

## CHAPTER 6

### PAKISTAN 2020: THE POLICY IMPERATIVES OF PAKISTANI DEMOGRAPHICS

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Pakistan poses a unique challenge to U.S. foreign policy. The government has been a front-line partner in the Bush administration's War on Terror, but is also home to the Taliban, al Qaeda, and remnants of the nuclear proliferation network of A. Q. Khan. The United States depends on Pakistan's cooperation, but its people and government remain wary and at times hostile toward the United States. Even Pakistanis sympathetic to U.S. goals often call for greater patience on the part of Washington, but Americans are unlikely to become disinterested observers in Pakistan any time soon.

One of the toughest short-term challenges facing the next U.S. administration is how to address the problem of militancy on Pakistan's western border. Success in Afghanistan and security at home depend on finding effective solutions in Pakistan's Tribal Areas. Success is likely to remain elusive as long as Pakistan and the United States remain on different time horizons. The United States feels the urgency of the threat, while Pakistanis take a longer-term view of progress. Only months after the February 2008 parliamentary elections, Washington became frustrated with the weakness of Pakistan's new civilian government and

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its unwillingness to address the problem of militancy head-on. For its part, many in Islamabad see containing the militants as a viable option, and incorporating the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) as a generational task only made more difficult by direct U.S. action.

This is a time of great unpredictability in Pakistan and for U.S. decisionmakers. Major questions surround Pakistan's leadership, economic future, and social stability. Could Pakistan become a steadfast ally of the United States? Or will the United States find itself in direct military confrontation with Pakistani forces? Is Pakistan sliding toward collapse? Does it pose a clear and present danger to the United States? If so, what are the policies that could mitigate this threat? With Pakistan, everything is on the table, from billions of dollars of U.S. aid to Predator missile strikes and pariah status. It is no wonder that U.S. policy toward Pakistan has been trapped in a short-term mindset since September 11, 2001 (9/11).

Forecasting Pakistan's near-term political future may be a fool's errand, but anticipating trends that will shape its evolution over the long-term is possible and necessary. A closer look at Pakistan's demographic challenges raises a number of policy imperatives for Pakistan's government and the United States. Both will have to contend with an ongoing demographic transition characterized by a shifting age structure and migration pattern that are likely to place newfound resource pressures on food, water, and energy, and heighten the importance of addressing poverty, education, and violence. Population trends are not destiny. They simply present new challenges and opportunities for governments and outside actors. How well the Pakistani government

and the United States recognize, adapt, and get ahead of these trends will shape the Pakistan that will emerge in the years to come.

### **Pakistan's Demographic Future.**

A chapter on demographics may seem out of place in a book on Pakistan's nuclear future. What do population trends have to do with nuclear weapons? One possible way to think of the correlation is that nuclear weapons are the deadly tip of the iceberg, while demographics are the danger lurking far below the surface. Demographic visions traditionally have alerted us to external threats that could have destructive consequences for our own society.<sup>1</sup> Demographic projections have become a sort of "geopolitical cartography" for national security planners, helping them to avoid dangers hidden in the future's hazy unknown.<sup>2</sup> Since the earliest days, demographics have been viewed as a determinant of other societies' hostile actions, capacity, and intent, and the nuclear age is no exception.<sup>3</sup>

The size, security, and possible use of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal in 2020 will be a function of individual decisions by Pakistani leaders and its national security community. These decisions, however, will be shaped by a broader domestic and international context. Demographics will play an important role in determining this context, helping to shape Pakistan's politics, social cohesion, and economic growth. The demographic effects will be indirect, and they will operate on a longer time frame than any democratic political calendar. Demographic change, in the words of one recent study, "shapes political power like water shapes rock. Up close the force looks trivial.

But viewed from a distance of decades or centuries it moves mountains."<sup>4</sup>

Population has always been linked to security. Traditionally, the size of a body politic has been leaders' main demographic concern: the larger the population, the greater a society's wealth and power. In the most elementary sense, a larger population provides more men to field in battle. Pakistan had just under 40 million citizens in the years immediately following partition, but today it has somewhere in the neighborhood of 170 million people and is the seventh largest country in the world. Pakistan's population doubled between 1961 and 1982, a period of just 21 years.<sup>5</sup> The United Nations (UN) projects that by 2050 Pakistan's population could double again to more than 350 million people, making it the world's third or fourth most populous country.<sup>6</sup> One would expect a Pakistan of 350 million people to wield significant influence on the world stage, particularly in the Muslim world. The question of whether Pakistan can become a global or even a regional power, however, is very much tied to its stability and economic growth. India, its main strategic rival, already dwarfs Pakistan with over one billion people. It is expected by some to grow to more than 1.6 billion by 2050, overtaking China's own growth projections for this period.<sup>7</sup>

Population growth is not always a positive occurrence. As far back as Malthus' writing in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, commentators have worried about populations outstripping their environments. Theories of Social Darwinism have been discredited in most circles, but many leaders today recognize that high population densities and high rates of population increase can undermine gains from economic growth and potentially contribute to

social and political instability. Three factors determine population: fertility, mortality, and migration. For its part, Pakistan has successfully curbed its fertility rates after decades of effort. Pakistan first implemented an anti-natalist policy in 1965, but it was not until the 1990s that it experienced a fertility downturn. Since the 1960s, Pakistan's population grew at a staggering rate of close to 3 percent per year. Fertility rates in the 1970s and 1980s hovered between six and seven births per woman. Fertility began to decline as families migrated to urban areas, women married later, and family planning became more accepted practice. During this decade, fertility rates stand around four births per woman in Pakistan.<sup>8</sup> By 2050, some expect the total fertility rate to fall to between 1 and 3 births per woman.<sup>9</sup>

