

'Pakistan continues to patronise terror despite taking US aid'

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Washington: Pakistan pockets billions in US aid and takes in tonnes of military hardware even as it continues to patronise proxy groups, a top American expert on South Asia has said while emphasising on this "dysfunctional dynamic" in the bilateral relationship.

"Even as it pockets billions in US aid and takes in tons of military hardware, Pakistan patronises proxy groups that terrorise Americans, Afghans, and Indians," Michael Kugelman, senior associate for South and Southeast Asia at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars wrote in an op-ed in The Diplomat magazine.

Kugelman's remark comes as Pakistan Army chief General Raheel Sharif began his five-day visit here.

"What accounts for this dysfunctional dynamic? One reason is naivete: a belief that showering Pakistan with aid will, in time, compel it to act in ways that benefit US interests," he said.

As Husain Haqqani's book 'Magnificent Delusions' makes clear, US officials have long been content to keep the aid flowing while holding their noses and hoping for the best, Kugelman said.

"Such an approach is utterly wrong-headed; US aid does not buy Washington leverage over Pakistan. Additionally, US and Pakistani interests are diametrically divergent on the militancy issue," he wrote.

For America, the Haqqani network and Lashkar-e-Taiba are dangerous groups that must be reined in. For Pakistan, these groups are useful assets because they make "archenemy" India vulnerable, he argued.

"Another possible reason for Washington's continued courtship of a nation that works against American objectives and interests? Fear. The United States prefers to be on the good side of a volatile nuclear-armed nation than on its bad side," Kugelman said.

According to the expert, General Sharif's meetings will feature plenty of discussion about Afghanistan--and how Pakistan can help bring the Taliban back to the negotiating table.

There will presumably be talk of a potential--though highly unlikely--deal to scale back Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme. Sharif will likely make fresh pitches for new military assistance, he added.

"The United States will issue fresh calls for Pakistan to end its relationships with militants. And through it all, Gen Sharif will receive the full red carpet treatment--as he did on his last trip to Washington," Kugelman said.

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