
Afghanistan-Pakistan Relations: History and Geopolitics in a Regional and International Context

Implications for Canadian Foreign Policy

**Final Report
Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation**

By

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Executive Summary

I. Issue of Focus

My Fellowship research focussed on the nature of Afghanistan-Pakistan relations over the previous sixty years to present day. The intention behind the research is to emphasize the importance to Canada of having an independent Pakistan policy and to view relations between the two countries and the region in a more nuanced and historicized light. This paper is attached to the Executive Summary herein.

A second paper setting these relations within a structuralist theoretical framework of state formation in post-colonial societies in general and in Afghanistan and Pakistan in particular, will be made available shortly. The object of the second paper is to understand not just *what* the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have been, but also to ask *why* they have been so. From my perspective, it is an effort to rationalize the pathology of relations between the two countries that can not always be understood within the limits of a realist framework.

Mr. Kamran Bokhari, the Director of Middle East Analysis with Strategic Forecasting, Inc (Stratfor), served as my mentor for the purposes of the above papers. I acknowledge his contribution with much gratitude, as well as all the support that I have received from everybody at the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation.

II. Methodology

The research for the reports was conducted between September, 2007 and October, 2008. The primary methodology was an extensive literature review, both of historical record as well as the constant onslaught of current events. This was supplemented (and in some cases framed) by highly instructive discussions

and interviews with policy makers and civil society leaders in Canada, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Further, I sought conversations with policy makers with a view to better understanding and influencing policy direction.

A number of those I was able to interview and have discussions with were uncomfortable going on the record with some of the more sensitive information. They have not been identified in my report, though their insights were extremely useful.

III. Results

The results of historical research indicated that the present crisis-laden relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have numerous historical antecedents that stretch back to Pakistan's predecessor state in the modern state system, that of British India. Historical antipathy and mistrust runs deep. Many of the paths to peace and stability in Afghanistan and Pakistan require such a broader and deeper understanding of their relations. Further, the two countries inhabit prime geopolitical and geo-strategic real estate. As a result, the (often contradictory and hostile) interests of regional and global powers often intersect there. An external hegemonic agenda can not simply be superimposed onto the region without creating the kind of turmoil that we are presently witnessing.

IV. Analysis

Building on the findings, it is vital to engage Pakistan more fully and forcefully and to understand the dilemmas of its security and insecurity. One must also remain cognizant of and closely analyse the regional dimension Afghanistan-Pakistan relations. There have been no strictly local conflicts in the region. The nationalist border clashes, the Soviet invasion, the subsequent civil war in Afghanistan and the ascendancy of the Taliban, to the present so-called War on Terror have all been regionalized and/or internationalized conflicts between actors with transnational links. Though the paper does not present a host of specific policy recommendations, it notes that it would be a mistake to not involve all key regional and international actors in moving towards a resolution to the present crisis.

Thus, there is an urgent need to move beyond narrow management strategies and adopt more comprehensive political analysis and solutions that consider the substantive roots of the imbroglio.

V. Future Plans

My immediate plans include making a second paper publicly available with a theoretical framework relevant to the present paper.

I will also disseminate the findings of my research paper as widely as possible. Dissemination strategies include publications and presentations to policy makers and members of civil society.

Further, I have planned a conference for the middle of January, 2009, where expert panellists will discuss the issues of Canada's foreign policy towards Pakistan and the region in general. I welcome – and indeed invite – being contacted for further details.

I also intend to remain involved in an upcoming international conference in support of a comprehensive peace plan for Afghanistan.

I continue to explore further opportunities that will allow me to further develop my research work.

Afghanistan-Pakistan Relations: History and Geopolitics in a Regional and International Context

On September 12, 2001, US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage made a series of unilateral demands on Pakistan. The head of Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) General Mahmood Ahmad pleaded with him to reconsider, stating, "You have to understand history." "No," Armitage responded, "History begins today."¹

Unfortunately, the burden of history can not be wished away so easily.

The present relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan are merely the latest chapter in a complex tome that extends well into Pakistan's predecessor state in the modern state system, that of British India. Likely, its anthropological antecedents stretch back even further. Therefore, there can be no ignoring the historic, geographic and ethnological context of poor relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, framed within the backdrop of overarching regional and international factors. This paper aims to highlight some of the salient moments within this context and to illustrate that the present impasse between the two countries has numerous historical continuities and identifiable changes. In doing so, the account here will map out some of the complexities involved in relations between the two states. It will also provide a historicized counter-narrative to the one-dimensional portrayals that hold Pakistan primarily responsible for Afghanistan's malaise and largely ignore history and geopolitics in favour of narrow management strategies. Though direct policy recommendations are avoided, it is hoped that this paper will assist policy-makers in assessing more realistic, holistic and comprehensive strategies for engagement, peace and stability in the region.

¹ Richard Armitage interview, *Return of the Taliban*, PBS Frontline, July 20, 2006, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/taliban/interviews/armitage.html>. Pakistani version of events include the now notorious account recollected in former President General Parvez Musharraf's autobiography that Armitage warned Pakistan to be "prepared to be bombed back into the Stone Age," if it did not accede to US demands. See Parvez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir* (New York Free Press, 2006), p. 201.

A. From Colonialism to Nationalism

The British in India had initially adopted the 'policy of masterful inactivity' or 'closed border policy' towards the Pashtun² tribal areas that lay astride the largely ungoverned frontiers of India and Afghanistan. A continuation of the policies of the former Sikh kingdoms of the Punjab³, it implied minimal interference in the affairs of the Pashtun tribes straddling the border. However, the drive to secure India's frontiers against increased threat perceptions from an expanding Tsarist Russia led the British to opt for a 'forward policy' from 1876 onward⁴. They pushed their actual control into the tribal areas and sought to exercise dominant influence in Afghanistan. This policy resulted in the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1880) in the aftermath of which Kabul accepted British suzerainty.

At stake was transforming Afghanistan into a buffer between Russia and British India; this required defined boundaries to demarcate the limit of imperial expansion by either empire. In 1887, an agreement between Britain and Russia marked Afghanistan's northern boundary with the latter as laying firmly along the Amu Darya (Oxus River). To reciprocate, the Durand Line Agreement was signed between the British Indian Foreign Secretary Sir Mortimer Durand and Amir Abdur Rahman Khan of Afghanistan in 1893. The Durand Line demarcated the outer frontier of British India. Afghanistan also agreed to create a narrow land corridor in the north east to ensure that the Russian Empire in Central Asian and the British Indian Empire did not share a common border that could be subject to dispute and clashes. This resulted in the Wakhan Corridor, the narrow strip of land that today separates Tajikistan from Pakistan's Northern Areas and Kashmir, and abuts China.

² Pashtuns are an Eastern Iranian ethno-linguistic group found in eastern, southern and south-western Afghanistan as well as the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Baluchistan province of Pakistan. Pashtuns can be broadly characterized by their distinct Pashto language and adherence to strict codes of behavior called *Pashtunwali*. They are estimate to number in the range of 40 million, making them the largest tribal grouping in the world. The last reliable census of Afghanistan in 1979 found Pashtuns to constitute 42% of Afghanistan's population, forming a relative majority in the ethnically heterogeneous country.

The word Pashtun is pronounced Pakhtun in the harsher Pashto/Pakhto dialect spoken by eastern Pashtuns of the border tribal areas in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Pashtuns/Pakhtuns are also be referred to as Pathans in India and Pakistan. The word is likely a variation of the term 'Pashtahan', the Pashto plural of Pashtun. This paper will use the term Pashtun throughout when referring to this ethno-linguistic group or its members.

For the classic account on the Pashtuns, see Sir Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans 550 B.C. – A.D. 1957* (London Macmillan, 1958)

³ Hassan Askari Rizvi, *Military, State and Society in Pakistan* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 44.

⁴ For a good account of these policies, see Caroe, *The Pathans*, p. 370.

Thus, the British were able to rely on a number of defensive rings. The first was the buffer state of Afghanistan itself. The second was the Durand Line (which to a lesser extent was meant to limit Afghanistan's influence as well) and the semi-autonomous tribal areas that it bounded. The final bulwark for the British Indian Empire was beyond the eastern limits of the tribal areas where laid the "settled districts" of the frontier province; these included the bristling garrison towns of Peshawar and Quetta. This three tiered defense was meant to protect against any Russian advance towards India.

The tribes that were now to be administered by the British were kept pacified through a combination of semi-autonomy, and agreements with and subsidies paid to tribal leaders, as well as coercive means such as punitive expeditions and other collective punishments⁵. The Durand Line also formally split the Pashtuns in Afghanistan from their co-ethnics in India – and later, Pakistan. The Line of course has important symbolic and juridical significance. In real terms however, the tribes and particularly nomadic groups have moved back and forth across the border with relative ease. There were numerous tribal uprisings in protest against the British forward policy and the Durand Line. Kabul continued to exercise influence among these tribes, believing in any case that it could control them better than the British in Peshawar and Delhi⁶. Nonetheless, the Durand Line Agreement came to be confirmed by each successive ruler of Afghanistan through subsequent treaties with the British government.

i. Transition to Post-Colonial States

Prior to the partition of the Sub-Continent politics in India's North West Frontier Province (NWFP)⁷ was dominated by the prominent leader Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his younger brother Dr. Khan Sahib through their Khudai Khitmatgar Movement (KKM). Known as the "Frontier Ghandi", the elder Khan led the Congress⁸ ministry in the NWFP. An ardent Pashtun nationalist, he remained staunchly opposed to the province's inclusion into Pakistan. The KKM advocated

⁵ In keeping with the British tradition of bureaucratic and legalistic authoritarianism in the Sub-Continent, these coercive measures were legitimized by rooting them in the *Frontier Crimes Regulation*, first passed in 1848. This legislation is still in force in the tribal areas of Pakistan, though the government announced its intention to repeal it in April, 2008.

⁶ M. Hassan Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan 1863-1901* (Brill, 2006) p. 184.

⁷ The so-called 'settled districts' and the mostly Pashtun areas around them were consolidated into the NWFP in 1901. Prior to this, these territories were part of the province of the Punjab. NWFP did not include the tribal areas straddling the India/Afghanistan border.

⁸ Founded in 1885, the Indian National Congress was the first and largest mass political party in India. It led the Independence Movement against the British and opposed the partition of India till 1946. It is still a powerful force in Indian politics and is presently the largest party in the ruling coalition.

the idea of an independent and sovereign 'Pashtunistan' with the support of the Congress Party. Kabul had sought to open negotiations with the British on the issue of the return of lost territory and later, on a merger of Pashtun areas with Afghanistan through the partition referendum. Promptly snubbed by Britain, Kabul became a public supporter of Pashtunistan, though it presumably harboured the idea that an independent Pashtun state would be incorporated into a greater Afghanistan⁹. Given only the choice of joining a predominantly Hindu India or a Muslim Pakistan, the devout Pashtuns opted for the latter by a wide margin. The Pashtunistan movement, however, continued in varying capacity until at least 1979 and the resentment and fears that this aroused in Pakistan's leaders, particularly its Punjabi dominated military, continues to affect perceptions of Pakistan's interests in Afghanistan¹⁰.

The tribal territories bounded by the Durand Line and the limits of the NWFP were not included in the partition referendum as technically they were autonomous from British control. Therefore, all quasi-constitutional arrangements between the tribes and the British government lapsed on August 14, 1947, as a Pakistan was proclaimed. However, a tribal *Jirga*¹¹ was held in November and December of 1947. All major tribes at the *Jirga* decided to transfer their allegiance to the new state of Pakistan, particularly in view of a greater grant of autonomy and the withdrawal of all Pakistani military presence¹². This was followed by written confirmations and treaties¹³.

ii. Early Relations

In September, 1947, Afghanistan became the only nation in the world to oppose Pakistan's entry into the United Nations citing the Pashtunistan debate. This opposition did much to jaundice relations between the two states early in Pakistan's life. It was seen as particularly hurtful coming from a fellow Muslim country, given Pakistan's difficult transition into statehood and the existential threat it faced then from India. Further, Afghanistan's posture added to the

⁹ Barnett Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System* (Yale University Press, 2002), p. 62.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 63.

¹¹ A *Jirga* is a meeting between tribal elders and leaders. Decisions made at a *jirga* by consensus or majority become binding on all participant tribes. This has been and remains an important tool of Pashtun collective decision making. The word 'jirga' literally means 'circle'. Traditionally, participating leaders sat in a circle, implying equality between them all.

¹² Khurshid Hasan, 'Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 2, No. 7 (1962), p. 16. With a few exceptions, the Pakistani state remained true to its word by not sending troops into the tribal territories until only recently.

¹³ Noor ul Haq, Rashid Ahmed Khan, Maqsoodul Hasan Nuri, *Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan*, Islamabad Policy Research Institute, IPRI Paper 10 (Asia Printers Islamabad), p. 26.

Pakistani leaders' persecution complex; they felt that Pakistan was beset by enemies on all sides – and from within through sub-nationalists and subversive fifth columnists – bent on the state's isolation and destruction.

Almost immediately after the British transfer of power, Afghanistan encouraged armed tribal incursions into Pakistani territory, particularly the tribal areas. These raids were a constant irritant that complicated Pakistan's defense calculus on its Eastern border with India, particularly as at the time of partition the Pakistani military was too weak to face an Afghan and Indian threat simultaneously¹⁴. These border skirmishes led to the aerial bombing of an Afghan village in 1949. In an emotional session thereafter, the Afghan *Loya Jirga* (i.e. Parliament) adopted a resolution unilaterally repudiating all nineteenth century treaties with British India. The most important of these was the Durand Line Agreement that demarcated the international frontier between Afghanistan and the now Pakistan¹⁵. No government in Kabul since has ever recognized the validity of the Durand Line – not even the pro-Pakistan Taliban – causing an obvious strain on relations.

The support for Pashtunistan and rejection of the Durand Line were designed to gain influence in and leverage against Pakistan, as well as to potentially gain territory that may have provided Afghanistan with an egress to the sea. Further, Afghanistan had remained a Pashtun ruled and dominated state since the 18th century¹⁶; support for the independence or the absorption of Pashtun areas thus served to mobilize their identity in support of the state. A Pashtunistan Day was officially declared and celebrated every year on August 31 to symbolically highlight Kabul's support for the cause and to emphasize the importance that the issue held for the state of Afghanistan¹⁷.

¹⁴ Ian Talbot, *Pakistan: A Modern History* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 99.

¹⁵ The issue of the Durand Line has fired scholars on both sides of the border, though the Pakistani position has generally been recognized by most states, including the US, as being superior in both international law and as a material *fait accompli*. For the US position on the matter, see Dennis Kux, *The United States and Pakistan 1947-2000* (Woodrow Wilson Centre Press, 2001), particularly at p. 81. For a good review of the arguments in rejection of the Durand Line, see Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan*, p. 177-192. For the Pakistani position on the matter see Haq, Khan and Nuri, *Federally Administered Tribal Areas* and Khalid Hasan, 'Durand Line Treaty has not lapsed', *Daily Times*, February 1, 2004. Available online at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story_1-2-2004_pg7_23 (Accessed September 18, 2008).

