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**PAKISTAN:
RED
ALERT**

Obama's Pakistani Policy: Friends in Need?

Ilias Tasopoulos

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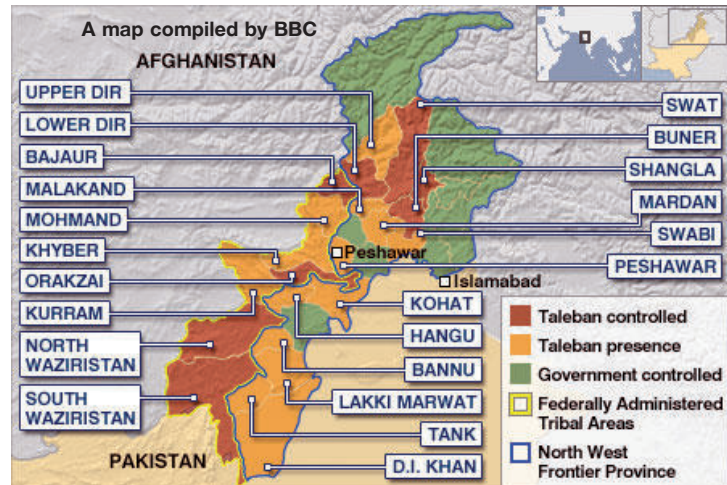
In the last few years, Pakistan has been moving closer to the core of U.S. foreign policy, particularly since Barack Obama assumed the U.S. Presidency in January. Pakistan exemplifies how ambitious foreign policy plans are affected by the practical necessities of international relations. Bearing this in mind, one could argue that Pakistan might become a landmark in the foreign policy record of the current U.S. administration.

It would be unfair to accuse the Obama administration of having no idea about how to deal with Pakistan; a country which had been chosen as the battle ground by Obama's team while claiming the Democratic Presidential Nomination. On the contrary, Obama's team was extremely confident in its ability to deal with Pakistan. According to a private speech held by Barack Obama at a pre-election fundraiser in San Francisco, his visit to Pakistan in 1981 represented a journey which "advanced his foreign policy qualifications." In August 2007, Barack Obama expressed himself in a kind of inappropriate and disrespectful way towards Pakistan's domestic sovereignty by declaring that "if we have actionable intelligence about high-value terrorist targets and President Musharraf won't act, we will". The statement was seen as a reply to his competitor Hillary Clinton who had accused him of being soft on terrorism and additionally naive on foreign policy issues. Obama did not shift his stance from hard to soft, not even when the Republican Presidential candidate, John McCain proclaimed that Obama was planning to attack Pakistan.

In the last few years, Pakistan has moved closer to the core of U.S. foreign policy. In particular, this trend has been strengthened since the beginning of the Obama administration whose main focus is Afghanistan as the U.S. strives for the restoration of its pre-Iraq war position. For Barack Obama, the war against the Taliban has top-priority in the battle against "terrorism", although the 44th U.S. President refrains from using the T-word. Twenty-one thousands more U.S. troops have been sent to Afghanistan since the beginning of U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, raising the total U.S. troops level to sixty thousands. However, pacifying the turbulent Afghan lands is almost impossible without sealing off the borders of Pakistan, regardless of how many thousands of soldiers the U.S. transfers to Afghanistan. Precisely, the porous mountain border that bisects the traditional Pashtun tribal lands is highly permeable allows groups that carry out attacks in Afghanistan to retreat and take refuge in parts of the country inaccessible to the Pakistani security forces.

In order for the U.S. initiative in Afghanistan to be successful, the Pakistani authorities will have to minimize the influence of the Taliban in the northwest and east of the country.

It seemed as if Pakistan had been unable to cope with the Taliban due to the fact that a major part of its army has been tied down in Kashmir while facing an extremely large number of threatening Indian Army troops. U.S. officials maintained that Pakistan fielded only one army brigade and about 40,000 minimally trained and equipped Frontier Corps members in the vast region of Baluchistan where extremists flee from. Additionally, Pakistani troops were deployed along the Indian border during the 2009 Mumbai attacks, following India's decision to move more troops to Kashmir.



Obama advisors had drawn up a plan for dealing with Pakistan, which incorporated amongst other things conflict resolution in Kashmir through U.S. mediation; by sending, for instance, U.S. troops to the area under the umbrella of an international organization. The easing of tensions with India would enable Pakistan to withdraw its troops from Kashmir and confront the Taliban and other related groups operating on Pakistani soil. The U.S. forces in Afghanistan could then lead extremist squads into deadly traps by pushing them to the Pakistan border where they could be crushed in cooperation with the Pakistani Army.

Nevertheless, a variety of factors has illustrated serious weaknesses of this plan. India has consistently rejected any third party mediation, while being reluctant to withdraw its forces from Kashmir for fear of encouraging other secessionist movements elsewhere in the country; the continuation of guerrilla attacks in Kashmir and the conflict with Pakistan have also influenced India's calculations enormously. Moreover, China, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, raised objections to the idea of sending U.S. troops to Kashmir. It warned the U.S. against any form of American military presence close to its borders.

Above all, the U.S. administration has not been able to convince Pakistan to jump on their bandwagon. The Pakistani army is averse to withdrawing from Kashmir, as this is the focal point of the relations between the two nuclear nations, Pakistan and India. Analysts argue, that foreign policy issues, and primarily Pakistan's Kashmir policy are fundamental to the Pakistani Army's very *raison d'etre*. A potential Pakistani Army withdrawal from Kashmir would delegitimize the military and weaken its political power and role in the Pakistani society.

However, most importantly the Pakistani Army was not willing to orchestrate a massive military campaign against the Taliban. If a major offensive against the Taliban took place and proved unsuccessful, the regime would be left vulnerable, especially if the U.S. decided not to extend their assistance. Then, the Pakistani regime would be unable to

withstand a potential Taliban counterattack, while its relations with segments of the population which are under the influence of the Taliban would be irreversibly destroyed. If the U.S. leaves Afghanistan without having achieved anything in terms of eradicating the Taliban sanctuaries, Pakistan will be left behind with a heavy burden on its shoulders, i.e. the country will be obliged to take the responsibility for the elimination of the Taliban. This behaviour can be explained by the uncertainty about the U.S. future proceeding towards Pakistan. In other words, it is not sure if the U.S. will continue to support the Pakistani state in the future.

In the last few years, Pakistani officials have lost their confidence in their American counterparts. The dominant view in Pakistan is that the U.S. has favoured India by recognizing its nuclear capability and hegemony in the area when it completed a deal in 2008, which permits civilian nuclear trade. Pakistanis claim, that the U.S. policy is contradictory when it comes to India and Pakistan as the U.S. suspended military cooperation with Pakistan in 1990 and objected to Islamabad's nuclear weapons program. Furthermore, the members of Pakistan's intelligence service (ISI) are highly suspicious of their counterparts after their resumption of contacts in 2001 and the strained cooperation that followed. Particularly, the CIA and the U.S. army had been unwilling to disclose any kind of information about planned U.S. operations against extremists to the ISI, as they believed that the targeted groups would be forewarned. Accordingly, Pakistanis do not want to reveal their nuclear facilities' exact location to the United States, as they are convinced that U.S. commanders would capture or even destroy these facilities in order to prevent extremist forces' from taking control over them.

After assuming the U.S. Presidency, Obama had to adjust the plan for Pakistan by not putting emphasis on the Kashmir issue, as he noticed pretty quickly the limited options available for dealing with the situation in Pakistan. His three-pronged strategy to cope with the difficulties of Pakistan consisted of building confidence between the U.S. and Pakistan, increasing foreign aid flows and targeting senior leaders of extremist groups in the 'lawless' Afgan-Pakistani border region.

The tripartite summit in May 2009, where U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met with Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai and Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari in Washington was part of the U.S. campaign that aims to improve the American-Pakistani relations. Although, U.S. Commanders have expressed their appreciation for the Pakistani armed forces - contrary to their doubts about the competence of the Pakistani government - the feelings are not mutual: Pakistanis do not take the U.S. support for granted. The U.S. military has launched a new program which supports the participation of Pakistani officers in its Counterinsurgency Training Center located outside Kabul and allows them to take part in seminars dealing with irregular warfare. U.S. special operation troops have already trained parts of the Frontier Corps and Pakistani Special Forces Units. The ultimate aim of the U.S. campaign is to enlarge and above all normalize the cooperation between the Afghani and Pakistani authorities who currently cooperate only in minor issues such as cross-border truck transport. Efforts have been made in order to persuade the intelligence chiefs of Pakistan and Afghanistan to work together, with the CIA serving as an intermediary.

