

Imagining Alternative Ethnic Futures for Pakistan

Published by the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center

By Maya Chadda

Introduction

Pakistan's growing crisis of governability is disturbing to policy makers across the world. A group of top U.S. experts on Pakistan conclude that "The United States cannot afford Pakistan to fail nor...ignore the extremists operating in Pakistan's tribal areas" to operate with impunity.¹ Why is Pakistan important to the U.S. and what would make it more stable and democratic? The first question is less difficult to answer. Throughout the nineteenth century, Afghanistan was the cockpit of a titanic struggle that came to be called the Great Game. In a similar, but modern context, that role has now devolved to Pakistan. What makes its growing instability a particular cause of concern is that far from being a steadfast ally, capable of promoting and projecting U.S. interests in the region, internal developments in Pakistan are in danger of compounding threats to U.S. interests.

As a nuclear-armed, predominantly Muslim nation of 165 million, Pakistan is important to the US in several ways. It is located adjacent to the oil rich Persian Gulf states and Central Asia; it borders on China and India, the two principal rising and rival states in Asia. As a result, Pakistan is strategically central to any attempt to prevent war and maintain peace in the region. All three states- India, Pakistan and China – are nuclear power states and historic rivals or allies. India is regarded an adversarial state by both Pakistan and China while China has built close security ties with Pakistan. At the same time, it is an Islamic nation with a declared interest in building a modern democracy, Pakistan can serve the U.S. both as a shield and a sword; it can shield against expansion of radical Islam currently entrenched in the tribal areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan and act as a sword to eliminate their presence from the region. Should Pakistan become a

¹ United States Institute of Peace, *The Next chapter, United States and Pakistan*, A Report of the Pakistan Policy Working Group, September 2008. http://www.usip.org/pubs/ppwg_report.pdf

successful democracy it would serve as an exemplar to the Islamic world in its own ideological battles.

However, Pakistan has had trouble establishing stability let alone a democracy over the past 65 years of its history. Military dictators have ruled the country close to 50 percent of the time.² The remaining years have witnessed populist leaders backed by cults of personality attempting to establish a party system but with little success given the way that the military has spread its tentacles throughout Pakistani society and permeated its institutions. Preoccupied with political survival, Pakistan's civilian leaders have paid little attention to reforms that could have prevented the state's slide towards failure. Even a cursory glance at Pakistan's history shows how it has lurched from one political crisis to another. The first decade of uncertain bureaucratic democracy ended in a military takeover by general Ayub Khan in 1958, whose rule lasted for the next ten years. Since then the army has, in a sense, never been out of power. Pakistan has slipped in and out of military rule three more times. It has been ruled directly by the military for twenty two of the following forty years, and even in the interregnums, Civilian governments have only survived so long as the military acquiesced.

In retrospect, the 11 years of military rule from 1977 to 1988 under General Zia ul Haq was the beginning of Pakistan's steady slide into Islamization. Zia maneuvered and revived a strategic alliance with the U.S. in which Pakistan agreed to serve as a conduit to Afghan Mujahedin fighting the Soviets forces. In return, the U.S. agreed to provide Pakistan with military assistance and turn a blind eye to its acquisition of nuclear technology, although officially the U.S. insisted on a policy of non-proliferation. In fact, the adventurous policy of cross border infiltration to foment rebellion in Indian Kashmir originated in the Zia years. To gain popular support for his illegitimate rule, Zia turned to the mullahs and Islamic leaders while Pakistan's civilian political leaders and parties were banned. The subsequent 10 years of uncertain democracy can be characterized as a period of diarchy, indirect rule by the military behind the façade of civilian rule and

² For an excellent account of Pakistan's civil military relations see Hasan-Askari Rizvi, *Military, State and Society in Pakistan* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).

elections. Not one elected government was able to complete its term in office during those ten years.³

The era of democratic experiment ended in war and a coup in 1999 by General Pervez Musharraf who dismissed Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and arrested him on charges of corruption and mismanagement. These charge sheets were trotted out every time the Pakistani military decided to stage a coup and take over power and had become something of a template for takeover.

2008 saw yet another transition from military rule to an uncertain coalition government, this time from General Musharraf to President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yousuf Reza Gilani. But the new elected government must manage a Pakistan that is weakened by economic crisis, political discontent and radical Islamists spreading violence and terror.⁴

Perspectives on Pakistan: The Debate

Pakistan began life with all the disadvantages of a newly born state. In sharp contrast to India, its lack of a pre-existing state structure is the main reason why it succumbed repeatedly to military rule. The areas that were pulled together as Pakistan in 1947 had powerful local ethnic parties, such as the Awami League in East Pakistan and Khudai Khidmatgars in North West Frontier Provinces (NWFP). These parties consented to join Pakistan in the 1940s largely because M. A. Jinnah, the leader of the Muslim League and founder of Pakistan, promised them self-rule and political autonomy. The *idea* of Pakistan as a homeland for the Muslims of the sub-continent had little space in it for ethnic and cultural diversity, however. The nationalist narrative of Pakistan was forged on the anvil of Islam.

³ For a brief discussion of these years see Maya Chadda, *Building Democracy in South Asia*, (Boulder, Colo, Lynne Rienner, 2000) pp. 67-101.

⁴ Harsh Pant, ISN Security Watch, *Pakistan: Challenges After Musharraf*, August 22, 2008. <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Current-Affairs/Security-Watch/Detail/?ots591=CAB359A3-9328-19CC-A1D2-8023E646B22C&lng=en&id=90376>

The geographical anomaly of a single nation composed of two halves divided by the entire body of India only heightened the pressure on the early leaders to de-emphasize its cultural and linguistic diversity. A geographically divided Pakistan could not become a democracy unless it accepted the possibility of electoral advantage going to its more populous eastern wing. This proved too much for the West Pakistan based military-feudal elite to swallow.

Despite the turbulence caused by repeated military coups, the surgical dissection of the country in 1971, and the US' temporary loss of interest in South Asia after the Vietnam War, every Pakistani government adhered firmly to two planks of foreign policy: strong security ties with the U.S. and an enduring conflict with India. Conflict with India was inevitable because of the way the partition had occurred in 1947, unleashing a communal holocaust and leading to war between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. Each of these relationships contributed to the ascent of the military to power in Pakistan. A hostile India justified putting the armed forces in charge; alliance with the U.S. helped Pakistan defend against the larger India. But this strategy came at huge domestic costs because swollen military budgets pre-empted expenditure on social development, particularly education and health.

