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Edited by Kristina Zetterlund

Pakistan – Consequences of Deteriorating Security in Afghanistan

Cover image: Border of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Picture taken in the spring of 2007 in Paktia Province, Afghanistan, looking into Pakistan. Photographer: Staff Sergeant Wells, United States Army.

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Sammanfattning

Pakistan har hamnat i världens fokus till följd av en rad politiska, ekonomiska och säkerhetsrelaterade händelser. Ökad insikt i att Pakistan spelar en kritisk roll för ett stabilare Afghanistan har också riktat strålkastarna mot landet. Med det växandet intresset finns också en ökad önskan att fördjupa kunskapen om regionen. Denna rapport sammanför en grupp av internationellt ledande Pakistanexperter som här analyserar utvecklingen i Pakistan. För att påvisa de regionala kopplingarna har skribenterna analyserat olika frågor med ett försämrat säkerhetsläge i Afghanistan som utgångspunkt. Rapportens målsättning är att granska utvecklingen i Pakistan från ett inrikes-, regionalt och internationellt perspektiv.

Nyckelord: Pakistan, Afghanistan, Indien, Kina, Iran, USA, NATO, terrorism, Al Qaeda, Taliban, Sydasien, kärnvapen.

Summary

Pakistan is at the centre of the world's attention in the wake of various political, economic and security-related events. The recognition that Pakistan has a key role in the stabilisation of neighbouring Afghanistan has also brought the country into the spotlight. With the intensified focus on the region, there is a growing desire to deepen the understanding of links between Pakistan and Afghanistan as well as related regional and international dynamics. This report brings together a group of internationally leading Pakistan-experts who look at various issues related to the country. In order to highlight the regional linkages the writers analyse different topics with a deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan as point of departure. The objective of the report is to look at developments in Pakistan from a domestic, regional and international perspective.

Keywords: Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, China, Iran, USA, NATO, terrorism, Al Qaeda, Taliban, South Asia, nuclear weapons.

The Asia Security Studies Programme

The Asia Security Studies programme at the Swedish Defence Research Agency's Department of Defence Analysis conducts research and policy relevant analysis on defence and security related issues. Its primary focus is on East and South Asia as well as the Persian Gulf region. The programme strikes a balance between working on issues directly affecting Swedish foreign and defence policy as well as research on topics with wider regional and global implications. The Asia Security Studies programme is mainly financed by the Swedish Ministry of Defence but research is also conducted for other ministries and agencies in Sweden and abroad.

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Introduction

Pakistan and Afghanistan in Focus

International attention has increasingly turned towards Pakistan and Afghanistan since 2001. Not only are there few signs of any substantial improvements in the security situation in Afghanistan despite an international troop presence but violence there is also more and more seen to be connected to developments across the border with Pakistan.

A series of recent incidents have once again thrown Pakistan into the international limelight. To name but a few – the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in December 2007, the general election which led to the defeat of President Pervez Musharraf, the devastating bomb attack on the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad, and in November 2008, the series of coordinated attacks in Mumbai which left more than 170 people killed and which were blamed on a Pakistan-based group. Pakistan's economic situation is also a source of concern. Weighed down by among other factors a worsening security situation and higher oil and food prices, the already limping economy of Pakistan suffered a hard blow when the world's economy hit the brakes. The International Monetary Fund in November 2008 approved a \$7.6 billion bailout package to Islamabad but Pakistan's central bank still projects inflation to be at 20 to 22 percent in the fiscal year 2008/09, predictions largely in line with the IMF forecast of 23 percent.¹

Consequently, the region has been identified as a key policy challenge for the surrounding world. US President Barack Obama has said that militants based in South Asia are the biggest threat to the United States and has made clear that he intends to increase efforts in Afghanistan, redeploying US troops from Iraq to fight "the right battlefield" in Afghanistan and Pakistan.² Along similar lines, UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown has stated that three out of four of the most serious terrorist plots monitored by MI5 have links to Pakistan.³

With the growing focus on the region, there is also growing interest in and desire to deepen the understanding of links between Pakistan and Afghanistan as well as related regional and international dynamics. Naturally, the region is of

¹ *Reuters*, 'Pakistan's GDP growth to be in range of 3.5-4.5 pct', 6 December 2008.

² *Reuters*, 'Obama says S.Asia is chief threat to U.S.', 1 December 2008 and Sam Graham-Felsen, 'Senator Obama Delivers Address on National Security', post from Obama HQ, 1 August 2007, www.barackobama.com.

³ James Kirkup, 'Terrorists in Pakistan planning over 20 attacks on Britain, says Gordon Brown', *Daily Telegraph*, 15 December 2008.

particular interest to countries contributing troops to the multinational military mission in Afghanistan, including Sweden.⁴

Objective & Method

Security developments in Pakistan cannot be disconnected from the region at large. Neither is it possible to consider the situation in Afghanistan without addressing the wider context beyond the country's national boundaries. In the field of academic research, however, we felt that there was a certain gap to fill in terms of bringing together work on Pakistan with various regional perspectives. In order to achieve a more comprehensive regional analysis, developments in Pakistan have been explored with a deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan in mind.

This report is part of a project by the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) on security policy developments in Pakistan which was carried out throughout 2008. The project was structured into different phases. The first part took place in April 2008 and comprised a smaller workshop with national experts who discussed future developments in Pakistan. The following month, FOI conducted a research trip to Pakistan, interviewing experts and analysts in Islamabad and Peshawar. A group of leading international experts were then asked to contribute to this study. The authors were invited to a conference in Stockholm held at FOI on 9-10 October, 2008, at which they were given the opportunity to present their papers and exchange experiences and ideas. This is the final product of the year's effort.

The project, which includes this report, was commissioned by the Swedish Ministry of Defence and is part of the ongoing programme on Asia Security Studies at the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI).

In addition to all the contributors to this report, I would like to thank John Rydqvist, head of FOI's project on Asian Security, for continuous support throughout the year. I would also like to express particular gratitude to Johan Tejpar whose help has been indispensable, especially in organising the conference which preceded this report.

⁴ At the time of writing, the Swedish force in Afghanistan comprised approx. 375 soldiers. See www.mil.se/en/Forces-abroad/Afghanistan.

Research Questions & Scenario

As one important objective was to expand perspectives and put the analysis of Pakistan into a wider regional context, several authors with different areas of expertise were approached. As a result, domestic, intra-regional as well as inter-regional issues relating to Pakistan are covered in this report.

In order to stress the relevance of Afghanistan to the current situation in Pakistan and encourage policy-relevant discussions on future challenges with a regional context, each writer was, in addition to the specific subject of their chapter, asked to consider possible consequences should the security situation in Afghanistan deteriorate even further. To achieve this, all writers were presented with a scenario which depicted what a deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan could entail. Rather than being a strict and formal scenario to be taken as a prerequisite, it was meant to provide the authors with a setting and background to deliberate on in their texts. As a result, the authors chose to use the scenario somewhat differently. Some reflected on issues related to the scenario within the length and width of their chapter while others chose to address the scenario more specifically.

In addition to relating their chapters in one way or another to the scenario, the authors were encouraged to offer suggestions of possible areas and measures which would improve the chances for a lasting positive outcome in Afghanistan and the region, also after foreign troops have left. It should be added that the scenario intentionally does not address the possible involvement of outside powers in Afghanistan as that was left for the individual writers to deliberate on in their separate chapters.

The scenario is not necessarily a description of the most likely development in Afghanistan. Instead, it is a future deliberately constructed to be pessimistic.

The scenario given to the writers to consider reads as follows:

Resistance against the presence of foreign security forces is intensifying. Given the escalating level of violence and the repeated number of incidents of coalition strikes which have caused civilian casualties, foreign troops are increasingly being viewed as occupying forces. The critique is voiced not only among the population but also exploited on the political level with the opposition trying to discredit the government while the government points the finger of blame at foreign troops.

Simultaneously, the Afghan government is growing more and more unpopular as security fails to improve. Instead, the government, more or less confined to Kabul, is accused of being merely a puppet of the United States. Afghanistan's

economy is on the brink of collapse, crippled by corruption and organised crime. The illicit opium economy, on the contrary, flourishes and continues to hamper stabilisation efforts. Discontent is reinforced by surging food prices and the gradual drying up of foreign assistance as aid agencies are pulling out because of safety concerns and as media focus turns elsewhere. Kidnappings have become a regular occurrence.

Instead, some Afghans are reminiscing about the “order” and “stability” under the rule of the Taliban. Tensions along regional and ethnic lines start to re-emerge and the general discontent leads to increased support for the insurgency. In addition to new recruits from the local population, opposition forces are strengthened by a wave of foreign jihadi fighters who see Afghanistan as their new central front in the war against the West. An increasing number of targeted attacks against the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the police together with corruption are, on the other hand, hampering efforts to rebuild the country’s security institutions.

The Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are more and more isolated from the Afghan society due to the worsened security situation and their limited military capabilities and mandates. Coalition soldiers rarely venture out of their compounds. Furthermore, lacking interoperability and coordination between the different PRTs hamper the coalition’s efforts.

Simultaneously, the passing of time, lack of progress and multiplying casualty figures are testing the resolve of troop contributing countries. Public opinion is questioning the reasons behind the military engagement and calls on politicians to turn their focus to domestic issues. Consequently, troop-contributing countries are pulling out of Afghanistan and the coalition is shrinking, in terms of contributing countries as well as boots on the ground.

Structure & Content

The report starts out with three chapters which deal with internal developments in Pakistan. The first chapter is written by **Mr. Shuja Nawaz** and provides a review of Pakistan’s security complex. Shuja Nawaz is author of the book “Crossed Swords: Pakistan, its Army, and the Wars Within”, on which his chapter here is based. Mr. Nawaz runs us through the development of Pakistan’s security complex and discusses the relationship between Pakistan’s military and the country’s political establishment. He also addresses the challenges the security institutions are facing today, noting that for the first time in decades Pakistan’s army is operating in force within its own borders against a growing Islamist militant movement.

The second chapter looks at militant organisations in Pakistan and is written by **Professor Rohan Gunaratna** and **Mr. Syed Adnan Ali Shah Bukhari** of the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. The authors examine militant groups that are focused on Afghanistan and Pakistan and are either based in or operate from the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA). Professor Gunaratna and Mr. Bukhari also list the key driving forces of these organisations, categorising them under the headings of security, political and administrative issues.

In the third chapter, **Mr. Imtiaz Gul** of the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) in Islamabad deliberates on the security dynamics in Pakistan's border areas. Mr. Gul considers FATA from a historical perspective and describes the political dynamics as well as parties to the conflict in that same region. Various issues, such as the tribal structure in FATA and administrative and political arrangements are considered.

The following four chapters analyse Pakistan's relations with four countries – Afghanistan, China, India and Iran. **Ambassador Ann Wilkens**, Swedish Ambassador to Pakistan and Afghanistan 2003-07, is author of chapter four, which looks at relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The author examines the various linkages between the two neighbouring countries and discusses related issues, including the historical and regional context, ethnic groups, the Durand Line, border areas and recent developments in the bilateral relationship.

The fifth chapter is authored by **Mr. Ye Hailin** of the Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) in Beijing and examines the relationship between China and Pakistan. Ye Hailin explains how the bilateral relationship is mainly built on political and military interests and notes that economic links as well as people-to-people exchanges are limited. Among other issues, he also deliberates on what possible effects China's and India's relationship have on that between China and Pakistan.

Dr. Stephen P. Cohen of the Brookings Institution in Washington in the sixth chapter discusses the relationship between Pakistan and India. Dr. Cohen starts out by examining the context of current India-Pakistan relations before moving on to analyse how India views Pakistan. The final part of the chapter considers possible scenarios which might change Indian policy radically – the most likely, the most promising and the most frightening scenarios.

In the last chapter, **Dr. Harsh V. Pant** of King's College in London presents an analysis of the relationship between Pakistan and Iran. Dr. Pant discusses the recent evolution in the bilateral ties and argues that developments in Afghanistan will be a crucial variable in determining the future of Pakistan-Iran relations. The chapter leads us through the historical background of the relationship and then analyses the role of September 11, 2001, in changing the countries' strategic priorities.

1 Pakistan's Security Complex

Shuja Nawaz

Today, more than 61 years after independence, Pakistan is struggling to craft a stable polity in the midst of a serious economic crisis. Pakistan's strategic location at the cusp of the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, and South Asia and as the door to Central Asia and China gives it added significance and makes it a key player on the regional and global scene. Its proximity to a largely hostile and dominating neighbour, India, shapes Pakistan's foreign and defence policies, on the one hand, and informs its domestic debates, on the other. The presence of nuclear weapons and missile delivery systems in both Indian and Pakistani hands makes this an even more volatile region than in the past.

Pakistan is suffering yet again from unrest and turmoil in its western neighbour Afghanistan. It has not yet recovered from the aftermath of the Afghan war against the Soviet Union when it acquired millions of refugees as well as a drug and gun culture that has created deep fissures in its society. Following the 2001 United States invasion of Afghanistan, the blowback from the war inside Afghanistan against the presence of foreign troops has spawned the rise of Islamic militancy inside Pakistan's own borders, not only in the volatile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) but also in the hinterland. As a result, Pakistan faces an existential threat, a challenge that both its security complex and the national polity seem unprepared to meet.

The United States has been unable to control the rising insurgency in Afghanistan, even with international coalition support and the presence of troops from NATO. That insurgency, led by the Taliban, whom the United States wanted to oust from Afghanistan's polity, and including former Mujahideen commanders from the Afghan war against the Soviet Union, is now fast be-

*Mr Shuja Nawaz is the author of *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, its Army, and the Wars Within* for Oxford University Press (May 2008) on which this chapter is based. He was a television newscaster and producer with Pakistan Television from 1967 to -72. He covered the 1971 war with India on the Western front. He has worked for The New York Times, the World Health Organization, as a Division Chief for the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and a Director of the International Atomic Energy Agency, and has widely written and spoken on military and politico-economic issues on radio, television, and at think tanks. He was Editor of Finance & Development, the multilingual quarterly of the IMF and the World Bank. He can be reached at www.shujanawaz.com or at www.Huffingtonpost.com.*

coming a major civil war. Many analysts see the United States losing this war, as the central Afghan government, supported by US troops in Afghanistan, is effectively unable to govern most of the country.

A report from the Center for Strategic and International Studies, released in September 2008, indicated that the Taliban are expanding their economic and political influence and now dominate half the country (most of the south and the eastern parts of Afghanistan are “no go” areas for coalition and Afghan national forces).⁵ The US commander in Afghanistan believes that a force of 400,000 would be needed to support the current US military doctrine in the country to fight a Taliban force estimated at 5-20,000 plus the forces led by Jalaluddin Haqqani and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, each comprising 1,000 Mujahideen fighters. Given dwindling political support at home in the United States and the likelihood of a withdrawal of key NATO allies over the next two years, the situation in Afghanistan is likely to deteriorate rapidly. This deterioration and any precipitate withdrawal by NATO or US forces would create a volatile situation in Afghanistan with major consequences for Pakistan.

Pakistan’s political reins have off and on been, effectively, in the hands of the Pakistan army for more than 38 years since its independence. The country is now wracked by internal divisions between provinces and between the forces of modernism and militant and radical Islam. These continuing conflicts have created political uncertainty. The February 2008 elections gave some hope, allowing the leading political parties – the late Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto’s Pakistan Peoples’ Party (PPP) and former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif’s Pakistan Muslim League (N group) (PML-N) – to return to power in a tenuous coalition of former rivals. And the Islamist alliance in the North West Frontier Province was trounced by the Pashtun secular Awami National Party (ANP). But the improbable coalition of the PPP and PML (N) soon fell apart and was replaced by a new coalition of the PPP and numerous smaller but dissimilar parties whose primary motive appears to be association with power at the centre rather than any shared ideological ties.

At the heart of the political maelstrom is the Pakistan army, probably the best organised group and a veritable political force unto itself, whose every action and hint creates reverberations in Pakistan’s polity. Even today, under a new army chief, General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, who has sworn to take the army back into the barracks, there are many doubters who see the politicians facing a huge challenge in running the country effectively after over seven years of autocratic

⁵ “Losing the Afghan-Pakistan War? The Rising Threat” by Anthony H. Cordesman, CSIS, September 18, 2008.

rule by President Pervez Musharraf and, consequently, expect a potential return to power of the army. They point to the gradual destruction or diminution of institutions: the judiciary, the constitution, the bureaucracy, and the legislature, and to the transmogrification of a parliamentary system of government into a presidential system by Musharraf. If history is any indication, President Asif Ali Zardari will be loath to give up all the presidential powers of his military predecessor, including the appointment and dismissal of military chiefs.

Against this background, cynics point to past promises by other army chiefs, who all promised to keep the army out of politics but in the end almost inevitably brought the army to power, to fill, what they considered to be, a political vacuum. The weight of history leans towards a continuing role of the army in Pakistan's polity, whether overt or behind the scenes. Whatever path it takes, the army too faces some daunting challenges as it begins the fight against home-grown insurgencies. For it too has changed dramatically over the years.

Pakistan came into being in 1947 as the most populous Muslim nation on the planet, but the debate over its national identity has not been conducted democratically nor has it been concluded. It has also yet to craft a stable political system that establishes the supremacy of the civil over the military, as envisioned by its founder Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the *Quaid-i-Azam* (Great Leader). The political parties too have yet to root their thinking and actions in well-crafted mandates and manifestos and allow democratic selection of their own leaders: most are run on familial or dynastic lines. Without a powerful base of support in the country as a whole, they have not been able to provide the counterweight to the highly trained and disciplined Pakistan army that is all too ready to step in when the politicians falter.

Although the Muslim way of life was a motive behind the call for Pakistan, its early political leadership did not give the country an Islamic blueprint for its political development or goals. The reason for this was that the movement for Pakistan was not an Islamic movement as much as it was a movement by Indian Muslims to seek greater social and economic opportunity for themselves.

Pakistan's 61 year old existence has been marked by attempts to build a nation but without first building the institutional foundations that are needed to allow a stable federal entity to evolve in a democratic and pluralistic setting. Ethnic and regional strife, sectarian violence, and the persistent intrusion of foreign powers into the region in the pursuit of their own agendas, all have created the setting for uneven political and economic development.

1.1 The Age of Terror

The Pakistan army, the largely Muslim rump of the British Indian army, too was saddled at birth with this paradoxical identity: the symbols of Islam but the substance of a colonial force, quite distant from the body politic of the fledgling state. It adopted, for instance, the numbers 786 for the identification of its General Headquarters in Rawalpindi. In Islamic numerology, 786 represents the Arabic *Bismillah IrRahman IrRahim*: the invocation that Muslims intone at the start of any action or venture of note. This numerical code was emblazoned on all gate posts and vehicles, as a reminder that this was the army of a Muslim country. And for its badge, it chose two crossed swords holding up an Islamic rising crescent and a five-pointed star against a green background.

But the Islamic identity was in name only at that stage. The senior echelons of the Pakistan army at its birth were still British officers who had opted to stay on and they were succeeded by their native clones, men who saw the army as a unique institution, separate and apart from the rest of civil society and authority.

This was the dominant cultural ethos of the army then. As the country grew in age, this schism between the cantonment and the city pervaded the army's thought processes and seemed to guide as well as bedevil the military's relationship with the civilian sector in Pakistan. The army initially retained its largely moderate and secular nature. But over time it became a true mirror of Pakistan's largely conservative urban population and a challenger of the political system.

Pakistan's history is one of conflict between the underdeveloped political system and a well organised army that grew in strength as a counterweight to a hostile India next door and in relation to the political system. In the words of former army chief General Jehangir Karamat: "Whenever there is a breakdown in ... stability, as has happened frequently in Pakistan, the military translates its potential into the will to dominate, and we have military intervention followed by military rule". But, he adds, "as far as the track record of the military as rulers in the past is concerned, I am afraid it is not much better than the civilians."⁶ The most recent direct rule of General Pervez Musharraf supports this assessment. While it ushered in a period of false stability and ostensibly open public discourse, it stunted political growth and badly damaged the ability of civil society to participate freely in the political process. In many ways, Musharraf was a "liberal autocrat" who lost his liberal leanings the longer he stayed in power.

⁶ General Jehangir Karamat, "The role of the military and future civil-military relations in Pakistan". Talk at the Brookings Institution, Washington DC, 19 June 2000.

While over time the army gained the respect of Pakistan's population for its spirited defence of the country's borders against a powerful India, and continued to attract a large number of youth to its ranks, its dominance of the polity of Pakistan eventually produced public questioning. Over time, through coups and largely unfettered access to state resources, the army won the battle between authority, represented by the state's various instruments of government, and coercive power, reflected in the army's military prowess, leaving the instruments of state weakened and unable to function even when the military returned to its barracks.

1.2 Power Brokers

The paradox of power that hobbled Pakistan's slow political development was that as the army grew in strength and size, it stunted the growth of the political system whose leaders either made no attempt to rebalance the relationship between the state and the centre of power, the army, or worse, invited the army to settle political differences amongst themselves. Successive political leaders suborned and eviscerated the vaunted bureaucracy and managed to weaken the educational system, thus depriving the country of alternative governance mechanisms and an informed electorate. The army, meanwhile, learned over time to establish patron-client relationships with the bureaucracy and with Islamist parties, whom it used in its efforts to fight internal populist leaders in both East and West Pakistan and to fuel the Kashmiri insurgency against Indian rule. The result: a persistent praetorian state with military or quasi military rule for over half its life after independence from the British.

The 1999 coup that brought General Pervez Musharraf to power resorted to legal legerdemain to avoid being classified as a martial law regime and, effectively, a temporary legal dispensation allowed it to operate beyond the ambit of the constitution of the country. The November 2007 "second coup" by Musharraf effectively allowed him to replace the judiciary wholesale, muzzle the media, and "win" re-election to the Presidency, but in the process he had to shed his uniform, opening the door to a return to civilian rule of sorts, followed by his own resignation.

1.3 Today's Headline: "War on Terror"

Today, Pakistan is at another crossroads, as a partner of the West in the global "War on Terror". And its army is operating in a changed and highly charged domestic political environment. The country's two leading main stream parties (the PML of Sharif and the PPP of Benazir Bhutto) were largely excluded from

the political process in the past eight years. Only in late 2007 were their leaders allowed back from exile and re-entry to Pakistani politics. The assassination of Bhutto in December 2008 deprived the country of a political counterweight to President Musharraf.

After decades of mainly conventional conflicts with its large neighbour India, today, for the first time, Pakistan's army is waging a largely futile war against an unseen enemy: Islamist terrorists within its own border. This is direct fallout from the US invasion of Afghanistan and the continuing fight against the Afghan Taliban, who see the borderland inside Pakistan as their home turf. The western front bordering Afghanistan is awash in insurgent activity spilling over from Afghanistan and also home-grown insurgency, involving radical Islamist Taliban who are intent on fighting the United States in Afghanistan and putting their stamp on the tribal areas of Pakistan.

The eastern front against India is relatively calmer and there is promise of some progress on the Kashmir dispute, though that may be illusory, given the mood swings of governments on both sides and the ability of the Indian government to create turmoil every now and then by angering the freedom loving Kashmiris.

For the first time in decades, today the Pakistan army is operating in force inside its own borders. The "enemy" this time is a growing Islamist militant movement known as "Talibanisation", after the radical right wing and fundamentalist former regime of Afghanistan, and "foreign" elements aligned with Al Qaeda, the amorphous network of well-trained terrorists begun by Osama bin Laden and operating in the FATA – the no-man's land between Pakistan's North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Afghanistan's eastern frontier, the Durand Line.

What makes the battle against the Islamist insurgents so critical is that Pakistan is a nuclear weapon state. And the abiding fear in the rest of the world is the spectre of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of radicals inside Pakistan. Although the army has now taken control of the nuclear command and control system, through the Strategic Plans Division of the army headquarters, and oversight, by the National Security Council, and appears to have met the approval of strict Western referees, such as the International Institute for Strategic Studies in the UK, fear persists abroad that radical elements in the country or within the military may one day decide to use Pakistan's arsenal of nuclear weapons regionally or resort to proliferation, especially to other Muslim nations. The fuse for a constantly brewing conflict with neighbouring India is the Muslim-majority state of Kashmir, representing the unfinished part of the 1947 partition of British India that has been the cause of at least three wars between the two countries. Whether that fuse will be lit or snuffed out lies in the hands of the army that has forged foreign policy for much of the life of Pakistan.

1.4 The Corporate Army

Increasingly, the Pakistan army is seen by many as a corporate entity that functions as the most effective political party in the country, protecting its interests, sometimes even at the expense of national interests. A recent study of “Milbus”, or military business interests, by Ayesha Siddiqi in her book *Military Inc.*⁷ focuses on Pakistan to characterise the role of the military as “predatory”. While this study does not ascribe acquisition of assets through legalised means solely to the military (recognising the prevalence of these actions among the civil sector too), it assigns personal aggrandisement as the motive force behind the actions of senior serving and retired military officers. In a country where a Culture of Entitlement has taken hold since the late 1970s, this criticism is valid against all actors on the political stage, who use state resources for personal gain. And it raises questions about the heart of the national security apparatus, the Pakistan army, and its role in Pakistan’s polity today.

1.5 Nature of the Army

Pakistanis proudly point to the fact that theirs is a volunteer army with a long historical tradition. In many ways, it is often talked about in the same terms as the army of its political ally and brother country Turkey. As author Stephen Kinzer states in his study of Turkey today:

*“Turks ...feel deep gratitude and a genuine connection to their army. They believe it exists and works for them.” But, he adds, today, “Turks want to escape from its political power, which has become intrusive and suffocating. They have learned the lessons of democracy and now want to live by them.”*⁸

While many may debate whether Pakistan has truly learned the lessons of democracy, the sentiments in Pakistan today are similar to those in Turkey, whose army is often cited as a model for the army of Pakistan.

Yet there are those who see a closer resemblance to the army of Indonesia under Presidents Sukarno and Suharto where the *dwi fungsi*, or dual functions, of the army became entrenched. Army officers saw themselves as “saviours of the country” and also developed a role in ruling the country via a revolving door policy under which military officers were given civilian jobs and then moved out to make room for new officers.

⁷ Ayesha Siddiqi, *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan’s Military Economy* (London: Pluto Press 2007).

⁸ Stephen Kinzer, *Crescent and Star: Turkey between Two Worlds* (New York: Straus and Giroux, 2001), pp.164-65.

Ayesha Siddiqi attempts to quantify the extent of the military's business interests in Pakistan and comes up with a figure of \$10 billion. While her calculations are open to dispute and indeed have been challenged by the military, the gist of her arguments raises relevant questions: To what extent is the military's access to state resources crowding out the private sector and preventing expenditure on other more productive sectors, such as health and education? More important, is this model sustainable? The new army chief, General Kayani, appears to have realised the need for the army to go back to its professional roots and has begun to distance himself from the former chief, Musharraf. But disengaging the army from the economy and from commercial enterprises will take time.

1.6 The Wide Footprint of the Army

Both the size and nature of the Pakistan army have a huge impact on the country's economy and society. Rising from a relatively small force at independence, Pakistan today has an army of over 800,000, including about 500,000 regular troops and the rest consisting of paramilitary forces or reserves. It is larger than the regular army of the United States. Pakistan increased its force size even after having lost half the country in 1971 with the independence of Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan). In the process, the security threat from India grew, forcing it to meet India's rapid growth of military might as well as the appearance of the Soviet armed forces in Afghanistan to its west in the 1980s.

In 2005, according to World Bank data, defence spending as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product in Pakistan was around 3.4 percent compared with India's 2.3 percent – among the highest burdens of military spending in the world.⁹ As Pakistan develops and its economy grows, the opportunity cost of its defence spending will rise dramatically. This is a huge challenge for the regime as it ponders its political future, on the one hand, and the nature of the army that Pakistan needs to ensure its security, on the other.

How can one increase development expenditure or have a thorough discussion of the overall budget? The military share of the budget has ranged from 30-40 percent but it is still kept as a one-line item that is not subjected to any detailed examination nor debate in the national assembly. Expenditures on education account for no more than 1.6 percent of GDP and on health for 0.5 percent (compared with defence spending at 3.4 percent, as mentioned above).¹⁰ As the security situation inside Afghanistan deteriorates and Pakistan suffers from the

⁹ World Bank. *World Development Indicators 2006*.

¹⁰ Dr. Parvez Hasan, 'State and Pakistan Economy: Where have we come from? Where do we go?'

contagion effect of the fighting in its neighbour, it will need to retool its own army from a large conventional force to a leaner and much more mobile counterinsurgency force. At the very least, this will necessitate a spike in military expenditures resulting from import of new weaponry and equipment and re-training of its forces to fight the wars within Pakistan. During a global economic slowdown and rising prices of fuel and other essentials, these rising expenditures will place major pressures on the Pakistani economy and society. Pakistan is unlikely to be able to raise the required financing from domestic resources and will become even more dependent on foreign assistance.

The issue facing Pakistan and its military today is one that faces many other developing countries. Apart from crowding out other more useful investments, the relatively large size of the defence sector and its gradual expansion into other economic activities, as has been the case in for example Pakistan, Turkey, and Indonesia, spawn a host of ills associated with such parastatal enterprises: featherbedding or over-employment, heavy and often hidden subsidies, privileged access to scarce resources, and the creation of a powerful and new vested interest group in economic activities: the serving military and ex-servicemen. There is no hard financial scrutiny or supervision of these enterprises nor, more importantly, of overall defence spending. This distorts the allocation of scarce domestic resources and retards economic development. Accompanying this economic domination of the political landscape, the army has also strengthened its political status within the rubric of the state's system of assigning seniority to different representatives of government.

1.7 Army vs. Civil Hierarchy

Even two-time former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif shook his head when asked by me if he knew about the application of the Warrant of Precedence during his terms in office. Yet this list, that Pakistan inherited from the British and that established the relative ranking of civil and military officials for protocol purposes, has been a major path to the rise of the military in Pakistani society and polity. Beyond simple protocol, this list defines the relative roles of officials from the civil and the military in the nation's polity and provides a map of their relationships. The Warrant of Precedence, issued by the Ministry of Interior from Karachi in February 1950, ranked the top officials of the then Dominion of Pakistan, with the Governor General at the head, followed by the Prime Minister. Notably, the Commander in Chief of the Pakistan army came in at number 15, below, among others, the Judges of the Federal Court, the chief justices of the high courts of the provinces, and deputy ministers of the Dominion. The Chief of Staff of the Pakistan army came in at number 20 while Lieutenant Generals came

in at number 21, followed by General Officers Commanding divisions at number 22, both below federal secretaries and the Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan.

Pakistan changed this warrant, de facto, when General Ayub Khan, the Commander-in-Chief of the army, in 1954 was made Defence Minister and afterwards when he took over as Chief Martial Law Administrator and then President. Today the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (JCSC) and the Chiefs of Army, Air, and Naval Staff are ranked at number 6, while Lieutenant Generals remain at par with federal secretaries at number 16.¹¹

None of the civilian prime ministers in recent decades has made any attempt to change this order. Indeed, all of them have elevated military officers to levels beyond those envisaged by the founders of Pakistan and then complained publicly about the military asserting itself in the polity of Pakistan.

1.8 Protecting its Own

A frequent complaint about the army in today's Pakistan stems from its overwhelming power and ubiquity in all spheres of civil endeavour, and its ability to operate outside the bounds of normal legal systems. As a result, when its members choose to ignore the law or take it into their own hands, the first instinct of the higher command is to keep the matter out of the public's eye. Concomitant with this tendency has been the growing power and involvement of the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) agency and the Military Intelligence in domestic political and civil issues, as policy advisors and implementers rather than providing policy-neutral intelligence for military purposes or conducting counterintelligence against the external enemies of Pakistan.

The ISI, a highly effective counterintelligence entity, came into its own during the Afghan Jihad but in recent years has often been called a "rogue" agency or a "state within a state". In fact, it often operates at the behest of the government, civil and military, aligning with whatever centre of power is deemed more powerful or supportive of its functions. Because its role has been confused by its masters, who want it to serve not only as an intelligence function but also as the crafter and implementer of policy, it takes the heat for some of its actions on their behalf. The civilian Intelligence Bureau (IB), which used to be tasked with internal security matters, became an appendage of the military agencies under Musharraf. Under his regime, it was headed by a retired Brigadier, a personal friend of the Chief of Army Staff and President. Under the previous civilian

¹¹ Warrants of Precedent issued by the Government of Pakistan 1963, 1968, 1970, and 2006.

regime of Prime Minister Sharif, the IB was used for political purposes and even then was headed by a former military officer. Even the army's own Military Intelligence Directorate was brought into the political sphere by Musharraf and a number of his predecessors. To make these agencies effective and to remove from them the opprobrium associated with their extra-legal actions, they need to be subjected to public scrutiny and controls not only within the army's structure but also before parliament.

The ISI has been embroiled in controversy as a result of US allegations that its staff was associated with Mujahideen commanders who were, according to US sources, linked to the bombing of the Indian embassy in Kabul in July 2008. As the situation in Afghanistan deteriorates and turns out of control, Pakistan will be tempted again to use its ISI resources and links with the Taliban and Mujahideen to maintain its strategic and economic interests in Afghanistan. It will also want to counter what it perceives to be rising Indian involvement in the economy and security apparatus of Afghanistan. The ISI will, again, be a key element in its efforts in that regard. This will pose a challenge to the new civilian government as it seeks to further Pakistan's strategic interests without conceding control of events in Afghanistan to the machinations of the ISI.

1.9 Challenges Ahead

Over the years, the Pakistan army has been regarded, with some merit, as a highly disciplined and trained force, relying on volunteer recruitment. The Pakistani population traditionally has shown great respect, even adoration, for its soldiers and officers. Many youth sign up voluntarily for service in the army as officers or soldiers following family or tribal traditions in the past and recently as a means of upward social and economic mobility. Some ten times the number of cadets required for each course in the Pakistan Military Academy apply for each course that is advertised. The army's soldiers and junior officers have time and again shown their abilities on the battlefield. But the leadership of the army has let down the forces and the country repeatedly. Gradually, instead of respect, feelings of fear and loathing have pervaded the political discourse on the army and its role in the country's polity.

The Pakistan army of today, though large and ubiquitous, is ill-equipped and untrained for low-intensity conflict and has suffered heavily at the hands of well-trained guerrillas who melt into the population. And increasingly, its association with the American superpower that is driving the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan pits the army against its own tribes. Even the United States is now putting pressure on Pakistan to do more to plug the gaps in the porous and rugged 1,350 mile border with Afghanistan, something that the relatively small

US and NATO forces have failed to do from their side of the divide. The terror network has struck back not just in FATA but also against the army inside Pakistan proper, with a new weapon: suicide bombers. Its major target has been President Pervez Musharraf himself. Even without Musharraf, Pakistan faces a long war on this front. The army is not yet fully equipped for that war.

1.10 An Army Undergoing Change

The conditions that led to the weaknesses of the military system are not just societal but also arise from the recruitment patterns of the Pakistan army that define the nature of its officer class and other ranks (soldiers). Traditionally, the army was a predominantly Punjabi force. In British India, three districts: Campbellpur (now Attock), Rawalpindi, and Jhelum dominated the recruitment flows that helped India send some 2.5 million soldiers to fight in World War II on behalf of the British Empire. The North West Frontier Province (NWFP) gradually began supplying troops and officers, as settled areas Pushtun tribesmen joined the military.

Over time, with the provision of waivers for both physical and educational qualifications, recruitment has increased from the formerly less well represented areas. Based on separate General Headquarters (GHQ) data for soldiers and officers, Punjab shows an overall decline in recruitment of soldiers from 63.86 percent in 1991 to 43.33 in 2005, but there was a shift in the recruitment patterns within Punjab with Central Punjab outpacing Northern Punjab, the traditional recruitment ground, by 7,500 to 5,000 recruits in 2005. Southern Punjab had 1,800 recruits. On the contrary, the NWFP and FATA increased from 20.91 percent in 1991 to 22.43 percent in 2005, Sindh rose from 8.85 percent to 23.02 percent, with rural Sindh accounting for the majority of the recruits (5,095 in 2005 compared with 2,500 in 1991), Baluchistan rose from 0.49 percent to 1.52 percent in 2005 with 200 urban and 300 rural recruits in 2005, and Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas increased from 5.86 percent to 9.70 percent.¹²

Looking at the officers commissioned into service during the period 1970-89 in comparison with 1990-2006, we also see a change in the relative share of different parts of the country. The Punjab rose marginally from 66.46 percent to 66.93, but within the Punjab there are notable changes in the home districts of the officers shifting to the more populous and emerging urban centres of Central and even Southern Punjab. This is in line with rapid urbanisation trends nationwide.

¹² Data in this section provided to the author by the General headquarters, Pakistan Army, Rawalpindi.

These bigger cities and towns are also the traditional strongholds of the growing Islamist parties and conservatism, associated with the petit bourgeoisie. The Zia period (reflected in the statistics for 1980-89) shows a sharp bulge in all cases, as the army became a visibly more lucrative and attractive profession for the urban youth and a means for upward social mobility.

The importance of the bulge in the Zia period is also underscored by the fact that the officers who joined in that decade are now poised to rise into the general officer category. When the current group of senior Lieutenant Generals retires, most of whom were commissioned in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Zia *Bharti* (recruits) will take over the running of the Pakistan army. Apart from being inducted into the army during the middle of Zia's Islamist ethos and official fostering of religious ideology and dogma, this group suffered from the US and Western European embargo on aid to Pakistan and was largely deprived of training opportunities in the West. Not only was it deprived of advanced overseas training during its formative years, this officer cohort was denied exposure to the outside world till late in their careers, by which time their world-view had been formed and in many cases become entrenched.

The current cohort of senior army leaders in Pakistan, including the army chief, General Kayani, represents the last group of officers who were able to take advantage of overseas training in their early years and were exposed to wider external influences. The effects of such training and exposure are reflected in some of their thinking on national issues.

1.11 Penetration of Civil Society

One other visible manifestation of military domination of the civil sector has been the re-employment of retired or even serving officers in civil institutions and in the host of military owned enterprises that provide longer term employment for army officers. Today, military officers dominate education and training institutions in the civil sector. All the major civil service training establishments, for example, are now headed by army officers. They also head universities and state-owned corporations. Some 1,200 army officers were inducted into key civil slots during the Musharraf period. While military rule or military-dominated rule has something to do with this, the role of the civilian rulers cannot be downplayed, for they have allowed the military free ingress into their domain over the years and, indeed, have elevated the military presence to the detriment of the civil sector. The move by General Kayani to withdraw some 300 serving army officers from civilian positions is a positive sign of changes in thinking on this front.

1.12 Defending the Homeland

Pakistan's lack of national cohesion and its location in a tough neighbourhood dictate that it should maintain a strong defence establishment. However, as assessments by the army itself have shown, there are different ways of achieving the notion of security without making the army so large and burdensome that it dwarfs and stifles economic development. In addition, there are sound military reasons for re-evaluating the nature, size, and organisation of the army.

Today, Pakistan has a large conventional army, tasked with defending every inch of its borders: a hostile one in the east against India and a hot one in the west against Afghanistan, with a potential for unrest on the Iranian frontier if the internal insurgency situation in that neighbour's Baluchistan province becomes a cross border issue. Internally, the army needs to reorient its training and force structure not only to cope with external threats but also to combat internal insurgencies, starting with the current situation in FATA. It needs specialised units and training in low-intensity Fourth Generation warfare and indoctrination of officers and soldiers in the principles of such warfare, according to which ideas, not weapons alone, matter.

1.13 Looking Ahead

It is important for the army to help create a stable national polity by subjecting itself in practice to civilian oversight and control. It needs to ensure that it does not become the instrument of civilian dictatorship by subjecting itself to wider parliamentary controls and oversights of its operations. This should extend to ratification of senior appointments of the service chiefs, the recently proposed regional commanders, and the Chairman of the JCSC. And it must be prepared to expose more of its expenditure details to scrutiny by government and parliament.

On its side, the civilian government needs to ensure that it follows the constitution fully and does not involve the military in political disputes. As past experience shows, when politicians run to the army chief for help, it upsets the balance of the civilian system of government and, eventually, brings the army into power.

While the military has an advantage over the civil leadership in employing force, it has a comparative disadvantage in building political loyalty from a civilian base. The reason is that "a military government does not easily tolerate a normal level of dissension or debate needed to build or maintain coalitions with

civilians.”¹³ Few military regimes have attempted to “build mass parties and where they have been created they turned out to be ineffectual structures because genuine participation was not permitted.”¹⁴ The military system of orders and obedience does not easily adjust to the noise of democracy and dissent. The Pakistani experience certainly supports these views, although successive military leaders, including Musharraf, have felt that they can buck this trend.

In the face of hostility, Pakistan’s defence lies in a smaller, highly mobile, and powerful military, relying on a nuclear and conventional weapons system and the capability of delivering a damaging riposte. But an even better defence lies in creating a powerful, pluralistic polity residing in a strong economy, built on a society that values education and the welfare of its population.

