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## Another Pakistan Is Needed

### *Can Openings Emerge Post-Osama bin Laden?*

#### INTRODUCTION

While Pakistanis have shown remarkable resilience and capacity to muddle through big and small afflictions, there must be a breaking point if the process continues to move in the wrong direction. While still too early to speak of Pakistan as a failed state, it is a country dangerously sliding down the path towards becoming one. This is bad for Pakistan, of course, but also bad for Afghanistan. The two provinces bordering Afghanistan are already slipping beyond government control. The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) are turning into a war zone. The economic capital, Karachi, is again gripped by turmoil. Climate change and rapid population growth contribute to overstretching the social fabric.

The consequences for Afghanistan are obvious – mending Afghanistan is just not possible while Pakistan continues to fall apart. All the major insurgent movements are based in Pakistan and protected by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Since long, al-Qaeda has moved from Afghanistan to Pakistan while affiliated organisations – also based in Pakistan – seem to have taken the lead for terrorist activities. Pakistan is emerging as the biggest security threat in the region, turning Afghanistan into a sideshow. In other words,

to stabilise Afghanistan, another Pakistan is needed. In the wake of the killing of Osama bin Laden, some soul-searching is now being done – not only within civil society, but possibly also within the army. Crisis may be turned into opportunity. This paper will look at what, in particular, needs to change to seize that opportunity. Six areas of central importance will be outlined: The army needs to be put under democratic control; the fear of India has to be addressed; the Durand Line should be established as a border and the status of the FATA normalized; efforts must be made to solve the Balochistan crisis peacefully; the rising tide of religious extremism and sectarianism needs to be checked and the relationship with the United States should be defused. The paper is based on eight years of continuous Pakistan-watching, on the spot and from outside.

#### CUT THE ARMY DOWN TO SIZE

As the end game in Afghanistan enters a formative phase, the Pakistani army has been badly bruised by a series of events, the most spectacular being the 2 May killing of Osama bin Laden by intruding US Special Forces, only a stone's throw away from one of its most prestigious institutions. This was followed, on 22 May, by a revenge attack on the Mehran

naval aviation base in Karachi, which insurgents put under siege for more than 15 hours. It led to a loss of lives, equipment and, not least, prestige unequalled since the attack on the Army General Headquarters in Rawalpindi on 10 October 2009.

The security service was relatively quick in detaining five persons suspected of having collaborated with the CIA in facilitating the raid resulting in the killing of Osama bin Laden, but little has been done to cast light over the situation leading up to this raid: How could the world's most wanted man lead a quiet suburban life in the highly militarised city of Abbottabad for several years? Who facilitated this; at what level within the Pakistani armed forces, notably the ISI, does complicity lie; and where does it end? Or are we to believe that no such complicity exists? If so, a serious effort to map out the circumstances behind bin Laden's presence in Abbottabad is needed to appease scepticism.

The state of the Pakistani army is central to developments in Afghanistan. Whether directly in power or staying in the wings, the army calls the shots on regional foreign policy, particularly regarding India and Afghanistan. To a large extent, Pakistan's policies towards these two neighbouring countries form two sides of the same coin: Fear of India requires 'strategic depth' in Afghanistan. Resolute intervention against insurgent movements based in FATA requires détente with India, freeing up troops from the eastern border region. Pakistani support to militants in Kashmir is matched by Indian support to nationalists in Balochistan – or so we are led to believe. Pakistan's ultimate security nightmare is to be squeezed between two hostile neighbours with nowhere to go. While per se, these arguments may be valid, this type of security-based thinking leaves little flexibility for other considerations, such as the economic advantages which could follow from regional cooperation and Pakistan's strategic position within that region. And there is also a rich, cultural heritage waiting to be carried forward into today's global arena. A united South Asia, including a stable Afghanistan, could be a tremendous actor in global politics – one that could match a China on the rise.

