



The Crisis State Pakistan's Security Dilemma

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Maleeha Lodhi's recent edited volume titled *Pakistan: Crisis State*, analyses the multiple security issues facing Pakistan. A spate of new books have been published in the recent years including that of Anatol Liven (*Pakistan: A Hard Country*), Stephen Cohen (*The Future of Pakistan*) and others. What is the major security issues facing Pakistan? Among them, what are likely to shape Pakistan's immediate and long term future?

PAKISTAN'S SECURITY: WHO DEFINES AND AGAINST WHOM?

The biggest security challenge that Pakistan is currently facing is in terms of who defines it and against whom? In most of the democratic countries, the political leadership and the Parliament defines the security threats to the State, and the military and intelligence Establishment support the government's decision. In most of the non-democratic states, the Establishment, primarily the military defines the security threats, with the security agencies supporting it. Pakistan is unique; despite being a democratic government, neither the Parliament nor the government have complete control over its foreign and domestic

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policies, including the strategic weapons.

Due to its history in the last six decades with weak democratic governments and institutions and periodic military interventions, despite the elections and an elected government, the Parliament has less control over defining domestic and external relations and subsequent strategies to pursue them. Besides the above contradiction, in Pakistan the religious political parties and radical groups also play a crucial role in determining the external and internal relations

In particular, the foreign policy of Pakistan vis-a-vis India, Afghanistan and the US, and its domestic policies vis-a-vis Balochistan, radicalism and jihadi groups have traditionally been determined by the Establishment. On numerous occasions, the objectives and strategies of these two primary actors along with the third actor – the religious and radical groups contradicted each other.

Failure to have an unanimous approach in defining the strategic interests and threats of the country, have not only affected Pakistan's external relations, but also divided the polity from within. The divide between the moderates and extremists, between the secular and radicals on various crucial security issues affecting Pakistan's stability and even survival, is due to the failure to reach an understanding on who defines the security interests of the country and who pursues them. The elected government believes, that it has the democratic mandate, while the Establishment considers the political parties as opportunist, corrupt and anti-State. Since the Establishment has the military power and brute force to back its decisions, the political parties and the Parliament remains the weakest.

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Unfortunately, even when provided with an opportunity, as happened in the mid 1970s after the Indo-Pak war, and during the late 1990s, when the Shariffs were voted with massive majority to the Parliament, the leading political parties of Pakistan – the PPP and the PML-N always squandered the chances with mis-governance and high level of corruption. More importantly, both the leading political parties failed to build democratic institutions and instead started aggrandizing themselves with more, ultimately leading to their downfall.

The religious political parties and the radical groups such as the Lashkar-e-Toiba, Teherik-e-Taliban-Pakistan and other sectarian organisations including the Sipah-e-Sahaba, and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, along with radical groups outside the country such as the Afghan Taliban and the al Qaeda forms the third most important segment in deciding what constitutes the security threat. While this segment lacks sufficient power – political and military to take over the entire country, they have adequate street power, that neither the political parties nor the Establishment could ignore. To make the situation worse, the links between the Establishment and the non-State actors make play a greater role in giving an added advantage to the military and intelligence agencies in deciding and defining the security interests of the State, irrespective of a popularly elected democratic government.

II

AFGHANISTAN: STRATEGIC DEPTH OR STRATEGIC TRAP?

Invariably, every actor in Pakistan agree, that the country needs to re-orient its relationship with Afghanistan. Traditionally, since independence, Pakistan's Afghan policy has been decided by the Establishment. Though vehemently denied by the military and the intelligence agencies, "strategic depth" has been the primary security concern of Pakistan vis-a-vis Afghanistan.

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From the beginning, Islamabad and Rawalpindi wanted a friendly regime in Kabul, to ensure that the Durand Line does not become a hot border with pashtun nationalism making it irrelevant. Besides, Pakistan also did not want Afghanistan to fall under any sphere of Indian influence, for the Establishment felt, New Delhi would use its influence in Kabul against Pakistan's interests by supporting militant groups and sub-nationalisms within Pakistan. Islamabad also wanted to keep its western borders under its control, by keeping the regime in Kabul under its influence.

Pakistan used the Afghan Mujahideen in the 1980s and the Taliban in the 1990s, to achieve its interests. While the international community supported and in fact exploited Pakistan's linkages with the non-State actors in Afghanistan in the 1980s, for Islamabad successfully projected its strategy as a jihad against the Soviet troops, in the 1990s, from the UN to the US, every actors remained indifferent to Pakistan's support to the Taliban, as it was felt at that time, it would not affect the global security.