1.14 The Immediate Challenges

In the near term, the new army chief, General Kayani, and his commanders will face a number of challenges as the newly formed government of President Asif Ali Zardari tests its political muscle by challenging the establishment and the security complex. Whatever the process, it will be messy and will also test the mettle of General Kayani. While his appointing authority is currently the President of Pakistan, he reports to the Prime Minister as the head of government. How would Kayani react if the President decides to remove him and place a more pliable chief in his stead?

Kayani’s main focus will remain on the counterinsurgency campaign in the frontier badlands bordering Afghanistan and in Swat. From all accounts, he has pressed his colleagues to move quickly to prepare the logistical ground for anti-terror operations in those areas. But it will be important for him to allow the new government to make the political decisions on the use of the army in that mode and to define the collaboration with the Afghan and United States governments. This will be a hard transition for an army that has been used to work independently with its foreign partners under Musharraf. Equally important will be the need for Kayani to recognise what the US under the thinking of General David Petraeus has come to learn the hard way in Iraq; that counterinsurgency

¹³ Alfred Stepan, *The Military in Politics: changing patterns in Brazil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 263

¹⁴ ‘Soldiers in Mufti: The Impact of Military rule upon Economic and Social Change in Non-Western States’, *American Political Science Review*, 64:1131-48. See also Richard Wintrobe ‘The Tinpot and the Totalitarian: an economic theory of dictatorships’, *American Political Science Review*, Volume 84, No. 3, September 1990 for a survey of the literature.

operations are 80 percent political and economic operations and only 20 percent military.

Kayani gives the impression of a thoughtful general, not a blustering gung-ho type. He appears sure of himself and, if he resists the temptation to use unbridled force for short-term gains, he may be able to help quell the situation in the frontier. The key will be to avoid punitive actions alone and to provide security for the local population. His experience in the ISI should also have given him insight into the difficulty of a military solution to Kashmir.

Without the army's support, given the current power balance in Pakistan, the civilian government will not be able to move quickly on resolving issues with a dominant and potentially hegemonic India to the east. Kayani recognises the need for peace and open borders but he is also aware that he cannot move too far ahead of the general public sentiment. India too will need to show an open mindedness that has been absent in its public discourse on Kashmir or open borders. For many in Pakistan, there is deep-seated fear of India swamping Pakistan economically and culturally. However, Kayani appears to be a man of inner confidence, hence the quiet that marks his demeanour. And, unlike Musharraf's one-step forward, two-steps back approach on key issues relating to India, he will likely take those steps forward that matter most and stick to them.

With a civilian government in charge again, the role of the ISI will need to be tempered. The army high command will favour greater oversight of the ISI by the civil authority and even parliament, with the involvement of the military. If Kayani's studied silence in the episode involving the browbeating in the Army House in March 2007 and subsequent arbitrary removal of the former Chief Justice by Musharraf is any indication, he will likely favour a reduced political role of the ISI, allowing it to concentrate on important counterintelligence operations. His main focus, though, will be returning the army to its professional roots and keeping it out of politics.

As stated earlier, the composition of the Pakistan army today better represents the society in which it operates than the army at independence. It is also more professional and better trained than ever before. As it expands its membership into less represented areas and provinces, it can become a true national army and regain its position of trust and devotion. If it does not, and if the civilian politicians also fail to pay heed to the changes around them, then the rising tide of conservatism may be transformed into a radical Islamist wave that will sweep both civil society and the Pakistan army into its embrace, with results that are entirely predictable and not what Pakistan nor its neighbours and friends desire. The longer the country remains under military domination, the greater the risk of failure of the state.

The latest recruitment statistics indicate that Pakistan's army is no longer the same homogenous force of the past with a limited recruitment base. It now reflects a broader range of the country's rapidly urbanising population. The emergence of new media and public discourse has also challenged the military's ability to control life in the country with an iron hand.

While the army remains a conservative institution at heart, it is not yet a breeding ground for large numbers of radical Islamists that many fear. Islam, though, remains a visible force in Pakistan's society and army. Keeping the Islamists at bay remains a daunting task however, but it need not be used as a scary scenario only to gain Western support. A progressive Pakistan needs to provide opportunities for its citizens to lead their lives without fear of the radical forces of Islam that are vying for power today. More important, given the dominant role of the army in Pakistan's polity, if Pakistan is to mature, thrive, and survive as a successful state and a nation, the army needs to take a back seat and allow the politicians and civil society to make their mistakes and allow the other critically important elements of society: newspapers, businesses, professionals, lawyers, etc., to function unfettered. These are the challenges that both the army and civil society in Pakistan must surmount through a return to democratic norms so that they can fulfil their promises to the country and win the long war against militancy and terror.

If Pakistan makes it through the current trials, it will also help the global community in its efforts to counter militancy in the region. If Pakistan fails, the world will fail. With increasing talk of the United States and the coalition losing the war in Afghanistan, the fear is that Pakistan will be the next target of the militants as they are expected to spread out from the border region into the heart of the country. The loss of Afghanistan to militancy will increase pressure on Pakistan. While a Talibanised Afghanistan may muddle along in isolation, Pakistan is a nuclear weapon state and too critically placed in the region and too large an entity to be allowed to deteriorate in the face of militancy. A joint effort by the Pakistan military and civilian administration will be needed to overcome the threat of terror and militancy. Pakistan's friends must play their part to help Pakistan succeed. There is no other acceptable option.

2 Militant Organisations and Their Driving Forces

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2.1 Introduction

Since 2007, Pakistan has come to be regarded as the most dangerous country in the world.¹⁵ While Iraq and Afghanistan continue to witness more violence in

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¹⁵ Ron Moreau and Michael Hirsh, 'Where the Jihad Lives Now', *Newsweek*, October 29, 2007, www.newsweek.com/id/57485/print. Also see 'Pakistan, The World's Most Dangerous Country, is Still no Safer', *Telegraph*, August 19, 2008, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/main.jhtml?xml=/opinion/2008/08/19/dl1901.xml>

terms of terrorist attacks compared to Pakistan, the latter surpassed the other two in terms of casualties between January-August 2008.¹⁶ Similarly, Pakistan's continued weakening of its writ over territories lying on its western borders – the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Balochistan – resulted in the western border areas becoming a semi-safe sanctuary for the Pakistani and Afghan Taliban as well as foreign militant groups. The subsequent Pakistani Taliban efforts to establish a quasi-parallel government in the FATA region present an existential threat to the Pakistani State.

The FATA region assumed international significance following the arrival of Afghan Taliban and Afghanistan-based foreign militant groups, such as Al Qaeda, after the overthrow of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan by the US-led coalition against terrorism. Under immense pressure from the United States, Pakistan's military incursions into FATA to hunt the retreating Al Qaeda and other foreign militant groups between 2003-2006 had unintended consequences. The overwhelming kinetic approach adopted by the Pakistani security forces mobilised existing militant groups in FATA and Pakistan, and spawned a new generation of Pakistani militant groups – the Pakistani Taliban - dedicated to protecting the foreign militants. The subsequent peace agreements signed by the Pakistani government with various pro-Taliban local militant groups in South Waziristan Agency (SWA) and North Waziristan Agency (NWA) during 2004-2006, helped the latter in regrouping, reorganising and strengthening themselves to the detriment of the Pakistani government and their local protégé – the tribal elders.

At present, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan has assumed the status of becoming the epicentre of international terrorism. Located along the 2,400 km long rugged, but imaginary, border separating Afghanistan and Pakistan, FATA has provided both local (Pakistani Taliban) and foreign militant groups with the opportunity to regroup, organise and plan terrorist attacks in Pakistan and Afghanistan as well as globally.

Similarly, the Taliban-led militancy, which was confined to the NWA, SWA and Bajaur Agency until early 2007, had spread to the entire FATA and most parts of

¹⁶ Between January-August 2008, Pakistan witnessed 28 suicide attacks in which 471 people were killed and 713 were wounded. Iraq suffered 42 suicide attacks that killed 463 people and injured 527 others. Similarly, there were 36 suicide attacks reported in Afghanistan in which 463 people were killed and 394 injured during the same period. See Amir Mir, 'Pakistan Tops Iraq, Afghanistan in Suicide Bombing Deaths', *The News*, September 15, 2008, http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=135813

the NWFP by January 2008,¹⁷ and also posed a threat to parts of the Punjab and Sindh provinces. The rise and strengthening of the Pakistani Taliban in the entire FATA region during 2006-2008 coincided with the gradual intensification of the Afghan Taliban-led insurgency in Afghanistan, where it gradually spread to almost cover the entire Pushtun belt located along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

Pakistan's inability to rein in the militant groups and establish its control over the FATA and Balochistan regions further exacerbated security problem for both Afghanistan and Pakistan. The rising violence heavily affected the US and ISAF-NATO troops based in Afghanistan under the international mandate. Presently, the problem of militancy in both countries is intertwined, and Taliban militants on both sides of the border are inseparable from each other, due to the common ethnicity, religion, culture and norms shared by the Pushtun nation divided by the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. With the leadership of Al Qaeda well entrenched in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region, the FATA region has evolved into a "mini Afghanistan", of the kind that existed during the Taliban rule (1996-2001), which poses serious threat to the regional and international security in the foreseeable future. Recent US intelligence reports and an interview given by the US President, George Bush, to *ABC News* in April 2008 forecast that Pakistan, and not Afghanistan or Iraq, is now the most likely place where a plot could be hatched to carry out any 9/11-type attack in the US.¹⁸

Presently, Pakistan is host to a plethora of militant groups active all over Pakistan, as well as in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). These groups differ in their interests and objectives: some are focused on the Indian-held Kashmir (IHK); others are waging a guerrilla war in Balochistan to seek political and economic rights, while some are concentrating their efforts on Afghanistan to evict foreign troops while at the same time attempting to impose Taliban-style Shariah in Pakistan.

This chapter will discuss only those groups that are focused on Afghanistan and Pakistan and either maintain their operational base in FATA, or conduct their operations from there. These are mainly Pushtun militant groups, while some mainland Pakistani groups, such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LJ), Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Harkaul Mujahideen (HuM), Harkatul Jihad-e-Islami (HuJI) and Harkatul Mujahideen al-Almi (HuMI) have also joined their struggle. The militants belonging to these mainland groups are often referred to as the Punjabi

¹⁷ By early 2008, there were reports of Taliban presence in Kurram, Orakzai, Khyber and Mohmand Agencies of FATA.

¹⁸ Anwar Iqbal, 'Bush Calls FATA Most Dangerous Region', *Dawn*, April 13, 2008, <http://www.dawn.com/2008/04/13/top1.htm>

Taliban¹⁹ – a word used for non-Pushtun Pakistani militants based and operating in FATA, but not necessarily belonging to the Punjab province alone. The presence of foreign militant groups in FATA, such as Al Qaeda, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) etc., and their growing linkages with Pakistani Taliban and mainland terrorist groups have tended to exacerbate the security problems for both Pakistan and Afghanistan. The paper will discuss the drivers that have helped the Pakistani Taliban militants survive, organise and pose a potential security threat to the entire South and Central Asian region and the broader international community.

2.2 Militant Organisations in FATA

The militant groups in FATA could be divided into two categories: Foreign militants and local militants. The foreign militant groups comprise among others Al Qaeda, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) and Islamic Jihad Union (IJU). However, Al Qaeda and the IMU occupy significance due to their numerical strength, transfer to Pakistani militants of ideological, logistical and R&D support on explosive and training techniques, their relations with various tribal elders and clerics and influence in the region as well as their involvement in local dynamics of the FATA region.

Similarly, the local Taliban groups assume tremendous importance to being native of FATA and given their decades' long involvement in the Afghan conflict. They are also presently acting as hosts to the foreign and non-local militants, providing the latter with the much-needed sanctuary as well as human and terrorist infrastructure resources in the region.

2.2.1 Al Qaeda

Al Qaeda, the most hunted terrorist group in the world, remains the focus of the international community since September 11, 2001, when it conducted terrorist attacks in the US. Terrorism experts remain divided over the shape, structure, location and leadership of Al Qaeda. Some believe that Al Qaeda's operational organisation was considerably weakened due to the capture or killing of its top

¹⁹ Aamir Latif, 'Punjabi Taliban Rise in Waziristan', *Islam Online*, April 22, 2007, http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1177155819817&pagename=Zone-English-News%2FNWELayout

leadership, and the subsequent decentralisation of its command structure.²⁰ According to Marc Sageman, Al Qaeda's core leadership has been "neutralised operationally." However, loose groups of Muslims in the West who radicalise each other and carry out autonomous, self-financed attacks, pose a much bigger danger to the West than Al Qaeda, he adds.²¹ According to former Pakistani Interior Minister Aftab Khan Sherpao, "Al Qaeda is a loose network without a hierarchy, made up of groups that are global, fluid and unpredictable".²² What is left of Al Qaeda, some experts believe, is "inspirational", without any integrated operational network. Furthermore, Al Qaeda wants to ride on the back of the resurgent Taliban movement in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region. Former Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf, while speaking at the French Institute for International Relations (IFRI), expressed a similar opinion when he said, "When the Army battles with Al Qaeda now, the number of [Al Qaeda] casualties are in the single digits, three or four," suggesting that Osama bin Laden's network had been decimated. However, the Taliban, according to Musharraf were a "more serious" issue.²³

Others believe that the organisation, despite having lost most of its pre-9/11 leadership, has survived the onslaught and has been able to maintain a robust infrastructure in the FATA region. After retreating from Afghanistan following the US-led coalition attack on Afghanistan, both Al Qaeda and Afghan Taliban remnants linked up with a handful of pro-Taliban local tribal militants (later Pakistani Taliban). There was no other way for both the Afghan Taliban and Al Qaeda to survive in the post 9/11 period than to accept the traditional hospitality of the local Pushtun tribes in FATA under the local tribal code "Pushtunwali".²⁴

²⁰ The Egyptian Saif al-Adel, head of Al Qaeda's Security Committee, Abu Muhammad al-Masri, head of Training Sub-Section, and two sons of Bin Laden, Muhammad and Saad bin Ladin are believed to be interned in Iran. Similarly, other important leaders like Khalid Sheikh Muhammad, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, Walid bin Attash and many others were killed or arrested in Pakistan. According to an interview conducted by the author Rohan Gunaratna in Islamabad with an ISI official in April 2007, more than 25 percent of the detainees in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, were arrested in Pakistan. Michael Hayden, Director of CIA in his speech at the Atlantic Council in the US on November 13, 2008 also lauded Pakistan's counter-terrorism role over the years, saying that more terrorists have been captured and eliminated with the support of the Pakistani security forces in the region than anywhere else. See the Speech of CIA Director, Michael Hayden, on 'State of Al Qaeda Today' at the Atlantic Council of the United States on November 13, 2008, http://www.acus.org/http://www.acus.org/event_blog/cia-director-event-transcript

²¹ 'Winning or Losing?', *Economist*, July 17, 2008.

²² 'Al Qaeda is Global, Fluid and Unpredictable: Sherpao', *Daily Times*, October 20, 2008.

²³ 'Taliban Represent a Greater Threat Than Al-Qaeda, Musharraf Says', January 22, 2008, http://www.eneews20.com/news_Taliban_Represent_a_Greater_Threat_Than_Al_Qaeda_Musharraf_Says_05340.html.

²⁴ Khalid Hassan, 'Tribesmen Fought for Money, Not Al Qaeda', *Daily Times*, February 17, 2005, http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story_17-2-2005_pg7_55.

Thereafter, Al Qaeda used its tribal affiliations as well as nurtured and built a clerical support base. Some of the leading Al Qaeda figures married into influential local families, which is peculiar of Al Qaeda leaders in an attempt to establish roots in the region.²⁵ Such efforts helped Al Qaeda militants to find a robust and resilient sanctuary in FATA which enabled them to secure local protection and avoid arrest, establish relations with local Islamist militant groups and reconstitute a scattered Al Qaeda in the FATA region.

Despite intermittent pressure from the US and the Pakistani government, Al Qaeda and many other foreign and Pakistani militant groups re-established a smaller and more rudimentary version of their Afghan training infrastructure firstly in the Shakai Valley of South Waziristan Agency (SWA) during 2002-2003, and later in North Waziristan Agency (NWA) during 2004-2006. Operating out of FATA and the adjoining settled areas of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), Al Qaeda trained some Westerners of Pakistani origin to mount attacks in Europe and North America. For example, the leader of the July 7, 2005 (7/7) bombers, Mohamed Siddique Khan, and the leader of the failed July 21, 2005 (21/7) attacks in the UK were both trained in the Dir district of NWFP. Furthermore, the Al Qaeda leader in the UK, Dhiren Barot aka Abu Issa al-Brittani aka Abu Issa al-Hindi, in April 2004 visited Waziristan to consult the Al Qaeda leadership while planning to attack multiple targets in the UK and the US, including the Prudential building, New York Stock Exchange and Citigroup's headquarters in New York, as well as the International Monetary Fund's headquarters in Washington D.C. Similarly, Al Qaeda planned, prepared and executed two failed assassination attempts against the former Pakistani President, General Pervez Musharraf, in December 2003.

The subsequent military operations by the Pakistani security forces, first in SWA (2003-2005) followed by the NWA (2005-2006), had mixed results. While some Al Qaeda militants were killed in various small-scale "search and destroy" military operations, Al Qaeda's central leadership remained unharmed. With military operations becoming increasingly unpopular with the common tribesmen in FATA, the Pakistani government signed a series of peace agreements with local tribes and Taliban groups in an attempt to isolate Al Qaeda from the Pakistani Taliban and to make the local environment hostile to Al Qaeda and

²⁵ For example, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Al Qaeda's de facto second-in-command married a local woman from the Mamond Tribe in Bajaur. Similarly, the granddaughter of Maulana Faqir Muhammad, head of TTP-Bajaur Chapter, is married to an Arab Al Qaeda militant, Abu Osman.

other foreign militant groups.²⁶ However, the strategy did not work as envisaged. In effect, it helped the local Taliban and their “foreign guests”²⁷ in strengthening their presence in the NWA and SWA.

At present, Al Qaeda is believed to be maintaining two operational structures in FATA – one in NWA and SWA (mainly with the Wazir and Daur Tribes)²⁸ and the other in the Bajaur Agency (mainly with the Mamond Tribe) of FATA. Al Qaeda has been able to recreate their training infrastructure in the NWA, albeit a rudimentary and small one compared to the infrastructure it maintained in Afghanistan. Furthermore, Al Qaeda continues to shift its training infrastructure from time to time in order to avoid a US or Pakistani strike. This infrastructure is largely believed to be situated in the areas surrounding the town of Mirali and between Miranshah and the Shawal Valley,²⁹ at Sedgi³⁰ and Data Khel.³¹

Similarly, Al Qaeda has formed Tanzim Al Qaeda al-Jihad fi al-Khurasan (Al Qaeda in Afghanistan) with the sole purpose of fighting in Afghanistan. Al Qaeda operations are most prevalent in the Afghan provinces adjacent to the FATA, and comprise mainly roadside Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) as well as rocket and mortar attacks. Al Qaeda fighters also participate in ground assaults on outposts manned by Afghan security forces or the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, but these attacks mostly occur as part of a larger Taliban attack. It is believed that aside from Al Qaeda’s support for the Taliban’s fight in Afghanistan, their involvement in IEDs and mortar and rocket attacks is primarily intended to create footage for propaganda purposes and to train their cadre before the recruits are sent back to their respective countries.³² However, Al Qaeda has also carried out several suicide attacks in Afghanistan, and it is reported that Arab militants in FATA have been one of

²⁶ The Pakistani government entered into three peace agreements with the respective tribes and Taliban militants in NWA and SWA. These include: Shakai Agreement with Ahmadzai Wazir Tribe and Taliban (April 2004); Sararogha Agreement with Mahsud Tribe and Taliban (February 2005); and North Waziristan Agreement with Uthmanzai Wazir Tribe and Taliban (September 2006).

²⁷ Foreign Militants are mainly described as “foreign guests” both by the tribesmen as well as government officials in FATA. See ‘US Drone Attack Kills 13 in Waziristan’, *Daily Times*, November 8, 2008.

²⁸ The Wazir Tribe is divided into two sub-tribes: Ahmadzai Wazir inhabiting the SWA, and Uthmanzai Wazir inhabiting the NWA. Daur is another significant tribe of NWA and resides on the banks of the Tochi River valley, mainly in Mirali and Miranshah areas of NWA.

²⁹ ‘Pakistan’s Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militants’, ICG Report, December 11, 2006, p.21

³⁰ ‘Pakistan Raid toll ‘climbs to 45’, *BBC*, March 2, 2006.

³¹ ‘Afghanistan Arrests 17 Would-Be Bombers’, *Associated Press*, October 4, 2006.

³² Discussion with Anders Nielsen, former Research Fellow at the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR), Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, June 25, 2007.

the mainstays in transferring and legitimising suicide attacks among militants in Pakistan's FATA.³³

While Al Qaeda faces limitations on expanding its size in FATA, the terrorist group is attempting to reach out to like-minded groups worldwide to augment its force. Operating out of FATA, the leadership of Al Qaeda is co-opting militant groups with local battle experience. Through this process of cooperation, Al Qaeda's global organisation has grown at an unprecedented rate. In the absence of major successful attacks on Western soil, the leadership of Al Qaeda is trying to portray itself as the headquarters of the global jihad movement with fronts in North Africa, Iraq, the Gulf, Asia and the Horn of Africa.³⁴ In recent years, Al Qaeda has been successful in wooing a faction of the Egyptian militant group Al-Jamaa Islamiya to join Al Qaeda (August 2006)³⁵; the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) (September 2006)³⁶; and the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) (November 2007).³⁷

In Pakistan, Al Qaeda has been able to link up with like-minded jihadi groups that have been operating in the country since the 1980s. These groups include among others Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LJ), Harkatul Mujahideen (HuM), Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Harkatul Jihad-e-Islami (HuJI), Harkatul Mujahideen al-Almi (HuMI), Jamiatul Furqan, Jamiatul Ansar and splinter groups or former members of Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) and Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT).³⁸ These militant groups maintain a firm presence in Punjab Province, especially the southern Seraiki-speaking districts of the province since the 1980s. Post-9/11, these groups are controlled from FATA since their leadership is knitted with the Al Qaeda-Taliban leadership.³⁹ The double suicide attack against Musharraf's

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ 'Website: Al-Zawahiri Congratulates Muslims on Id Al-Adha, 'Defeat' of Americans', Jihadist Websites -- OSC Report, 2006

³⁵ 'Al-Zawahiri: Egyptian militant group joins al Qaeda', *CNN*, August 5, 2006, <http://www.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/meast/08/05/zawahiri.tape/index.html>

³⁶ 'Algerian Islamist Group Joins Al Qaeda', <http://www.afrol.com/articles/21324>.

³⁷ 'Libyan Group Joined Al Qaeda', http://www.globaljihad.net/view_news.asp?id=214.

³⁸ While some of these groups are sectarian in nature, such as LJ, SSP etc, others have remained engaged in Kashmir since 1990s. However, following their proscription in 2001-2002, most of them changed their names. SSP changed its name to Millat-e-Islamia and then to Ahl-e-Sunnat Wal Jamaat. JeM changed its name to Khuddam ul-Islam, while Lashkar-e-Tayyaba's patron body changed its name from Markaz al-Dawaa Wal Irshaad to Jamaat ul-Dawaa etc.

³⁹ The presence of Punjabi Taliban in SWA was widely reported in March 2007 when they allied themselves with the local Taliban group of Mullah Nazir in South Waziristan Agency to evict foreign militants belonging to Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). See Aamir Latif, 'Punjabi Taliban Rise in Waziristan', *Islam Online*, April 22, 2007, http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1177155819817&pagename=Zone-English-News%2FNWELayout.

motorcade on December 25, 2003, was ordered by the Al Qaeda's leader Abu Faraj al-Libbi, but planned and executed by members from Pakistani groups that included Jamiat ul-Furqan, HuJI and Jamiat ul-Ansar.

On September 22, 2008, NWFP Governor Owais Ghani revealed that the jihadi organisations based in FATA are "preparing the people of southern Punjab for suicide attacks in the name of jihad, which is a dangerous carry over from the troubled FATA region."⁴⁰ It has been reported that terrorist attacks on Islamabad and other cities of Punjab are carried out by urban-based local terrorists and not by the tribal terrorists.⁴¹

Using FATA, Al Qaeda has galvanised and mobilised disparate Islamist groups in the global south to create an Al Qaeda movement. With representation from more than two dozen groups, Al Qaeda has created within FATA a de facto headquarters of the global jihad movement. Realising that propaganda forms the basis of winning the present "struggle" against the "Jews and crusaders" from the West, Al Qaeda is exploiting the mayhem created within the Muslim world, as well as the confusion that confounds the Muslim diaspora in the West. In 2007 alone, Al-Sahab, Al Qaeda's media wing, released almost 80 audio and video tapes carrying messages of its leadership. These tapes were increasingly sophisticated productions with subtitles in for example English, animation effects and studio settings.⁴²

According to the US Department of State's "Country Reports on Terrorism 2007", FATA has provided Al Qaeda leadership with "greater mobility and ability to conduct training and operational planning, particularly targeting Western Europe and the United States."⁴³

Similarly, EUROPOL's Annual "Terrorism Situation and Trend Report-2008", released in April 2008, described FATA as the "command and control centre" of Al Qaeda's "remaining core leadership" for planning attacks in the EU. According to the report, a foiled plot in Germany, related to Islamic Jihad Union

⁴⁰ Aoun Abbas Sahi, 'The Punjab Connection', *Newsline Online*, October 2008, <http://www.newsline.com.pk/NewsOct2008/cover3oct2008.htm>.

⁴¹ Ibid. Also see 'Profile: Amjad Farooqi', *BBC*, 27 September 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/3692882.stm; 'Lashkar-e-Jhangvi Involved in Marriott Attack: Malik', *Aaj TV Online*, December 22, 2008, http://www.aaj.tv/news/National/124888_detail.html

⁴² Statement of Peter Bergen Schwartz, Senior fellow of the New America Foundation, before the House Committee on Select Intelligence, April 9, 2008, <http://www.peterbergen.com/bergen/articles/details.aspx?id=341>.

⁴³ Chapter 5: Terrorist Safe Havens: Strategies, Tactics, Tools for Disrupting or Eliminating Safe Havens, *Country Report on Terrorism 2007*, US Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2007/>

(IJU) based in the tribal areas, and recent foiled terrorist attacks in the UK and Denmark indicated an increasingly assertive and efficient Pakistani-based command and control of terrorism in the EU. The report said that the Afghan Taliban and pro-Taliban groups in Pakistan have links to the increasingly active core-structure of Al Qaeda. The report further said that while terrorist links between Pakistan and the EU were almost exclusively focused on the UK, they have recently been expanded to the rest of the EU as well.⁴⁴

Michael Hayden, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), in his speech to the Atlantic Council on November 13, 2008, conceded that despite suffering serious setbacks, Al Qaeda remains determined and adaptive. Hayden further said that the terrorist group is both resilient and vulnerable and remains the most serious threat to the US.⁴⁵

A combination of virulent ideology and global outreach to like-minded individuals and militant groups tends to make Al Qaeda the most haunted terrorist organisation in the world. Someone has aptly summarised Al Qaeda as “a terrorist organisation, a militant network and a subculture of rebellion all at the same time”.⁴⁶

2.3 The Pakistani Taliban

Since 2006, there has been increasing interest and concern in the vague phenomenon called Talibanisation of Pakistan. Former Pakistani President, General Pervez Musharraf, catalysed a major interest in this phenomenon when he suggested that the Taliban now present a greater threat to *the world* than Al Qaeda.⁴⁷ This claim was made when the Pakistani President addressed the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee in Brussels in September 2006. In his address, Musharraf stated that although the vast majority of Pushtuns are moderate, the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan could lead to a Talibanisation of the Pushtuns.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ “TE-SAT - EU Terrorism Trend and Situation Report”, EUROPOL 2008, http://www.europol.europa.eu/publications/EU_Terrorism_Situation_and_Trend_Report_TE-SAT/TESAT2008.pdf

⁴⁵ Speech of CIA Director, Michael Hayden, on ‘State of Al Qaeda Today’ at the Atlantic Council of the United States on November 13, 2008.

http://www.acus.org/http://www.acus.org/event_blog/cia-director-event-transcript.

⁴⁶ ‘Wining or Losing?’, Op.cit.

⁴⁷ ‘Afghanistan: Taliban Could Spark Pashtun 'National War', *RFE/RL*, September 12, 2006.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

The main problem in scientifically dealing with Musharraf's statements is the lack of clarity that he brings to the term Talibanisation. To bring clarity, we have decided to define Talibanisation or Taliban as encompassing groups in FATA and the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), who view themselves as part of the Taliban movement and refer to the Taliban leadership under Mullah Muhammad Omar for direct operational and strategic guidance. If seen through this prism, Musharraf's warnings seem to remain extremely valid, especially in a Pakistan/Afghanistan context.

The problem in dealing with the Pakistani Taliban is the complexities that surround the various groups of the Taliban that are divided on tribal basis. FATA is comprised of seven Agencies (districts) which are inhabited by various tribes. Each tribe has its own group of Taliban that maintains its separate hierarchy and leadership and seldom operates on the territory of other Taliban groups, except for when they trespass to conduct cross-border attacks in Afghanistan. This is in sheer contrast with the Afghan Taliban which maintain a well-defined hierarchical organisation, with Mullah Omar as the supreme leader and an overall Taliban Shura (consultative council) as the decision-making body of the movement. All the Pakistani Taliban groups, however, have owed allegiance to Mullah Omar and regard him as their supreme leader. While fighting in Afghanistan, all the Pakistani Taliban militants operate under the hierarchical structures of the Afghan Taliban and receive their orders from the Afghan Taliban commanders.

Similarly, the Afghan Taliban, which are believed to have been created by the Pakistani government to bring peace to Afghanistan by ending warlordism in the war-ravaged country, remain a purely Afghan phenomenon which owes its existence to the civil war in Afghanistan during the 1990s. The Pakistani Taliban, on the other hand, are an indigenous phenomenon that came into existence in the post-peace agreements that the Pakistani government signed with various tribes and the Taliban between 2004-2006. Until 2006, the Pakistani Taliban groups were confined to SWA, NWA and Bajaur Agencies⁴⁹ but had spread to the entire FATA by 2008.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ In Bajaur Agency, the pro-Taliban proscribed militant movement, Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi, which was formed in early 1990s to demand enforcement of Shariah (Islamic Law) in Malakand Division, became a vanguard of Afghan Taliban and Al Qaeda militants in the region in the post-9/11. Subsequently the leadership of TNSM Bajaur joined the TTP and is now referred to as TTP-Bajaur Chapter.

⁵⁰ Between 2007-2008, small groups of Taliban began to emerge in Mohmand, Orakzai, Khyber and Kurram Agencies. These groups, however, remained weak and increasingly depend on physical, human and monetary support from various Taliban groups from NWA, SWA and Bajaur Agencies.

The Pakistani Taliban groups mainly fall under the influence of the veteran Afghan mujahideen leader of the 1980s, Maulana Jalaluddin Haqqani, and his son, Sirajuddin Haqqani alias Khalifa, who runs the infamous “Haqqani Network” from the Khost province of Afghanistan. The Khost province adjoins the North Waziristan Agency (NWA) of FATA and provides the Haqqanis and their fighters with the strategic depth to operate from deep inside Pakistan into Afghanistan.⁵¹ While the Haqqanis are reported to be exercising considerable influence upon the Pakistani Taliban, the latter exercises autonomy in their actions and decisions while operating in FATA, especially when their tribes’ interests are at stake or threatened. A glaring example is that of a Pakistani Taliban group led by Mullah Nazir of the Ahmadzai Wazir Tribe, who evicted Uzbek militants belonging to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) from the Ahmadzai Wazir’s tribal area in South Waziristan Agency (SWA) in March-April 2007.⁵² Mullah Nazir did not pay heed to the Afghan Taliban leadership or to other Pakistani Taliban leaders when they tried to convince Nazir not to evict Uzbek militants.⁵³

Some important Pakistani Taliban groups operating in FATA include the Ahmadzai Wazir Taliban (SWA), Uthmanzai Wazir and Daur (NWA), Mahsud Taliban (SWA), Omar Khalid Group (Mohmand) and Maulana Faqir Muhammad-led Taliban in Bajaur Agency.

2.3.1 Ahmadzai Wazir Taliban

The Ahmadzai Wazir tribe of SWA was the first to host the Afghan Taliban and foreign militants when they fled Afghanistan following the US-led coalition attack on Afghanistan in October 2001. Leading a handful of pro-Taliban militants, Nek Muhammad, who belonged to the strongest clan, Yargul Khel of the Ahmadzai Tribe, actively supported the foreign militants. The Pakistani security forces conducted military operations against Nek Muhammad during 2003-2004. In April 2004, the Pakistani government entered into a verbal Shakai peace agreement with the Ahmadzai Wazir Tribe and Nek Muhammad-led militants. The agreement, however, broke down in June 2004 due to differences, with each side blaming the other of non-compliance, owing to the unwritten

⁵¹ Imtiaz Ali, ‘The Haqqani Network and Cross Border Terrorism in Afghanistan’, Terrorism Monitor, Volume 6, Issue 6 (March 24, 2008), Jamestown Foundation, http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?issue_id=4431

⁵² Daniel Kimmage, ‘Central Asia: Has IMU Reached the End of Line?’, *RFERL*, 30 March 2007.

⁵³ Aamir Latif, ‘Pakistan Tribes Take on Uzbek Militants’, Islam Online, 22 March 2007, http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1173695254296&pagename=Zone-English-News%2FNWELayout. Also see ‘Wazir Tribesmen Wary of Uzbek Militants’ Return to South Waziristan’, *Daily Times*, January 31, 2008.

nature of the peace agreement. Nek Muhammad was eventually killed in a predator drone strike in June 2004. His sudden death led to a power struggle between his top militant commanders, a majority of whom happened to be from the powerful Yargul Khels. However, active interference by the Afghan Taliban finally helped Mullah Nazir, a militant commander belonging to the small and weak Kaka Khel clan, to assume the leadership of the Ahmadzai Wazir Taliban in November 2005 – a decision with which the Yargul Khels have not reconciled until now. A decisive battle in March 2007 between the Uzbek militants belonging to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Mullah Nazir finally saw the eviction of Uzbek militants from the area. The IMU militants received active support from the estranged militant commanders of the Yargul Khel clan while the Mullah Nazir-led Taliban were backed by other Ahmadzai clans, tribal elders, the Punjabi Taliban and the Pakistani security forces. Following the defeat of the IMU militants, the Yargul Khel commanders also fled the region.

The IMU and Yargul Khel commanders took refuge with Baitullah Mahsud, the supreme commander of the Mahsud Taliban militants in South Waziristan Agency (SWA). The IMU-Mullah Nazir struggle also negatively impacted on relations between the Mashud and Ahmadzai Wazir Tribes as well as between the Baitullah Mahsud-led Taliban of the Mahsud Tribe and the Mullah Nazir-led Taliban of the Ahmadzai Tribe, since the latter resented the refuge provided by the Mahsuds to the IMU. The struggle continues and Mullah Nazir and his leading commanders have come under constant attacks from the IMU and Yargul Khels. In 2008, Mullah Nazir lost two of his most important aides and commanders – Malik Khanan and Meetha Khan – in the power struggle. The infighting provided the Pakistani government with the opportunity to reassert itself in the region. Mullah Nazir remains weak and vulnerable to machinations of Yargul Khel commanders and IMU militants who want to stage a comeback. Nazir remains pro-government, which allowed an opportunity for the Pakistani government to entrench itself in the area by establishing a permanent military presence in the Wana area and by undertaking development work in the Ahmadzai Wazir areas.

2.3.2 Uthmanzai Wazir and Daur Taliban

The Uthmanzai Wazir and Daur Taliban of the NWA remains the strongest Taliban group in FATA due to their numerical strength, relations with the Afghan Taliban leadership and as they act as a host to Al Qaeda and other foreign militants. These Taliban militants are led by Hafiz Gul Bahadur, who is an Uthmanzai Wazir, while his two deputies, Maulana Sadiq Noor and Maulana Abdul Khaliq Haqqani are from the Daur tribe. Pakistan initiated military opera-

tions in the NWA to evict foreign militants from the region in early 2006. The military operations, however, failed to achieve their objectives. Realising the high cost of military operations that resulted in heavy civilian and military casualties, the Pakistani government signed the infamous September 2006 North Waziristan Agreement with the Uthmanzai Wazir Tribe and the Taliban.⁵⁴

2.3.3 Mahsud Taliban

Still another significant Taliban group is the Mahsud Taliban, which appears to have been the strongest and most violent in recent years. The Mahsud Taliban, under the leadership of Baitullah Mahsud, gave refuge to foreign militants, especially the IMU, after they retreated from Ahmadzai Wazir territory following the initiation of military operations in the SWA in 2003-2004. Al Qaeda, however, reportedly moved to the NWA and preferred to reside with the Uthmanzai Wazir and Daur tribes. In late 2004, the Mahsud Taliban started conducting hit-and-run attacks against Pakistani security forces and installations in the SWA. A military operation by the Pakistani security forces against the Mahsud tribe eventually resulted in the signing of the Sararogha peace agreement in February 2005. The area witnessed comparative peace from 2005 to mid-2007.

In August 2007, Baitullah scrapped the Sararogha peace agreement on the grounds that Pakistani security forces were being redeployed in the area.⁵⁵

Another reason for scrapping the peace agreement was the military operation that Pakistan had conducted against the Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) in Islamabad in July 2007. The abduction of nearly 300 Pakistani security personnel near Laddah in August 2007 and demands for the release of Taliban militants and would-be-suicide bombers being held in Pakistani jails were perceived as humiliating for the Pakistani government.

Similarly, Baitullah Mahsud was named as a prime suspect in the assassination on 27 December 2007 of Benazir Bhutto, chairperson of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP).⁵⁶ Maulana Saleh Shah, a senator from the South Waziristan Agency, reportedly said that Baitullah Mahsud, the leader of the newly formed Tehrik-e-

⁵⁴ For an English version of the text of North Waziristan peace agreement, please see 'Return of the Taliban: North Waziristan Peace Pact', *Frontline*, October 3, 2006, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/taliban/etc/nwdeal.html>.

⁵⁵ 'Militants End South Waziristan Peace Deal', August 19, 2007, <http://newsdirect.wordpress.com/2007/08/19/militants-end-s-waziristan-peace-deal>.

⁵⁶ Pakistani intelligence claims to have intercepted a phone call from Baitullah Mahsud, offering congratulations for the operation that killed Bhutto. See Barnett Rubin, 'The Musharraf Problem', *Wall Street Journal*, December 29, 2008.

Taliban Pakistan (Taliban Movement of Pakistan), had threatened to welcome Benazir with bombs on her return to the country⁵⁷ - an allegation he later denied.

On 14 December 2007, Baitullah Mahsud announced the formation of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), an umbrella organisation comprising various militant groups in FATA and the NWFP. Formed to centralise their command under Baitullah Mahsud of South Waziristan, the TTP's stated aims were to enforce Shariah in Pakistan, coordinate efforts against the US and ISAF-NATO forces in Afghanistan, and conduct "defensive jihad" against the Pakistani security forces.⁵⁸ Baitullah Mahsud was nominated the leader of the TTP, while Maulana Hafiz Gul Bahadur, commander of the NWA Taliban, and Maulana Faqir Muhammad, head of Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM)⁵⁹, were declared the second and third deputy leaders of the militant group. Similarly, Maulana Fazlullah of TNSM⁶⁰ in Swat was appointed as secretary general of TTP. Maulvi Umer of the Bajaur Agency was nominated the official spokesman of the TTP. Considering TTP's growing relationship with Al Qaeda, the Pakistani Taliban presents a much bigger and immediate threat to Pakistan than the Afghan Taliban. The TTP's collective membership is presently assessed at 30,000 to 35,000.

One of the reasons for forming the TTP was to render the Pakistani government's 'divide and rule' policy ineffective. This policy was a continuation of British India's policy, under which a non-cooperating or dissenting tribe was subjugated or coerced, while placating the others at the same time. Similarly, the government had successfully played on the historical differences and rivalries that existed among various tribes inhabiting a single Agency in order to keep the tribes in check. Another way to keep the tribes in check was the carrot and stick policy under which certain rewards were given to a tribe while punishment was meted out to its rival in case of non-compliance.

Soon after its formation, the TTP issued threats to the Pakistani government to cease military operations in the Swat district of NWFP and parts of FATA, otherwise they would conduct terrorist attacks throughout Pakistan.⁶¹ The subsequent terrorist attacks on military installations in the SWA, especially on

⁵⁷ 'Baitullah Executes Three Soldiers: Says His Bombers are Waiting For Benazir Bhutto', *Daily Times*, October 5, 2007.

⁵⁸ 'Editorial: Tribal Areas Under Centralised Control', *Daily Times*, December 16, 2007

⁵⁹ Since May 2008, the TNSM Bajaur calls itself as TTP-Bajaur chapter. This is because TNSM's founder, Sufi Muhammad, who was released from Pakistani jail in April 2008 under agreement with the Pakistani government, renounced his relationship with Maulana Faqir Muhammad and Maulana Fazlullah and evicted them from the TNSM.

