

# Policy Analysis

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## *Pakistan and the Future of U.S. Policy*

by Malou Innocent

### Executive Summary

A spreading Islamic insurgency engulfs the amorphous and ungoverned border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. After initial victories by the United States and the Northern Alliance in autumn 2001, hundreds of Taliban and al Qaeda fighters fled Afghanistan to seek refuge across the border in Pakistan's rugged northwest. Since 2007, the number of ambushes, militant offensives, and targeted assassinations has risen sharply across Afghanistan, while suicide bombers and pro-Taliban insurgents sweep through settled areas of Pakistan at an alarming pace. For better and for worse, Pakistan will remain the fulcrum of U.S. policy in the region—its leaders continue to provide vital counterterrorism cooperation and have received close to \$20 billion in assistance from the United States, yet elements associated with its national intelligence agency, Inter-Services Intelligence, covertly assist militant proxy groups destabilizing the region.

Instead of “surging” into this volatile region, the United States must focus on limiting cross-border movement along the Afghanistan-Pakistan frontier and supporting local Pakistani security forces with a small number of U.S. Special Forces personnel. To

improve fighting capabilities and enhance cooperation, Washington and Islamabad must increase the number of Pakistani officers trained through the U.S. Department of Defense International Military Education and Training program. In addition, U.S. aid to Pakistan must be monitored more closely to ensure Pakistan's military does not divert U.S. assistance to the purchase of weapons systems that can be used against its chief rival, India. Most important, U.S. policymakers must stop embracing a single Pakistani leader or backing a single political party, as they unwisely did with Pervez Musharraf and the late Benazir Bhutto.

America's actions are not passively accepted by the majority of Pakistan's population, and officials in Islamabad cannot afford to be perceived as putting America's interests above those of their own people. Because the long-term success of this nuclear-armed Muslim-majority country depends on the public's repudiation of extremism, and our continued presence in Afghanistan is adding more fuel to violent religious radicalism, our mission in the region, as well as our tactics, our objectives, and our interests, must all be reexamined.

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## **Introduction**

Since 2002, al Qaeda and the Taliban have found sanctuary in the vast unpoliced region of western Pakistan, known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Pro-Taliban insurgents cross FATA's highly porous border with Afghanistan to kill U.S. and NATO troops. The insurgency is spilling over into Pakistan's two westernmost provinces adjoining FATA, Balochistan and North-West Frontier Province, with frequent reports of beheaded women, kidnapped Pakistani soldiers, and mutilated tribal elders. In some areas of FATA, relentless Taliban incursions have already led to the complete collapse of civilian and tribal administration. In addition, former CIA director General Michael Hayden believed the next attack on the U.S. homeland is likely to originate from western Pakistan. The danger is growing, with violence spreading to Pakistan's large urban centers, including Peshawar, Karachi, and Islamabad. Political observers have grown wary of the integrity of Pakistan's military command structure, and are concerned about militants taking over its nuclear weapons.

All three issues—the nature of the spreading insurgency, its impact on the U.S.-NATO effort in Afghanistan, and the security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal—are important to America's security. But policymakers must remain flexible with leaders in Islamabad. Paradoxically, our dependence on them constrains the usefulness of their support. For example, three-quarters of provisions for U.S. and NATO troops must travel via FATA's Khyber Pass. This tribal agency has experienced some of the grisliest fighting. Because Khyber is the most vital military supply line into landlocked Afghanistan, it will be jeopardized if security conditions worsen. Other supply routes are being considered. An agreement with Georgia and Kazakhstan has been reached, and talks are ongoing with Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan—the latter having expelled U.S. forces from its territory in 2005 in a dispute over human rights issues. Kyrgyzstan's government recently

voted to end America's use of its Manas air base following Russia's announcement of billions of dollars in new aid. While the move may have been political, after the closure of Uzbekistan's air base, Kyrgyzstan's is the only U.S. military facility left in the Central Asia region.

Given the aftermath of the August 2008 conflict in Georgia, establishing a new northern corridor inside Russia's sphere of influence may require Washington to offer concessions to Moscow, such as offering an unofficial quid pro quo by halting further NATO expansion, or delaying the proposed installation of long-range ground-based missile defense interceptors in Poland and a mid-course guidance radar in the Czech Republic.

Another alternative would be routes through Iran, which has linguistic, geographic, and historical ties to Afghanistan. In recent decades, Tehran has had more influence over the country's Tajik-dominated north rather than its Pashtun-dominated south. Despite three decades of hostile U.S.-Iran relations, the interests of Tehran and Washington have overlapped occasionally, most recently when Iran quietly supported America's effort to oust the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. But until Washington either withdraws from Afghanistan or establishes warmer relations with Iran or Russia, logistical and geopolitical issues mean that U.S. policy in the region, at least for the foreseeable future, will remain hostage to events inside Pakistan.

To make matters worse, Washington's diminished leverage over Islamabad means elements of its military and intelligence service may continue to take advantage of America's dependence by failing to tackle terrorism more vigorously. As former secretary of state Condoleezza Rice once observed:

America's al-Qaida policy wasn't working because our Afghanistan policy wasn't working. And our Afghanistan policy wasn't working because our Pakistan policy wasn't working . . . al-Qaida was both client of and patron to the Taliban, which in turn was supported by Pakistan. Those relation-

ships provided al-Qaida with a powerful umbrella of protection, and we had to sever them.<sup>1</sup>

Except for Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan and other tribally based militant groups striking targets in the Pakistani government, most Pakistani defense officials do not perceive the original Afghan Taliban, Lashkar-e-Taiba, the Haqqani network, and other specific proxy groups as their enemies, but as a means of extending their geopolitical reach into Afghanistan and throughout the region. Until rogue elements of Pakistan's state apparatus make a fundamental shift in strategic priorities, U.S. and NATO attempts to stabilize eastern and southern Afghanistan remain futile.

In the short-term, the highly porous Afghanistan-Pakistan border will continue to be used as a giant sieve, allowing militants based in FATA to gradually expand their political and economic influence inside Afghanistan and undermine the efforts of coalition forces. If U.S. strikes and incursions launched into FATA from Afghanistan are to be successful they must coordinate heavily with civilian and military officials in Islamabad.

In the medium-to-long term, Washington must be prepared to accept a less-than-definitive victory in this region. Given the magnitude of the atrocities unleashed on September 11, removing both al Qaeda and the Taliban organization that sheltered them was the appropriate level of retaliation. The question of why we remain in Afghanistan, however, is seldom raised.

The Sisyphean task of nation building Afghanistan will undermine our economic and geostrategic interests. "If we set ourselves the objective of creating some sort of a Central Asian Valhalla over there, we will lose," warned U.S. secretary of defense Robert Gates to members of the House Armed Services Committee in January 2009. "Because nobody in the world has that much time, patience, or money, to be honest."<sup>2</sup>

Critics of U.S. military interventions have been too quick to invoke the Vietnam analo-

gy in the past. But in Afghanistan, it is quite possible that U.S. and NATO forces "could fight for decades, win every discrete engagement, and still not achieve anything remotely resembling victory."<sup>3</sup>

## The Recent History of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Border

When considering what steps must be taken to contain the region's insurgency, it helps to understand the troubled history and the shaky foundation on which that region now rests. One impediment to the area's long-term viability is the Durand Line, the nebulous border Pakistan shares with Afghanistan.

In 1893, British civil servant, Sir Henry Mortimer Durand, and his Afghan counterpart, Amir Abdul Rahman Khan, delineated Afghanistan as a buffer with which to protect British India's northwest frontier from Russian armies. But like many acts of British colonial administration, the Durand Line was born out of political and military expediency, as well as a fundamental neglect of the region's ethnic composition. "Tribes, sometimes even villages, were divided," recorded Sir Martin Ewans, former British head of chancery in Kabul.<sup>4</sup>

Because it was created without regard to the wishes of native Pashtun tribes, the region's inhabitants ignored the border. Having endured successive waves of Persian, Greek, Arab, Turk, and Mughal invaders, the zealously independent and battle-tested tribes repeatedly repulsed Britain's colonial armies, leaving a thin slice of rugged territory unconquered by the Raj. Because Britain's interference only exacerbated conflict, and the people of this region preferred to be governed by their own tribal customs, the British instituted the colonial policy of noninterference, or "masterly inactivity," in the internal affairs of the Pashtun tribes.