It is against this complex intertwining of domestic and international forces that we need to imagine an alternative ethnic future for Pakistan. What would make it more stable? What would lead to a consolidation of democracy in Pakistan? There is no consensus among observers in the U.S. on how this can be achieved. One view advocates a firm adherence to the conventional road of free and fair elections. It believes that this will guarantee the inclusion of all sections of society and facilitate the emergence of a stable polity. A second view is that political institutions need to be strengthened first, through a reform of the political parties as well as the legal and constitutional framework of the state. The conclusion is that only then will free elections yield the desired results. More community-oriented observers stress education, health and transparency and consider

advances in these to be a necessary pre-condition for the emergence of a stable democracy. There is thus no clear consensus on where to start and how to proceed.⁵

In the U.S. this debate is understandably focused on rolling back the advancing Taliban groups that are now entrenched in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the North West Frontier Province (NWFP).⁶ Under U.S. pressure, Pakistan's government abandoned the strategy of negotiating with some factions of the Taliban provided they gave up arms and accepted the suzerainty of the government in Islamabad. General Musharraf had strongly supported the deal and the later leader of the opposition in Pakistan's Parliament, Nawaz Shrif and Prime Minister Gilani also thought it to be a prudent strategy. The idea was to use a 'carrot and stick' approach to divide the Taliban and regain control of the FATA. General Musharraf was convinced that the FATA areas had to be incorporated into Pakistan but this meant changing its current status and turning it into another province of Pakistan. As a result the deal was to be an interim arrangement.

But the idea of a deal with the radical Taliban was deeply disturbing to the U.S. Government. It smacked of appeasement and weakness; it also institutionalized the territorial gains made by Taliban. This was not acceptable to the U.S. largely because it undermined its goal of weakening the Afghan Taliban and stabilizing the Afghan government under a non-Taliban rule.

Many in the U.S. argued that the Taliban had a larger agenda and allowing them to gain legitimacy would threaten Pakistan while undermining in the interim, the U.S. efforts at strengthening the Karzai government in Kabul. The short term US objective was to help Pakistan's military eliminate the Taliban, but strengthening the Pakistani army created serious problems for all future civilian governments. And many in the policy circles close to both the Clinton and Bush administrations had argued that in the ultimate analysis the

⁵ A leading expert on Pakistan imagines scenarios ranging from secular democracy to Islamic regime along the lines of Iran in Pakistan. See Stephen Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan*, (Brookings, Washington D.C. 2004) pp. 267-301.

⁶ Daniel Markey, "Securing Pakistan's Tribal Belt," Council on Foreign Relations report no. 36, August 2008. https://secure.www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/Pakistan_CSR36.pdf

only effective answer to Islamic radicalization was a stable and democratic Pakistan. But how could the U.S. promote democracy while supporting the military in Pakistan? The U.S. strategy of backing the military had produced only aborted democracy in Pakistan. It was unlikely to succeed this time around. Neither the objectives of democracy nor the narrow focus on the war on terrorism in U.S. policy then tells us how Pakistan can build a stable state as a first step towards democracy.

This paper seeks to explore ways in which this objective can be achieved despite the political constraints under which any Pakistani government has to operate. I argue that democracy is not a panacea to instability, at least not in the short run. Democratic competition can exacerbate conflict and while democracy ought to be the goal, ethnic reconciliation and conflict management capacity are more important as first steps towards that goal. This interim course of action does not need a full-fledged democracy to be in place. Pakistan has possessed a partial and rather unsuccessful federal system since at least 1973 although its record of accommodating its nationalities has been dismal. Integrating these in an enduring way is an existential imperative for a stable Pakistan. If the U.S. is interested in Pakistan's stability then it needs to help Pakistan find a formula to forge a new ethnic bargain that will revive its federal mandate.

Pakistan is not alone in having to balance ethnic and regional influences against the need to unify; nor is it the only country in South Asia to fear disintegration because of ethnic overlap, religious fundamentalism, civil strife and disputed borders. In all these respects, countries in South Asia share Pakistan's problems: One is an ethnocracy (Sri Lanka), two are partial and episodic democracies (Bangladesh, Nepal) while one is a fully-fledged but still flawed democracy (India). South Asia provides a valuable context to imagine an alternative future for Pakistan. This context suggests that short of a fully functioning and vibrant democracy, a revitalized power-sharing agreement between the central Pakistani State and its parts can be a viable path to stability.

Nature of Violence and Conflict in Pakistan

Ethnically and linguistically Pakistan, like neighboring India, is one of the most heterogeneous countries in the world. At its inception, Pakistan was made up of five large distinctive nationalities, Bengalis in East Pakistan, and Sindhis, Punjabis, Pushtuns and Baluchis in West Pakistan. There was a sixth large group, but it had no territorial base: The Muhajirs, who had migrated to the newly created Pakistan and settled largely in Punjab and Sindh. Leaders of Pakistan presumed that Islam would hold the fragile union together, but support for the idea of a separate nation of Pakistan had been tepid among the Baluch, Pushtuns, Sindhis and even to some extent among the Punjabi Muslims, till weeks before the Partition. These ethnic communities had agreed to join Pakistan on the promise of a large degree of autonomy and self-rule. But Pakistan's post-independence history belied these hopes and produced instead, a serious imbalance between ethnic nationalities and the central state.

Pakistani leaders shared a common fear in the early years of independence that granting concessions to ethnic nationalities might spiral into separatism. Exhorting his countrymen, M.A. Jinnah, Pakistan's founding father had said, "You have carved out a territory, a vast territory. It is all [your]; it does not belong to a Punjabi, or a Sindhi, or a Pathan or a Bengali. It is all your." Therefore, "If you want to build yourself up into a nation," he said, "for God's sake give up this provincialism."⁷ And although India was committed to creating a federal structure from the very beginning, India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had voiced strong misgivings about provincialism and railed against it in the early 1950s.

Nehru and Jinnah had good reason to fear provincialism. No state can be formed without some concentration of power at the center, and the power has to be exercised most decisively at the very beginning of nation building.⁸ Progressive consolidation, however, requires an institutionalization of the means to circulate and share power. Democracy, or at the very least, negotiated power sharing are the only ways to ensure that this takes place.

⁷ Stephen Cohen, *Idea of Pakistan*, 205.

⁸ The recent experiment at nation and state building in the newly created Bosnia-Herzegovina, itself a fragment of the previous Yugoslavia, underscores the error of dispersing power too widely at the outset.

Neither development had occurred in Pakistan. India offers an interesting contrast. “In India, federalism was the mechanism to accommodate great linguistic heterogeneity, creating multiple identities. But the elite of Pakistan viewed regional and linguistic identities as inherently dangerous and as undermining the ‘nation project’. The adoption of Urdu as the state language was an indication of interregional identity projected by the center.”⁹

While Pakistani leaders feared power-sharing, the denial of autonomy was precisely what led to the breakup of East from West Pakistan in 1971. The loss of Bengali dominated East Pakistan, however, made accommodation with ethnic identities more and not less urgent. For the Bengali majority in undivided Pakistan had counterbalanced the Punjabi majority in West Pakistan to give the other ethnic groups the political space to assert themselves. The secession of East Pakistan therefore triggered powerful movements for provincial autonomy for a Sindhu Desh, an independent Baluchistan, a NWFP tied to Afghanistan and even a Mohajir state that aspired to turn Karachi into another Singapore. What complicated matters even more was the injection of Islamist ideology into FATA and northern Baluchistan after 1990.