The most significant component of the current administration strategy is foreign aid, as it is perceived as the 'best' means for regaining Pakistan's confidence. An international donors' conference, enjoying the support of the U.S. administration, was held in Tokyo where Pakistan secured \$5.28 billion in pledges. Additionally, Obama has fully

adopted U.S. Vice President Biden's plan. The latter, had been arguing for support packages for Pakistan since George W. Bush's Presidency, a time when Pakistan had been the recipient of more than \$10 billions in U.S. aid. Obama has backed a \$1.5 billion annual economic assistance package for five-years while further asking the Congress to approve quickly hundreds of millions of dollars in emergency military aid for Pakistan. Obama has reportedly resisted congressional efforts to impose strict conditions on any aid to Pakistan, sharing the view of General Petraeus, chief of the U.S. military's Central Command. The U.S. administration has been exerting pressure on the Congress and the Senate to bypass the restrictions imposed on the new Pakistani military funding aid program; normally this kind of military aid passes through the State Department and is subject to Foreign Assistance Act restrictions. Nonetheless, Obama is hesitant to claim that the U.S. is at war with the Taliban in Pakistan, something that would enable the administration to obtain full control of the military aid and which had been done by the Bush administration in the cases of Afghanistan and Iraq. Nonetheless, it would be difficult for Obama to follow his predecessor's tactics as he had employed an anti-war rhetoric before the elections; however, the situation could change due to the recent developments in the Swat Valley and the expansion of the radical Islamist's influence. Tactics that have been used so far might not be sufficient any more.

Over the last years, U.S. air strikes against extremist groups inside Pakistan launched from air bases in the Afghan-Pakistani borders seem to have been common practice. It is said, that the CIA plays a central role in coordinating this covert project, which the U.S. government does not officially acknowledge and which is aimed at killing senior Taliban and al-Qaeda leaders. Nonetheless, attacks on Pakistani territory by missiles launched from unmanned drone aircrafts have been authorized by the Obama administration. According to U.S. officials, the drone attacks were acquiesced to by the ISI; the U.S. military has even provided Pakistan with a broad array of surveillance information that was collected by these drones in May 2009. As civilian casualties from drone attacks have already triggered a vibrant reaction inside Pakistan, which could weaken the already fragile civilian government, the Obama administration has not initiated any covert ground attacks in Pakistani regions where leaders of extremist groups are located.

The latest developments may force the Obama administration to change its course of action once again. Gen. David Petraeus, fearful of a potential government collapse in Pakistan, could support the return of a military dictatorship as he commented that the Pakistani army, which is "superior to the civilian government", could survive the fall of the government of President Zardari. If President Obama is influenced by this view, it will be a clear sign that his ambitious foreign policy plans have been indefinitely tempered by the hard reality of international politics. ■



Pakistan-India: Brothers in Arms

Marina Eleftheriadou

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The 60-year long India-Pakistan conflict is once again under the spotlight. Islamabad's reaction to the Mumbai attacks showed that despite its growing internal security issues, India remains its number one threat. Comparatively, India appears to have outgrown this love-hate relationship and has espoused a broader strategic vision that extends beyond the narrow India-Pakistan picture.

Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founding father and first Premier of Pakistan, famously described his newly-created country as akin to a Caesarian birth, a product of the British fleeing their colonial responsibilities. A significant repercussion of this traumatic birth has been Pakistan's inability to view India, its naturally born brother, with little other than distrust, envy and fear. Created as a homeland for Indian Muslims while hosting only a third of them, Pakistan has always felt bullied by its more robust brother. A series of military defeats, the traumatic loss of East Pakistan (Bangladesh) in 1971 and the continuing struggle for bisected Kashmir (without which it feels "incomplete") have only fanned this trepidation vis-a-vis India. A number of other, lesser, issues such as the land and maritime delimitation of Sir Creek region, the dispute since 1984 over the Siachen Glacier and the exploitation rights for electricity purposes on Kashmir-crossing rivers, namely Kishenganga (Neelum for Pakistan) and Chenab, help

give body to the "grievances repertoire". The latter issue was the lynchpin behind a minor tussle in August 2008 when the Indian authorities decided to fill the Baghlihar dam, which resulted in low water levels on the Pakistani side subsequently threatening their ability to irrigate the crops.

In recognizing these various incidents it is hardly a surprise that Pakistan often 'diagnoses', either justifiably or as result of state paranoia, 'an Indian finger' in every problem it faces; Whether justified or not, Pakistani politicians and military are unlikely to sleep sound at night for fear of waking to the dawning of yet another 'existential nightmare' in the face of India. Pakistan's relentless fear of an Indian attack and annulment of the partition has severe repercussions on Pakistan's internal security as it starves the increasingly unstable northwestern region of desperately needed security forces in favour of over securing the border with India (80% of troops are stationed on Pakistan's eastern border). Moreover, Pakistan

has long been convinced that, perhaps with an ounce of truth, the Research and Analysis Wing (India's foreign intelligence) has been acting as a backer for the Balochi insurgency group. These beliefs and accusations are not kept behind closed doors; in April, during an address to the Senate, the Pakistani Prime Minister's adviser, Rehman Malik, openly accused India of supporting the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA). The Pakistani authorities were even prepared to join forces with the Islamists in Swat (immediately after reaching the 'Talibanization' agreement) *"...to take steps to clear the [district] of elements and criminals belonging to the Research and Analysis Wing, for the government has enough evidence of India's involvement in the current lawlessness in Swat"*. To consider this line of thinking demonstrates the unflinching belief in Pakistan that the deterioration of the security situation in north and north-western Pakistan is directly linked to Indian-Afghan plans to push US forces into invading Pakistan in order either to redraw the Durand Line by annexing the Pashtun-inhabited areas of Pakistan or dismember the state.

After 9/11 Pakistan tried to preserve its long-term options in its cherished 'strategic depth' Afghanistan. Forced to follow the 'war on terror' agenda spearheaded by the Bush administration, Islamabad tried to keep a balance for when the Americans capture the al-Qaeda leadership or just are overwhelmed with the hardship of fighting in Afghanistan and leave. This policy presumed showing signs of cooperation while being on relatively good terms with the Taliban and retaining a capable reserve of Islamist forces to "re-capture" Afghanistan from anti-Pakistan elements incarnated in the face of Karzai. However, with the U.S. still just over the border after eight years

with a new lease of life to tackle the continuing problem of Afghanistan and the master of maneuvering, Musharraf, finally pushed out of the picture, Islamabad has finally come to realize that despite its desperate attempts to retain a balance to appease all parties, it is slowly but surely losing its footing.

Unsurprisingly, as Pakistan was losing ground in Afghanistan, India was ready to step into Islamabad's shoes. New Delhi hasn't resigned to a 'my enemy's enemy is my friend' dynamic in regards to its relations with the India-schooled Karzai and the Northern Alliance members of the new Afghan government whom it had supported in their anti-Taliban fight in the 90's. Rather, India has developed a pro-active approach as it perceives Afghanistan not only as a strategic spearhead on Pakistan's flank but also as a valuable foothold on Central Asia's energy wealth; hence, as part of New Delhi's regional ambitions. Large amounts of money have been pledged to Afghanistan's reconstruction (\$1,2 billion); economic and cultural bonds are being strengthened and importantly a significant Indian presence is developing to man the numerous construction squads and provide the personnel for the embassy in Kabul and four consulates across the country (some of them close to Pakistan's borders) as well as the Indo-Tibet Border Police unit. The latter was established following a number of attacks against Indian nationals and its forces were reinforced after a suicide bombing at the Indian Embassy in July 2008. If seen in conjunction with the Indian military air base in Tajikistan, it is no wonder that New Delhi's *inroads have alarmed Islamabad. As Musharraf said "India's motivation in Afghanistan is ...nothing further than upsetting Pakistan. Why should they have consulates in Jalalabad*

and Khandahar? What is their interest? There is no interest other than disturbing Pakistan, doing something about Pakistan".

Traditionally, Islamabad, in order to counter the Indian threat relied on constant alert mode in view of India's behaviour, high troops' mobilization and strategic alliances inside the Cold War framework, namely China and U.S. as India although officially non-aligned was leant towards the Soviet Union. However, it was not naive enough to ignore that it would never be a match for the world's second largest army (1,1 million active and 1,8 million reserve troops) despite the -still present- Command & Communication problems and the inferior Russian-made or indigenous weaponry. Even before Pakistan lost its edge in air power and to a lesser extent missile capabilities, it increasingly turned to the power multiplier (nuclear weapons) and non-conventional means (guerrilla forces, predominantly in Kashmir) in an attempt to redress the balance.

