

## RETHINKING THE NATIONAL SECURITY OF PAKISTAN

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This paper examines the dynamics of Pakistan's national security, focusing on concerns and objectives. At a basic level, security is indivisible and is something a state can have more or less of. Security has an objective and subjective dimension as well as an internal and an external dimension. At a minimal level, a state includes within its security parameters territorial integrity, national sovereignty and the absence of fear of threat to these values – which as a basic feature is common to all states. Of course, with the growing interdependence amongst states within the international system, *sovereignty* itself has, over the decades, altered in its conceptualisation.

Although there is a tendency to focus on the external dimension when dealing with issues of national security, the indivisibility of this notion implies that the internal dimension of security is equally critical. Just as foreign policy emanates from domestic compulsions, so external security is interlinked to the internal dynamics of a state's security. In fact, the internal dimensions of security have become critical within the context of nuclearisation and the changing nature of warfare. Increasingly, with the advent of ever more lethal weapons, the cost-ineffectiveness of the military solution through occupation has meant that traditional warfare has given way to other unconventional means. In the same way, with the battlegrounds extending beyond the military front to the civilian population-industrial areas and civilian spheres of activity, the socio-ecological costs of traditional war have increased manifold - especially with the advent of nuclear facilities and industries like the chemical industry, which can have a tremendous fallout if destroyed. Since many industrial centres are close to population concentrations, the destructive fallout is further multiplied.

Also, while the international community has failed to outlaw war *per se*, it has become more and more unacceptable for states to use all-out military means to resolve their conflicts. Instead, the use of the military option is increasingly justified within some multilateral cover. In the present day world, war has now expanded to include many unconventional means like guerrilla warfare, psychological warfare including the use of terror, economic warfare and indirect intervention in the territory of a rival state. In many ways, while for Clausewitz war was a continuation of politics by other means, now it is almost as if politics has become an extension of war by other means. And in these "other means" is included all manner of tactics short of direct all-out military confrontation. One major tool of "other means" is subversion.

To subvert, as the Chambers English Dictionary defines the word, means "to overthrow; to overturn; to pervert". Subversion means, "overthrow; ruin". Since, in a conflictual relationship between hostile actors, the aim of each is to ruin the other, so subversion becomes a natural strategy for each. Given the decreasing relevance and acceptability of conventional warfare, states in conflictual relationships opt for indirect interventions in enemy territory in order to destabilise and weaken the polity. As such then, low intensity conflicts become a more viable option – low intensity conflict referring to a level of violent engagement short of all-out war. Given the transnational linkages that sub-national groups within a state have these days, and given the reach of modern communications, the boundaries between external and internal, domestic and foreign have become increasingly blurred – highlighting once again the criticality of civil society in the security equation.

This is especially true for South Asia in general and Pakistan in particular. Pakistan's security environment has been altering since the nuclearisation of the region and then the events of 11 September, 2001 (9/11). The overall changes have accentuated the security problems for Pakistan – especially because at one level there has been an increasing enmeshing of the external security dynamics with the internal political dynamics.

**Internal Security Dynamics.** One can identify four levels at which the internal dynamics of state-society relations impact directly on Pakistan's security framework – with the first level itself altering the dynamics of the other three.

**Militarization of Civil Society.** Whether it is a conflict between hostile student organisations or political rivalry, or an argument between two individuals, Pakistan's civil society has seen an increasing resort to violence to resolve all manner of conflicts. This militarization of civil society – its preference for a violent course of action over other means of exercising influence – became marked after the imposition of martial law following a military coup in July 1977. Militarization is directly linked to the concept of militarism – which denotes a “social formation and structure”<sup>1</sup> reflecting it at the behavioural level of state and civil society. Both militarization and militarism reflect the prevalence of a conflictual framework at the level of the state and civil society, where increasing violence comes to mark conflict behaviour – not only of the state but also of civil society within the state.