Why did these grievances eventually morph into a violent movement against the state of Pakistan? In addition to denial of autonomy, two other factors were responsible: the preponderance of Punjabis, not only in numbers but also in wealth and power within the army; and the repeated military takeovers of Pakistan’s government after 1971. The three conditions together destroyed the political channels that might have established a new more equitable balance between Pakistan’s ethnic nationalities and its central state.

The Destiny of Constitutional Provisions to Provincial autonomy

If Pakistan did not become a democracy it was not for want of trying. Between 1947 and 1956 there had been no constitutional representation in the newly created Pakistan. The

⁹ Katherine Adeney, *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict Regulation in India and Pakistan*, (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 141.

constitutional crisis which developed during the existence of the first Constituent Assembly strengthened the role of central institutions- the bureaucracy and army - at the expense of regional parties in the provinces. The 1956 constitution and the governments it created was short lived and gave way to political chaos. Acutely conscious of its weakness in comparison to the well led larger India, Pakistan's elite opted for military rule and jettisoning democracy. The unsuccessful conclusion of the first war with India in 1948 had already frozen Indo-Pakistan frontier into a hostile border. By 1956, the Cold war was jelling into military alliances led by the U.S. and Soviet Union. It is in this context that General Ayub Khan decided to assume control in 1958, suspend the constitution and link the course of Pakistan's foreign policy to the containment objectives of the U.S.

President Ayub ruled the country with an iron fist and ignored the demands of Pakistan's ethnic nationalities. Instead, he strengthened the role of the bureaucracy and military within a new constitutional set up that transformed Pakistan into two administrative units, West and East Pakistan. The purpose was to balance the Bengali dominated East Pakistan and to deny the latter power proportionate to its numerical majority. But it also had the unfortunate side effect of forcing the merger of all ethnic nationalities in the west- the Baluch, Pushtun, Punjabi, Sindhi and Muhajirs - into a single unit.¹⁰

The single unit plan (meant to establish a parity between the two halves of Pakistan) was the starting point of all of Pakistan's subsequent problems, and indeed of its drift towards Islamism in the eighties. It sowed the seeds of secession in East Pakistan. It also effectively disenfranchised the Sindhis, the Baluchis, and to a lesser extent the Pushtuns. The years between 1969 and 1972 were chaotic and violent. Ayub Khan's fall from power led to the first authentic elections but these resulted in a majority for the Awami League party of East Pakistan. Unable to tolerate the prospect of an East Bengali Prime minister, General Yahya Khan staged a preemptive coup that settled the fate of Pakistan's democracy for the second time since its birth. What followed was a civil war,

¹⁰ For a brief discussion see Maya Chadda, *Building Democracy in South Asia*, op. cit., p. 24-30; Also see Yogendra Malik, Charles Kennedy, Robert Oberst, Ashok Kapur, Mahendra Lawoti, Syedur Rahman, (eds.) *Government and Politics in South Asia*, (Boulder, Colo, West view press, 2009) p. 162

intervention by Indian army, Pakistan's defeat and the secession of East from West Pakistan. Since the military had been discredited political parties, particularly the Pakistan People's Party, emerged as the alternative. Prime Minister Bhutto gave Pakistan its third constitution. This constitution has been in abeyance for much of the last three decades, but it subsequently became the bases for constitutional modifications. These occurred largely in response to the shifts in the balance of power between the military and civilian leadership in Pakistan. In 1973 constitution repealed the One-Unit Plan (returning West Pakistan to the original four provinces and tribal areas) and put in place provisions for regional autonomy within a federal state. Its adoption was tantamount to an admission that ethnic accommodation was an existential imperative for Pakistan.

The 1973 constitution, framed in the aftermath of Bangladesh's secession, formally restored the principle of federalism, redefining the term as "maximum provincial autonomy". The residual powers were vested in the Provincial Assemblies and for the first time a bicameral legislature was elected. The Senate was elected for four years on a basis of regional parity. The provinces, Punjab, Sindh, N.W.F.P. and Baluchistan were to elect 14 members each for four years and half of the members retired after two years.¹¹The 1973 constitution contained two lists: Federal and Concurrent. The Federal list comprised two parts. Part I contained items over which only the Parliament could legislate, encompassing 67 subjects. Either the Federal and Provincial governments could legislate over the items in Concurrent List; however, in case of conflict over the exercise of power, the central government's right prevailed (article 143).

The 1973 constitution created a federal structure, but it did so in the absence of any genuine understanding, or indeed respect, for the federal principle. While it devolved a large share of legislative power on the provinces, Prime Minister Bhutto remained deeply reluctant to devolve power to the provinces. This became evident in his treatment of Baluch nationalism.

¹¹ Mansoor Akbar Kundi and Arbab Jahangir, "Federalism in Pakistan: Issues and Adjustments," <http://www.cdrb.org/journal/2002/3/2.pdf>; Also see Mansoor Akbar Kundi, Federalism/Demarcation of Roles for Units in Pakistan, *Asian and African Studies*, 2002, accessible at <http://www.cdrb.org/journal/2002/3/2.pdf>

The weaknesses of the One-Unit Plan had been exposed by events in Baluchistan even before the secession of Bangladesh. In an effort to curb the growing secessionism there, General Yahya Khan had granted Baluchistan the status of a separate province in 1970. But in the aftermath of Pakistan's break-up, fearful that Baluchistan would go the same way, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, operating as interim President under an interim constitution, dissolved Baluchistan's coalition government led by Attaullah Mengal on February 15, 1973. When the NAP-JUI (National Awami Party and Jamat-Ulema-Islami) coalition in the NWFP resigned in protest against Bhutto's arbitrary action, he drew no lessons from it, and instead banned the National Awami Party in February 1975 and arrested its leaders under charges of conspiring against the state. They remained behind bars until 1977. As a result, throughout the Bhutto period there was no effective opposition in the National Assembly.

Federalism received a body blow when General Zia-ul Haq engineered another military coup in 1977. For the following eight years, the 1973 constitution went into abeyance, and federalism came to be substituted by a party-less democracy which slid rapidly toward Islamization of Pakistan's state and society. The accidental death of General Zia brought another ten years of uncertain and unstable democracy to Pakistan but no elected governments finished their terms during those ten years. The military dismissed ruling coalitions led by Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif two times each on the standard charges of mismanagement and the endangerment of national security. It was clear that Pakistan's constitution would operate in breach and federalism would disintegrate under the force of struggle among Pakistan's political elites. Indeed this period witnessed the crass manipulation of ethnic movements through the tactics of divide and rule, cooptation and bribery. Ethnic parties participated in the four coalition governments but the fear of military intervention exacerbated uncertainty and let loose the very worst features of democracy in Pakistan: alliances for pecuniary and political purposes that were devoid of a larger purpose.

