

# MAPPING PAKISTAN'S INTERNAL DYNAMICS

## *Implications for State Stability and Regional Security*

By Mumtaz Ahmad, Dipankar Banerjee, Aryaman Bhatnagar, C. Christine Fair,  
Vanda Felbab-Brown, Husain Haqqani, Mahin Karim, Tariq A. Karim,  
Vivek Katju, C. Raja Mohan, Matthew J. Nelson, and Jayadeva Ranade



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# Mapping Pakistan's Internal Dynamics: Implications for State Stability and Regional Security

*Mahin Karim*

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This NBR Special Report is the culmination of a two-year research project by the National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR) that sought to analyze Pakistan's internal security landscape and external geopolitical environment. Funded with generous support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the project convened an international team of experts to author the essays presented in this report. These essays were informed by a series of workshops and briefings held in New Delhi and Washington, D.C., in partnership with the Observer Research Foundation.

## Project Rationale

Pakistan today represents one of the world's most significant and vexing geopolitical challenges. Its geographic position at the nexus of the Middle East and Asia, its nuclear stockpile, and the strength and determination of domestic extremist groups make Pakistan's future course a top geopolitical priority for the United States. Looming instability inside Pakistan profoundly threatens U.S. interests in regional stability, nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the eradication of extremism. An unstable Pakistan—a state that is riven by internal factionalization and radicalization, possesses a nuclear stockpile that may not be secure from terrorist groups, and finds its very existence as a viable, secular state threatened—would have profound implications for the security interests of the United States and the geopolitical stability of the Middle East and Asia.

As the United States and NATO withdraw the bulk of their military forces from Afghanistan, Pakistan will be a key player in preserving regional stability. As such, ensuring Islamabad's continued strength and viability will be a necessary first step for the United States toward achieving broader national security objectives. Yet persistent suggestions of complicity between elements of the Pakistan military and intelligence services and various terrorist organizations have exacerbated the already profound concerns about Islamabad's weak control over frontier provinces, the spillover of Taliban and other Islamist elements across the Afghan border into Pakistan, and the realization that many of these groups have been harbored and to a degree controlled by forces within Pakistan's military-intelligence establishment to further the country's strategic goals.

Thus far, India in particular has borne the brunt of Pakistan's dichotomous political culture. New Delhi's state-level negotiations with the civilian government in Islamabad toward better relations between the two countries have been rendered almost farcical by the activities of subversive elements within Pakistan's military-intelligence establishment to scuttle any such attempts at closer ties. Pakistan's so-called successful democratic transition in May 2013 and the newly elected government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his Pakistan Muslim League–Nawaz (PML-N) party, brought some measure of hope. During his prior tenure as prime minister (1997–99), Sharif was credited, along with then Indian prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, with normalizing relations between the two countries to a degree not experienced since their respective independence from British India. Those efforts were, of course, derailed by the 1999 Kargil War that was spearheaded by then Pakistan army chief Pervez Musharraf, who subsequently ousted Sharif from power and exiled him to Saudi Arabia in a military-backed coup. Perhaps it is no small wonder then that the recent overtures by Sharif and the new civilian government in Pakistan toward better relations with India have been overshadowed by an upsurge in infractions across the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir, once again bringing to light the opposing centers of power at play in Pakistan.

Yet Pakistan's instability is not solely an Indian problem. Should Islamabad's power continue to disintegrate, the control and security of Pakistan's nuclear forces grow increasingly uncertain, and extremist forces strengthen, instability could quickly spread across South Asia and the Middle East. While the Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, or TTP) have since their inception in 2007 primarily targeted their efforts domestically against the Pakistani state, there have recently been indications of plans for the TTP to expand the scope of activities beyond Pakistan. In a show of solidarity with al Qaeda and other jihadist groups, the Pakistani Taliban have already expanded their operations beyond Pakistan's borders to assist rebels fighting against the Assad regime in Syria. Further, the TTP also threatened to attack Myanmar in the wake of sectarian violence against Rohingya Muslims in that country. Reports of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)—which already has sympathizers among Pakistani extremist elements—possibly expanding its scope of operations into Pakistan are cause for further alarm. The stakes for both the country and the region thus could not be higher.

### *Understanding Pakistan's Internal Dynamics*

Any U.S. strategy to preserve Pakistan's internal stability must be founded on a detailed and nuanced understanding of the dynamics that are tearing the country apart. A preliminary review of Pakistan's internal extremist groups suggests wide differentiations by intention and even more profoundly by geography. Some extremist organizations are focused on fighting what they see as foreign enemy forces—namely the United States and India—whereas others, such as the Pakistani Taliban, are fighting Islamabad itself in order to establish a new government founded on Islamist principles. Most significant, but least understood by the outside world, are the subregional variations that cut across both internally and externally focused extremist groups. The tenuous political relationship between the government in Islamabad and vulnerable provinces, particularly the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where many of these extremist elements are based, renders very real the possibility of “rogue states within a state” that could provoke instability not just within Pakistan but also beyond. The links between certain extremist groups and elements within the Pakistani military-intelligence establishment further add to the complexity of Pakistan's internal political environment. For example, the Haqqani network, which the United States has declared a terrorist group, has been used by Pakistan to further a subversive agenda in Afghanistan. A clearer understanding of the competing motivations, spheres of influence, and “balance of power” dynamics among these groups is essential to effectively inform any big-picture analysis of Pakistan's future political trajectory and its impact on regional stability.

Further, Pakistan's position at the front line of the conflict in Afghanistan has taken a toll on the Pakistani polity. Public opinion has become increasingly negative in recent years due to the perceived weakness of a civilian political establishment that has granted too many concessions to the war on terrorism and its Western, mainly U.S. proponents at the expense of Pakistani sovereignty and national interests. For many in Pakistan, this shift has translated into a swing toward anti-U.S., anti-India, and pro-Islamist sentiments. These issues dominated the campaign rhetoric leading up to the May 2013 elections. It is worth noting that Sharif's PML-N and Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf—both of which have conservative ties—were the two exceptions to the Pakistani Taliban's terrorist campaign against political parties and candidates considered liberal or secular in orientation.

Regional developments, particularly in neighboring Afghanistan, will also have a profound impact on Pakistan. While the U.S. and NATO military presence in Afghanistan has helped maintain a degree of stability within that country, as those forces are withdrawn there are increasing concerns over the ability of a weak Afghan government to consolidate power and preserve state stability. Pakistan has already borne the unintended consequences of the U.S.-NATO security mission in Afghanistan, with the spillover of al Qaeda and Afghan militant groups into Pakistan—some of which have targeted Pakistan’s own military forces and further exacerbated its internal instability. The prospect of renewed instability in Afghanistan, as well as “great game” concerns over increased Indian, Russian, and Iranian influence in the country as the U.S. and NATO presence draws down, has fueled Pakistan’s reluctance to give up its own instruments of influence—which include subversive militant groups such as the Haqqani network.

Similarly, recent moves by the civilian governments in Pakistan and India toward improved relations will affect dynamics in Pakistan. An anti-India foreign and military policy has long fueled the existential rationale for entrenched stakeholders within Pakistan’s military-intelligence establishment and motivated support for militant groups working to destabilize India. A rapprochement between Pakistan and India would not be in the political, ideological, or economic interests of these factions and may inadvertently contribute to increased efforts to destabilize the civilian government in Islamabad as well as antagonize India through support for increased extremist activities—or even military incursions—on Indian territory. As mentioned earlier, there is already disturbing evidence pointing in this direction.

### *Implications of Instability*

This is not the first time in Pakistan’s history that the country has been considered on the brink of state failure. While remaining in the top twenty of *Foreign Policy*’s annual Fragile States Index (called the Failed States Index through 2013), Pakistan in recent years had “improved” its ranking from number nine in 2008 to number thirteen in 2013. Perhaps it comes as no surprise that in the latest index released in June 2015, Pakistan is ranked at number ten, signifying an increasingly deteriorating situation and lending credence to the policy and security concerns highlighted in this report. The complex internal dynamics at play within Pakistan’s sociopolitical landscape and the hedging strategies that various influential stakeholders have been able to exercise in engaging with and balancing those dynamics have contributed to the status quo of a stable, albeit precarious, state. Critical questions remain, however. How long can Pakistan maintain this status quo? And of particular concern for the United States and Pakistan’s neighbors, how long before the schisms plaguing the internal political landscape begin to adversely affect the country’s external geopolitical environment?

The resurgence of an Islamist influence in Pakistani politics has implications not just for the United States and India but also for Pakistan’s other neighbors. The dominance of right-wing Sunni Muslim groups, several of which have been implicated in sectarian violence against Pakistan’s Shia population (as well as other minority groups), should be of concern to neighboring Iran. China too is already unhappy with suspected ties between extremist groups in Pakistan and Muslim separatist movements in China’s northwestern regions. In addition, the Pakistani Taliban have sent fighters to support rebels in Syria and made threats against the regime in Myanmar, while Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan had called for international intervention against the Bangladesh government’s decision to ban Jamaat-e-Islami in Bangladesh from political participation and

prosecute its leaders for war crimes in 1971. A strong Islamist influence in Islamabad would be more likely to give such groups greater freedom to foment regional instability. Given that Pakistan does not yet subscribe to any formal “no first use” policy, the implications of a potentially unstable political transition in nuclear Pakistan, with anti-establishment and extremist inclinations, bear serious consideration.

Instability also heightens the potential risks of nuclear proliferation to both state and nonstate actors, particularly given existing concerns over Pakistan’s ability to secure its nuclear facilities. Recent breaches by terrorist groups of the national security infrastructure—first with the May 2011 attack on the Mehran naval base in Karachi and then the August 2012 attack on the Kamra airbase in northwest Pakistan, both of which are believed to be connected to military nuclear facilities—have raised concerns over Pakistan’s control of its nuclear assets. The security breaches not only highlighted the vulnerability of Pakistan’s nuclear stockpile but also fueled further speculation over the dichotomous nature of the military-intelligence establishment vis-à-vis forces supporting the civilian government versus those supporting anti-state elements. Further, the Pakistani Taliban’s July 2013 jailbreak in Dera Ismail Khan, leading to the escape of 250 inmates, including 45 senior commanders, was facilitated by inside help. The operatives were allegedly assisted by police and jail employees and trained by former Pakistan Air Force personnel. In this context, the claims by ISIS that it could acquire nuclear weapons from Pakistan for use against the United States within a year are particularly disturbing. The prospect of state failure or of Islamist forces undermining Pakistan’s democratic transition is not beyond the realm of possibility. Such an outcome would pose dire security challenges for Pakistan’s neighbors, regional stability, and the United States.

## Project Synopsis

The complex interplay among the internal and external forces shaping Pakistan today demands an in-depth assessment of their influence on the country’s future trajectory—in the context of both continued state stability and Pakistan’s potential to derail broader security priorities in the region. Toward this end, this project convened an international team of experts to provide a comprehensive mapping of the country’s internal security landscape and external geopolitical environment, with the aim of assessing the implications for peace and stability in Pakistan’s periphery as well as for U.S. interests in Asia and the greater Middle East. While primarily targeting a U.S. audience, the research emerging from this project and presented in this report should also be of use to policy communities in India and other countries affected by Pakistan’s internal dynamics.

U.S. policy toward Pakistan has historically been confronted by the twin challenges of dealing with the complex—and often conflicting—dynamics shaping Pakistan’s domestic political imperatives and its foreign policy behavior. Even when well-informed, these policies are often formulated to address one particular issue, yet produce impacts that may well conflict with other dimensions of Pakistan’s story. Such a situation renders these policies vulnerable to unintended consequences that potentially exacerbate rather than mitigate existing challenges vis-à-vis not only the U.S.-Pakistan relationship but also U.S. relations with other countries in the region.

By applying, to the extent possible, a holistic approach to understanding the complex internal and external variables shaping Pakistan, our hope is that the final products generated by this project will help policymakers better respond to incidents or sudden crises in the short term and design

better-informed strategies and policies toward Pakistan in the long term. The project's analyses and briefings aim to expose policymakers to the intricacies of Pakistan's internal dynamics; help dispel preconceived notions of simplistic rivalries between well-meaning democrats in Islamabad, Islamist extremists in FATA, and officials in the security services playing both sides; and draw attention to the links between those internal dynamics and Pakistan's external geopolitical environment. By exposing policymakers to the important regional, cultural, economic, and ideational rifts that roil throughout Pakistan, the project hopes to facilitate more nuanced and effective policy decisions.

### *Phase One*

The project was organized into two phases. The first phase focused on developing a deeper understanding of the complex sociopolitical landscape influencing internal dynamics and state stability in Pakistan by mapping the diverse sociological, political, cultural, and religious influences shaping Pakistan's political and security environment—at not just the federal state level but also the local regional level. The goal of this effort was to help shed light on the regional variations in Pakistan's state and nonstate power structures and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the internal fault lines shaping the country's future trajectory. This phase of the project explored three specific dimensions of Pakistan's internal sociopolitical landscape: the political superstructure, internal security environment, and informal agencies of influence on Pakistan's internal stability. Despite the daunting challenges inherent in such a task, the first three essays in this report by Mumtaz Ahmad, C. Christine Fair, and Matthew J. Nelson provide a masterful overview of internal trends in Pakistan today. These essays offer fascinating insights into little-explored facets of Pakistani society while highlighting the difficulties intrinsic in any attempt to understand the country.

Ahmad's essay provides a comprehensive overview of the principal institutions composing Pakistan's political superstructure, along with a discussion of both center-provincial dynamics and civil-military relations. The essay asserts that Pakistan's "superstructures" of the military and civil bureaucracy have played a pivotal role in ensuring state stability through numerous political crises, despite challenges in institutional capacity. These superstructures have thereby helped avert any major threat to state legitimacy and integrity, with the tacit implication that they will continue to do so. Significantly, the essay contends that while the transitions from military to civilian rule in 2008 and between civilian governments in 2013 may not have resulted in any qualitative shift in the civil-military balance of power, these transitions did give impetus to certain sociopolitical forces that offer a more positive outlook for Pakistan's stability than the usual pessimistic scenario posited by the country's detractors. At the same time, Ahmad's essay seems to implicitly recognize, and accept, that political stability in Pakistan is still contingent on the support of the country's military-intelligence establishment.

While Ahmad's optimism for the Pakistani state, despite this reality, appears to stem from perceived changes in the mindset of Pakistan's military high command, indicating a shift in favor of stronger civilian rule at the center, C. Christine Fair's assessment of the same institution offers a much more dire analysis. She provides an insightful commentary on political violence in Pakistan and highlights the intrinsic linkages between Pakistan's internal and external security environments. Importantly, the essay draws attention to the ideological motivations of the state, in particular the security establishment, that drive its behavior and that will continue to derail any

efforts toward real security—both domestically and regionally—unless there is a fundamental sea change in the mindset of Pakistan’s military-intelligence establishment. In particular, the country would need to abandon a national ideology embedded in the “two-nation theory” of its partition from India in 1947. Fair argues that Pakistan’s history of political violence, both internally toward minority communities and externally in the use of nonstate actors as a subversive foreign policy tool, is rooted in precisely this ideology, whose strongest proponent has been the military-intelligence establishment. Given that Fair is pessimistic about the likelihood of the Pakistani psyche undergoing any such significant change, her prognosis for the country is gloomy at best.

Perhaps the most revelatory essay in this report is Matthew Nelson’s essay, which explores the relationship among three intriguing domains of informal influence that are emerging in Pakistani society, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas. He defines these three domains as the “petty bourgeoisie” (i.e., rising middle classes in competition with the country’s traditional stronghold of large landowners), “petty ulema” (i.e., freelancing and more informal providers of religion in competition with the country’s old-school religious leaders), and “petty parliamentarians” (i.e., local-level political and community leaders in competition with the traditionally powerful statesmen that molded the country’s legal landscape). Using “petty” to describe the junior status of these emerging actors, as well as their more informal (and at times illegal) practices, Nelson offers an illuminating perspective on how competition for resources and “legal impunity” will help define the emerging political landscape in Pakistan. How these groups interact with each other and the state adds yet another layer of complexity to the challenge of understanding Pakistan. Yet it is precisely these types of nuances highlighted by Nelson that are necessary to better understand the country.

## *Phase Two*

The second phase of the project explored Pakistan’s complex relations with its “near abroad” and how issues of stability within Pakistan will affect its relations with countries in the region, assessed the impact on the stability of Asia and the greater Middle East, and explored the implications for security interests in Asia. In addition to country-specific essays exploring Pakistan’s relations with India, China, Iran, and Afghanistan, this phase of the project also examined Pakistan in the context of broader geostrategic threats, such as nuclear and WMD proliferation and global jihadism. Yet although focusing on the geopolitical implications of Pakistan’s engagement in the region, each essay made some reference to the role of internal dynamics in shaping the country’s geopolitical behavior, thereby lending credence to the project’s view that there is a symbiotic link between Pakistan’s domestic and foreign policy, which any strategy needs to take into consideration.

Perhaps it comes as no surprise that the one internal aspect looming over much of Pakistan’s external behavior is the India factor. As alluded to earlier, the national ideology of Pakistan is existentially rooted in defining India as its quintessential archrival and a threat to national security. As such, Pakistan’s foreign policy behavior—as dominated and dictated by the country’s military-intelligence establishment—has been preoccupied with feeding this ideology and the concomitant perception that India must be contained and repelled in its regional or great-power ambitions. This aspect of Pakistan’s behavior is an important theme in Vanda Felbab-Brown’s essay on Pakistan’s relations with Afghanistan. Significantly, Felbab-Brown argues that while an unstable Afghanistan would inevitably threaten Pakistan’s own security, if

the alternative is a stable Afghanistan with strong ties to India, Islamabad may perversely prefer the former. The essay contends that unless there is a significant shift in the lens through which Pakistan's military-intelligence establishment views India, the country will continue to support its militant proxies in Afghanistan, rendering the prospects for future stability rather dim.

Aryaman Bhatnagar and C. Raja Mohan's essay on India-Pakistan relations reinforces this finding. However, while the authors express frustration at the lack of forward momentum between Pakistan and India on promising trade and economic ties—held hostage to the politics of security relations—the essay does tacitly consider the possibility that internal challenges could compel a positive change in the Pakistan Army's India policy. Thus far, however, there have been no visible signs of such change. In a similar vein, Dipankar Banerjee's essay on nuclear proliferation points to the central place of India in Pakistan's nuclear doctrine and raises concerns about the security of Pakistan's nuclear stockpile should the country descend into instability.

China and Iran emerge as interesting prospects for bringing about a change in Pakistan's mindset on India, according to authors Jayadeva Ranade and Tariq Karim, in their respective essays. China, in particular, as a long-standing "all-weather" friend of Pakistan, likely presents the strongest potential for eliciting a shift in Pakistani behavior. Yet although Pakistan has long proved useful to China in its own ambitions to contain India, recent concerns about Islamic militant influences from Pakistan spilling over into China's sensitive Xinjiang region, as well as China's interests in Afghanistan, may serve as the necessary impetus for Beijing to have that proverbial talk with Islamabad. While Islamic Iran and post-independence Pakistan have had contentious relations on religious ideological grounds, Tariq Karim argues in his essay that shared interests in energy and economic development, as well as common concerns over the spread and influence of ISIS, offer opportunities for diplomatic leverage potentially beneficial not just to India but to global security interests in the region.

Echoing elements of all three essays on internal dynamics (by Ahmad, Fair, and Nelson), Husain Haqqani's essay on the threat of global jihadism reinforces the implications of Pakistan's national identity—forged and rooted in an artificial construct of religion and ideology—not just for Pakistani policy but also for regional stability and global security. While the formal superstructures of the state appear to continue to lead Pakistan down a doomsday path, perhaps the informal domains of the petty bourgeoisie, petty ulema, and petty parliamentarians explicated in Nelson's essay provide opportunities of change for the better. The latter, in particular, may have significant implications for the former, particularly from a policy perspective.

If indeed there are trends within Pakistan's informal domains that indicate possibilities for ideational change, particularly in attitudes toward Pakistan's neighbors and the country's broader role in the region, it could be argued that any potential benefits of such trends are negated by continued support for the state's formal superstructures. The Pakistani state—and thus by default the Pakistan military-intelligence establishment—has received billions of dollars in U.S. assistance, which some might argue has been repaid in heightened anti-Americanism and increased threat levels against the United States. While India has a history of forging strong people-to-people ties with Pakistan—through sports, civil-society engagement, media and entertainment, and even business communities—the significance of these relationships and any resulting goodwill toward India within Pakistan is undermined by the traditional anti-India stance of a powerful state superstructure. Perhaps a radical policy prescriptive moving forward might be to withhold—rather than continue—support for a state superstructure that evidently has proved detrimental

to both U.S. and regional interests and let the informal elements within Pakistan evolve as they will. While this may prove a risky proposition and indeed result in the very instability that both the United States and regional powers fear, it may be the better alternative in the long run to maintaining an increasingly unpalatable status quo whereby Pakistan continues to be a financial drain on strained U.S. resources, a wrench in the aspirations of a rising India, and an incubator of extremism threatening global security.

### *Workshop Discussions*

Both phases of the project were informed by workshop discussions in New Delhi, held in August 2014, which served to effectively reinforce the project's emphasis on linking Pakistan's internal dynamics to its external behavior. While day one of the workshop offered an overview of the first phase findings on Pakistan's internal dynamics, the second day was focused primarily on the regional security environment. However, it is noteworthy that even when discussions focused on issues at the broad geopolitical level—such as bilateral relations, nuclear proliferation, or global terrorism—Pakistan's internal dynamics still filtered into the discussion. Not surprisingly, recurring themes were the civil-military relationship within Pakistan, the overwhelming influence that Pakistan's military-intelligence establishment wields in just about every aspect of the country's domestic and foreign policy, and the implications thereof for any meaningful transition in Pakistan toward policies that promote regional peace and stability.

As argued earlier, India has borne the brunt of Pakistan's dichotomous political culture. India's frustrations with its neighbor were certainly reflected in the at times acrimonious tone of discussions during the two-day event in New Delhi. Perhaps not surprisingly given the upsurge in cross-border incursions over the LoC experienced by India in the months preceding the workshop, the outlook of participants was generally pessimistic.

At the same time, the U.S.-India relationship has experienced its own share of Cold War-induced ambivalence and mistrust, particularly on the part of India. Perhaps the most significant takeaway on this front for U.S. policymakers is that while India, as a stable democracy, may share the same overall objectives vis-à-vis Pakistan as the United States and is willing to work with Washington on ensuring regional stability, it would prefer such efforts to be facilitated through quiet, indirect "back-channel" engagement rather than through an overt U.S.-India partnership or alliance. The historical ideal of nonalignment is one that continues to resonate within many corridors of the Indian policy community, and it would be to the United States' detriment to ignore that prevailing aspect of the Indian psyche in dealings with New Delhi, whether on Pakistan or other issues of mutual regional interest.

Iran and China also offer intriguing possibilities for "managing" Pakistan, as argued by the essays in this report. However, the entrenched trust deficit between these countries and the United States, as well as the competitive nature of the U.S.-China relationship, may preclude any realistic chance of cooperating to tackle the challenges related to Pakistan.

A key area of potentially fruitful cooperation is of course Afghanistan. Not surprisingly, Pakistan's status as a possible source of further instability was a recurring theme during the New Delhi workshop discussions. Concerns among participants that Pakistan might intensify its activities in Afghanistan in a continuance of its proxy war against India were, however, tempered by a discussion of potential cooperative engagement by India and its neighbors—including Pakistan, if willing—to contribute to stabilization efforts. At the same time, it is important to

note in this context that for any U.S.-India cooperation on Afghanistan to be meaningful, U.S. policymakers would do well to pay heed to Indian sensitivities about the influence of the United States' relations with Pakistan on U.S. views of Indian engagement in Afghanistan. Much of the tension during workshop discussion sessions emerged from this perceived grievance, not just in the context of Afghanistan but also importantly in the context of addressing larger challenges related to Pakistan.

As reflected in the essays collected in this report, the workshop discussions thus served to highlight the importance of viewing these challenges both at the macro-level of Pakistan's geopolitical environment and at the micro-level of the various institutions, relationships, and stakeholders that are shaping the environment within the country. The report finds that the latter have an indelible impact on Pakistan's behavior externally in the region.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize and express appreciation to the members of the project team whose work appears in this report. It has been a true pleasure to work with each of them, and the project has benefited immensely from their expert contributions. I would also like to acknowledge the Observer Research Foundation, our partner in India, whose collaboration with NBR has been invaluable. I would further like to recognize and thank the NBR staff, fellows, and editors whose efforts contributed to the success of this initiative. Finally, I would like to thank the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation for supporting this initiative.

# Mapping Pakistan's Political Superstructure

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This essay examines both the pivotal institutional structures of the Pakistani state and the current dynamics of national political processes, with a view to evaluate the country's capabilities to address internal and external security issues.

### **MAIN ARGUMENT**

Notwithstanding the long history of political crises and religious, sectarian, and ethnic conflicts, Pakistan has more than muddled through numerous crises and upheavals despite structural weaknesses of state and governmental institutions. This is largely thanks to the military and the civil bureaucracy. Both during military dictatorships and civilian governments, these two "superstructures" of the state have ensured that borders are secure, insurgencies do not threaten the state's very existence, nuclear assets are safe and secure, law and order is maintained—howsoever inadequately—and the day-to-day business of the government continues to be performed. The pivotal institutions of the state—the parliament, civil bureaucracy, the military, paramilitary outfits, intelligence agencies, the judiciary, police, and provincial and local governments—do face multiple challenges and inadequacies in terms of institutional capacity, resources, sophistication, and operating procedures. Yet despite the enormity and multiplicity of threats to internal security, they have been able to steer through crises and avert a major catastrophic situation that threatens Pakistan's integrity and legitimacy.

### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- All relevant stakeholders—both domestic and international—that are concerned about the threats to the peace and stability of Pakistan should support new policy reforms (legal, institutional, socioeconomic, and educational), while also working to address the socioeconomic, political, and religious and ideological conditions that give rise to extremism and militancy.
- The foremost task to ensure Pakistan's internal security and to deal with militancy is to enhance the capacity of the state's institutional structures—especially the civil bureaucracy, the judiciary, and law-enforcement agencies—through organizational reforms and technical support.
- The convergence of two recent developments—massive military operations against the militants in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and the consensus among major political parties and civil society activists that extremism and militancy are the most imminent threats to Pakistan's security—calls for a deeper commitment by the international community to strengthen these trends through a package of incentives.

**F**ew countries in the developing world have faced as many internal and external crises and upheavals as has Pakistan since its inception in 1947: four military coups resulting in 36 years under military dictatorship in its 68-year history as an independent state; dismemberment of the state resulting in the secession of East Pakistan in 1971; four wars with India with dire consequences for Pakistan's security, economy, and polity; three constitutions that were either annulled or amended in accordance with the whims of the military rulers; frequent dismissals of elected governments; insurgencies of various intensities in former East Pakistan, Baluchistan, rural Sindh, and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA); and more than 30 years of continuous involvement in the affairs of Afghanistan, which resulted in the inflow of more than five million Afghan refugees,<sup>1</sup> introduction of drugs and weapons throughout the country, and the unprecedented upsurge of Islamic extremism, militancy, terrorism, and suicide bombing.

Pakistan has muddled through all these crises and upheavals thanks to the two structurally solid and self-consciously cohesive institutions: the military and the civil bureaucracy. Over the course of both military dictatorships and civilian governments, these two superstructures of the state ensured that borders remained secure, insurgencies did not threaten the very existence of the state, nuclear assets were safe and secure, law and order was maintained—howsoever inadequately—day-to-day government business was done, and educational institutions and hospitals kept functioning. This is, indeed, not a small achievement given Pakistan's tumultuous history.

It is often tempting to reduce the current condition of political and institutional structures in a nation like Pakistan to a particular event or series of events within a specific time frame. The reality, however, is that beneath the surface is a network of branches so vast and intertwined that to take any one patch in isolation not only would be misleading but also would not do justice to the complexity and richness of the country's institutions. Nonetheless, in attempting to map the causes of current issues affecting the country, it is appropriate to examine more recent events to ascertain their effects on contemporary governance and politics.

With this in mind, this essay will focus on events surrounding the 2008 elections onward. These elections marked a turning point in Pakistan's historical trajectory, with power finally being handed over to a civilian government following a decade under the dictatorship of General Pervez Musharraf. Galvanized by the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) came into power—its fourth stint since 1972. When the PPP took charge of the government in early 2008, the state was facing enormous political and security challenges. Terrorist attacks were becoming much more frequent than in previous years. Increasingly, not only security personnel and government establishments but also civilians were becoming targets of sectarian militant groups like Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ). The judiciary and the executive were at loggerheads, thus paralyzing the state machinery, and parliamentary democracy as envisaged by the 1973 constitution was all but subverted by the unbalanced distribution of power between the president and the elected legislature that had resulted from decades of military rule. The assassination of Bhutto in December 2007 further exposed the vulnerability of the political system in the face of terrorism and militancy and created a most inhospitable environment for economic investments.

Just as the starting point selected for this analysis is the election period of 2008, the end point will be the aftermath of Pakistan's national elections in 2013 that brought Muhammad Nawaz Sharif into power for the third time as head of the Pakistan Muslim League–Nawaz (PML-N).

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<sup>1</sup> Kamal Sadiq, *Paper Citizens: How Illegal Immigrants Acquire Citizenship in Developing Countries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Much has changed between and after these two elections, however. The political environment is much more competitive with the swift rise in popular support for Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), which received the second-highest number of popular votes and presently leads the governing coalition in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Assembly. The introduction of this new force in Pakistani politics has dented the long-standing two-party dominance of the PPP and PML-N. The new political dispensation is simultaneously more complex, competitive, and interdependent—necessitating collaboration for effective governance.

The transition from military rule to the two civilian governments that came into power in 2008 and 2013 may not have caused any qualitative shift in the balance of power between the military establishment and the civilian governments, but it has, nevertheless, given rise to certain political developments that mitigate against a pessimistic scenario for the future of Pakistan's political stability. These developments include:

- The declining popular support for religiously based political parties
- The continuing political and religious-ideological marginalization of extremist and militant groups
- The political mobilization by the PTI of the urban-based educated middle class and especially its younger generation, both men and women, thus indicating a powerful shift from a rhetoric of Islam to the language of rights, social justice, and public good
- The consensus among all the regional political elite and between the two major political parties (the PPP and PML-N) that no military intervention will be acceptable in the political process and no political change will be acceptable that is not provided in the 1973 constitution<sup>2</sup>

Given this context, this essay examines the pivotal institutional structures of the Pakistani state—their organization, orientations, and capacities—from the point of view of their ability to meet the security challenges that Pakistan faces today. The first section describes the changes in center-provincial relations to set the stage for a more critical examination of such superstructures as the parliament, local government institutions, and the judiciary in the second section. The essay then examines the struggle between the civilian bureaucracy and police, paramilitary outfits, and the military and draws policy implications for relevant stakeholders in both Pakistan and the international community.

## Reconfiguring Center-Provincial Relations

After taking over power in 2008, the PPP-led coalition government focused on the improvement of interprovincial relationships and empowerment of parliament. In its initial phase, the government focused on the politics of consensus, initiating important constitutional changes with a view to empower parliament over all other institutions of the state and to reduce the trust deficit among the administrative units of Pakistan as well as between the provinces and the center.

The first step toward empowerment of provinces was the seventh National Finance Commission Award, approved by all four provinces unanimously and effective from July 1, 2010, to June 30, 2015. The award increased the share of taxes collected by the central government allocated to the

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<sup>2</sup> For a summary by the author of the PPP, PML-N, and other relevant Pakistani political parties, see the National Bureau of Asian Research website, <http://nbr.org/research/activity.aspx?id=653>.

provinces from 47.5% to 56.0% in 2010–11 and 57.5% in the remaining years. Some additional emergency relief funds were also allocated to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan.<sup>3</sup>

The most important reconfiguration in center-provincial relations, however, came through the 18th Amendment. The amendment abolished the “concurrent list” in the constitution, and as a result, over 40 central government ministries and their subordinate departments—including education, health, and food and agriculture—were transferred to the provinces in 2011. Other important changes that redefined the structural relations between the center and provinces included a new revenue-sharing formula, a long-standing source of contention in the federation. Additionally, the Council of Common Interests, which was a joint forum composed of the center and provinces, was given a significant role regarding the allocation of resources to the provinces. The 18th Amendment also specified the future dimension of the National Finance Commission, which sets the distribution of national revenues between the center and provinces.

While these efforts seemed to consolidate the autonomy of the provinces, suspicions over the entire constitutional development process were raised when the PPP government created seven new ministries in 2011. These seven ministries were responsible for the fields of environment, health, agriculture, culture, education, and minorities’ affairs—subjects that were supposed to be handled by the provinces under the 18th Amendment.<sup>4</sup> However, the federal government failed to “anticipate the provincial governments’ lack of will and capacity” to undertake their new responsibilities.<sup>5</sup> In some cases, the provincial governments themselves requested the federal government to keep managing some programs for several more years. Simply put, the provincial economies could not afford the added responsibilities. Given Pakistan’s low tax-to-GDP ratio (approximately 9%) and the fact that 90% of the revenue is collected by the federal government, it is extremely difficult for the provinces to undertake the functions previously performed by the center without generating more revenue or receiving a larger share from the federation.<sup>6</sup>

An interesting thing to note here is that despite the devolution of responsibilities, no serious effort was made by the federal government to reduce the expense of its huge bureaucracy. Although seventeen ministries were abolished, the federal government’s current expenditure (excluding defense) rose from 1.819 trillion rupees (\$17.865 billion) in 2011–12 to 2.066 trillion rupees (\$20.284 billion) in 2012–13 at constant prices.<sup>7</sup> Federal bureaucrats whose ministries were transferred to provinces readjusted themselves in either newly created positions within the Federal Secretariat or, still better, in handsomely paid positions in public sector autonomous agencies and corporations. One has also yet to see the benefits of the devolution of powers to the provinces in terms of the efficiency of delivery of services.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> However, funds “allocated” does not necessarily mean funds “given” or spent. In 2012, for example, the federal government allocated 40 billion rupees to Baluchistan under the Public Sector Development Program, but only 9 billion rupees were released. See Stephen Cohen, “The Future of Pakistan,” Brookings Institution, January 2011, [http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2010/9/bellagio%20conference%20papers/01\\_pakistan\\_cohen.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2010/9/bellagio%20conference%20papers/01_pakistan_cohen.pdf); and Abdul Malik, “The Federal Petroleum Ministry Should Have Been Abolished after the Passage of the 18th Amendment,” *Herald* (Pakistan), July 18, 2013, <http://herald.dawn.com/category/current-issue/page/13>.

<sup>4</sup> The federal government justified this action by saying that international donors pressured it to keep the education and health ministries under its domain because they were facing security and communication issues with the governments at the provincial level. See Umer Farooq and Muhammad Badar Alam, “Centre of Controversy,” *Herald* (Pakistan), July 19, 2013, <http://herald.dawn.com/news/1152846>.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Kugelman, “Is There Any Hope for the 18th Amendment?” *Dawn*, December 6, 2012, <http://www.dawn.com/news/769362/is-there-any-hope-for-the-18th-amendment-2012-12-06>.

<sup>6</sup> Yousuf Nazar, “Challenges Post the 18th Amendment,” *Dawn*, March 28, 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Finance Division (Pakistan), “Federal Budget 2012–13: Budget in Brief,” June 2012, [http://www.finance.gov.pk/budget/Budget\\_in\\_Brief\\_2012\\_13.pdf](http://www.finance.gov.pk/budget/Budget_in_Brief_2012_13.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

Whatever the reconfiguration of center-provincial relations envisaged in the 18th Amendment, the fundamental structural and jurisdictional ambiguities remain unresolved, especially as they relate to internal security. In the absence of any coherent policy to combat terrorism and to deal with the jihadi and militant groups, the central government failed to provide any guidelines to the provinces on how to tackle the problem of growing extremism and militancy. As a result, each province was left to devise its own strategy based primarily on its own limited intelligence and operational resources.

## An Examination of Crucial Superstructures

### *Parliament*

A major achievement of the 18th Amendment was to restore the parliamentary character of the 1973 constitution. The amendment transferred almost all executive powers from the president to the prime minister: the prime minister was no longer bound to consult, but just to inform, the president on policy matters; presidential power to dismiss the elected parliament and the government was abolished; and all major federal appointments were to be made by the prime minister or by the president with the consent of the prime minister. As a result, the country returned from a semi-presidential system to a parliamentary one. Nevertheless, under President Asif Ali Zardari, who was the center of political power as co-chairman of the PPP, neither the prime minister nor the parliament were able to exercise any power independent of the presidency. The situation drastically changed, however, with the PML-N government elected in May 2013. Today, President Mamnoon Hussain acts as a typical ceremonial head of state in a parliamentary system of government, while Prime Minister Sharif exercises all powers of the federation.

In Pakistan, elected parliaments have rarely acted as independent lawmaking institutions and have almost always followed the lead of the executive branch headed by the prime minister. Even in its most important function of approving the annual budget, the parliament's performance has been lackluster. Members of parliament are often more interested in their own perks and privileges, distribution of spoils, and allocation of development funds for their constituencies. There are 32 standing committees of the National Assembly and 28 standing committees of the Senate dealing with the subjects under the purview of the federal government, but in many cases they play little to no role in the legislative process. Federal ministers rarely attend the meetings of these standing committees, and the standing committees lack professional staff to provide the members with research assistance and policy inputs.

Having said that, the National Assembly over the past few years has been quite vocal in representing the public sentiments on such issues as deteriorating law and order, especially in Karachi; the insurgencies in FATA and Baluchistan; and the new national security policy. Thus, the parliament may not be that effective in formulating, directing, and monitoring public policies, but it certainly provides an important forum for airing the views and frustrations of the general public on issues of national importance.

### *Local Government Institutions*

Despite their long history, local government institutions in Pakistan have not played an effective role in the governance process. Political parties have always been ambivalent about the idea of local elections, fearing infighting within their ranks over the distribution of party tickets to candidates at

the local level. Provincial governments, jealous of the few powers available to them courtesy of the central government, are naturally reluctant to delegate administrative and financial powers to local government institutions in cities and rural areas.<sup>9</sup> Provincial government bureaucrats in district administration, revenue, police, health, and education hate the very idea of working under the elected representatives of the people in the metropolitan corporations, municipal committees, district boards, and union councils. The federal government, meanwhile, prefers to deal with the provincial government bureaucracy—headed mostly by officials from the Central Superior Services—rather than with locally elected public representatives who cannot speak English as well as they do.<sup>10</sup>

Not surprisingly, local government institutions have flourished only during military rule in Pakistan. This was due to the strategic objective of military rulers to weaken and bypass national political parties and create a base of popular support at the local levels, independent of national politics. Thus, the elections of the local bodies during military rule have always been on a nonparty basis. During President Musharraf's rule (1999–2008), for instance, considerable administrative powers and development functions were transferred to local bodies in both urban and rural areas. The Office of Deputy Commissioner was subordinated to the elected chairman of the District Council, known as *nazim*. Obviously, political parties, provincial governments, and civil servants of the District Management Group were not happy with this arrangement, while members of the National Assembly and provincial assemblies also felt left out of the spoils system. The elected district councils, though, were quick to assert their authority and initiated development projects on their own. Notwithstanding the political motives of the Musharraf government behind the introduction of the new system, it marked the first time that the district-level bureaucracy was made accountable to local elected members.

Following Musharraf's departure in 2008, the PPP government let the previously elected local government institutions elapse at the end of their term, as anticipated, and did not hold fresh elections in any of the provinces. The provinces also showed little enthusiasm in reviving the local bodies; instead, they appointed bureaucrats who were directly accountable to them as administrators of the local government institutions. For both the federal and provincial governments, local government resources—especially highly prized urban land, contracts for the delivery of services, and appointments of hundreds of thousands of personnel in the education and health sectors—became an attractive source of corruption and political bribes.

The Supreme Court of Pakistan intervened several times in 2014–15, asking the provincial governments to hold local elections as soon as possible, but the provinces kept finding one pretext or another to postpone them.<sup>11</sup> The Sindh government repeatedly amended local law depending on the changing political relationships between the PPP and Muttahida Qaumi Movement. Finally, the Baluchistan government took the initiative to hold local government elections in early 2015, followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Punjab and Sindh governments started the first phase of their elections in late October 2015. As anticipated, candidates of the ruling parties in each province won by a landslide.

The absence of local government institutions for about a decade in Pakistan had consequences not only for the devolution of administrative and political power to the grassroots level but also

<sup>9</sup> Shahzada Irfan Ahmed, "Time for a Third Tier," *Daily Jang* (Pakistan), July 28, 2013, <http://jang.com.pk/thenews/Jul2013-weekly/nos-28-07-2013/spr.htm#2>.

<sup>10</sup> Adnan Randhawa, "Consensus Against LGs," *Express Tribune*, November 1, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Azam Khan, "Non-cooperative Provinces: In Sindh and Punjab, LG Polls Not in Sight," *Express Tribune*, December 1, 2014.

for internal security. In the absence of elected local government institutions, there was a lack of formal contact between local community leaders and police and other law-enforcement agencies. Local political leaders in union councils, municipal committees, metropolitan corporations, and district councils, with their organic links to their constituent communities, had been a major source of information about suspicious and criminal activities. These links proved to be quite useful for local police officials to apprehend criminals and keep a watchful eye on suspicious activities in the communities.<sup>12</sup>

### *The Judiciary*

Pakistan's judicial system, inherited from British rule, consists of magistrates, session judges, provincial high court judges, and the judges of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. Lower-level judicial appointments are made by the provincial governments, while judges of the provincial high courts, Islamabad High Court, and the Supreme Court are appointed by the Judicial Council and approved by the president.

The judicial system at the district level is generally seen as inefficient, hopelessly slow in the disposal of cases, excessively beholden to bureaucratic rules and procedures, and irredeemably corrupt. The judicial arteries are so heavily clogged with a huge number of litigations that both civil and criminal cases linger for decades without formal hearings or decisions. The judiciary, on the other hand, complains about the shortage of judicial officials at the lower level, blames police investigators for their incompetence in preparing criminal cases, and accuses prosecutors of a lack of professional training and an inability to collect admissible evidence against defendants. It is no wonder that an overwhelming number of cases against those apprehended for committing terrorist acts are dismissed by the judiciary either on technical grounds or because of inadequate evidence presented by the prosecutors. A U.S. State Department report claimed that Pakistan was incapable of prosecuting terror suspects, as the courts let 75% of apprehended terrorists go.<sup>13</sup> According to an official document, the courts have released 1,964 alleged terrorists from 2007, with 722 rejoining terrorist groups and 1,197 continuing anti-state activities.<sup>14</sup>

The most remarkable development with respect to the judiciary during the past seven years has been the visible and activist role of both the Supreme Court and high courts in political and administrative processes, which led to the executive-judiciary confrontation that preceded the end of the Musharraf presidency. The main issue involved the restoration of judges deposed by President Musharraf in 2007, including the chief justice of the Supreme Court, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry. Even after being democratically elected, the PPP government was reluctant as well to restore Justice Chaudhry out of fear that he might strike down the amnesty provided to President Zardari for corruption charges under the National Reconciliation Ordinance. When the deposed judges were eventually restored in March 2009 as a result of massive popular protests led by the PML-N and with behind-the-scenes pressure from the military, they were ready to pounce on the executive with a vengeance. Choudhry's Supreme Court, for example, launched an investigation into the "memogate" scandal, which involved President Zardari and Pakistan's ambassador in Washington allegedly

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<sup>12</sup> The army and paramilitary forces in Swat and Dir, for example, deployed successfully hundreds of former elected officials of local government and other notables in "peace committees" to gather information about the Taliban and other militants and to help the security agencies apprehend them.

<sup>13</sup> "Pakistani Courts Let 3 out of Every 4 Terror Suspects Go: U.S. State Department," *Express Tribune*, September 1, 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Malik Asad, "722 Suspects Rejoined Terrorist Groups after Acquittal," *Dawn*, October 19, 2013.

asking the U.S. government to intervene against the Pakistan military to prevent a potential coup following the operation against Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad. In addition, the court took dozens of *suo moto* actions against the government challenging executive authority.

The Supreme Court also acted as a check on the PPP-led coalition, issuing dozens of orders canceling senior-level administrative appointments made by the president and the prime minister by declaring them illegal, putting on hold increases in utility prices ordered by the executive departments, and admonishing cabinet officials, senior bureaucrats, and police officers for their failure to abide by the rules and comply with the court's instructions. The Supreme Court also made enemies among the elected members of the national and provincial legislatures by disqualifying dozens of them for holding dual nationality or submitting fake educational documents to the Election Commission.<sup>15</sup>

Before the Chaudhry court, no military officers or agencies had ever been prosecuted or called on to explain their conduct, even though the military is heavily involved in industrial, commercial, and financial enterprises. Under Chaudhry, however, officers from the Pakistan Rangers and even the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) were summoned to account for hundreds of missing persons from Baluchistan and other parts of the country who were allegedly picked up by the military intelligence agencies for interrogation on charges of terrorism. The Supreme Court took up these missing person cases as a human rights issue and was at least successful in restraining the security agencies from future illegal detentions. No doubt the court dealt with the issues involving the military with much softer hands than it did with the civilian government,<sup>16</sup> but the very fact that the ISI had to answer to the court about its interrogation activities, agreed to allow families to visit the detainees in its custody, and even produced several missing persons before the court were noteworthy developments.<sup>17</sup>

The judicial activism directed against politicians has subsided considerably since the PML-N government came into power in 2013. The two chief justices of the Supreme Court who succeeded Chaudhry have shown little inclination to engage in judicial activism compared with their predecessor. Nonetheless, the activism of the Supreme Court under Chaudhry has left a strong legacy. The spirit of activism has trickled down to the provincial high courts, where judges have started admonishing provincial executive authorities for alleged irregularities, suspending police officers for not pursuing cases against known criminals, and disqualifying members of provincial legislatures on charges of fraud. While many people appreciate these developments and believe that the judicial activism of the courts will be a check on the corrupt practices of the bureaucracy and excesses of police, many are also worried that an interventionist judiciary will end up doing more harm than good. Bureaucrats and policymakers, for example, could be deterred from making bold decisions for fear of being overturned by judges. Moreover, the federal government now has an excuse to delay appointing the heads of at least twenty different public sector enterprises, institutions, and agencies, citing fear that the appointments may not stand the scrutiny of the courts.

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<sup>15</sup> International Crisis Group, "Parliament's Role in Pakistan's Democratic Transition," Asia Report, no. 249, September 18, 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Asian Human Rights Commission, "The State of Human Rights in Pakistan in 2012," <http://www.humanrights.asia/resources/hrreport/2012/ahrc-spr-008-2012.pdf/view>.

<sup>17</sup> Muhammad Shayan Lakdawalla, "Not Missing, Says the Supreme Court," *Dawn*, February 2012.

## Civil-Military Relations: The Struggle Continues

Along with the judiciary, the PPP government (2008–13) had to contend with the military, which is arguably Pakistan's most powerful institution. The military has ruled the country directly for more than three decades of its 68-year history as an independent nation and has been the most influential actor in shaping Pakistan's internal security mechanism and formulating its defense and foreign policy.

Although Pakistan ranks only 172nd in GDP per capita (purchasing power parity) at \$4,700 and ranks 147th on the Human Development Index, it ranks 35th in the world in defense spending.<sup>18</sup> Defense expenditures consume a large percentage of GDP, having averaged 4.5% from 1995 to 2009.<sup>19</sup> In the budget year 2013–14, the allocation for the defense sector was around 1.014 trillion rupees (\$10 billion), or approximately 30% of the total budgeted expenditure. This figure includes military pensions but excludes 70 billion rupees (\$690 million) in coalition support funds and other security-related spending that falls under “civilian armed forces,” such as the rangers.<sup>20</sup>

In the year 2014–15, budgetary allocation for the defense sector was 1.113 trillion rupees (\$11 billion), which was approximately 28% of the total budgeted expenditure. The figures exclude 163.4 billion rupees (\$1.618 billion) allocated for military pensions from the civilian budget, 165.0 billion rupees (\$1.625 billion) from contingent liability, and 85.0 billion rupees (\$837 million) from the coalition support fund.<sup>21</sup>

The military budget is presented before the parliament in the form of overall allocations for the army, air force, and navy, but no additional details are provided nor are allocations discussed. The military justifies the allocation of a huge portion of the annual budget for defense spending on the basis of long-standing conflicts and an arms race with India, insurgencies in FATA and Baluchistan, Pakistan's geostrategic position in the Afghan war, the military's increasing role in internal security in major cities, and more frequent incidents of terrorism. In addition to the budgetary allocations, the military and military-sponsored organizations, institutions, and enterprises are able to mobilize enormous resources by running state-of-the-art medical facilities, schools, colleges and universities, industrial and commercial corporations, banks, engineering and construction companies, and nationwide real-estate development schemes.<sup>22</sup>

Given the history of tension-ridden relations between PPP governments and the military during the Zulfikar Ali Bhutto government (1972–77) as well as the two governments of Benazir Bhutto in the late 1980s and mid-1990s, one could not expect much cooperation between these two former adversaries upon the election of Zardari as president in 2008. Tensions began to surface very early in the PPP government's tenure with a move to place the powerful ISI under the direct control of the Ministry of Interior so as to increase its accountability to the civilian government—a step that was swiftly reversed under the pressure of the military.<sup>23</sup> Zardari also had to reverse his decision

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<sup>18</sup> Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), *The World Factbook* (Washington, D.C.: CIA, 2015), <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2004rank.html>; and *Human Development Report* (New York: UN Development Programme, 2015).

<sup>19</sup> Muhammad Zafar Anwar, Zain Rafique, and Salman Azam Joya, “Defense Spending-Economic Growth Nexus: A Case Study of Pakistan,” *Pakistan Economic & Social Review* 50, no. 2 (2012): 163–82.

<sup>20</sup> Kamran Yousaf, “Defence Budget Hiked by 15 Per Cent,” *Express Tribune*, June 13, 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Ismail Sheikh and Kamran Yousaf, “Budget 2014: Govt Announces 700bn Defense Budget,” *Express Tribune*, June 3, 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Ayesha Siddiqa, *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 2.

<sup>23</sup> Jon Lunn and Gavin Thompson, “Pakistan in 2013,” House of Commons Library, Research Paper, no. 12/76, December 6, 2012.

to abolish the National Security Council, which was established during the Musharraf regime to empower the military in the decision-making process.

The 2008 terrorist attack in Mumbai, which led the Indian government to accuse the ISI of masterminding the attack through surrogates such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), was another event that exacerbated tensions between the military and the civilian government. In the aftermath of the attack, Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani promptly announced—without consulting the military—that he was sending the director-general of the ISI to India to clear Pakistan's position. The army chief was equally quick to announce that he would not allow his spy chief to be grilled and humiliated by the Indians. However, perhaps the climax of tensions between the civilian government and the military was the infamous memogate scandal discussed in the previous section.

Although the military's relations with the PPP-led government remained complex and uneasy throughout its five years, the military kept itself limited to displaying its displeasure through not-so-subtle signals. A coup was not a viable option for three main reasons: First, the military could not present acceptable alternatives to the civilian government. Second, the army's reputation was seriously damaged as a result of some controversial decisions made by the Musharraf regime, such as giving Washington blanket support for the war on terrorism, allowing the United States to operate drones in and from Pakistan, showing flexibility to India on the Kashmir issue, and carrying out military operations in several areas, including Baluchistan and FATA.<sup>24</sup> Third, all major political parties made it publicly known that, despite their differences with the policies of the PPP government, they would not accept any military intervention in the political process.

Civil-military relations started on an apparently easy footing at the start of the third Nawaz Sharif administration in 2013. The consensus view of political analysts was that civil-military relations would be more cordial than they were during his earlier stints in power in the 1990s. Things moved rather smoothly until the PML-N government entered into indirect peace talks with the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). There is a general perception, despite claims to the contrary by the Sharif government, that the army was not fully invested in the peace talks with the Taliban. Earlier, the Taliban had undertaken two major operations against the security forces in the FATA area, killing dozens of troops. Then came a video issued by a faction of the Taliban showing the slaughter of more than a dozen Frontier Constabulary personnel, who had been kidnapped by the Taliban a year earlier. The military, in consultation with the civilian government, retaliated with massive aerial bombings of the Taliban training camps and ammunition depots that killed dozens of insurgents. Clear signals were given by the military that it was preparing a major operation in North Waziristan with the aim of dismantling the Taliban's training camps and hideouts, but the prime minister's office unexpectedly announced that the government had appointed a "nonofficial" committee to enter into peace talks with the TTP. There were reports that this decision did not have the blessings of the armed forces.<sup>25</sup>

Nonetheless, the public face of civil-military relations continued to be projected as cordial in the media until the beginning of 2014. At the same time, however, there were reports that the military was reluctant to enter into negotiations with the Taliban.<sup>26</sup> A related issue creating tensions in civil-military relations came to the fore when the Ministry of Interior decided to release

<sup>24</sup> For further analysis of these three reasons, see C. Christine Fair, "The Pakistani Military's New Coup Playbook," *Foreign Affairs*, March 14, 2013, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/139054/c-christine-fair/the-pakistani-militarys-new-coup-playbook>.

<sup>25</sup> Saeed Shah, "Pakistan Weighs Strike Against Taliban over Airport Attack," *Wall Street Journal*, June 9, 2014, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/gunmen-attack-karachi-airport-1402301470>.

<sup>26</sup> Owen Bennett-Jones, "Pakistan Army Eyes Taliban Talks with Unease," BBC, April 15, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-27133865>.

several TTP prisoners as a goodwill gesture to help negotiations with the Taliban succeed. Media reports indicated that the military had not been consulted and was unhappy with the civilian government's decision to release prisoners without a reciprocal move by the Taliban.

The short-lived honeymoon between the Sharif government and the military establishment was marred by yet another development in 2014: the trial of General Musharraf by a special bench of the Supreme Court on charges of treason for declaring an emergency in violation of the constitution in 2007. The army establishment obviously did not like the way its former chief was being treated by government prosecutors, PML-N politicians, the media, and the court. What was seen as most provocative—and unacceptable—by the military, however, was what the generals interpreted as attempts to malign and humiliate the army by PML-N politicians through attacks on Musharraf. Although the Sharif government was quick to explain that criticism of Musharraf's dictatorship and use of unconstitutional measures during his reign in power should not be taken as an assault on the institution of the military, the seeds of discord had already been sown.

The military was also unhappy about the registration of criminal cases against serving military personnel in missing persons cases. It objected that the federal and provincial governments took a rather neutral stance and did not show any enthusiasm to defend the armed forces.<sup>27</sup> In response to the growing number of cases before the superior courts and the judges' harsh criticism of the role of the ISI in missing persons cases, the government introduced the Protection of Pakistan Bill of 2014 in the parliament, giving more powers and indemnity to security forces in counterinsurgency operations. Later, in early 2015, the PML-N government, with the consent of all political parties, passed a constitutional amendment to establish military courts to try all terrorism cases.

As of late 2015, it appears that the die has been cast: the military establishment has made it known to the civilian government that it will not be taken for a ride by politicians. At the same time, the PML-N, after testing the waters with a few deliberate provocations, seems to have learned the lesson of the PPP government: know your limits. The other consideration, as reportedly articulated by the minister of interior, has been that the growing tensions between the army and the civilian government will not auger well for the smooth and effective implementation of the new security policy, approved by the Sharif government, that requires close collaboration between the military-dominated intelligence agencies and armed forces and civilian intelligence and police.<sup>28</sup>

What was of special concern for political analysts was the real danger of discord on how to deal with Taliban insurgents. For much of the early part of the Sharif administration, the two appeared at odds, with the military launching strikes against TTP targets in May 2014 while preparing for a major ground offensive. The militants' daring attack on the Karachi airport in early June 2014 was more than enough justification for the military to go for the kill now that the public largely supported such an operation. The attack on the Karachi airport followed the TTP's assault on the Army Public School in Peshawar in December 2013, killing 150 students. In the wake of the unprecedented national outrage against this brutal act of the Taliban, the military was quick to take complete charge of all internal security matters, putting pressure on the civilian government to come up with a comprehensive national action plan for combating extremism, militancy, and terrorism and to amend the constitution to establish military courts for speedy trials and swift punishment of terrorists. Formulated with the consent of all political

<sup>27</sup> "Mercury Rising in Civil-Military Relations," Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Training, May 6, 2014, <http://www.pildat.org/eventsdel.asp?detid=700>.

<sup>28</sup> Qamar Zaman, "No Differences: No Prisoner Release without Army Consent," *Express Tribune*, April 14, 2014.

parties, the resulting plan gives extensive powers to the armed forces in combating terrorism. Since the launching of Operation Zarb-e-Azb in FATA in June 2014, the largest operation against the TTP and its allies to date, the military has asserted its complete domination in national security matters. For all practical purposes, it is once again at the helm of affairs in matters of national security, both internal and external.

At the same time, however, the military seems to be doing its part much more effectively and with clear results. Operations Zarb-e-Azb and Khyber-1 in the northern areas and the rangers' operations in Karachi have shown significant results: most FATA agencies have now been cleared of Taliban hideouts, ammunition dumps, and training camps, and 2,763 Taliban militants had been killed as of June 2015, in addition to 218 terrorists killed in cities. At the same time, the military has also carried out more than 9,000 intelligence-led counterterrorism operations throughout the country to forestall the blowback of its operations in the north. As of June 2015, more than 350 soldiers and officers had been killed. According to the director-general of Inter-Services Public Relations, 837 militant hideouts were destroyed and 253 tons of explosives recovered during the operation. In addition, the forces recovered 18,087 weapons from militant hideouts in North Waziristan alone.<sup>29</sup> Although major cities and towns in FATA have been cleared of the presence of TTP militants, it is obvious that a long-term military presence in FATA will be necessary.

Along with launching Operation Zarb-e-Azb in FATA, the Pakistan Rangers began a major cleanup operation in Karachi to combat both terrorism and common criminals affiliated with terrorism. According to a report issued by the rangers in July 2015, 5,795 operations had been conducted in Karachi since the start of the operation, during which rangers arrested 10,353 suspects and seized 7,312 weapons and 348,978 rounds of ammunition. The paramilitary force also apprehended 826 terrorists and 925 target killers, along with extortionists who were also linked with militant organizations. The rangers further claimed the killing of 364 terrorists and suspected criminals in 224 encounters. The report added that the incidents of crimes such as kidnapping for ransom, target killings, and extortion had been reduced significantly in Karachi since the operation was initiated.<sup>30</sup>

While a great deal of optimism exists concerning the role of newly mobilized civil society in Pakistan, there is also some merit to the claim that civil-military relations have entered a new phase. Since the democratic civilian elections of 2008, the military high command has refused to intervene directly into politics and once again install a military regime. This does not merely represent a tactical shift in the mentality of Pakistan Army General Headquarters. Rather, it denotes a strategic recalibration of the requirements of the national interest of the Pakistani state. Although the Pakistan Army remains deeply concerned about the shenanigans of various civilian political dispensations that come and go, it has most likely come to the realization that the business of domestic political life is best managed by civilian politicians and administrators so that the military can maintain its focus on the various security threats the nation faces, both internally and externally. Whether ensuring that its interests in Afghanistan are maintained effectively, that New Delhi is kept at bay and knows its limits, or that internal security threats emanating from domestic jihadist militancy are contained and controlled, the military high command is now cognizant of

<sup>29</sup> "A Year on, 2,763 Militants Have Been Killed in Operation Zarb-e-Azb," *Express Tribune*, June 13, 2015.

<sup>30</sup> Monthly comparisons showed that 73 incidents of target killing were reported in December 2013, which declined to fewer than 10 in June 2015. The report also claimed that whereas 174 cases of kidnapping for ransom were reported in the city in 2013, this figure dropped to 115 in 2014 and only 13 cases had been reported by July 2015. Similarly, 1,524 cases of extortion were reported in 2013, 899 cases in 2014, and 249 by July 2015. See Faraz Khan, "Performance Review: Rangers Claim Karachi Operation Helped Curb Crime," *Express Tribune*, July 8, 2015.

new priorities that must inform its strategic rethinking. While the Pakistan Army may continue to use soft power to put pressure on Islamabad when it feels that politicians and administrators either threaten fundamental interests of the state or have been ineffective in dealing with particular threats, it is highly unlikely that the army will once again dislodge a civilian government to restore itself back into the front seat. In this sense, though it may seem counterintuitive, the military establishment has been tacitly supportive of civil society's attempt to monitor and increase the accountability, transparency, and efficiency of politicians and administrative arms of the state.

The fact that the military often absolves itself of scrutiny does not change the fact that it has been inclined to facilitate a more robust political culture where politics at its most elementary level of "getting things done" is executed with relative efficacy. Despite its own corruption and lack of transparency, there is a degree of order and stability that the military high command feels that it must preserve—and protect from politicians. There is a broad consensus among military leaders that certain grave security threats do exist in society that require a level of determination, discipline, training, resources, and efficiency to tackle that only the military can deliver. The fact that the military high command has publicly expressed its dissatisfaction with the lack of "good governance" on the part of the civilian government sends a powerful signal to the Sharif government to put its house in order.<sup>31</sup> Given this political dynamic, the most likely forthcoming scenario is that some kind of agreement between the prime minister and General Raheel Sharif will be reached, one that ensures the supremacy of the military over national security, defense, and foreign policies with a grudging acquiescence of the civilian government. So the story of civil-military relations ends where it began, and, as they say, the struggle continues.

## Bureaucracy: Is the Steel Frame Cracking?

The bureaucracy in Pakistan is the second most important guardian of the state. As an heir to the British colonial administration, the elite cadres of Pakistan's civil service (district management, police, foreign service, finance, excise and taxation, and customs groups) have exercised enormous power in decision-making at both the federal and provincial levels, especially given the pattern of weak and unstable civil governments followed by military rulers who lacked skills in managing political affairs.<sup>32</sup> The unremitting infighting among politicians of all persuasions, as well as their lack of interest in substantive public policy issues, has further facilitated the ascendancy of the elite civil services to a position of inordinate power.

At the staff level, senior bureaucrats advise elected cabinet ministers on new policies in their respective areas, prepare budgets, write new tax laws, manage public finance, negotiate loans with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and formulate rules, regulations, and procedures for implementation of policies and management of governmental affairs. At the field level, they act as agents of federal and provincial governments, implement public policies and development projects, collect taxes, maintain law and order, administer health and educational institutions, and act as the eyes and ears of the state. In order to stave off any effort by the military regimes to introduce administrative reforms, the top echelons of the civil service came up with

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<sup>31</sup> "Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Press Release after the Corps Commanders Meeting in Rawalpindi," *Dawn*, November 11, 2015.

<sup>32</sup> Mumtaz Ahmad, *Bureaucracy and Political Development in Pakistan* (Karachi: National Institute of Public Administration, 1974).

the novel idea to reserve quotas for prized police and district administration positions for serving military officers, thus investing the military in the preservation of the status quo.

The generalist bureaucracy managed the affairs of the state rather efficiently as long as its main functions were limited to the collection of revenue and maintenance of law and order—two typical functions of bureaucracy during the colonial period—and as long as it could maintain the tradition of political neutrality. However, the politicization of bureaucracy during the Zulfikar Ali Bhutto government in 1972–77 and the withdrawal of constitutional protections for civil servants for their tenure created a sense of insecurity among bureaucrats. As a result, they were no longer willing to take the risk of rendering independent advice to their political bosses.<sup>33</sup> This created not only an environment of abdication of responsibility on the part of civil servants but also incentives for corruption. The declining efficiency and rampant corruption in bureaucracy are much more prevalent in public sector enterprises that have become an enormous burden on public exchequer.<sup>34</sup>

What seems to have qualitatively changed in Pakistan's bureaucracy during the past three decades is the prevalence of corruption at the highest echelons. Up until the 1970s, observers of the higher bureaucracy of Pakistan would criticize its preoccupation with power and status, its alienation from the people, and its obsession with outdated rules and regulations. Financial corruption, however, was mostly confined to the lower and middle levels of the bureaucracy.<sup>35</sup> Looking at the large number of cases of corruption against top bureaucrats in the civil service and public enterprises in recent years, it is clear that the real game in town is no longer power, privilege, and status but money.