Army bashing has been rampant during the last couple of months, both outside and inside Pakistan. As shall be seen below, this is relevant in an analysis of the different options in the Afghan end game. The Abbottabad raid was deeply embarrassing in the light of Pakistan's repeated denials that it might be harbouring Osama bin Laden, but it was also a sign of inefficiency, not normally associated with the Pakistani security forces. Why, Pakistanis have been asking frequently, do we allocate the lion's share of the national budget, to the detriment of social sectors such as education and health, to institutions sleeping through a spectacular foreign intervention?

Among several lessons to be learned from this debacle, one message comes out starkly: The security services of Pakistan, having become a state within the state, need to be cleaned up, reined in and put under democratic control. The security state, or 'deep state' as it is sometimes referred to, needs to be transformed into a functional democracy. If that happens, the consequences will be beneficial, not least for the imminent phase of international withdrawal from Afghanistan. Insurgent movements would cease to be 'assets', to be delivered or not delivered to the negotiating table. They could be looked at in their own right, rather than as pawns in a security scheme. Their 'usefulness' could be objectively evaluated and could be found wanting. The fact that Pakistan seems to be slowly falling apart could finally enter centre stage and give rise to some urgent, determined and united action.

In other words, a transformation of the Pakistani army into a democratically controlled institution would be a game changer. But will it happen? And how quickly could it happen? Time is running out and the stakes are high. The task of cleansing the Pakistani army can only be carried out by the army itself – no other institution is strong enough to do it. The lack of civil-military dialogue throughout most of Pakistan's history has resulted in estrangement between these two crucial sectors. The rift has been enhanced by a system of perks and privileges within the army, alienating it from the lot of the underprivileged common man. Especially

since the rule of Zia ul-Haq in the 1980s, when Islamisation was being carried out at the same time as Western money flowed freely to the Afghan mujahedin, an above-the-law attitude has been cultivated within the armed forces. An ex-army officer describes it as follows: 'Almost all officers are trained to be suspicious of their civilian counterparts and internalise a feeling of systemic superiority over what they consider the corrupt and inefficient civilian-run systems. Naturally, this attitude also plays a role in their view of the popularly elected governments and is further accentuated in case of senior officers who are only accountable to their superiors in uniform.'<sup>1</sup>

Thus, even if little is known to outsiders of the internal dynamics within the army, the balance of forces may be such that a cleansing cannot be done from inside. In a negative scenario, an unreformed army continues to govern Pakistan's relations with India and Afghanistan according to a narrow, security-related vision. Via its spoiler capacity, it stages a comeback performance of likewise unreformed Taliban in Kabul, further strengthening religious extremism and sectarianism in both countries. Such a development cannot be tolerated by India, Iran and Russia. A new cycle of regional turmoil follows, this time with the West in the role of bystander. Global jihad profits from the momentum and the clash between civilisations, which we thought of as a distant spectre, gradually becomes a reality.

## ALLAY THE FEAR OF INDIA, MOVE ON THE KASHMIR ISSUE

The current army chief, Asfaq Pervez Kayani, has famously stated that he is 'India-centric' but in this he is hardly alone, only aligning himself with a long army tradition. Fear of India and the impossible competition with a much bigger neighbour has been the Pakistani security forces' guiding-star since the country was created in 1947. Over the years, it has also become the *raison d'être* of the evolving security state, broadening and deepening its

<sup>1</sup> Masood Raja, 'Reflections by an Ex-Army Officer,' *Viewpoint* 27 May 2011, online issue no. 52.

grip over ever-larger segments of the nation's political and economic life. If India ceased to be a threat, the army would risk its status as the most privileged sector of Pakistani society. This applies in an even higher degree to some of the militant movements focusing on the Kashmir issue – movements which are generally thought to be working in collusion with the ISI, or elements within the ISI. While the Indian threat may – or may not – still be there, the threat perception per se may have taken on a life of its own.

