

The midnight raid conducted by Navy SEALs lasted all of 40 minutes. The terrorist mastermind responsible for the deaths of nearly 3,000 Americans on September 11, 2001, was buried at sea just hours later. The American people were stirred by the late Sunday evening news and heartened by such a dramatic, overdue victory against those who would do us harm.

Osama bin Laden's death sparked much interest in the "hows" of our successful military operation, but we should also focus on the "where." Having searched for bin Laden for ten years, our military and intelligence agencies found him not in a cavernous hideout in the nontraversable Afghan mountains. Rather, he lived and schemed in an expansive compound in the middle of a modern city in northern Pakistan. A city not far from the nation's capital and home to top military and educational institutions. The United States has provided billions of dollars to Pakistan in recent years, yet the world's most wanted terrorist was found in its backyard. This begs further questions about America's exceedingly complex relationship with Pakistan.

Pakistan's challenges are immense. It is a former British colony, yet its civil institutions are weak. The military maintains a strong and prevalent presence throughout society. It is a country of "haves" and "have-nots," and most land and property is owned by a relatively small number of families. In the absence of strong structured governance, Islamic extremism is on the rise. Earlier this year, two Pakistani politicians were killed by terrorists after calling for changes to the country's blasphemy laws, which make insulting Islam a capital offense. One of these leaders was the highest ranking Christian government official.

As a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee and a congressional initiative called the House Democracy Partnership, I met last year with Pakistan's president, prime minister, and members of its parliament about reasserting democratic processes in the country. I also assessed security operations in the North West Frontier Province, near the Afghan border. This assessment included a meeting at the U.S. Consulate in Peshawar, which came under attack by militants just days later. The Pakistani military at the time seemed to show a willingness to contribute to regional stability and U.S.-led NATO efforts in Afghanistan. Pakistani officials continue to emphasize that their own significant casualties in a difficult and ongoing struggle against militant elements demonstrates their commitment to shared security goals.

Our relationship with Pakistan has waxed and waned, and endured significant tension related to the debut of its nuclear program and the A.Q. Khan network's nuclear proliferation activities. Many in Pakistan perceive our interest in their nation as cynical and transactional, and

misunderstandings abound. Yet the United States responded swiftly in providing emergency humanitarian assistance when Pakistan was engulfed by devastating floods, and continues to seek out opportunities to mitigate hostile influences while helping Pakistan to strengthen fledgling democratic institutions. But today there are new and important questions to consider regarding America's relationship with Pakistan. How much did the Pakistanis know about bin Laden? What now is Pakistan's role in coalition efforts to drive out terrorist elements in Afghanistan?

In response to the array of geopolitical concerns, I have called on the President to form an Afghanistan-Pakistan Study Group to further explore such questions and clarify America's goals and strategy in the region. This Group would be modeled after the Iraq Study Group, which was formed by Congress in 2006 and helped change the course of the Iraq War. The proposed Afghanistan-Pakistan Study Group would conduct a forward-looking, independent assessment of the current and prospective situation on the ground in Afghanistan and Pakistan, its impact on the surrounding region, and its consequences for the United States and global stability.

Much of the lingering concern surrounding the potential for violence and terrorism in Pakistan is rooted in that country's longstanding tensions with neighboring India. Fringe nationalistic elements in both societies continue to inflame relations between the two countries. Nearly three years ago terrorists from Pakistan carried out bombings in Mumbai, India, that killed more than 160 people, including Americans. Many consider these murderous acts India's "9-11." This tense relationship is magnified by the threat of nuclear exchange.

As we work for security in the region and seek to clarify America's relationship with Pakistan, many important and complex questions must be considered. For the U.S., recent events elevate the critical importance of answering them with careful analysis to ensure that our policies are well informed, and adequately reflect U.S. security needs as well as broader humanitarian aspirations.