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SADF COMMENT

Pakistan – Friend or Foe?

The controversial German constitutional lawyer and political theorist Carl Schmitt (1888-1985) in his well-known work [‘The Concept of the Political’](#) promotes a clear distinction between “the friend” and the “foe”. This radical premise of a ‘friend-foe relationship is supposed to be the basis of all ‘political’ and should be applicable to all political actors. In other words, “whoever is not for us, is against us”. However, such clear-cut distinctions and dichotomies are rather subjects of theoretical considerations more than concrete guidelines and/or directives for political decisions and such ideal types of (international) relations are hardly to find in reality. Despite increasing cooperation and integration worldwide, there are no doubts that the friend-foe dichotomy determined always a significant constituent in political mind-sets worldwide. Intentionally or not, there are always situations which are unfortunately requiring to consider an assessment ‘who is a real friend?’ and ‘who is most-likely a foe?’.

The recent two-day visit of Pakistan’s top General Raheel Sharif to Berlin marks such an occasion, for Germany as well as for Europe. Regarding [official statements](#) and media reports, the Chief-of-Army-Staff (COAS) [Sharif aim was](#) to foster bilateral military-to-military contacts, enhanced defence and security cooperation, discuss training exchanges as well as to

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interact in general with high ranking German political leaders, like Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen. Pakistan's COAS travelled also to Czech Republic on a day-long visit with a quite [similar official agenda](#).

The rationale behind the visit of COAS is clear, emphasizing its own sacrifices during and contribution to its fight against terror combined with the appeal to the international community that "[terrorism has morphed into a global phenomenon and warrants global response. In order to effectively win, synergy by all required.](#)" In other words, to be able to continue the officially claimed tremendous success of Pakistan armed forces against terrorism, foremost the achievements of the military operation Zarb-e-Azb, "[will require greater understanding and support of International community](#)". Behind this diplomatic gimmick, it is clear what General Sharif wants: unconditional (financial) aid -without political strings attached-, and a card blanche. Latter one should be understood as a continuation of Germany's (and Europe's) ignorance of human, political and civil rights violations by Pakistan's state authorities (especially in Balochistan province), and the on-going undermining of the civilian government and the country's political institutional structure by the soldiers. In this context, one should mention that under the cover of an-terror legislation, the military was able to build-up its strongest formal, institutionalized role in the country's political system ever. Furthermore, to ensure a safe environment for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CEPC) - a mega-development project able to change significantly major economic, social and political trajectories - the army was able to set up a complete new institutional structure (so called APEC committees, a military-civilian hybrid), side-lining the country's executive and legislative bodies in crucial decision-making processes.

Nevertheless, besides the current peak of truncations of civilian rule, democracy, and human rights situation by the country's security forces including intelligence, it seems that General Sharif's mission in Europe was quite successful, at least when it comes to the so called 'understanding of Pakistan's situation'. [Germans](#) as well as [Czechs](#) officials

acknowledged Pakistan's contribution in fighting terrorism and expressed its keen interests in further cooperation.

This obvious paradox is not a new phenomenon and fits in the general appeasement policy of the international community towards Pakistani elites in order to convince them to be part of the 'global war against terror'. Against this backdrop, opening and maintaining a dialogue with a difficult and even reluctant partner is basically a constructive approach. But this should be not at all costs, especially not by ignoring the all too evident realities on the ground. Having said this, one must recognize that Pakistan is rather a part of the problem of international (especially cross-border) terrorism than a credible partner in finding a solution for the challenge of international Jihadism.

During the last two decades, Pakistan has come to be perceived as the world's epicentre of Jihadist activities. By analysing the cause and consequences of the latter phenomenon, numerous observers (like Carlotta Gall, Peter Tomson, Alexander Chris¹) are stating that there are indications that the country is a state-sponsor of terrorism.

As such, there is a clear discrepancy between claim and ambition after assessing Pakistan's counterterrorism activities. It can be stressed out here that Pakistan acts only against militant groups which developed an anti-Pakistan agenda. Terrorist organizations operating abroad, especially in Afghanistan and/or India, are not clear identified targets of the country's anti-terrorism campaigns.

Ayesha Jalal, states that there is the international opinion, "while not all Pakistanis are terrorists, most acts of terrorism in the contemporary world carry the Pakistani paw print".

¹ Gall, Carlotta (2014). *The Wrong Enemy: America in Afghanistan, 2001-2014*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; Tomson, Peter (2013). *The Wars of Afghanistan: Messianic Terrorism, Tribal Conflicts, and the Failures of Great Powers*. New York: PublicAffairs; Tomson, Peter (2011). *Pakistan: With Friends Like These...* World Policy Institute; <http://www.worldpolicy.org/journal/fall2011/pakistan>. Accessed 13 June 2016; Alexander, Chris (2011). *The Long Way Back: Afghanistan's Quest for Peace*. New York: HarperCollins. Further references used in this article are: Byman, Daniel (2005). *Deadly Connections: States that sponsor Terrorism*. Cambridge UP: Cambridge; Jalal, Ayesha. (2011). *The Past as present*. In Maleeha Lodhi (Ed.). *Pakistan: Beyond the 'Crisis' State*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Tim Craig states that there are too many instances giving the impression that virtually every terrorist incident after the attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Center site in New York has had some connection with Pakistan. Either the terrorists are Pakistani or of Pakistani origin or have supporters and contacts in the South Asian country. It does not come by surprise, that among the targets of US drone strikes in Pakistan are Arabs, Uzbeks, Uighurs, Chechens, and many other ethnic groups and nationalities from outside the Af-Pak region.

Besides Iran, regarding Daniel Byman, Pakistan is one of the most active sponsor of state terrorism world-wide. Craig is convinced that the country is not only flirting with militant Jihad but using terrorism as an instrument of state policy since decades, which is getting confirmed not only by international experts but even Pakistani elites themselves. For example, [former President Asif Zardari made it public](#) that the country deliberately created and nurtured terrorist groups, such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) as a policy to achieve short-term tactical objectives.

In consequence, only due to heavy pressure of the US administration, Pakistan turned against international (cross-border) terror groups (like al-Qaeda, Taliban including Haqqani Network, and affiliates), on its own soil. But these activities were rather supposed to calm Washington but not to crush seriously the international terror organizations. The strategy of Pakistan “has been to make a show of cooperation with the US-led fight against terrorism while covertly abetting and even coordinating Taliban, Haqqani Network, and other militants (by providing shelter, training, finances, logistic, equipment, and information). In other words, Pakistan misused international support and goodwill by turning covertly and/or indirectly via proxies against the Afghan government. Furthermore, these proxies were especially combatting the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which include many thousands of European soldiers too. Having this in mind, one can't help feeling but one might recall once again the ‘Schmittian dichotomy’ of who might be a ‘friend’ or a ‘foe’.