American Foreign Policy Council

Pakistan

QUICK FACTS

Population: 177,276,594

Area: 796,095 sq km

Ethnic Groups: Punjabi 44.68%, Pashtun (Pathan) 15.42%, Sindhi 14.1%, Sariaki 8.38%, Muhajirs 7.57%, Balochi 3.57%, other 6.28%

Religions: Muslim 95% (Sunni 75%, Shia 20%), other (includes Christian and Hindu) 5%

Government Type: Federal republic

GDP (official exchange rate): $168.5 billion

Map and Quick Facts courtesy of the CIA World Factbook (Last Updated June 2010)

Pakistan was established in 1947 as a homeland for South Asia's Muslims following the end of British colonial rule on the Indian Subcontinent. The majority of Pakistanis practice a moderate form of Sufi Islam, but Islamist political parties exercise significant influence within society and through the courts and help shape the political debate, foreign policy, and the development of legislation. Moreover, throughout Pakistan's history, its military and intelligence services have created and cultivated ties with violent Islamist groups to achieve regional strategic objectives. The U.S. war in Afghanistan following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, and Pakistan's role in fighting terrorism in recent years, has severely complicated the Islamist militant landscape in Pakistan. The emergence of a vio-

lent indigenous Taliban movement in Pakistan's tribal border areas which seeks to overturn the Pakistani state and which retains links both to the Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda poses questions about the future stability of the Pakistani state.

Pakistan will continue to grapple with its status as a Muslim constitutional democracy, and with developing ways to channel Islamist ideologies that have played a significant role in its identity since 1947. While Islamist political parties are unlikely to take power in the near future, they will continue to influence the country's legal framework and political discourse in ways that restrict personal freedoms, subordinate women and minorities, and enhance the role of clergy within the country's democratic institutions. While societal attitudes will also shape Islamist trends in Pakistan, it can be argued that the military's posture and attitude toward violent Islamists will be the single most important factor determining the future direction of the country, i.e., whether it remains positively engaged with Western countries or takes a decisively Islamist turn that severs its traditionally strong relations with the U.S.

ISLAMIST ACTIVITY

Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), which consist of seven semi-autonomous tribal agencies along the border with Afghanistan, constitute one of the most dangerous terrorist safe havens in the world today. In 2002, al-Qaeda's leadership moved from Afghanistan into Pakistan's North and South Waziristan sections of the tribal border areas, where they established networks with like-minded Pakistani groups such as the Jaish-e-Muhammed and the Lashkar-e-Taiba.[1] There are currently some 150,000 Pakistani troops in the FATA fighting al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and related militant groups.

Pakistan has long relied on violent Islamist groups to accomplish its strategic objectives in both Afghanistan and India. In recent years, however, as Pakistan has stepped up its military operations in the tribal border areas, some of these militants have turned their guns on the Pakistani state.

The Afghan Taliban

Pakistan's military and intelligence services (particularly the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate, or ISI) historically have had close ties with the Afghan Taliban, which ruled Afghanistan from 1996–2001. Before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Pakistani government openly supported and recognized Taliban rule in Afghanistan. Although Pakistani officials largely disagreed with the Taliban's harsh interpretation of Islam, they viewed the Taliban as their best chance to achieve their own strategic objectives in the region. Pakistan continued to support the Taliban into the late 1990s, long after Osama bin Laden took refuge there in 1996 and despite the growing problems that it created in Islamabad's relations with Washington. Pakistan's high-stakes policy vis-à-vis the Taliban derived from its aims of denying India, as well as Iran and the Central Asian countries, a strong foothold in Afghanistan and ensuring a friendly regime in Kabul that would refrain from making territorial claims on Pakistan's Pashtun areas along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

Despite pledging to break ties with the Taliban after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, Islamabad failed to crack down forcefully on Afghan Taliban leaders or to actively disrupt their activities in Pakistan. Indeed U.S. officials have acknowledged that officials within Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelli¬gence (ISI) directorate maintain relationships with Afghan Taliban leaders and see benefits in keeping good ties with the Taliban in the expectation that the Taliban will again play a role in Afghan politics.