Although each tribe was collectively responsible for law and order in its own area, over time, the region's deep ravines and isolated valleys became a breeding ground for

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smugglers and drug traders, outlaws and terrorists. The mountainous tribal belt straddling what would later become the imaginary border between modern-day Pakistan and Afghanistan eventually earned the moniker “Yaghistan,” or “Land of the Rebels.”<sup>5</sup>

The region and the policy of noninterference were later inherited by the independent government of Pakistan under Governor General Mohammad Ali Jinnah in 1947. To this day, this tribal area remains within the territorial confines of Pakistan yet formally outside of its constitution.

Relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan did not have an auspicious beginning. When Pakistan sought admission to the United Nations, Afghanistan cast the only dissenting vote.<sup>6</sup> The main factor was a dispute over the Pashtun tribal areas adjoining both countries. Pashtuns are Afghanistan’s largest ethnic group, about 13.5 million of the country’s 31 million people. Despite being a minority in Pakistan, more Pashtuns live in Pakistan than in Afghanistan (about 25.4 million).

Over the decades, various Afghan leaders refused to recognize the Durand Line and wanted to annex Pakistan’s Pashtun-dominated tribal regions, including FATA, Balochistan, and North-West Frontier Province, forming a separate and independent “Pakhtunistan.”<sup>7</sup> Both countries almost went to war over the issue in 1954.

### **The Turning Point**

With only a few minor periods of discord, Washington and Islamabad were strategic partners throughout the Cold War. But Pakistan evolved from a marginal U.S. partner to a pivotal U.S. ally in December 1979, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan.<sup>8</sup> To Washington the invasion was a nightmare, coming just one month after the seizure of the American embassy in Tehran and less than five years after America’s retreat from Vietnam. For many policymakers, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan solidified the impression that countries around the world neither respected nor feared the United States.<sup>9</sup>

In Washington, President Jimmy Carter’s

National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, proposed a plan to counter the Soviet offensive. It was initially a nonlethal propaganda and psychological operations campaign, but it soon became a plan to bleed the Soviets dry.

At the time, the CIA had few intelligence sources in Central Asia, and Pakistan, a long-time ally sharing a border with Afghanistan, became the logical choice to assist the covert operation. Pakistan’s leader, General Mohammed Zia ul-Haq, who only two years earlier had overthrown (and later hanged) civilian prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, turned down Carter’s initial offer of \$400 million as “peanuts.”<sup>10</sup>

General Zia was later rewarded with a five-year, \$3.2 billion military aid package from President Ronald Reagan, plus permission to purchase nuclear-capable F-16 fighters previously available only to NATO allies and Japan.<sup>11</sup> From 1982 through 1990, the United States gave over \$4 billion in assistance to Pakistan.<sup>12</sup> Saudi Arabia agreed to match that aid dollar for dollar, as the Saudis were a long-time enemy of Moscow and a steadfast ally of Islamabad.

Under this U.S.–Pakistan–Saudi Arabia alliance, the United States provided training, coordination, and strategic intelligence; the Saudis provided the money and recruitment of Afghan mujahideen (Islamic “holy warriors”); and the Pakistanis provided their territory as a base of operations and acted as the sole liaison with Afghan forces.<sup>13</sup>

The Pakistani national intelligence agency, Inter-Services Intelligence, funded by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and Saudi Arabia, directed the bulk of the money and military hardware to the most radical and intolerant factions of the mujahidin, such as Hizb-i-Islami (the “Party of Islam”) led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a radical Afghan guerrilla leader who emerged as the ISI’s most powerful client.<sup>14</sup>

ISI officers insisted to CIA officials that Hekmatyar was the most efficient at killing Soviets; they based their assessment on reviews of battlefield damage reports and the movement of weapons shipments, and they

discovered that “the best organized fighters” were led by Hekmatyar.<sup>15</sup> ISI officers also assumed they could control Hekmatyar more easily than other mujahideen leaders.

The Soviet–Afghan War was yet another chapter in an ongoing saga between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Islamabad viewed the Soviet–Afghan War as an opportunity to ensure that an Islamic government aligned with Pakistan, rather than a secular pro-Soviet government aligned with India, would come to power in Kabul after the Soviets withdrew. In addition, Islamabad’s recent memory of losing East Pakistan (which seceded with India’s assistance in 1971 and became the independent country of Bangladesh) made many of its leaders even more fearful of irredentist Afghan leaders stirring up trouble in its geopolitical back yard—a loss of “strategic depth” they believed would leave their country even more vulnerable to the next full-scale Indian assault.<sup>16</sup>

Given the CIA’s limited knowledge of the local culture, they deferred to the Pakistanis, the experts in the region. But the CIA overlooked that the ISI intended to exert its influence over Afghanistan and deny India a chance to gain power by supporting their preferred proxies. To this end, the ISI did not sponsor more tolerant Afghan nationalist factions of the resistance. That decision profoundly shaped the mission and its aftermath. By aiding the most extreme factions of the mujahideen, the anti-Soviet jihad facilitated the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism in Afghanistan and, later, the advance of a Taliban government that would one day provide shelter to the al Qaeda organization directly responsible for the 9/11 attacks.

Pakistan’s own religious character altered significantly during the 1980s. “School textbooks were overhauled to ensure their ideological purity,” writes Zahid Hussain in *Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle with Militant Islam*. “Books deemed un-Islamic were removed from syllabuses and university libraries. It was made compulsory for civil servants to pray five times a day.”<sup>17</sup> General Zia also enacted Islamist ordinances within the court system, encouraged prayer in the barracks, and posted an imam in every military unit.<sup>18</sup> During Zia’s rule, the

country’s Sunni-Islamic push was geared not only toward combating infidel Soviets, but toward countering the rise of the Shiite revolution across the border in Iran.

Before the Soviet–Afghan War, the tribes and the independent government of Pakistan shared power in FATA. During the war, when FATA and North-West Frontier Province functioned as the rear base of the Afghan resistance, a third entity emerged, that of jihadist militants. In FATA, Pakistan’s army and ISI oversaw the mushrooming of religious schools called madaris (plural of madrassah) financed by the Saudi government.<sup>19</sup>

While propagating militancy was not the original intent when madaris were first established in 11th-century Baghdad, in the Pakistan of the mid-1980s madaris were aimed at indoctrinating Muslim youths in radical interpretations of Islam and propagating a militant anti-Western worldview.<sup>20</sup> Ahmed Rashid, author of *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, estimates that in 1971 only 900 madaris existed in all of Pakistan. By 1988, that number had swelled to 8,000—with another 25,000 unregistered.<sup>21</sup>

### **Jilted Partner**

U.S. relations with Islamabad soon cooled after the signing of the Geneva Accords in April 1988, which ratified the official terms of Soviet withdrawal.<sup>22</sup> In 1990, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Robert Oakley went to Islamabad to deliver a stern message: America would be instituting sanctions against Pakistan under the Pressler Amendment of 1985, which specified that no military equipment or technology was to be sold or transferred to the country unless President Reagan could certify that Pakistan did not have a nuclear device, was not developing a nuclear device, and was not acquiring the technology to make a nuclear device.<sup>23</sup>

General Zia would later tell CIA director William Casey that being an ally of the United States was equivalent to living on the banks of an enormous river: “The soil is wonderfully fertile, but every four or eight years the river changes course, and you may find yourself alone in a desert.”<sup>24</sup>

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After the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan and America imposed sanctions on Pakistan, ISI decided to redirect the proxy methods employed against the Soviets toward jihad against India in Kashmir. By 1992, Afghanistan's Soviet-installed regime collapsed and gave way to civil war among rival guerrilla factions of the mujahideen. The two most notable groups were a Sunni Pashtun movement known as the Taliban, led by Mullah Mohammed Omar, and the Tajik-dominated movement known as the Northern Alliance, led by Ahmad Shah Massoud.<sup>25</sup>

The Taliban captured the important southern city of Kandahar in the winter of 1994, and seized Kabul in 1996. Pakistan would be one of three countries to formally recognize the Taliban as the official government of Afghanistan.<sup>26</sup> In return for the ISI's assistance, the Taliban allowed Pakistan's army to operate dozens of training camps in Afghanistan for the struggle against India in Kashmir.

