



# DIIS REPORT

## **PAKISTAN'S FUTURE POLICY TOWARDS AFGHANISTAN**

A LOOK AT STRATEGIC DEPTH,  
MILITANT MOVEMENTS AND THE ROLE  
OF INDIA AND THE US

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## Acronyms

AJK	Azad Jammu and Kashmir
ANP	Awani National Party
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FI	Fidayeen Islam
GHQ	General Headquarters
GoP	Government of Pakistan
HuJI	Harakat ul Jihad al Islami
HuM	Harakat ul Mujahideen
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IJK	Indian-controlled Jammu and Kashmir
IPI Pipeline	Iran–Pakistan–India gas pipeline
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
ISM	Ittehad e Shura Mujahideen
JeM	Jaish e Mohammad
JI	Jamaat e Islami
JKLF	Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front
JuA	Jamiat ul Ansar
JUI	Jamaat e Ulema Islami
J&K	Jammu and Kashmir
KPP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province
LeJ	Lashkar e Jhangvi
LeT	Lashkar e Taiba
LoC	Line of Control
MMA	Muttahida Majlis e Amal
NCTA	National Counter Terrorism Authority
NWA	North Waziristan Agency
NWFP	North West Frontier Province
Pak-Army	Pakistan Army
PML	Pakistan Muslim League
PPP	Pakistan Peoples Party
PT	Punjabi Taliban
RAW	Research and Analysis Wing
RAM	Riyast e Amniyat e Milli

SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SFs	Security Forces
SSP	Sipah e Sahaba Pakistan
SWA	South Waziristan Agency
TAPI	Trans-Afghanistan Pipeline
TNSM	Tehrik e Nifaz e Shariat e Mohammadi
TTP	Tehrik e Taliban Pakistan
TTS	Tehrik e Taliban Swat
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

## **Abstract**

What factors are likely to govern the course of Pakistan's future policy vis-à-vis Afghanistan? This question has increasing relevance for regional security, especially in the light of the imminent endgame in Afghanistan and of the ongoing dialogue with the Taliban.

This report probes the implications of the volatile US–Pakistan relationship and of Indo–Pak rivalry in the Af–Pak war theatre, in particular for Pakistan's reliance on militant extremist groups to secure and further its strategic interests. Developments pertaining to the role and engagement of the United States in the region and Indian ties to Afghanistan and the US affect Pakistan's perceived power status in the Indian subcontinent. The extent to which Pakistani interests are met in the process and outcome of brokering a deal with the Taliban is an additional determinant of whether Pakistan will continue with, or veer from, the status quo.

## **I. Introduction**

Since the birth of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in 1947 it has grappled with its *raison d'être* and as a result of this identity crisis unrest and instability have plagued the country as well as the region. The British delineation of the Durand Line divided the Pashtun population on both sides of the Af–Pak border. Meanwhile the partition of India divided the Punjab and Bengal, as well as the princely state of Kashmir, which to this day remains a disputed territory.

Relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan pivot on the topic of Pashtun populations and the Taliban. The natural inclination of Pakistani foreign and regional policy-making has always been and remains to utilise these issues to assert strategic depth in Afghanistan. With the backing of the US, the Pakistani intelligence service (ISI) helped vivify the Taliban in the 1980s so as to battle the Soviet army. This allowed Islamabad to resist pressure from the Soviet Union, avoid a pro-New Delhi government in Kabul as well as exert influence over the Afghan Pashtun contingent. Pakistan has been particularly hesitant to fight the Ghilzai clan of the Taliban for they are most ardently opposed to the Durrani Pashtun, Hamid Karzai.

Historically, relations between India and Afghanistan have been sound, interrupted mainly by the Taliban takeover. New Delhi has vested interests in ensuring a healthy relationship with Afghanistan, not least due to its large trade and foreign policy interests in Afghanistan as a transit country and partner to regional strategy. As the cardinal regional donor to Afghanistan – and the fifth largest worldwide – India is a principal stakeholder. The aid contributes largely towards reconstruction efforts, including key infrastructure as well as the development of democratic institutions.

Added to this mix is the perceived betrayal felt by Pakistan towards its long-term ally, the United States of America; the latter is seen as lending friendship and support to Pakistan only intermittently so as to realise its political goals in the region. In this context Barack Obama's announcement of an imminent exit of US/NATO troops from Afghanistan as early as summer 2011 conjured up unhappy memories of abandonment for Pakistanis. Despite recent announcements that NATO will retain an enduring presence in Afghanistan beyond the 2014 handover of security control to Afghans, and despite diplomatic promises of continued cooperation by the US even after ISAF withdraws, Islamabad and the Pakistan Army remain sceptical.

While the South Asia security complex continues to expand with Beijing and New Delhi competing for greater power, the enmity between India and Pakistan permeates all regional issues as a most potent problem. The major bone of contention is the Kashmir conflict. At its height, this tension has erupted into occasional wars and crises between these nuclear-armed and belligerent powers; at lesser extremes, there is an ongoing and simmering struggle of each nation to undercut the other throughout the region.

The presence of ISAF and the watchful eye of the international community buffers against any alarming levels of tension between India and Pakistan. Although officially a prominent ally of the US-led war on terror, Pakistan is widely accused of behaving as a 'marginal satisfier' – it allegedly continues its tacit support of the Afghan Taliban as well as certain factions of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, such as its Muqami Tehrik-e-Taliban outfit which has for the most part considered the Afghan jihad to be the legitimate war. Despite overt military manoeuvres and arrests, no serious sign of a turnaround in Pakistani strategy has been observed. The forthcoming ISAF departure thus poses a threatening scenario for Islamabad and raises a strategic dilemma. The question is: which direction will Pakistan take in view of this changing equilibrium?

One of the options available to Pakistan is to continue its present course of action. Pakistan has little or no faith that the Americans will help to keep India 'at bay' once they have left the Af-Pak stage. Postulations have been made from various quarters within the US that India must, indeed, be the power that keeps peace in the subcontinent. This resonates with India's own aspirations to be the regional superpower, although it appears more interested in realising this goal through the use of soft power, including economic incentives, rather than pursuing militaristic ambitions. At any rate, these developments have done little in the way of allaying Pakistani fears or distrust.

Pakistan has been led to respond to this supposed Indian encirclement by wielding its strategic assets – chiefly, extremist elements engaged in Afghanistan and Kashmir/India. Through its silent backing of the Taliban it hopes for a pro-Islamabad regime to take shape in Kabul. Similarly, it protects areas where potential Kashmir/India-oriented jihadists are trained whilst having officially banned such groups. Pakistan walks a tightrope in managing the balancing act of fighting the Pakistani Taliban while also safeguarding its relations to the Afghan Taliban and Kashmir/India-focused groups. Yet despite such favouritism, the Taliban has not

reciprocated by showing willingness to settle the border problem and recognise the Durand Line.

A regional solution to the security dilemma in the Af–Pak theatre could benefit from a greater utilisation of regional organisations such as the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) forum; member states of SCO include China and Russia. At present Pakistan and India retain observer state status while Afghanistan is a guest attendant. The SCO could be approached to provide security of its border with India and Kashmir which the US has repeatedly failed to provide. Confident that SCO can provide effective security on that front and that Chinese and Russian influence may reduce Pakistan’s fear of encirclement, Pakistan may have a greater incentive to oversee its western frontier and be in a position to better tackle the Pakistani and Afghan Taliban. However, at present there is scant indication that this is a tangible option. It is unknown whether the SCO can and will play the part required in this regard, nor whether India and Pakistan as secondary observers would accept a backseat role.

A major nuisance to Islamabad’s foreign policy, thus, is the inescapable dilemma stemming from the need to reconcile bilateral and regional objectives with the need to preserve Pakistan’s global standing and strategic value to the United States. So, what is the current situation and what future course is Pakistan likely to take? What factors impact this course?

The present report aims to analyse Pakistan–Afghanistan relations and the direction Pakistan’s future policy towards Afghanistan is likely to take in light of recent developments. It therefore looks at the following key factors that are chiefly relevant for such an analysis – namely: Afghanistan–Pakistan relations and the significance of ‘strategic depth’; the shift of militant movement from Pakistan’s south and east to the country’s western border; Afghanistan–India relations and India–US cooperation and their implications for Pakistani policy.

Firstly, Pakistan–Afghanistan relations and Pakistan’s historic tool of ‘strategic depth’ and its relevance today set the backdrop to Pakistani interests vis-à-vis Afghanistan. Issues particular to Pakistan that govern its approach to Afghanistan include the Pashtun Question, the Durand Line, and access to the energy and mineral-rich Central Asia are also discussed in this section.

The report then reflects on the security situation and how the ‘militancy movement’ mimics regional politics. In this regard the jihadist landscape of the region is drawn

by keeping a focus on the Talibanization of sectarian and previously Kashmir-focused groups. This terrorist trend is telling of the broader objectives of the Pakistani regime towards Afghanistan.

The role of India in the Af–Pak theatre is also of relevance to the study of Pakistani policy in Afghanistan. For Pakistan most, if not all, regional policy amounts to a zero-sum game with India. Pakistan's Afghan policy should be seen in the context of the South Asian security complex where Afghanistan is one component of Pakistan's India policy. The importance and viability of resolving the Kashmir conflict and the implications it may bear for reversing Pakistan's revisionist approach to Afghanistan is discussed. It can be argued that the Indo–Pak rivalry has seen a new proxy war theatre in Afghanistan where both countries vie for political influence and a friendly government in Kabul. India allegedly supports Baloch and Wazir insurgencies inside Pakistan and is linked to the Karzai government and Afghan warlords, suggesting to Pakistan that Panjshiri rather than Pashtun dominance prevails in Afghanistan, which is inherently unfavourable to Islamabad. Therefore Pakistan's reliance on US/ international support to beef up its military infrastructure, partly to pose a threat to India, partly to mitigate Indian influence in the region, is expected to continue. The possibility of alternative transport routes to Central Asia involving Indian and Iranian cooperation that will reduce Pakistan's centrality in the Afghan conflict as well as affect its regional status is another worry for Pakistan. Given Indo–Pak rivalry, India's historic ties to Afghanistan and its ongoing presence in the country are of significant concern to Islamabad.

Related to this is the threat emanating from India's seemingly developing relationship with the United States, in particular regarding military and defence cooperation. Pakistan's motivations in Afghanistan and general foreign policy also rest on any developments related to US policies in South Asia. Changing dynamics of Pakistan–US relations, especially vis-à-vis growing India–US ties, are also crucial in guiding Pakistan's strategic steps towards Afghanistan and the region as a whole.

It is therefore postulated that Pakistan's future policy with respect to Afghanistan will depend on the trend and scale of Indian cooperation with Afghanistan and the US. These factors prey on Pakistan's basic insecurities, namely: a) Indian encirclement (increased Indian presence and influence in Afghanistan) and b) the forging of a strategic US–India relationship (in particular, military/defence cooperation). Both threaten to deepen the asymmetry in political influence and military capability and relegate Pakistan's power status to a lower level on South Asia's strategic stage.

Chapter 2 inspects Pakistan–Afghanistan relations through a historical prism with a focus on Pakistan’s involvement in Afghanistan and analyses the current bilateral standing between them. Chapter 3 delves further into the role of Pakistan in Afghan affairs by mapping both the function of the Inter-Services Intelligence and the concept of ‘strategic depth’ as a key foreign policy instrument in Afghanistan.

The flow of proxy war from Kashmir to Afghanistan is examined in chapter 4. Afghanistan is proposed to be a new stage for the unresolved rivalry between Pakistan and India. Chapter 6 peruses the Indian portfolio with respect to its increased activities in Afghanistan and its growing relations to the United States as these factors impact the steering of Pakistani policy in Afghanistan, bearing ramifications for the regional political and security landscape.

The role of the US, too, affects the political and security landscape of the subcontinent. In chapter 7 the delicate intricacies, past and present, of the Pakistan–United States partnership are detailed. Whilst officially promoting an allied front, the bond between the two nations is split or scarred in certain areas. Finally, chapter 8 concludes by exploring the possible scenario(s) Pakistan is likely to pursue in light of recent and current political events unfolding in the region and whether any developments can be expected that will alter the present-day dynamic.

## 2. Pakistan–Afghanistan relations

Relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have for the large part been scarred by turbulence and suspicion. In recent years this has taken the form of levelling accusations at each other of state-sponsored terrorism.

The quandary can be broken down to the issue of the Durand Line and the idea of ‘Pashtunistan’. The history of the Line dates back to the 1879 Treaty of Gandumak signed between Great Britain and Afghanistan during the Second Anglo-Afghan War. However, it wasn’t until 1893 after a virtual stalemate that the Afghans came, under duress, to agree to the demarcation of a 2,640 km border between Afghanistan and what was then British India. From the outset the Line artificially divided the Pashtun people. The issue became more sensitive after the partition of British India in 1947. Solicitous about carving its own identity in the new regional framework, Afghanistan called for the right of self-determination for Pashtuns – this came to be known in Kabul as the ‘Pashtunistan’ policy. Unsurprisingly, this caused cleavage between the two neighbours.

Being ethnic, political, nationalistic and geopolitical in its nature, the Pashtun problem is multifaceted and duly exploited by both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Islamabad has typically treated the Pashtun mujahideen, during and after the anti-Soviet jihad, with favouritism while Afghanistan signals a claim over the Pakistani Pashtun population and how it can be used as a ‘nuisance capability’ against Pakistan. Claiming parts of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (KPP), Afghanistan was the only country to challenge Pakistan’s admission as a member of the United Nations in 1947. Kabul rejects the Durand Line, arguing that the July 1947 referendum held by the British never satisfied the requirement for self-determination and furthermore, since Pakistan was a ‘new state’, pre-existing treaty rights including borders did not apply.<sup>1</sup>

Pakistan, for its part, views the Durand Line as a legitimate international border and has deliberately supported Pashtuns on either side of it, cautiously managing Pashtun sentiment. During the Soviet invasion, for example, the then President of Pakistan, Zia-ul Haq, offered Abdul Wali Khan, a historic leader of Pakistani Pashtuns, the post of Prime Minister. Pakistan has long been cognisant of a lingering Pashtun ir-

<sup>1</sup> Fazal-ur Rahim Marwat, “The Durand Line Issue”, *Frontier Post*, 17 October 2003.

redentist struggle to a separate Pakhtunkhwa state, and has made deliberate efforts to contain it. In a recent gesture to seduce Pakistani Pashtuns, Pakistan renamed its Pashtun-dominated North West Frontier Province 'Khyber Pakhtunkhwa' when the ruling provincial party the Awami National Party (ANP), which is a secular Pashtun nationalist group, lobbied to name the province 'Pakhtunkhwa', reflecting the ethnicity of up to 75% of its population. NWFP had remained till then the only province of Pakistan not to be named for its ethnic majority as successive governments refused proposals to rename it.

The term 'Pashtunistan' was coined by Afghanistan. It came to denote an independent Pashtun country that brings together Pashtun dominated areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan or, according to some, the whole of Afghanistan along with Pashtun areas in Pakistan. The Durand Line straddling Afghanistan and Pakistan divided Pashtun kith and kin and has, since its inception, been regarded with resentment. The driving force behind the concept of 'Pashtunistan' is to re-seam that split.

Afghan Prime Minister, Sardar Muhammad Daud Khan forcefully campaigned for Pashtunistan during the period of his reign from 1953–1963. By 1961 he was funnelling support to militias in Pakistan and encouraging incursions by Afghan troops into Pakistan's Bajaur tribal agency. Pakistan parried these intrusions by bolstering the role of religious Afghan leaders like Gulbaddin Hekmatar and Ahmed Shah Massoud. Pakistan has since shown little flexibility on the topic and is unlikely to do so in the future. The GoP would be hard-pressed to cede the 20% of its territory making up the Pashtun belt – especially in light of the nascent and ongoing nationalist insurgency in Balochistan. It is also questionable whether Islamabad would be willing to forgo the strategic advantage afforded to it by its Pashtun population, or even that the Pakistani Pashtuns would agree to a merger with a greater Afghan entity.

During the era of the Afghan jihad against the Soviets, a sprawling madrassa or religious seminary network was put in place to cater for the needs of the refugees. Heavily funded by Saudi Arabia, many of these madrassas promulgated a Wahhabist interpretation of Islam. Madrassa students participated in the series of jihads or conflicts to ravage Afghanistan. Pakistani patronage and Afghanistan's stormy internal affairs gave extra impetus to the political rise of the Afghan Taliban – a phenomenon that would eventually spill over into Pakistan. Allegedly, the Taliban had already 'infiltrated' and inspired a similar force in Pakistan's FATA region as early as 1998–99.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Asad Munir, "How FATA Was Won by the Taliban", Express Tribune, 21 June 2010.

Pakistan is weary of a non-Pashtun government in Kabul, fearing it to be pro-India and resentful of Pakistan. It has therefore been a top priority of Pakistan to ensure a friendly Afghan regime, and to this end it struggled to save the Taliban up until the US intervention in October 2001, and even afterwards insisted that the new Kabul government include 'moderate' Taliban. Since 9/11 Pakistan has supported certain Pashtun political figures and endorsed Pashtun claims of being sidelined from the political sphere as well as the economic reconstruction process.<sup>3</sup> Pockets within the Pakistani establishment are alleged to have resumed their backing of the Afghan Taliban.

However, despite Islamabad's steadfast backing of the Taliban and Pashtun favouritism, the group did not manage to garner support beyond its ethnic constituency nor did it acquiesce to accepting the Durand Line. The Tripartite Commission – including Pakistan, Afghanistan and US/NATO – in charge of monitoring security and coordinating information and intelligence sharing along the Pak–Afghan border has been tasked with pushing for the international recognition of the Line despite Afghanistan's reservations in this regard. However it is unclear how far this has come.

A by-product of the Soviet invasion and the civil war to follow was the outpouring of at least three million Afghan refugees into Pakistan between 1979 and 1989. After the US-led toppling of the Taliban in 2001 the figure reached five million. Of the Afghan refugees, 85% are ethnic Pashtuns while the rest include Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras. Although a large number of Afghans have since repatriated, as of March 2009 1.7 million registered Afghans still remained in Pakistan. These refugees are spread largely across FATA, KPP, Quetta, Karachi, Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

Pakistan consistently upholds itself as one of the largest refugee-hosting countries in the world (1.7 million) while Afghanistan ranks as the #1 source country (2.9 million) of refugees. One in every four refugees is from Afghanistan, and 96% of all Afghan asylum seekers are found in Pakistan and Iran.<sup>4</sup> Catering to massive refugee

<sup>3</sup> Frederic Grare, "Pakistan–Afghanistan Relations in the Post-9/11 Era", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Paper No. 72 (October 2006).