Since 1998 when the two states conducted their initial nuclear tests, weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) became the primary concern in the India-Pakistan conflict equation. India is believed to have between 40 and 120 warheads and Pakistan between 35 and 95. While India from the beginning has declared that its doctrine is based on a no first use (retaliatory) policy, Pakistan has repeatedly stated that it will not forgo its right to use its nuclear arsenal on the offensive as a means to outflank India's greater strategic depth and conventional superiority; Pakistan decided to declare the use of nuclear weapons even in the case that India refrains itself from a full-scale conventional war and instead engages in a limited conventional war; an idea Indian strategists have

been developing and promoting over the last few years. A strategy that Pakistan has been very vocal about to attract international attention at times of strained relations with its neighbour. Such was the case during the Kargil conflict in 1999, the 2001-2002 standoff and the latest brief tension following the November Mumbai attacks. After this latest incident Pakistan not only dredged up the nuclear issue but transferred its forces from northwestern frontier land where they were engaged in conflict with the Taliban to its border with India in an attempt to encourage American and international pressure on India to avoid escalation.

The Mumbai attacks also highlight the second component of Pakistan's post-conventional military approach: the use of irregular 'subcontractors' to do the fighting. From the use of Pashtun tribesmen in 1947 who invaded Kashmir ahead of the Pakistani army Pakistan continues to use non-conventional forces to inflict harm on India; a tactic that has become more and more professional-like and has been applied covertly over the last few years. The end of the Soviet jihad coincided with the flare up of the Kashmiri insurgency and the empowered Pakistan's Inter-services Intelligence (ISI) saw a golden opportunity in redirecting those omnipotent warriors who bogged down a superpower towards Pakistan's arch enemy. India has repeatedly accused Pakistan of not only hosting pro-Kashmir groups united under the Muttahida Jihad Council umbrella such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad, but also of funnelling funds to them and provoking fire exchange along the Line of Control, as Pakistani soldiers start shooting purposely the Indian side, to allow the militants infiltrate Kashmir.

ISI also got involved in the Sikh insurgency by providing support to the International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF) which following a lull in activity since 1993 have intensified their activity in recent years. The ISI has further been charged with channelling money to various other guerrilla groups in India's northeast such as the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), Harkat ul-Jihad Islami (HuJI) (Bangladesh-based) and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB). ISI is also said to be involved in the creation (directly or indirectly via Lashkar-e-Taiba, a group that claimed responsibility for the Mumbai attacks) of the Indian Mujahedden (IM) a group composed wholly of Indian Muslims. IM, which was established in 2008, currently pose probably the greatest long-term challenge to the Indian counterinsurgency matched only by the Naxalite Maoist insurgency group (eastern and south-eastern India).

In the meantime, the nature of the Kashmiri insurgency is changing. The indigenous population (usually pro-independence as opposed to pro-union with Pakistan) such as the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) have been marginalized in terms of lost support and thus preferred to give up the struggle or opt for a political battle and join the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC). However, even the APHC appear ill-prepared to meet the needs of the population that is increasingly tired by the omnipresent Indian army, and the minimal improvement in their lives despite the numerous confidence-building measures such as the resuming of trade and transportation between the two parts of Kashmir. APHC's call for the boycott of the recent state assembly and general elections failed to mobilize support.

This doesn't mean that Kashmiris have resigned to their fate as the August 2008 unrest indicated but that Kashmir becomes relatively inhospitable for the militants. The latter, increasingly more confident with their skills and the technological gadgets in their hands, aim to the 'beast's heart': India's hinterland.

The three-day long Mumbai attack stirred up a heated debate within and outside of India regarding the reasons for the police and counter-insurgency unit's inability to contain and neutralize the threat but also why India reacted so tepidly to this new provocation. Some pointed to the international pressure, others to the lack of operational readiness of the army and others to the election period, which as usual allows harsh rhetoric by 'patriotic politicians that nonetheless never leads to any 'military adventures'. Probably it was a combination of all assumed factors. However, perhaps what best accounts for India's seemingly restrained reaction is the simple fact that India has grown accustomed to living with security threats that claw their way out of every corner of its territory and has further accepted the fact that it shares a border with an often hostile and unstable neighbour. According to the 2007 "Failed States Index" published by Foreign Policy and the Fund for Peace, six of the twenty-five failed states listed are in New Delhi's immediate neighborhood. New Delhi was prepared for the over-rehearsed and over-used rhetoric of denial from its neighbour post the Mumbai attacks; Pakistan would deny its involvement or even the nationality of the attackers, then half-heartedly accept to look into the matter, make a few arrests, ban Lashkar-e-Taiba which would change its name again and keep a low profile for a while, then the Pakistani authorities would ask for further clarifications in

the Indian report until the case would end in a folder marked with a large digit number and stored in the ISI's basement just for the record.

Today India, under a massive defense modernization program and a \$32,7 billion defense budget (23,6% higher than the 2008 budget which itself was increased by 10% comparing to the initial estimates), is enhancing its armed forces with purchases from Russia, U.S. and Israel as well as homemade systems (BrahMos cruise missiles and nuclear-capable short range Prithvi II missiles) and has successfully launched the all-weather radar imaging satellite RISAT-2 (April 2009). A part of this budget will be allocated for the improvement of counter-insurgency or Pakistan-specific weapon systems. But India, regardless of its internal and external security concerns, remains an aspiring regional power and reasonably focuses on China and follows carefully the latter's

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advances in Central Asia and the Indian Ocean. Particularly, India is alarmed by China's infamous 'string of pearls' strategy that on the one hand aims at safeguarding the energy maritime routes from the Middle East (the same routes India desperately needs for its booming economy); and on the other hand, taking advantage of the general significance of the Indian Ocean.

In other words while India has the potential and the aspiration to become a regional power (or hegemon) and a significant international player, Pakistan's strategic vision remains sub-regional. However, India is mature and ambitious enough not to aim for and work towards engineering the collapse of Pakistan, not out of brotherly love but because it realizes it is better prepared to deal with the occasional malicious move by its querulous brother and that should Pakistan become a failed state the

repercussions would be far greater than anything India or the region has yet had to deal with. In the meantime it can watch with half-hidden joy the reversion of Zia ul Haq's policy, which aimed at "bleeding India with thousand cuts", as it is more appropriate to refer to Pakistan itself as one big bleeding wound. ■



Political parties in Pakistan: the military's handmaidens

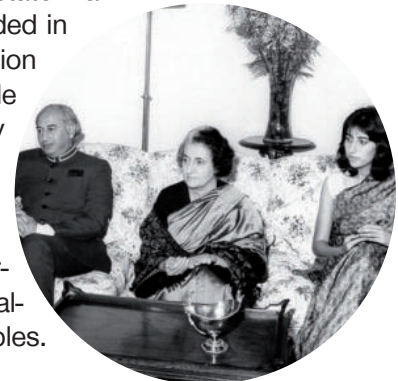
Styliani Saliari

The 'Western' understanding of political parties can be described by the notion that parties are an endemic feature of democracies. Precisely, political parties and democracy are inextricably linked to each other whereas the former (theoretically) plays a significant role in representing citizens' ambitions and urging the government to address their 'grievances'. Nevertheless, Pakistan's so-called 'elitist' political scene depicts a completely different version as it is ruled and influenced by higher masters.

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Pakistan is a parliamentary democracy; however, due to Musharraf's coup in 1999 the President is the source of power as he can appoint top officials and the army chief while additionally oppose the government. Moreover, Pakistan can be characterized by a multi-party system with 49 political parties applying for poll symbols with the Election Commission in the parliamentary elections in February 2008, which brought in a civilian government. Nevertheless, Pakistan's political parties seem to be far from being progressive and effective as they have failed to respond successfully to a series of challenges. Pakistan's authoritarian political culture and an 'imbalance of power' between the state and the weak political institutions can partly describe the existing dilemma. Precisely, according to Sumit Ganguly, Professor of Political Science who holds the Rabindranath Tagore Chair in Indian Cultures and is the Director of Research at the Center on American and Global Security at Indiana University at Bloomington, 'civilian governments in Pakistan are of transient significance'. In fact, the military and the intelligence services constitute the perennial characteristics of the Pakistani state. Pakistan has been under the predominance of the military nearly since it was founded in 1947 while the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) operates directly under the instruction area and supervision of the army chief of staff, although it is officially accountable to the Prime Minister. Nonetheless, before analyzing the situation it is necessary to outline the main parties in Pakistan.

Firstly, there is the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). The party was launched in 1967 by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Benazir Bhutto's father, and stays in the hands of the family with Benazir Bhutto's son Bilawal as chairman and her husband Asif Ali Zardari as the current President of Pakistan. The party was based on the ideas of 'egalitarian democracy' and identified itself in its early days with socialist principles.



Although the PPP has detached itself from its 'socialist roots' it is the only party that receives support in all the four provinces of Pakistan with the southern province of Sindh - where the Bhutto family hails from - representing its stronghold. Furthermore, the party's relations with the army represent a 'grim picture' which has been persisted for the last 40 years, partially due to the PPP's attitude of civilian dominance over the military, its attempt to improve relations with the military's longstanding adversary India and its repudiation of radical Islamists whom the army fostered in the 1980s. In July 2008, President Zardari's endeavor to undermine the ISI's powers was a complete failure.