Former Pakistani president and retired army General Pervez Musharraf said at a press conference in Islamabad in 2000, "Afghanistan's majority ethnic Pashtuns have to be on our side . . . the Taliban cannot be alienated by Pakistan. We have a national security interest there."<sup>27</sup>

Throughout the 1990s, Washington put little to no pressure on the Taliban's biggest benefactors: Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Even after the CIA documented links between the ISI, the Taliban, and Osama bin Laden, the region remained on the periphery of U.S. policymaking. The U.S. embassy in Kabul was closed in 1988, and the region's closest CIA station, based in Islamabad, did not even have Afghanistan on a list of intelligence-gathering priorities. But Pakistan's recognition of Afghanistan's repressive Taliban regime, coupled with General Musharraf's overthrow of his country's democratically elected Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in October 1999, turned his country into an international pariah. Just as the anti-Soviet jihad 10 years earlier had forged close ties between Washington and Islamabad, tectonic shifts in the geopolitical

landscape would bring the estranged allies together once again.

## **U.S.-Pakistan Relations, Post-9/11**

Two days after the September 11th attacks, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage handed a single sheet of paper to General Mahmoud Ahmed, director general of the ISI and a vociferous supporter of the Taliban.<sup>28</sup> Printed on the sheet were seven non-negotiable demands for Pakistan's leader, General Musharraf. In return for Washington's repeal of previous sanctions, a five-year aid package worth \$3 billion, and the forgiveness of outstanding debt to the United States and other Western nations, Pakistan would allow "basing, staging and overflight support" for all U.S. aircraft for the war in Afghanistan, allow America access to naval bases and airports, provide intelligence sharing and cooperation, drop support for the Taliban, and purge the upper echelons of its military and nuclear facilities of religious extremists.<sup>29</sup> Musharraf accepted Washington's demands.

He also agreed to ban Kashmiri rebel groups Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad, which had ties to al Qaeda predating 9/11.<sup>30</sup> Jaish-e-Mohammad was a jihadi group formerly trained by the Pakistan army to fight in India-administered Kashmir; at the time of 9/11, the group had a large following among the lower ranks of Pakistan's armed forces.<sup>31</sup> Lashkar-e-Taiba, a militant proxy group created by the ISI, allegedly trained militants responsible for the November 2008 Mumbai attacks, according to U.S. and Indian intelligence. Both organizations are believed to be so big and well-financed they can operate independent of the state.<sup>32</sup>

Months after the official beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom on the evening of October 6, 2001, along with the U.S.-led air campaign known as Operation Crescent Wind, al Qaeda and Taliban militants poured over Afghanistan's border into Pakistan and found refuge in FATA. The region—roughly the size of Massachusetts and home to more

than 3 million Pashtuns—was an ideal sanctuary. The tribes native to FATA adhere to the pre-Islamic tribal code of *Pashtunwali*, which by custom extends assistance to strangers who request protection.

FATA had once provided fertile recruiting ground for foot soldiers waging jihad against the Soviet Union in the 1980s and against India in Kashmir and the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan in the 1990s. Much of the region's inhospitable mountainous terrain can support only foot traffic or pack animals, making it difficult to infiltrate and to monitor militant activity.

By spring 2002, less than a year after the initial invasion of Afghanistan, that sanctuary became even safer after President Bush decided to pull most of America's Special Operations Forces and CIA paramilitary operatives off the hunt for Osama bin Laden so they could be redeployed for a possible war in Iraq.<sup>33</sup> All of these factors greatly alleviated pressure on the remaining Taliban and al Qaeda forces.

Between spring 2002 and spring 2008, militants were able to consolidate their hold over northwestern Pakistan. The growing power of militants has had ominous implications for the U.S.-led mission in southern and eastern Afghanistan. Indeed, by the summer of 2008, the situation in Afghanistan had deteriorated significantly.

### **Afghanistan Destabilized**

In June 2008, the deadliest month of the deadliest year for the United States and NATO since the invasion, a sophisticated Taliban assault on a Kandahar prison freed 1,200 inmates, including 350 Taliban. Attacks from improvised explosive devices (IEDs), developed in Iraq and brought to the Afghan battlefield, have doubled in the past year. IEDs now take U.S. and NATO lives more than any other tactic.<sup>34</sup>

The Taliban's presence is strongest in the southern provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, Zabol, and Oruzgan, and militant activity is significant in the eastern provinces of Paktika, Khowst, Nangarhar, Konar, and Nuristan. In

many of these areas, the Taliban have usurped the traditional functions of a sovereign state, collecting taxes, enforcing order, and providing basic services.<sup>35</sup>

NATO's International Security Assistance Force of nearly 55,000 troops and 25 Provincial Reconstruction Teams are finding it increasingly difficult to combat a resurgent Taliban while simultaneously attempting to rebuild the war-ravaged nation.<sup>36</sup>

Many commentators argue that the major cause of Afghanistan's deterioration remains poor central governance from Kabul, as warlords fill the vacuum left by President Karzai's weak and corrupt leadership. While these allegations may be true, President Karzai continues to demand greater control over NATO operations and has grown increasingly vocal about the need to limit civilian casualties. Most recently, he offered direct talks with Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, reportedly hosted by King Abdullah in the Saudi city of Mecca.

President Karzai aside, Afghanistan's patchwork of tribal factions, as those found in Pakistan's tribal areas, has proven historically difficult to govern. The only Afghan ruler able to secure the allegiance of warring tribes was Ahmed Shah Durrani, who died in 1772. His empire disintegrated soon after his death.

Aside from pockets of Wild West conditions, another factor contributing to Afghanistan's downward spiral is the de facto al Qaeda and Taliban sanctuaries in Pashtun and Balochi areas of western Pakistan. NATO's stalemate will continue so long as militants remain protected across the border.

## **Militancy in Pakistan**

Each of Pakistan's seven tribal agencies are administered by a political agent, who secures tribal loyalties, maintains control through the colonial-era Frontier Crimes Regulation, and answers directly to the governor of North-West Frontier Province, who himself answers directly to the president of Pakistan, who claims direct jurisdiction over FATA.<sup>37</sup> Traditionally,

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**Figure 1**  
**Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas**



Source: Government Accountability Office, Report to Congressional Requesters, *Combating Terrorism: The United States Lacks Comprehensive Plan to Destroy the Terrorist Threat and Close the Safe Haven in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas*, GAO-08, April 2008, <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08622.pdf>, p. 7.

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tribal leaders (*maliks*) form a meeting or assembly (*jirga*) to orchestrate consensus decisions and to turn orders into workable policy.

But over the past several years, these traditional tribal arrangements have been slowly breaking down. The mutilated bodies of more than 150 pro-government tribal elders have been found in FATA's scattered hamlets.<sup>38</sup> Terrorists expand where security is thin, and offer their own brand of swift justice and ideal visions of an Islamic state. Poverty, poor edu-

cation, and extremist sentiments have empowered militant groups with whom the government has never competed. Tribes, clans, and elements of extended families not aligned with the Taliban fear reprisal. Only some tribal militias (*lashkars*) are able to fight back.

According to senior U.S. intelligence officials, the Taliban, al Qaeda, and allied terrorist groups have established 157 training camps along the tribal region, and have more than 400 support locations in the tribal areas



and in North-West Frontier Province.<sup>39</sup> The security situation in each of FATA's seven tribal agencies has grown worse in the past few years.