The composite dialogue that Pakistan and India started in 2004 did not get far, stalling after the devastating attacks in Mumbai in November 2008. The wheels are now beginning to cautiously move again. A new spirit of pragmatism and constructive engagement was reported from the foreign secretaries' meeting in late June, which uncharacteristically ended with a joint statement and a joint press conference, where the Pakistani foreign secretary called for an end to 'the ideology of military conflict'.<sup>2</sup> It was followed by a foreign ministers meeting on 27 July, which seemed to enhance the positive atmospherics. Again, a joint statement was published, pointing to the need for *détente*: 'The Ministers underlined the need for sustained effort by both countries to build a relationship of trust and mutually beneficial cooperation in conformity with the determination of the people of both countries to see an end to terrorism and violence and to realise their aspirations for peace and development.'<sup>3</sup> Reports that the situation in Kashmir has been more peaceful during the first half of this year than at any time in the last 20 years constitute another positive sign, amounting to 'an almost 50% drop in most parameters used to measure

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Pioneer*, June 25, 2011. <http://www.daily-pioneer.com/348298/India-asks-Pak-for-26/11-trial-closure-agrees-on-cross-Kashmir-CBMs.html>.

<sup>3</sup> 'Joint Statement Following Meeting between the Minister of External Affairs of India and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan,' published on the website of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs on 27 July 2011, paragraph 6. <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=190017878>.

militancy'.<sup>4</sup> However, in the first week of August, stone pelting demonstrators were again out on the streets of the Kashmir valley, indicating the fragility of the situation.<sup>5</sup>

Historically, the perspective of substantial progress in Indo-Pakistani relations – be it on relatively minor issues like Sir Creek or Siachen – has triggered destructive events. And, sure enough, it happened again – and in the same place as in 2008. On 13 July, three bomb blasts in congested areas of Mumbai took more than 20 lives, injuring well over 100. Obviously, the militant movements have reserved for themselves the role of the ultimate negotiator, turning on the terrorism tap when it suits them. But this time it did not work. Possibly, the importance of détente between India and Pakistan is gaining precedence not only within the respective establishments, but in Indian public opinion as well. As India has the upper hand in the region, letting go of grievances requires some magnanimity on its part. But the reward is valuable: the possibility of an acceptable end state in Afghanistan, with limited Taliban influence. If this spirit grows strong, maybe even the intractable Kashmir crisis could finally be approached, more than 60 years after it was set off.

## ADDRESS THE DURAND LINE ISSUE

The Line of Control dividing Kashmir is a provisional arrangement, mirrored in Pakistan's west. Neither Afghanistan, nor the affected Pashtun population have ever fully recognised the Durand Line as a national border. Some maintain that the Durand Line itself, drawn up in 1893 for a duration of 100 years, is now inconsequential. Having a large part of its national borders in a nebulous state of validity and recognition could be unsettling for any nation, even one much more stable than Pakistan. If the security state is to be dismantled, this source of insecurity will have

<sup>4</sup> *Times of India*, 25 June 2011. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Kashmir-most-peaceful-this-year-in-last-20-years/articleshow/8984080.cm>.

<sup>5</sup> 'J&K Youth Pick Up Stones again Ending Fragile Calm,' *Mail Today*, 7 August 2011.

to be addressed. Concessions from the Afghan side would be required, as well as a change of mindset among some Pashtun nationalist movements. As a distant dream, in a future cooperative South Asia, once the border is established and recognised, it could again lose its importance. In a peaceful context, Pashtunistan could re-emerge as one cross-border region among others.

A number of clashes have recently taken place across the Durand Line. According to the Pakistani army, these are a consequence of US forces' abandonment of the border area without installing an Afghan counterpart to take over protection, leaving the terrain open for insurgents to attack Pakistan from the west. The Afghans accuse Pakistani forces of repeatedly firing rockets and mortar shells into several Afghan villages in eastern Nangarhar and Kunar provinces, killing civilians and forcing people to flee. On 29 June, the commander of the Afghan border police of the eastern zone resigned in reaction to these attacks, in order to 'avoid disgrace'.<sup>6</sup> As regards Pakistan's motive, he could think of three, understood as equally illegitimate: 'Pakistan wants to formalise the Durand Line, derail the peace and reconciliation process, and reduce the pressure on Pakistan resulting from the death of Osama bin Laden.'<sup>7</sup>