<sup>4</sup> "2009 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons", Division of Program Support and Management, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 15 June 2010.

<sup>5</sup> By comparing the refugee population with the average income level of a country (measured by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (PPP) per capita, a measure can be obtained of the relative impact of hosting refugees. If the number of refugees per 1 USD GDP (PPP) per capita is high, the relative contribution and effort made by countries compared to the national economy can be considered to be high.

fallout has inevitably burdened Pakistan's national economy (in 2009 Pakistan was hosting 745 refugees per 1 USD GDP per capita).<sup>5</sup> Islamabad is in a position to use this generosity towards Afghans as a bargaining chip in its dealings with Kabul.

At the same time Afghanistan is one of the major countries of return: more than 5.3 million Afghan refugees have returned to Afghanistan since 2002.<sup>6</sup> Afghanistan has experienced extensive new internal displacements due to widespread violence and insecurity. Presently there are upwards of 240,000 'conflict-induced' Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Afghanistan.<sup>7</sup> In October 2010 it was reported that over 100,000 Afghans had been forced out of their homes in Afghanistan in the previous year, and that there is no clear mandate to assist and protect IDPs.<sup>8</sup>

Yet squabbles and skirmishes between Pakistan and Afghanistan have been rampant. Cross-border incursions predate the creation of Pakistan and continue till today. For instance, in May 2007 Afghan ground soldiers reportedly entered Pakistan attacking military posts, resulting in the death of eight Pakistani soldiers. Pakistan retaliated by killing seven Afghan soldiers and further opened artillery fire on targets inside Afghanistan. More recently, in February 2011, the two forces crossed swords again along the border; while Afghan commanders alleged their killing of a Pakistani soldier came as a response to an attack by Pakistani troops on an Afghan police post, Pakistani officials maintained they were "responding with artillery and mortars" after Afghan soldiers died at an army checkpoint in North Waziristan.<sup>9</sup>

The blame game runs deeper: each country has accused the other of fomenting their respective insurgencies. However, while Afghanistan points the finger at Pakistan for fanning the flames of its domestic wars, such recriminations do not necessarily mean that the ISI can be held entirely responsible. Accusations may serve domestic political purposes or act as means of compensating for poor governance. And while Pakistan cannot be absolved of double-dealing, there may be legitimate concern that its Afghan counterpart has restrained efforts to control cross-border

<sup>6</sup> "2009 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons", Division of Program Support and Management, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 15 June 2010.

<sup>7</sup> "Afghanistan IDP Populations Statistical Analysis", United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 31 March 2010.

<sup>8</sup> "Afghanistan: Little Relief for Growing Number of Conflict IDPs", (14 October 2010), IRIN website, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportID=90768>, accessed 23 November 2010.

<sup>9</sup> "Pakistan Soldier Killed in Afghan Border Clash", Reuters, 2 February 2011.

infiltration. Pakistan has repeatedly claimed that terrorism inside Pakistan is linked to ‘anti-Pakistan elements’, pointing to Afghanistan and India. To signal that Afghanistan, too, has a bargaining chip to play, especially in relation to using the Pashtun question to its advantage, President Karzai led a 40-member delegation to the funeral of Pashtun nationalist leader Abdul Wali Khan in February 2006, claiming in a press conference:

If they (Pakistan and Iran) don’t stop, the consequences will be ... that the region will suffer with us equally. In the past we have suffered alone; this time everybody will suffer with us. (...) Any effort to divide Afghanistan ethnically or weaken it will create the same thing in the neighboring countries. All the countries in the neighborhood have the same ethnic groups that we have, so they should know that it is a different ball game this time.<sup>10</sup>

Despite their differences, Pakistan and Afghanistan have been looking towards peaceful ventures that would help ameliorate relations between the two nations as well as benefit the security situation of the region as a whole. Deepening economic cooperation, and especially bilateral trade and streamlining of transit trade, has been a key component of the Pakistan–Afghanistan Joint Economic Commission. Afghanistan’s number one trading partner (imports) is Pakistan and its third largest export market is to be found in Pakistan.<sup>11</sup>

Bilateral trade has grown manifold since 2000; it reached \$540 million in 2003–04 and \$1.2 billion in 2004–05<sup>12</sup> and the Afghanistan–Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement in 2010 committed to increasing that figure to \$5 billion by 2015.<sup>13</sup> In July 2010 the two countries signed a transit-trade pact that opened eighteen roads and border crossings, as well as access to Gwadar and Qasim seaports, allowing Afghan farmers and merchants to export their products to the region and develop trade links to central Asian republics.<sup>14</sup> India was not involved in this new agreement and Afghan truckers remain barred from entering India via Pakistan.

<sup>10</sup> Dawn, 18 February 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Comparatively, US and India rank as the first and second largest export partners and the second and third biggest import partners to Afghanistan.

<sup>12</sup> “Fifth Session of Pak–Afghan Joint Economic Commission Concludes in Kabul”, Pak Tribune, 26 July 2005.

<sup>13</sup> “Pakistan Pursued Foreign Policy Based on National Interests: FO”, Associated Press of Pakistan, 30 December 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Jay Solomon and Alan Cullison, “Islamabad, Kabul Sign Pact”, Wall Street Journal, 18 July 2010.

The Commission also deals with issues related to Pakistan's development assistance to Afghanistan and promotion and protection of investment in each country. Like India, Pakistan has also engrossed itself in reconstruction efforts and humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan ever since the toppling of the Taliban regime in 2001. Pakistan has committed up to \$330 billion in reconstruction and assistance programs to Afghanistan.<sup>15</sup> It has helped build and maintain the Turkham to Jalalabad road in Nangarhar province and the Ghulan Khan–Khost road, and Chaman–Kandahar railway line. In 2010 projects to build Peshawar–Jalalabad and Quetta–Kandahar rail links were voiced as priorities. Pakistan is also revamping schools/universities and hospitals including building work at universities in Kabul, Nangarhar, and Mazar-e-Sharif, as well as a project to build a hospital in Kabul called Jinnah Hospital Complex.<sup>16</sup>

It has been a long-standing policy of Pakistan to welcome Afghan nationals to its universities and colleges. Currently, 6,000 Afghan students are enrolled in Pakistan's colleges and universities, representing approximately 60% of all Afghans studying in institutions of higher education abroad, and half a million of Afghan child refugees attend schools in Pakistan.<sup>17</sup> In 2010 the two countries agreed to devise long-term capacity building programs for Afghanistan by establishing 2,000 scholarships for Afghani students in Pakistani institutions in the two-year outlook, as well as by strengthening cooperation in the energy, health and agriculture sectors.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> "Pakistan Pursued Foreign Policy Based on National Interests: FO", Associated Press of Pakistan, 30 December 2010.

<sup>16</sup> Mohammad Ali Jinnah was the founding father of Pakistan and to name a hospital in Kabul after him is telling of the level of predominance Pakistan seeks in Afghanistan.

<sup>17</sup> Ambassador Mohammad Sadiq, "Pakistan–Afghanistan: The Conjoined Twins", The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, 13 November 2010.

<sup>18</sup> Joint Statement between Afghanistan and Pakistan on Strengthening the Partnership, Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations in New York, 16 September 2010.

### 3. Strategic depth and the ISI

*“We are saving the Taliban for a rainy day.”<sup>19</sup>*

For decades, especially since 1979, Islamabad has employed violent Islamic extremist groups as a hedge against India and an unfriendly regime in Kabul – both of which it perceives as threats to its national security apparatus. An ever-looming Pakistani fear is that of being trapped in a two-front situation with India to the east and a heavily India-friendly Afghanistan to its west. Pakistan’s strategic depth approach is to be understood against this backdrop.

Pakistan’s strategic depth in Afghanistan entails ‘sanitising’ the latter of any outside influence, in particular that of India. Its history is therefore pockmarked with extensive engagement and interference in internal Afghan affairs. Such a strategy of forestalling hostile encirclement has undermined both Afghanistan’s internal security as well as that of the region. Whether Pakistan will alter the course of this trend will therefore help determine the future of security in the area.

In 1995 Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani ransacked the Pakistani embassy, condemning the country for its interference in Afghanistan’s internal affairs. During the time when the Soviet-installed government of Najibullah disintegrated and Kabul was usurped by the mujahideen led by Ahmad Shah Massoud, the leaders of seven main Sunni Islamic mujahideen groups were Pakistan-based and the lion’s share of the largesse (money and ammunition) was channelled from Pakistan. The ISI’s Afghan Bureau managed the training of Afghan fighters and their operations.<sup>20</sup> As Pakistan desired a Pashtun-ruled enclave in Kabul that would contribute to its wider regional objectives, including access to the new Muslim Central Asian republics, it shifted its weight behind whoever it deemed most effectual as a surrogate force. Ultimately the Taliban, the hardline Sunni Islamic militia manufactured from religious-political madrassas along the Afghanistan–Pakistan border came to be the most favoured recipient of the ISI. It provided the movement with ideological and military muscle in the form of unstinting monetary, military and logistical support, eventually bringing the Taliban to the helm of power in Kabul in late

<sup>19</sup> Former Pakistani official, quoted in “Right at the Edge”, New York Times, 15 September 2008.

<sup>20</sup> Amin Saikal, (2004) “Mujahideen Islamic Rule, Taliban Extremism and US Intervention” in Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival, I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: New York.

1996.<sup>21</sup> Islamabad, along with Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, were the only governments to accord recognition to the Taliban. The Taliban being anti-Shia in character served the interests of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates and therefore received sympathy and patronage from them.

A major turnabout in Pakistan's Afghan policy came when, in the aftermath of 9/11, President Musharraf complied with US demands and moved 100,000 troops from the country's eastern front against India to its western border in order to target militants.<sup>22</sup> This came as a surprise to several layers of the Pakistani army, so whilst still a key US ally, certain segments of the Pakistani establishment and the Inter-Services Intelligence continue to be 'tolerant' of the Taliban.<sup>23</sup> The pressure on Pakistan would mount over time as they were pushed into sending regular troops into Waziristan and later full-fledged operations against al-Qaida and Taliban militants. In some cases it was even believed that the Pakistani government was intervening to protect Taliban commanders, especially those connected to the Afghan insurgency, whilst all the while targeting military operations but only against foot soldiers of local origin.<sup>24</sup> In fact Pakistan backed the US-led campaign in Afghanistan under the understanding that the Northern Alliance – considered to be non-Pashtun and supported by both India and Iran – would not be allowed to take over Kabul. However, the aftermath of US advances saw the Northern Alliance assume control of Kabul and, disappointed by this, Pakistan decided to “guard its own interests more carefully”.<sup>25</sup> As a manifestation of 'guarding', this could explain the fact that during the US-led coalition move into Afghanistan in October 2001 the Afghan border with Pakistan's Khyber Agency was closed while Waziristan's Miranshah and Mirali routes were left open.

Until at least 2008 President Musharraf's vacillating counter-terrorism strategies were allowing militants to expand the religio-political space. Intermittent peace deals between the GoP and various militant factions across FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province helped militants expand their influence and ideology. Some of these negotiations came with the understanding that engagement in Afghanistan would be

<sup>21</sup> In fact the pioneer who launched the Taliban – the man who in 1994 recruited, trained and armed Talibs or madrasa students from the border regions to join Pashtun Mujahideen fighters in Afghanistan – was the then Minister of the Interior in Pakistan – Naseerullah Babar.

<sup>22</sup> “Perils of Pakistan”, Washington Times, 6 November 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Imitaz Gul, ICCT conference, The Hague, 12–13 December 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Intikhab Amir, “Waziristan: No Man's Land?” Herald, April 2006.

<sup>25</sup> Hassan Abbas, “Militancy in Pakistan's Borderlands: Implications for the Nation and for Afghan Policy”, The Century Foundation, October 2010.

permitted so long as Islamists refrained from attacking Pakistani interests. As a result militant activity in Kabul and Afghan eastern regions continued unhindered.

Senior members of the Afghan Taliban are said to operate from Quetta from where they manage military operations in the south-central Afghan provinces (Helmand, Kandahar, Oruzgan, and Zabol).<sup>26</sup> The Haqqani Network, closely affiliated with the Afghan Taliban, operates out of North Waziristan tribal agency in Pakistan and runs operations in Kabul, and Afghanistan's eastern regions of Khost, Logar, Paktia, and Paktika. In November 2009 the US accused ISI of helping Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Omar evade CIA drone strikes.<sup>27</sup> A report by General McChrystal in August 2009 directly linked all major Afghan insurgent groups to Pakistan; their senior leadership purportedly resided in Pakistan and was connected to al-Qaida. Furthermore, he alleged that elements within ISI aided these groups.<sup>28</sup>

Pakistan counter-terrorism efforts remain focused on fighting anti-government elements or those factions of the Tehrik-e-Taliban engaged in waging a jihad against the Pakistani regime. However, militants with the Muqami Tehrik-e-Taliban – namely Hafiz Gul Bahadur of North Waziristan and Maulvi Nazir of South Waziristan and their affiliates such as the Haqqani network – who have typically maintained a pro-government stance and concentrated their jihad against allied troops in Afghanistan, have received a discreet *carte blanche* from the Pakistani establishment to continue their operations.

Once the anti-Soviet jihad ended Pakistan continued its strategic depth approach, this time diverting its focus and patronage of militants to the Kashmir struggle. This served as a key instrument in containing and countering Indian control of Kashmir. Under pressure from the international community Pakistan came to ban numerous extremist groups that had previously served under the ISI in the post 9/11 era. Nevertheless, support continued. In fact, despite claims to the contrary by the Pakistani authorities, it is widely believed that ISI plays a catalytic role in the Afghan and Kashmir insurgencies – both of which are essentially taking place in a corridor along the border of Afghanistan and Indian Kashmir and would not be possible without sanctuaries on the Pakistani side.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Kaplan, "The Taliban's Silent Partner", New York Times, 20 July 2006.

<sup>27</sup> "Taliban Chief Hides in Pakistan", Washington Times, 20 November 2009.

<sup>28</sup> Stanley McChrystal, "Commander of International Security Assistance Force's Initial Assessment", 30 August 2009.

Reports of continued Kashmir-oriented ISI links are rife. The culmination of these links is encapsulated in the incident on 24 December 1999 when Harakat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami militants, with the help of ISI, hijacked an Indian Airlines flight with the objective of freeing three militants. These included Masood Azhar, the head of Jaish-e-Mohammad, another terrorist outfit with the aim of conducting missions in Kashmir and India, and Omar Sheikh who was later arrested in connection with the Daniel Pearl murder case.

More recently, the November 2008 terrorist raid in Mumbai was traced to Pakistan – namely, Lashkar-e-Taiba and ISI. The interrogation of David Headly, a Pakistani American arrested in 2009 for conspiring with LeT to launch the Mumbai attack, revealed heavy ISI involvement in the operation.<sup>29</sup> According to some journalists the ISI's chief, Lieutenant-General Ahmed Shuja Pasha, supposedly admitted that at least two retired Pakistani Army officers had been involved in planning the Mumbai attack.<sup>30</sup> This is notable as it is solely retired military officers that make up ISI's 'S-Wing' – the department responsible for dealing with jihadist groups operating outside Pakistan.<sup>31</sup> Headly's confession also suggested that the top ISI brass was kept unaware of such activities – a postulation made already by many western security agencies.

According to Headley, the Mumbai attacks offered the ISI an opportunity to restore the jihadist credentials of Lashkar-e-Taiba – a group that continues to yield a stream of cadres who have turned westwards to join the Tehrik-e-Taliban in its fight against the Pakistani state. In the aftermath of the information to surface from the Headley case the ISI appears to have created a tighter moratorium on similar operations. Yet the Indian government, as well as some Western countries, continue to voice concerns related to threats emanating from LeT against India. Attacks against Indian consulates and Indian personnel in Afghanistan in recent years are suspected to be the handiwork of militant groups connected to ISI.<sup>32</sup> The 7 July 2008 bombing of the Indian embassy in Kabul was attributed to Lashkar-e-Taiba: American intelligence agencies claimed to have intercepted communications linking ISI to LeT.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Jason Burke, "Pakistan Intelligence Services 'Aided Mumbai Terror Attacks,'" *Guardian*, 18 October 2010.

<sup>30</sup> Dean Nelson & Rob Crilly, "Woodward Book: 'Rogue Pakistani Officers Were Involved in Mumbai Attacks,'" *Telegraph*, 28 September 2010.

<sup>31</sup> "South Asia Still Beset by Violent Extremism", International Institute for Strategic Studies, January 2011.

<sup>32</sup> See for example Jason Burke and Jon Boone, "Kabul Attacks Apparently Aimed at Indians Leaves 17 Dead", *Guardian*, 27 February 2010.

<sup>33</sup> "Pakistan Aided Attack in Kabul, Officials Say", *New York Times*, 1 August 2008.

#### 4. Shift of jihad theatre from Kashmir to Afghanistan

*“Afghanistan [...] in many ways has replaced Kashmir as the main arena of the still-unresolved struggle between Pakistan and India.”<sup>34</sup>*

Although there are several dimensions to the Indo–Pak conflict, the issue of Kashmir remains paramount and dates back to the circumstances of their independence from the British. Pakistan maintains that Kashmir rightfully belongs to Pakistan since at the time of partition, and still today, Kashmir consists of a Muslim majority. It overtly offers moral support to the Kashmiri people in their struggle for freedom from the Indian army which commits innumerable human rights abuses on the Muslims. Meanwhile, India views these advances as a proxy war by Pakistan who never accepted Kashmir’s just accession to India.

Four wars (1949, 1965, 1971 and 1999) have been fought between the two nations over the Kashmir dispute. The Line of Control divides Jammu and Kashmir territory into Indian-controlled Jammu and Kashmir encompassing the regions of Kashmir Valley, Jammu and Ladakh, and a smaller area under Pakistani control comprising Azad Kashmir and Northern Areas.