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)

The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), an amalgamation of Pakistani militant groups loosely affiliated with al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban, was formed in 2007 and has conducted numerous suicide attacks against Pakistani security forces and civilians throughout 2008-10. Indeed the number of terrorist attacks in Pakistan increased from 254 in 2005 to 2,148 in 2008. In 2009 alone, around 3,000 Pakistanis lost their lives to terrorist attacks.[2] U.S. officials have sought to convince Pakistan that its dual policies of supporting some terrorists while fighting others are counterproductive in ensuring Pakistan's own security and stability and in pursuing broader efforts to rein in international terrorism.

The Haqqani network

Jalaluddin Haqqani is a powerful independent militant leader whose followers operate in the border areas between Khost in Afghanistan and North Waziristan in FATA. He has been allied with the Afghan Taliban for nearly 15 years, having served as tribal affairs minister in the Taliban regime in the late 1990s. Jalaluddin's son, Sirajuddin, is reportedly increasingly taking operational control of the militant network.

The Haqqani network has been a major facilitator of the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan, and responsible for some of the fiercest attacks against U.S. and coalition forces. Haqqani forces were responsible for a truck bombing that killed two U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan's Khost province in March 2008, the storming of the Serena Hotel in Kabul during a high-level visit by Norwegian officials in January 2008, and an attack on the U.S. Bagram Air Base in mid-May 2010.[3]

The source of the Haqqanis' power lies primarily in their ability to forge relations with a variety of different terrorist groups (al-Qaeda, the Afghan Taliban, the Pakistani Taliban, and India-focused groups like the Jaish-e-Muhammed), while also maintaining links to Pakistani intelligence. Pakistani military strategists apparently view the Haqqani network as their most effective tool for blunting Indian influence in Afghanistan. Credible U.S. media reports indicate that the Haqqani network, in cooperation with Pakistani intelligence, was responsible for the bombing of the Indian embassy in Kabul in July 2008, killing more than 50 people, including two senior Indian officials.[4] U.S. officials have appealed to Pakistani leaders to crack down on the Haqqani network, but have been rebuffed with declarations that the Pakistani military is over-stretched and incapable of taking on too many militant groups at once.

Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed

Groups like the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM – formerly the Harakat-ul-Ansar) focused their attacks throughout the 1990s on Indian security forces in Jammu and Kashmir but now conduct attacks throughout India and target both

Indian and Western civilians. The Pakistan Government's failure to shut down groups like JeM and LeT, responsible for the November 2008 attacks in Mumbai, is creating instability in the region and increasing the likelihood of additional international attacks, particularly against India, but also involving citizens of other nations. Indeed, recent investigations of David Headley, the terrorist suspect arrested in Chicago in early October 2009 for plotting with the LeT to attack targets in India and a Danish newspaper, have raised questions about whether there was official Pakistani involvement in the Mumbai attacks. Headley's "handler" was a retired Pakistani Army major.[5]

Following the Mumbai attacks, Islamabad responded to U.S. and Indian pressure by arresting seven LeT operatives, including those that India had fingered as the ring leaders of the attacks--Zaki ur Rehman Lakhvi and Zarar Shah. The Pakistani government also reportedly shut down some LeT offices throughout the country. Despite these actions, there are indications that the LeT continues to operate relatively freely in the country. Pakistan released from detention LeT founder Hafez Muhammed Sayeed in June 2009, when the Lahore High Court determined there was insufficient evidence to continue his detainment.