Secondly, there is the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) (PML-N), the largest faction of the Muslim League. The party is headed by Nawaz Sharif who reappeared as a main player of Pakistan's political landscape in September 2007; he was in exile in Saudi Arabia after he had been ousted from power by Musharraf's coup in 1999. The PML-N power-base is Punjab, which dominates the military and state bureaucracies. It is a centrist conservative party, which gained power twice in the 1990s. Particularly, in 1997 it obtained a huge public mandate, which enabled it to compose a government with a two-third majority. However, its rule ended in allegations of corruption and an effort to replace Musharraf as the head of the army failed since he organized a bloodless and successful military coup in 1999. In the 2008 elections, the PML-N gained a total of 91 seats in the National Assembly and came second after the PPP, which won 121 seats. The two parties formed a coalition government under the banner of Musharraf's resignation and the lawyers' movement. The latter's creation was sparked by the removal of Supreme Court Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry during Musharraf's rule. The PML-N started declaring the judiciary issue its 'personal task' and preferred leaving the government in May 2008 when its PPP colleagues stall the reinstatement process. Formally, it supported the government in order to keep track of the Musharraf issue. However, when the latter finally resigned from the Presidential post, Sharif officially decided to join the opposition and hence in the September elections the PML-N did not support Zardari but a candidate from its party. Hence, President Zardari reciprocated with the February 25th supreme court ruling which forbid Sharif and his brother Shahbaz to contest elections and hold any office. Meanwhile, the lawyers' movement initiated massive protests, which reached its peak in March 2009 and led to the restoration of Chaudhry. Moreover, the February 25th ruling was annulled on March 31, 2009. The restoration of the judge turned Sharif into a hero.

Thirdly, there is the Pakistan Muslim League (Q) (PML-Q) which was founded under the guidance of Musharraf in 2001 and was primarily a splinter faction of the PML-N. The party was able to attract plenty of dissidents from the PML-N and formed an alliance amongst others with the Muttahida Quaumi Movement (MQM) -a party founded for the protection of the rights of the Urdu-speaking immigrants from India after partition. Hence, the PML-Q was able to form a government in 2002.

Moreover, there is the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), which was founded after Musharraf's alliance with the U.S.-led anti-terror coalition as a result of 9/11. It consists of a coalition of six Islamic parties while its opponents have accused it of attempting to establish a theocracy in Pakistan. However, in parts the MMA supported Musharraf and his Constitution (Seventeenth Amendment) Act, 2003, which extended the President's stay in power and

increased his influence. In return, amendments regarding Islamization were anchored in the Constitution and Shar'i'a law was installed in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). Additionally, the two parties allied themselves and formed a government in Balochistan.

Last but not least, there is the Awami National Party (ANP), a nationalist leftist party which had its base in the NWFP while being extremely popular among the ethnic Pashtuns. However, it failed to defend itself against the Taliban after the latter started an assassination campaign against ANP ministers and members of the parliament this year. Since then, the provincial government (the ANP) has gone into hiding, state institutions in northern Pakistan have been paralyzed and over one million people have fled. Additionally, the party is divided and has become unpopular among the Pashtuns while the ideology of the Taliban is spreading throughout the area promoting fear among Pashtun cultural leaders, aid workers, teachers, doctors and lawyers.

The parliamentary elections of February 2008 were seen as a flicker of hope among the people of Pakistan who were worn out by Musharraf's eight years of military rule and indignant over Benazir Bhutto's assassination. Hence, they voted for two moderate, pro-democracy, semi-secular parties: the above described PPP on the national level and the ANP as the provincial government in the NWFP. According to Ahmed Rashid, a Pakistani journalist based in Lahore who writes inter alia for the 'Daily Telegraph' and the 'The International Herald Tribune', this outcome was also a 'resounding defeat' for the Islamic parties which fared well in the NWFP in the 2002 elections while Musharraf opted to ally with them in Balochistan. Rashid also underlined that the people of Pakistan hoped that the newly elected civilian government would act as a 'counterweight' to the military and 'redefine Pakistan's national security', something which has not occurred yet. Instead of improving Pakistan's worsened economy and combating the Taliban in cooperation with the military, President Zardari and Prime Minister Gilani have been busy with fighting their political opponents such as Nawaz Sharif. In the meantime, the economic situation has deteriorated even more, the army and the ISI still restrict the power of political parties while Talibanization has reached its peak epitomized by the Taliban's advancement in the Swat valley and Buner and the latest military operations against them which have received international media attention. Its outcome is still unclear and it is unknown whether the government is dealing genuinely with the Taliban issue or is just undergoing a symbolic operation that will result in another peace-capitulation agreement.

Against this background it can be said that political parties in Pakistan have not been quite effective due to factional turmoil and clashes of interest. Precisely, they are characterized by a lack of democracy within the party structure and a clear political vision. Further, they seem not to be interested in an alternate leadership while their 'only' aim seems to be to seize power. Their leaders act as chairpersons for life and only a few parties have ever held elections within their ranks; Benazir Bhutto as well as Nawaz Sharif never attempted to advance the emergence of alternate leadership. Political parties are perceived as being corrupt, incompetent and extremely detrimental to the people's welfare while their liability to fragmentation, regionalization and ethnicization exacerbates their ineffectiveness.

All these aspects linked to the colonial state structure which Pakistan inherited whereas the military and bureaucracy were far more developed than political parties, have made it easy for the army and the ISI to control the core political institutions and processes. According to Aqil Shah, a former Rhodes Scholar and Ph.D. candi-

date in the Department of Political Science at Columbia University, the military might have allowed the existence of a civilian government, however it would be naive to think that it has lost control over 'its legitimate structural mission', comprising Afghanistan, India and the nuclear weapons. Precisely, the long-standing perception of India as an existential threat -Pakistan founded by Muhammad Ali Jinnah for India's Muslims to protect them from Hindu violence and supremacy - explains the army's pivotal role. Moreover, military Presidents ruled the country from 1958-71, 1977-88 and from 1999-2008 and hence hindered the institutionalization of political parties and the rule of civilian governments enormously.

However, the problem of governance does not end here. According to the Islamabad-based columnist Farukh Saleem, 11% of Pakistan's territory is either directly controlled or challenged by the Taliban. Furthermore, Balochistan in the southwest of Pakistan is marked by separatism and the 17 million people city Karachi is an 'ethnic and sectarian tinderbox' waiting to blow up. Nevertheless, the greatest fear of all is if the Pakistani Taliban succeed in toppling the regime they will gain control over Pakistan's nuclear weapons.

But why did the Taliban become so powerful? In this context, it is important to make clear that their evolutionary trajectory is inextricably linked to the military and the ISI. During the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s former President Ronald Reagan used Pakistan as the 'lethal weapon' against the Red Army. Particularly, the CIA entrusted, in accordance with Saudi Arabia, Pakistan's secret services to recruit international jihadists to fight against the Soviets. Now, everything is backfiring while until today, both the military and the government have not committed themselves to develop a proper counterstrategy to eliminate the Taliban as they perceive them as a useful tool against India.

Last month, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told Congress, 'Let's remember here, the people we are fighting today, we funded 20 years ago. It was President Reagan, in partnership with the Congress, led by Democrats, who said you know what, it sounds like a pretty good idea: let's deal with the ISI and the Pakistani military and let's go recruit these mujahideen and that's great.' She reached a conclusion by saying: 'There's a very strong argument, which is it wasn't a bad investment to end the Soviet Union, but let's be careful what we sow, because we will harvest'.

All in all, Pakistan is a country, which is mainly influenced by three different players with various shifting policies: the military, the radical Islamists and the political parties. The latter can be definitely called the weakest among the three whereas statements about the strongest should be made with care. The army might still perceive itself as the true and almighty guardian of the Pakistani state, which according to Sumit Ganguly sees the jihadists as their controllable 'handmaidens'; however, recent developments have challenged this 'dominant truth'. Additionally, we should not forget that Pakistan is also part of the U.S.'s regional scenario which could mean two things in the eyes of the Pakistani military: firstly, that the U.S. might favor India over Pakistan as a regional counterweight against China and secondly, that a U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan would enhance India's influence in Pakistan's neighboring state. Hence, the military is neither genuinely interested in destroying the Taliban completely nor in reducing its immense influence inside the Pakistani state as security issues are considered top priority. ■

An assessment of the recent *Taliban* advances in Pakistan

Marina Eleftheriadou

For several years the situation on Pakistan's northern and north-western areas has been evaluated under the prism of the insurgency in Afghanistan. However, the militants' decision to move from the Swat region (North-Western Frontier Province -NWFP) to the neighboring Buner and Dir (the latest incident in a series of similar advances in the wider area) demonstrated that an insurgency against the Pakistani state is gaining momentum over the Afghan jihad. Although it has proved itself quite successful and full of potential, its survival revolves around its raison d'etre.