¹⁶ Rubin, *Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, p.19, 26. Also see M. Nazif Shahrani, 'The Future of the State and the Structure of Community Governance in Afghanistan', in William Maley (Ed.), *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban* (Hurst, 2001), particularly at p. 234.

¹⁷ Dilip Mukerjee, 'Afghanistan Under Daud: Relations With Neighbouring States', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (1975) p. 306-307.

iii. Entry into the Cold War

Being landlocked, Afghanistan relied on port facilities at Karachi for its link to the international market. Therefore, it began to look for alternate trade outlets that would bypass its economic dependence. Iran presented the next closest port but transportation networks through Eastern Iran were extremely poor¹⁸. Afghanistan's quest for alternatives became more dire when Pakistan imposed an arguably illegal 'slow down' of in-transit trade¹⁹. This turned into a full fledged economic blockade following serious tribal incursions into Pakistan in 1950-51. Afghanistan insisted that the tribal insurgents were 'freedom fighters' unsupported by Kabul despite ample evidence to the contrary²⁰. The blockade led to a thaw in relations with the USSR which allowed Afghanistan free transit through its territory via the Central Asian Republics²¹.

Afghanistan's early opposition to Pakistan was a clear indication that it was not prepared to simply let Pakistan walk into the hegemonic role that the British had recently vacated. Pakistan's internal crisis, international isolation, foreign policy disarray and military weakness meant that it had to relinquish any pretensions that Afghanistan remained within its sphere of influence. Nor could it at present act as the enforcer for British interests in the region as the British Indian Army had done²². The weakening of specifically British and generally Western hegemony in the region was not lost on the USSR. Thus, its support was subtly aimed at pulling Afghanistan into its orbit even though it made much of the fact that unlike US aid its own assistance came without strings attached²³. In fact, the Soviets were making a long term investment in Afghanistan. They knew that the US had ignored Afghanistan's requests for military aid and the economic aid that it provided was insufficient for the purposes of allowing a weak Afghan state to

¹⁸ Ralph H. Magnus and Eden Naby, *Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx and Mujahid* (Westview, 2002).

¹⁹ This interference with in-transit trade is contrary to international law. The right of landlocked countries to access the sea is assured by customary international law and has been reinforced by the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1982*.

²⁰ Also of note, the assassination of Pakistani Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali Khan in 1951 had all the portents of a serious crisis in relations between the two countries. The assassin was, Saad Akbar Babrak, an Afghan citizen and former British intelligence officer. However, the crisis was averted when it was decided that the Afghan government was not involved in the incident. The assassination is to this day a mystery mired in conspiracy theories. For a good account of the assassination, see Ayesha Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule: The Origins of Pakistan's political economy of defence* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 132-135.

²¹ Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan* (Oxford Karachi, 2007), p. 494.

²² Humza Alavi, 'The Origins and Significance of the Pakistan-US Military Alliance', in Satish Kumar (Ed.), *Yearbook on India's Foreign Policy* (New Delhi Sage, 1990), p. 5. All page number in reference to this article for version available online at <http://ourworldcompuserve.com/homepages/sangat/pakustt.htm>. The British, and later the US, were to envisage this role for the Pakistan army in theory though it did not quite materialize in reality.

²³ Dupree, *Afghanistan*, p. 515.

be able to remain in control of its territory²⁴. Thus, Afghanistan would become increasingly reliant on the USSR and allow it to exercise influence in the state through aid, education and military training.

Pakistan was also being pulled into the geopolitics of the Cold War. In 1949 the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had been invited to visit Washington where, to the US's disappointment, he had elucidated his country's overarching foreign policy principle of non-alignment²⁵. Thus, early on it had become clear that India would not be the much coveted keystone in the budding anti-communist alliance that the US hoped to build in Asia. Pakistan exploited India's policy choice and sought to position itself as an alternative US ally in South Asia²⁶. Further, the US began to view Pakistan as an important regional ally following the election of the nationalist regime of Mohammed Mossadeq in Iran in 1951²⁷. Mossadeq, a fiery anti-imperialist, had embarked on a popular nationalization program, asserting state control over the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company that had hitherto dominated Iran's oil industry. By 1953, the US was convinced that Iran was gravitating towards the Soviet Union²⁸. In this altered regional environment, Pakistan's efforts to secure US military assistance to address its security anxieties *vis a vis* India bore fruit. In 1954 the US inducted Pakistan into the anti-communist South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), followed in 1955 by entry into the Baghdad Pact. This was renamed the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) after the 1958 republican revolution in Iraq resulted in its withdrawal from membership. Both pacts included a military aid package. This occurred over strong protests by Afghanistan (and India) which had argued that it would upset the regional balance of power²⁹. Pakistan's membership in these regional security organizations effectively shut out any substantial assistance to Afghanistan, a country that was antagonistic to Washington's newest ally in the region. The die was cast; Afghanistan signed on to a comprehensive Soviet assistance package a month after the US-Pakistan

²⁴ Rubin, *Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, p. 65.

²⁵ Non-alignment meant that India would seek peaceful co-existence with all countries and not ally itself with any power blocs. Under Nehru, India was one of the founders and leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement which was based on the same principles and consisted of most Third World countries.

²⁶ Christophe Jaffrelot (Ed.), *A History of Pakistan and Its Origins* (Anthem Press, 2002), p. 99.

²⁷ Alavi, 'The Origins and Significance of the Pakistan-US Military Alliance', p. 5.

²⁸ Mark J. Gasiorowski and Malcolm Byrne, *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran* (Syracuse University Press, 2004), p. 125. Mossadeq was overthrown in a CIA sponsored coup that same year. In 2000 the *New York Times* published a leaked CIA document titled 'Clandestine Service History: Overthrow of Premiere Mossadeq of Iran, November 1952 to August 1953'. These were later made public by the CIA and can be found on the internet, including at: <http://web.payk.net/politics/cia-docs/published/one-main/main.html> (Accessed September 16, 2008).

²⁹ Abdul Sattar, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy 1947-2005: A Concise History* (Oxford Karachi, 2007), p. 44.

deal³⁰, even though it would continue to receive some economic aid from the US as well.

iv. The Decade of Daud

In 1953, Sardar Mohammad Daud Khan, a first cousin of King Zahir Shah, had been appointed the Prime Minister of Afghanistan. The primary proponent of Afghanistan's Pashtunistan policy, he was appointed in the hopes of being able to force a quick solution to the issue³¹. Afghanistan's foreign policy continued to formally embrace *bay-tarafi*, literally, without sides, meaning nonalignment. However, under Daud's decade long premiership Afghanistan moved considerably closer to the USSR. This says less about Daud and more about the balance of regional and international constraints and opportunities available to him and his country at the time. This brought about a strategic reorientation in alliances and interests in the region: India and Afghanistan remained formally nonaligned while receiving considerable support and assistance from the USSR. Pakistan became allied with the US, and later developed friendly relations with China³². China viewed Soviet assistance to India and Afghanistan as a policy of strategic encirclement aimed against it³³; this brought it closer to Pakistan.

In 1955 the One Unit Scheme came into force in Pakistan. This consolidated the provinces of Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan and NWFP into the single political unit of West Pakistan. This was to be given electoral parity with the more populous province of Bengal, now dubbed East Pakistan. The scheme was vastly unpopular in Pakistan, seen as denying Bengal its demographic majority and as solidifying Punjabi domination over the smaller provinces³⁴. It proved unpopular in Afghanistan as well which saw the Pashtun areas it claimed being drawn more tightly into Pakistan³⁵. Riots broke out in Kabul that led to the sacking of the Pakistani Embassy in Kabul and the consulate in Jalalabad while the police looked on³⁶. It also led to an increase in border clashes. The seriousness of the situation in 1955 can be gauged by the fact that Afghanistan mobilized upwards of 70,000 reservists on the border, expecting a strong military response from

³⁰ Rubin, *Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, p. 65.

³¹ M. Hassan Kakar, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and Afghan Response* (University of California Press 1997), p. 7.

³² Dupree, *Afghanistan*, p. 499-558.

³³ Gerald Segal, 'China and Afghanistan', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 21, No. 11 (1981), p. 1158 – 1174.

³⁴ Talbot, *Pakistan*, p. 126-127, 134.

³⁵ The tribal areas, however, remained outside of the One Unit and retained its autonomous character.

³⁶ Michael Rubin, 'When Pashtun Came to Shove', *The Review*, Vol. 27, No. 4, April 2002, available online at <http://www.ajiac.org.au/review/2002/274/essay274.html> (Accessed September 15, 2008).

Pakistan³⁷. The situation also precipitated another border closure that lasted 5 months.

The US attempted to mediate relations between the two countries. Concerned, probably without cause, that the US would attempt to draw Afghanistan into the CENTO pact as well, the USSR suddenly threw its support behind Pashtunistan³⁸. Despite great oratory in its favour, the Soviets never seriously backed Pashtunistan. Perhaps this was in trepidation of the dire instability that a successful separatist movement may cause in co-ethnic areas in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran, even causing the former two to completely balkanize and unravel as states. Therefore, the USSR consistently decided against inviting such instability on its south-eastern borders by refraining from actively encouraging or clandestinely supporting a breakup of Pakistan.

Normal diplomatic and trade relations resumed in 1955³⁹. However, relations again took a downturn after the change of power in Pakistan. General (later President and Field Marshal) Mohammad Ayub Khan, himself an ethnic Pashtun⁴⁰, had come to power in a military coup in 1958. Flush with Pakistan's newly acquired military strength and Western connections, Ayub pursued a more aggressive foreign policy orientation⁴¹. He purportedly advised the Afghan Foreign Minister that his military could march into Kabul in the space of a day⁴²; the threat precipitously terminated the negotiations. Nor was US President Eisenhower's visit to Kabul in 1959 able to bring a thaw in Pak-Afghan relations⁴³.

Pashtunistan dominated Afghan foreign policy in the early 1960s⁴⁴ despite the fact that it enjoyed little support amongst the Pashtuns of Pakistan⁴⁵. Daud too adopted a more aggressive approach. In 1960 over a thousand Afghan soldiers disguised as Pashtun nomads and tribesmen infiltrated the Bajaur Agency of Pakistan's frontier tribal areas. The infiltrators were repelled by pro-Pakistan

³⁷ Julian Schofield, 'Challenges for NATO in Afghanistan Pakistan Relations', in *Canadian Institute of International Affairs – International Security Series* (May, 2007), p. 6.

³⁸ Dupree, *Afghanistan*, p. 508. Also, Rubin, *Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, p. 65.

³⁹ Khurshid Hasan, 'Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 2, No. 7 (1962), p. 16.

⁴⁰ Though an ethnic Pashtun, Ayub was born and raised in the Punjab. His native language was not Pashto – an essential component of the Pashtun identity – but Hindko.

⁴¹ Dupree, *Afghanistan*, p. 541.

⁴² Hassan Kakar, *Soviet Invasion and Afghan Response*, p. 9.

⁴³ Dupree, *Afghanistan*, p. 549.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 538.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 557. Though many of Daud's advisors knew this, they were reportedly too scared of him to advise him accordingly.

tribesmen⁴⁶. This was followed by two separate and larger incursions in 1961, both supported by Afghan troops. A break in diplomatic relations and border closure followed, with Daud resolving that the, “border will remain closed until the Pashtunistan issue is solved.”⁴⁷

v. A Brief Abatement of Tension

Daud had followed an interventionist policy of supporting all Pakistani dissidents with sanctuary, funds and weapons⁴⁸. By 1963 amid economic hardships imposed by the border closure there was real fear that a newly confident and militarily capable Pakistan allied to the US and friendly with China would escalate the confrontation with Kabul. Thus, that year King Zahir Shah convinced Daud to resign from power, publicly citing the tensions with Pakistan and Daud’s inability to resolve the Pashtunistan imbroglio. The Pashtunistan issue abated following the re-establishment of diplomatic ties and the reopening of the border in 1963, brought about through Iranian mediation⁴⁹. The subsequent rapprochement between the countries was cited as justification for Daud’s dismissal. The new policy was to continue moral support for Pashtunistan without endangering Afghanistan’s economic or diplomatic interests⁵⁰. Relations between the two countries were never better than during this decade, nor have they been since. They further improved with the dismantling of the One Unit in Pakistan in 1970. Upon the reintroduction of the provinces, a number of tribal areas were incorporated into the NWFP and Baluchistan while the others were organized as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Though the geographic composition of these areas has changed somewhat over the years, they continue to lack most constitutional and other lawful protections afforded to the rest of Pakistan, lacked the rights of franchise until recently and are governed directly by the centre through draconian British era legislation⁵¹.

A measure of the thaw in relations between the two countries was evident in Kabul’s military restraint in this period. Pakistan and India had gone to war in 1965 and 1971. Pakistan’s forces were spread deadly thin during both conflicts.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 545.

⁴⁸ Rizvi, *Military, State and Society in Pakistan*, p. 146. Also, Schofield, ‘Challenges for NATO’, p. 6.

⁴⁹ Shirin Tahir-Kheli, ‘Iran and Pakistan: Cooperation in an area of Conflict’, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 17, No. 5 (1977), p. 479-483.

⁵⁰ Dupree, *Afghanistan*, p. 649-661.

⁵¹ Haq, Khan and Nuri, *Federally Administered Tribal Areas*. The *Frontier Crimes Regulation* is still in force in FATA and is regularly invoked by the Pakistani government.

However, Kabul refrained from taking advantage of its weakness and in fact, provided both material and moral support to Pakistan⁵².

Unfortunately, Islamabad has failed to see the historical, and indeed, historic lesson inherent in Kabul's support during its wars with India. Seeking good terms with a government in Kabul eased Pakistan's security concerns against India in a more substantial way than its quest for a pliable government has been able to to-date.

vi. Mutual Intervention

Relations again cooled when Daud Khan returned to power in a leftist inspired military coup in 1973 that abolished the monarchy and established the Republic of Afghanistan. The change in state structures was cosmetic; as before Daud ruled through coercive military strength and in consultation with a *Loya Jirga* that had no power to bind him. Pashtunistan was part of the justification provided for the coup; Daud claimed that the King had not sufficiently exploited Pakistan's military and political weakness to its advantage, particularly after the 1971 loss of East Pakistan⁵³.

The USSR was the first country to recognize the Daud government, given its past relations with him and that many military officers belonging to the pro-Soviet Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) had heavily aided the coup. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the charismatic Pakistani Prime Minister at the time, also made friendly overtures to Daud and recognized his government. At the time, Bhutto faced a nationalist tribal insurgency in the province of Baluchistan and hoped to pre-empt any support that Afghanistan might provide the rebels⁵⁴.

The Pashtun dominated PDPA urged Daud's government on to a policy of brinkmanship with Pakistan on Pashtunistan, hoping to further increase Afghan dependence on the USSR⁵⁵. In reality, as a Pashtun nationalist committed to consolidating the power of the central state to modernize Afghan society, Daud probably needed little encouragement from the PDPA. Despite Pakistan's

⁵² Magnus and Naby, *Afghanistan*, p. 117.