Aspirations for an independent Kashmir are rooted in local consciousness, yet the insurgency there did not gain momentum till 40 years after the partition of the Indian subcontinent. The jihadi infrastructure in place in Afghanistan during the 80s lent impetus to the Kashmiri movement towards insurgency. Saudi influence crept into Kashmir during this time. Money was funnelled via local colleges and used to set up, among other facilities, a network of madrassas in the Kashmir Vale, planting the seeds of Islamic fundamentalism. Up till then Kashmiri Islam was largely dominated by the more peaceful Sufi variant.

The final stages of the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan brought a sudden surge in manpower and weaponry readily available for the Kashmir struggle. Thousands of Afghan war veterans trained in the deployment of Kalashnikovs, rocket launchers and grenades found a fresh *raison d’être* in Kashmir against the Indian army. Given the dearth of employment opportunities available to Kashmiri youth they turned to arms and to proving their valour. Gradually, Kashmiri youth came to

<sup>34</sup> Rashid & Rubin, “From the Great Game to Great Bargain”, *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2008.

be mobilised more by the sentiment of ‘Islam is in danger’ than by aspirations of independence.

A number of the Kashmiri elite were allegedly on the payroll of the ISI. Indeed, the insurgency in Kashmir is widely believed to have been bolstered by the spy agency. Kashmir-focused groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba, Hizb-ul Mujahideen and Jaish-e-Muhammad are known to have had links to the ISI, which used the militants to fight its proxy war with India in Kashmir. Unsurprisingly, this gave extra muscle and zest to the Kashmir insurgency, leading to escalating violence and chaos.

In 1990 young men in the Kashmir Valley launched a guerrilla revolt against Indian rule under the banner of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front. The movement’s stated objective was to unite IJK with its Pakistani counterpart as a single independent state. However it was known to receive weapons and training from the JKLF nucleus in Azad Jammu and Kashmir as well as Pakistani military intelligence.<sup>35</sup> Existing deep-seated grievances towards India allowed JKLF to amass widespread local support. Pakistani endorsement meant a gradual shift in JKLF away from its independentist stance towards a pro-Pakistan and, later, more Islamist guerrilla leaning. The second half of the decade witnessed infiltration by pan-Islamist fighters mainly from Pakistan, adding a distinct Islamist flavour to the conflict.

The protracted ‘low-intensity’ warfare between insurgents and Indian Security Forces in the interior of IJK altered the military, political and social (including human rights aspect) character of the region, turning the territorial dispute into a complex arena of proxy wars, antagonistic nationalisms and conflicting state allegiances, a pro-independence struggle, dense militarisation, a grave human rights situation, and so on.

Recent times may have witnessed a shift back to an Afghanistan of many extremist groups. This transfer from Pakistan’s eastern border to its western side may have contributed to the relative lull in jihadist activity inside India. Growing numbers of elements within Kashmir-oriented jihadist groups have become preoccupied with fighting against the Pakistani state or operations inside Afghanistan. According to General Michael Flynn, senior US military intelligence officer in Afghanistan, groups like the Lashkar-e-Taiba are increasingly pumping operatives into Afghanistan where they are active in eight provinces.

<sup>35</sup> Sumantra Bose, *Kashmir: Roots to Conflict, Paths to Peace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), p.3.

This movement westwards reflects a larger regional trend in anticipation of a US/NATO endgame in Afghanistan. This endgame is likely to entail a negotiation between the Afghan government and upper echelons of the main insurgent groups, a prospect that worries New Delhi for it may spell the return of an anti-India regime in Kabul.

The scenario gives Pakistan the opportunity to gain influence in Kabul through careful manipulation of its relations to extremist groups now supporting the Afghan Taliban – i.e. pro-Pakistan factions of TTP, the Haqqani network, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Hizb-e-Islami, Lashkar-e-Taiba and so on – and pushing for a central role in the negotiation process.<sup>36</sup> A focus of these groups has been to challenge Indian presence in Afghanistan as well as disrupt ISAF activities and interests there.

Pakistan’s ISI is in a position to calibrate the activities of various jihadi organisations, especially those involved with Kashmir/India. For example, according to David Headley – arrested in connection with the November 2008 terrorist attack in Mumbai – the strike in India was part of a plot by the ISI to discourage further integration between Kashmir-focused extremist groups and FATA based militants who have waged a jihad against the Pakistani state.<sup>37</sup>

In response to concerns surrounding Pakistan’s increasingly thinly disguised support for groups involved in attacking coalition troops in Afghanistan, ISAF was tempted to carry out operations inside Pakistani territory. In September 2010 US forces killed two Pakistani border guards who were allegedly protecting Haqqani fighters escaping to Pakistan. The situation led Pakistan to shut down the Torkham Gate border – through which 25% of ISAF’s non-lethal cargo is transported daily – reminding the world community of Pakistan’s importance in the war on terror.

Regarding the Pakistani and Afghan Taliban, while some reports point to a solid link between the Pakistani and Afghan Taliban or dispel the notion entirely, others offer a more nuanced view. Most of the TTP leaders are veterans of the fighting in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation; and have historically supported the ‘jihad’ against foreign forces in Afghanistan by supplying fighters and logistical aid. In this context experts have argued the Pakistani and Afghan Taliban to be joined by an umbilical cord or, at the very least, have taken the view that the Pakistani Tali-

<sup>36</sup> This is discussed further in the next section.

<sup>37</sup> Jason Burke, “Pakistan Intelligence Services ‘Aided Mumbai Terror Attacks’”, *Guardian*, 18 October 2010.

ban are “an extension of the Afghan Taliban”.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, both movements have individual and distinct characters that are born of their particular domestic situations and politics. The Pashtun identity, brotherhood and honour code tie the two together. Given the porous border joining Pakistan to Afghanistan, and the kinship felt between Pashtuns on both sides of the Durand Line, movement of militants between the two countries has been frequent.

Although the Pakistani Taliban owes allegiance to Mullah Omar and some factions of the TTP fight within the Afghan Taliban command structure against coalition forces, the TTP maintains separate structures with respect to strategy and targets. It should be remembered that the Afghan Taliban is a phenomenon that emerged from the civil war in Afghanistan during the 1990s. The Pakistani Taliban, however, grew mainly from the perceived violation of peace agreements between the GoP and various tribes in FATA and the Taliban, starting in 2004, and its influence spread from South Waziristan to the rest of FATA as well as parts of KPP.

Movement of militants from Pakistan to Afghanistan has been widely documented. However, according to some observers, the reverse has also taken place where members of the Afghan Taliban have fought against Pakistani security forces.<sup>39</sup> Others have refuted such claims, insisting that “the Afghan Taliban and the Hikmatyar group have no role in militancy inside Pakistan”.<sup>40</sup>

Yet, it was claimed by Pakistani authorities that the perpetrators behind an attack against a police academy in Lahore (Punjab province) in March 2009 included an Afghan hailing from Afghanistan’s Paktika province.<sup>41</sup> It was alleged that the assault was plotted in South Waziristan but bore the blueprint of ‘outside involvement’ – namely, Afghanistan.<sup>42</sup>

The engagement of Afghans in Pakistan and the presence of Afghans in the upper echelons of the Pakistani Taliban point at the strong overlap between Pakistani and Afghan extremist elements. In Khyber Agency, Kamran Mustafa Hijrat, a former

<sup>38</sup> Rahimullah Yusufzai, *The News*, phone interview on 16 May 2009; Syed Irfan Arshad, *Dawn*, phone interview on 7 and 15 May 2009.

<sup>39</sup> Syed Irfan Ashraf, *Dawn*, phone interview on 7 and 15 May 2009.

<sup>40</sup> Sohail Qalandar, “Khul Kay”, (May 2005) *Pakistan Politics*, <http://pkpolitics.com/2009/05/15/khul-kay-15-may-2009/>, accessed 18 May 2009.

<sup>41</sup> “مناواں حملہ۔ گرفتار دہشت گرد بیت اللہ محسود کا ساتھی ہے”, *Geo Urdu*, 30 March 2009.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

Afghan Taliban commander, acted as a deputy to Hakimullah Mehsud (current head of Tehrik-e-Taliban) and his group was allegedly behind attacks on trucks carrying NATO supplies to Afghanistan.<sup>43</sup> After Hijrat's arrest in 2008 his successor, too, was an Afghan named Rahmanullah.<sup>44</sup>

Another example is Maulvi Sangeen, an Afghan commander of the TTP who made the news in mid-2009 for hosting a funeral for a fellow Talib who died in a missile strike.<sup>45</sup> Sangeen is linked to militancy on both sides of the Durand Line. Allegedly an associate of Sirajuddin Haqqani, key commander of the Haqqani network in eastern Afghanistan,<sup>46</sup> he is considered to also be close to Baitullah Mehsud's group and operate from FATA.<sup>47</sup>

Qari Zia-ur Rahman is another Afghan commander purportedly straddling the Durand Line. Operating in the Bajaur Agency of the Tribal Areas, Qari Zia is allied with the core Tehrik-e-Taliban and allegedly heads a militia of trained fighters from Uzbekistan, Chechnya, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan, as well as Arab nations.<sup>48</sup> Zia is also in charge of both military and financial affairs of the Taliban in Kunar and Nuristan provinces of Afghanistan, along with representing this region in the shura of Mullah Omar.<sup>49</sup>

The power struggle between Wali-ur Rehman and Hakimullah Mehsud, in the aftermath of Baitullah Mehsud's death in August 2009, was allegedly resolved with the mediation of the Afghan Taliban. According to Waziristani tribesmen, "in order to avoid bloodshed, Wali-ur Rehman had been forced by the Afghan side to agree".<sup>50</sup> Such interventions by the Afghan Taliban highlight its role as a mentor to and ally of the Pakistan Taliban.

Despite openly professing loyalty to Mullah Omar, the Pakistani Taliban has not received similar declarations of allegiance from their Afghan counterparts. It was

<sup>43</sup> Rahimullah Yusufzai, "A Who's Who of the Insurgency in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province: Part Two - FATA Excluding North and South Waziristan", *Terrorism Monitor*, 7 no. 43 (March 2009).

<sup>44</sup> It was recently reported that Hijratullah was tortured and killed by security forces; Riffat Ullah Aurakzai, "کی بلاکت کی تصدی طالبان کمانڈر", *BBC Urdu*, 19 May 2009.

<sup>45</sup> "Missile Attacks Kill 50 in South Waziristan", *Dawn*, 24 June 2009.

<sup>46</sup> Cyril Almeida, "Groping in the Dark", *Dawn*, 26 June 2009.

<sup>47</sup> "Live with Talat", *Aaj TV*, 21 April 2009 and Cyril Almeida, "Groping in the Dark", *Dawn*, 26 June 2009.

<sup>48</sup> Kanchan Lakshman, "The Battle for Bajaur", *South Asia Intelligence Review*, 7 no. 14 (13 October 2009).

<sup>49</sup> Mukhtar A. Khan, "A Profile of Militant Groups in Bajaur Tribal Agency", *Terrorism Monitor*, 7 no. 6 (19 March 2009).

<sup>50</sup> Saeed Shah, "Pakistani Taliban Leader Calls Obama 'Our Foremost Enemy,'" *McClatchy*, 25 August 2009.

reported, for example, that in late 2008 and early 2009, Mullah Omar disapproved of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, and had allegedly dispatched a delegation to Waziristan urging the TTP to help the Afghan Taliban counter an increased number of US forces (expected to be imminent at the time) in Afghanistan. The Afghan emissaries allegedly urged the TTP leaders to “settle their differences, scale down on their activities in Pakistan and help counter the planned increase of American forces in Afghanistan”.<sup>51</sup> Soon after, the Council for the United Mujahideen was formed where the TTP leaders Baitullah, Maulvi Nazir and Gul Bahadur seemingly buried their rivalries and reaffirmed allegiance to Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden.

However, their Afghani counterparts issued contrary statements: Zabiullah Mujahid, a spokesman for the Afghan Taliban, denied that any such meeting took place. He emphasised: “We don’t like to be involved with them, as we have rejected all affiliation with Pakistani Taliban fighters... We have sympathy for them as Muslims, but beside that, there is nothing else between us”.<sup>52</sup> In response to the official formation of the Tehrik-e-Taliban a spokesperson on behalf of Mullah Omar in January 2008 announced that “Mehsud had nothing to do with them since their priority is waging Jihad against the US and NATO forces in Afghanistan and not against the Pakistan military”.<sup>53</sup> Indeed a major bone of contention between Baitullah’s TTP and the Afghan Taliban centres on the issue of where the battle arena ought to be – Pakistan or Afghanistan?

After the aforementioned press conference allegedly took place, it was claimed that the group had distanced itself from the Pakistani militants led by Baitullah Mehsud, saying that they would not support any militant activity in Pakistan.<sup>54</sup> An Afghan Taliban spokesman reportedly said:

Had he been an Afghan we would have expelled him the same way we expelled Mansoor Dadullah for disobeying the orders of Mullah Omar. But Baitullah is a Pakistani Talib and whatever he does is his decision. We have nothing to do with it.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> “US Plans New Drone Attacks in Pak”, *The Nation*, 26 March 2009.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Ref / press conf – Taliban.

<sup>54</sup> “Baitullah on his own”, *Dawn*, 29 Jan 2008.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

Furthermore, Hikmatyar is known to have stated that militants fighting the Pakistani Security Forces are weakening the Pakistani state and that the Afghan Taliban does not want Pakistan to be weakened or be portrayed in a negative light.<sup>56</sup> In yet another effort to remain distinct from the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, the Afghan Taliban confessedly avoids the ‘Taliban’ denomination, and prefers instead to be recognised as ‘Da Afghanistan Islami Amarat’ or the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.<sup>57</sup> An Afghan Taliban member reportedly stated:

The Afghan Taliban is fighting Western forces that have occupied Afghanistan. It is jihad against non-Muslims and occupiers. We cannot say the same about the new groups of Taliban fighting in places outside Afghanistan.<sup>58</sup>

Yet, it is undeniable that the Afghan Taliban has benefited from the Pakistan Taliban in terms of human and ideological support. The former’s influence over the TTP is also evident in the fact that certain sections of the TTP agreed to limit their jihadi activities to supporting the Afghan Taliban, even though this led to tensions within the TTP.

On the whole, Baitullah’s Taliban does not seem to have a strong presence in Afghanistan. In order to cross the border over to Afghanistan his fighters have to pass through territory belonging to the Waziri tribe, and for that it is imperative for Baitullah and his successors to be on good terms with Wazir Taliban leaders such as Maulvi Nazir and Gul Bahadur.<sup>59</sup> The extent of the TTP’s involvement in Afghanistan also depends on how preoccupied it is, domestically, in its fight against the Pakistani Security Forces. The present focus and escalation in confrontations on the part of the Pakistani army ensures that Baitullah’s group will remain active on the Pakistan front for some time to come.

However, this does not imply that Baitullah’s group has not been active in Afghanistan in the past. In June 2008 it was reported that Baitullah’s men were amongst those who died in Afghanistan in the aftermath of an air strike by coalition forces.<sup>60</sup> Previously, in May 2008, Baitullah had vowed to continue fighting US-led troops in

<sup>56</sup> Sohail Qalandar, “Khul Kay”, (May 2005) Pakistan Politics, <http://pkpolitics.com/2009/05/15/khul-kay-15-may-2009/>, accessed 18 May 2009.

<sup>57</sup> Rahimullah Yusufzai, “Taliban Prefer Not to be Known as Taliban”, *The News*, 10 September 2009.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Rahimullah Yusufzai, *The News*, phone interview on 16 May 2009.

<sup>60</sup> “Several of Baitullah’s Men Die in Afghan Bombing”, *The News*, 7 June 2008.

Afghanistan.<sup>61</sup> Baitullah Mehsud has repeatedly sworn allegiance to Mullah Omar and promised participation in the Afghan Taliban but there has been a notable shift from “jihad in Afghanistan” to “defensive jihad against the apostate Pakistan army” – resulting in the above-mentioned disputes between Baitullah and the Afghan Taliban over who the key enemy is.<sup>62</sup>

In an October 2009 autobiographical note by Hakimullah Mehsud, the new chief of TTP, he implicates his involvement in Afghanistan, where he writes “a group led by Maulvi Sangeen and Baitullah Mehsud attacked a check post in Khost during the initial stages of war against foreign troops (after the successful regrouping of the Taliban post 9/11).”<sup>63</sup>

Another key difference between the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban is that the former is seemingly more united. Although the Afghan Taliban might also include different factions (e.g. the Hikmatyar group that is powerful in its own right), the organisation has a defined hierarchy where supreme leadership is reserved only for Mullah Omar. The Afghan Taliban is also unanimous on its agenda and targets – i.e. against the foreign forces and the Afghan government in Afghanistan.

The Pakistani Taliban, on the other hand, has several different factions and leaders – from Maulvi Nazir to Mangal Bagh – and, in addition to having separate agendas, there has often been disunity among them. Individual tribes have their own unique Taliban factions that maintain separate hierarchies and seldom operate in the territory of other factions. Baitullah’s group, for instance, has been primarily focused on fighting the Pakistani Security Forces, while Maulvi Nazir and Gul Bahadur have stayed involved in neighbouring Afghanistan. Groups/leaders under the TTP with sectarian backgrounds, or those operating in areas with a significant Shia population express their jihad via mass-casualty sectarianism.

Furthermore, the Afghan Taliban, having functioned as a governing regime for six years, is likely to be far more experienced and disciplined than its Pakistani counterpart, and boasts a high-powered council. When fighting in Afghanistan, cadres

<sup>61</sup> Alamgir Bhattani, “Afghan Jihad Will Continue: Mehsud”, Dawn, 25 May 2008.

<sup>62</sup> For more on this, see forthcoming report by Qandeel Siddique and Laila Bokhari, “Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan: Actors and Ideology.”

<sup>63</sup> “Translation of Hakimullah Mehsud’s Autobiographical Handwritten Notes”, (3 October 2009), NEFA Foundation, <http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/Hakimullahnotetranslation.pdf>, accessed 12 October 2009.

of the Pakistani Taliban reportedly operate under the hierarchical structures of the Afghan Taliban.<sup>64</sup>

Finally, the fact that the TTP is fighting ‘Muslim’ forces, as opposed to the ‘foreigners’ being fought by the Afghan Taliban, also gives rise to differences with respect to the support received among its respective constituencies. Domestically, the TTP has increasingly been losing sympathy, due to its kidnaps, beheadings and the notion that it kills its ‘own people,’ causing general mayhem, bloodshed and brutality.