On the other side, Pakistani troops set up more border posts to prevent further attacks by militants. Reportedly, the army is seriously considering fencing and mining some important parts of the Pakistani-Afghan border, in the wake of increasing incursions by militants from the Afghan side into Bajaur, Upper Dir and Mohmand tribal regions. As on earlier occasions when the fencing issue has come up, these plans are rejected by Afghan spokesmen referring to the need for the Pashtun civilian population to move freely across the border. At the same time, pressure on Pakistan to stop militant groups from entering into Afghanistan is as strong as ever and Pakistani decision-makers have some

<sup>6</sup> Report by Abdul Mueed Hashimi published by *Pajhwok Afghan News* on 30 June 2011.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

reason to feel 'damned if you do, damned if you don't'.

The semi-autonomous status of the FATA region is at the heart of this problem. The existence of Taliban-affiliated *madrassas* and training facilities for various militant groups is a legacy of the last eruption of the Cold War, when the opaque and unregulated situation in the FATA agencies served Western, as well as Pakistani interests well. Now it has turned into a heavy burden for an overstretched Pakistani army to deal with. Therefore, the solution of the Durand Line issue should be coupled with the integration of FATA into Pakistan proper and the extension of full democratic rights to the FATA population. On this score, the PPP<sup>8</sup>-led government in Islamabad has taken some positive steps: On 12 August, President Zardari signed two executive orders – one to allow political parties to freely campaign in the FATA and the other to amend the outdated Frontier Crimes Regulation which the British Raj imposed in 1901. These reforms are first steps in a process which is likely to take time. Dealing with the status of FATA means shattering the dream of Pashtunistan, which makes it high-risk business, not only in Afghanistan but also in some quarters on the Pakistani side of the Durand Line.

## START A DIALOGUE WITH BALOCH NATIONALISTS

Like FATA and parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, portions of Balochistan, the largest province of Pakistan, have slid beyond the control of the Islamabad government. As in Kashmir, controversy dates back to the creation of Pakistan – the main issue here being the control over Balochistan's natural resources. The latest insurgency started in 2002 and intensified with the killing of Nawab Akbar Bugti in August 2006. Since then, the nationalist opposition groups have become more violent and more separatist, and now call for an independent Balochistan. Such a project could affect Iran with its population of around five million Baloch, and Afghanistan with its minor Baloch population as well.

<sup>8</sup> Pakistan Peoples Party, the political party founded by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1967.

Moreover, it links with other regional issues: Islamabad suspects that New Delhi is actively supporting Baloch insurgents and intent on destabilising Pakistan from its footholds on the western side of the border, in Afghanistan. Teheran suspects that Islamabad is actively supporting the Sunni insurgent group, *Jundallah*, supposedly based in Balochistan and attacking Iranian installations from there, thereby also doing the bidding of Iran's enemies, particularly the United States.

Reports from Balochistan of military repression and crimes against human rights are rampant. Young nationalist activists go missing and later turn up dead, bearing the marks of torture. Families are unable to register the disappearances as they are beyond the realm of the regular police authority. Civilian non-Balochs living in the province have also been targeted by nationalist groups. Minority groups have migrated. In the fight against the Pakistani state, even benign symbols of the government have not been spared: Schools have been attacked and teachers killed. Moreover, sectarian groups are active; the Taliban base their leadership in the province's capital, where Mullah Omar supposedly leads the *Quetta shura*; supplies for the international troops in Afghanistan pass through Balochistan (and are often attacked there), as do the drug smuggling routes. It is, to say the least, a problem-ridden province and the least-developed part of Pakistan.

To redress this situation is a major challenge; it should start with a demilitarisation of the conflict and a serious dialogue with the nationalist opposition over division of control and resources. Again, the PPP-led government has taken an initiative, through the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, to devolve powers – but it lacks the strength to carry out reforms in such a manner that makes a difference on the ground. However, even if too little too late, the process could profit from a reduced army influence and a different kind of energy and focus. Because Balochistan is kept out of the limelight of independent media, there is a tendency in the public debate to overlook the seriousness of the crisis there. This could prove a fatal mistake.