Falling fertility rates has meant that Pakistan is presently undergoing a demographic transition. Demographic transition explains the shift from the high death rates and high birth rates of a preindustrial society to the low birth rates and low death rates of industrialized economies. Pakistan's crude death rate declined progressively from 24 deaths per 1,000 in 1950 to 8 deaths per 1,000 in 2006.<sup>10</sup> Pakistan's death rate declined during this time at a much faster rate than its fertility rate. The result has been a shifting population demographic away from the classic pyramid model to a more cylindrical shape. The main reason the structure of population aging matters is that there is a "mismatch between the timing of human productivity and human consumption."<sup>11</sup>

Because of the time lag between changes in fertility and changes in mortality, Pakistan is experiencing the possibility of what is called a "demographic dividend." The potential for a demographic dividend occurs

when a lowered birth rate leads to changes in the age structure of a population. In this case, an increase in working age population and decline in dependent age population results in economic gains.<sup>12</sup> Simply put, young people require a society's investments in health and education, working-age adults supply labor that fuels this investment, and the elderly again require investments in health. A country with a large labor supply relative to its young and old has the potential to realize significant economic growth because the dependency burden is low. Demographic dividends create the possibility for economic growth by "improving labor supply, increasing savings, and allowing development of human capital."<sup>13</sup> Pakistan's median age in 2006 was 20 years. By 2050, it is projected to be 33 years.<sup>14</sup> The proportion of Pakistan's working age population of 15 to 64 reached 59 percent in 2006.<sup>15</sup> Capitalizing on the possibility of a demographic dividend is currently up to the Pakistani government.

This dividend can only be realized in the right policy environment such as occurred in South Korea over the second half of the 20th century or is occurring in China and India now. Studies have demonstrated that as much as one-third of East Asia's economic miracle can be attributed to a demographic dividend.<sup>16</sup> What Pakistan is currently experiencing is a once in a lifetime opportunity as the working age swells and dependency ratio declines. Demographers believe that Pakistan's window of opportunity probably opened in 1990 and is likely to close by 2045. The critical question is whether the labor market will be able to absorb an influx of new workers. As one commentator has asked, "Would these teeming numbers be actually a 'dividend' or would they be more of a threat?"<sup>17</sup> By 2030 Pakistan is estimated to have 175 million potential workers,

85 million of whom could be women. Realizing a demographic dividend is closely tied to female education and empowerment, as it depends upon sustaining lower fertility rates.<sup>18</sup> By 2050, the number of potential workers is expected to rise to 221 million.<sup>19</sup> If Pakistan fails to adequately train and educate its labor supply and grow its economy to provide jobs, difficult times could be ahead.

The other side of the demographic dividend coin is demographic danger. The most commonly discussed demographic threat is known as “youth bulge.” This is the period typically before the demographic dividend can be realized when the huge tide of young people has not yet entered the labor market. This creates enormous pressures on the state to provide health, education, and other services. As this population becomes adolescents, the theory holds that single teenage men without the discipline of a good public, private, or military education and without the prospects of employment are more likely to engage in violence directed against the state and other groups in society, or engage in terrorism. Many have looked to the failures of the state education system in Pakistan, for instance, as a primary reason for the greater role madrassahs have played in educating young Pakistanis today. Madrassahs do not necessarily produce terrorists, but they do play a role in proselytizing an anti-modern, anti-Western world view.

There is no guarantee that Pakistan has weathered its period of youth bulge as it transitions to its dividend period. One recent study has argued that, similar to the aftershocks of an earthquake, “echo booms” reverberate every 2 decades after periods of booming fertility which are followed by a steep decline. This would mean that the number of Pakistanis between

the ages of 15 and 24 would grow from roughly 7 percent of the population between 2005 and 2020 to over 30 percent between 2020 and 2035.<sup>20</sup> This would create a new period of stress for both state and society. Demographic transitions ultimately reduce threats of violence and instability, but these transitions proceed unevenly. It is in the midst of the transition—when inequality is growing, urbanization and migration are high, and contact with the global marketplace is on the upswing—that political instability and authoritarian reactions are most likely.<sup>21</sup>

Other than fertility and mortality, urbanization is the third demographic effect that shapes the contours of a country's population. Urbanization is a form of migration: citizens migrate internally from rural to urban areas, often in search of jobs and a better life. Migration has been an integral and often painful part of Pakistan's history. Four main migratory waves have shaped Pakistan's demographics: at partition from India; the war in neighboring Afghanistan; workers' migration to the Gulf; and urbanization, including the growth of the megacity Karachi. The continuing effects of each are likely to play an important role in Pakistan's economic, social, and political stability for decades.

Between partition in August 1947 and the end of open borders in 1951, 6 million non-Muslims moved from Pakistan to India, and 8 million Muslims moved from India to Pakistan.<sup>22</sup> Most of the migrants to Pakistan were East Punjabis who settled in Punjab. Twenty percent, though, were so-called Muhajirs, Urdu speakers who settled in Sindh and had a significant influence on provincial and national politics.<sup>23</sup> During the 1980s, there was a comparable influx of people into Pakistan on account of the Afghan war. More than 2.5 million Afghans fled to Pakistan to escape the violence,



settling primarily in Peshawar and Quetta in tight kinship and tribal networks.<sup>24</sup> Many of these Afghans still remain, despite large scale repatriation efforts after the fall of the Taliban in 2001.

