**The die is cast**

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Before coming to Islamabad, US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, while speaking in Mumbai had made it very clear that the United States was not interested in a broad-based relationship with Pakistan, beyond Afghanistan. She said, “My visit to Pakistan is for a very specific narrow purpose. It is in the context of Afghanistan to make sure that Pakistan has the capabilities to ensure everybody’s security including India and US. The United States does not see itself building a broad relationship with Pakistan and we have no interest in returning to days of hyphenating India and Pakistan. That is not where we are. That is not where we’re going to be”.

There could not have been more clarity with regards to how the US perceives future relations with Pakistan. The emphasis on her visit being specifically regarding Afghanistan and the reiteration that the US was not interested in building broad-based ties, amply reflected that it only wanted transactional links with Pakistan. The part of her statement that the visit was to make sure Pakistan has the capabilities to ensure everybody’s security including India and the US, is very significant. It implies that the US held the belief that Pakistan was responsible for the threat to the security of India and the US, and it was now her responsibility to remove that threat.

[Shaukat Tarin's tenure as finance minister ends today](https://nation.com.pk/16-Oct-2021/shaukat-tarin-s-tenure-as-finance-minister-ends-today)

The mention of India with regards to the security threat points to an acceptance of the alleged Indian narrative of cross-border terrorism by the US, which it has been supporting ever since forging a strategic alliance with the former. The reality is that India itself is a threat to regional security because of what it is doing in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJ&K) and the US is also itself responsible for her failure in Afghanistan by pulling out from that country prematurely. While blaming Pakistan vis-à-vis India, the US conveniently forgets the state terrorism by the former in IIOJ&K, terror acts in Pakistan and the support it has been extending to the Baloch insurgents on which a dossier with irrefutable evidence has been shared with New Delhi, the UN and other leading countries of the world. These realities are the casualty of global politics. The US and her allies see things through the prism of their own strategic and commercial interests rather than humanitarian considerations, international law and the principles enshrined in the UN charter.

[PTI govt drops petrol bomb on masses](https://nation.com.pk/16-Oct-2021/pti-govt-drops-petrol-bomb-on-masses)

Pakistan still seems committed to forging a broad-based, long-term and sustainable relationship with it, anchored in economic cooperation, regional connectivity, and peace in the region. That is the impression one gathers from the deliberations that took place between Wendy Sherman and Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi at the delegation talks. Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood stressed that there was a fundamental convergence between Pakistan and the United States on the need for a peaceful settlement expressing the hope that the new setup in Afghanistan would make concerted efforts for peace and stability as well as work towards the betterment of the lives of all Afghan people. He also reiterated that an inclusive and broad-based political structure reflecting the ethnic diversity of Afghan society was essential for Afghanistan’s stability and progress, adding that the current situation required positive engagement of the international community, urgent provision of humanitarian assistance, release of Afghan financial resources, and measures to help build a sustainable economy to alleviate the sufferings of the Afghan people. His assessment with regards to the way forward in Afghanistan is beyond reproach.

[Pakistan strongly condemns terrorist attack on Kandahar mosque](https://nation.com.pk/16-Oct-2021/pakistan-strongly-condemns-terrorist-attack-on-kandahar-mosque)

Reportedly Sherman also emphasised the importance of the long-standing relationship between Pakistan and the US and agreed to continue close communication and coordination on the situation in Afghanistan, security and counter-terrorism, trade and investment, climate change, economic cooperation, and regional connectivity. That sounds hypocritical as well as playing to the gallery, when seen in the backdrop of what she said in India.

Theoretically speaking, the nature of the future relationship with the US as perceived by Pakistan is a right course to traverse. But as they say, it takes two to tango. In this case the die has already been cast. No matter what Pakistan does, things are not going to change for her. The US would always be looking to coerce Pakistan or use her for the achievement of her strategic goals in this region, particularly the elimination of the terrorist threat emanating from Afghanistan. In my discourse on relations between the two countries, I have always maintained that the US was an unfriendly ally. Pakistan has not gained anything from being an ally of the US in the past and it would not be different in the future as well. It sacrificed more than eighty thousand lives and its economy sustained a loss of $150 billion in the war against terrorism as a frontline state. It played a pivotal role in the conclusion of a peace deal between the US and the Taliban and getting started the intra-Afghan dialogue which unfortunately remained inconclusive. But the US has blamed Pakistan for alleged duplicitous behaviour all along. After the exit of the US and NATO forces and the sudden collapse of the Afghan regime, which paved the way for Taliban regaining control of the country, Pakistan is being made a scapegoat for US failures in Afghanistan.

[149 novel coronavirus infections, six death recorded in KP](https://nation.com.pk/16-Oct-2021/149-novel-coronavirus-infections-six-death-recorded-in-kp)

Nevertheless, in spite of the situation, Pakistan rightly believes that, notwithstanding the withdrawal of the US and NATO forces from Afghanistan, the US remains relevant to ensure Afghanistan does not relapse into a situation that prevailed there in the aftermath of the Soviet withdrawal and US abandonment, which could conveniently lead to the resurgence of terrorist entities, particularly Daesh. In this regard, the statement by Prime Minister Imran Khan, that the Taliban were the only option against them has great merit. If the US and its allies really want an end to terrorism they need to support the Taliban regime in fulfilling their promises and dealing with the looming humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. They will have to be partners in this effort even if the US is not interested in broad-based long term relations with Pakistan.

In view of the stated stance of the US, Pakistan needs to review her relations with Washington, beyond Afghanistan. Pakistan’s security, strategic interests and economic progress are inextricably linked to our own region. While avoiding any confrontation with the US, which it cannot afford for a variety of reasons, Pakistan must give greater priority to her ties with neighbouring countries. CPEC provides a unique opportunity in this regard. Therefore, no effort should be spared to make it a success.