It is in this context that one needs to analyze the role of bureaucracy in Pakistan today, especially as it relates to national security and law and order. First, the generalist orientation of the probationary training of the civil service is downright inadequate to equip public officials for the complex tasks that they are called upon to perform in their long careers. Second, the frequent transfer of senior civil servants from one government department to another makes it impossible for them to acquire expertise in any specialized area. Third, as was pointed out earlier, the increasing politicization of bureaucracy has created conditions under which bureaucrats are wary of taking independent initiative or even making routine decisions. Fourth, there is no standardized mechanism of evaluation that rewards exceptional performance and penalizes substandard work. In such a situation, civil servants have no incentives to perform over and above the minimum requirements of their job descriptions, especially when promotions are based on seniority rather than merit.

Finally, whatever faults one could find with the colonial legacy of Pakistan's bureaucratic structures, two of its main pillars—the office of the deputy commissioner in settled areas and that of the political agent in tribal areas—were immensely effective in the maintenance of law and order. This was possible because the deputy commissioner and political agents were in charge of all government departments at the district level and exercised executive, investigative,

<sup>33</sup> Andrew Wilder, "Pakistan & Afghanistan: Domestic Pressures and Regional Threats: The Politics of Civil Service Reforms in Pakistan," *Journal of International Affairs* 63, no. 1 (2009): 19–37.

<sup>34</sup> Among those institutions that have suffered continued losses because of mismanagement and corruption over the years are Pakistan International Airlines, having accumulative losses of 157 billion rupees (\$15.4 million) in 2012; Pakistan Steel Mills, having accumulative losses of 103 billion rupees (\$10 million) in 2013; Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Service Corporation, having accumulative losses of 14.1 billion rupees (\$1 million) in 2011; and Pakistan Railway, with losses of over 150 billion rupees (\$15 million) in 2008–13.

<sup>35</sup> Ilhan Niaz, "Corruption and the Bureaucratic Elite in Pakistan: The 1960s and 1970s Revisited," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 23, no. 4 (2013): 1–17.

prosecutorial, judicial, and police powers. As the most important symbol of both the coercive power and moral authority of the state at the district level and as an embodiment of the Weberian notion of legal-rational authority, the deputy commissioner and political agents were most adept at conflict resolution—whether sectarian tensions or antigovernment rallies or disturbances. As a result of the frequent tampering with this traditional structure of district administration in the name of administrative and local government reforms, the social status and authority of the deputy commissioner (now known as district coordinator) has been considerably diminished. Devoid of police and magistracy powers, the district coordinator is no longer in a position to play an effective role even in relatively minor incidents of the breakdown of law and order, never mind controlling sectarian violence or combating terrorism.

## The Role of the Police Administration

The police administration in Pakistan, in terms of its organizational structure and functions, is more or less no different from what it was during the British colonial period. In fact, many of its rules and regulations go as far back as the Police Act of 1861. During Musharraf's rule, an attempt was made to introduce changes in police administration for the first time in Pakistan's history, and a new law was passed in 2002. Most of the law's provisions, however, remain unimplemented in the absence of bylaws that were supposed to accompany it.

As a recent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan report observes, police "represent what is both good and bad about Pakistan."<sup>36</sup> In terms of its stated ideals, the police force is charged with the important task of maintaining law and order and protecting the lives and property of citizens. However, as far as actual performance is concerned, Transparency International has ranked the police as the most corrupt institution in Pakistan in three consecutive surveys.<sup>37</sup>

In Pakistan, police administration has always been a provincial subject. Nevertheless, all senior police officers working in provinces belong to the Police Service of Pakistan, a federally recruited and regulated cadre that gives considerable influence to the federal government to direct police affairs in the provinces. Although the core functions of police remain under the control of provincial governments, the federal government over the years has established its own police agencies with cross-provincial jurisdiction. At present, the federal government oversees several police-related institutions, including the Federal Investigation Agency, Anti-Narcotics Force, Frontier Constabulary, Frontier Corps, Pakistan Coast Guards, Pakistan Rangers (mostly on deputation from the army), National Highways and Motorways Police, Pakistan Railways Police, Northern Area Scouts, and Islamabad Capital Territory Police.

It is important to note here that forces such as the Frontier Constabulary and Northern Area Scouts in FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Levies in Baluchistan are recruited—in continuation of the British colonial tradition—from among local tribes in consultation with the tribal chiefs. This is for two primary reasons: first, troops thus recruited are believed to be already familiar with the local terrain and people; and second, this system gives tribal chiefs and local communities a stake in its success. These paramilitary forces consist of relatively young men,

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<sup>36</sup> Asad Jamal, *Police Organisations in Pakistan* (New Delhi: Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative and Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2010), 7.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

many of them in their teens,<sup>38</sup> who wear the traditional local dress of the shalwar-qameez as their uniform. Until the emergence of the Taliban in FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, these forces were usually very successful in maintaining law and order in their jurisdictions. Their loyalty to their mission and to the state is tested whenever they are called on to fight against people of their own tribes and clans who have joined the Taliban.

The authority to legislate criminal laws and their procedures has been given to both central and provincial legislatures, but the implementation of the Pakistan Penal Code is the responsibility of provincial police.<sup>39</sup> Once investigated by the police, most criminal cases are tried by local magistrates, except those offenses punishable either by death or under the Islamic Hudood Ordinances that are tried by a sessions court. In addition, crimes registered under the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997 are tried in special antiterrorism courts.

In popular perception, Pakistani police are seen as corrupt, inept, inefficient, brutal, and indifferent to the plight of citizens. In an overwhelming majority of cases, police still rely on torture, and many cases are never solved. Indeed, crime statistics indicate an alarming increase in recent years in crimes such as murder, rape, theft, robbery, and kidnapping for ransom, not to mention terrorism and sectarian killing.<sup>40</sup> It is rare that the police are able to apprehend and successfully prosecute the culprits, given a lack of modern forensic equipment and a weak criminal justice system. Moreover, there are almost daily reports in the newspapers of police officers themselves involved in bank robberies, thefts, kidnapping for ransom, and protecting criminals. Police have also demonstrated a lack of preparedness for preventing and responding to terrorism. As a result, a general sense of insecurity has gripped the nation, especially in urban areas. Those who can afford their own personal guards are now relying more on them, and private businesses are hiring private security companies.<sup>41</sup>

However, this dismal picture of police in Pakistan does not tell the whole story. Not all problems can be placed at the doorstep of police officers. The lower echelons of police in Pakistan—those who do the real legwork—remain the most poorly paid in the country's bureaucratic hierarchy, and their working conditions are probably the worst among government employees. There are also reports that at any given time around 20% of the entire police force and some elements from the Civil Armed Forces are deployed on protocol duties for VIPs. VIP protection consumes roughly 30% of the total police budget in rural areas and roughly 50% in major urban centers of the country.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, the recruitment of lower-level police officers has long been considered one of the most important perks of provincial politicians, who fill the ranks with their political clients without any regard to merit. Finally, the system for training police remains outmoded, and their weapons are of much lower quality than those of terrorists and common criminals.

Added to these problems is the equally corrupt and inept lower-level judiciary, whose conduct is integrally linked to the performance of police. The magistrates and sessions judges often stall the hearing of cases, taking advantage of delays by demanding larger amounts in bribes. According to

<sup>38</sup> Jamal, *Police Organisations in Pakistan*.

<sup>39</sup> Hassan Abbas, "Police & Law Enforcement Reform in Pakistan: Crucial for Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism Success," Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, 2009, <http://www.ispu.org/GetReports/35/1890/Publications.aspx#sthash.CZsv281Y.dpuf>.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.; and Ashraf Javed, "Police Confess 20,273 Cases Untraceable," *Nation*, November 11, 2012.

<sup>41</sup> According to a recent report in *Dawn*, while there are just under 27,000 police officers in Karachi, the number of private security personnel is nearly 55,000. *Dawn*, May 31, 2014.

<sup>42</sup> Hassan Abbas, "Reforming Pakistan's Police and Law Enforcement Infrastructure," United States Institute of Peace, Special Report, no. 266, February 2011, 18.

a report by the National Judicial Policy Committee headed by the chief justice of Pakistan, as of March 31, 2009, there were 1,565,926 pending cases in sessions and other subordinate courts and another 138,945 pending cases in the country's six superior courts.<sup>43</sup>

The PML-N government announced a new national security policy in the beginning of 2014 that was approved by the cabinet and subsequently endorsed by the parliament. The policy envisaged the creation of a national counterterrorism center, special operation squads, and a rapid-response force, as well as close collaboration between more than sixteen different intelligence agencies, departments, and cells with the aim of collecting intelligence data from all of them and then transmitting it to the national counterterrorism center for immediate action. The implementation of this national security policy required meticulous work in putting together several new bureaucratic organizations, modifying the working procedures of existing ones (especially the police), and conducting the recruitment and intensive specialized training of a large number of personnel. This was a gigantic task that required not only close cooperation between the military, police, and civilian intelligence agencies but also significant funding and continuous monitoring by the Ministry of Interior to ensure that the proposed structures were in place on time. Yet a senior police officer from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stated that while the national security policy was announced by the Ministry of Interior with great fanfare, police officers from provinces were neither briefed on the details of the policy nor told about the mechanism by which to coordinate their work with other agencies.<sup>44</sup> Because of the inadequate capacity of Pakistan's police and administrative institutions, poor cooperation, and the nonallocation of promised funds, the national security policy miserably faltered at the implementation stage and was effectively replaced later by a national action plan. Even the national action plan, also announced with great fanfare in early 2014, remains an ambiguous document with broad guidelines but not enough concrete and actionable policy measures.

## The Intelligence Agencies: Now You See Them, Now You Don't

Pakistan has at present 26 intelligence agencies working under different institutions and departments of the federal and provincial governments in order to protect the state from external and internal threats. Of these, the two most important at the national level are the ISI, which reports to the chief of army staff and through him to the president and the prime minister, and the civilian Intelligence Bureau, which reports directly to the prime minister. Established in 1948, the ISI is tasked with acquiring intelligence of strategic interests and assessing the intensity of foreign threats. In recent years, another important duty that has been assigned to the agency is counterterrorism. As most of its personnel are provided by the army, the ISI's record shows that it is more loyal to the army than to the civilian government.<sup>45</sup> The Intelligence Bureau is a legacy of British colonial rule and had been considered the main intelligence arm of the state before the rise of the ISI in the 1980s. The gradual neglect and subsequent decline of the bureau as a premier civilian agency has been the most damaging thing that has happened to Pakistan's domestic intelligence.

The ISI is probably the most well-known institution of Pakistan throughout the world—mostly for the wrong reasons. India, Afghanistan, and the United States have often accused it of

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<sup>43</sup> Jamal, *Police Organisations in Pakistan*, 16.

<sup>44</sup> Author's interview, Peshawar, March 12, 2015.

<sup>45</sup> Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, "Quarterly Monitor on Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan," December 2013–February 2014.

involvement in violence in Indian-controlled Kashmir, of complicity in terrorist acts from New Delhi to Mumbai to Kabul, and of duplicity in working both with and against the United States in the war on terrorism. The ISI also has been known for the making and unmaking of civilian governments since the late 1980s.<sup>46</sup>

Both the United States and Pakistan are reaping the bitter harvest sowed by their premier spy agencies in the 1980s in the Afghan jihad. Two generations of extremists and militants fired up with the ideology of jihad—taught by the ISI during the Afghan and Kashmir operations—have played havoc with Pakistan's stability, security, economy, and culture. Most of the militant organizations that now threaten Pakistan's peace and sovereignty and terrorize its citizens—the TTP, LeT, Jaish-e-Muhammad, the Punjabi Taliban, and a host of Kashmir-centered militant groups—owe their origins, directly or indirectly, to the ISI.

The civilian intelligence agencies complain that they are often left out of the loop by the ISI in matters concerning threats to national security. In many cases, information available to different agencies is scattered, and no mechanism is in place for sharing intelligence with other agencies—a classic case of turf wars. With this in mind, the Ministry of Interior, in its new national security policy, decided to establish the Joint Intelligence Directorate for coordination and intelligence sharing among the 26 intelligence agencies operating in the country.<sup>47</sup> It is doubtful, however, that this new institution will have any teeth unless it is headed by a senior military officer who has the confidence of the army chief. Still, in a situation in which even the ISI and Military Intelligence do not usually see eye to eye on many issues and reportedly sometimes even work at cross-purposes, it would be naive to think that the Joint Intelligence Directorate will become a real clearinghouse of all intelligence in the country.<sup>48</sup>

The dreaded Criminal Investigation Department of police in the provinces—the one that acted as the eyes and ears of British rule at the district level—was the most important spy arm of the government of Pakistan until the late 1960s. The department provided authorities with timely information about suspicious activities, both of a criminal and a political nature. The gradual decline and neglect of this important network that operated from the neighborhood to national levels with its own army of informers has deprived the central government of a vital source of information about terrorism and sectarian violence.

## Concluding Remarks

I have argued in this essay that, despite a long history of political crises and socio-religious and ethnic conflicts, as well as the fundamental structural weaknesses of governmental institutions, the state of Pakistan has survived thanks to two structurally solid and self-consciously cohesive institutions: the military and the civil bureaucracy. Although the predominant political position of the military-bureaucratic oligarchy over the years undoubtedly thwarted political

<sup>46</sup> General Hamid Gul, a former ISI chief, proudly takes credit for forming a political alliance of right-wing parties under the auspices of the spy agency that brought Nawaz Sharif into power in the center for the first time. General Aslam Beg, a former chief of army staff, also admitted in a hearing before the Supreme Court in 2010 that he asked the ISI to collect millions of rupees from private banks and businesses to distribute among the politicians whose election campaigns were approved by the ISI.

<sup>47</sup> "Security Policy to Focus on Agencies Coordination: Nisar," *Dawn*, January 19, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1081341>.

<sup>48</sup> Ali K. Chishti, "Intelligence Agencies & Civilian Supremacy," *Friday Times*, May 20–26, 2011, <http://www.thefridaytimes.com/20052011/page6.shtml>.

development on democratic lines, its firm hold on power nonetheless ensured a modicum of stability in state institutions.

However, poor governance, continual wrangling with the judiciary, tense relations with the military, the lack of a coherent economic and fiscal policy, and near neglect of internal security during the recent PPP government left the country in a state of crisis. The PML-N government also failed to come up with any plan to combat militancy during its first year in power. It was only after the gruesome Taliban attack on a school in Peshawar in December 2013, killing more than 125 students, that the PML-N was awakened by the military from its indolence to commit its political will and make the fight against terrorism one of its top priorities.

Pressure from the military led the civilian government to announce first the new security policy and later the national action plan, which called for the establishment of a network of counterinsurgency task forces as well as close cooperation between all the civilian and military intelligence agencies. However, these measures, including the coordination between the central government and provinces to combat terrorism and militancy, have yet to be realized because of both bureaucratic inertia and turf wars between different agencies and levels of the government. Since the inception of the national action plan and Operation Zarb-e-Azb in June 2014, the military is doing its part with the total commitment of its manpower and resources, achieving spectacular results in FATA and Karachi. At the same time, the military has recently expressed its frustration that the civilian government is not emphasizing “good governance” as an integral part of long-term success against terrorism and militancy.<sup>49</sup> There is some evidence, however, that improved intelligence work by security agencies has helped foil terrorist plots in Karachi, Islamabad, Peshawar, and Quetta.<sup>50</sup>

Nevertheless, intelligence agencies remain suspicious of each other and are often engaged in turf battles; civilian authorities and the military establishment are not always on the same page on issues of security, especially with regard to going after sectarian outfits with connections to political parties. Police and paramilitary agencies remain poorly trained and equipped, central and provincial governments rarely coordinate their security policies and strategies, and the political government in Islamabad seems to be preoccupied with one political challenge after another, leaving little time for policymakers to address security issues on a long-term basis.

There are various indicators that the Pakistani state is indeed moving in the direction of resolving—or attempting to resolve—the various contradictions that complicated its political landscape over the past few decades. The consequences of a rising tide of violence, conflict, and instability have compelled the establishment in Islamabad to prioritize long-term strategic thinking over short-term tactical maneuvering. While this may not imply a complete break from past policies, it does suggest a fundamental rethinking of strategies for ensuring domestic and regional stability. The national action plan, the giving of a free hand to the military in operational matters, the establishment of military courts, the rangers’ operation in Karachi, and recent political initiatives to bring the Baluch insurgents to the negotiating table are some of the measures that are showing positive results. In such a context of a recalibration of major policy decisions, it is important to once again reconsider the dynamic role of the state in making the necessary adjustments to a rapidly changing geopolitical context.

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<sup>49</sup> “Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Press Release after the Corps Commanders Meeting in Rawalpindi.” A few days after the press release, the chief justice of the Supreme Court, in a speech in Hyderabad, also chastised the government for “bad governance.” *Dawn*, November 14, 2015.

<sup>50</sup> “Major Terrorism Plots Foiled,” *Pakistan Observer*, September 6, 2015.

The righteous rage articulated by Imran Khan, civil society activists, and online media against electoral irregularities, corruption in political circles, human rights violations, and socio-economic injustices, and the unprecedented popular response that these voices received from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to Punjab and Sindh support several conclusions. First, a powerful shift is taking place from the rhetoric of an Islamic state under *sharia* to the language of rights, welfare, and public good. Second, politics in Pakistan has now become a truly free public space as opposed to a space largely occupied by a limited class of big landlords, tribal chiefs and *sardars* (noblemen), and prominent families. Third, Pakistan is on its way to becoming a “political society” in the sense in which the term has been used by the Italian political theorist Giorgio Agamben.<sup>51</sup> All three developments are certain to redefine the role of Pakistan’s state institutions and their response to a new set of demands by civil society.

The stability of the current political dispensation and the consensus among the regional political elite that (1) parliamentary political supremacy must be preserved at all cost, (2) no political change will be acceptable that is beyond the 1973 constitution, and (3) the federation must be preserved are other positive developments that are often overlooked by political observers. The fact that the Awami National Party, the PPP, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Jamaat-e-Islami, Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, Balochistan National Party, and the National Party representing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, and Baluchistan all joined hands with Nawaz Sharif’s PML-N against the possibility of military intervention and in support of changes only within the framework of the constitution during a major political challenge posed by the PTI and Pakistan Awami Tehrik in August 2014 is something unique in the history of Pakistan. These developments clearly indicate that even though Pakistani politics may be tumultuous and noisy and the state institutions may not be as functional as they should be, Pakistan is not on the brink of chaos and collapse as its detractors claim.

The principal impediment to the implementation of a concerted agenda of reducing violence and promoting more social cohesion is not the Pakistan Army General Headquarters but the lack of leadership and vision by both civilian politicians and administrators. This is the major contradiction with regard to Pakistani state imperatives at the moment: how to achieve agreed-upon objectives with government functionaries who are less than capable and often not committed to much beyond their own petty perks and privileges. The national security establishment in Pakistan can be criticized on many levels, but its resolve to sustain a level of stability and order in the country and its frontiers seems fairly intact. The danger is not that Pakistan will sink to the status of a “failed” state but that it will continue to be a state in which the politicians of the ancient regime foolishly resist the inevitable forces of social and political change.

This essay has emphasized the serious deficiency in the capacity of major state institutions to meet the challenges of internal security. But this explanatory factor for the disappointing performance of the state in fighting against militancy and terrorism should not be applied across the board. Much more significant factors than the incapacity of pivotal institutional structures are the sheer indifference and total lack of willingness on the part of top political and administrative leaders to pursue bold policy initiatives. The top political leadership is primarily concerned about its short-term political gains, while top civil servants are mostly concerned about their career interests. Regardless of the capacity of state institutions, there will remain unutilized potential until these issues are addressed.

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<sup>51</sup> Giorgio Agamben, “Introductory Note on the Concept of Democracy,” *Theory & Event* 13, no. 1 (2010).



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# Pakistan's Internal Security Environment

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This essay diachronically analyzes data on political violence in Pakistan to demonstrate the historical nature of the problem; provides a brief discussion of the most important violent groups; discusses the various obstacles that will prevent Pakistan from undertaking the necessary reforms to secure its citizens; and concludes with a discussion of the policy implications that derive from this analysis.

### **MAIN ARGUMENT**

Pakistan has long been beset by ethno-nationalist, communal, political, and Islamist violence. Much of this violence stems from the state's failure to develop an inclusive form of nationalism and concomitant strategy of state building. Specifically, Pakistan's insistence on the fundamentally communal and exclusionary "two-nation theory" as its national ideology resulted in the loss of East Pakistan and encourages ever more narrow definitions of who is suitably "Muslim" for Pakistan. At the same time, Pakistan's security institutions have instrumentalized a menagerie of Islamist militants to prosecute its internal as well as external policies with respect to India and Afghanistan. Since 2001, many of these erstwhile proxies have turned their guns and suicide devices on the state and its citizenry under the banner of the Pakistani Taliban. A lack of both will and capacity hinder the state's ability to effectively confront this threat and secure its population. Most problematically, Pakistan still wants to nurture some militants who are its assets while eliminating those who fight the state. Civilians also lack the ability, will, or vision to force the security forces to change tactics.

### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- Pakistan is unlikely to abandon its national ideology or reconsider notions of state building that may persuade providers of violence to put down their arms.
- Pakistan is also unlikely to be able to improve the capabilities of the varied institutions tasked with internal security and rule of law due to political constraints and civil-military imbalances.
- As a result, Pakistan will become ever more dangerous, mostly for its own citizenry. Pakistan's Shia, Ahmedi, and even Barelvis will be most at risk, as well as the small numbers of non-Muslims.

Pakistan faces numerous internal security challenges, including sectarian, communal, and ethno-nationalist violence as well as terrorist and insurgent attacks. The varied groups engaging in this wide array of political violence have targeted ordinary citizens, political leaders, and government officials, as well as Pakistan's security forces. Many of these threats stem from Pakistan's founding ideology, the "two-nation theory," and the particular ways in which the Pakistani state—under civilian and military governance—has sought to employ stylized versions of Islamism to manage Pakistan's religious, sectarian, and ethnic differences. While the communal appeal of the two-nation theory had utility in generating support for an independent Pakistan to be carved from the detritus of the Raj, the same ideology became dangerous once Pakistan came into being because the new state was home to many minorities, including Hindus, Parsees, Christians, and Sikhs. Arguably, the divisive rhetoric that successfully tweezed apart the subcontinent should have been tempered, if not outright jettisoned, after 1947 if Pakistan's diverse population were to live harmoniously within a new nation with a precarious political geography and strained resources.

The political elites of the new country, however, opted not "to promote an inclusive Pakistani nationalism that would have accommodated the divisive forces of ethnic and cultural diversity of the people of the new country."<sup>1</sup> Instead they fostered a "nationalism based on the assumption that all Pakistani Muslims were already a nation rather than a potential nation and exhorted different ethnic groups to subordinate all aspects of their ethnic and cultural identities to the nationalism rooted in Islam."<sup>2</sup> Despite the clear tension between Pakistan's ideology (Islam as articulated in the two-nation theory) and its demographic reality, which included persons from diverse ethnic, sectarian, and religious backgrounds, these leaders redoubled their commitment to enshrining the communal basis of the state's identity and founding logic.

The consequences of this enduring choice and the enormous failures of managing its deleterious outcomes have been—and are—horrendous. After the 1947 partition, approximately 12 million Hindus stayed in East Pakistan alongside 32 million Muslims.<sup>3</sup> Pakistan's failure to accommodate regional and local aspirations and its use of oppressive means to subvert them led to the loss of East Pakistan in 1971 and has contributed to simmering discontent in Baluchistan, parts of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and parts of Sindh.<sup>4</sup>

In March 1949, Pakistan's political, bureaucratic, and military elites launched the country down an irreversible path of Islamism with the introduction of the Objectives Resolution in the first constituent assembly. The Objectives Resolution created a permanent role for Pakistan's *ulema* (religious scholars) and religious entrepreneurs to define who is Muslim. In turn, this expanded the space for conflict with Ahmedis, Shias, and, as I show in this essay, even Barelvis.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Riaz Hassan, "Imagining Religion: Portraits of Islamic Consciousness in Pakistan," in *Being Muslim in South Asia: Diversity and Daily Life*, ed. Robin Jeffrey and Sen Ronojoy (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 42.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>3</sup> Richard D. Lambert, "Religion, Economics, and Violence in Bengal: Background of the Minorities Agreement," *Middle East Journal* 4 (1950): 307–28.

<sup>4</sup> Katharine Adeney, "A Step Towards Inclusive Federalism in Pakistan? The Politics of the 18th Amendment," *Publius* 42, no. 4 (2012): 539–65; Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005); Owen Bennet Jones, *Pakistan: Eye of the Storm* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Adeel Khan, "Pukhtun Ethnic Nationalism: From Separatism to Integrationism," *Asian Ethnicity* 4, no. 1 (2003): 67–83; and Adeel Khan, "Renewed Ethnonationalist Insurgency in Balochistan, Pakistan: The Militarized State and Continuing Economic Deprivation," *Asian Survey* 49, no. 6 (2009): 1071–91.

<sup>5</sup> The Objectives Resolution, which became the preamble to Pakistan's constitution, declared that "the principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice as enunciated by Islam shall be fully observed.... [T]he Muslims shall be enabled to order their lives in the individual and collective spheres in accordance with the teachings and requirements of Islam as set out in the Holy Quran and the Sunnah." The text of the Objectives Resolution is available at [http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/annex\\_objres.html](http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/annex_objres.html).

While Pakistani elites have time and time again continued down a path of state building that gives rise to these violent fissures, Pakistan's institutions have not evolved to manage these enduring threats effectively. Even though the country's military, paramilitary, and intelligence agencies have enabled, if not outright created, these same threats, they—not the local police—nonetheless take the lead in fighting internal security threats. This situation gives rise to a curious paradox: Pakistan handles domestic asymmetric threats with conventional military means while managing conventional security challenges with India and Afghanistan through asymmetric tools such as state proxies. The record of the armed forces in these conflicts is mixed. In some cases—for example, various periods in Baluchistan, Karachi in the 1990s, and Swat in 2009—the army has used excessive force to diminish the rebels' ability to operate. However, it has done so at a high cost in terms of civilian casualties and human rights abuses.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, institutions responsible for enforcing the rule of law have long been enervated and incapable of managing the myriad threats to the state. Part of Pakistan's inability to manage these challenges is due to a distinct lack of will: some of the Islamist terrorist groups savaging the nation have overlapping membership with other Islamist militant groups that carry out the army's preferred policies in Afghanistan and India. Thus, there is an inescapable link between Pakistan's external security environment and the tools the state has developed to manage it—namely, militant proxies managed by the army and Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)—and the country's own internal security environment. While this chronic failure to provide security stems, at least in some measure, from a lack of capability, the central and provincial governments have demurred from undertaking the necessary reforms throughout the civil service and police organizations to fortify these critical institutions. A detailed explanation for this is beyond the scope of this essay, but this issue has much to do with the path dependency of patronage politics in Pakistan.<sup>7</sup>

In this essay, I first provide a historical overview of political violence in Pakistan's recent past. Second, I provide a thumbnail sketch of the key organizations providing this violence. The third section then exposit how Pakistan's internal and external security environments are intrinsically interlinked. Here, I detail what is known (or suspected in most cases) about the linkages between these groups and Pakistan's military and intelligence agencies (and even political parties as appropriate). I contend that these linkages between external security policy and domestic security management will continue to pose enduring problems for Pakistan unless the state fundamentally changes the ways in which it manages its external security environment and even the ideology of the state. The fourth section provides an overview of security governance in Pakistan and the key roadblocks that prevent the country from better managing its internal security (e.g., the commitment to jihad under its nuclear umbrella as a tool of foreign policy). I conclude with a discussion of implications.

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<sup>6</sup> "Pakistan: Abuses, Impunity Erode Rights," Human Rights Watch, February 1, 2013, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/02/01/pakistan-abuses-impunity-erode-rights>; Human Rights Watch, "*We Can Torture, Kill, or Keep You for Years*": Enforced Disappearances by Pakistan Security Forces in Balochistan (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2011), <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/pakistan0711WebInside.pdf>; and "Pakistan: Extrajudicial Executions by Army in Swat," Human Rights Watch, July 16, 2010, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2010/07/16/pakistan-extrajudicial-executions-army-swat>.

<sup>7</sup> See, *inter alia*, International Crisis Group, "Reforming Pakistan's Criminal Justice System," Asia Report, no. 196, December 2010, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/-/media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/196%20Reforming%20Pakistans%20Criminal%20Justice%20System.pdf>; International Crisis Group, "Reforming Pakistan's Civil Service," Asia Report, no. 185, February 2010, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/-/media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/185%20Reforming%20Pakistans%20Civil%20Service.pdf>; International Crisis Group, "Reforming Pakistan's Police," Asia Report, no. 157, July 2008, [http://www.crisisgroup.org/-/media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/157\\_reforming\\_pakistan\\_s\\_police.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/-/media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/157_reforming_pakistan_s_police.pdf); and International Crisis Group, "Reforming the Judiciary in Pakistan," Asia Report, no. 160, [http://www.crisisgroup.org/-/media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/160\\_reforming\\_the\\_judiciary\\_in\\_pakistan.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/-/media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/160_reforming_the_judiciary_in_pakistan.pdf).

## Overview of Political Violence in Pakistan

While there are several datasets that scholars have developed to track political violence in Pakistan, here I use a newly introduced political violence dataset collected by a research team led by Bueno de Mesquita (the BFRS dataset from 2014).<sup>8</sup> For the purposes of this essay, I examine trends in several kinds of political violence: sectarian violence (e.g., among different Muslim groups), communal violence between different religious communities, ethno-nationalist violence (waged by specific ethnic groups for corporate goals), terrorism (violence against non-combatants), and insurgency and guerilla warfare (violence against security forces).

**Table 1** provides a brief overview of incidents of terrorist and non-terrorist political violence as well as the number of fatalities and casualties for both. For illustrative purposes, I divide the data into two periods: 1988–2001 and 2002–2011. I have chosen this breakpoint because the events of September 11, 2001, triggered several adverse developments in Pakistan’s internal security environment. Between the nine years of 2002 and 2011, there were 3,721 terrorist attacks, compared with 2,087 in the earlier thirteen-year period. The post–September 11 environment was also more deadly, with 3,697 slain compared with 2,086 in the earlier period.

Turning to all other acts of political violence (e.g., communal and sectarian), there were 12,820 incidents with 24,966 deaths in the latter period compared with 11,340 incidents and 10,873 deaths in the earlier period. Across the duration of the BFRS dataset, there were some 5,808 acts of terrorism and another 24,160 incidents of other forms of political violence. In all, there were 41,622 fatalities in that period and many more injured.

**Figures 1–6** provide heat maps of this political violence at the district level for 1988, 2001, 2002, 2006, and 2011. More darkly shaded districts have higher levels of violence, whereas districts that are unshaded are free of violence.

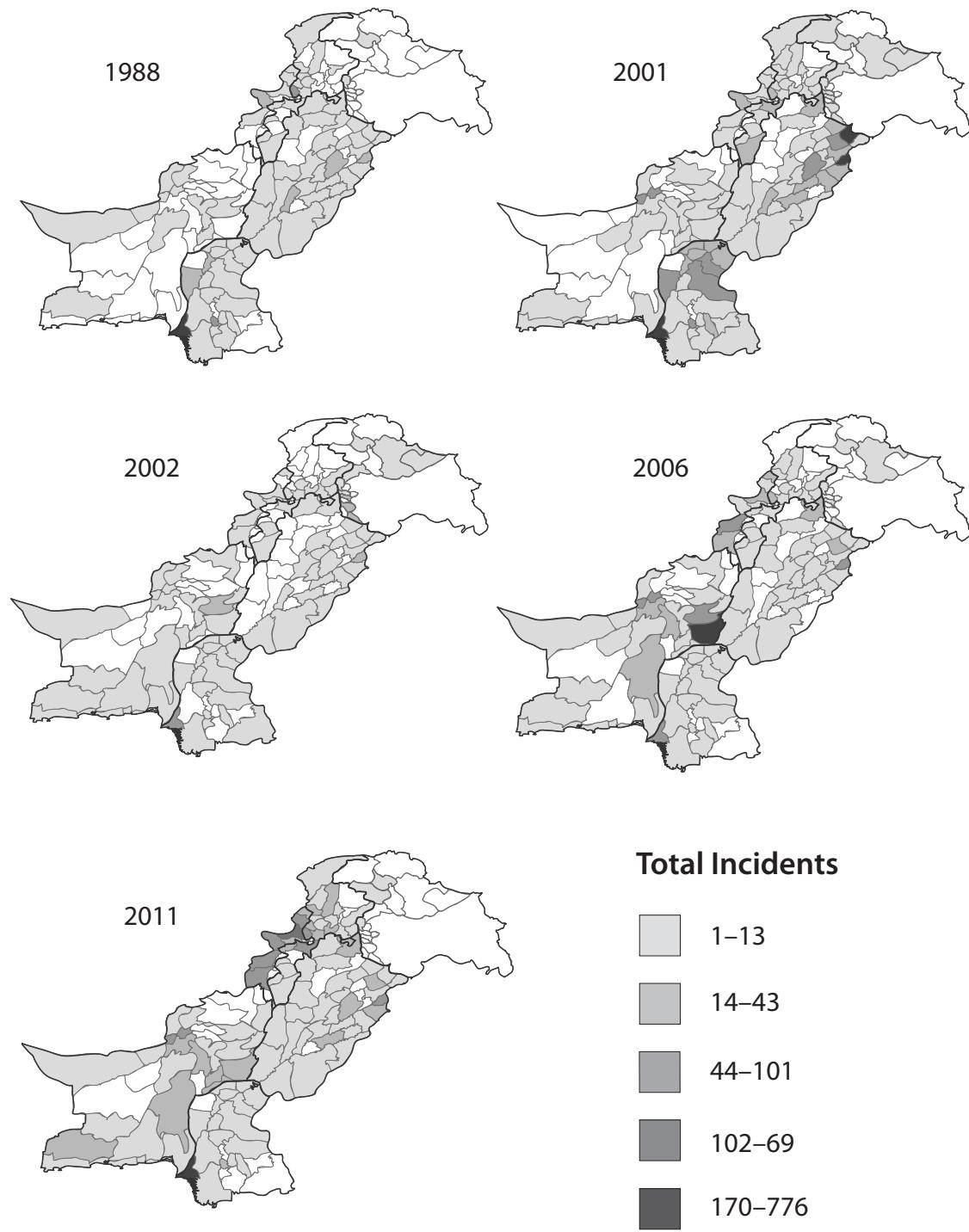
TABLE 1 BFRS political violence

Variable	1988–2001	2002–11	Total
<b>Incidents, terrorist attacks</b>	2,087	3,721	5,808
<b>Killed, terrorist attacks</b>	2,086	3,697	5,783
<b>Wounded, terrorist attacks</b>	6,754	9,025	15,779
<b>Incidents, other political violence</b>	11,340	12,820	24,160
<b>Killed, other political violence</b>	10,873	24,966	35,839
<b>Wounded, other political violence</b>	12,886	20,924	33,810

SOURCE: Author’s tabulation of BFRS dataset.

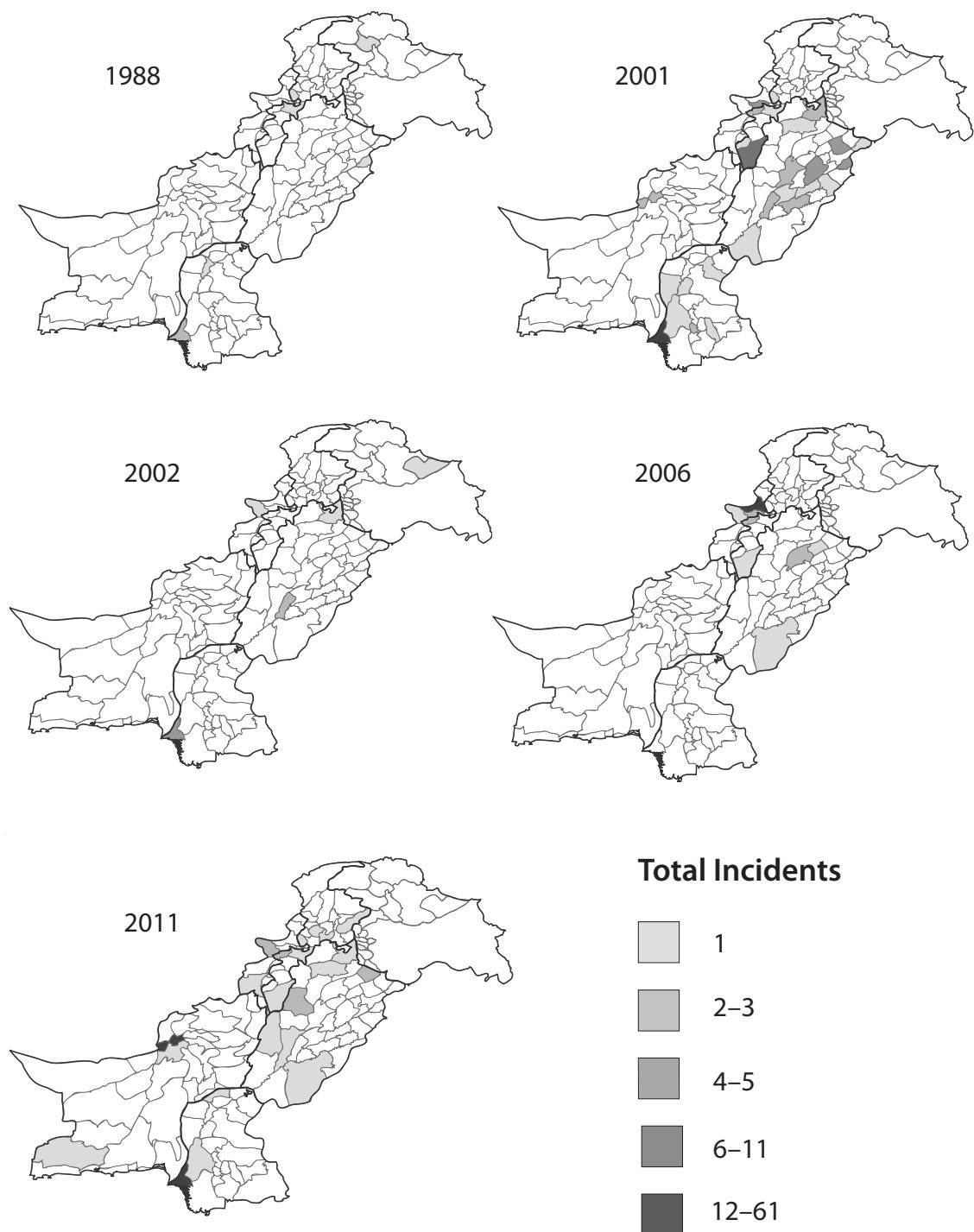
<sup>8</sup> These datasets all have their own strengths and weaknesses, which are discussed in Ethan Bueno de Mesquita et al., “Measuring Political Violence in Pakistan: Insights from the BFRS Dataset,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, published online September 15, 2014. Unlike most datasets on Pakistan, which focus only on “terrorism,” the BFRS dataset used in this essay collects information about virtually every kind of political violence in Pakistan from the beginning of 1988 (when the anti-Soviet war was concluding) to the end of 2011.

FIGURE 1 All political violence in Pakistan, selected years



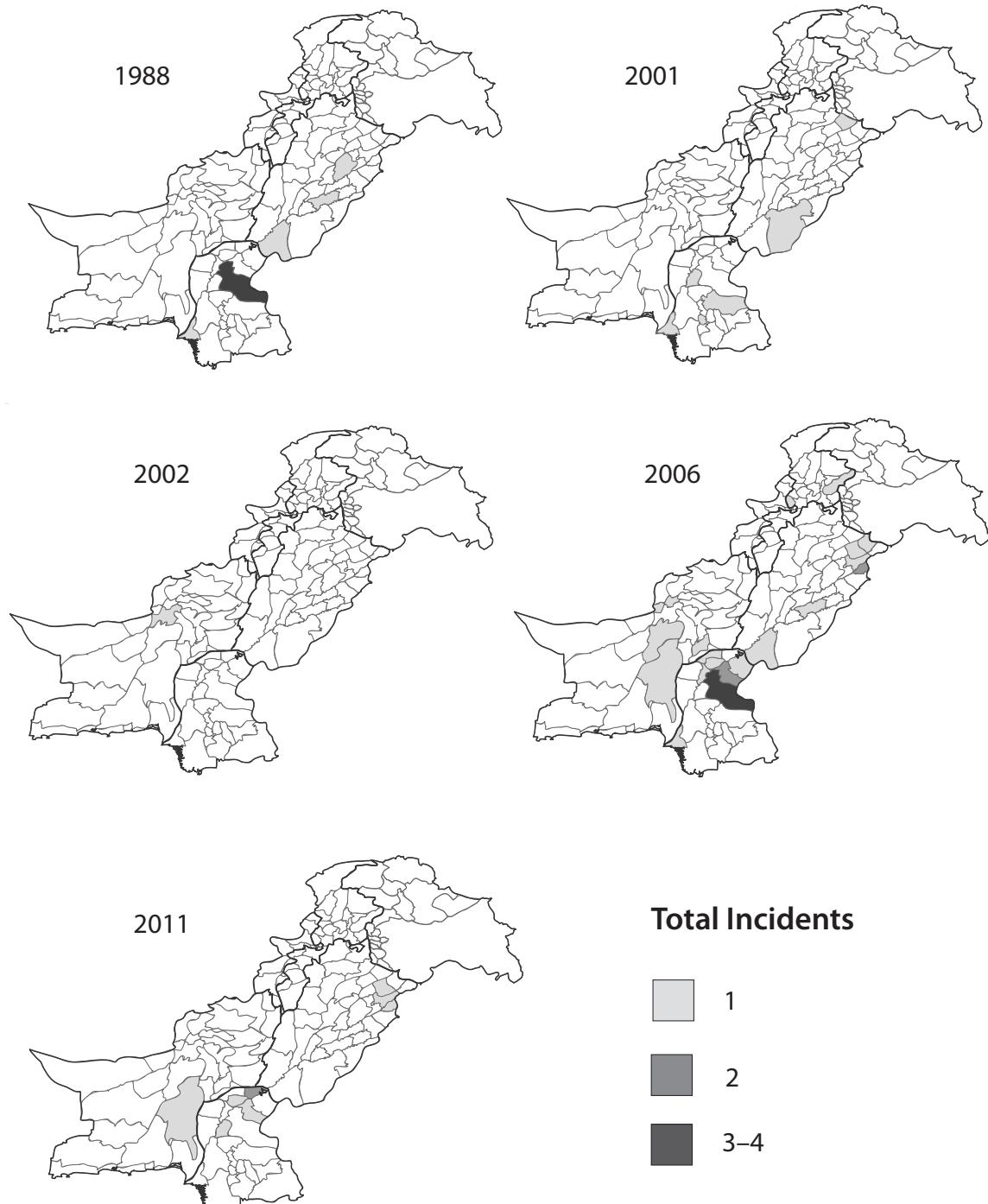
SOURCE: Manipulation of BFRS dataset by Jesse Turcotte on behalf of the author.

FIGURE 2 Sectarian violence in Pakistan, selected years



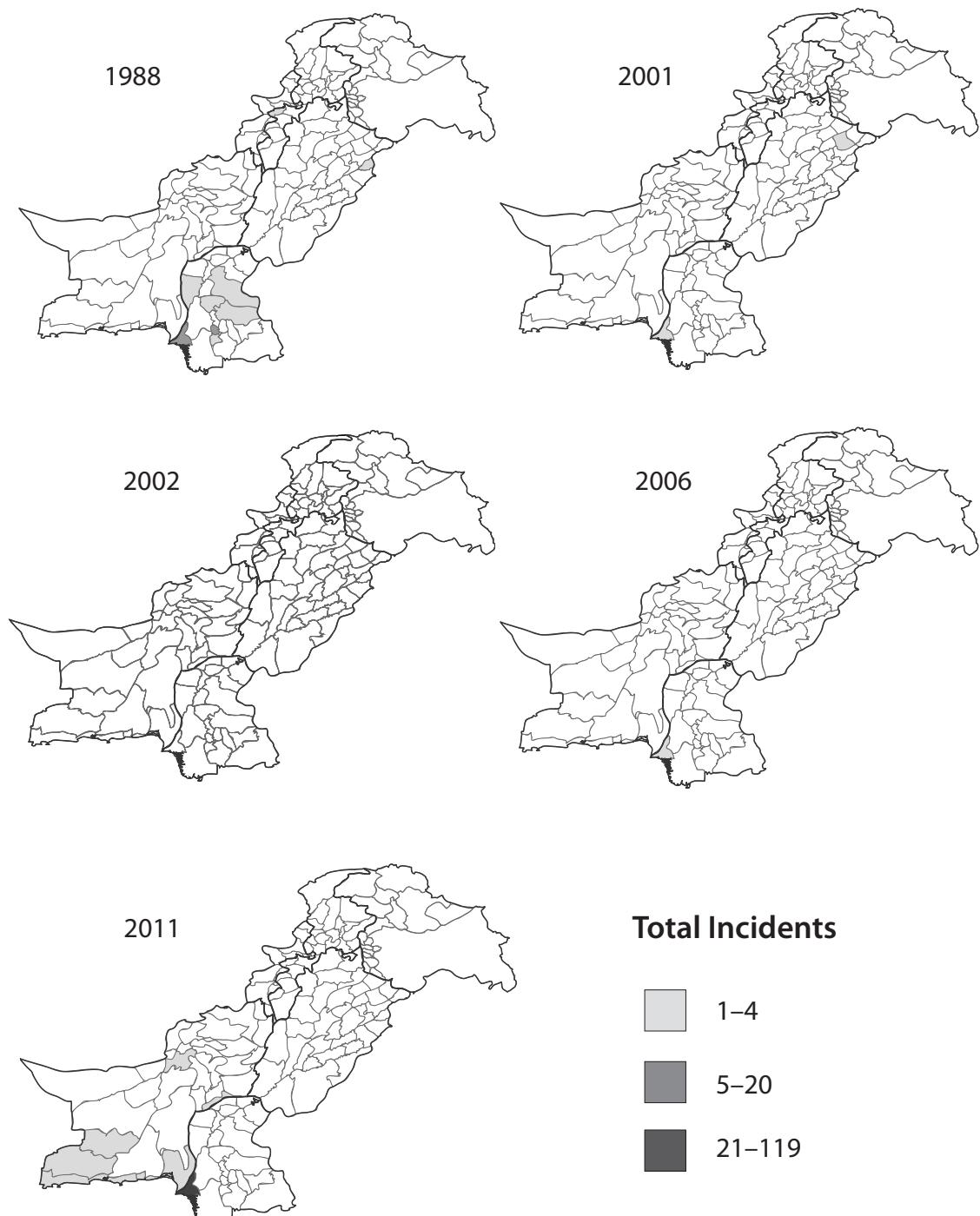
SOURCE: Manipulation of BFRS dataset by Jesse Turcotte on behalf of the author.

FIGURE 3 Communal violence in Pakistan, selected years



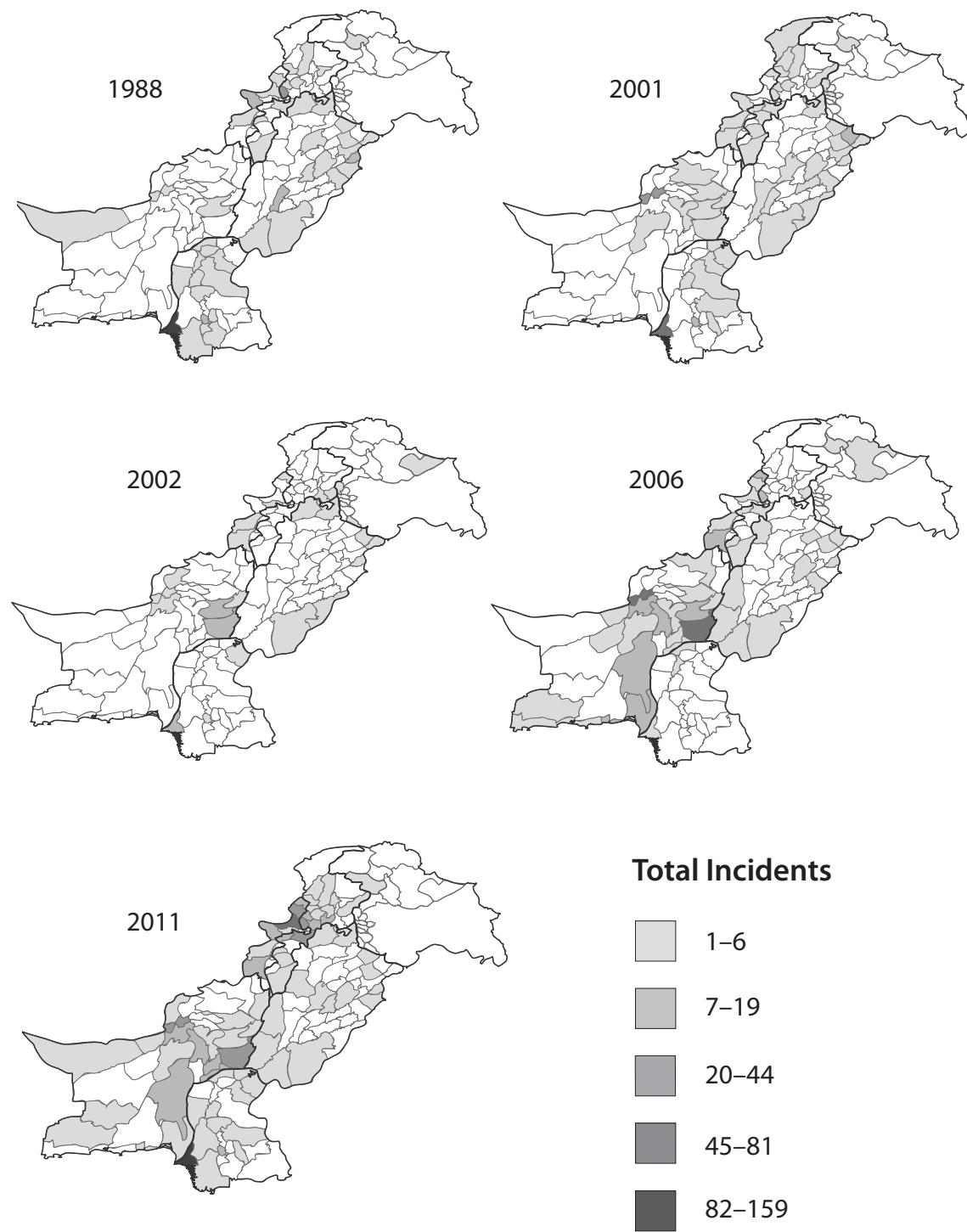
SOURCE: Manipulation of BFRS dataset by Jesse Turcotte on behalf of the author.

FIGURE 4 Ethno-nationalist violence in Pakistan, selected years



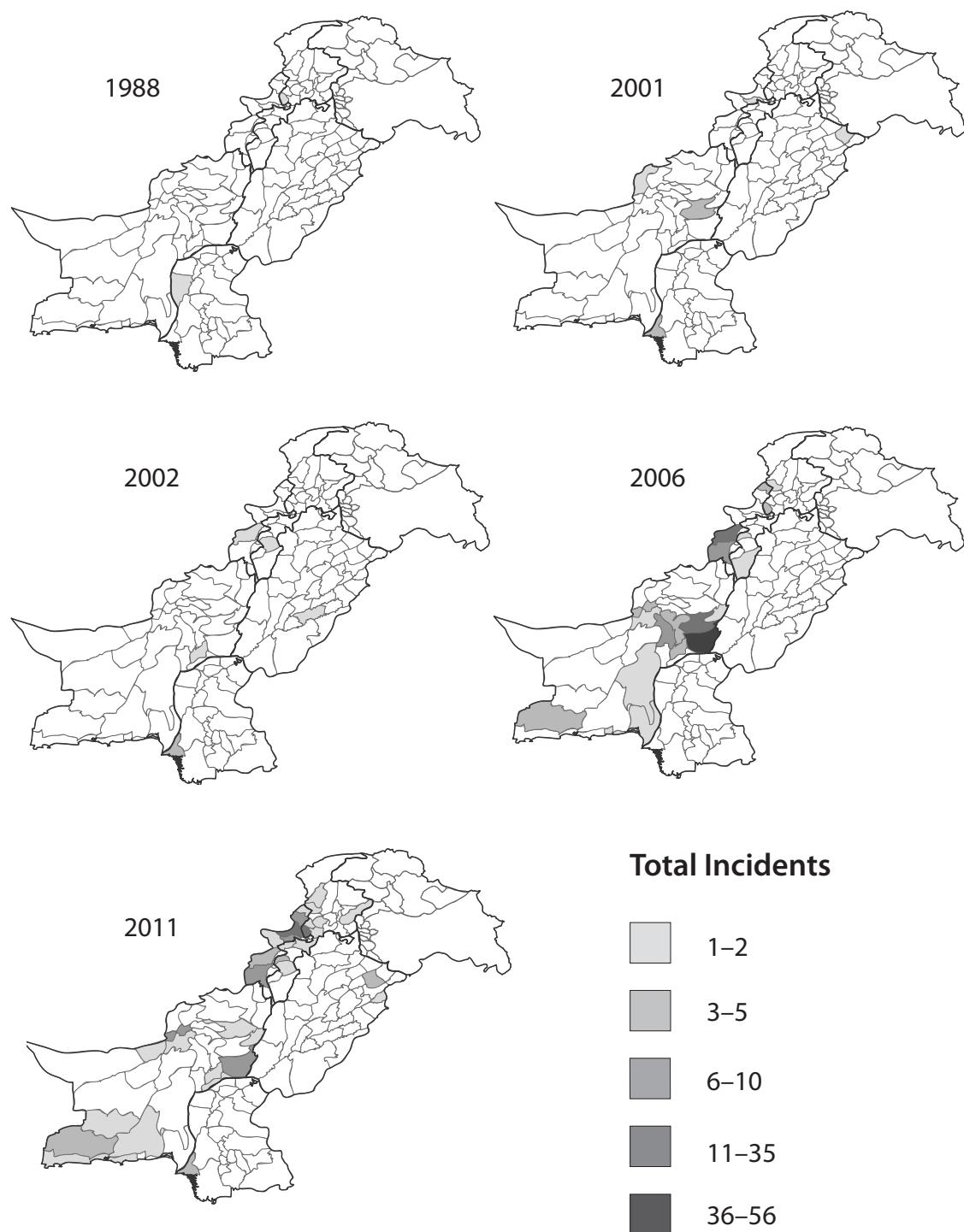
SOURCE: Manipulation of BFRS dataset by Jesse Turcotte on behalf of the author.

FIGURE 5 Terrorist violence in Pakistan, selected years



SOURCE: Manipulation of BFRS dataset by Jesse Turcotte on behalf of the author.

FIGURE 6 Militant/guerilla violence in Pakistan, selected years



SOURCE: Manipulation of BFRS dataset by Jesse Turcotte on behalf of the author.

Figure 1 depicts all political violence in Pakistan. While in 1988 some districts were completely free of political violence, most districts in most years witnessed some level of political violence. FATA shows violence both before and after September 11. Figure 2 provides a heat map of sectarian political violence in the same years. In 1988, few districts experienced such violence. In subsequent years, this violence is mostly centered in Punjab and a few districts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh. Figure 2 also demonstrates that sectarian violence does not occur in the vast majority of districts in Pakistan. Similarly, Figure 3, which depicts incidents of communal violence, demonstrates that communal violence is quite rare and does not occur in the vast majority of districts. Figure 4 depicts ethno-nationalist political violence. This sort of violence is also quite rare across time and space, with Baluchistan and Sindh experiencing most of the events.<sup>9</sup> Figures 5 and 6 depict terrorism and guerilla violence. While many districts at different points in time experience such violence, it is also the case that many districts have remained free of terrorism and guerilla attacks.<sup>10</sup>

## Providers of Insecurity

Pakistan hosts numerous political actors, including ethno-nationalist and Islamist militant groups, as well as numerous militias that act on behalf of various political parties and organized criminal groups. Because a comprehensive account of all these actors is beyond the scope of this essay, this section focuses on describing the most important and enduring ethno-nationalist and Islamist militant groups. However, I do note some of the most enduring political and criminal organizations when appropriate.

### *Ethno-Nationalist Actors*

As noted above and as Figures 1–6 and Table 1 demonstrate, Pakistan suffers from a vast array of political violence, with sanguinary consequences. Ethno-nationalist political violence (including terrorism and militant attacks) has primarily occurred in Baluchistan and Sindh. The conflict in Baluchistan is long standing and dates back to independence, when key Baluch tribes resisted being incorporated into Pakistan. Since then, several Baluch nationalist groups have emerged, some of which are militant. These militant groups have targeted security forces, government officials, university professors, teachers, doctors, and police, among others. These groups have also targeted Punjabis, whom are reviled as “settlers.” In turn, the state has responded with lethal force to suppress not only militants but also peaceful political ethno-nationalist Baluch. The disappearance of Baluch persons remains a salient issue, as do excesses of the army and the various intelligence agencies. While Baluch militants base their demand for independence on the province’s pre-partition history, there is strong concurrence among Baluch, Pashtuns, and other ethnic and religious minorities in Baluchistan that the province is deprived of adequate funding by

<sup>9</sup> Examples of ethno-nationalist events include violence attributed to ethnic-based militant groups (e.g., Baluch, Sindhi, and Pashtun). However, because newspaper accounts rarely make such positive attributions and because an event is coded only if there is such attribution, the number of ethno-nationalist events in this database is likely undercounted.

<sup>10</sup> While Figures 1 through 6 offer district-level insights, they do so only for specific points in time. For graphs breaking down the occurrence of violence type across the provinces and FATA over time, see the National Bureau of Asian Research website, <http://nbr.org/research/activity.aspx?id=653>. These graphs show the annual casualties (per 1,000 persons) for the various types of political violence examined in Figures 1–6 in four provinces plus FATA. This allows one to compare not only the occurrence of a particular kind of violence across the provinces and FATA but also the impacts of each type of violence within a province or FATA. As the graphs illustrate, for much of the time period between 1988 and 2011, Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Punjab have been relatively peaceful, whereas Sindh and FATA have been rather turbulent.

the central government and not paid a fair price for its gas resources, resulting in chronic budget shortfalls and massive underdevelopment. At their core, the problems in Baluchistan stem from the state's inability to manage various competing ethnic and regional identities and its refusal to completely devolve power.<sup>11</sup>

Ethno-nationalist conflict in Sindh also has numerous causes, a detailed exposition of which is beyond the scope of this essay. Sindh has long been the site of competition between and among the so-called *muhajirs* (Urdu speakers who migrated to Pakistan from what is today Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in India), Baluch, and Pashtuns, many of whom live in Karachi in large numbers. These varied ethnic groups are represented by political parties that in many cases behave as organized criminal outfits with their own armed militias. (It should be noted that virtually all of Pakistan's political parties have "student" wings that also engage in violence, ostensibly to service the goals of their parent organizations.)

At various points in time, Pakistan's military, paramilitary, and police forces have been deployed to put down the various sources of unrest. Recent trends have exacerbated these long-standing problems. Most notably, ongoing military operations in Pashtun areas have contributed to the swelling ranks of Pashtuns in Karachi. The primary Pashtun political party, the Awami National Party (ANP), now has a branch in Karachi. The ANP has frequently clashed with the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), which was previously known as the Muhajir Qaumi Movement. The MQM is a secular political party that draws support from some muhajirs and functions as an organized criminal outfit cum political party, replete with its own armed militia.<sup>12</sup>

### *Islamist Actors*

Perhaps the most problematic forms of violence challenging the state come from Islamist organizations that engage in a wide array of activities, including sectarian and communal violence, terrorist attacks against non-combatants, and guerilla campaigns against Pakistan's security forces. In some cases, sectarian and ethnic violence coincide, as is the case with the Hazara Shia, whom Deobandi terrorists have slaughtered in large numbers in recent years.<sup>13</sup>

While analysts tend to use the anodyne descriptors of "Islamist," "terrorist," or even "sectarian" to describe these groups, these expressions suffer from considerable under-specification. In fact, the groups that are primarily engaged in this kind of violence are generally Deobandi. This includes the sectarian (and communal) organization the Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ), which is the name under which older Deobandi sectarian groups such as Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) now operate. It also includes various components of the so-called Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the evolution of which I describe below. These Deobandi groups have long-standing ties to the Afghan Taliban and consequently to al Qaeda and several other Deobandi militant groups that the ISI groomed for operations in Kashmir and elsewhere in India

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<sup>11</sup> Yunas Samad, "Understanding the Insurgency in Balochistan," *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 52, no. 2 (2014): 293–320; and Rabia Aslam, "Greed, Creed, and Governance in Civil Conflicts: A Case Study of Balochistan," *Contemporary South Asia* 19, no. 2 (2011): 189–203.

<sup>12</sup> See Farhan Hanif Siddiqi, "Intra-ethnic Fissures in Ethnic Movements: The Rise of Mohajir Identity Politics in Post-1971 Pakistan," *Asian Ethnicity* 11, no. 1 (2010): 25–41.

<sup>13</sup> Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, *State of Human Rights in 2013* (Lahore: Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2014), <http://www.hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/report14/AR2013.pdf>; and "Pakistan: Rampant Killings of Shia by Extremists," Human Rights Watch, June 30 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/06/29/pakistan-rampant-killings-shia-extremists>.

(Jaish-e-Mohammad, Harkat-ul-Jihadi-e-Islami, and Harkat ul Mujahideen, among others).<sup>14</sup> Problematically for the Pakistani state, many of these purportedly Kashmir-oriented groups that are Deobandi have overlapping relations with the aforementioned anti-Shia Deobandi groups (LeJ and SSP, or ASWJ), the TTP, the Afghan Taliban, and al Qaeda.

These myriad Deobandi militant groups are also tightly aligned with the various factions of the Deobandi ulema political party, Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), and enjoy funding by wealthy Arab individuals and organizations.<sup>15</sup> In the 1980s and early 1990s, Shia sectarian groups were lethally active as well. These groups, which have now largely disappeared, used to target Sunni Muslims and received funding from Iran.<sup>16</sup> Today, sectarian violence in Pakistan is generally understood as violence perpetrated by Deobandi terrorists against members of rival sects. There are two emerging contrary trends. First, in tribal agencies such as Kurram, very small numbers of Shia militias have formed militias to protect themselves against Deobandi militants.<sup>17</sup> Second, Barelvis are also increasingly militarizing to protect themselves against the predations of Deobandi terrorism.<sup>18</sup>

While ethno-nationalist violence is important, much of Pakistan's contemporary—and future—insecurity stems from Islamist forms of violence and Islamist actors. This is true, I contend, whether we discuss religious violence against other Muslim sects (e.g., Shia and Barelvis), the Ahmedis (who consider themselves to be Muslims, but who are considered apostates by some), or other religious minorities or the political violence waged by the TTP and its allies. For this reason, the following section describes how the current state of affairs has evolved.

## Pakistan's Jihad Policy Comes Home: Sectarian Violence and the Rise of the Pakistani Taliban<sup>19</sup>

To fully understand the origins of Pakistan's contemporary internal security challenges, one must understand the long-standing ties between the tools of choice that the Pakistan Army has used to manage its external security goals (political Islam and Islamist militancy) in Afghanistan and India, as well as the internal developments noted above. In this section, I argue that the emergence of the TTP and its Punjab-based allies such as the ASWJ stem from the confluence of Pakistan's external security policy as spearheaded by the army and the ISI, domestic developments, and consequential developments in the region due to the events of September 11. After briefly describing Pakistan's "jihads" in Afghanistan and India, I account for the realignment of several of Pakistan's past and present proxies and the culmination of the Islamist insurgency that is ravaging the country and its polity.