The only power-sharing experiments worth noting during the Zia and then the Musharraf governments were the devolution plans each had introduced. These plans came at

different times in Pakistan's history but were similar in motivation, general outline and purpose. The International Crisis Group report on these plans points out that "The primary motivations for Zia to create local bodies was to legitimize the military government, broaden its support base beyond the military, and use the newly created and pliable local elite to undermine its political opponents. In essence, the local bodies provided the "civilian base of his military government, supporting it in return for economic and political benefits".¹² Gradually, these local governments became a vast mechanism for extending state patronage to pro-military politicians, providing the military government with ample scope for staging favorable, non-partisan elections. In due course, the new local elites formed the core of Zia's rubber stamp parliament, elected in non-party national elections in 1985. But these local bodies could not assuage popular demands for participation or bestow any lasting legitimacy on the military government.¹³

The report goes on to say that "Devolution, in fact, has proved little more than a cover for further centralized control over the lower levels of government" in Musharraf's plan. "Despite the rhetoric from Islamabad of empowerment," the ICG report points out, "local governments have only nominal powers. Devolution from the centre directly to the local levels, moreover, negates the normal concept of decentralisation since Pakistan's principal federal units, its four provinces, have been bypassed. The misuse of local government officials during the April 2002 presidential referendum and the October 2002 general elections has left little doubt that these governments were primarily instituted to create a pliant political elite that could help root the military's power in local politics and displace its traditional civilian adversaries."¹⁴

Time and again, Pakistan was denied democracy which could have welded the country into a coherent nation-state. It could not settle on a legal political framework that could have channeled protests and integrated its diversity into a coherent whole. Still, the absence of a legal political framework alone cannot explain why Pakistan's ethnic nationalities turned to

¹² International Crisis Group, Asia Report, no 40, *Pakistan: Transition to Democracy*, 3 October 2002, p. 7.

¹³ ICG report, *Ibid.*, p.4-5

¹⁴ ICG report, *ibid.*,

violence and separatism. For that we need to briefly sketch a short profile of their key grievances.

Pakistan's Ethno-Nationalities: Politics of Discord

Sindh: Sindhi separatism can be traced all the way back to the group's marginalization in the creation of Pakistan in the forties and to the demographic changes that followed Partition. Sindhi is not only a distinctly different language from Punjabi, Urdu and Pushtu, it has a rich and long literary tradition. Partitioned Sindh, not unlike partitioned Bengal in 1947, was divided between the more modern, urban and prosperous Hindu minority and the feudally dominated Muslim peasantry in rural Sindh. During the partition most of the Hindus migrated to India while Urdu Speaking Muslim refugees (Muhajirin) settled in Sindh, particularly Karachi. These migrants were better educated and soon entrenched themselves among Pakistan's ruling elites. In contrast, Muslim Sindhis lagged far behind with only 10 percent levels of literacy compared to 70 percent among the new comers. Wright comments, "This handicap might have been compensated politically as Sindhis still had a two-thirds majority in the province as a whole had it not been for the exigencies of national politics in the new country. During the first republic of Pakistan (1947-58) and certainly until the assassination of Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan in 1951, politics was dominated by the refugee leaders from northern India and Bombay, but they lacked constituencies and were consequently reluctant to hold national elections."¹⁵ The first cause of friction between the government of Sind and the central government was the choice of Karachi as the national capital. The city of Karachi, which the Sindhis claimed always to have belonged to Sindh, was "demarcated and placed in 1948 under central administrative control."¹⁶ Later Sindh was merged as a result of the "Two-unit" plan into West Pakistan.

In 1960, President Ayub Khan moved the national capital to Islamabad leaving Sindh without the national capital or any capital whatsoever. Ironically, this also marginalized

¹⁵ Theodore Wright, p. 301-302.

¹⁶ Theodore Wright, 302.

the Muhajirins (refugees) who had migrated to Pakistan in 1947 and settled in Karachi in large numbers. Attempts to impose Urdu as the national language in early 1950s led to rioting and demonstrations in Sindh but the government adamantly replaced Sindhi as a medium of instruction with Urdu. The espousal of Urdu as the national language was implicit in the “Two-unit” plan and the centralization under military government in Pakistan. The imposition of Urdu on East Pakistan led to similar rioting and violence and forced the government to withdraw the directive that declared Urdu’s exclusive national status.

In 1970, Ayub Khan's successor Yayha Khan returned Karachi to Sindh but by then the conflict between the Sindhis and Muhajirins had become institutionalized. It was also a harbinger of the extreme communal violence that was to tear the city apart in the 1980s and 1990s. Intra-ethnic tensions in Sindh were caused largely by the Ayub government's policy to settle Punjabi officers in Sindh through land grants; especially irrigated land along the Indus. Pakistan had failed to carry out a land reform in a system where the distribution of ownership was extremely uneven and dominated by an oppressive feudal system. This was particularly so in Sindh. ¹⁷

¹⁷ As Wright observed, "In the Ayub Khan era, as noted above, the government made considerable land grants to retired army officers and civil servants, both disproportionately Punjabi, which further exacerbated the conflict, especially if the new landholders were absentees. These settlers were among the first to be attacked in the riots which preceded Ayub's downfall." See Theodore Wright, *Ibid.*

Political interference by central governments as well as the manipulation and repression of local leaders added further fuel to popular discontent but the fate of Sindhi nationality was no different from that of the other nationalities in Pakistan. When Sindh's first chief minister, Mohammed Ayub Khushro, "opposed the establishment of Karachi as the federal capital in 1948, he was dismissed by his rival and fellow Sindhi, the provincial governor, G. H. Hidayatullah, on grounds of maladministration and corruption, although Khushro still had the support of a majority in the assembly." This was only the first in a series of interventions that culminated in a bitter fight over the imposition of the Two-Unit plan. Political manipulation forced Sindh to accept the plan but "Sindhis were [left] without an adequate voice to represent their aspirations and concerns."¹⁸

¹⁸ Lawrence Ziring cited in Theodore Wright, "Center-Periphery Relations," p. 303

“This process was repeated under General Ziaul Haq's martial law regime (1977-85), but even the second Sindhi Prime Minister, Mohammed Khan Junejo (1985-88), encountered major dissidence in his home province.”¹⁹ In early 1970s, Prime Minister Z. A Bhutto had tried to address the Sindhi grievances but he could do little, “perhaps because” explains Wright, “he did not dare antagonize either the army or Punjabi voters on whom he relied for continuance in power.”²⁰

While Sindh has not declared open rebellion against the Pakistani state, tensions continue to fester even today and resentments have accumulated that flare up frequently in the form of violent confrontation between Sindhis and Muhajirs in Karachi. Indeed Karachi, a huge city and the hub of commerce and trade in Pakistan, presents a special case of inter-ethnic conflict. Economic factors, demographic pressures, and militant Islam have turned Karachi into one of the most unsafe cities in the world.