Migration from Pakistan to the Gulf states took off in the 1970s as a construction boom drew workers from uneducated, rural areas of Pakistan. Skilled workers later followed. Savings sent back to Pakistan in the form of remittances have constituted the largest single source of foreign exchange earnings for Pakistan.<sup>25</sup> While some see remittances as a major financial resource that could be harnessed for development, the long-term effects of remittances on structural poverty are less clear.<sup>26</sup> According to the Pakistan Ministry of Finance, the total remittances sent to Pakistan between FY2002 and FY2006 were \$4.57 billion. The United States was the single largest country source, although the Gulf states, if lumped together, provided the largest single regional total.

Pakistan has traditionally been a rural, agricultural country. In 1951, 83 percent of Pakistanis lived outside of cities and towns. Today, this number has fallen to 68 percent or less. Urbanization is progressing at a rapid 4.9 percent per year, and Pakistan is projected to be predominantly urban by the next decade.<sup>27</sup> More than half the urban population of Pakistan lives in the eight largest cities, and Sindh is the most urbanized province in Pakistan on account of Karachi. Rapid urbanization and the ensuing high congregations of people living in slums create a host of pressures on state and society. In Lahore, Pakistan, for instance, there are 6,500 sanitation workers for 7.5 million people. In Delhi, India, by comparison, there are 46,000 sanitation workers for 11 million people.<sup>28</sup> Urbanization also erodes traditional social structures and exposes migrants to “the social and cultural crosscurrents of modernity.”<sup>29</sup>

The effects of these four migratory waves will continue to shape Pakistan. The pace of urbanization will create new strains and opportunities that could serve as an engine of industrialization and modernization, or else be captured by unstable and violent crosscurrents. The large presence of Afghans in western Pakistan continues to blur the Durand line separating the two countries and further complicates efforts to tie the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and Balochistan more squarely to Pakistan's center. Muhajirs continue to play an important role in Pakistani and Karachi politics. Muhajir-Sindhi ethnic violence like what occurred in the 1990s remains a continuing possibility in Karachi. The Gulf has proved an important source of capital for Pakistan, but it is unclear what sort of political influence the transfer of wealth will have on Pakistan over time.

The critical point to note is that while Pakistan has undergone remarkable changes over the past 60 years, perhaps none have been greater than what has occurred over the past decade. Agriculture is no longer the lone driver of the economy. Automobiles, mobile phones, and an independent media have connected Pakistanis to each other and to the rest of the world in revolutionary ways. Women play a greater role in public life, including at universities. Pakistan is continually renegotiating its relationships with Islam, India, China, the United States, and the Gulf.

Understanding these changes and the effects of Pakistan's demographic transition are vital to understanding Pakistan's future. The country's ability to successfully weather this transition period will depend on two primary factors. The first is how its leaders manage to address the instability caused by increased resource pressures on food, water, and energy. The

second is how the country manages to address three societal ills likely to be heightened by the transition period: poverty, lack of education, and violence. This chapter will discuss each of these dynamics before making a case for why U.S. decisionmakers ought to pay attention to Pakistan's long-term future and what policy options exist to mitigate peril. The United States must help Pakistan through this demographic storm, or else risk its worst effects washing up on our shores.

### **Food, Water, and Energy.**

Population change is closely tied to resource availability. Food, water, and energy are all basic requirements for life and economic activity. Pakistan, like many countries, faces severe constraints on all three, and the potential for shortages is only likely to grow as populations increase. Pakistan was hit particularly hard by the global food crisis this year. The World Food Program reported that as many as 60 million Pakistanis were "food insecure" as a result of the global rise in commodity prices. Despite 6 years of sustained economic growth, roughly a quarter of Pakistan's population still lacks potable water.<sup>30</sup> The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Report has predicted a global water crisis by 2025 that Pakistan is unlikely to escape.<sup>31</sup> Energy shortages continue to be endemic in Pakistan. This past summer, Pakistan's government set the nation's clocks forward by 1 hour to ease energy demand. These pocketbook issues traditionally have led to political instability in Pakistan, but few political leaders have been able to devise a long-term countrywide strategy for addressing food, water, and energy insecurity.

The global food crisis hit the world this year with “alarming speed, force, and depth,” presenting a humanitarian, development, and strategic threat to countries around the world.<sup>32</sup> The price of basic foodstuffs skyrocketed as a result of high energy prices, increased demand from rising middle classes in China and India, the increased production of biofuels, poor weather potentially linked to climate change, and more systemic problems in agricultural production, trade, and the delivery of food relief.<sup>33</sup> Since the beginning of 2006, the average world price for rice has risen over 200 percent, milk by 170 percent, wheat by 136 percent, and maize by 125 percent. The new Pakistani government was forced to place a 15 percent export duty on wheat and to import millions of tons of the country’s main staple in order to address the shortages. The UN World Food Program (WFP) estimated that close to 40 percent of Pakistan could no longer afford the poverty-line intake for food. Urban areas were hit particularly hard as food prices increased.