⁶⁰ Since May 2008, Maulana Fazlullah operates under the banner of TTP-Swat Chapter.

⁶¹ 'Tehrik-e-Taliban Threatens Attacks in Settled Areas', *The News*, January 5, 2008.

Britishera military forts in Spilatoi, Sararogha and Ladha, finally forced the Pakistani government to initiate a three-pronged military operation in January 2008 against Baitullah Mahsud-led Taliban militants, code named “Operation Tri-Star”, of which “Operation Zalzala (earthquake)” was one effective part.⁶² The Pakistani security forces made significant gains against Mahsud’s Taliban militants and occupied the strategic towns of Laddah, Makin, Spinkai Raghzai, Kotkai and Tiarza, aiming at encircling Baitullah Mahsud.⁶³ A unilateral ceasefire came into effect after Baitullah Mahsud extended a truce offer to the government through Senator Maulana Saleh Shah of the South Waziristan Agency.⁶⁴ Subsequent negotiations between the newly-elected Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)-led government and the TTP resulted in an impasse that continues till today. Despite the absence of a peace agreement, a fragile ceasefire continues to maintain peace in the region.⁶⁵

It was also reported that Mullah Omar, the supreme leader or “*Ameer-al Momineen*” (Leader of the Faithful) of the Afghan Taliban, disapproved of Baitullah Mahsud’s decision to form the TTP, since the former did not want the Pakistani or local Taliban to conduct fighting against Pakistani security forces. Omar, instead, wanted the Pakistani Taliban to concentrate their energy and human resources on fighting ISAF-NATO troops in Afghanistan.⁶⁶ While there are unconfirmed reports that Mullah Omar has sacked Baitullah from the ranks of the Taliban, it is an undeniable fact that the Afghan Taliban maintains a heavy reliance on the Pakistani Taliban for crucial human and physical support. Also, the Afghan Taliban do not exercise operational control over the Pakistani Taliban groups, which maintain a separate command and control mechanism although they have vowed allegiance to Mullah Omar.

According to some reports, the Taliban factions in North and South Waziristan, headed by Hafiz Gul Bahadur and Mullah Nazir, have distanced themselves from Baitullah.⁶⁷ The distancing of Gul Bahadur came in December 2007, following Mullah Omar’s disapproval of Baitullah’s strategy to form the TTP.⁶⁸ It was also reported that Hafiz Gul Bahadur asked Baitullah in January 2008 not to use the North Waziristani territory for conducting attacks against Pakistani security

⁶² Zaffar Abbas, ‘Taliban Ousted, But Spinkai is now a Ghost Town’, *Dawn*, May 19, 2008.

⁶³ ‘Waziristan Militant Commander Killed?’, *Daily Times*, January 27, 2008.

⁶⁴ ‘Mahsud Offers Conditional Talks’, *Daily Times*, January 27, 2008.

⁶⁵ ‘Govt, Mahsud Announce Ceasefire’, *The Post*, February 4, 2008.

⁶⁶ Syed Saleem Shahzad, ‘Taliban Wield the ax Ahead of New battle’, *Asia Times Online*, January 24, 2008.

⁶⁷ Syed Saleem Shahzad, ‘Taliban Take a Hit, But the Fight Goes on’, *Statesman*, February 2, 2008.

⁶⁸ ‘Omar dismayed at Followers Over Wildcat Actions’, *Statesman*, January 28, 2008.

forces⁶⁹, as this could jeopardise ongoing negotiations to revamp the September 2006 peace agreement. Gul Bahadur had announced a ceasefire with the Pakistani security forces in late December 2007, which finally led to the revival of the September 2006 peace agreement in February 2008.

A deep schism also reportedly exists between various Taliban groups operating in FATA over the issue of whether to fight a “defensive” war against Pakistani government and security forces.⁷⁰ Some of the militant groups are more comfortable with fighting the ISAF-NATO troops in Afghanistan instead of waging a war inside Pakistan.⁷¹ Such groups also maintain that they have owed allegiance to Mullah Omar and not to Baitullah Mahsud and, therefore, would abide by the instructions of Mullah Omar.⁷²

Meanwhile, Baitullah Mahsud continues to strengthen his relationship with the Al Qaeda leadership presently based in the NWA. Mahsud is reportedly receiving ideological, financial and logistical support from Al Qaeda.⁷³ Al Qaeda also favours attacks against the Pakistani government and security forces. The TTP seems to be toeing to Al Qaeda’s ideology of global jihad and recently claimed involvement in foiled terrorist attacks in Spain in January 2008.⁷⁴ Presently, relations between the Afghan Taliban and TTP are facing serious problems since the TTP has inched closer to Al Qaeda, which is at cross-purpose with the Afghan Taliban’s strategy of limiting their struggle to Afghanistan only. This is evident from the recent statement by Mullah Omar in which he said that the Taliban movement is not a threat to other countries. According to Omar, “This is our right to defend our country. We are not a threat to other countries. But we have to use our rights when our country is occupied by foreign forces.” He also emphasised that the people of other countries should pressure their governments not to send troops to Afghanistan.⁷⁵

Also, serious policy differences between Hafiz Gul Bahadur and Mullah Nazir, on the one side, and Baitullah Mahsud, on the other, led the former to form another military bloc, the Muqami Tehrik-e-Taliban (Local Taliban Movement)

⁶⁹ Matthew Vree, ‘Tribal Pakistan: Who is in Control?’, <http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/pakistan703/history/map.html>.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ ‘Spotlight Falls on Taliban man Accused of Murdering Benazir’, *Daily Times*, January 28, 2008.

⁷⁴ The Spanish Government claimed on January 25, 2008, to have arrested 14 suspected terrorists in the country, which were in the final stages of preparing a suicide attack using multiple bombs. See Richard Esposito and Paco Medina, ‘Urgent Manhunt Across Europe for Terror Plotters’, *ABC News*, January 25, 2008, <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/story?id=4191953>. Also See ‘TTP Planned Foiled Barcelona Suicide Attacks’, *Daily Times*, September 19, 2008.

⁷⁵ ‘Taliban no Threat to US, Europe: Omar’, *Dawn*, February 12, 2008.

on June 30, 2008.⁷⁶ Subsequently, Hafiz Gul Bahadur was appointed as the overall commander of both the Ahmadzai and Uthmanzai Taliban, Mullah Nazir as the deputy commander and Mufti Abu Haroon as the spokesman of the group.⁷⁷ The formation of the Bahadur-Nazir alliance could be aptly described as a “Waziri alliance” since both Nazir and Bahadur belong to the dominant Wazir Tribe in the NWA and SWA, which encircles the Mahsud Tribe from the North, West and South.⁷⁸ As stated by Mullah Nazir, the group has been formed to “defend the Wazir Tribes’ interests in North and South Waziristan.”⁷⁹

It is, however, generally believed that the bloc was formed as an attempt to counter Baitullah Mahsud and his TTP. As stated by a pro-Mullah Nazir tribal elder who attended a jirga (tribal council) to ratify the Nazir-Bahadur agreement, the move aimed at allowing the two leaders to “forge unity against Mahsud.”⁸⁰ The agreement came against a backdrop of increasing terrorist activity by the Baitullah Mahsud-led TTP against the Pakistani government as well as militant raids by the TTP in June 2008 to punish the pro-government Malik Turkistan group from the neighbouring Bhattani Tribe. Both Mullah Nazir and Hafiz Gul Bahadur are pro-government and shun terrorist activities within Pakistan.

Contrary to Baitullah Mahsud, Hafiz Gul Bahadur and Mullah Nazir remains pro-Afghan Taliban and have limited their activities to Afghanistan only. Both the TTP and Muqami Tehrik-e-Taliban are trying to woo various Taliban groups operating in FATA and NWFP which is giving rise to tensions between the two sides that may boil down to open hostility. The TTP is believed to have killed two prominent leaders of rival pro-Taliban militant groups – Haji Namdar of Amr Bil Maroof wa Nahi Anil Munkir (Promotion of Vice and Prevention of Virtue) in the Khyber Agency and Shah Khalid Group in the Mohmand Agency, when they decided to join the Muqami Tehrik-e-Taliban.

2.3.4 Taliban of Bajaur Agency

Bajaur Agency lies in the extreme north of the FATA region and shares a border with the Kunar and Nuristan Provinces of Afghanistan. Bajaur played a

⁷⁶ ‘Two Taliban Groups Unite to Fight NATO’, *Dawn*, July 1, 2008; ‘Mehsud Challenged by New Militant Bloc’, *Daily Times*, July 2, 2008.

⁷⁷ ‘Pakistan: Pro-Govt Militants, Tribal Elders Join Hands Against Mehsud (Awakening?)’, *Zee TV*, July 9, 2008.

⁷⁸ Sadia Sulaiman, ‘Empowering “Soft” Taliban Over “Hard” Taliban: Pakistan’s Counter-Terrorism Strategy’, *Terrorism Monitor*, Volume 6, Issue 15, July 25, 2008, <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2374331>.

⁷⁹ ‘Mehsud Challenged by New Militant Bloc’, *Daily Times*, July 2, 2008.

⁸⁰ ‘Wazir Tribes Ratify New Militant Bloc’, *Daily Times*, July 8, 2008

prominent role a springboard and sanctuary for Afghan refugees and mujahideen in the 1980s era of jihad against the former Soviet Union. In the 1990s, the Agency witnessed a rise of the TNSM that was headed by Maulana Faqir Muhammad. TNSM struggled for implementation of Shariah in the Malakand region and also maintained friendly ties with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan during 1996-2001.

After the fall of the Taliban regime in October 2001, Bajaur acted as a sanctuary for Al Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban. Gradually, the TNSM allied itself closely with the Taliban and Al Qaeda leadership and started cross-border attacks in Afghanistan. By 2006, TNSM had assumed tremendous strength.

At present, there are four main Taliban groups operating in the Agency, namely the TTP-Bajaur chapter (formerly TNSM); Jaishul Islami, led by Waliur Rehman; Dr. Ismail group active in Mamond area, and Karwan-e-Niamatullah led by Maulana Niamatullah.⁸¹ All the groups have joined the TTP and operate under the leadership of Maulana Faqir Muhammad, who is also the deputy head of TTP. Due to Bajaur's proximity to Peshawar, capital of NWFP, and to Kabul in Afghanistan, the Bajaur Taliban could cause major instability in the two capitals. The presence of foreign militants within the ranks of the Bajaur Taliban also poses a serious threat since they provide the ideological and strategic guidance to the group. Also, the Bajaur Taliban provides crucial support to Taliban militants in the adjoining district of Swat in NWFP as well as to Taliban militants in neighbouring Mohmand Agency.

In Khyber, Kurram and Orakzai Agencies, the Taliban groups emerged in 2008 and remain considerably weak. Most of the Taliban militants in these Agencies are either of non-local or foreign origin, and their activities in Afghanistan remain insignificant. In Khyber Agency, a small Taliban group is operating in the Jamrud area under the leadership of a former Afghan governor of the Nangarhar district during the Taliban regime (1996-2001), Yahya Hijrat aka Maulana Mustafa Kamal Kamran Hijrat. Hijrat and his Taliban militants operate on the Pakistan-Afghanistan highway that connects Peshawar with Kabul, with the objective to disrupt ISAF-NATO and US supplies on the strategic road.⁸² Similarly, the Taliban operating from Khyber Agency are also involved in kidnapping for ransom in an effort to raise funds for TTP-operations. Yet another Taliban militant group operates in the Darra Adamkhel area under the leadership

⁸¹ Maulana Faqir Muhammad-led TTP-Bajaur has its stronghold in the Mamond area, while Karwan-e-Niamatullah is operating in the Salarzai area of Bajaur Agency, Jaishul Islami operates in the Damadola in Mamond area of Bajaur Agency. Similarly, an Afghan Taliban commander, Qari Ziaur Rehman, control the affairs of the Charmang area of Bajaur.

⁸² 'NATO Supply Trucks Hijacked by Taliban Retrieved', *Daily Times*, November 11, 2008

of Mufti Ilyas, Khalid Khan and Maulana Tariq Khan. The Taliban militants in Darra are said to have close connections with the anti-Shia militant organisations Lashkar-i-Jhangvi and Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP). Darra Adamkhel is a strategic pass that connects the southern NWFP with the northern part.

In Kurram and Orakzai Agencies, the Taliban groups are mainly focused on Talibanisation activities in the adjoining settled districts of Kohat, Hangu and Thal in NWFP. The head of TTP in Orakzai Agency is Hakimullah Mahsud, who once was the spokesman of Baitullah Mahsud and who carried the nom de guerre, Zulfiqar Mahsud. The Taliban in Kurram Agency are led by Fakhr-e-Alam Mahsud.

2.4 Post-2008 General Elections and the Security Situation in FATA

The inauguration of a new government led by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in the February 2008 elections gave the impression that the security situation in the country, especially in FATA, would improve. This impression was a result of pre-election statements by various political parties who disagreed with Musharraf-era policies, including those related to the war on terror, and vowed to initiate peace talks with the tribal militants. Some of the constituents of the newly-elected government also declared that they would favour the signing of peace agreements to bring an end to militant activities in the country. While militant violence continues in the country in the post-election era, its intensity has gone down considerably.

However, the approach of the new PPP-led government failed to initiate and finalise any peace agreement that could satisfy the Pakistani government and the larger international community. This was because the demands put forward by the Baitullah-led Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) included non-interference by the Pakistani government in TTP's cross-border attacks into Afghanistan and withdrawal of Pakistani troops from the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and the FATA region. The ISAF-NATO expressed its reservations to Pakistan over any future peace deal with the TTP, announcing that a sharp increase of more than 50 percent in cross-border attacks had been witnessed in May 2008 compared to the number of attacks in May 2007. According to the ISAF-NATO spokesman, James Appathurai, "the concern is that the deals struck by the Pakistan government and extremist groups in the Tribal Areas may be allowing them to have a safe haven." Appathurai further said that ISAF-NATO had communicated their

concerns to the Pakistani authorities. “We do not want to interfere in internal affairs but we have every right to communicate our concerns.”⁸³

Secondly, the new government comprised of various political parties which maintained diverse approaches towards the issue of militancy. This resulted in differences and finally a lack of consensus in reaching a comprehensive settlement on the Taliban issue. Thirdly, Pakistan could not sustain the pressure of the international community, especially the US and ISAF-NATO forces in Afghanistan, in the long term if the Taliban militants continued to violate any future peace deal with the government.

According to the *New York Times*, an increasing frustration on the part of the US administration vis-à-vis the new Pakistani government’s stated policy of signing peace deals in the near future with the Pakistani Taliban militants while showing little concern over stopping Pakistan-Afghanistan border attacks pushed the US administration to consider cross-border raids into Pakistani tribal areas.⁸⁴ The US Deputy Secretary of State, John Negroponte, also made it very clear on May 5, 2008, when he said that the US “will not be satisfied until all the violent extremism emanating from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas is brought under control. It is unacceptable for extremists to use those areas to plan, train for, or execute attacks against Afghanistan, Pakistan, or the wider world. Their ongoing ability to do so is a barrier to lasting security, both regionally and internationally. Pakistan’s Government must bring the frontier area under its control as quickly as possible and we are certainly prepared to provide appropriate assistance to the Government of Pakistan in order to achieve that objective.” He also said that “a successful strategy in the tribal areas must include the possibility of military operations.”⁸⁵

Finally, any future peace agreement entered into by the new government is likely to fail in the medium and long-term since the Taliban intend to continue with their Talibanisation drive and have declared an intention to impose their Taliban-style Shariah in the country. According to Maulana Faqir Muhammad of the TTP, “the removal of President Pervez Musharraf, a review of the country’s foreign policy and the enforcement of Shariah law in the Tribal Areas are the

⁸³ ‘NATO Concerned over Pakistan Border Deals’, *Daily Times*, May 15, 2008.

⁸⁴ John Perlez, ‘Pakistan Defies US on Halting Afghanistan Raids’, *The New York Times*, May 16, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/16/world/asia/16pstan.html?_r=1&sq=Damadola%20Strike%20May%2016.%202008&st=nyt&oref=slogin&scp=1&pagewanted=print

⁸⁵ John Negroponte’s Remarks at the National Endowment for Democracy’s Pakistan Forum at Washington D.C., May 5, 2008, <http://www.state.gov/s/d/2008/104366.htm>

three demands that are a must for lasting peace in the settled and tribal areas of NWFP.” He further said that “Islam comes first, then Pakistan.”⁸⁶

It has been witnessed that, since March 2008, the Taliban have intensified their vigilante activities in FATA and the NWFP region. The recent killings of alleged criminals in the Mohmand and Orakzai Agencies in May 2008⁸⁷ as well as religious edicts calling upon people to grow beards are cases in point.⁸⁸ Similarly, the Taliban banned non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and women’s education in some districts of the NWFP and Orakzai Agency.⁸⁹

2.5 Key Drivers behind the Rise of Taliban and the Subsequent Talibanisation of FATA

A host of security, political and administrative issues are responsible for the rise of the Pakistani Taliban and their subsequent Talibanisation of FATA. Some key driver will be presented below in brief. These issues are interlinked and not ranked in order of importance. They will be discussed under three separate headings -security, political and administrative issues.

2.5.1 Security

1. The presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan provides ample support for the Taliban among the FATA tribesmen, who have traditionally fought outside influence in Afghanistan. NATO forces presence in Afghanistan is an issue that is used by clerics with Taliban sympathies to rally support for their cause. The legitimacy of “jihad” is very strong among the tribesmen in the FATA and this is being used very effectively by certain clerics.
2. The return to SWA and NWA of several clerics and tribesmen, who fought with the Taliban in Afghanistan during 1996-2001 and returned to FATA after the overthrow of Taliban regime in Afghanistan in November 2001, added to the Taliban advance. Aside from the Taliban ideology, they also brought military experience, which has been used against the Pakistani military.

⁸⁶ ‘Islam First, Pakistan Later: Maulvi Faqir’, *Daily Times*, April 19, 2008

⁸⁷ Dr. Hassan Isfahani, ‘Taliban Shot and Hang Kidnappers in Orakzai and Mohmand Agencies’, <http://www.pakspectator.com/taliban-shot-and-hang-kidnappers-in-mahmand-and-orakzai-agency/>

⁸⁸ ‘Grow Beards or Face Punishment: Taliban’, *Express India*, May 5, 2008, <http://www.expressindia.com/latest-news/Grow-beards-or-face-punishment-Taliban/305671/>

⁸⁹ ‘Taliban Ban NGOs, Women Education in Orakzai Agency’, *Terror News Brief*, <http://pbtt.wordpress.com/2008/05/11/taliban-ban-ngos-women-education-in-orakzai-agency/>; ‘Taliban Give NGOs 3-Day Deadline’, *Daily Times*, May 13, 2008.

3. Necessary, but failed military offensives took an army tailored to fight a conventional war with India to fight tribesmen in a guerilla war in very rugged terrain. The resulting heavy-handed tactics created hatred among tribesmen against an otherwise respected institution in Pakistan. The offensives were also very unpopular within Pakistan's officer corps, who did not like fighting their own countrymen. The offensives caused significant casualties - civilian as well as military. The peace agreements did not bring closure as the Pakistani military lacked the will to enforce them, which only emboldened the Taliban.
4. After the signing of the peace agreements, many of the tribal elders who had stood with the Pakistani Army were killed by the Pakistani Taliban, while the remaining tribal elders were coerced and submitted to Taliban rule. This further eroded the power of this institution (tribal elders), which had been one of the pre-eminent institutions of power in FATA since the time of the British rule over the Indian subcontinent (1857-1947).
5. The Pakistani military operations also weakened the civil administration - another important institution in FATA. During and after the entry of the Pakistan's Army into North and South Waziristan Agencies, the Army became the most powerful representative of the Federal government in FATA. As the Pakistani Army was conducting military operations within North and South Waziristan, the Political Agent's (PA) manipulation of the Tribal tribal elders, was often undermined by military operations. As stated by the former head of the Political Administration in Khyber and South Waziristan, Khalid Aziz: *"Manipulating and aligning tribal leaders and tribes is a time consuming job, which often demands the use of both enticements and coercion. Aligning the tribes is in many ways like a game of chess, where the Political Agent is trying to manoeuvre in such a way that the transgressing tribe is rendered checkmate and is forced to comply, but if the Army suddenly fires a missile into this chessboard, while the PA is manoeuvring, then the tribesmen will loose trust in him."*⁹⁰
Pakistan's Army operations sidelined the PA office, which was already weakened by the decline of the tribal elders, who had been the interface between the PA and the tribesmen. The weakening of the PA office has generally weakened the role of Pakistan's civil bureaucracy in FATA and instead increased the influence of Pakistani military officers. It has also derailed the institutionalised relations between the Federal Government and the tribesmen.

⁹⁰ Interview with Khalid Aziz, Head of Regional Institute of Policy Research and Training (RIPORE) in Peshawar, May 23, 2007.

6. The Taliban's ability to establish law-and-order in FATA, where the Federal government and the PA had failed, added to their popularity. The Pakistani Taliban provide *Salweshti* (protection) to the locals in an area that has typically been lawless. Through this, the Pakistani Taliban have garnered public support.

2.5.2 Political

1. The role and popularity of the clergy increased after the "jihad" against Soviet forces in Afghanistan during the 1980s. This was especially prevalent in the southern districts of NWFP and the southern Agencies of FATA, which were traditionally relatively religious and economically backward compared to the North. The foothold of the secular parties was also much weaker in these areas and when adult-franchise was established in FATA in 1996, the votes in the southern Agencies of FATA and the southern districts of NWFP went to the clerics. Specifically, the votes in the southern districts of NWFP and the southern Agencies of FATA went to clerics who were aligned with JUI-F, which has historically had, albeit currently declining, sympathies for the Taliban.
2. The southern districts of NWFP and the southern Agencies of NWFP are underdeveloped in health, economic and educational terms. These districts and Agencies are remote from NWFP's capital of Peshawar and sparsely populated, which means that the political weight of their electorate is very limited. NWFP has typically been ruled by secular parties, which have their main support base in the central districts around Peshawar. The southern districts and Agencies of FATA and NWFP have been neglected, leaving a significant part of the tribesmen illiterate and dependent on Madrassah education.⁹¹ FATA has a literacy rate of 17.4 percent and a primary school participation rate of 41.3 percent, which are significantly lower than the national averages of 45 percent and 77 percent respectively. According to a report of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), there are only 102 high schools across FATA, while as many as 300 Madaris (religious seminaries) operate there.⁹²
3. Initiation of political reforms by the Federal government, aimed at bringing FATA into Pakistan's mainstream political life, has strengthened the clergy and weakened the Malik (tribal leaders). As these political reforms were introduced in 1996, including adult franchise, the southern districts of NWFP and FATA elected clerics with close affiliations to the Taliban. This increased the strength of the Taliban, and the Federal government therefore halted these reforms in 2002. This caused resentment among educated

⁹¹ "Preparing Project to Develop Federally Administered Tribal Areas in Pakistan", Asian Development Bank, February 18, 2004.

⁹² Zissis, Carin, 'Pakistan's Tribal Areas', Council on Foreign Relations, November 9, 2006.

tribesmen who wanted to be full members of the Pakistani society, while leaving the clerics in power in southern NWFP. However, the recent decrease in popularity of JUI-F and MMA in NWFP and their loss in the general elections in February 2008 were not catalysed by federal political reforms, but instead by Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal's (MMA) failure to bring provincial resources to the southern NWFP and because MMA members are increasingly perceived as being corrupt.

2.5.3 Administrative

1. The tribesmen of FATA no longer want to be governed by the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) – a British-era law enacted in 1901 and which is meant to regulate the affairs of FATA. However, there is a split between the educated tribesmen, who often hold jobs in Pakistan's administration or military, and their fellow un-educated tribesmen. The collective punishment clauses of the FCR stipulate that tribesmen who are public employees can be relieved from collective punishment when their tribe transgresses. The group of educated tribesmen wants to become full members of Pakistani society and be governed by Pakistan's secular judicial system. Contrary to this are the supporters of the Taliban. They also want to dispel with the FCR, but instead of the Pakistani judicial system, they want to introduce Shariah Law and Islamic Courts.
2. The Pakistani Taliban have been able to provide an expeditious justice system, which is perceived as being less corrupt and more effective than the Pakistani judicial system. This has received support from the masses in both FATA and the settled areas. The imposition of restrictions and bans in FATA has caused some opposition in the region, whereas the Taliban-supported Peace Committees in the settled districts simply enter arbitration on request by local authorities and the locals.
3. The creation of the Governors "FATA Secretariat" and the subsequent division of powers and duties related to security in FATA between the FATA Secretariat and NWFP's provincial "Home Department for Tribal Affairs" have increased problems related to the co-ordination of security in FATA. The Home Department for Tribal Affairs reports to the provincial government, whereas the FATA Secretariat reports to the Governor, who looks after the FATA on behalf of the President of Pakistan.
4. Former Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf's "Devolution of Power Plan 2000" removed the offices of Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner, who held key coordination functions on security issues related to the settled districts and FATA. During the rule of the Commissioners, which was an office held by senior civil servants, they were some of the most powerful members of the local executive. They also played a significant role vis-à-vis Waziristan, with the Commissioner of Dera Ismail Khan also in charge of South and North Waziristan. The PAs of these two

Agencies therefore did not have to travel to Peshawar for consultation and guidance.⁹³ In the words of the former PA of South Waziristan Agency, Khalid Aziz: *“The commissioner acted like the regional coordinator and that office is missing in the new local government system. That is why quick decisions are difficult to make and the security environment deteriorates meanwhile”*⁹⁴

Refusing to re-instate the office of the Commissioner, which was removed by former Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf, the present Pakistani government is instead introducing the office of the Resident Coordinating Officer (RCO).⁹⁵ This office was created by the British, during their rule of India, and included a resident for the two Waziristans. According to Khalid Aziz, the Resident was so: *“powerful that the military was placed under his control and the governor would take his recommendations seriously for any policy decision on Waziristan”*.⁹⁶

The devolution of powers plan has left some serious structural weaknesses in Pakistan’s federal and provincial administrative systems. These weaknesses have curbed Pakistan’s ability to effectively combat the rise of the Taliban in FATA. As stated by Khalid Aziz: *“We left so many gaps in the new system and are paying the price now”*⁹⁷

2.6 Conclusion

The long-term strategic significance of Al Qaeda successfully carving out a semi-safe-haven in FATA is yet to be realised. In addition to the inaccessible Pakistan-Afghanistan border emerging as the new headquarters of the global jihad movement, Al Qaeda and its likeminded groups are seeking to change the geopolitics of the region. Using FATA, Al Qaeda and its associated groups are attempting to indoctrinate self-radicalised individuals in the West and recruit them to carry out attacks in Europe and North America. Operating from FATA, groups trained in that region are mounting attacks in Western China (Xinjiang), Iraq, Algeria, Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Central Asian countries and other conflict zones. As the failed assassination attempts on leaders in Pakistan and Afghanistan show, the philosophy of Al Qaeda and its associated groups is to remove all those leaders they view as “American assets” and who are hostile to the terrorists and extremists.

⁹³ ‘President considering old ideas to solve current Waziristan problems’, *Daily Times*, May 25, 2007.

⁹⁴ Interview with Khalid Aziz.

⁹⁵ *ibid*

⁹⁶ *ibid*

⁹⁷ *ibid*

Almost all the terrorist and extremist groups that existed in Afghanistan and Pakistan during the Taliban rule in Afghanistan (1994-2001) have reconstituted themselves and maintain a robust presence in FATA. Al Qaeda is providing crucial knowledge and methodology to mobilise not only foreign but also domestic terrorist groups. The tribes in FATA supported the anti-Soviet multinational Afghan mujahideen campaign between 1979 and 1989. Today, the tribes in FATA perceive the Western intervention in Afghanistan as an extension of the past where non-Muslims occupied Muslim lands. Consequently, hardline Pushtun nationalists and Islamists are supporting the fight against the US and its allies. Like Sudan and Afghanistan, which were hubs for terrorist groups from 1991 to 1996 and 1996 to 2001 respectively, FATA has emerged as the most important terrorist sanctuary in recent history.

To demonstrate that the threats made against the West by Osama bin Laden and Al Zawahiri are real, Al Qaeda's leadership is likely to build capabilities to strike against Western targets outside its normal areas of operation in Iraq and Afghanistan. While creating new structures and linking up with existing platforms globally, Al Qaeda is using FATA to impart training and direction to a new generation of transnational and home-grown cadre. As long as FATA is a sanctuary for the jihadists, there can be no genuine peace and stability in Afghanistan and beyond. Without the dismantling of Al Qaeda and the associated jihadist enclave in FATA, even if international forces would double their size in Afghanistan, the incessant guerrilla and periodic terrorist attacks will continue. Focusing on the increased infiltration from FATA into Afghanistan, the media has mostly dealt with the problems for NATO and Afghan security forces, but not the threat to the rest of the world. Very little has been documented on the threat from this jihadist enclave to rest of Pakistan and to the West. From this sanctuary, Al Qaeda is building skill and will, empowering a new, albeit currently small generation of Western recruits. In addition to imparting propaganda which creates support for Al Qaeda and its movement globally, Al Qaeda is providing operational and IED knowledge, which enables a level of sophistication and scale that is not normally seen among home-grown groups.

The West, particularly the US, has no option but to enhance its engagement with Pakistan. Pakistan has once again become a frontline in the fight against terrorism and extremism. But without an understanding by the West of the difficulties Pakistan is facing, the progress of the Pakistani state will be limited.

Instead of threatening to impose sanctions, it must understand why “all terror roads lead to Pakistan”.⁹⁸ The surviving core leadership of Al Qaeda actively leading the global jihad lives and works in FATA. Although the international community perceives Iraq and Afghanistan as the two pivotal states, Pakistan is the most pivotal state.

Recent media reports of Al Qaeda diverting its human and material resources from Iraq to Afghanistan, which it describes as “Khurasan”,⁹⁹ means that the terrorist organisation, after suffering setbacks in Iraq due to the Sahwa (awakening) movement by the Iraqi tribes, wants to fight its decisive battle against the West in “Khurasan”.¹⁰⁰ This would mean more Al Qaeda involvement in Afghanistan that could bring more violence to the insurgency-hit country in the near future. In May 2008, it was reported that two prominent leaders of Al Qaeda in Iraq – Abu Suleiman al-Otaibi and Abu Dejana al-Qahtani – were killed in fighting against US forces in the Afghan Paktia province that adjoins the South Waziristan Agency.¹⁰¹

Already, the security situation in Afghanistan has witnessed considerable deterioration since 2005, and it will deteriorate further with the passage of every year. According to a study released in December 2008 by The International Council on Security and Development (ICOS), formerly known as the Sensil Council, the Taliban by December 2008 held a permanent presence in 72 percent of Afghanistan, up from 54 percent in 2007.¹⁰² Taliban forces have advanced from their southern heartlands, where they are now the de facto governing power in a

⁹⁸ Within the Western intelligence community, they used this phrase often because many of their investigations led to Pakistan.

⁹⁹ According to an Islamic belief, a decisive war would be fought between the Muslims and Jews that would start from Khurasan, which is a province of Iran. However, historically it was a larger province under the Persian Empire that covered parts of present-day Afghanistan and Central Asia. The beliefs say that Muslims would win the war, and would proceed to the Arab Middle East where Armageddon would be fought as the last decisive battle. Al Qaeda believes that the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region is part of Khurasan, where it is fighting against the Anti-Islam Judeo-Christian nexus. Hence, Al Qaeda has also named its organisation in Afghanistan as “Tanzim al-Qaeda al-Jihad fi-al Khurasan” with Mustafa Abu Yazid aka Abu Saeeda al Masri as its head.

¹⁰⁰ Alex Spillius, ‘Al-Qaeda leaders leaving Iraq to bolster fight in Afghanistan’, *Telegraph*, August 1, 2008, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/2481460/Al-Qaeda-leaders-leaving-Iraq-to-bolster-fight-in-Afghanistan.html>

¹⁰¹ According to the report quoting Al Qaeda leader, Mustafa Abu Yazid, both the leaders left Iraq probably in early 2008 to take part in fighting in Afghanistan. Otaibi was the head of the judiciary of the self-styled Islamic State in Iraq. See, ‘Key al Qaeda member killed in Afghanistan: Web’, *Reuters*, May 11, 2008, <http://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSL1112798020080511>

¹⁰² ‘Struggle for Kabul: The Taliban Advances’, The International Council on Security and Development (ICOS) December 2008, http://www.icosgroup.net/documents/Struggle_for_Kabul_ICOS.pdf

number of towns and villages, to Afghanistan's western and north-western provinces, as well as provinces north of Kabul. Within a year, the Taliban's permanent presence in the country has increased by a startling 18 percent.¹⁰³

While the Afghan Taliban continues to be the mainstay of Afghan insurgency, cross-border moral, political, human and financial support from Pakistani and foreign militants groups contribute significantly to the success of the insurgents in Afghanistan. Since August 2006, Pakistan's incessant military operations against Taliban and foreign militants in Bajaur, Mohmand and Swat have left more than 1,600 Taliban and foreign militants killed.¹⁰⁴ At the same time, ISAF-NATO and US troops based in the Afghan province of Kunar that faces Bajaur are conducting similar operations against Taliban strongholds in northeastern Afghanistan. A much improved cooperation and coordination of military operations have squeezed the Taliban militants on both sides. According to a US military official, Captain Benjamin Brink, in charge of a joint intelligence operations centre between ISAF, Afghanistan and Pakistan, "The Pakistanis tell us they see a decrease in movement across the border in their direction ... and we suspect it is down the other way as well because we are performing blocking operations along the passes and we will continue to do that through the winter (December-February 2008)."¹⁰⁵

Such joint operations are vital to block the cross-border movement of the Taliban and destroy their hideouts and terrorist infrastructure in the region. Since October 2008, there has been a tribal uprising against the Taliban in the FATA Agencies of Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai and Swat on the patterns of the Awakening movement in Iraq. However, there is a strong apprehension that such uprisings may fail in the long run because of weak support from the Pakistani government due to lack of resources. In addition, brutal Taliban reprisals may break the will of the tribes to oppose the Taliban presence in the region.

If the jihadist enclave in FATA is not dismantled, the Taliban leadership will continue to harm not only the adjacent areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan but inflict grave damage to the rest of the world. With Al Qaeda maintaining a semi-sanctuary in FATA and spreading its virulent ideology both locally and globally, the Taliban – both Pakistani and Afghan – are the first to be affected by its propaganda. While understanding the geopolitical concerns of Pakistan, the West must step up its existing engagement with Pakistan on a number of fronts.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ 'Pakistan: Taliban Militants Killed in Air Attack in Northwest', *Adnkronos International*, November 6, 2008, <http://www.adnkronos.com/AKI/English/Security/?id=3.0.2674859051>

¹⁰⁵ Jonathan Burch, 'NATO says no Afghan winter lull in fight with Taliban', *News Daily*, December 8, 2008, <http://www.newsdaily.com/stories/isl226135-us-afghan-winter/>

Whether it is to develop its economy, educate its youth, train Pakistani military, law enforcement and intelligence officers or groom its next generation of leaders; whatever investment is made in Pakistan at this crucial juncture will help reduce the growing global threat of extremism and violence.

3 Security Dynamics in Pakistan's Border Areas

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3.1 Introduction

Before we venture into the security dynamics in Pakistan's troubled tribal lands – also known as FATA – let us consider the following statements that emanated from Washington at different times from different persons:

“Al Qaeda militants in Iraq are moving to safe haven in tribal areas of Pakistan, posing threat not only to coalition forces in Afghanistan but to Islamabad”. Gen James Conway, Commandant of the US Marine Corps, in a press meeting in Washington (August 28, 2008).¹⁰⁶

“The resurgence of fundamentalism in Afghanistan and Pakistan (is) the real central front against terrorism,” he warned. “The fact is Al Qaeda and the Taliban — the people who actually attacked us on 9/11 — have regrouped in those mountains between Afghanistan and Pakistan and are plotting new attacks.” Joe Biden, in his address to the Democratic Party Convention in

Mr. Imtiaz Gul is Chairman of the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS). He has covered Afghanistan/Tribal Areas/Kashmir militancy extensively since 1988 and traveled the length and breadth of these areas. Gul's Afghanistan travels have brought him in contact with a number of Pakistani officials from different departments and agencies, allowing him to trace and analyse Pakistan's involvement with different Afghan factions. Being a Pashtoon, Mr. Gul has also seen the Afghan Taliban from a very close range and produced scores of inside stories on the radical militia for The Friday Times as well as the German Press Agency and the Deutsche Welle. Gul's book The Unholy Nexus; Pak-Afghan relations under the Taliban (Vanguard, Pakistan, 2002) was also the result of Mr. Gul's frequent contacts with officials and warring factions. In addition, Imtiaz Gul has been broadcasting with CNN between 1998 – 2000 as well as with Hong Kong-based Star World TV and the National Public Radio in the United States. He has been the Islamabad Correspondent for Pakistan's most prestigious weekly The Friday Times since 1995.

¹⁰⁶ PTI, ‘Al-Qaeda militants moving to Pakistan from Iraq’, 28 August 2008.

Denver (August 28, 2008) where he was nominated as Barack Obama's running mate.¹⁰⁷

"Next 9/11 to come from FATA." General David Petraeus, the Commanding General, Multi-National Force-Iraq (May 22, 2008).¹⁰⁸

The growth of Al Qaeda safe havens in FATA is "troubling" and it may take Pakistan "several years" to turn around the situation. The United States Department of Defense (May 23, 2008).¹⁰⁹

Describing the tribal region along the Pakistani-Afghan border as one of the most dangerous areas in the world, Bush said Al Qaeda had there "*established safe havens and was plotting attacks against the United States*", adding that Pakistan and not Afghanistan or Iraq is now the most likely place where a plot could be hatched to carry out any 9/11-type attack in the US. President George W. Bush in an interview with *ABC News* (April 12, 2008).¹¹⁰

"Al Qaeda has found new sanctuaries in the ungoverned spaces, tribal spaces and frontier provinces of Pakistan." Robert Mueller, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), before the Council on Foreign Relations (September 28, 2007).¹¹¹

The gradual spike in violence inside the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) as well as elsewhere in Pakistan constituted the basis of these assessments. In 2003, Pakistan suffered a total of 189 terrorism-related fatalities. In 2004, 2005 and 2006 these numbers grew to 863, 648 and 1,471, respectively. The year 2007 was the bloodiest on record; terrorism-related fatalities shot up to 3,599, an average of 9.86 per day. The figure also included people who became victims of close to 60 suicide bombings during the year that climaxed with the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, the former prime minister, who was shot dead after an election rally at Rawalpindi. Apparently, a suicide bomber blew himself up instantly after shooting Bhutto from a close range, thereby causing the death of several others.

During 2008, suicide attacks subsided to nearly 42 by the end of November, yet the casualties thereof and the Taliban threat grew manifold; beginning from North and South Waziristan, the Taliban movement peddled through Mohmand agency, Bajaur, and set even the Swat region, which is not part of FATA, aflame. In the early part of the year, militants from the Khyber agency almost converged

¹⁰⁷ *Dawn*, 'Fata central front in war on terror, says Biden', 29 August 2008.

¹⁰⁸ Anwar Iqbal, 'Next 9/11 to come from Fata: US general', *Dawn*, 23 May 2008.

¹⁰⁹ *AFP*, 'Pentagon says growth of Al-Qaeda safe havens 'troubling'', 23 May 2008.

¹¹⁰ Anwar Iqbal, 'Bush calls Fata most dangerous region', *Dawn*, 13 April 2008.

¹¹¹ www.fbi.gov/thisweek/archive

on Peshawar, the provincial capital, assisted by jihadists from another semi-autonomous region, Darra Adam Khel, triggering a knee-jerk reaction by the army which eventually carried out several operations in the region. Darra Adam Khel, which once housed a bustling arms bazaar where replicas of Russian, American, British and Italian fire-arms were available, is situated by a tunnel on the highway which connects Peshawar with Karachi, the life-line for Pakistan's external trade. The Japanese-funded tunnel, some 50 kilometres south of the provincial capital, remained closed for several days following its brief seizure by Taliban militants, who had also attempted to blow it up in January 2008.

Militants and the military traded heavy fire for several days, until the army forced the Taliban out of the area and reopened the strategic tunnel, which also is a vital link between the southern parts of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the provincial capital Peshawar on the Indus Highway.

In late August, the tunnel came under yet another attack, preceded by a deadly strike on a para-military checkpoint a few kilometres from the tunnel. These hostilities forced the authorities to shut the tunnel again for several weeks and were followed by massive search and surgical operations against militants.

This paper explains the Pakistani tribal areas from a historical perspective and elucidates the political dynamics of the region and actors of the conflict. This should help the reader understand how these areas degenerated into a hot bed of radicalism, and how the Al Qaeda ideology found a foothold in a region which had for centuries largely remained a no-go area and where drugs and guns thrived because of the liberty the wily tribesmen had enjoyed for centuries.