<sup>14</sup> For more comprehensive discussions of these groups, see C. Christine Fair, "The Militant Challenge in Pakistan," *Asia Policy*, no. 11 (2011): 105–37; Mansur Khan Mahsud, "The Battle for Pakistan Militancy and Conflict in South Waziristan," New America Foundation, Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative Policy Paper, April 2010, <http://counterterrorism.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/southwaziristan.pdf>; and Shehzad H. Qazi, "Rebels of the Frontier: Origins, Organization, and Recruitment of the Pakistani Taliban," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 22, no. 4 (2011): 574–602.

<sup>15</sup> Mariam Abou Zahab and Olivier Roy, *Islamist Networks: The Afghan-Pakistan Connection* (London: Hurst and Company, 2004); and Fair, "The Militant Challenge."

<sup>16</sup> Fair, "The Militant Challenge."

<sup>17</sup> Zia ur Rehman, "The Battle for Kurram," *Friday Times*, March 2–8, 2012, <http://www.thefridaytimes.com/beta2/tft/article.php?issue=20120302&page=3>.

<sup>18</sup> Ismael Khan, "The Assertion of Barelvi Extremism," *Current Trends in Islamic Ideology*, no. 12 (2011): 51–72, <http://www.hudson.org/research/9848-the-assertion-of-barelvi-extremism>.

<sup>19</sup> See C. Christine Fair, "Explaining Support for Sectarian Terrorism in Pakistan: Piety, Maslak and Sharia," *Religions* 6, no. 4 (2015): 1137–67.

Afghanistan or India. After the LeT attack in Mumbai in 2008, the Pakistan Army paused its military operations in FATA and even declared Baitullah Mehsud and Maulvi Fazlullah to be “patriotic” even though both had waged a militant campaign against the Pakistan Army for years.<sup>52</sup>

However, commanders and groups who prove to be recalcitrant—for example, Nek Mohammad, Baitullah Mehsud, Hakimullah Mehsud, and the TNSM in 2009—are eliminated either through military operations or through U.S. drone strikes in FATA. Needless to say, neither the Pakistan Army nor any of its civilian security forces have made serious attempts at eliminating Punjab-based groups that provide important lethality and reach to the TTP. Until the army abandons jihad as a tool of foreign policy, according to which some groups are viewed as state assets, extirpating the menagerie of Islamist militant groups savaging the state will be very difficult.

### *Pakistan's Security Governance: Lack of Capability<sup>53</sup>*

Many of the internal security challenges that are manifest in sectarianism, communal killing, and the insurgent and terrorist campaign of the TTP stem from Pakistan’s own policies. However, as noted above, when the state resolves to eliminate some groups, it often falls short.

The shortcomings of the civilian security apparatus are numerous. First, it should be acknowledged that Pakistani agencies view the myriad threats to the country differently. While the ISI may view a particular group or an individual to be an asset, local police may view them as a threat. Local police interviewed by this author over the years note that upon the police arresting a particular individual, the Ministry of Interior or some other government agency often demands the suspect’s release.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, even when civilian leadership would like the state organs to undertake actions against specific groups, civilians do not usually control these organizations. The discussion that follows examines the problems confronting the ISI and police forces.

*Inter-Services Intelligence.* As is well known, the ISI is not responsive to civilian control despite the fact that the organization is constitutionally accountable to the prime minister. Most of the officers come from the army on secondment, which means that their promotions, professional achievement, and ultimate loyalty rest with the army. Although the ISI also has officers seconded from other services, as well as a large but unquantifiable cadre of civilians, it has mightily resisted efforts to bring the organization under actual civilian control.<sup>55</sup> In 2008 the civilian government proclaimed that “the Prime Minister has approved the placement of Intelligence Bureau and Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) under the administrative, finance and operational control of the [Interior Ministry] with immediate effect.”<sup>56</sup> However, the government reversed this decision almost immediately, likely due to army outrage. Given that all Pakistani civilian leaders fear a military coup, there is little appetite to antagonize the army.

Despite frequent assertions that the ISI is a “rogue” organization, there is no actual evidence for this claim. In fact, as noted above, the ISI officer cadres all come from the armed forces,

<sup>52</sup> Blake Hounshell, “Pakistani Official Calls Bhutto’s Killer ‘Patriotic,’” *Foreign Policy*, Passport, November 30, 2008, [http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2008/11/30/pakistani\\_official\\_calls\\_bhuttos\\_killer\\_patriotic](http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2008/11/30/pakistani_official_calls_bhuttos_killer_patriotic); and Hamid Mir, “Army Official Calls Baitullah Mehsud, Fazlullah ‘Patriots,’” *News International* (Pakistan), December 1, 2008, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrintDetail.aspx?ID=18709&Cat=13&dt=12/1/2008>.

<sup>53</sup> This section draws from and updates C. Christine Fair, “Security Sector Governance in Pakistan: Progress, but Many Challenges Persist,” Centre for International Governance Innovation, SSR Issue Papers, no. 5, January 2012, [http://www.cigionline.org/sites/default/files/SSR\\_Issue\\_no5.pdf](http://www.cigionline.org/sites/default/files/SSR_Issue_no5.pdf).

<sup>54</sup> Zafar Abbas, “Operation Eye Wash,” *Herald* (Karachi), August 2005, 64.

<sup>55</sup> Jayshree Bajoria and Even Kaplan, “The ISI and Terrorism: Behind the Accusations,” Council on Foreign Relations, Backgrounder, May 4, 2011, <http://www.cfr.org/pakistan/isi-terrorism-behind-accusations/p11644>.

<sup>56</sup> M. Ilyas Khan, “Spy Agency Confusion in Pakistan,” BBC News, July 28, 2008, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7528592.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7528592.stm).

When the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan following the signing of the Geneva Accords in 1988, the United States also ceased direct involvement. However, Pakistan remained engaged. General Zia was displeased that the accord did not provide for an Islamist government in Afghanistan and instead left in place a Soviet-installed president, Mohammad Najibullah. Despite opposition to his governance from within Afghanistan and from Pakistan, Najibullah retained power until 1992 when the Soviet Union collapsed and its successor state, Russia, halted payments to Kabul. While various militia factions battled for state control, Pakistan put its support behind the Pashtun Islamist, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. In April 1992 the Peshawar Accord put forward a compromise solution for the various combatting commanders. The accord established a system of rotating presidents. Sibghatullah Mujaddidi was to serve for two months, followed by Burhanuddin Rabbani, who was to serve for four. The accord broke down, however, and Rabbani retained the presidency for four years, before falling to the Taliban in 1996. During this period the various mujahideen-cum-commander militias engaged in sanguinary in-fighting that destroyed Kabul.

The Afghan Taliban emerged in 1994 in Kandahar under the leadership of Mullah Omar, a veteran mujahideen commander who had been running a *madrasah* (Islamic school) in Kandahar. The Taliban's first recruits came from exiled Afghans studying at madaris in Pakistan. To indicate its madrasah links, the movement named itself the Taliban, the Persian plural of *talib* (student). (*Tuleba*, the plural form in Arabic, is occasionally used as well.) During their time in the madaris and refugee camps, where Saudi charities and the Deobandi movement had a significant presence, many members of the would-be Taliban were exposed to and became sympathetic to Salafism (and jihadi Salafism in particular). The Taliban garnered fame by opposing the above-noted commanders, who by the mid-1990s had become known warlords (*jangbazi* in Dari). The principal warlords were the Northern Alliance, led by Ahmad Shah Massoud, and Hekmatyar's Hizb-e-Islami. The Taliban garnered popular support because they confronted these warlords and promised security, freedom of movement without harassment, and swift justice.<sup>29</sup>

The Taliban first came into contact with the Pakistani political establishment through their ties to a faction of the JUI, the Pakistani Deobandi political party, which at that time was headed by Maulana Fazlur Rehman. Rehman, an important political partner of Benazir Bhutto, facilitated contacts between the Taliban, and Nasirullah Babar, Bhutto's minister for the interior, began providing logistical and other support to the Taliban. (Babar forged Pakistan's Afghan policy during Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's tenure.) A few years earlier, the ISI had concluded that Hekmatyar was unable to forge a stable, pro-Pakistan government in Afghanistan and welcomed the Taliban's emergence. With massive covert assistance from the ISI and the Pakistan Army and Air Force, the Taliban spread out from Kandahar by coopting local warlords and tribal structures. By 1998, they controlled most of Afghanistan.

While Pakistan facilitated U.S. operations in Afghanistan, it is a well-known fact that Pakistan continued to support the Afghan Taliban by housing its leadership, facilitating Taliban activities in the country, and supporting key Islamist leaders such as Jalaluddin Haqqani and even Hekmatyar. Indeed, much of the so-called Haqqani network is based in North Waziristan and even in Islamabad.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, "Understanding the Taliban and Insurgency in Afghanistan," *Orbis* 51, no. 1 (2007): 71–89; Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia* (New York: I.B. Taurus and Co., 2010); and Abdulkader Sinno, "Explaining the Taliban's Ability to Mobilize the Pashtuns," in *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*, ed. Robert D. Crews and Amin Tarzi (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 59–89.

<sup>30</sup> Don Rassler and Vahid Brown, *The Haqqani Nexus and the Evolution of al-Qa'ida* (West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, 2011).

## *Pakistan's Jihad in India*

In India, Pakistan has employed nonstate actors to achieve policy goals since 1947 when a mid-level army officer, Colonel Akbar Khan (who was the director of weapons and equipment at the nascent Pakistan Army's general headquarters), helped coordinate invaders from the tribal areas and what was then known as the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) to seize Kashmir. The incursion enjoyed support from the provincial governments of the NWFP and Punjab and eventually enjoyed the highest support of the new government.<sup>31</sup> As Pakistani "marauders" streamed into Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh—the then sovereign of Kashmir—requested India's assistance. India agreed, provided that Kashmir become incorporated into the new country. Once the accession papers were signed, India airlifted troops to protect what had become Indian territory. The conflict became known as the first Indo-Pakistani War. When the war ended, about one-third of Kashmir was administered by Pakistan and the remainder by India. The conflict bequeathed a security competition that exists to date.<sup>32</sup>

Pakistan continued to use nonstate actors for operations in Kashmir intermittently.<sup>33</sup> When Kashmir burst into a full-fledged insurgency in 1989 as a result of Indian malfeasance in managing Kashmiri political grievances and gross electoral manipulations, Pakistan swung battle-hardened mujahideen from Afghanistan to Kashmir. The timing coincided with the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the demise of the Soviet Union, and the emergence of Pakistan's "nuclear umbrella."<sup>34</sup> Pakistan cultivated several kinds of militant groups for operations in Kashmir and beyond. These groups vary by sectarian orientation, the types of operations they employ, the ethnic background of their recruits, and even their means of recruitment and deployment.<sup>35</sup>

Analysts typically call these militant organizations "Kashmiri groups" or Kashmiri *tanzeems*. This is a misnomer, however, because these organizations include few ethnic Kashmiris among their ranks, and most do not operate exclusively in Kashmir. They include the Deobandi groups of Jaish-e-Mohammad and Harkat-ul-Ansar/Harkat-ul-Mujahideen; Ahl-e-Hadith organizations, such as the Punjab-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT); and groups influenced by the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), such as Hizbul Mujahideen and al Badr.<sup>36</sup>

## *The Pakistani Taliban Emerges: Realignment of Deobandi Militant Groups after September 11*

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11 and President Pervez Musharraf's decision (albeit coerced) to support the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, several of Pakistan's militant organizations began significant reorganizations. First, Jaish-e-Mohammad had a serious split over Musharraf's decision to facilitate U.S. operations in Afghanistan to overthrow the Afghan Taliban, which for most intents and purposes was a Deobandi-inspired Islamist government. Masood Azhar, Jaish-e-Mohammad's *amir* (commander), remained loyal to the state while Jamaat-ul-Furqan began undertaking suicide operations against government installations.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Shuja Nawaz, "The First Kashmir War Revisited," *India Review* 7, no. 2 (2008): 115–54.

<sup>32</sup> Andrew Whitehead, *A Mission in Kashmir* (London: Penguin Books, 2007).

<sup>33</sup> Praveen Swami, *India, Pakistan and the Secret Jihad: The Covert War in Kashmir, 1947–2004* (London: Routledge, 2007), 49–75.

<sup>34</sup> Fair, *Fighting to the End*.

<sup>35</sup> Fair, "The Militant Challenge."

<sup>36</sup> Many of these groups have been proscribed numerous times only to re-emerge and operate under new names. Rather than employing the most current names under which they operate, I use the names that are likely to be most familiar to readers.

<sup>37</sup> Amir Mir, *The True Face of Jihadis* (Lahore: Mashal Books, 2004); and Qazi, "Rebels of the Frontier."

During this same period when Pakistani groups were evolving, important events began taking place in FATA. Specifically, after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan that began in October 2001, many fighters associated with al Qaeda and the Taliban (Uzbeks, Uighers, Arabs, and Afghans, among others) sought sanctuary in FATA and paid a considerable amount of money to locals for shelter and amenities. When the Pakistan Army began undertaking limited operations in FATA in 2002, specific tribal dimensions of the conflict emerged. At first, the Wazirs elected to fight the Pakistan Army, and later the Mehsuds—who had previously been loyal to the army—also joined this fight. By 2007, Mullah Nazir and Hafiz Gul Bahadur led a new formation called the Muqami Tehreek-e-Taliban (Local Taliban Movement). This group aimed to protect the interests of Wazirs in North and South Waziristan. Nazir and Gul Bahadur formed this group “to balance the power and influence of Baitullah Mehsud and his allies, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.”<sup>38</sup> Notably, both Nazir and Gul Bahadur forged a pact with the Pakistan Army whereby they would desist from attacking it. Instead, they would focus all of their efforts on ousting the U.S. and NATO troops from Afghanistan and helping restore the Afghan Taliban to power.<sup>39</sup> Other tribal *lashkars* (militias) also emerged to challenge either the Pakistan military or rival groups. Some of the commanders began espousing the appellation of the Pakistani Taliban.

These various militias successfully forged a tentative archipelago of *sharia* (Islamic law) that arched across the Pashtun belt in FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Analysts generally cite 2007 as the year that the TTP formally coalesced. In November of that year, several Pakistani militant commanders, rallying under the leadership of Baitullah Mehsud, announced that they would henceforth operate under the banner of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (Pakistani Taliban Movement). But it should be noted that many commanders who call themselves Pakistani Taliban were not a part of this alliance. Notably, neither Nazir nor Gul Bahadur elected to join the TTP; instead, they continued focusing on the jihad in Afghanistan and remained foes of the organization’s leadership.

Following Baitullah Mehsud’s death as a result of a U.S. drone strike in August 2009, Hakimullah Mehsud took over the TTP. Under him, the TTP became more coherent and intensified its campaign of suicide bombings of Pakistani security and intelligence agencies.<sup>40</sup> TTP campaigns against civilian targets also became more vicious, singling out Shia and Ahmedis, who are considered *munafiqin* (Muslims who spread discord in the community) and *murtad* (liable to be killed), respectively. Nor has the TTP spared important Sufi shrines: since 2005, militants have launched more than 70 suicide attacks on such sites, killing hundreds, and attacks have intensified in recent years. This focus on sectarian violence no doubt reflected Hakimullah’s long-time association with the sectarian terrorist groups SSP and LeJ.

After a U.S. drone strike killed Hakimullah in November 2013, Maulana Fazlullah became the amir of the TTP. Fazlullah had previously claimed notoriety as the broadcaster “Maulana Radio” and as head of the Tehreek-e-Nifaz Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM), an Islamist militant group in Swat that resumed agitation for the imposition of sharia. Although the TNSM eventually became a working partner of the TTP, it had begun to challenge the state before the TTP formally announced its existence. The TNSM had been active in the 1990s, but several analysts contend that

<sup>38</sup> Qazi, “Rebels of the Frontier,” 577.

<sup>39</sup> C. Christine Fair and Seth G. Jones, “Pakistan’s War Within,” *Survival* 51, no. 6 (2009): 161–88.

<sup>40</sup> Pak Institute for Peace Studies, *Pakistan Security Report 2009* (Islamabad: Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 2009); and “Pakistan Blast Sharpens Concern on Taliban,” PBS NewsHour, January 1, 2010, [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/military/jan-june10/pakistan\\_01-01.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/military/jan-june10/pakistan_01-01.html).

events relating to the post-September 11 environment reinvigorated the group. Fazlullah forced an agreement (called Nizam-e-Adl, which means “system of justice”) from the Pakistani government in 2009 after a sustained campaign of terrorism that lasted several years.<sup>41</sup> However, when the TNSM broke the accord, the Pakistan Army quickly acted to crush the movement. Fazlullah now resides in Kunar Province in Afghanistan and is rarely heard from.<sup>42</sup>

While many analysts describe the TTP as a monolithic entity, it is perhaps best understood as an umbrella organization for various anti-Pakistan Islamist militants in the tribal regions of South and North Waziristan, Orakzai, Kurram, Khyber, Mohmand, Bajaur, and Darra Adam Khel, as well as in the settled districts of Swat, Buner, Upper Dir, Lower Dir, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Tank, Peshawar, Dera Ismail Khan, Mardan, and Kohat. At any given time, the exact composition of this umbrella organization changes as the Pakistani military encourages some factions to make temporary truces and redirect their actions in Afghanistan. It is also arguable whether the TTP has a coherent command and control structure, given that Fazlullah now resides in Afghanistan.<sup>43</sup>

Although the so-called Talibanization of the tribal areas was initially limited to North and South Waziristan, the phenomenon spread rapidly. Pakistani Taliban surfaced in areas that had previously been free of such activity, including Bajaur, Mohmand, Orakzai, and Kurram Agencies. Aid workers with whom I spoke in 2008 expressed surprise that Kurram had become so dangerous. But the agency has long been the site of sectarian violence due to its large Shia population. Given the intensifying sectarian agenda of the TTP, these developments in Kurram should not have been surprising.<sup>44</sup> The Pakistan Taliban also undertook activities in the frontier areas of Bannu, Tank, Kohat, Lakki Marwat, Dera Ismail Khan, and Swat.<sup>45</sup>

In April 2009, news reports announced the arrival of the Punjabi Taliban, referring to the various militant groups ensconced in the Punjab, the most populous province in Pakistan.<sup>46</sup> Despite its ostensibly recent coinage, the term Punjabi Taliban has a long and complex history, but since 2009 it has garnered significant political importance.<sup>47</sup> Many Pashtuns support the use of the term to emphasize that Pakistan’s insurgency is not solely Pashtun; however, many non-Pashtuns reject the term for the same reason. The latter prefer to attribute the threat against Pakistan to the “Pashtun other,” often stereotypically characterized as “uncivilized,” “warlike,” and “violent.”<sup>48</sup>

While it is tempting to view Punjab as a new theater of Talibanization, sites of militancy across Pakistan are interrelated. Punjab-based groups such as the Deobandi LeJ and Jaish-e-Mohammed are components of the TTP and conduct attacks in its name. In fact, the so-called Punjabi Taliban

<sup>41</sup> Asad Hashim, “The Iron Fist of Maulana Fazlullah,” Al Jazeera, November 8, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/11/iron-fist-maulana-fazlullah-201311171538269715.html>.

<sup>42</sup> Zia Khan, “Pakistani Spies Trace Fazlullah to Kunar Province,” *Express Tribune*, July 26, 2010, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/31093/pakistani-spies-trace-fazlullah-to-kunar-province>.

<sup>43</sup> One long-time observer of militancy in Pakistan, Mariam Abou-Zahab, strongly discounts the claim that the TTP is a coherent alliance. She argues that the constituent parts of this inchoate alliance are driven by local factors and constrained, in good measure, by tribal boundaries that circumscribe the leadership. Thus, she discounts claims that the TTP is a coherent organization running the length and width of the Pashtun belt. This view has been buttressed by my own field interviews in Pakistan in February and April 2009 and later.

<sup>44</sup> Mariam Abou Zahab, “The Regional Dimensions of Sectarian Conflict in Pakistan,” in *Pakistan: Nationalism without a Nation*, ed. Christophe Jaffrelot (London: Zed Books, 2002), 115–30.

<sup>45</sup> Fair, “The Militant Challenge.”

<sup>46</sup> Sabrina Tavernise, Richard A. Oppel Jr., and Eric Schmitt, “United Militants Threaten Pakistan’s Populous Heart,” *New York Times*, April 13, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/14/world/asia/14punjab.html>; and Hassan Abbas, “Defining the Punjabi Taliban Network,” *CTC Sentinel*, April 2009, 1–4.

<sup>47</sup> Rahimullah Yusufzai, “The Discourse on Punjabi Taliban,” *News (Pakistan)*, July 6, 2010, <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/4655.htm>.

<sup>48</sup> Author’s field work in the summer of 2010. See also “Rehman Malik Asserts He Used No Term Like ‘Punjabi Taliban,’” *South Asian News Agency*, June 4, 2010.

groups form the backbone of the TTP and have played an important role in attacking Sufi, Shia, Ahmedi, and other civilian targets throughout Pakistan and in Punjab in particular.<sup>49</sup>

Pakistan's militant landscape is also populated by key leadership councils (*shuras*) of the Afghan Taliban in Quetta, Peshawar, and Karachi, as well as by remnants of al Qaeda, whose operatives are known to reside in North and South Waziristan and in Bajaur, among other parts of the Pashtun belt. Moreover, many al Qaeda operatives, such as Abu Zubaydah and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, have been arrested in Pakistani cities with the help of Pakistani authorities. Osama bin Laden was also eventually found and killed by the United States in a Pakistani cantonment town.

## Obstacles to Reforming Security Governance in Pakistan

The preceding section surveyed the range of militant groups based in Pakistan both before and after September 11. Despite the trend of rising sectarian violence, numerous obstacles remain that will likely preclude Pakistan from undertaking the necessary reforms to enhance security for Pakistanis. First and foremost among these is a fundamental lack of will to dispense with militancy as a tool of foreign policy and the inability of civilian leadership to control the military and its dangerous agenda. (Of course it is far from obvious that civilians possess a different set of strategic priorities and beliefs about the best way to secure those priorities than does the army.)<sup>50</sup> While Pakistan's security forces evidence a stark lack of will, they are also crippled by enormous deficits of civilian capability and the concomitant political unwillingness to enhance the civilian security apparatus. Cutting across all these themes is the pernicious role of the ISI, which is under the control of the army. Like any other intelligence agency, the ISI is compartmentalized: one part of the organization is tasked with managing Pakistan's myriad jihadi assets, while other parts are tasked with fighting those militant groups deemed to be enemies of the state.

### *The Pakistan Army's Lack of Will*

As the two foregoing discussions intimate, Pakistan's key domestic foes are inherently tied to the country's strategy of managing its security concerns in Afghanistan and India. It is difficult to imagine that there could be a TTP had there not been an Afghan Taliban and its various Deobandi and al Qaeda-related allies in Afghanistan who fled to Pakistan. Nor is it easy to imagine that the TTP could exist—much less with such brutality—had there been no suite of Deobandi militant groups that the state raised to fight in India. At the same time, the state's ambivalence toward the Deobandi sectarian groups has also contributed to the reach and lethality of the TTP. This situation has given rise to the particular approach that the Pakistan Army has taken to these groups: the army and the ISI are unwilling to declare full-scale war but, to the extent possible, pursue peace deals with specific militant commanders.<sup>51</sup>

The Pakistan Army is extremely reticent to give up militant assets if they can be persuaded to turn their guns, suicide vests, and vehicle-born IEDs away from the Pakistani state and toward

<sup>49</sup> Bill Roggio, "Suicide Bomber Kills 60 at Mosque in Pakistan's Northwest," *Long War Journal*, November 5, 2010, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/11/suicide\\_bomber\\_kills\\_40.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/11/suicide_bomber_kills_40.php).

<sup>50</sup> A robust discussion of civil-military relations in Pakistan is beyond the scope of this essay. Moreover, this topic has been covered amply elsewhere. See, for example, Aqil Shah, *The Army and Democracy: Military Politics in Pakistan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014); Hassan Askari Rizvi, *The Military and Politics in Pakistan 1947–1997* (Lahore: Sange-e-Meel, 2000); Ayesha Siddiqa, *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy* (London: Pluto Press, 2007); and Fair, *Fighting to the End*.

<sup>51</sup> Daud Khattak, "Reviewing Pakistan's Peace Deals with the Taliban," *CTC Sentinel*, September 2012, 11–13.

Afghanistan or India. After the LeT attack in Mumbai in 2008, the Pakistan Army paused its military operations in FATA and even declared Baitullah Mehsud and Maulvi Fazlullah to be “patriotic” even though both had waged a militant campaign against the Pakistan Army for years.<sup>52</sup>

However, commanders and groups who prove to be recalcitrant—for example, Nek Mohammad, Baitullah Mehsud, Hakimullah Mehsud, and the TNSM in 2009—are eliminated either through military operations or through U.S. drone strikes in FATA. Needless to say, neither the Pakistan Army nor any of its civilian security forces have made serious attempts at eliminating Punjab-based groups that provide important lethality and reach to the TTP. Until the army abandons jihad as a tool of foreign policy, according to which some groups are viewed as state assets, extirpating the menagerie of Islamist militant groups savaging the state will be very difficult.

### *Pakistan's Security Governance: Lack of Capability<sup>53</sup>*

Many of the internal security challenges that are manifest in sectarianism, communal killing, and the insurgent and terrorist campaign of the TTP stem from Pakistan’s own policies. However, as noted above, when the state resolves to eliminate some groups, it often falls short.

The shortcomings of the civilian security apparatus are numerous. First, it should be acknowledged that Pakistani agencies view the myriad threats to the country differently. While the ISI may view a particular group or an individual to be an asset, local police may view them as a threat. Local police interviewed by this author over the years note that upon the police arresting a particular individual, the Ministry of Interior or some other government agency often demands the suspect’s release.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, even when civilian leadership would like the state organs to undertake actions against specific groups, civilians do not usually control these organizations. The discussion that follows examines the problems confronting the ISI and police forces.

*Inter-Services Intelligence.* As is well known, the ISI is not responsive to civilian control despite the fact that the organization is constitutionally accountable to the prime minister. Most of the officers come from the army on secondment, which means that their promotions, professional achievement, and ultimate loyalty rest with the army. Although the ISI also has officers seconded from other services, as well as a large but unquantifiable cadre of civilians, it has mightily resisted efforts to bring the organization under actual civilian control.<sup>55</sup> In 2008 the civilian government proclaimed that “the Prime Minister has approved the placement of Intelligence Bureau and Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) under the administrative, finance and operational control of the [Interior Ministry] with immediate effect.”<sup>56</sup> However, the government reversed this decision almost immediately, likely due to army outrage. Given that all Pakistani civilian leaders fear a military coup, there is little appetite to antagonize the army.

Despite frequent assertions that the ISI is a “rogue” organization, there is no actual evidence for this claim. In fact, as noted above, the ISI officer cadres all come from the armed forces,

<sup>52</sup> Blake Hounshell, “Pakistani Official Calls Bhutto’s Killer ‘Patriotic,’” *Foreign Policy*, Passport, November 30, 2008, [http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2008/11/30/pakistani\\_official\\_calls\\_bhuttos\\_killer\\_patriotic](http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2008/11/30/pakistani_official_calls_bhuttos_killer_patriotic); and Hamid Mir, “Army Official Calls Baitullah Mehsud, Fazlullah ‘Patriots,’” *News International* (Pakistan), December 1, 2008, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrintDetail.aspx?ID=18709&Cat=13&dt=12/1/2008>.

<sup>53</sup> This section draws from and updates C. Christine Fair, “Security Sector Governance in Pakistan: Progress, but Many Challenges Persist,” Centre for International Governance Innovation, SSR Issue Papers, no. 5, January 2012, [http://www.cigionline.org/sites/default/files/SSR\\_Issue\\_no5.pdf](http://www.cigionline.org/sites/default/files/SSR_Issue_no5.pdf).

<sup>54</sup> Zafar Abbas, “Operation Eye Wash,” *Herald* (Karachi), August 2005, 64.

<sup>55</sup> Jayshree Bajoria and Even Kaplan, “The ISI and Terrorism: Behind the Accusations,” Council on Foreign Relations, Backgrounder, May 4, 2011, <http://www.cfr.org/pakistan/isi-terrorism-behind-accusations/p11644>.

<sup>56</sup> M. Ilyas Khan, “Spy Agency Confusion in Pakistan,” BBC News, July 28, 2008, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7528592.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7528592.stm).

particularly from the army. The director general of the ISI is always a serving army general, and insubordination to the army chief is unthinkable without enormous consequences such as forced retirement. Thus, there is a consensus among experts that the ISI is not rogue but rather subordinate to the interests of the Pakistan Army.<sup>57</sup>

As a result, there is a sense in which the problem of the ISI is a subset of the army's dominance of the state, which itself is beyond the purview of civilian oversight. This is extremely destabilizing for the country and the region. Few Pakistanis are aware of the ISI's activities abroad or, if they are aware of the accusations, do not believe them.<sup>58</sup> However, given that the ISI proxies that ravage India are the most likely precipitant of an actual war, the lack of any civilian oversight of the organization continues to disconcert analysts within and beyond South Asia.<sup>59</sup>

In addition to their activities abroad, the ISI and other intelligence agencies are suspected of perpetrating appalling human rights abuses at home. Many persons have been abducted in what is referred to as "forced disappearance." Worse, once these persons disappear, families have no recourse to determine their fate or even their whereabouts. According to a recent report by Human Rights Watch, "information on the fate of persons subjected to enforced disappearances in Pakistan is scarce. Some of the alleged disappeared are being held in unacknowledged detention in facilities run by the Frontier Corps and the intelligence agencies, such as at the Kuli army cantonment, a military base in Quetta."<sup>60</sup> While the vast majority of these excesses are perpetrated by military intelligence agencies like the ISI, other agencies are also involved, including civilian entities such as the police, the Frontier Corps, and the Intelligence Bureau. The latter two organizations are run by the Ministry of Interior.

As in the case of military assistance, the United States and its partners hardly help the situation inasmuch as they rely heavily on the ISI. The United States, for example, counts on the ISI to detain individuals who are suspected of terrorism. Human Rights Watch explains that after Pakistan lent its support to the U.S. war on terrorism, "Pakistani authorities implemented a policy of rounding up suspected members of al Qaeda and the Taliban." During the Bush administration, "several hundred Pakistanis and foreign nationals living in Pakistan were simply taken into custody and handed over to the U.S. without any due process. Many of these people were then held at Bagram Airbase in Afghanistan or transferred to the U.S. military detention center at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba."<sup>61</sup> The United States and United Kingdom have done little to discourage these practices and in fact have been complicit in serious abuses of suspected terrorists. Investigations by Human Rights Watch have found evidence that both countries provided "Pakistan's security forces what they viewed as carte blanche to expand the scope and ambit of such abuses far beyond what was sought by their Western allies to cover political opponents of the military, including ethnic minority groups, particularly in Balochistan. Many of the individuals targeted, deprived of legal protections, have been or remain victims of enforced disappearance."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Bajoria and Kaplan, "The ISI and Terrorism."

<sup>58</sup> Only 19% of a predominantly urban adult sample believed the ISI gave any kind of direct support to an array of militant organizations. "Pakistani Public Opinion on Democracy, Islamic Militancy, and Relations with the U.S.: Questionnaire," WorlPublicOpinion.org, September 2007, [http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/jan08/Pakistan\\_Jan08\\_quaire.pdf](http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/jan08/Pakistan_Jan08_quaire.pdf).

<sup>59</sup> Frederic Grare, "Reforming the Intelligence Agencies in Pakistan's Transitional Democracy," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Report, March 2009.

<sup>60</sup> Human Rights Watch, "*We Can Torture, Kill, or Keep You for Years.*"

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 15–16.

*Police.* Pakistan is a security state dominated by the army. The army believes that it is the institution most capable of defending the ideological and territorial integrity of the state.<sup>63</sup> Despite the persistent and growing internal security challenges detailed above, Pakistan at the federal and provincial levels has failed to invest in modern police infrastructure that can contend with the various threats to the state and its peoples. Across Pakistan, the police remain horribly trained, poorly equipped, outmanned, outgunned by the various foes they confront, and poorly paid in proportion to the risks they assume. These problems incentivize corruption and in some cases defection, such as when police abandon their posts when militants are poised to overrun them or when they or their families are threatened.

Perhaps one of the most pernicious consequences of Pakistan's shambolic law-enforcement structures is rampant extrajudicial killing. According to a June 2011 account, approximately 700 suspects died due to police torture in the previous ten years. Punjab accounted for the largest fraction, with 300 persons dying in police custody over that period.<sup>64</sup> In fact, according to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan's 2010 annual report, 338 people were killed in police encounters, which are typically staged with the goal of killing the individuals targeted, whereas only 28 suspects were injured and captured alive. Moreover, the commission's tabulation of media reports reveals that there were at least 174 people illegally detained by police.<sup>65</sup>

It is also well known that Pakistan's police are deeply corrupt and engage in extortion, often demanding bribes to even file a case (or a "first information report," as it is known in Pakistan). Worse yet, the police can be paid by the wealthier party in a dispute to not file such a case. In a 2002 survey by Transparency International Pakistan, the police were ranked as the most corrupt institution in Pakistan.<sup>66</sup> All of this contributes to a rampant public fear of the police. This has profound effects on law and order and enables the violence that has seized the country. In many cases, citizens are reluctant to even notify the police of suspected criminal activity out of fear that the police will act against them rather than the suspected miscreant.<sup>67</sup>

Pakistan's police predominantly are equipped with .303 bolt-action rifles, lack even the most basic body armor, and travel in soft-skin vehicles that are vulnerable to attack. Police stations and training facilities remain frequent targets of terrorism, and most police infrastructure lacks the most elementary defenses to protect against such attacks. In addition, police forces are often barely literate, lack even the crudest forms of forensics capability, and are generally loathed by the public they ostensibly serve for their avarice and corruption.

Despite these persistent issues, it should be noted that there have been improvements to the police in some regions. Both Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police have increased pay, expanded their force, equipped select units with modern light and heavy weapons, and acquired better—if still inadequate—ground mobility and communications equipment. Over the course of my numerous visits to Pakistan since 1991, the Islamabad Police, in particular, appear to have made important strides in professionalization and have won back the confidence of Islamabad's residents. The well-paid and well-disciplined Motorway Police are respected for their integrity and professionalism, but remain exceptional within a police system mired in decrepitude.

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<sup>63</sup> Haqqani, *Pakistan*.

<sup>64</sup> Jam Sajjad Hussain, "Punjab Tops in Extra-Judicial Killings," *Nation* (Pakistan), July 30, 2011.

<sup>65</sup> Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, *State of Human Rights in 2010* (Lahore: Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2011), 76–77.

<sup>66</sup> Transparency International–Pakistan, "Nature and Extent of Corruption in the Public Sector 2002," 2002.

<sup>67</sup> Azhar Hussain Nadeem, *Pakistan: The Political Economy of Lawlessness* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Not only has Pakistan for the most part demurred from making critical investments in its police forces, the state has also failed miserably to provide a modern policing framework. Until 2002, Pakistan still operated under the Police Act of 1860—a colonial era dispensation designed to control citizens rather than protect them. President Musharraf’s Police Order of 2002 was an important move to professionalize the police and remove them from the influence of politicians who had become accustomed to using the police to advance their personal agendas. When the parliament convened in 2002, however, it undermined some of the ordinance’s most important measures pertaining to the political neutrality of the police force. In the intervening years, Pakistan’s national and state assemblies, as well as the various police forces, have been unable to agree on a concept of policing for a modern state. Without this framework, the marginal improvements to police training, equipping, and professionalization will be limited.

This situation is unfortunate. Pakistan has many advocates for robust police reform from within its various policing institutions, but these reformers lament that they cannot attract the requisite attention from Pakistan’s legislative bodies. The police also report tension with the army and intelligence agencies. Police allegedly arrest individuals who are suspected of being terrorists only to be told that they must release these persons due to the interference of intelligence agencies. Indeed, the lack of a uniform approach to confronting terrorist groups within Pakistan’s security and intelligence agencies remains a key challenge.

Ostensibly, policing responsibilities in the four federal units are vested in the provincial governments, and the provincial police structures act independently of each other without any national integration. The Interior Ministry does, however, exercise overall supervision. With the passage of the 18th Amendment to Pakistan’s constitution in 2010, federal ministries are to be devolved. How this will unfold with respect to the Ministry of Interior in policing is yet to be seen. Despite these ostensible oversight bodies, policing in Pakistan is subject to political interference, with many politicians using the police as personal militias. Police are directly incentivized to abide by political demands because promotion, pay, and postings are not based on merit but on *sifarish* (political influence).<sup>68</sup>

The Pakistan Army most likely is at best ambivalent about making widespread improvements in policing, if for no other reason than to preserve its preeminent status among other institutions. This attitude is shortsighted. The literature on insurgencies generally finds that local police—not armies—play the pivotal role in successful counterinsurgencies.<sup>69</sup> Arguably, maintaining the army’s operational tempo in internal security duties over a long period of time will have negative effects on troop morale and erode the army’s relationship with the citizenry. Unfortunately, there are few signs that Pakistan is taking its policing challenge seriously.

*Criminal justice system.* The police are also hobbled by Pakistan’s derelict criminal justice system, which, with a conviction rate between 5% and 10%, more often than not acquits the accused.<sup>70</sup> Suspects in extremely high-profile attacks routinely go free, such as in the 2007 attack on Benazir Bhutto in Karachi, the 2008 Danish Embassy and Marriot Hotel bombings in Islamabad, and the 2009 assault on the Lahore training academy. Even the accused in the 2009 attack on army headquarters in Rawalpindi were acquitted. This demoralizes the police, who are often incapable of

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<sup>68</sup> Frederic Grare, “Political Dimensions of Police Reforms in Pakistan,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Policy Outlook, July 14, 2010.

<sup>69</sup> See case studies in C. Christine Fair and Sumit Ganguly, eds., *Policing Insurgencies: Cops as Counterinsurgents* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>70</sup> International Crisis Group, “Reforming Pakistan’s Criminal Justice System.”

assembling a coherent file that presents sufficient evidence to persuade a judge to convict. Indeed, the police generally do not know how to preserve a crime scene, collect evidence, or maintain evidence custodial chains and also lack the capacity to analyze ballistics, DNA, or other common forms of forensic evidence. Furthermore, Pakistan has no witness protection program. Given the limited police capabilities, witnesses are critical, but few witnesses are willing to put their lives at risk. Witnesses are not alone; many judges may be reluctant to convict—or acquit in the case of blasphemy charges—out of fear of retribution. Prosecutors are also sensitive to personal risk in deciding whether to take up a case. For these and other reasons, police resort to extralegal means to deal with suspects, such as killing them in “encounters.”

In fact, Pakistan’s criminal justice system is flawed from its first principles: the legislative framework. The country’s criminal law draws on three colonial era laws: the Pakistan Penal Code of 1860, the Evidence Act of 1872, and the Criminal Procedure Code of 1898. Pakistan has also retained the colonial-era Frontier Crimes Regulation of 1901, which places FATA under a different regulatory framework based on a system of political agents who serve as judge, prosecutor, and law enforcement and govern on the principle of “collective punishment.” Despite some putative reforms in the regulation, residents of FATA have no appellate recourse should they feel aggrieved by a political agent’s determination. Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Kashmir, and parts of Baluchistan are also subject to laws other than those that govern the four “normal” provinces.

In addition to these geographically peculiar laws, several other laws have been enacted that are germane to security governance. General Zia’s notorious Hudood Ordinances enforce physical punishments for a wide array of crimes and equate rape without witnesses with other forms of “unlawful fornication,” which are punishable with stoning or death. The National Accountability Ordinance has been used selectively to pursue persons who antagonize the government in power. A third example is the recently lapsed Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997, which provided special courts and provisions for detaining and trying suspected terrorists.

Not only is Pakistan’s legal framework ill-suited for a modern state beset with complex law and order problems, the system of courts and prisons are derisory. According to the International Crisis Group, at the beginning of 2010 there were more than 177,000 cases pending in the superior courts (the Supreme Court, the provincial high courts, and the Federal Shariat Court) and 1.3 million in the lower judiciary.<sup>71</sup> The number of court personnel employed to manage this system is too few. As are civil servants everywhere, judicial officers are poorly paid and amenable to bribery.

The overcrowding of prisons in Pakistan poses another problem for the police system. Approximately 80% of the prison population is composed of persons on trial, which not only raises serious concerns related to due process but also presents security risks. Prisons are in fact logistical operational hubs for terrorists and organized criminals, who use mobile phones to plan and coordinate operations from the safety of their jail cells. Prisons also provide militant groups with ready pools of potential recruits. With too few prison staff, authorities are unwilling to engage in countermeasures to curb such activities.

This situation is exacerbated by a surprising paucity of trained trial lawyers. Because lawyers are the pool from which the judiciary draws, the problem percolates throughout the criminal justice system with no palliative in sight. Part of the problem stems from the quality of legal education in Pakistan. According to persons I interviewed in the spring of 2008, the country’s legal education is still conducted in English, owing to the fact that case law history, torts, and

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<sup>71</sup> International Crisis Group, “Reforming Pakistan’s Criminal Justice System,” 8.

other relevant historical opinions are all in English (due in part to Pakistan's colonial heritage). While there are proponents of changing the official language to Urdu, if that were to happen, engaging this vast body of juridical opinion would soon become very difficult. The problem with continuing to rely on English as the educational medium in law school is the simple fact that many students do not possess adequate English-language skills to understand the materials. There are few ways of resolving this impasse without making serious structural changes to Pakistan's system of jurisprudence or improving the quality of law students' preparation.

Thus, comprehensive reforms to Pakistan's criminal justice system are needed. Officials should begin by revamping the legal framework; investing in the construction of a modern policing force; investing in lawyer training; reforming judicial recruitments and appointments, both at the lower and superior levels; and working to stem the institutionalized corruption that extends throughout the breadth of Pakistan's legal system.

## Conclusions and Implications

Pakistan's leadership has consistently pursued Islam as a national ideology. With the passage of the Objectives Resolution, religious entrepreneurs and ulema assumed a permanent role in deciding who is a Muslim and who is "Muslim enough." This strategy of handling Pakistan's domestic diversity has been consistently impinged on by the tool that the state has used to manage its concerns in Afghanistan and India: Islamist militancy. Arguably, this twinned set of policies was not sustainable over the long haul, even absent the developments in the region after September 11 and the U.S. decision to invade and then occupy Afghanistan. Indeed, the data presented in section one of this essay shows that Pakistan experienced considerable violence before 2001.

However, the regional developments that ensued after September 11 have rendered Pakistan's internal security virtually unmanageable. Under the best-case scenario, Pakistani institutions will have enormous difficulties contending with internal security threats. Yet, as an authoritarian state, Pakistan has consistently failed to develop constitutional democratic arrangements that would empower citizens to take part in the conduct of their state's affairs at home and abroad.

If bureaucratic, political, and military leaders were serious about contending with these myriad threats, they would undertake very serious reforms. First, the state would evolve a different ideology that moves away from the exclusionary and communal rhetoric of the two-nation theory toward an approach that acknowledges and embraces sectarian, ethnic, communal, and other regional and local differences. Second, it would undertake sweeping reforms of internal security governance. Third, the state would abandon jihad as the principal tool of foreign policy in Afghanistan and India.

As there is virtually no chance that Pakistan would pursue one, much less all three, of these courses of change, the United States and the region should prepare for a Pakistan that is ever more dangerous—most of all for its own citizens.

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# Informal Agencies of Influence in Pakistan: The Interdependence of Social, Religious, and Political Trends

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This essay argues that social, religious, and political trends tied to an expansion of Pakistan's lower-middle classes have strengthened mafia-style politics in ways that undermine the legitimacy of the state.

### **MAIN ARGUMENT**

Informal agencies of influence in Pakistan are tied to three broad trends. The first trend unfolds in the domain of society at large and consists of a movement away from large landowners in favor of the rising lower-middle classes. The second trend takes place in the realm of religion and involves the decline of established religious scholars in favor of Pakistan's freelancing and relatively undisciplined junior ulema. The third trend, unfolding in the sphere of local politics, involves a general shift away from the senior statesmen who sought to mold the formal legal landscape of Pakistan in favor of what I call Pakistan's "petty parliamentarians." This group of politicians does not seek to mold the law; rather, it seeks to determine who is held accountable to existing laws and, more importantly, who is not. Patterns of rural-to-urban migration in central Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Baluchistan suggest that as the influence of informal politics increases, the legitimacy of the state is diminished. This pattern is unlikely to produce an explosive transformation in Pakistan. Nonetheless, it is likely to weaken the formal apparatus of the state (and those who engage with it) while strengthening the bonds between existing state actors and various urban and sectarian mafias.

### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- Given that much of the political action in Pakistan takes place at the level of "mafia" politics, policymakers must learn to navigate informal social, religious, and sectarian trends unfolding at this level.
- Moving beyond military, civilian, bureaucratic, business, NGO, and media elites, analysts must include an account of Pakistan's youth and popular classes. Connecting elite and nonelite levels is necessary to appreciate the "informalization" of contemporary politics.
- Religious identification in Pakistan is directly underpinned by grassroots efforts to combine economic and political mobility with religious respectability. Analysts require a deeper understanding of the relationship between economic growth and sectarian competition.

This essay examines the relationship between informal agencies of influence and the question of instability in Pakistan. The analysis does not stress particular events; instead it focuses on broad structural trends within three specific domains. Each trend moves away from a familiar caricature of the political landscape in Pakistan during the first few decades after the country's formation in 1947. This landscape is characterized by (1) a shift from large landowners focused on the preservation of traditional rural norms and customary law to the "petty bourgeoisie," (2) a shift from old-school religious leaders based in large *madaris* (Islamic schools) and focused on the reproduction of nuanced doctrinal debates to freelancing and relatively undisciplined "petty ulema," and (3) a shift from powerful statesmen, including senior military leaders, who sought to mold the legal landscape of the country, to "petty parliamentarians" seeking to determine who should be held accountable to existing laws and, more importantly, who should not.

Throughout this essay, I do not use the term "petty" in a strictly pejorative sense. Instead, I use this term to describe the junior status of particular actors as well as the tendency of these junior actors to engage in practices that might be described as informal. These practices are defined by a certain quasi-legal or explicitly illegal quality.<sup>1</sup>

The large-scale transformation within which I situate key changes tied to economic activity, religious practice, and grassroots political behavior is related, first and foremost, to patterns of rural dislocation, rural-to-urban migration, and the expansion of informal wage labor in Pakistan's urban and peri-urban areas. As such, most of my remarks are focused on Pakistan's rural and peri-urban areas, particularly in the provinces of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Baluchistan. I also touch on related trends in Karachi near the end.

One of the key trends lying at the heart of this essay concerns the expansion of nonstate or private-sector education among Pakistan's lower and lower-middle classes. Two types of educational institutions are important: private madaris and private schools. With reference to madaris, I discuss the problem of sectarian conflict. With reference to private schools, I discuss Pakistan's exam-system mafia and the problem of bogus credentials. Pakistan's aspiring lower-middle classes, concentrated in peri-urban areas, are closely related to both types of institutions. In fact, problems pertaining to sectarianism and bogus credentials also emerge as helpful points of emphasis within my account of the work undertaken by Pakistan's petty parliamentarians. As I explain, petty parliamentarians flourish precisely insofar as they succeed in accessing the power of the state to protect those (e.g., petty entrepreneurs and petty ulema) who bend existing rules.

In his well-known book *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, Olivier Roy focused on three different dimensions of grassroots authority in Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup> I draw attention to changes within the same three dimensions in Pakistan: the first is the *malik* or *khan* (tribal landowner) and his *jirga* (council of tribal elders convened to settle disputes); the second is the religious mullah and his *madrasah*; and the third is the state and its courts. My emphasis, however, lies on the ways in which, during the past 20–30 years, each of these three dimensions has been destabilized by large-scale social changes. The first section discusses changes related to rural-to-urban migration, the second considers new forms of religious interpretation, and the third examines the consolidation of new forms of electoral (albeit, as I will explain, not quite democratic)

<sup>1</sup> In India, the term *jugaad* is sometimes used to describe these informal non-elite practices. These practices are characterized, above all, by a flexible "get it done" approach to existing rules and conventions.

<sup>2</sup> Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

political accountability. The essay then concludes with a brief description of likely political trends moving forward.

## Society: From Established Landowners to the Rise of Pakistan's Petty Bourgeoisie

In Roy's work, landowning maliks are tied to large estates and the machinations of rival khans. Drawing attention to specific forms of competition between rival kinship factions (i.e., powerful, landowning, agnatic Muslim castes), Roy builds on some of the work that Fredrik Barth initiated in his study of political patterns in Swat during the 1950s.<sup>3</sup> By the time Talal Asad and Charles Lindholm returned to Swat during the 1960s and 1970s, however, Barth's focus on rival khans had already been displaced by a combined account of khans and social class.<sup>4</sup> What follows is a brief account of the implications surrounding this combined social formation.

### *From Rival Khans to Rival Classes*

Rival khans still figure prominently in Pakistani society. But over time the commercialization of agriculture and the influx of money via migrant laborers (particularly non-landowning laborers who migrated to work in Karachi and the Gulf) meant that rival khans have been forced to contend with upstart tenants, urban traders, and a slowly expanding, increasingly mobile middle class. The latter group has been keen to devour new forms of economic and above all educational opportunity across a wide range of schools and madaris.

Of course, the size of the middle class is notoriously difficult to estimate. The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), however, argued in 2011 that, within a population of roughly 187 million (40% urban and 60% rural), 42% should be described as "vulnerable" lower-class citizens and 11% should be described as members of Pakistan's urban professional middle classes (or the elite).<sup>5</sup> Beyond this, PIDE described 23% of the country's citizens as middle-class "aspirants" (22% urban and 24% rural), 16% as middle-class "climbers" (21% urban and 12% rural), and 8.5% as the "fledgling" middle class itself (12.5% urban and 6% rural). I will focus on these latter three groups. Constituting 25%–50% of the population, the short-term fortunes of these ambitious groups (whether rising or falling) are likely to place a great deal of pressure on Pakistan's traditional elites. The degree to which public opinion shapes Pakistan's policy environment is unclear; but, in a strictly informal sense, these classes are unlikely to be silenced.

During the 1990s, scholars such as Alain Lefebvre described the social and political activities associated with Pakistan's migrant middle classes in the Punjab.<sup>6</sup> Lefebvre found that much of this group's new wealth was spent on lavish weddings, consumer goods, and land (thus allowing new classes—indeed, new Muslim castes—to enter "the world of rival khans"). More recently, however, scholars have stressed the ways in which the wealth associated with this burgeoning class of urban migrants has been channeled into entrepreneurial or charitable activities,

<sup>3</sup> Fredrik Barth, *Political Leadership among the Swat Pathan* (London: Athlone, 1959).

<sup>4</sup> Talal Asad, "Market Model, Class Structure, and Consent: A Reconsideration of Swat Political Organisation," *Man* 7, no. 1 (1972): 74–94; and Charles Lindholm, "Contemporary Politics in a Tribal Society: Swat District, NWFP, Pakistan," *Asian Survey* 19, no. 5 (1979): 485–505.

<sup>5</sup> Durr-e-Nayab, "Estimating the Middle Class in Pakistan," Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, Working Paper, no. 77, 2011, <http://pide.org.pk/pdr/index.php/wp/article/view/2958>.

<sup>6</sup> Alain Lefebvre, *Kinship, Honour, and Money in Rural Pakistan: Subsistence Economy and the Effects of International Migration* (Richmond, England: Curzon, 1999).

including new businesses, hospitals, ambulances, and again private schools. Standing in for weak public-sector services, many of these new charitable institutions charge fees. These fees are often means-tested, with poorer community members receiving subsidies. Some of these institutions are also launched as a form of charitable giving, including those supported by well-known religious organizations like Jamaat-ud-Dawa (enjoying close ties to the military).<sup>7</sup> But, secular or religious, most are never registered; they remain strictly informal. While a few seek formal recognition as charities, they often do so precisely because this allows the owner or entrepreneur to avoid paying certain taxes.

### *Rival Classes, Religion, and Politics*

Analysis of “new money” figures prominently in most of the recent work on shifting patterns of rural authority in Pakistan. In the district of Jhang, for instance, Mariam Abou-Zahab has documented the contested power of landowning Shia elites, thereby drawing attention to the mostly Sunni mobilization of marginalized tenants, middle-class traders, and smallholding *muhajirs* (i.e., immigrants from other districts).<sup>8</sup> Here an increasingly mobile rural and peri-urban middle class has stepped forward to challenge the authority of Pakistan’s traditional landholding elite—both in economic terms (as the embodiment of Pakistan’s petty bourgeoisie) and in sectarian terms (via petty ulema like the Jhang-based founder of the ardently anti-Shia Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi).<sup>9</sup>

Chakwal District has not been discussed in the academic literature to the same extent as Jhang. But Chakwal is similar. Here, Shia landowners have long battled rising Sunnis—Sunnis whose shifting circumstances have been tied not only to migrant labor in the Gulf but also to military service in Pakistan. The Shias of Chakwal typically support a pro-Shia party known as the Majlis-e-Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM), whereas many local Sunnis are drawn to the successor organization of the Sipah-e-Sahaba, known as Ahl-e-Sunnat-wal-Jamaat (ASWJ). In fact, these social-cum-religious ties have become increasingly salient in political terms over time.

Within Chakwal, Sardar Ghulam Abbas has been an important Shia leader for many years, holding key positions like that of the Chakwal District Nazim. But since 1985, his main Sunni rival, the retired general Majid Malik, has controlled the local National Assembly seat. The issue of educational qualifications took center stage in 2002 when new rules introduced by General Pervez Musharraf required members of the National Assembly to hold a valid university degree. These new rules prevented Malik from defending his seat (for a sixth time), so he responded by nominating his graduate nephew, the retired general Tahir Iqbal, to serve instead. Malik later passed the baton to a Sunni journalist by the name of Ayaz Amir during the elections of 2008.

This shift from Malik to Iqbal, and then to Amir, did not matter very much in “economic” or “sectarian” terms. But, within just a few years, the ASWJ had turned against Amir for his middle-class liberal views. And in 2013 their resistance compelled Malik to shift his political support back to Iqbal (who defeated Ghulam Abbas once again). Organized religious influence, closely related to middle-class social ties, was thus important politically as well.

<sup>7</sup> Humeira Iqtidar, *Secularizing Islamists? Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamaat-ud-Dawa in Urban Pakistan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Mariam Abou-Zahab, “The Sunni-Shia Conflict in Jhang, Pakistan,” in *Lived Islam in South Asia: Adaptation, Accommodation, and Conflict*, ed. Imtiaz Ahmad and Helmut Reifeld (New Delhi: Social Sciences Press, 2004), 135–48. See also Muhammad Q. Zaman, “Sectarianism in Pakistan: The Radicalisation of Shi'i and Sunni Identities,” *Modern Asian Studies* 32, no. 3 (1998): 689–716.

<sup>9</sup> Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi launched the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) in Jhang after President Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq bowed to Shia protests seeking an exemption from the compulsory payment of zakat (religious alms) during the 1980s.

Residents of the area note that Chakwal's Shia elite had long used their control over Chakwal's district *kachehri* (administrative headquarters) to seize property illegally (e.g., via intimidation and the forgery of documents that could be used to defend their acquisitions within Chakwal's district courts). But this is only part of the story. Others note that Chakwal's powerful Shias simply sought to recover what a shrewd land mafia controlled by the ASWJ had previously seized for General Malik. The point does not concern the activities of Chakwal's Sunnis or Shias per se; rather, it concerns the relationship between "traditional" rural and "rising" urban elites, channeled through sectarian and electoral rivalries focused on the illegal capture of land.

### *Rival Classes and the Pursuit of Informal Justice*

The specific political parameters of each locality are different. However, with slight modifications—particularly in Baluchistan, as discussed below—the local trends I describe are sufficiently generalized to account for broad national patterns as well.

Historically, scholars have stressed the ways in which family- and land-related conflicts between rival khans were settled via arbitration, with the process being mediated by informal *jirgas* or *panchayats*.<sup>10</sup> As time passed, however, scholars have also emphasized two changes. The first change concerned the encroachment, within this rural dispute-resolution landscape, of state-based courts. The second concerned the role of religious elites.

As early as the late nineteenth century state-based litigation became increasingly popular in northwest India. This pattern emerged not so much from a desire to press for the strict enforcement of colonial laws but in a bid (led by rival khans) to secure greater access to state power so that, in due course, that power might be manipulated in the context of the colonial courts. After 1947 this confluence of local khans and state-based courts continued. In fact, postcolonial elections frequently boiled down to what might be described as a kinship-based competition between would-be captors of the courts.<sup>11</sup> Increasingly, electoral success implied an enhanced ability to manipulate state power in ways that might allow for the protection of one's allies from the enforcement of existing laws—above all, postcolonial laws that threatened to dismantle the agnatic landownership patterns that each khan was committed to defend.

This shift away from *jirgas* and *panchayats* to state-based courts, however, was just one part of the story. Even as state-based courts were being pulled into landed kinship rivalries, parallel economic changes also provided new forms of access to *sharia*-based forms of dispute resolution associated with local mullahs. In broad terms, commercial agriculture and extensive labor migration to the Gulf meant that certain mullahs, previously serving as the "employees" of powerful landowners, started to enjoy alternative sources of financial support from Pakistan's rising middle classes. In effect, new sources of funding allowed a growing number of what Muhammad Qasim Zaman calls the "peripheral ulema" to loosen prevailing forms of rural subordination.<sup>12</sup> Some continued to serve powerful landowners, but many began to peddle their services within Pakistan's new middle classes. Indeed, many found that Pakistan's petty bourgeoisie—particularly those with ties to the Middle East—were keen to mix their rising economic position with new forms of religious prestige.

This adjustment in the social-cum-religious terrain shifted the menu of dispute-resolution options, prompting some within the rising middle classes to call on this new breed of freelancing

<sup>10</sup> "Panchayat" is another term used to describe a council of elders convened to settle disputes.

<sup>11</sup> Matthew J. Nelson, *In the Shadow of Sharīah: Islam, Islamic Law, and Democracy in Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

mullahs for fatwas. In fact this pattern of economic-cum-religious exchange—what some would describe as a new space of economic and religious resistance to established elites—is precisely what has unfolded in places like Jhang and Chakwal.

A similar pattern emerged in Swat—albeit, this time, without the same sectarianism. During the 1970s, for instance, Charles Lindholm describes a pattern in which the marginalized tenants of Swat who supported land seizures inspired by the rhetoric of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) became disgruntled after the removal of PPP Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto by General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq.<sup>13</sup> Lindholm notes that by 1981 many of Swat's disaffected tenants had joined up with renegade Sunni mullahs like Maulana Sufi Mohammad to press their social-justice demands within Sufi's informal (i.e., nonstate) references to sharia.<sup>14</sup>

In most parts of Pakistan, it is common for both the jirga and the courts to be captured by powerful landowners.<sup>15</sup> In the jirga, informal settlements are expected to reinforce the agnatic terms of tribal custom—customs that stress the terms of patriarchy and patrilineage while, at the same time, varying from place to place. But the terms of custom have been treated as increasingly anathema, since 1947, in Pakistan's state-based courts. Still, my own research shows how Pakistan's state-based courts remain closely tied to the pursuit of custom-friendly outcomes.<sup>16</sup> In fact when less powerful litigants approach the courts, they are often bankrupted by procedural maneuvers and stratagems that, in a *de facto* sense, reinforce the specific terms of tribal custom. Elected elites often facilitate these stratagems en route to the production of extrajudicial *razeenamas*, or compromises, favoring landowning elites outside of the courts themselves.

With this in mind, it is hardly surprising that, among the rising lower-middle classes, freelancing mullahs operating at some distance from the traditional rural order are occasionally seen as an attractive dispute-resolution alternative. Indeed, most appeals for speedy justice at the hands of local mullahs—including appeals by those who lack any pious motivation—could be described as a form of class-based resistance. This pattern of social resistance is critical of both the jirga and its formal appendage, the courts. Indeed, Pakistan's Islamic state is widely seen as “un-Islamic” precisely insofar as its core institutions have been captured by elites firmly committed to the preservation of rural tribal norms.

### *Rival Classes: The Case of Baluchistan*

Baluchistan is particularly interesting when it comes to these evolving social trends. For several decades, prevailing forms of resistance to a formal state known for supporting the jirga system favored by tribal elites (i.e., Baluch sardars) have not been associated with any form of religious resistance. Instead, prevailing forms of resistance have been associated with secular forms of regional or nationalist dissent.<sup>17</sup>

In Baluchistan regional politics have long involved at least four levels of tension. The first, unfolding within the Baluch community, pits traditional tribal sardars against a group of

<sup>13</sup> Lindholm, “Contemporary Politics in a Tribal Society,” 485–505.

<sup>14</sup> See Lindholm, “Contemporary Politics in a Tribal Society”; and Aasim S. Akhtar, “Islam as Ideology of Tradition and Change: The ‘New Jihad’ in Swat, Northern Pakistan,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 30, no. 3 (2010): 595–609.

<sup>15</sup> See Muhammad A. Chaudhary, *Justice in Practice: Legal Ethnography of a Pakistani Punjabi Village* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>16</sup> Nelson, *In the Shadow of Shari'ah*.

<sup>17</sup> In Baluchistan, patterns of dissent have focused on secular demands for provincial-cum-ethnic autonomy not unlike—indeed, historically tied to—the secular demands of Bengal's Awami League. See Paul Titus and Nina Swidler, “Knights, Not Pawns: Ethno-Nationalism and Regional Dynamics in Post-Colonial Balochistan,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 32, no. 1 (2000): 47–69.

modernizing middle-class nationalists. The second pits both groups (each favoring its own type of social order while pressing for greater provincial autonomy) against the centripetal pull of Pakistan's powerful centralizing state, including the Pakistan Army (dominated, as it is, by Punjabis). The third level pits different tribal leaders (even from within the same tribe) against one another—some working to oppose and some working to gain access to various forms of state power. The fourth pits nationalist (i.e., ethnic) Baluch against Baluchistan's ethnic Pashtuns.

These four levels of tension are important. But over time analysts such as Frederic Grare have also emphasized a shift within Baluchistan's resistance movement. This shift offers a subtle twist on the macro-level social changes discussed above in the context of Jhang and Chakwal. Whereas in the past resistance-oriented tribal elites collaborated with middle-class nationalists against other tribal elites affiliated with the state, Grare draws attention to the expanding influence of middle-class activists based along Baluchistan's southern coast (including, especially, those with close ties to the Gulf). Drawing attention to many of the same trends of Gulf migration and mobility described above, Grare points to a broad geographic shift "from rural to urban" and thus "from the northeast of the province to the southwest."<sup>18</sup> Ugo Fabietti shares this assessment and stresses that Baluchistan's middle-class activists remain closely tied to powerful transnational networks, including lucrative networks for smuggling drugs and guns. These networks, including related networks in Karachi, have allowed Baluchistan's urbanizing middle classes to fund persistent forms of ethnic-cum-nationalist resistance.<sup>19</sup>

Given what Nina Swidler describes as the "partial" transformation of society in Baluchistan—a transformation in which "tribal" Baluch are simultaneously caught up in "new forms of consciousness associated with education and wage work"—it is difficult to describe the Baluch resistance movement as categorically opposed to Baluchistan's rival sardars.<sup>20</sup> Instead, it may be more accurate to say that Baluch insurgents are only opposed to those sardars who support the exclusionary policies of the state. These insurgents see the state as denying the Baluch population access to public- and private-sector employment (e.g., public-sector jobs in Quetta and private-sector engineering jobs in Gwadar) in favor of Punjabis, as well as denying or withholding access to the royalties associated with the extraction of Baluchistan's natural resources (e.g., natural gas from Sui). The insurgents have also stressed rampant human rights violations perpetrated by state actors in their push to pacify the province.