The LeT has put down roots in Pakistani society, especially in central and southern Punjab, through its social welfare wing, the Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), which runs schools and medical clinics. The headquarters of the LeT/JuD is a 200-acre site outside Lahore in the town of Muridke. The JuD increased its popularity through its rapid response in helping victims of the October 2005 earthquake in Pakistani Kashmir. The U.S. government views the JuD as a surrogate or front organization of the LeT. The U.S. State Department designated the LeT as a Foreign Terrorist Organization in December 2001, and later included the JuD on the Specially Designated Global Terrorist Designation list as an alias of the LeT.[6] On December 11, 2008, the United Nations Security Council imposed sanctions on JuD, declaring it a global terrorist group.[7]

There are well-known links between both the LeT and JeM to international terrorism. Shoe bomber Richard Reid apparently trained at an LeT camp in Pakistan; one of the London subway bombers spent time at the LeT complex in Muridke; and al-Qaeda

leader Abu Zubaydah was captured from an LeT safe house in Faisalabad, Pakistan. The LeT signed Osama bin Laden's 1998 fatwa for Muslims to kill Americans and Israelis.

Reports indicate that one of the prime suspects in the 2006 London airliner bomb plot had family ties to Maulana Masood Azhar, the leader of JeM. The JeM has also been linked to the kidnapping and brutal murder of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl in January 2002. Pakistan officially banned the JeM in 2002, but Azhar has never been formally charged with a crime. Omar Sheikh confessed to Pakistani authorities that he masterminded Pearl's kidnapping and in July 2002 was sentenced to death by an anti-terrorism court in Pakistan.

LeT involvement in Afghanistan has picked up since 2006. LeT members apparently trained at camps in Kunar and Nuristan provinces in the 1990s but did not fight alongside the Taliban at that time.[8] In the last four years, however, as the Taliban has regained influence in Afghanistan, the LeT has supported the insurgents by recruiting, training, and housing fighters and facilitating their infiltration into Afghanistan from the tribal areas of Pakistan. LeT fighters were also likely part of the group that attacked a U.S. outpost in Wanat, Afghanistan in 2008 that killed nine U.S. soldiers.

ISLAMISM AND SOCIETY

The strategic environment in South Asia over the last 30 years and the Pakistani response to these regional challenges has influenced Islamist trends in society and heightened religious-inspired violence. The war against the Soviets in Afghanistan in the 1980s and the Islamization policies of Pakistani president General Zia ul-Haq during the same period strengthened Islamist political forces and puritanical sects like the Deobandis, over the more moderate Barelvis.[9] Pakistani society today is in a state of transition, as people face regular terrorist strikes throughout the country and economic instability that has led to power shortages and skyrocketing food prices. According to South Asia scholar Moeed Yusuf, Pakistani society is inherently conservative but this religious conservatism should not be interpreted as extremism.[10] The influence of Sufism, dating back

to the eighth and ninth century in South Asia, also has had a moderating influence on how most Pakistanis practice and interpret the Islamic faith.

Muslim revivalist movements developed late in the nineteenth century in South Asia in response to the decline in Muslim power in the region and as a reaction to British colonial rule. The first attempt to mobilize pan-Islamic sentiment on the Subcontinent was in 1919 through the launching of the Khilafat movement, which agitated against the abolition of the Ottoman caliphate.[11] Although the movement dissolved after the Turkish government abrogated the Muslim caliphate in 1924, it roused Muslim political consciousness and catalyzed a sense of communal identity.[12]

The Jamaat-e-Islami was founded by Islamic scholar Maulana Abul Ala Maududi in 1941. Maududi came of age as British colonial rule was ending on the Subcontinent and an Indian national identity was developing. Witness to Hindu-Muslim communal tensions, Maududi believed the only way Muslims could safeguard their political interests was to return to a pure and unadulterated Islam that would not accommodate Hindus. He denounced nationalism and secular politics and held that the Islamic state was a panacea for all the problems facing Muslims. He further held that for Muslims to mobilize their resources against the Hindus, they had to break free of any Western influences.[13] Reflecting Maududi's early linking of the Muslim struggle with both Indian Hindus and western forces, modern Islamist extremist literature in Pakistan draws parallels between British colonial rule in the nineteenth century and U.S. ascendancy since the middle of the twentieth.[14]

