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Pakistan Should Ditch Washington

To the despair of State Department professionals (who are very professional indeed), the art and craft of US diplomacy have taken a very nasty knock since the appearance of Donald Trump on the world stage. To be sure, the practice of sending rich political donors to prime ambassadorial posts such as Berlin, Tokyo and London has been the norm for decades, but some of Trump's appointees have stretched the bubble of amateurism a little too far. The man in Germany, for example, was only in the job for a day, in May this year, before he gave orders that "German companies doing business in Iran should wind down operations immediately," which début debacle was met with derision by the German people.

The pompous ass in London, billionaire Woody Johnson, was interviewed by Sky News in June 2018 and cast an intriguing light on his expertise concerning his host country. When he was asked the nature of his relationship with Sadiq Khan he replied "with whom?" The interviewer then told him that Sadiq Khan is the Mayor of London, whereupon Woody announced that "My relationship is very good."

Then President Trump informed London's *Sun* newspaper that "You have a mayor who has done a terrible job in London. He has done a terrible job."

There's not much joined-up diplomacy in the Trump Administration, but although these examples are mildly amusing and show the people involved to be the fools they are, there is a most serious side to the international diplomatic devastation created by Trump, the man so well described by dismissed White House aide Omarosa Manigault Newman as "tawdry, cruel, vindictive."

The disconnect was highlighted on August 13, the day before Pakistan's Independence Day, when US Secretary of State Pompeo messaged "On behalf of the Government of the United States of America, I would like to extend my best wishes to the people of Pakistan as they celebrate their independence day. For more than seven decades, the relationship between the United States and Pakistan has rested on the strong foundation of close ties between our two peoples. In the years ahead, we hope to further strengthen these bonds, as we continue to look for opportunities to work with the people and Government of Pakistan to advance our shared goals of security, stability, and prosperity in South Asia."

This supposedly friendly greeting was sent to a country about which Trump had [tweeted](#) that "The United States has foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years, and they have given us nothing but lies & deceit, thinking of our leaders as fools. They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!"

"Strengthen bonds", anyone? Washington must be unhinged (to employ the title of the [Omarosa book](#)) to imagine that a few clichés about "shared goals" might in some way cancel out Trump's malevolent insults.

Not only this, but Washington has made one of the gravest diplomatic errors of its many with Pakistan by [suspending](#) the US International Military Education and Training (IMET) programme. This doesn't sound much, but it is probably the most serious setback in Pakistan-US relations thus far in the Trump regime's fandangos of international incompetence.

The most important part of IMET was the annual training in the US of some 60-70 Pakistan armed forces' officers, including at the US Army War College (one of the most professional — that word again — military academies in the world). It cannot be emphasised too much that this sort of hosting pays enormous dividends. Not only is participation in specialised discussion and mixing with people of different views most beneficial to students and hosts, but personal contacts build trust and expand horizons. It cannot be valued in money. You simply can't put a price on it, which I found an enormous and indeed insuperable hurdle when I was trying to convince pointy-headed Australian bureaucrats that hosting foreign students and sending our people abroad would pay dividends in the future.

Not for nothing is the motto of the US War College "Prudens Futuri", which is usually [translated](#) as "Be provident for the future." But at the moment, Washington's

thinking about the future appears to be limited to the mid-term elections and (appalling thought) the re-election of Trump in 2020.

Meantime, Pakistan suffers from US bullying and intimidation, with the “bond-strengthening” Pompeo making threats about what might happen as a result of a loan to Pakistan by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). He [issued a warning](#) that an IMF credit would be conditional on a promise that none of the money is used to repay Chinese debt, which is a weird way of trying to “advance our shared goals of security, stability, and prosperity.”

Pompeo [told CNBC](#) that “Make no mistake. We will be watching what the IMF does. There’s no rationale for IMF tax dollars, and associated with that American dollars that are part of the IMF funding, for those to go to bail out Chinese bondholders or China itself.”

But the arrogant assumption that Washington can dictate everything to the world doesn’t intimidate China, Russia or Pakistan. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project linking China’s western provinces through Pakistan to the Arabian Sea is worth \$62 billion, and other economic and defence links with China are commercially, politically and socially of much more importance to Pakistan than its tenuous and increasingly fragmenting connections with the United States. There are some who scoff at CPEC, like Husain Haqqani, a former Pakistani ambassador to Washington and CIA asset, who, [according to the Washington Post](#), “quipped that the Chinese-Pakistan Economic Corridor . . . actually should be called “Colonizing Pakistan to Enrich China.”

Washington’s growing arrogance doesn’t intimidate Russia, either, and in the light of increasing confrontation by the US-NATO military alliance it is apparent that a new era in Moscow-Islamabad cooperation has dawned. For a start, [as reported by Voice of America](#) on August 8, “Pakistan has wrapped up a ground-breaking contract with Russia that would, for the first time, open doors for Russian military training of Pakistani army officers. The rare deal comes amid deteriorating relations between Islamabad and the United States, which has resulted in the halt of all military exchange programs with Pakistan and left a void that Moscow has stepped in to fill.” Washington will rue the day it closed the doors of professional colleges to Pakistan’s military officers.

Not only that, but Russia has provided Mi-35M combat helicopters to Pakistan, and the two countries’ armies have held two counter-terrorism military exercises, while their navies “recently participated in joint antidrug exercises in the Arabian Sea. The latest naval collaboration took place last week in St Petersburg, where a Pakistani warship

participated in the major Russian Navy Day parade.” Their cooperation will develop and expand, to their mutual benefit.

Pakistan is wise to engage with China and Russia, and should ditch the Washington Empire.

Prudens futuri.