Together with this shift in favor of an urbanizing middle-class Baluch resistance movement, however, some observers have also gone on to stress key changes within the state itself in favor of religion. In particular, some allege that the pro-government vigilantes unleashed to "disappear" Baluch insurgents maintain close ties to Punjab-based sectarian groups like ASWJ and its anti-Shia militant wing, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi.<sup>21</sup> In short, the battle for Baluchistan has slowly evolved along rival middle-class agendas—a secular agenda dominated by insurgent Baluch (in collaboration with certain tribal elites) versus a sectarian agenda dominated by Punjabis (working indirectly with the state).

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<sup>18</sup> Frederic Grare, "Balochistan: The State Versus the Nation," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 11, 2013, 9, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/04/11/balochistan-state-versus-nation>.

<sup>19</sup> Ugo E.M. Fabietti, "Equality versus Hierarchy: Conceptualising Change in Southern Balochistan," in *Marginality and Modernity: Ethnicity and Change in Post-Colonial Balochistan*, ed. Paul Titus (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 13–15, 18.

<sup>20</sup> Nina Swidler, "Beyond Parody: Ethnography Engages Nationalist Discourse," in Titus, *Marginality and Modernity*, 187–88.

<sup>21</sup> See Grare, "Balochistan," 17.

## **Conclusion**

In Jhang, Chakwal, Swat, and Baluchistan, new forms of resistance pit Pakistan's rising middle classes against the state and its fading rural order. This resistance is routinely tied to competing notions of social justice, including forms of justice set apart from negotiated forms of state-based legislation. And, with the exception of Baluchistan, this resistance is often inflected by rival claims to Islam.

## **Religion: From Established Religious Scholars to the Rise of Pakistan's Petty Ulema**

Historically, as noted above, rural mullahs were employed by (and subordinated to) powerful landowners. But as Pakistan's economy has begun to shift, many mullahs have found themselves with new sources of financial support—particularly from the urban middle classes and Pakistan's petty bourgeoisie. In what follows, I will briefly explore the implications of this change for the religious and sectarian politics of the country.

### *Petty Ulema and the Political Economy of Religious Education*

The evolving relationship between Pakistan's petty bourgeoisie and Pakistan's petty ulema surfaces in the research of Masooda Bano, who describes the work of an enterprising mullah living in Rawalpindi. Keen to access the social-cum-religious aspirations of Pakistan's rising middle classes, this mullah established two educational institutions within a single building. On the one hand, he created a community madrasah with approximately 50 students; on the other, he created a private school with approximately 100 students. Bano writes that "the head is constantly innovating and adapting to combine his dual objectives of providing religious education and...earning a good living." He simply promises to provide the children in his madrasah "with some secular education on top of the[ir] religious education," while at the same time providing those in his private school with "a secular education...rooted in religious principles."<sup>22</sup>

It would be difficult to find a better illustration of the relationship between Pakistan's rising middle classes and religion. In fact, this account is very much in keeping with my own research on the "hybrid" social-cum-religious priorities of Pakistan's aspiring lower-middle classes. Many in these groups insist that they send their children for religious education precisely because they value the prospect of improved access to employment.<sup>23</sup>

As Bano points out, students who complete their education in a madrasah often enjoy greater access to employment in Pakistan's rapidly expanding religious sector (one of the few areas of expansion in the country's notoriously anemic economy). But even beyond this, many claim that the problem of unemployment itself stems from "corrupt" employers who value kinship or connections over merit. In fact, these parents see religious (or moral) education as an opportunity to cultivate the community values that will allow their children (and other lower-middle-class children) to improve their employment prospects in the future.

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<sup>22</sup> Masooda Bano, "Contesting Ideologies and Struggle for Authority: State-Madrasa Engagement in Pakistan," University of Birmingham, Religions and Development Research Programme, Working Paper, no. 14, 2007, 39, <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/government-society/rad/working-papers/wp-14.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> See Matthew J. Nelson, "Muslims, Markets, and the Meaning of 'A Good Education' in Pakistan," *Asian Survey* 46, no. 5 (2006): 699–720; and Matthew J. Nelson, "Dealing with Difference: Religious Education and the Challenge of Democracy in Pakistan," *Modern Asian Studies* 43, no. 3 (2009): 591–618.

### *From Religious Education to Sectarian Competition*

My own research does not stress the link between education and employment. Instead I focus on an equally crucial link between education and the formation of ideas, drawing attention to the link between “hybrid” secular and religious enrollments and the formation of sectarian ideas.<sup>24</sup> In public as well as non-elite private schools, government-sanctioned curricula designed to prepare local students for government-sanctioned exams emphasize the “unifying” potential of Islam: “We have faith in one God, one Prophet, and one [holy] book,” notes one Urdu-language textbook, “so it’s binding on us that we should be one as a nation also. We are all Pakistanis now: not Balochis...not Sindhis...not Pathans.”<sup>25</sup> Indeed, in keeping with the Islamic ideology of Pakistan and constitutional language seeking to avoid any encouragement of sectarian prejudice (Article 33), Pakistani public and non-elite private schools make no effort to acknowledge any form of doctrinal difference.

Within most madaris, however, the prevailing tendency runs the other way. Students are trained to recognize fine-grained doctrinal differences as matters of “proper belief.” In fact the value of Sunni over Shia beliefs, Sunni Deobandi over Sunni Barelvi beliefs, and so on is continually reinforced via *munazaras* (debates) and the extracurricular practice of *radd* (doctrinal disputation).

These differences between “school” and “madrasah” curricula are striking. But their significance for the cultivation of ideas lies in the degree to which Pakistan’s expanding lower-middle classes engage in hybrid forms of education. My own research shows that the oft-cited World Bank statistic indicating that less than 2% of all madrasah enrollment amounts to full-time residential enrollment is broadly correct.<sup>26</sup> Yet, having said this, an additional 8% appear to call the mullah from their local madrasah to teach their children at home, while a further 69% are engaged in part-time study involving *maktab-* or madrasah-based enrollment during the morning or afternoon.<sup>27</sup> In fact, moving away from the World Bank’s conclusions, I found that a clear majority of every demographic group in Pakistan favors some combination of religious and secular enrollment in maktabas or madaris and schools. This is, of course, exactly the trend that entrepreneurial educators like Bano’s enterprising mullah have sought to tap.

This trend of hybrid enrollment, however, serves as a powerful driver of ideas. In practice, most students simply combine the ideas they encounter in school with those they encounter in their maktab or madrasah, insisting with their school curriculum that Pakistan is an Islamic state in which “there is only one Islam” and, then, moving over to the curriculum they encounter in their maktab or madrasah, that that “one Islam” is the sectarian Islam associated with a particular mullah. This is the sort of mindset that spurs a popular but competing sense of sectarian affiliation in Pakistan.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Matthew Nelson, “Ilm and the Individual: Islamic Education and Religious Ideas in Pakistan,” in *Being Muslim in South Asia: Diversity and Daily Life*, ed. Robin Jeffrey and Ronojoy Sen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 161–80; and Nelson, “Dealing with Difference,” 591–618.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Nelson, “Ilm and the Individual,” 165.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. Note that full-time enrollment, including nonresidential enrollment, is closer to 6%.

<sup>27</sup> A “maktab” is a rudimentary mosque-based Quranic school.

<sup>28</sup> See Nelson, “Dealing with Difference.”

Like Pakistan's petty bourgeoisie, the petty ulema are entrepreneurial.<sup>29</sup> Although some of the social trends related to the rise of the petty bourgeoisie have provided petty ulema with new forms of financial (and operational) independence, this relationship should not be overstated. In fact most of the support the petty ulema receive from Pakistan's petty bourgeoisie is channeled through established forms of institutional authority tied to Pakistan's sectarian *wafaq* (madrasah accreditation boards): the Wafaq-ul-Madaris al-Shia for the Shia, the Wafaq-ul-Madaris al-Arabiya for Sunni Deobandis, the Tanzeem-ul-Madaris for Sunni Barelvis, the Wafaq-ul-Madaris al-Salafiyah for the Salafi Ahl-e-Hadith, and the Rabita-tul-Madaris for madaris affiliated with the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI).

By and large, Pakistan's petty ulema maintain strong doctrinal ties to their own sectarian *wafaq* (albeit stronger in the case of most Deobandi and Jama'at madaris than in the case of most Barelvi madaris). As their influence has expanded, partly owing to the work of their own private madaris, these petty ulema have also cultivated community bonds that bring them into contact with those seeking state power in the context of Pakistan's provincial and national elections.

### *Petty Ulema and Party Politics*

In Chakwal, local forms of sectarian competition routinely place those affiliated with the Shia MWM at odds with the Sunni (Deobandi) ASWJ via party-based forms of political competition pitting the Shia Sardar Ghulam Abbas (frequently associated with the PPP) against the Sunni General Malik (tied to the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, or PML-N). In fact, the same religious-cum-political actors (MWM/PPP and ASWJ/PML-N) re-emerge in several other districts, including Rahim Yar Khan, Bhakkar, Gujrat, and Jhang.<sup>30</sup>

In Rahim Yar Khan, Bhakkar, and Gujrat, sectarian violence has flared in the wake of provocative wall-chalking, tit-for-tat text messages, and violent clashes during Muharram. Here again the ASWJ was reported to enjoy close "local" ties to the "national" PML-N. In fact, during the 2013 elections, Amir Mir reported that these two parties discussed seat-by-seat plans known as "seat adjustments" according to which each party would avoid fielding candidates against the other. Focusing primarily on Rahim Yar Khan, Bahawalnagar, Layyah, Faisalabad, and Jhang, Mir reported that the ASWJ agreed to field candidates in four constituencies, leaving twelve for the PML-N.<sup>31</sup> In the end, these adjustments did not materialize, and the ASWJ failed to win any seats.<sup>32</sup> But even so, it is widely believed that the ASWJ did not lose out entirely. What it sought from the beginning was primarily access to impunity. The ASWJ leaders simply calculated that, in exchange for providing a certain amount of political support to the PML-N during the local elections, the PML-N would stifle any future push to introduce a ban on the ASWJ's activities.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> In a related development, Jon Boone has described "a little-known outsourcing boom fuelled by parents of Pakistani origin [in Britain and around the world] turning to Qur'an teachers in Pakistan" via Skype. See "Concerns over Online Qur'an Teaching as Ex-Pakistan Militants Instruct Pupils," *Guardian*, June 17, 2013. Boone focuses on an organization known as Faiz-e-Quran run by a retired colonel, Sultan Chaudri, previously associated with Jamaat-ud-Dawa. Turning to the entrepreneurial underpinnings of this venture, however, Chaudri complains that many of his teachers leave to start "computer academies" of their own.

<sup>30</sup> One of the key precursors for the MWM, the Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqh-e-Jafria, emerged in Bhakkar during the 1980s.

<sup>31</sup> Amir Mir, "Punjab Government May Not Act against LeJ: PML-N Has Seat Adjustments with Defunct SSP," *Dawn*, February 22, 2013.

<sup>32</sup> Muhammad Ahmed Ludhianvi disputed the election for constituency NA-89 in Jhang. Initially, a tribunal convened by the Punjab Election Commission found in his favor, but the Supreme Court of Pakistan later suspended the case.

<sup>33</sup> Mir, "Punjab Government May Not Act against LeJ." In 2010, Punjab chief minister Shabaz Sharif argued that the TTP should "spare" the Punjab owing to his government's "independence" from the United States. Sharif pointed to the fact that he rejected development assistance tied to the Kerry-Lugar-Berman Act because, according to Sharif, it amounted to a violation of Pakistan's "sovereignty" for attempting to link development funding to the U.S. government's certification of civilian control over Pakistan's military affairs.

During the past few years the mainstream political influence of Pakistan's freelancing mullahs has become increasingly hard to miss. Throughout the 2013 campaign, for instance, parties that articulated a willingness to appease Pakistan's petty ulema—namely the PML-N, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F), and JI—fared well. By contrast, those that refused—namely the PPP, Awami National Party (ANP), and Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM)—suffered brutal and sustained attacks.

### **Conclusion**

Once upon a time, aggressive mullahs were seen as a proxy force used by the Pakistan Army to manage its foreign policy goals. Since 2013, however, it may be more accurate to say that these religious activists are also tied up with mainstream political parties pursuing domestic electoral goals. A pattern has emerged in which sectarian mullahs seize new economic resources (including illicit resources tied to extortion as well as drug, weapon, gem, and timber smuggling) to carve out a political space increasingly removed from the traditional authority of prominent landowners and the operational authority of established madaris.

As discussed above, what is crucial about these trends is not merely the sectarian politics of Pakistan's petty ulema. What matters is the way in which these trends bring Pakistan's petty ulema together with Pakistan's petty bourgeoisie and parliamentarians in a much larger push for scarce resources. In peri-urban areas, working with candidates like General Malik, both the petty ulema and the parties associated with them have extended their economic interests into commercial property, residential areas, and increasingly one another's sectarian mosques. Focusing on Rawalpindi, Ayesha Siddiqa comments on the trend "of Barelvi mosques being forcibly occupied by Deobandis." This, she argues, is an economic push for urban real estate tied up with sectarian trends, often taking place with the help of "land mafias" protected by the PML-N.<sup>34</sup>

Of course the economic and political muscle associated with these new religious actors is not exploited by elites alone. Even at a local level, most of Pakistan's blasphemy cases stem from small-scale skirmishes over scarce resources, with the members of one local faction pulling in powerful sectarian mullahs to describe a key rival as a blasphemer (thereby implicating him or her in a capital crime rooted in simple hearsay). Again, it is not religion alone that is important. What matters is the confluence of economic, religious, and political trends at both the local and the national levels simultaneously.

## **Politics: From Established Statesmen to the Rise of Petty Parliamentarians**

It is probably safe to say that the Pakistani state has struggled with the rule of law—not least in the context of several military coups. In the past, the government's dance with despotism has often been tied to the power of rural elites—not only formally but also informally given the capture of the state and its local courts by landowning kinship factions.<sup>35</sup> Since the mid-1980s, however, elected officialdom has drawn away from the exclusive power of rural elites owing to

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<sup>34</sup> Ayesha Siddiqa, "The New Frontiers: Militancy and Radicalism in Punjab," Centre for International and Strategic Analysis, February 4, 2013, 14, 17. See also S.V.R. Nasr, "The Rise of Sunni Militancy in Pakistan: The Changing Role of Islamism and the Ulema in Society and Politics," *Modern Asian Studies* 34, no. 1 (2000): 139–80.

<sup>35</sup> See Nelson, *In the Shadow of Shari'ah*.

core structural changes. Increasingly, elected officials have sought to combine their enduring ties to rural elites with an attachment to informal patterns of power dominated by urban mafias. Here again underlying patterns are apparent. These patterns are tied up with informal access to state power via elected officials peddling valuable forms of impunity—impunity as a form of political patronage for powerful mafias intervening to assist with the illegal (or quasi-legal) capture of urban land.

### *Informal Politics and the Rule of Law: A Case of Public Ambivalence*

In 2013 this balance between rural power and urban land mafias was challenged by the party of Imran Khan—the PTI—and its rhetoric of “clean government.” The PTI emerged as the leading party of a new coalition in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa—partly owing to sustained TTP attacks on its avowedly secular rival, the Pashtun-nationalist ANP. Although the PTI’s electoral success was limited, there can be little doubt that it energized the young, urban, right-of-center orientation of Pakistan’s rising middle classes. In fact, even apart from Peshawar, the PTI emerged as the second-largest party in urban areas across the country, in Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad as well as Multan, Faisalabad, and Rawalpindi.

The sociological significance of the PTI far outweighs its immediate political significance. In fact, the PTI introduced what can only be described as a political puzzle regarding the value-based orientation of Pakistan’s middle classes—a puzzle in which social and religious trends turn on the horns of an evolving dilemma: Will this rising middle-class cohort turn to parties like the PTI because, as Umer Farooq noted in one account of a PTI rally in Faisalabad, the party’s “tirade against the traditional political elite” appeals to those in Pakistan’s lower-middle classes “who form a majority of the population [and] have an enduring sense of insecurity as most of them...do not own any land,...which makes them dependent on local industry [or] commerce”?<sup>36</sup> Will Pakistan’s lower-middle classes turn to Imran Khan because, in keeping with many of the social-cum-religious patterns described above, ASWJ flags and representatives of Jamaat-ud-Dawa are present at PTI rallies?<sup>37</sup> Or, turning away from this account of sweeping social-cum-religious change, will this cohort simply continue to support notables within established parties like the PML-N? Indeed, given eleventh-hour efforts to capture the hearts and minds of young voters by distributing free laptops to Punjabi students (and constructing an elevated bus route in Lahore), is it even correct to see the PML-N as a traditional party tied to Pakistan’s enduring rural tradition of “thug love”?<sup>38</sup>

By all accounts, Pakistan’s rising middle classes are pressing impatiently for change. In fact it is often reported that their attachments to landowning kinship factions and the patronage systems these groups maintain are losing ground to policy-oriented parties like the PTI and the rhetoric of Imran Khan. But is this correct?

In the Lahore constituency that Khan himself contested, one reporter quoted a young urban office worker whose demographic profile clearly matched that of the PTI. Surprisingly, the office

<sup>36</sup> Umer Farooq, “In the ‘Right’ Direction,” *Herald* (Pakistan), April 15, 2013, <http://herald.dawn.com/2013/04/15/in-the-right-direction.html>.

<sup>37</sup> See Huma Yusuf, “Imran Khan’s Security State,” *Dawn*, February 20, 2012, <http://dawn.com/2012/02/20/imran-khans-security-state>.

<sup>38</sup> For a discussion of this tradition, see Cyril Almeida, “Notes from Central Punjab,” *Dawn*, April 21, 2013, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1024715/notes-from-central-punjab>. “His goons are everywhere,” notes Almeida in his caricature of Pakistan’s old-school political elites. But “the thug is also a people’s guy. His dera is always open, his phone [is] always on.” Almeida adds, “If you’re his voter, he’ll move heaven and earth to fix [your] problem[s].... [But] the nasty side is equally real. The thug-winner has an elaborate network of facilitators, smaller thugs, and henchmen. The money he skims off contracts or earns through his criminal enterprise is shared.... [In fact] sharing the loot wins him loyalty, and the loyal network delivers him votes.... What the soft touch can’t win over,...threats and intimidation can.”

worker did not plan to vote for Imran Khan. Instead, he planned to vote for Khan's PML-N challenger, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq. And he did so owing to the political leanings of his *biraderi* (i.e., his kinship-based clan). "This system is very strong in Pakistan," he said, referring to the traditional power of kinship-based alliances typically associated with rural areas. Even in 2013, the office worker still insisted that this system must be "respected."<sup>39</sup> Khan may have won the second-largest number of votes in Pakistan's urban areas. But in the end he was unable to secure the seat he contested in the center of Lahore owing to the power of long-standing rural political patterns.

In the district of Gujrat, this dilemma was very much in play throughout 2013, and the informal capture of rural and urban land continued to figure prominently. As the campaign season accelerated, small and medium-sized landowners based near the district headquarters were racked with anxiety. Although they expected the PML-N to win on a provincial level, they were reluctant to launch a local challenge to the enduring patronage power of those previously associated with the "king's party" of General Musharraf (i.e., the Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam, or PML-Q), namely Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi. If they expected to retain any local political influence at all, these landowners knew they would need to provide their clients with assistance in the context of the district kachehri (where the politics of impunity were crucial). The question was through whom, in party terms, this informal assistance would be provided at a local level.

The personal preferences of these anxious local powerbrokers were divided between a National Assembly candidate holding a PML-N ticket and a Provincial Assembly candidate holding a PTI ticket.<sup>40</sup> But, middle-class aspirations and personal preferences notwithstanding, they hesitated to sponsor a rally for anyone other than the Chaudhrays (PML-Q). Even if they could afford to host separate rallies for separate candidates (which these local powerbrokers could not), would they be punished by the Chaudhrays for doing so? As in Lahore, the power of patronage rooted in local notables continued to matter a great deal, and in the end these powerbrokers hosted a rally for the Chaudhrays. One local powerbroker with ties to the Chaudhrays noted that "people vote for us because they perceive us as [being able to] come to their help in times of trouble." Indeed, during an interview with Pakistan's Herald, he simultaneously addressed "three different complaints—one related to illegal occupation of land, another related to gas supply...and a third regarding the admission of young boys and girls in a local college."<sup>41</sup> Qabza (illegal land seizures) and colleges are in many ways the core themes in the patronage politics of Pakistan. Karachi is one place where these two themes are clearly developed side by side.

### *Informal Politics: The Case of Karachi*

Within Karachi, the more established and well-educated Urdu-speaking Muhajirs have been challenged, since the 1960s, by the rural-to-urban migration of many Pashtuns, with both groups seeking to control the city's vast informal settlements. Since 2001, however, the influx of Pashtuns has accelerated (with many fleeing the violence tied to militant and military operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). And, as this influx has increased, Pashtun control over

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<sup>39</sup> Jon Boone, "Pakistan Backs Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif as Imran Khan Falls Short," *Observer*, May 11, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/12/pakistan-elects-nawaz-sharif-imran>.

<sup>40</sup> Author interviews conducted in March 2013.

<sup>41</sup> Farooq, "In the 'Right' Direction."

key transport links—both within Karachi and along the route between Karachi and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa—has bolstered their economic clout.<sup>42</sup>

The MQM, representing Karachi's middle-class Muhajir community, is well known for its use of violence to discourage expanding Pashtun migration into the city (while, at the same time, pushing settled Pashtuns to live in ethnic ghettos as a means of consolidating and restricting their votes). These tactics have spurred tit-for-tat attacks. But for more than a decade before 2013 both the Muhajir's MQM and the Pashtun's ANP played a key role in Islamabad's governing coalitions. This made it much harder for the state's security personnel (e.g., army rangers) to crack down on their party-based vigilantes.

In any event, control over urban land is a central feature of Karachi's party politics. In fact, as in many other cities, mutually beneficial links have developed between party-based politicians and criminal mafias—both motivated by an interest in seizing plots of land to construct additional housing and shops for their supporters.<sup>43</sup> Even as land mafias are involved in providing an informal solution to Karachi's persistent housing and infrastructure shortages, however, they are also involved in providing a healthy income to party-based collaborators (supplying an informal income to the petty parliamentarians who intervene to provide these mafias with various forms of political protection). The distribution of social services and the distribution of political impunity are not incompatible; rather, bringing these elements together is increasingly the name of Pakistan's political game.

As Huma Yusuf notes, referring both to the influx of Pashtun migrants and to Karachi's very long history of informal settlements (beginning with the influx of Muhajirs from India after 1947), “broader socioeconomic factors and land use trends are the true drivers of Karachi's violence.”<sup>44</sup> Political parties have ceased to offer policy-oriented political “representation”; instead, they provide “an essential form of protection” under the guise of “ad hoc service delivery.” In fact, the benefits run at least three ways at once—to politicians, their constituents, and the mafia—with “land grabbers...us[ing] political connections to regularize squatter settlements...[or] secure permits to develop [plots for housing]...purchased for a fraction of their market value after threats or acts of violence.”<sup>45</sup>

Urban mafias are a crucial part of party politics in Karachi. Yet having said this, those mafias are also keen to maintain a certain amount of operational autonomy. One of the best examples of this independence moves beyond the city's well-known Muhajir-Pashtun (MQM-ANP) rivalry to an area known as Lyari, which is dominated by migrant Baluch. Historically, Yusuf notes, Lyari has been “a hub of drug smuggling, weapons trafficking, extortion, [and] kidnapping” with close ties to the PPP.<sup>46</sup> But by 2008 its warring gangs had been brought under the control of a notorious gangster named Rehman Dakait, who formed a People's Amn or “Peace” Committee (PAC) to sustain a ceasefire. Later that year, however, his death created a succession crisis pitting Uzair

<sup>42</sup> The route between Karachi and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is also used to supply NATO forces in Afghanistan. Some argue that Pashtun ties to Pakistan's national transport infrastructure have helped to stitch the Pashtun community more fully into Pakistan's national fabric—effectively pulling them away from the pursuit of a new “Pashtunistan” combining elements of Afghanistan, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

<sup>43</sup> See Liza Weinstein, “Mumbai's Development Mafias: Globalization, Organized Crime, and Land Development,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 32, no. 1 (2008): 22–39.

<sup>44</sup> Huma Yusuf, “Conflict Dynamics in Karachi,” United States Institute of Peace, 20, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/resources/PW82.pdf>.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 12.

Baluch (backed by the PPP) against Akram Baluch (with ties to the MQM). The Uzair Baluch faction, however, decided to break with the PPP in 2012, and according to Yusuf they “signaled” this by killing a local PPP representative.<sup>47</sup>

This highly factionalized pattern of violence has also created a welcoming platform for the Taliban. Since 2010, separate TTP groups from South Waziristan (based in Sohrab Goth and Manghopir) and Swat (based in Pathan Colony and Future Colony) have expanded their campaign against leading ANP politicians beyond Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to Karachi. These operations have displaced the ANP and nudged the city’s political center of gravity away from an ethnic Muhajir-Pashtun idiom toward a sectarian pattern involving rival Taliban (Deobandi), Sunni Tehreek (Barelvi), and Sipah-e-Mohammad (Shia) urban warriors.<sup>48</sup>

In Manghopir, the Taliban have launched their own extortion rackets and begun to mediate disputes through what one observer called “a parallel judicial system.”<sup>49</sup> Attacks on prominent media outlets like the Express Group recall the Taliban’s targeting of those who criticized the shooting of Malala Yousafzai in Swat. Indeed, one of the TTP’s own offices is called the Anti-Crime Control Committee even as the Taliban has been described as “the latest player” in Karachi’s city-wide “land grab.”<sup>50</sup>

Again, the link between large-scale social changes and micro-level religious and political changes is easy to see: “Karachi’s educated middle-class residents are increasingly being enticed by sectarian groups and the TTP,” notes Yusuf. “This is not only for ideological reasons, but also because, in a violent and competitive city, affiliations with...the armed wings of political parties...or sectarian groups provide much-needed protection.”<sup>51</sup> In short, Pakistan’s petty bourgeoisie, ulema, and political parties collaborate with organized crime.

What we see is a common pattern of informal politics—a disorderly scramble for scarce resources—inflected, in certain ways, by shades of regional variation. What we see is a pattern in which, over time, Pakistan’s political landscape has shifted toward an increasingly regionalized battle between rival middle-class parties in urban areas. In the North, we see rival middle-class parties with a common right-of-center orientation: in Punjab, the PML-N is pitted against the PTI, while in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa the PTI is pitted against JI. In the South, we see rival middle-class parties with a secular focus drawing attention to specific ethnic differences: in Karachi, the MQM vs. the ANP; in Sindh, the MQM vs. the PPP; and in Baluchistan, the National Party vs. the Balochistan National Party. Although each locality is different, the overall trends apply to most localities throughout Pakistan, especially in peri-urban areas.

### *Informal Politics: The Case of Education*

Moving away from this scramble for scarce urban real estate, however, there is at least one ostensibly positive issue that all of Pakistan’s major parties seek to highlight: education. That issue draws attention back to the importance of Pakistan’s aspiring middle classes and their quest for

<sup>47</sup> According to Yusuf, the PAC’s decision to kill the local PPP representative was spurred by “resentment against the PPP which had consistently curtailed the PAC’s activities to appease its [national-level coalition allies within] the MQM.” See Yusuf, “Conflict Dynamics in Karachi,” 13.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 17–18.

<sup>49</sup> Declan Walsh, “Taliban Spread Terror in Karachi as the New Gang in Town,” *New York Times*, March 28, 2013.

<sup>50</sup> Fahim Zaman and Nazihah Syed Ali, “Taliban in Karachi: The Real Story,” *Dawn*, March 31, 2013, <http://www.dawn.com/news/799118/taliban-in-karachi-the-real-story>.

<sup>51</sup> Yusuf, “Conflict Dynamics in Karachi,” 20.

social mobility. Unfortunately, a closer look at each party's rhetorical commitment to expanding the benefits of education (en route to employment) is not far removed from the larger themes of this essay focused on the informal work of Pakistan's petty parliamentarians.

Briefly stated, Pakistan's elected leaders are alive to the public's demand for educational credentials. During the past two years, Punjab's provincial government has accepted substantial funding from the British government to recruit nearly 80,000 new teachers for government schools—which is particularly significant in light of the fact that those teachers could be called on to serve as returning officers during the 2013 elections.<sup>52</sup> Calling education its “number one national priority,” for instance, the PML-N promised to raise national education expenditures to 4% of GDP. (For comparison, the PPP promised 4.5%, while both the MQM and the PTI promised 5%).<sup>53</sup> Indeed, well-known educationist Faisal Bari noted that leading up to the recent election there was a clear realization in each party's manifesto that education was “necessary for the social and economic well-being of the country.”<sup>54</sup>

My own research, however, reveals the extent to which local politicians frequently manage to balance their commitment to the provision of high-quality educational credentials with persistent failures at the level of education itself.<sup>55</sup> In fact, herein lies the paradox associated with recent efforts to address widespread middle-class demands for education: in practice, much of this demand is bound up with demands for high-quality education measured by improved exam scores; but in many cases higher scores are simply for sale with the help of an elaborate network of exam-fixers known as the *booti* mafia. (The term “booti” refers to several different types of cheat sheets.) In fact, Pakistan's booming market for low-cost private schools plays an important part in this mafia, with some of the fees charged by these private schools allowing them to pay more for the mafia's services. (Advertising high scores helps these schools expand their business.) Yet local politicians also play a role: they are paid by the mafia—and thus indirectly by students and parents—to provide a certain amount of political protection. Here again access to impunity emerges as the name of the patronage game.<sup>56</sup>

Aspiring middle-class parents are keen to pay as much as they can to provide their children with a good education. That education is defined by a combination of religious and secular education, but the latter is measured via scores on the government's annual exams. It is in fact quite difficult to overstate the resistance faced by those who seek to dismantle Pakistan's booti mafia and thus provide for honest exams. When the chief minister of Punjab, Shahbaz Sharif, piloted a computerized exam system designed to break up the local booti mafia in 2011, the most powerful network of private schools in the province emerged at the front of violent protests to block it.<sup>57</sup>

Throughout Pakistan, strong exam scores are seen as the most effective way to secure good jobs for students—particularly when it comes to the public-sector jobs for which aspiring non-elites

<sup>52</sup> Michael Barber, “The Good News from Pakistan: How a Revolutionary New Approach to Education Reform in Punjab Shows the Way Forward for Pakistan and Development Aid Everywhere,” *Reform*, March 2013, 13, [http://www.reform.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/The\\_good\\_news\\_from\\_Pakistan\\_final.pdf](http://www.reform.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/The_good_news_from_Pakistan_final.pdf).

<sup>53</sup> Faisal Bari, “Education and Manifestos,” *Dawn*, March 29, 2013, <http://www.dawn.com/news/798752/education-manifestos>. Constitutionally, education is a “provincial” subject, and most provinces spend up to 40% of their provincial budgets on education.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Matthew J. Nelson, “Educational Quality: Roadblocks Facing Reform in Pakistan” (unpublished manuscript).

<sup>56</sup> During the 2013 elections, several politicians were barred from contesting because they held fake degrees.

<sup>57</sup> “Inter Results: ‘Punjab Group of Colleges Orchestrated Protests,’” *Express Tribune*, November 15, 2011, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/292300/bise-result-fiasco-incorrect-results-could-be-due-to-human-error>.

so often compete. Teachers and their principals want high scores too, not only because their professional evaluations are tied to them, but also because so many moonlight as entrepreneurs offering private tuition (with higher scores once again serving to boost business). Exam invigilators and their superintendents are equally enthusiastic about what the booti mafia can do to supplement their incomes. And, finally, as in the case of Karachi's housing sector, politicians often find that selective forms of protection can supplement their incomes too.

### **Conclusion**

A pattern of informal politics is seen throughout Pakistan. In 2012 the Punjab government initiated a programme requiring junior bureaucrats to record the phone numbers of those who approached them for services.<sup>58</sup> Those numbers were later used to generate robocalls asking whether citizens were satisfied with their bureaucratic experience. After more than a million calls, however, the program had received 175,000 replies and just 6,000 reports of bribery. It may be that citizens were not confident that punitive action would be taken against those who demanded bribes. But there is also another possibility. In many cases, citizens themselves sought out opportunities to pay informally for quasi-legal or illegal acts. They may have believed that punitive action would be taken and sought to avoid that outcome.

### **Looking Ahead**

As noted above, this essay examines informal processes in Pakistan, focusing on three domains—the petty bourgeoisie (i.e., Pakistan's rising middle classes), the petty ulema, and the petty parliamentarians. In many ways these three domains are inseparable. But, precisely insofar as this is the case, it remains to be seen whether the broader trends this essay describes are destabilizing for the state as a whole.

There is every reason to believe that the frequent collaboration between (1) Pakistan's aspiring and rapidly urbanizing middle classes, (2) Pakistan's freelancing and often aggressively sectarian mullahs, and (3) Pakistan's corrupt politicians might be destabilizing. This is particularly true in places like Baluchistan or Karachi, where ethnic tensions figure so prominently. In fact the risk of instability would appear to be compounded by the yawning gulf between the informal patterns I have described and the ordering potential of the state. The traditional rural order that once sustained a modicum of highly inegalitarian social control in Pakistan is fading. But as that old order (long reinforced by the state) continues to fade—more slowly than many would like to suggest—new forms of state power have scarcely begun to replace it. Moving forward, the formal power of the state is likely to remain rather weak. As the power of the state continues to merge with informal processes, however, the legitimacy of the state will almost certainly continue to deteriorate.

Globally connected, entrepreneurially minded, and blessed with a knack for practices captured by the notion of *jugaad*, Pakistan is not short of money—neither old money nor new.<sup>59</sup> But resources tend to be exchanged informally, particularly when it comes to new businesses; charitable, religious, or sectarian causes; and the competition for rural and urban land. Indeed the patterns

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<sup>58</sup> "Punjab Tries New Way of Tackling Corruption," Associated Press, February 4, 2013. See also Huma Yusuf, "Pakistan's Corruption Conundrum," *Dawn*, April 24, 2013.

<sup>59</sup> See footnote 1 for an explanation of *jugaad*.

described in this essay are defined by their informality. By and large they involve informal access to state power via elected officials peddling impunity as a form of protection for powerful sectarian and mafia groups. Today, local social trends are intimately bound up with the informalization of Pakistani politics more generally.

The interaction between the three domains I have chosen to highlight typically reinforces enduring forms of inequality. That inequality is itself closely associated with violence. But, taken as an organic whole, this pattern of enduring inequality stitched together with violence need not be seen as explosive—tempestuous, perhaps, but not explosive. On the contrary, this interaction could be seen as sociologically dynamic and adaptive.

In my view, the social, religious, and political life of Pakistan during the next five to seven years does not lie in any steady progress (or dramatic lurch) in the direction of religious revolution, liberal democracy, secularism, civil war, or clean government. Instead, the future lies in ongoing efforts to combine the selective distribution of informal social services with the selective distribution of impunity. This is neither a religious nor a democratic nor an authoritarian model of government. On the contrary, what we see is a case in which the distribution of impunity by elected officials remains the most valuable political prize of all.

In an important review article published in 2005, Magnus Marsden lamented a persistent tendency to see “Islamist political parties...[as] important not for the content of their ideologies but because of the socio-economic conditions that created them.”<sup>60</sup> He stresses, in particular, scholars’ persistent focus on “rural-urban migration, the experience of...[state] corruption... and [a] posited relationship between these social dynamics and growing levels of support for ‘Islamis[m].’”<sup>61</sup> I agree that this focus on sociological drivers figures prominently, but I do not agree that it eliminates a nuanced appreciation for religious ideologies. On the contrary, what we have is an appreciation for the link between social change, political frustration, and specific religious ideas. In this case, an appeal for new forms of political power has been framed in an Islamic idiom and taken up by sectarian mullahs funded, in part, by Pakistan’s once marginalized (but now rising) lower-middle classes.

This paper aims to support a deeper understanding of the sociopolitical landscape influencing both internal dynamics and state stability in Pakistan. Along the way, I have also sought to shed a bit of light on Pakistan’s state and nonstate power structures, drawing attention to the ways in which these structures might unfold in different parts of Pakistan over time.

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<sup>60</sup> Magnus Marsden, “Mullahs, Migrants, and Murids: New Developments in the Study of Pakistan,” *Modern Asian Studies* 39, no. 4 (2005): 983.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 986.



# India-Pakistan Relations and Regional Stability

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This essay reviews the current state of India-Pakistan relations and examines the prospects for bilateral and regional cooperation between the two South Asian neighbors.

### **MAIN ARGUMENT**

India and Pakistan have considerable scope to build on the various confidence-building measures that have been negotiated in the past decade and a half, especially in the areas of trade and economic cooperation. Greater economic engagement has the potential to generate interdependence that could help promote the normalization of relations. However, policymakers in both countries face familiar obstacles to a normal relationship—cross-border terrorism originating from Pakistan, differences over Kashmir, and entrenched domestic opposition to broadening engagement on both sides of the border. The inability of policymakers to separate progress in one field from differences in other areas has rendered it difficult to expand and sustain cooperation. More immediately, India-Pakistan relations are further complicated by the turbulent regional dynamic centered on Afghanistan. The drawdown of foreign troops after over a decade-long international presence in Afghanistan and the challenges of producing internal stability there will make the construction of a shared vision for regional cooperation elusive.

### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

This essay offers the following policy recommendations for limiting conflict between India and Pakistan and expanding the scope for cooperation:

- India and Pakistan need to find ways to sustain their resumed dialogue.
- Trade and commercial relations, where quick advances are possible, should be isolated from differences in other fields.
- An early restoration of the ceasefire agreement along the Line of Control and the international border in Kashmir will help arrest the further deterioration of the security environment and create the space for progress elsewhere.
- India should take unilateral steps, wherever possible, to improve relations. It has taken such initiatives in the past—for example, in granting most-favored-nation status to Pakistan in 1996.
- India and Pakistan should begin a dialogue on the future of Afghanistan.

The trauma of partition in 1947 embittered India-Pakistan relations from the start. Since then, each side has accumulated many grievances against the other. Four wars, territorial disputes, differences over transboundary water sharing, and cross-border terrorism originating from Pakistan have served to create an enduring hostility between the two neighbors.<sup>1</sup> Over time, mutual demonization and mistrust have been institutionalized, strengthening domestic constituencies in both countries that are opposed to sustained engagement and cooperation.

The election of two strong leaders in Pakistan and India—Nawaz Sharif in 2013 and Narendra Modi in 2014, respectively—raised hopes for a revival of the peace process that has stumbled since the terrorist attack on Mumbai in November 2008. This optimism was based on the positive tone adopted by both leaders. But as has happened so often in the past, both Sharif and Modi have found it difficult to move forward. The initial bonhomie was followed by Modi's suspension in August 2014 of planned foreign secretary-level talks in protest of the meeting between Pakistan's high commissioner to India and Hurriyat leaders. The proposed meeting in India between the national security advisers of the two countries was also called off in August 2015 on similar grounds.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, the numerous ceasefire violations and clashes along the Line of Control (LoC) and the international border in Kashmir also heightened tensions between the two countries.

Both Modi and Sharif, however, have persisted in finding a way to engage with each other despite all the difficulties. By the end of 2015, both India and Pakistan had agreed to resume their formal dialogue following the visit of India's foreign minister Sushma Swaraj to Islamabad in December. Modi's surprise stopover in Lahore subsequently on December 25, while returning to New Delhi from a visit to Kabul on the same day, reflected his desire to accelerate the process of engagement with Pakistan and raised expectations once again about the prospects of the bilateral relations.

Despite the resumption of the on-again, off-again dialogue, New Delhi and Islamabad will continue to encounter familiar challenges: cross-border terrorism, differences over the question of Jammu and Kashmir, and domestic opposition in both countries to closer ties still cast a shadow over the relationship. Developments in Afghanistan, as the country adjusts to a new leadership in Kabul and deals with fresh security challenges following the drawdown of foreign troops from the region, could also trigger events and policies that reinforce mutual distrust.<sup>3</sup> The lack of consensus between India and Pakistan on Afghanistan, in addition to their bilateral problems, also makes the prospects for stabilizing their South Asian neighbor difficult.

This essay is divided into five parts. The first will assess the efforts by India and Pakistan to improve bilateral relations over the past decade and a half. The second section will identify potential avenues for cooperation, while the third part will explore some of the issues that could derail the relationship. The fourth part will analyze the implications of the developments in Afghanistan for India-Pakistan relations, and the final section will examine the impact of tensions between the two countries on regional stability.

<sup>1</sup> Sumit Ganguly, *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions since 1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Stephen P. Cohen, *Shooting for a Century: The India-Pakistan Conundrum* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2013); and T.V. Paul, *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> The proposed meeting was an outcome of the meeting between Modi and Sharif at Ufa, Russia, on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in July 2015. The omission of Kashmir from the joint statement, the Ufa Declaration, and Sharif's condemnation of terrorism and promise to expedite the trials of the militants accused of carrying out the 2008 Mumbai attacks provoked a lot of criticism in Pakistan. As such, the run-up to this meeting was marred by accusations and hostile exchanges between the two governments. Moreover, India insisted that the Pakistani envoy Sartaj Aziz could not meet the Hurriyat leaders and that the agenda of the talks be restricted to terrorism as per the Ufa Declaration. This was not acceptable to Pakistan, which did not want any preconditions for this meeting.

<sup>3</sup> Aryaman Bhatnagar and Wilson John, "Afghanistan: A Regional Flashpoint," *Seminar*, December 2014.

## Efforts at Reconciliation

In India, there have been two lines of thought on relations with Pakistan. The first school is skeptical and argues that normalization of relations is impossible given the Pakistan Army's irreconcilable hostility to India. The second view suggests that India should consciously engage with its neighbor, despite all the known difficulties, in order to strengthen the constituency in Pakistan for peace with India.<sup>4</sup> Despite this divide within the strategic community, as well as considerable opposition from the Indian political class and security establishment, all recent governments in New Delhi, including that of Modi, have sought to engage with Islamabad.

The roots of the current peace process can be traced to Atal Bihari Vajpayee's tenure as the prime minister (1998–2004). He placed great emphasis on improving relations with Pakistan amid tensions raised by the nuclear tests by both nations in May 1998. Vajpayee's visit to Pakistan in February 1999 saw the signing of the Lahore Declaration, which outlined a set of confidence-building measures (CBM) and paved the way for a discussion of the Kashmir question.<sup>5</sup> Progress halted, however, when India discovered Pakistan's incursion across the LoC in the Kargil sector in summer 1999. India's war to vacate this aggression, the military coup in Islamabad in late 1999, the failure of the Agra summit between Vajpayee and Pervez Musharraf in 2001, and the terrorist attacks on the Indian parliament in December 2001 underlined the utter fragility of engagement between the countries. Vajpayee's persistence and Musharraf's eventual acknowledgment of the need to explore unconventional solutions facilitated the negotiation of a new framework for engagement on the sidelines of the 2004 South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit in Islamabad. This agreement comprised three core elements: an assurance from Musharraf that Pakistan's territory would not be used to support terrorism in any manner, an agreement to expand CBMs, and an Indian commitment to purposefully address the Kashmir issue.<sup>6</sup> Besides the Kashmir question, the dialogue was scheduled to deal with seven other issues, including peace and security, the disputes over Siachen Glacier and Sir Creek, the Wular Barrage/Tulbul Navigation Project, economic and commercial cooperation, terrorism and drug trafficking, and the promotion of friendly exchanges in various fields.

Although a change of government in New Delhi soon after prevented Vajpayee from building on this momentum, there was a great deal of continuity in Manmohan Singh's approach to Pakistan. Singh's desire to increase engagement with Pakistan was based on the belief that for India to play a larger role in world affairs, it had to ensure greater stability in its own neighborhood and resolve any long-standing border disputes.<sup>7</sup> During his tenure, backchannel diplomacy, which was initiated in 2005, was almost successful in reaching an agreement on Kashmir. By 2007, there was an understanding on a four-point framework for resolving the issue: greater movement of people and goods across the LoC, autonomy for both parts, intra-Kashmir governing mechanisms, and demilitarization to follow an end to violence.<sup>8</sup> The two sides also appeared close to resolving

<sup>4</sup> Wilson John, "Pakistan," Observer Research Foundation (unpublished essay, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> For the full text of the Lahore Declaration, see Ministry of External Affairs (India), <http://mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?18997/Lahore+Declaration+February+1999>.

<sup>6</sup> For the full text of the joint statement issued by India and Pakistan at the end of the twelfth summit meeting of SAARC in Islamabad on January 6, 2004, see, "India-Pakistan Joint Press Statement," South Asia Terrorism Portal, January 6, 2004, [http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/document/papers/indo\\_pak\\_6jan04.htm](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/document/papers/indo_pak_6jan04.htm).

<sup>7</sup> Sanjaya Baru, *The Accidental Prime Minister: The Making and Unmaking of Manmohan Singh* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Steve Coll, "The Back Channel: India and Pakistan's Secret Kashmir Talks," *New Yorker*, March 2, 2009, [http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/03/02/090302fa\\_fact\\_coll](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/03/02/090302fa_fact_coll); and Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri "Address by Former Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri" (speech presented at the Asian College of Journalism, Chennai, January 24, 2011).

the Siachen and Sir Creek disputes. Improving relations with Pakistan remained a priority during Singh's second term as well. Thus, despite the baggage of the November 26 attacks in Mumbai in 2008, India resumed talks with Pakistan in April 2010 and strived to enhance economic and trade ties, liberalize the visa regime, and promote greater energy cooperation.

In the fifteen years since the Lahore Declaration was signed, a number of CBMs have been undertaken. The most significant of these agreements has been the ceasefire along the LoC in November 2003. Other significant CBMs include an agreement on advance notification of ballistic missile tests; the resumption of bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad, Amritsar and Nankana Sahib, and Delhi and Lahore; the resumption of the Samjhauta Express train, which runs between Delhi and Lahore; the commencement of a rail service between Munabao in Rajasthan and Khokhrapar in Sindh; the opening of the first overland truck route between the two countries at Wagah; the revival of trade across the LoC; the reactivation of the joint economic commission and joint business councils; and the creation of an institutional mechanism for India and Pakistan to cooperate on fighting terrorism.<sup>9</sup>

Islamabad and New Delhi, however, have struggled to build on these measures. For instance, the LoC ceasefire has been violated on a number of occasions, and with increasing frequency, since 2013. Such border skirmishes, along with political differences and other adverse security developments, have often led to political standoffs between the two countries. In such situations, measures to promote closer economic and trade ties and increased people-to-people contact have suffered.

## Avenues for Cooperation

### *Promoting Economic Interdependence*

India's emphasis on greater economic engagement with Pakistan is rooted in the belief that this approach could strengthen domestic constituencies in Pakistan, as well as in India, that recognize the mutual benefits accruing from harmonious bilateral relations. This logic seems to hold special appeal to Sharif and Modi, who have a record of emphasizing economic development and growth. Sharif's victory in May 2013 was welcomed in India for this reason. Sharif's party, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), represents the business and trading class in Pakistan, and Sharif himself belongs to an industrialist family. Indian observers viewed his background and his clear political mandate as providing a good opportunity to boost bilateral economic relations.

Economic development and trade ties underpin Modi's foreign policy decision-making as well, particularly toward South Asia. Indeed, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) election manifesto stated that "political stability, progress and peace in the region" were essential for the region's growth and development.<sup>10</sup> In his speech at the 2014 SAARC summit in Kathmandu, Modi also claimed that the Indian vision for South Asia rests on five pillars—trade, investment, assistance, cooperation in every area, and increased contacts between people.<sup>11</sup> For Modi to achieve his development priorities, better relations with India's neighboring countries are an important foreign policy

<sup>9</sup> Syed Rifaat Hussain, "The India Factor" in *Pakistan: Beyond the Crisis State*, ed. Maleeha Lodhi (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); and Sajjad Padder, "The Composite Dialogue between India and Pakistan: Structure, Process and Agency," *Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics* 65 (2012), [http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/13143/1/Heidelberg\\_Papers\\_65\\_Padder.pdf](http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/13143/1/Heidelberg_Papers_65_Padder.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> For the BJP's full election manifesto, see Sabka Saath and Sabka Vikas, "Election Manifesto 2014," BJP, 2014, [http://www.bjp.org/images/pdf\\_2014/full\\_manifesto\\_english\\_07.04.2014.pdf](http://www.bjp.org/images/pdf_2014/full_manifesto_english_07.04.2014.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> For the full text of Prime Minister Modi's speech at the 2014 SAARC summit, see "PM's Speech at the SAARC Summit," Prime Minister's Office (India), [http://pmindia.gov.in/en/news\\_updates/pms-speech-at-the-saarc-summit](http://pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/pms-speech-at-the-saarc-summit).

objective. In fact, this was reiterated by Swaraj during her briefing to the Indian parliament on her Pakistan visit in December 2015 as the reason for restarting the formal dialogue. She claimed that “good neighbourly ties with Pakistan” were important for the Modi government’s vision for “peace and development in the region through deeper regional integration in South Asia.”<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, the new government seems to realize that India first needs to develop stronger ties with its own neighborhood to become a more significant global player.<sup>13</sup> Since assuming office, Modi has made a start in this direction. This was evident in his invitation to the leaders of all SAARC countries for his inaugural ceremony in May 2014 and by his subsequent visits to the neighboring countries. By December 2015, barring Maldives, Modi had visited all of India’s immediate neighbors.

The issue of economic cooperation with Pakistan was also on the agenda when Modi met with Sharif in May 2014 on the sidelines of his inauguration. Modi expressed his willingness for full trade normalization based on a roadmap already agreed upon by both countries. As per this roadmap, Pakistan is required to extend most-favored-nation (MFN) status—or what is now called nondiscriminatory market access status—to India. India, on the other hand, must reduce import duties to 5% on all Pakistani products, except one hundred specified items.<sup>14</sup>

Bilateral trade between India and Pakistan at present stands at \$3 billion. As **Table 1** shows, trade has grown significantly over the past decade but is still well below the estimated potential. Studies have shown that the potential of bilateral trade lies between \$10 billion and \$50 billion and that a sustained and concerted effort to remove these various obstacles can ensure that this potential materializes within the next decade.<sup>15</sup>

Increased trade between India and Pakistan can reduce production costs by allowing access to cheaper raw materials and lower transportation and insurance costs. Consumers would have access to a much greater variety of cheap goods that could be imported at a lower cost, while manufacturers would have access to each other’s markets.<sup>16</sup> Pakistan’s automotive, pharmaceutical, tire, agriculture, and textile sectors, in particular, would gain access to cheaper Indian machinery, raw materials, technology, and expertise—all of which could help these sectors become more competitive. There is, in turn, a huge demand in India for Pakistan’s textiles, leather, and agricultural machinery.<sup>17</sup> Improved bilateral trade would also allow both countries to bring items that are currently traded illegally or through a third country under legitimate trade routes, allowing both nations to increase their revenue.

Pakistan’s deteriorating economy provides immediate incentives for it to enhance its economic engagement with India. As indicated by **Figure 1**, the Pakistani economy has grown at an

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<sup>12</sup> “Sushma Swaraj Explains Why She Went to Pakistan in Parliament,” *Daily News and Analysis*, December 15, 2015, <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-full-text-sushma-swaraj-explains-why-she-went-to-pakistan-in-parliament-2155577>.

<sup>13</sup> It is important to note that even Singh had placed great emphasis on regional economic integration, but his government did not have sufficient political will or clout to follow through on this stated objective. For more on this issue, see C. Raja Mohan, “Five-Point Someone,” *Indian Express*, May 26, 2014, <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/editorials/five-point-someone-2>.

<sup>14</sup> “Modi Seeks Full Trade Normalization with Pakistan,” *Hindu Business Line*, May 27, 2014, <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/international/modi-seeks-full-trade-normalisation-with-pakistan/article6054255.ece>.

<sup>15</sup> Nisha Taneja et al., “Normalizing India Pakistan Trade,” Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, Working Paper, no. 267, September 2013, [http://www.icrier.org/pdf/working\\_paper\\_267.pdf](http://www.icrier.org/pdf/working_paper_267.pdf); Loknath Acharya and Ashima Marwaha, “Status Paper on India-Pakistan Economic Relations,” Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, February 2012, <http://www.ficci.com/spdocument/20183/StatuspaperonIndiaPakistan.pdf>; Mohsin Khan, “India-Pakistan Trade Relations: A New Beginning,” New America Foundation, January 2013; and “Improved Indo-Pak Ties May Help Double Trade from \$3 Billion,” *Economic Times*, May 29, 2014, [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-05-29/news/50182308\\_1\\_india-pakistan-trade-double-trade-trade-relations](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-05-29/news/50182308_1_india-pakistan-trade-double-trade-trade-relations).

<sup>16</sup> Acharya and Marwaha, “Status Paper on India-Pakistan.”

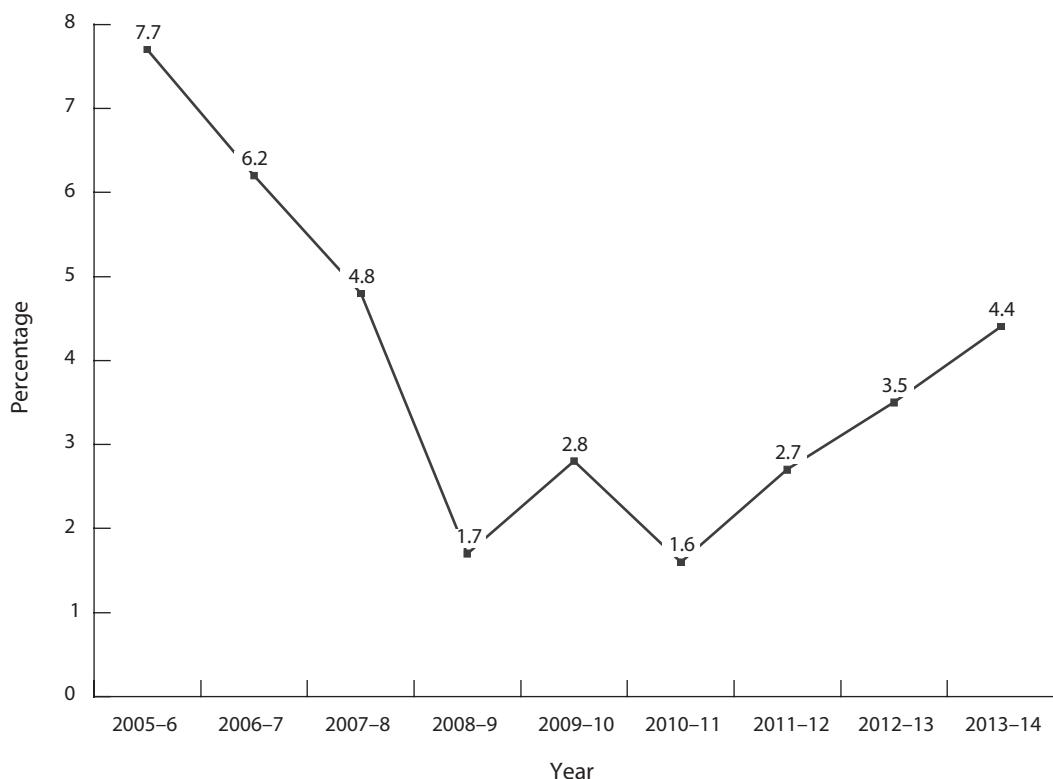
<sup>17</sup> Khan, “India-Pakistan Trade Relations.”

TABLE 1 Bilateral trade between India and Pakistan, 2005–6 to 2013–14

Year	Trade (million \$)
2005–6	868.79
2006–7	1,673.71
2007–8	2,238.50
2008–9	1,810.05
2009–10	1,849.26
2010–11	2,372.12
2011–12	1,956.57
2012–13	2,606.00
2013–14	2,721.00

SOURCE: Ministry of Commerce (India); and Indiastat, "Bilateral Trade between Countries and Regions (1991–2012)," <http://www.indiastat.com/foreigntrade/12/foreigntrade/107/bilateraltradewbcountriesandregions19912012/449925/stats.aspx>.

FIGURE 1 GDP growth rate in Pakistan, 2005–6 to 2013–14



SOURCE: This graph is generated from World Bank data on GDP growth, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG/countries/PK?display=graph>.

extremely low rate of 2%–4% over the past ten years. A combination of poor governance, the deteriorating security situation, and declining foreign investment have contributed to its present plight. Islamabad has nonetheless found it difficult to move forward on normalizing trade ties with India. The Pakistan Army has acted as a major obstacle by preventing the civilian government from granting MFN to India.<sup>18</sup>

### Promoting Energy Cooperation

Another major characteristic, and cause, of Pakistan's stagnant economy has been the country's acute energy crisis. Power failures of up to twelve to eighteen hours a day in major urban centers like Lahore and Islamabad sparked “energy riots” in 2012. According to some estimates, the energy shortages have cost Pakistan 3%–4% of its GDP, with capacity utilization in some key industries having fallen by nearly 50%.<sup>19</sup>

Experts and policymakers have advocated energy cooperation between India and Pakistan. In fact, soon after Sharif assumed power, his government reportedly undertook a feasibility study to explore the possibility of importing 1,000 megawatts (MW) of electricity from India.<sup>20</sup> Shahbaz Sharif, the chief minister of Pakistan's Punjab Province, also expressed his willingness to cooperate with India in setting up biogas and biomass power-generation plants in a meeting with a delegation of Indian energy experts in Lahore in December 2013.<sup>21</sup> In March 2014 the Pakistan government also sent a draft memorandum of understanding to India for a potential power trade deal under which Pakistan would import 500 MW of power, which would eventually increase to 1,200 MW.<sup>22</sup> A broad understanding has already been reached between the two countries on the establishment of a power-transmission line between Lahore and Amritsar. The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline is another venture that could promote energy cooperation between India and Pakistan. The pipeline will transfer natural gas from the Daulatabad oil fields of Turkmenistan to Fazilka in India via Afghanistan and Pakistan. Both India and Pakistan will receive 1.3 billion cubic feet of gas per day and have already signed gas sale and purchase agreements.<sup>23</sup> The groundbreaking ceremony for TAPI was held in Turkmenistan in December 2015. However, the unstable security environment, along with logistical and political problems, which have constantly prevented this project from even starting, will continue to be a significant obstacle for the completion of this initiative.

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<sup>18</sup> In 2011, Yousaf Raza Gilani, Pakistan's prime minister at the time, was prevented by the Pakistan military from following through on his promise of granting MFN to India. The military was also seen as being instrumental in Sharif's decision in March 2014 to delay conferring MFN status to India until after the conclusion of the Indian parliamentary elections. See Khalid Mustafa, “Trade Deal with India Hits Snag Because of GHQ's Silence,” *News International* (Pakistan), March 21, 2014, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-29239-Trade-deal-with-India-hits-snag-because-of-GHQs-silence>; and Sachin Parashar, “Pak Army Stopped Nawaz Sharif Govt from Trade Deal: India,” *Times of India*, March 26, 2014.

<sup>19</sup> Annabel Symington, “Pakistan Opposition Take Aim at Energy Crisis Ahead of Elections,” *Christian Science Monitor*, February 1, 2013, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-South-Central/2013/0201/Pakistan-opposition-take-aim-at-energy-crisis-ahead-of-elections>; and Shabbir H. Kazmi, “Pakistan's Energy Crisis,” *Diplomat*, August 31, 2013, <http://thediplomat.com/2013/08/pakistans-energy-crisis>.

<sup>20</sup> “New Pak Government May Consider Importing Electricity from India,” *Hindu*, May 21, 2013, <http://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/new-pak-govt-may-consider-importing-electricity-from-india/article4736041.ece>.

<sup>21</sup> “Pakistan Keen to Cooperate with India on Energy Projects: Shahbaz Sharif,” *Economic Times*, December 25, 2013, [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2013-12-25/news/45561787\\_1\\_energy-projects-indian-punjab-energy-crisis](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2013-12-25/news/45561787_1_energy-projects-indian-punjab-energy-crisis).

<sup>22</sup> Zafar Bhutta, “Pakistan All Set to Import Electricity from India,” *Express Tribune*, March 20, 2014, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/685056/pakistan-all-set-to-import-electricity-from-india>.

<sup>23</sup> Daniel J. Graeber, “Kabul, Islamabad Pursue Gas Pipeline Connections,” United Press International, November 17, 2014, [http://www.upi.com/Business\\_News/Energy-Resources/2014/11/17/Kabul-Islamabad-pursue-gas-pipeline-connections/8531416231998](http://www.upi.com/Business_News/Energy-Resources/2014/11/17/Kabul-Islamabad-pursue-gas-pipeline-connections/8531416231998).

## Challenges in the Bilateral Relationship

Despite efforts to promote cooperation and interdependence, bilateral relations have remained trapped in a perpetual cycle of crises, wherein any momentum is slowed by adverse developments. This dynamic has heightened tensions on both sides and made it difficult to sustain a genuine comprehensive dialogue. This pattern was evident during both Vajpayee's and Singh's tenures. The Kargil war, a coup in Islamabad, and attacks on the Indian parliament prevented Vajpayee from building on the momentum generated by the Lahore Declaration. Talks were resumed in 2003, and the agreement with Musharraf in 2004 provided a platform for Singh. However, General Ashfaq Kayani's unwillingness to abide by the framework laid out by his predecessor acted as a major obstacle for Singh. Despite a number of CBMs and the breakthrough on Kashmir during his first term, the baggage of the November 26 attacks in Mumbai undermined all subsequent efforts to improve relations during the rest of Singh's time in office. In Modi and Sharif's case, relations have followed a similar trajectory, and as India and Pakistan resume their formal dialogue, both leaders will have to work around familiar obstacles to ensure some sustainability to the India-Pakistan peace talks.

### Ceasefire Violations

Since 2013, ceasefire violations have sharply increased in number along the LoC. The year 2014 reportedly recorded the highest number of violations since the ceasefire went into effect in 2003. The worst escalations occurred between August and October 2014, with some Indian officials claiming that this period saw the heaviest firing and shelling between the two countries since the 1971 India-Pakistan War.<sup>24</sup> Such border skirmishes tend to initiate a blame game in which each country accuses the other of being the aggressor, heightening negative sentiments on both sides of the border. Peace talks have been called off in the past on account of such incidents. The beheading of an Indian soldier in January 2013 that caused New Delhi to suspend talks is one such instance.<sup>25</sup>

As the ceasefire violations have continued incessantly since 2013, the situation was complicated further by the muscular approach of the Modi government, which has been more confrontational in its statements, especially when compared to the previous Singh-led government. For instance, Indian home minister Rajnath Singh has warned Pakistan on multiple occasions that India would issue a "befitting reply" if the ceasefire violations did not end.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, India's defense ministers, first Arun Jaitley and subsequently Manohar Parrikar, have also issued threats of a strong Indian military response. Parrikar, in December 2014, claimed that the government's directive to the armed forces is to not hold back in the face of provocation but retaliate with "double the force."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> "J&K: 2014 Records 562 Ceasefire Violations; Highest in 11 Years," *Economic Times*, December 28, 2014, [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-12-28/news/57462630\\_1\\_ceasefire-violations-border-ceasefire-heavy-firing-and-shelling](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-12-28/news/57462630_1_ceasefire-violations-border-ceasefire-heavy-firing-and-shelling).

<sup>25</sup> Cross-LoC trade and the visa-on-arrival scheme for elderly citizens were also suspended on a temporary basis on this occasion.

<sup>26</sup> "India Will Give Befitting Reply to Pakistan, Says Rajnath Singh," *Business Standard*, August 31, 2014, [http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/india-will-give-befitting-reply-to-pakistan-says-rajnath-singh-114083100634\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/india-will-give-befitting-reply-to-pakistan-says-rajnath-singh-114083100634_1.html); "End Ceasefire Violations, Else Will Give Befitting Reply: Rajnath Singh," NDTV, October 7, 2014, <http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/end-ceasefire-violations-else-will-give-befitting-reply-rajnath-singh-603227>; and "Will Give Befitting Reply to Pakistan: Rajnath Singh on Ceasefire Violations in J&K," Zee News, January 1, 2015 [http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/will-give-befitting-reply-to-pakistan-rajnath-singh-on-ceasefire-violations-in-jk\\_1523276.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/will-give-befitting-reply-to-pakistan-rajnath-singh-on-ceasefire-violations-in-jk_1523276.html).