The British colonial rulers institutionalised these liberties till the end of the 19th century. Pakistan, after emerging on the world map as an independent Muslim state in 1947, inherited the system and continued with it. What we see today in the tribal areas is not only the blowback of the US-Pakistani proxy war mounted against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the early 1980s. It also stems from decades of neglect and complacency of successive Pakistani establishments who opted to keep their eyes shut from the cauldron of religious radicalism that had started simmering immediately after the anti-Soviet jihad, and which by 2008 had turned into a full-fledged militant challenge and violent insurgency to the state of Pakistan.



1: FATA: Legal / Administrative Structure

The Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan (FATA) consist of seven tribal districts, also called agencies (Bajaur, Khyber, Kurram, Orkzai, Mohmand, North Waziristan and South Waziristan) and six sub-districts that lie between the seven FATA tribal agencies and the settled districts of the Northwestern Frontier Province (NWFP) called Frontier Regions or FRs in official jargon. The six FRs are the FRs of: Bannu, D.I. Khan, Kohat, Lakki, Peshawar and Tank (these FRs are different from their adjacent settled districts with the same names—not to be confused. See map).

The FATA region (inclusive of agencies and FRs) is spread over 27,220 sq km with a population (based on 2004-05 estimates) of 3,683,101, about 52 percent of which is male. As the name of the area suggests, the society is predominantly tribal. This is a very backward area of Pakistan with male literacy rates of 30 percent and female literacy rates of 3 percent according to the 1998 official census. The geography of FATA does not allow a lot of farming. Out of the 2.72 million hectares of land in FATA, 2.42 million hectares are unavailable for cultivation and consist mainly of barren hills.

It is a limitedly governed area of Pakistan. There is no police, courts nor taxation in FATA. People in FATA do not require licenses for keeping or carrying arms. It is, however, governed under a regulation called the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) which is different from the law of the land in the rest of the country (details below).

3.2 The Tribal Structure

Various Pashtoon tribes live in FATA. Tribal affiliation of the people of FATA forms an important part of their identities and does have a great bearing on their lives on certain occasions. Table 1 lists the major tribes in each of the seven tribal agencies of FATA.

Table 1

Tribal Agency	Major Tribes
Bajaur	Tarklani, Utmankhel
Khyber	Afridi, Shinwari
Kurram	Toori, Bangash
Mohmand	Mohmand, Safi
North Waziristan	Utmanzai Wazir, Daur
Orakzai	Orakzai
South Waziristan	Ahmadzai Wazir, Mehsud

3.3 The FCR

Although constitutionally part of Pakistan, the FATA region functions as a semi-autonomous area run under special laws called the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR), which was designed and implemented by the British colonial rulers in 1901. This traditional system of governance continues to date in tandem with the “jirga” (assembly of tribal elders) that determines law and its execution as and when necessary. The FCR provides for arbitration by jirgas to settle disputes through customary methods. The actual conviction or acquittal as well as the implementation of the jirga decision are in the hands of the Political Administration of the area, headed by the Political Agent for that particular agency (see below). A salient feature of the FCR is the incorporation of the concept of collective responsibility which gives the Political Agent vast powers to hold the tribes collectively accountable for the wrongdoings by one of their tribesmen or in the area inhabited by the concerned tribe. A whole tribe can be penalised for non-cooperation with the Political Administration or violation of the FCR with punishments such as detention of the men belonging to the tribe in question (irrespective of their association with the crime) and confiscation or even destruction of properties owned by the tribe in question. Moreover, the Political Agent can under the FCR keep a person under arrest for three years without presenting him before any court of law. This is also called “40 FCR”, as the section dealing with these powers are found in clause 40 of the regulation.

3.4 Administrative Arrangements

Under Article 247 of the Constitution of Pakistan, the President exercises the executive authority over FATA through the Governor of the North West Frontier Province. This presidential agent is assisted in his functions, largely by the Political Agents (PAs) of all the seven agencies. All officials within a tribal agency report to the PA of the respective tribal agency, who in turn reports to the newly established office of the Regional Coordination Officers (RCOs). The Frontier Regions (FRs) are administered by District Coordination Officers (DCOs) of the respective districts. The PAs and DCOs in charge of FRs report to RCOs, who report to the FATA Secretariat, which is a Secretariat under the governor overseeing FATA.

The FATA Secretariat, established relatively recently in Peshawar, is headed by an Additional Chief Secretary. It is further sub-divided into four sections headed by four Secretaries. The four sections are: Administration, Planning and Development, Law and Order, and Finance. Each of these sections has Deputy Secretaries and Section Officers working under the Secretary. The FATA

Secretariat, through its Additional Chief Secretary, reports to the Governor of the NWFP as well as the Secretary of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) in Islamabad.

Each tribal agency is headed by a mid-level officer of Pakistan's civil service, called a Political Agent. The office of the PA combines in itself the functions of police and judiciary along with the responsibility of supervising the activities of all development departments. Maintaining law and order in the agency remains the principal responsibility of the office though. A tribal agency is administratively divided into subdivisions, which are looked after by deputies, known either as Assistant Political Agents (APAs) or Political Tehsildars and deputy Tehsildars, the latter two being responsible for the smallest administrative units known as Tehsils. For police duties, the PA maintains a civilian force called Khasadars, drawn from the tribes living in the area under his control.

The FRs are administered by an Assistant Political Agent under the supervision of the District Coordination Officer (DCO) of the concerned district.

3.5 Political Representation

FATA is represented by eight Senators (Upper House) and 12 Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) in the country's parliament. Though both FATA and the NWFP are predominantly Pashtun, FATA is not represented in the provincial assembly of the NWFP because constitutionally it is not part of the NWFP, despite the fact that there was no adult franchise in FATA until December 1996 before which only Malikhs were entitled to cast votes to elect MNAs. In December 1996, FATA was granted universal adult franchise. However, tribal customs and the innate conservatism of the rural Pashtoon tribal society resulted in very few women casting their ballots.

3.6 Actors in Conflict

3.6.1 Government's Security Apparatus in FATA

The security force structure operating in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan (FATA), adjacent to Pakistan's border with Afghanistan, is slightly different from the structures of security forces operating in the settled areas of the country. Following is a description of the various force structures operating in FATA.

Frontier Corps

The Frontier Corps is a security force that operates in the seven tribal agencies of FATA under the Federal Interior Ministry. It is a well-trained and organised force and is commanded by officers from the Pakistani army who join the Frontier Corps on deputation from the Pakistan military. Its troops are drawn from FATA as well as other areas of the country. The Frontier Corps is actually deployed all along the Durand Line from Chitral in the north to the coast of Makran in the South. The Frontier Corps not only safeguards the border with Afghanistan along the Durand Line, but also assists the civil authorities in agencies in case of internal problems beyond the resources at their disposal.

Frontier Constabulary

The Frontier Constabulary operates in the six Frontier Regions (FRs). The Frontier Constabulary is also a trained and disciplined force and reports to the provincial Home Department's Chief Secretary. The Frontier Constabulary is commanded by provincial police officers who join the constabulary on deputation from their department. Its troops are drawn from local tribesmen. Its major role is to patrol the border between the tribal and settled areas in order to prevent raids and to check smuggling.

Khasadars

The Khasadars form a police force which is at the disposal of the PA of the agency concerned. They are nominally trained and belong to the agency (rather the locality) in which they operate. Notable families are given a certain amount of control within their tribes over the allocation of jobs as Khasadars, which is also a means for the PA to secure the loyalties of notables.

Tribal Lashkars

Tribal lashkar is not a permanent security force. It is a force comprising volunteers raised by the tribal elders of a particular tribe or sub-tribe to deal with a given crisis at a given time. For instance, tribal lashkars have been raised in parts of Bajaur agency, Darra Adam Khel and some Frontier Regions to deal with pro-Taliban militants.

Pakistan Army

Even though the army is the largest force in FATA at the moment, it is mentioned at the end of the list because, historically speaking, the army had never ventured into the tribal areas prior to 9/11. The FCR also does not permit the army's presence in the area except for along the borders. It was only after 9/11 that the regular army of Pakistan entered the semi-governed tribal territories. Since its deployment, which began with the establishment of posts in the Khyber agency opposite the Afghan Tora Bora mountains, the army has become an important security factor in the area. As of now, the collective

strength of the army and the FC based in, or dealing with, FATA issues stands close to 117,000, according to the government sources. The army has also lost scores – some 1,400 personnel – in operations against militants in various tribal agencies.

3.6.2 Afghan Government and the NATO-led International Peace Troops

Though based in Afghanistan, the US and NATO-led coalition forces in Afghanistan (close to 71,000) and the Afghan National Army (ANA), which is expected to be about 70,000 by the end of 2008 and about 90,000 by end of 2009, are the other governmental actors involved in the meanwhile controversial anti-terror war. Afghan and Pakistani militants use the presence of the foreign troops as a ruse to justify their insurgency. The regular missile strikes, predominantly from the CIA-supervised drones into the Waziristan region targeting suspected militant hideouts, have forced these troops into direct conflict with the militants. On September 3, 2008, the coalition ground forces ventured into a Pakistani village for the first time, drawing widespread condemnation from Pakistan's government and public. It also heralded a new phase of quiet tension and acrimony between the Pakistani army and its counterparts across the border.

3.7 Militant Forces in FATA

Militant forces in FATA can be broadly divided into three groups:

1. FATA-based militant groups with top leadership based in FATA
2. Non-FATA-based Pakistani militant groups with top leadership based in Pakistan and not necessarily in FATA
3. Foreign-based militant groups with top leadership either in Afghanistan or FATA

It needs to be mentioned here, however, that these groups are largely networked with one another and that water-tight compartmentalisation of the groups is not possible. The categorisation has been done though to make it easier for the reader to understand the phenomenon. In addition, the third category of militants includes organisations like Al Qaeda. Its vision and area of operation extends far beyond FATA, Pakistan or Afghanistan. The whereabouts of this group's leadership are not known, though its deputy Dr. Ayman al Zawahiri is rumoured to move between Bajaur agency and the eastern Afghan province of Kunar. Suspicion of his presence also led to two US missile strikes in January and October 2006 on two Bajaur villages.

3.7.1 FATA-Based Militant Groups

Most Pakistani jihadists, who are predominantly ethnic Pashtoons from the FATA and NWFP, joined the ranks of the Taliban in Afghanistan during their rule in Kabul (1996-2001). Those who survived the US-led Afghan opposition assault on the Taliban on October 7, 2001, retreated mostly into the Waziristan region of Pakistan. They did not draw much media attention until late 2003 when the government of Pakistan—under pressure from the US—launched a military operation against those who were sheltering and supporting foreigner militants, Arab and Uzbek nationals in particular. The first such military operation ended in April 2004 with a poorly negotiated and badly crafted peace agreement with Ahmadzai Wazir militants in South Waziristan agency. The military operation resumed soon after the agreement when the local militant commander Naik Mohammad was killed in an air strike. Since then, the militancy has spread from South Waziristan's Ahmadzai Wazir territories to the Mehsud territories, to North Waziristan and to Bajaur agency. Currently, local pro-Taliban militants literally have a presence in all the tribal agencies, most of the FRs and quite a few districts of NWFP. As far as organisational hierarchy is concerned, the pro-Taliban militant movement in Pakistan is not a monolithic whole. It is, however, networked together by adherence to the common ideology of jihad against infidels and their supporters.

At the local level, various militant groups in different tribal agencies operate under their own local independent command. Limitedly successful efforts have been made by militant groups to organise themselves under a singular leadership. However, a bottom-up approach to understand the dynamics of militancy in Pakistan still makes more sense than a top-down approach. It is, consequently, adopted here for greater understanding of the militancy superstructure in Pakistan's tribal areas, also called FATA.

Tehreeke Taliban Pakistan (TTP)

The Tehreeke Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was established by its leader, Baitullah Mehsud, on December 14, 2007.¹¹² The creation of TTP was not as much the creation of a new organisation as it was a merger of various militant outfits operating under different commands in various tribal agencies (especially North Waziristan and Bajaur agency). Or to use corporate terminology, it was the acquisition of smaller militant groups by the larger and more powerful group, led by Baitullah Mehsud. TTP is believed to be the largest local militant force in Pakistan. It operates under the direct leadership of its supremo, Baitullah Mehsud, in the Mehsud territories of South Waziristan. In Bajaur agency, its

¹¹² *Daily Times Lahore*, December 14, 2008; *The News Islamabad*, December 17, 2008

chapter is led by Faqir Mohammad, who was running his independent militancy shop before joining hands with Baitullah Mehsud under the TTP. Baitullah Mehsud had already planted his men in areas like Swat, Mohmand agency, FR Kohat (Darra Adamkhel), Orakzai agency and the Hangu district prior to the formal establishment of TTP.

Since its creation, TTP has coordinated its activities well in various tribal agencies and in settled districts of NWFP and have proved to be a tough opponent for the security forces. When the military operation was continuing in South Waziristan, TTP-associated militants in Darra Adamkhel (FR Kohat) on January 24, 2008, snatched five military trucks with ammunition destined for South Waziristan along with five soldiers.¹¹³ In this way, it can be said the TTP was successful in stretching the military combat force thin, especially when keeping in mind the fact that the military was also fighting TTP-linked militants in Swat at the same time. The TTP demonstrated effective coordination when Bajaur militants began attacking security forces in retaliation for the military operation in Swat.¹¹⁴ Similar actions against the security forces were launched in other areas where TTP had a presence. Moreover, the militants in Swat, led by Maulana Fazlullah, have openly claimed allegiance to TTP on a number of occasions.¹¹⁵ His spokesman Muslim Khan has publicly vowed revenge on the security forces which he believes is killing innocent people.

The course of developments also confirms that the TTP intensified its anti-military campaign after the Taliban became the target of military operations in Swat, Bajaur and South Waziristan in January 2008. The outfit responded cleverly by engaging the military in combat at four different locations, employing suicide bombings as one of the bloodiest means to inflict losses on the security forces in major cities.

The power of Mehsud-led militants was formidable even before Mehsud formally established the TTP. On August 30, 2007, his group abducted about 250 Pakistan army soldiers and held them until November 4, 2007. It was seen as a crushing blow to the reputation and ability of the Pakistani army. Most of these men were released only after Mehsud had secured the release of 25 of his comrades, at least four of whom had been convicted by courts on charges of terrorism. Mehsud is also allegedly associated with various suicide bombings across the country, including the one that killed former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Even after that attack, the government took its time to ban the organisation. The TTP was proscribed on August 25, 2008, before which its spokesman

¹¹³ *The News Islamabad*, January 25, 2008; *Dawn Islamabad*, January 25, 2008

¹¹⁴ *The News Islamabad*, January 8, 2008

¹¹⁵ *The News Islamabad*, July 3, 2008; *Daily Times Lahore*, July 3, 2008

Saeedullah (commonly known as Maulvi Omar) would give out regular updates on its activities to the media.¹¹⁶

Bahadur and Nazir Groups

When TTP's creation was announced on December 14, 2007, Hafiz Gul Bahadur, the militant commander in North Waziristan, was declared as one of its central leaders. Gul Bahadur, however, distanced himself from the organisation. His differences with Baitullah Mehsud became more evident at the time of the Pakistani army's operation against the Mehsud-led militants in South Waziristan. Bahadur was reported to have clearly told Mehsud to keep his war to his own area and not attack security forces in North Waziristan.¹¹⁷ Moreover, he refused Mehsud's request for help in his fight against the military.

The differences between the two groups became more and more obvious as time progressed. On June 30, 2008, Gul Bahadur announced his alliance with the leader of the Ahmadzai Wazir militants in South Waziristan, Mullah Nazir.¹¹⁸ Nazir had had an uneasy relationship with Mehsud since the time the latter gave shelter to the Uzbeks and their local supporters whom Nazir had ousted from the Ahmadzai Wazir territories after a fierce fight leaving dozens dead in March 2007.¹¹⁹ Mullah Nazir and his tribesmen from the Ahmadzai Wazir tribe were at loggerheads with each other even at the time when the army was pounding Mehsud-led militants' positions in the areas of South Waziristan inhabited by the Mehsud tribe.¹²⁰

Like TTP, these groups are also avowedly jihadi and call for death to the infidel and their supporters. Actually, North Waziristan under the 'leadership' of Gul Bahadur is a favourite destination of the Taliban supremo in Afghanistan, Jalaluddin Haqqani and his son Sirajuddin Haqqani. Gul Bahadur's association with Haqqani invited a few air strikes into the Pakistani territories of North Waziristan by US predator drones in September and October 2008.

What distinguishes the Bahadur-Nazir alliance from TTP is its non-offensive attitude toward the Pakistani military. While the military has been taking action against various arms of TTP in different areas of FATA and the NWFP in 2008, both Gul Bahadur and Mullah Nazir remained silent. The government probably successfully exploited TTP's differences with Nazir and, particularly, Bahadur,

¹¹⁶ Based on interviews with journalists based in Peshawar.

¹¹⁷ *The News Islamabad*, January 23, 2008

¹¹⁸ *Dawn Islamabad*, July 1, 2008

¹¹⁹ The numbers of death are highly inflated in the news reports.

¹²⁰ *Daily Times Lahore*, January 17, 2008

who Baitullah Mehsud thinks have forged an undeclared understanding with the government.

In March 2008, when the main Tank-Wana road was closed due to fighting with Mehsud-led militants, the authorities provided an alternative route for Ahmadzai Wazirs, connecting them with the rest of the country via the Gomal-Wana road.¹²¹ It is also reported that the government had entered into a peace agreement with Bahadur-led militants in North Waziristan on February 17, 2008, at a time when the army still had not reached peace with Mehsud-led militants in South Waziristan.¹²² Similar to the TTP, the Nazir and Bahadur groups also have supporters in some other tribal areas, but their reach is not as extensive as that of TTP.

Tehreeke Nifaze Shariate Mohammadi (TNSM)

The Tehreeke Nafaze Shariate Mohammadi (TNSM) is the oldest FATA-based militant group. Formed in 1992, it was banned by President Pervez Musharraf on January 12, 2002. Maulana Sufi Mohammad, the leader of the organisation, belongs to the Dir district of NWFP. He organised thousands of people to fight the US-led coalition forces and the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan in 2001. All of them—except a handful—were either killed or arrested in Afghanistan. Some, including Sufi Mohammed, managed to return to Pakistan, only to be arrested. Sufi Mohammad was released from jail on April 21, 2008, ostensibly, to help in the restoration of peace in the Swat district of NWFP. The newly-elected government of NWFP thought that he would be able to prevail over the militants in Swat led by his son-in-law, Fazlullah. The effort initially bore some fruit with the conclusion of a peace agreement with militants of Swat on May 21, 2008. This understanding, however, proved short-lived for a variety of reasons—including lack of control of Sufi Mohammad over the militants in Swat—and the fighting resumed in late June.

The TNSM first shot into prominence in November 1994 when it led an armed uprising in support of Islamic Sharia in the Malakand division of NWFP. Approximately 40 persons, including 12 security personnel, were killed in a week of fighting before the government was able to re-establish its writ. Subsequent to the arrest of its leader in 2001, however, it has largely remained dormant and has steadily lost ground to the more organised and militant but less popular and ideological TTP. TNSM still has plenty of ideological following in various northern districts of the NWFP. It has, however, shunned violence to achieve its political and ideological objectives. Since his release, Sufi

¹²¹ *Daily Times Lahore*, May 10, 2008

¹²² *Daily Times Lahore*, June 8, 2008

Mohammad has been on the right side of the government establishment, yet he has not been successful in turning the tide against TTP-affiliated militants in Swat, Bajaur, and other adjacent districts of NWFP.

Lashkare Islam (LI)

Lashkare Islam (LI) is a Khyber agency-based militant outfit. It was established by Mufti Munir Shakir somewhere around 2004. In late 2005, the organisation came into the limelight when it developed serious differences with Ansar-ul-Islam (AI), a Brelvi organisation led by Mufti Munir Shakir's rival Pir Saifur Rehman (see below). Both groups spread hatred against each other through their illegal FM radio stations. The differences between the two groups often get violent even to this date. There were several rounds of fighting around Tirah valley between the two groups even in 2008. Mufti Munir Shakir left Khyber agency in the last week of February 2006.¹²³ He was arrested soon after he left Khyber by an intelligence agency. With the departure of Mufti Munir Shakir, his deputy, Mangal Bagh Afridi, assumed the leadership of AI.

Mangal Bagh Afridi's stand-off with the rival AI continues to date. He has also frequently annoyed the political administration by violating government orders to refrain from militant activities. Afridi has been dispensing vigilante justice from time to time, besides running mobile FM radio stations in the area, continuing with the tradition of delivering sermons over radio as his predecessor Mufti Shakir. Under the leadership of Mangal Bagh Afridi, the LI has occasionally picked battles with some of the local sub-tribes. In April 2008, the LI had a skirmish with powerful Kuki Khel tribesmen of Jamrud when they tried to stop the tribesmen from doing certain businesses which Mangal Bagh thought were un-Islamic. In brazen disregard of the law, on March 3, 2008, LI militants attacked the Bara Sheikhan village in the Peshawar district (not a tribal area) and killed 10 tribesmen and injured about a dozen over a religious issue. It is hard to deduce whether Mangal Bagh is sending men to fight for the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan. Some connection with the Taliban movement in Afghanistan cannot be ruled out though. According to one report, Taliban leaders from Afghanistan mediated a dispute between LI and their rival AI in November 2007.¹²⁴ Interestingly enough, LI has proved to be an effective counterweight to the TTP, which had been trying hard, though with little success, to assert itself in the Khyber agency.

¹²³ Munir Shakir was reportedly been released on August 20, 2007 too with the condition that he will not go back to Khyber agency. He is believed to be living in Peshawar

¹²⁴ *The News Islamabad*, November 14, 2007

Rival groups in Khyber agency created such a commotion and fear within the agency as well as in nearby Peshawar that the military had to launch a massive anti-militant operation in the area, particularly against LI, in June 2008. Yet, the subsequent events, including an open press conference in Jamrud by Afridi, led many to suspect that the military operation was just an eye-wash, which created big noise but achieved little.¹²⁵ One testimony to that is that Mangal Bagh Afridi is still running the activities of his group just like he used to without being affected by the military operation and that he gave another press conference at Jamrud in the third week of October as well.

Anasar-ul-Islam (AI)

Ansarul-ul-Islam (AI) is a Brelvi group of activists which only turned militant in response to LI and has no regional or global militant agenda as such. The group was founded by Pir Saifur Rehman (an Afghan who lived in Khyber agency from 1977 to 2006). Since late 2005, his group has been involved in hate-mongering on illegal FM radio stations and in violent clashes with the rival LI. Rehman was forced to leave the tribal area after the political authorities of Khyber agency detained about 40 of his supporters in the first week of February 2006. He was forced out by the Political Administration because of his spread of hate against Mufti Munir Shakir through his illegal FM radio station, which had generated violence in the agency. Pir Saifur Rehman probably moved to Lahore because many of his supporters were Punjabis. Qazi Mehboobul Haq leads AI in the absence of Pir Saifur Rehman. He operates from his power-base in the Tirah valley from where he has successfully managed to repel several attacks by the LI.

Amr Bil Maroof wa Nahi Analmunkir or Naamdard Group

Haji Naamdard was the founding leader of the Amr Bil Maroof group – also known as the Naamdard Group, which was earlier affiliated with LI. Naamdard was assassinated on August 13, 2008, allegedly by the same group which had attempted to eliminate him through a suicide bomber earlier that year, on May 1, when Naamdard was meeting his followers at a mosque in Bara town of the Khyber agency. He survived the attack, which had apparently been master-minded by a TTP-associated local militant named Hakimullah. Naamdard had been instrumental in securing the release of some security forces personnel from captivity of Hakimullah a few days prior to this suicide strike. Maulvi Niaz Gul succeeded Naamdard and the group remains active in the Bara area of Khyber agency.

¹²⁵ *The News Islamabad*, July 1, 2008

In September-November 2007, followers of the Amr Bil Maroof group clashed with the Sheikhmal Khel sub-tribe of Afridis due to ideological differences. Naamdar believed in jihad against the infidels but advocated restraint against attacks inside Pakistan targeting the military or civilians.¹²⁶ That is why TTP militants viewed him as a government collaborator, and, thus, his elimination.

3.7.2 Groups outside FATA linked to FATA Militants

Pakistan was a hotbed of militancy in the 1990s with various kinds of militant groups recruiting and training for different battlefields across the globe, especially Afghanistan and Indian-administered Kashmir. These groups recruited youngsters from different parts of Pakistan and trained them either in Kashmir, FATA or in Afghanistan. With Pakistan's U-turn on the Afghan Taliban after 9/11, President Musharraf declared a ban on almost all jihadi organisations in January 2002. Some of them, however, re-emerged with different names and are now trying to stay afloat from their hideouts inside FATA.

Soon after the colossal bombing of the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad in September 2008, which claimed more than 60 lives and injured another 250, Governor of the NWFP, Owais Ahmed Ghani, told journalists, "Militants in the tribal areas of the NWFP have established firm networking (with jihadi groups) in southern Punjab and most fresh recruits for suicide attacks are coming from there. Militant leaders and commanders are also coming from Punjab. The militants' field commander in Swat too is from Punjab."¹²⁷ There seems to be some truth behind the Governor's assertion; in July 2008, fierce clashes between Omar Khalid, the TTP-affiliated militant commander and another militant commander with the name of Shah Khalid resulted in the death of Shah Khalid. It was reported that Shah Khalid had links with Jamaat-ud-Dawa, the parent organisation of Lashkare Taiba (LT), a proscribed organisation that was active in Kashmir and India. According to Amir Mir, a leading analyst on terrorist organisations in Pakistan, an Al Qaeda activist, Abu Ali Tunisi, has managed to bring together four different banned militant outfits under Al Qaeda. He also said Tunisi is based in Waziristan.¹²⁸ This alludes to the fact that jihadists with one agenda but different organisations have converged in FATA because of the relative safety that the area provides.

¹²⁶ Haji Naamdar's interview with Daily Times, *Daily Times Lahore*, May 3, 2008

¹²⁷ *Dawn Islamabad*, September 23, 2008

¹²⁸ Amir Mir: "Who is who of the suicide bombers?" *The News Islamabad*, September 21, 2008

3.8 Cross-Border Allies - Afghan Organisations

3.8.1 Taliban Movement of Afghanistan

The big “T” leadership of the erstwhile Taliban movement of Afghanistan also has links with the militants in FATA. Though still elusive, the leader of the movement, Mullah Omar, continues to inspire followers and sympathisers on both sides of the Durand Line. His friend Jalaluddin Haqqani and his sons have taken charge of the militancy in Afghanistan against Afghan and coalition forces. Many locals in private conversations admit that his son Sirajuddin Haqqani frequently travels to the tribal areas of Pakistan, North Waziristan in particular, and that some other top leaders of Taliban movement of Afghanistan are also to be seen in the tribal areas. Though closely linked with Mullah Omar’s Taliban movement, the Haqqanis run their own organisation called Amaraate Islami.

The relationship of various militant groups based in FATA with the Taliban movement of Afghanistan is pretty evident. Most of these groups fight against the coalition and Afghan forces in Afghanistan, which is a common cause with the Taliban movement of Afghanistan. In one of the air strikes in North Waziristan in the first week of September, 2008, the US drones targeted the residential compound of Jalaluddin Haqqani.¹²⁹ In the early hours of October 22, US CIA-led drones fired three missiles on one of Haqqani’s former madrassa in Danday Drapakhel in the Khost province near the Pak-Afghan border. At least eight inmates were killed, mostly students who had been staying there.

Hezbe Islami of Gulbudin Hekmetyar also maintains close contacts with Mullah Omar and the Haqqanis, and they occasionally also coordinate attacks on coalition forces.

3.9 Non-Afghan Foreign Militants

3.9.1 Uzbeks

As of November 2008, militants of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) had morphed into a lethal non-Arab Al Qaeda entity. IMU opened its first training camp near Mazar e Sharif in northern Afghanistan in the late 1990s and escaped to South Waziristan during the US-led Operation Anaconda in 2002.

¹²⁹ *The News Islamabad*, September 9, 2008; *Dawn Islamabad*, September 9, 2008

Now, most of the Uzbeks from the former Soviet central Asian republics are probably making their last stand.

Welcomed whole-heartedly and greeted with open arms in December 2001, these IMU militants, led by Tahir Yuldashev, faced little problem in finding support and shelter amongst the Ahmadzai Wazir tribesmen inhabiting the regional headquarters of Wana in South Waziristan. Most of them had begun retreating into Waziristan the moment coalition forces began pounding Taliban positions all over. Yuldashev in fact, became a star speaker at a mosque in the Sheen Warsak region near Wana, South Waziristan. Yuldashev had succeeded Jumma Namangani, who was killed in a US air strike in northern Afghanistan in November 2001.

Once well-entrenched with the local support, Yuldashev founded the organisation Mohajireen o Ansar to pursue his agenda which essentially converged with the larger objectives that Osama bin Laden's organisation had set for itself. One of the Pakistani Punjabi fugitives, Qari Mudassir, acts as their spokesman.

Yuldashev had survived the fierce Kaloosha Operation in March 2004, which the army had launched when it stumbled upon dozens of Uzbek militants in the Kaloosha suburb of south Waziristan. During the operation, Pakistan's army and para-military met with resistance by local sympathisers of the Uzbek Al Qaeda militants. Dozens were killed while several were taken hostage by Uzbek and local tribal militants. Yuldashev got injured in the cross fire but managed to escape from the scene into safety.

Once he recovered from his injuries, Tahir Yuldashev began organising his people into Mohajireen o Ansar. He also set up a private jail to use to punish people he thought were creating problems for the Uzbeks.

The exact number of Yuldashev's followers is difficult to determine, yet various local sources speak of up to 1,000 Uzbeks being present in the region. Usman Jan and Jafar Asad are reportedly two trusted aides of Yuldashev.

Yuldashev's fate took a turn when his vigilantes began targeting Pakistan's army and government officials. These anti-army strikes turned the Uzbeks from revered heroes to villains in the eyes of local people, and they fell out with the pro-government Taliban commander Mullah Nazir who disapproved of targeting the Pakistani army and civilian targets.

In early June 2008, the organisation claimed responsibility for waylaying Malik Khanan, a pro-government commander, affiliated with Yuldashev's arch-rival Mullah Nazir. "Noor Islam and Qari Mudassir, who was once member of the SSP, admitted that they finally got Khanan after some botched attempts to kill

him. The other target was Mullah Nazir and we will get him too”, the organisation’s spokesman Qari Mudassir told daily *The News*.¹³⁰

The Islamabad-based Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) also secured a telephone conversation between Mudassir and a local journalist in June 2008, in which he made the admission of having killed Khanan.

Khanan was a commander for the hostile Shakai valley and was immediately replaced with Tensile Khan. Before Khanan, Mullah Nazir had lost another close aide, Maulvi Iqbal. He was killed along with several fighters, including many Pakistanis from the Punjab province, during skirmishes with US-led coalition forces in early 2008.¹³¹ Iqbal had been based in South Waziristan. Early in October 2008, Iqbal’s son also fell victim to the rivalry with Khanan Wazir..

3.10 Arab Al- Qaeda / Taliban

American defence officials estimate that currently, between 150 and 500 hardcore Al Qaeda fighters are operating in the Tribal Areas.¹³² Sources in Wana, South Waziristan, claim at least 200 influential Arabs still live in the region under the protection of Mullah Nazir.¹³³

3.10.1 Background

During the Taliban rule, two categories of Arabs had entered into Afghanistan: those filled with the jihadi zeal who kept pouring in from different parts of the Arab world for the war of the Taliban and bin Laden, and those who had moved in from Pakistan after expiry of their visas and who settled in the eastern parts of Afghanistan, mostly Jalalabad. Many had stayed on after the Soviets had pulled out of Afghanistan in 1989.¹³⁴

Almost all of them - several thousand - either perished in the American attacks on Kandahar and the vicinity of Jalalabad and the Tora Bora mountains, or landed in jails in late 2001. Most were among the 7,000 Taliban and Al Qaeda militants captured by Western coalition troops by the end of December that year. More than 200 were caught by Pakistan’s border security forces after they gave up their fight in the Tora Bora Mountains, south of Jalalabad.

¹³⁰ *The News*, June 5, 2008.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² *The New York Times*, April 30, 2008.

¹³³ Also see Profile of Mullah Nazir, and Non-TTP Taliban in South Waziristan.

¹³⁴ Gul, Imtiaz, “The Unholy Nexus” and “True Face of Jihadis” by Amir Mir.

According to a *Jane's Intelligence Report (JIR)* of June 2001, Arabs swelled the ranks of the Taliban fighting force and constituted the second largest foreign contingent. The source of this information was the United Front or Northern Alliance.

*"Their numbers have grown notably over the past 18 months. There seems little doubt; at least 2,000 combatants - all apparently affiliated to and financed by Osama bin Laden - are now active in support of the Taliban. One source monitoring the military situation estimates up to 3,000 Arab combatants who may be in the field. Certainly, an Arab presence, including numbers of civilians and families, is now quite open in the cities of Kabul, Jalalabad and Kandahar."*¹³⁵

At least 200 Arab Taliban were found executed on different locations in Jalalabad and Kandahar immediately after Mullah Omar surrendered power in December 2001. This also came as no surprise.

*"Both Arab instructors and trainees have been seen at Rishkhor, near Kabul, following the August 1998 US cruise missile attack on training camps at Zhawar (in the eastern Khost province). Rishkhor expanded to become probably the biggest training base in the country, housing up to 1,500 trainees - Pakistanis, Arabs and others - as well as some 30-50 instructors (some of whom had moved from Khost). Courses covered basic field craft and small-arms training, graduating to specialised courses in support weaponry, demolition and escape and evasion. Last June, however, following international publicity and growing diplomatic pressure, the facility was emptied. Kabul-based journalists were permitted to visit it, but official denials that foreigners had ever been trained there, were belied by large signs on buildings in Arabic and Urdu."*¹³⁶

As for the Arabs, the *JIR* said, generally, Arab units were *"deployed in an infantry role armed with nothing heavier than RPGs, PK machine guns and mortars. They were, however, widely recognised as currently the most aggressive and committed fighters in Taliban ranks."*

Arab influence is seen as particularly strong within the Ministry for the Enforcement of Virtue and Suppression of Vice, the Taliban's ubiquitous religious police and in cities where the presence of Arab fighters is open. So is their hostility towards Western aid workers.

¹³⁵ Jane's Intelligence Report, June 2001.

¹³⁶ Jane's Intelligence Report, October 1999.

“Chechen units and the forces of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) constituted the other two main foreign contingents of the foreign Taliban”, JIR said. “While organisationally separate, with distinct leaderships, links between Islamist militants from the two ex-Soviet territories are long-standing and it seems likely that Chechens are today attached to IMU combat units. Other foreigners, including Pakistanis from the SSP and Lashkare Jhangavi, are also operating under the IMU’s military umbrella.”

3.10.2 Present Scenario

By late 2008, things have changed only to the extent that the Pakistani Taliban support for IMU and Arab Al Qaeda appears fragmented. The Haqqani-led Taliban in North Waziristan are sheltering both Arab and IMU militants. Baitullah Mehsud supports both Uzbeks and Arabs, while his Ahmedzai Wazir rival, Mullah Nazir, protects and harbours Arab fighters.

What causes concern among outsiders - including Afghans and Americans - is the pronounced objective of all groups; to continue supporting jihad inside Afghanistan to drive out “foreign occupation forces”. And this certainly does not augur well because almost everybody - ranging from the Afghan President Hamid Karzai to the US President George W Bush - is wary of these radicals. And as the pressure on Pakistan mounts to go after them, the danger of this pressure translating into physical action by the US-led international community against Al Qaeda in the tribal areas also grows.

3.11 Militants’ Relations with Federal / Provincial Government

The US-led anti-Soviet Union jihad in the 1980s had come as a boon for Pakistan’s intelligence apparatus, predominantly the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Since the agency was the on-the-ground guide and trainer of the Afghan mujahideen, as well as the conduit for all Western aid to them, it developed a strong relationship with most of the groups that went beyond the Afghan jihad. Much before the last Soviet troops walked out of Afghanistan in February 1989, the ISI had turned several mujahideen allies to the disputed Himalayan state of Kashmir, two-thirds of which was under Indian control. The Pakistani establishment patronised the anti-India separatist movement and considered it a cost-effective way to bleed India and force it into giving up control over the state. The ISI also extended its hand of cooperation to the Taliban, when they first conquered Kandahar in October 1994.

The consequence: the ensuing years witnessed unusual strains in Pakistan-India relations, on the one hand, and condemnation of Pakistan for its Taliban policy, on the other, until the Taliban were swept out of power by the US-supported Northern Alliance in December 2001.

Despite being part of the international coalition against terrorism, the Pakistani establishment maintained its links with many militant outfits on both sides of the Durand Line. This drew flak and scepticism from abroad. The suspected nexus between the establishment and the militants also prevented tribes in FATA from rising against various Taliban groups, fearing the military and intelligence services might punish them for confronting the Taliban. The militants took massive advantage of this ambivalence and stretched their influence not only all over FATA but also beyond it. But bloody encounters between the military and militants in March 2004 in South Waziristan and a sustained campaign by certain Taliban groups against military and government targets since have dented this nexus to a certain extent. The massive military operation against these outfits in the Bajaur agency since early August 2008, for instance, provided some proof of this broken relationship. Following human and territorial losses to the Taliban, the para-military forces then mounted a series of operations, were joined by the army in early September, and inflicted severe losses on TTP-affiliated Taliban groups.

It is, however, still not sure to what extent the relationship between the military intelligence and the militants is damaged or if it is broken altogether.

3.12 FATA Future

According to US officials, Taliban attacks on security forces increased in Afghanistan in 2008.¹³⁷ The growing frustration of the NATO forces based in Afghanistan was evident from their increasing number of interventions inside Pakistani territories. The attack by the US ground forces on September 3, 2008, however, was a break from the past. It was the first time that US ground forces conducted an operation at such a scale inside Pakistani territory. And the attack came at a time when the Pakistani military was engaging TTP-affiliated militants in fierce combat in Bajaur agency. The US action was condemned at the official level and by the general public in Pakistan. Despite widespread condemnation of the attack, however, the US-led NATO forces in Afghanistan continued air strikes against targets inside Pakistani territory. On September 25, 2008, there

¹³⁷ Carlotta Gall: "U.S. commander in Afghanistan faults Pakistan for not pressing militants" *International Herald Tribune*, May 30, 2008

was a short gun battle along the border between Pakistani security forces and coalition forces after what Pakistan claimed was an incursion of NATO choppers into Pakistani territory in the area of Saidgai in North Waziristan.¹³⁸

Pakistan is going through a very uncertain phase in its life. The security situation is grave. According to one article, "Since 2002 the suicide bomber has struck 103 times in 27 cities across the country. In all these attacks, a total of 1,311 people have been killed and 1,160 injured."¹³⁹ The economic situation is not very encouraging either. According to Pakistan's Federal Bureau of Statistics' August report, consumer price inflation stood at 25.33 percent in 2007-08,¹⁴⁰ which is unprecedented. And how would future incursions by the US affect Pakistan?

Criticism in Pakistan is already hitting the roof. Even one of the more balanced among the defence analysts, Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Talat Masood argues, "In the event that the US continues to unilaterally intervene and launch land and air operations inside Pakistani territory, it would be very difficult for the government to make the people own this policy and get their support. In fact, it will further heighten the prevalent anti-American sentiment and confirm the belief that the US is deliberately destabilising a democratic government."¹⁴¹ According to Afghan writer Zuhra Bahman, instead of advocating for more attacks in Pakistan, the powers in Afghanistan should concentrate more on reducing civilian casualties from military operations and should announce an exit plan for the foreign forces.¹⁴²

Notwithstanding the criticism by commentators, or condemnation by the Pakistani government and its people, the US-led NATO forces in Afghanistan have continued to target suspected militant positions inside FATA. Pakistan's army recently expressed reservation about the US-NATO strikes inside Pakistan, yet it is quite evident from the continued inter-action between the Pakistani and the coalition military leadership that the "rules of engagement" do permit aerial and missile strikes.

Pakistani army officials (based on personal interviews) concede that, under the existing understanding, the US-led coalition will keep prowling and rocketing Waziristan, where the majority of Arab and Uzbek Al Qaeda militants are holed up. The Pakistani army, on the other hand, continues to hunt the Tehreeke

¹³⁸ *The News Islamabad*, September 26, 2008; *Dawn Islamabad*, September 26, 2008

¹³⁹ Shahid Ilyas Khan: "Pakistan under the shadow of the suicide bomber" *Turkish Daily News*, September 23, 2008

¹⁴⁰ Federal Bureau of Statistics: "Monthly Review on Price Indices" *Government of Pakistan, Islamabad*, August 2008

¹⁴¹ Author's interview with Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Talat Masood

¹⁴² Zuhra Bahman: "Ways forward in Afghanistan" *The Guardian*, September 2, 2008

Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and its affiliates, considered as the single most dangerous threat to Pakistan. This threat emanates from the areas where the TTP holds sway under its supreme leader Baitullah Mehsud or where its affiliates operate, like Faqir Mohammad in Bajaur agency, Mullah Fazlullah in Swat and Omar Khalid in Mohmand agency. In January 2008, when the military tried to take out the stronghold of Baitullah in South Waziristan, the fighting got out of control and in a short period of time it was fighting a war in Darra Adam Khel, Swat and Bajaur. This time, the military has decided to clip the wings of Baitullah Mehsud by taking out his militancy franchises in other areas.