Muhajirs:

The motivating cause behind the mobilization of the Muhajirins was different. It occurred not because of discrimination or lack of representation but because of the Muhajir leaders' gradual loss of status and influence among the Pakistan's ruling circles. This became especially pronounced after 1971 and the secession of Bangladesh. In 1979, in response to events in Karachi, the Muhajirs founded the All Pakistan Muhajir Students Organization (A.P.M.S.O.) to compete with other ethnic student groups, particularly the Jama'at-i-Islami youth group, the Jamiat-e- Tulaba, on campus. In March 1984, when President Zia –ul-Haq banned all student organizations, Altaf Hussain, then the head of the APMSO, transformed his student organization and founded the Muhajir Qaumi Mahaz, a party that dominated Karachi throughout the 1980 and 1990s. In August 1986, it issued a charter of demands which included full representation in provincial as well as federal government departments on the basis of population; the grant of voting rights to the real Sindhis and Muhajirs, while non-Sindhis (including non-domiciled and non-Muhajirs) were to be given only a business permit to operate in Sindh; the setting of

¹⁹ “The Exit of Chief Minister,” Dawn Overseas Weekly, April 14, 1988.

²⁰ Theodore Wright, “Center- Periphery Relations,” p. 307.

quotas and reservations for Muhajir students; a ban on outsiders buying property in Sindh; an extension of citizenship rights to Bengali Muslims (Biharis) stranded in Bangladesh, the confinement of Afghan refugees in their camps and the nationalization of bus services owned by 'Pathans' (Pushtuns). Most importantly, the MQM demanded that its people be recognized as the fifth nationality of Pakistan, along with Punjabis, Sindhis, Pathans and the Baluch.²¹

Baluch and Pushtun ethnic demands

While disaffection simmered in Sindh, it was in Baluchistan that ethnic resentments burst into flames. After the secession of East Pakistan, Baluch separatism became the most dangerous challenge to the security and authority of governments in Islamabad. The previous discussion has already explained why tensions exploded in 1973 and how the government of Z.A. Bhutto crushed the Baluch revolt. But Baluch nationalism has refused to die out. There are at least three reasons why the Baluch demand a separate state: changing demographic distribution in the province, the effects of socio-economic modernization on the traditional Baluch life style, and the enduring the struggle for power in Pakistan.

The Baluch are a small minority in a large province, accounting for only 2 percent and then 5 percent of Pakistan's population before and after the secession of East Pakistan. Compared to Punjab and Sindh, the Baluch province is grossly underdeveloped. The Baluch have migrated to other provinces in search of jobs. This out-migration has reduced their number in their ethnic homeland. At the same time, a huge number of Punjabis, Pathans and Sindhis have migrated to Baluchistan in search of economic opportunities. The migration from Afghanistan increased markedly after the 1978 Marxist coup in Kabul and the Soviet invasion of that country in 1979. Rajat Ganguly writes, "The consequences of demographic transition in Baluchistan have been severe for the continued cultural integrity of the Baluch and their political control of Baluchistan."²²

²¹ Vikhar Ahmed Sayeed, "Muhajirs of Pakistan," In One World South Asia, August 13, 2008. <http://southasia.oneworld.net/opinioncomment/the-muhajirs-of-pakistan>

²² Rajat Ganguly, p. 135-136.

The demographic transformation brought modernization which has in turn undermined the Sardari system (indirect rule through tribal chieftains) that the British had put in place. But the weakening of tribal traditions has not advanced to the point where the Baluch region can be smoothly incorporated into Pakistan. “The ruling elite in Pakistan” writes Ganguly, “in their attempt to build a strong, centralized state made it imperative to break down the power of tribal chieftains as part of a larger effort to merge Baluch identity into an all embracing Pakistani identity.”²³ The central government built roads to make Baluchistan more accessible and increased the number of army retirees (largely from Punjab and NWFP) that were settled by land grants in Balochistan. This caused friction among the native Baluch and the new migrants. The tribal Sardars revolted and the educated and better- traveled among them (For example, Khair bax Marri and Mengal , who were both heads of their respective tribes) opposed Balochistan’s incorporation into Pakistan.

*The Pushtuns*²⁴

Pakistan’s frontier provinces are populated by the Pushtun who live on both sides of the Durand line marking the border with Afghanistan and have harbored irredentist aspirations from time to time. Left alone to live according to their customs, the ethnic tribes glorify, “independence, battle and personal bravery and deeply tribal code of honor (Pukhtunwali) whose three cardinal tenets are revenge, sanctuary, and hospitality. These tribes have ethnic connections with the tribes in Afghanistan; Many tribal families in fact live on both sides of the Durand line. Movement across the border has been free and unhindered for hundreds of years.”²⁵

²³ Rajat Ganguly, *Kin State Intervention in Ethnic Conflict: Lessons from South Asia* p. 137.

²⁴ See Adeel Khan, *Politics of Identity: Ethnic Nationalism and the State in Pakistan*, “ New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2005, P. 83-109.

²⁵ Bhola, “Afridi-Shinwari Revolt in Khyber, cited in Rajat Ganguly, op. cit., see n. 32, p. 177.

Pakistan's governments have followed a two pronged approach to the tribal regions: Cooptation of vocal and powerful ethnic elites and neglect of the rest or repression when a recalcitrant ethnic leader refused to toe the line. On the whole, cooption of Pathan nationalism has worked far better than that of the Baloch largely because the Pushtun rose to become officers and were recruited into Pakistan's armed forces in large numbers. This deferential approach to the tribal areas, as opposed to the other provinces of Pakistan had tacit support from the U.S. Rajat Ganguly writes, "Pakistan's improved military and financial capability as a result of joining the western bloc also allowed the central regime to implement the carrot-and-stick policy more effectively." ²⁶

Had Afghanistan not been invaded by the Soviet Union in 1979 and by the U.S. in 2001, Pushtun ethno-nationalism would have been no different from the Baluch or Sindhi variants. Indeed, because the Pushtuns were heavily integrated into the framework of the Pakistani state, they would probably have been assimilated into a new system of power sharing. But 1979 changed all that.

The Soviet invasion completed the split that had existed since the end of the 19th century between the urban, modernized and largely Russian influenced Afghani elite in Kabul and the deeply conservative and traditional tribesmen in the countryside. War against the Godless heathen radicalized the latter. This was actively encouraged by both the U.S. and Pakistan for their own self serving purposes. The ground was then laid for the conversion of a simple ethnic movement into a complex insurgency that fused religion and nationalism. This conversion took place in three stages. During the Afghan war Pakistan's tribal areas and the NWFP became sanctuaries for the oppressed and insurgent Afghans alike. There was no conflict between Pashtun ethno-nationalism and the Pakistani state during this period. The conflict began only after the United States declared a war on Taliban regime in Afghanistan in 2001. This broke the links between Afghan nationalism and Pakistan, to the severe detriment of Islamabad's relations with its own Pushtun population.

²⁶ Rajat Ganguly, *Ibid.*, p. 187.

The third stage followed naturally from the previous break between country side and capital in Aghanistan. As the Taliban and large numbers of nationalist Pushtuns took shelter in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Pakistan was forced to join the war against the Taliban. This turned the complex brew of nationalism and religion which had so far targeted the U.S. and NATO, inwards and against the state of Pakistan. The sporadic truce that had prevailed between the government of Pakistan and the radicalized Pushtuns ended when the Pakistan army attacked the Islamic radicals hiding in the Lal Masjid in Islamabad in July 2007.