What unites the Taliban tehris is their common goal of establishing Sharia law in their respective countries. Achieving Sharia was one of the stated aims of the TTP upon its formation in December 2007. Key TTP actors and ideologues have reiterated TTP’s ambition to convert the Islamic Republic of Pakistan into a truly ‘Islamic’ state by replacing the nation’s Constitution with Sharia law. That is, both on the religious (Sharia law) and ‘jihadi’ front (ridding Afghanistan of foreign forces), the TTP and Afghan Taliban resonate similar ambitions.

**Punjabi Taliban:** The Punjabi Taliban consists primarily of segments of sectarian groups and those previously focused on the Kashmir/India jihad. Since the 1980s Punjabi militants have fought in Afghanistan. Presently, too, segments of the aforementioned groups are suspected of being active in Afghanistan.<sup>65</sup> Within Pakistan a growing number of suicide attacks have taken place in the country’s heartland – namely Punjab and Islamabad – and are attributed to the ‘Punjabi Taliban’.

Punjab is Pakistan’s second largest province and its most populous. It is also home to major cities like Lahore and the garrison city of Rawalpindi. Increased Taliban activity in Punjab may therefore bear ominous signs for the security of Pakistan. Equally worrying is the inherent implication that the TTP is not a purely Pashtun movement restricted to the tribal areas and that militant groups from Punjab appear to be interwoven in the Taliban.

The Chief of Pakistan’s National Counter-Terrorism Authority (NCTA) has summarised the pattern of terrorism in Pakistan as follows:

<sup>64</sup> Maulvi Nazir in a March 2009 interview with As-Sahab testified to this assertion.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

Ideas, logistics, cash come from the Gulf; Arab guys, mainly Egyptians and Saudis, are on hand to provide the chemistry; veteran Punjabi extremists plot the attacks; while the Pakistani Taliban provides the martyrs.<sup>66</sup>

This suggests the role played by Punjab-based extremists in promulgating militancy in Pakistan is instrumental: attacks in the big cities, such as Lahore and Islamabad, are considered to be the result of coordination between Waziristan and Punjab based militants. In addition to plotting attacks and offering logistical support, the Punjabi extremists are known to generate funds for the TTP, as well as to supply recruits to fight jihad in both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The post-9/11 era in particular saw many of the Kashmir based militant groups join forces with TTP militants in FATA and Swat to assist them in fighting against the Pakistani Security Forces. Long-standing connections between the Taliban and violent jihadist organisations outside of the tribal areas were capitalised on in order to unite against the Pakistani army. These Kashmiri groups also became increasingly involved in Afghanistan. For example, the Lashkar-e-Taiba is known to be pumping more and more fighters into the Afghan jihadist pipeline – where they expand on their combat skills. According to General Michael T. Flynn, a senior US military intelligence office in Afghanistan, they are currently active in eight Afghan provinces.<sup>67</sup>

In the late 1990s, after a wave of SSP and LeJ cadres were arrested, the groups shifted their bases to Afghanistan where they were allegedly provided with sanctuaries by Mullah Omar's regime.<sup>68</sup> The toppling of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan saw the return of these groups to Pakistan where the majority of these 'sectarian' militants settled in the borderlands – in particular Lower Kurram and Orakzai Agency.<sup>69</sup> With links to local al-Qaida elements, these groups planted their seed in the tribal belt. Accordingly, "the simmering animus of the sectarian terrorists found vent in suicide-bombing attacks on the Shia community".<sup>70</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Kaustav Dhar Chakrabarti, "Taliban Spreads into Pakistan's Heart", Rediff.com, 13 February 2009.

<sup>67</sup> "South Asia Still Beseet by Violent Extremism", International Institute for Strategic Studies, January 2011.

<sup>68</sup> "Pakistan: The Militant Jihadi Challenge", (13 March 2009), International Crisis Group, [http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/south\\_asia/164\\_pakistan\\_\\_\\_the\\_militant\\_jihadi\\_challenge.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/south_asia/164_pakistan___the_militant_jihadi_challenge.pdf), accessed 15 March 2009.

<sup>69</sup> Mariam Abou Zahab "Sectarianism in Pakistan's Kurram Tribal Agency", *Terrorism Monitor*, 7 no. 6 (March 2009). Many of these militant groups were proscribed as terrorist organisations by Pakistan during this period, possibly leading them to seek sanctuary in the country's north west.

<sup>70</sup> "The Sectarian—Ethnic Scourge", *Daily Times Pakistan*, 5 February 2009.

In recent years groups previously active in Kashmir, like Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad have also relocated to FATA.<sup>71</sup> These extremist Deobandi groups are known to have injected their knowhow, manpower and material resources into the TTP, paving the way for the latter to secure new zones of influence in, and outside, Pakistan's tribal belt.

As early as 2007 a trend was observed whereby Kashmir-based jihadi organisations were seen moving to the Waziristans. In this regard, a report by Syed Saleem Shahzad suggests that a turning point for the jihad movement in Pakistan occurred when, in 2006–2007, Kashmiri jihadi organisations moved to North and South Waziristan – boosting the number and strength of militants in that area.<sup>72</sup> The report maintains that Kashmiri separatist groups brought with them a specific guerrilla strategy that has altered the dynamics of the Taliban: “[it has] reorganised and regrouped the Taliban movement along the lines of a separatist guerrilla movement that has had a cascading affect in the region”.<sup>73</sup>

These newcomers encompass a spectrum of groups primarily focused on Afghanistan and Kashmir. After being banned, some of the militants discontinued their jihadist activities altogether, while others came to view the Pakistani government as a ‘betrayal’ of the Kashmir and Afghan jihads. They decided to open a front alongside their comrades in Waziristan, and spread to the rest of FATA, Swat and other areas.<sup>74</sup> Sipah-e-Sahaba, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba are the major militant groups ensconced in South Punjab and known to have bases in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. For example, in the wake of the November 2008 terrorist attack in Mumbai, India, Jaish-e-Mohammad's Masood Azhar reportedly shifted base from Bahawalpur (in Punjab) to Waziristan.<sup>75</sup> JeM is known to be active in the Afghan jihad – various articles and speeches found on the Jaish-e-Mohammad website also testify to its staunch pro-Taliban stance and involvement in Afghanistan.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Mariam Abou Zahab “Sectarianism in Pakistan's Kurram Tribal Agency”, *Terrorism Monitor*, 7 no. 6 (March 2009).

<sup>72</sup> Syed Saleem Shahzad is the Pakistani Bureau Chief of Asia Times Online; he writes on global security issues with a focus on al-Qaeda and Taliban in Pakistan.

<sup>73</sup> Syed Saleem Shahzad, “The Gathering Strength of Taliban and Tribal Militants in Pakistan”, Pakistan Security Research Unit (October 2007).

<sup>74</sup> Sohail Qalandar, “Khul Kay”, (May 2009) Pakistan Politics, <http://pkpolitics.com/2009/05/15/khul-kay-15-may-2009/>, accessed 18 May 2009.

<sup>75</sup> Amir Mir, “The Swelling Force of Extremism”, *The News*, 22 March 2009.

Sources claim there are currently between 5,000–9,000 youths from South Punjab fighting in Afghanistan and Waziristan.<sup>77</sup> Apparently, from 2005–2007, about 2,000 militants from southern and northern Punjab had moved to South Waziristan to create logistical support networks that would help conduct operations in inner Pakistan.<sup>78</sup>

When carrying out operations in Punjab, fidayeen attacks appear to be the TTP's preferred strategy.<sup>79</sup> This could be due to the influence from Kashmir and Punjab-oriented extremist groups who have joined the TTP. In return, Tehrik-e-Taliban has incorporated existing extremist strands – for example, the violent sectarian groups of Sipah-e-Sahaba (SSP) and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) – with a more belligerent expression (for example, the use of suicide bombings and tactics aimed at mass casualties).

Current TTP militants with backgrounds in sectarian or Kashmiri jihad include Qari Hussain Mehsud who is in charge of TTP's 'suicide wing' (dubbed Ustad-e-Fidayeen) and closely connected to Lashkar-e-Jhangvi known for its vehement anti-Shia stance. Qari Hussain is allegedly responsible for up to 95% of suicide attacks inside Pakistan.<sup>80</sup> Given his ties to LeJ and key leadership within the TTP, it is postulated that Qari cooperated with LeJ cadres to carry out a portion of these suicide attacks, especially those in the Punjab. Other TTP militants, such as Qari Zafar from Karachi, Rana Afzal and Noor Khan, who now operate in Waziristan, allegedly also have links to the LeJ.<sup>81</sup> Qari Muhammad Zafar, known to also be a senior leader of the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, appeared before a group of reporters in South Waziristan in early October 2009, along with the new TTP emir, Hakimullah Mehsud.<sup>82</sup> This again points towards a close cooperation and convergence of interest between Punjabi and Waziristani extremists.

<sup>76</sup> www.alqalamonline.com

<sup>77</sup> Ayesha Siddiqi, "Terror's Training Ground", Newline, September 2009.

<sup>78</sup> Aamir Latif, "Punjabi Taliban Rise in Waziristan", IslamOnline.net, 22 April 2009; Hassan Abbas, "Militancy in Pakistan's Borderlands: Implications for the Nation and Afghan Policy", (October 2010), The Century Foundation.

<sup>79</sup> A Fidayeen attack differs from suicide bombing in that the attacker does not aim to explode himself to instant death; rather he is heavily-armed and fights till the end so as to inflict maximum damage. Despite launching the onslaught in scenarios where death is inevitable, a Fidayeen embarks upon his mission with the intention of escaping. Such a modus operandi has been the hallmark of Pakistani militant group, Lashkar-e-Taiba.

<sup>80</sup> Saifullah Khalid, "سے ذاید گروہوں کی کاروائی تھی 2 لاہور رہمکے", Ummat Karachi, 29 May 2009.

<sup>81</sup> Saif Ullah Khalid, "سے ذاید گروہوں کی کاروائی تھی 2 لاہور رہمکے", Ummat Karachi, 29 May 2009 and "CID Punjab's Red Book lists 91 Most-Wanted Terrorists", Daily Times, 29 August 2009.

<sup>82</sup> "Militant Groups in Punjab", Daily Times, 12 October 2009.

The 30 March 2009 attack on a police academy in the Pakistani city of Lahore shows traces of such a link. The Pakistani authorities alleged that the perpetrators of this assault were TTP elements loyal to Baitullah Mehsud, and also included an Afghan national.<sup>83</sup> However, Baitullah denied any relations to the captured Afghan and refused to comment on other attackers involved/captured in the onslaught, as doing so would “cause complications for their tribe”.<sup>84</sup>

According to other sources, the attackers spoke Saraiki (a dialect predominant in southern Punjab) and Urdu, leading to suspicions that Lashkar-e-Jhangvi was responsible.<sup>85</sup> Later it surfaced that Qari Hussain Mehsud, a close associate of Baitullah, was the mastermind behind the attack.<sup>86</sup>

Indeed a significant number of terrorists operating inside Pakistan today are known to be affiliated with Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, a decisively anti-Shia, hardliner, Sunni Deobandi group with a suicide squad. In addition to attacking the Shia community, saint worshippers, bureaucrats and policemen, the group is believed to be behind most of the attacks against Western targets in Pakistan since 9/11.<sup>87</sup> A close cooperation between LeJ and al-Qaida exists where, apparently, the latter has contracted the former to carry out operations against Western targets.

LeJ’s relationship with al-Qaida was first suspected in 2002 when the group was seen targeting western marks and using suicide bombing tactics. LeJ was incriminated in the killing of Wall Street Journal journalist Daniel Pearl and the bombing of a bus carrying French naval engineers – both incidents took place in Karachi in 2002. Since then LeJ has been accused of involvement in several other attacks on western targets – including the 2006 suicide bombing of the US Consulate in Karachi and the 2008 attack on the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad.

<sup>83</sup> Saeed Shah “Pakistan Blames Lahore Police Academy Siege on Taliban”, The Guardian, 30 March 2009 and “حملہ گرفتار دہشت گرد بیت اللہ محسود کا ساتھی ہے منوان”, Geo Urdu, 30 March 2009.

<sup>84</sup> Haroon Rashid, “حملوں ہم نے کیے ہیں: بیت اللہ محسود”, BBC Urdu, 31 March 2009. It should be mentioned that Baitullah’s ‘confession’ came quick on the heels of a similar claim made by another, relatively unknown, group called Fidayeen-e-Islam. One cannot often trust the credibility of such claims. It is difficult to see what truly lies behind the smokescreen of conflicting news emanating from the region. Hijratullah, the captured Afghan, allegedly disclosed that he was working under the command of Qari Hussain, head of TTP’s Suicide Squad and a close aide of former TTP chief, Baitullah Mehsud.

<sup>85</sup> Waqar Gillani, “12 Killed as Gunmen Storm Police School in Pakistan”, The New York Times, 30 March 2009.

<sup>86</sup> Amir Rana, “Story Behind Munawan Fidayeen Attack”, The News, 1 April 2009.

<sup>87</sup> Amir Mir, “The Swelling Force of Extremism”, The News, 22 March 2009.

The LeJ leadership is comprised of members who fought in the Afghan jihad in the 1980s and 1990s, while the rank and file is drawn from Pakistani madrassas or from among poor, rural families in Punjab and Karachi.<sup>88</sup> In fact, upon its formation in 1996, LeJ set up training camps in Afghanistan (outside Kabul), and was involved in the massacre of the Hazara population during the period from 1998–2001.<sup>89</sup> The post-2001 era saw a return of LeJ from Afghanistan to Pakistan, as well as a ban on the organisation. Shortly afterwards, key LeJ figures were arrested or killed. Arguably, this background led the group to forge links with elements of the Pakistani Taliban.

The mastermind behind the October 2009 attack on the General Head Quarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi was one Aqeel, alias Dr. Usman, who hailed from Rawalpindi and belonged to a group of Punjabi militants linked with TTP.<sup>90</sup> In the aftermath of the GHQ attack, TTP spokesman Azam Tariq allegedly confessed to journalists that the assault was “carried out by our [TTP] Punjabi unit” in retribution for military operations in the north-west of the country.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, the groups thought to be behind the GHQ attack are also suspected of militant involvement in Bajaur, South Waziristan, as well as Swat.<sup>92</sup>

Aqeel served as a Nursing Assistant in the Army Medical Corps and worked briefly with Pakistan Army Surgeon General, Lt Gen Dr Mushtaq, who was killed in a terrorist attack, before absconding in 2006.<sup>93</sup> He joined the Jaish-e-Mohammad and later, served under Qari Saifullah and Ilyas Kashmiri – all actors belonging to Kashmir-focused jihadist groups linked to the ISI.<sup>94</sup> Saifullah Akhtar of Harakat-ul-Jihadi Islami (HuJI) and Ilyas Kashmiri (another senior commander of HuJI and member of Brigade 313) had left their Kashmiri fronts to fight alongside the TTP – both are apparently based in Waziristan.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Amir Rana, “Enemy of the State – Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Militancy in Pakistan”, Jane’s Intelligence Review, 5 August 2009.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Tahir Niaz, “Who is ‘Dr. Usman,’” Daily Times, 12 October 2009.

<sup>91</sup> Omar Waraich, “At least 40 Dead After Pakistan Suicide Attack”, The Independent, 13 October 2009.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> “Taliban Attacked at GHQ Rawalpindi”, Duniya TV, 11 October 2009.

<sup>94</sup> Tahir Niaz, “Who is ‘Dr. Usman?’” Daily Times, 12 October 2009. Qari Saifullah and Ilyas Kashmiri are discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>95</sup> Brigade 313 is a conglomeration of different militant groups, such as HuJI, LeJ and JeM, operating under one banner, Saif Ullah Khalid, “سے ذاید گروہوں کی کاروائی تھی 2 لاہور رہمکے”, Ummat Karachi, 29 May 2009.

Aqeel was also reportedly involved in the attack against the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore in March 2009, the suicide blast on the head of the Medical Corps, Surgeon Lt. Gen. Beg in 2008, and an assassination attempt on former President Pervez Musharraf in 2007.<sup>96</sup> Allegedly, the list of demands issued by Aqeel during the GHQ attack included the trial of Pervez Musharraf and the expulsion of ‘US bases’ inside Pakistan.<sup>97</sup> Initial news reports alleged that the ‘Amjad Farooqi Group’ – a splinter sectarian outfit of LeJ allied with al-Qaida – had claimed responsibility for the GHQ assault. The group was said to have threatened continuation of such attacks till all “US bases are closed, Blackwater security firm is sent packing from Pakistan, and offices of all foreign NGOs are shut down.”<sup>98</sup> Given the nature of the demands listed by Aqeel and the Amjad Farooqi Group, it is speculated that the Punjabi Taliban is preoccupied with avenging the growing US influence in Pakistan and the Pakistani state’s complicity in this regard. To realise this goal, elements previously affiliated to, and familiar with the Army are contracted.

Aqeel’s experiences at the Army Medical Corps presumably left a negative impact on him. Embittered and radicalised, he may have sought vengeance upon his previous employer and the Pakistani army in general. Demanding the expulsion of ‘US bases inside Pakistan’ points at a common perception amongst jihadists in Pakistan, namely that the Pakistani regime is complicit in allowing the US to operate freely inside Pakistan. Aqeel’s case is also symbolic of a trend that is seeing individual/groups previously affiliated with the Pakistani army turn against it.

There is reportedly personnel overlap between the SSP, LeJ and JeM reflecting their common agenda.<sup>99</sup> For example, suspects of the 2002 attack on the French engineers in Karachi confessed belonging to Brigade 313, which is apparently a group consisting of militants from Harakat-ul-Mujahideen, Harakatu-ul Jihad Islami, and LeJ. Similarly, the 2008 Marriott Hotel blast was claimed by Fidayeen-e-Islam, a subset of the Tehrik-e-Taliban. Investigative reports on the Marriott Hotel case concluded that “all evidences of the terrorist bombing led to South Waziristan via Jhang [a Punjabi city where LeJ influence is strong]”.<sup>100</sup> Such an overlap scenario resonates

<sup>96</sup> “Taliban Attacked at GHQ Rawalpindi”, Duniya TV, 11 October 2009.

<sup>97</sup> Omar Waraich, “At least 40 Dead After Pakistan Suicide Attack”, The Independent, 13 October 2009.

<sup>98</sup> Tanvir Siddiqi, “Brig. Col, 4 Soldiers Martyred; 4 Terrorists Killed; 10–15 Hostages Held in Security Office”, Pakistan Observer, 11 October 2009.