The attacks in New York and Washington during September 2011, again made the international community to fall behind Pakistan, while the latter has been exploiting the former since then.

To conclude, on Afghanistan, while Pakistan has inherent interests irrespective of its successes and failures, the international community has also played a substantial role in keeping those Pakistani interests on its western border alive. Despite the recent debate within Pakistan on reorienting their relationship with Afghanistan, there has not been much of a change in the strategies or policy suggestions from independent sources. While majority within Pakistan agree that Islamabad's strategies has not helped improving Pak-Afghan relations, there has not been a radical change in the present formulation. Majority within Pakistan, even today, cutting across political, military and radical establishments would prefer a friendly regime in Kabul, denying space to India and prevention of any pashtun nationalism across the Durand Line. These precisely were the problems faced by Pakistan, which were viewed as a part of its strategic depth in Afghanistan. Will the depth become a trap, once again for Pakistan in Afghanistan?

III

NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND PAKISTAN: WHO PROTECTS WHOM?

In the recent years, one of the biggest international concerns in Pakistan has been the nuclear safety and security of Pakistan's strategic

assets – primarily the nuclear weapons and materials. On the other hand, Pakistan has built them over the years, as the military and political establishments believe the nuclear weapons as the guarantor of security (particularly against India).

While the reasons for Islamabad 's decision to pursue a rigorous nuclear weapons programme is not the focus of this essay, what needs to be focussed into are the current domestic and international debates regarding Pakistan's nuclear assets, and the military's nuclear weapons strategy.

Three major issues relating to safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear assets have been in the primary international focus and are likely to continue during this decade as well. First and foremost is the fear over non-State actors having access to the nuclear weapons directly, or to the nuclear bureaucracy, who in turn would help them build a weapon. This essentially mean the non-State actors having linkages either with the custodians of the nuclear weapons (meaning the security forces, which are entrusted to protect them) or with those who designed and built them (meaning the nuclear scientists). While the general state of affairs within Pakistan over the last few years have fuelled the fear over a possible link between the non-State actors and the security forces, the AQ Khan led nuclear proliferation network has underlined the fear over non-State actors accessing nuclear materials and blue prints.

Second major issue over the nuclear safety and security in Pakistan is related to the non-State actors attacking a nuclear installation within the country – either to create unacceptable damage, as a part of their anti-State activities or to procure nuclear materials, or both. In the recent years, especially since the TTP onslaught in Punjab, Islamabad and many parts of Khyber Paktunkhwa, this fear has multiplied. The daring and well coordinated attack on a fortified naval installation in Karachi during 2011, killing military personnel and destroying few P-3C Orion aircrafts, significantly increased the international fear – what if a similar attack takes place on one of Pakistan's nuclear installation?

Third major issue over the nuclear safety and security in Pakistan is what is generally referred as an insider job, meaning a divide within the security establishment and a section "going rogue" with taking control of few weapons or materials. The question of a divide within Pakistan's military - either over ethnic or religious has been a primary focus at the international level. While the fear over a section within the Establishment going against

From the 1980s, a section within the Establishment, has been using the non-State actors to further their own strategic interests in the region. Since the late 1970s and during the 1980s, Pakistan used various mujahideen groups in Afghanistan, as a part of its "jihad" against the Soviet Union, with funds flowing from the US and the Gulf countries.

the rest over the military operations in FATA has been a recent one, the fear over a "radical" section within the military has been an old one, ever since Gen Zia initiated a programme of Islamization to legitimize his rule. Besides, a section of the military and the intelligence agencies have been closely working with the Afghan mujahideens, militant groups in Jammu and Kashmir, and multiple sectarian groups within Pakistan since the 1980s. This linkage and close interaction is more than three decades old; while the former wanted to use the latter as a part of their larger strategy at the national and regional levels, today, there is a greater fear of the latter influencing the former.

IV

STATE AND NON-STATE ACTORS: WHO USES WHOM?

Since the late 1970s and during the 1980s, Pakistan used various mujahideen groups in Afghanistan, as a part of its "jihad" against the Soviet Union, with funds flowing from the US and the Gulf countries. Not only Pakistan received funds from elsewhere, but also the jihadis along with their own ideologies from all over. While the Afghan mujahideen were leading the jihad against the Soviet troops, the international jihadis assembled for the first time in the region, experimenting with jihad. Osama bin Laden's entry into the region was a part of this jihad, along with many Arab fighters, who were ideologically motivated.