The current conflict in Pakistan is often characterized as a conflict of modernity with retrograde Islam; or, it is described as a clash between more radical and deeply conservative Islam. Only tangentially have the commentators acknowledged the role of Pushtun ethno-nationalism in it. The current conflict is all of the above and more. It is within this context that Pakistan has to defend its northwestern borders and prevent violence from spreading to its provinces and cities. But it has not been able to do this. Islamist extremism has gained a strong base in the NWFP ever since the Islamist alliance, the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), secured an absolute majority in the Provincial Assembly elections of October 2002. Islamic parties which never received more than 2 percent of the vote in any previous elections are now commanding double digit support. In fact during the five years, the FATA and the NWFP have become the primary arena of struggle between militant Islam and Pakistan's modern state.

The erosion of central control is reflected in the NWFP's slide from a fairly well integrated province into a rebellious region. Pakistani state had a strong presence in and a widely accepted power-sharing arrangement with NFWP.²⁷ Its situation was not even remotely comparable to the lightly and indirectly governed FATA. But the consolidation of the Taliban/Al Qaeda axis in these regions has forced a difficult choice on Pakistan: attempts to incorporate the tribal regions might mean a long war in the region and against its own people; failure to do so will strengthen radical Islam and spell an end to the

²⁷ Adeel Khan, *Op. cit.*, p. 101.

moderate Muslim state that Pakistan can become. Aware of these dangers and pressured into action by the U.S., General Musharraf temporized by ordering offensives in 2006-7 in Baluchistan, and in the FATA in 2007-08. In Baluchistan the free reign given to the army drove the insurgency underground.²⁸

In FATA, Musharraf's strategy was more ambivalent. This was because the vast majority in Pakistan was uncomfortable with the idea of deploying the army against its own people in these regions. The average Pakistani regards the Taliban as misguided youth that deserve understanding and sensitive handling. Bin Laden is popular and the U.S., particularly since the military strikes, increasingly unpopular.²⁹ The subsequent reign of terror against civilians has tilted the public against Taliban but the raids have cancelled this out.

The deadly connection between Pakistan's home grown Islamic radicals and the war in Afghanistan became fully visible in the aftermath of the July 2007 Lal Masjid episode. The TNSM (Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi) or the Movement for the Enforcement of Islamic Laws, which operates in the Swat district of NWFP, broke the peace agreement it had signed with the provincial government on May 22, 2007³⁰ and declared a *jihad* against those responsible for the military assault on the mosque. What followed came close to civil war. Violence is no longer confined to the tribal belt between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

²⁸ There has been a steady stream of bomb and rocket attacks on gas pipelines, railway tracks, power transmission lines, bridges, and communications infrastructure, as well as on military establishments and governmental facilities. Even as the Musharraf government claimed relative success in Baluchistan, the more insidious problem of Islamist extremism generated undeniable pressures to respond militarily in pressing need to forcefully react a NWFP.

²⁹ Christine Fair, Steve Kull, Clay Ramsey, "Pakistani Public opinion on Democracy, Islamic militancy and Relations with the US," A joint Study by World Public Opinion and the United Institute for Peace, Washington D.C. February 2008, http://www.usip.org/pubs/working_papers/wp7_pakistan.pdf

³⁰ The TNSM, one of the five outfits proscribed by Musharraf on January 12, 2002, was formed in 1992 with the objective of a militant enforcement of *Sharia*. Ideologically, it is committed to transforming Pakistan into a Taliban-style state. The TNSM operates primarily in the tribal belt, such as Swat and the adjoining districts of the NWFP. Although well established in the NWFP, the TNSM has had only limited success in expanding its activities beyond the tribal areas. It has substantial support in Malakand and Bajaur in the FATA, and includes activists who have fought in Afghanistan at some time during the past 25 years.

The battle between the Security Forces (SFs) and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) intensified in 2009. According to official data, 1,400 ‘militants’ were killed in a military offensive that commenced on April 26, 2009, even as close to 3.8 million people were fleeing their home in search for safety and succor. The operations were initially confined to Lower Dir, Buner and Swat Districts of the NWFP. These were spread to the rest of the FATA and NFWP. While the SFs have stepped up their operations, the TTP has expectedly responded with a welter of attacks across Pakistan’s urban areas and elsewhere.³¹

What is more it has spread to Punjab, the heartland of Pakistan. During first half of 2009, 155 persons, including 92 civilians and 51 Security Force (SF) personnel, were killed in 104 terrorism-related incidents in Punjab. The overwhelming proportion of fatalities comprised of civilians and SF personnel, and just 12 terrorists, including nine suicide bombers. This may be because the Taliban-Al Qaeda network is securing an upper hand in areas beyond the tribal belt. Even the nation’s capital Islamabad, Punjab’s provincial capital Lahore and the garrison town of Rawalpindi have not escaped terrorist attacks. Out of the 104 incidents recorded in the first half of 2009, nine were reported from Islamabad and 18 from Lahore.

Perhaps the most dangerous outcome of the conflict in FATA has been the rapid replacement of old, conservative ethnic Pushtuns tribal leaders with younger and more radical aspirants seeking to lead a Jihad against all its enemies -- the Pakistan government and security forces, the Americans, NATO and the pro-Pakistan ‘co-opted’ tribal leaders. The radical leaders and their followers quarrel among themselves but neither the U.S. nor Pakistan has been able benefit from it. As India has found to its consternation in Kashmir, divisions among the militants only prolongs the conflict.

To sum up: The convergence of ethnicity, Islamist fundamentalism, Pashtun nationalism and a hatred of the West fostered by Al Qaeda, has created a qualitatively different situation from anything that Pakistan has ever faced before in FATA, parts of Baluchistan and a widening swathe of the NWFP. It is a challenge for which the feeble and still very

³¹ Kanchan Laxman, Afflicted Power, South Asia Intelligence Review, Weekly Review, Vol 7 (49), June 15, 2009.

young state of Pakistan has no effective response. The solution for Pakistan lies in separating radical Islam from nationalism, particularly, ethnic nationalism. South Asia's experience suggests that conflicts based on religious ideology are more difficult to resolve because, unlike culturally defined linguistic and regional identities, they are not amenable to resolution through power-sharing and cultural accommodation. Ethnic movements do not usually extend beyond the boundaries of the ethnic homeland. It may be easier to negotiate and settle with the Baluch and the Sindhis by granting them a large measure of provincial autonomy than to do so with the multiplicity of Islamic radical groups operating in FATA, who are determined to capture Pakistan and establish an Islamic Caliphate from Kabul to Srinagar.

None of the policy prescriptions for Pakistan being mooted in the U.S. come to grips with the sheer complexity of the challenges they face. Pakistan's elites share the deep fear of the Islamic radicals with the U.S. but the one-track U.S-focus on them has made it convenient for Pakistan to ignore the problem of ethnic self assertion. This has given the military and civilian governments the pretext to postpone the search for power sharing strategies that might stabilize Pakistan.