<sup>27</sup> "Retaliate with Double Force: Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar on Ceasefire Violations by Pakistan," NDTV, December 31, 2015, <http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/retaliate-with-double-force-defence-minister-manohar-parrikar-on-ceasefire-violations-by-pakistan-642263>.

Such statements have been matched by an increase in the intensity and volume of India's military action along the LoC, resulting in high casualties across the border.

This approach reflected Modi's efforts to reframe the terms of engagement with Pakistan that have defined India's relations with its neighbor over the past two decades. Previous Indian governments were routinely criticized for being "soft" on Pakistan and for wanting to engage with it despite there being no genuine effort on the latter's part to address India's concerns. Modi's efforts to revive talks toward the end of 2015, and an aborted effort earlier, revealed how difficult it is for either side to unilaterally alter the terms of engagement. New Delhi's decision to accept the broad parameters of the dialogue established by Vajpayee and pursued by Singh underline the return of the Modi government to a more realistic approach to engagement with Pakistan.<sup>28</sup>

In fact, since the meeting between Sharif and Modi at Ufa on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit, in July 2015 there has been a concerted effort to reduce tensions along the LoC. In September 2015, for instance, the Indian Border Security Force and Pakistan Rangers agreed to stop border violations along the LoC and activated a hotline to maintain communication with each other to resolve problems along the border.<sup>29</sup> Although there have been a few instances of ceasefire violations since September, the situation on the whole seems to be improving with both sides agreeing to maintain a truce along the LoC.<sup>30</sup> However, as the situation from 2013 onward has shown, the stability along the LoC and international border could be fragile and might be tied to the overall state of political affairs between the two countries.

### Cross-border Terrorism

From the Indian perspective, cross-border terrorism originating from Pakistan, and Islamabad's unwillingness and inability to put an end to it, has remained one of the major obstacles to normalization of bilateral relations. Modi, for example, has claimed that talks "cannot be conducted in the shadow of terrorism."<sup>31</sup> He expressed this concern to Sharif during their first meeting in May 2014, where India also urged Pakistan to expedite the trials of those accused in the November 26 attacks. Yet Modi has not found it easy to compel Pakistan to stop supporting terrorist groups hostile to India.

The use of nonstate actors to further the country's foreign policy and strategic objectives, especially vis-à-vis Afghanistan and India, has been an integral part of the Pakistan military establishment's strategic culture. This was evident as early as 1947, when militias from Pakistan's tribal agencies were used in the Kashmir conflict.<sup>32</sup> Since that time, Islamist Punjabi and Pashtun groups have been nurtured, supported, and used by the Pakistan Army to resist East Pakistan's

<sup>28</sup> The comprehensive bilateral dialogue, the name given to this new phase of engagement, is a modified version of the composite dialogue process that had governed the India-Pakistan peace process until now. The issues that will be discussed under the bilateral dialogue are more or less similar to those discussed under the previous framework. The only additions have been religious tourism and humanitarian issues. The full text of the joint statement is available from the website of India's Ministry of External Affairs.

<sup>29</sup> "Pakistan Rangers, Indian BSF Agree to Halt Ceasefire Violations," *Dawn*, September 13, 2015 <http://www.dawn.com/news/1206587>; and "Pakistan Rangers Top Commander Calls BSF Chief, Urges End to Firing," NDTV, October 27, 2015 <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/pakistan-rangers-top-commander-calls-bsf-chief-urges-end-to-firing-1236671>.

<sup>30</sup> "Ceasefire violation by Pakistan Continues," *Indian Express*, September 17, 2015, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/pakistan-violates-ceasefire-twice-in-a-day-along-loc-in-poonch/>; "Ceasefire Violation: Pakistan Targets 30 Border Posts in Jammu & Kashmir, Five Civilians Injured," *Daily News and Analysis*, October 26, 2015, <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-ceasefire-violation-pakistan-targets-30-border-posts-in-jammu-kashmir-five-civilians-injured-2138613>; and "India and Pakistan's Military Agree to Maintain Truce on LoC; Keep Communication Alive," *New Indian Express*, December 22, 2015, <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/India-and-Pakistans-Military-Agree-to-Maintain-Truce-on-LoC-Keep-Communication-Alive/2015/12/22/article3190973.ece>.

<sup>31</sup> Benazir Shah, "No Interest or Reason to Focus on Pakistan," *Newsweek*, October 12, 2014, <http://newsweekpakistan.com/no-interest-or-reason-to-focus-on-pakistan>.

<sup>32</sup> Shuja Nawaz, *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, Its Army, and the Wars Within* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

war of liberation in 1971, the Soviet presence in Afghanistan in the 1980s, and India, especially in Jammu and Kashmir, since the late 1980s. Given that the conventional military disparity between India and Pakistan has significantly widened since independence, the Pakistan Army has found the use of militant groups to be a more effective means of challenging its neighbor.

Since September 11, despite being a non-NATO ally in the U.S.-led global war on terrorism, Pakistan has been selective in its actions against militant groups. While it has targeted militants in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) that pose a threat to the Pakistani state, it has continued to maintain strong ties with Afghan insurgent groups like the Taliban and the Haqqani network, as well as India-focused groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), based in Pakistan's Punjab Province.<sup>33</sup> These groups continue to operate freely in Pakistan, and Hafiz Saeed, the mastermind of the November 26 attacks, has openly declared jihad against India on numerous occasions.<sup>34</sup> The Punjab government also allocated millions of rupees to Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), the parent organization of the LeT, as part of its 2013–14 fiscal budget.<sup>35</sup>

Pakistan has faced massive blowback both from its policy of using violent nonstate actors and as a result of its participation in the U.S.-led global war on terrorism. Fatalities in Pakistan since 2003, as a result of terrorist violence, have exceeded 50,000 and nearly half of these are civilians and members of Pakistan's security forces.<sup>36</sup> The Pakistan Army appears to have recognized the increasing security threat. General Kayani, Pakistan's chief of army staff at the time, addressed the nation in August 2012 at the Kakul Military Academy and described militancy in FATA as a grave security challenge confronting Pakistan. The lack of any mention of India in his speech was interpreted as a public assertion by Kayani that India was no longer seen as Pakistan's biggest security threat. Additionally, in 2009 the chief of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Lieutenant General Ahmed Shuja Pasha, claimed that Pakistan was "distancing itself from conflict with India" and recognized "fully well that terror is our enemy, not India."<sup>37</sup> However, despite the scale of this internal security threat, there have been no visible signs of change in the army's attitude toward India.

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<sup>33</sup> Pakistan's links with such groups have often been highlighted by U.S. government officials as well. For instance, in 2011, Admiral Mike Mullen, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the U.S. military, claimed that Pakistan viewed these "proxies" as "strategic assets" and called on Rawalpindi to disengage from such groups. In particular, he claimed that the Haqqani network was "veritable arm" of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). For more on this argument, see "Strategic Assets: ISI Must Disengage from Proxies: Mullen," *Express Tribune*, September 21, 2011, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/256790/us-tells-pakistan-to-disengage-from-proxies>; and "Haqqani Network Is a 'Veritable Arm' of ISI: Mullen," *Dawn*, September 22, 2011, <http://www.dawn.com/news/660878/haqqani-network-is-a-veritable-arm-ofisi-mullen>. In October 2011, Hillary Clinton, then the U.S. secretary of state, in a joint press conference with Hina Rabbani Khar, Pakistan's foreign minister at the time, also demanded greater cooperation from Pakistan in its fight against terrorism. Clinton claimed that Pakistan could not "keep snakes in its backyard" and expect them to "bite only its neighbors." See "Snakes in Your Backyard Won't Bite Only Neighbours: Hillary to Pak," *NDTV*, October 21, 2011, <http://www.ndtv.com/world-news/snakes-in-your-backyard-wont-bite-only-neighbours-hillary-to-pak-573412>. More recently, a Pentagon report claimed that militant groups operating against Afghanistan and India had sanctuaries in Pakistan. For the full report, see U.S. Department of Defense, *Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan* (Washington, D.C., October 2014), [http://www.defense.gov/pubs/Oct2014\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/pubs/Oct2014_Report_Final.pdf). Finally, President Barack Obama, just before his arrival in India in January 2015, stated that "safe havens within Pakistan are not acceptable and that those behind the Mumbai terrorist attack must face justice." See "Terrorist Safe Havens Not Acceptable: Barack Obama," *Hindustan Times*, January 24, 2015, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/terrorist-safe-havens-not-acceptable-pakistan-must-punish-26-11-attackers-obama/article1-1309890.aspx>.

<sup>34</sup> Rana Tanveer, "Hafiz Saeed Vows Jihad against India Will Continue," *Express Tribune*, December 19, 2011, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/308521/difa-i-pakistan-conference-hafiz-saeed-vows-jihad-against-india-will-continue>; "Hafiz Saeed Threatens India with 'Mumbai-Like' Attack at Islamabad Rally," *Times of India*, September 7, 2013, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/Hafiz-Saeed-threatens-India-with-Mumbai-like-attack-at-Islamabad-rally/articleshow/22401818.cms>; and "Hafiz Saeed Announces Jihad against India to Free Kashmir," *Sahara Samay*, May 29, 2014, <http://www.saharasamay.com/world-news/676554044/hafiz-saeed-announces-jihad-against-india-to-free-kashmir.html>.

<sup>35</sup> "Pak's Punjab Government Allocates Millions of Rupees for Hafez Saeed's Jamaat-ud-Dawa," *Times of India*, June 18, 2013, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/Paks-Punjab-govt-allocates-millions-of-rupees-for-Hafiz-Saeeds-Jamaat-ud-Dawa/articleshow/20648209.cms>.

<sup>36</sup> Mudassir Raja, "Pakistani Victims: War on Terror Toll Put at 49,000," *Express Tribune*, March 27, 2013, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/527016/pakistani-victims-war-on-terror-toll-put-at-49000>.

<sup>37</sup> Susanne Koelbl, "Pakistan's New Intelligence Chief: 'Terror Is Our Enemy, Not India,'" *Der Spiegel*, January 6, 2009.

There have been suggestions, by both Indian and Pakistani observers, of a possible shift in Pakistan's strategic outlook following the December 16, 2014, massacre of children in an army school in Peshawar by the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Within a day of the incident, Sharif declared that there will no longer be any "differentiation between 'good' and 'bad' Taliban."<sup>38</sup> The government has also reportedly banned groups like the JuD and the Haqqani network.<sup>39</sup> However, India continues to be very skeptical about the effectiveness of this ban. Pakistan has taken such steps in the past but has been unable or unwilling to follow through on them. The LeT, for instance, was banned in 2002 by the Musharraf government but regrouped and renamed itself the JuD. Today, both organizations enjoy extensive state patronage. Pakistan's interior minister, Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, claimed in January 2015 that there were as many as 95 banned groups still actively engaged in terrorism and extremism in Punjab alone.<sup>40</sup> Thus, Pakistan's sincerity in taking action against such groups is still unclear.

This issue is not going to disappear in the resumed dialogue with Pakistan. Terrorism was identified as a primary obstacle to the growth of bilateral ties that would need to be "clearly and directly addressed" during a brief meeting between Modi and Sharif on the sidelines of the international climate summit in Paris in December 2015.<sup>41</sup> Swaraj, in her briefing to the Indian parliament following her visit to Pakistan, however, claimed that the only way forward for bilateral relations is through dialogue, for which it was critical to "not get provoked by the saboteurs, who want to stall the dialogue somehow," and instead to strive to "find a way forward through the dialogue."<sup>42</sup> To what extent the two governments would manage to achieve that remains to be seen.<sup>43</sup>

### *Domestic Constituencies in India and Pakistan*

Another challenge is constituencies in both India and Pakistan that are opposed to engagement and have often acted as obstacles to further progress in bilateral ties. The Pakistani military establishment, as noted above, is one such group. It wields a great degree of control over Pakistan's foreign policy, has traditionally viewed India as posing an existential threat to Pakistan, and has used this threat perception to cement its preeminent place in the country's power structure. The army considers retaining the ability to challenge India and resisting its rise as a sign of victory. Any change in this thinking is considered not only tantamount to defeat for the Pakistan Army but also as possibly eroding the legitimacy of the Pakistani state itself.<sup>44</sup>

The Pakistan Army has been wary of peace talks and closer ties with India. There have been numerous instances in which it has disrupted the reconciliation process. For instance, many

<sup>38</sup> "Won't Differentiate between 'Good' and 'Bad' Taliban: Pak PM Sharif Vows to Fight Terror," *Hindustan Times*, December 18, 2014, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/peshawar-attack-pakistan-lifts-moratorium-on-death-penalty-vows-united-fight-against-terror/article1-1297492.aspx>.

<sup>39</sup> "Revealed: Govt Decides to Ban Haqqani Network, JuD," *Express Tribune*, January 15, 2015, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/822087/revealed-govt-decides-to-ban-haqqani-network-jud>; "Govt Tight-Lipped about Ban on JuD, Haqqani Network," *Dawn*, January 22, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1158484>; and "Haqqani Network and JuD Banned," *Dawn*, January 22, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1158625>.

<sup>40</sup> "95 Banned Groups Active in Punjab," *Dawn*, January 15, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1157108>.

<sup>41</sup> "Sushma Swaraj Explains Why She Went to Pakistan in Parliament."

<sup>42</sup> "Why Urdu? Why Green Saree? Sushma Swaraj Gives It Back to Critics in Parliament Speech on Indo-Pak Dialogue," *Firstpost*, December 15, 2015, <http://www.firstpost.com/world/renewed-dialogue-with-pakistan-marks-beginning-of-peace-sushma-swaraj-tells-parliament-2544752.html>.

<sup>43</sup> The attacks on an Indian air force base in Pathankot in the Indian state of Punjab in early 2016, just a week after Modi's Lahore visit, which were claimed by a group based in Pakistan and seen by many in India as having the backing of the Pakistan military, presented one of the most immediate challenges to this renewed attempt at bilateral engagement.

<sup>44</sup> C. Christine Fair, *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

within India view the November 26 attacks on Mumbai as the Pakistani military establishment's response to President Asif Ali Zardari's declared plans to adopt a moderate nuclear policy and boost economic ties with India.<sup>45</sup> Meanwhile, the attack on the Indian consulate in Herat in May 2014 was traced to the LeT and is seen as an attempt to disrupt Sharif's meeting with Modi, which was to happen just a few days later.<sup>46</sup>

Sharif, who has served two previous terms as prime minister, thus may not have too much maneuvering space vis-à-vis the military on engaging with India. His attempts to improve relations with India in the 1990s caused much resentment within the military establishment and ultimately led to a military coup in 1999. As he continues to face domestic opposition—from both political parties and the military—there are concerns in New Delhi that he may be forced to adopt a more cautious policy toward India. General Kayani reportedly warned Sharif soon after he assumed office to go slow on India and to only take gradual initiatives toward improving relations.<sup>47</sup> Sharif's attempts to raise the Kashmir issue at the UN General Assembly in September 2014 were also seen as motivated by a desire to gain the trust of his domestic audience. However, the talks at the national security adviser level in Bangkok in December 2015, and the subsequent bilateral talks, may have had the Pakistan military's blessing. Pakistan's new national security adviser, Lieutenant General Nasir Khan Janjua, is generally seen, especially in India, as a Rawalpindi appointee.

India also has a vocal domestic constituency that is opposed to engagement with Pakistan and imposes constraints on Indian leaders. These detractors—including political opposition figures and members of the foreign policy establishment, as well as officials from the armed forces and intelligence agencies—tend to adopt a highly aggressive tone in the face of terrorist incidents. This approach creates an environment that is not conducive for dialogue and pushes the government into a corner, forcing it to adopt an aggressive stance so as to not appear soft on terrorism.

This pattern was evident particularly during Singh's tenure. In January 2013, following skirmishes along the LoC resulting in the beheading of an Indian soldier, Singh was compelled, under severe domestic pressure, to suspend talks. This occurred despite the fact that media reports disagreed about which side had triggered the crisis. Similarly, Singh was heavily criticized for suggesting that terrorism should be delinked from the composite dialogue process in a meeting with his Pakistani counterpart Yousaf Raza Gilani on the sidelines of a Non-Aligned Movement summit at Sharm-el-Sheikh in July 2009. The BJP denounced the suggestion as "surrender" and a matter of great shame.<sup>48</sup> Faced with such stiff opposition, the Indian government was forced to ignore repeated Pakistani pleas for a meeting between the two countries' foreign secretaries.<sup>49</sup> Despite a desire to promote closer ties with Pakistan, such constraints prevented Singh from visiting Pakistan even once during his ten years in power. This track record partly validates Pakistan's concerns that India, for all its talk of wanting better ties, has not consistently worked toward ensuring a sustainable dialogue.

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<sup>45</sup> Declan Walsh, "India and Pakistan Talk, but Tensions Are High," *New York Times*, September 29, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/30/world/asia/indian-and-pakistani-leaders-meet-in-new-york.html>.

<sup>46</sup> Lalit K. Jha, "LeT behind Attacks on Indian Consulate in Herat, Says U.S.," *Indian Express*, June 27, 2014, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/let-behind-attack-on-indian-consulate-in-herat-says-us/>.

<sup>47</sup> "Go Slow on India: Gen Kayani Tells India," *Times of India*, May 19, 2013, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/Go-slow-on-India-Gen-Kayani-tells-Sharif/articleshow/20133246.cms>.

<sup>48</sup> "Sharm-el Sheikh Statement a Shame, Says BJP," IBN Live, July 30, 2009, <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/sharmel-sheikh-statement-a-shame-says-bjp/98156-37.html>; and Neena Vyas, "We Will Not Accept Delinking: BJP," *Hindu*, July 18, 2009, <http://www.hindu.com/2009/07/18/stories/200907186131000.htm>.

<sup>49</sup> Hussain, "The India Factor."

The constant criticism leveled by the BJP against the so-called soft Pakistan policy of the Singh-led government in a way laid the groundwork for the Modi government to adopt a more muscular approach to incidents of cross-border terrorism and ceasefire violations. At the same time, the logic of running the government and foreign policy demands impose their own imperative of engaging with Pakistan. The formation of a coalition government in Jammu and Kashmir by the BJP and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in February 2015 could prove to be a positive development for India-Pakistan relations. The PDP has always been an advocate for a sustained dialogue between the two countries as a means to resolve the Kashmir issue and had been critical of the current government's decision to call off the talks in August.<sup>50</sup> The resumption of dialogue with Pakistan was reportedly one of the demands put forward by the PDP as a prerequisite for allying with the BJP.<sup>51</sup> In its Common Minimum Programme, the alliance expressed a willingness to support initiatives taken by New Delhi toward Pakistan in order "to create a reconciliatory environment and build stakes for all in the peace and development within the subcontinent."<sup>52</sup> It also suggested a number of trans-LoC CBMs, including enhancing people-to-people contacts on both sides of the border, expanding civil society exchanges, and boosting cross-LoC travel, commerce, and business.<sup>53</sup> While an alliance with the PDP may not guarantee a sustained dialogue with Pakistan, it could ensure a degree of internal checks on the Modi government and encourage the pursuit of a more balanced Pakistan policy. It also opens up many creative possibilities on cooperation across the LoC.

## Afghanistan: Contested Space

Afghanistan is strategically important for both India and Pakistan and occupies a significant position in their relationship. Yet their interests and capabilities to influence developments are fundamentally different. Geography has acted as a boon and a hindrance for both countries vis-à-vis Afghanistan. While the lack of a direct border with Afghanistan may have limited India's role compared with that of Pakistan, this factor has ensured that India-Afghanistan relations, unlike Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, are not burdened by the baggage of a disputed border. Moreover, Pakistan's constant interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs has caused much resentment within the country. A prominent aspect of Pakistan's Afghan policy has been the pursuit of "strategic depth." Since the 1970s, Pakistan has actively sought to balance the influence of non-friendly countries in Afghanistan by retaining a degree of control over it through a fundamentalist, Pashtun-dominated movement.<sup>54</sup> Pakistan has made repeated attempts to ensure

<sup>50</sup> "India-Pakistan Talks Cancelled on Flimsy Grounds, Says PDP," *Daily News and Analysis*, August 18, 2014, <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-india-pakistan-talks-cancelled-on-flimsy-grounds-says-pdp-2011792>.

<sup>51</sup> "BJP, PDP Seal Alliance to Form Government: Talks with Hurriyat, Phased AFSPA Rollback," *Indian Express*, February 25, 2015, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/politics/pdp-bjp-announce-alliance-to-form-government-in-jk/>.

<sup>52</sup> For the full text of the BJP-PDP Common Minimum Programme, see "Full Text: Common Minimum Programme of PDP-BJP Government in J&K," IBN Live, March 2, 2015, <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/full-text-common-minimum-programme-of-pdpbjp-government-in-jk/531591-37-64.html>.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Fair, *Fighting to the End*; Ali K. Chisti, "The Death of Strategic Depth?" *Friday Times*, July 8–14, 2011, <http://www.thefridaytimes.com/beta2/tft/article.php?issue=20110708&page=6>; and Khalid Iqbal, "Pakistan's Dilemma about Strategic Depth," *Criterion Quarterly* 7, no.1 (2012), <http://www.criterion-quarterly.com/pakistan%20%99s-dilemma-about-strategic-depth>. In its initial conception, widely attributed to former army chief General Mirza Aslam Beg, "strategic depth" was understood as a military concept. It called for a strategic withdrawal of Pakistani troops into Afghan territories, in the event of a full-scale Indian invasion, from where a counteroffensive could be launched. For more on this concept, see Kamran Shafiq, "Defining 'Strategic Depth,'" *Dawn*, January 19, 2010, <http://www.dawn.com/news/965626/defining-strategic-depth>.

that such groups or individuals—the Afghan *mujahideen* in the 1980s and subsequently Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and the Taliban—assume power in Kabul. Given its problems with Pakistan since the partition of the subcontinent, Afghanistan has looked to India as a major source of external support. This relationship has fueled Pakistan's insecurity vis-à-vis India, enhancing its fears of being encircled by two hostile neighbors.

Pakistan, in particular, has been wary of India's increasing influence in Afghanistan over the past decade. It has accused India of using consulates in Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar, and Jalalabad to fuel insurgencies in Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Pakistan has sought to limit India's influence by denying transit through Pakistani territory to Indian goods bound for Afghanistan. The attacks on Indian targets like the embassy in Kabul in 2008 and the consulates in Jalalabad and Herat in 2013 and 2014, respectively, are also a part of Pakistan's strategy to curtail Indian influence in Afghanistan. Musharraf, in fact, claimed in February 2015 that Pakistan continued to provide support to the Taliban after 2001 in an effort to counter the growing Indian presence in Afghanistan.<sup>55</sup>

### *Targeting of Indian Interests*

Since the installation of Ashraf Ghani as the president of Afghanistan in October 2014, it has been India's turn to worry about the implications of a potential rapprochement between Kabul and Islamabad. Ghani's early foreign policy initiatives had been geared toward improving relations with Pakistan. There were a number of high-level bilateral exchanges and assurances, for instance, to jointly tackle terrorism in the region.<sup>56</sup> Afghanistan also stepped up military operations against alleged TTP bases in eastern Afghanistan and sent a group of army officers for training in Pakistan for the first time in February 2015.<sup>57</sup> Ghani's decision to withdraw his predecessor's request for military equipment from India was also seen as an attempt to pacify Pakistan.<sup>58</sup> This initial enthusiasm, however, seems to be giving way to a more subdued, and at times confrontational, approach amid increasing violence in Afghanistan, lack of progress in the peace talks with the Taliban, and growing domestic opposition to Ghani's Pakistan policy.

There has been an adjustment in Ghani's policy vis-à-vis India as well. New Delhi was closely monitoring these developments but could do very little about them and was largely marginalized in the process. There are signs now that Kabul is willing to resume the close ties the two countries shared during Hamid Karzai's tenure. Two high-level visits to India from the Afghan national

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<sup>55</sup> "Pakistan Undermined Karzai's Govt as He Helped 'India Stab Pakistan in the Back': Musharraf," *Express Tribune*, February 13, 2015, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/837797/pakistan-undermined-karzaais-govt-as-he-helped-india-stab-pakistan-in-the-back-musharraf>.

<sup>56</sup> Ghani has already visited Pakistan, where he took the unprecedented step of visiting the Pakistan Army headquarters in Rawalpindi. Similarly, the Pakistan national security adviser Sartaz Aziz, the chief of army staff General Raheel Sharif, and the ISI chief Rizwan Akhtar have all undertaken trips to Kabul as well. In fact, General Sharif has also made a few emergency trips to Kabul to discuss joint counterterrorism mechanisms. For more on these developments, see "President Ghani Arrives in Pakistan on Two-Day State Visit," *Khaama Press*, November 14, 2014, <http://www.khaama.com/president-ghani-arrives-in-pakistan-on-two-day-state-visit-8756>; "Pakistani Army Chief Proposes Training for Afghan Army Officers," *Khaama Press*, November 6, 2014, <http://www.khaama.com/pakistani-army-chief-proposes-training-for-afghan-army-officers-8725>; "Pakistan's New ISI Chief Arrives in Kabul," *Tolo News*, November 11, 2014, <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/17080-pakistans-newisi-chief-arrives-in-kabul>; "Pakistani National Security Advisor Visits Kabul," *Tolo News*, October 19, 2014, <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16802-pakistani-national-security-advisor-visits-kabul>; "Pakistan Army Chief Visits Kabul Following Deadly Peshawar Attack," *Khaama Press*, December 17, 2014, <http://www.khaama.com/pakistan-army-chief-visits-kabul-following-deadly-peshawar-attack-9143>; and "Pakistan's Army and ISI Chiefs Arrive to Kabul," *Tolo News*, February 17, 2015, <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/18259-pakistans-army-andisi-chiefs-arrive-to-kabul>.

<sup>57</sup> "Taliban Sanctuaries: Afghans Launch Raids in TTP-Infested Kunar," *Express Tribune*, December 23, 2014, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/810947/taliban-sanctuaries-afghans-launch-raids-in-tpp-infested-kunar>; and "First Group of Afghan Army Cadets Arrives for Training at PMA," *Express Tribune*, February 5, 2015, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/833500/first-group-of-afghan-army-cadets-arrives-for-training-at-pma>.

<sup>58</sup> "President Ghani Suspends Karzai's Request for Indian Arms," *Tolo News*, February 10, 2015, <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/18152-president-ghani-suspends-karzaais-request-for-indian-arms>.

security adviser and deputy foreign minister in November 2015 paved the way for Modi's first visit to Afghanistan the following month. During this day-long trip, Modi officially handed over three attack helicopters to Afghanistan, the first time that India has provided lethal weaponry to the Afghan National Security Forces, and spoke of the need for the two countries to work together to tackle common challenges.

However, Pakistan's links with the various Afghan insurgent groups have placed it in an important position to influence political and security developments in Afghanistan. Better ties with Pakistan are thus necessary for Kabul to reach a political agreement with the Taliban, something that Ghani, despite his public pronouncements, recognizes. This is evident from Kabul's continuing efforts to work with Islamabad and explore the possibility of resuming the peace process with the Taliban.<sup>59</sup> It remains to be seen how Ghani balances his relations with both India and Pakistan. Pakistan has always strongly opposed any military ties between India and Afghanistan. The Strategic Partnership Agreement signed between the two in 2011, which commits India, among other things, to "assist...in the training, equipping, and capacity building programs" for the Afghan National Security Forces, has always been a source of concern for Pakistan.<sup>60</sup>

While India, for its part, has good objective reasons for a normalization of ties between Kabul and Islamabad, the real question is about the terms. If the reconciliation is seen as limiting Afghanistan's sovereignty or lending Pakistan special privileges across the Durand Line, New Delhi will be deeply concerned.

### *Spurt in Cross-border Terrorism*

Developments in Afghanistan could also add a new dimension to the issue of cross-border terrorism. India is concerned that prolonged instability in Afghanistan or the re-emergence of the Taliban as the dominant force, even if only in some provinces, could turn the country into a haven for radical extremist groups. Such fears are based on past events in Afghanistan. During the 1990s, under international pressure, Pakistan shifted many militant groups' bases from its Punjab Province and tribal areas to eastern Afghanistan. It initially paid the Jalalabad Shura and subsequently the Taliban to provide these groups with protection.<sup>61</sup> Groups like the LeT, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, and Hizb-ul Mujahideen were provided sanctuary and an operating base in Afghanistan from where they could carry out activities against India. The Taliban was also allegedly complicit in the hijacking of Indian Airlines Flight IC-814 in 1999. Maulana Masood Azhar, who was released as part of a hostage deal, subsequently planned and executed terrorist attacks on Indian soil from his base in Pakistan.

Indian opposition to the Taliban is rooted in these past experiences. New Delhi continues to view the group as Pakistan's puppet, incapable of negotiating or operating independently. India is concerned that the Taliban's involvement in Afghanistan's future political setup would invariably provide an opportunity for Pakistan to enhance its influence in the country. From an Indian perspective, it is thus critical to prevent Pakistan from becoming the sole arbitrator of Afghan

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<sup>59</sup> "Four-Nations Session in Islamabad Agrees on Resuming Peace Talks," Tolo News, December 9, 2015, <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/22731-four-nations-session-in-islamabad-agrees-on-resuming-peace-talks>.

<sup>60</sup> "Taliban Leadership Approves Preliminary Peace Talks with Afghan Govt," *Khaama Press*, February 22, 2015, <http://www.khaama.com/taliban-leadership-approves-preliminary-peace-talks-with-afghan-govt-9950>.

<sup>61</sup> Ahmed Rashid, *The Taliban: The Story of the Afghan Warlords* (London: Pan Books, 2001).

political and strategic discourse, as such an arrangement would not only threaten India's interests but also fuel Islamic radicalism throughout the region.<sup>62</sup>

An additional concern for New Delhi is the prospect of Punjab-based groups like LeT and Jaish-e-Mohammad turning their attention to India following the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan. As a result of its decision to join the global war on terrorism, Pakistan asked these groups to lie low and even paid some militants, such as Hafiz Saeed, compensation.<sup>63</sup> It is possible that following the drawdown Pakistan will once again allow these groups to plan and launch terrorist operations against India.<sup>64</sup> In fact, intelligence sources within India believe that a new campaign by Islamic militants may already be underway and have pointed to the various incidents along the LoC as proof.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, Hafiz Saeed and the chief of Hizb-ul Mujahideen, Syed Salahuddin, assured a delegation of Kashmiri separatists visiting Islamabad in December 2012 that militancy in Kashmir will escalate once U.S. troops withdraw in 2014.<sup>66</sup>

## The Implications for Regional Stability

### *An Unstable Afghanistan*

While developments in Afghanistan have a bearing on India-Pakistan relations, tensions between the two countries may have an impact on Afghanistan's stability as well. There are concerns that after the drawdown of international forces India and Pakistan could intensify their military and financial support for different Afghan factions to gain the upper hand in Afghanistan.<sup>67</sup> In the past, India and Pakistan have supported different factions. While the Northern Alliance received assistance from India in the 1990s, for example, Pakistan extended support to the Taliban. A reoccurrence of this will not only further exacerbate tensions between the countries but also increase instability in Afghanistan.

An unstable environment is not conducive for the various development projects currently underway in Afghanistan that are critical for its future. The TAPI project has been stalled for years, and the prevailing insecurity and future uncertainties have derailed work in the country's mining sector as well. Indian development projects, in particular, have been vulnerable to attacks. For instance, in April 2013, Afghan intelligence foiled a Taliban plot assisted by the ISI to blow up the Salma Dam, which at the time was still being constructed by India.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, the unabated activities of insurgents have hampered commercial transport on the Zaranj-Delaram and Kabul-

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<sup>62</sup> Arun Sahgal, "U.S. Af-Pak Strategy and Afghanistan's Alternative Futures: Options for India," in *Afghanistan: A Role for India*, ed. R.K. Sawhney, Arun Sahgal, and Gurmeet Kanwal (New Delhi: Centre for Land Warfare Studies, 2011).

<sup>63</sup> Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005).

<sup>64</sup> Wilson John and Aryaman Bhatnagar, "Impact on India," in *Pakistan's Afghan Gambit*, ed. Wilson John (New Delhi: Haranand Publishers, 2014).

<sup>65</sup> "India, Pakistan Tensions Expected to Rise," Voice of America, August 13, 2013, <http://www.voanews.com/content/reu-india-pakistan-tensions-expected-to-rise/1728761.html>.

<sup>66</sup> "Hurriyat Delegation Meets Hafiz Saeed and Salahuddin," *Tehelka*, January 9, 2013, <http://www.tehelka.com/jihad-will-revive-in-kashmir-in-2014-hafiz-saeed-salahuddin-tell-hurriyat-delegation>.

<sup>67</sup> Frederic Grare, "2016, the Kabul Story," *Indian Express*, June 13, 2014, <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/2016-the-kabul-story/99>.

<sup>68</sup> Scott Peterson, "Why a Dam in Afghanistan Might Set Back Peace," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 30, 2013, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-South-Central/2013/0730/Why-a-dam-in-Afghanistan-might-set-back-peace>.

Kandahar highways.<sup>69</sup> The possibility of further attacks could deter India, as well as other countries, from investing in such projects in the future.

### *Regional Integration*

There has been an increasing thrust among regional countries for greater cooperation within South Asia as a means of promoting peace and stability. For instance, the Kathmandu Declaration issued at the 18th SAARC summit held in November 2014 emphasized the determination of member countries to “deepen regional integration for peace and prosperity by promoting mutual trust, amity, understanding, cooperation and partnership” in the fields of trade, investment, finance, energy, security, infrastructure, connectivity and culture.<sup>70</sup>

The lack of cooperation between India and Pakistan, however, has always threatened to undermine this vision of regional integration. As discussed above, economic and commercial relations between the two countries are always subject to the state of their political and strategic ties. The renewal of the formal bilateral dialogue, it is hoped, can prove a boon for regional integration and cooperation as well.<sup>71</sup> Nonetheless, a lack of cooperation from Pakistan, however, should not prevent India from deepening its ties with its eastern and southern neighbors. India’s geographic location and sheer size enable it to engage directly with the other SAARC countries. A bilateral agreement with any of these countries for deeper economic or commercial relations or an agreement between two or more member states including India—as permitted by the SAARC charter—for “subregional cooperation” would automatically integrate a large part of the subcontinent.<sup>72</sup> The development of the BBIN (Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal) subregional network may be one such step.<sup>73</sup>

While it is possible for India to pursue active economic integration with the rest of the region, its lack of geographic contiguity with Afghanistan increases the importance of Pakistan. Bilateral differences and divergent interests vis-à-vis Afghanistan have prevented cooperation on this front so far. This is evident from Pakistan’s rejection of numerous offers from India for a dialogue on Afghanistan. Moreover, as noted above, Pakistan’s concerns about increasing Indian influence in Afghanistan have forced it to deny access to Indian goods bound for Afghanistan through Pakistani territory. This policy naturally creates skepticism about the prospects of a regional solution for Afghanistan through the country’s development as a trade and transit hub connecting South and Central Asia.

Given the lack of any bilateral discussion on Afghanistan, it is remarkable that Pakistan has been willing to engage with India—and Afghanistan—on the TAPI gas pipeline project. While progress has been slow, there have been recent calls to expedite this venture. For instance, in February 2015, Indian petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan called for an early implementation of the

<sup>69</sup> “Highway Insecurity Hampering ChahBahar Port Trade: ACCI,” Tolo News, September 17, 2013, [www.tolonews.com/en/business/11955-insecurity-on-highways-adversely-affecting-trade-at-chah-bahar-port-acci](http://www.tolonews.com/en/business/11955-insecurity-on-highways-adversely-affecting-trade-at-chah-bahar-port-acci).

<sup>70</sup> For the full text of the Kathmandu Declaration, see “Kathmandu Declaration,” South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, November 27, 2014, <http://www.saarc-sec.org/press-releases/18th-SAARC-Summit-Declaration/121>.

<sup>71</sup> “Sushma Swaraj Explains Why She Went to Pakistan in Parliament.”

<sup>72</sup> Modi himself acknowledged this by claiming that it is possible to strengthen ties in South Asia either “through SAARC or outside it” and either among all the countries or among only a few of them. See C. Raja Mohan, “States and the Saarc,” *Indian Express*, November 29, 2014, <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/states-and-the-saarc>.

<sup>73</sup> “India Explores Scope for Power Trade with Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal,” *Economic Times*, January 31, 2015, [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-01-31/news/58650561\\_1\\_power-trade-the-jwg-inter-grid-connectivity](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-01-31/news/58650561_1_power-trade-the-jwg-inter-grid-connectivity).

project.<sup>74</sup> In November 2014, the state gas companies of the four member countries involved agreed to establish a company that would build, own equal shares of, and operate the pipeline.<sup>75</sup> Although a number of challenges still remain before the pipeline can materialize, India and Pakistan's engagement on this front may provide a blueprint for exploring other avenues of collaboration. India should nonetheless actively pursue greater integration of Afghanistan by engaging with other regional countries—especially Iran and the Central Asian republics—and building on the steps that it has already taken.<sup>76</sup> The development of a regional trading network centered on Afghanistan that does not include Pakistan, and the possible trade benefits accruing from it, could compel the latter to play a more constructive role.

China's increased involvement in South Asia could have a significant impact for the region as well. Since the change of leadership in Kabul, Beijing has shown greater interest in enhancing its role in Afghanistan.<sup>77</sup> Ghani's efforts to reach out to China have in part been motivated by the latter's close ties with Pakistan. Kabul is hopeful that by increasing investments in Afghanistan, China can also persuade Pakistan to play a more constructive role in the region. In fact, Kabul hosted the first trilateral strategic dialogue between Afghanistan, China, and Pakistan in February 2015, at which all three countries committed to enhance counterterrorism and security cooperation. China also expressed a commitment to constructing a hydroelectric power plant in Afghanistan's Kunar Province, which would feed into the power grid of both Afghanistan and Pakistan; a motorway linking Peshawar and Kabul; and rail links between Chaman in Pakistan and Kandahar in Afghanistan. India has had limited engagement with China on Afghanistan, with the first bilateral discussion taking place in April 2013. Although progress has so far been slow, the convergence of interests suggests that much potential for collaboration between the two exists and is something that India should seek to expand.

## Conclusion

India-Pakistan relations are at a critical juncture. There have been some improvements in bilateral ties over the past decade and a half, which have created a foundation for cooperation. The economic situation in both countries and Pakistan's internal security challenges also may have created an opening for promoting closer bilateral ties. An increase in bilateral trade not only would generate additional revenue, enhance competitiveness and the quality of goods, and lead to an exchange of expertise but also could introduce an element of interdependency that creates mutual incentives for both sides to sustain this process. Some in New Delhi, however, fear that Pakistan's

<sup>74</sup> "Pradhan Seeks Expediting of TAPI Project at Islamabad Meet," *Hindu*, February 12, 2015, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/pradhan-seeks-expediting-of-tapi-project-at-islamabad-meet/article6884026.ece>.

<sup>75</sup> "Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pak, India Set Up TAPI Pipeline Company," *Hindu Business Line*, November 13, 2014, <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/turkmenistan-afghanistan-pak-india-establish-tapi-gas-pipeline-company/article6595003.ece>.

<sup>76</sup> India has been in negotiations with Afghanistan and Iran for a transit trade agreement and has been exploring other avenues of cooperation as well. It has also been involved with the development of infrastructure in the region. India has constructed the 220 kilometer Zaranj-Delaram highway, which connects with the main Kandahar-Herat highway; has cleared an investment plan of approximately \$85 million toward the development of the Chabahar port in Iran; and plans to build a 900 kilometer rail link from the Hajigak mines in Bamyan to the Chabahar port. Similarly, it has discussed the possibility of developing a trans-Afghan transport corridor during high-level exchanges with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

<sup>77</sup> During Ghani's trip to Beijing in October 2014, Afghanistan and China signed four agreements aimed at enhancing trade and commercial relations and humanitarian relations. See Rateb Noori, "Afghanistan, China Sign Four Agreements," *Tolo News*, October 28, 2014, <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16916-afghanistan-china-sign-four-agreements>. The two countries have also been in discussion regarding the construction of a road link between China's Xinjiang Province and the neighboring Badakhshan Province in northern Afghanistan. See "China Pledge \$327 Million Aid to Afghanistan through 2017," *Khaama Press*, October 29, 2014, <http://www.khaama.com/china-pledge-327-million-aid-to-afghanistan-through-2017-8897>.

presumed confidence that it could shape the future of Afghanistan in collaboration with China might make the Pakistan Army more adventurous toward India.

There is no escaping the reality that numerous historical and structural problems still limit the possibilities for political reconciliation between India and Pakistan, as has also been evident during Modi's tenure so far. Constraints exist on both sides. In Pakistan, there is a significant imbalance in civil-military relations, which is unlikely to be resolved in the near future. The military continues to dictate the country's foreign policy and deny the civilian leadership any space to pursue a dialogue with India on its terms. In India, too, the resistance to engagement with Pakistan has solidified in recent years, particularly within the BJP and the strategic community.

Given these domestic constraints, India will need to be far more creative than it has been in the past in exploring new openings bilaterally with Pakistan and finding ways to engage other powers that have a shared interest in limiting the sources of instability in Pakistan and Afghanistan. To this end, New Delhi should consider pursuing any actions that it can undertake unilaterally, as it did when granting MFN status to Pakistan in 1996. Moreover, the Indian belief that the Pakistan Army will pursue terrorism and covert activities to destabilize India should be tempered with the belief that there is a possibility that the internal dynamics in Pakistan can actually bring about a change in the military's strategic calculus.

In Modi and Sharif, India and Pakistan have two leaders who are willing to push forward the relationship. Modi's Pakistan policy, after the initial confusion and constant back and forth, by the end of 2015 started to show a more serious commitment toward constructive engagement. It remains to be seen, however, whether the two countries are now genuinely on the verge of a new beginning where this momentum can be sustained or whether the renewed attempt, like previous efforts, will fall prey to the usual constraints in bilateral ties. A possible reconciliation in India-Pakistan relations could open up the possibility of the two cooperating on Afghanistan. A stable Afghanistan is in the interest of both India and Pakistan, as well as all the major powers. Greater connectivity between Central Asia, South Asia, and the Persian Gulf as a result of prolonged stability in Afghanistan would bring great benefits to both countries and the region as a whole through enhanced trade and energy cooperation. A shared regional vision centered on Afghanistan could thus introduce another element of potential interdependence between India and Pakistan, which if sustained, would benefit the entire region.

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# Pakistan's Relations with China and Implications for Regional Stability

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**NOTE:** This essay partly draws on Jayadeva Ranade, "The Future of China-Pakistan Relations," *Seminar*, December 2014; and Jayadeva Ranade, *China Unveiled: Insights into Chinese Strategic Thinking* (New Delhi: KW Publishers, 2013).

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This essay evaluates the most salient dimensions of the relationship between Pakistan and China, including cooperation on economics, security, and nuclear issues, and discusses relevant challenges facing the partnership.

### **MAIN ARGUMENT**

The relationship between China and Pakistan has grown to encompass the entire gamut of strategic elements, and though described as mutually beneficial and “all-weather,” it is a relationship that is far from being one between equals. Pakistan is an asset to China’s geopolitical and economic aspirations, but Beijing is a key driver in Pakistan’s future security. Pakistan’s continued use of Islamist militants to pursue foreign policy goals will in the future clash with China’s growing concerns about Muslim Uighur separatists, but meanwhile developing uncertainty in Afghanistan nudges China to use Pakistan’s influence with the Taliban to protect its interests in Afghanistan. Pakistan, in turn, relies on China to assist its economic and infrastructure development. China’s willingness to expand Pakistan’s nuclear and missile capabilities, despite rising Islamist radicalization, is fraught with risk.

### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- The growing radicalization of Pakistani society and the armed forces is of serious concern. As the Islamist fundamentalist and extremist elements rise to senior positions in the Pakistan Army, they will acquire control over the country’s strategic nuclear assets. The international community must examine options to avoid such a situation.
- China and Pakistan emerging as the de facto dominant forces in Afghanistan would create instability. China’s interest in containing Islamism would be limited to neutralizing Uighur elements. It is probable that Beijing could acquiesce in an arrangement whereby other extremist forces could use Afghanistan as a sanctuary or base of operations against the U.S., United Kingdom, Europe, and India.

Diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan date back to 1951—one year after the founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC)—when Pakistan established a mission in Beijing. Since then, the partnership has developed into one of the most comprehensive bilateral relationships that China has with any country.

The fact that the relationship has endured for so long owes to Pakistan’s strategic value to China. The China-Pakistan strategic partnership is primarily manifested in five aspects: economic and trade cooperation, security cooperation, nuclear collaboration, high-level diplomacy and exchanges, and the Kashmir issue. As the relationship matured, it has come to anchor Pakistan’s defense and foreign policy goals. Strong mutual geostrategic interests and perceived national security interests bind the two states. Of particular relevance are the agreements and proposals to upgrade the Karakoram Highway, establish a defense electronics complex in Pakistan, develop Gwadar port as an energy hub, and lay a pipeline from Baluchistan to Xinjiang.

This essay evaluates the most salient dimensions of the bilateral relationship. The first section assesses cooperation between China and Pakistan on diplomatic, economic, security, and nuclear issues. The essay then considers the role of the Kashmir issue in the strategic partnership before concluding with a discussion of challenges facing Sino-Pakistani relations.

## China-Pakistan Cooperation

### *Economic Cooperation*

China’s dependence on the flow of energy resources through narrow sea lanes is a weakness that adversaries can exploit. China has worked to resolve this dilemma both by increasing its naval presence in the Indian Ocean and by developing overland trade and energy corridors through Central Asia. Pakistan could be key to achieving both of these plans.<sup>1</sup>

Sino-Pakistani cooperation in the Indian Ocean has centered on the construction of a port at Gwadar. Despite initial reluctance, China agreed to fund the project after receiving sovereign guarantees for the port facilities—much to the consternation of the United States. With China providing \$198 million of the \$248 million budgeted for phase one, construction of the project began in March 2002. China also financed a highway link from Gwadar to a central Baluchistan town connecting Karachi and Quetta. When the port was formally inaugurated by President Pervez Musharraf on May 20, 2007, he credited the strong Pakistan-China relationship with making “the dream of Gwadar port a reality.”<sup>2</sup>

The port provides China with strategic access to the Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea, and Indian Ocean. Located just 250 miles from the Strait of Hormuz, through which nearly 20% of the world’s oil supplies transit,<sup>3</sup> Gwadar offers critical access to key shipping lanes and allows China to ensure the security of its crude oil import routes. China has access to the port for trading purposes, using the Karakoram Highway as a link. The recent pledge by Chinese leaders to invest, by Pakistani estimates, \$46 billion in energy, road, and railway projects to establish the China-Pakistan

<sup>1</sup> Michael Beckley, “China and Pakistan: Fair-Weather Friends,” *Yale Journal of International Affairs* 7, no. 1 (2012): 9–22, [http://yalejournal.org/article\\_post/china-and-pakistan-fair-weather-friends](http://yalejournal.org/article_post/china-and-pakistan-fair-weather-friends).

<sup>2</sup> “Chinese Assistance Helped Realize Dream of Gwadar Port: Musharraf,” Embassy of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, March 21, 2007, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/cepk/eng/xnyfgk/t305256.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Energy Information Administration, “Strait of Hormuz Is Chokepoint for 20% of World’s Oil,” September 5, 2012, <http://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.cfm?id=7830>.

Economic Corridor—linking Gwadar to Xinjiang—reinforces the strategic importance of Gwadar port for both countries.

With the capacity to accommodate submarines and aircraft carriers, the port also augments China's naval capabilities and could be used to monitor U.S. naval activity in the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf. Gwadar is considered by some scholars to be one of China's “string of pearls”—a chain of potential naval bases between the Middle East and East Asia.<sup>4</sup> Chinese officials have, however, disputed a statement made by Pakistan's defense minister that China has been invited to build a naval base in Gwadar. They instead have characterized the port in economic terms as an important part of China's “maritime Silk Road” project to enhance trade and commerce across the region. Nonetheless, the fact remains that Gwadar port has the potential to easily and quickly be developed into a naval base by China in the future.

### *Defense and Security Cooperation*

Bilateral defense cooperation pivots around high-level talks, intelligence sharing, joint exercises, counterterrorism, and arms sales. There are two major bilateral defense forums—the Joint Committee on Cooperation in Defense Technology and Industry and the Defense and Security Talks. Since 2002, these have been held each year, alternately in Pakistan and China. Though Pakistan has had defense relations with the United States as well, it considers China a more reliable partner, mainly due to a common interest in dealing with India. More Pakistan Army officers and personnel have received training in China since 2010 than in the United States, which was Pakistan's primary military training partner in the past. Bilateral defense cooperation is backed by frequent visits by military leaders. Dozens of Pakistani military delegations visit China each year, and many high-level delegations from China visit Pakistan as well.

The intelligence services of the two countries also share close ties that are reinforced through regular exchanges at high levels and by a regular strategic dialogue at the foreign ministry level. This cooperation has made it possible to contain the potential for damage from the activities of Uighur extremists trained by Pakistan-based Islamist terrorist organizations at camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan and China carry out military exercises every two years and have tested their capacity to conduct operations from a joint command center, including simulation of large-scale intelligence gathering by Chinese and Pakistani troops and search-and-destroy missions.

Chinese leaders have used their relationships with Pakistani military officials and the Islamist political parties to persuade them to discourage attacks on Chinese interests. Before September 11, for example, China reached agreements with the Taliban to prevent Uighur separatists from using Afghanistan as a training ground for militant activities. In late September 2011, China's vice premier in charge of public security, Meng Jianzhu, visited Pakistan in order to strengthen cooperation on addressing the problem of militancy in Xinjiang. China's interest in supporting counterterrorism initiatives in Pakistan is aimed at containing any threats to its internal stability in Xinjiang and securing the safety of Chinese investments and personnel in Pakistan.

Defense cooperation also extends to Pakistan's ground forces, air force, navy, and missiles. China is viewed by Pakistan as a reliable supplier of conventional military equipment, main battle tanks, fighter aircraft, and warships. The number of sales, because of the low “friendship” prices and easy availability, has increased steadily. Between 1978 and 2014, China sold over \$10.5 billion

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<sup>4</sup> Beckley, “China and Pakistan.”

in military equipment to Pakistan.<sup>5</sup> For nearly every year between 2001 and 2014, Pakistan was the single-largest purchaser of Chinese weaponry, accounting for almost 42% of China's total arms sales during this period.<sup>6</sup>

Security ties received a stimulus after the U.S. surgical strike at Osama bin Laden's hideout in Abbottabad, Pakistan. China publicly expressed support for Pakistan and called on the United States to respect the "independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity" of Pakistan.<sup>7</sup> It simultaneously expedited the delivery of 50 JF-17 aircraft with upgraded avionics. One reason for China enhancing military-to-military cooperation with Pakistan is to ensure that it facilitates rather than undermines China's domestic stability.<sup>8</sup>

In recent years, the scope of cooperation in space has also expanded. China helped Pakistan develop its space launch vehicle and conduct research in space technology in Ormara, Baluchistan, under the supervision of the Space and Upper Atmospheric Research Commission in Karachi.

### *Nuclear Cooperation*

China is a major partner in the development of Pakistan's nuclear weapons and missile programs. It "transferred equipment and technology and provided scientific expertise to Pakistan's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs throughout the 1980s and 1990s, enhancing Pakistan's strength in the South Asian strategic balance."<sup>9</sup> Most significantly, Sino-Pakistani cooperation included the transfer of 34 short-range ballistic M-11 missiles from China to Pakistan in 1992.<sup>10</sup> As international pressure mounted on China to comply with the Missile Technology Control Regime, Beijing brokered an arrangement for Pakistan to acquire missiles from North Korea in exchange for nuclear technology. Pakistani aircraft used to regularly overfly Chinese airspace, often with stopovers in Hotan, ferrying supplies, scientists, and specialist personnel to and from North Korea. Benazir Bhutto personally traveled with nuclear data to Pyongyang. China also constructed a ballistic missile manufacturing facility outside Rawalpindi and assisted in Pakistan's development of the 750-kilometer-range Shaheen-I ballistic missile.

A.Q. Khan, the nuclear scientist who played a key role in developing Pakistan's nuclear weapons program and in 2004 confessed to selling nuclear designs and materials to countries such as Iran, North Korea, and Libya on the black market, has described China's role in the development of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program. He claimed that in the early 1980s China supplied Pakistan with 15 tons of uranium hexafluoride as well as 50 kilograms of weapons-grade uranium.<sup>11</sup> China is also reported to have provided Pakistan with nuclear warhead designs, with information surfacing in 1994 "that China's Nuclear Energy Industry Corporation had transferred 5,000 ring magnets to a Pakistani nuclear weapons lab for use in gas centrifuges to enrich uranium."<sup>12</sup> As a

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<sup>5</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, <http://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Rosheen Kabraji, "The China-Pakistan Alliance: Rhetoric and Limitations," Chatham House, Asia Programme Paper, December 2012, 5, [https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Asia/1212pp\\_kabraji.pdf](https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Asia/1212pp_kabraji.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>9</sup> Lisa Curtis and Derek Scissors, "The Limits of the Pakistan-China Alliance," Heritage Foundation, Backgrounder, no. 2641, January 19, 2012, 3, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/01/the-limits-of-the-pakistan-china-alliance>.

<sup>10</sup> Shirley A. Kan, "China and Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and Missiles: Policy Issues," Congressional Research Service, CRS Report for Congress, RL31555, January 5, 2015, 54, <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/RL31555.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> R. Jeffrey Smith and Joby Warrick, "Pakistani Nuclear Scientist's Accounts Tell of Chinese Proliferation," *Washington Post*, November 13, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/12/AR2009111211060.html?sid=ST2009111300578>.

<sup>12</sup> Curtis and Scissors, "The Limits of the Pakistan-China Alliance," 3. See also "Haf-3/Shahen-I/M-11," Federation of American Scientists, September 9, 2000, <http://fas.org/nuke/guide/pakistan/missile/haf-3.htm>.

result of an international outcry over these actions, the transfer prompted China to pledge in May 1996 that it “would not provide assistance to unsafeguarded nuclear facilities—i.e., facilities not covered by IAEA safeguards.”<sup>13</sup>

The depth of China-Pakistan relations was in ample evidence when India was negotiating the India-U.S. Civil Nuclear Agreement. During that period, Chinese and Pakistani diplomats regularly consulted as the two governments colluded to delay conclusion of the deal. When Pakistan was rebuffed after seeking a similar deal from the United States, China warned Washington that it was violating international regimes on nuclear matters, and that if the United States made an exception in the case of India then another country could well assist its own ally. An opinion piece in the English-language *China Daily* commented that the United States was adopting a double standard by viewing Iran’s nuclear program in the context of nonproliferation while partnering with India on nuclear development.<sup>14</sup> It also recalled that the United States was the first country to impose sanctions on India after its nuclear test in 1998. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao clearly alluded to China extending nuclear assistance to Pakistan when he stated that “relevant countries could have cooperation in peaceful use of nuclear energy under the precondition of fulfilling their due international obligations.”<sup>15</sup>

Beijing has followed through on this warning by helping Islamabad build two civilian nuclear reactors at the Chashma site in Punjab Province under agreements made before China joined the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) in 2004. In June 2008, China agreed to help finance two additional 320 megawatt electrical units at Chashma. In March 2009, China’s Shanghai Nuclear Engineering Research and Design Institute announced plans to design the Chashma 3 and 4 reactors, with assistance from China Zhongyuan Engineering Corporation and China Nuclear Industry No. 5 Construction Company. In March 2010, Pakistan announced that China would finance 82% of the \$1.9 billion cost for construction of the Chashma 3 and 4 reactors and provide fuel for the entire lifetime of the reactors (typically 40 years). In November 2010, the China National Nuclear Corporation agreed to assist with construction of a fifth unit at Chashma, which it was later revealed would have a 1,000 megawatt electrical capacity.<sup>16</sup> China anticipated controversy due to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and guidelines of the NSG but decided it would go ahead. The status of Chashma 5 is presently uncertain.<sup>17</sup>

Most recently, it was discovered that China is about to operationalize a one-gigawatt light water reactor in Karachi, with plans for two more reactors to be sited there as well.<sup>18</sup> Because China has used its veto power as a permanent member of the UN Security Council to protect Pakistan, inspectors have been denied entry to Pakistani nuclear facilities, and inspections, when they occur, are less than rigorous.

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<sup>13</sup> “China’s 11 May 1996 Pledge Not to Provide Assistance to Unsafeguarded Nuclear Facilities,” Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies, January 1998.

<sup>14</sup> Hu Shisheng, “Strategic Gains at Heart of Bush South Asia Trip,” *China Daily*, March 7, 2006, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2006-03/07/content\\_527458.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2006-03/07/content_527458.htm).

<sup>15</sup> “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Liu Jianchao’s Regular Press Conference on 9 October 2007,” Consulate-General of the PRC in Mumbai, October 9, 2007, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/cgmb/eng/fyrth/t370983.htm>.

<sup>16</sup> Nick Cunningham, “Why China’s Nuclear Plans in Pakistan Draw Global Criticism,” *Christian Science Monitor*, March 11, 2015, <http://www.csmonitor.com/Environment/Energy-Voices/2015/0311/Why-China-s-nuclear-plans-in-Pakistan-draw-global-criticism>.

<sup>17</sup> World Nuclear Association, “Nuclear Power in Pakistan,” April 2015, <http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/Country-Profiles/Countries-O-S/Pakistan>.

<sup>18</sup> Madhav Nalapat, “China Gifts Pak Mega Nuclear Power Plants,” *Sunday Guardian*, August 2, 2014, <http://www.sunday-guardian.com/news/china-gifts-pak-mega-nuclear-power-plants>.

## *High-Level Diplomacy and Exchanges*

The constant exchange of high-level visits has played a vital role in strengthening relations between Pakistan and China. Dictated by the compulsions of regional diplomacy, however, visits to Pakistan by Chinese leaders have been balanced with visits to India. Chinese vice foreign minister Wang Yi, while on a visit to Pakistan in December 2007, sought to dispel any impression in Islamabad that this balancing of visits signaled a shift in policy. He praised the efforts of Musharraf and the Pakistani government for promoting regional peace and stability and emphasized that, regardless of any change in Pakistan's domestic situation, the "all-weather friendship" would continue to deepen.<sup>19</sup>

Chinese leaders have been prominent in projecting the image of their strong partnership. Chinese premier Li Keqiang, during his visit to Pakistan in 2013, stated that "as the closest friend and brother of Pakistan, China will render support and assistance as our ability permits. To help you is to help ourselves." He also said that the countries' "all-weather friendship and all-round cooperation...have stood the test of the changing global environment and set a fine example for the growth of state-to-state relations."<sup>20</sup> This assertion clearly indicates the interdependency in the relationship and highlights that its importance for China's new regime under Xi Jinping remains unchanged.

## **The Role of Kashmir in the China-Pakistan Relationship**

China's stance on Kashmir is closely tied to China-Pakistan relations. Pakistan, India, and China all have competing claims along the borders of Kashmir, and over the years China has extended its influence in portions of Kashmir with the support of its ally Pakistan.

China's position on the India-Pakistan conflict over Kashmir has been through three phases. In the mid-1950s, China adopted a pro-Indian position, with Beijing conceding that Kashmir had acceded to India. In the early 1960s, however, it shifted toward a pro-Pakistan stance of supporting the right of self-determination for Kashmiris. In its third phase, China's official position is now that India and Pakistan should peacefully resolve the dispute on the basis of the UN resolutions and agreements signed by the two sides in this regard. The Chinese media coverage of developments in Kashmir, however, mainly highlights the Pakistani point of view that the Kashmiris should be allowed their right to self-determination and that a free and impartial election should be held under UN auspices. Although mentioning that bilateral agreements between India and Pakistan should also form the basis of a solution to the Kashmir dispute, China has carefully avoided specific reference to the Simla Agreement, which formally established the Line of Control in 1972.

A major step in the China-Pakistan relationship was taken in 1963, when leaders signed the Sino-Pakistan Agreement establishing the border between the two states. Under the agreement, China ceded over 1,942 square kilometers (750 square miles) to Pakistan, and in exchange Pakistan formally recognized Chinese sovereignty over 5,180 square kilometers (2,000 square miles) of territory in northern Kashmir and Ladakh. This land transfer facilitated the building of the Karakoram Highway in 1978, which connects China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region

<sup>19</sup> "Chinese Senior Vice Foreign Minister Calls on President," Embassy of the PRC in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, December 14, 2007, <http://pk.chineseembassy.org/eng/zbgx/t390232.htm>.

<sup>20</sup> Li Keqiang, "Making New Progress in Growing China-Pakistan All-Weather Friendship" (speech at the Senate of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Islamabad, May 23, 2013), [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/zjyh\\_665391/t1043526.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zjyh_665391/t1043526.shtml).

with the Gilgit-Baltistan region located in territory presently held by Pakistan. Years later, as the situation became more serious, India was compelled to take countermeasures.

A few interactions between Chinese and Pakistani leaders are illustrative of the complex role of the Kashmir issue in the strategic partnership. In October 1991, Chinese president Yang Shangkun visited Pakistan and held discussions with President Ghulam Ishaq Khan. Speaking at a banquet he hosted in honor of the Chinese president, Khan referred to Pakistan's sincere efforts for a peaceful settlement of the Kashmir dispute with India. Yang, however, sidestepped any reference to the Kashmir issue.

In December 1993, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto paid a three-day visit to China. In her meeting with Chinese premier Li Peng, Bhutto said that Pakistan would oppose Western moves and pressure against China on the issues of human rights, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Tibet. She also briefed Premier Li on Pakistan's proposed stand on the Kashmir issue at the scheduled foreign secretary-level talks between India and Pakistan. The Chinese media, while trying to steer a carefully noncontroversial and neutral course, did not mention that Bhutto had sought Chinese mediation on the Kashmir issue. An indication that such a request had been made was, however, contained in her statement describing China as an important balancing power that has a regulatory role to play on the international scene. Li emphasized at the meeting that issues between India and Pakistan, including the Kashmir dispute, needed to be resolved through patient dialogue between the two countries. At the end of her visit, Bhutto announced that she had not sought Chinese mediation on the Kashmir issue.

Later, in February 1994, Chinese foreign minister Qian Qichen visited Pakistan and described China-Pakistan relations as time-tested and "beneficial for the people of both the countries and for regional peace and stability."<sup>21</sup> On the Kashmir issue, Qian hoped that "India and Pakistan would make progress in resolving the Kashmir issue through dialogue." Qian also met Pakistani president Farooq Leghari, Senate chairman Wasim Sajjad, and National Assembly speaker Yousuf Gillani. Xinhua dispatches covering these meetings made no reference to the Kashmir issue. In contrast, the Pakistani media sought to project that during the visit Qian had joined Pakistan in expressing concern "at the gross violation of human rights in Indian held Kashmir." An official Pakistani statement pointedly asserted that he had described Indian media reports regarding the implications of troop removal from the Sino-Indian border as "played up" in order to give rise to apprehensions, and that "China would never let any such situation take place where India could have the benefit of the relaxation of tension against Pakistan." At a press conference in Dhaka in February 1994 while on the second leg of his tour to Bangladesh, Qian responded to questions on the Kashmir issue and asserted that "China's position on the issue remains unchanged and that India and Pakistan could settle the dispute left over by history through peaceful negotiations, taking into account the UN resolutions and the relevant agreements between the two countries."<sup>22</sup>

China's proximity to Pakistan and the latter's influence on its stance on Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) was evident in China's open support for Pakistan. China's position revealed a desire to overtly interfere in the affairs of J&K and coincided with the tacit agreement between Washington and Beijing to cooperate in a bid to jointly resolve contentious issues in South Asia, including Kashmir. Just days prior to Hu Jintao's summit meeting with U.S. president Barack Obama in

<sup>21</sup> This paragraph draws on Xinhua dispatches during February 21–24, 1994. See also Jayadeva Ranade, *China Unveiled: Insights into Chinese Strategic Thinking* (New Delhi: KW Publishers, 2013).