### **Bajaur Agency**

One militant group that operates in the Bajaur Agency, as well as in North-West Frontier Province's Swat Valley, is Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM-Movement for the Enforcement of Islamic Laws), headed by Maulana Fazlullah.<sup>40</sup> The area continues to be a source of Taliban recruits. In 2007, TNSM prevented children from getting polio vaccines, as they considered them to be a Western plot to sterilize Muslims.<sup>41</sup>

In April 2008, TNSM tried to impose Shariah law formally in NWFP's Malakand district. By August and September 2008, Pakistani security forces equipped with heavy artillery and gunship helicopters killed dozens of terrorists, including foreign fighters. The aerial bombardment displaced 200,000 locals.

### **Mohmand Agency**

In Mohmand, insurgents continually overrun checkpoints and kidnap Frontier Corps (FC) soldiers, the local paramilitary forces recruited from the tribal region.<sup>42</sup> In October 2007, militants publicly beheaded six alleged criminals and flogged three others. In August 2008, more than 75 villages were in the process of evacuation due to intense clashes between troops and local militants. Many of the militants were equipped with Kalashnikovs and rocket-propelled grenades.

During the summer of 2008, Pakistani officials announced a truce with local militants: the tribes agreed not to shelter foreign militants and the military agreed not to launch operations without consulting tribal elders.

The deal was pursued because Pakistan's army and FC experienced disastrous losses in confrontations with insurgents. Also, the army is more inclined to fight India, not a civil war within its borders. But since initiated, this deal and others like it have failed, precipitating a resurgence of Taliban hostilities.

The glaring weakness with the peace deals was that they functioned more as appeasement rather than a concerted effort to contain radicalism.

### **Khyber Agency**

The traditional invasion route between Central Asia and the Indian Subcontinent, Khyber is the tribal agency through which 75 percent of U.S.-NATO supplies must move in order to resupply troops fighting in Afghanistan. Supplies arrive in Pakistan's port city of Karachi, move north to Peshawar, and head west before crossing into Afghanistan and arriving in Kabul.<sup>43</sup> The rest of the supplies arrive via air or through the Chaman border crossing point in Balochistan. According to U.S. officials, American forces in Afghanistan have stockpiled enough supplies to last a 60 to 90 day severance of the supply chain.

Over the past year, jihadist groups have repeatedly interdicted the supply route.<sup>44</sup> In March 2008, dozens of oil tankers headed for Afghanistan were attacked in the tribal town of Landi Kotal. Sixty tankers caught fire and 35 were completely destroyed.<sup>45</sup> That same month, militants also set fire to over 40 oil tankers near the Torkham border post.<sup>46</sup> That summer, militant group Lashkar-e-Islam repeatedly attacked NATO supply vehicles entering Afghanistan.<sup>47</sup> By November, insurgents hijacked trucks carrying Humvees, fuel, and other supplies. In December 2008, gunmen torched more than 160 vehicles in Peshawar, located on the edge of the Khyber Pass. It was the biggest assault yet on the vital military supply line. In February 2008, militants blew up Khyber's red metal bridge.

### **Orakzai Agency**

In September 2008, locals from eight villages formed a 2,000-man force to combat terrorism.<sup>48</sup> In recent months, the headless bodies of police cadets have been discovered throughout the agency. In the past, militants have attacked military convoys using remote-controlled devices planted along roadsides. In Orakzai, FC soldiers have also been besieged at local agency checkpoints.

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**Like most conventional forces, their army has suffered severe losses at the hands of elusive and adaptive insurgents.**

### **Kurram Agency**

Kurram was the first point of refuge for al Qaeda and the Taliban after the October 2001 invasion of Afghanistan.<sup>49</sup> The agency is also well known for its Shiite-Sunni violence, which has now spilled over into neighboring Orakzai Agency. In October 2006, a quarrel erupted between the two factions over whether a shrine to the 18th century figure Syed Amir Anwar Shah was meant for Sunnis or Shiites.<sup>50</sup> In September 2008, local newspapers reported ongoing violence between rival tribes.

Recently, tribal elders called on the government of Pakistan to demolish madaris used for training militants, while one *jirga* accused the Afghan government, NATO, and Iran of trying to kill Sunni Muslims.<sup>51</sup>

### **North Waziristan Agency**

Many experts are firmly convinced that al Qaeda's two main leaders, Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, are based in North Waziristan, possibly near its capital, Miram Shah.<sup>52</sup> In late 2005, militants declared North Waziristan an Islamic state.<sup>53</sup> Newspapers in the region report that U.S. spy planes frequently conduct reconnaissance flights over the area, and that mortar shells and rockets from across the border in Afghanistan hit terrorist training camps and centers operating in the agency. These camps are believed to be receiving direct commands from al-Zawahiri.

### **South Waziristan Agency**

In June 2008, Baitullah Mehsud, commander of the tribal-based Islamic movement Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, which operates as Pakistan's version of the Taliban, claimed the entire territory of South Waziristan.<sup>54</sup> Mehsud has been accused of playing a central role in a wave of deadly suicide attacks that engulfed Pakistan from November 2007 through January 2008, and was named by CIA Director Michael Hayden as the prime suspect behind the grisly December 2007 assassination of Pakistani politician Benazir Bhutto. Many tribes in this agency support the separation of FATA from Pakistan. It has also been reported that the Taliban have three regional offices in

the area.<sup>55</sup> South Waziristan is considered the operations center of the Taliban and al Qaeda and local newspapers report that U.S. drones are seen patrolling the agency.

## **Spillover and Response**

Two of Pakistan's provinces adjacent to FATA, Balochistan and North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), have experienced spillover from FATA's insurgency. NATO chief of staff for southern Afghanistan, Colonel Chris Vernon, believes the "thinking piece" of the original Afghan Taliban operates primarily out of Quetta, the capital of Pakistan's Balochistan province.<sup>56</sup>

In NWFP, in areas like Kohat, Taliban operate out of local mosques and have emerged as substitutes for Pakistani courts. Swat Valley, only a five-hour drive from Islamabad, is considered the first "settled" district in Pakistan to have fallen completely under Taliban control. The raid by the Pakistani government on the Red Mosque (*Lal Masjid*) in Islamabad in July 2007 intensified a wave of revenge attacks against the army and the government. Since then, loose networks of suicide bombers began striking Pakistan's major cities, including Peshawar, Karachi, and Islamabad.

Beginning in 2004, the Pakistan Army moved between 80,000 to 120,000 soldiers into FATA, and about 20,000 into NWFP's Swat Valley. The results have been mixed. Many soldiers lack proper training, equipment, and communication gear.<sup>57</sup> Like most conventional forces, their army has suffered severe losses at the hands of elusive and adaptive insurgents. Over a thousand Pakistani soldiers have been killed in confrontations with militants. One soldier told the BBC, "This is a country where soldiers are slaughtered . . . Their bodies may be found, but not their heads."<sup>58</sup>

Militants also stage elaborate kidnappings. In August 2007, Baitullah Mehsud captured over 200 Pakistani troops who offered little or no resistance.<sup>59</sup> That embarrassment was followed in October 2007 when

insurgents captured dozens of Pakistani soldiers and paraded them in front of Western journalists.<sup>60</sup> Some officers admit morale has not been this low since the army failed to stop East Pakistan's secession in 1971.