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The recent events demonstrated that there is an evolving insurgency in Pakistan, which acts in connection but also beyond the situation in Afghanistan. The move into Buner was the sheer product of the perception on the part of the Islamists that the government, embroiled in political disputes and repeatedly forced to make compromises (the issues of the reinstatement of chief judge Chaudry, the revocation of anti-Sharif court decisions, the signing by Zardari of the Sharia regulation for Swat, the release of the cleric responsible for the Red Mosque seizure), would not react. However, the government and the military, due to US pressure or the militant's mere proximity to Islamabad opted for a counter-attack. On the militants part it was clearly a miscalculation. To borrow Mao's terminology, it was a premature effort to switch to "strategic offensive", albeit on the operational level only. The inconclusive military operations seem inadequate to smash the insurgency and the army's decision to open

up new fronts, such as the air strikes in Bannu, Arakzai and Bajaur Agencies and the ground operation in South Waziristan (the stronghold of Baitullah Mehsud who is the leader of the umbrella organization Tehrek-e-Taliban-Pakistan -TTP), indicate the intention to cover up the failure to defeat the militants in the Swat region. In this light, most probably after a temporary retreat to safe areas in Pakistan or even Afghanistan (there are reports of an influx of TTP fighters into the Kunar Province), the militants will be ready to return back to the "strategic stalemate" phase to further expand the "liberated areas". This brings up the question about the strategic objectives of the militants and how they managed to "liberate" all this land in a matter of few years.

Geography is destiny; and the Islamist militants proved that they could read the maps and formulate their strategies accordingly. A closer look at Pakistan's map reveals that the militants methodically expanded their influence along the border with Afghanistan. From



their initial bases in Balochistan, they moved to South and North Waziristan and from there, in few months, they moved to Kurram, Arakzai, Mohmand and Bajaur Agencies of the FATA, effectively thus encircling the Khyber Agency from where 80% of the Coalition forces supplies pass into Afghanistan. After they had managed to control FATA, the Pakistani Islamist militants moved to Swat and from there to Buner and Dir. It seems that their next target will be Chitral, which is, situated further north on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. With Chitral under Islamists' control, the entire border will be lost to the militants. Then an advance to the south that is the administrative center of Pakistan, Punjab is highly probable.

These step-by-step advances were not restricted to the military domain. The militants proved themselves familiar with guerrilla warfare theories. Before any new endeavor is undertaken small groups of militants infiltrate the areas in order to evaluate the conditions, come

in contact with possible sympathizers, measure the possible resistance and generally prepare the ground for the arrival of larger formations. Their first care after having entered in large numbers is to disrupt any opposition and gain popular support (active or passive). This is done by addressing popular socio-economic grievances (e.g. in Swat the Taliban moved against the land-lord elite), liquidating maliks or tribal leaders that refused to forego their political power and subordinate to the militants (especially if the former dared to form lashkars -militias- to repulse the militants as was the case in Dir, Arakzai, Khyber, Bajaur and Swat) and finally creating new political-administrative institutions. The latter was facilitated by the fact the federal government never had such institutions in the FATA area or it has lost grip of the NWFP areas. The central

government policies were channelled into those regions through political intermediaries (usually tribal leaders) who formed corrupt political elites. These elites in the last years were sidelined by charismatic mullahs who were further empowered as the military and the government assigned them with negotiating with the militants.

The Pakistani Taliban turned these into "liberated zones" and subsequently safe bases to where militants could retreat any time they faced resistance in their adventures in other regions. The government also failed to offer any credible counterpropaganda. Instead of portraying them as un-Islamic or as "agents of India", members of the military, political and religious establishment never miss an opportunity to offer them patriotic credentials. At the same time while the government was encouraging the tribal leaders to form lashkars to counter the militants, it left them without any military

cover when they needed it. For example, in Swat's Kalam the local lashkar made fervent appeals to the army to save the population that was slaughtered by the militants in reprisal attacks but the army never showed up. Thus, the Taliban was the only one to guarantee the protection of life and the establishment of public order in these regions.

Counterinsurgency policies did not improve the image and the authority of the government. Military's occasional operations with the poorly trained Frontier Corps pointed out that unless military or police units resided in these regions preventing the insurgents to return and, thus, establishing confidence to the population, there was no chance for success against the Taliban.

However, while the militants face a relatively easy task in thwarting counter-insurgency efforts, their biggest vulnerability lie in their lack of cohesion. This disunity is a product, on the one hand, of the traditional tribal social norms inside the Pashtun community, on the other hand, and perhaps more important, a product of disagreements over basic tenets of strategy and goals. The distrust towards any wider hierarchies beyond the tribe and the absence of a clear unifying strategy deprives the insurgency from any model of organization, strictly hierarchical or network-based.

The most prominent example of inter-tribal rivalries was the alliance formed (June 2008) between Maulvi Nazir and Hafiz Gul Bahadur of the Wazir tribe (North Waziristan) in order to counter Baitullah Mehsud advances in FATA after the creation of TTP. This alliance disintegrated in February 2009 when Baitullah managed to persuade Bahadur and Nazir of their common cause and offered them incentives to support him. Rivalries are not restricted to the inter-tribal relations but also to intra-tribal ones. Baitullah faces no less than two adversaries from inside his own -Mehsud- tribe

namely Qari Zainuddin Mehsud and Turkistan Bitani. The brotherly disputes of the three men on several occasions have turned violent and bloody.

However, the most serious threat to the Islamist insurgency in Pakistan is neither the tribal nature of the target population nor the militants' tribal background. During the Afghan jihad against the Soviet Union, tribal and inter-organization rivalries sometimes could lead to armed confrontation. Still, all the groups despite their disagreements on operational or tactical issues never disagreed on the primary goal; that is expelling the foreign forces. However, in Pakistan today there is a significant disagreement regarding attacks on the Pakistani state and its functionaries who are considered hostile to the Islamic cause. The disagreement is not due to a rift between the global-jihad (al Qaeda type) and the local Islamist groups as many analysts and officials point out. Al-Qaeda and foreign jihadists have learned the Iraqi lesson and came to appreciate the sanctuary they are offered. They prefer to keep a low profile without getting involved in the local rivalries.

On the contrary, the different approaches are represented within the Pakistani Taliban forces. TTP organization remains the main force supporting attacks against the Pakistani state. The TTP has managed to impose its policy by force, as in the case of the killing of Shah Sahib and his men by TTP guerrillas in July 2008. Shah Sahib was against the attacks on Pakistani targets. However, force alone will not be enough, when TTP is trying to "persuade" stronger dissidents such as the Waziris or the Haqqani network. In this case, TTP needs to build an all encompassing strategy, convincingly connecting 'legitimate jihad' in Afghanistan with the demise of the regime in Pakistan. Without such a strategy, the insurgency is doomed to political failure, far more disastrous for the Pakistani Taliban than the military defeat. ■

Pakistan's pan-Islamist adventures in the Middle East: tales of yesterday?

Chrysoula Toufexi

The Pakistani elite always incorporated the Islamic identity into their definition of Pakistani nationalism. Prior to and after Pakistan's independence in 1947 the religious aspect has been overemphasized in opposition to Hindu India in order to create 'us-versus-them dichotomies'. Precisely, this exclusionary mindset, which has led to the externalization of the 'other', and the essentialization of the 'self' justified the demand for self-determination by the Muslim population prior to independence while in the post-independence period Islam was supposed to bind Pakistan together.

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During the process of nation-building the Islamic discourse figured prominently in Pakistan's domestic policy while Pakistan was the first Muslim country to adopt the official title 'Islamic Republic' under the otherwise secular constitution of 1956. Under the rule of General Zia-ul-Haq (1978-1988) the country underwent a substantial Islamization affecting its legal, financial, civil service and political institutions.

Particular geo-strategic concerns of Pakistan within the scope of security issues, whether real or exaggerated, focused primarily on India. Thus, Pakistan's foreign policy was based on a

strong sense of Islamic identity, which was emphasized by Pakistan's leadership to counter the Indian threat that could lead to the country's disintegration. Since its creation, Pakistan has internalized and represented the idea of being the homeland for all Indian Muslims, while the claim over Kashmir as a Muslim homeland is at the heart of this assertion.