The military is quite likely to play it soft on the militants associated with Mullah Nazir in the Ahmadzai Wazir areas of South Waziristan and those allied with the Pakistani Taliban of Hafiz Gul Bahadur as well as with the Haqqani network in North Waziristan agency. The two groups have refrained from launching attacks on security forces in Pakistan for quite some time and are likely to be rewarded for that 'good behaviour'. This seems to be the understanding between the Pakistani security apparatus and the militants.

The coalition forces in Afghanistan are mindful of this. This is the reason they have tried to, in the words of CIA Director Robert Gates, 'excite' the militants.¹⁴³ Taking on all the militant groups without giving the relatively moderate ones a chance of co-option and engagement could be disastrous. First, because the security forces will be over-stretched; second, because the fragmented militant movement would have reasons to coalesce again; third, because taking on each and every militant group could easily destabilise the country as a whole. The recent militant attacks in Islamabad have exposed the fragility of Pakistani security and governance institutions as well as the economic capacity of the country to face terrorist violence on a large scale.

In a hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations of the United States Senate on March 8, 2007, James Dobbins, the former US envoy to the Afghan opposition in October 2001, made some interesting recommendations, which remain valid to date and need to be taken into account while dealing with Pakistan.

Drawing on a several RAND Corporation studies on nation-building and counterinsurgency, Dobbins pointed out the "near impossibility of putting together broken societies without the support of neighboring states, and of suppressing well established insurgencies that enjoy external support and

¹⁴³ *Dawn Karachi*, September 19, 2008

neighboring sanctuary”, adding, “The validity of this lesson is evident today both in Iraq and Afghanistan.”¹⁴⁴

Dobbins made two points in this regard:

- a) *“It is clear that Pakistan has both geopolitical and domestic political incentives for destabilising its neighbour. Geopolitically, Pakistan fears an independent Afghan state aligned with India.*
- b) *“Domestically, Pakistani elites would prefer to see Pashtun ambitions externalized, in the pursuit of power in Afghanistan, rather than turned inward, in the pursuit of greater autonomy, or even independence for Pashtoonistan.”*

While one would tend to disagree with Dobbins’s assertion that Pakistan may still be pursuing a policy aimed at destabilising Afghanistan, there is some credence to the Pakistani concerns as far as the issue of Pashtoonistan is concerned.

The course of events in the last couple of years has clearly demonstrated that any destabilisation in Afghanistan will bring instability to Pakistan as well. The spiral of deadly violence, which began in 2007, continued through 2008 not only in the tribal areas but also in major cities and towns, triggering a critical review of the Afghan policy.

A sense of concern and urgency is quite discernible from private conversations with people like Gen Ahmed Shuja Pasha, the head of the mighty ISI agency. One only hopes the impressions these military officials give to their visitors stem from a genuine desire to protect Pakistan from conditions that have kept Afghanistan on tenterhooks for decades.

As far as Pashtoonistan is concerned, the ambitions of Pashtoon nationalists on both sides of the Durand Line are still very much alive. Elements within the Awami National Party (ANP), the Pashtoon nationalist and secular force which traditionally enjoyed good relations with Afghanistan’s Pashtoon nationalists, are still wedded to their dream. Now that the ANP rules the NWFP, the Pashtoon nationalists might see it as a good opportunity to network with those across the border.

Yet, James Dobbins, and many others, do make another important point. “If Pakistan is the central front in the war on terror, it is not one susceptible to a military response. We are not going to bomb Islamabad or invade Waziristan... the US and NATO troops are likely to be required indefinitely as long as the

¹⁴⁴ James Dobbins, ‘Ending Afghanistan’s Civil War’, Testimony presented before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on March 8, 2007.

Taliban and the other insurgent groups are able to recruit, train, raise funds and organize their operations in Pakistan.”¹⁴⁵

The United States and the rest of the international community, argues Dobbins, need to offset the drive to destabilise Afghanistan with a greater array of incentives and disincentives designed to lead Pakistan to assert control over its own territory and population and prevent either from being used against its neighbour.

One must also underscore the need for approaching Pakistan with at least some degree of trust. Mistrust vis-à-vis this vital link in the ongoing war on terror only encourages those elements within the Pakistani establishment who are still driven by the dreams of Pan-Islamism and who certainly sympathise with, if not support, the Al Qaeda and Taliban “resistance against the western Imperialism.” These people would exploit any sign of American mistrust and high-handedness to justify their opposition to the cooperation with the United States and its allies.

In order to neutralise this lobby, the US administration needs to be patient and sensitive to the public sentiment in Pakistan. On the other hand, it must appreciate that within the Pakistani establishment, there are still people, though certainly not a majority, who have had a long association with “jihadists” and who would always tend to work against anything they perceive as “anti-Islam”. It is probably these people who keep undermining the efforts of the coalition against terrorism. It is, therefore, imperative for the US-led coalition to inject confidence and trust in its dealings with the Pakistani government and its security apparatus. Any course contrary to this offers fuel and ammunition to those vehemently opposed to the Pakistan-US cooperation in the anti-terror war.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

4 Relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan

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A lot has been written on the relationship between Pakistan and India, including the Kashmir problem, less on the problems on the western border, between Pakistan and Afghanistan. However, these problems are now becoming more pressing, as the linkages become increasingly clear between the struggle for the stabilisation of Afghanistan and the situation in parts of Pakistan, mainly the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), but also large parts of the North Western Frontier Province (NWFP) and Balochistan. For a surprisingly long time, the regional perspective was largely marginalized from the international discussion on the multidimensional effort to put Afghanistan on the path towards democracy and development. Geographical borders, even disputed ones, tend to have a blinding effect on analytical vision. Today, due to the development over the last couple of years, the regional perspective has become unavoidable and seems bound to stay on the agenda for the foreseeable future.

4.1 The Pashtunistan Issue

Today's linkages go back into history. In fact, they predate the creation of Pakistan. The name Pakistan itself provides a hint of the interconnected ties. While it means (in Urdu) "the land of the pure", it also contains indications of its territorial components: **P**unjab, **A**fghania, **K**ashmir, **I**ndus (or Iran, according to

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another explanation), Sindh and Balochistan¹⁴⁶. It is notable that Afghanistan is not retained as the name of the province in question, the NWFP. While Afghanistan would obviously have been an awkward term for a Pakistani province neighbouring Afghanistan – as shown by e.g. the conflict surrounding Macedonia – the natural alternative would have been Pashtunistan. As Punjab is the land of the Punjabis, Sindh of the Sindhis and Balochistan of the Baloch, NWFP is the land of the Pashtun. But even if, after the election in February 2008, the renaming of NWFP as Pakhtunkwa has resurfaced on the political agenda, it remains a sensitive issue, as the idea of Pashtunistan is not confined to one nation state and thus transgresses the sovereignty of both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In the context of the current Talibanisation of Afghanistan, as well as the FATA and NWFP, the Pashtunistan issue has to be understood and taken into account. The Pashtun¹⁴⁷ are a people divided between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Of its approximately 42 million members, the majority, around 60-65 percent, live in Pakistan (approx. 28 million). While the around 13-15 million who live in Afghanistan are a minority of the Pashtun population, they constitute, if not a majority, at least the biggest ethnic component of the Afghan population, possibly around 45 percent.¹⁴⁸ This demographic imbalance is in itself a source of problems: Is the natural home of the Pashtun where their historical roots are (in Afghanistan), where most of them actually live (in Pakistan) or in an independent new state (Pashtunistan)?

Many ethnic nationalities are divided between nation states without too many problems, so why do the Pashtun think they cannot do without a sovereign state of their own? Part of the answer may be that the hierarchic, male-dominated social system embraced by so many Pashtun encourages nostalgia for lost grandeur and conservative, backward-looking thinking much more than it provides impulses for modernisation and globalisation. The marginalisation of women from political decision-making may be a large factor in this picture, which, however, will not be discussed further here. This paper will also avoid cultivating the myth of the Pashtun being innately a fiercely independent and martially inclined tribe.

¹⁴⁶ Kalim Siddiqui, *Conflict, Crisis and War in Pakistan* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1972), p.39.

¹⁴⁷ Other terms are Pakhtoon or Pathan. In this paper, the term Pashtun will be used throughout, unless the text is directly quoted.

¹⁴⁸ The figures are uncertain due to e.g. the lack of census of the current Afghan population, the inclusion or not of Afghan refugees in Pakistani figures and the general unreliability of statistics. This is an approximation drawn from various sources.

Furthermore, when Pakistan was created, the centre of gravity of the new state was placed eastwards, with the political ideas and leadership coming from what is now India and Urdu, an artificial language spoken mainly in northern India, adopted as the national language. Thus, the Pashtun were physically marginalised in Pakistan, while they retained their dominance in neighbouring Afghanistan where their numbers were, however, only half of the Pakistani Pashtun population. Since the middle of the 18th century until the Soviet take-over in 1979, the Pashtun have provided Afghanistan with its rulers.¹⁴⁹ According to Pashtun tradition, as descendants of Afghana, the grandson of king Saul of Israel, they are the original Afghans, before the name was applied to all inhabitants of nowadays Afghanistan.¹⁵⁰

As already mentioned, the Pashtun tradition is one of grandeur. The empire of Afghanistan's founder Ahmed Shah Durrani, dating from 1747, stretched from Persia in the west to Delhi in the east, from Kashmir in the north to the Indian Ocean in the south, with (until 1773) the capital in Kandahar.¹⁵¹ Access to the sea was not a problem at this time, as opposed to the strategic concern it is for the now land-locked country, a contrast which serves to feed today's nostalgic tendencies. While this empire was dismembered as the British colonial rule gained ground, the tradition of Pashtun rule lived on in what was left of Afghanistan. As late as in 1981, John C. Griffiths wrote: "No democratic administration has ever had more than two non-Pathans in any cabinet, though these have usually numbered from fifteen to twenty people."¹⁵²

4.2 The Durand Line

Pashtunistan thus encompasses a large part of Afghanistan, mainly in the South and East, together with the NWFP and a minor part of Balochistan of Pakistan. The border which divides the Pashtun between the two countries was drawn up by the British colonisers in 1893, as a conclusion of the era of the Great Game of competition between Great Britain and Russia. The decision was "an attempt to persuade the Amir of Afghanistan to restrain his Pathan subjects from their periodic descents on Her Majesty's subjects in her North-West Frontier Provinces /.../ After all, one could scarcely ask the Amir to restrain his subjects

¹⁴⁹ Wilhelm Dietl, *Brückenkopf Afghanistan /Bridgehead Afghanistan/* (München: Kindler Verlag, 1984), p. 32.

¹⁵⁰ Encyklopaedia Britannica. Cf. also Article Four of the 2004 Afghan Constitution, which specifies that "the word "Afghan" shall apply to every citizen of Afghanistan".

¹⁵¹ Dietl, *ibid.*, p.32.

¹⁵² John C. Griffiths, *Afghanistan* (London: André Deutsch, 1981) p.81.

if he was uncertain as to who they were officially.”¹⁵³ It was named the Durand Line after Sir Mortimer Durand, who led the commission which delineated this frontier of military convenience. Soon after, in 1905, the North-West Frontier Province was created to encompass the Pashtun majority regions within the empire.¹⁵⁴

The Durand Line was never accepted by the Pashtun population straddling it and they continued to move around in the areas as they always had. Nor was it ever fully accepted by any Afghan government, even if some have been more willing to compromise, and it remains a stumbling block for the development of good relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. These relations set off for a bad start as Afghanistan voted against Pakistan’s entry into the United Nations in 1955. Kabul’s argument was that treaties between British India and Afghanistan relating to border issues were no longer valid with the new state of Pakistan and “the Afghan position was that the population of Pushtunistan – usually described as the area lying east of the Durand Line, but in some statements as all of West Pakistan west of the Indus River – should have the option, through a plebiscite, to decide for independence or for inclusion within India or Pakistan.”¹⁵⁵ An independent Pashtunistan, it was assumed, would be closely allied with Afghanistan. (It is interesting to note how this reasoning mirrors demands put forward by the Pakistanis with regard to the conflict surrounding Kashmir.)

Confrontations, uprisings and skirmishes have since followed and diplomatic relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have periodically been very tense or even severed. During the Cold War, Pakistan leaned towards the United States, joining the CENTO,¹⁵⁶ while the Soviet Union wanted to establish closer ties with Afghanistan,, as an incentive lending their support for the self-determination of Pashtunistan.¹⁵⁷ In his recent book “Descent Into Chaos”, Ahmed Rashid writes: “In the 1960s and 1970s, diehard Pashtun nationalists, including Afghan president Mohammed Daud, claimed that Afghanistan’s borders extended up to the Indus River, well south of Peshawar – a claim that, if acknowledged, would have cut Pakistan in half.”¹⁵⁸ It should be added, however, that neither did any

¹⁵³ Griffiths, *Afghanistan.*, pp. 56-57.

¹⁵⁴ Wikipedia (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pashtunistan), August 26, 2008.

¹⁵⁵ Richard S. Newell, *The Politics of Afghanistan* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1972), p. 67.

¹⁵⁶ Central Treaty Organization, also known as the Baghdad Pact, initiated by the USA and NATO in 1954.

¹⁵⁷ Wikipedia, *Pashtunistan*, August 26, 2008.

¹⁵⁸ Ahmed Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2008), p. 267.

Pakistani government push the Afghans to recognize the Durand Line, as it suited Pakistani expansionist ambitions to keep the border situation fluid.¹⁵⁹

The problems have been intensified by the lack of a unitary, recognized version of where the Durand Line actually runs. In Russian-produced maps it is located further to the East than in British-produced maps. Since there is no coherent demarcation on the ground, there is ample scope for misunderstandings, which may, or may not, have ulterior, political motives. The time scope of the Durand Line is equally contentious. According to one Afghan line of reasoning, the Durand line was established for a period of time limited to 100 years and consequently, it has now expired. Other arguments pertain to the legitimacy of the referendum in 1947, through which the population in the North-West Frontier Province voted for accession to Pakistan. That referendum was boycotted by the Red Shirt movement led by Abdul Ghaffar Khan, whose nickname “the frontier Gandhi” reflected the general inclination of the Pashtun population to support anti-British Indian nationalism rather than Muslim separatism.¹⁶⁰ His son, Abdul Wali Khan, is carrying his heritage forward as the leader of the Awami National Party (ANP), which made a spectacular come-back in the last election in February 2008 and is now ruling the NWFP together with the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP).

The lack of clarity with respect to these various aspects of the Durand Line is particularly detrimental in today’s situation with various degrees of warfare prevailing in large parts of the border area. As in all conflict zones, national sensitivities become acute and potentially explosive in themselves. Small provocations or mistakes arising on top of these sensitivities can lead to unmanageable consequences.

4.3 The FATA

As British efforts to bring Afghanistan under its sphere of influence proved unsuccessful, the FATA was created as a buffer zone immediately east of the Durand Line, behind which the empire proper could relax and go about its colonial administration. The leadership of the tribes inhabiting these areas was consistently resistant to attempts towards external domination – and they had good reasons to be so, as smuggling has traditionally been the mainstay of FATA’s economy. Instead of taking them on, the British chose to give the tribes a special dispensation, involving a high degree of autonomy and administratively

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 268.

¹⁶⁰ Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan Between Mosque and Military* (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), p. 160.

separating them from the North-West Frontier Province which was incorporated as part of the British protectorate state.

In the FATA dispensation, Political Agents of the federal administration were appointed to maintain contacts with the elected tribal leaders – “maliks”. The system was one of indirect rule and the loyalty of the maliks was ensured by regular subsidies.¹⁶¹ In return for stability, the tribes were largely left alone to run their own business. Since then, the FATA continue to be governed, not by the provincial government in Peshawar but directly from the capital, via the provincial Governor in Peshawar, who is appointed by the President. While FATA can send representatives to the National Parliament, the Parliament cannot legislate in any matter concerning FATA. Adult franchise was not introduced in FATA until 1996¹⁶² and the moderate political parties have been barred from participating in elections, including the one in 2008 – leaving the terrain free for the religious parties, which have gained ground over a number of years.

The legal system adopted for the FATA population also dates back to colonial times. The Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) was originally drafted in 1882 and promulgated with amendments in 1901.¹⁶³ It is based on the concept of collective responsibility, thus providing also for collective punishments. The new government in Pakistan, elected in February 2008, has decided to finally do away with this system but the modalities are still being discussed.

While this system has been beneficial to smugglers and drug traffickers and provided fertile ground for the Taliban, it has done little for the population at large, least of all the women. Poverty is deep and widespread, social services are limited. Female literacy is calculated at only three percent of the population.¹⁶⁴

With the spread of Talibanisation, the structure of tribal elders as counterparts to the Political Agents has also broken down. Many elders have simply been murdered, others terrorised into fleeing.

Gradually, the Taliban have taken over, using their expanded influence as a basis from which to spread into the settled areas. The term “tribal areas” for the FATA is understood as being the opposite of the “settled areas” of the neighbouring NWFP. What has happened during the last few years, though, is that the influence of the Taliban has slowly spread from the tribal areas, where it was seen as a limited problem connected to the special status of this region, into the

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 160.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 11. For more details, see Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos*, pp. 265-266.

¹⁶³ International Crisis Group, Asia Report No 125: *Pakistan's Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militants*, p. 5.

¹⁶⁴ Wikipedia (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federally_Administered_Tribal_Areas), p. 25, August 28, 2008.

settled areas of not only the NWFP but increasingly other provinces as well. The problem has gone, largely unchecked, from marginal to central.

4.4 The War Against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan

The roots of the Talibanisation of FATA go back to the war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan between 1979 and 1989. In the last big confrontation of the Cold War era, the semi-autonomous status of the FATA, as well as their tradition as a more or less safe haven for shady business, came in handy in the fight against the communists. According to Steve Coll, who has given a detailed account of the CIA's involvement in Afghanistan in his book "Ghost Wars", "(t)he CIA sent its first classified proposals for secret support to the anti-communist Afghan rebels to Jimmy Carter's White House in early March 1979",¹⁶⁵ more than half a year before the actual Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December, 1979. Pakistan was then ruled by Zia ul-Haq, after a military coup had removed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the founder of the PPP, from power in July 1977. A month later, on April 6, 1979, Zia proceeded to hang Bhutto, thereby choosing to disregard an international outcry against the death sentence and creating the basis for Bhutto's future stature as a political icon and martyr, inherited by his daughter Benazir who herself was killed in connection with a bomb blast on December 27, 2007.

Although Zia was the president who introduced staunch Islamic rules into the hitherto more relaxed religious framework of the Pakistani society, he managed to combine his Islamist, anti-Western attitudes with close cooperation with the United States, in a marriage of mutual convenience. This may have been the beginning of growing ambiguity and double-dealing in Pakistan's relation to the West in general, and the USA in particular. However, it may also date further back, into Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's era. Stephen Cohen writes: "Above all, Bhutto taught the Pakistanis the importance of 'flexibility,' that is, of not taking any foreign commitment too seriously (except, perhaps, that of China) and being willing, when necessary, to deceive formal allies and putative friends about Pakistan's real intentions and capabilities. In doing this, Bhutto was merely applying to Pakistan's foreign policy some of the principles that had become

¹⁶⁵ Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), p. 42.

endemic in domestic politics: trust no one, power alone counts and principles can be compromised.”¹⁶⁶

When thousands of armed rioters, incited by rumours of American involvement in an uprising in Mecca and possibly inspired by the attack on the American embassy in Tehran, broke into the US Embassy compound in Islamabad on November 21, 1979, fatally wounding a Marine guard and setting buildings on fire, the Pakistani government did little to intervene. Four people died in the incident, several more were wounded and the entire Embassy was destroyed. In a speech broadcast the same evening, President Zia failed to condemn the attack, understating it as follows: “I understand that the anger and grief over this incident /in Mecca/ was quite natural, but the way in which they were expressed is not in keeping with the lofty Islamic traditions of discipline and forbearance.”¹⁶⁷

Nonetheless, cooperation between the American administration, in particular the CIA, and the Pakistani government, in particular its military security set-up, the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI), became ever closer in the fight against the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. Massive funding, to the tune of hundreds of millions US dollars per year, was received by the ISI, as “Zia did not allow the CIA or any other foreign intelligence agency to aid the Mujahedin directly, enter Afghanistan, or plan the Mujahedin’s battles and strategy. That became the prerogative of the ISI, which with its newfound wealth and American patronage had become a state within a state, employing thousands of officers in order to run what was now also Pakistan’s Afghan war.”¹⁶⁸

The American interest in supporting the mujahedin fitted well into the agenda of the Pakistani security system. The ISI had started funding the Jamiat-e-Islami Afghanistan, led by Burhanuddin Rabbani, already in 1973 when Rabbani, after the overthrow of king Zahir Shah by his Soviet-backed cousin Sardar Muhammad Daoud, was forced to escape to Pakistan. Among Rabbani’s followers were Ahmed Shah Massoud and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who became two of the most prominent mujahedin leaders during the ensuing war against the Soviet occupiers.¹⁶⁹

President Zia ul-Haq managed, however, to portray the channelling of aid to the mujahedin movements via Pakistan as a service which put the country’s security at risk and meant that Pakistan, consequently, also deserved to be compensated

¹⁶⁶ Stephen Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), p. 142.

¹⁶⁷ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, p. 36.

¹⁶⁸ Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos*, p. 10.

¹⁶⁹ Haqqani, *Pakistan Between Military and Mosque*, pp. 172-173.

with direct support. In 1980, the Reagan administration allocated 3.2 billion US dollars in economic and military aid to Pakistan, followed in 1986 by another package of 4.2 billion US dollars over a six-year period.¹⁷⁰

This flow of resources into the Afghan mujahedin movements, the tribal belt where many of them were based and trained, as well as into the military establishment of Pakistan continued until 1990, when the Soviets had left Afghanistan and the Pressler Amendment, responding to Pakistan's evolving nuclear status, was invoked to end American military and economic assistance. The feeling of abandonment in the region was considerable and should not be underestimated as one of the sources of current anti-Americanism in that part of the world: The Cold War had been won, it had been won at great cost to the Afghan people and with Pakistan cast in a main part - but the Afghans and the Pakistanis had been left with the problems. This type of feelings remains part of the psychological make-up of today's conflict situation, as they tend to resurface when Pakistan is accused - by Afghanistan or the West - of not doing enough to fight the "war on terrorism". This may also be part of the background to Pakistani tendencies - matched, but to a lesser degree, in Afghanistan - not to view the fight against terrorism as a domestic challenge, but an agenda imposed from the outside, in spite of the growing number of suicide attacks within the country. While most Pakistanis prefer to live in an open and tolerant society, the fight against terrorism is not always interpreted as defending these values but is rather seen as doing the bidding of the US, or the West in general.

The exit of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan was followed by, first, fighting between the government and the warlords, who were fomented by e.g. US and Pakistani assistance, then by inter-factional fighting between different warlords. The civilian Afghan population continued to be squeezed between warring parties. The flow of resources across the border into Afghanistan was replaced by a renewed flow of refugees in the opposite direction. Millions fled, most of them to Pakistan and most of these settling in Pakistani Pashtun areas. The character of Peshawar changed, with a dramatic increase in population over a short period of time and sprawling refugee settlements surrounding the city centre.

Although many refugees returned after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, an estimated two million still remain in Pakistan, either in camps in the NWFP and Balochistan or as urban settlers, mainly in the Peshawar area. With them have come, according to views often heard in Pakistan, the "Kalashnikov culture": the collapse of rule of law, a dramatic rise in crime rates and an increasing drug problem.

¹⁷⁰ Haqqani, *Pakistan Between Military and Mosque*, p. 188.

The mujahedin fighting the Soviet invaders received external financing from other sources as well, notably Saudi Arabia. While, according to Haqqani, the ISI channelled at least two billion dollars in US covert assistance to the mujahedin during the eight years following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the contributions coming from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries were estimated to have been even larger.¹⁷¹ According to Rashid, these sources of funding merged: "Between 1982 and 1990 the CIA, working with the ISI and Saudi Arabia's intelligence service, funded the training, arrival, and arming of some thirty-five thousand Islamic militants from forty-three Muslim countries in Pakistani madrasas¹⁷² to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan. This global jihad¹⁷³ launched by Zia and Reagan was to sow the seeds of al Qaeda and turn Pakistan into the world centre of jihadism for the next two decades."¹⁷⁴

The Pakistani madrasas played a central role in supporting jihadin Afghanistan. Here, the development in Iran also enters into the equation. According to Hussain, "the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 opened up the first wave of foreign funding for madrasas in Pakistan. Fearful of growing Iranian influence and the spread of revolution, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and some other oil-rich Muslim countries started pumping money into hardline Sunni religious organizations willing to counter the Shia threat. Millions of dollars were poured into setting up madrasas across the country, particularly in Balochistan province, bordering Iran."¹⁷⁵

A large part of the madrasas built with funding from e.g. the Gulf countries are concentrated in Balochistan, the FATA and the NWFP, where they still serve as recruitment ground for the Taliban on both sides of the Durand Line. Although the Pakistani government has announced several initiatives to bring these schools, calculated to number about 12,000, into the mainstream system of education, these have remained gestures without much substance. And even if it wanted to, there is little the government can do - short of armed intervention - when the mullahs, who run these schools without the need for state funding, do not want to cooperate. On the contrary, as the public education system continues to decay and poverty remains rampant, the number of families looking to the madrasa system as a solution not only for the education, but also the feeding and clothing of their children, seems to be on the increase.

¹⁷¹ Haqqani, *Pakistan Between Military and Mosque*, p. 142.

¹⁷² Religious schools

¹⁷³ Religious strife or struggle

¹⁷⁴ Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos*, pp. 38-39.

¹⁷⁵ Zahid Hussain, *Frontline Pakistan* (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2007), p. 77.

On the provincial level, the election of 2002 brought Jamiatul Ulema-i-Islam (JUI) – the religious party which is considered to be the closest to the Taliban – to positions of power in both the NWFP and Balochistan, a situation which lasted until the 2008 election threw them out. According to Rashid, “/t/he JUI was to use the state machinery now at its disposal and its own network of madrasas and mosques to help the Taliban to regain Afghanistan.”¹⁷⁶

When I met a few students in a female madrasa in Lahore, run by the Jama’at-e-Islami (JI).¹⁷⁷ in 2006, I asked them about their plans for the future. The answer was unanimous: Back in their villages, they would like to return the privilege of having been educated by opening up their homes to illiterate women in the vicinity and teach them what they themselves had been taught at the madrasa. Thus, the word is spreading, in a way which will continue to feed the jihadist view of the world, adding to the turmoil on both sides of the Durand Line.

4.5 Balochistan

As in the north, the southern part of the border area between Afghanistan and Pakistan divides an ethnic group between several states. The Baloch, characterized as an Iranian people related to the Kurds and estimated to number over 15 million, are found mainly in Pakistan (8 million), Iran (4.1 million) and Afghanistan (1.1 million), with the rest spread around the world, including a significant number in Sweden.¹⁷⁸ Already in 1947, when Pakistan was created, there were nationalist tendencies in Balochistan and some Baloch leaders opposed the inclusion of their territory into the new state.¹⁷⁹ Unlike the Pashtun society, however, the Baloch are “markedly secular and mullahs have no standing in Baloch society, which has remained untouched by the waves of Islamisation that have swept the region. Instead, Baloch leaders have joined up with secular Sindhi and Pashtun nationalists to oppose what they consider Punjabi hegemony.”¹⁸⁰ A band of territory along the border with Afghanistan has, however, traditionally been inhabited by Pashtun. The number of Pashtun in the area also increased dramatically when Afghan refugees started arriving during the 1980s. Consequently, “Baloch nationalists opposed the army’s backing of the Afghan Mujahedin in the 1980s and of the Taliban in the 1990s

¹⁷⁶ Rashid, *Ibid.*, p. 159.

¹⁷⁷ JI is the smaller of the two dominant religious parties. It is considered to be more disciplined than JUI and closer to militant Wahhabi Islam as practiced in Saudi Arabia.

¹⁷⁸ Wikipedia (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baloch_people), August 29, 2008.

¹⁷⁹ Haqqani, *Pakistan Between Military and Mosque*, p. 102.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 283.

because they saw the army strategy as one that favoured Pashtun fundamentalism to the detriment of Baloch rights.”¹⁸¹

While Balochistan has remained the poorest of Pakistan’s four provinces, it is rich with natural resources, notably natural gas. There are widespread feelings in the province that the Baloch do not receive a fair share or compensation for these resources and ethnic nationalism has led to four insurgencies (1948, 1958-59, 1962-63, 1973-77), which have been put down by the Pakistani army.¹⁸² The last one was during Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s rule. Haqqani writes: “Under attack from the government, the secular NAP/National Awami Party, today ANP, ended up joining an opposition alliance dominated by the religious parties. In effect, Bhutto had weakened his secular rivals and strengthened the position of the Islamists as the focal point of opposition to his government.”¹⁸³

At around the same time, Daoud’s coup against the king in Kabul, Zahir Shah, took place, and while Pakistan protected Islamist opponents to the Soviet-inspired coup, Daoud decided to establish training camps for Baloch rebels.¹⁸⁴ This pattern of tit-for-tat is still reflected in the accusations traded today between the Pakistani and Afghan governments: Islamabad accuses Kabul of fomenting and supporting the Baloch rebellion, Kabul accuses Islamabad of harbouring and equipping Taliban insurgents. Although these accusations come with a great deal of truth, the “blame game”, as President Musharraf used to call it, does not promote the cooperation needed to fight instability on both sides of the border.

When Baloch nationalism resurfaced in 2003, options for a political dialogue were put on the table and partially explored but finally flouted by the military leadership, which again chose the path of violent repression. On August 26, 2006, Nawab Akbar Bugti, the 79-year-old leader of one of three rebelling tribes (Marri, Mengal and Bugti) was killed in his hide-out in the Baloch mountains, thereby providing the Baloch rebellion with a martyr and further alienating the still quite secular-minded nationalist parties. Bugti’s grand-son, Brahamdagh Bugti, managed to escape to Kabul and attempts by the Pakistani government to have him extradited have so far failed.

¹⁸¹ Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos*, p. 283.

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 36.

¹⁸³ Haqqani, *ibid.*, p. 103.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 174.

4.6 The Rule of the Taliban

The Taliban movement, by and large composed of rural southern Pashtuns, came to the forefront as a reaction to the utter mayhem and total lack of respect for human rights that the feuding warlords had imposed on Afghanistan. At first, they were welcomed as the restorers of some kind of law and order, albeit an extremely rigid one in line with the orthodox Deobandi¹⁸⁵ school, from which they had originated. Many had been educated at madrasas or religious seminaries in Pakistan, e.g. Darul Uloom Haqqania near Peshawar, which had “been the cradle of the Taliban militia that ruled Afghanistan for more than five years. Many of its leaders, including several cabinet ministers, had graduated from the school.”¹⁸⁶

The close links between the Taliban and Pakistani religious leaders brought better relations on the official level between the two countries than ever before or since. Pakistan was one of only three countries¹⁸⁷ which recognized the Taliban regime and close contacts were maintained via the Pakistani embassy in Kabul throughout the Taliban reign. Although the Taliban did not heed all the advice the Pakistanis provided them with, e.g. when they in 2001 destroyed the two huge Buddha statues carved into a cliff outside the city of Bamiyan, they were uneducated enough to need guidance and weak enough internationally not to constitute a threat to Islamabad. The Pakistani military idea of “strategic depth” on its western flank, needed in case of conflict with India, seemed viable during the Taliban reign from the middle of the 1990s until the American attack on Afghanistan after September 11, 2001. India was unlikely to be able to expand its influence in an Afghanistan with the fundamentalist Taliban at the helm.

From today’s Afghan perspective, this is often summed up as Pakistan having been instrumental both in the destruction brought on by the warlords after the Soviet exit and in the ensuing Taliban reign of terror. In return for their cooperation, the Taliban could count on sanctuaries and training grounds in Pakistan, as well as military support and advice via the ISI. In fact, Pakistani authorities, and the ISI in particular, were deeply involved in Afghan affairs. According to Rashid “/t/he Taliban handed over to al Qaeda the running of the training camps in eastern Afghanistan that the ISI and Pakistani extremists had earlier run for Kashmiri insurgents”.¹⁸⁸ For an Afghan eye, what all of this amounted to was a

¹⁸⁵ A branch of Sunni Hanafi Islam named after a religious seminary established in 1867 in the Indian village of Deoband, near Delhi.

¹⁸⁶ Hussein, *Pakistan Between Military and Mosque*, p. 77.

¹⁸⁷ The other two were Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

¹⁸⁸ Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos*, p. 15.

policy guided by the wish to dominate and exploit, through a proxy regime, a neighbour who should preferably be kept weak.

4.7 Post 9/11

The coordinated attacks in New York and Washington on September 11, 2001, put the Pakistani government, then headed by general Musharraf who was relatively isolated after his coup against prime minister Nawaz Sharif in October 1999, before a not too difficult choice: Pakistan could either join the US in the “war against terrorism” or stay away from it, taking the risk of being treated as part of the problem. Even if Musharraf, according to his memoirs, “made a ruthless analysis, deliberately devoid of emotion”,¹⁸⁹ it must have been quite clear to him that Pakistan was in no position to successfully deal with being included among the enemies of the US. According to Hussain, the alliance with the US came with a set of seven conditions:

1. “Stop al-Qaeda operations on the Pakistani border, intercept arms shipments through Pakistan and all logistical support for bin Laden.
2. Blanket over-flight and landing rights for US planes.
3. Access to Pakistan’s naval bases, air bases and borders.
4. Immediate intelligence and immigration information.
5. Curb all domestic expression of support for terrorism against the United States, its friends and allies.
6. Cut off fuel supply to the Taliban and stop Pakistani volunteers going into Afghanistan to join the Taliban.
7. Pakistan to break diplomatic relations with the Taliban and assist the US in destroying bin Laden and his al-Qaeda network.”¹⁹⁰

These demands amounted to nothing short of a volte-face in Pakistan’s policies, which was quite hard to sell in all quarters involved. Overnight, yesterday’s best friends had become enemies. According to Rashid, the pill had to be sweetened in order to make the army swallow it: “The military and the ISI /...believed.../ that helping the United States overthrow the Taliban regime would absolve it of reining in the Kashmiri militants. /.../ When, after 9/11, Musharraf declared that by siding with the United States he had ‘saved’ the Kashmir issue, he was signalling to the militants that nothing had changed.”¹⁹¹ Even so, the new policy was not uniformly embraced and, although assessments vary as to what extent ambiguity within the leadership continued to prevail, most observers agree that at

¹⁸⁹ Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2006), p. 204.

¹⁹⁰ Hussain, *Frontline Pakistan*, p. 36.

¹⁹¹ Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos*, p. 115.

least elements within the ISI preferred to remain loyal to the old, pro-Taliban agenda. According to Rashid, the ISI set up a clandestine organization to assist the Taliban and “justified its actions as stemming from fear of an Indian-controlled NA¹⁹² government in Kabul after the overthrow of the Taliban.”¹⁹³

During the following years, this ambiguity or double-dealing in the Pakistani behaviour became increasingly clear. Jihad was still a valid concept, not only in Kashmir but also in Afghanistan - in fact, more so in Afghanistan after the cease-fire along the Line of Control dividing Kashmir took effect in 2003. While many terrorists affiliated to al-Qaeda were indeed delivered to the US – in his book, Musharraf points out that considerable income was generated from these handovers¹⁹⁴ the leadership of one part of the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan, “the Quetta shura”, remained in Balochistan without being touched by the security forces. During a visit in 2005 to Pashtunabad, a suburb of Quetta, I could see for myself the distinctly Taliban character of the place. When meeting the then minister of foreign affairs a few weeks later, he assured me that there were no Taliban organizing in Quetta – if, indeed, I had such information, the Pakistani government would be happy to act upon it...

In the FATA, where the al-Qaeda aspect of the war was more prominent, the government was more active, applying a tactic of hot and cold, shifting from military attacks to agreements, direct or indirect, with the Taliban. These agreements, however, prompted by heavy casualties in the army and failing morale in the continued fight against Muslim brethren, were unsuccessful in stopping the Talibanisation from spreading across north-western Pakistan. In fact, as Samina Ahmed has pointed out, they rather achieved the opposite of their stated objective: Being “short-sighted accords that concede territory and political authority to militants, /t/hese accords have only undermined the writ of the state and empowered the insurgents.”¹⁹⁵

By the beginning of 2006, reliable reports of linkages between the increasingly active Taliban forces in Afghanistan and madrasas, training camps and sanctuaries in Pakistan had become quite frequent. President Karzai did not waste time in blaming the intensifying insurgency on Pakistan, accusing it of not only turning a blind eye to the cross-border traffic of recruits and armaments but also of actively colluding with the insurgency. The Pakistanis were incensed by these accusations, pointing to the sacrifices made in the war against terrorism and throwing the accusations back: Why did the Afghan government and the interna-

¹⁹² Northern Alliance, the tadjik-dominated, anti-Taliban alliance of Northern warlords.

¹⁹³ Rashid, *ibid.*, p. 78.

¹⁹⁴ Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, p 237: “We have earned bounties totaling millions of dollars”.

¹⁹⁵ Samina Ahmed, “Talking to the Taliban is Foolish”, *Financial Times*, July 24, 2008.

tional forces present in Afghanistan not do more to guard the border area? Why did they let corrupt Afghan officials release terrorists who had been handed over by Pakistan?

When the Pakistani government started talking of fencing the border, there was an international outcry against the idea, which in the end turned out to be impracticable. Pakistan then announced the closure of refugee camps along the border, another measure which was unpopular with the Afghans but which proved to be harder to carry out than originally envisaged. The relationship between the two presidents, Karzai and Musharraf reached an all-time low, while the security situation in both countries continued to deteriorate.

To which extent the new Pakistani government formed after the February 2008 elections can turn these relations around remains to be seen. While there have been a number of encouraging signs, it is also true that, so far, the internal power struggle seems to have absorbed most of the political energy. It is important, however, that the advent of a new set-up in Islamabad is viewed as a window of opportunity for the region, not only by the Pakistani voters who brought it into power, but also by the Afghan government and the international community, which has put so much at stake in Afghanistan, apparently without taking the continued slippage in Pakistan properly into account.

One “pull factor” for an improved relationship is the economic prospects offered by growing trade and commercial interaction. Between 2001 and 2006, trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan increased from 100 million to 1.6 billion US dollars.¹⁹⁶ In spite of today’s turmoil, the regional potential for mutually beneficial growth remains great, also in terms of the wider region, including Iran and Central Asia. An international effort to pin-point these potential benefits, along the lines of the Middle East peace process of the 1990s, might be useful.

4.8 The Indian Dimension

Two additional factors have to be taken into account if the Pakistani manoeuvring after 9/11 is to be understood: The fact that Pakistan’s foreign policy, particularly within its region, has traditionally been run by the army, rather than the government – a set-up which was accentuated with Musharraf assuming the dual role as President and Chief of the Army Staff – and the predominance of the relationship with India in Pakistan’s foreign policy. Since the creation of Pakistan, the threat from India has been seen as existential. There is a “chicken and egg” situation in this, as the preoccupation (if not obsession) with India is

¹⁹⁶ Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos*, p. 249.

also the main reason for why the army has been able to take on its disproportionate role in the Pakistani society as a political and economic actor, running a range of civilian companies and organizations and creating a quite visible divide within the society between well-equipped cantonment areas and the large slums surrounding them. In order to maintain these privileges, it is in the army's interest to ensure that the Indian threat remains credible.

India looms large also in the Pakistani-Afghan relationship. According to Rashid, "the Kashmir dispute continued to be a key factor in the intense rivalries that erupted between India and Pakistan after 9/11. Islamabad viewed its Afghan policy through the prism of denying India any advantage in Kabul."¹⁹⁷ The way the US conducted its intervention in Afghanistan in 2001 made it possible for the Northern Alliance, backed by Pakistan's most feared neighbours, India, Iran and Russia, to claim victory over the Taliban, who had been Pakistan's closest regional allies. India, the very arch-enemy, was quick to see the possibilities and proceeded to woo Karzai and put an extensive aid programme in place. All of this combined to give Pakistani-Afghan relations yet another bad restart. As Rashid writes: "Kabul had suddenly become the new Kashmir – the new battleground for the India-Pakistani rivalry."¹⁹⁸

Against this background, every visit by President Karzai to New Delhi and every new Indian project office opened up in Afghanistan are duly noted in Islamabad - of which both Indians and Afghans are also acutely aware. Consequently, the close relations which President Karzai, a graduate of an Indian university, continues to develop with India as well as the growing Indian economic support to Afghanistan are viewed with considerable suspicion in Islamabad. Apart from the four official Indian consulates in Afghanistan,¹⁹⁹ Pakistanis count up to ten extensions of these in areas close to the border with Pakistan. The real *raison d'être* of these offices is understood by Islamabad to be the destabilisation of, primarily, Balochistan. In this way, the Kashmir issue, being the most tangible problem in Indo-Pakistani relations, is linked not only to the Pashtunistan question but has also become connected to the nationalist movements in Balochistan in a kind of vicious circle of destabilisation.