In contrast with Maududi, Pakistan's founding father and leader of the Muslim League, Muhammed Ali Jinnah, supported the idea of Islam serving as a unifying force, but envisioned the country functioning largely as a secular and multiethnic democratic state. Thus, although the argument to establish a separate Pakistani state was based on religious exclusivity, Jinnah's ultimate goal was not to establish Pakistan as a theocratic state.[15] However, soon after the creation of Pakistan, debate about the role of religion in the coun-

try's constitutional and legal systems was increasingly influenced by the idea that Islamic principles should inform the conduct of the state.[16]

Maududi's contrasting vision for Pakistan created problems for him and the JI during the early years after partition. The Pakistani authorities questioned JI members' allegiance to the state and even incarcerated Maududi for his controversial positions on the Indo-Pakistani dispute over Kashmir.[17] After spending time in jail, Maududi eventually stopped questioning the legitimacy of the Pakistani state and focused on encouraging Islamization of the government and the adoption of an Islamic constitution.

Today's Jamaat-I-Islami (JI) political party in Pakistan, led by Qazi Hussain Ahmed, draws most of its support from middle class urban Pakistanis. It has generally performed only marginally at the polls, capturing about five percent of the vote in most elections held during the last two decades. The party's influence on Pakistani politics and society outweighs its electoral performance, though, primarily because of its effectiveness in mobilizing street power, its ability to influence court cases, and its adeptness at using Pakistan's Islamic identity to bring pressure on military and democratic governments alike to adopt aspects of its Islamist agenda.[18] In the 2002 elections, the JI formed an alliance with five other religious political parties, and the coalition garnered over 11 percent of the national vote. The resulting coalition of Islamist parties grabbed enough votes in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) to form the government, marking the first time the Islamists were charged with running a provincial government (see below).

The other major Islamist movement in South Asia is the Deobandi movement. This movement originated in 1866 in the city of Deoband in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh with the establishment of the Dur ul-Ulum madrassa, still the largest operating Deobandi madrassa. Deobandism was a reformist movement that developed in reaction to British colonialism and from the belief among Muslim theologians that British influence on the Indian subcontinent was corrupting the religion of Islam. The Deobandis solidified a puri-

tanical perspective toward Islam for South Asian Muslims, much as the Wahhabis have done in present-day Saudi Arabia.[19]

Although Deobandi clerics were initially concerned with strengthening the Islamic character of individuals and society, several of them later became politically focused and joined the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind (JUH), a political party established in pre-partition India in 1919.[20] In the lead-up to partition, the Deobandis split between those who supported Gandhi's Indian National Congress and those who supported the creation of a separate state of Pakistan as proposed by Muslim League leader Muhammed Ali Jinnah. The pro-Muslim League faction became the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), while the JUH maintained links with the Indian National Congress, arguing that the creation of Pakistan would divide and weaken the Muslims of the Subcontinent.[21]

The Deobandis gained considerable strength during the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan in the 1980s when *madrassas* (religious-based schools) mushroomed in Pakistan, partially to accommodate the three million Afghan refugees that fled there. The Taliban leaders who made their debut in Kandahar, Afghanistan in 1994 came mostly from these Deobandi *madrassas*.[22] As a political party, JUI draws support from rural voters, mostly among Pashtuns in the northwest.

Three wars and several military crises with India have also bolstered the influence of religious extremists, with the backing of the Pakistani state. During the 1990s, the JI focused its agenda on supporting Kashmiri militants, while the JUI turned most of its attention to supporting the Taliban in Afghanistan. More recently, both the JUI and JI have rallied their political supporters against U.S. policies in the region, taking advantage of high levels of anti-American sentiment fueled by the post 9/11 American and NATO military presence in Afghanistan and U.S. pressure on Pakistan to tackle terrorists on its own soil. Most Pakistanis blame their country's counterterrorism cooperation with the U.S.—not past support for religious extremists—for the incessant suicide bombings and attacks across the nation that claimed more than 3,000 Pakistani lives in

2009 alone.[23]