⁵³ Daud's perception of Pakistani weakness was not exaggerated. In the war of 1971 Pakistan lost half its naval fleet, a quarter of its air force and a third of its army, including the 93,000 troops taken prisoner following Pakistan's surrender. Clearly, the morale of the army and the entire country was at an all time low. See Christophe Jaffrelot (Ed.), *A History of Pakistan and Its Origins*, p. 75.

⁵⁴ Lawrence Ziring, *Pakistan at the Crosscurrent of History* (Oneworld, 2003), p. 145. For details on the Baluch insurgency, see Selig S. Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow: Baluch Nationalism and Soviet Temptations* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1981) p. 29-40.

⁵⁵ Hassan Kakar, *Soviet Invasion and Afghan Response*, p. 13.

gesture, Daud supported the insurgency in Pakistani Baluchistan, sheltering rebels and establishing training camps on Afghan territory⁵⁶, a resumption of Afghanistan's proxy intervention in Pakistan. This led to not infrequent border clashes between the two countries. In 1976, it led to a sharp escalation, prompting a deployment of Afghan forces in anticipation of a Pakistani attack⁵⁷.

Pakistan's war with India in 1971 had led to its province of Bengal seceding to form the independent Bangladesh. Pakistan had thereby lost substantial territory and half its population. Thus, Afghanistan's revived irredentist claims and support for the Baluchistan insurgency this time around found a much more wary and sensitive Pakistan. Though a socialist and himself opposed by domestic Islamists, Bhutto decided to arm and support Islamists opposed to Daud as a counter policy. Further, his advisors calculated that there would be a power vacuum in Kabul upon the ailing and aged Daud's death; having allies in the form of the Islamists would serve Pakistan well in influencing a post-Daud order⁵⁸. Thus, Pakistan supported the unsuccessful *foco*-style Islamist uprising in 1975 against the perceived un-Islamic communist influence in the Daud government. This provided Pakistan with a fateful opportunity to turn the tables on Kabul. Pakistan provided refuge and in all likelihood, special operations training to the would-be Islamist revolutionaries fleeing Daud's wrath⁵⁹. Some of these rag-tag rebels would go on to become household names in the region: Ahmad Shah Massoud, Barhuddin Rabbani and Gulbadin Hekmetyar. This was the ready-made strategic policy initiative that was expanded by Pakistan and exploited by the US after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan⁶⁰. Thus the struggle between nationalists in Kabul and Pakistan backed Islamists only intensified after the Soviet invasion; its roots stretched back to at least 1973 and, of course, its offshoots persist to the present day.

Pakistan's reciprocal interventionist policy certainly put pressure on Daud to reconsider the Pashtunistan issue and return to the negotiating table. This was

⁵⁶ Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, p. 39. Also, Hussain Haqqani, *Between Mosque and Military*, p. 174.

⁵⁷ Shirin Tahir-Kheli, 'Iran and Pakistan: Cooperation in an area of Conflict', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 17, No. 5 (1977), p. 479-483. Iran mediated the stand-off between the two countries.

⁵⁸ Rubin, *Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, p. 100. The key advisor in this respect was General (Retired) Naseerullah Babar. He would go on to advise Bhutto's daughter Benazir along the same lines with respect to supporting the Taliban in the 1990s.

⁵⁹ Haqqani, *Between Mosque and Military*, p. 174.

⁶⁰ This is most often seen as the beginning of Pakistan's Islamically oriented policy of proxy interference in Afghanistan. However, it bears mention that some scholars note that Pakistan had begun to pursue a 'forward policy' in Afghanistan as early as the 1960s by encouraging religious parties to seek ideological allies in Afghanistan in an attempt to bring Afghanistan and Pakistan into a common defence posture. See Haqqani, *Between Mosque and Military*, p. 165-167.

part of the reason that an agreement on the recognition of the Durand Line in return for Pakistan granting autonomy to the NWFP and Baluchistan was nearly reached between Bhutto and Daud in 1978⁶¹. Further, Daud was increasingly disconcerted by the overt pro-Moscow tenor of many of the communists in his government as well as by Afghanistan's growing dependency on the USSR. This was probably not Daud's intention in having strengthened ties. However, lying on the borders of the Soviet superpower the geopolitical calculus of a bi-polar world was heavily weighted against him.

vii. Reorienting Foreign Policy and Twin Coups

The failure of the US-led SEATO and CENTO alliance systems to be of any substantial aid to Pakistan in its wars against India in 1965 and 1971 had led first Ayub Khan and then Bhutto to reconsider its Western political and military orientation⁶². Bhutto withdrew from SEATO (though he kept up membership in CENTO to maintain its strategic link to both Turkey and Iran, as well as to receive weapons to rebuild the military). He continued a more balanced foreign policy symbolized by the "all weather friendship" with China and by evolving bilateral ties with the Soviet Union. Relations had begun improving after Pakistan closed the US military base and listening station in Peshawar. The USSR even assisted it in setting up a steel factory near Karachi in 1970⁶³. Pakistan also pursued closer ties with other socialist countries, including North Korea and Eastern European nations. Bhutto also reoriented Pakistan towards the Middle East, particularly towards Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Sheikdoms/United Arab Emirates which had assisted it in its wars with India⁶⁴. This balancing of foreign policy was developed by Bhutto into what he referred to as "bilateral nonalignment"⁶⁵.

Given Daud's unease with Afghanistan's growing tilt towards Moscow, he attempted a foreign policy reorientation similar to Bhutto's by moving towards the Muslim world and fostering closer relations with regional powers Iran and Saudi Arabia. Both countries were then staunch US allies, and concerned about the growing influence of the USSR in Kabul (which, even then, they hoped to

⁶¹ Rubin, *Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, p. 100. Magnus and Naby, *Afghanistan*, p. 62.

⁶² Close relations with China were a result of this strategic review. The architect of this policy was Ayub Khan, though Bhutto would later take credit for it. See Talbot, *Pakistan*, p. 175. The CENTO and SEATO pacts had been specifically invoked by Pakistan in 1965 and 1971 – to no avail. See Sattar, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy 1947-2005*, p. 52, 58.

⁶³ Christophe Jaffrelot (Ed.), *A History of Pakistan*, p. 171.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 105.

⁶⁵ These were essentially policies of multilateralism, *Ibid*, p. 102-104. Pakistan formally joined the Non-Aligned Movement in 1979.

replace with their own). Newly flush with incredible oil revenues following the 1973 Oil Shocks, they offered Kabul an aid package that would have dwarfed Soviet assistance over the previous two decades⁶⁶. Viewing both Afghanistan and Pakistan as important anti-communist bulwarks, the two oil rich Muslim states worked hard at bringing them to see eye to eye⁶⁷. The result was the near-agreement on Pashtunistan and the Durand Line in 1978.

It is unclear how far such a deal would have held water in the long term given that the structures of both states would be incredibly resistant to the deal being effectively realized. Though perhaps not a long term resolution of the issues of Pashtunistan and provincial autonomy in Pakistan, in the medium term it offered a *détente* that was based on concessions that were easily reversible but also allowed both countries to save face. It would have also have enabled them to ease defence spending and concentrate more on development efforts. Additionally, the deal offered Bhutto a window to negotiate a peace in Baluchistan. In any event, Bhutto was overthrown in a military coup and then “judicially murdered”⁶⁸ before an agreement could be finalized.

The coup-maker, General Mohammad Zia-ul Haq continued Bhutto’s efforts till Daud too was overthrown in a PDPA led coup in 1978 and murdered shortly thereafter along with most of his family⁶⁹. Both Daud and Bhutto had enjoyed varying degrees of popular legitimacy and possessed unassailable nationalist credentials. As such, they were better poised to resolve the impasse between the two countries than any leader before or since. As is often the case in both countries, events swamp and overwhelm even the best of intentions.

The PDPA government initially renewed support for Baluch and Pashtun separatists and revived calls for Pashtunistan⁷⁰. Anticipating a ‘counter-revolutionary’ response from the conservative Pashtun countryside, these moves were aimed at placating potential rebels and rallying Pashtun support, the standard strategy of consolidating and exercising state power in Afghanistan. This support was cut short after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on Christmas

⁶⁶ Magnus and Naby, *Afghanistan*, p. 62.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 119.

⁶⁸ The term is popularly used in Pakistan to describe the death sentence given to Bhutto. After the coup he was charged with conspiracy to commit murder in a case that had already been tried and dismissed. Further, Bhutto was the first person in Pakistan’s penal history to receive a death sentence for a conspiracy charge.

⁶⁹ In a recent gruesome end to the Daud saga, on June 12, 2008 the bodies of the indomitable sardar and his family were found in two mass graves in the Pul-e-Charki prison compound in Kabul.

⁷⁰ Harrison, *In Afghanistan’s Shadow*, p. 143-144. Prime Minister Hafizullah Amin was particularly passionate about the issue. His conception of Pashtunistan included all of Pakistani Baluchistan and all land “from the Oxus to Attock”.

Day, 1979. Kabul now followed Moscow's line that Pakistan should not be broken up and that 'self-determination' was an internal matter. For all intents and purposes, this signified the substantive end of the Pashtunistan movement as one that presented a material irredentist threat to Pakistan. Its symbolic value, however, remains potent in Afghanistan and has been revived since 2001.

B. Communism, Islamism, Intervention and Invasion

The relationship between Pakistan and the US had cooled down considerably by the 1970s. Pakistan smarted under the arms embargo slapped on it since the 1965 war with India⁷¹. By this time India had also received considerable military aid and hardware from the US. The Sino-Indian war of 1962 (prompted in part by China's perception of encirclement by the USSR) had turned New Delhi into an important anti-Chinese ally in the region for Washington. It also led to closer relations between Pakistan and China; indeed to this day China remains Pakistan's closest ally. These close relations were utilized by the US in 1970 to open secret negotiations with China which led to the famous *détente* between the two countries. A vector of these delicate negotiations was that neither the US nor China chose to endanger their budding anti-Soviet convergence by coming to Pakistan's military aid in the war with India in 1971. In any case, neither power was willing to risk going to war with the Soviet Union over the war in Bengal⁷². Moreover, the genocide that the Pakistan military was committing in Bengal made even a diplomatic charge in its favour unpalatable. This further estranged Pakistan from the US. Relations got more embittered when Bhutto began to pursue a nuclear program in 1972 given the demonstrated failure of both conventional arms and international alliances to aid it against Indian 'aggression'⁷³. The military coup and dictatorship of 1977 also isolated Pakistan

⁷¹ The US had suspended aid to India as well. Pakistan remained bitter because the suspension had a disproportionate impact on Pakistan since India had a larger indigenous defence capability. Secondly, Pakistan felt that its status as an ally entitled it to better than 'balanced' treatment.

⁷² India and the USSR had concluded a Treaty of Friendship in 1971. SEATO obligated the US to act in case Pakistan was subject to 'communist aggression'.

⁷³ This was two years prior to India's ironically dubbed "peaceful" nuclear test in 1974 which remains the official excuse for starting Pakistan's nuclear program. In the autobiography written in his death cell, Bhutto infers the US engineered his downfall due to his intransigence on the nuclear issue. See Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, *If I am Assassinated* (New Dehi: Vikas), p. 118. Most scholars have not found much evidence for the assertion. Despite this, the theory remains popular in Pakistan.

The 'third way', that of attaining security as a function of diplomacy, friendly relations and making peace with India, particularly in light of the glaring weaknesses in Pakistan's military security architecture, was not seriously pursued.

from the West. Moreover, the American Embassy in Islamabad had been ransacked in 1979⁷⁴. Therefore, this year saw Pak-US relations at low ebb.

The Islamic revolution in Iran with its anti-imperialist (and specifically anti-US) rhetoric and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan changed this dramatically.

i. The Cold War Turns Hot

Soviet influence in Kabul had, of course, increased dramatically after the communist coup. However, PDPA factions were locked in an increasingly bloody factional war that undermined the regime internally⁷⁵. Revolts in the Soviet trained Afghan military had severely curtailed its strength. A then fledgling nationalist and Islamist uprising in the countryside threatened to conflagrate. Stemming the fratricidal power struggle and shoring up the communists in Kabul was certainly one motivation for the Soviet invasion. However, the Soviet invasion was largely provoked by the covert support that the US had begun providing to anti-government groups in Afghanistan months prior to the Soviet invasion. This assistance was provided despite the calculation that it would induce a Soviet military response. In fact, this was precisely the strategy; the US hoped to embroil the Soviet Union in a bloody conflict comparable to the American experience in Vietnam⁷⁶. This would slowly bleed the Soviet Union and prevent it from politically or militarily penetrating further south towards the Middle East. The US used this space to build up a deterrent military capability in the Persian Gulf that culminated in the Gulf War and the 'internationalization' of Arab oil⁷⁷. Thus, Afghanistan remained a pawn, suffering a still ongoing and rapacious hot war in the big power rivalry of the so called Cold War.

⁷⁴ This was following rumours that Israelis had taken over the Grand Mosque in Mecca, the holiest site of Islam. With no Israeli embassy to vent against, mobs had attacked the US embassy. The rumours proved false; incident on the Mosque was perpetrated by members of an ultra-orthodox Saudi Arabian Muslim group.

⁷⁵ Rubin, *Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, p. 111-121.

⁷⁶ These revelations were made by Zbigniew Brzezinski, the National Security adviser to President Jimmy Carter from 1977 to 1981 in a 1998 interview to the French newspaper *Nouvel Observateur*. See Shuja Nawaz, *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, its Army and the Wars Within* (Oxford Karachi, 2008), p. 371-372. The full text of the interview can be found online at <http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/BRZ110A.html> (Accessed September 15, 2008). That US support to the anti-communist forces began prior to the Soviet invasion was later confirmed by Robert Gates, Director of the CIA from 1991-93, in an interview with the BBC in 2004. The interview can be found online at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4112117.stm (Accessed September 15, 2008).

⁷⁷ Hafeez Malik, *US Relations with Afghanistan and Pakistan: The Imperial Dimension* (Oxford Karachi, 2008), p. x.

American President Jimmy Carter called the Soviet invasion “the most serious threat to peace since the Second World War,”⁷⁸ and sought to enlist Pakistan’s assistance. Some in General Zia’s cabinet strongly objected to Pakistan’s involvement in the Afghan war, concerned for angering the Soviet bear and – presciently – stirring up a hornets nest inside the country. Zia disagreed and sought to exploit Pakistan’s geo-strategic potential to the fullest. Zia proved a wily operator; refusing the outgoing Carter administration’s offer of \$400 million in aid as “peanuts”, he held out till the Reagan government provided Pakistan with an aid package worth more than \$3.2 billion over six years⁷⁹. Pakistan, under Zia a sclerotic and thoroughly repressive military dictatorship, was now a “frontline state” in the war for freedom and democracy.

Pakistan stage managed most of the Islamic resistance against the Soviet Union. It allowed the so-called Mujahideen⁸⁰ thousands of bases in its tribal areas from which to mount cross-border raids into Afghanistan⁸¹. Further, the ISI funnelled funds and arms provided by the US and Saudi Arabia, but also to a lesser extent by the UK, China, the Gulf States, Egypt, and Israel⁸².