The 1977 coup and Zia's Afghan policy altered the dynamics of societal conflicts and enmeshed domestic and external policies more intensely together. With political parties banned and all venues for protest through legal means closed, polarisation within society intensified. Cleavages and conflicts within civil society, which had shown a violent trend under Z. A. Bhutto's increasing use of the coercive elements of the state, grew worse under the successor military rule. The ban on political parties led to an increasing focus on seeking identity through group membership based upon ethnicity, sectarianism and the traditional *biradari* (kinship) system. As it did then, such a development further bolsters the prevalent conflict within society, as polarization develops vertically.<sup>2</sup>

The militarization of society continued to prevail in the post-Zia period and still continues to act as an accentuator of civil society cleavages, leading to a general decline of law and order. This, in turn, weakens the domestic polity's fabric and thereby undermines the external projection of national interest. It also allows for easier internal penetration by external powers for subversive purposes. Until

deweaponization of civil society is affected extensively, democratization of the polity will not lower the level of militarization of society. This has been illustrated in the post-Zia period – from 1988 to the present.

**Political Structures and Stability.** The second level of internal state dynamics is the prevalence or otherwise of a democratic political culture and stable political structures.

Pakistan has yet to evolve a substantive democratic culture. Political stability throughout has been undermined not only by the erratic democratic experiments but also by the societal violence and polarisation that has come to mark the post-1977 political culture. The violence that came with the availability of weaponry and the abundance of drug money defined this political culture into the end of the nineties. Even though the ethnicity factor has subsided during the last two general elections, political polarisation has even now become ever more acute as the intolerant culture of kinship and sectarianism has undermined broad-based national political agendas. The acute nature of political dissent, and the lack of evolution of democratic institutions has often held external policy hostage to politics of intolerance and violence.

Additionally, the weakening of state institutions by successive governments has meant that institutional decision-making has tended to be replaced increasingly by personalized decision-making, often with no formal records being kept. The result has been the erosion of policy continuity and formulation of long-term objectives. Instead, the state tends to be dominated by ad-hocism, with new governments first trying to undo their predecessors' decisions – or, at the very least, introducing a completely new set of policies which leave earlier ones half-implemented or totally reversed. All these tendencies undermine the external credibility of the state, in terms of alliance and investment reliability.

**Growth of Ethnic and Sectarian Groups.** The development of vertical polarisation within civil society – a legacy of the Zia period – has continued to define Pakistan's political landscape. Although the ethnicity factor has become less violent and critical over the last few

years, within the national polity (as seen by the success of national parties over ethnic parties in the provincial and national electoral results in the last two general elections), the continuing instability along the Durand Line can threaten to raise this factor once more in the future – especially the continuing disenfranchisement of the Pakhtun community in Afghanistan and the Afghan refugee problem which continues to persist. Presently, the sectarian issue continues to haunt the national polity.

Sectarian conflict also has grown within Pakistan in the post 1977 period so that external powers have found it expedient to use Pakistan for their proxy wars. The revival of political activity, instead of undermining sectarianism, sustained it because political parties found powerful support groups amongst the sectarian elements. The sectarian issue within Pakistan's domestic polity has had a negative fallout on Pakistan's relations with neighbours like Iran.

The success of the religious political coalition Motehada Majlis-i-Amal (MMA) in the last elections has added a new factor in Pakistan's political spectrum, which may also cause instability domestically – given that the MMA may take the provinces under its rule in one direction while the other provinces move in a substantively different developmental direction – and which will impact Pakistan's external relations. However, it is too early to predict the future impact of the MMA on the national polity over the long term – since the survival of the coalition itself is debatable.

The present government's move to ban extremist religious outfits is a recognition of the problem presented by these militant groups and it is also a recognition of the fact that the efforts to privatize "*jihad*" across the LOC by some of these groups has undermined Pakistan's operationalisation of its external policy.

**Socio-economic Development.** Corruption within the state apparatus, uneven development, neglect of the agricultural sector and an unhealthy dependency on the textile sector has undermined economic progress. An undocumented economy has allowed a parallel economy to develop, which has further eroded national resources. All these factors have led to an overwhelming dependence on external

financial resources. This external dependency affects Pakistan's external policy options, limiting many alternatives, which donors may not permit. Also, most external financial inputs have gone into non-revenue generating activities, thereby further burdening the nation.

Economic compulsions are also making it increasingly difficult for Pakistan to put the issue of trade with India on the back burner till political conflicts between the two are resolved. If the pressure continues, Pakistan's external security imperatives may well be further jeopardised. Along with the economic underdevelopment, social development is impeded by an uncontrolled population growth, which so far the state has been unable to control.