<sup>22</sup> Qian Qichen (press conference in Dhaka, February 27, 1994).

September 2009, Chinese vice foreign minister He Zhengyue publicized China's willingness to mediate between India and Pakistan if required. The offer was repeated twice after the summit. Soon thereafter, secessionist Hurriyat leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq asserted that China has a role to play in settling the Kashmir issue. He also disclosed that he had received an invitation from a Chinese NGO and would soon be traveling to China.<sup>23</sup>

On the whole, however, since 2007, Beijing has taken a far more aggressive stance in siding with Pakistan on the Kashmir dispute, while asserting its own claims to portions of Indian-controlled J&K (in particular, the Ladakh region). In 2010, China expanded its claim and designated the entire state of J&K as disputed by declining a visa to India's Northern Army commander and thereafter issuing stapled visas to residents of J&K, which India refuses to recognize. China's claims on Ladakh are based on the assertion that its people and culture are identical to those of Tibet. In May 2013, for example, the *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao* (China Youth Daily) published an article explicitly highlighting China's claim to Ladakh.<sup>24</sup> Beijing continues to exert pressure on international organizations, such as the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank, to accept its claims, which has resulted in these organizations ceasing to give financial assistance to development projects in the disputed Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh or to even specifically mention Arunachal Pradesh or J&K in their reports.

There have been persistent reports since 2010 of People's Liberation Army (PLA) personnel in these disputed areas. While some sources claimed that up to 10,000 PLA troops were present, in 2011 the Indian Army's chief of staff, General V.K. Singh, referred to the presence of nearly 3,500 PLA personnel in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. India's Northern Army commander, Lieutenant General K.T. Parnaik, also warned in 2011 that "the Chinese presence in Gilgit-Baltistan and the Northern Areas is increasing steadily. China is involved in the construction and upgrading of numerous roads, bridges, and hydropower projects." He added that "Chinese links with Pakistan, through PoK [Pakistan-occupied Kashmir], lend strength to the China-Pakistan nexus, which has been of great security concern for us."<sup>25</sup> In fact, Hong Kong-based, Chinese-controlled media reports revealed that China's leadership was considering the possibility of a future deployment of special forces in these areas to safeguard Chinese assets.<sup>26</sup>

Some official Chinese media reports have questioned whether Chinese strategic investments in Pakistan's northern areas, and in fact in Pakistan itself, are safe. They point to the newly upgraded Karakoram Highway, plans for a railway line running along a similar axis down to Gwadar port, and plans for an oil pipeline from Gwadar to Xinjiang. Since 2009–10, China has been engaged in almost 35 projects in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir and Pakistan's northern areas, including hydroelectric projects and the construction of roads and helipads. PLA engineers are known to be involved in some of the projects.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> "Visa Rider on Mirwaiz's China Visit," *Times of India*, November 21, 2009, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Visa-rider-on-Mirwaizs-China-visit/articleshow/5253760.cms>; and Ranade, *China Unveiled*, 168.

<sup>24</sup> "Zhong-Yin bianjing zhangpeng duizhi shijian de zhuduo jingshi" [The China-India Border Camp Confrontation Incident: A Good Deal of Warning], *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao*, May 10, 2013, [http://zqb.cyol.com/html/2013-05/10/nw.D110000zgqnb\\_20130510\\_1-10.htm](http://zqb.cyol.com/html/2013-05/10/nw.D110000zgqnb_20130510_1-10.htm).

<sup>25</sup> "4,000 Chinese, Including PLA Men, in PoK: Army Chief," *Times of India*, October 6, 2011.

<sup>26</sup> For further discussion, see Ranade, *China Unveiled*, 170.

<sup>27</sup> Ranade, "The Future of China-Pakistan Relations."

## Challenges Facing the China-Pakistan Relationship

Islamic militancy poses a major challenge to the strategic partnership. Attacks on Chinese individuals inside Pakistan, the training of Uighurs in extremist Islamic organizational facilities, and the suspected assistance and activities of religious Pakistan-based *tanzeems* (outfits or organizations) to fundamentalist elements in Xinjiang are thorny issues in China-Pakistan relations. In the 1990s, China advised Benazir Bhutto to tighten controls on Pakistani preachers traveling to Xinjiang, and the Chinese authorities rerouted Hajj pilgrimage flights to avoid stopovers in Pakistan. As ethnic unrest and violence in Xinjiang increased, however, Chinese provincial cadres began to overtly blame radical influences from Pakistan. At two sessions of the National People's Congress, delegates and senior officials from Xinjiang pointed to Pakistan as a source of the unrest. Official Chinese media reports disclosed that local Chinese authorities in Xinjiang charged that the attacks in Kashgar in July 2011 had been committed by a person who had trained in Pakistan, which is the first time China has publicly called out Pakistan for providing sanctuary for insurgents.<sup>28</sup> This series of events highlights China's growing impatience over Pakistan's inability to stop cross-border militancy.<sup>29</sup> Pakistan has tried to limit damage to the relationship by stepping up cooperation between Chinese and Pakistani intelligence agencies in tracing and extraditing Uighurs from Pakistan back to China while promising to help China curtail violence in Xinjiang.<sup>30</sup>

Beyond Islamist militancy, other limits to the relationship became evident when Pakistan sought financial assistance that China declined to provide. China preferred to let the United States assist Pakistan financially while limiting itself to extending other forms of material assistance. Beijing calculated that this policy would bind Pakistan closer to China. Islamabad was bailed out but forced then to accept funding from a multibillion-dollar International Monetary Fund program with stringent economic conditions. Although China eventually agreed to lend Pakistan \$500 million, Beijing's reluctance showed that it was unwilling to assume financial responsibility for Pakistan.<sup>31</sup>

## Conclusion

The Sino-Pakistani relationship is not a partnership of equals. China wields considerable influence and will dictate the agenda of bilateral relations. At the same time, China has been careful not to act in a way that could make Pakistan unstable because that would threaten its strategic investments in Pakistan's northern and western areas and weaken Pakistan's ability to curb the flow of terrorism into Xinjiang. With uncertainty looming over Afghanistan's future, China also needs Pakistan's help in protecting commercial investments, exploiting Afghanistan's natural resources and mineral deposits, and dealing with Afghanistan and the Taliban.

Pakistan is also important to China's geostrategic ambitions. China looks to Pakistan to provide access to the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean as well as to act as a conduit to the

<sup>28</sup> This remark by Xinjiang governor Nur Bekri was reported by Xinhua. See "Xinjiang Officials Stress Anti-terrorism, Development," Xinhua, March 7, 2012; and Ranade, *China Unveiled*, 89.

<sup>29</sup> See Ranade, *China Unveiled*.

<sup>30</sup> This finding is supported by anecdotal evidence from reliable Uighur sources. See Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

Islamic countries. Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, all of which are integral to China’s recent strategy of peripheral diplomacy and have been designated as “friends,” have pledged their support to President Xi Jinping’s initiative.

Nevertheless, the China-Pakistan relationship faces a number of serious challenges, the most pertinent of which relate to the ongoing threats posed by Islamist militant groups operating within Pakistan—many of which have been tolerated and utilized by the Pakistani state in Afghanistan and India. Barring a reassessment of these policies by Pakistan, China’s deep concern with violent extremism in its restive Xinjiang region, combined with continued security challenges for Chinese citizens working in Pakistan, will probably test the limits of the all-weather friendship. The most dangerous challenge, however, is the emerging scenario where nuclear weapons come into the hands of radicalized extremist officers of the Pakistan Army—an eventuality that Beijing currently seems unwilling to accept.



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# Pakistan's Relations with Iran and the Implications for Regional Stability

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**NOTE:** The views expressed in this essay are the author's own and do not in any way reflect the policy or views of the government of Bangladesh, which he represented; the government of India, to which he was accredited; or the World Bank and the Vivekananda International Foundation, with which he is currently affiliated.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This essay examines the deep history and complex modern dynamics of the relationship between Pakistan and Iran and argues that greater cooperation between the two countries could enhance regional integration and promote stability at a time of rising sectarian tensions in the Middle East and South Asia.

### **MAIN ARGUMENT**

Iran has deep cultural ties to South Asia, including modern-day Pakistan, forged by centuries of shared history. In recent decades, however, the two countries have frequently been on opposite ends of geopolitical and religious rivalries. Following the overthrow of the shah in 1979, Iran and Pakistan were no longer Cold War allies; instead, Shiite Iran has frequently viewed Pakistan as a partner of its Sunni archrival, Saudi Arabia. This conflict was exemplified in Pakistan's and Iran's support of opposing factions in the aftermath of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. In recent years, Iran's overtures toward a partnership with India, as well as Pakistan's security challenges and struggles with Sunni militancy, have led to a tense relationship between Islamabad and Tehran. Domestic political changes in both countries, however, combined with diplomatic efforts at reintegrating Iran into the international community, provide Pakistan and Iran with an opportunity to rebuild a relationship based on energy trade as well as security cooperation against dangerous militant groups. Such a partnership not only would benefit the two countries individually but could help build security and trade linkages in Central and South Asia.

### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- It is essential for the global war on terrorism that Iran, as home to the most important Shiite leadership, and Pakistan, where several radicalized Sunni groups appear to have established a widening beach-head, should engage with each other on security issues, using cooperation on energy as the gateway to expanding the space of mutual trust.
- Pakistan should revitalize efforts to proactively engage with India to find peaceful solutions to the long-festering disputes that have historically bedeviled relations between the two countries. This process could restore the positive engagement that historically had defined relations between Iran and the South Asian subcontinent.
- For the above to happen, however, other international actors, particularly the U.S. and the other permanent members on the UN Security Council, should work toward re-engaging with Iran and creating the enabling environment and conditions required.

**P**akistan's relations with Iran are drawn from umbilical links between the two countries during a historical gestation period nurtured over several millennia. Understanding this history, particularly in the period immediately before the formation of modern Pakistan, is important if one is to understand the present state of relations between the two countries in these explosive postmodern times.

This essay first traces, in very broad brush strokes, the exchanges between historical Persia and the historical Indian subcontinent before the formation of modern Pakistan through the partition of India. Against this backdrop, it attempts to analyze how post-partition relations between Iran and Pakistan were shaped by the larger global postmodern forces that affected Pakistan, Iran, and India. The author then examines the contemporary challenges for Pakistan-Iran relations before discussing the prospects for cooperation that now exist for the two countries, in collaboration with India, to devise the architecture of long-term energy security that will fuel regional development. This analysis advocates bringing Iran in from the cold and encouraging Pakistan to reinvent its doctrine of "strategic depth" to give the term new meaning. The essay concludes that both outcomes are necessary for ensuring the larger goals of national and regional strategic security in the face of the existential threat to the region posed by the menacing Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

## The Historical Subcontinent, Afghanistan, and Iran

A nation tends to draw on its historical legacy in determining its foreign relations. Although historically and geopolitically a part of the Indian subcontinental landmass, Pakistan as a nation developed a reconstituted faith-based and ideological construct at odds with its deeply shared historical and cultural ties with the rest of the Indian subcontinent. This sense of a distinct identity drove the partition of India at independence in 1947. Pakistanis derive their perception of themselves and their regional and global role from this legacy.

During the third and second millennia BCE, Pakistan (like India) was a part of the Indus Valley civilization. It was also a part of the Achaemenid Empire founded by Cyrus the Great in 550 BCE until the empire's overthrow in 330 BCE by Alexander the Great. As an integral part of the Indian subcontinent, Pakistan was invaded successively by the Persians, Greeks, Scythians, Arabs, Afghans, and Turks, all of whom left deep and lasting footprints in their conquered lands. However, it is noteworthy that until Pakistan's postcolonial emergence, its history and culture shared the same roots with what emerged as modern Iran (and Afghanistan).

Iran and India have interacted with each other historically and culturally since the time of the Achaemenid Empire, which exercised sway in the east over India. On several occasions invaders from Persia or Afghanistan (most notoriously Nader Shah) swept into India, attracted by the latter's vast and legendary riches. The Mughal rule of India was almost concurrent and interacted with the Safavid rule of Persia. The subcontinent's arts, languages, and literature, particularly during the Mughal era, drew seminal inspiration from Persian poets, writers, philosophers, and artists. Notably, Urdu, which is the state language of Pakistan and is still widely used in northern India, is largely derived from and inspired by modern Persian, forming an umbilical link between postmodern Iran and post-partition Pakistan.

In the post-World War II era, the shah of Iran established close relations with both India and Pakistan, seeking a balancing role between the two nations. Larger economic ties with India offset

military cooperation with Pakistan. The Shiite prism through which Iran has traditionally viewed its immediate neighborhood is an important factor in this policy. It is noteworthy that Iran's Shiite population, occupying the core area of Iran proper, is ringed by a Sunni, non-Persian speaking girdle comprising peoples of various origins: Kurds (of Iranian origin) in the west, Azerbaijanis (of Turkic origin) in the north, Arabs (in the Khuzestan region to the south), and Baluchis (a branch of Iranian) in the east. Post-revolution Iranian aspirations at once mirrored and sought to challenge the Saudi-Wahhabi worldview of Islam in which both rivals wished to assert a global pan-Islamic leadership role. These rivalries stemmed from historical causes but had remained largely latent until well after the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire. The sectarian fault lines within Pakistan were targets for influence by both Shiite Iran and Wahhabi Sunni Saudi Arabia, the latter of which also sought to purify the larger swathe of Sufi-oriented Sunnis everywhere (looked upon by Wahhabi Sunnis as deviants from pristine Islam).

It was not until the 1950s that the complex, intertwined threads connecting post-partition India and Pakistan with Iran started unraveling into more distinctly separate strands. The faith-based and sectarian contestations were subsumed by the old Cold War contestations between East and West on the global level, with Pahlavi Iran and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan both being drawn together closely as allies of the West and co-members of the U.S.-sponsored military alliance, the Baghdad Pact, and the Central Treaty Organization. In the early 1960s the two countries even flirted briefly with the idea of entering into a confederation. In this alliance-driven relationship, Iran leaned more toward Pakistan in the latter's confrontational relationship with India. Although the shah of Iran continued to work to balance relations with India and Pakistan, he was also acutely conscious of the undesirable fallout his country would reap in the event of any destabilization of the Baluchistan Province of Pakistan. For this reason, Iran strongly advocated the unity of Pakistan, even by assisting it in 1971 through the provision of military supplies.

This kaleidoscopic pattern of relations changed dramatically in 1979 with the overthrow of the Iranian monarchy by the Islamic Revolution. Initially, the new regime in Iran, by virtue of its theocratic agenda, felt closer to Islamic Pakistan than to secular (and largely non-Muslim) India. However, this relationship was increasingly subsumed and rendered complicated by the following factors:

- Iran's Muslims were predominantly Shiite, whereas Pakistan's (or more correctly, West Pakistan's) Muslims were predominantly Sunni.
- Pakistan was squarely in the U.S.-Western camp to which the revolutionary Iranian regime, led by the Shiite mullahs, was uncompromisingly opposed.
- In the new rubric of the Iran-Saudi rivalry for capturing the hearts and minds of Muslims globally, Pakistan was perceived by the Iran of the ayatollahs as increasingly siding with the Saudi-Wahhabis.

The combination of factors discussed above triggered a hotly contested regional "cold war" within the larger global Cold War, with increasingly negative consequences for Pakistan. In this context, Afghanistan, with its own explosive mix of ethnic, tribal, and sectarian feuds, became the battlefield in a new variant of the "great game." The following section considers this and other challenges for relations between Iran and Pakistan.

# Challenges for Postmodern Iran-Pakistan Relations

## Afghanistan and Central Asia

During the war against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, both Pakistan and Iran supported the Afghan *mujahideen* in their war against the Soviet army in Afghanistan and the Soviet- and Indian-backed Najibullah regime in Kabul. However, Iran supported mainly the Persian-speaking Shiite factions in Afghanistan. After the Soviet withdrawal and the collapse of the Najibullah regime, when Pakistan supported first Gulbuddin Hekmatyar against the Rabbani faction and then subsequently the Taliban from 1995 onward, Iran viewed this support as being directly antithetical to its own security interests. This perception resulted in a cooling of relations with Pakistan and an increasing convergence with India on the issue.<sup>1</sup> Since then, Iran's and India's views on the Afghanistan situation have continued to converge.

Taliban and al Qaeda elements, dispersed but not eliminated by U.S. ground force operations in 2001–2, took refuge and then re-established their bases and launching pads largely in Pakistani Baluchistan. This shift was very unsettling for Iran, given the harshly anti-Shiite views of these groups. Together Iran and Pakistan have absorbed approximately 95% of refugees from war-ravaged Afghanistan. Iran is host to approximately 1 million Afghan refugees, while Pakistan has some 1.5 million.<sup>2</sup> The complex ethnic, tribal, linguistic, and sectarian divides within Afghanistan are reflected in large part in the makeup of these refugee populations, adding to the risk of a potentially explosive conflict.

Despite these divisions, the imperatives of development and growth forced both Pakistan and Iran to seek areas of collaboration economically, even as ideological tensions remained as undercurrents. A common quest for energy security—with Pakistan looking to acquire access to energy sources in Iran—promised to bridge doctrinaire theological rifts between the two countries. This also held true for India's relationship with Iran. Thus, the quest for energy security and economic development served as an aspiration for bringing the Indian subcontinent, Afghanistan, and Iran once again tantalizingly close to collaborating for their collective good and prosperity. Indeed, for Pakistan (as for India), Iran was the most natural choice of sourcing, particularly given that its gas reserves, virtually untapped until the turn of the twentieth century, are huge and second only to Russia's reserves. In the early 1990s, Iran and India signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for construction of a 2,500-kilometer gas pipeline from Iran's South Pars Fields to Delhi, India, and they had completed feasibility studies by the end of the decade. Pakistan, while initially playing the role of spoiler, subsequently showed keenness in reviving the project. Such a pipeline passing through its territory would pay Pakistan a windfall of up to \$500 million or more annually in transit fees, as well as allowing the nation to import gas through the same pipeline for its own growing needs and thereby lower domestic prices.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In 1994, during the Rafsanjani era, a white paper issued by the Iranian Defense Ministry publicly and openly declared that Pakistani and Saudi collusion in arming and training Taliban fighters was a threat to Iran's own security interests in the region. Ironically, this issue also saw Iran sitting on the same side of the table with India and the United States in the back-channel talks that tried to broker peace in Afghanistan. For further discussion of the armed support given by Iran and Pakistan to opposing sides in the Afghan civil war of the 1990s, see Human Rights Watch, "Afghanistan—Crisis of Impunity: The Role of Pakistan, Russia and Iran in Fuelling the Civil War," Report, July 2001.

<sup>2</sup> See "2015 UNHCR Country Operations Profile—Islamic Republic of Iran," UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486f96.html>; and "2015 UNHCR Country Operations Profile—Pakistan," UNHCR, 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e487016.html>. Since 2002, UNHCR has facilitated the return of almost 3.8 million refugees.

<sup>3</sup> See "Project Focus: Iran-Pakistan-India Gas Pipeline," Gulf Oil and Gas, <http://www.gulfoilandgas.com/webpro1/projects/3dreport.asp?id=100730>.

Ironically, the quest for energy security also created the prospects for both Iran and Pakistan to act as partners with (or rivals to) each other in serving as conduits for trade and transit to Central Asia. Iran perceives itself as the natural transit route for oil and gas exports and non-oil trade from Central Asian countries to world markets. Iran offered India a viable transit route for trade with the newly independent Central Asian republics by linking major seaports in the Caspian Sea and the Indian Ocean bordering India with the rest of the world. To this end, the two countries inked an MOU in 1984, with Tajikistan as the third signatory party, to facilitate India's transit trade with the Central Asian republics. India had been participating in efforts to complete railway projects that would facilitate such transit within Iran. Iran, India, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan are also co-signatories of a cargo transit arrangement via rail from Bandar Abbas to Central Asia and beyond. However, Pakistan, because of its proximity to the region, viewed all these developments as inimical to its own interests. Instead, it touted a policy of "strategic depth," under which Pakistan sought to use the natural advantage of its proximity to the Central Asian landmass to monopolize access to the region. In effect, these two separate efforts served to neutralize each other, serving no country's interest in any considerable measure.

### *Strategic Cooperation between Iran and India*

Iranian strategic calculations have also been a source of tension between Pakistan and Iran, as the latter looked to bolster its interests by seeking partners with other regional powers, including Russia and India. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the Central Asian states—all of which had varying degrees of closeness historically and culturally with Iran—as comforting buffers, Iran's traditional relationship of mutual suspicion and hostility with the former Soviet Union was transformed into a new relationship of potential cooperation and selective collaboration in defense purchases with the new Russian Federation. In the mid-1990s, Iran acquired three submarines from Russia and other conventional weaponry from both Russia and other states of the former Soviet Union.<sup>4</sup>

However, with the growing U.S.-Russia detente, Iran viewed Russia as increasingly under U.S. pressure and therefore not entirely reliable as a source for spare parts and after-sales services. (This perception translated into Iran forging and strengthening close ties with both China and North Korea—but the limited scope of this essay precludes elaboration of this here). Although Russia completed delivery of all submarines in the mid-1990s, it was around this time that Iran looked eastward to India as a possible strategic partner in the realm of defense. As such, several high-level visits between defense personnel were exchanged, albeit without any fanfare. India could provide Iran spare parts, maintenance, and training in the use of its defense hardware of Russian or former Soviet origin. Therefore, the two countries cautiously explored the new potential for expanding strategic cooperation, although neither side talked about this publicly. This caused considerable angst and discomfort in Pakistan. However, U.S. pressure and the threat of sanctions on Indo-Iranian deals effectively served to push this issue to the back burner, which militated against Iran and India coming closer together but also in the process caused vicarious pleasure in Pakistan and fueled resentment in Iran.

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<sup>4</sup> Nuclear Threat Initiative, "Iran Submarine Capabilities," July 17, 2013, <http://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/iran-submarine-capabilities>; and Lionel Beehner, "Russia-Iran Arms Trade," Council on Foreign Relations, Backgrounder, November 1, 2013, <http://www.cfr.org/armies-industries-and-trade/russia-iran-arms-trade/p11869>.

Indian officials had also contacted Iran very informally about the possibility of Tehran sponsoring India's entry into the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation on the basis of India being home to the second- or third-largest Muslim population in the world (over 172 million Muslims, according to Indian census data).<sup>5</sup> Iran had been inclined to support this bid, but the move was vehemently opposed by Pakistan. However, this ploy served an effective tactical purpose in the constant game of one-upmanship between India and Pakistan. With India's recent aggressive diplomatic push to woo the Islamic world, particularly Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Indonesia, Pakistan's claims of monopolizing relationships with these entities have been largely devalued.

Pakistan has viewed any cooperation between Iran and India as coming at the expense of its own relationship with Iran. Significantly, Iran increasingly favors a peaceful settlement of disputes between India and Pakistan through bilateral negotiations between the two sides, which undercuts Pakistan's traditional efforts at multilateralizing and internationalizing the Kashmir dispute. This is a far cry from Iran's role of strategic support for Pakistan in 1971. During Pakistan's last misadventure in Kargil, Iranian officials were critical of the government and urged it to show more restraint. Iran shares China's misgivings about provoking outsiders to intervene in the region and does not want to be drawn into a conflict in South Asia. On the contrary, Tehran views India as a vast potential market, conveniently nearby, for oil and gas, as well as "a window to the West" that has the advanced technology for which Iran yearns. It is irked by Pakistan's perceived role as a spoiler in efforts to engage with India on a pipeline deal. Earlier in 1998, after India and Pakistan gate-crashed into the hitherto exclusive nuclear club, leaders from Iran (Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi) and Bangladesh (Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina) visited New Delhi and Islamabad with similar messages. They emphasized the necessity of pulling back from confrontation, engaging in dialogue, and resuming business and economic activities.

### *Drug and Gun Trafficking*

A major irritant in Iran's relationship with Pakistan, and a spillover from the Afghan problem, is the drug smuggling that takes place across Iran's borders with Pakistan and Afghanistan. Iran has reportedly lost several thousand soldiers, Revolutionary Guards, and policemen in encounters and skirmishes with drug smugglers from Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>6</sup> Most of the fighting reportedly has taken place along Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan border with Pakistan. Many of the smugglers are armed with sophisticated modern weapons, including assault rifles, anti-tank rockets, anti-aircraft "stinger" missiles, and other carryovers from the weaponry supplied by the United States to fight the Soviet Union. By the 1990s, Iran had already become the main victim from and the major conduit for drug smuggling, with 60% of the contraband being moved on to Turkey, the Arab gulf states, and further west and about 40% landing in the domestic market.<sup>7</sup> The latter trend has contributed to increasing drug usage within Iran and drug-related problems like a rise in AIDS cases.

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<sup>5</sup> See Abantika Ghosh and Vijaita Singh, "Census: Hindu Share Dips below 80%, Muslim Share Grows but Slower," *Indian Express*, January 24, 2015, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/census-hindu-share-dips-below-80-muslim-share-grows-but-slower/#sthash.vyUQyh7w.dpuf>.

<sup>6</sup> Amir Arsalan Afkhami, "From Punishment to Harm Reduction: Resecularization of Addiction in Contemporary Iran," in *Contemporary Iran: Economy, Society, Politics*, ed. Ali Gheissari (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 202.

<sup>7</sup> Author's personal notes from an official briefing given to ambassadors during the period when the author was ambassador to Iran (1991–95).

Iran is equally (if not more) worried that gun-running and the fomentation of anti-establishment movements inside Iran could just as well supplement drug trafficking. Drug trafficking from war zones frequently goes hand in hand with gun-running, both of which threaten state security and constitute a common cause for concern.

### *The Nuclear Factor*

Iran has long been faced with a severe sense of insecurity from being hemmed in by nuclear weapons states in its immediate or near vicinity—Russia, China, India, Pakistan, and Israel.<sup>8</sup> Iran has aspired to acquire nuclear technology from the days of the shah in the mid-1960s when it was part of the Western alliance during the Cold War. With the Iranian Revolution and the plummeting of U.S.-Iran relations into an extreme adversarial mode, those hopes were all but put to rest. When the Soviet Union collapsed and broke apart, however, large numbers of nuclear scientists (and other highly qualified technocrats and scientists) suddenly found themselves without jobs. During this time, Iran turned to recruiting jobless Soviet scientists at very low or reasonable wages to revive its earlier abortive nuclear ambitions. Tehran viewed the U.S.-led moves to deny it this technology as unreasonable and discriminatory. Pakistan, with its own grandiose ambitions enunciated famously by the late Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, who said that Pakistanis “would eat grass but acquire nuclear weapons,” was not averse to helping Iran in this ambition. The rest is history.<sup>9</sup>

However, while Pakistan may have been motivated to assist Iran in acquiring nuclear technology for the peaceful uses claimed as the program’s rationale, its position on Iran’s weaponization of nuclear technology is a matter of conjecture, given that Pakistan’s strategic proximity with the United States and Saudi Arabia would have militated against such assistance.

## **The Implications of Recent Developments**

### *Political Developments*

Iran has enjoyed better relations with civilian governments in Pakistan than with military rulers there. Relations with Pakistan turned rancorous under General Ziaul Huq’s regime, which also saw the rise of the Taliban (and al Qaeda) and more frequent targeting of Shiites by Sunni radicals. Relations apparently improved somewhat under the Nawaz Sharif administration, but the baggage left behind from earlier times was huge, complicated, and difficult to resolve. General Pervez Musharraf, recognizing that there were problems and a need to remove irritants in his country’s relations with Iran—given that both nations are partners in the Economic Cooperation Organization (formerly the Regional Cooperation for Development)—visited Iran soon after assuming power in December 1999. Nevertheless, during this fence-mending trip, the Ayatollah Khamenei and President Mohammad Khatami spoke very frankly about their concern over the continuing sectarian violence in Pakistan and its “very bitter ramifications” (Khamenei’s words).<sup>10</sup> Pakistan reportedly agreed with Iran on the necessity for the establishment of a broad-based

<sup>8</sup> Author’s notes from a conversation in 1999 with a senior Iranian official.

<sup>9</sup> Shehzad H. Qazi, “Making the Bomb: Pakistan’s Nuclear Journey,” *World Affairs*, July/August 2013, <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/making-bomb-pakistan%E2%80%99s-nuclear-journey>.

<sup>10</sup> “Khamenei Calls on Musharraf to End Sectarian Conflict in Pakistan,” Kuwait News Agency, September 12, 1999, <http://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticlePrintPage.aspx?id=1046371&language=en>.

representative and multiethnic government in Afghanistan. General Musharraf also briefed the Iranian leaders on the domestic factors that had necessitated the change of power in Pakistan.

It is curious, but noteworthy, therefore that barely a day after what was described by Pakistani officials as a very successful visit, former Iranian president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who still held at that time a key position as chairman of the Expediency Council of Iran, in a Friday prayer sermon castigated Islamabad's policy on Afghanistan as "improper" and the "source of crimes."<sup>11</sup> He was especially critical of Islamabad for failing to bring the killers of Iranian nationals in Pakistan to justice. He is also reported to have said that it "would be a shame for the people of Pakistan to compare themselves with India and Bangladesh where democracy existed" and would be better for the state to return to democracy from military rule immediately.<sup>12</sup> In this context, Sharif's return to power in a more democratized Pakistan and the election in Iran, driven by the youth vote, of the Hassan Rouhani government (essentially wearing the mantle of his mentor Rafsanjani) are of great importance.

The return of Sharif with a substantial mandate (at least from the Punjab region) opens up some opportunities for all stakeholders in the region, particularly with respect to relations with India. It was during Sharif's previous term, before he was removed from power by General Musharraf in 1998, that the two countries had come tantalizingly close to resolving their long-festering border dispute. It is tempting to think that had that goal actually been achieved at the time (but for the Kargil mini-war), perhaps the trajectory of subsequent developments in Pakistan would have led to September 11 not happening. Sharif, who essentially represents business-oriented Punjab today as he did in his earlier stint, will in all likelihood wish to pick up from where he left off with the previous Bharatiya Janata Party-led government of Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 1998, and will not be averse to improving relations with India, now led by Vajpayee's protégé Narendra Modi. Yet Sharif will likely be more cautious in his approach this time. Unfortunately, efforts by leaders of both countries today to re-establish a dialogue about changing their relationship for the better have already witnessed jarring jolts from hard-liners. In Pakistan, political challenges to Sharif, which more than a few Pakistanis suspect have been orchestrated by elements from within the country's all-powerful military, have distracted (and detracted) from the bonhomie agenda, triggering a backlash from hard-liners in India. Once again, it appears increasingly that the most powerful political party in Pakistan that actually wields real power is the army, for whom the prospects of any peace dividend may be a contradiction in terms. On the other hand, if Pakistan and India do manage to enter a dialogue that leads to a peaceful resolution of their disputes, and a modicum of mutual trust and mutual accommodation is achieved between the two countries, this breakthrough would change current geostrategic equations with regard to trilateral relations with Iran. Such a development could well have a beneficial bearing on the situations currently prevailing in Afghanistan and the Middle East.

### *Opportunities for Cooperation*

Notwithstanding these challenges, energy cooperation appears to be the most promising and probable gateway to improving relations between Pakistan and India. Such cooperation would

<sup>11</sup> "Rafsanjani: Pakistan's Conduct in Afghanistan Is 'Criminal,'" Kuwait News Agency, October 12, 1999, <http://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticlePrintPage.aspx?id=1046505&language=en>.

<sup>12</sup> "Rafsanjani: Pakistan's Conduct in Afghanistan Is 'Criminal,'" Kuwait News Agency, October 12, 1999, <http://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticlePrintPage.aspx?id=1046506&language=en>. (This news report is distinct from the report in the preceding footnote, although the title and date are the same.)

automatically draw in Iran as a partner. Pakistan has signed a power deal with the Central Asian countries that could be the harbinger of broader cooperation. The agreement was brokered by the World Bank and creates the conditions for sustainable electricity trade between the Central Asian countries of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and the South Asian countries of Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>13</sup> Iran is the most logical next partner in this energy-driven configuration for peace and economic development. The April 2015 framework agreement that set the terms under which the United States and its partners will remove sanctions on Iran in phases corresponding to reductions in Iran's nuclear capacity is a significant milestone toward making regional cooperation and energy integration feasible. While not a done deal at the time of writing, the new pragmatism demonstrated by all sides despite the very tough bargaining at the negotiation table in Geneva gives everyone concerned the audacity to hope.

The Central Asian countries would also like to expand the power deal to include the vast market in India, but this can only happen if Pakistan agrees to cooperate with its longtime rival. On India's eastern border, India and Bangladesh have already operationalized power grid linkups, and power trade between the two countries has emerged as an expanding reality. The entire northeastern region of the subcontinent, comprising Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal, is steadily progressing to what could culminate in an eastern subregional grid. This project has vast potential for generating clean, renewable energy in the form of hydropower that could be well in excess of 100,000 megawatts, potentially helping reduce the South Asian carbon footprint significantly.<sup>14</sup> Such subregional cooperation could eventually extend farther eastward to embrace Myanmar.<sup>15</sup> However, these developments have been made possible only because India's relations with its eastern neighbor Bangladesh (which was once East Pakistan) have undergone a sea change qualitatively, with almost all friction points (including the contentious land and maritime boundary issues) having been resolved peacefully. Could this model be emulated in relations between India and Pakistan and eventually embrace Iran as well as Central Asia?

Growing regional cooperation in the energy sector in the eastern and western sides of the Indian subcontinent could offer Pakistan the opportunity to redefine its long and dearly held doctrine of strategic depth to mean now acting as a guardian and facilitator of energy connectivity between the Central Asian and Southeast Asian regions of greater Asia. Will Pakistan choose to avail itself of this opportunity? Only time will tell. But Iran's possible reconnection with the world as a responsible actor would open up the prospects for broader energy security globally and provide Pakistan with a tremendous opportunity to positively engage with the region.

Iran may be expected to support Sharif and the democratic elements in Pakistan over the military in the hope that this will open up the way for better relations between the two countries as well as allow Iran to play a stabilizing role in Afghanistan. This could, if all other things go well, restore a modicum of equilibrium between the various contesting forces there and neutralize to manageable limits the role of Sunni radicals.

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<sup>13</sup> For an overview of the Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project (CASA-1000), see the World Bank website, <http://www.worldbank.org/projects/P145054?lang=en>. See also the CASA-1000 Project website, <http://www.casa-1000.org/MainPages/CASAAbout.php>.

<sup>14</sup> Bhim Udas, "Hydropower Potential in S. Asia," *Kathmandu Post*, August 9, 2005, [http://www.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2005/08/10/related\\_articles/hydropower-potential-in-s-asia/48348.html](http://www.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2005/08/10/related_articles/hydropower-potential-in-s-asia/48348.html).

<sup>15</sup> The author, as high commissioner of Bangladesh to India from August 2009 to October 2014, played a seminal role in the development of this initiative and continues to be involved in this process of promoting regional cooperation as an adviser to the World Bank on South Asian regional economic integration since November 2014.

A return of Iran to the comity of nations and as an active participant at the negotiating table would immensely benefit the search for mediated solutions where sectarian divisions have spiraled into the visceral and blood-letting conflicts of today that threaten the foundations of the postmodern global order. The emergence of ISIS in Iraq and the declaration of a Sunni caliphate under Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, followed by the July 2014 call by a Sunni leader in India for raising a Sunni army to fight Shiites, have alarmed Shiites everywhere, but particularly peoples in India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan.<sup>16</sup> Iranian officials have been perturbed by this and have taken note of the reports of Indian youth affiliated with the Indian mujahideen who are said to have disappeared from their homes and surfaced in Iraq as ISIS fighters. These developments no doubt revive the specter of the Afghan Taliban, which in the late 1990s had announced the goal of establishing an Islamic caliphate in the Fergana Valley and its adjoining areas in Central Asia. ISIS, whether in alliance with al Qaeda, the Taliban, al Shabaab, or Boko Haram, espouses an extremist form of Wahhabism/Salafism and views all other Muslims not following its extremist tenets as deviants. The rise of ISIS constitutes a clear and present danger to the existing but rival Saudi and Iranian dispensations alike. ISIS claims to have established a branch operating along Pakistan's western border after securing the defection of several Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan commanders, including Hafiz Saeed Khan. Bangladesh and Muslim countries of Central and Southeast Asia are also possible targets for regime change and conversion. For this reason, it is very likely that the present government in Iran will seek to reach out to the current Saudi government (as indeed former president Rafsanjani did in the early 1990s). Tehran will view this as a far better option than those above-mentioned extremist forces that are now common enemies of both countries. Whether the new dispensation that has succeeded in Saudi Arabia will reciprocate or be tempted to move further to the right doctrinally to inoculate itself against the ISIS threat remains to be seen.

In this context, Iran's current willingness to meaningfully engage with the United States and the West is of critical importance and could have positive ramifications for Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the entire South and Central Asian regions. It is an increasingly inescapable reality that without Iranian inclusion in regional and global interlocutions, the hopes of ending the ever-broadening rise of extremist elements, notably ISIS, will not bear any credible fruition, whether in Afghanistan and Pakistan or in the region extending from Syria across Lebanon and Iraq. If Shias across this vast swathe account for well over 40% of the aggregate population, then Iran's inclusion in the international response is the only option. While militant Sunnis owe allegiance to various dispersed founts of influence, the Shiite world is far more unified and cohesive, adhering to a more disciplined hierarchical order of leadership in which Iran occupies the apex position and wields powerful influence.

President Rouhani and his suave and erudite foreign minister Javad Zarif are known to be pragmatic moderates. They were important officials in the previous Rafsanjani and Khatami regimes in Iran. Both men are very likely to shift away from entrenched doctrinaire positions to pursue realistically achievable goals without perceptibly compromising self-respect. Their goals are very likely to be based on pragmatism, as opposed to irrational ideological jingoism, and would flow from a conviction that whatever exists now is probably far more palatable and

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<sup>16</sup> Sunni theologian Maulana Salman Nadwi of Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama, in an open letter, had asked the Saudi government to prepare an army of 500,000 Indian Sunni Muslim youths to fight against the Shia militias in Iraq and elsewhere. The same report mentioned that he had recently admitted to having accepted Baghdadi's caliphate. For more on this development, see "Nadwa Cleric Asks Saudi Govt to Prepare an Army of Sunni Youth for Iraq," *Times of India*, July 26, 2014, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Nadwa-cleric-asks-Saudi-govt-to-prepare-an-army-of-Sunni-youth-for-Iraq/articleshow/39012903.cms>.

acceptable than what might emerge in the future. If Iran viewed the Taliban and al Qaeda as threats inimical to its national (and regime) security, ISIS must surely be viewed as a hugely magnified present-day version of those earlier threats. Reintegrating Iran into the international community and encouraging it to work together with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, in concert with the rest of South and Central Asia, is in the world's larger interest. Without this, the pacification of ISIS is unachievable.

What should the United States and other global and regional powers do? First, sectarian divisions are at the heart of the various conflicts that currently dominate Afghanistan and Pakistan as well as the greater Syria-Iraq-Lebanon region. These divisions are largely fueled either by perceptions of marginalization or by economic causes that have been exacerbated by perceptions of sectarian oppression. The regions involved, and indeed the world at large, would benefit from a rapprochement between Iran and Pakistan. Since economic development is very much predicated on the ability of countries to fuel new industrial growth that would also have a beneficial spillover effect on their contiguous regions, Pakistani and Iranian leaders should enhance cooperation on energy issues that would stimulate economic development and growth and reduce the scourge of poverty and unemployment. Improved energy and economic ties would inevitably expand to security issues. However, current global rivalries and stand-offs have to be subsumed now to meet the new threat of global terrorism. In a sense, the world today may already be witnessing the beginnings of a global conflagration. Whereas in World War II both sides were fighting a conventional war, the existing world order is now being challenged by forces that use both conventional and unconventional weapons and do not accept or respect any of the currently established international norms or rules of engagement. Therefore, a global alliance to fight this scourge must look at the larger threat and subsume local or more narrowly defined rivalries or antagonisms for the larger good.

Following the same logic, Pakistan should revitalize efforts at normalizing relations with both India and Iran. Expanding trade with India, particularly in the energy sector, would help triangulate the bilateral relations between the three countries into a beneficial framework that could then grow to embrace Central Asia on the western side and Southeast and East Asia on the eastern flank. In fact, energy cooperation through extending existing power grids from national to regional configurations would ultimately establish the logic of putting in place an interlinking grid of symbiotic interdependence that would be the foundation for a stable security regime in the larger Asian region.

However, these developments can only happen if other international actors, particularly the United States, work toward building partnerships with Iran to address growing security challenges that override all other considerations at this point in time. Without this, neither Pakistan nor Iran would likely feel compelled to reach out to the other.

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# Pakistan's Relations with Afghanistan and Implications for Regional Politics

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This essay discusses the long-term and current relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the intertwined militancy in the two countries, and the impact of India, the United States, China, and other regional powers on the Pakistan-Afghanistan relationship.

### **MAIN ARGUMENT**

Afghanistan's peaceful future depends to a great extent on an auspicious regional environment, with Pakistan at its core. Conversely, an unstable Afghanistan threatens Pakistan, complicating the latter's ability to refurbish its weak state and economy and suppress dangerous internal militancy. But in the absence of dramatically improved relations with India, Pakistan is likely to prefer an unstable Afghanistan to a strong Afghanistan closely aligned with India. Pakistan thus retains an interest in not liquidating its long-term relationship with the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani network, a policy that exacerbates Afghan instability.

### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- Although the outreach to Pakistan by Afghan president Ashraf Ghani has warmed relations between the two countries, Pakistan's geostrategic outlook and the limitations of its selective counterterrorism policies have not resolutely changed.
- Pakistan's policies toward both militant groups and Afghanistan are determined as much by incompetence, inertia, and a lack of capacity as by calibrated duplicitous manipulation.
- Crucially, Pakistan's willingness to accommodate Afghanistan-oriented militant groups is motivated by a fear of provoking militants to incite violence in Punjab and threaten the core of the Pakistani state instead of focusing externally. This paralyzing fear persists despite Pakistan's desire to defeat the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan.
- China's increasing activity in Afghanistan might eventually motivate Beijing to put pressure on Pakistan in a way that it has previously been unwilling to do. Pakistan may thus face more united international pressure regarding its policies in Afghanistan and accommodation of militants than ever before.
- Nonetheless, an expectation of radical change in Pakistan's strategic outlook and behavior toward militant groups will likely produce disappointment—in Afghanistan, India, and the United States. Yet all three countries would be wise not to sacrifice whatever limited collaboration with Pakistan is at times possible for the still-elusive hope of cajoling Pakistan into a full-scale and lasting counterterrorism partnership.

**A**fghanistan's peaceful future depends to a great extent on an auspicious regional environment, with Pakistan at its core. Vice versa, an unstable Afghanistan will complicate Pakistan's ability to refurbish its weak state and economy and suppress dangerous internal militancy. Assassinations and military coups have plagued Pakistan since the early years of independence, leaving behind a weak political system unable to effectively deliver elementary public goods, including safety, and respond to the fundamental needs of the struggling Pakistani people. Rather than being a convenient tool for regional security schemes as Pakistani generals have often imagined, an Afghanistan plagued by intense militancy, with Kabul unable to control its territory and effectively exercise power, will distract Pakistan's leaders from addressing internal challenges. Such a violently contested, unsettled Afghanistan will only further augment and complicate Pakistan's own deep-seated and growing security and governance problems.

Yet Afghanistan's location at the crossroads of the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia has for centuries made a friendly neighborhood elusive. Although religious, ethnic, economic, and cultural ties between Afghanistan and Pakistan run deep and wide, the two countries have frequently been at odds with one another. During the Cold War, Afghanistan became a battleground in the global conflict between the Soviet Union and United States, with Pakistan as a key U.S. ally supporting the anti-Soviet *mujahideen*.<sup>1</sup> Pakistan has long been a difficult and disruptive neighbor, seeking leverage in Afghanistan, hoping to limit India's influence there, and cultivating radical groups within Afghanistan as proxies. Despite a decade of U.S. attempts to bring Islamabad and Rawalpindi (the seats of Pakistan's government and military establishment, respectively) on board with its efforts in Afghanistan, Pakistan continues to be ensnared in—while also augmenting—Afghanistan's instability. Pakistan fears both a strong Afghan government closely aligned with India, potentially helping encircle Pakistan, and an unstable Afghanistan that becomes—as has already happened—a safe haven for anti-Pakistan militant groups and a dangerous playground for outside powers. Whether the recent warming of relations between the two countries, following a change in government in Kabul in September 2014 when Ashraf Ghani became president, translates into lasting and substantial changes in Pakistan's policy remains very much yet to be seen.

But if Afghanistan is unstable and harbors Salafi groups that infiltrate Pakistan, then Pakistan itself will become further destabilized and—crucially—distracted from tackling its other crises. These include militancy in the Punjab region and a host of domestic calamities, such as intense political instability, economic atrophy, widespread poverty, and a severe energy crisis. The Pakistani state is already hollowed out, with its administrative structures having undergone a steady decline since independence. Major macroeconomic deficiencies have increased, and deep poverty and marginalization persist amid a semi-feudal distribution of power, often ineffective and corrupt political leadership, internal social and ethnic fragmentation, and compromised security forces.<sup>2</sup> The internal security challenge is far more insidious than that recently encountered by the Pakistani military in the tribal and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa areas. In actuality, it is the Punjabi groups, such as the Punjabi Taliban, Lashkar-e-Taiba, and Sipah-e-Sahaba, who pose a deeper threat to Pakistan. Extreme internal fragmentation in Pakistan and a loss of central control, particularly if these

<sup>1</sup> For more details, see Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); and Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (London: Penguin Books, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Stephen P. Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2004); and Anatol Lieven, *Pakistan: A Hard Country* (New York: Public Affairs, 2012).

problems extend to the military, could set off one of the most dangerous security threats in Asia and the world. After all, Pakistan is a large, nuclear-armed Muslim country that coexists in only a precarious peace with its neighbor India. Yet while a U.S. disengagement from direct fighting in Afghanistan could allow the United States to rebalance its relationship with Pakistan and shift the center of U.S.-Pakistan relations beyond the narrow prism of counterinsurgency efforts in Afghanistan, an unstable Afghanistan will also ultimately be very unhealthy for Pakistan.

This essay proceeds as follows: It first discusses the long-term relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan and explores how the India factor influences relations. Next, the essay discusses militancy in both Afghanistan and Pakistan and the latter's policy responses, including its support for the Afghan Taliban and affiliated groups. This section also explores how Afghanistan's current security and political developments influence Pakistan's policy in Afghanistan. The subsequent section considers the U.S. dimension of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations and explores this triangle with respect to militancy in both countries, as well as counterinsurgency and counterterrorism efforts and negotiations with the Afghan Taliban. The final section analyzes the impact of other regional actors on Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, including Iran, Saudi Arabia, and China. In particular, it examines the implications for Pakistan of China's increasingly active and more multifaceted role in Afghanistan.

## The History of Fear and Rivalry between Pakistan and Afghanistan

For decades, relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have been characterized by mutual suspicion and deep-seated animosities, resulting at various times in antagonistic regional security alignments, clandestine plays and counter-plays, cultivation of each other's rivals, and even low-level overt military exchanges. Among the most difficult issues, discussed in the subsections below, are an unsettled border, ethnic politics and irredentism, and strategic fears and rivalries between the two countries with the specter of India looming over them.

### *An Unsettled Border and Pashtun Irredentism*

Pakistan and Afghanistan share a long, rugged, and porous border—the Durand Line—which Afghanistan has refused to recognize and which inhabitants on both sides cross with ease and regularity.<sup>3</sup> Pakistan and Afghanistan also share a population of ethnic Pashtuns that Kabul has at times sought to mobilize as a tool against Pakistan. Kabul has also periodically resorted to deriving domestic political capital from Pashtun irredentism and claims of “greater Afghanistan.”<sup>4</sup> In turn, Islamabad has attempted to manipulate Afghan refugees in Pakistan against Kabul by sending them back to an uncertain fate in Afghanistan and overwhelming Afghan authorities with political and economic pressure.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, Afghan refugees in Pakistan, as well as Afghan militants hiding there, no longer remain merely in the border areas but also reside and

<sup>3</sup> For seminal work on the Durand Line, see Louis Dupree, “The Durand Line of 1893: A Case Study in Artificial Political Boundaries and Culture Areas,” in *Current Problems in Afghanistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 77–93. For an analysis of how the border, which is not recognized by Afghanistan, undermines the possibility of improved relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, see Barnett R. Rubin and Abubakar Siddique, “Resolving the Pakistan-Afghanistan Stalemate,” United States Institute of Peace, Special Report, no. 176, October 2006, <http://www.usip.org/files/resources/SRoct06.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Marvin Weinbaum and Haseeb Humayoon, “The Intertwined Destinies of Afghanistan and Pakistan,” in *The Future of Afghanistan*, ed. J. Alexander Thier (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2009), 93–103.

<sup>5</sup> For a recent such episode, see Kevin Sieff, “Afghan Refugees Forced to Return Home,” *Washington Post*, June 20, 2012, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/afghan-refugees-forced-to-return-home/2012/06/20/gJQAQEBrRrV\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/afghan-refugees-forced-to-return-home/2012/06/20/gJQAQEBrRrV_story.html).

operate in other parts of Pakistan, including such core areas as Karachi, where they influence the country's politics, economics, militancy, crime, and ethnic relations.

Since the British colonial era, Pakistani Pashtuns have been a troubled people, isolated from and neglected by the rest of Pakistan. Even today, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), the home of many Pashtuns, are stuck in an inherited colonial design: appointed political agents rule over the territories and the Pashtun people via tribal *maliks* (tribal elders), a draconian Frontier Crime Regulation system collectively punishes entire tribes for transgressions, and the areas lack accountable political representation in Islamabad. Under former president Asif Ali Zardari, the government of Pakistan eliminated some of the harshest elements of the Frontier Crime Regulation code and permitted the formation of and campaigning by political parties in FATA. But the systematic reforms required to equalize the status of FATA with the rest of Pakistan have not been undertaken.<sup>6</sup> The tribal areas continue to be economically and socially underdeveloped, lack basic legal and human rights, and hence are politically restless and a fertile ground for terrorist groups.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the possibility of Pakistani Pashtun separatism, perhaps fanned by Afghanistan for domestic political reasons or as leverage against Pakistan, remains a worry for the Pakistani military-intelligence establishment.

### *The India Specter*

The dominant lens through which Pakistan's military-intelligence establishment, however, continues to see Afghanistan is through Pakistan's long-standing existential rivalry with India. Since 1947, when Britain granted both states independence, Pakistan has fought four wars with India: three over the status of Kashmir and the so-called Line of Control that separates the Pakistani part of Kashmir from India's, and one over the transformation of East Pakistan into the independent state of Bangladesh. More than a decade after September 11, Pakistan's military-intelligence establishment remains preoccupied with India's ascendance at a time of Pakistan's own stagnation and atrophy.<sup>8</sup>

Pakistan thus continues to be deeply suspicious of India's ambitions in Afghanistan, which has repeatedly been a prime theater for Indian and Pakistani rivalries. As early as the 1950s, India offered itself to Afghanistan as a counterbalance to Pakistan via military and economic assistance and major cultural exchanges. Many Afghan elites have been educated in India and lived there in exile.<sup>9</sup> During the 1980s, while Pakistan and the United States supported the mujahideen in Afghanistan, India backed the pro-Soviet regime of President Mohammad Najibullah. During the 1990s, when Pakistan supported the mostly Pashtun Taliban, India (along with Russia, China, and Iran) provided assistance to the Northern Alliance mostly representing non-Pashtun minorities. Since 2001, India has pledged approximately \$2 billion toward Afghanistan's reconstruction, including infrastructure, hospitals, and other highly visible projects, such as a new Afghan

<sup>6</sup> For details of the 2011 FATA reforms, see Shehryar Fazli, "A New Dawn for Pakistan's Tribal Areas?" *Foreign Policy*, August 12, 2011, [http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/08/12/a\\_new\\_dawn\\_for\\_pakistans\\_tribal\\_areas](http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/08/12/a_new_dawn_for_pakistans_tribal_areas).

<sup>7</sup> See International Crisis Group, "Countering Militancy in FATA," Asia Report, no. 178, October 21, 2009; and Joshua White, "Pakistan's Islamist Frontier: Islamic Politics and U.S. Policy in Pakistan's North-West Frontier," in *The Afghanistan-Pakistan Theater: Militant Islam, Security, and Stability*, ed. Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Clifford D. May (Washington, D.C.: Foundation for Defense of Democracies, 2010), 41–74.

<sup>8</sup> For more on Pakistan's India preoccupation, see Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan*; and Lieven, *Pakistan: A Hard Country*.

<sup>9</sup> Of course, many Afghan elites have also been educated in Pakistan.

parliament building.<sup>10</sup> During the 2000s, President Hamid Karzai's embrace of India was a major irritant to Islamabad, which the 2005 U.S.-India agreement on civilian nuclear cooperation, not extended to Pakistan, made all the more stinging.<sup>11</sup> Thus, Indian consulates in Afghanistan have been regarded by Pakistan as spying outfits and sources of aid to the separatist movement in Pakistan's province of Baluchistan, and Indian aid in dam construction in the Afghan province of Kunar was interpreted by Islamabad as a way to divert water resources from Pakistan. Islamabad also considered the Karzai government to be deeply influenced by Iran, posing yet another threat to Pakistani interests.

Thus, fearing encirclement by India, Pakistan has been reluctant to suppress Afghan (and other jihadi) militant groups that use Pakistan for sanctuary—such as the Afghan Taliban and Haqqani network. Its willingness to provide support for these groups, despite pressure from the United States and NATO, reflects the persistent view of the Pakistani military-intelligence establishment that the jihadi groups are critical assets in preventing threats on Pakistan's western flank from an India-friendly regime in Kabul and in securing access to Central Asia's trade routes.<sup>12</sup>

The Pakistani military long viewed Afghanistan as a source of needed strategic depth during any future military confrontations with India. Given India's conventional military superiority and Pakistan's inherent difficulties in defending the narrow territory that separates the border with India from Islamabad and Peshawar, the Pakistani military considered it imperative to be able to redeploy back into Afghanistan, recoup forces there, and launch a counterattack against India. Over the past several years, Pakistan's civilian politicians and envoys to the United States have dismissed the idea that the country still pursues strategic depth in Afghanistan, arguing that, while always exaggerated, Pakistan long ago abandoned such a strategy. Nonetheless, from Pakistan's strategic perspective, encirclement by hostile powers in Afghanistan and India must be avoided above all.<sup>13</sup>

Pakistan's fear of being encircled and possibly carved up between Afghanistan and India, however much stuck in a passé strategic concept, was tragically manifest in the attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul in July 2008. Although the attack was conducted by the Haqqani network—arguably the most vicious branch of the Taliban—U.S. and Afghan intelligence sources showed that elements in Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) provided support.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, some of the other dramatic terrorist attacks in Afghanistan, such as the strike against the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul and the April 2012 attack against the Afghan parliament and the Kabul Star Hotel, while perpetrated by the Haqqani network, have been consistently linked by

<sup>10</sup> For details on India's projects in Afghanistan, see Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, CRS Report for Congress, RL30588, May 3, 2012. For an overview of India's broader interests in Afghanistan, see also C. Christine Fair, "India in Afghanistan and Beyond: Constraints and Opportunities," Century Foundation, September 28, 2010, <http://tcf.org/publications/2010/9/india-in-afghanistan-and-beyond-opportunities-and-constraints>.

<sup>11</sup> For more on Islamabad's views, see the leaked report "State of the Taliban: Detainee Perspectives," International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), January 6, 2012, 8, <http://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/296489/taliban-report.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> For more on Pakistan's perspective on its militant groups, see Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (London: Penguin Books, 2008).

<sup>13</sup> Bruce Riedel, *Deadly Embrace: Pakistan, America, and the Future of Global Jihad* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2011).

<sup>14</sup> For details on the terrorist attacks and Indian suspicions of an ISI role, see, for example, Javed Hamdard and Candace Rondeaux, "Suicide Bombing Leaves 40 Dead in Central Kabul," *Washington Post*, July 8, 2008, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/07/AR2008070700329.html>; Karin Brulliard, "Afghan Intelligence Ties Pakistani Group Lashkar-e-Taiba to Recent Kabul Attack," *Washington Post*, March 3, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/02/AR2010030202427.html>; Maria Abi-Habib and Zia Sultani, "NATO Copter Ends Kabul Hotel Siege," *Wall Street Journal*, June 29, 2011, <http://www.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304447804576413991003487976>; Emily Wax, "Kabul Attack May Intensify India-Pakistan Proxy War," *Washington Post*, October 11, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/10/10/AR2009101002298.html>; and Alissa J. Rubin, Graham Bowley, and Sangar Rahimi, "Complex Attack by Taliban Sends Message to the West," *New York Times*, April 15, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/16/world/asia/attacks-near-embassies-in-kabul.html>.

U.S. intelligence officers to the ISI.<sup>15</sup> Notably, the former U.S. chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen, felt compelled before retiring to call the Haqqani network “a veritable arm of the ISI,” even though he had sought for years to build up a positive relationship between the United States and Pakistan.<sup>16</sup> Indian people and assets in Afghanistan continue to be frequent terrorist targets. In May 2014, for example, the Indian consulate in Herat was attacked.

Indeed, a disturbingly high likelihood remains that events in Afghanistan could trigger a major crisis between India and Pakistan, with the haunting peril of potential escalation to a nuclear war. Such events could include a future terrorist attack against Indian interests in Afghanistan linked back to Pakistani or Pakistan-based militant groups, and perhaps even to the ISI; an outright proxy confrontation in Afghanistan; or a mere misinterpretation of a local security threat against Indian assets in Afghanistan and a resulting strategic miscalculation between the two countries. Whether the Indian government of Narendra Modi, with its Hindu-right constituencies, could react with the restraint that the previous governments in the 2000s showed in responding to terrorist attacks in India and on Indian assets in Afghanistan is an open question. Already, India resents that the United States restrained its activities in Afghanistan over the past decade, defining U.S. actions as catering to Pakistan’s unjustified paranoia and leaving India worse off. Just like Pakistan, India is deeply skeptical that the United States will leave behind a stable and sustainable Afghanistan free of terrorism leakages and Pakistan’s power-plays. While eager to cultivate formal and informal allies in Afghanistan far more actively and without U.S. interference, India does not want to see the United States leave, and leave it holding a possible Afghanistan bag of troubles.

## Militancy in Afghanistan and Pakistan and the Implications for Pakistan’s Afghan Policy

### *Security and Political Developments in Afghanistan*

As the United States winds down its military participation in Afghanistan’s counterinsurgency after more than a decade of struggles against al Qaeda and the Taliban, Afghanistan’s future remains precarious at best. An atmosphere of uncertainty regarding ongoing security and political transitions and a difficult economic outlook have pervaded Afghanistan since the beginning of 2013. This uncertainty culminated during the highly contested 2014 presidential election and then somewhat eased after the installation of the government of national unity of President Ghani and his chief executive officer and rival Abdullah Abdullah. How Pakistan assesses the prospects of Afghanistan’s stability and the relative strengths of the Afghan government, the Taliban and other militant groups, and non-Pashtun poles of power, such as the former Northern Alliance, will greatly affect its policies in Afghanistan for the next several years and their potential blowback into Pakistan.

In spring 2015, the Taliban and its affiliated insurgent groups, such as the Haqqani network and Hezb-e-Islami, remain deeply entrenched. The 2015 fighting season will be very important because it will crucially shape the morale and staying capacity of both the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and the Taliban, as well as the two sides’ willingness to negotiate, the commitment of outside donors, and perceptions of the viability of the Afghan state-building by Pakistan, India,

<sup>15</sup> Author’s interviews with ISAF officials, Kabul, April 2012.

<sup>16</sup> Elisabeth Bumiller and Jane Perlez, “Pakistan’s Spy Agency Is Tied to Attack on U.S. Embassy,” *New York Times*, September 22, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/23/world/asia/mullen-asserts-pakistani-role-in-attack-on-us-embassy.html>.

and other regional countries. Yet increasingly the Afghan forces are standing largely on their own: after a decade of large-scale offensive counterinsurgency operations, the U.S. and NATO missions in Afghanistan have changed to assume a far more limited role of advising, training, and offering in extremis assistance under Operation Resolute Support.

In turning over responsibility to the ANSF, the United States and NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) handed over a stalemated war. The territory cleared of insurgent forces is smaller than projected. Although the Taliban failed to disrupt Afghanistan's presidential elections in 2014, the year turned out to be among the most violent of the past decade for Afghan citizens. The ANSF too took extensive and likely unsustainable casualties: more than twenty thousand soldiers and support personnel were lost due to deaths and injuries in combat, desertions, and discharges.<sup>17</sup> The Afghan forces also suffer from financial problems and deficiencies in logistics, intelligence resources, and special support functions, including medical evacuation, as well as from ethnic and patronage fragmentation and factionalization. The lack of Afghan close-air-support assets is particularly problematic and has given a great boost to the insurgency.

At the same time, Pakistan views Afghanistan's efforts to procure a larger air force—as well as heavy weapons—from the United States, India, and China with great suspicion and concern. Indeed, much of the military equipment that Kabul has sought to acquire, such as fighter jets and tanks, is not suitable for counterinsurgency but rather is meant for conventional military engagements—paralleling Pakistan's so-called counterinsurgency procurement that is really meant for military confrontation with India. Although Kabul has so far not acquired these assets, it often did little to hide its purpose of redressing military vulnerabilities vis-à-vis Pakistan. As part of his outreach to Pakistan (detailed below), the newly elected president Ghani canceled an order of such weapons from India in fall 2014.

Overall, whether the ANSF can maintain even existing levels of security in Afghanistan in 2015 and beyond remains a huge question mark. That does not mean the Taliban is anywhere close to holding large territories or taking over Kabul—far from it. The insurgents face their own logistical problems and increasingly likely recruitment and legitimacy challenges. But the ANSF's weakness does portend persisting, serious, and multifarious military contestation in Afghanistan for years to come, exploitable by criminal elements as well as by outside nonstate and state actors.

Moreover, the country's complex and opaque security and political environment is becoming even more complicated. Just like in Pakistan, the possibility that new jihadi groups, including the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), will intensify their activities in Afghanistan is growing. Such jihadi groups may at times cooperate with Afghan and Pakistani militant groups. Others may clash with them and with al Qaeda, cut into their recruitment pool, and indirectly influence their policies. Rivalries with ISIS and other eventual new jihadi groups in Afghanistan may drive the Taliban to the negotiating table with the Afghan government; or they may in fact encourage the Taliban to increase terrorist activity in a propaganda competition with outside rivals. ISIS, in particular, presents a major threat to the authority and symbolic power of the Quetta Shura and Mullah Omar, but whether this threat enhances or decreases the chance of a negotiated deal between the Taliban and the Afghan government remains to be seen.

Meanwhile, however complex, the specter of ISIS in Afghanistan and Pakistan has helped at least temporarily anchor an ambivalent White House in Afghanistan, despite the administration's

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<sup>17</sup> Matthew Rosenberg and Azam Ahmed, "Figures from U.S.-led Coalition Show Heavy 2014 Losses for Afghan Army," *New York Times*, March 3, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/03/world/figures-from-us-led-coalition-show-heavy-2014-losses-for-afghan-army.html>.

geostrategic mindset oriented toward other parts of the world, its desire to end the U.S. military engagement in Afghanistan, and its frustrations with Afghan rule under Karzai. During Ghani's visit to Washington in March 2015, the U.S. government agreed to his request not to reduce the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan from the current ten thousand to five thousand personnel before the end of 2015. But the White House did not concede to extending that presence past 2016 and remained firm that after that deadline the U.S. forces in Afghanistan would only provide U.S. embassy protection and number no more than one thousand.