Even before the Soviet invasion, Pakistan had withheld recognition of the PDPA government⁸³. India’s entente with the USSR dictated that it recognized all communist era governments in Kabul and was mostly uncritical of the Soviet invasion⁸⁴. Iran, convulsed by revolution and contending with a cruel Western-backed invasion by Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, remained only a minor player in Afghanistan for many years. It entered the arena only later to arm, mediate between and unite various armed factions of the Shia Hazaras after the Soviet withdrawal⁸⁵.

⁷⁸ Jimmy Carter, *State of the Union Address*, January 23, 1980. Available online at the Jimmy Carter Library and Museum, <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.org/documents/speeches/su80jec.phtml> (accessed September 16, 2008).

⁷⁹ Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation-Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia* (Viking, 2008) p. 38.

⁸⁰ The popularly known term ‘mujahideen’ comes from the word ‘jihad’. Under Islam, this means “to struggle” whether by force of arms or otherwise. One who engages in jihad is a ‘mujahid’; its plural is mujahideen.

⁸¹ Haq, Khan and Nuri, *Federally Administered Tribal Areas*.

⁸² Among other aid, China, Egypt, and Israel were the largest suppliers of the Type 56/AK-47 (Kalashnikov) rifle that became one of the most potent symbols of the resistance.

⁸³ Lawrence Ziring, *Pakistan in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford Karachi, 1999), p. 447.

⁸⁴ Ian Talbot, *Pakistan*, p. 268.

⁸⁵ Anwar-ul-Haq Ahady, ‘Saudi Arabia, Iran and the conflict in Afghanistan’, in Peter Maley (Ed.), *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban* (Hurst & Co., 2001), p. 119-122.

By the mid-1980s, however, another front was added to the proxy war in Afghanistan. Both Afghanistan and Pakistan would become battlegrounds for Saudi Arabia and Iran in their struggle for the leadership of Muslims world wide, each sponsoring its own religious zealots and sectarian militants⁸⁶ that continue to proliferate even today.

ii. Pakistan's Role in the Resistance

Pakistan's strategic objectives in Afghanistan were primarily framed by its all-consuming obsession with securing arms and alliances to offset Indian predominance in the region. They were also informed by the historically troubled relations with Afghanistan over Pashtunistan⁸⁷. Thus, over the course of the war these objectives evolved to include the imposition of a friendly – or better yet, a puppet – government in Kabul to stabilize Pakistan's western frontiers. This would provide Pakistan with "strategic depth" against India⁸⁸. In a sense, this was a reprise of the British 'forward policy' that also looked upon Afghanistan as a strategic buffer to counter external threats⁸⁹. Despite appearances and public exhortations to the contrary, the possibility of a Soviet invasion was considered far more remote in Islamabad than it was in Washington⁹⁰. As can be deciphered, the core of Pakistan's strategic policies were still military oriented and conceptualized India as the main threat despite the presence of Soviet troops at its doorstep and conducting 'hot pursuits' of the Mujahideen through Pakistan's tribal areas.

Pakistan provided covert and carefully calibrated support to the Mujahideen so as to avoid a direct confrontation with the USSR and to be able to control the outcome of the war⁹¹. It recognized and funnelled assistance only to the Peshawar based 'alliance' of seven Islamic parties, channelling the lion's share of

⁸⁶ Syed Vali Reza Nasr, 'Islam, the State and the Rise of Sectarian Militancy in Pakistan' in Christophe Jaffrelot (Ed.) *Pakistan: Nationalism Without a Nation?* (Manohar, 2004) p. 94.

⁸⁷ Talbot, *Pakistan*, p.267-268.

⁸⁸ The lack of strategic depth has haunted the military since Pakistan's inception. Military planners have long struggled with overcoming the deficiencies of Pakistan's geographic narrowness and the presence of important cities (such as Lahore) and communication networks within short striking distance of India. The earliest appreciation of this strategic concern is in February 1946 by General Arthur F. Smith, then Chief of General Staff in India. See Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule*, p. 50. A pliable government in Kabul was meant to give Pakistan this much required strategic depth to launch a counter-offensive from Afghan territory. More disturbingly, the Pakistani military had also planned to secret nuclear weapons in (the non-existent) Soviet era bunkers at Bagram and other military bases in Afghanistan so as to give it second strike capability. See Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, p. 121.

⁸⁹ This position is also reviewed in Barnett Rubin and Abubakar Siddique, 'Resolving the Pakistan-Afghanistan Stalemate', United States Institute for Peace, Special Report No. 176, October 2006.

⁹⁰ Ian Talbot, *Pakistan*, p. 268.

⁹¹ Ibid. For a good compact account of Pakistan's involvement in the Afghan-Soviet War, see Nawaz, *Crossed Swords*, p. 369-379.

weapons to favoured groups, particularly the extremist Hekmetyar's Hizb-e-Islami. Further, with the US's approval, support and encouragement it accentuated the Islamic dimension of the resistance to the Soviet occupation, including encouraging fighters from all over the Muslim world to come and join the jihad in Afghanistan⁹². These tactics were aimed at sidelining the ostensibly secular nationalists, keeping the resistance dependent on Pakistan and ensuring that no one party was able to garner too much success and hence, nation wide support independent of Pakistan's influence. Further, Zia was mindful of the more than two million Afghan – mostly Pashtun – refugees living in squalid camps in Pakistan⁹³. Zia's experience of Black September in 1970 was thus, important in his calculations. Black September was the name given to an uprising (and alleged putsch) by Palestinians in Jordan led by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). This uprising was brutally suppressed with assistance from Pakistani troops led by then Brigadier Zia ul-Haq. Zia had learnt first hand the danger a united and organized resistance movement in exile, combined with a large refugee population, could pose to an unpopular host government⁹⁴. He had no intention of allowing that danger to materialize by giving the Afghans the chance to arrive at a broadly popular and legitimate leadership or government-in-exile.

iii. Costs and Consequences

Zia's policies of supporting the Mujahideen resistance in Afghanistan, in connivance with the US and other states, have exacted a disastrous toll on the peoples of both countries and its legacy continues to haunt the region. Pakistan faced retaliation by becoming a victim of numerous terrorist outrages and bombings engineered by KhAD (Afghan intelligence), the Soviet KGB and India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). These attacks killed or maimed over 4000 Pakistanis over the course of the war⁹⁵. Public exhortations to jihad, the open operation of foreign militants and terrorists in Pakistan and the use of the mushrooming madrassahs to indoctrinate and recruit 'holy warriors' led to the opening of vicious sectarian fissures. Sectarian and factional violence too became common-place⁹⁶. As society was thus brutalized and desensitized it was as if

⁹² One recalls the enduring image of Zbigniew Brzezinski at the Khyber Pass rallying the Mujahideen's religious fervour and urging them to victory with the words "Your cause is right. God is on your side". For a study of the Islamic dimension of the resistance, see Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan* (Cambridge, 1990).

⁹³ Amnesty International, 'Refugees from Afghanistan: The World's Largest Single Refugee Group', November, 1999.

⁹⁴ Roy, *Islam and Resistance*, p. 122.

⁹⁵ Ian Talbot, *Pakistan*, p. 268.

⁹⁶ Nasr, 'Islam, the State and the Rise of Sectarian Militancy in Pakistan' in Jaffrelot (Ed.) *Nationalism Without a Nation?* p. 94-105.

Pakistan crossed a moral threshold into a disregard for human life. The number of random bombings and killings in Pakistan have only increased since, only now with mostly local perpetrators. Opium cultivation and drug trafficking in mujahideen controlled areas of Afghanistan and FATA turned swathes of territory into narco-fiefdoms and international drug routes. The Pakistani state and particularly the military were heavily involved and benefited greatly from this spread of the lucrative illegal economy. Its influence on the state grows as a new class of *nouveau riche* drugs entrepreneurs have emerged in the cities and use their power and pelf to insinuate themselves within the machinery of state and government⁹⁷. In addition to narcotics, lethal weapons flooded the society. As many as 70% of the weapons supplied for Afghanistan never made it there⁹⁸. The more sophisticated weapons systems were often pilfered by the military while many of the armaments were sold for profit by the Pakistani military or its various entrepreneurial middlemen. This so called 'heroin and Kalashnikov culture' has undermined Pakistan's political economy and society ever since. In the words of American historian Paul Kennedy, "Ten years of active involvement in the Afghan war has changed the social profile of Pakistan to such an extent that any government faces serious problems in effective governance. Pakistani society is now more fractured, inundated with sophisticated weapons, brutalized due to growing civic violence and overwhelmed by the spread of narcotics."⁹⁹

Afghanistan begun to disintegrate as a state around the time of the Soviet invasion. It completely collapsed in the aftermath of the Soviet withdrawal and the recession of most international aid. It has to date failed to recover from the civil war it was plunged into in the 1970s. With over a million civilians dead and counting since 1979 and the worlds largest displaced population¹⁰⁰, Afghanistan is sorely fragmented and has lost at least two generations of its people to war and dislocation. Its climb out of oblivion remains a slippery slope.

⁹⁷ See Ahmad Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (Yale, 2001), p. 117-127. He gives the example that the entire staff attached to the ISI office in Quetta was dismissed and replaced because of heavy involvement in the drugs trade. See p. 120.

⁹⁸ Peter Chalk, 'Light Arms Trading in SE Asia', RAND Op.Eds, available online at <http://www.rand.org/hot/op-eds/030101JIR.html> (Accessed September 15, 2008).

⁹⁹ Quoted in Rashid, *Taliban*, p. 194.

¹⁰⁰ *Amnesty International*, 'Refugees from Afghanistan: The World's Largest Single Refugee Group'.

C. Democracy and Civil War, Neo-fundamentalism and Terrorism

Soviet forces withdrew across the Amu Darya in 1989, defeated as much by the sinews of the resistance fighters as by Pakistan's high-cost covert operations and the endless foreign supply of cash and armaments, including sophisticated weapons such as shoulder-fired anti-aircraft Stinger Missiles¹⁰¹. The Soviet life-line to the Afghan government as well as the infighting between various resistance commanders allowed the 'communists'¹⁰² to stay in power till 1992. As anti-government forces advanced on Kabul, President Dr. Najibullah stepped down in this year in favour of a Mujahideen 'coalition' led by nationalist and spiritual leader, Sibgatullah Mujadedi. But the Mujahideen were soon rent apart by brutal factional struggles.

A terrible phase in the civil war in Afghanistan was now unleashed whereby largely ethnically divided factions fought for personal power. Most of Afghanistan came under the rule of various local commanders and warlords. Kabul was seized by the Tajik dominated Jamiat-e-Islami of Barhuddin Rabbani and his most able commander, Ahmed Shah Massoud. Hekmetyar, Pakistan's favourite, failed to prise it from their grasp despite repeated attempts and indiscriminate rocket and artillery barrages that destroyed much of the city and killed thousands. Hekmetyar was not solely responsible for the misery inflicted on the proud Kabulis. In an ever shifting Rorschach of alliances and international patrons, heavy fighting ensued between the forces of the Tajik led Jamiat-e-Islami, the Pashtun dominated Hizb-e-Islami, the Hazara Hizb-e-Wahdat and Abdul Rashid Dostum's predominantly Uzbek Jowzjan militia¹⁰³. All armed groups in Afghanistan share the blame for the misery they inflicted on their own people, as do those who armed them – and those who abandoned them. With the Soviet forces withdrawn, the Cold War at an end and the Gulf War on the horizon, the superpowers lost interest in the region. There was no earnest effort

¹⁰¹ The Mujahideen were the first non-NATO recipients of these sophisticated weapons. Many were appropriated by the Pakistan military. Some became available for sale in the mushrooming weapons bazaars in the FATA areas.

The propaganda that lionized the Mujahideen still holds a dangerous sway. The myth of the 'unbeatable Afghan' hides the fact that the brutal Soviet scorched earth tactics had come close to breaking the back of the resistance. It was only through increased aid and the provision of more sophisticated weapons that turned back the tide. See Rubin, *Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, p. 181.

¹⁰² The PDPA had long since jettisoned its Marxist-Leninist and particularly its agnostic outlook. It had attempted – unsuccessfully – to transform itself into the reformist and nationalist Watan (Homeland) Party.

¹⁰³ Rubin, *Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, p. 247-280. Also, Amin Saikal, 'The Rabbani Government, 1992-1996', in William Maley (Ed.), *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban* (Hurst & Co., 2001), p. 29-42. Also, Ahady, 'Saudi Arabia, Iran and the conflict in Afghanistan', p. 117-134 in the same volume.

to broker peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan. Pakistan, Iran and Uzbekistan attempted to fill the power vacuum. But in the absence of serious international support and mediation, they could predictably do little other than strengthen client warlords or factions just enough to maintain a stalemate. Pakistan too was left out in the cold; most US aid was withdrawn and it was sanctioned for a nuclear program that had been conveniently ignored during the war. This has left a bitter legacy that poses a formidable challenge to peace making and state building activities in both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

i. Enter the Taliban

With the crumbling of the Soviet empire and the ostensible independence of the former Soviet Republics in the early 1990s, Pakistan was anxious to extend both trade and political ties to Central Asia. This necessitated measures to bring some stability to an Afghanistan mired in civil war and under the fragmented rule of numerous warlords and armed gangs. The ISI, trapped by its own strategic vision, continued to back the sinking ship of Hekmetyar. But in a seeming repeat of history, the second democratically elected and secular government of Benazir Bhutto, under its Interior Minister General (retired) Naseerullah Babur, laid the ground work for utilizing the Tehrik-e-Taliban (The Movement of Students) to bring stability to southern and eastern Afghanistan¹⁰⁴. Babur, who had previously advised Benazir's father on his aggressive Afghanistan policy in the 1970s, again saw the high stakes for Pakistan: a highly lucrative potential trade and energy route through to Turkmenistan and the other former Central Asian Republics.

The Taliban were a product of the war, displacement and dislocation brought by the Soviet invasion and Western response. The leaders of the Taliban movement were almost without exception former mujahideen, many of them affiliated with traditionalist Pashtun parties¹⁰⁵. The majority of Taliban fighters and leaders had only known war and life in the refugee camps. Thus, the Taliban's ultra-conservative orthodoxy was not simply a fundamentalist or literalist return to the scriptures or a traditionalist reversion to a pristine life in Afghanistan. It was the translation of the myths of religious and traditional Afghan village life *as interpreted* through the harsh conditions of the refugee camp¹⁰⁶. Therefore, the Taliban have been aptly described as neo-fundamentalist ('neo' because the

¹⁰⁴ Ahmed Rashid, 'Pakistan and the Taliban', in Maley (Ed.), *Fundamentalism Reborn?*, p. 79.

¹⁰⁵ William Maley, 'Interpreting the Taliban', in Maley (Ed.) *Fundamentalism Reborn?*, p. 15.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 20. The refugee camps were dense and dangerous and much more strictly regulated and segregated than was generally life inside Afghanistan. Many refugees never interacted with a member of the opposite sex.

world they recreated never actually existed)¹⁰⁷. This enabled the Taliban to commit acts that would have been unthinkable in the Afghan village or towns. These included publicly chastising or beating women who did not belong to their own family for slights such as appearing in public 'immodestly' dressed¹⁰⁸, or even for seeking employment, education or medical treatment. Their extremely harsh and completely exclusionary gender policy gained them notoriety and opprobrium in the region and across the world¹⁰⁹.