The erosion of respect for religious pluralism in Pakistan has also been facilitated by exclu¬sionary laws and the proliferation of minority-hate material in public and private school curriculums. Several studies have also documented a broad-based connection between *madrassa* education and the propensity toward gender, religious, and sectarian intolerance and militant violence in Pakistan.[24] *Madaris* (the plural of *madrassas*) are spread throughout Pakistan, but most analysts believe that only about 5–10 percent of Pakistani school children attend these Islamic seminaries. A number of these schools are financed and operated by Pakistani Islamist parties, such as the Jamaat-e-Ulema Islam (JUI), and by Pakistani expatriates and other foreign entities, including many in Saudi Arabia. In a seminal study entitled "Islamic Education in Pakistan," South Asia scholar Christine Fair notes that while there is little evidence that *madaris* contribute substantially to direct recruitment of terrorists, they do help create conditions that are conducive to supporting militancy.[25] While mainstreaming and expanding the curriculums of *madaris* is part of reversing extremist trends, it is equally important for Pakistan to improve and modernize its public education sector and to revise textbooks that encourage an intolerant and militant culture.

Discrimination against religious minorities–including Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Ahmadis, and Shi'a–has led to a threefold increase in religious and sectarian violence in the country over the last 30 years. The rising violence against the Shi'ite community (which make up about 25 percent of Pakistan's total population) has been part of the upward trend in sectarian attacks. For example, in December 2008, at least 20 people were killed by a bombing near a Shi'ite mosque in Peshawar,[26] while a funeral procession for a murdered Shi'ite cleric was attacked in February 2009, resulting in more than 25 dead.[27] The difference between Sunnis and Shi'a is one of interpretation and the right to lead the Muslim community.

The minority Ahmadi community also is suffering severely from the growing culture of religious intolerance in Pakistan. The Ahmadiyya Jamaat has approximately 10 million followers in the world,

including approximately 3 to 4 million in Pakistan. Toward the end of the 19th century, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908), founder of the Ahmadiyya Jamaat, broke with centuries-old Islamic dogma by claiming to be an Islamic prophet. (Mainstream Muslims believe that the Prophet Mohammad was the last prophet.) Six years after Pakistan's independence, Islamists led by Anjuman-i-ahrar-i-Islam (Society of Free Muslims) started a mass movement to declare the Ahmadi sect as non-Muslim, arguing that Ahmadiyya was an entirely new religion that should not be associated with Islam. In late May of 2010, militants armed with hand grenades, suicide vests, and assault rifles attacked two Ahmadi mosques, killing nearly 100 worshippers.[28] Human rights groups in Pakistan criticized local authorities for their weak response to the May attacks and for failure to condemn the growing number of kidnappings and murders of members of the Ahmadi community. The U.S. State Department's 2010 Human Rights Report noted that according to the Ahmadiyya Foreign Mission, 11 Ahmadis were killed in Pakistan the preceding year because of their religious beliefs.[29]

Even mainstream Muslim religious sites in Pakistan have fallen prey to the culture of intolerance and hate. In an apparent effort to push their hard line Islamist beliefs and to intimidate the more tolerant Muslim communities in Pakistan, militants conducted suicide bombings on Pakistan's most revered Sufi shrine in Lahore in July 2010, killing more than 40 and wounding nearly 200.[30] The shrine--a burial site of a respected Persian Sufi saint who lived in the 11th century--represented the heart of Muslim culture in the city. In orthodox interpretations of Islam, the veneration of Sufi mystics is considered heresy.

The rash of suicide bombings, like those on the Sufi shrine in Lahore, are leading average Pakistanis to disassociate themselves with the goals of the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Polls show that Pakistani opinion has turned sharply against the Taliban and al-Qaeda over the past two years. A public opinion poll carried out in Pakistan in 2009 by the Pew Global Attitudes Project found that 70 percent of Pakistanis rated the Taliban unfavorably, compared to only 33 percent just one year prior. Similarly the percentage of Pakistanis with

an unfavorable view of al-Qaeda jumped from 34 percent to 61 percent between 2008 and 2009.[31] Still, high levels of anti-Americanism persist in Pakistan. A recent Pew Global Attitudes Project survey revealed that six in ten Pakistanis consider the U.S. an enemy of their country.[32]