A critical problem complicating U.S.-Pakistan relations and the NATO mission in Afghanistan is that under Musharraf, Pakistan would target terrorists selectively, eradicating indigenous Deobandi and Shiite militant groups that did not share Islamabad's broader vision vis-à-vis India, while turning a blind eye to the Taliban to use them as a hedging policy in case the United States withdraws, and as a proxy force against Karzai's regime in Afghanistan that Pakistan accuses of being pro-India.<sup>61</sup> Some analysts even suspect Osama bin Laden escaped capture after the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan with a tip-off from ISI.<sup>62</sup>

But people in Washington who had hoped Pakistan's duplicity would disappear along with Musharraf are likely to be disappointed. Musharraf should be understood as an extension of the military, as he reflects the consensus view among the army's corps commanders. Severing relations between the military and militants has proven difficult, not only due to ideological and strategic sympathies, but because the army sometimes relies on Pashtun militants as key informants in the tribal region.<sup>63</sup>

U.S. officials acknowledge, however, that the Pakistani government has captured more terrorists and committed more troops than almost any other nation in the "war on terror."<sup>64</sup> Former Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell praised Pakistan's cooperation, saying Islamabad has done more to "neutralize" terrorists than any American partner.<sup>65</sup>

### **Recommendation 1: The Anbar Model— and Its Limits**

In late 2006 and through 2007, U.S. forces in Iraq's al Anbar province teamed up with more than 30 indigenous Sunni tribes to fight al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Sunni tribes agreed to

recruit thousands of men for the Iraqi army and provide intelligence to U.S. officials on the whereabouts of AQI; in return, U.S. troops helped local tribes obtain water treatment centers and medical clinics, while Iraq's Interior Ministry provided supplies and other funding.

Many commentators have drawn parallels between Iraq and Afghanistan, and Iraq and the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. But the differences between the two in terms of geography and socio-economic conditions will make it difficult for U.S. forces to apply the Iraq model to the region. Afghanistan is bigger than Iraq in both size and population. Afghanistan and northwestern Pakistan are mountainous and rural, whereas fighting in Iraq is heavily concentrated in urban areas.

While it would be naïve to assume that a solution in Iraq can be perfectly transplanted onto Afghanistan and Pakistan, it would be equally naïve to assume that the conflicts share no common elements. On both fronts, coalition forces confront adversaries who can melt easily into the population. Both fronts are plagued by elements of criminal gangsterism, sectarian violence, and jihadist insurgencies, and both conflicts are ripe for employing proven counterinsurgency techniques, such as recruiting indigenous allies, maneuvering through tribal society, and cultivating legitimacy from the local population while employing minimal force.

U.S. Central Command should seek to implement some counterinsurgency techniques to the Afghanistan-Pakistan frontier.<sup>66</sup> Pakistani security forces, with American technical advice, should focus on protecting the populace and recruiting indigenous partners to fight insurgents. It might even be necessary to deploy small numbers—a few dozen to a few hundred—Special Forces personnel within Pakistan as part of a larger covert operation in support of local Pakistani security forces.

A light footprint is consistent with a central tenet of counterinsurgency: applying military power precisely and discriminately rather than employing overwhelming force. This counterinsurgency approach limits civilian casualties and lessens the possibility that U.S. tactics

**The army sometimes relies on Pashtun militants as key informants in the tribal region.**

**If America does decide to train the FC in counterinsurgency operations, it will take years, and may still not resolve problems involving morale and motivation.**

will serve as a recruiting tool for militants. Moreover, civil unrest unleashed from a heavy U.S. combat presence in the tribal areas would strain Pakistan's army, forcing it to quell violence and street protests elsewhere in the country at the cost of leaving the frontier areas even more unsupervised.

While Pashtun loyalties have traditionally lain with pro-Taliban militants, the murder and mutilation of hundreds of tribal leaders has created the potential for a backlash similar to the anger indigenous Iraqi Sunnis exhibited against al Qaeda's brutality and intimidation. Islamabad and Washington should seek to exploit any manifestations of such resentment among the tribes in FATA.

Tribal militias (*lashkars*) have succeeded in standing up against the Taliban and al Qaeda in the Lakki Marwat District of NWFP, and the Char Dewal and Jalmai villages of the Kurram Agency. But in areas like Khyber, Kohat, Waziristan, and Swat, there appears to be no stopping the Taliban's spread unless more support can be leveraged from Islamabad.<sup>67</sup> Building Pakistan's counterinsurgency capacity must be devoted to cultivating legitimacy at the village level by earning the cooperation of local tribes and working together to uproot common enemies.

In late spring 2008, a 40-page classified document leaked to the *New York Times* titled, "Plan for Training the Frontier Corps," was under review at U.S. Central Command.<sup>68</sup> Known as the Security Development Program (SDP), or "train the trainers," the plan, initiated in October 2008, was intended to improve security by enhancing the fighting capability of the Frontier Corps.<sup>69</sup> The FC in Balochistan is roughly 80,000 strong. Approximately 50,000 FC are split between NWFP and FATA.

Owais Ahmed Ghani, the Governor of NWFP, recounted to the author during her visit to Peshawar that the FC was conducting major military offensives against Islamic extremist strongholds in the Bajaur Agency for three days and nights with little water, no food, and no sleep, thus exemplifying their dedication. But other commentators are more skeptical of the FC's capabilities.

One U.S. soldier said of them, "the Frontier Corps might as well be Taliban . . . They are active facilitators of infiltration."<sup>70</sup>

Essentially, FC soldiers are Pashtuns fighting fellow Pashtuns. If America does decide to train the FC in counterinsurgency operations, it will take years, and may still not resolve problems involving morale and motivation. To guard against tribal and clan loyalties, FC may be directed not to fight in their home villages.<sup>71</sup>

During the late summer of 2008, a small number of U.S. Army and special operation forces began training the Special Services Group, a commando division in Pakistan's army, to perform ground and air operations in and around FATA. Working in coordination with Pakistani security forces, more familiar with the region's inhospitable terrain and the cultural and linguistic aspects of tribal society, can offer the mission in Afghanistan a higher likelihood of succeeding. Putting a Pakistani rather than American face on operations in FATA is more likely to gain local support.

Aside from on-the-ground coordination is an emphasis on increased human-intelligence sharing. In March 2008, the first of six joint U.S.-Afghanistan-Pakistan military intelligence centers were opened along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. The centers are intended to inhibit cross-border movement and coordinate information and tactics among U.S., Afghan, and Pakistani officials. U.S. Brigadier General Joseph Votel said three of the centers will be built in Afghanistan and another three in Pakistan, at a cost of about \$3 million each. The centers will allow 20 people from each of the three countries to watch live video feeds from U.S. spy planes, which can be played back in real-time to ground forces on both sides of the border.<sup>72</sup>

Unfortunately, less than a year later, U.S. officials in Khyber report problems of language barriers, ongoing border disputes between Pakistani and Afghan field officers, and mistrust among all three militaries.<sup>73</sup> Construction of the second intelligence station has been delayed due the recent spike in violence. Sealing the border is impossible,

given the hundreds of miles of rough mountainous terrain—some of the most formidable in the world.

General David Petraeus, chief of Central Command, has urged a major reassessment of U.S. strategy in Afghanistan. Part of that strategy includes leveraging diplomatic initiatives with countries in the region, as was done in Iraq.<sup>74</sup> This too will prove difficult. Pakistani officials claim India's external intelligence agency, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), uses Indian consulates in Afghanistan to secretly funnel weapons to separatists in Balochistan, and may have even had a hand in the September 20th bombing of the Islamabad Marriot Hotel. In addition to the connection between Pakistan's ISI and the Mumbai terror attacks, U.S. intelligence officials allege that elements of the ISI also provided support to pro-Taliban insurgents responsible for the July 7th bombing of the Indian Embassy in Kabul.

Any stoking of the ongoing rivalry with India will remain futile for Pakistan, as India's military superiority will allow the Indians to keep hitting Pakistani pressure points. The conventional balance of power on the subcontinent will likely remain with New Delhi, given its enormous supply of manpower and fast-developing economy. For Pakistan, the unparalleled level of suicide attacks has deeply undermined the country's cohesiveness. That combined with the country's chronic political instability, growing civil unrest, and poor economic conditions means Islamabad simply cannot afford to fight a long war on its northwest border and another war with a country six times its size on the east.

