



Pakistan-US Relations – A Challenge for Antony Blinken

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“Pakistan-US Relations – A Challenge for Antony Blinken” was researched, compiled and written by **Imran Siddiqui**, contributor to CommandEleven.

About CommandEleven

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The incoming Secretary of State, Antony (aka Tony) Blinken is a seasoned diplomat and very close to the national security establishment of the US. He is a close confidant of the President-elect and he is also close to former Presidents Obama and Clinton. An alumnus of Harvard and Columbia, Tony Blinken has tried his hand in politics, journalism, law and film production before settling in government. His late grand-father, Maurice Blinken, founded the American Palestine Institute and played a key role in persuading the US govt to support the establishment of Israel. His father and uncle have served as US diplomats in Europe and have considerable influence in the US politics. The family is considered close to the World Jewish Congress.

Blinken started his political career in 1994 as a staff on the National Security Council. His recent appointments include National Security Advisor to then Vice President Biden (2009-2013), Deputy National Security Adviser to the President (2013-15) and then Deputy Secretary of State (2015-17). He chaired the Deputies Committee that discussed and formalized strategies for Secretaries and members of the Cabinet.

This means that Tony Blinken had an important role to play in **2009 Afghan Troop Surge**, **2011 Libyan Intervention**, the **2014 US military forces to Iraq and to Syria and the nuclear deal with Iran**.

Tony Blinken has also ventured into private sector and co-founded [WestExec Advisors](#) with former [Obama officials](#) that include Nitin Chadda. In addition, Blinken is a former partner in [Pine Island Capital Partners](#). Pine Island and remains a strategic partner of WestExec.

Tony Blinken is well connected and some even say that he may be the next head of the CIA or even a Presidential candidate. He seems to favor muscle backed diplomacy an example is recent bombing of Syria, at the same time he supports sanctions on companies instead of countries to ensure that doors are not closed. Words like empathy, dignity, humility, cooperation, collaboration are part of his vocabulary and he is a good speaker. He is a centre-left in political standings and with a good sense of humor.

He has the courage to accept his failures as he admitted his failure in Syria and openly said that he often thinks about the people that have died in Syria. Here is one of his best [interviews](#) that gives a glimpse of how he will manage the role.

Pakistan must remove all emotions and understand that the new Secretary of State is pro-Israel and pro-India but he is fair; Praveen Swami tried his best to get Tony Blinken say something negative about Pakistan, but he managed it well and remained [unbiased](#).

Here are some issues that both sides will discuss:

What do you want?

Both sides need to clearly outline their goals from a Pakistan – US relationship?

The answer for Pakistan should be simple, improvement in bi-lateral trade and economy. Why? because the govt of the United States is in no position to deliver anything else to

Pakistan. They can't broker peace between Pakistan and India and they need Pakistan's help with Afghanistan.

To have a mutually beneficial and consistent co-operation, sincerity from both sides is a must. In addition, the US need to stop looking at Pakistan from the lens of Afghanistan because Pakistan has far more to offer. A large consumer market with a high youth population, Pakistan can be a new market for the US products.

Previous regimes in Pakistan have been fully marred by corruption and their focus was on self-growth, however, with the new government in Pakistan, the US investors and businesses can be confident that Pakistan is an opportunity for mutual growth.

Economy

'Trade and not aid' is now the motto of the govt of Pakistan. This should be the focus of all discussions, at all levels. Time is over for intangible promises and Pakistan must only pay attention to tangible items such as an increase in trade and payment of previously rejected invoices from WOT.

There is a commercial opportunity for the US companies as well. Many major US brands are doing well in Pakistan and many others can benefit. Pakistan needs construction items, telecom products and many other goods that are imported mostly from China. In addition, Pakistan can be a manufacturing hub for US firms that can manufacture and sell their products in Pakistan. Those goods can be exported to Central Asia as well.

To summarize, here are some growth opportunities for Pakistan and the US to focus upon:

- Trade
- Education
- Climate change
- Manufacturing
- Science and technology
- Digitalization of economy
- Training in vocational and technical fields
- Health care

Above all, a greater economic partnership will mean a greater leverage for the US govt. By not improving bi-lateral trade, the US can see the remaining leverage erode completely in the next few years.

Afghanistan

Pakistan is right in opposing any reversal of the deal because the consequences are going to be grave for all stakeholders including the United States.

Any negative consequences from reversals of the Afghan deal will give an opportunity to the Republicans to claim failure of the US Foreign policy under Biden. Most of the soldiers

are from the regions in the US that have supported Trump/ Republicans and a delay to their anticipated return from Afghanistan will create a political storm at home.

Pakistan can and should continue to play a facilitator's role in dialogue with the Taliban to ensure that Taliban are not in breach of a deal and are playing its role in return of peace to Afghanistan.

Tony Blinken holds sympathetic view of global refugee crisis; it could be because he was the chief architect of the Syria policy. The return of refugees to Afghanistan can be an initiative that he may be able to help with. A possible solution is settlement of refugees in IDP camps managed by the UN inside the Afghan border. On the issue of repatriation of refugees, an alignment will also be required in Pakistan as well.

As key stakeholders to peace in Afghanistan, China and Russia will support Pakistan in preventing any reversal of the deal. Pakistan must ask of the following from the Biden administration:

- No delay in return of US soldiers
- An end to anti-Pakistan (specifically against CPEC) activities in Afghanistan
- Settlement of returning Afghan refugees from Pakistan
- Payment of previously rejected invoices for WoT (approx. \$4-\$5 billion US)

Kashmir

Pakistan must comprehend that there will be no help from the US in resolution of the Kashmir issue. The Kashmir issue is used by the US as leverage. India may seem to give in to pressure from the US government (recent ceasefire on LOC is an example) but it can back out leaving Pakistan without any gains from the US or India. Pakistan must take this leverage away by not asking for help from the US.

The Indian government is reckless to the point of stupidity and will make new blunders on the issue of Kashmir. At that point, let the US offer help in deescalating a situation.

Iran

The US Sanctions will be relaxed gradually resulting in an increase in trade with world. There are billions of USD in frozen assets across the globe with \$20 billion in China alone. Expectations must be set with the US govt that Pakistan is going to be an exporter to Iran. The US sell weapons to India, Pakistan can also export locally made platforms to Iran. This will not tilt the balance of power in region allowing Iran to look at non-nuclear options.

Any improvement in Pakistan's economic outlook will also help in addressing US concerns about extremism in Pakistan because extremism in Pakistan is directly related to economic conditions of Pakistan.

Israel

Does it matter to the US if Pakistan recognize Israel as a country? YES, because it adds value to the sovereignty of Israel. PM Khan has said that US has pressurized Pakistan to accept Israel. Pakistan's stance has been that relations are not possible until Palestinians are given their right of a just settlement.

It will be a big win for Israel and the US if Pakistan accepts Israel. This could be a valuable leverage for Pakistan in many financial discussions across the globe. Pakistan is demanding return of money that has been looted by corrupt governments, Israelis can help Pakistan in recovering a significant amount among other things.

In conclusion, one would hope that both parties are able to find a new way forward. The keys to success are clarity of objectives with focus on economy and bi-lateral trade. It is time to move forward as partners and to gain trust that was lost a while ago.

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