On the one hand, the Pakistani Muslim heritage serves as the 'lowest common denominator' which enables the unification of the otherwise heterogeneous people of Pakistan, comprised of different tribes and languages. On the other hand, Islam as a religious orientation averts the country's fear of sectarian defined nationalism, which nurtures the threat of separatism. One can identify several tribes in the territories along the border of Pakistan with its neighbors, where sectarian nationalism has been the driving force behind aspirations of independence. Only in some cases these aspirations have not been successful as it is the case with Pash-tun nationalism, which emerged as soon as Pakistan gained its independence and is located at the Pak-Afghan borders. Balochi nationalism across the Afghan-Iranian-Pakistani borders is another example. However, in other cases, such as the one of Bengali nationalism, aspirations of independence led to the separation of Pakistan's eastern part and the formation of Bangladesh in 1971. Hence, although Pakistan belongs geographically to the South Asian realm, championing the Islamic cause, it seeks to redefine its position strategically as part of the Greater Middle East. In this way, Pakistan's vision of occupying an Islamic pivotal seat within the Muslim world emerged and became an essential component of its foreign policy in Central Asia and the Middle East.

In order to facilitate its pan-Islamic vision Pakistan sought alliances by moving beyond its regional context. During the Cold War Islamabad was placed on the side of the U.S. as it is located between Central Asia and the Middle East, hence looming large due to its geo-strategic significance. Precisely, the U.S. security architecture against the USSR needed Pakistan as partner in order to contain Soviet expansion into the Middle Eastern region and the Indian Ocean. In 1954 Pakistan became a member of the SEATO or Manila Pact and in 1955 it joined the Baghdad Pact, later renamed the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) along with Turkey, Iraq, Iran and the UK.

Furthermore, Pakistan joined strong alliances in the Middle East in its effort to become a key player in the international politics of the Islamic world, while aiming at building an alliance, which would back up its deterrence strategy against India. On the multilateral level, it sought to promote its Pan-Islamist agenda by calling on the Middle Eastern states to form an Islamic political alliance. The World Muslim Congress (Motamar Al-Alam Al-Islami), founded in Mecca in 1926 for the promotion of solidarity among the Muslim Ummah gained prominence. Moreover, the conferences of 1949 and 1951 in Karachi within which Pakistan played an important role as a host to the Congress' headquarters led to the modernization of the Congress' organizational structure.

Nevertheless, its goal of founding an Islamic alliance was achieved not until the formation of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1969, although the organization has remained quite stagnant. Notwithstanding particular efforts to revive an Islamic Ummah, Pakistan's Pan-Islamist vision gained only limited prominence among the Muslim world, largely due to the rising of the Pan-Arab ideology that was disseminated most notably by the Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser or later by the Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

On the bilateral level, Pakistan sought to form strong bonds with the two main players of the Middle East: Iran and Saudi Arabia, while maintaining also significant ties with the conservative and moderate monarchies in the Gulf region. Pakistan was the first country to officially recognize the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which is one of the major donors of economic aid to the country and a host of a significant number of Pakistani expa-

triates. However, Pakistan did not manage to form an alliance of Muslim states against India or rally the Middle Eastern support behind its claim over Kashmir the way Islamabad affirms the plea of a Palestinian homeland. Nonetheless, Pakistan continued to be deeply supportive of the Arab cause. This commitment is manifested by its strong anti-Israeli stance, while it has repeatedly refused official recognition of the State of Israel. As a matter of fact, it has used the Indian-Israeli relations as a means to downgrade India's image in the Islamic world. However, unofficial contacts between Pakistani and Israeli officials have often been conducted silently.

In the regional arena Pakistan's most trustworthy ally is Saudi Arabia, while it enjoys a rather complicated relationship with Iran. Riyadh's religious affinity with Islamabad has paved the way for the funding and establishment of religious schools and universities in Pakistan, strengthening the elite's promotion of an Islamic state. Additionally, the Saudi monarchy was a major advocate of Pakistan's national unity, especially during the period that led to the independence of Bangladesh.

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Furthermore, the situation in Afghanistan which caused, for different reasons, Islamabad's and Riyadh's interests to merge, led to a significant boost in the Saudi-Pakistani strategic cooperation. Since the creation of Pakistan, its foreign policy has aimed at emphasizing its pan-Islamist vision in Afghanistan in order to undermine the growing Pashtun nationalism. After Bangladesh had gained its independence, efforts to strengthen the Islamist cause were advanced and considered vital to Pakistan's unity. In 1979, Afghanistan provided the fertile ground for Islamabad in order to prove its Islamic credentials in the Islamic world while in the same year Pakistan would gain again prominence as a U.S. ally to counter the Soviet intervention. During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, Pakistan armed the pro-Pakistan and mostly Pashtun Afghan groups along the Af-Pak borders that were adherents of Sunni-Islamism and fought against the communist Afghan government. This attempt was largely orchestrated by Pakistan's Directorate of Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) through U.S. and Saudi military aid and funding, enabling thus the Pakistani government to pursue its own geopolitical interests in the region; it called radical Islamist fighters from abroad to be trained in Pakistani camps and religious schools so they could fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan. During the Afghan civil war the ISI continued to fund and arm the Taliban movement, which came to power with Pakistan's aid in 1994. A friendly regime in Afghanistan could serve Islamabad's doctrine of "strategic depth" against India following the power vacuum that had emerged after Soviet withdrawal.

Saudi Arabia's geopolitical agenda in Afghanistan was characterized by the will of establishing a Sunni Islamic government in the country, which would prevent the Shiites from achieving greater influence in the region. A development which had been initiated by Iran and its Islamic Revolution; Iran had threatened Kabul by attempting to expand its sphere of influence. However, as a result of the Saudi-Iranian proxy war in Afghanistan, and the Saudi-Pakistani support of Sunni Pashtun militants in Afghanistan, Islamabad's relations with Tehran suffered a serious blow during the 1990s and only recovered due to the Taliban's fall from power in 2001. Pakistan's relations with Iran had been strong in the 1970s and 1980s. During the Cold War both were aligned with the U.S., while after the fall of the Shah and the subsequent deterioration of U.S.-Iranian relations, they continued to share common aims in Afghanistan in order to counter the Soviet presence. Pakistan's and Iran's strategic partnership solidified during the 1980s as both were important members in a number of region-

al organizations such as the OIC and the Economic Organization of Cooperation (ECO, 1985).

Nevertheless, by 1994, Afghanistan had developed into a source of mistrust between the two allies. For Iran, Afghanistan was vital to its ideological, political and economic expansion to Central Asia. Yet, the Taliban regime, 'friendly' towards the Saudi monarchy meant more Sunni encirclement and an increase in isolation for the Islamic Republic. Therefore, in Afghanistan, Iran was patronizing mainly militant groups among the Shiites or Persian-speaking tribes and supported the Northern Alliance formed by the Shiites, Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara groups, in order to facilitate the overthrow of the Taliban. Pak-Iranian relations were restored after the downfall of the Taliban in 2001.

However, Pakistan's Islamist adventures in Afghanistan since 1979 have had one major effect regarding its image in the geopolitical power game. The result was to place Islamabad into a pivotal strategic position and at the center of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East during the Soviet occupation of Kabul, while securing the accumulation of considerable economic and military aid to alleviate its numerical disadvantage against India. Furthermore, since 9/11, Pakistan's survival and contribution to the U.S. "War on Terror" has been deemed more than essential and its significance on the Middle Eastern world cannot be denied or contested.

Notwithstanding, efforts by the Pakistani elite to provide Pakistan with an Islamic identity in order to appease sectarian challenges by patronizing Islamist groups has led to one other severe effect: the emergence of a major force composed of members of the state's military and intelligence apparatus and religious advocates of a Pan-Islamist agenda centered around Islamic political parties such as Jamaat-e-Islami, and religious movements. This force within Pakistan allowed a "defensive" Islamist cause to evolve into an "offensive" Jihadist ideology. The result was to transform Pakistan into the breeding ground of Islamic extremism that would later be exported to South Asia. A notable example of exporting violent extremism was Kashmir, where insurgent groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Hizbe-ul Mujahideen had enjoyed the indirect support of the ISI. Nowadays, the ISI, which was able to control radical groups until 2001, is not able to do so anymore in the Af-Pak borders and the FATA region. Moreover, as Pakistan has been on the frontlines in the battle of the U.S. against "terrorism", militant Islamists view the current Pakistani government as a threat to their survival. For Pakistan, yesterday's dream of gaining a "rightful" cardinal position among the Muslim nations has evolved into today's nightmare of a state close to the brink. Hence, the dream has been postponed for a better tomorrow. ■

Overseas Pakistanis: *choice and necessity*

Elisavet Paraskeva-Gkizi

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Pakistani immigration, as a transnational phenomenon affects not only the immigrants' way of living but also their host countries. Hence, the following article will tackle the following questions: why do Pakistanis emigrate in the first place, where do they migrate to and how can the encounter between the Pakistanis and their host society be characterized?