The London-based think tank, Quilliam, warns in its August 2009 report that Pakistani youth are a prime target for Islamist recruitment.[33] With the size of Pakistan's population between ages 15-24 estimated to be around 36 million and below the age of 15 to be an additional 58 million,[34] the need for specific policies to counter the Islamists' agenda is apparent. The Quilliam report argues that without the development of a compelling Pakistani identity, pan-Islamism is starting to fill the void.[35] A World Public Opinion Poll released in January 2008 revealed that a majority of Pakistanis support a moderate, democratic state, but they also want Islam to play a larger role in society.[36]

The 2007 Red Mosque siege and the events that followed have played a significant role in Pakistani society's current perception of Islamist movements. Early in 2007, students of the notorious Red Mosque in the heart of Islamabad and an adjacent *madrassa* for women launched a vigilante-like campaign to force their view of Islam on the Pakistani people. They burned CD and video shops, took over a local children's library, and kidnapped women who they accused of running a brothel, as well as several Pakistani policemen.

On July 5, 2007, Pakistani troops started a clearing operation to force the students to vacate the mosque and *madrassa*. While 1,200 students surrendered and the government sought to negotiate a peaceful resolution, over one hundred armed militants hunkered down in the mosque and *madrassa* and vowed to fight until death. On July 10, military troops stormed the buildings. After two days of fierce fighting, the military gained control of the premises but only after 19 troops and 62 militants were killed.

The Pakistani general public reacted negatively to the military operation, with Islamist circles questioning the use of force against the

country's own citizens and mosques, and more liberal commentators faulting the government for allowing the situation to get out of hand in the first place, noting the past strong ties of Pakistani intelligence to the mosque. The Islamist political parties faced a dilemma in that they largely agreed with the policies the Red Mosque leaders were pursuing but did not support the idea of engaging in violent confrontation with the government to achieve these goals.[37] Following the military operation that ended the siege, JI leader Qazi Hussain held the state "wholly responsible" for the confrontation. In addition, the two Islamist parties hailed the Red Mosque militants as "mujahideen who fought for enforcing Islam in its true spirit."[38]

However, in April 2009 when pro-Taliban militants moved from the Swat Valley into neighboring districts following a peace deal with the government, most observers believe the militants overplayed their hand and revealed their long-term intentions of expanding influence throughout the NWFP. Pakistanis living outside of the northwest province had previously believed the Taliban's activities could be contained within the tribal areas and Swat Valley. A video that circulated in the Pakistani national media in early April 2009 showing Taliban leaders whipping a young girl also helped turn Pakistani public opinion against the militants.

In early 2009 the Pakistan military, with backing from the central government, pursued a peace deal with the pro-Taliban militant group, the Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM – Movement for the Enforcement of Islamic Law), whose objective is to enforce sharia throughout the country. In 2007, the movement succeeded in taking over much of the Swat Valley in the settled areas of the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP). The Pakistan military deployed some 12,000 troops to the area for 18 months in 2007-2008 before ceding the territory to the militants. The surrender of Swat occurred despite the overwhelming vote in favor of the secular Pashtun Awami National Party in the February 2008 elections, demonstrating the people of the region did not support the extremists' agenda but were merely acquiescing in the absence of support from the government to counter the militants.

Tensions came to a head in mid-April 2009, when the pro-Taliban forces moved from the Swat Valley into the neighboring district of Buner. On April 24, 2009, under both Pakistani public and U.S. pressure, the Pakistan Army deployed paramilitary troops to the region and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Ashfaq Kayani sent a warning to the militants that the Army would not allow them to "impose their way of life on the civil society of Pakistan."[39] The statement was a positive first step in clarifying Pakistani policy toward the militants and was followed by aggressive military operations.[40] By mid-summer, the Pakistan military cleared Swat Valley of the militants and normalcy began to return to the region.