### **External Security Dynamics**

Three major issues now impact Pakistan's external security environment in an altered fashion:

- The relationship with the US
- The issue of WMD
- The Pakistan-India relationship

These issues have impacted other aspects of Pakistan's security environment, including its relationship with its allies and its interaction in international fora – and, most critically, they have further enmeshed the external dimension of security with the internal.

**Pakistan's relationship with the US.** The Pakistan-US relationship is an increasingly dialectical one, having multiple levels of operationalisation.

### **The War on Terrorism**

Post-9/11, Pakistan became a frontline state once again for the US – this time as a partner in the US-led War on Terrorism. Having backed the Taliban regime, Pakistan had to do an about-face on this support after the link between Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda and the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the US was established; and the support extended by the Taliban to Osama bin Laden made the

Taliban regime the main target of the US-led war on terrorism in Afghanistan. However, as the war in Afghanistan has progressed, and the US has been unable to establish law and order in that country, Pakistan has seen a direct challenge to its sovereignty along the Pakistan-Afghan border region. The US has been seeking hot pursuit across the Durand Line which Pakistan is not prepared to grant – and this has often lead to clashes between Pakistani and US forces. Also, because of the exclusion of the Pashtuns from the power structures in Afghanistan, there is a coalescing of these forces with the Taliban remnants and as the US frustration increases over its inability to capture Osama bin Laden, Pakistan comes under political fire from Washington which in turn aggravates the Pak-US relationship.

The Pashtun factor has also brought the Afghan issue into the internal dynamics of Pakistan's political structures. The MMA government in the NWFP is increasingly at odds with Islamabad over the intervention of the Pakistan army into the tribal areas in pursuit of al-Qaeda remnants, who may have crossed over into Pakistan after the US attacks on Afghanistan began. The presence of the army in the tribal belt, for the first time, has had mixed results. While some tribal leaders resent the erosion of their authority and are using the threat to tribal values as a pretext to garner support from the MMA provincial government, the army's policy of building communication infrastructure and providing schools and health facilities will help bring this area into the national mainstream – a move that was long overdue.

Meanwhile, the emergence of the Northern Alliance into power in Afghanistan has meant that Pakistan has a hostile neighbour in post-Taliban Afghanistan and the growing Indian presence there has further aggravated the problem for Pakistan. India has opened six consulates in Afghanistan, including along the border towns like Kandahar and Jalalabad. India has also established two air bases in Tajikistan and for Pakistan there is now the possibility of a two-front multiple level threat from India (discussed below).

Another new development in Afghanistan that has long-term strategic implications for the region, including Pakistan, is the

presence now of NATO in Afghanistan. This is a qualitative expansion of the NATO operational framework and could lead to a new involvement of NATO in Asian security matters. With NATO on its borders, both China and Pakistan have to study the implications for their long-term security.

### **The Pre-emptive Doctrine of the US National Security Strategy Paper and Its Impact on Pakistan**

The invasion of Iraq and the promulgation of the pre-emptive doctrine by the US has a direct bearing on Pakistan's security concerns because the doctrine focuses primarily on Muslim states in its expansive reach of pre-emption at the political, economic and military levels. Also, Pakistan as a member of the Security Council, has come under US pressure for support on UN SC resolutions tabled by the US. Pakistan has also come under pressure on the issue of the sending of Pakistani troops under US command to serve in Iraq. This issue has a strong domestic fallout for Pakistan – which is why Pakistan has made a policy statement that it will only send forces under a UN mandate. However, the US draft resolution on the issue still calls for a multinational force (not a UN force) under US Command – which will not resolve the issue for Muslim states like Pakistan.

The pre-emptive doctrine also refers to the vague notion of “failing states” and the more precise definition of “rogue” states. Given the linkage with the notion of axis of evil, these categorisations have a direct bearing on Muslim states, in the long term, especially given the last characteristic of a “rogue state”, which identifies a rogue state as one which *“rejects basic human values’ and hate the United States and all that it stands for.”* So, at the end of the day, any government or state that is seen as hostile to the US will merit preemptive action on the part of the US.

The military aspects of pre-emption have reasserted the primacy of military power in international relations because the military aspect of the pre-emptive doctrine has to be seen together with the US Nuclear Posture Review of 2002. In the Review the US has tried to rationalise the use of nuclear weapons, even against



states that do not possess them. Deterrence has been set aside as having become redundant. Now this directly impacts countries like Pakistan which have built up a minimum deterrence through a policy of nuclear restraint.