What is unfortunate is that Pakistan was near food self-sufficiency for wheat in the early 1980s.<sup>34</sup> Pakistan’s emerging food security problem has been linked closely to the unprecedented increase in population.<sup>35</sup> As early as the 1990s, food projections were showing that the demand for rice and wheat would soon outstrip supply.<sup>36</sup> This is despite a relatively successful record of agricultural growth. Pakistan has always at its heart been a rural agricultural society, even though it is becoming increasingly urban. Agriculture still accounts for one-quarter of Pakistan’s gross domestic product (GDP) and employs almost one-half of its labor force.<sup>37</sup> Seventy percent of export revenue stems from agriculture, and over one-half of industrial production comes from agricultural business.<sup>38</sup> A

lasting agricultural crisis in Pakistan will have far greater implications than its effect on individual families. It is likely to severely impact the country's economic growth.

One of the main challenges to increasing agricultural production in Pakistan is low productivity and reliability of water. The total irrigated area of Pakistan increased by 80 percent between 1960 and 2005, from 10.4 to 18.8 million hectares. Upwards of 80 percent of Pakistan's cropped area is currently irrigated.<sup>39</sup> Farming is a water-intensive pursuit, taking 1,000 tons of water to grow one ton of wheat and 2,000 tons of water to grow one ton of rice.<sup>40</sup> According to one study, because of water shortages, Pakistan will be forced by 2025 to import large quantities of wheat amid "famine-like conditions."<sup>41</sup> That day may arrive sooner than expected.

At the root of the problem is that human populations continue to grow, but the amount of fresh water stays roughly the same over time.<sup>42</sup> Pakistan had essentially the same annual renewable water availability for its 35 million people in 1947 as for its 170 million people today. In 1981 there was close to 3,000 cubic meters of water for each Pakistani each year. By 2003, the number had fallen below 1,500, and by 2035, it is projected to fall below 1,000, the baseline that indicates water scarcity.<sup>43</sup> The Indus River basin covers 70 percent of Pakistan's territory. Its flow depends on melting snow, and its irrigation potential is thus limited to the months between May and September. The rest of the year, Pakistan depends upon stored water. The storage capacity of water reservoirs in Tarbela and Mangla are decreasing due to erosion from farming techniques that increase sediment and displace water.<sup>44</sup> If climate change reduces the snowcap on the Himalayan and

Hindu Kush mountain ranges that feed the Indus, the river's flow could shrink even further. The lack of clean water impacts sanitation. UNDP estimates that almost 40 percent of Pakistanis lack adequate sanitation, increasing the spread of waterborne disease.

The Government of Pakistan is aware of what is required to address the country's water shortfall: new dams that can create new water storage facilities, more efficient farming techniques, and updated storage and irrigation systems. The government has unfurled a string of strategies, action plans and projects, but many observers are left with the sense that there is not a single, comprehensive plan to tackle the water crisis in Pakistan. At least one development bank has argued that without the creation of three new dams in Pakistan by 2016, the country will experience a severe water shortage by 2020. The politics of dam building in Pakistan are extremely complicated though, with each provincial government fearing that it will somehow be shortchanged. It is worth noting that General Pervez Musharraf's efforts as the country's de facto military ruler to move forward with dam construction in Kalabagh, Punjab Province, Pakistan, met with such stiff political resistance that he was forced to back down in 2006. It took 30 years for the four Pakistani provinces to agree on the 1991 water apportionment accord following the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty, and they are still fighting today.<sup>45</sup>

Water in Pakistan is vital to energy production. Electricity production from fossil fuels and nuclear energy requires huge quantities of water for cooling and other purposes, and one-half of Pakistan's electrical energy is hydro-generated.<sup>46</sup> Water is also essential for all other types of energy production. Future investment in alternative energy sources such as biofuels will

further depend on irrigated land. At present, Pakistan receives roughly half of its energy supply from natural gas, 30 percent from oil, 11 percent from hydroelectric energy, 8 percent from coal, and 3 percent from nuclear energy.<sup>47</sup> Only 20 percent of oil demand is met from indigenous sources. In fact, Pakistan's dependence on imported energy is expected to increase considerably in the near to medium term.<sup>48</sup> This could be particularly damaging to Pakistan's economic situation given the soaring prices of energy.

Pakistan is currently experiencing an acute energy shortfall. Some have estimated that Pakistan is meeting only one-fourth to one-third of its power generation needs. Forty percent of households in Pakistan lack electricity and 18 percent of households have no access to pipeline gas.<sup>49</sup> There is a close linkage between power generation and economic growth. As the country's economy grows, its power generation needs will increase at a proportionately higher rate. Pakistan's energy deficit could double by 2025 if growth continues at its present pace.<sup>50</sup> Energy expansion, in turn, could lead to higher economic growth, and energy shortages could retard the growth process.<sup>51</sup> To meet rising demand, the government in the short term has sought to tap unexploited coal reserves in the Thar Desert in the Sindh Province of Pakistan and hydroelectric power from the north, both of which present serious logistical constraints. Over the long-term, Pakistan hopes to become an energy corridor between the Middle East and Central Asia.

The majority of Pakistan's natural gas production comes from Balochistan, a province that has engaged in a longstanding, low-level insurgency against Islamabad for decades. Pakistan's energy insecurity and its search for assured access to hydrocarbon resources

has “magnified the economic and strategic importance of the province,”<sup>52</sup> as Balochistan accounts for almost 40 percent of Pakistan’s natural gas production. The province – sparsely populated and underdeveloped – consumes under 20 percent of this production, though, and receives a “deficient share of revenues from the government’s sale of natural gas,” a main grievance of the insurgents.<sup>53</sup> The province’s potential as a transit point for gas pipelines running between Iran and India and from the new Gwadar port to Central Asia increase its strategic importance. Balochistan stands as a good example of the way energy has fundamentally affected political stability in Pakistan over recent decades.