The highly contested and fraudulent 2014 presidential election in Afghanistan ignited an intense and prolonged political crisis. The election brought the country to the edge of political and ethnic violence and nearly provoked a military coup and civil war.<sup>18</sup> Under pressure from the United States, the two principal contenders—Ghani, the former minister of finance, who was seen as a pro-reform Pashtun candidate, and Abdullah, the former minister of foreign affairs, who was seen as a Tajik and the status quo, establishment candidate—ultimately agreed to form the government of national unity.

But the distribution of power in the arrangement continues to be contested by the two men and their networks. For more than half a year after its formation, the government is stuck in a political deadlock. Broader questions of the legality of the arrangement, of a 2016 *loya jirga* (a grand constitutive assembly) and a constitutional reform codifying or redrawing the deal, and of the political implications of the 2015 parliamentary elections all loom large and cast a shadow over the power-sharing deal. In addition, basic daily governance persists in a debilitating and corrosive limbo. Ghani and Abdullah took more than three months after assuming office to agree on some ministerial appointments, even as former ministers were fired. Run by deputies and stuck in uncertainty and inertia, the line ministries thus continued to stagnate as vehicles of personal enrichment rather than being reformed into effective tools for delivering public goods and administration. The troubles stemming from the power-sharing arrangement and from Afghan governance in general are a forceful, if distressing, reminder that power in Afghanistan often comes from personal networks and that institutions do not function or are easily subverted by behind-the-scenes powerbrokers. Thus, even reform-minded and knowledgeable technocrats without strong personal networks, such as Ghani, may have a very limited implementation and governing capacity—as well as many political debts—even while formally sitting at the center of power. Overall, it continues to be unclear whether the president-CEO arrangement will survive and deliver the much desired corruption-free and effective governance, remain stuck in paralysis and legal tangles, or altogether collapse.

Whatever the ultimate outcome, the delay in the formation of a new government and the resulting paralysis are undermining the crucial increase in donor confidence and support for Afghanistan that emerged after Karzai peacefully handed power over to Ghani in September 2014. Bringing back such donor confidence and commitment in the future may not be feasible. A weakening of U.S., NATO, and other partners' commitments to Afghanistan in turn reinforces the skepticism persisting in Pakistan since 2001 that a stable and nonthreatening Afghanistan would be constructed by the United States and its allies. This disbelief encourages Pakistan to maintain a variety of assets in Afghanistan, including Afghan militant groups, that are contradictory to both Afghan and U.S. interests. Even as Afghanistan-Pakistan relations have warmed considerably

<sup>18</sup> Author's interviews with Afghan politicians and civil society representatives and U.S., ISAF, and international diplomats and military officers, September–October 2014.

after Ghani's outreach to Pakistan, it is not likely that Islamabad will liquidate all of these assets to please Kabul.

These political and security uncertainties already have had a pronounced effect on Afghanistan's fragile economy. Domestic economic performance in 2013 and 2014 was even worse than expected, with massive economic shrinkage, large unemployment, capital flight, and a chronic as well as acute fiscal crisis. In addition to the post-2014 uncertainties and the fact that much of Afghanistan's legal economic growth has been tied to the presence of foreign security forces now leaving the country, the inability of the Afghan government to improve tax and customs collection and reduce massive corruption has caused a significant shrinkage in GDP growth. From double digits earlier in the decade, GPD growth plummeted to almost zero in spring 2015.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, revenue theft in 2014 turned out to be the worst since 2001. The promise of the country's mineral wealth producing revenues to wean Afghanistan off dependence on foreign aid and illegal opium production for income generation, economic growth, and human development remains just a promise.

### *Pakistan's Policies toward Afghanistan*

Political instability and the accompanying economic crisis will deeply affect the performance, loyalties, and sustainability of Afghan security forces. They also deeply affect the expectation of stability and relative effectiveness of power arrangements in Afghanistan that Pakistan uses to evaluate its policies toward the country. An unstable Afghanistan hosting anti-Pakistan militant groups is deeply threatening. But in the absence of dramatically improved and normalized relations with India, Pakistan still likely prefers this scenario to one in which a strong Afghanistan is closely aligned with India.

In the context of unresolved difficulties in its relations with India and great uncertainty in Afghanistan, Pakistan chooses to continue cultivating Afghan Pashtun militants. Clearly the Pakistani government (or at least parts of it) has been coddling the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani network for years. The ISI's relationship with the latter has been particularly tight. More than merely allowing the groups to enjoy safe havens in FATA, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Baluchistan, and Karachi, as well as fundraising in Pakistan, the ISI has also provided logistical support, armaments, and technical and logistical advice to the insurgents. At the same time, the ISI has actively sought to exploit the provision of these resources and safe havens to the militant groups to influence their strategic decision-making and tactical operations. ISI observers have participated in meetings of the Quetta Shura and used coercion, such as selectively arresting and releasing key Afghan militant leaders and de facto holding hostage their families in Pakistan, to manipulate decisions regarding military operations in Afghanistan or negotiations with Kabul or Washington.<sup>20</sup> Interrogations of Taliban and Haqqani militants have revealed that in meetings with the insurgents, ISI officers are regularly hostile to the United States, ISAF, and the Afghan government. They call for continued jihad and for expelling "foreign invaders" from Afghanistan, a message that strongly resonates with Taliban members.<sup>21</sup>

However, the relationship between the ISI and Afghan militants is also fraught with tensions. Much of the Taliban, particularly in southern Afghanistan, resents the degree of influence and

<sup>19</sup> Author's interviews with World Bank and International Monetary Fund officials in Afghanistan, September and October 2014, and in Washington, D.C., November 2014. See also "Afghan Traders Protest Taxes; 10 Die as Bombs Target Police," Associated Press, April 6, 2015.

<sup>20</sup> Matt Waldman, "The Sun in the Sky: The Relationship between Pakistan's ISI and Afghan Insurgents," Discussion Paper, no. 18, Crisis States Research Center, June 2010, [www.aljazeera.com/mritems/Documents/2010/6/13/20106138531279734lse-isil-taliban.pdf](http://www.aljazeera.com/mritems/Documents/2010/6/13/20106138531279734lse-isil-taliban.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> "State of the Taliban," 8.

control the ISI attempts to exercise over the group. Quetta Shura Taliban members especially complain about being under the thumb of the ISI and argue that the interests of the intelligence agency and Pakistan more broadly are often inconsistent with the interests of Afghanistan.<sup>22</sup> The apparent internal struggle over political and military leadership within the Afghan Taliban since the latter part of 2013 also reflects tensions within the group over how closely it should respond to instruction from Pakistan and to what extent it can operate independently of the ISI, including during possible negotiations with the Afghan government over a political settlement.

Afghan leaders often reduce the Afghan Taliban insurgency and affiliated groups to the role of Pakistan and its support for militancy in Afghanistan. They frequently maintain that without Pakistan's support there would be no insurgency, or that it would have long ago been defeated if only Pakistan had played a constructive role. Such statements are exaggerations. Miserable governance in Afghanistan, a determination by the United States and the Northern Alliance in 2001 and 2002 to fully exclude the Taliban from political life in Afghanistan, and an initially under-resourced counterinsurgency effort are the principal reasons that since 2001 the Taliban has been able to retain traction among portions of the Afghan population and sustain bases of operation within the country.<sup>23</sup>

Pakistan does not have anything approaching total control over the various militant groups that operate from its territory, including the Afghan Taliban. Nor can it any longer unequivocally see the Afghan Taliban as an easily controllable and straightforward asset. Should the Taliban control Afghanistan, or even just parts of the country's territory, would it be willing to renege on its debts and friendships with other fellow jihadists, deny bases of operation to anti-Pakistan militant groups, and do Rawalpindi's bidding? Pakistan cannot count on such attitudes by the Taliban and be certain that the group would not turn a blind eye (or worse) to anti-Pakistan jihadi activities. Despite years of intense U.S. pressure, its policies toward the militants, including its unwillingness for years to launch a military operation into North Waziristan to dislodge the Afghan Taliban there, are determined as much by incompetence, inertia, and a lack of capacity as by calibrated duplicitous direction. Additionally and crucially, Pakistan's willingness to accommodate Afghanistan-oriented militant groups is also motivated by a fear of provoking these groups to incite violence in Punjab and threaten the core of the Pakistani state instead of focusing externally.

Thus, Pakistan increasingly does not have good options in Afghanistan and is coming to understand that it needs to diversify the pool of its interlocutors. During the presidential campaign in Afghanistan, for example, it reached out to Abdullah even though he represents Pakistan's old enemy, the Northern Alliance. Paradoxically, just as for the Afghan government and the West, the integration of the Taliban into mainstream politics may be the best outcome even for Pakistan. Yet Taliban militancy is still strong, and such an outcome will likely prove elusive and aspirational for years to come. Thus, Pakistan will strive to maintain at least some leverage over the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqanis and hope that it still can manipulate such asymmetric assets to its advantage in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the external safe havens in Pakistan for the Afghan Taliban and a lack of Pakistani resolve greatly hamper counterinsurgency and stabilization efforts. The meekness and deception in Pakistan's efforts against the militants have significantly enhanced the

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<sup>22</sup> "State of the Taliban," 8.

<sup>23</sup> For details, see Felbab-Brown, *Aspiration and Ambivalence*.

latter's ability to regroup, resupply, train, recruit, and fundraise in Pakistan, thus fueling violence in Afghanistan.

In the summer of 2014, after several dramatic terrorist attacks rocked Pakistan, the Pakistani military finally launched a military operation to crack down on the militant groups in North Waziristan and eliminate their crucial sanctuaries. In public announcements surrounding Operation Zarb-e-Azb (loosely meaning “strike of the prophet’s sword”), the Pakistani military promised a comprehensive operation in the region and determined “to eliminate these terrorists regardless of hue and color, along with their sanctuaries.”<sup>24</sup> The recapture of North Waziristan’s capital of Miranshah from militants and the closing of their bases there and in surrounding areas have definitely weakened and fractured the militants. This operation has also led to a palpable warming in U.S.-Pakistan relations and, coinciding with Ghani’s outreach to Pakistan, in Afghan-Pakistan relations as well. Nonetheless, despite the extensive aerial campaign by the Pakistani military in North Waziristan (driving over 200,000 refugees to flee the area), there are reasons to doubt how comprehensive and impartial the campaign’s choice of militant targets has been. For one, the Pakistani military seems to have given the Afghan Taliban ample time to clear out from the territory and move into Afghanistan.<sup>25</sup>

Officially, of course, the Pakistani government vehemently denies that it tolerates and cultivates insurgency in Afghanistan. Instead, Islamabad claims that Kabul’s toleration of sanctuaries for Baluch separatists and Pakistani militants, such as Maulana Fazlullah, the leader of the reinvigorated Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi militant group, and the United States’ ineffectiveness in suppressing anti-Pakistan militants in eastern Afghanistan, such as the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), generate cross-border tensions and destabilize Pakistan.<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, at times Afghan politicians have been rather vocal that Kabul should exploit the fact that Pakistani militants do cross into Afghan territory, thus serving Pakistan some of its own medicine.<sup>27</sup> In fall 2013, frustrated by the lack of progress in negotiations over a political settlement with the Taliban and with limited access to key Taliban leaders in Pakistan, the Afghan government, for example, tried to deliver on an old threat to cultivate anti-Pakistan proxies as leverage. But Washington saw Latif Mehsud, the Pakistani Taliban leader whom Afghan intelligence had picked for this ploy, as highly dangerous, having been implicated in the failed 2010 car bomb attempt in New York City’s Times Square. U.S. Special Forces thus snatched Mehsud from the Afghan intelligence service, causing yet another major crisis in the U.S.-Afghan relationship and undermining the Afghan scheme. In December 2014, after improvements in Pakistan’s relations with both the United States and Afghanistan increased U.S. drone strikes in North Waziristan, as well as against Pakistani Taliban hiding in Afghanistan’s provinces of Kunar and Nangarhar, the U.S. military returned Mehsud to Pakistani authorities.

Nonetheless, militants focused on Afghanistan continue to operate in Pakistan, and cross-border incursions have hardly stopped. Instead, the use of Afghan territory by Pakistani militants has resulted in Pakistan periodically shelling Afghanistan’s border territories—a policy often causing civilian casualties and intensifying anti-Pakistan rhetoric and sentiment among

<sup>24</sup> Ismail Khan and Declan Walsh, “Pakistan Military Wages Assault Against Militants,” *New York Times*, June 15, 2014.

<sup>25</sup> “Double Games,” *Economist*, July 12, 2014.

<sup>26</sup> See Ismail Khan and Declan Walsh, “Taliban Kill 13 Soldiers in Pakistan Raid,” *New York Times*, June 25, 2012; and Matthew Rosenberg and Eric Schmitt, “Allies Rebuke Pakistan on Cross-Border Attacks,” *New York Times*, July 29, 2012.

<sup>27</sup> Author’s interviews with former high officials of the Arg Palace, National Directorate of Security, and Afghan parliament, Kabul and Washington, summer 2009, summer 2010, fall 2010, and spring 2012.

both Afghan politicians and the broader population—and has provoked border clashes between Pakistani and Afghan military forces.<sup>28</sup> Despite Pakistan's counter-accusations about Afghanistan and the United States willfully tolerating anti-Pakistan groups operating out of Afghanistan's territory, the reality is that neither the United States and NATO nor the Afghan government has ever had the requisite military resources in eastern and southern Afghanistan to seal off the border with Pakistan. The U.S. brigades deployed there never succeeded in stopping the flow of militants across the border into Afghanistan, even as they fought some of the bloodiest battles in the country in the eastern mountains and valleys. And there is little prospect that the Afghan security forces will be able to do any better from 2015 onward.

Indeed, Pakistan's army chief, General Raheel Sharif, linked a brutal attack by the Pakistani Taliban on an army school in Peshawar in December 2014 that left 148 dead, including 132 students, to Afghan safe havens of the TTP. Claiming that the attack was orchestrated by Maulana Fazlullah from Afghanistan, Sharif flew to Kabul to demand Afghan and U.S. cooperation against the TTP and other anti-Pakistan militants. The United States and Ghani responded positively to Pakistan's request for anti-TTP cooperation: the United States repeatedly bombed TTP targets in Afghanistan, and Ghani went as far as to divert Afghan soldiers from difficult and important fighting with the Afghan Taliban in the southern Helmand Province to take on the TTP at the border with Pakistan. In Peshawar, while consoling the victims of the attack, Sharif again foreswore a policy of cultivating some militants while fighting others: "We announce that there will be no differentiation between 'good' and 'bad' Taliban," he said.<sup>29</sup> Time will tell whether the Peshawar massacre will in fact become a watershed moment clarifying the Pakistani military-intelligence establishment's commitment to counterterrorism and whether Islamabad can translate this new strategic clarity into systematic action throughout Pakistan. Even if such a new strategic mindset were to take root, this approach would be confronted and subverted by multiple obstacles and countervailing pressures.

Instead, a potent combination of Pakistan's fears might materialize within a year or two: the possibility that a weak Afghan government could become more dependent on the outside support of nations still interested in its fate, such as China, Iran, and Pakistan's archrival India, and that internal instability might enable activities of anti-Pakistan militant groups.

## The Pakistan-Afghanistan-U.S. Triangle

### *The Strategic Trust Deficit between the United States and Pakistan*

As described above, throughout much of the past decade the United States has seen its relationship with Pakistan through the prism of the counterinsurgency efforts in Afghanistan, resulting in heightened tensions between the two countries. Washington has been highly frustrated by Pakistan's unwillingness to act against Afghanistan-oriented militants. While the United States has blamed Pakistan for fueling the insurgency in Afghanistan and indirectly causing the death of U.S. and NATO soldiers, Pakistan has blamed the United States for intensifying militancy throughout the region, including in Pakistan, and motivating terrorists to kill Pakistanis. The lack of trust on the part of the Pakistani military-intelligence establishment, political leaders, and population that the

<sup>28</sup> For an illustrative incident, see "Afghanistan-Pakistan Border Guards Trade Fire: Afghan Officials," *Express Tribune*, August 14, 2012.

<sup>29</sup> Cited in Ismail Khan, "Pakistani Army Chief Asks Afghans to Help Find Taliban Commanders Behind Massacre," *New York Times*, December 17, 2014.

United States will succeed in stabilizing Afghanistan and become a reliable ally of Pakistan has deep roots. But despite this disbelief in the success of the counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan, Pakistan also dreads any prospect of a precipitous U.S. withdrawal in 2016.

In fact, the foibles of U.S. policy in Afghanistan in many ways resemble U.S. policy toward Pakistan. Washington has long and systematically privileged short-term interests and cosseted problematic leaders who could not deliver effective and accountable governance to the Pakistani people but who promised to bolster U.S. strategic and military objectives.<sup>30</sup> The United States' leverage in Pakistan, however, has been considerably more limited than in Afghanistan, including regarding Afghan militants and their allies. Thus, in dealing with Pakistan-based al Qaeda and other anti-American militants in the Afghanistan war, the Obama administration has been basically limited to carrying out drone strikes in the border area between the two countries. Although the United States assesses this approach to be highly effective in decimating al Qaeda's leadership structure, it has further alienated the Pakistani leadership and public and likely radicalized segments of the Pakistani population.<sup>31</sup>

Indeed, Pakistan's trump card in dealing with Washington has been its own internal frailty. Pakistan's economy is in shambles, the country suffers from massive electricity blackouts, and severe poverty and unemployment are widespread. Secessionist and jihadi militancy, including in southern Punjab, may have been somewhat suppressed, but it has not been tamed.<sup>32</sup> The country also faces many acute and long-term challenges of energy and water deficiencies, large population growth, and limited employment opportunities. With good reason, Washington is deeply concerned that its actions could push Pakistan over the edge into collapse. Pakistan's disintegration would be a nightmare for the United States and the region, given the implications that such a meltdown would have for the safety of the country's nuclear weapons and for the possibility of extremists provoking a major military (and even nuclear) confrontation between Pakistan and India. Islamabad plays these fears for all they are worth to gain leverage in its relationship with Washington.

### *Implications for Afghanistan-Pakistan Relations and Negotiations with the Taliban*

At stake, however, are not just U.S. objectives but also Pakistan's own strategic interests in Afghanistan. Pakistan does not want to be bypassed as the United States and NATO reshape or wrap up their roles in Afghanistan after 2016. Islamabad also does not want to be left out of any potential deal between the Taliban and Kabul, should Ghani's emphasis on negotiations with the Taliban eventually gain real traction. Perhaps ironically, Ghani expects Pakistan to deliver the Taliban to the negotiating table, a key reason behind his accommodation of Pakistan.

In fact, since March 2012, negotiations with the Taliban over a brokered end to the fighting have been mostly stalled. The Taliban has exhibited only limited interest in dialogue, and certainly not with the previous Karzai government. In June 2013, after months of efforts by international

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<sup>30</sup> For more on U.S. policy in Pakistan, see Felbab-Brown, *Aspiration and Ambivalence*; and Riedel, *Deadly Embrace*.

<sup>31</sup> For more on drone strikes in Pakistan, see Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann, "The Year of the Drone: An Analysis of U.S. Drone Strikes in Pakistan, 2004–2010," New American Foundation, Policy Paper, February 24, 2010; Peter Bergen and Jennifer Rowland, "CIA Drone War in Pakistan in Sharp Decline," CNN, March 28, 2012, <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/03/27/opinion/bergen-drone-decline/index.html?iref=allsearch>; Avery Plaw, Matthew S. Fricker, and Brian Glyn Williams, "Practice Makes Perfect? The Changing Civilian Toll of CIA Drone Strikes in Pakistan," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 5, no. 5-6 (2011): 51–69; and David Kilcullen and Andrew McDonald Exum, "Death from Above, Outrage from Below," *New York Times*, May 16, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/17/opinion/17exum.html>.

<sup>32</sup> For a report on recent militant grumbling in Punjab—which is Pakistan's most prosperous but also a highly unequal province—see Waqar Gillani and Salman Masood, "Gunmen in Pakistan Kill 6 Soldiers and a Policeman," *New York Times*, July 9, 2012.

diplomats, and with Pakistan's acquiescence, there appeared to be a major breakthrough when the Taliban opened an office in Doha. Yet in violation of the parameters believed to be agreed upon by the U.S. and Afghan governments, the Taliban exhibited the flag and other insignia of its 1990s regime, sending shockwaves throughout Afghanistan. Critically, Karzai felt deeply threatened and betrayed by the seeming legitimacy and status accorded to the insurgents and the direct channels to the international community the office gave the Taliban. The very next day, he withdrew from the negotiations, causing them to collapse again. Ever more distrustful of Washington, Karzai subsequently sought to bypass the United States and engage the Taliban and Pakistan directly. The Afghan government managed to persuade the new Nawaz Sharif government to release one of the Taliban's key leaders, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, from house arrest in Pakistan as well as some other top-twenty Taliban operatives. However, that seeming diplomatic *démarche* ultimately did not provide the Afghan government with access to Baradar, whom it saw as the key for negotiating a deal.

Upon assuming the presidency in September 2014, Ghani included an official visit to Pakistan among his first foreign trips, along with visits to Saudi Arabia and China. In all three countries, he sought to obtain support for a new push for negotiations with the Taliban, identifying a negotiated settlement as a key priority of his government, and China subsequently offered its support for the negotiations and hosted Taliban delegations in Beijing. The Pakistan trip too was widely seen as positive and helpful for improving Afghanistan-Pakistan relations. The Afghan Taliban itself seems to be more open to negotiations with Ghani than it was with Karzai. In his outreach to Pakistan and to the Taliban, Ghani nominated the former Taliban deputy minister of justice, Qamaruddin Shinwari, as minister of borders and tribal affairs—a ministerial post of great significance to Pakistan.

Even so, it is unlikely that the Taliban will make any deal before 2016—that is, before its militants have further tested the Afghan security forces as the United States and NATO continue to reduce their presence in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the failure to get the negotiations going is depleting Ghani's political capital in Afghanistan: Karzai and members of the Northern Alliance, still smarting from the outcome of the presidential elections, are vocally criticizing Ghani's outreach to Pakistan. Without some progress on negotiations, or if the 2015 Taliban military campaign turns bloody (as is likely), Ghani might not be able to maintain his Pakistan-friendly policy. Political campaigning for the fall 2015 Afghan parliamentary elections will further augment nationalist rhetoric and anti-Pakistan sentiments.

## Beyond the United States and India: Regional Involvement in Afghanistan and Implications for Pakistan

Faced with Pakistan's lack of interest in cooperating against the Taliban insurgency, the Obama administration labored to develop an impartial regional framework facilitating a stable Afghanistan. Its efforts culminated in the November 2011 Istanbul conference, where participating countries were to pledge noninterference in Afghanistan's affairs and commit to developing the so-called new Silk Road to bolster Afghanistan's economy. The United States hoped to reshape the country as a regional trade and energy hub as well as a source of mineral resources. The other desired benefit of the new Silk Road was to entangle Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and other regional actors in a web of economic interdependence and cooperative relations.

But like many other diplomatic events on Afghanistan, the 2011 Istanbul conference produced only vague platitudes without any concrete commitments. It became apparent that most countries were maneuvering to position themselves advantageously after 2014 rather than being interested in multilateral cooperation.<sup>33</sup> Still, the conference did at least launch a multilateral platform for discussing Afghanistan issues—the so-called Istanbul Process—that has been sustained to this day.

Even so, the region continues to be plagued by enduring animosities and contestations that go beyond the India-Pakistan rivalry and Pakistan's belief in the primacy of its interests in Afghanistan. Although all regional actors—the United States, China, Russia, India, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and even perhaps Pakistan—agree that an unstable Afghanistan is highly undesirable and threatening, coordinated policy approaches have been elusive and hedging behavior has often prevailed.

Iran views U.S. involvement in Afghanistan with suspicion, but its actions there have thus far been less destabilizing than those of Pakistan. In fact, at various times Iran has reached out to the United States regarding cooperation in Afghanistan. Tehran is afraid of intense Sunni militancy in Afghanistan, with safe havens for foreign jihadists and—in a nightmare scenario—the re-emergence of a radical Sunni government in Kabul influenced by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, similar to the government under the Taliban. During the 1990s, Iran assiduously opposed the Taliban and provided extensive support to the Shia Hazaras and other members of the Northern Alliance, thus crossing proxy swords with Pakistan in Afghanistan.<sup>34</sup> Other conflicts instigated by militant groups periodically escalate tension between Iran and Pakistan. For example, Jundullah, a Sunni militant group based in Pakistan's Baluchistan that claims to fight on behalf of Iranian Sunnis, occasionally conducts terrorist attacks in Iran. Iran has found Pakistan's efforts against this group underwhelming. At the same time, Tehran has gone to great lengths to pacify relations with Islamabad after recent incursions by Iran into Pakistani territory to capture criminals or terrorists operating out of the area. It has remained strikingly silent about Sunni attacks on Shias in Pakistan and the indifference of Pakistani authorities to their plight. Both countries also share a fear of Baluch nationalism and could benefit from robust economic cooperation, including in the energy sphere. Thus, their rivalry in Afghanistan and elsewhere is overlaid with joint interests.

Saudi Arabia has not been highly active in Afghanistan recently, after being substantially involved in the country's political arrangements in the first part of the 2000s and actively supporting the Taliban during the 1990s. Nonetheless, it is gravely concerned about al Qaeda and ISIS, and a strong presence of either group in Pakistan or Afghanistan would be threatening to Saudi Arabia. Moreover, its rivalry with Iran is a paramount security and strategic preoccupation. The same competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran that has been playing out in Pakistan for years—with both cultivating competing political powerbrokers, favored military generals, loyal religious authorities, and even proxy militant groups—might also escalate in Afghanistan. A worst-case scenario would repeat the 1990s when Iran and Saudi Arabia were engaged in a proxy war in Afghanistan, with the former supporting the Northern Alliance and the latter the Taliban.

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<sup>33</sup> For an excellent analysis of the Istanbul conference and regional dynamics, see Marvin Weinbaum, "The Regional Dimension in Afghan Stability," in *Afghanistan in Transition: Crafting A Strategy for Enduring Stability*, ed. Beata Górska-Winter and Bartosz Wiśniewski (Warsaw: Polish Institute of International Affairs, 2012), 81–92.

<sup>34</sup> For more on Iran's policy toward Afghanistan, see James F. Dobbins, *After the Taliban: Nation-Building in Afghanistan* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2008); Mohsen Milani, "Iran's Policy toward Afghanistan," *Middle East Journal* 60, no. 2 (2006): 235–56; and Alireza Nader and Joya Laha, "Iran's Balancing Act in Afghanistan," RAND Corporation, Occasional Paper, 2011.

Such a proxy war would play into the hands of militants on both sides of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and complicate relations between the two countries.

China's increasing counterterrorism and economic interests in Central and South Asia have made it a far more active player in Afghanistan in recent years than it had been during the first decade of the 2000s. China is concerned about the possibility that its own Islamist militants—the East Turkestan Islamic Movement of ethnic Uighurs who continue to suffer marginalization in China—will use safe havens in Afghanistan and Pakistan to plan and launch attacks in China.<sup>35</sup> In 2014, and particularly after Ghani assumed the presidency in Afghanistan, China significantly amplified its public support for the Afghan government. It has promised greater financial and economic aid to Afghanistan, including increased Chinese investment in the country's extractive sector. For the first time, Beijing proposed to provide military training and other assistance to the ANSF.<sup>36</sup> As mentioned earlier, China has also provided support for the Afghan government's negotiations with the Taliban. In addition, China assumed the leadership of several trilateral and multilateral diplomatic initiatives involving Afghanistan and also one involving Pakistan. All this Chinese activity on Afghanistan is of great significance to Pakistan. Such a focus on success in Afghanistan and cultivating close ties to Kabul might create friction in the Pakistan-China relationship, which both sides have long held up as a far more reliable, committed, undemanding, and unshakable friendship than the one between the United States and Pakistan.<sup>37</sup>

Whether any of these Chinese démarches will deliver a diplomatic or policy breakthrough in Afghanistan is too early to tell. Many of these initiatives face large obstacles. However, if China remains committed to Afghanistan, Beijing might have to confront Pakistan about its deleterious involvement in the country and support for Afghan militant groups in a far more determined way than previously. China might even become motivated to put pressure on Pakistan in a way that it has previously been unwilling to do. Pakistan may thus face more united international pressure regarding its policies in Afghanistan and accommodation of militants than ever before.

## Conclusions

An unstable Afghanistan, especially if it were to again plunge into a civil war after 2016, will be like an ulcer bleeding into Pakistan, destabilizing that country as well. India will then become much less restrained in supporting Pakistan's enemies in Afghanistan, such as a reconstituted Northern Alliance, and Pakistan's paranoid fears of encirclement will be ever more based in reality. Other regional powers will once again compete over spheres of influence in Afghanistan, and their gloves may come off. It is thus in Pakistan's own interest to ensure that the United States and China cooperate and do all that is still possible to prevent Afghanistan from exploding into a full-blown civil war after 2016.

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<sup>35</sup> For analysis of China's interests in Afghanistan, see Jane Perlez, "China Shows Interest in Afghan Security, Fearing Taliban Would Help Separatists," *New York Times*, June 8, 2012; and Raffaello Pantucci, "China's Afghan Dilemma," *Survival* 52, no. 4 (2010): 21–27.

<sup>36</sup> Author's interviews with Chinese officials, November 2014.

<sup>37</sup> For analysis of the China-Pakistan relationship, see Mathieu Duchâtel, "The Terrorist Risk and China's Policy toward Pakistan: Strategic Reassurance and the 'United Front,'" *Journal of Contemporary China* 20, no. 71 (2011): 543–61; Evan A. Feigenbaum, "China's Pakistan Conundrum: The End of the All-Weather Friendship," *Foreign Affairs*, December 4, 2011, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/136718/evan-a-feigenbaum/chinas-pakistan-conundrum>; and Lisa Curtis, "China's Military and Security Relationship with Pakistan," testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, May 20, 2009, [www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written-testimonies/09\\_05\\_20\\_wrt/09\\_05\\_20\\_curtis\\_statement.pdf](http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written-testimonies/09_05_20_wrt/09_05_20_curtis_statement.pdf).

All of Afghanistan's neighbors, as well as regional actors, would benefit to one degree or another from a stable Afghanistan, and most of these states would prefer such an outcome. Even Pakistan, while defining a strong pro-India Afghanistan as the worst possible result, would prefer a neutral, nonaligned, stable Afghanistan to one torn by outright civil war or destabilized by extensive militancy. But if Afghanistan's stabilization remains a distant aspiration, all of the countries in the region will persist in strengthening their ethnically based proxies and stimulate each other's insecurity.

Despite recent tragic and brutal terrorist attacks in Pakistan and declarations by Pakistani officials that they will now target all militants equally and robustly, there are strong reasons to doubt that a fundamental reprioritization and redefinition of Pakistan's basic security and strategic interests has taken place. At a minimum, such a shift will continue to face large obstacles from within Pakistan. These countervailing pressures are as much a function of Pakistan's fears, incompetence, and inability as they are of its scheming duplicity, regional power plays, and ambitions.

Given the internal uncertainties in Afghanistan, external actors' hedging, and Pakistan's own internal limitations, poor governance, and fears, as well as the inertia of its strategic outlook, Pakistan is unlikely to start acting decisively against Afghanistan-oriented militants in its own territory anytime soon. Nor is it likely to have the capacity to coerce the Afghan Taliban into serious negotiations with the Afghan government anytime soon. However, Islamabad is likely to find its existing policies in Afghanistan increasingly costly with respect to external support for Pakistan, not just from the United States and its NATO allies but also from China. Moreover, playing divide-and-rule with militant groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan will continue to augment Pakistan's own deep-seated internal security and governance challenges.

An expectation of a radical change in Pakistan's strategic outlook and behavior will likely produce disappointment—especially in the United States, Afghanistan, and India. But none of these countries' policies toward Pakistan need to be on or off, black or white. While Pakistan is highly unlikely to sever relations with Afghanistan-oriented militants or start resolutely acting against all terrorist groups, particularly those focused on India, it has the capacity and can be motivated to engage in some cooperation on matters of counterterrorism in the region and anti-militancy in Afghanistan. All three countries would be wise not to sacrifice whatever limited collaboration with Pakistan is at times possible for the still-elusive hope of cajoling Pakistan into a full-scale and lasting counterterrorism partnership.

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# Pakistan and the Threat of Global Jihadism: Implications for Regional Security

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This essay traces the creation of Pakistan's Islamic identity and examines its influence on the country's foreign and security policy, especially through the use of Islamist groups as key levers.

### **MAIN ARGUMENT**

The first section of this essay analyzes how Pakistan is connected to global jihadism through its ideology. Pakistan's national narrative and identity have been built around Islam. The country's need to explain its foundational idea as "a laboratory of Islam" for South Asia's Muslims has led it to incorporate religion into its foreign and domestic policies. The second section then considers implications for countries in the region, especially Afghanistan, India, China, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. Finally, the essay concludes by discussing the challenges facing Pakistan and offers policy prescriptions for both Pakistan and other countries.

### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- Ideologically motivated policies are sometimes presented as pragmatically driven and based on national security considerations. But the consistency of Pakistan's commitment to pan-Islamism and Islamic nationalism indicates that the country is unlikely to abandon jihadism without a fundamental reorientation of its core ideology.
- While many Pakistanis might be troubled by the violent ramifications of global jihad within the country, broad sympathy in Pakistani society for jihadis remains a reality. Most Pakistanis support *sharia* rule, an Islamic caliphate, and an Islamic state, even if they disagree on the definition of those concepts.
- The state is willing to crush jihadi groups that engage in violence against Pakistani citizens and security personnel but has no qualms about the mobilization of jihadis that target other countries, particularly India, Afghanistan, and even the United States. The problem with this policy has been that jihadi groups do not make the distinctions made by the government and often collaborate with each other on the ground.

The shadow of global jihad has spread from the mountains of Afghanistan to the far reaches of North Africa in recent years. Pakistan is perceived as the center of jihad, and the roots of this can be traced back to the very founding idea of the country. The idea of Pakistan and its reality have tugged at each other from the time of the nation's inception. Historically speaking, the geographic boundaries that became Pakistan in 1947 belong to an ancient land that traces its history back to the Indian civilization. At the same time, however, these boundaries signify a fairly new country borne out of a unique set of ideas. Shaped by the idea that the Muslims of India were a separate nation and, therefore, had the right to a separate homeland, Pakistan crafted a national identity to maintain its cohesiveness.

This constructed identity emphasizes religion and ideology at the expense of ethnic, linguistic, and sectarian diversity. As a result, ideological rather than pragmatic considerations drive the country's approach to national security. Although Pakistan's military and civil bureaucracy both originated from institutions created under the British Empire, the "ideology of Pakistan" has progressively shaped these institutions more than the professionalism that is often projected to outsiders.

The ideology of Pakistan has led to a policy of using Islamist groups as levers of Pakistan's foreign and security policy. Over time, this policy of selectively acting against or providing safe havens to different jihadi groups created a society where these militant groups can spread their tentacles. There has also been an erosion of the writ of the Pakistani state and a decline in the capacity of state institutions, especially the law-enforcement machinery.

This essay traces the creation of Pakistan's Islamic identity and examines its influence on the country's foreign and security policy, especially through the use of Islamist groups as key levers. The second section then considers implications for countries in the region, especially Afghanistan, India, China, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. Finally, the essay concludes by discussing the challenges facing Pakistan and offers policy prescriptions for both Pakistan and other countries.

## Pakistan and the Rise of Jihadism

### *Pakistan's Islamic Identity and Ideological Nationalism*

The desire to strengthen Pakistan's Islamic identity and to avoid a South Asian one—identified with India—led Pakistan to turn toward the Middle East, the hub of Islam. This rotation toward Mecca to differentiate, legitimize, and strengthen Pakistan's identity was not new, as previous sultanates and kingdoms of the subcontinent had often gained legitimacy through Mecca's sanction. However, this twentieth century turn toward the Muslim Middle East created a study in contradictions: Pakistan has become at the same time home to moderate and tolerant Sufi South Asian Islam, a growing Wahhabi populace, and jihadism.

This contradiction has its roots in the incompletely imagined ideology and identity of Pakistan, founded on a narrow and poorly defined set of Islamic principles that sowed the seeds for Islamic extremism and religious fundamentalism, leading over time to a schism in Pakistani society.<sup>1</sup> A country with a rich history of Sufi Islam that initially promoted a tolerant form of Islam became hostage to a narrow and dogmatic religious interpretation that was alien to the country. Geopolitics,

<sup>1</sup> Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005); Farzana Shaikh, *Making Sense of Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); and Christophe Jaffrelot, ed., *Pakistan: Nationalism without a Nation* (London: Zed Books, 2002).

foreign funding, and policy choices made by those in power enabled the growth of this brand of Islam, ultimately leading to the current crisis. Today, the roots of Islamic fundamentalism are woven deeply into the fabric of Pakistani society, making the country a global hub of jihad.

The synthetic imposition of an ideological nationalism and religious identity also sharpened preexisting ethno-linguistic cleavages within the various provinces of Pakistan. The fact that virtually every ethnic group within Pakistan overlaps with those in neighboring countries led to an intertwining of foreign and domestic politics. Fearful that its neighbors, India and Afghanistan, may attempt to manipulate these ethnic and linguistic overlaps to instigate instability, Islamabad followed a policy of suppressing any and all expressions of ethnic or linguistic nationalism.

This perceived threat to Pakistan's existence has been the cornerstone of its foreign policy, the rationale for the state's continuing suppression of Pashtun and Baluch irredentism, and fuel for Sindhi, Muhajir, and Seraiki sentiments that exacerbate ethnic and linguistic divisions. The creation of an independent state of Bangladesh from East Pakistan in 1971, with support from India, still looms large in the Pakistani imagination. In fact, the events of 1971 only strengthened fears of the intentions of neighboring countries and heightened desires to secure national integrity at any cost.

This existential threat has been the driving force for Pakistan's military, which has dominated the country since independence in 1947. At the time of independence, the military emerged as the strongest institution when Pakistan inherited one-third of the British Indian Army with less than a quarter of the requisite revenues. Instead of adjusting institutions to the nation's capabilities and resources, weak civilian parties and leaders facilitated the development of a military-intelligence establishment that was stronger than was required or sustainable. The military thus became the supreme institution. Since the first coup in 1958, the Pakistani military has dominated and directed the course of domestic politics, foreign policy, and security strategy. The dysfunctional system that thus evolved has only deepened and exacerbated national fissures and fault lines instead of allowing them to become irrelevant.

### *Pakistan's Use of Militant Groups*

The aforementioned fear of internal breakup instigated or backed by neighboring countries, combined with a lack of resources to stand up to these antagonistic neighbors, especially India, directed Pakistan toward a military-led foreign policy that favored asymmetrical warfare. This involved the use of nonstate actors who shared the ideological nationalism and strategic vision of Pakistan's military establishment. In the 1980s, this policy received a shot in the arm with the United States' decision to support the *mujahideen* in Afghanistan in order to combat the Soviet Union. As substantial amounts of money, weapons, and fighters flowed in, Pakistan's security establishment began setting up camps to train militants for fighting not only in Afghanistan but in Indian-held Kashmir as well.<sup>2</sup>

Today, a wide array of militant organizations operate in Pakistan with safe havens in urban and rural areas. Some of these include sectarian organizations that target minorities (Sipah-e-Sahaba), anti-India outfits (Lashkar-e-Taiba), anti-Afghanistan groups (the Haqqani network), and anti-Pakistan militants (Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, or TTP). The Pakistani state

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<sup>2</sup> Muhammad Yusuf and Mark Adkin, *Afghanistan: The Bear Trap—The Defeat of a Superpower* (New York: Casemate, 2001); and Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004).

provided safe havens to groups considered vital assets in projecting power regionally. Over time, a nexus emerged between the various militant organizations, allowing them to share operational and technical knowledge. In a number of incidents, close coordination between these groups has been witnessed. For example, during the 2009 attack on the Pakistan Army's general headquarters in Rawalpindi, there was coordination between the TTP and its Punjabi allies, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and the Punjabi Taliban. Many of the Punjab-based groups send their recruits to train in the tribal areas or in Afghanistan before they return to participate in attacks around the country.

The policy of allowing militant groups to operate on Pakistani soil proved to be disastrous. Rising militancy, coupled with a significant decline in the capacity of the state, gave these groups the ability to wreak havoc not only in Pakistan but also in India, Afghanistan, Iran, and China. For example, Faisal Shahzad, arrested for the attempted bombing of Times Square in May 2010, trained at militant camps in Waziristan.<sup>3</sup> This event showcased that militant groups in Pakistan were now keen on carrying out attacks on a global level. Today, these organizations have strong bases all across the country—Karachi, South Punjab, and Quetta—not just in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

The September 11 attacks and the subsequent invasion of Afghanistan proved to be a turning point in the nature of militancy in Pakistan. General Pervez Musharraf quickly severed ties with the Taliban and supported U.S. operations in Afghanistan. To give the peace process with India some traction, he put a temporary halt on the flow of militants into Indian-held Kashmir. This stance differed from April 1999, when Musharraf told a group of retired military officers that the “Taliban are my strategic reserve and I can unleash them in tens of thousands against India when I want.”<sup>4</sup> By 2002, he had moved against sectarian and other militant organizations, banning groups like the Lashkar-e-Taiba. However, these bans proved to be only for show, as the banned organizations and their leadership were allowed to operate under new names. These groups were still seen as allies, not threats to the Pakistani state and its vision.<sup>5</sup>

As Afghan and Arab fighters fleeing from Afghanistan found refuge in the tribal areas of Pakistan, disgruntled militants from Pakistan began moving to these areas as well. The tribal areas thus emerged as a hub for regional and global militancy, and in 2002 Pakistan sent troops into FATA for the first time since independence. Nonetheless, Pakistan continued to follow a policy of differentiating between groups. While foreign terrorists with links to al Qaeda were handed over to the United States, local militants (sectarian, anti-India, and anti-Afghanistan groups) were left alone.

Over time, some of these militants built their capacity to challenge the writ of the state and inflict huge casualties on security forces in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Other groups, such as the Haqqani network, were “managed” by Pakistan’s intelligence agencies in a bid to exert influence on events in Afghanistan.<sup>6</sup> This policy proved disastrous: not only did the tribal areas become a seething cauldron of global terrorism, but there was blowback for Pakistan itself. According to the

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<sup>3</sup> Anne E. Kornblut and Karin Bruillard, “U.S. Blames Pakistani Taliban for Times Square Plot,” *Washington Post*, May 10, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/05/09/AR2010050901143.html>.

<sup>4</sup> A.R. Siddiqi, “Commando Complex,” *News International* (Pakistan), July 11, 2013, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-9-189142-Commando-complex>.

<sup>5</sup> Jayshree Bajoria, “Lashkar-e-Taiba (Army of the Pure) (aka Lashkar e-Tayyiba, Lashkar e-Toiba; Lashkar-i-Taiba),” Council on Foreign Relations, Backgrounder, January 10, 2010, <http://www.cfr.org/pakistan/lashkar-e-taiba-army-pure-aka-lashkar-e-tayyiba-lashkar-e-toiba-lashkar-taiba/p17882>.

<sup>6</sup> Hassan Abbas, *The Taliban Revival: Violence and Extremism on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

South Asia Terrorism Portal, in Pakistan from 2003 to 2014, 19,152 civilians and 5,839 security force personnel lost their lives in terrorism-related violence.<sup>7</sup>

The creation of an ideological nationalism based on Islam allowed these radical groups to propagate their message and raise large sums of money. Further, while the coercive apparatus of the military and intelligence agencies remained strong, the local police were not provided the political support, resources, and skills required to combat these radical outfits. Matched against a poorly trained and demoralized police force, these groups developed extortion and kidnapping rackets in urban centers. They also were able to raise money through narcotics trafficking and trading smuggled goods. Thus, these militant organizations possess a sophisticated system of raising funds to support their activities.

Ethnic and sectarian divisions within the population further provided opportunities for terrorists to develop bases across Pakistan. The Pakistan Muslim League–Nawaz (PML-N), the ruling party in Pakistan, adopted a soft stance against militant organizations in Punjab. In 2010, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's brother and Punjab chief minister Shahbaz Sharif went so far as to say that the Taliban and PML-N were fighting for the same cause and that the Taliban should spare Punjab.<sup>8</sup> In Karachi, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement, an ethnic political party, entered into a gang war with the Awami National Party, a secular party representing Pashtuns. The result was that the TTP and its affiliates were able to establish bases in large parts of Karachi, giving the group the ability to destabilize Pakistan's financial capital. The TTP provided support to al Qaeda in the May 2011 attack on the Pakistani naval base Mehran—one month after the killing of Osama Bin Laden—as well as in the attack on Karachi airport in June 2014.

Pakistan's use of ideology and Islamist groups in both its domestic and foreign policy has greatly influenced the security of its neighbors, Afghanistan and India, both of which have had strained relations with Pakistan. China and Iran, too, have been affected by the growth of jihadism in Pakistan.

## Regional Implications

### Afghanistan

Pakistan sought strategic depth in Afghanistan through militant groups with close links to the Pakistani security establishment.<sup>9</sup> Today, these very same groups are obtaining strategic depth using Pakistani territory to train, recruit, and spread out into the region and beyond. The mistrust between Afghanistan and Pakistan and the inability of both countries to control militants on either side of the Durand Line have strained ties between the neighbors. While Afghanistan alleges that Pakistan has provided sanctuary to groups such as the Haqqani network in FATA, Pakistan argues that the chief of the TTP has been given space to operate from eastern Afghanistan.

In July 2014, Pakistan launched a military operation—Operation Zarb-e-Azb—in North Waziristan, asserting that this time Pakistan would not differentiate between good and bad groups but would target all militant groups in that area. In order for this operation to succeed,

<sup>7</sup> "Fatalities in Terrorist Violence in Pakistan 2003–2015," South Asia Terrorism Portal, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/casualties.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> "CM Shahbaz Wants Taliban to Spare Punjab," *Dawn*, March 15, 2010, <http://www.dawn.com/news/857697/cm-shahbaz-wants-taliban-to-spare-punjab>.

<sup>9</sup> "Strategic depth" is a policy envisaged by the Pakistan military to use Afghanistan as a fallback in case of invasion by India. Pakistan could retreat into Afghanistan, regroup its forces, and use Afghan soil as a base to then counter Indian forces.

Pakistan needed cooperation from Afghanistan. The two countries formed a joint working group on security, signaling that they are beginning to work together to tackle militant organizations.<sup>10</sup> However, cross-border raids leading to the death of Pakistani soldiers once again threaten to sour relations.<sup>11</sup>

The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan will increase the challenges faced by Pakistan. In a sign that the U.S. military drawdown will last beyond 2016, the White House announced in October 2015 that 9,800 troops will remain in Afghanistan in 2016 along with their NATO counterparts. In 2017, around 5,500 troops will still be in the country as a bare bones U.S. presence. As the U.S. military footprint in the region grows lighter, more operational space will be available for militants on either side of the Durand Line, allowing them to train, plan, and carry out attacks in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The impact of a U.S. drawdown is already visible in Afghanistan, with a rise in the rate of civilian casualties in 2014.<sup>12</sup>

If we bear in mind recent events in Iraq, both Pakistan and Afghanistan need to work closely together to eliminate militant sanctuaries on either side of the Durand Line. This 2,640-kilometer-long and exceedingly porous border has been a bone of contention between Pakistan and Afghanistan since independence. No Afghan government, not even the Taliban, has ever accepted the Durand Line as the official boundary between the two countries. Furthermore, Pakistan sees intermittent Afghan support for Pashtun and Baluchi irredentism as a threat to national integrity and as a nefarious plan involving India and Afghanistan.<sup>13</sup>

The space that Pakistan ceded to militant groups in the tribal areas bordering Afghanistan has over the years become a no man's land. If this territory is not reclaimed, it has the potential to lead to a regional nexus of various jihadi groups—the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani network, the TTP, and others—into one grouping. The swiftness with which the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) gained control of large parts of Iraq provides a salient example. ISIS operated in border areas of Iraq and Syria, where the writ of both states was weak, and used this area as a base for launching overwhelming attacks against Iraqi forces.

The border area between Afghanistan and Pakistan represents an area where the rule of law is similarly weak—re-establishing the writ of the state on either side of the border will be critical in defeating militant organizations with bases in the region. Moreover, the decision by a Pakistani jihadi group, Tehreek-e-Khilafat, to claim allegiance to ISIS chief Abu-Bakr al-Baghdadi's caliphate has made the threat of regional cooperation between terrorist groups seeking to undermine Afghanistan very real and the need to counteract these associations more urgent.<sup>14</sup>

The struggle for Pakistan's soul, however, is internal, not external. Pakistan is increasingly threatened by homegrown militant elements as well as foreign terrorist groups to whom it has provided sanctuary and training. There is a real and clear danger that after the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, Pakistan may collapse into what analysts have often feared: a country of 190 million

<sup>10</sup> Tahir Khan, "Pakistan, Afghanistan to Establish Working Group on Security," *Express Tribune*, June 26, 2014, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/727434/pakistan-afghanistan-to-establish-working-group-on-security>.

<sup>11</sup> "Terrorists from Kunar Ambush Post in Bajaur, 3 Soldiers Killed," *Daily Times*, July 13, 2014, <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/13-Jul-2014/terrorists-from-kunar-ambush-post-in-bajaur-3-soldiers-killed>.

<sup>12</sup> Hashmat Baktash and Shashank Bengali, "Civilian Casualties Up Sharply in Afghanistan as U.S. Departure Nears," *Los Angeles Times*, July 9, 2014, <http://www.latimes.com/world/afghanistan-pakistan/la-fg-more-afghan-civilians-dying-20140709-story.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Marvin G. Weinbaum, "Afghanistan and Its Neighbors," United States Institute of Peace, Special Report, no. 162, June 2006; and Rasul Bakhsh Rais, *Recovering the Frontier States: War, Ethnicity, and State in Afghanistan* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> Rob Crilly and Saleem Mehsud, "Pakistani Terror Group Swears Allegiance to Islamic State," *Telegraph*, July 9, 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/pakistan/10955563/Pakistani-terror-group-swears-allegiance-to-Islamic-State.html>.

people with an unstable polity, numerous jihadi groups, and a nuclear arsenal. As things stand, the Great Game which set the tone for the great rivalry of the nineteenth century between the British and the Russian empires has been replaced by the struggle between jihadism and democracy. This struggle is setting the tone for Afghanistan and increasingly Pakistan. Afghanistan once provided a buffer zone between the two great empires of the world, but now the region on either side of the Durand Line has become a buffer zone keeping the spillover of militancy from Pakistan into India at low levels.

### *India*

Pakistan's relations with India have been marred by four inconclusive wars and a history of government-sanctioned militant activity in Kashmir. As mentioned earlier, the war on terrorism supposedly induced Pakistan, under Musharraf, to temper anti-India militant groups in order to provide some traction to the stunted peace process with India. However, because the Pakistani government did not completely disavow the policy of supporting these groups, they were allowed to base their operations in Pakistan and sustain their anti-India activities. As a result, terrorist incidents have risen in India, including the 2008 Mumbai attacks. Yet despite this trend, India to some extent has been shielded from the volatility and insecurity that have engulfed Pakistan and Afghanistan. India's involvement in Afghanistan is tied to the perspective that a stable Afghanistan is a prerequisite to India's own stability and security.

Since the trade liberalization reforms of the early 1990s, India has progressed on a path of economic growth to become an emerging global power and the world's third-largest economy, even as the country's growth has slowed down in the last couple of years. In this crucial period, India needs a stable South Asia and especially a stable Pakistan. If Pakistan were to become a failed state, the implications for India's growth would be ominous. Another incident like the 2008 Mumbai attacks could lead to a direct confrontation between the two nuclear-armed powers, making it imperative that Pakistan deal with anti-India militant groups. However, the Pakistan military and intelligence agencies have yet to launch a concerted operation against these groups despite the implications for relations with India and, on a larger scale, regional security and cooperation.

### *Iran*

The rise of militant organizations in Pakistan also threatens ties between Pakistan and Iran. Pakistan's Baluchistan Province shares a 909-kilometer border with Iranian Baluchistan. Over the years, Pakistan has allowed its territory to be used for a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia. This helped provide funding and ideological material for various militant groups, Islamist organizations, and *madaris* (Islamic schools). Many of these groups are based in Pakistan but operate in other countries. For example, Jundullah, a Sunni militant organization focused on fighting Iran, developed close ties with militant groups operating in Pakistan.

In recent years, relations between Iran and Pakistan have suffered because of the actions of these groups and Pakistan's reluctance or inability to act against them. In February 2014 a Sunni militant group kidnapped five Iranian border guards and took them into Pakistani territory. Iran threatened to send forces into Pakistan to free the guards if Islamabad was unable to secure their release.<sup>15</sup> On June 9, 2014, an attack by militants killed 23 people, many of them Shia

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<sup>15</sup> Ankit Panda, "Iran May Send Forces into Pakistan," *Diplomat*, February 19, 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/02/iran-may-send-forces-into-pakistan>.

pilgrims returning from Iran.<sup>16</sup> Given the existing instability on its borders with Iraq and Syria, Iran's interests lie in maintaining a stable and secure border with Pakistan and Afghanistan. However, the instability in those countries and their inability to control militant groups will continue to force Iran to take tougher stances against Pakistan, which may result in a larger conflict in the future.

### *Saudi Arabia*

Saudi Arabia is one of Pakistan's closest allies, continually providing economic aid to bolster its chronically ill economy. However, this closeness comes at a cost, as Saudi-based charities and groups have funded religious seminaries that espouse an extremely narrow version of Islam. During the anti-Soviet Afghan jihad, a large number of madaris were set up along the Afghan-Pakistan border, where a Wahhabi-Salafi version of Islam was taught. The number of madaris that take a harsh view of unbelievers and apostates later rose to 11,221 in 2005, up from the 2000 figure of 6,761. This means that in a period of five years that included the terrorist attack of September 11, the number of apostatizing seminaries doubled in Pakistan. Charities run by Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jamaat-ud-Dawa were prominent in relief efforts after a massive earthquake in the north of the country in 2005 and floods in the south in 2010. The proliferation of such charitable organizations across Pakistan bolsters the ideological foundations of militant organizations and continues to churn out a steady line of recruits. Keen to maintain close ties with Saudi Arabia, Pakistan has largely turned a blind eye to such groups.

In order to preserve its access to Saudi largesse, Pakistan, instead of eliminating its jihadi groups, may decide to use them to further Saudi goals vis-à-vis Iran as well as continue to support those jihadi groups that operate in India and Afghanistan. The Saudis support Sunni militants in an effort to ensure that nuclear-armed Pakistan remains close to the Arab monarchy in its competition with Iran for influence in the Middle East. The recent Saudi gift of \$1.5 billion raised eyebrows in Pakistan and led to fears that the country was once again taking money in return for supporting a proxy conflict.<sup>17</sup>

### *China*

China is one of Pakistan's oldest allies in the region. Partly owing to their contentious relations with India, the two countries have a close friendship that has produced cooperation in many arenas. China has provided aid and technical assistance for major infrastructure development within Pakistan, including the Gwadar port and Karakoram Highway projects. Apart from such investment in infrastructure, China has also provided military assistance, especially in the nuclear arena.

For China, Pakistan has been an important ally in the Muslim world. Beijing hoped that ties with Pakistan would ensure that China would not have any problems with its own Muslim populace. The Xinjiang region is home to a large Uighur Muslim population, and there has been continual violence in the last two decades, with militant groups taking up arms against the Chinese state. Ever since the Afghan jihad of the 1980s, Uighurs have trained and lived in Pakistan. In earlier decades, the Pakistani state ensured that these Uighurs did not return to Chinese territory.

<sup>16</sup> "Border Attack Kills Pakistani Pilgrims," Al Jazeera, June 8, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2014/06/border-attack-kills-pakistani-pilgrims-201468225422138438.html>.

<sup>17</sup> "Saudi Arabia Loaned \$1.5bn to Shore Up Economy," Dawn, March 13, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1092913>.

In recent years, however, there has been a rise in Uighur militants trained in Pakistan's tribal areas who have returned to Xinjiang. This reflects either Pakistan's inability or unwillingness to control its own borders.

This ineffective border control has coincided with a steady rise in kidnappings and killings of Chinese workers in Pakistan, which threatens important infrastructural projects that are critical for Pakistan's own development. While relations between the two countries are still friendly, Pakistan's inability to control what happens within its own territory, especially with respect to groups targeting China, has resulted in a slow decline in Chinese support. In the economic arena, proposed regional cooperation projects, such as the maritime Silk Road, now seem to bypass Pakistan because of Chinese fears that continued instability in Pakistan could make the country unviable as an economic partner.<sup>18</sup>

For China, Pakistan is becoming a low-cost secondary deterrent vis-à-vis India, similar to North Korea vis-à-vis South Korea and Japan. While continuing to maintain close ties and offer economic and military aid, China rarely goes out of its way to help Pakistan in any conflict with India. Pakistan's growing internal problems raise the question of whether China might at some point see benefits from allying with India on certain issues, while still keeping Pakistan as a secondary deterrent. Will Beijing apply more pressure on Islamabad to clamp down on the jihadi groups operating within Pakistan and Afghanistan? Will China use its close ties with Pakistan to steer the country toward adopting a more stringent policy against all militant groups and abandoning the perception of some groups as assets?

## Conclusions

Pakistan's national identity is built on Islam. Pakistani leaders may not share the views of jihadi hardliners about imposing *sharia* (Islamic law), but they cannot be seen as suppressing Islam in an Islamic country. This dilemma serves as an advantage for Islamists of all varieties, including the jihadis. To complicate matters further, the Pakistani deep state (comprising the country's military and intelligence services) has used jihadism for leverage in both domestic and foreign policies. At home, the Islamists have served as a check on the influence of secularists who might draw the country closer to India, while in Afghanistan and Kashmir they have assisted Pakistan in exercising power through asymmetrical warfare.

Pakistan is currently engaged in an internal struggle for its soul. To rid the nation of jihadis, it must consider the plausibility of a national identity other than one based on Islam. An overwhelming majority of Pakistanis are Muslims, and they practice their faith in varying degrees of piety. But if the state continues to insist on describing its history solely in religious terms, denying the pre-Islamic culture of various ethnic groups and a shared history with neighboring states, Pakistan's national ideology will continue to advance the goals of radical Islamists. Notwithstanding the government's stated policies, Pakistan's milieu would continue to be conducive as a haven for global jihadism.

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<sup>18</sup> Shannon Tezzi, "China's 'New Silk Road' Vision Revealed," *Diplomat*, May 9, 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/05/chinas-new-silk-road-vision-revealed/>.

## *Challenges*

Over the years, Pakistan has become jihad central. Training camps nestled in the ungoverned North Waziristan region increasingly prepare and equip militants to wage war in different regions of the world. Foreign fighters trained in Pakistan have reportedly fought in Syria, Iraq, China's Xinjiang region, and other conflict-ridden areas. However, beyond training camps, these organizations are developing close relations and cooperation for strategic purposes, as evidenced by the June 2014 attack on the Karachi airport, which was orchestrated by the TTP in association with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Such collaborations have the potential to create instability across the entire region, extending from Central Asia, Xinjiang, and Kashmir all the way to Syria.

At the same time, there has been a rapid erosion of the Pakistani state's authority within its territory and a decline in the capacity of government institutions. The inability of the state to enforce its laws, particularly those responsible for keeping the country secure, has only increased in recent years. New operations by the Pakistani military—for example, in North Waziristan—are steps in the right direction, but these actions will not be enough as the hydra-headed monster of jihadist groups becomes more pervasive and gains traction with smaller regional militant outfits. Further, these operations tend to target only those terrorist groups that attack the Pakistani state. As discussed earlier, this is because the military and intelligence community continue to view certain groups as strategically valuable to Pakistan.

This approach, however, can produce only limited results, and a very real possibility for Pakistan is increased violence and instability in tribal areas. The near absence of the state's writ on either side of the Durand Line will only add to the political turmoil and humanitarian disasters engulfing the region as militant organizations with transnational jihadist goals could fill the resultant vacuum. The ongoing military operation in North Waziristan targets militants that have made the region a safe haven. This operation needs to be complemented by efforts to rebuild local governing institutions. Absent any government presence, the region will continue to remain host to a wide range of militant organizations with local, regional, and global agendas.

Furthermore, increased instability in Pakistan's tribal areas will provide an incentive for anti-Pakistan terrorist groups such as Tehreek-e-Khilafat and the TTP to align with regional terror networks such as the IMU or ISIS. As the power-projection capabilities of these groups increase, the stability of the region will be more and more dependent on not just Pakistan and Afghanistan but also regional countries like China, Russia, India, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. The emergence of ISIS and its challenge to the very existence of modern Iraq are evidence of the rising tide of transnational jihad. The success of ISIS will encourage like-minded militant organizations in Pakistan to try to expand the theater of jihad from Syria to Pakistan. Militants affiliated with the Afghan Taliban will be able to project power into Afghanistan, especially as that country recovers from a divisive election. Chinese Uighur militants in the area will be able to carry out deadly attacks in China's Xinjiang region. Groups such as the IMU and Jundullah will increase their attacks in Central Asia and Iran, respectively. In short, a deteriorating situation in the tribal belt could spill over into the entire region.

Another challenge faced by Pakistan is increased militant activity within its heartland and most populous area: South Punjab. This region is the primary recruitment ground not only for the Pakistan Army but also for jihadi groups. As a result, a future scenario where militants and security personnel are from the same village or family cannot be precluded and will have

dangerous repercussions for Pakistan. Militants operating in South Punjab belong mainly to anti-India and sectarian organizations. As their capacity grows, these groups could elevate the level of violence in Indian-held Kashmir and potentially carry out deadly attacks in mainland India. The Mumbai attacks are proof that such a scenario can increase hostilities between the two nuclear powers. These militant groups thus could undermine any normalization of relations between India and Pakistan.

The Pakistani military has historically relied on such organizations to project power, and increased hostilities could once again lead to the military's outright support of anti-India militant groups. If such a situation were to occur, Pakistan would be unable to effectively deal with the plethora of militant organizations within its territory. This failure would develop into a self-perpetuating cycle that strengthens militant organizations, further weakens the state, and causes increased levels of violence and turmoil in the region.

Events in the Swat Valley prior to the 2009 military operation are proof of how quickly militants can fill the vacuum left by the state. Once local Islamist movements were given space to establish a foothold, they implemented their own brand of sharia, shutting down schools, conducting public executions, and attracting thousands of radicals to the valley. In the end, the military was forced to step in, displace hundreds of thousands of people, and fight a bloody battle against these radicals. Events in the valley provide a small case study of the reinforcing cycle bred by lack of governance and increased militancy.

Political turmoil and instability on a national level will also damage Pakistan's already beleaguered economy. International investors are reluctant to invest in a country that is in the news on account of terrorist attacks and violence. Domestic entrepreneurs, too, have chosen to take their capital out of Pakistan for several years. Moreover, industrial output is adversely affected by frequent closure of manufacturing units, limiting the country's export potential as well as tax collection. Already, Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves have been consistently low and its tax-GDP ratio is among the lowest in the world. In addition, such volatility will result in a weakening of the civilian government's mandate, which will only skew the civil-military relationship further. The rise of terrorist organizations that now challenge the military means that any future military intervention will incite opposition not only from pro-democracy forces but from militant groups as well. A military intervention would thus lead to increased violence and instability, further emboldening militants and allowing them to propagate their own form of sharia rule. During the Musharraf era, a number of such peace deals were signed with militant organizations, with each deal leading to increased violence.<sup>19</sup> To restore stability, the military could decide to once again co-opt certain militant organizations, thereby increasing their role in the country. This action would not only wipe out the small but not insignificant democratic gains made by Pakistan since 2008 but also wash away any gains made against the spread of militant organizations and their views in the country.