## REVERSE SECTARIANISM AND RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

When Pakistani spokesmen count their number of dead in the 'war against terror', a recurrent number given is around 35,000. However the figure is calculated, it is plausible. While violent attacks and terrorism in general have reportedly dropped during 2010,<sup>9</sup> Pakistan holds its ground as the world's most terror-affected country. In particular, sectarian violence has increased. Muslims attack non-Muslim minorities; Sunnis attack Shias and vice versa; Sunni extremists attack other Sunni extremists of a slightly different brand. In other words, as often happens in authoritarian and extremist settings, infighting within the religious revolutionary movement is becoming as violent as the fight against the common enemy, in the shape of secular or Westernised ideas.

The backdrop to this development is that continuously failing political and economic institutions leave behind a vacuum, from which religious extremism profits to expand. This phenomenon manifests itself not only in a growing number of *madrassas*, lapping up the spoils from a wrecked public education system – the change pervades the whole society, crowding out a dialogue based on non-extremist or secular values. To mention just one example, media coverage of the murder of the Governor of Punjab, Salman Taseer,<sup>10</sup> tended to analyse the deed in religious terms, rather than as a criminal act of the highest order.

The Pakistani army falls into this enhanced narrative. It retains its prestige not only from its role as the protector of national security,

<sup>9</sup> See *Pakistan Security Report 2010*, published by Pak Institute for Peace Studies, PIPS. The decrease is attributed mainly to the military campaign in the tribal areas, increased surveillance by law-and-order agencies and the killing of key terrorists in US drone attacks in FATA.

<sup>10</sup> Taseer was murdered on 4 January 2011 in the heart of Islamabad by one of his own bodyguards, claiming to carry out God's will since Taseer had criticised the law against blasphemy. The act was widely praised, not only by the religious lunatic fringe.

but also – Pakistan being a state based on religion – from a position as the guardian of the true faith. When the army develops a bomb, it is not just a bomb but an 'Islamic bomb', created for the good of the whole Muslim *ummah*. For the outside world, the spectre of this bomb falling into the hands of religious extremists is a nightmare. Much speculation has been devoted to assessing the strength of the religious extremists inside the army. Attacks with obvious inside connections, such as the Mehran incident or the attempts to murder President Musharraf in 2003, serve to increase anxiety.

As a sign that the army may now be taking this fear more seriously, a brigadier and four majors were recently arrested for having links to Hizb ut-Tahrir, a banned extremist movement, and a board of enquiry was established.<sup>11</sup> If this is the beginning of a new trend, it could represent a reversal of the fundamentalist onslaught. The army might decide to purge itself of extremist elements and restrict itself to its core duty, to deliver security. Civil society would then also have to reassert itself, and refuse to be hounded underground or into exile. The media, now largely also controlled by the army, could re-appropriate their role as a watch-dog of military as well as civilian excesses and become a sobering force in society. On this basis, a non-violent, national dialogue on the nature of the Islamic Republic could be initiated. After the Abbottabad raid, demonstrations in this spirit have occurred in many Pakistani cities. In the best of cases, the US raid against al-Qaeda may have served as an eye-opener, even a turning point. If the slide towards religious extremism is reversed in Pakistan, this could have a regional effect and widen the scope for non-extremist solutions in Afghanistan as well.

<sup>11</sup> Article by Qaiser Butt in the *Express Tribune* on 27 June 2011. <http://tribune.com.pk/story/197204/alleged-links-to-hizbut-tahrir-army-brass-undecided-on-action-against-servicemen>.

## LOOK AT THE US AS ANOTHER COUNTRY (NOT AS THE DEVIL HIMSELF)

The extremist movements are riding the tide of visceral anti-Americanism characterising almost all segments of Pakistani society. In Pakistan, the idea that 9/11 was the result of an internal, Jewish plot is not reserved for the conspiratorial fringe; it verges on the commonplace. Almost all ills befalling the Pakistani population – and lately they have been many – will be twisted into US-inspired schemes. First and foremost among these perceived plots is the scheme to dispossess Pakistan of its nuclear weapons, emasculate its army and throw it to the Indian wolves. Therefore, many Pakistanis believe, it is actually the Americans who are behind the recurrent suicide bombings: The turmoil that these attacks create facilitates further evil schemes on their part. Last winter's Raymond Davis affair, with all its incredible twists and turns, fell unto soil already ripe with rumours of secret American bases, undercover agents and contractors and, of course, served to enhance these perceptions.<sup>12</sup>