<sup>99</sup> Amir Rana, “Enemy of the State – Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Militancy in Pakistan”, Jane’s Intelligence Review, 5 August 2009.

<sup>100</sup> Hassan Abbas, “Defining the Punjabi Taliban Network”, CTC Sentinel, 2 no. 4 (April 2009).

well with the abovementioned quote from NCTA's Tariq Pervez – terrorist activity in Pakistan, especially in Punjab and Sind provinces, relies on networking between different militant components from different regions.

Qari Saifullah Akhtar (mentioned above) is the leader of the Pakistan chapter of Harakat-ul Jihadi Islami (HuJI). His group is aligned with the TTP and active in Bajaur. Most of HuJI's members are said to be Mamond tribesmen from the town of Damadola.<sup>101</sup> Qari Saifullah has played a key role in jihadist activities inside Pakistan and is intimately linked to the 'Punjabi Taliban'.<sup>102</sup> In her posthumous book, Benazir Bhutto accused Saifullah of being the mastermind behind the suicide attack on her welcome procession in Karachi in October 2008. He is also allegedly responsible for the September 2008 bombing of the Marriot Hotel in Islamabad. Akhtar is also tied to the Afghan Taliban, having served as an advisor to Mullah Omar on political affairs.<sup>103</sup> Apparently three ministers and twenty-two judges belonging to the HuJI were part of the Taliban cabinet in Afghanistan.<sup>104</sup>

Ilyas Kashmiri, hailing from the Kotli region of Pakistan-administered Kashmir, is the head of the Kashmir chapter of HuJI. However, since 2004 Kashmiri has been seen participating in militant activity inside Pakistan, aimed specifically at high-profile Pakistani army personnel, pointing towards HuJI–TTP collaboration. Indeed some sources report Kashmiri's outfit – Brigade 313 – to have allied with the Pakistani Taliban in 2007.<sup>105</sup> Kashmiri was also accused of plotting the assassination of current Chief of Army Staff, General Ashfaq Kiyani.<sup>106</sup> He presumably also carried out the murder of Major General (retired) Amir Faisal Alvi, former General Officer Commanding the Special Services Group (SSG), in November 2008, under the directive of the North Waziristani Taliban. The Special Services Group is an elite special operations force of the Pakistani army and Maj. Gen. Amir Faisal Alvi headed the first-ever military operation in North Waziristan in 2004.

Interestingly, according to some sources Ilyas Kashmiri himself once belonged to the SSG, in-charge of training the Afghan Mujahideen to fight against the Soviet army

<sup>101</sup> Mukhtar A. Khan, "A Profile of Militant Groups in Bajaur Tribal Agency", *Terrorism Monitor*, 7 no. 6 (19 March 2009).

<sup>102</sup> Amir Rana, "Ilyas Kashmiri had Planned to Attack COAS", *The News*, 18 September 2009.

<sup>103</sup> Amir Mir, "The Swelling Force of Extremism", *The News*, 22 March 2009.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> Hamid Mir, "How an Ex-army Commando Became a Terrorist", *The News*, 20 September 2009.

<sup>106</sup> Amir Rana, "Ilyas Kashmiri had Planned to Attack COAS", *The News*, 18 September 2009.

in the 1980s.<sup>107</sup> In the early 1990s he joined the HuJI as part of the Pakistani army's campaign to work with Kashmiri militants in Pakistan's proxy war against India. Due to differences with Saifullah Akhtar in the mid-1990s, Kashmiri created Brigade 313 and conducted guerrilla operations against the Indian army with the alleged support of the Pakistani regime.<sup>108</sup>

Ilyas Kashmiri apparently lost the blessing of the Pakistani army when he refused to work under the banner of the Jaish-e-Mohammad and its leader Masood Azhar in the late 1990s and early 2000s. For some years he kept a low profile. However, as with many other groups to be further radicalised during that time, the jihadist in Kashmiri awoke when the Pakistani army raided the Red Mosque in July 2007. He then allegedly moved his Brigade 313 to North Waziristan and joined forces with the local Taliban, carrying out operations at their behest, including the previously mentioned assault on the SSG official and attempts to assassinate Pervez Musharraf.<sup>109</sup>

Apparently since May 2010 Ilyas Kashmiri has also headed a group named Lashkar al-Zil, or Shadow Army. Apparently spanning the Af-Pak border, the group is said to comprise elements hailing from al-Qaida, the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani network and Tehrik-e-Taliban. In light of the diminishing presence of al-Qaida in Afghanistan, an alliance between various jihadist groups poses a more relevant threat. ISAF commanders have reported a heightened role of alliances such as Lashkar al-Zil who work in collaboration rather than pursuing individual agendas. Indeed it is Kashmiri's strong link to al-Qaida that in April 2011 led the US to announce a 5 million dollar reward for anyone who provides information or helps in his arrest.

Maulana Fazlur Rehman Khalil is the leader of Jamiat-ul-Ansar (JuA), another militant group involved in the struggle to secede Jammu and Kashmir from Indian rule. After the ousting of the Taliban in 2001 Khalil, along with hundreds of his fighters, set off to Afghanistan. Presently, it is believed that Khalil maintains very good ties with both the Afghan Taliban and al-Qaida leadership.<sup>110</sup> He was said to be in an al-Qaida training camp that was struck by US missiles in Afghanistan in 1998. At a press conference during the same year Khalil warned that: "For each of us killed or wounded in the cowardly US attack, at least 100 Americans will be killed. I may not

<sup>107</sup> Hamid Mir, "How an Ex-army Commando Became a Terrorist", *The News*, 20 September 2009.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Amir Mir, "The Swelling Force of Extremism", *The News*, 22 March 2009.

be alive, but you will remember my words”.<sup>111</sup> An international dimension to Khalil’s network emerged in 2005 when Umer and Hamid Hayat in Lodi, California were arrested for their alleged connections to Pakistan-based jihadi training camps – namely that belonging to Maulana Khalil in the area of Dhamial in Rawalpindi.<sup>112</sup>

This highlights the nexus between previously Kashmir-based (and state-sponsored) militant groups and the Pakistani Taliban. Disgruntled with the Pakistani state (for personal or political reasons), growing segments of organisations involved in the Kashmir jihad have been shifting camps to the FATA to fight alongside the TTP and against the Pakistani state.

Stronger links are seemingly being forged between militants in the FATA and Punjab, where the latter is seen as offering a pool of recruits who are trained in the tribal belt and can carry out operations in Punjabi cities. Would-be suicide bombers arrested in Punjab confessed to having received training in Waziristan from a camp belonging to Baitullah’s Tehrik-e-Taliban.<sup>113</sup> A 25-year old arrested militant claimed: “There were 15–16 individuals in my group who had received bomb training. Previously they had been operating in Afghanistan; however now we focus solely on Pakistan”.<sup>114</sup>

When asked “What is your justification for killing innocent people?” another 30-year old would-be suicide bomber arrested in Sargodha replied:

When they (TTP) take us for training, they tell us that this is a Jihad. They brainwash us and we believe that this is the true path to attaining paradise. [...] We would obey them at all costs; if they should order us to kill our parents, we shall oblige.<sup>115</sup>

As mentioned previously, involvement of extremists hailing from Punjab in the ongoing Afghan insurgency has long been suspected. According to a recent martyr video – “The Will of Shaikh Ashraf Abid” – Ashraf Abid, a civil engineer from Punjab, allegedly ‘martyred’ himself by attacking Jalalabad airport in Afghanistan. In the video, Abid hails Amir-ul-Momineen (Mullah Omar), and incites Muslims to ‘wake

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Amir Mir, “Double Talk?” Newline, July 2005.

<sup>113</sup> “پنجاب: طالبان کا اثر و نفوذ”, BBC Urdu, 26 June 2009.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

up' and help the 'Mujahideen cause'.<sup>116</sup> The example of Ashraf Abid hints at the role played by Punjabi militants inside Afghanistan.

Further evidence of PT's international nexus could be found in a jihadi video about Turkish and German mujahideen in Waziristan released in November 2009, where a group calling itself the 'Tehrik-e-Islami Taliban Punjab' thanked its Turkish and European 'brothers' for encouraging them with their "funds and support".<sup>117</sup> Earlier the same year, 'Tehrik-e-Taliban Punjab' claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing in Lahore (Punjab) in a Turkish-language statement posted on a Turkish jihadi website. The militants claimed the attack was in response to military operations in Swat.<sup>118</sup> The relationship dynamics between the Punjabi Taliban and militants in FATA and Swat, as well as extremists from Europe, requires further exploration.

<sup>116</sup> "Will of Shaikh Ashraf Abid: The Martyrdom Bomber of Khost", As-Sahab, November 2009, Jamia Hafsa Forum, <http://www.jamiahafsaforum.com/forum/showthread.php?t=3351>, accessed 27 November 2009. Ashraf Abid spoke Urdu with a thick Punjabi accent. Given his academic background – civil engineering – it is probable that Ashraf Abid was linked to the Pakistan-based jihadi group, Lashkar-e-Taiba, known for giving high priority to both jihad and education.

<sup>117</sup> "Yardimkervani", Jamia Hafsa Forum, <http://www.jamiahafsaforum.com/forum/showthread.php?t=2916>, accessed 1 November 2009.

<sup>118</sup> "Tehrik-e-Taliban Punjab Claims Lahore Bombing", Pakistani News, 28 May 2009.

## 5. The role of India

*“While Indian activities largely benefit the Afghan people, increasing Indian influence in Afghanistan is likely to exacerbate regional tensions and encourage Pakistani countermeasures” – General Stanley McChrystal.<sup>119</sup>*

For decades several regional actors, including India, Pakistan and Iran, have used the Afghan stage to contest their power and influence by supporting and promoting specific actors or groups. Other actors such as Japan and China have also spread their tentacles. Japan is the second-largest donor of reconstruction and development aid to Afghanistan and is eyeing it for the ‘Central Asia Plus Japan’ framework – a political initiative to promote dialogue and cooperation between Japan and Central Asian states. China is a major economic stakeholder in Afghanistan, likely to become the largest provider of foreign direct investment in the country. In May 2008 Chinese firms won a \$3.5 billion contract to develop Afghanistan’s massive Aynak copper field. It is also involved in the construction of a power plant and railroads linking the mines to China through Pakistan.

As discussed above, for Pakistan most, if not all, regional policy equates to a zero-sum game with India, as its biggest fear is Indian encirclement and expansion. Even Pakistan’s Afghan policy is one aspect of its Indian policy. It is therefore important to assess the dynamics of India–Afghanistan relationship.

Since the signing of the ‘Friendship Treaty’ between India and Afghanistan in 1950, Kabul has been closer to Delhi than Islamabad. Afghanistan has received the erstwhile support of India, including the backing of Afghan claims to Pakistani Pashtun areas.<sup>120</sup> India, for its part, supported all governments in power in Kabul till its progress was circumscribed by the rise of the Taliban regime. However, even during the time of the anti-Soviet war India managed to expand its development activities in Afghanistan and later teamed up with Iran, Russia and Tajikistan to support the Northern Alliance in its efforts to dampen Taliban dominance. In early 2001, for example, Ahmed Shah Massoud made a secret visit to New Delhi

<sup>119</sup> Tim Sullivan, “Indo-Pakistan Proxy War Heats Up in Afghanistan”, Associated Press, 24 April 2010.

<sup>120</sup> Hassan Abbas, “Militancy in Pakistan’s Borderlands: Implications for the Nation and Afghan Policy”, The Century Foundation (October 2010).

to secure military assistance.<sup>121</sup> For years New Delhi supplied the leaders of the Northern Alliance with food, intelligence and medical care. Having rekindled its connections to the remnants of the Northern Alliance, India is now seen as having sizeable support in the Afghan parliament.

After the ousting of the Taliban in late 2001, India and other regional powers were allowed a fresh opportunity to solidify their strategic foothold in Afghanistan. The Indian embassy in Kabul reopened in December 2001 after having been closed since the Taliban takeover in 1996. Since then India has rooted its presence in Afghanistan by establishing consulates across Afghanistan and developing an elaborate aid program in the country. Till now it has pledged up to US\$1.2 billion to Afghanistan, making it the largest regional donor and a top five global contributor.<sup>122</sup> There are presently 4,000 Indian citizens involved in reconstruction and development programs in Afghanistan.<sup>123</sup>

Indo-Afghan joint projects include hydroelectric projects and building roads: electricity transfer from Central Asia to Afghanistan, the Zaranj and Dellaram road that connects Afghanistan to Iran, and the Chahbahar sea port in Iran to be used for exports/imports between India–Afghanistan–Central Asia as part of a 2003 trade agreement are important strategic programs. Denied access via Pakistan, the Chahbahar route offers a costlier alternative for India to gain access to Central Asian republics rich in energy and mineral resources. Among Pakistan's anxieties related to India is the latter's relations to Central Asian states and access to their vast energy reserves.

New Delhi has built highways in Afghanistan's western deserts and is constructing a new Parliament building. It also offers free medical care in clinics across Afghanistan. Transferring skills and enhancing local capacity is another part of Indian engagement in Afghanistan. On an annual basis India provides hundreds of graduate and post-graduate scholarships to Afghan students. Another cornerstone of Indian soft power lies in its entertainment industry – Bollywood movies and songs, as well as Indian dramas and TV shows – remain highly popular in Afghanistan.

<sup>121</sup> Amin Saikal, (2004) "Mujahideen Islamic Rule, Taliban Extremism and US Intervention" in *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival*, I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: New York.

<sup>122</sup> Jayshree Bajoria, "India–Afghanistan Relations", Council on Foreign Relations, [http://www.cfr.org/publication/17474/indiaafghanistan\\_relations.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/17474/indiaafghanistan_relations.html), updated 22 July 2009; Daya Gamage, "Robert Blake on Listening Tour in Af–Pak and India: But Region is Holbrook's Domain", *Asian Tribune*, 19 March 2010.

<sup>123</sup> "Hamid Karzai to visit India on Monday", 24th April 2010, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/updates.asp?id=103567>

There is little question that the ongoing activities in Afghanistan represent a proxy war between India and Pakistan. The killing of an Indian engineer by the Taliban, as well as bomb attacks on the Indian embassy in Kabul have been interpreted by India and the international community at large as ISI attempts to undermine Indian influence. The February 2009 attack on a Kabul guesthouse popular among Indians revealed that at least one of the victims was an undercover Research and Intelligence Wing (RAW) agent.<sup>124</sup> S. M. Krishna, the external affairs minister, said the killings were “the handiwork of those who are desperate to undermine the friendship between India and Afghanistan”. Echoing this view Arun Sahgal, an expert at the Institute of Defence Studies in New Delhi, states that the attacks are carried out with the objective of diluting the Indian presence in Afghanistan.<sup>125</sup>

The apparent ‘mushrooming’ of Indian consulates in Afghanistan is of particular concern to Islamabad. Along with an embassy in Kabul, India maintains consulates in Jalalabad, Herat, Kandahar and Mazar-e-Sharif. Further fuelling Pakistani paranoia is the increase in numbers of Indian paramilitary personnel in Afghanistan to provide security and protection to its consulates and the Border Roads Organisation, which is constructing the Zarang–Delaram road.

For India the problem of Pakistan-sponsored militant groups has been most menacing. The collective of jihadists including Kashmir/India-focused extremist groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Harakat-ul Mujahideen, and Harakat-ul Jihad-al Islami have links to Afghanistan and varying proximity to the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, Afghan Taliban and al-Qaida. The danger of the Taliban returning to power – and offering support and safe havens to these groups – is therefore a major concern for India. With a presence in Afghanistan and friendly ties to its government, it is also offered an opportunity or new vantage point from where to keep a closer eye on Pakistan.

Just as Pakistan continues its ties to the Afghan Taliban and its satellites in Pakistan, India appears to reserve its links to Afghan warlords. India is interested in ensuring that elements inimical to it or its domestic security do not again mushroom under the auspices of a Taliban regime. That is, it seeks to suppress Islamic militancy as it threatens its strategic goals in the region as well as adversely impacts its domestic

<sup>124</sup> Tim Sullivan, “Indo-Pakistan Proxy War Heats Up in Afghanistan”, Associated Press, 24 April 2010.

<sup>125</sup> Jason Burke and Jon Boone, “Kabul Attacks Apparently Aimed at Indians Leave 17 Dead”, Guardian, 27 February 2010.

security and social fabric by giving impetus to Hindu nationalism and fundamentalism.<sup>126</sup> Therefore the Indian ambition to maintain a strong presence in Afghanistan allows it to monitor as well as influence activities inside Pakistan that are related to its interests.

In fact India's return to the Afghan scene has again unleashed a sparring of sabotage and terrorism charges between India and Pakistan. Pakistan is naturally sceptical of any/all Indian presence in Afghanistan, believing it to be a pretext for intelligence operations aimed at monitoring activities inside Pakistan as well as fomenting violent unrest inside Pakistan – in particular the movements in the border areas of Balochistan and FATA where the Indian secret service Research and Analysis Wing is suspected of aiding insurgents by offering specialised training, weapons and ammunition.

In fact Pakistani officials have suggested that Balochistan is a home to not only RAW, but to a wide array of players:

Every agency in the world, from the Americans to the Iranians to the Afghans to the Europeans to the Arabs, has some kind of footprint in the area. For some reason the British have an extraordinary interest in the area.<sup>127</sup>

However, India, or RAW, feature heavily in allegations made by the Pakistani press and officials. In July 2006 Senator Mushahid Hussain, chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, singled out the Indian consulates in Kandahar and Jalalabad and the Indian embassy in Kabul for conducting “clandestine activities inside Pakistan” and accused RAW of training 600 Balochis in Afghanistan.<sup>128</sup> He also implicated the Afghan intelligence agency, Riyast-e-Amniyat-e-Milli, the Afghan Border Security Force, the Afghan Police, as well as customs officials for working in cahoots with RAW.<sup>129</sup>

New Delhi is known to have provided the Northern Alliance with basic amenities as well as intelligence for a number of years. In addition, the rise and strength of the Balochistan Liberation Army is credited to Indian stoking of the organisation. Sources

<sup>126</sup> Christine Fair, “India in Afghanistan Part I: Strategic Interests, Regional Concerns”, *Foreign Policy*, 26 October 2010.

<sup>127</sup> Cyril Almeida, “All Baloch Shouldn't be Tarred with Same Brush”, *Dawn*, 25 July 2010.