### **The Bilateral Pakistan-US Relationship**

Post-9/11, Pakistan and the US once again got drawn into an intensive cooperative relationship – within the context of the war on terrorism. As a result the US has been given extensive access to Pakistan's intelligence and security structures, but there is a growing questioning of this relationship within Pakistan – especially since the US has yet to live up to its quid pro quos, especially the financial ones such as the one relating to market access for Pakistan's textiles. US Aid has, however, once again established its presence in Pakistan with programmes being initiated in the health and education sector.

President Musharraf's visit to the US earlier this year (2003) did result in a \$ 3 billion economic and military aid package, but Congress has yet to approve it and already many conditionalities are being linked to this package. Also, in terms of military aid, the US has shown no willingness to transfer state-of-the-art weapon systems to Pakistan. Even in terms of sale of weapons the US has so far not acceded to Pakistani requests for F-16s or the Phalcon system that the US is allowing Israel to transfer to India. So far the military aid and sales relates to spares and some defensive systems to help in the war on terrorism. Latest reports suggest that the US will allow the sale of \$9 billion of modern arms to Pakistan, but there is little yet on the terms and conditions – including Congressional Conditionalities. There is an expectation that the sale will include vision devices, missiles and radars – but not the Phalcon system. The US also seems to be willing to sell transport aircraft and spares for the Pakistan Navy's Harriers and Sea King helicopters.

Pakistan has expressed concern over the Phalcon sale to India since this directly destabilises the strategic nuclear balance established in South Asia. The Phalcon sale to India is part of a massive US-India strategic partnership which has a strong defence

component – and is linked to the Indo-Israeli relationship which centres on defence cooperation. The US-India relationship directly impinges on the US-Pakistan relationship because of the defence aspects whereby the transfer of certain weapon systems to India impacts on the security threat perceptions of Pakistan.

As stated earlier, US pressure on Pakistan is also growing on the issue of the sending of Pakistani forces to Iraq. Pakistan has made it clear that it will do so only under UN mandate and/or on the request of the Iraqi people and the OIC or GCC. The problem for Pakistan is that it is not feasible for its forces to serve under a US commander answerable to the US government. This is totally different from serving under a UN Commander answerable to the Secretary General and the UN SC – a system under which Pakistan has sent its forces on many occasions. But as the US gets bogged down in Iraq, the pressure on Pakistan will continue to grow.

All in all, it is becoming evident that the US-Pakistan relationship is going to come under increasing stress – especially given the proclivity of the US media to make Pakistan the scapegoat for all manner of issues, which, in turn, leads to a growing hostility towards the US within the Pakistani polity. Thus, in the long term, the Pakistan-US relationship will have to be defined within the framework of issue-specific cooperation with clear-cut quid pro quos.

### **The Issue of WMD**

The whole issue of WMD has become highly politicized, with the result that the non-proliferation agenda has been cast aside. Instead, only certain states' WMD programmes are going to be targeted and presently these states are Iran, Syria and, to a lesser extent it seems, North Korea. For Pakistan the problem arises because it has become the favourite whipping boy on the proliferation issue and is accused, willy nilly, of providing nuclear assistance to Iran and North Korea. This is despite the fact that India has a science and technology collaboration agreement with Iran and an extensive uranium enrichment programme – and in the case of North Korea if it was going the enrichment route, it would not have

needed to challenge the UN inspectors and so on. The revelation in early December 2003 that some Pakistani scientists may have given assistance to Iran in the nuclear field, for monetary reasons, further increases the West's discomfiture with Pakistan's nuclear capability.

For the future, countries like Pakistan will be dragged into the WMD issue. For Pakistan, the issue is critical because this pretext could be a means of trying to target Pakistan's nuclear programme which sits uneasily with the US. And since WMD remains one of the rationalisations for the US pre-emptive doctrine, the present framing of the WMD issue impacts and aggravates Pakistan's security concerns.

### **The Pakistan-India Relationship**

Post-9/11, the Pakistan-India relationship deteriorated further with India trying to use the War on Terrorism to bring Pakistan and Kashmir into the terrorist ambit. While this policy did not succeed totally, what India has managed to do is to frame the Kashmir issue purely in the context of "cross-border" infiltration and Islamic fundamentalism so that the real nature of the Kashmir dispute has been sidetracked. Pakistan's gestures of compromise and accommodation on Indian and international concerns have not met with any reciprocity from the Indian side and India has failed to give any response to the Pakistani suggestion to have international monitors along both sides of the LOC.