The Taliban were successful in liberating a Pakistani trade convoy *en route* to Turkmenistan and went on to capture Kandahar City¹¹⁰. Strengthened by support from transport mafias in Pakistan, a weapons cache seized from Hekmetyar and extensive assistance from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia¹¹¹, the Taliban began their whirlwind campaign to conquer Afghanistan. The Taliban promised to have no desire to seize power but only to break the hold of the warlords and transfer power to an Islamic government. As such they were initially welcomed by those sections of population tired of bickering and predatory warlords. To paraphrase the Roman historian Tacitus, the ultra-orthodox neo-fundamentalist Taliban made a wilderness and called it peace; but still, it was a kind of peace and as such it was welcomed by the war weary population¹¹². However, it is easy to overestimate this point in explaining their success as the myths propagated by the Taliban and Pakistan have done. Apart from the southern provinces of Kandahar and to a much lesser extent, Helmand, and the region immediately surrounding the capital city of Kabul, the rest of the country was not nearly as lawless and chaotic as is often popularly believed; in fact much of it was relatively stable and beginning to thrive¹¹³. Thus, the essential factor in the Taliban's rise was not the desire for bringing order from chaos, but rather the surge in military and economic assistance provided by Pakistan and Saudi

¹⁰⁷ The concept has been developed by Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (I.B. Taurus, 1994), p. 75-88.

¹⁰⁸ The simple head-covering and clothes that covered the entire body were considered immodest. The Taliban insisted on a thick full body veil called the *burkha*, with a thick gauze over the eyes. This garment is much more restrictive than the Pakistani, Iranian or Turkish veils.

¹⁰⁹ For the Taliban's gender policies, see Nancy Hatch Dupree, 'Afghan Women under the Taliban', in Maley (Ed.), *Fundamentalism Reborn?*, p. 15-166.

¹¹⁰ For the founding myth of the Taliban, see Rashid, *Taliban*, p. 17-30.

¹¹¹ Anthony Davis, 'How the Taliban Became a Military Force', in Maley (Ed.), *Fundamentalism Reborn?*, p. 43-71.

¹¹² This can be gauged by the fact that even then President Rabbani, locked in mortal combat with Hekmetyar in Kabul, initially supported the Taliban as both a stabilizing and potentially friendly Pashtun force. See *ibid*, p. 44. Further, even now President Hamid Karzai and his family, who hail from Kandahar, were early supporters of the Taliban. See Ann Marlowe, 'Two Myths About Afghanistan', *Washington Post*, February 11, 2008, p. A 13.

¹¹³ Davis, *Ibid*, p. 69. Also see Nazif Shahrani, 'War, Factionalism and the State in Afghanistan', in *American Anthropologist* 104(3), p. 719-720.

Arabia when outside support for and the morale of other armed groupings was sagging¹¹⁴.

The ISI and Pakistani military eventually threw their weight behind the Taliban, retaking control of Pakistan's Afghanistan policy. The US too favoured the Taliban as a force of stability in an energy rich region¹¹⁵ up until 1998's terrorist attacks on the US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya. These were widely believed to be perpetrated by Osama bin Laden, a Saudi businessman and Arab mujahideen commander from the anti-Soviet war turned leader of al-Qaeda, an international terrorist organization. On his expulsion from Sudan in 1996, Hekmetyar had invited bin Laden to Afghanistan. He was now guest of the Taliban in the Emirate of Afghanistan who refused to extradite him. Even then, the US maintained contacts with the Taliban till 2001. With Pakistani military planning and assistance, the Taliban were able to march into Kabul in 1996. Pakistan recognized the Taliban government immediately, given the tantalizing prospect of a friendly regime in Kabul whose puritan Islamic neo-fundamentalism made it vehemently opposed to an 'infidel' India. Pakistan would remain only one of three countries to bestow recognition¹¹⁶.

However, generous assistance did not mean that the Pakistani government could fully control the Taliban; they made use of their various social and political networks to play benefactors and supporters at various levels of Pakistani government and society against each other and managed to maintain their relative autonomy¹¹⁷. This was amply displayed by the fact that like every other regime in Kabul since 1948 the Taliban too refused to accept the Durand Line. Pakistan's powerlessness was further demonstrated by its impotence in getting the Taliban to temper their human rights excesses, as well as its failure to prevent the destruction of the ancient Buddhas of Bamiyan.

By 2001 Pakistan had squandered much of the good will gathered during the Afghan-Soviet war by its blatant interference in Afghanistan and its sponsorship of the Taliban's ongoing military campaign against the so called Northern Alliance, a Tajik led coalition of militias mostly consisting of Afghanistan's ethnic minority groups. The Taliban now controlled most of the country, with the Northern Alliance restricted to and doggedly holding on to a pocket of territory

¹¹⁴ Davis, *ibid*.

¹¹⁵ Richard Mackenzie, 'The United States and the Taliban', in Maley (Ed.), *Fundamentalism Reborn?*, p. 90-103.

¹¹⁶ The other two were Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

¹¹⁷ Rashid, 'Pakistan and the Taliban', in Maley (Ed.), *Fundamentalism Reborn?*, p. 73.

around the Panjshir valley, home of the famous Tajik commander Ahmad Shah Massoud. The then leader of Pakistan, another military putschist named General Parvez Musharraf, openly admitted Pakistan's ongoing support for the Taliban, declaring, "This is our national interest...the Taliban cannot be alienated by Pakistan. We have a national security interest there."¹¹⁸

Other regional powers had also rejoined the fray with renewed vigour in response to Pakistan's sustained and brazen assistance to the Taliban¹¹⁹. Iran, which had been fundamental in bringing together the Northern Alliance¹²⁰, also armed the Shia Hazara. Russia and Uzbekistan supplied assistance and weapons to their clients and co-ethnics in the Northern Alliance. Tajikistan provided logistical support to Massoud, who in turn assisted in mediating its bloody civil war. India too had shifted its support from the former communists to the former mujahideen of the Northern Alliance, though it bears noting that former communist leaders and militias were also part of Alliance, as well as the Taliban. India's turn was based on the changing situation in Afghanistan and on its antipathy to Pakistan, particularly the fact that Pakistan was using Taliban run militant camps in Afghanistan to train fighters for operations in Indian Controlled Kashmir.

ii. Taliban: Support and Isolation

Shunned by the international state system, the Taliban were increasingly drawn into a parallel underground transnational community, one of international terrorists and criminal and jihadist networks¹²¹. These networks allowed them to maintain military dominance in a war weary country with a ready supply of resources and fighters from Pakistani madrassahs, as well as Arab fighters under the umbrella of al-Qaeda and Islamic Jihad. The Taliban's main 'strike corps', the feared Brigade 55 for instance, was entirely composed to non-Afghans¹²². It also hosted like-minded dissidents from its neighbours, including the leaders and fighters of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)¹²³. Though obviously Afghan led and dominated, the Taliban have always been a transnational

¹¹⁸ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, p. 50.

¹¹⁹ Pakistan's military assistance to the Taliban was illegal under *UN Security Council Resolution 1333* adopted on December 19, 2000.

¹²⁰ Ahady, 'Saudi Arabia, Iran and the conflict in Afghanistan', in Maley (Ed.), *Fundamentalism Reborn?*, p. 124.

¹²¹ Rubin, *Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, p. xvi.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ With particular reference to the IMU, see Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (Yale, 2002).

phenomenon; it was natural for them to seek allies in the same manner and through similar channels.

Even prior to 2001 the Taliban movement was far from monolithic. There were differences, including with regard to sheltering Osama bin Laden, and the relationship to be pursued with the international community. By 2001, internal and external pressure on the regime was mounting. There was considerable diplomatic pressure on Pakistan to withdraw its support and recognition¹²⁴, Saudi Arabia had severed aid due to the Taliban's refusal to extradite bin Laden, and the Northern Alliance's effective campaign to gather support in European capitals was seeing increasing success. The Taliban's lack of interest in governance beyond law and order and war-making had turned Afghanistan into the world's largest humanitarian disaster. But it was the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, on the US that renewed international interest in Afghanistan and refreshed the opportunity for it and the global community to play a role in the region and in the latest strategic realignments therein.

With Afghanistan once more an international battlefield, Pakistan too was able to reprise its role as a 'frontline state' in the fight for 'freedom' and 'democracy'. As fate would have it, it saw this role again two years into the regime of another military dictator, General Pervez Musharraf.

D. Same Region, Similar Interests: Afghanistan-Pakistan Relations Today

To say that the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan today is highly complex is a gross understatement that does not even begin to convey the magnitude and multiple concentric layers of the problem. As the preceding discussion demonstrates, the clash of interests has not simply been one between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Rather, there have been and continue to be various regional and global dimensions to the conflict that complicate hopes for peace even in the long term.

Afghanistan has lived with a grave geopolitical misfortune. Its people and their lands have long existed at the cross-roads of empires, from Safavid Persia, Shaybani Uzbek and Mughal India, to Tsarist Russia (and later the Soviet Union) and the British Empire in India, not to mention the strategic importance of the

¹²⁴ Canada too had asked Pakistan to cease its support for the Taliban. Pakistan's own foreign service was close to revolt on the issue. See Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, p. 57.

country to the present day *US imperium*. The Afghan state that was formed at the high noon of classic imperialism unravelled at the dusk of the Cold War when competing alliance systems reduced it to a bloody battlefield. Current geopolitical competition in the region is reason for similar foreboding, particularly as the locus of violence and conflict spreads eastwards, already engulfing Pakistan.

The relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan since 2001 have been well documented. Therefore, they will not be narrated in any great detail here¹²⁵. Rather, this paper will aim to highlight those aspects which still embitter relations between the two countries. Further, as noted above, there can be no thorough review of policies towards Afghanistan and Pakistan without addressing these broader questions that inform their relations and their political and policy implications. Nor can the conflict be understood without highlighting some of the contradictory and/or conflicting regional and international interests involved in Afghanistan and Pakistan at present. It is hoped that this will also be an invitation to experts in these areas to continue to lend their specific knowledge and analysis to these issues.

i. Pakistan and Afghanistan after 9/11

After some fevered deliberation, Islamabad was relatively prompt in declaring support for Washington in its so called War Against Terror. The decision was not made lightly by the Pakistan military; supporting the Taliban was so important to Pakistan's security and regional calculations that Musharraf even considered going to war with the United States rather than abandon his allies in Afghanistan¹²⁶. Ultimately, Pakistan assisted the US with facilities and bases as well as the intelligence necessary to win the war in Afghanistan quickly. At the same time, the paucity of ground troops only scattered the Taliban and many elements of al-Qaeda. Thousands of them escaped into Afghanistan's rugged mountains and Pakistan's tribal areas. Many simply returned to their villages and towns, or to refugee camps and madrassahs in Pakistan where they had family and friends waiting. Once in Pakistan or near the border many fighters were also able to rely on clan connections or bribe their way to safety. The ISI, utilizing its assets in Pakistan's religious political parties, also welcomed many of the demoralized fighters back, saving them for a rainy day.

¹²⁵ A copious amount of recent literature now exists on the topic. However, Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, is highly recommended in this respect. Current up to the spring of 2008, its scope and richness of detail is presently unparalleled.

¹²⁶ Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, p. 199. Also, Barnett R. Rubin, 'Saving Afghanistan', *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2007.

Pakistan's panic regarding the new situation in Afghanistan began in November of 2001, when despite US assurances to the contrary, the Northern Alliance forces moved into Kabul. The Alliance had developed close ties to India; its control of Kabul was seen as a profound strategic threat to Pakistan and a complete failure of Pakistan's costly investment in cultivating the friendly Taliban regime. At the conference in Bonn, Germany, where an interim Afghan government was chosen, the Northern Alliance received the portfolios of most of the important ministries, including defense. Its forces physically controlled these ministries and the US or other allies had little interest in evicting them. Even though a Durrani Pashtun in the form of Hamid Karzai was elected interim president in December 2001, Pashtuns still felt underrepresented in the government.

A Constitution was adopted following a constitutional Loya Jirga in 2004¹²⁷. This adopted a unitary (as opposed to federal) and presidential form of government, rejecting any formal ethnic representation in state institutions. Thus, the flip side to Pashtun concerns is that the Constitution provides no defense against perceived or actual domination of the state by any one particular ethnic community, which has historically been and is almost certain to again eventually be the Pashtuns. This has led to Afghanistan's minorities being extremely wary of the present set up as well¹²⁸. Moreover, against Pakistan's insistence, the defeated and demoralized Taliban were completely left out of any negotiations on the future of Afghanistan when potentially – though this is far from certain – they could have been dictated to from a position of strength.

ii. Heating Insurgency, Cooling Relations

By 2005, Afghanistan had once again begun to celebrate Pashtunistan Day each August 31. Moreover, in February, 2006, President Hamid Karzai publicly dubbed the Durand Line a "line of hatred" and expressed that he did not accept it as an international border as "it raised a wall between the two brothers."¹²⁹ Pakistani and Afghan troops had already clashed over the disputed border as early as 2003. Anti-Pakistan protests had followed in Kandahar, Lagman, Mazar-

¹²⁷ The official versions of Afghanistan's 2004 constitution are only available in the Dari and Pashto languages. A high quality unofficial English language translation can be found in *Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*, 'The A to Z Guide to Afghanistan Assistance, Sixth Edition', February, 2008, p. 68-99.

¹²⁸ See Katharine Adeney, 'Constitutional Design and the Political Salience of 'Community' Identity in Afghanistan: Prospects for the Emergence of Ethnic Conflicts in the Post-Taliban Era', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 48, Issue 4, (2008) p. 535-57.

¹²⁹ Afghan News Network Services, 'Durand Line Serves as a Line of Hate: Karzai', February 19, 2006. By two brothers he meant the Pashtuns on either side of the border.

i-Sharif, Urozgan and Kabul among other cities. In a seeming repeat of tensions from the 1950s, on July 8, 2003, protestors in Kabul ransacked the Pakistani Embassy, an incident which threatened to escalate into a wider conflict.¹³⁰ Pakistani and Afghan soldiers have periodically clashed across the border since¹³¹.

Pakistan also faced pressure on sealing its border and denying the Taliban sanctuary as early as 2002-03. The first reported clash between US and Pakistani troops took place then in South Waziristan in this period¹³². It was then that Major Steve Clutter, the then US military spokesperson at the Bagram Base near Kabul, first enunciated the US's 'hot pursuit' policy saying, "the US reserves the right to pursue fleeing Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters from Afghanistan into Pakistan without Pakistan's permission. It is a long standing policy, that if we are pursuing enemy forces, we're not just going to tiptoe and stop right at the border."¹³³ Thus, the controversy over recent incursions by US troops into Pakistani territory¹³⁴ have been part of the overall nexus of relations and tensions between the two countries since the early days of the latest war in Afghanistan.

A Tripartite Commission involving senior military and diplomatic officials from Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United States was set up in 2003 in an effort to facilitate communication and information sharing to avoid further incidents. Its role has remained purely technical around these lines as opposed to facilitating or being a springboard for broader political dialogue.