The perception in Islamabad of a lack of adequate Pashtun representation in the Afghan government also has a link to India, reflecting the rapprochement which developed between India and Tadjik warlords, notably Massoud, during the Soviet occupation in response to Pakistan's backing of Pashtun warlords, in particular Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. The question remains, however, whether

¹⁹⁷ Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos*, p. 110

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p 110

¹⁹⁹ These consulates are in Herat, Kandahar, Jalalabad and Mazar-e-Sharif.

charges of pro-Tadjik bias in the Afghan government, as often made by Pakistani officials, is more a residue of the reactions to the provisional government created in Bonn in 2001 than based on clear-headed analysis of today's situation. After all, not only the president but also a number of crucial ministers in the current Afghan government are Pashtun. The counter argument, however, is that Karzai is not a true representative of the Pashtun population but just a puppet put in place by the Americans. Furthermore, it is argued that while Tadjik domination of the government may be limited, the Tadjiks are very much in control of the security sector, which is what really counts and what India can exploit as an instrument against Pakistan.

In an interview from May 2006, published on the website Boloji, Mushahid Hussein, the secretary-general of the then ruling party PML-Q and head of the parliamentary committee appointed to deal with the Balochistan issue, expresses these suspicions bluntly: "RAW /the Indian security agency/ has established its training camps in Afghanistan in collaboration with the Northern Alliance remnants. Approximately 600 *ferraris*, or Baluchi tribal dissidents, are getting specialized training to handle explosives, engineer bomb blasts, and use sophisticated weapons in these camps."²⁰⁰

True or not, these are perceptions which end up having political consequences.

4.9 Conclusions

- The conflict in Afghanistan cannot be separated from its regional context. Developments in and between Pakistan, India, Iran and the Central Asian republics, as well as relations between this region and the surrounding world, where other conflicts affecting Muslim populations continue to feed religious fervour, must be part of the analysis guiding the international effort to stabilise Afghanistan.
- A continued worsening of the crisis in Afghanistan would not only greatly complicate the efforts to curb terrorism and militancy in Pakistan, it would also lead to a deepening of the divide between different parts of Pakistan, a country which is already marked by a history of division. When it was created, Pakistan was divided into a western and an eastern part, separated by the Indian landmass. When in 1971, after a very bloody war, the eastern part seceded to become Bangladesh, the balance was altered and the divide between the eastern and western parts of remaining Pakistan became more obvious. The two western provinces are linked to Afghanistan, while the two

²⁰⁰ www.boloji.com/analysis2/0116.htm

eastern provinces tend to look eastwards, towards India. When India moves forward, so do, albeit to a much lesser degree, Punjab and Sindh. When Afghanistan moves backward, so do Balochistan and, especially, the NWFP. If these two movements happen simultaneously, national coherency will be stretched, potentially beyond its limits.

- A deepening of the internal divides within Pakistan would be dangerous in various ways. It should be kept in mind that the spectre of secession is ever present, at the back of the mind, in Pakistani political thinking. Pakistan is a young state and has since its inception been surrounded by negative expectations. As pointed out above, Afghanistan did not want to allow Pakistan entry into the United Nations. In India, as well, doubts as to the viability of the newly created Muslim state were often voiced. For many Pakistanis, threats against the country's borders have become equal to threats against its very existence. Much of Pakistani political action, e.g. the acquisition of nuclear power, can be seen as guided, consciously or unconsciously, by existential anxiety.
- The Kashmir conflict, the Balochistan insurgency and the Pashtunistan issue are all unresolved questions of national belonging. They are closely linked and, to some extent, feed each other. None of them can be left to simmer if regional stability is to be attained. By the same token, progress in one of them could prove salutary for the whole region. Maybe the incoming US administration could provide an impetus here, e.g. by putting the long-standing Kashmir conflict back on the international agenda?
- Similarly, progress in e.g. the Middle East peace process could mean a lot by influencing the mindset driving jihad in South Asia.
- The change of government in Pakistan after the elections in February 2008 should be seen as opening a window of opportunity for change in the region, rather than a threat against what some perceive to be stability generated by military governments. Pakistani efforts to turn around the development towards increasing destabilisation by militant groups should be supported to the same extent as the government in Kabul is being supported, albeit by other means than an international military presence.
- In order to be able to play this constructive role, the social contract prevailing in Pakistan will have to be reshaped – starting with a civil-military dialogue. It is now quite clear that the armed forces have been unable to solve the country's pressing problems not only with militancy, but also regarding the economy, the huge social divides, wide-spread poverty, and an education sector in utter disarray. The democratic process, until now checked

by the army at regular intervals, has to be given a chance to develop and the considerable energy manifest in the civil society must be channelled into the political mainstream.

- A democratic dispensation must include the FATA. Pouring development resources into the FATA today will be not only difficult (cf. the situation in Southern and Eastern Afghanistan), without preceding political reform it may be counterproductive. In other words, it risks enhancing precisely those structures which have produced today's problems.
- The deep-seated mutual suspicions governing the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have to be addressed, possibly with international prodding. Again, the change of government in Pakistan provides new inroads for improvements. The main ingredients in these suspicions - Afghan fear of Pakistani domination, Pakistani fear of Afghan complicity in Indian destabilisation - should be analysed in a transparent manner, providing a basis for constructive discussions on possible remedies.
- After dealing with the mistrust between Pakistan and Afghanistan, a whole range of lesser problems, ranging from migration flows to the division of water resources, will have to be approached in a constructive manner, laying the basis for enhanced, mutually beneficial regional cooperation.

If these actions are not taken, there is a tangible risk that the region's descent into chaos will continue, the objectives of the international Afghanistan exercise will remain unreachable even in reduced form, the region will turn into an even safer haven for international terrorists, cheap heroin will flood the European markets, and the suppression of the human rights of the female half of the region's population will be intensified, while the rule of law and respect for human rights in general will continue to be eroded.

Many opportunities for constructive change in the region have already been missed. There is not much scope left for stumbling from one half-hearted intervention to another. The time for cohesive and determined action is now, by regional governments as well as the international community.

5 China-Pakistan Relationship: All-Weathers, But Maybe Not All-Dimensional

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In the 1980s, General Zia-ul-Haq praised the relationship between China and Pakistan as an “All-weather’s friendship”, and in 1996, during the state visit of Chinese President Jiang Zemin to Islamabad, the leaders of the two countries decided to establish an all-round cooperative partnership into the 21st century. Later, “all-weather friendship and all-dimensional cooperation” appeared in many joint statements and agreements between the two sides and became a “classic” definition of this bilateral relationship.

To outward seeming, there do not exist any problems in the two countries’ relations. However, while the China-Pakistan relationship is definitely “all-weather’s”, or time-tested, it is maybe not “all-dimensional”. Actually, the China-Pakistan friendship, which has always been praised as a model of neighbouring relationship by diplomats and media of the two countries, basically focuses on the political and military fields. The objective has not been to strengthen the two countries’ welfare interests but to strengthen them against common threats. It should be described as a shield to protect their traditional security interests rather than a bridge to lead to common prosperity and wealth.

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Under the comprehensive framework of the bilateral relationship, there are some problems beyond the traditional security fields which are covered by the two countries' close political and security cooperation.

Firstly, the economic and trade links between China and Pakistan are relatively weak, but even on this small scale there exist many problems and the links can backfire.

Secondly, people-to-people exchanges between these two countries are left far behind governmental contacts. The China-Pakistan cooperation has in all dimensions been led by the two governments and has not been enhanced by the support and participation of the private sectors or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) of the two countries.

Thirdly, the security situation in some provinces and regions in Pakistan causes present and potential future threats to China's interests, especially to Chinese investments. The political chaos and security turbulence of Pakistan restrict further cooperation between two sides.

Fourthly, the development of a subcontinent regional order and a change of China's regional strategy have brought certain negative effects to the relationship between China and Pakistan. The strategic value of Pakistan in China's foreign policy has been underestimated.

In fact, the China-Pakistan relationship is an unbalanced and externally led bilateral relation, which lacks solid internal support. With the development of a South Asian international order, there are some indications that the decisive factor affecting the China-Pakistan relationship will change. Although a challenge also means an opportunity, China and Pakistan should seize the opportunity to change the negative parts in their relations and enhance cooperation in all fields to be able to face further challenges.

5.1 China and Pakistan Strategic Cooperation—Time-Tested Solid Foundation

The China-Pakistan strategic cooperation did not emerge at the same time as the establishment of their diplomatic relations. In the early years of Chinese-Pakistani diplomatic relations, Pakistan maintained cool relations with China since it was an ally of the West. During the Bandung Conference in 1955, Premier Zhou Enlai held two friendly talks with Pakistani Prime Minister M. Ali, and both sides shared the view that exchange and cooperation in various areas

should be strengthened. The talks played an important role in promoting understanding and developing friendly relations and cooperation between the two countries. After the Bandung Conference, there was a gradual increase of high-level exchanges of visits. The successful exchange of visits in later years have greatly promoted the development of friendly relations and cooperation between the two countries and strengthened the friendship between the two peoples.

Since the late 1950s, especially from the second Indo-Pakistan war in 1965, successive governments in Pakistan have made vigorous attempts to strengthen these ties further. In fact, friendship with China has been a cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy since that time. For the last forty years, diplomatic ties between China and Pakistan are considered to be a model relationship between neighbouring countries. China and Pakistan have witnessed a smooth development of friendly and neighbourly relations as well as mutually beneficial cooperation.

Pakistan contributed a lot to the restoration of China's legal status in the UN and adopted a One China Policy, always strictly adhering to it. China proved its commitment to friendship with Pakistan in many crisis hours. Pakistan is the only non-socialist country for which China has vowed to fight on the battlefield, sending an ultimatum to another neighbour country, India (during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965). China is the biggest military equipment provider and the only supplier of nuclear energy and its related technology to Pakistan. In the last forty years, China's South Asian policy has been based on a single pillar—its “all-weather friendship and all-dimensional cooperation” with Pakistan.

Even since the onset of the 21st century, after the relationship between China and India had enjoyed continuous progress for a decade and with India no longer being seen as the “common enemy” of China and Pakistan as it had been for the previous thirty years, the relationship between China and Pakistan has not fallen into a declining tendency as some Indian observers had expected. On the contrary, China's relations with Pakistan has also made marvellous achievements. Their relationship has expanded to vast fields and their traditional politics and security links have also been getting closer. During the visit of the Chinese Premier to Islamabad in 2005, the two governments signed the “Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Good-neighbourly Relations between the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan” as an important legal foundation for the strategic partnership between China and Pakistan. With the efforts of the two sides, it seems that China's and Pakistan's “all-weather friendship and all-dimensional cooperation” are living up to their reputation.

5.1.1 Military Partnership: Not only a business

Military cooperation between China and Pakistan constitutes the most significant part of their all-dimensional relationship. In the last forty years, the military cooperation with China and related projects such as joint research and development, defence equipment trade and assistance, and personnel training have contributed a lot to Islamabad's capability to confront her strong neighbour and to remain the defence balance in this region.

Since the 1990s, due to the technical progress achieved by Pakistan's defence research organs, the self-support capability of Pakistan's army has been increasing and the defence cooperation between China and Pakistan has transformed from ammunition trade to joint development. The MBT Khalid (in China, MBT 85-2), the JF-17 Thunder fighter (in China, FC-1), the K-8 and the other defence equipment development projects were initialised in the 1990s or in the earlier part of the 21st Century. The main and standard armament of Pakistani forces is made in China or by joint ventures between the two countries.

Pakistan's limited amount of advanced American equipment is being substituted by Chinese equipment. In April 2008, Pakistan's military authority announced the armed forces would cut its F-16 upgrade project and that the number of F-16 purchased by Pakistan would be reduced from 36 to fighter planes 18 due to Pakistan's tight financial situation. Meanwhile, the JF-17 project would not be compromised or recomposed.

For Pakistan, the defence cooperation with China has been posterior to that with the US and the Americans have definitely enjoyed a technology advantage over China. But China has been more successful at building military ties and more significant for the security of Pakistan. Besides the factor of cost performance of Chinese products—their cheaper price and acceptable quality—and the path dependence—during Mao and Deng's periods, China assisted in building a lot of ammunition manufacturing facilities in Pakistan such as Taxila Heavy Mechanical Factory (HMF)—there are at least two other reasons behind China's advantage in this field: China proved its commitment of loyalty during every crises of Pakistan, and for the supply of military equipment, continuity and reliability are crucial. And China's assistance never has any political strings attached.

China's military cooperation with Pakistan is not just business-oriented but involves a comprehensive set of exchanges. The interaction of the two armed forces has expanded into personnel training, joint exercises and many other forms. From March 6 to 13, 2007, the Chinese navy task group participated in the naval exercises held in the Arabian Sea off Pakistan, which is the first time for the Chinese navy to participate in the multinational naval exercises. Before

this, the "Friendship-2006" China-Pakistan joint anti-terrorism exercise was initiated on December 11 and concluded on December 19 in the hilly area of northern Pakistan's Abbottabad. The exercises renewed and enriched the long-term defence cooperation between China and Pakistan.

As a conclusion, China's intentions with regard to its defence cooperation with Pakistan are to help Pakistan improve her self-defence capability and maintain the balance of defence on the subcontinent. Meanwhile, China hopes her arms exports, including both products and services, could gain some international reputation of reliability and quality via her cooperation with Pakistan. Of course, economic motivation also should be considered. China's foreign policy is driven by economic considerations as well, as is also reflected in her defence cooperation with Pakistan and other countries. As an example, the K-8 Trainer aircraft has been exported to many Asian and African countries, such as Egypt, Namibia, Zambia and Myanmar. In fact, Egypt purchased 80 K-8 planes, many more than Pakistan.

5.1.2 Nuclear Cooperation: Sensitive but not hazardous

Pakistan is the only country with nuclear weapons in the Muslim world, but not the only one with nuclear facilities and technologies. Like many other countries which have nuclear ambitions, Pakistan basically relied on her own resources and meanwhile tried to get foreign assistance. China, the loyal friend of Pakistan, provided help, including technology, nuclear fuels, and some equipment, at least in the civilian field. Although some analysts and intelligence sources implied that China was also involved in Pakistan's nuclear weapon projects and had provided M-11 missiles which could carry nuclear warheads, both China and Pakistan "categorically rejected these charges terming them baseless".²⁰¹ The two countries emphasized their cooperation had been monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) since the beginning.

For the civilian part of its international nuclear cooperation, China was not Pakistan's first partner, Canada was. Pakistan's first nuclear power reactor was a small (125 MWe) Canadian pressurised heavy water reactor (PHWR) which was started up in 1971. During the 1970s and 1980s, France, Belgium and Germany also provided some assistance to Pakistan's nuclear programme. China's contribution focused on Pakistan's two operational nuclear power plants—Chashma-1 and Chashma -2, both in Punjab. The former is a 300 MWe pressurised water reactor (PWR), which was supplied by China's CNNC under safeguards. It was started up in May 2000 and is basically a reproduction of Chin's Qinshan-1. The

²⁰¹ Ghulam Ali, Fifty-fifth Anniversary of Sino-Pakistan Relations: An Appraisal.

latter, Chashma-2, started in December 2005, cost US\$ 860 million, of which \$350 million was financed by China, and is also under international safeguards. Enriched fuel for both of them is imported from China.

Pakistan suffers from very serious power shortages. A more ambitious nuclear power plants programme is one of countermeasures adopted by Islamabad. Pakistan hopes to increase her nuclear capacity to 900 MWe by 2015 and further to 1500 MWe by 2020, according to her Energy Security Plan in 2005. To realize this purpose, Pakistan requests four additional Chinese reactors of 300 MWe each and seven of 1000 MWe. In June 2008, the government announced plans to build units 3 and 4 at Chashma, each with a capacity of 320 MWe and costing PKR 129 billion, of which PKR 80 billion will come from international sources, principally China.²⁰²

It should be noted that China's assistance is not freely donated. At the governmental level, this cooperation could be regarded as a friendly symbol, but for the Chinese enterprises involved, it is also a huge opportunity to occupy Pakistan's promising power market. Chinese firms are also throwing themselves into the construction of Pakistan's conventional power stations. China's nuclear deal with Pakistan absolutely has strategic objectives, upgrading the bilateral relationship, but there is also a clear economic motivation. It is sensitive, but given that it is monitored by the IAEA, maybe not definitely dangerous.

5.1.3 Gwadar Project: What does China Want?

In the first years of General Musharraf's regime, Pakistan redefined herself as an energy corridor connecting East Asia (China) and South Asia (India) with the Middle East and Central Asia. Actually, this corridor strategy was not invented by General Musharraf; it can be traced back to the 1960s as part of a strategy of Baluchistan's development initialled by Pakistan's central government at that time. The trans-Pakistan pipeline is at the core of this strategy and the Gwadar Port project is one of the cornerstones.

The Gwadar Port project started on 22 March, 2002. Phase I has been completed and Phase II is in process. This project costs 0.248 billion US\$, of which 50 million US\$ is paid by Islamabad and the rest, 198 million US\$, is contributed by China in the form of official development assistance (ODA).

According to Pakistan's government, "Gwadar as a deep-sea port will shortly be an additional and alternate port to the existing port infrastructure of Pakistan. It will provide an economical access to the sea for cargo generated in the Northern

²⁰² Resource came from Andrew Koch and Jennifer Topping, *Pakistan's Nuclear Related Facilities*.

and southern parts of Pakistan and Neighboring states. Pakistan offers the shortest route to Central Asia from its ports in the south through a modern road and rail network”.²⁰³ Phase I consists of three multipurpose berths, each 200m long, a 4.5 km long approach channel dredged to 11.6m-12.5m (width 130-165m) and related port infrastructure and port handling equipment and pilot boats, tugs, survey vessel etc. Phase II will consist of ten berths (two bulk cargos, two oil, and six containers), a 5.0 km approach channel, a 600m turning basin, and affiliated roads/infrastructure.²⁰⁴

As the biggest overseas construction of China since the Tanzania-Zambia Railway, the Gwadar project has drawn a lot of surmise and suspicion, especially with regard to China’s intentions. Does China want to use Gwadar as her first overseas naval base? Is it a component of the so-called “String of Pearls”? Defending China’s intentions is maybe not the best tactics to clear China’s position on this issue and ease concerns. Almost all kinds of infrastructure, no matter aerial or maritime, are dual-use. It is an undeniable nature of transportation infrastructure. The situation is quite like outer space facilities and activities. China could argue that her spacecraft Shenzhou 7 is a purely civilian project, that the small satellite (smallsat) released by astronauts is only for video shooting, but it is unhelpful to relax the people who worry about that the military purpose of this kind of smallsat is to catch or even destroy other countries’ space assets. Gwadar port could absolutely be used by the navy, the question is which navy?

China does not even have a Blue Water Fleet; her navy could sail to the Indian Ocean for a joint exercise or friendly visit, but obviously lack the combat capability of the other navy fleets which are already anchored there. Why does China need this port which is totally beyond her navy’s battle field and could be easily attacked? Of course it could be argued that China wants to make some advance preparations for her marvellous future strategy. But this assumption is at least challenged by one question: To build up a Blue Water Fleet, China needs at least ten years, and China has not even started her effort, but the construction of Gwadar only took three years. Why is China so impatient to expose her ambition?

In fact, China’s intentions of this project is that it is part of her oil and natural gas transportation diversity strategy. For China, currently 50 percent of her energy needs rely on import, of which 80 percent come from the Middle East, and all are transported via the Malacca Strait. This strait is relative fragile and crowded even in times of peace and pirates and some countries’ uncertain policies toward

²⁰³ <http://www.pakboi.gov.pk/>.

²⁰⁴ <http://www.pakboi.gov.pk/infra.htm>

China cause present and potential threats to Chinese energy supplies through this channel. Gwadar is one of some important ways in which China can avoid the dangers hiding in heavy fogs in the Malacca Strait.

To even realise this limited purpose was not expected recently because of security tension, political turbulence and geographical environment difficulties in Pakistan. Gwadar is symbol of friendship and will be beneficial in the future if Pakistan's situation improves enough to be an energy corridor as is expected. But it won't be a Quick Impact Project²⁰⁵; It needs more time to justify its value.

The strategic cooperation between China and Pakistan is incomparable and irreplaceable in the framework of China's regional system, but it obviously is a cooperation of governments, for government and by government. The private sectors are seldom involved. The cooperation is focused on these two countries' strategic interests, first and foremost their security interests. If the subcontinent regional system still could be regarded as a sealed system in which China and Pakistan stand shoulder to shoulder to contain India, and where the intentions and results of related players' interactions are only regional, this state-centric, security-oriented and Indo-centric cooperation is perfect enough to be a "Model". But the preconditions mentioned above have been changed. The world has become globalised and the regional system expanded. The traditional cooperation between China and Pakistan remains successful, which is nice and necessary, but is it solid enough to protect their common interests in the changing world and endure the test of time? Do they need something more?

5.2 Economic Linkage and People-to-People Exchanges—Heel of Achilles?

According to classic realism in International Relations theory, states are guided by the logic of "national interests". In Hans Morgenthau's time, it was usually defined in terms of survival, security and power. To Morgenthau, "rational foreign policy minimizes risks and maximizes benefits". In his time, they were the two sides of the same coin, risks and benefits were all about security and power.²⁰⁶ But now, in a globalised world, although it still could be urged that state behaviour is rational, the spectrum of national interests has been enlarged into a very comprehensive cluster, and while security and power maintain their

²⁰⁵ QIP is abbreviation of the operations conducted by Pakistan law enforcement agency in FATAs to inspire the local tribe, such as digging a well, building a county road or renewing some buildings.

²⁰⁶ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, Fifth Edition, Revised (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), pp. 4-15.

priority status, welfare occupies a more and more important position. It is almost the only consensus of Neo-Realism and Neo-Liberalism that there are three main goals which states seek—Power, security and welfare. Those are the three basic motives which determine the behaviour of states, and also three pillars to keep the relationship between states solid for long term. In fact, in some circumstances, seeking common welfare—or in other words, making money together and from each other—could even override security disputes.²⁰⁷

Unfortunately, measuring in terms of these three pillars, the relationship between China and Pakistan is not as solid as it looks like. Before the 21st Century, the relationship between China and Pakistan was not based on the parallel pillars—ensuring security and increasing welfare—but relied on the former one. Although the two sides adopted many efforts to remedy the imbalance, there is still a long way to go.

5.2.1 China- Pakistan Economic Ties: Tiny and Weak

Since the early 1950s, China and Pakistan have established trade relations and started trade transactions. In January 1963, they signed their first trade agreement. In October 1982, China-Pakistan Joint Committee of Economy, Trade and Technology was set up. But till 2003, their bilateral trade volume had remained at very low levels, around 1 billion US\$ per year. By joint efforts, the China-Pakistan economic and trade cooperation has witnessed a relatively fast growth in the recent five years. In 2007, China-Pakistan trade volume reached US\$ 6.5 billion, a new record in terms of their trade relations. But this still only accounted for 0.3% of Chinese annual import and export trade volume. With this record's help, Pakistan became the sixteenth biggest Asian trade partner of China—behind Oman and ahead of Israel. From 1995 to 2007, the total trade volume between China and Pakistan reached 20 billion US\$, which is only little more than half of the China-Indian annual trade volume in 2007 (38.6 billion US\$).²⁰⁸ During the visit of President Zardari to China in October 2008, the two sides vowed to improve their trade links to 15 billion US\$ per year before 2011.²⁰⁹ Even if this great ambition can be realised, it still would be left far behind of the trade links between China and India. Furthermore, there is another problem

²⁰⁷ Relationship between China and South Korea could be regarded as an example. Although there are many disputes concerning to security, ideology and first and foremost, the DPRK issue, and actually there are seldom in common between these two, ties between Beijing and Seoul are getting closer year by year since 1990s, mainly—if not only—because of their unbreakable economic linkage and very close and frequent people to people exchanges.

²⁰⁸ <http://yzs.mofcom.gov.cn/article/g/date/k/200802/20080205366505.html>

²⁰⁹ http://news.xinhuanet.com/herald/2008-12/18/content_10523203.htm

China and Pakistan did not mention much in that blueprint—for which side would the bilateral business contact be more favourable?

China-Pakistan trade links are not only relatively weak, but also notably unbalanced. Since 1995, China has enjoyed a favourable trade balance, and the advantage has kept continuously growing. In 2007, China's favourable balance was 4.3 billion US\$, a new record, marking an increase of 32 percent compared with the previous year.²¹⁰ But Pakistan's annual export volume has remained at the low level of about 1 billion US\$ for twenty years, though in 2007 reaching 1.1 billion US\$, also a new record. For some years, the development of Pakistani export volume was even in a negative direction. The outstanding rise in China-Pakistan trade volume since 2000 is just a result of the fast increase of China's favourable balance. The large and increasingly worsening trade imbalance has already caused complaint from Pakistan's government and enterprises, and has in some fields also led to revenge operations. Although the trade conflict still remains relative slight and could be controlled, it has already caused some negative effects on bilateral relations.

In recent years, Chinese enterprises have had a more and more positive attitude toward participating in Pakistani development and construction. The scale of Chinese investment in Pakistan has expanded, and the number of big and medium-sized projects have increased. Before 2007, the total amount of Chinese investment in Pakistan was 1.02 billion US\$. Comparing with direct investment, Chinese enterprises made bigger achievements on project contracts. In 2007, Chinese enterprises signed contracts worth a total amount of 3.1 billion US\$ with Pakistani counterparts.²¹¹ China-Pakistan cooperation projects—both in terms of investments and contracts—mainly focused on energy development and large-sized engine and power supply equipment. The involvement of Chinese enterprises in the local economy was limited and they did not blend with local companies.

5.2.2 FTA and the Backfire of Boosting Trade Ties

As Stephen Cohen has stated, trade policy is largely a political response to economic forces.²¹² After 30 years of an “Open and Reform Policy”, China's confidence on her economic power could be proved by her passion for free trade theory and its legal form—Free Trade Agreements (FTA). But due to complaints

²¹⁰ <http://yzs.mofcom.gov.cn/aarticle/g/date/k/200802/20080205366505.html>

²¹¹ <http://pk.mofcom.gov.cn/aarticle/zxhz/tjsj/200806/20080605604149.html>

²¹² Stephen Cohen, “The Rise of China and the Rise of China-U.S. Trade Frictions”, http://www.siis.org.cn/Sh_Yj_Cms/Mgz/200601/200872423029MJ3B.PDF.

and critique from China's trade partners caused by China's huge trade surplus, till now, China has only signed FTAs with five partners, Pakistan being the only neighbouring country of China.

Islamabad is the first among China's neighbours who recognized China's full market economy status (December 15, 2004) and signed an FTA with Beijing (November 24, 2006). Since the China-Pakistan FTA went into effect, as predicted, trade between the two countries and Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) to Pakistan have been boosted. On April 17, 2007, during the visit of Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz to China, the two sides inked 27 agreements and Memorandums of Understanding aimed at further expanding ties between the two countries. The annual trade volume between the two reached US\$ 5 billion in 2006, a 23.1 percent increase on the previous year.²¹³ In 2007, it reached US\$ 6.5 billion, increasing 24.6 percent.²¹⁴ It is absolutely good news to China, but did maybe not please Islamabad as the figures only mean Chinese products flooded into Pakistan. In 2006 and 2007, China's export volume reached US\$ 4.2 billion and US\$ 5.4 billion respectively. Pakistan's export to China only reached US\$1.07 billion and US\$ 1.1 billion the same years. The gap in the trade imbalance between China and Pakistan has been deepened since 2006.

China has emphasised repeatedly that its trade policy has not and will not be to pursue enormous profits, but the truth is that the trade imbalance favourable to China has been a worldwide phenomenon. China's official policy on political issues is always self-controlled and encourages the stability of the region, showing its peaceful and moderate intentions. But in the trade arena, Chinese enterprises usually operate ambitiously and offensively. The reasons for Chinese enormous trade profits are complicated and it is debatable whether it is only China which benefits from the trade, despite the trade imbalance, but it is not easy to persuade those countries that are unfavoured to recognize that the truth may not be what it looks like. The caution and reactions of Chinese trade partners, sometimes following trade disputes, challenged the belief assumed by China that increasing commercial links would guarantee political relations. It is correct, but only happens when the commercial links bring win-win result. In South Asia and Pakistan, just like elsewhere in the world, China has met similar situations.

Trade disputes, such as complaints from local manufacturers and anti-dumping investigations, have increased after Chinese increased its commerce links with

²¹³ <http://yzs.mofcom.gov.cn/aarticle/g/date/j/200701/20070104313110.html>

²¹⁴ <http://yzs.mofcom.gov.cn/aarticle/g/date/k/200802/20080205366505.html>

South Asia, also Pakistan in recent years. For example, in 2005, the Pakistani Custom Committee launched an anti-dumping investigation on Chinese formyl colophony. During negotiations on the FTA agreement between China and Pakistan, several influential Chambers of Commerces in Pakistan requested the government not to impatiently push forward the negotiations, worrying about possible negative effects caused by the FTA. Some local media even criticised the agreement for being a “political deal” and which would possibly damage Pakistan’s weak and underdeveloped economy.²¹⁵

Assuming China would preserve its competitive edge in the economic arena with Pakistan, it is not expected that the trade disputes will be resolved in a short time. China should find a way to minimise the negative factors of the increasing economic links and avoid the harm to the political relationship.

5.2.3 China-Pakistan People to People Exchanges: Loose and Slight

Exchanges of people between the two countries remain loose and are limited compared with those between China and its other important strategic cooperation partners, even potentially competing opponents. Each year, China hosts dozens of millions foreign tourists and visitors but only 70,000-80,000 are from Pakistan, on average accounting for 0.5 percent of the total and just a quarter of the number of Indian visitors. Of course, it could be argued that the Indian population is eight times that of Pakistan, so the average number of Pakistani visitors is still higher than Indian. But China’s other land neighbour, which also lack significant road connections with China, Kazakhstan, would bring objective statistical data. In the year of 2004, the number of tourists and visitors from Kazakhstan to China was twice that of Pakistan, and Kazakhstan’s population is just 10 percent of Pakistan’s. Pakistan is one of the countries which has the biggest population in the world and it is the closest friend of China, but it is only number 23 on the list of countries with the most number of people visiting China.

In 2003, a tourism memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed by the two governments. With the aim of attracting more Chinese tourists, Pakistan approved that Chinese citizens could apply for landing visas. But according to statistical data, each year only about 20,000 or 30,000 Chinese citizens travel to Pakistan for all kinds of purposes out of the total 20 million Chinese who go abroad.²¹⁶

²¹⁵ <http://pk.mofcom.gov.cn/aarticle/jmxw/200609/20060903092786.html>.

²¹⁶ Interview with the Consular Section of Pakistan’s Embassy in Beijing.

The decisive elements influencing the two countries' people-to-people exchange is a lack of official involvement and necessary infrastructure. The Culture Agreement was signed 40 years ago, but relevant activities have seldom been realised or they have been small and local. Till now, there are only two Pakistani culture centres operating in China and one Confucius Institute in Pakistan. Both China and Pakistan have rich tourism resources, but neither of them has made any public propaganda on the other country via media, including newspapers, TV and the Internet.

In terms of land communication, given restrictions from geographical conditions, the China-Pakistan Friendship Road could play a limited role in the transportation of people and goods during the summer. Maybe harsh geographical conditions in the border area are a decisive obstacle, which are blocking people-to-people exchange, but obviously, they are not the sole reason. There are many countries which have no land communication with China, but their people could easily take a flight or a boat to travel between their native countries and China. For a long time, there have been only three civil flights between China and Pakistan, from Shanghai and Beijing to Islamabad and Karachi, from Urumqi to Islamabad, and from Kashgar to Islamabad. None of them is daily operated.

Unquestionably, there exists a traditional friendship between China and Pakistan, not only on the governmental level, but also among the people. According to a poll by a Chinese leading website, Sina, Pakistan is viewed by Chinese people as being the friendliest country to China in the whole world. And although there is a lack of statistical data—it is not very easy to get such kind of data—Pakistanis are maybe the people who have the most favourable impression of China. The favourable impression of common Pakistanis is not of the Chinese people but of the Chinese government and is based on the firm and continuing support of Beijing for Islamabad's stance, especially when Islamabad faced a military threat from its south neighbour. On the other hand, lots of common Chinese people feel proud of Pakistani's favourable feelings, but sometimes think this is natural. So when some unfortunate accident happens to Chinese citizens or interests in Pakistan, it is not understood by the Chinese public. In recent years, the favourable feelings towards the Chinese government have been contradicted by the impressions of the Chinese people, especially overseas Chinese based in Pakistan. The Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) event and following incident when Chinese citizens were ambushed in Peshawar could be used as evidence.

In fact, the favourable feelings towards the other side basically come from the illusion or fantasy of two peoples and is not the result of long term and close people-to-people exchange. Actually, people-to-people exchange between China

and Pakistan is far behind the inter-governmental political and military cooperation, just like their economic links.

5.3 China and Pakistan: An Externally-led Relationship

For a long time, China's and Pakistan's connection could be defined as an externally-led bilateral relationship. This term signifies that the interaction between certain states (in this case, China and Pakistan) is driven by common external concerns, usually security threats. To increase the common welfare and support other internal goals have not been the priorities of their foreign policy with regard to each other. In this context, fragile economic linkages and extreme trade imbalance have never been raised soberly and earnestly in the dialogue of the two governments. To ensure their interdependency and enhance cooperation, Beijing and Islamabad did not need the assistance and support of the businessman.

Actually, the contrast between the tightness in political cooperation and the incompact economic linkages in the framework of China's and Pakistan's relationship is not a new phenomenon, it has been an "always be" problem for many decades since their diplomatic ties were established in the 1950s. From the 1960s to the 1990s, China and Pakistan kept on enhancing their political and security cooperation to confront traditional geopolitical threats. India has been a key issue in the relationship between China and Pakistan. Kenneth Lieberthal, professor of the University of Michigan, made the verdict that "traditionally, the driving factor (to this bilateral relation) for China was a hedge against India, and for Pakistan it was gaining access to civilian and military resources"²¹⁷. In fact, not only China is hedging against India but also Pakistan has for the last forty years. And Islamabad's behaviour is understandable, considering the interactive record of these two former British colonies.

Since the late 1990s, a new factor has contributed to consolidate and enhance China's and Pakistan's security cooperation. The 911 attacks in 2001 and the following global war on terror (GWOT) brought new content to the cooperation of the two countries. The fight against new emerging untraditional threats, such as terrorism, separatism and religious radicalism, became another important issue of concern to both sides. China's and Pakistan's cooperation, especially in the political and military fields, was regarded as the foundation of these two

²¹⁷ China and Pakistan: A deepening bond.
http://www.cfr.org/publication/10070/china_and_pakistan.html.

countries' regional policies for many years. The close cooperation between China and Pakistan has played a very important role for securing both of their security and geography interests. It is an undeniable fact that forty years of an "all-weather and all-dimensional" brotherhood has been brazed by common security concerns, even if these concerns are not the only solder.

So, a question comes up—what will happen to this externally-led relationship if there is no longer any common security concern, or the old friends adopt different definitions of the regional geopolitical environment? This perspective is getting more relevant with the term "Chindia" emerging.

Of course, counterterrorism remains another pillar of China's and Pakistan's security cooperation, but even on this account, the question still emerges whether this pillar is enough to provide the foundation for the "all-weather and all dimensional" brotherhood? Especially as this cooperation currently is seriously compromised by one partner's political turbulence and as counterterrorism efforts are more and more becoming a domestic fight.

5.4 The Challenges to China and Pakistan Relationship

5.4.1 "Chindia"'s Impact and the Transformation of China's Regional Strategy

In the recent 15 years since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the most influential international event has been Asia's "Rise"; of which the most outstanding countries have been China and India. As two emerging Asian powers with continuously increasing international interests and influence, how China and India handle their relationship will be critical for both countries and other regional partners, even for the global peace and prosperity in coming years. Relations with India have been the core in the chain of relationships between China and South Asia. The new trend of China's and India's interaction is to try to rebuild the structure of the South Asian regional system and defiantly change the geopolitical environment of China's and Pakistan's relationship.

Bill Emmott, the senior editor of *The Economist*, described the prospect of China, India and "Chindia" in January 2006, in his article "*The future power of Chindia*". Emmott asked the same question other people have asked every time this magic word of "Chindia" has been mentioned since it was created by Jairam

Ramesh in 2005, “Will they (China and India) work together, to lead Asia and perhaps the world?”²¹⁸

India’s answer to this question still remains unclear, also as the messages from New Delhi have usually been full of vagueness and contradiction. India has adopted a “hedging policy” in her relationship with China and the USA, carefully acting to gain the maximal benefit from her neighbour and the sole superpower in the world while meanwhile not expressing loyalty to any of them. India is not eager to be labelled Sinophile or as having Sinophobia.

In theory, China needs more confidence-building measures to ease her distrust in India’s intentions. After all, it is India who publicly declared that her nuclear ambitions were China-related. But in practice, Beijing has been trying to enlarge their shared interests to solidify the relationship with India. For China, India’s rise is welcomed, because China wishes to get the support of India for global multi-polarisation. In order to fit it with China’s global strategy, China modified her regional policy with regard to the subcontinent. The most significant part is that since the 21st Century, China has adopted a more neutral stance in her relationship with New Delhi and Islamabad.

Since 2000, by joint effort of the two sides, the distance between Beijing and New Delhi has been quickly shortened and the frozen dispute over the Himalayas, which emerged after the 1998 nuclear crises, has been thawing. In 2005, a joint statement was signed by the two countries’ premiers in New Delhi with the governments declaring they would setup a ‘strategic cooperation partnership for peace and prosperity’. This statement has been followed by dozens of MOUs and special agreements to enrich its content.

China and Pakistan have also signed similar statements, some even more positive and ‘strategic’. But in the economic field the partnership between China and Pakistan has already been left behind by Chinese-Indian cooperation, and the gap is turning larger by the day. China is now the second biggest trade partner of India, following the US, and India is the biggest South Asian trade partner of China. Ziad Haider, a research fellow of the Stimson Center in the US, said “Stronger economic ties will create stronger constituents for peace in both countries and raise the threshold for conflict. In what scenarios would India deem siding with the US against China worth jeopardising its commercial links with China?”²¹⁹ This question could also be used to assess the triangular relations of

²¹⁸ <http://www.billemmott.com/article.php?id=22>

²¹⁹ Ziad Haider, US-India-China: Giants at Play, http://www.indianexpress.com/res/web/ple/full_story.php?content_id=75320

China, Pakistan and India: A chip worth 20 billion US\$ is not easily thrown away.

The trade benefit is not the sole advantage India gains from warming up bilateral relations with China. Beijing strongly opposes Japan's ambitions for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council but keeps a very gentle attitude toward India's similar request. China also adopted a neutral stance towards the Indo-Pakistan conflicts, just like a Pakistan scholar stated, "China toned down its vocal support to Pakistan on a number of issues", such as on the Kashmir issue, "It (China) gradually shifted its stance from support of the right of self-determination for the Kashmiri people to a peaceful solution of the issue."²²⁰ It is debatable whether the shift in China's stance is the signature of a pro-India feeling on the part of China, but there is unquestionably a difference in China's policy of allying with Pakistan and containing India before the 1990s and her current strategy of balancing in the region.

The concept of Chindia challenged the traditional relationship between China and Pakistan. Not only did some Chinese scholars mean that Chinese support will not solve the problems Pakistan is facing and that the geopolitical game does no longer function, but also Pakistani has also realised that compared with the Cold War era, the Chinese foreign policy of the 21st century is more based on economic interests. Some Pakistanis worried that the new generation of Chinese—both common people and government elites—have no special pro-Pakistan feelings as the generation of the Cold War era. Some of them argued that "Pakistan can continue to expect unstinted support from China, under the present circumstances, our (Pakistani) foreign office must bear in mind that China has its own legitimate long-term interests in the region".²²¹

Pakistani analysts said that "Pakistanis should not feel threatened by Chinese and India's readiness to conduct close consultations and cooperation in the process of UN reforms. Improvements in China-India relations and in India-Pakistan relations need not be a zero-sum game."²²² Pakistan authorities also declared that they did not worry about the relation between China and India getting closer and the support of China to India's request. But in diplomatic circumstances, when someone is talking about something, it always means there are misgivings.

Mitigation of tension between China and India brought political and economic benefits for India as well as China, and is continuing to do so. It caused inque-

²²⁰ Ghulam Ali, Fifty-fifth Anniversary of Sino-Pakistan Relations: An Appraisal.

²²¹ Strengthening ties with China. <http://www.dawn.com/2005/04/05/op.htm>.

²²² The dragon and the elephant can get along.
http://www.tni.org/detail_page.phtml?page=archives_bidwai_dragon

tude in Pakistan. Pakistan is anxious about the prospect that the relationship between China and India will get too close and warm up too fast so that Pakistan risks falling outside of China's scope of interest.