India played a game of brinkmanship by mobilising its forces along the Pakistan-India border, but eventually the ploy failed to work so both sides have recently begun to move away from the brink and towards re-establishment of normalcy. However, this time round, Pakistan would like to see restoration of "normalcy" linked to commencement of bilateral dialogue. Unfortunately, at present, the BJP's internal politics has prevented the Indians from having a clear-cut policy towards Pakistan and there is a feeling that not much will happen in the way of dialogue before the Indian elections – but sometimes leaders can break the deadlock as President Musharraf did most recently on the issue of over flights and restoration of air links between the two states. Perhaps most critical

has been the latest statement (in an interview with *Reuters* in early December 2003) on Kashmir by President Musharraf, where he once again reiterated his call for both Pakistan and India to put aside their stated positions on the dispute and arrive at a solution through negotiation. The expected SAARC Summit in January 2004 is expected to provide the necessary breakthrough between Pakistan and India but so far there is no certainty that the bilateral dialogue will resume.

Meanwhile, there is the new diplomatic offensive being undertaken by India to increase people-to-people contact between various groups of Indians and Pakistanis including school children and businessmen. This builds up the pressure on the Pakistani state to seek accommodation with India without the necessary moves for dialogue on Kashmir. The wooing of the business community by India is the most threatening, since economic interests can be a strong motivating factor for restoration of trade ties despite outstanding core issues like Kashmir.

For Pakistan, the US-India relationship also raises some new security concerns not only in terms of the destabilisation of the military balance in the region, but also in terms of the energy security issue. The US and India have an agreement to jointly patrol the Indian Ocean from the Red Sea to the Malacca Straits, thereby controlling the critical oil transport routes. Also, joint US-India military exercises in sensitive areas like Ladakh close to Pakistan and China, sends negative signals in terms of the security concerns of these two neighbours of India.

India's increasing presence in Afghanistan also directly aggravates Pakistan's security concerns – especially in terms of low intensity conflict (LIC) in the volatile provinces of Balochistan and the NWFP. The Indian consulate in Zahedan, close to the Pakistan-Iran border, has already been indulging in covert activities aimed at destabilizing Balochistan and the Pakistan government has had to register a protest with the government of Iran on this count.

Meanwhile, India's acquisition of weapon systems like the Phalcon means that Pakistan will have to reconsider its unilateral

policy of nuclear restraint. The acquisition of missile defence by India means that Pakistan will have to increase its missile production and go in for an expansive second strike capability. All this undermines the existing stability of the strategic deterrence.

All the developments discussed above show a need for Pakistan to not only evolve a long-term comprehensive assessment of its national security, taking into account the internal and external factors, but also to visualize a comprehensive proactive policy on security. While Pakistan's security challenges have become more acute, new opportunities are also arising as the region undergoes major changes. As external and internal dimensions of security become more enmeshed, one with the other, there is a need to improve the internal political landscape and evolve national consensus on critical security issues.

Also, while the short-term situation may present acute security problems, the long-term offers a host of opportunities especially now that the sub-regional Asian divides have dissipated in strategic terms – both, militarily with the introduction of medium range missiles in South and West Asia, and politically, with the intervention of the global war on terrorism and the operationalisation of the US pre-emptive doctrine. In this expanded security milieu, waiting for events to happen and then simply reacting to them will be insufficient to bolster the state's security. Instead, proactive policies need to be formulated which are consonant with the needs of the domestic polity and the trends in the external environment.

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### *End Notes*

- <sup>1</sup> See, for instance, M.Thee, "*Militarism and Militarization in Contemporary International Relations*" in A.Eide & M Thee, editors, *Problems of Contemporary Militarism* (London: Croom Helm, 1980. Pp. 15-35. Also see, P. Wallensteen, J. Galtung & C. Portales, editors, *Global Militarization* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985).

2. A. Hussain, "*The Crisis of State Power in Pakistan*", in P. Wignaraja & A. Hussain, Editors, *The Challenge in South Asia* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1989), Pp. 199-236.

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