Until hawkish elements associated with Pakistan's government and military establishments come to that conclusion themselves, or U.S. policymakers successfully assuage Pakistani fears of Indian hegemony, the United States and NATO will not have the ISI's full cooperation. If Pakistan's army is unable—or unwilling—to neutralize FATA's insurgency and U.S. forces continue attacks by unmanned Predator drones, the collateral

damage unleashed from such independent operations will make the Taliban appear to be a force against injustice and consequently undermine the very security Western forces are attempting to provide.

During his campaign for the presidency, Barack Obama pledged to deploy more troops to Afghanistan and to take the fight into Pakistan. During the second presidential debate, he said, "if we have Osama bin Laden in our sights and the Pakistani government is unable or unwilling to take them out, then I think that we have to act and we will take them out. We will kill bin Laden; we will crush al Qaeda. That has to be our biggest national security priority."<sup>75</sup>

President Obama remains unequivocal in his commitment to continue airstrikes. But he and his policy planners must recognize that continuing airstrikes will undermine the authority of President Zardari, as well as Obama's ability to coordinate policies effectively with Pakistan's civilian and military leaders. The president's national security team must understand that the struggle against extremism would best be waged by bolstering Islamabad's ability to compete with militants for political authority in FATA. If his administration simply increases attacks from pilotless drones, it will only push more wavering tribes further into the Taliban camp, continue his predecessor's policy of dictation, rather than cooperation, and undermine the perception within the Pakistani body politic that Obama can change U.S. policy toward the Muslim world.

## **Recommendation 2: Training**

Marine Corps General Anthony C. Zinni, former chief of U.S. Central Command, said the following about Pakistan's army before the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee:

Because of the historic importance of the military as a source of stability within the country, I believe that isolat-

**The struggle against extremism would best be waged by bolstering Islamabad's ability to compete with militants for political authority in FATA.**

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ing Pakistan's influential military establishment is and will continue to be counterproductive to our long-term interests in the region. When the U.S. isolates the professional Pakistan military, we deny ourselves access to the most powerful institution in Pakistani society . . . I believe that our strategic interests in South Asia and beyond will best be served by a policy of patient military-to-military engagement.<sup>76</sup>

However, the United States cannot rely on Pakistan's army in its present form to be an effective ally against America's terrorist adversaries. To help overcome the army's sinking morale and poor performance, U.S. policymakers must increase the number of Pakistani army personnel trained at American military institutions through the U.S. Department of Defense International Military Education and Training program (IMET), which falls under the DoD's Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA).

IMET's program for the Middle East, South Asia Division (MSA) provides financial and technical assistance, the transfer of defense materials, training, and military-to-military contacts to build the capacity of partner nations.<sup>77</sup>

*Atlantic Monthly* foreign correspondent Joshua Hammer spoke with Major General Shaukat Sultan Khan, Musharraf's press secretary until March 2007, who spent six months in infantry school at Fort Benning, Georgia, in 1983. Khan explained how the American training shaped the mentality of thousands of young officers of his generation. "It helps you to establish a better relationship and more understanding [of the U.S. perspective]. . . . It broadens your outlook. . . . It gave us a connection."<sup>78</sup>

But after Congress imposed sanctions on Pakistan following the discovery of its covert nuclear program in 1990, Hammer found that Pakistani officers had little or no contact with the U.S. military for nearly a generation.

Enhanced military relations may be especially important because America's relations

with Pakistan's military threaten to get worse in the next few years. In *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, its Army, and the Wars Within*, Shuja Nawaz discovered that beginning in autumn 2008, conservative elements within the army, known as *Zia Bharti* (Zia's Recruits), are due to take over many senior leadership positions.

General Mohammad Zia ul-Haq, military dictator during the Soviet-Afghan War, encouraged the rise of Islamists in the military, and many of the young recruits from those days are now reaching the pinnacle of their careers. This conservative group within the army leadership may be disinclined to aid Americans, in part because they were deprived of advanced overseas military training when Washington imposed sanctions. Military-to-military training exercises engage younger army officers by serving as a confidence-building measure between the two armies. Training can hone the Pakistan army's counterterrorism capabilities but also counter its tilt toward radicalism. Exchange programs can also have the added benefit of boosting the professional competence of an officer corps that is responsible, among other things, for managing the country's nuclear arsenal.

Joint military-to-military exchange programs are common. Many countries get some type of military training in the United States, including Israel, Kuwait and Japan. In 2006, Pakistan's army assigned 306 soldiers to train in the United States, 157 of whom were junior officers.<sup>79</sup> But this is a paltry number considering that over 600,000 soldiers comprise Pakistan's army.<sup>80</sup> Significantly increasing the number of Pakistani personnel who study in the United States will require an increase of the State Department's International Affairs Budget, as IMET is conducted solely on a grant basis, but that seems an acceptable price to pay given the importance of the struggle against America's enemies holed up in FATA.<sup>81</sup>

To be truly effective at combating internal insurgencies, some commentators argue Pakistan's army must completely re-orient its force structure away from conventional threats—such as India—and toward the

army's bigger challenge—dealing with the low-intensity guerrilla insurgency that the army is presently ill-equipped and untrained to fight. Reshaping the Pakistani army's conventional force structure for more adaptive military campaigns may be a step in the right direction. But nimbler forces might be inadequate for conventional warfighting.

A similar debate is brewing over the U.S. Army's organizing principle: whether to focus future operations toward Iraq-style counterinsurgencies or on force-on-force conventional warfare. Some military analysts caution that the U.S. Army's present infatuation with stability operations and nation building will erode its capacity for conventional warfighting.<sup>82</sup> Leaders in Islamabad may want to pay attention to this debate. For Pakistan, a greater emphasis on a lighter force could leave it vulnerable to invasions by India, large-scale internal subversions, or political destabilization caused by economic problems. Ultimately, Pakistan's own civilian leaders and defense planners must determine for themselves if insurgents or India poses a greater threat—the United States cannot, and should not, decide that for Pakistan.

### **Recommendation 3: Greater Oversight for U.S. Aid**

Stabilizing the tribal areas will also require a more effective approach to the delivery of economic assistance. In general, foreign aid tends to be detrimental to a poor country's internal development; it discourages accountability and deters much-needed domestic reforms. But Washington's objective is to gain Islamabad's support for its policies in the region. Because economic assistance is a quid pro quo for advancing U.S. policies, stopping aid completely would shut a vital intelligence link needed to neutralize regional terrorism. Ostracizing Pakistan would also marginalize moderate elements within the army and ISI.

Moreover, sanctions rarely achieve the objectives we seek. U.S. relations with Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea, and Iran show that punitive measures have rarely caused the target regimes to

make meaningful changes in policy.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, the United States has better luck engaging those countries, as it did with Vietnam and China in the 1970s (with Pakistan's assistance). Continued cooperation with the Pakistani government is critical for advancing U.S. interests.

However, the United States must be more diligent in how it manages aid. While a number of programs are classified, it is safe to say that since 9/11, Pakistan has received close to \$20 billion in U.S. economic assistance.<sup>84</sup> U.S. aid to Pakistan comes from four funding streams: coalition support funds, roughly 57 percent of U.S. aid, considered reimbursement for logistic, military, and other expenses in support of U.S. counterterrorism operations; direct budget support, approximately 15 percent of U.S. aid, which are direct cash payments to the Pakistani government with little accountability; security assistance, roughly 18 percent of U.S. aid, which allows Pakistan to purchase major weapons systems; and development aid, less than 10 percent of U.S. aid, which goes toward education, democratic institutions, and civil society.<sup>85</sup>

For now, there is no agreed-upon standard for estimating aid flows from the United States to Pakistan. The Prevention, Conflict Analysis, and Reconstruction Project of the Center for Strategic and International Studies asked nearly 100 former and current U.S. officials how much they thought the United States provided to Pakistan annually. Replies ranged from \$800 million to \$5 billion.<sup>86</sup> The problem is that because U.S. aid is not centralized anywhere within the government, different agencies only know pieces of the overall budget. As a result, there is little oversight and it is impossible to properly monitor aid.