Demonstrating further resolve against militants challenging the Pakistani state, the Pakistani Army launched extensive operations in South Waziristan in the tribal areas beginning in mid-October, 2009. While the Army's resolve in fighting militants in Swat and South Waziristan signals greater clarity within the military establishment about the threat to the state from the Pakistani Taliban, there are few signs the Pakistani Army leadership is ready to accommodate U.S. requests to crack down on other groups that target U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan, like the Jalaluddin Haqqani network that operates out of North Waziristan and Afghan Taliban leaders that reportedly operate mainly from Quetta, Baluchistan.

ISLAMISM AND THE STATE

Following the 9/11 attacks, former Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf broke off official ties with the Taliban, supported the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, granted over-flight and landing rights for U.S. military and intelligence units, facilitated logistical supply to military forces in Afghanistan, and contributed substantially to breaking up the al-Qaeda network in the region. Pakistan helped captured scores of senior al-Qaeda leaders, most notably 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.

However, the government's various relationships with Islamist groups were not entirely severed and progress has been mixed. In addition to sporadic military operations, the Pakistani government

in the past pursued several peace deals with the militants, which contributed to destabilizing the Pakistani state and facilitating insurgent attacks against coalition forces in Afghanistan.

The first peace deal in March 2004, referred to as the Shakai agreement, was interpreted by the locals as a military surrender.[41] A February 2005 peace agreement with now-deceased TTP leader Baitullah Mehsud also backfired, emboldening Mehsud to form the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan. Baitullah Mehsud directed a string of suicide attacks against both Pakistani security forces and civilians in 2008 - 2009. Mehsud was killed by a U.S. drone strike in August 2009 and was replaced by Hakimullah Mehsud.

There are indications the Pakistani military has learned from its past mistakes in conducting counterinsurgency operations and is beginning to have more success in countering the insurgent/militant threat in the border areas. In the past, the Pakistan military employed heavy-handed tactics to crack down on Pakistani Taliban militants in the border areas, which alienated the local population. Pakistani operations were not sustained over time nor did they involve a "rebuild" phase to help locals in the aftermath of the fighting. Furthermore, while fighting some local Taliban elements, Pakistan's intelligence services simultaneously supported Taliban activities in Afghanistan.[42]

The Pakistan military remains the most powerful institution in the country, despite the establishment of a democratic government following elections in February 2008. Thus the country's success in countering violent Islamist movements will largely be determined by both the military's capabilities in beating back Islamist insurgencies in the northwest part of the country, as well as its policies toward violent extremist groups it previously nurtured.

Throughout Pakistan's troubled political history, both military leaders and democratic politicians have contributed to the Islamization of society and political discourse. Pakistan has endured military rule for about half its existence (during the periods 1958 – 1971; 1979 – 1988; and 1999 – 2008). Even when democratic governments

have been in power, the Pakistani Army continued to wield tremendous influence, particularly on matters related to foreign policy and the nuclear program. The Army leadership has proved itself adept at using religion and the Islamist political parties to stifle political opposition.[43] During the 2002 elections, then-President Musharraf pursued steps, such as campaign restrictions and candidate selection policies, which favored the Islamist parties over the democratic opposition, thus helping religious parties garner their greatest percentage of votes ever and catapulting the Islamist coalition to power in the NWFP.

In contrast to their showing in the 2002 elections, Pakistan's Islamist political parties performed poorly in the country's February 2008 elections. They garnered only two percent of the national vote and 11 seats in the NWFP provincial elections, losing to a secular Pashtun party, the Awami National Party (ANP), which took 30 seats. The ANP now leads a coalition government with the PPP in the province and supports the PPP government at the center. The ANP's election victory was initially hailed as a sign that the people of the region were more interested in pursuing democratic than Islamist politics. However, militant attacks and creeping Talibanization in the province persisted after the landmark elections. Provincial officials complained that the central government was ignoring the escalating violence and instability.

The democratic parties, during their tenures, have also sought to co-opt the religious parties in various ways and use religion to consolidate their power base. Pakistan's first elected Prime Minister, Zulfiqar Ali Butto, passed a resolution in 1974 declaring Ahmadis to be non-Muslims. The legislation barred Ahmadis from calling themselves Muslims, calling their places of worship mosques, performing the Muslim call to prayer, and using the traditional Islamic greeting in public. In 1998, when he was serving his second stint as Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif proposed a law to introduce sharia as the law of the land. If passed, it would have nullified the existing civil code and made Sharif the *Amir-ul-Momineen* (Commander of the Faithful) with absolute power. Fortunately, the motion failed.

