relatively small but vocal and violent segment of society favors revolutionary change. These radicals – terrorists, militants, and their ideological sympathizers – who cloak themselves in the garb of Islam, do not enjoy much popular appeal. They are, however, able to intimidate the masses. Some of the most radical voices in Pakistan have also enjoyed the active support of the state, including in the military and intelligence services. Armed, trained, and indoctrinated in the black arts of insurgency and terrorism, these groups now make terrifyingly sophisticated adversaries. It is not surprising that Pakistan's leaders often choose to temporize, negotiate, or at best divide and conquer these extremists rather than to tackle the whole of the problem at once.

Unfortunately, that piecemeal approach also betrays weakness and ambivalence. It has undermined, at times fatally, Pakistanis who might otherwise stand up for a more moderate or progressive society. It fosters an atmosphere

of fear and conspiracy. That, in turn, discourages the sorts of investments and entrepreneurial activity that could jumpstart the underperforming economy. Most worrisome, it increases the chance that the guardians of Pakistani national security, including those within the nuclear weapons program, will be compromised from within their own ranks. The greatest threat to Pakistan's stability comes not from the prospect of violent conquest – a virtual impossibility in the face of the army's size and overwhelmingly superior firepower – but from confusion, deterioration, or division within the army itself.

Aside from violent and revolutionary forces of change, Pakistan also faces the pressures and opportunities afforded by massive population growth. By mid-century, Pakistan will almost certainly join India, China, and the United States among the world's four most populous nations. Pakistan's cities are growing fastest of all, and the country's young urbanites are already demanding change. Not surprisingly, their main concerns are jobs and education. Thus far, Pakistan's sclerotic political system has done rather little to meet these needs, but the tide may yet turn. Tens of millions of young Pakistanis are coming of age in a world saturated with new tools of communication and social mobilization, like cell phones and interactive media. These tools may open the door to popular political participation in ways that are entirely new to Pakistan.

Nonviolent, evolutionary change might be the best possible way to unclench the grip on power enjoyed by Pakistan's traditional, repressive elite. For the moment, however, the country's reformers – young and old – are not up to the task. They lack experience and viable allies that can compete in the rough-and-tumble world of Pakistani politics and still remain true to their goals. Pakistan's current crop of reformers is also decidedly inward-looking, which limits its ability to benefit from external support, whether from America or elsewhere.

In short, Pakistan is vulnerable. Its traditional ruling classes and the military are still strong enough to ward off the immediate prospect of revolution or collapse, but the state is stressed by population growth, hamstrung in its reform efforts, and plagued by violence and terror. Change, whether revolutionary and violent or evolutionary and peaceful, looms on the horizon. It is impossible to know when and how the balance of power will tip away from those Pakistanis who favor continuity and toward those who favor change, but all the warning signs are in place.

### **America's Vulnerability**

Americans yearn for the sense of safety that was lost on 9/11 when terrorists turned New York's twin towers to ash. At that time, more al-Qaeda operatives lived in Pakistan than any other country. Washington's first concern when dealing with Islamabad remains the vulnerability of the American people to threats based on Pakistani soil.

Dealing with Pakistan is no straightforward affair. Anyone who claims otherwise has not been paying attention. Pakistan is neither completely aligned

with America, nor completely opposed. Some of America's frustrations with Islamabad result from what Pakistan does, others from what Pakistan seems incapable of doing.

The mixed experience of Pakistan's counterterrorism cooperation with the United States since 9/11 provides one illustration of the point. Some of the greatest American successes in the fight against al-Qaeda, like the arrest of 9/11 organizer Ramzi bin al-Shibh in 2002, came through cooperation with Pakistani authorities.<sup>3</sup> On other occasions, like the raid on Osama bin Laden's compound in May 2011, Washington chose to act unilaterally, fearing that its plans might be compromised if Pakistani officials were informed. In even more troubling circumstances, the United States and Pakistan have worked at cross-purposes. U.S. officials are, for instance, fully convinced that Pakistan employs some terrorist groups as proxy fighters in Afghanistan and India. These groups have American blood on their hands.

Nor is terrorism the only security challenge that the United States has in Pakistan. Prior to 9/11, and again increasingly as al-Qaeda's ranks have been decimated in the years after 2007, many U.S. officials view securing Pakistan's nuclear program as their top concern. Pakistan is expanding its nuclear arsenal and investing in new ways to launch warheads against neighboring India, including tactical (very short range) missiles. Aside from their implications for regional stability, these developments make the program more complicated and more difficult to secure. They also raise the potential costs of internal disorder or a hostile revolutionary turn.