Implications for Pakistan

To restore peace to Afghanistan, Pakistan must be stabilized and made free of insurgency and the support base it offers to the Afghan Taliban. Seth Jones in a well argued RAND report has observed, "Every successful insurgency in Afghanistan since 1979 has enjoyed a sanctuary in Pakistan and assistance from individuals within the Pakistan government, such as the Frontier Corps and the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI)".³² Failure to do so will cripple long-term efforts to stabilize Pakistan, rebuild Afghanistan and might even jeopardize India.

The U.S. has been following a three-pronged strategy. The first is to press Pakistan to use coercion against the extremists while enlisting the support of tribal chieftains and local

³² Seth G. Jones, "counterinsurgency in Afghanistan," Rand Counterinsurgency Study, Volume 4, http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG595.pdf

leaders against the insurgents with economic and political incentives. The Second prong is to improve governance by building schools, clinics, roads and other social projects, with the aim of infusing confidence, increasing the visibility of the central government, and gradually integrating these areas into the mainstream of Pakistan. The third prong is to secure a stable government and a dependable leader in Islamabad.

But this policy has not worked. Instead, the replacement of Musharraf by a far weaker, albeit democratically elected government under President Asif ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yousuf Reza Gilani, has compelled the Bush and Obama administrations to step up U.S. military raids in the border areas.

While strengthening of democracy must wait the success in the war, the two are closely intertwined. Many therefore wonder whether the military option will open the space for a stable democracy and whether the small and weak opening to democracy after Musharraf can be transformed into a vigorous and stable democracy in Pakistan. The current debate among students of Pakistan is polarized between ‘optimists’ who advocate a rapid advance to fully-fledged democracy and ‘pessimists’ who are willing to settle for an authoritarian regime for they fear chaos more than they desire democracy.

This debate has discounted the possibility of finding an ‘interim’ solution that looks for a way to expand the number of stakeholders in the democratic process. One way to do this is to reapportion political power between the State and its diverse and so far largely unintegrated ethnic communities. This requires understanding democracy in a way that is different from the way in which it has been traditionally understood in the west, i.e as a relationship between the state and individuals in society. That definition is characteristic of unitary states and precludes the possibility of layered sovereignty and plural citizenship. In South Asia, sovereignty has always been layered and the individual’s connection to the state has been mediated through kinship groups and regional and cultural identities that have a prior claim.³³

³³ It is also important to recognize that provision of individual rights is not the only path to a democracy; group rights are equally important although there is admittedly a tension between the two notions of rights.

Ethnic identities can be efficient, if not ideal, building blocs for a liberal democracy. But an edifice that is built on these alone will not stand; it needs to be buttressed by ensuring the equality of different ethnic groups. For instance, the dominant status of the Punjabis in Pakistan's military and bureaucracy will need to be counterbalanced by empowering the numerically inferior Sindhis, Pushtuns and Baluchis. This is best achieved by granting equal and fair access to state resources. Many of these safeguards are already embodied in the 1973 constitution. Pakistan needs to go back to it as a basic framework and update it in the light of the challenges it is facing today.

But a constitution is only a piece of paper if it is not backed by a social compact between the parties that observe and try to meet its unwritten premises. This is what has been so conspicuously absent in Pakistan. Return to a full-fledged federal arrangement is only the first step towards a progressive building of democratic institutions in Pakistan. A new ethnic contract would mean restructuring Pakistan's federal relations, adding real substance and force to the federal provisions already enacted by the 1973 constitution. It would mean removing formal obstacles to a progressive widening of the governing class and the political base of Pakistan's civilian institutions.

The purpose would be to revive and extend the 'Grand Bargain' in which ethnic and religious communities can exercise power to shape Pakistan. Such a process has three dimensions. The first is to secure an informal but abiding agreement among proximate ethnic communities within a region/province; second, to design an agreement among provinces as coequal partners in governing the unified nation of Pakistan; and third, to establish and institutionalize an agreement between the central state and its parts, the provincial units. There are several federal models available including Pakistan's own experience to draw upon. But the model that might work best for Pakistan is a hybrid model that blends regional and multiethnic federalism in an asymmetrical fashion. Hybrid federalism incorporates unitary features that strengthen the state and allow it to exercise an overarching authority within which it can bargain on behalf of the nation as a whole.

The purpose of the overarching authority must be a progressive integration of the Pakistani nation and not the survival of a particular leader or government.

While the granting of provincial autonomy is essential, that alone will not suffice. The federal process also needs to remain open ended in another respect. The empowerment of one ethnic group will create succession of similar demands from other ethnic groups and minorities. Every new ethnic mobilization needs to be dealt with in a principled manner. This requires creating a political process that permits representation and accommodation. The dangers of an unresponsive state have been amply visible in India's turbulent northeast where scores of militant movements compete against ethnically based provincial governments.

There are groups that do not make territorial demands. Pakistan contains a number of smaller ethnic and religious groups that have no clearly defined territorial homeland. Several of these groups have seen their rights severely reduced during the long period of Islamist-backed military rule. Among these are the Christian and Hindu minorities, the Ahmediyas and the Shias.³⁴ The latter have been the targets of sustained attacks for decades. Unless their status is restored, several key cities like Karachi and Hyderabad will never know real peace. The federal process therefore needs to be revisited periodically. At all times, the central state needs to be not only neutral and transparent but scrupulously adhere to canons of fairness.

Pakistan can go down this path in a step by step manner, dealing with each new demand as it arises. But this could invite charges of political expediency and manipulation and exacerbate conflict. It therefore has a good deal to learn from the strategy of the linguistic reorganization of the Indian states (provinces) in 1957. The states' reorganization was enacted for the country as a whole. It was accepted despite the fact that it denied the claims to separate statehood of several ethnic minorities because the overwhelming majority of ethnic nationalities found the new federal arrangement acceptable, and

³⁴ P.N Khera, "Pakistan Atomised", *Hindustan Times*, December 1, 2006, <http://www.thepersecution.org/news/2006/ht1201.html>

because the criteria upon which statehood was denied or conceded were transparent and impartially applied. The subsequent struggles in India's northeast illustrate why it is important to keep even this federal arrangement open-ended.

The offer of ethno-linguistic autonomy within the framework of a federal Pakistan can become a powerful counter-magnet to Islamist nationalism in FATA and NWFP, and even more so in Balochistan, where the struggle for self determination is mainly of the older variety. Greater regional autonomy will allow Pakistan to isolate these regions and the benefits that flow from separating Islamic extremism from ethnic dissidence will benefit the whole country. This is because Pakistan's future as a stable state is premised as much on accommodating grievances in Sindh, Karachi and Punjab as its is on separating ethnic nationalism from religious extremism.

The process of accommodation has then two dimensions: One, the strengthening of existing federal structure, implementing the laws and regulations on the books (the 1973 constitution) and second, informal processes by which a new social compact can be secured with the genuine representatives of ethnic communities. Such a process does not presuppose a full fledged democracy but it does require a broad and firm agreement among all the main political actors. By far the most important tacit agreement must revolve around the willingness to accept defeat at the polls and wait for the next round.