Pakistan’s leaders must develop effective policies for addressing the instability likely to be caused by increased resource pressures on food, water, and energy during the country’s demographic transition. Addressing the consequences of rapid urbanization is critical. When severe drought led to a 40 percent decline in wheat production in Sindh in the late 1990s, rioters stormed Karachi to protest the food and water shortages.<sup>54</sup> Rural poor often lack the ability to politically or violently mobilize in the way that urban populations do. As Pakistan’s pace of urbanization continues, we are likely to see more rather than fewer disturbances in its major urban areas. Street protesters provide a unique challenge for the Pakistani military, which is relied upon to keep order, but which realizes that blood on the streets tarnishes its image as guardian of the state. It is possible that sustained shortages in food, water, and energy could lead to a decreased capacity of the Pakistani state to govern, increased migration, and civil unrest particularly in urban settings. The degree of instability will largely be a function of how the country manages to address three societal ills that



could be heightened by the transition period: poverty, lack of education, and violence.

### **Poverty, Education, and Violence.**

Pakistan in 2020 could very well become a wealthier, better educated, more stable society. If it can reduce its sources of violence and instability, attract foreign investment, provide government services, produce new jobs, and develop its human capital, Pakistan will have taken advantage of its demographic dividend, and allay U.S. concerns about Pakistan's nuclear future. Demographic trends may be robust predictors of population growth and movement, however, future availability of resources is largely a known entity, but future levels of poverty, education, and violence depend almost entirely on human decisionmaking. It is impossible to accurately forecast whether Pakistan's government will make the right choices and how external events may shape and impact those choices. What is possible is to provide a baseline assessment of the current state of these critical drivers of conflict, instability, and extremism, and then analyze how demographic pressures may impact these drivers in the years to come.

Poverty, in and of itself, is not a cause of conflict, instability, or extremism. It is, however, a phenomenon that shapes how communities and individuals perceive their future and the opportunities that will exist for them and their children. Relative poverty is more likely to produce the alienation, isolation, and grievance that prove fertile ground for political instability, internal conflict, and extremist sentiment. Countries undergoing a demographic transition are more likely to experience higher levels of income inequality as societies move

from developing to industrialized economies. There are economic winners and losers in any society, but the winners and losers tend to move further apart during these transition periods. Government programs and foreign aid may help to ease the burdens of those who suffer most during this transition, but it is ultimately economic growth that has the potential to lift millions of people out of poverty, as the world is witnessing in China, and to a lesser extent, India.

Pakistan's recent economic growth is well-known. From 2002 to 2008, the country's GDP grew by an average of 7 percent per year and per capita income increased by 5 percent per year, the highest rate in Pakistan's history.<sup>55</sup> Total investment reached 23 percent of GDP in FY2007, and foreign direct investment reached \$5.1 billion, or 3.7 percent of GDP in FY2006.<sup>56</sup> Pakistan has negotiated trade agreements with China and a number of its neighbors, even if regional trade with India has remained mostly stagnant. Few could argue that the economic turnaround of this decade has not been beneficial for Pakistan. Pakistan's economic leadership during the 1990s was plagued by corruption, public debt, high deficits, and high poverty.<sup>57</sup> Musharraf's government brought macroeconomic stability and helped to deregulate key industries. The question, however, is whether in recent years Pakistan has experienced what William Easterly has called Pakistan's experience of the 1960s and 1980s: "growth without development."<sup>58</sup>

In 2006, six million families in Pakistan were still below the poverty line.<sup>59</sup> Pakistan's score in the UNDP's Human Development Index is currently 136 out of 177 countries, sandwiched between Ghana and Mauritania.<sup>60</sup> There is widespread sentiment in Pakistan that the benefits of this decade's economic

growth failed to trickle down to the majority of the population. Recently, there has been an additional worry that despite GDP growth, the country stands at the precipice of a major financial crisis stemming from the economic policies of recent years. Shahid Javed Burki, for instance, has argued that the recent GDP growth may have been artificial and is unlikely to be sustained without higher rates of investment in key industries like power generation and job creation for the rural poor.<sup>61</sup> A balance of payment crisis looms in Pakistan, and many fear a return to International Monetary Fund (IMF) lending.

Even if growth can be sustained, though, investments in health and education remain well below what is needed to realize Pakistan's demographic dividend. The success of this dividend will depend in large part on the country's ability to provide young people with the skills they need to succeed in the global marketplace. This means producing a work force that is globally competitive and can help Pakistan diversify from traditional agricultural-based industry like textiles. Without serious education reform, Pakistan is looking at large numbers of unemployable adolescents with few economic prospects who are sure to be the prime targets of those seeking to mobilize them for violent purposes.<sup>62</sup>

The UNDP Human Development Report in 2005 gave Pakistan the lowest score for its education index of any country outside of Africa.<sup>63</sup> Pakistan's overall literacy rate hovers between 40 and 50 percent.<sup>64</sup> For women, the literacy rate is below 30 percent, and for women in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), it is only 3 percent. Pakistan's primary school enrollment rate in early 2000 was the lowest in South Asia.<sup>65</sup> In 2005, Pakistan's secondary school enrollment

stood at just 27 percent of eligible students and less than 5 percent went on for tertiary education. Male children in Pakistan receive an average of 3.8 years of education, while female children receive an average of 1.3 years.<sup>66</sup> A host of problems plague education in Pakistan: internal mismanagement, poor quality textbooks, ghost schools, shoddy infrastructure, and discrimination. The single greatest challenge to reforming education in Pakistan is the poor quality of its teachers, who lack skills and incentives and who often fail to show up for work because of their low salaries. The result is that more Pakistanis are turning away from public education to attend private schools and madrassahs.

