THE PARADOX THAT IS PAKISTAN: BOTH ALLY AND ENEMY OF TERRORISM
By Isaac Kfir*

This article explores the paradox of Pakistan as a country encouraging Islamist militancy while, at the same time, being a key player in the war against terrorism. It surveys the challenges facing President Pervez Musharraf. It argues that having a “strongman” in Pakistan is not necessarily a bad thing given this difficult situation, but that Musharraf needs to move away from supporting the Islamist parties and needs to forge ties with the more secular political parties if he is both to survive and to be effective against terrorism.

This article reviews Pakistan's military efforts against al-Qa’ida and the Taliban while emphasizing the inherent paradox in Pakistani domestic policy, which oscillates between supporting Islamic radicalism and embracing modernization. Simply put, successive Pakistani governments have on the one hand fostered Islamic radicalism to further their ambitions in Afghanistan and Indian-ruled Kashmir, while, at the same time, seeking to curtail radical Islamism in Pakistan's own politics. Decades of Islamization coupled with increased sectarianism have left a tremendous imprint on the Pakistani psyche and have been a factor undermining the country’s stability. The current challenge faced by the Pakistani government is to return the Islamist genie to the bottle. This is made an even more significant challenge because of Pakistan’s nuclear capability1 and fragile domestic environment.

The Pakistani government is currently engaged in a number of costly and intricate military campaigns in the unruly areas of the country such as Waziristan and the Northwest Province with the clear aim of rooting out Islamist radicals. At the same time, it has had to deal with sectarian and tribal violence,2 coupled with increasing demands for devolution of power.3 Furthermore, the government has also introduced legislation aimed at reining in the spread of Islamist radicalism by controlling the proliferation of madrasas.4 As the President himself noted, Pakistanis are religious-minded people who have allowed themselves to Both Ally and Enemy of Terrorism be swayed by militant preachers because of low literacy rates.5 Yet, President Musharraf via his political party has been forging alliances with Pakistani-based Islamic militant groups in order to cement his rule, even though these groups foment sectarianism.6 Of equal concern is the ability of banned groups like Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (now Jamaat ud Da’wa) to continue to operate in the country against the regime.7

PAKISTAN'S ROLE IN THE WAR ON TERROR
There is little doubt that Pakistan plays a major role in the global campaign against al-Qa’ida, especially as its own Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) helped to create the Taliban and promote Islamist jihad. At the same time, though, this sponsorship gives the ISI tremendous experience and insider knowledge as to al-Qa’ida’s working and thinking. Almost immediately after the September 11, 2001 attacks, the...
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United States gave Pakistan $50 million in assistance, because President George W. Bush is determined that Pakistan is central to U.S. security interests regarding the counter-terrorist issue. This was a substantial shift in U.S. policy which saw sanctions imposed on Pakistan at the beginning and towards the end of the 1990s, following growing concerns over Pakistan’s nuclear program.

The American-led international campaign against al-Qa’ida and all of its affiliates and associates has forced Pakistan to make an awkward turnaround, silently moving away from supporting Islamist militancy toward a campaign largely demanding its eradication. As President Musharraf himself said when interviewed about the change of policy, albeit with considerable understatement, “It was in our national interest because I knew what would happen now in Afghanistan…. Our diplomatic association with the Taliban was going to become meaningless, as obviously they were going to be sorted out.”

The Military Challenge of Countering the “Terrorists”

The Pakistani Province of Waziristan, which borders Afghanistan and allegedly is the hiding place of the al-Qa’ida leader, Usama Bin Ladin, has increasingly become a focal issue in the war against terrorism. The murder in 2005 of Faridallah Khan, a Wazir tribal leader engaged in fighting al-Qa’ida, intensified the fear of many locals who live in an area partly controlled by al-Qa’ida, which assassinates those who oppose them. Khan is one of fifty tribal leaders who have died in Waziristan because of his opposition to al-Qa’ida, the Taliban, and similar groups within Pakistan.

In December 2005, seminary students operating in North Waziristan calling themselves the Taliban released a list of 200 rival tribesmen whom they wished to kill. The appeal of the region as a base to al-Qa’ida and jihadists is easy to understand. As one Western journalist put it, “Every house is a castle, a vast compound ringed by a towering mud wall, medieval battlements and fronted by a giant, thick door.” An example of Waziristan’s role as an international terrorism capital is the belief by investigators that at a March 2004 al-Qa’ida summit held there, a list of bombing targets for the movement was drawn up, including the London subway operation.

To those who have visited Waziristan, the province appears locked in a time capsule. The region is administered as it was a century ago, when the British Empire controlled the country. Power rests in the hands of a centrally appointed political agent. The political agent has the power to jail anyone for life without trial, impose collective punishments on villages, convene courts, etc. Literacy throughout the province is low while poverty is rife. Virtually all the men are armed usually with modern automatic weapons. Such conditions tend to bring about general discontentment and disenchantment, which Islamic militants take advantage of in order to recruit new members.