When the aid reaches Pakistan, much of it evaporates due to widespread corruption and mismanagement. For example, for an eight-month period in 2007, the United States reimbursed Pakistan \$55 million for maintenance costs of Vietnam-era Cobra attack helicopters. Later, the United States discovered that the Pakistan army got less than half of that amount from the Pakistani government. That led some Washington lawmakers to believe Islamabad

**Stopping aid completely would shut a vital intelligence link needed to neutralize regional terrorism.**

**U.S. policy and assistance enhanced the position of Pakistan's military at the expense of its civilian leaders.**

was exaggerating costs and pocketing surplus funds. In fact, the Government Accountability Office found that of the over \$10.5 billion in unclassified aid given to Pakistan from 2002 through 2007, \$5.8 billion was allotted to FATA and the border region; about 96 percent of that was reimbursements.<sup>87</sup>

The continuance of aid should, however, be predicated on the condition that no money be spent on weapons platforms for use against India; Pakistan's attempt to purchase F-16s and Sidewinder missiles is of no discernable use against militants. In response to Islamabad's feeble attempt to acquire naval equipment, one congressional aide observed caustically, "the last time we checked, the Taliban did not have a navy."<sup>88</sup>

Some weapons platforms are easier to detect than others. But even in theory, tracking assistance, or the purchase of dual-use weapons systems, can prove difficult. For instance, drawing a purely hypothetical scenario, if Islamabad spends \$20 million on its military, with \$15 million against India and \$5 million against insurgents, and then Washington decides to provide Islamabad with \$10 million in assistance, with Islamabad directing \$20 million against India and \$10 million against insurgents, their officials can claim they are using all the assistance to fund a burden they would otherwise have to bear, or that they are employing dual-use systems on their eastern front to free up more troops for the northwest. To investigate these channels means getting into Pakistan's internal affairs in ways too intrusive for any sovereign to allow.

For many years, the U.S. government has shoveled billions of dollars in aid into Pakistan without appropriate oversight. Until aid to Pakistan is more properly monitored, prospects for true improvement of the situation in the tribal areas are dim.

**Recommendation 4:  
Taking a Diplomatic  
Back Seat**

For 38 of its 61-year history, Pakistan has been ruled directly by its military. The army's

intrusion has led to a series of overhauled constitutions (1956, 1962, and 1973), protracted periods of martial law (1958–1962, 1969–1972, 1977–1985), and the overthrow of multiple civilian governments (1958, 1970, 1977, and 1999).

During the Cold War, U.S. policy and assistance enhanced the position of Pakistan's military at the expense of its civilian leaders. Through the years, as the military devoted more government resources toward itself rather than toward economic and social reforms to modernize and better educate its population, Pakistani citizens began to connect America's support for its military to their own deteriorating situation.

The ascension of military leaders like Ayub Khan, General Zia, and Pervez Musharraf may have been welcome news to many leaders within Washington. As a matter of political expediency, coordinating issues of military intelligence and operational and tactical level planning is much simpler when done through a single authoritarian leader than with the warring factions of a dysfunctional parliament. But when U.S. policymakers openly embraced an Islamabad under one-man rule, they appeared to also be embracing the army's abrogation of that country's constitution, the removal of its judiciary, and the silencing of its independent media.

Over time, as Pakistani citizens began to believe that their political independence was being denied by political pressures from Washington, their leader's continued implementation of U.S. policy grew into a political liability. Washington's political influence has become greatly diminished. As a result, some of Islamabad's policies today stand directly at odds with our own.

Questions remain unanswered as to whether policy was even substantively advanced under a single unaccountable agent, for example, under former President Musharraf. While Pakistani voters are largely unsympathetic to al Qaeda and the Taliban, Islamists in that country exploited anti-American sentiment at the ballot box in October 2002. Through elections rigged in their favor, Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), an alliance of six fundamentalist par-



ties, won an absolute majority in NWFP, was the second largest party in Balochistan, and became the third largest bloc in Pakistan's National Assembly. Despite many MMA members having close contacts with the Taliban, Musharraf and his military co-opted MMA to bolster their own legitimacy.<sup>89</sup>

In September 2008, Asif Ali Zardari, the widower of slain former Pakistani politician Benazir Bhutto, was sworn in as the new president of Pakistan. His pro-American stance and his reputation as "Mr. Ten Percent," because of the numerous kickbacks he received from government contracts while his wife was prime minister, are only some of the reasons why Zardari does not hold the public's trust. On the other hand, opposition leader Nawaz Sharif, of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), has seen his popularity soar due to his strong opposition to Islamabad's assistance to the U.S. mission in Afghanistan, and his insistence on reseating judges deposed by Musharraf, among other reasons.

No single Pakistani leader can or should be the linchpin in that country's fight against al Qaeda and the Taliban, especially since the country's long-term success depends on the strength of its civilian institutions and the public's repudiation of extremism.

Fortunately, Barack Obama may understand that. During the second presidential debate, in October 2008, Obama said we must change our policies with Pakistan. "We can't coddle, as we did, a dictator, give him billions of dollars and then he's making peace treaties with the Taliban and militants."<sup>90</sup>

The new administration appears committed to strengthening cooperation not only with the Pakistani Government but with the Pakistani people. In July 2008, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved the Biden-Lugar Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2008. This bipartisan plan, dedicated to non-military spending and to support the country's economic and democratic development, calls for \$7.5 billion over the next 5 years (\$1.5 billion annually) and an additional \$7.5 billion over the subsequent 5 years. In FATA, certainly broader access to education

and comprehensive study programs can help to mitigate the spread of militancy among younger generations. But a coherent distribution mechanism must be in place or else no one will benefit.

The majority of Pakistanis believe America's presence in the region is a threat to their country and that Washington's goal is to weaken and divide the Muslim world.<sup>91</sup> U.S. policymakers must recognize that America's name is still toxic. Going forward, Washington's best policy would be to quietly assist Zardari's new government and encourage the rule of law, but hesitate to embrace his leadership and make him appear to be beholden to the United States. If U.S. policymakers support President Zardari too strongly, he could meet the same ignominious fate as Musharraf—or worse, that of his late wife.

## Nuclear Weapons: Assessing the Risk without Panic

Numerous and overlapping problems make it difficult to shape a coherent U.S. policy toward Pakistan. But an added reason to assist Pakistan, aside from the sharp rise in violence in Afghanistan, is the fear that its 60 to 90 nuclear weapons may fall into terrorist hands.<sup>92</sup>

Pakistan's nuclear strategy is oriented toward deterring a conventional military assault by India. Dr. Peter Lavoy of the Center for Contemporary Conflict notes that one fear among Pakistani defense planners is the possible deterioration of its conventional military capabilities, which could then lower their threshold for the use of nuclear weapons.<sup>93</sup>

The central tenet of Pakistan's nuclear strategic doctrine is minimum credible nuclear deterrence.<sup>94</sup> Lieutenant General (Ret.) Khalid Kidwai, Director General of Pakistan's Strategic Plans Division, revealed certain scenarios under which, if deterrence should fail, Pakistan would use nuclear weapons against India:

- a. If India attacks Pakistan and conquers a large part of its territory (space

**No single Pakistani leader can or should be the linchpin in that country's fight against al Qaeda and the Taliban.**

**The danger of militants seizing Pakistan's nuclear weapons—while possible—remains highly unlikely.**

threshold); b. India destroys a large part either of its land or air forces (military threshold); c. India proceeds to the economic strangulation of Pakistan (economic strangling); or d. India pushes Pakistan into political destabilization or creates a large-scale internal subversion in Pakistan (domestic destabilization).<sup>95</sup>

Fortunately, due to security measures already in place at the military bases that house its arsenal of nuclear weapons, the danger of militants seizing Pakistan's nuclear weapons—while possible—remains highly unlikely.<sup>96</sup> A key security measure is the physical separation of nuclear components. Warheads, detonators, and missiles are not stored fully-assembled, but are scattered separately across the country's 6 to 10 high-security military bases, each equipped with standard safeguards, such as iris scanners, code-locked doors, and "Permissive Action Links," a command and control measure that precludes unauthorized arming and detonation of nuclear weapons.<sup>97</sup>

A sophisticated attack by terrorists also assumes terrorists would have the necessary training and technical expertise to assemble and utilize a nuclear warhead. Because most terrorists possess only rudimentary military training, it is unlikely that militants can fully assemble the nuclear components, even assuming such weapons could be obtained.