Other American policymakers, focused intently on the endgame of the Afghan war, see Pakistan's role as critical to determining whether Afghanistan emerges as a weak but stable state or reverts to bloody civil war fueled by the enmities of neighboring powers.<sup>4</sup> Of course, Pakistan's regional significance does not end in Afghanistan. Looking ahead to the future – a difficult and speculative business to be sure – Pakistan's most important role is likely to be the one it plays in the geopolitics of Asia, spanning from the energy-rich Persian Gulf and Central Asian states to the thriving economies of the Far East, especially that of China.

Faced with multiple concerns, there is a natural temptation to reduce the challenge of Pakistan to a single issue, to seek a bottom line about what matters to the United States most of all. This impulse to prioritize is admirable and necessary in the context of any single policy decision. But addressing only one of the challenges America faces in Pakistan would not be sufficient, and a

<sup>3</sup> David Rhode, "Karachi Raid Provides Hint of Qaeda's Rise in Pakistan," *New York Times*, September 15, 2002, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/15/world/threats-responses-karachi-karachi-raid-provides-hint-qaeda-s-rise-pakistan.html?ref=ramzibinalshibh>.

<sup>4</sup> For a comprehensive study of Afghanistan's regional context, see Ashley J. Tellis and Aroop Mukharji, eds., "Is a Regional Strategy Viable in Afghanistan?" Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/regional\\_approach.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/regional_approach.pdf).

single-track strategy will almost certainly allow other important issues to slip through the cracks.

Worse, policies that serve one set of ends may be counterproductive in other areas. Washington has committed this mistake over and over since the outset of the U.S.-Pakistan relationship. It has swung, pendulum-like, between different bottom line goals in Pakistan. At times this meant focusing only on Pakistan's role in the Cold War fight against Soviet influence. At other points Washington was obsessed with Pakistan's nuclear weapons program. Since 9/11, it has focused mainly on Pakistan's cooperation in fighting international terrorists.

To add another layer to this challenge, it is clear that the United States cannot achieve its ends in Pakistan through a strategy of pure cooperation or pure coercion. In some instances the United States will find it exceedingly costly to address its vital security concerns unless it can find a way to work with Pakistan as a partner. Securing Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, for instance, is a project that is best undertaken by Pakistanis themselves, with the United States playing only a supportive role. All things equal, building a close, cooperative relationship with Pakistan's military and nuclear establishment would seem to be the best way for the United States to gain confidence in the security of Pakistan's arsenal.

In other cases, however, achieving U.S. goals in Pakistan may require coercion or confrontation. For example, the experience of the past decade suggests that Pakistan is unlikely to end its support for violent extremist groups unless Washington forces Islamabad's hand. As the more powerful party in the relationship, the United States can put the screws to Pakistan in various ways, but America's power is not always easily turned into useful coercive leverage. If, for instance, Washington were to pressure Pakistan's military and intelligence services, it would be targeting some of the same individuals and institutions responsible for securing the nation's nuclear arsenal.

The effort to balance U.S. goals and avoid contradictory policy prescriptions is further complicated by the regional dimension. Washington cannot afford to deal with Islamabad in a vacuum; it must consider the implications of its policies with respect to other countries, especially India and Afghanistan. These are not always simple calculations. For instance, the more frustrated Washington gets with Pakistan, the more inclined U.S. leaders are to favor a relationship with India, the more stable, democratic partner in South Asia. Of course, an increasingly prosperous India offers ample attraction for the United States in its own right, but there is no escaping the fact that the more Washington tilts toward New Delhi, the more insecurity that inspires in Islamabad.

At times, such insecurity can pay dividends. Immediately after 9/11, Pakistani fears led its leaders to cooperate and compromise with the United States. Throughout 2012, Pakistan energized its diplomatic outreach to India as a means to avoid simultaneous tension with Washington and New Delhi. On many other occasions, however, insecurity has led Pakistan to take

counterproductive steps: to build more nuclear weapons, lend support to anti-Indian terrorist groups, or seek a closer relationship with China.

The United States has a full and complicated agenda in Pakistan, fraught with difficult trade-offs. That said, it is possible to disentangle U.S. interests into three primary areas of concern. Each deserves particular attention even as it must be balanced against the others.