Political instability in combination with impoverishment and underdevelopment, features which had characterized the Pakistani state for decades, have contributed to the enormous increase in Pakistani immigration throughout the world. In July 2008, Pakistan's estimated population

was 172,800,000 while at the end of this decade it is expected to be nearly 180 million, with high levels of urbanization surpassing 35% of the total population. For a poor, unstable and populous country such as Pakistan it is quite expectable that a large proportion of its population 'decides' to emigrate looking for a

better life in a 'safer' country. According to the year book of 2004-2005 of the Pakistani Government (Ministry of Labour, Manpower & Overseas Pakistanis) approximately 4 million Pakistanis lived abroad during that year, with three-quarters of them living in the Middle East. Meanwhile, these numbers are not valid anymore, considering both the growth of illegal immigration and the Pakistani population rate which is estimated to be 1,947% for the year 2009.

The term "Overseas Pakistanis" characterizes both Pakistani citizens who have migrated to another country and people of Pakistani origin who were born outside of Pakistan. The remittances from Pakistani expatriates have invigorated the country's economy several times as Pakistanis living abroad tend to invest their money in their home country - mainly in properties while in addition to that money is circulated by their relatives. However, this kind of invigoration neither solves Pakistan's economic problems nor its high emigration rate, which represents one of the consequences of the country's deteriorating economy.

The constant increase in overseas Pakistanis has required the creation of the 'Overseas Pakistanis Division' (OPD) which was created in order to improve the welfare of overseas Pakistanis. It provides better services to them such as improved facilities at airports and has set up suitable schemes in Housing, Education and Healthcare sectors. Moreover, it facilitates the rehabilitation of returning overseas Pakistanis while ensuring that Community Welfare Attaches (CWAs) maintain close links to them to help resolve their problems; it also locates new job opportunities for Pakistanis who intend to leave their country. The Community Welfare Attaches (CWA's) are located in 16 cities around the world (Europe, Asia). Their primary function is to establish and maintain close con-

tacts with foreign firms that have projects in various countries and are in need of manpower. Additionally, they provide welfare aid to overseas Pakistanis. Unfortunately, it is difficult to reach any conclusions about the organization's efficiency as it was established recently.

The Middle East with its high rate of Muslim population and United Kingdom with its colonial past represent the regions with the largest Pakistani populations. Pakistani immigrants all over the world and particularly in Britain and the Middle East are strictly attached to their religion (the majority of them are Muslims), language, culture and customs, which they do not give up easily. United Kingdom which 'hosts' the second largest Pakistani population (over 1 million Pakistanis live in the UK with 250,000 visiting the country each year) is a typical example of the aforementioned characteristics.

On April 8, 2009 11 Pakistani nationals and 1 British Pakistani were arrested on suspicion of plotting a "major terrorist attack". However, there was insufficient evidence to bring charges. Nonetheless, this case has brought to light the bizarre and obscure situation of the network of the sham colleges in Britain, as eight of the arrested were enrolled in one of the colleges.

Hundreds of Pakistanis enter Britain with student visas claiming that they have come to the country to study. Nevertheless, this is not always the truth. Many Pakistanis take advantage of the opportunities, which are provided by the sham colleges. Precisely, this network of colleges has been created in order to facilitate, never without payment, the entrance of Pakistanis described as students to the UK. The sham colleges are a profitable enterprise in Britain controlled by only a few people. Particularly, *The Times* has uncovered close ties among 11 colleges in

London, Manchester and Bradford, which were all founded in the past five years and are controlled by three young Pakistani businessmen. According to *Times on line*, the number of Pakistani nationals with permissions to either enter or remain in the UK as students jumped from 7,975 to 26,935 between 2002 and 2007. Hundreds of men from the North West Frontier Province in Pakistan have attended these colleges, which provide mock diplomas for a certain amount of money. Those running the sham colleges charged at least £1,000 for admission places and fake diplomas. They created their own university to issue bogus degrees and also charged £2,500 for false attendance records, diplomas and degrees that were used to extend the students' stay in Britain.

The majority of Pakistanis in the UK are Muslims (92%), mainly Sunni and their language of communication is Urdu. Certainly, most of Pakistanis speak English and the second, third and fourth generations consider English as their first language. In primary and secondary schools Pakistani pupils are the largest ethnic minority group and usually they do not continue their studies for various reasons; however mainly due to poverty. In 2007, a study found out that Pakistani Britons are hit by the highest poverty rate among different ethnic groups in Britain.

Pakistani immigrants in England and in other countries face severe poverty due to a combination of various factors, such as the lack of job opportunities, which would enable to make a decent living; hence, they seek alternative forms of illegal earnings. All this taken together creates a chain of discriminations, which are further nurtured by cultural, religious

and political reasons. Especially, after the bomb attacks (7/7/05) the discrimination against London's Muslim population increased. Tens of thousands of Muslims (including Pakistanis) have been targeted by police stops; however, not even one of these searches has led to any convictions. Pakistanis have experienced an even tougher time due to their country's connection with al Qaeda, and thus they had been for a long time the focus of national attention, in particular the largest Pakistani communities of the UK, such as Bradford faced constant discrimination. Recently, Gordon Brown said that three-quarters of domestic terrorist plots being monitored by the MI5 (the UK's security intelligence services) had links to Pakistan, although a year ago the MI5 had officially claimed that there was no easy way to identify those who become involved in terrorism in Britain.

There is a prevalent opinion among British citizens that members of the Muslim minority in Britain



and mainly Pakistanis have relationship with terrorist organizations. Pakistani Britons retain strong links with Pakistan. However, this does not indicate that sympathy with Pakistani Muslim causes in Pakistan means necessarily sympathy with terrorism; nevertheless, there is always a risk that ostensible innocent affiliations with people who live inside and outside of Pakistan may be exploited by the extremists. LeT (Lashkar-e-Toiba, a banned organization in Britain since 30/03/01) has used charitable organisations to draw volunteers -helping the victims of the Pakistani earthquake or doing humanitarian work in the camps for refugees displaced by fighting - into their orbit. These volunteers have reportedly included young men from the Diaspora in Britain. Groups such as LeT are much more dangerous than al-Qaeda because until the Mumbai attacks they were able to operate much more openly in Pakistan while having quite a few sympathisers inside the Pakistani security services and police.

British Muslims, almost half of them originate from Pakistan, have been more politicized and actively involved in commons through a variety of Muslim organizations (such as the Muslim Council of Britain), of Muslim Media organizations and web portals. Furthermore, in order to protect themselves from the antiterrorist legislation, which was particularly rigorous with Muslim citizens or immigrants, Muslims in the UK initiated the creation of institutional organizations such as the Muslim Safety Forum an independent body made up of many of Britain's and particularly London's major Muslim organizations which aims to improve lines of communication as well as the relationship between the police and the community.

After the renouncement of terrorism by the Pakistani government a few days ago, something which happened for the very first time , the leading Ulema of

Pakistan denounced the Taliban and their inhuman acts in a categorical manner as they declared that suicide attacks and the beheading of people were 'un-Islamic' acts. The significance of this declaration is important for the Pakistani immigrants as the majority of them disapprove extremist acts. Hence, this declaration 'guarantees' them the official support of their government in their negative attitude towards terrorism and enhances the hostile image of Islam - which plays an important role in Pakistanis' lives. Furthermore, the declaration is also important for their host countries, such as Britain since British authorities hold the view that there is a liaison between Pakistan and by extension with most of the Pakistani immigrants, and terrorism. However, the UK reacts in a show of good will kindly to the denouncement of terrorism by the Pakistani authorities. Certainly, this does not imply that the UK, like many other countries that face similar problems, will not continue to do its best for the country's national safety including the aforementioned severe antiterrorist measures, regardless of the possible terrorists' nationality.■



Iran: The New Arises from Inside the Old

Sotiris Roussos

Page 26 *Let us try and answer some of the questions frequently asked in the western media.*



First, was there any fraud in the Iranian presidential elections? The question seems rather shallow and with no long-term impact as the fraud in the elections came only as a spark for the confrontation between two Irans. One consisted of the urban middle class, harmed by both inflation and economic stagnation and the educated youth and women who see no future in the regime's introvert authoritarian

policies and another of rural masses closely knitted to state's subsidies and clientelism and guided by ultra-conservative clerics, the Revolutionary Guards and the Basij paramilitary organisations. Whoever won the elections, the confrontation between these two Irans was inevitable.

Second, was there any interference by the USA, Britain or other powers? No one can exclude the possibility that intelligence agencies might exploit the opportunity to gather information or to recruit human intelligence but the scope and the magnitude of the protest and the key positions in the Islamic Republic held by leaders of the opposition such as Hossein Mousavi, Hasemi Rafsanjani or Mohammad Khatami and Mehdi Karoubi, render the accusation that CIA and British Intelligence are behind the turmoil, laughable.

Third, is there a possibility for regime change? Most of the leaders of the protest belong to the mainstay of the Islamic regime. They never called for a regime change but they rather try to defend the core of the Islamic Republic from a coup by the ultra-conservatives premeditated by a coalition of part of the high-clergy, the Revolutionary Guards and the basij paramilitary. However, the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei chose to take sides and support Ahmadinejad, thus abandoning a tradition that the Leader should stand above every-day political feuds. Such a decision may injure his spiritual authority undermining one of the regime's foundations.