Pakistan has already experimented with hybrid federalism of an 'illiberal' variety. The most striking example is the different standard of governance applied to FATA. This asymmetrical federalism has become counterproductive because of the spill over effect of war and ethnic irredentism from Afghanistan. If this is to be arrested or rolled back from then an open ended, ethnically defined federal bargain needs to be put in place as a counterpoint. This bargain can be asymmetrical so as to accommodate specific histories and cultural traditions or geographical imperatives. Those who would like to see the establishment of a 'full-fledged' democracy with all of its elaborate safeguards for individual human rights may find this less than satisfactory. But for these rights to be given tangible form it is first necessary to end conflict, and restore stability to Pakistan.

That can only be achieved by a progressive expansion of the governing class through a genuine devolution of political power, and not the sham devolution plan that Presidents Zia-ul-Haq and Musharraf had foisted on the country. If this means particular leaders and parties in Pakistan have to lose their lock on power and policy, then they need to accept that outcome. There is no other way to stabilize Pakistan or make its people safe from the scourge of war and violence they plague them since the U.S.-Afghan war.

Implications for the U.S. Policy

It is clear that nuclear-armed Pakistan—the world’s sixth most populous country—has no effective control over a large swath of territory along its border with Afghanistan. Extremist groups that are intent on attacking the United States, such as al-Qaeda, enjoy safe haven in these border areas. Recent reports indicate that Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) elements are engaged with groups that support the Taliban and are killing American, NATO, and Afghan troops in Afghanistan.³⁵ The recent increase in bombings and murders indicate that these terrorist groups have extended their reach into the more settled portions of Pakistan. For most people in Pakistan, the U.S. is largely to blame for inciting and attacking the Taliban who had until recently regarded Islamabad to be friendly and sympathetic to their cause. According to a recent poll “only 15 percent of Pakistanis think their country should cooperate with the United States to combat terrorism.”³⁶

Pakistan’s security challenge is compounded by acute economic crisis. Rising prices and growing violence, the absence of jobs and poor educational services have pushed the Pakistan youth in search of Jihad. The February 2008 elections ended the nine years of military rule under Musharraf but no one is sure whether the new government can rise to meet the challenge and abandon the usual jockeying for office and power.

³⁵ Bruce Riedel, “Pakistan: The Critical Battleground,” *Current History*, Vol 107 (712) November 2008, p. 355.

³⁶ Christine Fair, Et al., *Pakistan Public Opinion*, cited in United Institute for Peace, “The Next Chapter Pakistan”, http://www.usip.org/pubs/ppwg_report.pdf

As a first preparatory step towards stability, Pakistan's leaders and parties need to revive the federal compact, remove all draconian measures and amendments that have been added since the Zia's and Musharraf's rule and devolve power laterally and downward to expand the political base of the central state.

A key prerequisite is the permanent withdrawal of the military from civilian life and political office. Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, General Ashfaq Kayani recently stated that the army would stay out of politics. But there is no certainty that the military will honor its promise should the civilian leaders fail to restore calm. The possibility of a future military take over must be avoided if the U.S. is serious about its commitment to building a stable Pakistan. The U.S. needs to take a hard look at its own arguments to back the military. Many in Washington believe that only a determined and forceful government in Pakistan can eliminate the Al Qaeda and therefore the U.S. needs to back the Pakistani military. This may be true, but that is only because in the past U.S. has supported military regimes in Pakistan that have perpetuated their stranglehold over society and economy.

The U.S. can play a key role in persuading the military to withdraw from politics. Recent literature stresses the "rentier" status of Pakistan which depends heavily on external capital, especially from the U.S., and the periods of accelerated flows of economic assistance (the current period being one of them) coincide with military rule.³⁷ The U.S. has given close to \$12 billion to Pakistan since 2001 and much of this assistance has been directed to service the needs of military establishment.³⁸ According to the Kerry-Lugar bill passed recently, the U.S. has committed itself to "empower the Pakistani people charting a path of moderation and stability," The bill is meant to help Pakistan combat Al Qaeda and Taliban by initiating good governance, greater accountability and respect for human rights. If the civilian authority is strengthened over the military, Pakistan may have a chance to build a stable democracy. ³⁹

³⁷ Farzana Shaikh, "Pakistan's Perilous Voyage," *Current History*, Vol 107 (712) November 2008, p. 364.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ American Chronicle, "Senate Unanimously Passes Kerry-Lugar Pakistan Aid Package," *Congressional Desk*, June 25, 2009, published July 20, 2009 3:30:29 PM

Breaking the self-perpetuating cycle of military rule in Pakistan will take enormous effort and require large scale investment in political and economic assistance. The U.S. Senate has already approved \$7 billion in civilian assistance over the next five years and \$400 million per year in military assistance from 2010-2013 with considerably more in the pipeline. This assistance can come with clearly stated conditions that will urge Pakistan to move towards a genuine federation and lateral power-sharing with its nationalities.

The U.S. needs to also distinguish between violence caused by ethnic demands and that caused by Islamic radicalism. Pakistan will require help in integrating the former while deploying effective counterinsurgency measures against the latter. U.S. assistance should be carefully calibrated to incorporate these different purposes. In addition to linking its long term commitment to gradual democratization in Pakistan, the U.S. needs to convince Pakistan to abandon the use of Islamic elements as an instrument of its foreign policy. If this were to happen, India and Pakistan might find their way to settling Kashmir more easily. Peace and moderation can go a long way in stabilizing Pakistan. The U.S. can use its considerable influence to persuade Pakistan's leaders to seek both.

Structural changes are usually difficult and most political leaders prefer not to make them for fear of losing control. But a new power-sharing compact among Pakistan's ethnic nationalities will renew the promise of Pakistan and strengthen its central state. It will do this by broadening its base and providing regular channels for resolving ethnic conflict. While several commentators on Pakistan have called for reforms in political parties and elections, improvement in governance and the accumulation of social capital, Pakistan needs to change the framework within which these changes can occur. This new framework can be constructed on the basis of a new social compact and a renewed promise to share power to build a stronger Pakistan.

A stable Pakistan is also a Pakistan free from wasteful expenditure on military hardware in an arms race with its traditional enemy, India. The newly forged strategic partnership between India and the U.S. gives the U.S. the influence and good will to urge New Delhi to take additional confidence building measures and encourages Pakistan to respond in kind. A friendly India-Pakistan relationship can be a basis to combat the challenges of religious extremism, violence and poverty in the region forcefully and vigorously. The history of the 60 year old Indo-Pakistani relationship does not inspire confidence that the U.S. will do follow through with these prescriptions, however. Perhaps with the new Obama administration and a newly elected government in Islamabad, not to mention the return of the Man Mohan Singh government in New Delhi, circumstances may have become propitious for a recasting of policies all around. There is no doubt that the key to peace and stability and to a terror free South Asia is a stable and democratic Pakistan.