By 2006 relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan had sharply deteriorated. The Taliban insurgency had gathered substantial strength in this period¹³⁵. President Karzai publicly accused Pakistan of supporting the insurgency and sheltering insurgent leaders in its cities. President Karzai went so far as to provide a list of names and addresses for alleged Taliban leaders living in Pakistan. Pakistan vehemently denied the charges.

¹³⁰ Rahimullah Yusufzai, 'Borderline Story', *The News International*, July 30, 2003.

¹³¹ See for example Anthony Lloyd, 'Afghan soldiers mass on the border, ready and willing to take on old foe', *The Times*, March 19, 2007.

¹³² Marc Kaufman, 'US Reports Clash with Pakistani Border Unit', *Washington Post*, January 1, 2003, p. A1.

¹³³ Scott Baldauf, 'US Hot Pursuit Roils Pakistanis', *Christian Science Monitor*, January 6, 2003, p. 6.

¹³⁴ *The Economist*, 'FATA morgana' and 'A Wild Frontier', September 18, 2008. Also, *The Economist*, 'Friends Like These', September 25, 2008.

¹³⁵ For a good account of the development of the Taliban insurgency see Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, particularly at p. 240-261 and 349-373.

The situation in Pakistan itself substantially altered in this period. The putschist General Musharraf had assumed the office of President and held parliamentary and provincial elections in 2002. The elections brought the MMA, a coalition of six Islamist parties, into government in the provinces of NWFP and Baluchistan, both of which border Afghanistan. The MMA was also the third largest party in the National Assembly immediately following elections. General Musharraf's government encouraged defections from the secular opposition parties until it effectively became the official opposition.

The unprecedented success partly capitalized on protest votes as the MMA was the only party resolutely opposed to the invasion of co-ethnic Afghanistan. This allowed the religious parties to increase their collective share of the popular vote from the usual 5% to about 11%¹³⁶. But they also benefited from severe electoral engineering. This included sidelining the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N), the two largest parties in Pakistan. Both were led by two former Prime Ministers, Benazir Bhutto and Mian Nawaz Sharif respectively. Both leaders were refused entry into the country, much less allowed to contest elections. Further, opponents were disqualified on the basis of corruption charges or lack of educational credentials¹³⁷. Religious parties were allowed to openly campaign while there were severe restrictions imposed on secular parties. As a result, the election process was sharply criticized by the European Union Observer Mission¹³⁸ and termed “deeply flawed” by Human Rights Watch¹³⁹. Contrary to these findings, the US concluded that the election results were “acceptable”; Canada did not utter any protests.

The success of the MMA shored up the traditional alliance between the religious parties and the military and buoyed Musharraf's rule both domestically and internationally. His gambit largely successful, Musharraf was able to convincingly project himself to an international audience as the only thing standing between the ‘Talibanization’ of Pakistan. The reality was different for most Pakistanis. The mullahs were allowed numerous concessions in return for

¹³⁶ The historic high for the religious parties was the 1970 election where they gathered 14% of the popular vote. Since then their electoral support had been in terminal decline till 2002. See Owen Bennett Jones, *Pakistan: Eye of the Storm* (Yale, 2003), p. xvii-xviii.

¹³⁷ In a country with a chronically low literacy rate, Musharraf brought in a law requiring that anyone running for office must have a university degree. At the same time, he recognized diplomas handed out by any madrassah to be the equivalent of a university degree, thereby effectively exempting most of the religious party leaders from the requirement.

¹³⁸ European Union Election Observation Mission, Final Report, ‘Pakistan National and Provincial Assembly Election, October 10, 2002’.

¹³⁹ Human Rights Watch Background Briefing, ‘Pakistan: Entire Election Process Deeply Flawed’, October 9, 2002.

supporting Musharraf, his constitutional changes and his government. The military-supported Islamist provincial governments did much to foster the insurgency in both Afghanistan and Pakistan by sheltering militants, reigning in law enforcement agencies that tried to curb their activities and broadly legitimating their obscurantist ideology¹⁴⁰. Domestically they were increasingly successful in foisting an ultra-conservative neo-fundamentalist agenda through a combination of intimidation, thuggery and popular legislation. Thus, contrary to international perceptions, Talibanization occurred at an unprecedented rate largely due to the government's cynical patronage.

Further, Musharraf's rule also saw the re-ignition of a burgeoning nationalist insurgency in Baluchistan. Baluchistan also shares a border with some of the most volatile areas of Afghanistan, namely the provinces of Helmand and Kandahar. Thus, the insurgency there not only taxed the Pakistani military but also presented numerous exploitable opportunities for the Taliban¹⁴¹.

By 2005, the Taliban insurgency had already become cross-border and was equally active on either side¹⁴². It now included the so called 'Pakistani Taliban'. Large swathes of territory in FATA, the NWFP and Baluchistan slipped out of control of the Pakistani government and were converted into mini versions of Afghanistan under the Taliban. Even the suburbs of the city of Peshawar, capital of the NWFP, were thus Talibanized. Moreover since 2007 a campaign of suicide and conventional bombings have terrorized all of Pakistan's cities, killing hundreds if not thousands¹⁴³. Not even Islamabad, the country's capital, has been spared. The insurgency has turned into Pakistan's Frankenstein's Monster; it can no longer delude itself into thinking that it still controls the actors or that it is insulated or contained in the lawless border areas away from the Pakistani heartlands. It now presents a palpable threat to the state¹⁴⁴.

¹⁴⁰ For an excellent report on this issue, see *International Crisis Group*, 'Pakistan: The Mullahs and the Military', Asia Report No. 49, March 20, 2003.

¹⁴¹ For a good report on the Baluchistan crisis, see *International Crisis Group*, 'Pakistan: The Worsening Conflict in Baluchistan', Asia Report No. 119, September 14, 2006.

¹⁴² Rubin and Siddique, 'Resolving the Afghanistan-Pakistan Stalemate'.

¹⁴³ In 2007 there were more suicide bombings in Pakistan than all previous years combined. There were 71 suicide blasts that killed 927 persons. This does not include other types of bombings and attacks across the country. See *Human Rights Commission of Pakistan*, 'State of Human Rights in 2008', p. 65.

¹⁴⁴ For a good account of the rise of extremism and militancy in Pakistan see Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, Zahid Hussain, *Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle with Militant Islam* (Columbia, 2007), and Hassan Abbas, *Pakistan's Drift into Extremism: Allah, the Army and America's War on Terror* (M.E. Sharpe, 2005), particularly p 201-241.

iii. Just what is Pakistan's Game?

Pakistan has many apologists that insist that the growing insurgency in Afghanistan has little to do with it and everything to do with the occupation of Afghanistan and bad governance under President Hamid Karzai. Others say that it is difficult for an army to fight its own people and therefore, the military has failed to subdue the Pakistani Taliban. Then there are those that claim Pakistan is a duplicitous ally that publicly condemns the Taliban while privately assisting them. Still other claim that Pakistan simply does not have the military capability to pacify its restive border areas and the insurgency that rages therein. There are elements of truth and myth-making in all these positions.

The Pakistani military has historically been more adept at suppressing – usually very brutally – insurgencies by its compatriots than it has been at fighting external threats. It has done so in Baluchistan in the 1940s, 1950s, 1970s and then from 2003 to 2008. It was also vicious in its suppression of an uprising in rural Sind in the late 1980s and in the province's first city of Karachi in the 1990s. Its brutality was unmatched in 1971 when it committed genocide against the Bengalis and was more or less on track for extinguishing the rebellion prior to Indian intervention. Thus, explanations relying on the assertion that Pakistan's military does not have the stomach to fight its own people, or that it does not possess sufficient expertise in dealing with asymmetric warfare does not hold water historically – even providing for the virtual revolution in asymmetric warfare tactics following the occupation in Iraq.

What distinguishes the present insurgency from previous ones, including the one in Baluchistan which the military has fought simultaneously? Clan and kinship ties may have played some role in the military's initial lackadaisical performance. Many of Pakistan's frontier paramilitary forces share not only ethnic but also blood ties with the Pashtun Taliban fighters. This situation has been remedied recently by moving ethnic Punjabi troops into the frontier regions.

But the main distinction has less to do with fighting fellow citizens than with the difficulty in squaring the ideological dimensions of the insurgency. The Taliban consider and proclaim themselves to be jihadis or mujahideen and are garbed in the cloak of Islamic legitimacy. Pakistan is itself an ideological state with a confused national identity tied in with Islam. It has for decades lionized – and sometimes idealized – the struggle for a puritan Islamic state in Afghanistan. The challenge now is that the Pakistani Taliban and their vocal sympathizers are proving increasingly adept at appropriating the Pakistani state's discourse of

legitimacy resting in its Islamic credentials and recasting it in a radical mould. Thus, ideationally it is now extremely difficult to re-characterize this subverted discourse as illegitimate, terroristic or even anti-state.

It is this dimension of the insurgency that is potentially the most damaging to Pakistan in the long-run as it requires a more comprehensive and long-term social solution than a mere military campaign within a particular time and space. Despite the dramatic increase in suicide bombings and sectarian and terror attacks in Pakistan, many Pakistanis are still unsure about the fight against the Taliban and al-Qaeda and continue to regard it only as America's proxy war. This is evidenced by the recent parliamentary resolution that calls for an immediate halt to military operations without calling on the Taliban to do the same¹⁴⁵. Thus, posing effective ideological and ideational opposition to the Taliban will require carefully crafting a social consensus not only on what must be done at present to stem the rising tide of extremism but also on the symbolic signifiers of the Pakistani state, particularly on its foundational myths and on the ways in which Islam is to play a role in its public sphere (or not). Such a consensus will prove difficult given a Pakistani polity increasingly fragmented along political, class, ethnic, sectarian, religious and urban/rural lines. Regardless, initiating a sustained public dialogue on these issues is crucial, particularly now when the elections of February, 2008 have inflicted a crushing defeat on the radical parties¹⁴⁶ and have provided the government with a democratic mandate.

Notwithstanding, Pakistan has undertaken earnest military efforts to keep the threat manageable, and its nuclear and human assets (i.e., pro-Pakistan Taliban) safe from external action. It has set up more than 1000 checkpoints on its side of the border, as compared to less than 200 on the Afghan side. It has deployed up to 110,000 troops on its border and lost over 3000, far more than the number of troops deployed on the Afghan side of the border¹⁴⁷.

¹⁴⁵ Hasan-Askari Rizvi, 'Blind to the Threat', *The Daily Times*, October 26, 2008.

¹⁴⁶ The MMA secured only 7 seats in the 342 seat National Assembly with some of the leaders of its component parties also losing their seats. See *Election Commission of Pakistan*, available online at <http://www.ecp.gov.pk/NAPosition.pdf> (accessed October 2, 2008).

¹⁴⁷ For Pakistani losses, see Rizvi, 'Blind to the Threat'. There are presently 50,700 troops as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. This includes Canada's contingent. There are an additional 7000 troops as part of the US Operation Enduring Freedom. These are outside of ISAF/NATO command and are deployed to hunt down al-Qaeda. The Afghan National Army (ANA) currently stands at a strength of about 86,000. Thus, active troops in all of Afghanistan come to 143,700. Most of them are not deployed by the border.

Recently, the Pakistani military has pursued more aggressive and increasingly successful actions against the militants in its Bajaur Agency, described as a “crucial hub” and the “centre of gravity” for the Taliban insurgents. The action saw hundreds of Taliban fighters pouring over the border from Afghanistan to reinforce their comrades in Pakistan¹⁴⁸. The military has been confronting and repelling attacks in Bajaur itself but has been unable to keep the Taliban restricted to the Afghan side of the border. Nor, of course, have foreign troops based in Afghanistan or the Afghan National Army (ANA) been able to prevent Taliban fighters from crossing the border and joining the fray in Pakistan. This demonstrates the limits of Pakistan – and Afghanistan – to effectively seal or manage the porous border.

Moreover, it is naïve to imagine that there is an ‘off switch’ for the insurgency somewhere in Islamabad. The ‘Taliban’ appellation no longer applies merely to the movement that seized power in Kabul back in 1996. The movement is now sorely fragmented, decentralized and remains regionalized and internationalized. It incorporates neo-fundamentalists, Islamists, other militants and terrorists, as well as drug barons, criminals, spoilers vying for local power and the destitute fighting for some semblance of a regular pay cheque¹⁴⁹. As the vicious Taliban insurgency within Pakistan itself shows, Pakistan does not control all the various strands of the renewed movement or its multifarious radical affiliates and has little influence over them. In the words of a prominent scholar on the subject, Pakistani intelligence agencies have “no clue” as to the numerous fragmented, loosely affiliated, networked or even competing radical organizations in Pakistan¹⁵⁰. This is demonstrated by the fact that when over forty different militant groups in the NWFP and FATA banded together as the Tehrik-e-Taliban under the leadership of Baitullah Mehsud, the ISI only found out after the fact¹⁵¹.

But this is not to say that Pakistan does not control *some* Taliban commanders and fighters; indeed it does and has used them against both Afghanistan and India. Thus, it is also important to recognize that not only is Pakistan unable to

¹⁴⁸ Barbara Plett, ‘Pakistan Villagers Take on the Taleban’, *BBC News*, September 29, 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7641538.stm (accessed September 29, 2008).

¹⁴⁹ For an excellent on the ground study, see Surendrini Wijeyaratne, ‘Afghanistan: A Study on the Prospects for Peace Discussion Paper’, *Canadian Council for International Cooperation*, p. 6. Also see *International Crisis Group*, ‘Countering Afghanistan’s Insurgency: No Quick Fixes’, Asia Report No. 123, November 2, 2006.

¹⁵⁰ Conversation with Hassan Abbas, a Research Fellow at Harvard University and a leading authority on security issues and extremist groups in Pakistan.

¹⁵¹ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, p. 386.

control the border and reign in all the militants, it is also – to the extent that it can – unwilling to do so. Pakistan hopes to keep the areas in a state of controlled chaos whereby its Taliban intelligence assets, such as the Haqqani father and son team, are preserved to be utilized to expand influence into both Afghanistan and India. The ‘control’ in this chaos comes in its targeting of foreign (i.e. non-Afghan and Pakistani) fighters and those Taliban commanders, such as Baitullah Mehsud, Mangal Bagh or Maulana Fazalullah (more popularly known as Maulana Radio for his skill in setting up pirate radio stations), that are bent on fighting the Pakistani state. The control, however, is often illusory and threatens to get entirely lost amidst the chaos.

The questions thus are: why is Pakistan unwilling to fight all the Taliban and why does it maintain its links with some of them? A cynical though not entirely unreasonable view holds that the insurgency has been good for Pakistan, and particularly its military managers. The Pakistani military under Musharraf benefited immensely from the at least \$10 billion, and perhaps as much as \$20 billion, in aid provided to Pakistan¹⁵². Most of this aid went to the military¹⁵³. Without the ongoing turmoil in Pakistan and the border areas the Pakistani military stands to lose a lucrative revenue stream.¹⁵⁴ No doubt this plays some role in Pakistan’s approach to the Taliban insurgency, just as its carefully calibrated support for the Mujahideen prolonged the war against the Soviets by keeping it at a low intensity. But the economic motive for the military is overly simplistic and fails to explain the entire scenario. Tactical motives aside, Pakistan’s strategic objectives in the region have remained the same even when it was completely isolated from US largesse in the 1990s. Though Pakistan no doubt realizes that US engagement in the region has given it the opportunity to build its military capability *vis a vis* India, its strategy is a continuation of gaining leverage in Afghanistan and building up the military security against India that it has pursued since the 1970s.