Today, there are three sets of non-State actors, which had/have close links with the Establishment in Pakistan. The first set of non-State actors include the various factions of the Taliban, Quetta Shura, Haqqani network and the TTP. While the linkages between the Establishment and the Quetta Shura led by Mullah Omar has been recorded repeatedly, one is not sure about the contemporary linkages, objectives and the strategies of these two. While Mullah Omar is believed to be concentrating mainly on

Afghanistan and pacing his strategies towards the 2014 deadline, what is likely to be his strategy once the international troops leave Afghanistan? Will he leave Pakistan and move into Afghanistan, or will he continue to control and manipulate the other Taliban groups east of the Durand Line?

Of the three factions within the Taliban – Quetta Shura, Haqqani Network and the TTP, the Establishment is believed to have complete control over the Haqqanis. The Haqqani network cannot survive within the military and monetary support from the East; it neither has a strong ideology, that could attract the larger pashtun community within Afghanistan. Besides, its hold within the Afghan territory is limited to few provinces along the Durand Line. Hence, the Haqqani network is likely to continue being a stooge of the Pakistani Establishment.

The third Taliban faction – the TTP is again not a monolithic organisation. Though led by the Mehsuds, it is an umbrella organisation deeply divided over tribal lines within the FATA. Though it has enough fire power and the reach within Pakistan up to Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore, what would become significant is – whom would the TTP look for ideological and military support, after 2014 – the Pakistani Establishment, or Mullah Omar?

The second set of non-State actors include those India (and Kashmir specific) militant organisations, especially the Lashkar-e-Toiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad and the Hizbul Mujahideen. While the Hizbul is predominantly a Kashmiri organisation and is on the decline, the Lashkar and the Jaish are intact. Neither the Indian nor the international efforts after the Mumbai attack in 2008 has pressurized Pakistan to dismantle the Lashkar network within Pakistan. The primary reason being – Lashkar remains an India specific militant group and has not undertaken any militant activity within Pakistan against the Establishment's interests.

Will Lashkar continue to remain an India specific organisation and will the Establishment continue to support it? Two factors may threaten this symbiotic relationship between the Lashkar and the Establishment. First, the generational change within the Lashkar; though there have not been adequate proof, there is a chatter highlighting a divide within the Lashkar and the next generation Lashkar may not look towards Hafiz Saeed, who has played a crucial role in keeping the organisation India specific. Second, the international linkages of the Lashkar and its

ramifications; a patten seems to be evolving of Lashkar developing linkages and presence in the West, especially in Europe, Canada and the US. Is the Lashkar going global? The recent American bounty announcement for Hafiz Saeed may not be due only to his activities in India. What if the next generation Lashkar has an independent objective and what if there is added international pressure on the Establishment to dismantle the network?

Third set of non-State actors are sectarian, belonging to multiple Sunni groups including Sipah-e-Sahaba, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Jaish-e-Mohammad. Consisting primarily of the Punjabi fighters, the fighters of the above three groups have been engaged in a sectarian vendetta in the FATA, especially Khurram and Orakzai agencies. It is not a coincidence that the sectarian faultline increased in the tribal belt during the last decade. Today, what is generally referred to as the Punjabi Taliban, essentially consist of the above groups. What will the Punjabi Taliban do, once the conflict comes to an end in the FATA, or international troops leave Afghanistan? Will they continue to fight in the FATA, or cross the Durand Line into Afghanistan, or come back into Punjab?

V

NO CONCLUSIONS WITHOUT EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

While the above mentioned issues are critical, the biggest problem facing Pakistan is the failure of governance. A cursory look at the governance record of democratic and military leadership during the last two decades do not instill confidence. Despite being at the receiving end, the democratic parties have not learnt their lessons; and despite ruling directly and indirectly, the Establishment could not provide effective governance.

Unfortunately, every actor – political, religious and military within Pakistan, is aiming to improve its own existence and reach, and in the process effectively destroying the institutions of governance. Though the Supreme Court of Pakistan has given a ray of hope, the legal institutions cannot govern Pakistan. Governance should remain within the domain of the people, its elected representatives and democratic institutions. This in fact, would remain the biggest security dilemma of Pakistan during this decade.