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IN PART B6

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From: Kati Marton [redacted]
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From: ahmed rashid [redacted]
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To: Kati Marton [redacted]
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Richard Holbrooke, Pakistan's hero: He had a vision for our future

New York Daily News.

By Ahmed Rashid <<http://www.nydailynews.com/authors/Ahmed%20Rashid>> Wednesday, December 15th 2010, 4:00 AM

No American has tried as hard to ease the fears, apprehensions, doubts, conspiracy theories and ill-informed views of Pakistanis toward the U.S. <<http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/United+States>> as has Richard Holbrooke <<http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Richard+Holbrooke>>. His death is a tragedy for American diplomacy - but much more so for Pakistan <<http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Pakistan>>, because whether you liked him or disliked him, there is no denying that in the last two years, he constantly battled for Pakistan.

The image of Holbrooke wading through floodwater, distributing relief goods to this year's 20 million flood victims - not once but repeatedly at the ripe age of 69 - is an indelible one, that our own much younger leaders barely ever replicated. He pushed for U.S. helicopters to be deployed in Pakistan for the flood victims. He pushed for more aid money for Pakistan from a reluctant Congress.

He helped start a dialogue on a dozen different issues - which will be his lasting legacy - and he pushed Pakistan, especially its army, to change its ways. Under the proverbial cover of national interest, we Pakistanis never made life easier for him or for ourselves by confronting the new realities of terrorism, our lack of political leadership or our collapsing economy.

But Holbrooke soldiered on.

At times he may have been aggressive and pushy, loud and boisterous, too quintessentially American, too bluntly New York [<http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/New+York>](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/New+York) .

But ultimately none of that mattered, because he brought to the table for the first time - after the preferred ignorance of the Bush administration and its lackadaisical love affair with Gen. Pervez Musharraf [<http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Pervez+Musharraf>](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Pervez+Musharraf) - a strategic vision to the U.S.-Pakistan relationship.

What was this vision? That America would remain committed to Pakistan's progress over the long term, even after the Afghanistan [<http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Afghanistan>](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Afghanistan) war was over, and that it would help improve Pakistani relations with India [<http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/India>](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/India) .

This was crucial: Unlike many who came before him and will come after, Holbrooke thought Pakistan was important for its own sake, not just because America wanted to defeat the Taliban [<http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/The+Taliban>](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/The+Taliban) in Afghanistan or solidify trade relationships with India.

He recognized the deep feelings of mistrust and ambivalence that still exist in Pakistan toward the U. S. He knew better than anyone in the U.S. administration that diplomacy makes a difference when diplomats deal with the realities on the ground - and not a preconceived image of what should be.

We should remember that all this time, Holbrooke battled the odds back in Washington [<http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Washington%2c+DC>](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Washington%2c+DC) . The Obama administration [<http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Barack+Obama>](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Barack+Obama) was and is heavily divided between the Obama-controlled White House [<http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/The+White+House>](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/The+White+House) , the Hillary Clinton [<http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Hillary+Clinton>](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Hillary+Clinton) -controlled State Department [<http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/U.S.+Department+of+State>](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/U.S.+Department+of+State) - in which he was her key adviser on global issues - and the all-powerful Pentagon. Not to speak of a Congress that, even when Democratic-controlled, kept trying to put awkward strings on aid to Pakistan, which Holbrooke opposed.

Holbrooke was a pain in the rear end for many of these power centers. At times he was ignored by the White House or by the Pentagon [<http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/The+Pentagon>](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/The+Pentagon) . At other times he was castigated by Congress. But Holbrooke, a strong-willed man, stuck to his convictions.

Whoever comes after him will be far less likely to have that strength of character - call it pigheadedness, if you like - and that will be a great loss.

It is especially problematic as Pakistan's future continues to teeter. The military still gives sanctuary to the Taliban. Extremism is still spreading. The international community still raises fears about the safety of its nuclear weapons. As the end game in Afghanistan approaches, some in Pakistan are pressuring against a final settlement of hostilities there.

Some in America will be happy to have a thorn removed from their sides. But many Pakistanis will remember Richard Holbrooke fondly: He was tirelessly fighting for a more stable future for our country. We have lost a friend, and whoever replaces him will never quite measure up.

Rashid is author of "Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia
 [<http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Central+Asia>](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Central+Asia) ."

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