As a simple example, due to eased tensions in the China-Indian border area, India has been able to withdraw about 150,000 soldiers for demobilisation or deployment to other potential battlefields, such as along the Pakistani-Indian border. It is understandable that Pakistan does not wish China's steps towards India to move faster than those towards Pakistan.

5.4.2 Terrorism: Threats towards China's interests in Pakistan

In Pakistan, a country with 160 million people, there are almost no common thinking shared by the central cabinet and local government, political parties' elite and tribal leaders, or the common people. The only exception is the friendly policy towards China. But now things are somewhat changing. Two kinds of militants and their activities are jeopardising Chinese interests in Pakistan and are causing grievous negative effects to Chinese people's common impression of Pakistan. Their political and diplomatic after-effects (if there are any) need to be further assessed.

Baluchi separatists:

Due to dissatisfaction with the central government's policy, some local militant groups regard Chinese interests in Pakistan as chips they can use to force the Pakistani government to accept their requests. Ideologically, they do not oppose the Chinese government or Chinese investments in local mineral resources, but they oppose Islamabad's distribution of profits. Therefore they have tried to stop, or at least slow down, Islamabad's Baluchi development project till their requests have been accepted.

In 2006, just a few days before President Gen. Musharraf paid a visit to Beijing, three Chinese engineers were assassinated by some gunmen of a group named the Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA) in Hub, a town west of Karachi. Both China and Pakistan stated that "this tragedy could not cause any negative effect to bilateral relations",²²³ but some political analysts emphasized that China should be cautious in expanding relations to ensure security of their people in Pakistan. During his visit, General Musharraf repeated his condolences many times. In a speech made in Sichuan, the president appealed to the audience for "another view of Pakistan". The president's complaisance expressed Pakistan's misgivings about future China-Pakistan bilateral relations.

²²³ http://news.xinhuanet.com/herald/2006-02/27/content_4232886.htm

The Hub tragedy was not a one-off case. In recent years, Chinese engineers or workers have been targeted by militants in the restive province of Baluchistan; several times since 2004. The most infamous incident which led to large number of casualties was a bomb attack in Gwadar port on May 2004. Three were killed and nine seriously injured. BLA should take responsibility for this ambush.

In past years, it was very rare that Chinese enterprises' or citizens' security and interests came to be diplomatic issues with other countries, not because of indifference, but as there were not many such issues which needed to be dealt with. Since the 21st century, China's overseas interests have been expanded with the increase of Chinese economic influence and protecting them have become an inevitable task of Chinese diplomats. In some cases, Chinese casualties or lost property have even caused improper and irrational reactions in some Chinese mass media and by radical nationalists. After the Hub and Gwadar tragedies, some Chinese media's true but not proper reporting caused large-scale Chinese public discontentment against their traditional friend.

Religious Extremists and East Turkistan Terrorists:

The Baluch Liberation Army is not the sole threat to Chinese interests. Some terrorists, separatists and religious extremists hiding in the Pakistani border area also a threat to Chinese overseas interests, and, furthermore, her security and stability in Xinjiang. China is deeply concerned about Islamic militants infiltrating its western borders. Some Central Asian and Afghanistan militants are hiding in Pakistan to escape crackdown in their own countries. They have very close linkages with the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) and other East Turkistan terrorist groups which are regarded as the most serious threat to stability and peace in the Chinese Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. After several years of military strikes launched by the Pakistani armed forces, the most infamous elements of these groups have been arrested or killed, including the most dangerous terrorist Hasan Mahsum, the former ETIM leader. But there are still some elements hiding in some mountain areas controlled by local tribes, which are sporadically obedient to Islamabad.

Pakistan has contributed a lot to China's efforts against the East Turkistan separatist movement. Actually, the cooperation against terrorism, separatism and religious extremism between China and Pakistan started much earlier than Pakistan's cooperation with America. In the early part of the 1990s, some East Turkistan elements took to violence against the Chinese government and the local moderate Muslim Community. Intelligence collected by the Chinese law enforcement agency showed the financial connection and organisational linkages between international religious extremists, terrorists and Chinese domestic separatists. Parts of such linkages used the territory of Pakistan and some

nefarious conspiracies were even plotted and conducted in Pakistan. As a loyal friend, Islamabad took swift and decisive action to protect Chinese security. The two governments initialised close and successful cooperation to strike back against East Turkistan elements. In that period and at the time of the war on terror (WOT) being launched by the US in Afghanistan, Pakistan's government and security forces stopped the infiltration of East Turkistan elements into China on the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan and arrested some of them, escorted them back to China.

Unfortunately, the counterterrorism atmosphere in Pakistan has changed in recent years as General Musharraf's tough but not very effective policy caused serious domestic backfire. In 2007, intensified political turbulence and continual violence in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and, lately, in the whole country, shook the position of Musharraf and finally led to his resignation. The long-term WOT on the territory of his own country with huge casualties is at least one important factor responsible for his unpopularity. Simultaneously, the stance of ordinary Pakistanis on the WOT shifted. Some tribal areas have been Talibanised rapidly. Under these circumstances, the friendship of China and Pakistan and their counterterrorism cooperation have been tested. In July 2007, some local religious extremists kidnapped a number of Chinese citizens, accusing them of defiling the customs of Muslims and corrupting public morals. This event resulted in the Lal Masjid (the Red Mosque) conflict. Just a few days after, several Chinese citizens who worked for a factory located in Peshawar were attacked and killed. The terrorists who launched this attack said they were revenging the people who died in the attack launched by government law enforcement agents against Lal Masjid.

Ironically, before these tragedies, several attacks against Chinese citizens and facilities occurred in Pakistan. Usually the attackers remained silent or denied responsibility and they did not send out any public statements to celebrate their success or call on further attacks. Some of them (such as BLA) even excused their maleficence by stating that their goal was to strike Islamabad and never treat Chinese as an enemy. The Lal Masjid event and the following attack in Peshawar were the first time in Pakistan that some elements dared to express their hatred against China. Although these were only individual incidents, the well-known eulogy "No one Pakistani would harm China, the best friend of Pakistan" of the brotherhood between China and Pakistan was oppugned.

More seriously, just some few months and even weeks before the Beijing Olympic Games were inaugurated, a series of terrorism plots were launched in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Some were smashed, but other caused

severe casualties among Chinese law enforcement agents. There is still a lack of evidence to prove the connection between the increasing violence in Xinjiang and unrest in FATA but the synchronisation of these events alarmed China. Did it mean that China's frontier of counterterrorism would be pushed back to the border between China and Pakistan, as opposed to the 1990s when Pakistani soldiers fought against East Turkistan elements and other terrorists by the Khyber Pass, hundreds of miles away from Xinjiang?

Counterterrorism cooperation provided a new field for China to strengthen its ties with South Asian countries, but it could only improve the solidity of the relationship between China and Pakistan when it was successful and requested a bloody price, mainly paid by the Pakistani side. Will President Zardari and his government be willing to pay the price? And is Islamabad capable of easing the Taliban storm in Pakistan? Of course, China will provide the necessary assistance to Pakistan, the question is how and how much?

5.5 Conclusion: China Should Keep China-Pakistan Relationship as Cornerstone of Her Regional Policy.

Obviously, since the China-India relation has been upgraded to the global level, the regional role of Pakistan to balance India has in relative terms decreased. But if China loosens its ties with Pakistan as India wishes, it remains uncertain whether New Delhi would offer the same response. In the triangular framework, China's and Pakistan's relationship is the prioritised concern of India, but it is not an exclusive concern. After all, India has experienced the expansion of Chinese influence at a global, regional and bilateral level and irrespective of China's and Pakistan's relation, India will consider China as a competing partner.

It could be urged that it was not necessary for China to decouple from Pakistan in order to tighten its links with India, a "balance" policy could have been adopted. But the point is, keeping the balance between one's long-term and close partner and a traditionally competing rival, which just a few years ago excused its nuclear test with Chinese threats, in fact means approaching India with price of estrangement with Pakistan. It would not benefit China's long-term interests and its reputation as a reliable friend in that region.

On the contrary, in order to maintain the regional stability, assuming it benefits China's interests, China needs the help of Pakistan, the No.2 power in that region. As an external player, if China stands with India, the dominant power in

South Asia, in the handling of regional issues, it would definitely improve India's position and make the regional situation more imbalanced. The majority of South Asian smaller and less developed countries have refused Indian ambitions for dominance for many years. Why would they welcome China's involvement as a regional "co-ruler" together with India? No matter how crucial India is to China's regional strategy, and how unhappy India would feel, New Delhi is not and will not be the sole cooperative partner of Beijing in the region. China's interests depend on comprehensive and mutually beneficial relations with all or at least a majority of parties in the region.

Of course, keeping Pakistan as the cornerstone of China's South Asian policy could maybe lead to the unpleasant consequence that "Pakistan, which on its own would have been a far less potent threat to India" could, "...with China's help become a threat"²²⁴. This could be, but only if Pakistani leaders want to adopt a suicidal policy. Pakistan, suffering from terrorism, poverty and a turbulent domestic situation, has been left far behind in the competition with India and considering these two countries' development prospects, Islamabad will never catch up. Maintaining its position and preventing not to be left too far behind will drain Pakistan's energy. Why and how would Pakistan pursue an offensive policy to threaten Indian security? It should be clarified that the objective of seeking regional dominance is not driving by the aim of ensuring security but is by outmoded geopolitical ambitions in the globalisation era.

The long-term dispute and mistrust between Islamabad and New Delhi cannot be erased in the near future even with the "help" of China. Actually, it is arguable whether China is capable to provide any help and whether the other two would welcome China's involvement. Given these circumstances, what China needs to do is to work together with India and Pakistan to find an alternative way to avoid the regional stability being hijacked by the confrontation between India and Pakistan, and set up a win-win mechanism in the triangular relationship. Improvements in China-India relations and in China-Pakistan relations do not need to be a zero-sum game. China should not be a mediator for the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan but should be a positive partner of them both at the same time, seeking a framework to enhance their bilateral trust and shared interests. Meanwhile, China also should be a responsible friend of Pakistan, continuing its "support for the efforts made by Pakistan at promoting peace and stability in South Asia and safeguarding its sovereignty and independence".²²⁵

²²⁴ <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South-Asia/GD09DF04.html>.

²²⁵ Joint Statement Between the People's Republic of China and The Islamic Republic of Pakistan, addressed on November 26th, 2006, in Islamabad.

The last and not least important, China should expand her field of vision beyond the subcontinent when evaluating and defining the value of Pakistan in its regional and global strategy. As the sole Muslim country with nuclear power, Pakistan plays a very important and special role in the Islamic world. Pakistan has strong cooperation with other key members of the Islamic world, such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey, both allies of the US and the former one also the origin of Wahabeism, homeland of conservative Islam. Islamabad keeps close cooperation with Tehran, something few Sunni countries are able to do. Pakistan's moderate foreign policy makes it easy for Islamabad to communicate with conservative and radical Islamic regimes, Sunni and Shiite states as well as pro- and anti-Western countries. With the help of Pakistan, the Chinese voice could be heard more and be supported by the whole Islamic world. To China, beyond the perspective of South Asia, Pakistan is an energy corridor as well as a bridge to the whole Muslim world. If Beijing realises this irreplaceable strategic value of Pakistan and Islamabad proves her capability to override the current political and security turbulence, a solid foundation for the future of the relationship between China and Pakistan can be built.

6 India and Pakistan: “If You Don’t Know Where You are Going, Any Road Will Take You There”²²⁶

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For sixty years the Pakistan-India relationship has been one of the world’s most complex and sharply-contested rivalries. It has been as persistent as the Israeli-Palestinian-Arab conflict, which it resembles in many ways, not least in its intractability. The two began with a basic clash of identities, soon there was a genuine border and territorial dispute, each has supported separatist elements in the other country and they are now nuclear rivals. There have also been four wars, numerous crises, and a near-permanent state of diplomatic hostility that shapes India’s and Pakistan’s relations with the rest of the world. The relationship continues to evoke international attention, if not necessarily action. Events in Afghanistan are only part of the picture for both India and Pakistan, but, in turn, the rivalry has had an impact on Afghanistan itself.

The relationship is not static, and some variables have changed, adding new dimensions and complications. These give room for cautious optimism, but also feed uncertainty. For example, the emergence of both states as nuclear weapons states after the 1998 tests simultaneously raised the stakes but also reduced the chances of a new conflict. This did not prevent a small war in 1999, and nearly a major one in 2001-02, but it did show that these weapons do affect the propensity

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²²⁶ Attributed to Lewis Carroll, more recently the title of a George Harrison song.

for and conduct of war between nuclear rivals. Similarly, intelligence errors or a strategic misjudgement--of a kind common to all states, big and small, wise and stupid--could lead to another crisis.

India's policy towards Pakistan, even before the current crisis in Afghanistan, has always been complex—perhaps a euphemism for confused. Yet, India could do more than any other state to stabilise Pakistan and help it pass through its current political, economic, societal and identity crises. If the worst should happen and Pakistan should truly fail as a state, India would also be central to any damage-control effort.

This paper surveys the context of current India-Pakistan relations. It then provides an analysis of how India views Pakistan, including its indecision regarding Pakistan's identity. Finally, it turns to possible scenarios that might change Indian policy radically. These could involve changes in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India itself that might prompt New Delhi to do more than watch and wait. There are, theoretically, many different combinations, but I focus on the most likely, the most promising and the most frightening. Finally, the paper provides a brief assessment of conflict-avoidance and amelioration policies relevant to the scenario presented by the sponsors of this workshop.

6.1 The Context

The two independent states of Pakistan and India were born amidst massive bloodshed in August 1947. From the outset, Pakistan, like India, enjoyed the benefits of institutions established by the British: a strong bureaucracy, a functioning judiciary, and a professional military.²²⁷ It also benefited from a uniting figure in Muhammad Ali Jinnah and a critically important strategic position, recognized early on by Great Britain and the United States. India, under Nehru, was seen as an unreliable state by the British, as he had opposed the British imperial order and did not support the allies during World War II. Also, Nehru was, from the American/NATO perspective, insufficiently critical of the Soviet Union.²²⁸

²²⁷ It is sometimes asserted that the Pakistan army was the strongest institution in the state, but this was not true after independence. Very few Pakistanis held higher ranks, and for a number of years key positions were filled by British officers, including the first two army chiefs. See Shuja Nawaz, *Crossed Swords* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), and Stephen P. Cohen, *The Pakistan Army* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

²²⁸ For an overview see Narendra Singh Sarila, *The Shadow of the Great Game* (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2005).

Pakistan was created in two parts or “wings”, with the more populous but militarily weaker East separated by 1000 miles of Indian territory from the West. The chaos of partition left the new state with a proportionately weaker state capacity than India, as well as limited financial resources. There were also Pakistani claims that India had not fulfilled its part of the bargain when it came to sharing military assets, a development that early on bred suspicion within the Pakistan military. This meant that for all its strengths, Pakistan saw itself as vulnerable, particularly to a seemingly hostile India, and the Pakistan army quickly identified its primary role as defending or deterring a hostile, even malevolent, India. To both sides partition and the subsequent war for Kashmir drove home the lesson that some military capability directed against the other was a necessity.

Forcing the semi-autonomous princely states to join India or Pakistan produced the most significant point of conflict between the two new nations. Bad will was generated when Hyderabad and Junagadh, both Muslim-ruled states with Hindu majorities, were compelled to join India, but the dispute and consequent war over Jammu and Kashmir, a Muslim-majority state with a Hindu ruler, sparked a conflict that would become the focus of competition between the two states for the next sixty years. In Pakistan, this reinforced the notion that the army was the most critical institution for the survival and advancement of the nation, an idea that was to have a detrimental effect on Pakistan’s very identity.²²⁹

Pakistan’s military vulnerability and the death by 1951 of its two dominant political figures, Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan, also contributed to growing military influence. Unlike India, where a strong Congress party governed in most of the country and at the centre, the Muslim League quickly deteriorated and the army (aligned with the bureaucracy) emerged as the state’s most powerful institution. In the mid-1950s, Pakistan joined two US-led treaty organisations – the Baghdad Pact (later CENTO) and the Manila Pact (later SEATO). These yielded military hardware, but not the guarantee against India that Pakistan sought.

India maintained cordial ties with Great Britain and the United States until the mid-1960s. From about 1959 onward India actually moved close to the Western powers as a consequence of their shared fears of Communist China.²³⁰ Indeed, India received significant grant military assistance from both America and Britain after the 1962 India-China war.

²²⁹ Stephen P. Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington: Brookings, 2004), pp. 45-47.

²³⁰ Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India, and Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996) pp. 274, 282.

1965 saw another war between India and Pakistan, this time triggered by miscalculations of President Ayub Khan and his young foreign minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Ayub had hoped to instigate a Kashmiri revolt and put pressure on India to negotiate, but the two sides fought to a stalemate. The United States suspended military aid to both countries and let the Soviet Union broker an agreement in Tashkent. This reinforced the strategic status quo, but was to have a deep effect on Pakistan's unity.²³¹ Ayub had declared during the war that East Pakistan could not be effectively defended (it was nearly encircled by India); this contributed to East Bengal's feeling of estrangement and abandonment.

In 1971 East Bengali nationalism, fermenting for years, erupted into rebellion. Aided by Indian arms, the East broke away, forming the new state of Bangladesh. In what remained of Pakistan Punjabis came to dominate by their sheer numbers. Coincidentally, they were also the largest ethnic/linguistic group in the army, and thus Pakistan's centre of political power came into alignment with its centre of military power. More worrisome, from a strategic perspective, was that the army and the political leadership, humiliated by the Indian victory, was bent on revenge.

New Delhi, for its part, assumed that Pakistan was no longer a serious rival. When Prime Minister Indira Gandhi made peace with Bhutto she failed to resolve still-remaining differences over Kashmir and a host of minor disputes. This was to change: as Pakistani governments meddled in Indian affairs, notably Kashmir, Indians came to view Pakistan as the most significant destabilising force in the region and along with its sponsors in Beijing and Washington, part of an encircling alliance of hostile powers.²³² The Indian view was that America, China, and Pakistan were fearful of a resurgent India. In fact, India's rise was prevented by India's own dysfunctional economy, its incapacity to come to grips with a still-recalcitrant Pakistan, and its continuing military dependence on the Soviet Union. The latter proved especially embarrassing when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979 without even informing India. This was the beginning of a long Indian search for an alternative great power friend, a search that had many setbacks.

The fifteen years between 1987 and 2002 witnessed four crises between India and Pakistan. None developed into an all-out war – the Kargil War of 1999 remained a limited conflict – but the introduction of nuclear weapons in both

²³¹ *The Idea of Pakistan*, p. 73.

²³² For the two definitive histories of American relations with India and Pakistan see Dennis Kux, *Estranged Democracies: India and the United States 1941-1991* (New Delhi: Sage, 1993) and Kux, *The United States and Pakistan, 1947-2000: Disenchanted Allies* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2001).

countries by the early 1980s added a new, and considerably more dangerous, dimension to the bilateral rivalry. At the same time, both sides learned valuable lessons about the limits of conflict in attempting to achieve national objectives. The result was a period of relative stability and maturity in bilateral engagement, although not necessarily irreversible progress.²³³

6.2 Indian Imperatives

Indian policy towards Pakistan stem from three imperatives: geopolitics, questions of national self-image and identity, and looking ahead, new economic and environmental considerations. There is an intertwined pattern of conflict and shaky reconciliation.²³⁴

6.2.1 Geopolitical Considerations

A significant portion of India's policy towards Pakistan can be explained in terms of geopolitics. Historically, the area that was to become Pakistan was an entry point for invading forces, from the Kushans and Mughals, to the Persians and Afghans. The British Indian Army spent considerable time and resources securing entry points on the northwestern frontier in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Partition established a geographically unnatural boundary between India and Pakistan. The border ran through the populous Punjab plain, and the sources of several major Pakistani rivers lay in India. An early expectation that Pakistan would serve as India's northwest bulwark never materialised.²³⁵

Imperial geopolitics soon reasserted itself. As noted, Pakistan's location was seen, even before partition, as valuable for containing Soviet ambitions. India, after initially refraining from taking sides in the Cold War, eventually tilted towards the Soviet Union. But the end of the Cold War radically altered the strategic environment. Pakistan – ostensibly on the winning side – was rewarded with US sanctions resulting from its nuclear weapons programme.²³⁶ India –

²³³ See P.R. Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema and Stephen P. Cohen, *Four Crises and a Peace Process: American Engagement in South Asia* (Washington: Brookings, 2007).

²³⁴ *Ibid* for a history of attempts at reconciliation, and a list of India-Pakistan conflicts.

²³⁵ Ironically, the Pakistan army is today headquartered in what used to be the old British Indian army's Northern Command.

²³⁶ George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999. p. 312.

seemingly the loser – was forced to give up its experiment in socialism and liberalised its economy, reaping rich dividends.²³⁷

After the September 11, 2001, attacks, India and Pakistan found themselves, rather uncomfortably, on the same side in the so-called “global war on terror.” The emphasis on the Kashmir dispute was replaced by two contradictory phenomena. On the one hand, more Indians came to see Pakistan as a barrier to large-scale Islamic militancy that might threaten to flood India. As Indian commentators have noted, Pakistan’s preoccupations with its western border has begun to fundamentally alter the security politics of the subcontinent.²³⁸ At the same time, geopolitical changes also have the potential to provide dampeners for deteriorating relations. India, limited in its ability to be active to its west, due to Pakistani opposition and an American presence, began increasingly looking eastwards towards a rising China.²³⁹ India also has to deal with an internal security situation made worse by the presence of a sizeable Maoist revolutionary movement.²⁴⁰

On the other hand, Pakistani ambitions regarding Afghanistan and points beyond clashed with an economically and culturally ambitious India, which sees Central Asia as a natural area of legitimate Indian interest. This has led to a nascent proxy war between the two powers in Afghanistan.²⁴¹ India has a sizeable paramilitary presence in Nimruz, and has contributed to infrastructure and state-building efforts there. Its opening of several consulates has also increased concerns by Pakistan of a larger Indian presence in Afghanistan. Indian denials are confirmed by independent sources, but Pakistan’s fears of Indian encirclement are underestimated by many outside observers. The Pakistan army still regards India as its main threat, and finds it difficult to view India’s intervention in Afghanistan as benign.

²³⁷ This was not immediately evident. See Ross H. Munro, “The Loser: India in the Nineties,” *The National Interest*, Summer 1993; See also Sandy Gordon, “South Asia After the Cold War: Winners and Losers,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. 35, No. 10, October 1995, pp. 879-895.

²³⁸ C. Raja Mohan, “Musharraf Maelstrom and India,” *The Indian Express*, November 4, 2007.

²³⁹ Elizabeth G. M. Parker & Teresita C. Schaffer, “India and China: The Road Ahead,” *South Asia Monitor*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, No. 120, July 1, 2008.

²⁴⁰ Namrata Goswami and Jason Miklian, “*India’s Violent Internal Dissent*” *Economic and Political Weekly*, May, 24, 2008

²⁴¹ Scott Baldauf, “India-Pakistan Rivalry Reaches into Afghanistan,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 12, 2003; Rahimullah Yusufzai, “The New India-Pak Battleground”, Rediff.com, May 23, 2006 (<http://www.rediff.com/news/2006/may/23spec.htm>).

6.2.2 Identity and Domestic Politics

Geopolitics is only part of the story and identity politics explains a significant portion of Indian attitudes towards Pakistan. The legacy of partition, Pakistan's historical support of terrorist groups, and recent Pakistani military adventurism mean that Indians often view Pakistan through the prism of national pride and identity, rather than by a careful assessment of long-term threats.

Indian attitudes towards Pakistan correspond to one of two narratives. The first, espoused by the right, including many supporters and members of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), sees Pakistan as an artificial state, yet one which enables a separation of South Asia's Hindu and Muslim populations.²⁴² A Muslim Pakistan can live alongside a Hindu India, and disloyal or discontented minorities could be expelled if necessary. Pliable or "loyal" minorities can be tolerated. Thus, a few BJP leaders have spoken positively of "Jinnah's Pakistan," a state inspired by the post-partition vision of Jinnah—a state tolerant of its minorities and without any claims on the large Indian Muslim population.

The second narrative, followed generally by the centre-left Congress Party, sees Pakistan as susceptible to a radical Islam that is in conflict with India's identity as a secular and pluralistic nation.²⁴³ Under Nehru the policy was one of watching and waiting—he assumed that Pakistan, being an anachronistic state, would eventually wither away. Nehru had little reason to offer concessions to Pakistan, especially over Kashmir, which was for him an emotional as well as strategic issue. He then blamed the Cold War, and the United States, for artificially inflating Pakistan's power. His daughter, Indira Gandhi, had a chance to move decisively against Pakistan during the 1971 war, and in fact brought about the partition of the country by midwifing the birth of Bangladesh. However, she shied away from either a continuation of the military conflict in the West or major concessions that would have accommodated Pakistan's concerns. Instead, Pakistan was left with a deep sense of grievance; this was exacerbated by the 1974 Indian nuclear test, which accelerated Pakistani interest in acquiring a nuclear weapon to balance Indian conventional dominance. After Indira there were a series of crises, testing out the military balance in an era of growing nuclear capacity. At no time, except briefly under the Janata government, was there an attempt to engage Pakistan by drawing upon Indian cultural and economic power. Both the Hindu-right and Congress narratives can be

²⁴² For an authoritative statement of moderate BJP views see Jaswant Singh, *A Call to Honour: In Service of Emergent India* (New Delhi: Rupa and Company Publishers, 2006), and *Defending India* (New Delhi: Macmillan India, 1999)

²⁴³ For a survey of Indian views see the chapter on Pakistan in Stephen P. Cohen, *India: Emerging Power* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2001).

interpreted in such a way as to denounce Pakistan's identity as in some way inferior to India's. Yet both could be tailored to accommodate Pakistan and enable coexistence.

Finally, both Pakistanis and Indians have underestimated the corrosive effect on the multi-national, multi-ethnic state by the various phenomena lumped under the rubric of globalism (these include the ever-increasing speed of movement of ideas, people, and goods, and the displacement of the state as the prime source of wealth and security). The fall of communism as a coherent rallying point for the discontented of the world also enhanced the attractiveness of ethnic and religious identity as a way of organising a state—or even a sub-state; the world is increasingly organised around armed ethnic or sectarian groups, not traditional nation-states.²⁴⁴

6.2.3 Economics and the Environment

A third set of imperatives for India is only now coming to the fore, but will grow steadily in importance. As India's economy becomes increasingly market-driven, and as business interests play a greater role in influencing politics and foreign policy decisions, economic considerations could become the most important force in shaping India policy towards Pakistan. In 2002, India suffered economically after its massive military mobilisation along the border with Pakistan in response to a terrorist attack on the Indian parliament. For the first time, India appeared to realize that the economic costs significantly outweighed the potential security benefits.

Energy and environmental factors, unlike economics, have yet to play a role in shaping the bilateral relationship, but they have the potential for doing so in the future. Disputes over water could well have a detrimental effect on the relationship. At the same time, opportunities could arise out of shared natural gas pipelines as both countries' energy requirements mount.

The imperatives of moving away from traditional security competition (the success of nuclear deterrence, economic interests and competing security concerns) and the coexistent constraints to normalisation (lingering mistrust, domestic political considerations and the prospect of a proxy conflict in

²⁴⁴ For my views on this see "U.S. Security in a Separatist Season," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (July 1992): pp.28-32.

Afghanistan) mean that the last four years have featured what several analysts, notably Ashley Tellis, have described as “ugly stability.”²⁴⁵

Despite a wide-ranging ‘composite dialogue’ and the advent of various confidence-building measures, the peace process between India and Pakistan is on shaky ground. Indian apprehensions about Pakistani-sponsored terrorism and latent Pakistani fears concerning Indian military superiority mean that a single dramatic event has the capability to erase years of effort. Terrorism in India, when not homegrown, continues to be linked to Pakistan-supported insurgents fighting Indian claims to Kashmir.

Overall, there is room for cautious optimism. For the first time, India is not a primary factor in Pakistani domestic politics. In India, there is a greater realisation that normalising relations with Pakistan will speed up its ascension to major power status. While no Indian wants a strong Pakistan, most (excepting some hawks, who look forward to Pakistan’s collapse with relish) do not want to see it fail either.

6.3 Scenario Building and Looking Ahead

The scenario presented for discussion is just one of several possible futures that could dramatically shape India-Pakistan relations. While it is difficult to quantify the degree to which Pakistan is directly involved in Afghanistan, notably in supporting the Taliban, there is no question that Afghanistan’s instability is directly related to Pakistani acts of commission or omission.²⁴⁶ Thus, any scenario that assumes the further deterioration of Afghanistan must take into account Pakistani support for, or toleration of, Taliban groups operating from Pakistani territory. These operations include logistics, training facilities, and a safe-haven for Taliban leaders, plus a place where the Afghan Taliban can interact with both al Qaeda and the “Pakistani” Taliban. The scenario prepared for this conference is Pakistan-free, and thus unrealistic.

There are at least three Afghan-Pakistan scenarios that *are* relevant, plus several more that would affect India-Pakistan relations that are not directly linked to the deterioration of Afghanistan.

²⁴⁵ This term was first used in this context in 1997, before India and Pakistan conducted their 1998 nuclear tests and experienced the Kargil and 2001-2002 crises. Ashley J. Tellis, *Stability in South Asia* (Santa Monica: Rand, 1997).

²⁴⁶ Estimates of the degree to which Pakistani is ‘responsible’ for Afghan instability range from a low of 15% to a high of 60%, according to conversations with European and American officials directly involved with NATO and American forces fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan.

The Afghan-related scenarios include:

- A deteriorating Afghanistan, but a still-coherent Pakistan that does not increase its involvement in Afghan developments,
- A deteriorating Afghanistan, and an increase in Taliban-related activities in Pakistan (the so-called Pakistan Taliban expand their influence outside of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) to the North West Frontier Agency (NWFP), and perhaps to Karachi),
- A deteriorating Afghanistan, but also further deterioration of the political and security situation in Pakistan, either through Taliban-like activities, or the acceleration of separatist, sectarian movements, and a paralysis of civilian leadership because of a failed economy.

Quite separately, five other developments are possible:

- A rapid deterioration in the political and security situation in Indian-administered Kashmir, with overt support by the government in Pakistan,
- The development of a full fledged proxy conflict between India and Pakistan in Afghanistan,
- A major terrorist incident in India or Pakistan where the involvement or knowledge of the other state can be unequivocally proven,
- An escalating nuclear or conventional arms race spurred by rapid Indian military modernisation, and
- Dramatic state failure in Pakistan that necessitates some kind of Indian intervention.²⁴⁷

6.4 India's Many Choices

The views of one of India's leading strategists towards Pakistan reflect some of the new thinking in India regarding Pakistan.²⁴⁸ In reviewing the options open to India regarding Pakistan-Afghan related issues, C. Raja Mohan notes three:

- First, India could stand apart from Pakistan-Afghan relations, and simply manage the consequences of developments on the Durand Line. This would be in tune with India's tendency to "wait and watch," a policy of inertia that has characterised Indian policy for decades.

²⁴⁷ For a comprehensive non-partisan American discussion of Pakistan's current crisis, along with a number of policy suggestions, see *The Next Chapter: The United States and Pakistan*, a report of the Pakistan Policy Working Group, September, 2008, available after October 2nd on the websites of the Brookings Institution, Heritage Foundation, U.S. Institute of Peace, and the Middle East Institute.

²⁴⁸ C. Raja Mohan, interviewed by Nitin Pai, in Pragati, <http://pragati.nationalinterest.in/wp-content/uploads/2008/09/pragati-issue18-sep2008-communityed.pdf>

- Second, Raja Mohan argues that India could join with the Pakistani military establishment to help ensure Pakistan's survival and territorial integrity. This option recognises that Pakistan is a buffer for threats from the northwest; operationally, India could reduce tensions along Pakistan's eastern boundaries—especially in Jammu & Kashmir—which might enable the Pakistani army to concentrate on the threat from radical Islamic groups and become more effective along the Afghan-Pakistan border. This would be an astonishing policy leap. It would require an imaginative and self-confident Indian leadership, and would rub up against embedded notions of a hostile Pakistan.
- His third option for India is the exact opposite: to press Pakistan along the eastern frontier, with the goal of “engineering a structural change in Pakistan”. This, Raja Mohan notes, runs the risk of another nuclear conflict, but it has a precedent in the 1971 war that bisected Pakistan. Some hardline elements in the BJP and even the military have considered this option; they argue that Pakistan remains an artificial country, that a newly partitioned Pakistan would leave behind a viable Sindh and Punjab, the Mohajirs could create a “Jinnahstan” in Karachi and Balochistan could be a weak state, or revert to Iran.

Importantly, Raja Mohan concludes that “what India might eventually do in this situation could be a combination of all three”, which would be patently impossible, but he then actually goes on to suggest a fourth option, that India cooperate with the international community on issues relating to Pakistan and Afghanistan in redefining the future of the Subcontinent's northwest. He concludes that this must be an urgent priority for New Delhi. This, also, would be unprecedented, and would involve working with the United States and perhaps China to seek an arrangement that would undoubtedly have to address Jammu and Kashmir as well as the Pakistan-Afghanistan borderlands.

Raja Mohan's views are among the most sophisticated in the Indian strategic community, and reflect the emergence of fresh thinking towards Pakistan. Without actually rejecting the options of outright hostility towards Pakistan, he seems to argue that it is in India's interest to work with others to manage Pakistan so that its failure does not threaten India. The optimal scenario would be a Pakistan strong enough to ensure its own territorial integrity, but not so strong that it could challenge India. The Indian debate towards Pakistan and the Pakistan-Afghanistan relationship is moving forward, but my judgment is that it is unlikely to be resolved, except by events that compel an Indian response.

6.5 Scenario Building

Let us now turn to some of these events, likely, unlikely, and frightening, and in this context examine what Indian responses might be.

6.5.1 Most Likely

Taking a straight-ahead projection, one implied in this project's scenario, we can postulate a continuing decline in the Afghanistan situation as the most likely future. In this case India will continue to marginally increase its presence in Afghanistan, perhaps moving to a de facto Provincial Reconstruction Team, in which Indian paramilitary forces are combined with developmental and construction projects. In the past the United States has not attempted to integrate Indian efforts into those of NATO or its own operations, but such expanded cooperation is not out of the question. A critical issue is, and will remain, the Pakistani belief that the Indians have a much larger and more assertive programme in Afghanistan than they actually do. India could (and should) address these Pakistani concerns by more transparency with regard to what its consulates are doing as well as the role of its faux Provincial Reconstruction Team.

6.5.2 Most Promising

If Pakistan began to take the threat from its homegrown Taliban more seriously, and was more proactive regarding the link between its territory and the Afghan Taliban, and if India (as suggested by Raja Mohan) moved to relieve pressure on Pakistan and even to engage in cooperation with it on anti-terrorism, then a new era of India-Pakistan-Afghan cooperation would emerge. Some elements of this scenario are now in place. Pakistan's new president, Asif Zardari, is certainly committed to a comprehensive assault on Islamic extremists, and has the support of at least two important political parties in Pakistan—the National Awami Party in the Frontier and the MQM in Sind and Karachi. He does not yet have the support of the dominant party in the Punjab, and of course the Islamist parties are strongly opposed to such a strategy. In one of his first acts, Zardari moved swiftly to reassure Afghanistan of Pakistan's good intentions, inviting President Hamid Karzai to his inauguration, an unprecedented act. He has also presided over a shakeup in the Pakistan army, which moved most of President Musharraf's men out of key positions, including the directorship of the Inter-service Intelligence Directorate (ISI). While Pakistan feels secure enough to have withdrawn more than six infantry divisions from its Indian border, this is a scenario that is laden with "ifs."

So far, neither the United States nor China seems to be actively pushing for India-Pakistan normalisation. American policy seems to be confined to urging the two states to better manage their relationship. While China is concerned about Pakistan's growing Islamic extremism, it has yet to broach the subject with Indian officials, but it has unofficially discussed this with the US and in private dialogue with foreign scholars.

6.5.3 Most Frightening

The simultaneous deterioration of Afghanistan and Pakistan presents the most alarming scenario, and opens up the possibility that India might take advantage of the situation to pre-emptively intervene in Pakistan, as suggested in Raja Mohan's second scenario, and as favoured by a number of hawkish Indian strategists. The scenario (from an Indian perspective) is alarming on many counts: not only might it precipitate an open-ended India-Pakistan war, it could leave the Indians in a precarious position in Afghanistan itself, facing the Taliban without support from the Afghan government, the United States, or NATO. A resurgent Taliban would certainly target India, and if it was backed by a pro-Taliban faction in Pakistan this might drive the Indian aid and training programmes out of Afghanistan. The scenario also implies a military stalemate or worse. One or more NATO countries, or even the United States, might withdraw from Afghanistan. This could lead to a very high-risk policy, discussed below. This is not a high-probability scenario, but the record of India-Pakistan relations indicates that both countries are prone to misjudgement and miscalculation, and that these have contributed to, or exacerbated crises in the past. The risk of an India-Pakistan crisis or war would be increased if there was also an uprising in Kashmir.

6.5.4 Most High-Risk

A deterioration in Afghanistan's situation, perhaps with a parallel deterioration of Pakistan, might lead to radically different strategies on the part of NATO and the US, possibly involving India more directly in Afghanistan.

One high-risk future could see the United States abandoning Pakistan as the main channel of supply and support for Afghanistan, and opening up a relationship with Iran (and India) to resupply its forces and those of the Afghan government via Iran. Iranians point out that they once cooperated with the United States in dealing with the Taliban, and while they maintain a cautious relationship with the Taliban today, Iran might be amenable to a new strategy that allowed America access via its territory. This might also involve India, which has pioneered the

Iran route. The United States could abandon Pakistan altogether, taking India up on its offer to help in Afghanistan (India was the first country to do so after 9/11). The risks, of course, are those of another India-Pakistan crisis, but that could happen in any case should Pakistan further decay.

A second high-risk development might be the transformation of both Afghan and Pakistani politics—the coming to power in each of a high-profile authoritarian leader that had the support of the army. In Afghanistan, it might well be the army itself, displacing a decreasingly competent Karzai regime; in Pakistan it might be Asif Zardari emerging as a popular leader in the tradition of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, but perhaps with the support of the army, and thus able to deal decisively with domestic dissent and Islamic extremism. The risk here might be simple failure to bring about regime transformation, but whether Afghanistan or Pakistan went down this road, India (and probably the United States, and certainly China) would be able to accommodate authoritarianism if it seemed to be more effective.

For a number of years the United States has tried to work around the India-Pakistan rivalry by pursuing a policy of ‘dehyphenation’. Dehyphenation meant that relations with India and Pakistan would be handled separately, and Washington would make no effort to address their bilateral disputes, except to encourage them to continue their dialogue, and to stand ready to facilitate any agreement that they might conclude.²⁴⁹ Kashmir, in particular, was out of bounds for American diplomats, even though it was regarded as the most dangerous place on earth by the Clinton administration. This policy had its roots in the 1980s in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, when the US tried to normalise relations with a semi-hostile India while providing massive military assistance to Pakistan.

However, a policy of dehyphenation works only as long as regional relations are cordial, which means that it is not optimal now. Events in Afghanistan have begun to shape America’s Pakistan policy, and, in turn, Pakistan’s concerns about Indian encroachment in Afghanistan (somewhat exaggerated) and fear of India’s dominance must be worked into American policy calculations. It is likely that the Obama presidency will pay somewhat more attention to India-Pakistan disputes, probably in a wider regional context, but it is very unlikely that it will mount the kind of high-profile effort to “solve” the Kashmir conflict attempted by earlier administrations.²⁵⁰ Calls for a special emissary for Kashmir are

²⁴⁹ Ashley J. Tellis, “The Merits of Dehyphenation: Explaining U.S. Success in Engaging India and Pakistan,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 4, Autumn 2008, pp. 21-42.

²⁵⁰ A forthcoming book by Ambassador Howard Schaeffer, to be published by the Brookings press, offers a detailed analysis of these efforts, which date back to the 1940s.

misguided, yet America must recognise that India-Afghanistan-Pakistan relations are interconnected, and that a broad, strategic approach is essential.

6.6 Conclusion

Afghan-related matters do not dominate Indian policy towards Pakistan, but they are an important component. India's policy is a function of strategy, identity, territory, and economics, and takes the form of cautiously balancing and pressuring Pakistan, often in response to perceived Pakistani actions in Kashmir. A lesser consideration is India's ambitions in Central Asia, which involve access to energy. India has forged a new relationship with America, partly displacing Pakistan in Washington's regional calculations, and with the completion of the agreement over nuclear energy, US-Indian relations are moving to a condition of normality.

Looking ahead, there are two interesting questions: whether India will see the possibility of a breakdown of Pakistan itself as a challenge or an opportunity, and in the case of a Pakistan that turns even more hostile to the Afghan government, whether India will openly work with America and other states to back the Afghan government in direct defiance of Pakistan.

