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Pakistan: Getting the Facts Straight

The IAEA Chief Mohammed El Baradei recently said, 'I fear that chaos—or an extremist regime could take root in that country (Pakistan) which has 30-40 warheads.' There has been no comment on his estimation of the number of warheads. None is needed because no one knows and both possibilities suit Pakistan. There has been much comment on his extremist scenario—a subject on which he has very little expertise. His view carries little weight except for a small segment of US and Indian thinkers. The dismissal of his opinion by a foreign office spokesman was more than enough.

The US Presidential candidates are trying to outdo each other with macho statements on Pakistan. This suits the US administration because it takes away the focus from Iraq and Afghanistan where Americans are dying. The US overt involvement in Pakistan's affairs enables our leaders to give defiant statements that tie in with anti American public opinion. The 'balkanization', 'extremist takeover' and 'loose nukes' scenarios have the same effect. You could add Lieberman's remarks and Harry Reid's letter asking for conditionality on aid to Pakistan to this list. So if this entire parody satisfies everyone then why complain? After all allies are meant to help each other. Even Indian writers chip in thinking that the US-Pakistan relationship is going down the tube.

So if none of this is important then what is? The fact that the US, NATO Afghanistan and Pakistan have a convergence of interests in Southern Afghanistan and Pakistan's western areas, and that they are cooperating. Without this cooperation nothing can ever be achieved and failure can be disastrous for the world. The fact that the US administration is fully satisfied with Pakistan's custodial controls over its strategic assets and the stability and capability of Pakistan's armed forces. The fact that the US supports the democratic and internal stabilization process in Pakistan regardless of how messy and convoluted it may be. And finally the fact that Pakistan is a pivotal strategic state. It has the support of the entire Islamic world and considerable influence within it.

If all of this were not true then the US would not be enhancing aid, support and investment in Pakistan---the country and its people.

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