<sup>128</sup> “RAW is Training 600 Balochis in Afghanistan: Mushahid Hussain,” *Boloji.com*, 15 May 2006.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

suggest Indian intelligence to be in contact with Balochi separatists.<sup>130</sup> Furthermore, India's activities are not isolated to the Afghan north, but have also come to envelope southern provinces and the north-east, touching the Pakistani border.<sup>131</sup>

Interestingly, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistani militant leaders have also accused India, along with Iran, NATO and Afghan Security Forces, of arming Shia groups inside FATA whom the local TTP factions have been fighting with increased vigour, especially since the Red Mosque operation in July 2007.

Despite India's alleged operations in Afghanistan, it is possible that Pakistan has inflated the impact this has had with regard to fuelling violent uprisings inside its own boundaries. According to a senior Pakistani army official, given the thick spread of Pakistan's own intelligence in the region, it should be able to monitor and contain Indian/Afghan activities.<sup>132</sup> Also, uprisings in FATA and Balochistan are, to an extent, indigenous to the nation, reflecting local grievances and resentment against the Pakistani establishment, and are therefore legitimate movements with or without 'outside' influence.

Recent events symbolise the tricky dynamics between Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. In October 2010 it was reported that the Afghan regime was holding an unofficial dialogue with the Taliban – including representatives from the Quetta Shura and Taliban leader Mullah Omar – in order to broker an end to the conflict. The US was facilitating the aforementioned dialogue by allowing Taliban leaders to freely travel to Kabul for the peace talks.<sup>133</sup>

However, despite President Karzai's admission that he and other senior government officials had held personal meetings with Taliban leaders in Afghanistan and Pakistan, it appears that Pakistan has been kept out of the loop. Pakistani Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani refused, on 13 October 2010, to comment on whether Pakistan backed the Afghan plan, hinting that Pakistan had not been included around the discussion table: "When Mr Karzai shares his roadmap with America and they share it with us, then we will be in a position to comment on

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Christine Fair, "India in Afghanistan Part I: Strategic Interests, Regional Concerns", *Foreign Policy*, 26 October 2010.

<sup>132</sup> Lt. Gen. Asad Durrani, "Whither Strategic Depth", *The Nation*, 27 May 2006.

<sup>133</sup> "US 'Aiding Afghan-Taliban Talks'", *Al-Jazeera English*, 14 October 2010.

<sup>134</sup> "Pakistan Key to Success of Afghan Peace Talks: Gilani", *Dawn*, 13 October 2010.

it”.<sup>134</sup> Pakistan again insisted on the importance of its involvement in arriving at a resolution: “...nothing will happen without us, we are part of the solution, not part of the problem”.<sup>135</sup> The prospect of an accommodation between Americans and Afghans with the Taliban feeds Pakistani paranoia that they will be left with a hostile – that is pro-Indian – regime in Afghanistan.<sup>136</sup> It has therefore shown itself forceful in pursuing a seat at the negotiating table. This point was reinforced when Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, a high-ranking member of the Quetta Shura, was arrested by the Pakistani ISI who suspected Baradar of indulging in negotiations with the Afghan government that excluded Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the Taliban has denied any engagement with the Afghan government on reconciliatory efforts, calling the claims “baseless propaganda” and “psychological warfare”.<sup>137</sup> The Taliban has reiterated that it shall only hold talks with the ‘enemy’ after all foreign troops have left the region.

India for its part is wary of any dialogue between the Afghan government and the Taliban for it feels such moves to be tantamount to giving legitimacy to the latter, portending some form of power to the Pashtun organisation that is anti-Indian. New Delhi fears a US withdrawal from the Afghan stage will allow Islamabad and the Taliban to resume power and potentially usher in an anti-India government. It has voiced its concerns to both the US and Afghanistan over such aspects of the transition process in Afghanistan that imply providing representation to the Taliban.<sup>138</sup> US backing of recent Kabul–Taliban talks and its openness to allowing some Taliban to join the Afghan government led New Delhi to threaten forming a coalition with Iran, as well as Russia and Central Asian states who are averse to seeing the Taliban poised to takeover.<sup>139</sup>

Afghanistan and India appear eager to expand the latter’s presence in Afghanistan via additional development and economic programs, as well as increased Indian training of Afghan civilian and military personnel. In August 2010 Rangin Spanta, a top National Security Advisor in Afghanistan confirmed: “We would like to

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Shortly after, in a briefing at the State Department, the US insisted that Pakistan had an ‘appropriate role’ in the Afghan-led reconciliation effort. However, the exact nature of this role was unclear; “Pakistan has a Role in Afghanistan, Says US”, Dawn, 21 October 2010.

<sup>137</sup> “Afghan Taliban Denies Reports of Negotiations; Conducts Study”, SITE Intelligence Group, 13 October 2010.

<sup>138</sup> “Afghan Peace Process Cannot be Pak-Driven: Krishna”, Nation, 10 January 2011.

<sup>139</sup> Tim Sullivan, “Indo-Pakistan Proxy War Heats Up in Afghanistan”, Associated Press, 24 April 2010.

expand cooperation with India in order to strengthen Kabul's ability to secure itself".<sup>140</sup>

Islamabad closely gauges the scale of Indian cooperation with Afghanistan and the US, for it preys on Pakistan's two basic insecurities: a) Indian encirclement through increased Indian influence in Afghanistan, and b) the forging of a strategic US–India relationship (in particular, military cooperation and a US–India Civilian Nuclear Deal). Both threaten to deepen the asymmetry in political influence and military capability and relegate Pakistan's power status in South Asia's strategic environment.

In a recent Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Zamir Akram – Pakistan's permanent representative to the UN in Geneva – pointed to Pakistani concerns pertaining to the “unfettered and discriminatory” nuclear cooperation between India and the US.<sup>141</sup> This insecurity is part of the reason that Pakistan has opposed the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) that aims to ban the production of fissile material used as fuel for nuclear weapons. Pakistan perceived India to receive more favourable attention and allowances from the US while this particular US-backed treaty was seen as a prejudiced strike against Pakistan's strategic interests.

India is struggling to secure a role as the leading power within the Indian Ocean basin. It aims to stunt developments injurious to its objectives by using the soft powers of economic and political influence in the region, as well as to promote itself as capable of shaping regional security.<sup>142</sup> India's relationship with Afghanistan, as well as with Iran, can thus be seen as part of its growing efforts to consolidate strategic power beyond the subcontinent, including an outreach towards Central Asia and the Middle East. Indian military capabilities have made a foray into Central Asia through the establishment of the first airbase outside India in Farkhor/Aini, Tajikistan.<sup>143</sup>

Denied access to Central Asia by Pakistan, India has turned to Iran to realise parts of its regional strategic goals. India and Iran have been constructing the North–South Corridor, a route via which goods can move from Indian ports to the Iranian seaport of Chabahar and onwards to Central Asia. The North–South Corridor threatens the Pakistani–Chinese efforts at Gwadar Port (in Pakistan's Baluchistan province) by of-

<sup>140</sup> C. Raja Mohan, “Delhi Must Take on Larger Role, Says Afghan NSA”, Express India, 1 September 2010.

<sup>141</sup> “Pakistan Says US–India Style Nuclear Deals Impacting on Its Security”, The Nation, 14 October 2010.

<sup>142</sup> Christine Fair, “India in Afghanistan and Beyond: Opportunities and Constraints”, (September 2010), The Century Foundation.

<sup>143</sup> Ritu Sharma, “India Shelves Proposal to Setup Airbase in Mongolia”, Thaindian News, 18 September 2009.

fering a more secure means of transporting goods into Afghanistan and Central Asia. It also hurts Pakistani efforts to retain hegemony over trade with Afghanistan.

Alternatives to the ambush-prone Pakistani logistical route for transporting NATO supplies are also underway. In November 2010 an agreement was reached between NATO and Russia regarding the expansion of a supply route from Europe to Afghanistan via Russia and Central Asia for the two-way transportation of NATO equipment to Europe.<sup>144</sup>

Iran and India also share a mutual, overarching concern: the threat posed by the constellation of Sunni militant groups spread across the area, many of which receive support from the Pakistani state. The danger of the Taliban returning to power in Afghanistan and freely offering safe havens and support to these militant factions is of particular concern to regional actors. The fall of the Taliban regime afforded both India and Iran an opportunity to curb this threat and invigorate their involvement in Afghanistan, spending millions of dollars on education and reconstruction efforts. However, in the case of Iran the situation is complicated due to its proxy war with the US. By supplying training, ammunition and financial aid to the Taliban, Iran simultaneously attempts a low-risk measure of applying pressure on the United States.

India–US relations, on the other hand, continue to flourish. Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, Robert Blake, has emphasised the importance of a strategic relationship with India:

Few relationships around the world matter more to our collective future, or hold greater promise for constructive action on the challenges that matter most to all of us, than the partnership between the United States and India.<sup>145</sup>

Among the key pillars of the relationship are defence cooperation and counterterrorism.

American endorsement of a permanent seat for India on the UNSC added to the Pakistani chagrin. The Pakistani Minister of Foreign Affairs stated: “India’s conduct in

<sup>144</sup> “NATO Endorses Afghan Exit Strategy”, Al-Jazeera English, 20 November 2010.

<sup>145</sup> Daya Gamage, “Robert Blake on Listening Tour in Af–Pak and India: But Region is Holbrooke’s Domain”, Asian Tribune, 19 March 2010.

relations with its neighbours and its continued flagrant violations of Security Council resolutions on Jammu & Kashmir are reasons to discredit India's bid for a permanent seat at the Security Council", and he urged the US to "take a moral view and not base itself on any temporary expediency or exigencies of power politics".<sup>146</sup>

Defence cooperation between India and the United States dates back to 1991.<sup>147</sup> Although an aspect of Indo-US strategic dialogue that is still evolving, this defence and military partnership between the two countries is particularly antagonising for Islamabad.

President Obama's visit to New Delhi in November 2010 took the Indo-US partnership to a steeper trajectory. The talks focused on:

The sale, purchase and joint development of military equipment; transfer of military technology; intelligence sharing; cooperation on counter-terrorism and counter-proliferation; jointly providing relief and succour after natural calamities; coordination in transnational anti-drug trafficking activities; joint patrolling of sea lanes of communication against piracy and terrorism; and, joint military exercises. It also includes working together to maintain regional and international peace and stability under a cooperative security framework.<sup>148</sup>

In the 1950s India received American assistance in developing its nuclear energy under the Atoms for Peace program. However, after India refused to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1968 and later tested its first nuclear bomb in 1974, it was marginalised by the US. Since 2000 this trend has been reversed and the US is seen to increasingly cooperate with India in the fields of space flight, missile defence and satellite technology.<sup>149</sup>

On 1 October 2008, after a three-decade moratorium on nuclear trade with India, the United States approved an agreement that would facilitate nuclear cooperation with India, paving the way for US assistance to India's civilian nuclear energy program as

<sup>146</sup> Pakistan on US Support for India's Bid for a Permanent Seat on UNSC (8 November 2010), Ministry of Foreign Affairs Pakistan website, [http://www.mofa.gov.pk/Press\\_Releases/2010/Nov/PR\\_279.htm](http://www.mofa.gov.pk/Press_Releases/2010/Nov/PR_279.htm), accessed 17 November 2010.

<sup>147</sup> General (ret.) V. P. Malik, "India-US Defence Relations", *South Asia Monitor*, 20 October 2010.

<sup>148</sup> Brigadier (ret.) Gurmeet Kanwal, "Indo-US Defence Cooperation: Set to Chart a New Trajectory", *Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis*, 23 November 2010.

<sup>149</sup> Jayshree Bajoria, "The US-India Nuclear Deal", *Council on Foreign Relations*, 3 November 2010.

well as a joint effort to expand work in energy and satellite technology. In exchange India can purchase nuclear technology and material that could potentially be used for nuclear bombs. Not having received a similar deal from Washington, such apparent US favouritism towards India planted seeds of suspicion in Pakistan, intensifying both regional tension and Indo–Pak rivalry.

While the US fills Pakistani armouries, India too benefits from American manufacturers and technology. During Obama's Delhi visit in November 2010, a \$3.5 billion defence deal was signed between the US and India. India had previously announced spending of up to \$30 billion on its military by 2012.<sup>150</sup> India's newfound proclivity to turn to the US in order to meet its military aircraft requirements speaks of the rapidly evolving relationship between the two countries. Bilateral exercise programs have also grown, strengthening their military-to-military relationship.<sup>151</sup> India has often voiced its concern at the US military aid and arms given to Pakistan to fight terrorism, believing that a portion of it is diverted against India. As international military forces reconfigure their presence, it seeks validation from Washington that its interests will remain intact.

Pakistan remains embittered by US–India civil–nuclear energy deals. In September 2010 Pakistan's foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi complained:

We (US–Pak) were traditional allies – the Indians remained in the Soviet camp. [...] Ever since that changed, the American approach has changed. Today, America values India a lot.<sup>152</sup>

In response to Washington's perceived shift towards India, Islamabad seeks to strengthen ties to Beijing. The Sino–Pak relationship has always been dubbed an 'all-weather' friendship, owing not least to their mutual antipathy to India. China has provided Pakistan with military aid and, increasingly, infrastructure development. Along with building infrastructure, nuclear energy investments are also underway. In February 2010 China agreed to build two nuclear reactors in Pakistan. China has also invested heavily in developing the strategic port of Gwadar in Pakistan's Balochistan province to potentially serve as a major conduit to Central Asian trade. China

<sup>150</sup> "India, US to Sign \$3.5 Billion Defence Deal", United Press International, 28 September 2010.

<sup>151</sup> Daya Gamage, "Robert Blake on Listening Tour in Af–Pak and India: But Region is Holbrook's Domain", Asian Tribune, 19 March 2010.

<sup>152</sup> Ishaan Tharoor, "At Odds with US, Pakistan Deepens Ties with China", Time, 1 November 2010.

therefore relies on Pakistan in order to make strategic inroads into South and Central Asia, and to dim the rising star of India in the region. Moreover, in August 2010 it was reported that Chinese soldiers were engaged in railroad works and reparation of the Karakoram Highway in Pakistan's Northern Areas in order to gain speedier access to the Gulf. Up to 11,000 troops of the People's Liberation Army were allegedly present in Gilgit-Baltistan.<sup>153</sup> Islamabad's facilitation of Chinese access to the Gulf raises obvious concerns in Washington. However, at present, although media access is restricted in the region, recent reports point at greater, and more long-term Chinese presence in the area.

During a rare three-day visit to Pakistan in December 2010, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao met Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani at the Pakistan-China Friendship Centre – a new centre dedicated to promoting cultural exchange between the two nations – in Islamabad to ink trade and investment deals of up to \$35 billion.<sup>154</sup> By comparison, India and China signed deals worth \$16 billion shortly before Wen's arrival in Islamabad.

Wen further commended Pakistan's fight against terrorism and insisted the international community 'affirm' that and "respect the path of development chosen by Pakistan",<sup>155</sup> hinting at the lack of trust and the criticism levelled at Pakistan by the United States and many Western countries.

<sup>153</sup> Selig S. Harrison, "China's Discreet Hold on Pakistan's Northern Borderlands", *New York Times*, 26 August 2010.

<sup>154</sup> James Lamont and Farhan Bokhari, "A History of China-Pakistan Ties", *Financial Times*, 19 December 2010.

<sup>155</sup> "China Pakistan Bonds Strengthened", *Al-Jazeera English*, 19 December 2010.

## 6. The role of the United States

Pakistan's motivations in Afghanistan as well as general regional and foreign policy rest to a great extent on developments related to future US politics in the region. According to the United States and most of the international community, Pakistan appears selective in its approach to counter-terrorism, due partially to Islamabad's apparent clash with the current Afghan government that it views as hostile. It is questionable how much longer Pakistan's double game tactics can last as it already lacks a considerable amount of legitimacy. Widespread criticism of its willingness to engage in an effective counter-terrorism strategy has left Pakistan under immense pressure to 'do more.'

Pakistan continues to prove its centrality to the Afghan conflict mainly out of fear of being internationally marginalised and because of its reliance on US alliance and money. Since 2001 Pakistan has been the recipient of up to \$18 billion aid from the US, two-thirds of which has gone directly to the war effort and machinery. This amount is roughly double the total US arms imported by Pakistan from 1947–2003.<sup>156</sup> In October 2010 the US announced a \$2 billion military and security aid package – including equipment needed in counter-insurgency operations – to Pakistan over a five-year time period. This package is to complement a \$7.5 billion civilian aid deal approved in 2009 and also spanning five years.<sup>157</sup>

Pakistan struggles to retain its status as a frontline state. Frail in stature compared to India, Pakistan needs to constantly secure US support, which has historically been granted only intermittently based on strategic priorities of the time – for instance, previously during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and currently as a major US ally in the war on terror. Competing with India for influence in Afghanistan, Pakistan vies to remain the preferred ally of the US – a position from which it is feeling gradually dethroned. The role of the US, therefore, is vital to Pakistan's regional interests.

Yet, Pakistan continues to shoulder distrust and criticism from the Obama administration regarding the former's sincerity in tackling militancy, especially that related to acts of terror inside Afghanistan and Kashmir/India. This is despite the US–Pakistan

<sup>156</sup> Imran Bajwa, "Pakistan: Forty Thousand Killed and More than One Hundred Thousand Injured During War on Terror", Asian Human Rights Commission Statement (11 November 2010).

<sup>157</sup> Kim Ghattas, "US Announces \$2bn Military Aid Package for Pakistan", BBC, 22 October 2010.

strategic dialogue that started in 2009 and was designed to bridge the widening trust gap between the two countries.

A White House report from 2010 highlighted the Pakistan Army's reluctance to conduct military operations that would "put it in direct conflict with Afghan Taliban or al-Qaida's forces in North Waziristan".<sup>158</sup> In January 2011 at a joint press conference with Hamid Karzai, Vice President Biden said "many hard days lie ahead" as more pressure is required on the Taliban from Pakistan's side of the border.<sup>159</sup> It also addressed the inability of the army to govern territory seized from militants.

Recent terrorist attempts in New York City, combined with a sharp increase in casualties to foreign troops in Afghanistan at the hands of supposedly Pakistan-based militants leaves the US feeling short-changed for the generous amount of dollars paid to Pakistan. After the failed car bomb attempt in New York's Times Square, the US announced a review of the options for a retaliatory unilateral strike on Pakistan should a successful attack, linked to Pakistan's tribal belt, take place on American soil.<sup>160</sup> Another report by a bipartisan US task force suspects an unstable US–Pakistan relationship and considers it a 'strategic reality' to look at 'alternatives' should the United States experience an attack on its soil that can be traced back to Pakistan.

