

By Professor Shaun Gregory

We should not fool ourselves that there are any simple levers that can be pulled to make Pakistan play a more constructive role in tackling the Taliban and other militants and terrorists on its side of the border, without which the situation in Afghanistan cannot be stabilised. However there are some clear areas which ought to be the focus of detailed policy attention in co-operation with the United States and - where relevant - our other partners and potential partners in the region:

(1) We must shift the focus of our energies from the military in Pakistan to the civilian leadership and expand our partners in Pakistan to include all those who can take Pakistan forward: business, civil society, political parties, NGOs etc. This must include some Islamist parties who eschew violence;

(2) We should shift the focus from military aid to Pakistan to civilian aid and to development and economic, social and political progress;

(3) We should ensure that any and all military aid to Pakistan [which must continue, albeit at a lower level] is accountable and subject to conditionality;

(4) We should reduce our dependence on Pakistan [in terms of logistics, intel, overflights and so forth] in order to enhance our leverage over the Pakistan Army/ISI;

(5) We should explore containment strategies for the FATA which end the airstrikes, retask the Pakistan military, apply downward pressure on arms trafficking and movement in and out of the FATA, apply downward pressure on the extremist message [disseminated through mosques, radio and madrassas], and seek least-worst accommodations with tribal groups;

(6) We need to understand that Pakistan has legitimate interests and concerns in Afghanistan and in the region more broadly and that these concerns need to be listened to and addressed, otherwise the paranoia of the Pakistan Army/ISI will continue to be fed;

(7) Finally we need a regional process - with Pakistan and Afghanistan jointly at the centre - to provide a political framework for progress. The combination of Obama, Clinton, Holbrooke and Petraeus, probably gives us our best shot at such a process for a generation.

This is the contents of an email sent at their request to the UK Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee about the Afghanistan-Pakistan situation