Fourth, what is the difference between today's crisis and the student protests in 1999 and 2003? Today's gigantic protests have political centre and spine. They are not simply eruptions of students' discontent against an authoritarian regime, which curtails civil and human rights and executes minors. They represent much wider urban social strata disaffected by the inflation of almost 30%, the stagnation in investments and the mismanagement of the country's rich oil and gas resources, more so since it is a period of high prices for both commodities. These strata are now aligned to parts of the clergy's rank-and-file. The stance of the vast constituency of the bazaar merchants still remains ambivalent. It is however beyond any doubt that their support is indispensable for the stability and longevity of any regime in Iran.

Last but not least, how far this volatile situation inside Iran would influence its foreign policy? It has already influenced it. The conservative side tried the old game of scapegoating by accusing USA and Britain for conspiring against Iran and, as a result, they put this country's relations with the West in more strains. On the other hand, America and its allies have every interest to see a stable Iran the soonest possible, under any government, if they wish to negotiate seriously over the nuclear issue. If there is no partner, voices in Israel and elsewhere calling for military options might get louder and, alas, more persuasive.

We shall finish with some words by Hoshang Asadi from his article in roozonline website: *In human history and society, "new" always arises from "inside" the old. It begins with criticism of the old, then it rejects it, and finally gives way to the new through the mixture of the thesis and anti-thesis. It is still too early to conclude that the new has overcome the old. The new has only been born, and the old has not yet died. History has only delivered the new child. The child can not be destroyed any longer; it is here to stay.* ■

BOOK
REVIEW

Journey into Islam:

the crisis of globalization

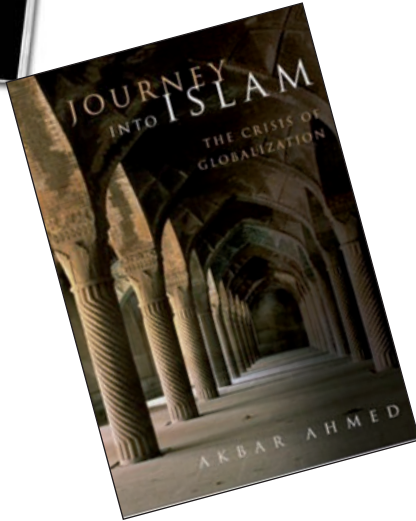
Akbar Ahmed

Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2007

"Whatever is begun in anger ends in shame". Akbar Ahmed, a Muslim Islamic scholar teaching in the American University, quotes the words of Benjamin Franklin in a thoughtful narration aimed to describe how the U.S. foreign policy and the War on Terror has led the West and Islam to the brink of collision.

Chrysoula Toufexi

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Troubling remains the fact that, while 9/11 terrorist attack was a terrible violent act that every human being contemns with ferocity, the international terrorist network of al-Qaeda can enjoy a wide base of support and create small terrorist pockets today in impoverished and war torn nations around the world. The international society has come to understand the Western civilization in terms of a highly globalized system, however it failed to emphasize globalization's effects on the Muslim societies. Islamic extremism in the age of globalization is thriving, while moderate Islam has been caught in a love hate relationship with the West. On the one hand, Muslims love the western technological advancement. On the other hand, they hate the cultural changes that it brings to their traditions and they consider technology and globalization to be the peaceful means of western imperialism to achieve domination. Akbar Ahmed's work

can be characterized by its effort to define international politics and its consequences in the Muslim world in the age of globalization, while doing so through the lens of an anthropologist.

As the title of his book reveals, Akbar Ahmed and his research team, comprised of American and Muslim American students embarked on a "journey" into the Islamic world and met with the ordinary people of Turkey, Qatar, Syria, Jordan, Pakistan, India, Malaysia and Indonesia. They visited mosques, universities, hotels, markets and homes to listen to the opinions of the Muslims of the everyday life, voices that the media seldom capture. In addition, they interview highly influential figures and leaders, diplomats and policy makers, Islamic scholars and religious preachers throughout their journey in the Middle East, South and East Asia. By asking about people's role models in the Muslim world, historical and

contemporary, intellectual and leading figures, the research team was able to yield important hidden messages about popular perceptions in the contemporary world. In addition every role model was identified within a main Islamic school of thought.

The writer's testimony of his encounter with all different types of the Islamic society successfully contests all negative stereotypes of Islam as belligerent, militant, backwards generated at large by the media. Instead the reader will feel the desperation and anger of the Muslim societies who sense that they are being targeted because of the Western superficial misperception of Islam as an enemy, which Akbar Ahmed successfully deconstructs.

Islam, the author sustains, is not a monolithic religion but within the Islamic intellectual thought one can identify multiple variations that are constantly transforming in order to adapt to the current challenges, which Muslims are confronted with. Within each of the main schools of thought that the writer identifies as the Deoband, Aligarh and Ajmer Islamic paradigms, there is a variance of interpretations for political action, thus neither of the models are static. For example different movements draw from the Deoband ideology such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Wahhabi in Saudi Arabia. Within the Deoband thought the author also identifies the Lebanese Hezbollah, Hamas in Gaza and the international terrorist network of Bin Laden's al-Qaeda.

Deoband adherents, use technology to spread their message, but their belief that globalization is another form of western expansion is deeply rooted. According to them, Western modernity is being thought to erode the principles of Islamic tradition. There is a general realization among the Muslim world that although technological advances have brought progress, globalization has also brought a certain materialistic lifestyle that is amoral in its nature and contradictory to the moral principles of Islam. In addition, globalization as projected through the media

reveals a series of contradictions between the West and Muslims. Peace, wealth, advanced level of education, democracy, human rights are reserved for people in the western nations. While the Muslim population, confronted with war, poverty, illiteracy, huge unemployment rates and authoritarian centralized political systems, feels excluded from the benefits of globalization.

What this research fieldtrip revealed to the author and his team, through people's responses to the questionnaires and the interviews conducted, is that today the Deoband model is gaining prominence within the Muslim world. In contrast, the Sufi spiritual mysticism of the Ajmer paradigm or the pluralist message of the Aligarh model calling for modernization and reform of the Muslim nation, through engagement with the western ideas of democratization and human rights is being discredited. Thus, what we witness within Islam, is a crisis stemming out of the difficulty to cope with the pressures of globalization and strike a balance between an external demand to follow a modernist path, which is explicitly a western one, and an internal forceful request to retain its religious identity. As long as reform has a western cover, Muslims will continue to feel alienated and follow the Deoband paradigm of the "Ummah under attack".

The absence of visionary leadership to lead Muslim nations to success, especially within the modernist paradigm, is a general acknowledgment by the majority of the responders. They see the modernist elite as corrupt as the consumerist system it adheres to. As the author illustrates, its absence of vision has driven the Muslim population's search for inspiration to figures like Hassan Nasrallah of Hezbollah, the Iranian President Ahmadinejad, the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad or even Osama bin Laden, although the majority condemns his terrorist activities. However, all these figures share a common element of the Deoband belligerent discourse: Muslim resistance to the U.S. imperialistic foreign policy, thus their rhetoric restores the lost pride of Islam.

Moreover, the author explains, the U.S. “War on Terror” has further reinforced the Deoband paradigm by launching two wars on Afghanistan and Iraq. Without taking into account tribal customs that reinforce local loyalties in contrast to national identities, the U.S. misinterpreted the power of the tribe to resist to the notion of democratization. While peace has remained only a wishful hope in the turbulent regions of the Middle East, other humiliating images of the torturing in Abu Graib, or the Danish caricatures of the Prophet Mohammad have made headlines in the media and have offended Muslims around the world. All these actions not only are a cause and a consequence of increasing racism, but they have also provided extremist Islam with an essential platform to justify its terrorist actions and gain support for its cause.

However, the author suggests that reversing these tendencies of anti-Americanism in the Muslim world is possible by looking into distinct influential figures of the Sufi and the modernist paradigm and give them credit among the Muslims. In addition, American and European Muslims that feel confident with their dual identity can set a significant example of how to balance the Islamic ideals while living in the West. Akbar Ahmed’s book

came in a period where cultural racism, hate and violence surface against notions of acceptance, tolerance and peace. It is therefore emphasizing the ironic antithesis of a highly interconnected world in which communication with the distant “other” is prohibited by crude stereotypes illustrated by the media networks. Moreover the *Journey into Islam* is a significant effort to examine the Muslim world through a Muslim context rather than through a Western perspective that tends to visualize the “Other” through distance and contrast. His encounter is thus even more critical and a valuable inquiry to the foreign policy maker, as it offers further insight on the crisis between Islam and the West, inspires a way forward to bridge the cultural gap and achieve interfaith dialogue. ■



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