American frustration with Pakistan is rooted in Pakistan's perceived unwillingness to attack extremist havens in North Waziristan. In 2010, 104 of the 118 US drone strikes were aimed at North Waziristan. An explanation for this lies in Islamabad's strategic considerations vis-à-vis Afghanistan/India whereby it finds it strategically necessary to maintain pro-GoP Taliban elements active in the Afghan war theatre. Another reason could be that it cannot afford to have more enemies, especially in the form of the powerful Haqqani network and its satellites who may join forces with prevailing anti-state elements, thus leaving Pakistan in an even frailer position.

The Pakistan Army has denied any hesitancy in combating militants in the tribal agency. A reason cited by Pakistani officials has been the need to consolidate gains made across the tribal belt and to recuperate from the high levels of casualties suffered during the 2009 military operations. General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani, Pakistan's

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> "Biden Presses Pakistan on Security", Al-Jazeera English, 12 January 2011.

<sup>160</sup> Greg Miller, "Options Studied for a Possible Pakistan Strike", The Washington Post, 29 May 2010.

chief of army staff, insisted in early 2010 that it was implementing a step-by-step strategy where it was important to first consolidate a hold in South Waziristan and other agencies before embarking on a new army offensive.

Despite strong scepticism Pakistan continues to receive considerable western backing. This is to say that Pakistani interests continue to be appeased since US policies in Afghanistan depend a great deal on Pakistan for transportation of goods, complicity in fighting al-Qaida targets, and so on. Despite efforts to craft alternatives, there remains a heavy reliance on Pakistan's logistical support. Daily, trucks carrying NATO supplies travel via Pakistan's tumultuous north-western region to Afghanistan and are often torched or prevented from passing through. While claiming plausible deniability Pakistan can calibrate such attacks in tune with the political necessity or demands of the time. For example, in October 2010 the GoP was outraged when a US military helicopter pursuing militants on the Af-Pak border accidentally targeted and killed Pakistani soldiers. In the aftermath of the incidence ISAF-bound fuel trucks sitting at the Af-Pak border were destroyed by insurgents, forcing a public apology by the United States.

American troops in Afghanistan have tripled under Obama's presidency with the last of the reinforcements arriving only recently to the country. Despite the plan devised by the Obama administration in November 2010 that would pave the way for ending the combat mission in Afghanistan by 2014, leaving the control of security to Afghans,<sup>161</sup> NATO secretary general Anders Fogh Rasmussen insisted it would stay in Afghanistan after the transition in a 'supporting role:'

President Karzai and I have signed an agreement on a long-term partnership between NATO and Afghanistan that will endure beyond our combat mission. [...] To put it simply, if the Taliban or anyone else aims to wait us out, they can forget it. We will stay as long as it takes to finish our job.<sup>162</sup>

For Pakistan, the possibility of US withdrawal from Afghanistan in the coming years eerily echoes the not-too-distant past when Pakistan felt abandoned in the aftermath of the Soviet defeat. This time around there is the added anxiety related to American propping of India as a South Asian power. Therefore, preserving the Taliban asset

<sup>161</sup> Peter Baker and Rod Nordland, "US Plan Offers Path to Ending Combat in Afghanistan", The New York Times, 14 November 2010.

<sup>162</sup> "NATO Endorses Afghan Exit Strategy", Al-Jazeera English, 20 November 2010.

insures Pakistan against the eventuality of a US/NATO departure, when it will need to fill the vacuum to prevent another regional powers, especially India, from claiming ascendancy. Afghanistan relies on international troops in its country so as to avoid domestic and regional power games from escalating and threatening any semblance of peace. Pakistan may ideally prefer a prolonged ISAF presence in Afghanistan for it guarantees security in the region and can neutralise India's attempt to acquire dominant influence in the country. It is partly due to Pakistan's dependence on the US in this regard that the latter can push Islamabad for better conduct.

However, with anti-Americanism peaking in Pakistan, any coercion tactics from Washington are likely to further disrupt the political landscape at home. Despite Pakistan's role as a key US ally in the fight against terror, the relationship between the two countries has been lukewarm at best. Criticism that Pakistan is 'not doing enough' further exacerbates resentment against the US which is seen as unappreciative of the heavy losses incurred by Pakistan at the hands of militants inflamed by the US and NATO presence in the region. The war on terror has so far claimed at least forty thousand Pakistani lives and injured over a hundred thousand, while only fourteen Americans have lost their lives in Pakistan.<sup>163</sup> More Security Force personnel have been killed during this time than during the Pak-Indo war of 1965.

Anti-US sentiment amongst Pakistanis has grown in recent years. A 2009 Gallup Survey revealed that 59% of Pakistanis believed the US to pose the greatest threat to their nation, while only 11% thought the Taliban to be a risk.<sup>164</sup> The escalating number of reported US drone attacks in the tribal areas, coupled with a widespread belief that Pakistan is fighting 'America's war,' suspicion of a 'US invasion of Pakistan' as seen with the expanding US embassy in Islamabad and the alleged presence of private security contractors in the country have all fed strong anti-US sentiments amongst Pakistanis. Khost in Afghanistan came to be the launching pad for drone strikes. The campaign itself officially commenced in July 2008 and has since then gained momentum. The relationship between the two countries was further strained after the killing of two Pakistanis at the hands of Raymond Davis, a US diplomat suspected of being a spy by most Pakistanis.<sup>165</sup>

<sup>163</sup> Imran Bajwa, "Pakistan: Forty Thousand Killed and More than One Hundred Thousand Injured During War on Terror", Asian Human Rights Commission Statement (11 November 2010).

<sup>164</sup> "US Public Enemy No 1 Gallup Survey Pakistan 2009", Press TV, downloaded from YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dV7rs7LZ3wk>, accessed 1 October 2009.

<sup>165</sup> Qandeel Siddique, "Everybody Hates Raymond: Implications for the Deep Schisms Within Pakistan-USA Alliance", DIIS Comment, 14 March 2011, <http://www.diis.dk/sw106128.asp>.

Use of heavy air strikes, including drone attacks by the United States and NATO in Afghanistan and Pakistan, have severely damaged the former's legitimacy in the eyes of the local populace who increasingly view western forces as foreign occupiers. This is partly due to the collateral damage and general chaos and displacement stemming from such strikes. In the latter half of 2006 at least 2,100 air strikes were carried out in Afghanistan.<sup>166</sup> Similarly US drone strikes inside Pakistan's tribal region have also spiked, especially since 2008.

Furthermore, there is a crisis of confidence in the local government where the GoP sits in a precarious position. The civilian leadership does not have the trust or backing of the people and faces a multitude of challenges on all fronts – ranging from terrorist threats to flood relief efforts to widespread poverty – all of which can have deleterious effects on the stability of the Government. The devastating floods in July and August 2010 displaced hundreds of thousands of people across Pakistan and destroyed major infrastructure. The state and army's focus has been on recovery and relief, arguably providing militants with the space to regain lost areas.<sup>167</sup>

The Pakistani sense of sovereignty needs a political revamping before GoP will be able to play an effective role in fighting extremism or fighting for regional cooperation. To achieve this will require a cessation of US military operations on Pakistani soil, for everything that further undermines Pakistan's sense of security will sooner or later undermine security in the entire South Asian theatre.

Added to this is the abovementioned fear that the US will exclude Pakistan from the nascent national reconciliation process in Afghanistan, leaving Pakistan paranoid that a deal that does not protect its interests and which is favourable to India may be brokered. Pakistan has complained of not being informed as to which Taliban leaders are meeting with delegates from the Karzai government.<sup>168</sup>

According to some experts the ultimate cause for the unstable security situation in the Af-Pak theatre boils down to Washington's unperceptive approach to Pakistan.<sup>169</sup> It appears that the United States is yet to take cognisance of the full effect of its policies

<sup>166</sup> "US Air Strikes Climb Sharply in Afghanistan", New York Times, 17 November 2006.

<sup>167</sup> Hassan Abbas, "Militancy in Pakistan's Borderlands: Implications for the Nation and for Foreign Policy", The Century Foundation (October 2010).

<sup>168</sup> Robert Grenier, "A History of Tragedy and Farce", Al-Jazeera English, 1 November 2011.

<sup>169</sup> Christine Fair, "India in Afghanistan and Beyond: Opportunities and Constraints", The Century Foundation, September 2010.

in the Indian subcontinent and Afghanistan. Pakistan's reading of US manoeuvres in the region, especially vis-à-vis India and Afghanistan, has enduring consequences as it decides the steps Islamabad will take in routing out extremism.

Pakistan continues to carry resentment against the US for relying on the Northern Alliance warlords to provide security and for failing to honour its commitment to not let the Alliance sway power in Kabul. Arguably, Pakistan felt justified in its support for Taliban elements fighting in Afghanistan as it witnessed the US support Afghan warlords. From a Pakistani perspective the US paved the way for Indian proxies to regain greater clout in Afghanistan.

Adding fuel to the fire is the recent American discourse to push for an expanded campaign of group raids and operations across Pakistan's tribal areas. Disappointed with Pakistani efforts to root out militants and overcome with urgency given the imminent drawdown in troops from Afghanistan, the US is contemplating routine incursions into Pakistan.<sup>170</sup> Already the Paktika Defence Force – one of six CIA-trained Afghan special operations forces used against insurgents throughout Afghanistan – has on at least two occasions crossed the border into Pakistan to carry out raids.<sup>171</sup> In September 2008, American commandos allegedly raided Pakistan's tribal area, killing a number of people suspected of being militants. Similarly, in October 2010, a US military helicopter pursuing militants on the Af-Pak border accidentally killed a group of Pakistani soldiers. However, the routes were re-opened shortly afterwards, reflecting the theatrics of power play between the two countries.

<sup>170</sup> Mark Mazzetti and Dexter Filkins, "US Military Seeks to Expand Raids in Pakistan", *The New York Times*, 20 December 2010.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

## 7. Conclusion

This report aims to analyse Pakistan–Afghanistan relations and the direction Pakistan’s future policy towards Afghanistan is likely to take in light of recent developments. To this end, Afghanistan–Pakistan relations and the significance of ‘strategic depth’; the shifting of militant movement from Pakistan’s south and east to the country’s western border and Afghanistan–India relations and India–US cooperation and their implications on Pakistani policy, are all factors that are analysed.

The issues of the Durand Line and ‘Pashtunistan’ remain on the boil. International and regional efforts including the Tripartite Commission should strongly enforce and incentivise Pakistan and Afghanistan to recognise and effectively patrol their border. Economic cooperation – in particular bilateral trade and streamlining of transit trade – and the role of the Pakistan–Afghanistan Joint Economic Commission should also be encouraged. Bilateral trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan has grown manifold since 2000, and is expected to reach \$5 billion by 2015. An important transit-trade pact to open eighteen roads and border crossings, as well as access to the strategic Gwadar and Qasim seaports – allowing Afghan farmers and merchants to export their products to the region and develop trade links to central Asian republics – was signed in July 2010. Like India, Pakistan has committed hundreds of billions of dollars to reconstruction programs in Afghanistan, including key road linkages. Steps such as these are in the right direction towards greater peace and stability in the region.

Arguably, the Taliban movements in Afghanistan and now in Pakistan represent Pashtun solidarity and nationalism. With a Taliban movement that has gained sway in Pakistan’s north-west, many segments of which vigorously support the Afghan Taliban, the idea of ‘Pashtunistan’ has not dwindled. The Afghan position has been dismissive of the July 1947 referendum held by the British and Afghanistan has never accepted the Durand Line as a legitimate boundary. The Government of Pakistan is unlikely to cede 20% of its (Pashtun) territory, especially in light of nascent nationalist insurgency in Balochistan, and forgo the strategic advantage it affords Pakistani intentions vis-à-vis Afghanistan. Pakistan also only recently rechristened its North West Frontier Province ‘Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’ after the 75% of ethnic Pashtuns inhabiting it. Furthermore, Pakistan’s national economy continues to carry the burden of a massive Afghan refugee population, and Pakistan can use this as a bargaining chip with Kabul.

Afghanistan–Pakistan history is pocked with distrust and cross-border interference. The latest barrage of misgivings centres on mutual perceptions of the other country's government as hostile, as well as mutual allegations that the neighbouring country is responsible for the fomentation of insurgency on one's own soil. This mistrust runs deep in the psyche of both countries. Afghan leaders such as Daud Khan, a staunch advocate of 'Pashtunistan,' funnelled support to militias in Pakistan's Bajaur tribal agency, along with sending troops across the border. Today, too, Pakistan regularly points an accusing finger at Afghanistan for supporting and stoking uprisings against the Pakistani regime. For its part, Pakistan has, for decades and even after 9/11 and its apparent policy turnabout, supported Pashtun individuals and groups in Afghanistan. Presently cross-border skirmishes between Pakistani and Afghan soldiers are reported. While the two nations continue the blame game – some of which may stand the test of time – allegations also serve the domestic political purpose of compensating for poor governance at home.

In this context the scenarios available to Pakistan include: maintenance of the status quo where Pakistan allows for destabilising factors to operate in the region; a change of attitude and fighting militant elements head-on, especially those in North Waziristan and affiliated with the Afghan Taliban; or opting for a regional solution with a focus on resolving the Kashmir issue as well as focusing on economic trade between the countries.

The steps Pakistan takes with respect to its policy towards Afghanistan will depend significantly on how the endgame in Afghanistan plays out. For Pakistan, the endgame in Afghanistan should prioritise installing a pro-Islamabad government in Kabul. For many years ISI's Afghan Bureau supported Afghan fighters and groups considered friendly to Pakistani interests – the 'friendliest' of which came to be the Taliban. It is widely believed that the ISI, or some segments of it, continue their support of these militant factions and their satellites (such as the Muqami Tehrik-e-Taliban) inside Pakistan.

Pakistan's efforts up until now relate to its forestalling of a perceived hostile Indian encirclement. Since 2001 Pakistan has insisted that the new Kabul government include 'moderate' Taliban. A decade on, this suggestion appears to have been taken on board by the US who now increasingly back talks with the Taliban.

India for its part is wary of any dialogue with the Taliban seeing this as tantamount to an anti-India government in Kabul. It has repeatedly voiced its concern to both the

United States and Afghanistan regarding its opposition to allowing representation to the Taliban as part of the transition process in Afghanistan.

So, how the endgame actually ‘ends’ will determine to a large extent the future path for Pakistan. Whether Pakistani interests will take precedence over Indian worries is yet to be seen. At present the United States appears to be increasing its diplomatic efforts to ensure a regional solution that would heed both Indian and Pakistani concerns.

This report has also argued that Afghanistan is a new arena for Pakistan and India to play out their perennial rivalry. A gradual Talibanization of Kashmiri militancy has been observed in the post-9/11 era. Factions of Kashmir-oriented groups have shifted to Pakistan’s western border to fight alongside the Taliban and a focus of these groups has been to challenge the Indian presence in Afghanistan.

The view that the India–Pakistan conflict can be analogised to and is rooted in the Kashmir problem is inadequate, for other drivers of the rivalry prevail. For example, the classical civilisation argument sees the recurrent Islamic and Hindu narratives – reflecting a religio-cultural incompatibility – as deepening the divide between the two countries. In a presidential address in Lahore in 1940, Mohammad Ali Jinnah explained why a separate homeland for Muslims is needed:

The Muslims and Hindus belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, and literatures. They neither inter-marry nor inter-dine and, indeed, they belong to two different civilisations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions.<sup>172</sup>

Within the paradigm of pure power politics, the relationship between India and Pakistan rotates around a power asymmetry where India – a more dominant state – is confronted by a smaller contender as its neighbour. The situation is rendered more complex as both possess nuclear weapons and wield two of the largest armies in the world. Although this creates an effective deterrence to the point of stalemate, Pakistan remains in the shadow of a giant (India) it struggles to stand up to. Also, as discussed above, the role of outside powers and in particular the United States cannot be overstated. From Pakistan’s viewpoint the United States is increasingly seen as favouring India over the erstwhile Pakistan–United States alliance. This changing configuration further tilts the scales, aggravating Indo–Pak relations.

<sup>172</sup> “March 23, 1940: The Lahore Resolution”, Pakistan Times, 23 March 2005.

Pakistani policymakers feel flanked between two hostile neighbours with whom they have had territorial disputes since the birth of the Pakistani state. Its support for the Taliban government therefore indulged two key objectives: it mitigated the tension stemming from the Durand Line question as well as lingering Pashtun nationalism, and it provided Pakistan with strategic depth vis-à-vis India. With the Karzai administration – pro-Indian and seemingly fixated on its conflicts with Pakistan, especially the terrorist wave from the Pak to Afghan side of the Durand Line – now in power in Kabul, Pakistan sees its strategic advantage diminishing.

While parts of the Pakistani establishment remain tied to the Afghan Taliban and its satellites in Pakistan, India appears in turn to be preserving its links to Afghan warlords. India will endeavour to ensure that elements inimical to its domestic security do not again mushroom under the auspices of a Taliban regime – that is, India seeks to suppress Islamic militancy to gain ground, because Islamic militancy impacts its domestic security and social fabric and threatens its regional goals. Bases in Afghanistan also offer it a new seat of influence from which to monitor its nuclear nemesis: Pakistan. With a history of amicable ties to Afghanistan and the present expansion of the Indian presence in Afghanistan (including Indian training of Afghan civilian and military personnel), India is unlikely to let the opportunity to gain influence in Kabul slip into the hands of its Pakistani counterparts.

India's growing political, military and economic ties to both Afghanistan and United States leave Pakistan feeling relegated and marginalised in the eyes of its so-called ally in the War on Terror as well as those of the international community at large. American endorsement of a permanent seat for India on the UNSC and Pakistani concerns pertaining to 'unfettered and discriminatory' nuclear cooperation – as well as increased bilateral military exercise programs coupled with Indian reliance on the US to meet its military aircraft requirements – only add to the Pakistani chagrin.