Much of America's attention on education in Pakistan has focused on the role of madrassahs. The linkage between madrassahs and terrorism is tenuous, however. While militant recruitment does take place in madrassahs,<sup>67</sup> it is probably more likely, as many have suggested, that an al Qaeda commander has graduated from the London School of Economics than a Pakistani madrassah. Still, these schools fail to educate Pakistanis in a way that will make them competitive in the global marketplace. They also contribute to an environment in which anti-modern and anti-Western views are more likely to take root. For those looking for a more moderate and tolerant Pakistan to emerge, the answer is unlikely to reside in madrassahs, though there is no guarantee it will reside in Pakistan's public education system either. Public schools in Pakistan continue to provide textbooks with historical inaccuracies based on religious animosities rather than historical, scientific, or economic explanations.<sup>68</sup> The problem for the United States, though, is that efforts to try to help the Pakistani government address curriculum and

textbook challenges touch a third rail of sovereignty in Pakistan and is sure to provoke significant backlash.

The U.S. focus on madrassahs is in effect a search for a simple explanation of the roots of violence and extremism in Pakistan. Unfortunately, there is no single structural factor that one can identify. The general absence of rule of law in Pakistan means that the police are viewed by most citizens as predators rather than protectors. Strong secessionist feelings and sectarian and ethnic tensions tend to overwhelm weak political institutions that have been purposefully kept weak by military rule. Regional and great power pressures from India and the United States tend to negatively influence stability. The country is awash with small arms. In such an environment, Graham Fuller's great question takes on a profound importance: "who will be able to politically mobilize this youth cohort most successfully: the state, or other political forces, primarily Islamist?"<sup>69</sup> The potential exists in complex tribal environments like FATA for the emergence of an outside entity with "powers of oratory and organization" who, with the assistance of outside money, can lead a revolt against traditional authority.<sup>70</sup>

Young people have been playing an increasingly important role in militant organizations in Pakistan today.<sup>71</sup> Baitullah Mehsud, a Pakistani Taliban leader who some have blamed for Benazir Bhutto's assassination, is only in his early 30s. These militants have killed hundreds of tribal chiefs and upended traditional authority in FATA, making it less likely a tribal uprising will succeed in casting out groups like al Qaeda. The interwoven web of militant organizations in Pakistan works to al Qaeda's benefit. Al Qaeda has no dedicated recruiting infrastructure in Pakistan, but relies upon this informal network.<sup>72</sup> Historically,

militant recruitment has revolved around the Indo-Pakistani conflict and has taken place out in the open, but since 9/11 it has gone underground and has tended to use anti-U.S. sentiment to motivate new cadres.<sup>73</sup>

If Pakistan is unable to sustain its economic growth, in part because of rising resource pressures, the country in 2020 could have millions or potentially tens of millions of unemployed young people who have not been properly educated to compete in the globalized economy. This will be a population that came of age during the War on Terror at a time of great antipathy toward the United States. Even if rural areas in Punjab and Sindh remain relatively quietist traditional societies as they have for decades, the increasingly populated cities and the heavily trafficked border regions will have access to networks of influence around the world. The Gulf, with the rising importance of its Sovereign Wealth Funds and growing source of remittances returning to Pakistan, is likely to have a heightened political influence. Today's interconnected world means that vectors of prosperity can quickly become vectors of instability.

### **Understanding the Risks.**

It is worth asking why Pakistan's future—its demographics, growing natural resource pressures, and efforts to address social ills—should matter to the United States. After all, the short-term dangers in Pakistan are numerous and challenging enough to suck the oxygen out of any long-term policy discussion. Furthermore, many countries around the world struggle with similar long-term challenges and sustain normal partner relationships with the United States. Why can't the U.S. Government continue to focus on

short-term challenges in Pakistan while supporting the traditional programs to promote good governance and economic growth?

The answer is that Pakistan may be the country where nuclear risk is greatest – where nuclear material is least secure, terrorists most active, and nuclear exchange with a neighboring state most likely. The long-term stability of Pakistan's state and society matters to the United States because the consequences of nuclear terrorism or a nuclear war could be catastrophic to the region and to American interests and lives.

The nuclear experts who study Pakistan tend to downplay the nuclear threat, but the potential for nuclear war, nuclear theft, or nuclear accident will increase in Pakistan as domestic instability increases. Pakistan's safeguards against these nuclear risks – the military's cohesion and professionalism, established command and control procedures, a robust conventional response capability that reduces the potential for nuclear use, a politically moderate and generally pro-Western government and military leadership – all could erode or disappear in the years ahead as demographic pressures rise and the fabric of Pakistan's state and society come under additional strain.