Against this background, the US-Pakistani alliance in the fight against terror remains an uneasy one for the Pakistani army, which is at the same time heavily dependent on American aid. As US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, in a moment of frankness, recently told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Pakistan views American dealings with India and Pakistan respectively as a 'zero-sum game', always asking: 'Are you our friend or are you their friend?'<sup>13</sup> The logical result of

<sup>12</sup> Raymond Davis was arrested after he shot and killed two Pakistanis in Lahore on 27 January 2011. He turned out to be linked to the CIA and the United States claimed he had diplomatic immunity and should be handed over to the American embassy. The case caused a public uproar in Pakistan and was finally solved in accordance with Sharia law, with the payment of a hefty compensation to the bereaved families.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.hindu.com/2011/06/25/stories/2011062555051700.htm>.

ambivalence is duplicity – spectacularly surfacing with the killing in Abbottabad.

The relationship between the United States and the Pakistani army may now have reached its lowest point in many years, from which one would like to think it can only get better. The Abbottabad raid has not contributed to decrease anti-Americanism – according to an opinion poll carried out after the raid, only 12 per cent of the Pakistani public had a positive view of the United States and a mere 8 per cent had confidence in President Obama<sup>14</sup> – nor has the incident polished the image of Pakistan in the United States. But at least it has served to put some of the cards on the table. Along with the freezing of aid and denial of visas, frank discussions are obviously also taking place.<sup>15</sup> The current, difficult passage in US-Pakistani relations might turn out to be sobering in the sense that Washington will put more energy into its relations with civilian Pakistan, and stop treating the generals as the actual leaders. Issues such as the humanitarian consequences of the ever-increasing drone attacks will then also have been taken seriously.

## CONCLUSIONS

A tangible possibility exists that, for the first time in Pakistan's history, a democratically elected government will run its full term and be followed by another elected government – contributing to a process that will put the country more firmly on the road towards a truly functional democracy. Political forces representing real people, not primarily political dynasties, may then enter the arena. Ultimately, the authoritarian patriarchy characterising Pakistani society – the older gentlemen, more often than not in uniform – may crack open to allow others into the

<sup>14</sup> *Express Tribune*, 25 June 2011. <http://tribune.com.pk/story/194581/domestic-support-for-pak-army-drops-us-poll/>.

<sup>15</sup> For instance, an article by Munizae Jahangir in *Express Tribune* on 27 June 2011 describes complaints raised by Pakistan over US independent contacts with Taliban leaders. <http://tribune.com.pk/story/197215/pakistan-upset-at-being-left-out-of-us-taliban-talks/>.

decision-making processes. That would do the country much good and would have salutary side effects for developments in its western neighbour, as well as for the whole region.

However, such a transformation will not happen overnight – if at all. A number of prerequisites exist: increased crisis consciousness, nationally as well as internationally; true civil-military dialogue; maybe a national conference to debate in earnest how the current negative spiral can be reversed. The turmoil characterising large parts of Pakistan plays into the hands of a military sector anxious to maintain its privileged position. For the end game in Afghanistan, a Pakistan mired in traditional security thinking will be detrimental in terms

of the broad-based, inclusive solutions needed. Even if civilian parts of the Pakistani establishment work in favour of a holistic approach to regional problems, the mere urgency of the Afghan situation works in the opposite direction.

Does the international community have the patience and the political will for the long haul implicit in a settlement that could take the whole region forward? Not likely, according to past experience. Still, the old truth that short-term gain produces long-term pain is highly applicable to this conflict-ridden corner of the world. A hasty settlement of the Afghan crisis could well contain the seeds of another, even more broad-based round of conflict in the not-too-distant future.

## **ABOUT THE AFGHANISTAN ANALYSTS NETWORK (AAN)**

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