First, al-Qaeda remnants, their affiliates, sympathizers, and possible successor organizations based on Pakistani soil pose an *immediate* threat to American security. The threat is an urgent one because innocent American lives are at stake. Successful U.S. military and intelligence operations have diminished, not eliminated, the terrorist threat. It could be reconstituted if Washington takes its eye off the ball.

Second, if Pakistan's nuclear weapons, materials, or know-how end up in hostile or irresponsible hands, they would pose a *vital* threat to the United States. Fortunately, Pakistan's nuclear arsenal does not now pose an existential threat of the sort the United States faced during the Cold War when thousands of nuclear-tipped missiles pointed at America from the Soviet Union. Even so, the possibility that Pakistan's warheads might be smuggled onto U.S. shores or transferred to other states or terrorist groups makes this issue one of Washington's highest security concerns.

Third, Pakistan's size, location, and potential for instability and violence represent an *emergent* geopolitical challenge within the context of Asia's growing importance on the global stage. America's broader economic, political, and strategic interests in Pakistan's neighborhood are less urgent than terrorism and less vital than nuclear weapons. Yet the United States must still think very seriously about them, especially when it comes to navigating relationships with rising Asian powers like China and India.

All of these U.S. interests are tied up in the fate of Pakistan itself. Pakistan is already a failing state in many ways, but it is not yet a failed one. As explained in Chapter 2, although it is not inevitable or likely in the immediate near term, Pakistan could fail in ways that are far worse than at present. Pakistan's under-performing national institutions could crumble further, its military could fracture, its ethnic and sectarian cleavages could take the country past the point of militancy and into outright civil war.

For the United States, these are scenarios to be feared, for however dangerous Pakistan is today, its collapse or breakup would be disastrous. The human costs, from violence, refugee flows, and internal dislocation would hurt Pakistanis and their neighbors. But the United States would also have strategic concerns. Neither Pakistan's resident extremists nor its nuclear arsenal would go quietly into the night. It is hard even to imagine the sort of stabilizing military force required to intervene in a broken Pakistan. In short, for Washington it is better to deal with a single Pakistan than multiple, warring states or, more likely, a morass of feuding fiefdoms.

Pakistanis will decide how to deal with internal threats, how to manage their nuclear program, and how to grapple with regional friends and adversaries. What they decide will have something to do with the character of Pakistan's relationship with the United States, which means that Washington can exert an important influence.

It would be hubristic, however, to argue that Americans can determine the destiny of nearly 200 million Pakistanis. As with many large, complicated societies, Pakistan's future – from the fate of its masses to the character of its leaders – will first depend on internal developments. Washington may be able to shield itself from many of the potential ill effects of these developments, but a healthy Pakistani society and a stable Pakistani state offers the only prospect for achieving all of America's objectives in an enduring way.

#### THE IMMEDIATE THREAT: TERRORISM

The 9/11 attacks exposed America's vulnerability to the threat posed by a handful of highly motivated terrorists. Armed only with plane tickets, box cutters, and some flight training, the attackers killed thousands of innocents, destroyed billions of dollars of property, and sent a nation of 300 million people into crisis.

Although the United States launched a war in Afghanistan to bring al-Qaeda to justice, many of the terrorist group's top leaders have been found in Pakistan. U.S. drones circling over Pakistan's tribal areas have killed dozens of al-Qaeda operatives. The mastermind of 9/11, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, was born to Pakistani parents and captured in Rawalpindi in 2003, near Pakistan's capital. Eight years later, and just seventy miles to the north, U.S. Navy SEALs raided Osama bin Laden's compound in the Pakistani town of Abbottabad. No one can doubt that al-Qaeda's roots in Pakistan run chillingly deep.

A central question for U.S. policymakers since 2001 has been how the United States should best defend itself against international terrorism in the future. Heightened American defenses – from closer scrutiny of all the people and goods that come into the United States to greater coordination and vigilance by domestic law enforcement agencies – is a start. Yet shortly after 9/11, the Bush administration also went on the offensive against al-Qaeda. Washington launched the war in Afghanistan and extensive manhunts across the globe. Over time, the United States also relied more heavily on new technologies, such as unmanned drones, to target and kill suspected terrorists in remote locations inside Pakistan, Yemen, and elsewhere. In each of these instances, the goal was to disrupt the safe havens that had permitted al-Qaeda and similar groups to plan and implement their operations.

The Bush administration also called for an even more ambitious American undertaking: the transformation of societies within the Muslim world that had given birth to the violent ideas espoused by al-Qaeda. This push to promote