Pakistan is motivated by the desire to have a friendly government in Kabul that it can exercise some influence with. Pakistan needs this to be able to expand

¹⁵² Derek Chollet and Craig Cohen at the Center for Strategic and International Studies have estimated that in addition to the \$10 billion in overt funds Pakistan received another \$10 billion in covert funds as well. See Amitabh Pal, ‘The Wrong Side in Pakistan’, *The Progressive*, February, 2008.

¹⁵³ About 1% of the funds were earmarked for development and 3% for border security. 96% were utilized for building up the military, including expensive purchases of advanced weapons systems. The figures come from Robert Miller of the Parliamentary Centre. See Mike Blanchfield, ‘Pakistan’s Plight the focus of Ottawa Conference’, *Canwest News Service*, October 16, 2008.

¹⁵⁴ For this argument see Dexter Filkins, ‘Right at the Edge’, *New York Times Magazine*, September 7, 2008. Available online at http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/07/magazine/07pakistan-t.html?_r=1&ei=5070&emc=eta1&oref=slogin (Accessed September 15, 2008).

political and trade ties with the Central Asian Republics and to keep Afghanistan's irredentist Pashtunistan claims in check. Most importantly, however, Pakistan's managers, and particularly its military that still controls its defence and foreign policies, are concerned with the perceived threat from India. Pakistan is a security state defined by its ideational opposition to India. The Pakistani military remains obsessed with the idea of gaining strategic depth against India. Its worst nightmare remains an Afghanistan friendly to and dominated by its arch-nemesis. Therefore, Delhi's growing influence in Kabul has been causing panic in Islamabad.

Indeed, India's ties with Afghanistan are partly aimed at disrupting Pakistan's security calculations. Pakistan continues to pursue a proxy war of varying intensity against India in Kashmir. This 'death by a thousand cuts' has the dual purpose of maintaining pressure on India to ultimately come to a settlement on Kashmir, and also to keep a substantial portion of the Indian military tied up in the Himalayan region, thereby reducing its strike capability against the rest of Pakistan. In the minds of military planners, this tactic gives Pakistan a 'force equalizer' against the much larger and more advanced Indian military. However, by strengthening its position in Afghanistan, India is countering Pakistan's long standing proxy tactics. An Afghanistan that is stable, adding to its military strength and increasingly (and justifiably) resentful of Pakistan would turn the tables. If India can not utilize its full military capability because of Kashmir, the thinking goes, then Pakistan can not utilize it because of Afghanistan. It is within this framework that Pakistan views and processes reports that India may provide training to the Afghan National Army (ANA)¹⁵⁵, as well as recently announced plans of increasing the projected strength of the ANA from 80,000 to 134,000¹⁵⁶. Many, including Afghan Defence Minister Abdul Wardak, argue that it should be much larger still¹⁵⁷. Therefore, it has received the news of the increase in

¹⁵⁵ India Defence, 'India to Train Afghanistan, Uzbekistan armed forces', April 24, 2007. Available online at <http://www.e-ariana.com/ariana/eariana.nsf/allDocs/53AF0A109DA7602E872572C700687F76?OpenDocument> (Accessed September 15, 2008).

¹⁵⁶ Sean McCormick, US Department of State, Press Statement: 'Afghanistan National Army Expansion', September 10, 2008. Available online at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2008/sept/109449.htm> (Accessed September 17, 2008).

¹⁵⁷ *CBC News*, 'Defence Minister says Afghan Army must be 5 times larger', July 12, 2006. Available online at <http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2006/07/12/afganistan12072006.html#skip300x250> (Accessed September 15, 2008). Also see *The Economist*, 'A Surge of Pessimism', October 16, 2008. The Defence Minister has argued for an army of 150,000-200,000. The Economist article argues expanding the ANA in line with Iraq, which has a projected military strength of 260,000. It also has 250,000 police as compared to 80,000 in Afghanistan. Further, Iraq also has a well funded 100,000 strong pro-government Sunni tribal militia. Iraq is both smaller and less populous than Afghanistan.

militarization in Afghanistan with much trepidation¹⁵⁸ – and it is not the only country in the region to have done so.

In contrast to Pakistan's influence exercised through madrassahs and militants, India is making investments in Afghanistan that, in the long term, are aimed at cultivating and cementing its ties with the Afghan elites of tomorrow. These include economic aid, infrastructural development and educational ties. Pakistan has been outmanoeuvred but has been slow to adapt or alter its policies accordingly.

However, there is also a dark side to Indian involvement in Afghanistan that is often ignored or written off to a mix of Pakistani paranoia and propaganda. This is the building of a dam on the Kunar river in northern Afghanistan. This would provide much needed electricity to Afghanistan. However, the river flows (via the Kabul River) into the Indus at Attock. In Pakistan's view, the Kunar dam would have serious ramifications for its water supply¹⁵⁹. Further, its construction comes amid ongoing disputes between India and Pakistan over the use of water resources and a dam on the Chenab River¹⁶⁰.

More disturbing still India funds and supports training camps for Pakistani Baluch insurgents in southern Afghanistan¹⁶¹. The latest rebellion raged from 2003 to recently in 2008 when the main insurgent groups declared a cease-fire¹⁶². However, tensions are still running high and a conflict could easily reignite. Thus, it seems Afghanistan has reprised its role of support to Baluch militants and proxy intervention in Pakistan – albeit at a lesser intensity than Pakistan is able to muster against it – while India has found its opportunity to give Pakistan a taste of its own medicine.

¹⁵⁸ See for example, Najmuddin A Shaikh, 'Any Pluses for Afghanistan?', *Daily Times*, September 5, 2008.

¹⁵⁹ Robert D. Kaplan, 'Behind the Indian Embassy Bombing', *The Atlantic*, August 1, 2008, available online at <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200808u/kaplan-pakistan> (Accessed October 5, 2008).

¹⁶⁰ Masood Haider and Anwar Iqbal, 'Water Issue to be resolved: Singh: Indus Treaty to Provide Guidance', *Dawn Internet Edition*, September 25 2008, available online at <http://www.dawn.com/2008/09/26/top3.htm> (Accessed September 25, 2008).

¹⁶¹ Pakistan's inability to draw attention to this fact strongly suffers from 'the boy that cried wolf' syndrome. Its enthusiasm in blaming outsiders – and most often and particularly India – for all its woes leeches its credibility even when the allegations hold water. A number of learned commentators have alluded to India and Afghanistan's support for Baluch insurgents. See, for example, Rubin and Siddique, 'Resolving the Afghanistan-Pakistan Stalemate'.

Further, a renowned journalist based in Pakistan and Afghanistan also advised me of credible, if as yet unconfirmed, reports on this issue. The journalist requested to stay anonymous pending the publication of the story.

¹⁶² *Daily Times*, 'Baloch Ceasefire is Welcome', September 6, 2008.

That such intense rivalry is occurring between ostensible Western allies while tens of thousands of troops are stationed in the region is a troubling portent. At the very least, the present strategies are failing to bring lasting peace and security to the region and are contributing to its militarization. This also demonstrates the limits of Western – even imperial – power to superimpose its own interests onto related states without regard for underlying and longstanding regional interests. As a result, a hegemonic agenda can not simply be transcribed onto the region without feeding the kind of turmoil that we are presently witnessing. The mutual animus between Afghanistan, Pakistan and India has lasted a long time. If the current course is followed without involving the entire region in an open dialogue, this turmoil will likely far outlast Western involvement in Afghanistan.

E. Regional Cooperation or Towards a New Cold War?

As we have seen, both Pakistan and India are using Afghanistan as a proxy battlefield. Afghanistan, the weakest of the three countries, is certainly a victim in the circumstances, but not an entirely passive or blameless one. Further, they are not the only countries that are exploiting Afghanistan to pursue their own *realpolitik* agendas, both legitimate and otherwise. The regional consensus that had been built by the US in support of its invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 is now unravelling, a victim of geopolitics and suspicions over its long-term goals and motivations in the country. To states in the region Afghanistan resembles more and more an expansion of the US *imperium*.

In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, Russia had proposed to accept US “global leadership” if the US allowed it “hegemonic responsibility for the former Soviet Union.”¹⁶³ Offered from a position of weakness, the proposal was rejected by Washington which planned to establish military bases in Central Asia to support the war in Afghanistan. It also hoped that the bases would be ‘enduring’, projecting US influence in the region the extending it to Russia’s south eastern borders, as the extension of NATO already inched towards its western borders¹⁶⁴. By 2005, however, as the US got increasingly bogged down in Iraq, Russia was once again acting like a great power and expanding its alliances

¹⁶³ Malik, *US Relations with Afghanistan and Pakistan*, p. xii.

¹⁶⁴ On the spread of US bases in the region and across the globe, see Chalmers Johnston, *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy and the End of the Republic* (Metropolitan Books, 2004).

in the region. It has conducted joint military exercises with China and India. It squarely rejected imposing sanctions on Iran for its uranium enrichment activities and has publicly decided to remain neutral in any future US-Iran war¹⁶⁵. As in Soviet times, it had also made attempts to take over supplying and training the ANA, though the recent boost in US aid to Afghanistan is presumably meant to ward off this development. Given the rising rancor between the US and Russia, if it views the growing ANA as a threat, Afghanistan may once again turn into a proxy battlefield between the two powers.

Iran too, under the moderate leadership of Mohammad Khatami, had offered its support in containing the Taliban and securing the border. Instead of fostering this regional cooperation, Iran was added to the list of the so-called Axis of Evil. It views the possibility of 'enduring' bases in Afghanistan as well as the planned increase in the size of the ANA with considerable and reasonable suspicion. Since 2003 it has had to live with US troops on both its eastern and western (Iraq) borders while relations between the two countries have considerably worsened. It has few good options ahead in Afghanistan, as long as the existing choices remain a government allied with the US with unprecedented military strength in manpower and equipment, or the Pakistan/Saudi Arabia aligned and rabidly anti-Shia Taliban that attacked and killed its consular staff in 1990s. Without a third option in Afghanistan, Iran is likely to continue hedging its bets, with some factions within its security establishment contributing to the ongoing chaos in Afghanistan.

However, it is China that is proving the major magnet for shifting interests in the region. Soon after the election of President George W. Bush, the US redefined China from "strategic partner" to "strategic competitor". This was in keeping with US defence doctrines aimed at pre-empting and preventing the re-emergence of a new rival for global power, preventing any hostile power from becoming a regional hegemon and maintaining a mechanism for deterring potential competitors aspiring to a larger regional or global role. China fit squarely within the doctrine.

Part of this re-qualification included luring New Delhi into accepting a leading role in the new US strategy for containing China¹⁶⁶. India and the US have moved considerably closer since then, exacerbating strains in the US-Pakistan relationship. The recent unprecedented nuclear deal between the US and India

¹⁶⁵ In real terms this means Russia will continue supplying Iran with weapons, including sophisticated air defence missiles.

¹⁶⁶ Gwynne Dyer, 'Containing China', *The Walrus*, October 2005.

that accepts the latter as a legitimate member of the nuclear club is an indication of the importance the US ascribes this budding alliance¹⁶⁷. This is leading to further nuclearization of South Asia. China recently agreed to provide Pakistan with two more nuclear reactors. Publicly the reason is to address Pakistan's acute energy crisis. The real reason is to restore some modicum of balance to the geopolitical power equation in South Asia that the comprehensive US-India deal had disturbed¹⁶⁸.

In this context, China too sees a lingering US presence in Afghanistan and Central Asia, as well as the steadily strengthening ANA as a threat. It is obviously wary of a US strategy of containment and strategic encirclement. It perceives Afghanistan as a plank in an encirclement strategy that also includes India among other countries. China's concerns are not aided by a feeling of déjà vu, having seen a similar encirclement attempted by the former Soviet Union. Pakistan is the wild-card for China. The two countries share an "all-weather friendship" and this is likely to continue; however China is not presently in a position to replace US generosity in terms of military, civil and financial aid. However, China has continued to court Pakistan as a large donor of military hardware and has assisted Pakistan in a number of strategic projects, including a new port at Gwador in Baluchistan. It has also begun to seek pre-emptive counter-alignments with Russia and Iran, and has improved and increased ties with Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, in addition to Pakistan, almost certainly to secure its position against India. However, China is also concerned about the chaos in Afghanistan and destabilization and Talibanization in Pakistan as reports begin to emerge about rebels in the Xingjian province finding sanctuary and training facilities in Pakistan's border areas.

Thus, a prolonged Western military presence in Afghanistan is slowly leading to the opposite of establishing peace and stability in the region. It is exacerbating regional tensions and contributing to its increased militarization. But despite the deliberately provocative title of this section, it is as yet doubtful that this will lead

¹⁶⁷ On this issue see Esther Pan and Jayshree Bajoria, 'Backgrounder: The US-India Nuclear Deal', *Council on Foreign Relations*. Available online at <http://www.cfr.org/publication/9663/> (Accessed October 20, 2008).

¹⁶⁸ Matthew Rosenberg, 'Pakistan Secures China's Help to Build 2 Nuclear Reactors', *The Wall Street Journal*, October 20, 2008. Available online at http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122445373748048283.html?mod=googlenews_wsj (Accessed October 20, 2008).

to a new Cold War or even a classic arms race in the near future. However, a pair of opposing alliances led by the US and China will likely emerge¹⁶⁹. The multi-layered relations between countries in the region are largely interest based. Russia and China still have their many differences. India does not desire a conflict with China, and vice versa, as both countries understand that this would be devastating to their emerging economies. Thus, India and China have been putting out feelers aimed at better bilateral relations as well. However, both are historical competitors. Further, the history of the region shows that there is a possibility of regional and international conflagrations stemming from the plethora of interests and particularly the involvement of big powers and veritable empires.

Therefore, any road that seeks to diffuse the tension and leads to peace goes through increased regional cooperation. Hence, an earnest and honest dialogue is required on the situation in both Pakistan and Afghanistan that brings all regional players and the countries presently involved in the occupation of Afghanistan to the negotiating table under the auspices of the UN. As this section hopes to demonstrate, the conflicts in Afghanistan and Pakistan and across the region have important transnational dimensions. Their solutions must be the same.

As a prologue to this section, it is useful to consider that Pakistan has often been described as a “pivotal state”, meaning a country “whose fates would significantly affect regional, even international stability.”¹⁷⁰ Peace, stability and prosperity in the country would have a knock-on multiplier effect throughout the region. I suggest Afghanistan is in a similar position. Once a cross-roads between East and West, between Asian and Europe through the fabled Silk Route, Afghanistan can once again be an important route for trade and energy. Thus, to create an enabling environment where this can be achieved needs to be an urgent policy priority.