Rather than a militant takeover of nuclear facilities, a more worrisome scenario would be government insiders surreptitiously obtaining and then disseminating nuclear secrets to terrorist groups. Another would be nuclear assets falling into the hands of radical Islamists within the military, which manages the command and control of the nuclear arsenal, or radioactive materials being attacked and seized while in transit.

Before 9/11, Pakistan's nuclear bureaucracy lacked a stringent internal vetting process. From this system emerged Pakistan's most notorious nuclear proliferator, Abdul Qadir Khan, a European-educated metallurgist whose black market network sold illicit urani-

um enrichment technology to Iran, North Korea, and Libya.<sup>98</sup> In 2005, Pakistan instituted an American-style Personnel Reliability Program (PRP) aimed at rooting out employees with radical tendencies or affiliations.<sup>99</sup> PRP screening measures include background checks, investigation of religious background, surveillance of phone conversations, monitoring of overseas travel, and periodic psychological evaluations.<sup>100</sup> Many officials are surveilled even after they retire.

But there is one potential problem with present PRP screening measures. A.Q. Khan was neither a religious zealot nor a conservative Islamist, but rather an ardent Pakistani nationalist. The present system thus remains vulnerable to insiders secretly stealing sensitive information. According to Lt. Gen. Kidwai, about 70,000 people work in Pakistan's nuclear facilities, including 2,000 with "critical knowledge" of its nuclear infrastructure.<sup>101</sup>

Although fixed nuclear facilities may be resistant to militant infiltration, Abdul Mannan, Director of the Directorate of Transport and Waste Safety at the Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority, argues that terrorists may intercept spent nuclear fuel during transportation and shipment. Radioactive materials in transit are harder to defend than stationary materials, and the release of these nuclear materials could be extraordinarily dangerous.<sup>102</sup> Washington should urge Islamabad to fully review all of its transit procedures and offer its own expertise about rectifying any potential deficiencies.

Aside from its own methods of self-protection, and despite the assurances from former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage that America would not intercede to prevent an Islamist takeover of Pakistan's nuclear weapons, there remains a possibility that the United States would directly intervene in the event of a nuclear crisis.<sup>103</sup> The U.S. Department of Energy's (DoE) Nuclear Emergency Support Team is tasked with responding to any type of radiological accident, and detecting and locating weapons-grade material before it slips into unauthorized hands.<sup>104</sup> The department's full-time emergency response units, each com-

posed of scientists, technicians, and engineers are prepared to deploy anytime, anywhere in the world and to respond to nuclear terrorist incidents—sometimes on four hours notice.<sup>105</sup>

One potential impediment to this seemingly far-fetched mission is a lack of interagency coordination in the event of an unfolding nuclear crisis. Another is that U.S. officials admit to having only limited knowledge of the location and conditions of Pakistan's weapons. This blind spot, even with substantial assistance from the U.S. military, precludes the Nuclear Emergency Support Team's ability to properly execute a direct intervention.<sup>106</sup>

Yet another fear is that the nuclear arsenal might fall to militants through the election of a radical Islamist government. This too is overstated. Supporters of al Qaeda and the Taliban do not make up a significant political constituency. In fact, Pakistanis typically vote for populist-socialist, left-of-center political parties, such as the Pakistan People's Party. For example, although the MMA gained control at the provincial level in 2002 (as mentioned above), many have since lost those seats because of poor governance.<sup>107</sup> For the time being, Islamist parties do not have enough political traction to transform the country's political environment.<sup>108</sup>

Given the number of physical security measures in place, the army's robust command and control operations, and Islamabad's commitment to having a nuclear deterrent vis-à-vis India, Pakistan's nuclear arsenal appears to be relatively safe, at least for the time being. Gradual, covert transfer of nuclear secrets, rather than a sudden and dramatic proliferation, is the more likely danger—and the one policymakers should watch for.<sup>109</sup> Finally, the scenario of citizens electing radical Islamist parties that might be tempted to give nuclear technology or materials to terrorist groups remains unlikely for the foreseeable future.

## Conclusion

During the years between the Cold War and the "war on terror," U.S. policymakers were

unable to shape a coherent policy in Central Asia. The United States can no longer afford such confusion. Al Qaeda has regrouped, militants freely traverse FATA's highly porous border to attack U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan, and the region's insurgency is now spreading to Pakistan's major urban centers.

Pakistan's assistance has been critical for preventing the convergence of global terrorism and nuclear proliferation. In addition to military operations assisted by Washington but driven by Pakistan, the new administration must increase the number of Pakistani officers trained at American military institutions through the U.S. Department of Defense International Military Education and Training program. Such a measure will improve professionalism and limit the spread of extremism in the army. This is particularly important since the army is responsible for the command and control of the nuclear arsenal.

Washington will also have to continue to provide financial incentives to induce cooperation. But assistance does not justify a blank check. Tracking where the funding goes—before it even leaves Washington—must begin with better coordination among U.S. government agencies as overseen by Congress. Another difficulty is ensuring that when funds finally do reach their destination, they are distributed effectively and used to counter insurgents.

Most important, Washington should stop embracing a single Pakistani leader or backing a single political party. America should not try to pick Pakistan's political winners, remake FATA, or expect Islamabad to toe the line on every conceivable issue. U.S. strategy should be narrowly tailored to securing specific objectives, and implementing the few policies likely to achieve those goals.

U.S. policy toward Pakistan is complicated and imperfect. But the proposals outlined above are critical to securing America's core interests in this turbulent part of the world. While these steps can help limit radical activity, U.S. leaders must be prepared to accept a less-than-definitive victory in this volatile

**Gradual, covert transfer of nuclear secrets, rather than a sudden and dramatic proliferation, is the more likely danger.**

## Cooperation with Pakistan will be vital for the success of America's NATO mission.

region. For the foreseeable future, no initiative can provide a silver bullet.

In the short and medium terms, cooperation with Pakistan will be vital for the success of America's NATO mission in Afghanistan. However, remaining in Afghanistan is an exorbitantly costly strategy that relies on conflicting regional alliances, assumes that Western values such as democracy and human rights prevail over and above local considerations, and requires a prolonged U.S. military presence in a perilous part of the world.

But America and its NATO partners will fail in Afghanistan if U.S. and Pakistani leaders cannot overcome their strategic differences and work together to neutralize the insurgency. Unless Washington can make certain that elements associated with Pakistan's government and military establishments are not actively assisting militants, our attempts to stabilize Afghanistan will remain mission impossible.

### Notes

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104. Although the Department of Energy is tasked with finding weapons, the Department of State is the lead federal agency responsible for coordinating assistance to Pakistan's government.

105. Theoretically, onsite response units can train people who speak the local language and are accustomed to that country's cultural and ethnic environment. According to the Department of Energy, up to sixteen people can become proficient in novice searcher techniques in less than one hour. But if search teams should locate a weapon in time, only highly trained personnel can properly dispose of the explosive. U.S. Department of Energy, National Nuclear Security Administration, May 8, 2008, <http://www.nv.doe.gov/library/FactSheets/NEST.pdf>.

106. Warrick.

107. Barry Newhouse, "Pakistani Moderates Make Gains in Northwest at Taliban's Expense," *Voice of America*, February 21, 2008, <http://www.voanews.com/english/archive/2008-02/2008-02-21-voa60.cfm>.

108. See Anatol Lieven, "The Red Mosque Falls," *International Herald Tribune*, July 13, 2007.

109. Congress has appropriated \$50 million to secure Pakistan's arsenal.

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