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<sup>19</sup> There were three main peace deals signed. The first peace deal between the TTP and the government of Pakistan was signed in April 2004 and is referred to as the Shakai peace agreement. It was signed with then TTP commander Nek Muhammad and came after the government launched a military operation in March 2004 to pressure Muhammad to cease supporting foreign militants. As part of the deal, the government agreed to release Taliban prisoners and pay compensation for property damage. The deal, however, collapsed by June 2004. The next peace deal was signed in February 2005 and is known as the Srarogha peace deal. It was signed with Muhammad's successor as head of the TTP, Baitullah Mehsud. The government again compensated the TTP for property damage and loss of lives and hoped to contain further Taliban expansion into Pakistani territory. The deal collapsed within a few months. The next deal was signed in May 2008 between the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the TTP and listed a sixteen-point agreement. However, this third deal collapsed as soon as it was signed as the Taliban refused to surrender arms and renewed attacks against government installations and security forces.

### *The Need for a Regional Strategy*

As the Pakistani military belatedly goes after terrorist organizations in North Waziristan, developing a regional strategy for collectively targeting these groups is essential. The porous border between Afghanistan and Pakistan means that action must be taken on both sides of the border for efforts to eliminate militant organizations to succeed. Furthermore, the Pakistani military must realize that the use of proxies in any shape or form is a bad policy in the long run. A regional agreement recognizing that militant organizations pose a threat to the security and stability of all regional actors is vital to ensure the long-term success of operations against these groups. Increasing levels of violence and efforts by militant organizations to widen their operational terrain pose a significant threat to both Pakistan and the region.

To ensure that such a scenario does not play out, Pakistan's security and political establishments must work together to blunt and permanently disable the capacity of militant organizations. It is also in the interest of regional and global states to support Pakistan as it tries to rein in militants. This support should include not only military aid but also training and the provision of equipment for Pakistan's underfunded and demoralized police force.

Overall, a comprehensive strategy that takes into account the interests of all regional states and does not rely solely on the military option is needed. Pakistan has a key role to play in such a strategy, and regional and global powers must also assist in pushing the country toward tackling militancy. Pakistan's security establishment and policymakers must recognize that militant organizations are not a suitable means to achieving national goals and furthering foreign policy. Over the decades, these groups have grown extremely strong and established deep roots within Pakistani society. To uproot them will be painful and require time, but with the region and the entire Muslim world in flux, it is imperative that Pakistan move in the right direction quickly.

In the years to come, the extent of radicalization within Pakistan's armed forces will remain unknown. Although there have been numerous instances of military officers cooperating with jihadists or deserting their service to join jihadist ranks, the Pakistan military tends to hold back information on the matter, making it difficult to assess the extent of this problem. Incidents such as the attacks on the Mehran naval station in 2011 and the Kamra airbase in 2012 and the foiled attempt by al Qaeda in the Indian subcontinent to take over a navy frigate in Karachi harbor in 2014 point to the persistence of jihadi influence within the ranks of the armed forces.

As U.S. and NATO forces withdraw from Afghanistan, it is unlikely that Pakistan will give up its decades-long pursuit of paramountcy over that country. Faced with international pressure as well as growing threats from the TTP, Pakistan has cleared out the known jihadist sanctuaries in North Waziristan, which has deprived Afghan groups such as the Haqqani network of their base of operations. But Pakistan has neither acted against nor militarily confronted the Afghan Taliban leaders, and the Haqqani network is believed to have relocated to other parts of FATA. Pakistan's policy in the immediate future will be to engage with the government of Afghanistan and the United States, with the stated objective of negotiating a settlement with the Afghan Taliban. At the same time, Pakistan will continue to try to militarily change the situation on the ground in Afghanistan in an effort to force the world to deal with de facto Taliban control of parts of the country as *fait accompli*. In Islamabad's view, this tactic could enable Pakistan to determine the final terms of an Afghan settlement, resulting in India's exclusion from Afghanistan and the country being acknowledged as Pakistan's sphere of influence.



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# Pakistan's Nuclear Proliferation and Its Impact on International and Regional Security

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This essay examines Pakistan's nuclear weapons program and the challenges it poses for regional and international security.

### **MAIN ARGUMENT**

Pakistan developed a nuclear weapons capability through the clandestine acquisition of fissile material and nuclear technology. It subsequently proliferated this to third countries, thereby violating both its own laws and international norms. Today, Pakistan's nuclear weapons program poses three distinct challenges to international security: (1) theft or acquisition of nuclear material from within the country by terrorist groups, (2) state-to-state transfer of this capability to other countries, particularly in the Middle East, for financial or strategic gains, and (3) a nuclear confrontation with India, with which Pakistan has engaged in wars in the past.

### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- Pakistan's unpredictable internal dynamic poses a significant challenge for the goals of nuclear stability and nonproliferation. Likely proliferation scenarios include use by a terrorist entity, state-sanctioned proliferation, or conflict with India.
- Nuclear confrontation between Pakistan and India, the principal source of Pakistan's nuclear compulsion, is a serious threat. This outcome is most likely to arise in the event of a state-sponsored terrorist attack on India or escalation following conventional military conflict along the Pakistan-India border.
- Given an atmosphere of increasing global uncertainty, the United States should examine all options to prevent nuclear proliferation from Pakistan, including both consensual and (less desirable) coercive methods.

In an interview in 2006, Robert Gallucci, a leading U.S. expert on arms control and disarmament, stated that Pakistan is “the number one threat to the world...[I]f it all goes off—a nuclear bomb in a U.S. or European city—I’m sure we will find ourselves looking in Pakistan’s direction.”<sup>1</sup> Ten years since these remarks, the situation in Pakistan has worsened.<sup>2</sup> The country’s internal stability is weakening under the strain of ethnic and sectarian differences as well as poor economic conditions. In 2014 the Fund for Peace ranked Pakistan tenth in its global analysis of “failing states.”<sup>3</sup> Yet in contrast with other states on this list, Pakistan is a nuclear weapon state with the world’s fastest-growing nuclear arsenal and effective delivery means, while also being a hotbed of global terrorism. This is a unique combination. Given these conditions, nuclear proliferation from Pakistan poses serious challenges to international and regional security, with major implications for U.S. interests.

Nuclear proliferation is a term that describes the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons-applicable nuclear technology and information to nations that are not recognized as “nuclear weapon states” by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Pakistan does not qualify as a nuclear weapon state under this definition and instead may be defined as a “state with nuclear weapons.”<sup>4</sup> Beginning in 1974, Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program under A.Q. Khan evolved through the clandestine acquisition of nuclear material and technology from around the world. Pakistan also later proliferated these to a number of other countries in violation of its own laws and other states’ nonproliferation legal commitments.

This essay analyzes the threat of such proliferation from Pakistan. The first section examines Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program and the doctrine the country has adopted for nuclear weapons use. The essay then assesses the dangers this poses to international security through three possible scenarios. One is theft or acquisition of nuclear material by terrorist groups in Pakistan or affiliated organizations in other countries. A second scenario is the deliberate illegal state-to-state transfer of such a capability. Third, there is the possibility of a nuclear conflict with India. Following this discussion, the essay examines the impact on international security, particularly in the worsening geostrategic environment of the Middle East. Finally, the essay concludes with recommendations for U.S. policy to counter this threat to the region.

## Pakistan’s Nuclear Weapons Program and Policy for Use

### *Pakistan’s Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*

Pakistan is considered to have the fifth-largest nuclear arsenal in the world, which includes an estimated 120 nuclear weapons of low- to high-yield boosted fission devices.<sup>5</sup> It also possesses

<sup>1</sup> Adrian Levy and Catherine Scott-Clark, *Deception: Pakistan, the United States and the Global Nuclear Weapons Conspiracy* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2007), 449.

<sup>2</sup> A lot of the material contained in this essay is drawn from six rounds of a trilateral nuclear strategic dialogue conducted by the author while at the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies. The dialogue gathered senior military officials, diplomats, and experts from India, Pakistan, and China and took place from 2008 to 2012 at various locations in Asia. I am grateful for the comments of the participants and their insights, all of which cannot be quoted in full. This program was supported by the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), based in Washington, D.C. The reports of the conference have not been publicly released and hence are not available for attribution. The author takes responsibility for their veracity.

<sup>3</sup> See Fund for Peace, “Country Data and Trends: Pakistan,” 2014, <http://ffp.statesindex.org/2014-pakistan>.

<sup>4</sup> A “nuclear weapon state” is a legal term used in the NPT to refer to nations that had manufactured and exploded a nuclear weapon or other nuclear explosive device prior to January 1, 1967. See art. 9, par. 3, of the NPT, <http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Nuclear/NPT.shtml>.

<sup>5</sup> Hans Kristensen and Robert Norris, “World Nuclear Weapons Stockpile Report,” Ploughshares Fund, August 2014, <http://www.ploughshares.org/world-nuclear-stockpile-report>. Pakistan is shown to have 120 nuclear weapons and India 110 nuclear weapons.

a comprehensive capability to deliver nuclear weapons by missile and aircraft to any target up to approximately two thousand kilometers (km).<sup>6</sup> In addition, Pakistan has acquired a number of modern nuclear-capable combat aircraft, including the F-16 from the United States and the Thunder or JF-17, which it jointly developed with China.<sup>7</sup>

Pakistan's nuclear weapons program began in earnest in January 1972 after the country lost the 1971 war with India that led to the creation of Bangladesh.<sup>8</sup> Pakistan followed the uranium enrichment route to produce fissile material. After some initial setbacks, it launched a clandestine program led by A.Q. Khan, a Pakistani metallurgist who had worked at a laboratory in Almelo, Holland, where uranium enrichment under a Urenco program was being undertaken.<sup>9</sup> Upon returning to Pakistan, he set up an elaborate and illegal international network with the support of the state to import nuclear technology and material to enrich uranium in Pakistan.<sup>10</sup> Nuclear weapon designs and technology for a testing facility were possibly obtained from China.<sup>11</sup> Following India's nuclear tests in May 1998, Pakistan conducted six nuclear test explosions later in that same month, which announced its nuclear weapons capability to the world.<sup>12</sup>

The network that Khan created to illegally acquire nuclear weapons and related technology for Pakistan was later used to proliferate the same to a number of other countries. A veritable "nuclear Walmart" came into existence.<sup>13</sup> Military and civilian officials from the Khan Research Laboratory traveled the world in military or government-leased aircraft to obtain nuclear and missile material and components, as well as to provide these to countries that were willing to pay. This blatant proliferation enterprise came to an end only in 2004. In a private conversation with Khan, then Pakistani president General Pervez Musharraf is said to have charged him with these criminal acts. After a public apology by Khan, orchestrated by the government, Musharraf pardoned him and confined him to a loose house arrest. The Pakistani establishment, or the "deep state," has not allowed Khan to be interrogated by any international agency or foreign government to date, and the details of his clandestine proliferation business remain largely hidden from the world.<sup>14</sup>

Khan's activities demonstrated that it is possible for a transnational network of scientists, engineers, and businessmen with support from the deep state in Pakistan to sell nuclear weapons material and supply enrichment facilities around the world. At its height, this network was dispersed over three continents and involved numerous individuals and companies that, knowingly or not, aided proliferation to Iran, Libya, and North Korea, among possibly other

<sup>6</sup> See NTI, "Country Profile: Pakistan," <http://www.nti.org/country-profiles/pakistan/delivery-systems>.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, "Pakistan & China's JF-17 Fighter Program," *Defense Industry Daily*, June 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Bhumitra Chakma, *Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 18–19.

<sup>9</sup> Pakistan, like many countries in the world, had a civil program to produce power from nuclear fission. The separate program under Khan was started in 1974 and was largely illegal.

<sup>10</sup> For a detailed discussion of the establishment and functioning of Khan's network, see Levy and Scott-Clark, *Deception*, 11–31.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas C. Reed and Danny B. Stillman, *The Nuclear Express: A Political History of the Bomb and Its Proliferation* (Minneapolis: Zenith Press: 2009).

<sup>12</sup> For a quick summary, see Michael Krepon, "Looking Back: The 1998 Indian and Pakistani Nuclear Tests," Arms Control Association, June 11, 2008, [http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2008\\_05/lookingback](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2008_05/lookingback).

<sup>13</sup> Peter Brookes, "Nuclear Wal-Mart," Heritage Foundation, February 9, 2004, <http://www.heritage.org/research/commentary/2004/02/nuclear-wal-mart>.

<sup>14</sup> For a detailed account, see Levy and Scott-Clark, *Deception*, 371–94. The term "deep state" is a concept with Turkish origins and describes a "state within a state." Such a body is said to have final authority over state policy. In Pakistan, this concept denotes the influence of the Pakistan Army's Inter-Services Intelligence, military intelligence agencies, and other sundry intelligence organizations, including the civil Intelligence Bureau. These agencies are primarily accountable to select governing organizations and not necessarily to the elected representatives.

states. This or a similar network could surely be recreated on short notice, even without the same actors, should the Pakistani deep state wish to do so.

### Pakistan's Nuclear Doctrine

Pakistan's nuclear weapons and operational doctrine are entirely India-centric. Because Pakistan does not define a nuclear doctrine in any of its policy papers, the analyses that follow are derived from statements by officials and political leaders. The country's nuclear doctrine is one of "first use." This means that if seriously threatened, Pakistan would initiate a nuclear strike against an adversary to avoid a situation of serious loss or impending defeat. For this purpose, Pakistan defines four possible red lines, the crossing of which by an adversary will lead to a nuclear response. These red lines, which all focus on India, are said to be:

- *Space threshold.* India attacks Pakistan and conquers a large part of its territory.
- *Military threshold.* India destroys a large part of either Pakistan's land or air forces.
- *Economic threshold.* India takes actions to strangle Pakistan economically.
- *Political threshold.* India pushes Pakistan into a condition of extreme political destabilization or creates a large-scale internal subversion.<sup>15</sup>

As a matter of policy, none of these red lines are defined with any greater clarity and may hence be determined by the Nuclear Command Authority, depending on prevailing circumstances. Pakistan's belief in the possibility of early nuclear warfighting is demonstrated by the fact that it has recently developed a short-range battlefield nuclear weapon, the Nasr. With a minimum range of 60 km, this missile can only be used tactically.<sup>16</sup> Given Pakistan's appreciation of a sudden attack by Indian forces and, therefore, the possible vulnerability of these weapons when forward deployed, it is possible that the use of Nasr missiles may be delegated to front-line military commanders, with all the attendant concerns of unauthorized or premature use.<sup>17</sup>

Pakistan continues to produce fissile material for nuclear weapons. It has acquired four nuclear reactors from China and is not prepared to halt fissile material production at this date. This policy has led Islamabad to oppose even discussions on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.<sup>18</sup> Without this treaty, the world cannot limit further production of fissile material and begin a process of global reduction of nuclear weapons.

## The Dangers of Pakistan's Nuclear Insecurity

There are many scenarios under which nuclear proliferation by Pakistan could affect global security. For the purpose of this analysis and for a better appreciation of policy options, three possible contingencies are considered.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> For a comparison with India's nuclear doctrine, see Michael Krepon, "Pakistan's Nuclear Strategy and Deterrence Stability," Stimson Center, December 2012, [http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/research-pdfs/Krepon\\_-\\_Pakistan\\_Nuclear\\_Strategy\\_and\\_Deterrence\\_Stability.pdf](http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/research-pdfs/Krepon_-_Pakistan_Nuclear_Strategy_and_Deterrence_Stability.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> For details on Pakistan's missile arsenal, see NTI, "Country Profiles: Pakistan."

<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of concerns within the Indian strategic community, see Manoj Joshi, "Ballistic Missile Nasr: A Bigger Threat from Pakistan," *India Today*, June 2, 2011, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/pakistans-short-range-ballistic-missile-nasr-is-a-matter-of-concern-for-india/0/140087.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Crail, "Pakistan's Nuclear Buildup Vexes FMCT Talks," *Arms Control Today*.

<sup>19</sup> Jeffrey Goldberg and Marc Ambinder, "Ally from Hell," *Atlantic*, October 28, 2011, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/12/the-ally-from-hell/308730>. Graham Allison of the Belfer Center at Harvard University also suggests these three likely contingencies. See Graham Allison, *Nuclear Terrorism: The Ultimate Preventable Catastrophe* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005).

The first contingency is the illegal acquisition of one or more nuclear devices, or related fissile material, by one or more of the many terrorist organizations operating in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. This could happen through any of three possible ways. One possibility is a terrorist attack on establishments within Pakistan that may be holding nuclear devices or material. A second possibility is a terrorist group capturing such weapons while they are in transit from one place to another. (The transit of these weapons is a requirement both for operational reasons and to ensure the secrecy of their location, which is an important security criterion.) Third, nuclear weapons could fall into the hands of terrorist groups through the active collaboration of rogue members from within the Pakistani nuclear establishment. There have been examples of this in the past. Two distinguished Pakistani nuclear scientists, Sultan Bashiruddin Mahmood and Chaudiri Abdul Majeed, on retirement became radical Islamists and created a charity, Ummah Tameer-e-Nau. In this capacity, in August 2001 they met Taliban and al Qaeda leaders in Afghanistan and offered nuclear assistance.<sup>20</sup>

The second proliferation possibility is through Pakistan's transfer of nuclear technology and material to one or more allies or partners around the world. A number of countries or terrorist organizations may qualify as potential customers. A transfer may well initiate a regional proliferation contest in the difficult strategic environment in East Asia or the Middle East. The recent nuclear deal signed with Iran may have stopped Teheran's ambition of early acquisition of nuclear weapons.<sup>21</sup> But does this entirely satisfy Iran's neighbors? Would any of them be tempted to look toward Islamabad for a quick nuclear deterrence capability? The possibility of Saudi Arabia acquiring nuclear weapons to match Iran is a real threat confronting the world right now. Prince Turki bin Faisal, the former Saudi intelligence chief, said in Seoul in late 2014, "Whatever the Iranians have, we will have too."<sup>22</sup> The last thing that the world needs right now is a Shia-Sunni competition for the nuclear bomb.

The third proliferation scenario involves a nuclear confrontation between India and Pakistan. This could occur as a result of two possible contingencies. One is in response to terrorist attacks against India. Two major incidents have happened in the past that may be considered as examples of such a threat. One was a nearly successful terrorist strike against the Indian parliament in December 2001 that targeted India's top political leaders. The other was the carefully planned and possibly military-supported terrorist attack in Mumbai in 2008. Under such circumstances in the future, India may be forced to consider a possible riposte. The other contingency is an escalation of conventional conflict that rises to the nuclear level. Islamabad's perception that India may launch a "Cold Start" short-notice offensive against Pakistan could in turn create insecurities that escalate to a limited offensive. This could then spin out of control and lead to a nuclear weapons exchange between the two countries.

### *Terrorist Acquisition of Nuclear Material within Pakistan*

Many international terrorist organizations have their roots or connections in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. Some of these groups have been sponsored by Pakistan's Inter-Services

<sup>20</sup> Allison, "Nuclear Terrorism"; and David Albright and Holly Higgins, "Pakistani Nuclear Scientists: How Much Nuclear Assistance to Al Qaeda?" Institute for Science and International Security, August 30, 2002, <http://exportcontrols.info/pakscientists.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas R. Pickering, "A Guide for the Perplexed: The Iran Nuclear Agreement," *Tablet*, July 27, 2015, <http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/192447/guide-for-the-perplexed-iran-nuclear-agreement>.

<sup>22</sup> David E. Sanger, "Saudi Arabia Promises to Match Iran in Nuclear Capability," *New York Times*, May 13, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/14/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-promises-to-match-iran-in-nuclear-capability.html>.

Intelligence (ISI) over the last three and a half decades. They maintain varied levels of cooperation with their erstwhile sponsors and often work in collaboration with government agencies within the “deep state” of Pakistan. Others are from the many radical organizations that have their own agendas and do not collaborate with or depend on such agencies.

Pakistan is vulnerable today to all three possibilities of nuclear weapons proliferation that were described earlier. There have been several cases in recent years where terrorists have struck and penetrated high-security military headquarters, military airfields, and submarine and naval bases and launched attacks on military personnel and secured ransom. Some of these attacks may well have been undertaken with the intent to seize or capture nuclear material.

Nuclear weapons are particularly vulnerable when in transit. The short-range tactical missile Nasr has to be deployed within close proximity to the front lines and when conflict may be imminent. Under these conditions and in forward areas, the missile as well as elements of a nuclear weapon may be especially vulnerable to terrorist seizure. The *mujahideen* in Pakistan increasingly possess the capability to launch attacks against these targets.

Another vulnerability is theft or loss of fissile material. Pakistan has large quantities of fissile material waste at its nuclear facilities, which are less secure. These are not weapons grade, but in combination with other explosives can be made into “dirty bombs” with residual nuclear fallout.

Pakistan claims to have an effective personnel security system for the entire staff working in its nuclear establishments. They operate directly under the security section of the Special Policy Division (SPD) and are manned by specially trained military personnel. The division has a force of around 20,000 soldiers for this purpose under its command, which is being scaled up to 28,000.<sup>23</sup> Pakistan claims to have effective measures for vetting the security clearances of all personnel committed to duties in the SPD. The weapons are also said to be secured against accidental release through the use of electronic permissive action links developed within Pakistan, which enable dual control.<sup>24</sup>

Many senior U.S. generals have commented positively on Pakistan’s nuclear security measures, but none have been permitted access to allow them to make an authoritative judgment.<sup>25</sup> Given the state of internal terrorism in Pakistan and increasing radicalization of Pakistani society, including information on the possible subversion of the military, the country’s nuclear weapons most likely remain vulnerable to theft and seizure.

### *Transfer of Nuclear Weapons to the Middle East*

At various times, Libya, Iraq (under Saddam Hussain), Egypt, and Saudi Arabia belonged to Pakistan’s proliferation network. Most of these relationships did not produce a major deal, though in Libya’s case the two sides only ended their nuclear cooperation under pressure from the West at a late stage.

Pakistan’s one enduring relationship has been with Saudi Arabia, which has been Islamabad’s principal benefactor over the years. In the 1960s and 1970s, Pakistani pilots flew Saudi planes,

<sup>23</sup> In 2009, Pakistan decided to scale up the force responsible for the security of nuclear assets and personnel from 20,000 by another 8,000 soldiers. See Russ Weller, “More Isn’t Necessarily Better with Pakistan’s ‘Nuclear Security Culture,’” Institute for Policy Studies, Foreign Policy in Focus, October 22, 2011, [http://www.ips-dc.org/more\\_isnt\\_necessarily\\_better\\_with\\_pakistans\\_nuclear\\_security\\_culture](http://www.ips-dc.org/more_isnt_necessarily_better_with_pakistans_nuclear_security_culture). An additional batch of 700 soldiers were trained for this purpose and entered service in November 2011 under Major General Muhammad Tahir, director general of security in the SPD.

<sup>24</sup> Christopher Clary, “Thinking about Pakistan’s Nuclear Security in Peacetime, Crisis and War,” Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), IDSA Occasional Paper, no. 12, 2010, 2–15.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 4.

and by 1980 the Pakistan Army had deployed over twenty thousand military personnel in Saudi territory, including an armored division.<sup>26</sup> These troops returned to Pakistan only in 1988 at the request of Saudi Arabia. In exchange, Riyadh has maintained a high-profile economic assistance program to Pakistan.

Pakistan has also helped facilitate weapons transfers from China to Saudi Arabia. In the mid-1980s, Prince Khalid bin Sultan, the commander of the Royal Saudi Air Defense Forces, purchased from China 50–60 CSS-2 (DF-3) liquid-fuel strategic missiles with a range of 2,800 km and deployed them in the desert south of Riyadh. He personally flew to China twice to complete the deal, and Pakistan's support and assistance was duly recognized. With a circular error of probability of approximately a kilometer, these missiles are of little practical use with a conventional warhead. Along with the purchase of a number of other surface-to-air missiles, the Saudi Air Defense Command was set up independent of the army and operationalized by the mid-1990s.<sup>27</sup>

By 2013, there were indications that China had supplied Saudi Arabia with the latest DF-21 accurate, solid-fuel, medium-range missiles, perhaps as early as 2007.<sup>28</sup> The DF-21 missiles are configured for both anti-ship and land-attack roles and can be fitted with nuclear warheads, though they are very unlikely to be so armed, especially in Saudi Arabia. Pakistan's role in this transfer has not been attributed.

Saudi Arabia's economic assistance and payments to Pakistan for the latter's security support over the years have come in many forms. Riyadh provided heavy financial support during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s. After Pakistan came under sanctions following its nuclear tests in 1998, Riyadh provided it with a free supply of 500,000 barrels of crude oil annually.<sup>29</sup> More recently, in March 2014 \$1.5 billion was transferred to Pakistan without any explanation to reduce its financial distress.<sup>30</sup>

Pakistan remains a true ally of Saudi Arabia and can be expected to come to its aid whenever required. Whether this will extend to providing strategic capability and nuclear assets may be questioned. An early 2015 request from Riyadh to Islamabad for military support in the conflict in Yemen was turned down. This may well suggest that Pakistan's security dependence on Saudi Arabia is presently limited and that it is unlikely to extend to providing nuclear support. Prudence would suggest, however, that in times of extreme strategic need, there may still be a possibility that Islamabad might make available both strategic weapons and trained manpower.<sup>31</sup> These could be kept at readiness in Baluchistan and airlifted at short notice without violating proliferation norms.

The implications of the close relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are significant when considering the role nuclear proliferation might play in regional security calculations. What

<sup>26</sup> Brian Cloughley, *A History of the Pakistan Army: Wars and Insurrections* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 286; Michael Kaufman, “22 Countries Avail Themselves of Pakistani Soldiers,” *New York Times*, February 6, 1981; and Richard Burt, “Pakistan Said to Base Troops on Saudi Soil,” *New York Times*, August 20, 1980.

<sup>27</sup> For a brief report on the Saudi Arabia Air Defense Command, see “Royal Saudi Air Defense Forces,” GlobalSecurity.org, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/gulf/rsadf.htm>.

<sup>28</sup> Ethan Meick, “China’s Reported Ballistic Missile Sale to Saudi Arabia: Background and Potential Implications,” U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, Staff Report, June 16, 2014.

<sup>29</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of this relationship, see Christopher Clary and Mara E. Karlin, “The Pak-Saudi Nuke, and How to Stop It,” *American Interest*, June 10, 2012, <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2012/06/10/the-pak-saudi-nuke-and-how-to-stop-it>.

<sup>30</sup> “Dar Terms \$1.5bn Donation a ‘Gift from Friends,’ ” *Dawn*, March 16, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1093342>.

<sup>31</sup> For a reliable Western view, see Mark Urban, “Saudi Nuclear Weapons ‘on Order’ from Pakistan,” BBC, November 6, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24823846>.

would be its impact on the Iranian nuclear weapons program? What might be the implications for the proliferation of nuclear weapons elsewhere in the Middle East? Would Israel respond with a preemptive strike to deter such proliferation?<sup>32</sup> In an already volatile security environment, these questions on nuclear proliferation make matters potentially much worse.

### *The Threat of a Nuclear Confrontation between India and Pakistan and Scenarios of Possible Use*

India and Pakistan are two nuclear-armed countries with existing territorial disputes and large military forces confronting each other face to face, who have fought several wars in the past. Tensions between the rivals remain high, and during 2013–14 they engaged in significant exchanges of gunfire across the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir, which resulted in military casualties. Even though India's official policy of “no first use” is a powerful commitment against resorting to the use of nuclear weapons first, this doctrine usually lacks credibility with adversaries without substantial transparency and conflict-avoidance measures from India, which are currently absent. Yet secrecy is necessary for survival of weapons and is unlikely to be compromised. But if India is attacked with nuclear weapons, its nuclear doctrine mandates a “massive response.”<sup>33</sup>

Given the reality of heavy troop deployment by both sides in Jammu and Kashmir and along the international border, the chance of a conflict remains unacceptably high. Should there be a terrorist strike followed by a retaliation through conventional operations, quick escalation to a nuclear exchange is a possibility. Suspicions of India adopting a Cold Start doctrine of conventional operations at short notice may compel Pakistan to either attack preemptively or resort to the use of nuclear weapons early in a conflict. Its deployment of short-range nuclear weapons, such as the Nasr, points in this direction. Against any such strike by Pakistan, India remains committed to a massive retaliatory strike, which would have devastating consequences for the combined 1.5 billion people in both countries.

Moreover, a nuclear conflict in South Asia could eliminate the taboo against nuclear weapons use, which has held for seven decades. The use of nuclear weapons might then emerge as a possible strategic option in any number of confrontations in East Asia or the Middle East.

## **The Worsening Geostrategic Environment in Asia and the Middle East**

In an interview with *Foreign Policy* in July 2014, Zbigniew Brzezinski, the U.S. national security adviser to President Jimmy Carter, described the current global strategic environment as one of “unprecedented instability worldwide.” He then compared the present to the Thirty Years War in early seventeenth-century Europe, where religious differences among fracturing states led to some of the most terrible conflicts in human history.<sup>34</sup> The situation today is probably being replicated a little farther to the east in the greater Middle East and North Africa, including Eurasia.

The fallout of the Arab Spring has led to a deep Shia-Sunni divide in an area that includes Libya and the Sahel, Syria and Iraq, and the entire Arab world. The intense Israel-Palestine clash

<sup>32</sup> Clary and Karlin, “The Pak-Saudi Nuke.”

<sup>33</sup> For more information on India's nuclear doctrine, see Prime Minister's Office (India), “Cabinet Committee on Security Reviews Progress in Operationalizing India's Nuclear Doctrine,” Press Release, January 4, 2003, <http://pib.nic.in/archieve/lreleng/lyr2003/rjan2003/04012003/r040120033.html>.

<sup>34</sup> David Rothkopf, “A Time of Unprecedented Instability?” *Foreign Policy*, July 21, 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/07/21/a-time-of-unprecedented-instability>.

in July 2014 has created a situation with a strong incentive for Islamic mobilization. This dynamic then manifested itself in the sudden rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in the heart of the Arab world in Iraq. Some see the struggle around the rise of ISIS as a proxy conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia, with allies divided along sectarian lines. The existing state boundaries drawn in the aftermath of World War I, which frequently grouped different religious sects under the same political borders, are breaking down.

Islamic radicalism seems to have made inroads in Xinjiang in western China. A sudden attack at night on March 1, 2014, in the Kunming railway station was a prelude to other attacks elsewhere in China. President Xi Jinping's inspection tour of Xinjiang in June 2014 was followed by further attacks and a commitment from Beijing to use heavy force to counter terrorism. Meanwhile, China's confrontations with Japan and some Southeast Asian countries over disputed islands have escalated to a point where tension is palpable. Many analysts are comparing the present state of East Asia to the one that prevailed in Europe in 1914 when the world bungled into World War I.<sup>35</sup>

By the end of 2014, NATO and the International Security Assistance Force had substantially withdrawn from Afghanistan, and they may even end their presence entirely by 2016.<sup>36</sup> The limited allied forces will not be able to deter efforts by the Taliban and al Qaeda in their various incarnations in Pakistan and Afghanistan to gain control of Afghanistan.<sup>37</sup> The breakup of Afghanistan along ethnic lines is thus a real possibility. Were this to happen, pressures on Pakistan, which has its own ethnic fault lines, will become strong and could even lead to a doomsday scenario of the breakup of a failing nuclear weapon state into two or more unviable states.

Against this backdrop, Pakistan-India relations continue as before in spite of recent leadership changes in both countries and earlier pledges to resume confidence-building measures.<sup>38</sup> Indian intelligence is seriously concerned that following the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan the surplus terrorists from that conflict may well be diverted east to continue their jihad in neighboring countries. Meanwhile, after a right-wing government led by Narendra Modi assumed office in New Delhi in May 2014, border tensions intensified. Promise of the resumption of bilateral confidence-building dialogue could not progress due to continued mistrust and differences, and talks were called off.

A surprise visit by Prime Minister Modi to Lahore on December 25, 2015, to wish Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif well on his birthday, created goodwill and high expectations on both sides. A schedule for a resumption of dialogue was being mutually worked out. Yet within a week, four to six heavily armed terrorists from Pakistan attacked a leading military airbase close to the international border at Pathankot.<sup>39</sup> Indian Air Force aircraft and assets were threatened but were protected by alert security personnel. But this attack once again set back the resumption of talks. Even with the best of intentions, this may well be the pattern of mutual relations for the future.

<sup>35</sup> Jitsuo Tsuchiyama refers to books by Aaron Friedberg and Zbigniew Brzezinski, who have compared the situation now in East Asia to that in Europe one hundred years ago. See Jitsuo Tsuchiyama, "Is East Asia Headed for War? Lessons from World War I," Tokyo Foundation, April 8, 2015, <http://www.tokyofoundation.org/en/articles/2015/is-east-asia-headed-for-war>.

<sup>36</sup> Barack Obama, "Statement by the President on Afghanistan," White House, Office of the Press Secretary, May 27, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/05/27/statement-president-afghanistan>.

<sup>37</sup> The situation in Iraq in summer 2014 is probably a more likely scenario, except that the Afghan National Security Forces may not be able to hold on for any length of time. The critical factor is Pakistan's role in Afghanistan following the U.S. withdrawal. If Pakistan pursues the objective of strategic depth, Afghanistan's collapse may come even earlier.

<sup>38</sup> Pakistan completed a democratic change of government in late 2013, while Indian national elections in April–May 2014 led to the swearing in of a new government in New Delhi on May 22 of that year. In an unprecedented gesture from the new Indian prime minister, all heads of the member states of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation were invited to the ceremony. A brief meeting between Modi and Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif seemed to indicate the possibility of a new beginning.

<sup>39</sup> For a brief description of the attack, see "Fresh Firing in Pathankot; IAF Using Attack Helicopters," *Hindu*, January 2, 2016.

The volatile security environment in the Middle East and Afghanistan today poses the greatest threat to the world. In the context of the terrible mix of religious and sectarian conflicts described above, there remains the possibility of nuclear proliferation from Pakistan. What role will Pakistan's nuclear arsenal play? Will the country be tempted to use these weapons to gain an advantage over other states? Or will it rely on this threat as a deterrent? Will some weapons or fissile material fall into the hands of terrorists? Will political instability in Pakistan and internal insecurity from Islamic radicalism lead to a border conflict with India? These issues will remain a major concern for the United States for several years ahead and challenge its fundamental global strategic interests.

## Implications for U.S. Policy

The global supremacy of the United States draws from its ability to control and stabilize the world. A stable and peaceful world not only serves the interests of all countries but also best serves U.S. interests. Washington achieves such peace and stability by maintaining a network of alliances and partnerships with like-minded states that help preserve international law, open and participatory governance, and a free-market system assuring steady improvement in living conditions for all. This status quo is challenged today by a rising hegemon, China, which wishes to establish an international order according to its own values and under its leadership. What this actually may mean for the proliferation of nuclear weapons is not yet clear. The acquisition of nuclear weapons by countries with different value systems and that are willing to challenge the global order certainly has the potential to undermine global stability.

This is already happening in Northeast Asia, and with nuclear proliferation from Pakistan a similar scenario could play out in the Middle East, destabilizing much of the region and seriously challenging U.S. national interests. Washington therefore needs to work to ensure that all proliferation scenarios involving Pakistan, beginning with the acquisition of nuclear weapons or materials by terrorist organizations, are prevented at all costs. Broad policy options are suggested below.

*Consensual elimination of nuclear weapons through a voluntary negotiated settlement.* The United States could provide Pakistan with adequate and effective security guarantees, as well as financial inducements, to ensure its continued existence as an independent state. If a sense of insecurity is what drives Pakistan's clandestine nuclear program, guaranteed security might allow it to forgo possessing these weapons. In exchange, Pakistan would need to take effective measures to ensure that there is no illegal proliferation of nuclear weapons or materials to other states. Pakistan would also need to provide the international community with failsafe assurances that the possibility of terrorist organizations acquiring such capabilities has been eliminated. Even then, however, the consensual elimination of Pakistan's nuclear weapons would be a huge challenge and would probably be possible only when linked to regional and global nuclear disarmament. Any idea that unilateral disarmament could be used as leverage to negotiate other gains should be scotched immediately.

*Coercive means of ensuring nonproliferation.* Attempting to ensure nonproliferation through coercive means is a dangerous alternative. But this measure must be considered given the risk of accidental proliferation sometime in the near future. The three nuclear challenges considered earlier—terrorist acquisition, state-led proliferation, and use in a war against India—each must be

addressed, which will call for coordinated actions among like-minded states. These states would need to adopt a conciliatory rather than a confrontational approach, even though within an overall framework of coercion.

*Other related measures.* In addition, the United States should consider the following options to limit the risk of nuclear proliferation from Pakistan:

- Address issues of Islamic radicalism and the challenges of anti-Islamic movements
- Beginning with the Israeli-Palestinian issue, work to resolve regional conflicts through UN-led initiatives
- Develop a plan to rebuild regional economies and improve employment opportunities for the youth population
- Advance the original goals of the Arab Spring by bringing about greater representational government where possible through consensus and cooperation rather than imposition from above
- Strengthen regional and subregional organizations in order to address pre-conflict challenges as they arise

## Conclusion

Pakistan is located in a critically dangerous region, continues to be dominated by the military, and possesses a large and potentially vulnerable nuclear arsenal. As such, it poses an existential threat to the world. This issue has been made even more complex by Islamic radicalization, Pakistan's use of jihad as a tool of aggression, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Numerous ethnic and religious fault lines further complicate a turbulent situation where great disparity exists in wealth between nations.

This volatile mix increases the possibility of nuclear proliferation from Pakistan, with all its attendant consequences for both Asia and the Middle East, and poses a substantial challenge to U.S. interests. Countermeasures will require Washington to engage in careful coalition building and respond with firm, though humanitarian, policies backed up by coercive force. In the final analysis, removing the potential for instability will require strong collective action from all stakeholders.

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# Pakistan's Complex Security Dynamics: Conclusions and Outlook

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**A**mong the multiple and contradictory tendencies highlighted by the essays in this NBR Special Report, it is difficult to discern an overarching trend in Pakistani society and polity. There are broad, though weak, currents of democratization flowing through the country; civil society groups, sections of the media, artists, and academics are demanding greater freedom of expression to examine the very foundations of state ideology and core beliefs. At the same time, strong religious sentiments, challenging and modifying the nature of Pakistan's traditional Islamic persuasion, are animating national discourse. Consequently, intolerance of minority Islamic sects and of other religions is rising and leading to extremist thought and violence. The forces of social conservatism are at odds with the advocates of a liberal Pakistan. It is within the matrix of these pressures that the state is seeking to balance its moorings while battling the insurgencies arising from entrenched ethnic separatism, such as in Baluchistan, and religiously inspired rebellion, such as in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

## Pakistan's Islamic Identity

### *State and Society*

The Pakistani state is not a passive recipient of ideas and impulses arising in the larger social and political body. State institutions also generate thinking, which is transmitted to society and the polity and has a decisive impact on popular attitudes. The state is therefore both a recipient and an originator of national approaches. It is noteworthy that the state seeks to carefully calibrate its interventions and guide the national mood. It does not always succeed, and consequently the country has paid a heavy price for its failure. This has been especially so when the state has intervened in the religious sphere and sought to use extremist groups as instruments of its external policies. As Mumtaz Ahmed observes in his essay for this report, "most of the militant organizations that now threaten Pakistan's peace and sovereignty and terrorize its citizens...owe their origins, directly or indirectly, to ISI [Inter-Services Intelligence]." There is little possibility that the Pakistani state will change course on its relationship with Islamist groups due to this reliance on jihad to pursue its objectives in Afghanistan and India, as C. Christine Fair correctly asserts.

The basic dilemmas of Pakistan's Islamic national identity stretch back to the formation of the country and remain unresolved. The two-nation theory that provided the ideological foundation of Pakistan asserted that Hindus and Muslims were separate nations requiring separate states. However, this theory did not clarify the precise nature of the Pakistani state, as Husain Haqqani discusses in his essay for this report. Would it be a homeland for the Muslims or an Islamic state to uphold *sharia*? And if the latter, then which form of *sharia*? The varied responses to these questions have provided the motivations for social and political behavior and state policy. These dilemmas also impinge on the Pakistani state's external policy choices, including its approaches toward India and Afghanistan and its web of relationships with the major powers, as well as its nuclear posture. Pakistan's Islamic identity was invoked by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, for example, to justify the pursuit of nuclear weapons and has also led to a close relationship with Saudi Arabia with dimensions involving nuclear assets, as Dipankar Banerjee notes in his essay. This confronts the world with a dilemma: are Pakistani nuclear weapons only a national asset or will they also be available to Saudi Arabia?

## *Civil Society*

Pakistan's civil society is still weak but is bravely attempting to create a more humane country that respects human rights, including those of minorities. Activists have not hesitated to criticize the excesses of official agencies and have risked their lives to raise the issue of the disappearance and deaths of thousands in Baluchistan. In some cases, activists are being killed for raising this issue. The assassination of Sabeen Mahmud in Karachi in April 2015 is a demonstration of the sensitivity of the intelligence agencies and the religious right to the activities of civil society. Activists have also been severely critical of the application of the blasphemy laws, which has resulted in the incarceration of many on trumped up charges.

Civil society groups have also advocated for the state's adoption of a more rational foreign policy and abandonment of the use of terror by severing links between the state and jihadi groups. Activists have incurred the ill will of both the state and the jihadi groups but are persevering. Pakistani authorities are particularly opposed to any criticism of intelligence agencies, especially to charges that they are indulging in illegal activities.

As of now, civil society groups have not gained enough strength to influence official thinking, though the state is monitoring their activities. The state apparatus wishes to project Pakistan as a moderate and enlightened Islamic country. On account of their foreign linkages, civil society groups can bring pressure to bear on the state both by themselves and directly by their friends abroad. The jihadi groups are obviously impervious to the rational discourse of civil society.

## *The Islamic Dimension*

While austere and assertive forms of Islam have remained in the Indian subcontinent, the dominant stream of the faith became moderate and accommodative over time so as to coexist with the faiths of the majority of the population. Most of Pakistan's Muslims adhere to this pluralistic form of Islam common in South Asia. However, since the creation of Pakistan, groups and parties that pursued "purer" forms of Islam have sought to propagate their faith in organized and active modes. They have put pressure on the government, for example, to declare heterodox Islamic groups such as the Ahmediya as non-Muslim.

Since its creation, Pakistan has used Pashtun tribes, covert groups, and increasingly militant Islamic *tanzeems* against neighboring countries. It did so in the 1947 operations in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and again in 1965 against India. It also used such tactics against Afghanistan in the mid-1970s. However, the Afghan jihad against the Soviet invasion of 1979 coalesced the forces released in the 1970s, concentrating them along Pakistan's western border. The United States, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and China supported the jihadi enterprise, and an exhausted Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan in February 1989. The Pakistani state, apprehensive that the jihadi groups would turn on their former handlers, stepped in to put some of the militants to use in the disputed territories of J&K, while continuing to support forces such as the Taliban in Afghanistan.

While the jihadi groups participated vigorously in the insurgency against India in J&K, they did not abandon their domestic agendas. Some of these groups, dedicated to anti-Shiite doctrines, adopted violent methods, while Shiite groups responded in kind. Violence against Sunni devotees at Barelvi or Sufi places of worship by Wahhabi and Deobandi groups has also occurred. Pakistan's involvement in the Afghan jihad thus spawned a range of highly motivated Islamist groups that were willing to become instruments of the state to promote its interests in the region. For its part,

the state looked the other way as these groups began to promote their individual theological agendas in the country, often extralegally. A close and enduring mutually beneficial relationship thus developed between the state and militant Islamist groups.

Pakistan's decision to provide facilities to U.S. forces after September 11 for the war against the Taliban dealt a severe blow to this cozy relationship. Many Islamist groups had close ties with the Taliban and felt betrayed. In 2007, anti-state tribal forces coalesced to form the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) under the leadership of the Mehsud tribe. The TTP is not a monolithic group but an amalgam of different actors united only in their opposition to the United States and the Pakistani government. Although the state has sought to exploit cracks within the movement, this approach has not yielded decisive results. The Pakistan Army has also pursued dialogue and peace negotiations, but again without much success. The army's principal approach is now to break up the TTP through prolonged action in North Waziristan, the group's main stronghold. The TTP, however, is far from vanquished, even if it has broken into factions. The principal faction of Mullah Fazlullah continues the struggle with others who break away and coalesce from time to time. There are even reports of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) attracting some groups.<sup>1</sup>

The TTP insurgency has undermined not only the security of Pakistan but also that of Afghanistan and the broader region. FATA continues to harbor Central Asian jihadis as well as members of the Xinjiang East Turkestan Islamic Movement. U.S. drone attacks are a double-edged sword. While they have eliminated some TTP leaders, the inevitable civilian collateral damage has contributed to deepening resentments.

### *The Baluch Insurgency*

The Baluchistan insurgency is vastly different from the jihadi TTP revolt. While the aim of the latter is to turn Pakistan into an Islamist state, the former is a secessionist movement with deep roots in the Baluch tribal psyche, as Matthew J. Nelson discusses in great depth in his essay. The Baluch have never fully accepted the province's merger with Pakistan and deeply resent Punjabi hegemony. The insurgency does not threaten the unity of the state, especially as the demographics of the province have changed to make the Baluch a minority. It does, however, absorb scarce resources and could pin down a substantial number of Pakistani forces if the insurgency becomes full blown. There is also a fear that India and Afghanistan will exploit Baluch separatism to create security problems.

India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Turkmenistan have agreed to build a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to India via the other two countries. This pipeline, as well as one under discussion from Iran to India, would need to traverse Baluchistan. As the situations stands, security concerns, among other issues, have inhibited these projects, which stand to greatly benefit both India and Pakistan. The Baluch insurgency will continue to have an adverse impact on these proposals, as well as on the announced China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. In order to provide security to the latter initiative, Islamabad has decided to raise a large security force.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bill Roggio, "Pakistani Taliban Emir for Bajaur Joins Islamic State," *Long War Journal*, February 2, 2015, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/02/pakistani\\_taliban\\_em.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/02/pakistani_taliban_em.php).

<sup>2</sup> Saeed Shah and Josh Chin, "Pakistan to Create Security Force to Protect Chinese Workers," *Wall Street Journal*, April 22, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/pakistan-to-create-security-force-to-protect-chinese-workers-1429701872>.

## Civil-Military Relations

### *The Pakistan Army*

The Pakistan Army is at once professional and political—it is both the defender of Pakistan's territorial integrity and the final protector of the country's ideology. Moreover, it has exercised direct political power for the majority of Pakistan's existence. Significantly, except for the years of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's leadership, when the army was recovering from the decisive defeat in the Bangladesh war, it has always been the final arbiter of Pakistan's security and important segments of its foreign policy.

The army is also a major economic player. Its influence has spread from banking and industrial enterprises to logistics, travel, and land development. Through these measures the army has promoted the corporate interests of its officers and men.<sup>3</sup>

The class composition of the army's officer cadre has undergone significant changes over the decades. These changes have, among other factors, contributed to a movement from a largely Westernized, nationalistic culture of the officer class to an Islam-inspired outlook. The soldiery, too, presently exhibits more Islamic piety in its conduct. These tendencies gained ground during the years of General Zia-ul-Haq's stewardship of the army and country and have steadily increased since then. This cultural shift in the Pakistan Army is influenced by developments in the larger Islamic world that have contributed to greater religiosity and feelings of victimhood as well as by developments in Pakistan itself, where sharper Islamic doctrines are becoming entrenched.

The TTP attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar in December 2014, which led to the slaughter of more than 130 school children, caused national anger and revulsion. The army and the government jointly announced that terrorism of all kinds would be eliminated from the country. But after an initial round of activity, the army reverted to business as usual.<sup>4</sup> The army continued to selectively target extremist groups—combating those opposed to it while patronizing or turning a blind eye to those willing to promote its agenda.

### *The Political Class and Recent Political Challenges*

Pakistan's political class has always been fragmented along ethnic, provincial, and class lines. It has been ideologically malleable and largely open to manipulation by the army. It has also been extraordinarily venal. All told, Pakistan's political actors have never enjoyed popular respect. Many political parties are family fiefdoms and are not governed democratically. They are in this respect no different from many parties in other South Asian countries, including India, which has a strongly rooted democratic system. Nonetheless, many of these parties have large followings, as the elections show.

Since 2008, Pakistan has been under civilian rule. The Pakistan Peoples Party government gave way to the Pakistan Muslim League–Nawaz (PML-N) under Nawaz Sharif in the 2013 elections. While the PML-N won a decisive majority, Imran Khan's party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, unexpectedly became the second-largest party in the parliament. It seemed that Sharif would have a smooth five years to address the many crises in the country and also give greater authority to the political executive vis-à-vis the army. But a year later, in 2014, Sharif was beset by deep political difficulties as a result of strained civil-military relations.

<sup>3</sup> For more on the army's influence, see Ayesha Siddiqa, *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy* (London: Pluto Press, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Khawar Ghumman, "NAP Report Indicates Little Progress on Key Fronts," *Dawn*, April 3, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1173611>.

Differences on policy approaches toward the FATA insurgency, the prime minister's animus toward former president General Pervez Musharraf, and his desire to improve relations with India contributed to these tensions. Many analysts have argued that the army used Khan and Tahir ul Qadri, who staged a march and sit-in in 2014 that paralyzed the capital for weeks, to put pressure on Sharif.<sup>5</sup> After an initial delay, the prime minister rallied the political class in the parliament to emphatically assert that the constitutionally established government be allowed to proceed without intervention. This action sent a significant and unprecedented message to the army.

While rallying the parliament, Sharif also asked the army to intervene with Khan and Qadri to defuse the situation. The army counseled both sides to show restraint. The prime minister placated the army by promising that its views would have an impact on security and foreign policy issues.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, the background struggle between the army and the political class remains unresolved, and Khan's confrontation with Sharif continues. It is thus difficult to assess if a new stage has been reached in Pakistan's political evolution.

### *The Media*

The Pakistani media has displayed a remarkable degree of openness in recent years and has been critical of state policies and institutions, including the army. Some sections of the media have put social malaise and bigotry, official apathy, and corruption under the spotlight. They have relentlessly attacked anti-women and anti-minority laws and practices. However, other sections are still retrograde and continue to promote extremist thought. During the Azadi march and sit-in, for example, the media was almost evenly divided in its support of Sharif and Khan. As a result, instead of playing an objective or constructive role to protect the democratic process, the media exacerbated political divisions.

Geo TV's attacks against the ISI for the alleged attempted murder of Hamid Mir were unprecedented in Pakistan's history. Never had any individual or media group launched such a direct challenge to the agency, which evokes both fear and grudging respect in the public at large. Significantly, the government did not adequately come to the ISI's defense; it did not completely rubbish the charge. Yet odds are that the ISI will continue to use strong-arm methods against critical journalists, but it will do so more circumspectly. Where necessary, the army will simply not allow the presence of the media so that it can have a free hand in dealing with militancy. This is the case in North Waziristan, which has been out of bounds for the media since the beginning of Operation Zarb-e-Azb in June 2014.<sup>7</sup> The army will not permit the media to scrutinize its methods of handling security issues.

### *The Judiciary*

Pakistan's judiciary has largely been the handmaiden of the army, ever willing to legally justify its repeated coups and turn a blind eye to its illegal or extralegal activities. The judges propounded the dubious doctrine of necessity to give legal cover to General Ayub Khan's coup of 1958, the first in Pakistan's history. They followed that precedent to dismiss legal challenges to later coups.

<sup>5</sup> Marvin Weinbaum, "How Protests and the Military Are Curbing Pakistan's Democracy," *Foreign Policy*, August 12, 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/08/12/how-protests-and-the-military-are-curbing-pakistans-democracy>.

<sup>6</sup> Saeed Shah, "Pakistan Army Chief Intervenes in Political Crisis," *Wall Street Journal*, August 28, 2014, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/pakistan-prime-minister-to-face-murder-charges-1409249484>.

<sup>7</sup> Phelim Kine, "Dispatches: Media Muzzled in Pakistan's Waziristan Offensive," Human Rights Watch, July 23, 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/07/23/dispatches-media-muzzled-pakistan-s-waziristan-offensive>.

The majority of judges were also not reluctant to forget their oaths on the constitution and take new oaths on constitutional ordinances promulgated by the coup-making generals.

General Musharraf dismissed Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhari in 2007. Breaking with tradition, Chaudhari took on the army and was supported by a large group of lawyers who took to the streets. The restoration of the elected government in 2008 saw the return of Chaudhari to the chief justice's chair. Since then, the judiciary has been assertive and activist. It has closely scrutinized the conduct of the government and the army, including in cases of illegal actions by the intelligence agencies and corruption by political leaders. Though Chaudhari has retired, a series of cases against Musharraf, including charges of treason and murder, are being heard by the courts.

Whether the judiciary will be able to continue with its present posture is unclear, as resentment is growing in the army and the political class. If the judiciary succeeds in the face of such opposition, it will help nudge the country on a path of constitutional democracy and respect of law.

## Pakistan-India Relations

### *Pakistan's India Policy*

The creation of Pakistan was opposed by Indian political groups in pre-independent and undivided India that were committed to a united country. Yet once Pakistan became a sovereign state, except for fringe groups, India accepted the reality of the new country. However, Pakistan continued to view its neighbor as a threat. This perception has persisted all through its existence and has had a decisive impact on the evolution of both the state and society. In particular, this preoccupation is responsible for the dominant role that the Pakistan Army has played in domestic affairs. While the army's popularity has fluctuated over time, it has remained the preeminent institution of the Pakistani state by skillfully building up the Indian threat while casting itself as the sole protector of the nation.

Pakistan refracts all of its external policies and engagements through the prism of its India policy, which is based on the premise of India being a permanent threat and therefore by extension a permanent enemy. This attitude is unlikely to change because it flows from the two-nation theory, which is the ideological foundation of the Pakistani state. The army perceives itself as the state's guardian and is ever wary of constructive engagement with India, as it is fearful that closer ties would weaken Pakistan's sovereignty. The core issue between India and Pakistan is thus ideological; Kashmir is only a by-product of this disagreement, though Pakistan emphasizes it as the core issue between the two countries. Although segments of Pakistani public opinion vigorously challenge the view of India as a permanent enemy, in the foreseeable future they are unlikely to pose a threat to the army's hold on the country's national security and vital areas of foreign policy. Indeed, large sections of the population have internalized the army's approach, especially among Islamist groups.

Pakistan's approach to meet the Indian threat has been to rely on military means, establishing strong ties with countries inimical to India while utilizing tools of subversion and terror. As a smaller state, its conventional force levels will remain inferior to India's. Hence, Pakistan relies on a nuclear deterrent and uses militant groups to wage a proxy war against India, thereby keeping India on the defensive and reducing the impact of the natural disparities between the two countries. The futility of this approach is obvious, however, as India has far outstripped Pakistan

over the past two decades. It is equally obvious that the path of confrontation with India has crippled Pakistan in every way and prevented it from becoming a modern, stable, and prosperous state. Nevertheless, the failure of this approach has not led the army to question the basis of its confrontational India policy.

As a smaller and weaker state, Pakistan could have adopted a more conciliatory approach toward India. It has, however, refused to explore the creation of a web of relations to entangle India to reduce the perceived Indian threat. In this, the Pakistani state and society and polity have reinforced each other.

### *The Modi Government's Policy toward Pakistan*

Indian policy toward Pakistan has evolved significantly since Narendra Modi took office in 2014. Initially, the Modi government set the following expectations for its approach toward Pakistan:

- India-Pakistan dialogue would be in accordance with internationally accepted conventions. Hence, Pakistan should not interact with separatists before official engagements, which marked a departure from the past laissez-faire Indian attitude.
- Pakistan's attempts to internationalize any aspect of bilateral relations, including the Kashmir issue, would be futile. This expectation sent a clear signal not only to Pakistan but also to the international community.
- India would respond with force to any violence emanating from Pakistan. The Modi government's commitment to this policy was demonstrated by its response to Pakistan firing on Indian military posts and villages in October 2014.

To engage Pakistan purposefully, in 2015 Modi diluted the red line he had drawn about meetings of Pakistani representatives and the separatists. He allowed such meetings on the conclusion of official India-Pakistan meetings. Modi sent the Indian foreign secretary to Pakistan on an exploratory visit in March. He also took the initiative to meet Prime Minister Sharif in Ufa, Russia, in July on the sidelines of a multilateral summit. The two decided, *inter alia*, that the national security advisers of both countries would meet in New Delhi to discuss terrorism-related issues. When the Pakistan Army objected to an exclusive meeting on terrorism, Modi again showed flexibility, and the two national security advisers met in Bangkok in early December. The foreign secretaries were present at the meeting, and the agenda was broad. The Pakistan national security adviser assured his Indian counterpart that all Pakistani institutions were determined to establish good relations with India and meet Indian concerns on terrorism. The Indian foreign minister visited Islamabad a few days after the meeting for an Afghanistan-related conference. She met Pakistan's entire civilian leadership to discuss bilateral relations. The two countries decided to embark on a comprehensive bilateral dialogue whose modalities were to be worked out by the foreign secretaries. On his way back to New Delhi from Kabul on December 25, Modi stopped over in Lahore for a few hours to meet Sharif. The two reiterated their commitment to take relations forward. The positive trend in the relationship took a major hit, however, when in early January 2016 terrorists of the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed attacked a major Indian Air Force base at Pathankot in the Punjab state. Modi reacted soberly but firmly and signaled that Pakistan should take action against the conspirators. India has provided leads to Pakistan, but Pakistan is prevaricating, and public pressure on Modi to refrain from being soft on Pakistan is strong. These developments have had a negative impact on the bilateral process.

What is not in doubt, however, is that there will be strong domestic pressure on the Modi government to take resolute action against Pakistan should there be a major cross-border terrorist attack involving large civilian casualties. This shift from an emphasis on accommodative processes to more assertive approaches has significant implications for the security situation, which Aryaman Bhatnagar and C. Raja Mohan discuss in their essay for the report. Moreover, it is not evident that Pakistan fully understands India's changed position, as its selective support for terrorist groups continues.

## Pakistan's Relationships with Key Regional States

### *Afghanistan*

Pakistan's primary objective in Afghanistan is to ensure that India does not use Afghan territory to encircle Pakistan. For this purpose, Islamabad has considered it necessary to have a government in Afghanistan that would be sensitive to Pakistan's concerns regarding India. Except for the Taliban, no Afghan government has been willing to accept a Pakistani veto over India policy. On the other hand, no Afghan government has been willing to allow India to use its territory against Pakistan. The current government indicated that India's cooperation in the security sector will be curtailed and channels will be significantly opened with Pakistan in this area. Nevertheless, as discussed by Vanda Felbab-Brown in her essay, fear of encirclement is one basic reason for Pakistan's continuing support for the Taliban, despite U.S. and Afghan opposition.

There are objective factors within Afghanistan for popular support of the Taliban among the Pashtuns. However, the organization would likely not have posed a serious challenge to Afghanistan's security if the Pakistani state had not supported it. Pakistan desires Taliban participation in the power structures in Kabul. It is aware that a Taliban sweep like in the 1990s would be possible only if the national unity government collapses and the Afghan army splits on ethnic lines. Such a scenario is a possibility but is unlikely if adequate international support for Afghanistan continues. The announcement of Mullah Omar's death in mid-2015 opened possibilities for positive change in Afghanistan but also added complexities. Omar's passing may reduce the ideological rigidities of the movement and make it more amenable to power sharing. At the same time, the Taliban's loss of cohesiveness could have a negative impact on any negotiation process that would be acceptable to all members. Pakistan has built up Mullah Mansour, but he must still establish his writ over the entire movement. Currently the international community's focus is on the quadrilateral process, and it seeks to pressure Pakistan to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table, but that prospect is still far from being realized. Meanwhile, the Taliban's focus remains on gaining international legitimacy and augmenting their strength on the ground through violence.

The Taliban enjoy the patronage of Pakistan jihadi groups. The rise of ISIS, however, has led to some Taliban members raising the ISIS flag. Currently the Taliban dominate, though ISIS's emergence is worrisome. Ashraf Ghani, the current president of Afghanistan, has appealed to Pakistan to persuade the Taliban to accept accommodative approaches and seriously engage in a reconciliation process. As noted above, he was willing to limit, if not eliminate, India's role in the security sector, which is a key Pakistani demand. However, Pakistan's disappointing response to his overtures made Ghani seek Indian cooperation in the security sector. It is unclear whether Pakistan will actually change the course of its entrenched Afghan policy.

## *China*

China has been the bulwark of Pakistan's security and is its most significant international partner. As Jayadeva Ranade examines in his essay, China provided significant assistance in the development of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program and is its largest supplier of military equipment.<sup>8</sup> The foundation of the partnership is based on common negativity toward India. While Sino-Indian ties have become multifaceted over the past few decades, old problems remain; hence, the cement of the Sino-Pakistani relationship should hold for the foreseeable future.

The threat of Uighur jihadism is growing in China and is no longer confined to Xinjiang. There is a sizeable reservoir of sympathy and support for the Uighurs among Pakistani jihadi groups. Although Pakistan has attempted to combat these tendencies, this is one area where China will expect Pakistan to act with even greater vigor.

Alongside security ties, China's economic engagement with Pakistan will continue to grow, especially as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor between Xinjiang and Gwadar port develops. China has committed \$46 billion for the project, of which more than \$30 billion will be spent on power projects in Pakistan.<sup>9</sup> The project was the centerpiece of Chinese president Xi Jinping's visit to Pakistan in April 2015. Apart from their economic impact, these investments will create a positive vested interest for China in Pakistan apart from the two countries' common antipathy toward India. China's involvement in infrastructure development, including in the energy sector, will only increase in the years ahead.

## *Iran*

Pakistan-Iran relations have been tense since the shah was overthrown in 1979. Mutual suspicions over the sectarian attitudes of Pakistan's state institutions, the nuclear question, differing approaches toward Afghanistan, and Pakistan's relationships with Saudi Arabia and the United States have contributed to uneven ties. Although it is unlikely that relations will break down completely, strains below the surface will continue. The strength of Pakistan's relations with Saudi Arabia will have a major impact on Pakistan-Iran relations. While there is little doubt that Pakistan's strong bonds with Saudi Arabia will endure, Islamabad will not directly get involved in the Saudi-Iran tensions or conflict unless the security of Saudi Arabia is under imminent threat. This was demonstrated in April 2015 when Pakistan denied Saudi Arabia's appeal for military assistance in its Yemen campaign.

As Tariq A. Karim argues in his essay, heightened energy cooperation offers Pakistan and Iran a unique opportunity to rebuild their relationship. Pakistan has considerable energy interests in Iran, especially in the country's vast gas reserves. With the lifting of U.S. sanctions following the Iran nuclear deal, the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline will become a serious possibility, which, if realized, would facilitate increased energy trade.

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<sup>8</sup> T.V. Paul, "The Causes and Consequences of China-Pakistani Nuclear/Missile Collaboration," in *South Asia's Nuclear Security Dilemma: India, Pakistan, and China*, ed. Lowell Dittmer (New York: Routledge, 2005), 181–82. For further insight into Chinese arms supplies to Pakistan, see Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, <http://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers>.

<sup>9</sup> Katharine Houreld, "China and Pakistan Launch Economic Corridor Plan Worth \$46 Billion," Reuters, April 20, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/20/us-pakistan-china-idUSKBN0NA12T20150420>.

## Outlook

Pakistan is a deeply troubled state, but it is not a failing state. It is a country with immense possibilities, but to realize this potential it will need to abandon enmity toward India and seek to construct a modern progressive state. Pakistan's India policy has held the country hostage, leading the military and political establishment to neglect the nation's development agenda and turn to ever-greater religiosity to gain legitimacy and credibility. This approach has, in turn, given extremist religious groups a free hand within the country while the state uses them to secure its foreign policy objectives. Some of these groups, such as the TTP, have subsequently turned against the state, undermining domestic security and adversely affecting Pakistan's social and economic well-being.

Pakistan's traditional Islamic orientation, historically moderate in nature, need not prevent the country from becoming a prosperous state. However, its political and, more importantly, military leadership must change course radically as extremist theologies spread throughout the country. That even the shock of the Peshawar school attack has not led to any thought of reducing the social role of these extremist groups is a cause for pessimism.

The prospects of turning South Asia into a harmonious and prosperous region largely depend on Pakistani approaches. So long as Pakistan remains a prisoner of its current ideological moorings and militaristic policies for protecting its security, a change is unlikely. This is a pity for a country and people with so much potential.









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