What has been most damaging to the democratic character of Pakistan—and contributed significantly to the country's current instability—has been the Pakistan military's reliance on religious militants to achieve strategic objectives vis-à-vis Afghanistan and India.[44] The Pakistan Army's support for militancy as an instrument of foreign policy has eroded religious tolerance and created strong links between the Islamist political parties and militant groups.[45]

The Pakistani security establishment's unwillingness to crack down on the Afghan Taliban and related groups threatens the entire U.S. and coalition mission in Afghanistan. After months of mounting frustration in Washington over Pakistan's refusal to clamp down on Afghan Taliban leaders, Pakistan has recently engaged in cooperation that could reflect a recalibration of its strategy toward Afghanistan. Pakistani and U.S. authorities confirmed that they captured the number two Taliban leader, Mullah Baradar, in early February. Additional reports indicate that at least four other senior Taliban leaders also may have been captured in Pakistan, including Mullah Abdul Kabir, a deputy prime minister in the former Taliban regime and a member of the Taliban Shura; former Taliban finance minister Agha Jan Mohtasim; and two "shadow governors" of Afghan provinces. Pakistan's Lahore High Court has ruled that Baradar and four other unnamed Taliban leaders could not be extradited to any other country.

It is unclear why Pakistan is now cracking down on some leaders of the Afghan Taliban. Most U.S. observers believe that Islamabad may be seeking to ensure that it will have a role in determining any potential settlement of the conflict in Afghanistan. Afghan leaders, along with the former United Nations senior representative in Afghanistan Kai Eide, claim the Pakistani arrests were merely aimed at disrupting peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban. Given Pakistan's long track record of support for militant groups fighting in Afghanistan and India, it is too early to determine whether these most recent arrests signal a reversal of past policies, or merely a tactical shift to demonstrate leverage in the region.

The Obama Administration has recently begun to challenge the Pak-

istanis on their lack of consistency in countering terrorist groups in the region. The Kerry-Lugar bill passed by the Senate last September (the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009) authorizes $7.5 billion in civilian aid to Pakistan over the next five years but also conditions military assistance on Pakistani measures to address terrorist threats. U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates hinted that Pakistan could be doing more to fight terrorism when he noted in a recent op-ed in the Pakistani daily *The News* that seeking to distinguish between different terrorist groups is counterproductive.[46] Then-U.S. Director of National Intelligence Admiral Dennis Blair elaborated on this point when he testified before Congress on February 2, 2010, that "Pakistan's conviction that militant groups are strategically useful to counter India are hampering the fight against terrorism and helping al-Qaeda sustain its safe haven."[47] U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has stated bluntly on at least two occasions that she believes Pakistani government officials likely have information on the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden that they are withholding from the U.S. government.[48]

The siege of the Red Mosque demonstrated that in certain situations the Pakistan military is prepared to confront extremists, even those with whom it previously had an intelligence relationship. The army links to religious militants revolve more around regional strategic calculations than deep sympathies with the Islamists' ideology. Thus, while it may take time to fully sever ties between elements of the military/ISI establishment and Islamist militant groups, it is certainly possible. Indications that the Red Mosque confrontation caused some dissension within the Army ranks demonstrate the challenges of convincing the Pakistan military to confront its former proxies, without causing major discord within the only Pakistani institution capable of taking on the militants. Any such process will take time and circumspection in order to anticipate and minimize the chances of revolt inside the military ranks.

While Pakistan faces enormous challenges with its economy and from extremists seeking to overturn the government, the strength and professionalism of its Army combined with the democratic impulse of middle class Pakistanis who are familiar with a tradition

of practicing moderate Islam should act as bulwarks against a potential Islamist revolution similar to the one in Iran in 1979.

ENDNOTES

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