Regardless of deepening security threats from both the Taliban and other Pakistan-based proxies operating against Indian personnel and institutions in Afghanistan, India thus far appears committed to staying in Afghanistan. With the drawdown in US/NATO troops imminent, both Pakistan and India are keen on ensuring that their interests are protected in Afghanistan. It therefore appears unlikely that Pakistan will revise its utilisation of militant proxies or divert from its stance of supporting such elements as a hedge against increasing Indian presence. Using terrorist groups as strategic assets and its frontline state status as a bargaining chip it will continue to maintain its centrality to the Afghan conflict and its relevance for regional security.

Insofar as Pakistan feels sidelined in favour of India and the latter continues impressing its footprint in Afghanistan, the continuum of politics being played out by Pakistani is unlikely to break. As the US executes a military withdrawal, Pakistan is further impelled to not deviate from its political course. From Pakistan's standpoint, supporting Pashtun insurgents is one of the few avenues open to it for exerting any influence over Afghanistan, especially if non-Pashtuns sit at the helm of power in Afghanistan, providing India with leverage.

At the same time Pakistan finds itself under a geopolitical compulsion to be cordial to Afghanistan so as to avoid driving Kabul any further into the arms of New Delhi and to keep up a peaceful dialogue with India that would not provoke it to attempt more destabilising manoeuvres in Pakistan's border insurgencies. It is also under pressure from the international community, especially the United States, to 'do more' in tackling terrorism. The question then is how Pakistan will walk this tightrope of double-appeasement.

Pakistan's attempt at forestalling a scenario of being surrounded by hostile neighbours has contributed to the present-day situation where the security of India, Pakistan and Afghanistan has become inseparable. FATA now acts as a reservoir of militants to be managed by the Pakistani military to conduct asymmetric warfare in both Afghanistan and Kashmir.

Another issue addressed in the present report is the role of the United States in dictating Pakistani policy vis-à-vis Afghanistan. This relates to what has already been discussed, especially with regard to the process and outcome of the ongoing endgame in Afghanistan. However it must also consider the nature of the relationship between Pakistan and the US, as well the inadequacy of US policy in the region.

An aggressive drone campaign inside Pakistan and a seeming violation of Pakistan's sovereignty has led many Pakistanis as well as international commentators to believe that the US is carrying out an 'undeclared war' with Pakistan. There is a need for a revision of US policy in the region that is more comprehensive and less reliant on the use of military power.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has suggested that things may be "changing".<sup>173</sup> It does not appear, given the current circumstances, that Pakistan has the incentives

<sup>173</sup> "Pakistan Used Terror as Hedge Against India: Clinton", MSN News, 13 November 2010.

to bring about such a change to its policies. Similarly, the notion that transferring six divisions from the border with India represents a significant departure from Pakistan's previous position may be misguided, as Pakistan persists in its support for pro-Afghan Taliban elements as well as Kashmir/India-focused militant groups, while New Delhi continues its support of the Baloch separatists as well as of a range of former militia leaders and Afghan warlords.<sup>174</sup>

As it becomes more apparent that stability and security cannot be granted to Af-Pak by the US or the UN alone, regional security arrangements are being brought to the fore in academic and policymaking circles.

Within the regional security paradigm, where the degree of security interdependence is seen to be greater at a regional rather than global level, some scholars have argued that India may be the sole regional actor with the "incentive and capability to deal with negative security externalities emanating from Afghanistan".<sup>175</sup> India accounts for over 75% of the South Asian population, GDP, and military expenditure, 79% of the total FDI inflows of South Asia<sup>176</sup> and almost 65% of its geographical area and armed forces and, moreover, its military might exceeds the combined strength of all other members.

While the ISAF presence may be favourable in terms of containing the Indo-Pak proxy war, other regional powers such as Iran, Russia and China do not look kindly on a US/NATO presence in Afghanistan, and despite the fact that the resurgence of the Taliban would create domestic nuisances in most of these countries, they would prefer for the foreign troops to leave. Iran especially foresees a possible US military intervention if it continues to displease the US and international community by not ending its nuclear program. There is, therefore, a clash of interests on a regional level that could impact Pakistani interests, as well as cast doubt over the viability of a regional solution.

The Afghan authorities have voiced and reiterated cooperation as one of the cornerstones in reaching a political solution to the militant crisis in the Af-Pak war theatre, along with the reintegration of Taliban foot soldiers into Afghan society

<sup>174</sup> Tim Sullivan, "Indo-Pakistan Proxy War Heats Up in Afghanistan", Associated Press, 24 April 2010.

<sup>175</sup> Melanie Hanif, "Indian Involvement in Afghanistan: Stepping Stone or Stumbling Block to Regional Hegemony?" German Institute of Global and Area Studies, (April 2009).

<sup>176</sup> "Why is South Asia Lagging Behind in Economic Development?" Spotlightofpeace.com, 13 January 2011.

and reconciliation with the Taliban leadership in Pakistan.<sup>177</sup> Within this framework, engaging in a ‘deep, strategic dialogue’ with Pakistan is seen as paramount. Pakistan continues to signal to the US and international community at large that a settlement to the Afghan problem is not possible without addressing the interests of Pakistan.<sup>178</sup> However, there is no guarantee that Pakistan will cooperate with the Afghan government if it were to limit Indian influence. Also, admitting that Pakistani engagement is vital to a ‘regional solution’ again leaves all actors to consider the variables important to Islamabad and its interest in the region.

Ameliorating Indo–Pak relations may bring the region one step closer to realising this aim since any Af–Pak regional counter-terrorism strategy requires Indo–Pak unity of thought and action and a sincere commitment to peace. In the words of Dr. Zalmay Rassoul, Minister of Foreign Affairs for Afghanistan: “We have good relations with our neighbours but our neighbours do not have good relations with one another”.<sup>179</sup> However, as long as the two rivals remain at loggerheads, playing out an intelligence war on the Af–Pak stage with India-supported militants causing havoc against the Pakistani state and the TTP, and Kashmir/India focused militant groups continuing to be seen as an asymmetric tool used against India by the ISI, an end to violent extremism in the near future is unlikely.

As for Indo–Pak relations, they now revolve around the issue of Lashkar-e-Taiba and Kashmir, especially since the December 2001 attack on the Indian parliament that led to a stand-off between the nuclear adversaries and, more recently, the November 2008 terrorist act in Mumbai. According to Indian diplomats, it is difficult to move forward until the seven people associated with the Mumbai attack are tried and until Pakistan carries out a serious crackdown on LeT.<sup>180</sup> However, the Pakistani establishment has been reluctant to root out groups like LeT and JeM, not least because they boast a social dimension. Jointly LeT and JeM run 150 seminaries and schools and are engaged in widespread charity work. It is doubtful how ready or even willing the Pakistani state is to make up for the loss of such social work. As described above, these groups also serve as war proxies in Kashmir and Afghanistan.

<sup>177</sup> Zalmay Rassoul, “Afghanistan: Perspectives for a Peaceful Solution”, Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) seminar, 11 January 2011.

<sup>178</sup> See for example “Pakistan Key to Success of Afghan Peace Talks: Gilani”, Dawn, 13 October 2010.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Imitaz Gul, ICCT conference, The Hague, 12–13 December 2010.

As a precondition to peace talks India has typically demanded that Pakistan make efforts to eradicate terrorism directed at its neighbour.<sup>181</sup> Peace efforts are often meek, with the two parties volleying recriminatory remarks. They sparred again at a meeting of foreign ministers in September 2010 where the Pakistani Foreign Minister called on the international community to ask India to “end its repression in Kashmir”. His Indian counterpart accused Pakistan of deflecting attention to its internal problems by using “Kashmir as a ploy”.<sup>182</sup>

Restraining terrorist activity, in particular the role of Lashkar-e-Taiba, has for a long time been an Indian demand of Pakistan, but of late has also become the focal point of many western threat analyses. Former US Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, has suggested the US government include LeT targets in its drone campaign since another Mumbai-style attack is likely to lead to a full-fledged war between India and Pakistan.<sup>183</sup>

Increasingly, scholars and policy-makers have come to focus on Kashmir as the linchpin of regional stability, believing that the improved Indo–Pak relations that solving the Kashmir dispute relies on would positively impact Pakistani interaction with Afghanistan.<sup>184</sup>

On 22 September 2010, Prime Minister Yousaf Gilani emphasised that Kashmir is Pakistan’s “core issue” and its resolution is key to peace and stability in the region.<sup>185</sup> Pakistan has been the ‘anti-status quo’ country with regard to its approach to resolving the Kashmir crisis; it has not renounced terrorism as a way of achieving that goal. Maintaining links to certain terrorist groups, some of who have been linked to violent extremist acts in Afghanistan and India, does not reflect sincerity in regard to solving the issue. This causes a dilemma for Pakistan for it cannot sustain for long the oxymoron between appearing to be serious about solving the Kashmir problem whilst justifying tacit support to extremist elements as a result of necessity.

India’s nagging presence in Afghanistan which it promises to continue will remain a thorn in the side of any Indo–Pak step to peaceful relations, as shall the issue of

<sup>181</sup> “India Ready to Discuss ‘All Issues’ with Pakistan: Rao”, Daily Times Lahore, 22 September 2010.

<sup>182</sup> “India and Pakistan Spar over Kashmir”, BBC, 29 September 2010.

<sup>183</sup> Anwar Iqbal, “LeT Hideouts Should be Hit by Drones: US Experts”, Dawn, 14 November 2010.

<sup>184</sup> Rubin & Rashid, 2008; Lisa Curtis, “Afghanistan and Pakistan: Understanding and Engaging Regional Stakeholders”, The Heritage Foundation, 31 March 2009.

<sup>185</sup> “Kashmir is Pakistan’s Core Issue: PM Gilani”, The Nation, 22 September 2010.

Pakistani support for certain militant groups (many of which are anti-India). India's continued rise as a regional superpower and its expanding defence machinery, with renewed backing from the US, is likely to keep Pakistan on the defensive.

Pakistan has increasingly looked to the United States to pressure India on the Kashmir issue. A recent wave of protests against Indian rule in Kashmir pushed Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi to "call upon the US particularly, which is pressing so responsibly for peace in the Middle East, to also invest its political capital in trying to help seek an accommodation on Kashmir. [...] Such an accommodation would not only be just for Kashmir but would be critical to peace in the region".<sup>186</sup> However, no concrete step in that direction has yet been made by the United States. In a visit to Asia in November 2010, President Obama placed India and not Pakistan on his itinerary. During his visit in New Delhi Obama declared that the US would not intervene in or discuss the Kashmir issue. A week before President Obama was elected in 2008 he had stated that solving the dispute over Kashmir's struggle for self-determination would be among his 'critical tasks'. Since then the US administration has taken few follow-up measures to address the Kashmir problem. With the appointment of Richard Holbrooke as the Special Envoy to South Asia it was made clear that Kashmir would not be part of his mandate. India is to create 50,000 US jobs and this appears to have successfully diverted US attention away from the thorny topic of Kashmir, all the while keeping the focus primarily on terrorism related to Af-Pak – this has been achieved partly with the success of effective Indian lobbying in the United States and the growing ties between the US and India.

Recent revelations by Wikileaks on the Kashmir issue have further aggravated Islamabad, pushing it to demand answers from the US. According to the leaks, the US was given evidence by the ICRC in 2005 that India was systematically torturing hundreds of civilians – including using electrocution, physical beatings and sexual interference – in Kashmir. According to the cables, 681 of the 1,296 detainees – who were not Islamist insurgents nor connected to any militant groups – were tortured.<sup>187</sup>

However, it is unclear whether mitigating India-Pak tension on the Kashmir issue will effectively dilute Pakistan's anxieties and open the way for a sincere counter-terrorism effort. India's 'big brother' prestige in the subcontinent hinged on its economic

<sup>186</sup> "Pakistan Seeks US Intervention on Kashmir", Daily Times, 23 September 2010.

<sup>187</sup> "WikiLeaks: India's 'Systematically Torturing Civilians in Kashmir'", The Telegraph, 17 December 2010.

growth and defence modernisation, as well as its rising new role as a special recipient of US attention and favour, suggests that Pakistan will remain on the defensive. Also, peace talks appear to have reached a stalemate where Indian demands for the uprooting of groups like LeT go unfulfilled, while Pakistan continues to find political and strategic utility in the use of insurgents in Afghanistan and Kashmir.

Some experts underline a role for the linking of the economies of Afghanistan, Pakistan and India as a long-term solution to the security challenges in the Af–Pak region; “...drugs are financing the Taliban, therefore farmers have to be given viable alternatives”.<sup>188</sup> To realise this, the character of the South Asian associations needs revamping. Regional contracts such as the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India (TAPI) gas pipeline project are essential to promoting regional peace.<sup>189</sup> Projects such as these bring India, Pakistan and Afghanistan to the bargaining table. A way forward may be for the international community, especially the US, to recognise and promote such initiatives as well as encourage other forms of regional cooperation.

It is uncertain to what extent regional bodies such as the SCO can help to facilitate the provision of regional security insofar as the Indo–Af–Pak arena is concerned. However, it is an option worth exploring for it is probable that with the right endorsement and strategy a regional solution may prove the best alternative to date. As opposed to US/NATO, the UN or the EU, the SCO possesses greater cultural understanding of the region. The western world could benefit from playing a more indirect role; the United States could cooperate with regional bodies and endorse their role and capability to ease Indo–Pak tension and bring security to Afghanistan.

Amelioration of Af–Pak relations hinges also on improvements within Pakistan. As described above, at the moment Pakistan remains plagued by a myriad of political, economic and social problems, along with the recent catastrophic floods. The body politic of Pakistan suffers legitimacy problems, with the ability of the democratically elected government constantly under question.

The dismal IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) situation in Pakistan precedes these natural disasters. However, a new internal displacement of up to three million people was witnessed in Pakistan in mid-2009 due to the humanitarian situation in the

<sup>188</sup> “US–Af–Pak Policy: Relevance for India and the EU”, A Round Table Discussion with Members of the European Parliament and Leading Indian Experts, New Delhi (25 April 2010).

<sup>189</sup> Zalmay Rassoul, “Afghanistan: Perspectives for a Peaceful Solution”, Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) seminar, 11 January 2011.

country's north-west.<sup>190</sup> Military operations across FATA and KPP have long led to the displacement of large swathes of people. The number of IDPs in July 2010 was 1.4 million, and under-registration implies the figure to be 25–50% higher. Accumulated displacements from FATA as well as FR Peshawar, Swat, Buner and Lower and Upper Dir were 4,600,000–5,600,000 (out of a population of over 18 million) as of mid 2010.<sup>191</sup>

Meanwhile a vast majority of Pakistan's 180 million-strong population is impoverished. Many become attracted to radical ideology or jihadi missions which sometimes prove to be a lucrative enterprise. The economic plight of the population and the 'quick justice' offered by the Taliban contribute to its strength.<sup>192</sup>

The year 2009 saw serious attempts by the Pakistani army to flush out militants from Swat and South Waziristan, and it currently has a presence in all of the tribal agencies besides North Waziristan. Yet the level of violent Islamic militancy remained high throughout 2010, the number of fatalities tallying 7,199. Within the settled areas violence has also remained high against the SFs and symbols of state. The rise of the Punjabi Taliban (described here) has led to sectarian violence against minorities, especially Shias.

Afghanistan, too, is wrought with domestic issues. It suffers from an inherent economic problem due to its geographical positioning and poor agricultural land. Corruption is also endemic. In a 2009 worldwide corruption survey, Afghanistan ranked 179 out of 180 countries.<sup>193</sup> The physical security and economic rehabilitation promised by the Karzai government have not yet manifested, while drugs continue to pump money into antigovernment elements. Former warlords like Abdul Rashid Dostum – renowned for their sweeping injustice and corruption – now sit at the helm of the Afghan government, inviting the perception that iniquity prevails in the corridors of power. Furthermore, President Karzai isolated a large number of Pashtuns with his nepotistic behaviour: in Pashtun-concentrated provinces such as Kandahar he

<sup>190</sup> "2009 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons", Division of Program Support and Management, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 15 June 2010.

<sup>191</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, [http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/\(httpEnvelopes\)/944667B8E6F38FDFC125778C00711DD9?OpenDocument](http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/(httpEnvelopes)/944667B8E6F38FDFC125778C00711DD9?OpenDocument)

<sup>192</sup> Imitaz Gul, ICCT conference, The Hague, 12–13 December 2010. See also Qandeel Siddique, "Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan: Who or what are they?" Danish Institute for International Studies report 2010: 12 November 2010.

<sup>193</sup> "Corruption Perceptions Index 2009", Transparency International.

appointed his relatives or friends as provincial governors in lieu of members of majority tribes.

Dissatisfaction with government representation is prevalent amongst Afghans. At least 70% of the Afghan National Army is comprised of Tajiks<sup>194</sup> and most top-level jobs in the Afghan Ministry of Defence are held by Tajiks. Such ethnic disparity raises the question of legitimacy as these bodies continue to be seen as non-representative. A manifestation of the growing distrust towards their government is the dozens of Afghans who protested the 18 September 2010 parliamentary poll<sup>195</sup> – the second since the 2001 US intervention – accusing the government of vote fraud and questioning the credibility of the Karzai administration.

Violence in 2010 was at an all-time high – a 300% increase in combatting incidents from 2007.<sup>196</sup> The escalating conflict has also put a halt to reconstruction projects in many parts of the country and adversely affected humanitarian action, infrastructure and access to basic healthcare, among other factors.<sup>197</sup>

Despite the involvement of other regional actors most, if not all, regional efforts to solve the current security dilemma emanating from the Af–Pak region ultimately require – first and foremost – a response to Pakistani concerns due to its centrality to the war. As Pakistani concerns rotate – to a significant degree – around India, greater pressure should be applied by the United States and the international community for India and Pakistan to take solid steps to improve their relationship and work towards finding a solution to the Kashmir dispute. Operational incentives should be set, such as setting result-oriented peace talks before furthering ongoing US–India cooperation. Although Indo–Pak enmity is multi-dimensional and there are no ‘quick fixes,’ this could be an encouraging starting point in the right direction. Other ways in which the United States can help make inroads that would promote better Indo–Pak relations should be explored.

<sup>194</sup> “Tajik Grip on Afghan Army Signals Strife”, Asia Times, 1 December 2009.

<sup>195</sup> “Protests as Afghan Results Released”, Al Jazeera English, 24 November 2010.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> “Afghanistan Humanitarian Action Plan 2010”, (30 November 2009) United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Appeal website <http://ochaonline.un.org/humanitarianappeal/webpage.asp?Page=1832>, accessed 11 November 2010.

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