Pakistan's relations with India, for instance, have thawed since the 1999 Kargil War, but India continues to dominate the thinking of Pakistani national security planners. India's growing presence in Afghanistan has fueled long-held fears in Islamabad of strategic encirclement. As Pakistan's conventional deterrent declines relative to India's heightened defense spending, Pakistan's nuclear deterrent becomes increasingly important. There are no guarantees that a conventional conflict between India and Pakistan will

stay conventional. The greater the stresses endured by the Pakistani state, the less stable relations with India are likely to be. A Pakistan teetering on the brink of collapse is likely to act in unpredictable ways toward neighboring states and nonstate actors alike.

No greater threat faces the United States than nuclear material in the hands of terrorists. America's inability to deter groups like al Qaeda makes developing a comprehensive strategy to address this threat a vital national priority. The United States must invest in new ways of detecting loose nuclear material at home and abroad, but few have faith that we will be able to identify nuclear material crossing our borders if terrorists get hold of it. This heightens the importance of disrupting terrorist networks and limiting proliferation at its source.

The most direct ways to prevent terrorists from gaining control of nuclear material are to kill and capture terrorist leaders, limit the number of nuclear weapons states and stockpiles, and ensure the security of existing nuclear weapons arsenals. Each of these is a vital mission, but hard to achieve with any full measure of success. It was former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld who asked in 2003 whether we are "capturing, killing or deterring and dissuading more terrorists every day" than are being recruited and deployed against us.<sup>74</sup> Five years later, we still do not have a concrete answer to the question. North Korean and Iranian pursuit of nuclear weapons demonstrates the complex geopolitics involved in trying to limit the number of nuclear weapons states. The United States has been more successful with reducing existing arsenals, but in Russia alone there still exist upwards of 10,000 warheads.

Classified plans to help secure nuclear stockpiles of partner states like Pakistan provide some assurances,



but scenarios of state collapse could render such plans meaningless. One attempt to systematically look at collapse scenarios in Pakistan anticipated a requirement of one million troops to keep nuclear material from leaving the country, and concluded that, "it points to the critical importance of doing whatever is possible to prevent the collapse in the first place."<sup>75</sup> What, exactly, would be a plausible scenario in which terrorists could get hold of nuclear material? Determining this could help to determine which long-term demographic trends could be most worrisome.

Stephen Cohen, one of the leading U.S. experts on Pakistan, has argued that all scenarios involving transmission of nuclear material to terrorists "lead back to the question of the army's integrity."<sup>76</sup> Possible transmission scenarios include:

- A hostile regime emerging through a coup, revolution, or election in which nuclear technology is transferred as a matter of policy to a terrorist group;
- Civil unrest that leads to divided command and control of the Pakistani military while a military faction proliferates nuclear material to terrorists;
- The continuing weakness of the state and armed forces to the extent that the security of nuclear stockpiles is in jeopardy, and material is stolen by a terrorist group.

Each of these nightmare scenarios demonstrates why U.S. policy has leaned heavily toward influencing state behavior and building closer ties with Pakistan's armed forces since 9/11. During the 1990s, the Pakistani military operated largely outside of America's sphere of influence because of U.S. sanctions that were

enacted after Pakistan's nuclear test. Of the 10-plus billion dollars in overt assistance provided by the U.S. Government to Pakistan since 9/11, over 60 percent has gone toward coalition support funds that reimburse the Pakistani military for its role in the war on terror.<sup>77</sup> This money, along with another billion-and-a-half in security assistance, has ensured the Pakistani military's cooperation and presence on the Afghan border, even if it has failed thus far to defuse the threat.

Recent tensions, however, between the United States and Pakistani militaries have risen to alarming levels and threatened to jeopardize the bilateral cooperation. A U.S. incursion into Pakistani territory by American Special Operations forces on September 3, 2008, prompted more than the standard rebuke from Pakistan. Pakistani military forces have since fired on U.S. helicopters and drones that have crossed or approached Pakistan's border with Afghanistan. It is impossible to predict whether these skirmishes will continue or escalate and how this might affect U.S.-Pakistan relations over the long run. The trend is worrisome, though, considering how vital the Pakistani military is to U.S. interests in Pakistan.

It is likely that some accord will be reached, and the United States will continue its close cooperation with the Pakistani armed forces. There is too much to lose for Washington not to resolve this crisis. The paradox, though, is that despite the Pakistan military's importance, the relationship has tended to frustrate other U.S. goals. America's ties to Pakistan's military have given the impression that the United States supports anti-democratic forces instead of the Pakistani people, provoking anti-American sentiment in the country.

The centerpiece of U.S. counterterrorism assistance in Pakistan today is a multiyear commitment to train Pakistani Special Forces and the paramilitary Frontier Corps in counterinsurgency doctrine and pour hundreds of millions of dollars in development money into the Tribal Areas. This attempt to win hearts and minds is the latest effort to work with local partners to create an environment in Pakistan unfavorable to al Qaeda and the Taliban. The difficulty, of course, is that our enemies are also seeking to shape this environment, and often times have proven more successful. While they may lack the resources we bring to the table, they have a veil of legitimacy from their cultural and religious kinship and anti-imperialist rhetoric that plays well to nationalist sentiment, even though their ideology is not nationalist itself. Pakistani public officials often speak of refusing to relinquish their sovereignty to foreign powers, but are too willing to accept the diminished sovereignty that comes from tolerating non-state actors like the Taliban and al Qaeda on their territory.