Until now New Delhi's Pakistan policy was on autopilot; Indian governments knew that they wanted to balance Pakistan, and did so by judicious use of intelligence services, by its great cultural power, and by a competitive diplomacy. India's greatest practical challenge was to deal with those states (America, China, the Arab powers) that had built up Pakistan as a serious rival to India. Now that this competition is practically over, and that some outside states, notably America, seem to have chosen India over Pakistan (symbolised by the civilian nuclear agreement), will India pursue a policy of strategic accommodation with a failing Pakistan, or will it try to give it a final push? It takes two hands to clap, Pakistan must be a willing partner in the first case, but a defiant Pakistan that pursues hardline policies in Afghanistan might provoke the latter response. The Indian debate has not yet reached the point where these alternatives are clearly thought out. India still does not know what it wants to do and its policy will likely remain one of drift, unless events compel a decision.

7 Pakistan and Iran: A Troubled Relationship

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Earlier this year, the President of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, made a brief visit to Pakistan on his way to Sri Lanka as part of a whistle-stop tour of South Asian nations that also included India. Two issues were front and centre during the visit – the India-Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline project and the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan. And it is these two issues that essentially sum up the present state of the Pakistan-Iran relationship and on both there is a growing divergence between the two neighbours that bodes ill for the future of their bilateral ties.

This paper examines the recent evolution in Pakistan-Iran bilateral ties and argues that the situation in Afghanistan will be one of the most important variables in determining the future of this relationship. While cooperation between Pakistan and Iran is essential to stabilising the situation in Afghanistan, a decline in Afghanistan's security environment is further aggravating the regional rivalry between the two. First, a brief historical overview of the Pakistan-Iran relationship is presented. Subsequently, the role of September 11, 2001, in changing the strategic priorities of Pakistan and Iran is analysed. Finally, recent economic, security and regional trends in the Pakistan-Iran relationship are explicated with a particular focus on the role of Afghanistan in the strategic calculus of both states.

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7.1 Historical Background on Pakistan-Iran Ties

Pakistan and Iran are bound by cultural, tribal and religious bonds. When Pakistan emerged as an independent state in 1947, the Cold War was gaining momentum, ever so gradually. Iran established diplomatic ties with Pakistan in May 1948, becoming the first to recognize the new state. Meanwhile, India's support for Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt as the leader of the Arab world hardened the Shah's attitude towards India, and to counter Nasser's growing popularity as well as to counter a threat to his monarchy, the Shah supported the formation of an Islamic bloc, strengthening Iran-Pakistan bonds.²⁵¹ Iran was a natural ally and role model for Pakistan in being a secular, centralized and western-oriented state and the two signed a treaty of friendship in 1950 providing for good neighbourly relations and most favoured nation status for each other.

Pakistan moved into the US orbit of influence and this made it a close partner and the other ally of Washington in the Muslim world. Both Iran and Pakistan became members of the Baghdad Pact (renamed CENTO in 1955) and Iran under the Shah was particularly well-disposed towards Pakistan. Pakistan was offered generous development aid by Iran, including oil and gas on preferential terms. The two also worked together to suppress the rebel movement in Baluchistan. In many ways, Iran and Pakistan became the main bulwarks of the US policy of preventing the spread of Soviet influence in the Middle East and Central Asia. Together with Turkey, Iran and Pakistan established the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) in 1964 to enhance trade and investment linkages.

After the British withdrawal from the Persian Gulf in 1971, the US gradually emerged as the main regional power, and based its policy on the "twin pillars" of Iran and Saudi Arabia. Pakistan's defeat in its 1971 war with India led it in search of new extra-regional powers to balance India's regional preponderance and China emerged as a key candidate. Pakistan also sought closer ties with the Arab states post-1971 even as it tried to keep its ties with Iran on an even keel. This resulted in an explicit commitment of security assistance to Iran if the need arose as well as price concessions on Iranian oil. Pakistan's hard-line approach towards Baluchistan and the North West Frontier Province at this time was also a result of the Iranian influence.

²⁵¹ On Iranian foreign policy during the Nasser era, see Shahram Chubin and Sepehr Zabin, *The Foreign Relations of Iran* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 140-169.

The fall of the Shah came as a major blow to Pakistan's foreign policy as Islamabad witnessed the rapid collapse of state authority within the territory of an old ally. The religious conservatives with an openly anti-US posture posed a difficult challenge to Pakistan as the prospect of religious disturbances within Pakistan became highly likely. The 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran had a profound impact on Pakistani civilians and the military alike and the Afghan experience pushed the army further into the Islamist direction. The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan brought the Soviet Union to the doorsteps of Pakistan, transforming the geo-strategic environment in the region. Pakistan found itself encircled with India enjoying traditionally good ties with the Soviet Union. Going against its non-aligned partners, India ended up justifying the Soviet invasion as a defensive move against the activities of "certain foreign powers", implying, in effect, American and Pakistani responsibility for the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.²⁵²

After the Iranian revolution, Iran withdrew from the CENTO and disassociated itself from the US-friendly countries, including Pakistan. Difficult though it was, Pakistan was among the first countries to recognise the new Iranian dispensation and went to considerable length to rebuild ties with the revolutionary regime in Tehran. Pakistan did not support Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war and refused to comply with the US request to help in the destabilisation of Iran as it viewed Iran as important for its strategic interests.²⁵³

The US, however, came to view Iran after 1979 as the principle threat to its interests in the region and with the loss of Iran as an ally, elevated Pakistan's importance in its strategic calculus.²⁵⁴ Iran's desire to spread revolution across the Middle East became a source of concern for both the US and Pakistan as both were interested in maintaining status-quo in the region.

Yet, when it came to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, all three – Iran, Pakistan and the US – emerged on the same side. Though Iran was preoccupied with domestic turmoil and its war with Iraq in the 1980s, it supported the cause of Afghan resistance and provided limited financial and military assistance to rebel leaders, especially those who pledged loyalty to the Iranian vision of the Islamic Revolution. Meanwhile, Pakistan emerged as the front-line state in

²⁵² Howard Wriggins, "Pakistan's Search for a Foreign Policy After the Invasion of Afghanistan," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 57, No. 2 (Summer 1984), p. 289.

²⁵³ Mushahid Hussain, "Pakistan-Iran Relations in the Changing World Scenario: Challenges and Response," in Tarik Jain et al ed., *Foreign Policy Debate: The Years Ahead* (Islamabad: Institute of Policy Studies, 1993), pp. 215-19.

²⁵⁴ For an authoritative account of US-Iran relations since the 1979 Revolution, see Gary Sick, "The Clouded Mirror: The United States and Iran, 1979-99," in John L. Esposito and R.K. Ramazani eds., *Iran at the Crossroads* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), pp. 191-210.

America's struggle to get the Soviets out of Afghanistan. Pakistan did try to cultivate Iran but its focus was on Saudi Arabia that "bankrolled Pakistani military programmes and provided grants for oil purchases, while Pakistan trained Saudi forces and cooperated on intelligence matters."²⁵⁵ The Saudi-funded, Pakistani-trained mujahideen were the main weapons that the West used to drive the Soviets out of Afghanistan, thereby providing Pakistan with considerable leverage in shaping the post-Soviet political scene in Kabul. Though Iran was home to an estimated 2.35 million Afghan refugees, Iran's narrow policy focus of favouring only selective Afghan factions, particularly the Shias in the area of Hazarajat, weakened Tehran's influence over the emerging political dynamic in Afghanistan.²⁵⁶

The turmoil that followed the Soviet withdrawal saw all regional actors vying with each other in trying to increase their influence in Kabul by supporting various political factions. Being the two states most directly affected by the rapidly deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran's involvement in Afghan politics further increased. The West had lost interest in Afghanistan's situation after the Soviet withdrawal and was preoccupied with the rapidly changing geo-political environment after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. This allowed regional actors like Pakistan and Iran to set the agenda in Kabul. With Pakistan and Saudi Arabia supporting the Taliban while Iran, India, Russia, Turkey and most Central Asian states backing the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance, the region witnessed unprecedented polarization in the aftermath of the end of the Cold War. As various factions struggled to gain control of the governmental apparatus in Kabul, Iran and Pakistan ended up on different sides of the political divide, despite occasional attempts towards cooperation by fostering the establishment of a broad-based government in the country. Islamabad and Tehran had different political agendas stemming from the competing factional interests of their Afghan clients that aggravated the mutual mistrust between the two neighbours.

The swift rise of the Taliban, who were able to capture Kabul by 1996, changed the ground situation in Afghanistan completely and set the stage for regional turmoil driven by an intensification of Iran-Pakistan rivalry.²⁵⁷ With Pakistan supporting the Taliban and Iran behind the Northern Alliance, the battle-lines between the two were clearly drawn. Iran felt regionally isolated with a regime in

²⁵⁵ Stephen Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), p. 122.

²⁵⁶ Ali Mohammadi and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *Iran and Eurasia* (Reading, UK: Ithaca Press, 2000), pp. 141-45.

²⁵⁷ On the developments in the Afghan civil war during the 1990s, see Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban* (London: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 183-196.

Kabul friendly to its competitor, Saudi Arabia, and a growing US presence in the Persian Gulf region premised on the doctrine of dual containment of Iran and Iraq. Iran saw the Taliban as an anti-Shia and anti-Iranian fundamentalist Sunni movement supported by its adversaries. Iranian residents in Afghanistan became a favourite target of the Taliban and sectarian violence also intensified in Pakistan as a result of conflict in Afghanistan. The situation worsened to an extent where Iran came on the verge of fighting Pakistan. In August 1998, after an incident in which the Taliban sacked an Iranian consulate in Mazar-i-Sharif and murdered six Iranian diplomats and some agents inside, Iranian officials massed around 70, 000 troops on its border with Afghanistan and blamed Pakistan, claiming that Pakistan had assured the safety of its diplomats.²⁵⁸ Iran felt that Pakistan in conjunction with the Saudis was making a deliberate attempt at keeping the Iranians and the Hazaras out of the power sharing agreements. It built its ties with Russia and newly emerged Central Asian Republics, all of which shared a deep suspicion of Afghan-Pashtun fundamentalism.

The advent of Mohammad Khatami in 1997 saw Iran adopting a new approach towards the West and Saudi Arabia, recognizing that peace in Afghanistan was necessary for its own economic development and political stability. The US and the Iranians even started working towards an eventual resolution of the Afghan crisis, but it was not to be.²⁵⁹

7.2 9/11 and Its Aftermath

September 11, 2001, changed the foreign policy priorities of both Iran and Pakistan. Pakistan was forced to support the US “war on terror” that brought a swift end to the Taliban government in Kabul.²⁶⁰ Though Iran welcomed the move, soon it found itself encircled with US forces in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia. Moreover, the Bush Administration included Iran in its “axis of evil”, implying that a regime change in Tehran had emerged as a topmost priority in Washington. President Bush’s ‘axis of evil’ speech in 2002 became a defining moment in recent US-Iranian ties, for relations between both countries had

²⁵⁸ Ahmad Rashid, ‘Taliban’ (London: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 203-05. For a scathing Iranian assessment of the Pakistani internal security situation during this period, see “Pakistan: Haven For Killers”, *Tehran Times*, Feb. 24, 1998.

²⁵⁹ Maggie Farley, “US and Iran have been talking, but very quietly,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 9, 2007.

²⁶⁰ On the overthrow of the Taliban, see Gary C. Schroen, *First In: An Insider’s Account of How the CIA Spearheaded the War on Terror in Afghanistan* (New York: Ballantine, 2005). Also, see Richard B. Andres, Craig Wills and Thomas E. Griffith Jr., “Winning With Allies: The Strategic Value of the Afghan Model,” *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Winter 2005/06), pp. 124-60.

marginally improved since the election of President Khatami in 1997.²⁶¹ Iran had expressed its sympathy to the US in the aftermath of 9/11, had pledged its full support in the war against terrorism and had played a key role in ensuring that Hamid Karzai (the US choice) was installed as the new President of Afghanistan. To be then openly described as repressive, a major supporter of terrorism and seeking to develop nuclear weapons came as a surprise to both the Iranian regime and the Iranian people. Iranian feelings of vulnerability were further compounded by the announcement of the new 'Bush doctrine' that brought the issues of democratization of the Middle East and pre-emption to the centre stage of the US foreign policy.²⁶²

Iran and Pakistan made some attempts at improving their bilateral ties after the fall of the Taliban in 2002. President Khatami's visit to Islamabad in December 2002 was a major step towards the normalization of bilateral ties between the two states. However, the situation in Afghanistan continued to cast its shadow over this relationship. Iran moved quickly to establish diplomatic ties with the Hamid Karzai government, installed after the rout of the Taliban. And despite US antagonism towards Iran, Tehran-Kabul ties have largely remained immune from US influence as the Karzai government has made a sustained effort to keep Tehran in good humour. Iran can bring its influence to bear on the Hazara population as well as on the northern and western parts of Afghanistan, which are heavily influenced by Iran. It has supported the reconstruction efforts undertaken in Afghanistan by the international community, contributing to infrastructure projects and humanitarian endeavours.

A politically stable and economically viable Afghanistan is viewed as essential for Iranian security and Iran has supported the political process in Afghanistan initiated by the Bonn Agreement. With this in mind, it signed the Kabul Declaration on Good Neighbourly Relations in 2002 along with Pakistan. Yet, Pakistan-Iran ties continue to suffer for a whole host of reasons with little indication of improvements on any front in the short to medium term.

²⁶¹ The speech is available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html>.

²⁶² John Lewis Gaddis, "A Grand Strategy of Transformation," *Foreign Policy*, No. 133 (November/December 2002), pp. 50-57.

7.3 Recent Trends in Pakistan-Iran Ties

7.3.1 Economic Ties

The economic relationship between Pakistan and Iran has largely been shaped by Pakistan's demand for Iranian oil. As a result, the ties have not matured beyond a point. The low level of economic exchange has hurt both states as, in the absence of a broad-based economic relationship, political and security tensions have tended to dominate this relationship. A number of factors in recent years, however, have given a boost to Pakistan-Iran economic ties. The economic growth in Pakistan in the last few years has enabled Pakistan to look for regional partners while the Iranian regime has initiated some economic reforms, faced as it was with a complete collapse of its domestic economic health. As political ties returned to some normalcy after the fall of the Taliban, the two states made a deliberate attempt to focus on the strengthening of economic and trade linkages. Though trade between Pakistan and Iran remains in the range of half a billion US dollars, it is an improvement over the previous declining trend. The aim of the two sides is to take their bilateral trade to the \$1 billion mark at the earliest. They signed a Preferential Trade Agreement in 2004 with the hope of converting it into a Free Trade Agreement. The expectation is that such an agreement will facilitate the growth of bilateral trade and strengthen economic ties.²⁶³

The two sides have decided to work their way through various institutional mechanisms such as the Joint Economic Commission (JEC), which meets regularly to propose various means by which the two sides can enhance trade and investment links. The JEC was established in 1986 and provides an organisational framework to enable the two countries to identify areas of mutual cooperation. Though its performance was largely lackadaisical throughout the period when political tensions were high between Pakistan and Iran, it has recently been more active in working out proposals and following through on their implementation. Recently, the push has been to involve the private sectors of the two states more forcefully in this endeavour.

One major complaint from Pakistan has been the large trade deficit in favour of Iran, largely due to the oil exports but also with trade barriers for Pakistani commodities in Iran remaining high. Pakistan mainly exports products like rice, wheat, paper, synthetic fibres and textiles to Iran while importing mainly petroleum and related products. It was only a few years back that Iran lifted its

²⁶³ Mubarak Zeb Khan, "Pakistan, Iran to cut duty on 647 items: Preferential Trade," *Dawn*, August 22, 2004.

quarantine on Pakistani exports of rice and wheat after it had been put in place in 1996 when Tehran found these products disease-infected. Upon Pakistan's prodding, Iran has decided to withdraw import duty on Pakistani rice to facilitate an increase in imports from Pakistan as one of the measures towards correcting the trade imbalance in the bilateral trade.²⁶⁴ The other issue that has plagued Pakistan-Iran economic ties is the issue of smuggling of petroleum, driven by the differences in oil prices across the border.

Pakistan's growing energy needs and Iran's pool of energy resources make the two states natural economic partners. Pakistan's search for energy security at a time of high volatility in energy markets makes Iran, with the world's fourth-largest reservoir of oil and second-largest reserves of natural gas, highly attractive. In 2009, Iran will be supplying 1100 MW electricity to Pakistan to mitigate an acute power shortage in the country, up from 35 MW that Iran usually supplies to the border areas.²⁶⁵ There has been a recent focus on increasing connectivity across their border regions and the two states have declared the two Baluchistans on either side of their borders as twin provinces to further enhance trade, economic and cultural links between the two regions.²⁶⁶

Rapidly rising energy demand in India and Pakistan is the impetus behind the proposed gas pipeline from Iran's gas fields through Pakistan to India. It is expected that this joint gas pipeline project would play an important role in cementing ties between Iran and Pakistan and that Pakistan's annual royalties from this project would be about \$500 million to \$600 million.²⁶⁷ The signing of the agreement would clearly add a new dynamic to cooperation between Pakistan and Iran in the energy sector but the proposal is now stuck because of differences between Pakistan and Iran on pricing and on methods to supply gas to India. There are also differences between the national oil companies of Iran and India over the legal interpretation of the contract for the export of 5 million tons of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to India. This \$22 billion deal was signed before Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was elected president of Iran and was tied to a relatively low market price for crude oil. India considers the deal final and binding, while Iran has argued that it is not binding because it has not been ratified. The Iranian Supreme Economic Council has refused to ratify the 2005 agreement for supply of gas to India and has demanded an upward revision in price. Both India and Pakistan have contended that Tehran should offer a price for gas in line with

²⁶⁴ "Pak-Iran trade rises to \$125m in first quarter," *The Nation*, July 25, 2008.

²⁶⁵ Zafar Bhutta, "Pakistan and Iran JEC to discuss electricity import," *The Daily Times* (Lahore), June 26, 2008.

²⁶⁶ "Pakistan, Iran sign agreement to declare twin provinces," *Tehran Times*, November 23, 2004.

²⁶⁷ Sohaib Shahid, "Iran-Pak-India Gas Pipeline: Implications and Prospects," *Jang* (Karachi), January 15, 2007.

global practices for long-term contracts and have rejected Iran's gas pricing formula wherein the gas price is linked to Brent crude oil with a fixed escalating cost component. The three states have now decided to get a realistic appraisal of gas prices through an independent consultant, although Iran maintains that the consultant's opinion would not be binding. The price Pakistan is demanding for security and transit is another reason the project is not moving forward. And then there is the US opposition to the project, though both India and Pakistan have indicated that the project does remain a foreign policy priority despite the pressure from the US.²⁶⁸

7.3.2 Security Interests

Recent years have also seen Iran and Pakistan making some effort towards security cooperation. The Pakistan-Iran Joint Ministerial Commission on Security was set up in 2001 to enhance bilateral cooperation on security issues ranging from terrorism and drug trafficking to sectarian violence and extremism. Regular interactions between the two sides have become the norm at various levels, from top political to intelligence services. This growing interaction on security issues has been deemed important by both sides in light of the rapidly evolving geopolitical environment in the region. After the rout of the Taliban, the two sides, who were on the opposite sides during the Taliban years, sought a stable Afghanistan for their own interests and came together to support the idea of a broad-based government in Afghanistan. However, Iran soon found itself cornered with the presence of US troops on all of its borders and became ambivalent about the role of the US in Afghanistan. Pakistan, on the other hand, has continued to support the US and NATO presence in Afghanistan, if only publicly. Tehran continues to blame Pakistan for the American presence in Afghanistan and Central Asia and is contemptuous of Pakistan's pro-American tilt.²⁶⁹

The Shia awakening after the 1979 Iranian Revolution and its instrumentalisation by Iran led to a very violent Sunni reaction, which was felt first of all in Pakistan and then spread to the entire Muslim world.²⁷⁰ In the 1980s, several radical groups sponsored by the Pakistani intelligence service started a systematic assault on Shia symbols and mosques in Pakistan. The Shias retaliated by

²⁶⁸ On the problems facing the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project, see Harsh V. Pant, "A Fine Balance: India Walks a Tightrope between Iran and the United States," *Orbis*, Summer 2007, pp. 495-509.

²⁶⁹ Fred Halliday, "Iran and the Middle East: Foreign Policy and Domestic Change," *Middle East Report*, 220 (Autumn 2001), p. 44.

²⁷⁰ Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (London: Hurst, 2002).

forming their own armed groups and taking help from Iran in particular. The fate of Shias in Pakistan remains a matter of concern for Iran given the persistence of sectarian violence against them there by the Sunni militants.²⁷¹ This Shia-Sunni strife in Pakistan has also provoked Iran to provide clandestine support to its co-religionists, the Shias, in Pakistan.²⁷²

The nuclear issue has added another dimension to their ties. Though Iran has received help from sections of the Pakistani scientific and military establishment, there is a sense of rivalry between Pakistan and Iran on the nuclear issue given Pakistan's unique position as the sole Islamic nation with the bomb. It is a peculiar relationship where suspicion of each other's motives has not prevented the two from cooperating on nuclear technology. The full extent of nuclear cooperation between Iran and Pakistan has come to light at a time when Iranian pursuit of nuclear weapons is causing jitters in the West. Interestingly, one of the drivers of Iranian nuclear weaponization is the fear of a "Sunni bomb" with rumours of an oil-for-nukes pact between Riyadh and Islamabad. Though the A.Q. Khan network helped Iran in its drive towards nuclear weaponization, Iran has not been very comfortable with the idea of Pakistan being the sole Islamic state with nuclear weapons. Pakistan has admitted that the former head of its nuclear weapons programme, Abdul Qadeer Khan, gave Iran centrifuges for enriching uranium even as it continues to argue that Khan was working on his own and the government had no knowledge of his activities. This is a claim that is difficult to accept at face value given the Pakistani military's tight control over the nation's nuclear programme and the fact that these transfers went on for almost two decades. The evidence is clear that the Pakistani military was not only aware of Khan's nuclear transactions with Iran but the scientist was operating with at least tacit approval because he was carrying out a policy of improving ties with Tehran that was endorsed by the top leadership of the Pakistani military and intelligence service.²⁷³

A military strike by the US against Iran's nuclear facilities would put Pakistan in a difficult position as it would find it very difficult to support American action against a fellow Islamic nation. Moreover, the costs would be high for Pakistan with a resulting flow of refugees and escalating tensions in Baluchistan. Pakistan

²⁷¹ The estimates of Pakistan's Shia population vary anywhere from 10 to 25 percent.

²⁷² For a thematic exploration of the role of sectarian divide on shaping Pakistan and Iran's views towards each other, see Vali R. Nasr, "International Politics, Domestic Imperatives, and Identity Mobilization: Sectarianism in Pakistan, 1979-1998," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (January 2000), pp. 175-87.

²⁷³ Douglas Frantz and Catherine Collins, *The Nuclear Jihadist* (New York: Twelve, 2007), pp. 176-79.

has, therefore, made it clear that it will not allow its facilities to be used against Iran in case the US decides to go down that route.

Around five million Baluch tribesmen stretch across the vast expanse of western Pakistan and eastern Iran. It is a strategically important position and the land remains rich in resources. Both Pakistan and Iran have long been concerned about the Baluch nationalist factions being able to pursue their long-standing goal of an autonomous or independent Baluchistan through guerrilla warfare, though Baluch nationalist forces have been much better organized in Pakistan.²⁷⁴ In the days of the Shah, Iran helped Pakistan in crushing the Baluch insurgents, fearing that the insurgency could spread across the border to the 1.2 million Baluch living in eastern Iran. But today, with Iran and Pakistan at loggerheads, both continue to suspect the other's involvement in insurgencies among their respective Baluch populations. Tehran has repeatedly accused the US Special Forces of using their bases in Pakistan to pursue undercover operations inside Iran designed to foment Baluch opposition to the regime of Ahmadinejad.²⁷⁵

It is interesting to note that the main centre of Taliban strategic command and control in Southern Afghanistan is based in Quetta, capital of the Pakistani province of Baluchistan. Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) is reportedly providing aid to the Quetta shura (council) and even as the Pakistani military continues to target the Baluch ethnic nationalist insurgency rather effectively, the Taliban command centre remains untouched.²⁷⁶

7.4 The Regional Dynamic

7.4.1 Growing India-Iran Ties

Iran's growing ties with India also cloud its relationship with Pakistan, though at the moment Iran's ties with India seem on hold till such time as the fate of the pipeline deal is clear. During the early phase of the Cold War, Tehran had supported Pakistan because it was resisting Nasserism in the Arab world. It, therefore, tried to cultivate an ally in Pakistan by providing it direct military

²⁷⁴ On the history of Baluch nationalism in Iran and Pakistan, see Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow: Baluch Nationalism and Soviet Temptations* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1981).

²⁷⁵ Selig Harrison, "Pakistan's Baluch Insurgency," *Le Monde*, October 2006.

²⁷⁶ Barnett R. Rubin, "Still Ours to Lose: Afghanistan on the Brink," Prepared Testimony for the House Committee on International Relations and the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, September 21, 2006, available at <http://www.senate.gov/~foreign/testimony/2006/RubinTestimony060921.pdf>.

assistance during the 1965 war with India and sided with Islamabad in the 1971 war. However, that kind of trust between Iran and Pakistan has now disappeared. Though Pakistan is not seen as an adversary of Iran even now, Tehran is aware of that the Sunni fundamentalism of jihadi variety considers the 20 percent Shia population of Pakistan as apostates. This is the same variant of Islamist fundamentalism that supports and sends jihadi terrorists to India.

There was also a perception shared by India and Iran that Pakistan's control of Afghanistan via the fundamentalist Taliban regime was not in the strategic interests of either state and was a threat to the regional stability of the entire region. As opposed to Pakistan, that promptly recognized the Taliban regime,²⁷⁷ India and Iran did not establish diplomatic contacts with the Taliban.²⁷⁸ India and Iran, together with Russia, were the main supporters of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance that with US help routed the hard-line Islamic regime in Afghanistan in November 2001.

India and Iran have signed an agreement to set up a joint working group on terrorism and security, the main purpose of which is to share intelligence on al-Qaeda activities in Afghanistan. Both countries have a shared interest in a stable Afghanistan with a regime that not only is fully representative of the ethnic and cultural diversity of Afghanistan but also is capable of taking the country on the path of economic development and social stability, thereby enhancing the security of the entire region. Defence ties between India and Iran have also evolved in the last few years, especially after the signing of a bilateral memorandum of understanding on defence cooperation in 2001. Though mostly restricted to training and exchange of visits, India also has used Iranian ports to send aid to Afghanistan, given Pakistan's denial of access to India. Even as the United States was conducting its war games in the Persian Gulf in March 2007, its largest show of force in the region since the 2003 invasion of Iraq and involving the USS *Eisenhower* and USS *Stennis*, the Iranian naval chief was visiting India, a reflection of the importance that Iran attaches to its growing defence ties with India. This visit has reportedly resulted in the establishment of a joint defence working group to look into Tehran's request that India train its military personnel.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ For Pakistan's reasons in supporting Taliban and its impact on Pakistan's foreign policy, see Kenneth Weisbrode, "Central Eurasia: Prize or Quicksand?" *Adelphi Paper 338* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2001), 68–71.

²⁷⁸ For a background of Iran's relations with Taliban, see Amin Saikal, "Iran's Turbulent Neighbor: The Challenge of the Taliban," *Global Dialogue* 3, no. 2/3 (Spring/Summer 2001): 93–103.

²⁷⁹ Vivek Raghuvanshi, "India, Iran to Deepen Defense Relationship," *Defense News*, March 18, 2007, available at <http://defensenews.com/story.php?F=2620792&C=asiapac>.

Iran remains India's only corridor to the Central Asian republics, given India's adversarial relations with Pakistan. In return for Iran's provision to India of the transit facilities to Central Asia, India is helping Iran in improving its transportation facilities, like ports and railways. India is cooperating with Iran in the development of a new port complex at Chah Bahar on the coast of Iran, which could become India's gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asia. There is also another project that involves linking Chah Bahar port to the Iranian rail network that is also well connected to Central Asia and Europe. What is significant about these projects is that Pakistan will become marginal to India's relationship with the Central Asian region. As a result, India's relations with Central Asia will no longer be hostage to Islamabad's policies. The emergence of Gwadar port that Pakistan has constructed with China's help is getting overshadowed by the strategically significant Iranian port city of Chah Bahar. The contest is on between Iran and Pakistan to become the favoured commercial and energy intermediary for the Central Asian Republics.²⁸⁰ The building of Chah Bahar port together with the completion of the Zaranj-Delaram highway in Afghanistan could well reduce Pakistan's logistical leverage on Afghanistan.

India's cultivation of ties with Iran and Afghanistan leaves Pakistan feeling very vulnerable as it finds itself surrounded by states with a distinct anti-Pakistan orientation. India's plan to build a highway linking the southern Afghan city of Kandahar to Zahidan in Iran is of concern to Pakistan as it will reduce Afghanistan's dependence on Pakistan to the benefit of Iran. India's building of roads in Afghanistan is seen as particularly worrisome as it will increase the influence of India and Iran and boost Afghanistan's connectivity to the outside world. India also hopes that the road link through Afghanistan and Iran will open up markets for its goods in Afghanistan and beyond in Central Asia.

Pakistan remains concerned about deepening India-Iran ties and Afghanistan's gravitation towards such an axis.²⁸¹ For many in Pakistan, India is pursuing a well-crafted strategy of encircling Pakistan and keeping it out of Afghanistan and Central Asia altogether. This seems an exaggerated assessment of Indian foreign policy towards the region in general and towards Iran in particular. There's

²⁸⁰ Robert G. Wirsing, "In India's Lengthening Shadow: The US-Pakistan Strategic Alliance and the War in Afghanistan," *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, 2007, pp. 157-160.

²⁸¹ For details on the emerging contours of India-Iran relationship, see Harsh V. Pant, *Contemporary Debates in Indian Foreign and Security Policy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 113-129.

hardly anything “strategic” in India’s relationship with Iran but for Pakistan, any step by India and Iran towards cooperation is fraught with trouble.²⁸²

7.4.2 Afghanistan Under Siege

Historically, Iran and Pakistan have competed for influence in Afghanistan and Iran has had to suffer the consequences of Pakistan’s attempts at establishing and supporting a fundamentalist Sunni regime in Kabul. Iran’s dissatisfaction with Pakistan flows from Islamabad’s military ties with the US and close economic and cultural ties to Saudi Arabia. Iran has special interests in western Afghanistan’s Heart region, with Persian-speaking Tajiks and Hazaras who are Shiites, whereas Pakistan considers the Pashto-speaking southern parts as falling within its sphere of influence. Recent deterioration in the security situation in Afghanistan has once again brought tensions between Iran and Pakistan to the fore.²⁸³ Iran’s internal cohesion and external security have come under strain with the growing instability in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The collapse of the Afghan state’s authority is increasing Iran’s own insecurity by creating a massive influx of drugs and weapons. The spectre of Afghanistan’s ethnic conflict threatening to spill into Iran and the economic burdens of supporting millions of Afghan refugees are keeping Tehran on the alert. A refugee crisis is emerging in Iran with 2,000-4,000 refugees entering Iran every day from Afghanistan, according to some estimates.²⁸⁴ Iran lacks the socio-economic infrastructure to absorb the flow of refugees in such a large number. Given the absence of western aid, it has found it difficult to deal with this crisis effectively. It is not surprising therefore that reports have emerged of Iran forcibly deporting up to 2,000 Afghan refugees per day, many of whom had lived in Iran for many years.²⁸⁵

The failure to wean Afghanistan away from poppy cultivation has led to Iran emerging as a transit route for narcotics into West Asia and Europe. This has resulted in an escalation of violence in Iran’s Sistan-Baluchistan province, further aggravating tensions along the Iran-Pakistan border. Though Iran has taken a proactive stance against drug smuggling, it has found it difficult to tackle this challenge due to its porous borders with Pakistan and Afghanistan. In May 2008, Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan agreed on a triangular initiative to

²⁸² Harsh V. Pant, “India and Iran: The Myth of a ‘Strategic Partnership’,” *India in Transition*, Center for the Advanced Study of India, University of Pennsylvania, available at http://casi.ssc.upenn.edu/print_pages/pdf/print_Pant.pdf.

²⁸³ On the deteriorating security environment in Afghanistan, see Barnett R. Rubin, “Saving Afghanistan,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 86, No. 1 (January/February 2007), pp. 57-78.

²⁸⁴ Atul Aneja, “Iran: Struggling to cope with refugee crisis,” *The Hindu*, August 16, 2008)

²⁸⁵ Kate Clark, “Arming the Taliban,” BBC News, September 18, 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia.

cooperate more closely in counter-narcotics efforts, including through the establishment of a joint cell, to be located in Tehran, which will facilitate information exchange and joint counter-narcotics interventions. It remains to be seen if this will have any perceptible influence on the narcotics trade.

Iran has been increasing its influence in Afghanistan, using its oil money to realize its self-image as an ascendant regional power. Iran's strategy towards Afghanistan seems geared towards hastening the withdrawal of American forces, preventing the Taliban from gaining power, and trying to keep Afghanistan under Tehran's sway. It played a major role in re-starting the post-Taliban political process in Afghanistan and has pledged \$560 million in aid and loans to Afghanistan.²⁸⁶ But Iran's role in Afghanistan has become more complicated recently. The perception that other states such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and in particular the US would gain an upper hand in the evolving political environment in Afghanistan has pushed Iran into charting a pro-active course towards its eastern neighbour. As Iran's relations with the US have become more confrontational, there have been some indications that certain sections of the Iranian military, especially the Revolutionary Guards, may be arming the Taliban so as to weaken the American military in Afghanistan. Time and again, the US and NATO forces have intercepted shipments of weapons being supplied to the Taliban that seems to have originated in Iran.²⁸⁷ There is little common ground between Iran and Pakistan on a solution to the Afghan crisis and history seems to be repeating itself with both states once again funding proxy wars between Shia and Sunnis in each other's countries as well as in Afghanistan, increasing the likelihood of a major sectarian explosion in the region.²⁸⁸

Iran has learnt from its past experience in Afghanistan. It doesn't want to give Pakistan a free hand and so it is exploiting the opportunities presented to it by the new political dispensation in Afghanistan and spreading its influence. Iran has tried to project itself as a responsible regional actor since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, urging the Northern Alliance to accept the Bonn agreement for the formation of a new broad-based government in Kabul and offering aid and loans as well as to train Afghan soldiers. It is heavily investing in construction projects in the western parts of Afghanistan, building roads, rail links and border posts. However, other interests are also at play with Iran using this unprecedented opportunity to support conservative Shia religious schools and warlords as well

²⁸⁶ David Rohde, "Iran Is Seeking More Influence in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, December 27, 2006.

²⁸⁷ John Ward Anderson, "Arms Seized in Afghanistan Sent From Iran, NATO Says," *Washington Post*, September 21, 2007; Gordon 2007.

²⁸⁸ Rashid, *Taliban*, p. 211.

as increasing its intelligence activities across Afghanistan. Iran has viewed itself traditionally as the guarantor of the security of Afghanistan's Shiites, which account for around 20 percent of the country's population. Iran would like the US forces to leave Afghanistan and, if possible, hasten their withdrawal while keeping the Taliban at bay even as it ensures that the western Afghanistan remains under its influence.

Several media reports from Afghanistan suggest that Iran has been increasing its operations in Afghanistan in an effort to gain influence with the contending insurgent factions and to hasten the departure of US troops from the country.²⁸⁹ It has been suggested that unlike in the past Iran is now ready to cooperate and support any group, regardless of their religion and language, who can fight the US presence in Afghanistan. Growing tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan are also working to Iran's advantage with Kabul becoming increasingly dependent on Iran for its transit trade routes. The Karzai government cannot pick fights with both of its vital neighbours and so is trying to keep Iran in good humour. While the US maintains that Iran is funnelling weapons into Afghanistan, the Afghan government continues to view Iran as close friend and ally.²⁹⁰ Meanwhile, Iran, sandwiched between 160,000 US troops based in Iraq to the west and around 50,000 US and NATO troops in Afghanistan to the east, has an interest in striking US forces and helping to push them from the region by supplying insurgents in both countries with funds, weapons, and training.

7.5 Conclusion

Notwithstanding some tentative recent attempts by Pakistan and Iran to improve their bilateral ties, the two continue to have a difficult relationship. For some time it seemed as if the challenges in Afghanistan might bring the two states together as both had been adversely affected by the collapse of Afghanistan. But it now looks as if the rivalry between the two is once again making its presence felt in and around Afghanistan.

After a rapid deterioration in the security environment in Afghanistan, plans are afoot in the US to increase troop levels and pursue an Iraq-like surge of troops. But a comprehensive approach that includes a constructive engagement of the key regional players such as Iran and India along with Pakistan is key to improving the ground realities. Though the collapse of governance after the

²⁸⁹ Muhammad Tahir, "Iranian Involvement in Afghanistan," *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (January 18, 2007).

²⁹⁰ Sheryl Gay Stolberg, "Bush and Karzai divided on Iran's role," *International Herald Tribune*, Aug 7, 2007.

overthrow of the Taliban regime has been rightly identified as the main factor behind the rising turmoil in Afghanistan,²⁹¹ the problem in Afghanistan remains a regional one. Throughout its history, Afghanistan has been a battleground for its neighbours who have exported their conflicts to the Afghan territory, and even today all the regional countries are interfering in Afghanistan by backing their proxies and hedging their bets as they see the US effort failing. It is clearly in the interest of the regional states to have a stable Afghanistan. The opportunities offered by trade and transit, energy market integration and road and rail infrastructure should dominate bilateral and multilateral agendas, along with cooperation to combat terrorism and the illegal narcotics trade. This may lay the basis for regional cooperation over the long term which is vital for Afghanistan's sustainable recovery.²⁹² While both Pakistan and Iran seem to have concluded that a stable, independent and economically strong Afghan state is preferable to a weak and troubled one, they remain very sensitive to their relative gains vis-à-vis each other.

Conflicting interests over Afghanistan have tended to play a pivotal role in the formation of foreign policies of Pakistan and Iran vis-à-vis each other and that continues to be the case even today. Afghanistan's predicament is a difficult one. It would like to enhance its links with its neighbouring states, especially Iran and Pakistan, so as to gain the economic advantages and tackle common threats to regional security. Yet, such interactions also leave it open to becoming a theatre where neighbouring states can play out their regional rivalries. Peace and stability will continue to elude Afghanistan so long as its neighbours continue to view it through the lens of their regional rivalries and as a chessboard for enhancing their regional power and influence. And these regional rivalries will only intensify if the perception gains ground that the security situation in Afghanistan is deteriorating.

Iran would view a "re-Talibanisation" of Afghanistan as a ploy by Pakistan to keep Afghanistan under its sphere of influence and Iran-Pakistan ties would deteriorate further.²⁹³ The potential for regional cooperation on trade and energy, something which is critical for the future of all the states in the region and towards which some tentative steps have been initiated, would become difficult to realize. Security would become the foremost priority of Iran and Pakistan,

²⁹¹ For a detailed explication of the reasons that led to the rise of insurgency in Afghanistan, see Seth G. Jones, "The Rise of Afghanistan's Insurgency," *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Spring 2008), pp. 7-40.

²⁹² Barnett R. Rubin and Andrea Armstrong, "Regional Issues in the Reconstruction of Afghanistan," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Spring 2003).

²⁹³ For an assessment of the role of Pakistan in providing sanctuary to the Taliban that has proved to be critical in their re-emergence, see Jones, "The Rise of Afghanistan's Insurgency," pp. 29-36.

forcing both to actively support their clients in Afghanistan to gain strategic leverage vis-à-vis each other. In many ways, it is a paradox. The situation in Afghanistan can only improve if its neighbours start acting responsibly but a significant deterioration in Afghanistan's security situation will force them to worry about their own security interests, thereby further intensifying regional rivalries. Iran will only play a positive role in Afghanistan if it feels its vital interests are not under threat and a deteriorating security environment in Afghanistan will only make Iran feel more vulnerable, forcing it to take steps to safeguard its interests, further spiralling the conflict.

It is imperative, therefore, for the international community to take the lead in stabilising Afghanistan, thereby creating conditions necessary for the many regional players to come together without worrying about their respective strategic end games.

Concluding Remarks

The security situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan is causing global concern and calls for expanded international efforts to stabilise the region can be heard from different parts of the world. For such efforts to be effective and constructive, it is necessary that the context is fully understood. As the authors in this report have all shown, it is impossible to look at developments in Pakistan and Afghanistan without taking into account the wider context and without considering factors that disregard national borders. Any attempt at understanding the region must look at local, national, regional as well as international forces, actors and issues. Similarly, it is critical that any efforts to stabilise the region comprise not only military elements but also “softer” non-military assistance, supporting for example economic development and human rights. In addition, it is crucial that efforts are not limited to “quick fixes”, but assistance must be allowed time to have a long-term, more lasting impact. Naturally, there are a number of other potential and sometimes inherent obstacles which have to be overcome, such as bureaucratic inertia and structures, cultural misunderstandings and miscommunication between various actors and organisations, and limited resources. Understanding is an essential step though towards finding a right path forward. It is, however, arguably one of the most challenging steps. The hope is that this report has contributed to drawing a map of the complexities of the region.