¹⁶⁹ *The Economist*, ‘Into the Wide Blue Yonder’, June 5, 2008.

¹⁷⁰ Robert Chase, Emily Hill, and Paul Kennedy (Eds.), *The Pivotal States: A New Framework for US Policy in the Developing World* (New York, 1998), p. 4.

F. Canada's Role in Afghanistan...and Pakistan?

Given Canada's policies, or lack thereof, with respect to Pakistan in the context of Afghanistan, the relevant questions raised by this paper are: What can Canada do? And what can Canada get Pakistan to do? The discussion that proceeds also deals with a third normative question implied in the first two: what *should* Canada do? The suggested answers are likely to be unpopular. But they are offered earnestly to allow policymakers to adopt realistic expectations and to explore opportunities for effecting sustainable change in the long term.

Afghanistan is Canada's largest foreign policy undertaking and commitment since the Korean War. However, this policy is equally notable for its gaps and lack of international and regional context, particularly with regard to the impasse in relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Recent revelations that years into Canada's military intervention in Afghanistan there is no up-to-date policy concerning Pakistan¹⁷¹ is good reason for foreboding and may undermine any gains made by Canada in Afghanistan; at worst it may unravel and render meaningless Canada's entire effort. Therefore, if Canada is to take its direction in Afghanistan seriously, as it must given the gravity and magnitude of its involvement and its costs, then it can not afford to ignore Pakistan in its policy calculus.

However, it is also vital to avoid the analytic pitfalls of simplistic jingoisms that hold Pakistan solely responsible for the current misery befalling its neighbour. Such a portrayal will barely move us beyond the level of crude caricature and cliché. Instead, Canada must recognize that Afghanistan and Pakistan share a long and deep history and for better or for worse, it is likely that their futures will be similarly intertwined. The adverse relationship between the two states, clearly evident in their public exchanges of diplomatic barbs, has been an ongoing state of affairs and not one that has developed only recently. Canada must be mindful of this history and the regional context if it to play a creative and effective role as a peacemaker in the region and avoid being seen as seeking to enforce a hegemonic or imperialist agenda. It must also move beyond simple management strategies that focus on technical issues like border regulation and military operations to engage the range of substantive political issues that are at the heart of the current crisis. Of course, the face of Pakistan and Afghanistan

¹⁷¹ Jeff Davis, 'Afghan Taskforce Reassessing Pakistan Strategy', *Embassy*, August 13, 2008.

that emerges will ultimately depend on the political choices available and made by its people and ruling establishment. However, foreign policy can be a tool of creating an *enabling* environment for peace and stability.

To do so will no doubt require adroit diplomacy supported by expert analysis and knowledge creation. This can not be achieved by ignoring or outsourcing foreign policy formulation; it will require rebuilding the specialist capabilities of government departments, particularly in foreign affairs and defense, as well as supporting regional analyses in public and private *fora*.

i. Engaging Pakistan within a Regional Framework

It is a fact that Western powers have preferred working with military strongmen in Pakistan. Despite Canada's foreign policy emphasis on democracy, it is often thought the most expendable plank of the '3D approach' that also emphasizes defense and development. Many Pakistanis do not believe that Canada sincerely holds democracy in high regard anywhere outside of its borders. Their cynicism is warranted given that Pakistanis struggled alone and isolated against military dictatorship from March 2007 to February 2008 without any substantial support expressed from Ottawa or other Western capitals. The message to Pakistanis was clear: the human rights, development and democracy that justified drastic measures such as the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan do not hold similar importance for its neighbour. It cheapened Canada's standing in both countries.

Presently Canada enjoys a relatively clean slate in the region, despite the unavoidable and necessary detractors of its military role in Afghanistan. Its relatively low profile can be something of an opportunity. However, if Canada is to be taken seriously in the region – and is to take the region seriously – it must urgently align its entire array of foreign policy tools with its declared values. Therefore, Canada must vocally and visibly support the restoration and continuance of democracy in Pakistan. Positive transformations and better focus on security and economic development in Pakistan can only flow from prolonged political stability within a democratic framework. Nine long years of direct and indirect military rule have brought Pakistan to its current precipice. It could likely take as long if not longer to pull it back from the edge. During this time its democrats and the fearless denizens of its civil society require all the friends and support they can get as they continue to struggle for rule of law and substantive democracy. There is also great capacity for broadening engagement with progressive and democratic vectors of Pakistani society. As the recent "Black and White Revolution" of the lawyers movement has shown, there is a vibrant and increasingly assertive civil society, a fearless media, and increased

youth involvement in politics. Thus, the façade of the military being the only so-called working institution of the state can no longer be sustained.

Canada can use its position of perceived neutrality within Pakistan to pedal its structural or 'soft power' in a way that can assist in addressing instability in Pakistan and, at its core, the imbalance in state-society and civil-military relations. Canada should review and focus its development tools and assistance programs as part of broader foreign policy engagement. Some factors that would result in strengthening the present democratic dispensation in the short to medium term could be, for example, addressing Pakistan's severe energy crisis and directing investment to assist its moribund economy even now at risk of defaulting on its external debt obligations. These would bear results in the short to medium term, and assist in undercutting the near global opposition that many Pakistanis have developed towards 'the West'. The development of FATA should also become part of the strategy to rebuild Afghanistan; this would recognize the reality on the ground that these areas in particular are closely linked and that they can be mutually constructive – or destructive.

Further, Canada has the opportunity to expand its assistance in reforming the education sector. As discussed above, ultimately the struggle against militant Muslims in Pakistan is one of ideas and ideology. Poverty and the gap in expectations and opportunities are essential factors in the rise of extremism in Pakistan (or anywhere else for that matter). But while these may be *enabling* ingredients, they are not *drivers*. Clearly, not everyone mired in poverty and the lack of opportunity turns to violence, nor are the middle classes immune from radicalization. The essential driver is a militant ideology that the state is increasingly unable to oppose and replace with anything more substantive. Without developing a social consensus around a Pakistani identity and the direction in which to take Pakistani society and polity, the jihadis will continue to have an attractive ideology. Reforming the education sector and civil institutions that, above all else, allows Pakistani youth to develop into critical thinkers and engage in public debate is what is urgently required to arrest the rising tide of militancy in the long run¹⁷². Assistance in this enterprise will be essential in the long-term for it will determine the future direction and viability of the Pakistani state.

However, Canada must also come to terms with dilemmas of Pakistan's security and insecurity. Pakistan will insist on exercising some influence in Kabul with a

¹⁷² I am grateful to Kamran Bokhari of Stratfor, Inc. for this insight.

view to security against India, and to a secondary extent, for guaranteed access to trade routes and checking Afghanistan's irredentist claims. The Taliban share ethnic and other ties to Pakistan through various networks. Though not strictly controlled by Pakistan, it can hope to exercise the most influence on them. Other ethnic and political groups in Afghanistan have historically and traditionally looked elsewhere in the region – and often at Pakistan's regional rivals – for solidarity and support. Thus, the Taliban – whatever form they take in the future – will likely form the basis of Pakistan's influence.

With this backdrop it is increasingly important to begin talking to Taliban factions that are prepared to come to the table. The centripetal force previously exercised by Mullah Omar and his clansmen from Kandahar appears to have weakened. Some Taliban commanders have expressed the need to temper their puritanical neo-fundamentalist excesses. Indeed, some have taken this tack in practice; in the areas like the Helmand province where they are aiming to expand their influence the Taliban have lifted bans on music, television, kite-flying and other entertainment, and the shaving of beards¹⁷³. Thus, there is every indication of the appearance of more flexible Taliban commanders open to dialogue. The proposition of pursuing negotiations is no longer radical. It is now being widely discussed, including by President Karzai himself¹⁷⁴. It is time to pursue it seriously and vigorously.

There is a quandary in working with Pakistan while knowing that it has hedged its bets and played both sides to some extent all along. As noted above, Pakistan is motivated by its security concerns, particularly *vis a vis* India and will not be easily swayed in its outlook. The solutions to a stable and peaceful Pakistan are only long-term ones. They include a Pakistan that alters its state structures sufficiently to limit the role of the military in the sphere of political decision-making. Thereby it can redefine its security as a function of friendly relations and alliances with its neighbours rather than military strength and proxy intervention. This can only be achieved in a substantively democratic Pakistan where the elected and accountable institutions of the state are able to impose their pre-eminence over the non-elected ones, particularly the military, and recast state-society relations in the sphere of political participation. It will also require an environment of reasonable reciprocation by Pakistan's neighbours.

¹⁷³ *The Economist*, 'Talking to the Taliban', October 2, 2008.

¹⁷⁴ See, for example, *Indian Express*, 'Karzai calls upon Mullah Omar to work for peace', September 30, 2008. Available online at <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/karzai-calls-upon-mullah-omar-to-work-for-peace/367924/> (Accessed October 1, 2008).

However, there are no good alternatives in the short term. Pakistan will remain a military dominated security-state for the foreseeable future while Pakistan's fragile democracy struggles to entrench itself. Pakistan's military-based security obsession with India can be gauged by the fact that its strategic policies ultimately remain concerned with India regardless of the present threat. This was true when Soviet troops were operating along its borders and the KGB and KhAD orchestrated terror attacks in Pakistan in the 1980s. It remains true today even as a spiraling Taliban led insurgency in the tribal areas extends its tentacles across the country with related terror attacks butchering hundreds across the country, including in the heart of the capital city of Islamabad. The words of a senior Pakistani government official in a recent interview with me captured this sentiment well. "Even if Pakistan disintegrates from the west," the official said ruefully, "We will continue to look toward the east."¹⁷⁵

Ultimately, the solutions to the stalemate are political, not military. In this context, Canada's diplomatic capital would be well spent in the role of peace-maker in the nuclear powered rivalry of India and Pakistan. Further, intense diplomacy is required between Islamabad, New Delhi and Kabul that assures each party of its legitimate interests while calming fears that the other is trying to undermine it. Each state, and particularly Pakistan, must eschew proxy militant intervention as a tool of foreign policy. To do so, Kabul must also take a friendlier posture towards Pakistan and reassess its open alliance with India.

Given that the Pakistani state has lost much territory in the past, it will continue to react strongly – even pathologically – to territorial challenges. Thus, border issues between Pakistan and Afghanistan also need to be urgently assessed and resolved peacefully. The Durand Line is mired in too much history and symbolism. A bilateral border commission with international oversight is required to properly demarcate a border. But a border between the two countries can not be a 'hard' one; both Pakistan and Afghanistan must foster open borders and exchanges that will boost both social and economic cooperation.

It is India and Pakistan however, that hold the key to better relations across the region. Better understanding between the two will remove the largest obstacle to much increased cooperation in the region under the auspices of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). This will realize the potential of bringing the countries together organically in areas of social, cultural and

¹⁷⁵ 'East' of course meaning India. Interview with a senior Pakistani government official. The official insisted on remaining anonymous. I remain incredibly grateful for the interview.

economic cooperation. The South Asia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) would boost the latter by providing each country with easy access to its natural markets. This will have a stabilizing and uplifting impact on the region as a whole. Needless to say, all this requires deft diplomacy and nuanced facilitation to be likely.

ii. Reassessing Afghanistan

Further, it is also high time to make an honest and critical assessment at the highest levels of the dismal aid and reconstruction effort undertaken in Afghanistan. Without such democratic criticism there can be no improvement or reform. The reconstruction in Afghanistan is the cheapest per capita 'state building' exercise in post-World War II history¹⁷⁶. Moreover, for the most part development efforts are poorly conceived and implemented. Efforts are duplicated and developmental organizations view each other as competitors rather than partners. Many opportunities are wasted as a result of petty personality clashes. Private contractors have frittered and swindled vast amounts of resources. The lack of effective oversight and monitoring has led to ghost projects and sub-standard work. CIDA funded projects are no different. There are obvious exemptions to these observations, but they are the exceptions that make the rule¹⁷⁷.

The Afghan government is also in dire need of reform. The highly centralized nature of the government offers little protection from corruption. Indeed, there are indications that the present government is more corrupt than the Taliban¹⁷⁸. In addition to a high proportion of former warlords in government and parliament, the largest drug barons in the country also remain in government with relative impunity¹⁷⁹. Some are closely connected to President Karzai himself¹⁸⁰. The government can not continue to rely on support and trust merely because it is not the Taliban. Ultimately, the test of effective governance is how it improves the lives of the governed. Afghanistan's government is failing the test even when

¹⁷⁶ *International Crisis Group*, 'Countering Afghanistan's Insurgency'. Also, Ron Moreau, Sami Yousufzai and Michael Hirsh, 'The Rise of Jihadistan', *Newsweek*, October 2, 2006.

¹⁷⁷ For a good overview for reconstruction and state building efforts in Afghanistan, see Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, p. 171-195. These were also my general observations in the months that I spent in Kabul.

¹⁷⁸ Associated Press, 'Current Afghan government more corrupt than Taliban, survey finds', *International Herald Tribune*, March 19, 2007. Available online at <http://www.ihf.com/articles/ap/2007/03/19/asia/AS-GEN-Afghan-Corruption.php> (Accessed September 16, 2008).

¹⁷⁹ *The Economist*, 'Afghanistan's Opium Poppies: No Quick Fixes', June 19, 2008. Also, Thomas Schweich, 'Is Afghanistan a Narco-State?', *New York Times Magazine*, July 27, 2008. Available online at http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/27/magazine/27AFGHAN-t.html?_r=1&oref=slogin&pagewanted=all (Accessed October 20, 2008).

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

its performance is adjusted for the Taliban insurgency. This too has resulted in the disenfranchised and economically marginalized to respond to the call of extremists and others opposed to the government¹⁸¹.

iii. Conclusion

As we have seen, the present crisis-laden relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have numerous historical antecedents that stretch back to Pakistan's predecessor state in the modern state system, that of British India. Historical antipathy and mistrust runs deep. Many of the paths to peace and stability in Afghanistan and Pakistan require such a broader and deeper understanding of their relations. Further, the two countries inhabit prime geopolitical and geo-strategic real estate. Thus, the (often contradictory and hostile) interests of regional and global powers frequently intersect there. As a result, an external hegemonic agenda can not simply be superimposed onto the region without feeding the kind of turmoil that we are presently witnessing.

In sum, it is naïve to think that the off-switch to the chaos in Afghanistan lies in Islamabad. The Taliban are now sorely fragmented and decentralized and Pakistan does not control them all. It is itself fighting an earnest civil war against them and its military is thinly stretched. Ultimately, however, a political solution must be found in regional capitals. Canadian and other troops can hold the ground till a *détente* is reached with the Taliban and regional powers but they can not force a solution through military prowess. The threat of force may sometimes have to enter political calculations in order to provide an enabling environment for dialogue. But ultimately, the causes of and solutions to the turmoil in the region are political, and facilitating an earnest discussion on them with partners in government, international organizations and civil society is a pressing need. It is a huge challenge for our time that leadership and political will can turn into an opportunity for Canada and the entire Central and South Asian region.

¹⁸¹ *International Crisis Group*, 'Countering Afghanistan's Insurgency'.