Ultimately, terrorists survive because of a lack of will to address the problem. As Henry Kissinger wrote 1 month after U.S. forces began their aerial bombing of Taliban-controlled Afghanistan in 2001:

The overwhelming majority of safe havens occur when a government closes its eyes because it agrees with at least some of the objectives of the terrorists. . . . Even ostensibly friendly countries that have been cooperating with the United States on general strategy...sometimes make a tacit bargain with terrorists so long as terrorist actions are not directed against the host government.<sup>78</sup>

The question that many in Washington have asked since 9/11 – particularly after Musharraf’s government cut

a deal with militants in September 2006—is whether Pakistan has also made this tacit bargain.

Even now it is uncertain whether the civilian government in Islamabad sees the problem on the Afghan border as an insurgency that threatens the Pakistani state and is worth years of war and sacrifice to subdue. Many in Islamabad believe the violence against Pakistanis will dissipate once America eases its pressure and militant activity is again directed toward external targets. Many in Washington believe the United States has not yet found a true partner in Islamabad—civilian or military—willing and able to stand up to the Taliban and al Qaeda in both word and deed. This is why the United States has sought to take action into its own hands through unilateral military action, and why Pakistan has responded by firing on U.S. soldiers.

The United States may be the foremost power in the world, but the tools to protect ourselves from tomorrow's threats do not always lie in our hands. This is not necessarily cause for panic. Few countries in the world expect the freedom of action and ability to influence events that resides in American hands. It may be cause, however, for a reexamination of how America achieves its goals and the tools we need to succeed.

The United States must find ways to deepen its partnerships with foreign governments and militaries and key stakeholders in civil society to help shape an environment supportive of U.S. objectives over the long-term. No partnerships are perfect. The challenge will be improving those partnership where cooperation is inadequate but vital. As Defense Secretary Robert Gates has said, “the most important military component in the War on Terror is not the fighting we

do ourselves, but how well we enable and empower our partners to defend and govern themselves,"<sup>79</sup> or as former Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sam Nunn is fond of saying, "We are in a race between cooperation and catastrophe."<sup>80</sup>

### **U.S. Policy Options.**

The first policy imperative of Pakistan's demographics is recognizing that as difficult a challenge Pakistan poses to U.S. decisionmakers today, it will likely be magnified in a decade's time if action is not taken now. The 9/11 Commission said the United States should make a long-term commitment to Pakistan's future.

The underlying purpose of all action should be to mitigate the risk of nuclear material being transferred to terrorists over the long run. Although direct U.S. military action on Pakistani territory could prove necessary, the U.S. Government should do more shaping and influencing and less compulsion of friends, adversaries, and those in between.<sup>81</sup> Any direct action should be weighed against potential long-term consequences that could create conditions favorable to terrorist recruitment and broader conflict and instability in Pakistan. Are the targets of unilateral military strikes directly threatening to U.S. interests and lives? If not, the costs of stirring resentment in Pakistan may not be worth the immediate benefits of action.

U.S. shaping efforts should take the form of strengthening the Pakistani military's coherence and professionalism, promoting forces of political moderation, working to address divisions in Pakistani society, and building the capacity of government,

military, and civil society actors. The U.S. Government already engages in much of this type of work, and yet the effect seems to be far less than the sum of the various parts.

The United States should recognize that its words and deeds can create incentives and disincentives for Pakistanis to work toward peace, stability, and moderation. It should be content to let politics play out in Islamabad without the shadow of U.S. interference.

At the same time, the United States should quietly build deeper and more lasting relationships with all levels of the Pakistani military. The purpose of this engagement should go beyond general alliance maintenance and intelligence collection and seek to generate a common threat perception and set of shared goals.

America's visible presence in Pakistan should expand tremendously, but not along a security agenda. The Biden-Lugar bill for Pakistan gets many elements right: billions of dollars of aid for education and health over many years, greater accountability for security assistance, building a new relationship with the Pakistani people. It is a long-term prescription that is necessary for a counterinsurgency war that will take years to win.

Any long-term aid plan for Pakistan must include the following elements:

- Massive new investments in teacher training. America should become synonymous with quality education in Pakistan, not with the war on terror. The only way Pakistan will compete in the future is with strong public education.
- Food, water, and energy assistance. America should work closely with the Pakistani state and civil society to develop, fund, and implement a

comprehensive program to address resource shortages in Pakistan over the next 20 years. The United States has already provided short-term food assistance to Pakistan, but longer-term programs can be developed, particularly in the energy sector.

- Trade assistance. Even if political realities mean that the United States is not going to fully open its markets to Pakistani textiles, the United States should help Pakistan diversify and increase demand for its exports to lower its trade deficit. Provinces should have more say in the formulation of Pakistan's trade policy, and Punjab must become an engine of growth for all of Pakistan. Greater linkages must be built with China and India.

America's assistance to Pakistan should be closely tied to a strategic communication plan to help counter the ideology put forward by groups like the Taliban and al Qaeda. The initiative and implementation team should have an extensive local presence outside the American embassy, and be staffed by Pakistanis. There is added risk to operating country-wide at a time when anything associated with America could become a target, but working in Pakistan is a risky proposition, and the United States must be willing to bear more risk.

Ultimately, Pakistanis will need to make the sacrifices and tough decisions necessary to keep their country on a path toward peace and prosperity. The United States can exercise more patience, but at a certain point, Pakistan will need to demonstrate that it is committed to effectively reducing the militant threat on its western border. Tribal jirgas and a new, more

balanced counterinsurgency strategy may prove to be the answer. The danger is that if these fail, the time horizons in Pakistan for U.S. decisionmakers are likely to get even shorter than they have been over the past 7 years.

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