Waziristan has a rich history of fomenting opposition to the Pakistani government. During the 1980s, the province became the center for those Muslims partaking in the jihad against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Pakistani
intelligence agency, ISI, supported by the United States and Saudi Arabia, poured billions of dollars into the campaign. The ISI set up and run dozens of schools that radicalized young Muslims and prepared them for the battle. The southern part of the region—especially around Wana and Shikai—became the largest al-Qa’ida training camp around the spring of 2004; at least 15 camps sprang up around the province, protected by the Wazir tribe.  

The Role of Legislation in the Post-9/11 World

UN Security Council Resolution 1373, adopted as a response to 9/11, demanded that countries submit annual reports to its Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) whose principal function is to monitor each state’s compliance with Resolution 1373. The significance of Resolution 1373 was that it amounted to a declaration by the international community to combat international terrorism.

Due to its proximity to Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bin Ladin’s main base of operation (at least until Operation Endure Freedom forced him to flee), has sought to embrace these demands to demonstrate its commitment to counter-terrorism. Pakistan has submitted five reports to the CTC highlighting its domestic legislative commitment to countering the threat of international terrorism. At the heart of its counter-terrorism program is the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997, as amended in August 2001, whose aim is to prevent terrorist acts and sectarian violence in and out of Pakistan Section 11 of the Act prohibits organizations involved in terrorist activities and bars membership and support to such organizations.

THE CHALLENGES

The Military Campaign against Islamic Militancy

The difficulty faced by the United States and its allies in their Afghan and anti-Taliban campaign is their inability to convince large sections of the Afghani and Pakistani population to support their efforts to apprehend Bin Ladin and his associates. The allies’ efforts suffer because of the inhospitable terrain around the Afghan-Pakistani border coupled with a tribal mentality that abhors informing or even cooperating with the central government, considering it betrayal. Concern over cross-border infiltration has led President Musharraf to suggest the building of a fence to hinder border movement. Moreover, there is also anger towards the policies of the Pakistani Army, which uses the Frontier Crimes Regulation to impose heavy financial sanctions and sets afire homes of suspected al-Qa’ida members and sympathizers. The American destruction of various homes in the region, and especially in Makin, intensified anger towards the United States, which, people feel, acts indiscriminately.

Pakistan has attempted to deal with Afghanistan, with whom it shares a 2450km border, by also establishing a Joint Interrogative Teams (JIT) and Standing Operating Procedures. The measures are designed to arrest and detain criminals wanted under national and international law. The Home Departments of the Northwest Frontier (WFP) and Baluchistan provinces maintain records of all foreigners as well as Pakistanis who arrive from Afghanistan. Moreover, Pakistan has deployed regular troops along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and it carries out air surveillance to prevent the entry of any terrorist from Afghanistan into Pakistan.
The realization that the area is infested with al-Qa’ida militants, some of whom plotted the assassination of President Musharraf, forced Pakistani security forces to take action. The government sent 70,000 troops and paramilitaries into the region, supported by jet fighters, helicopters, and Special Forces, to flush out the insurgents. After some intense battles, the Pakistani military forces triumphed. They killed around 300 al-Qa’ida operatives, more than half foreign-born (mainly from Uzbekistan), under the command of Qari Tahir Yuldashev, a leader of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). The success of the operation in the southern part of Waziristan led the militants to move to the northern part of the province where they live under the protection of Daur tribesmen who appear even less cooperative vis-à-vis the authorities than the southern Wazir tribe.  

In the beginning of October 2005, Pakistani security forces moved to Northern Waziristan and began a campaign that left around sixty people dead, including thirty foreigners. This included the killing of Tahir Yuldashev, also known as Commander Chamak, who by this point was a top al-Qa’ida operative. The military operation led to the killing of Hamza Rabia, a senior al-Qa’ida operative who according to Pakistan’s Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Rabia was the head of al-Qa’ida’s international operations. Rashid claimed, “He [Rabia] was very important in al-Qa’ida. He was maybe Number Three or Five.”  

The military campaign in Waziristan has also benefited from political strategy. Syed Zaheerul Islam, a top government administrator in Waziristan, met tribal elders and Islamic clerics in the hope of encouraging them to cooperate with the government in maintaining security. The four southern-based tribes—Ditta Khel, Deehati Khel, Dil Khel and Peerian Degal—have signed an agreement with Political Agent Syed Zaheer-al-Islam in Miranshah. Hundreds of clerics attended the signing to support the agreement. The four tribes made an unconditional pledge with the political establishment not to harbor foreigners and to provide full cooperation in maintaining law and order in South Waziristan.  

However, observers believe that the region is slipping back to Taliban/al-Qa’ida control as the latter managed to lure tribal militants by offering them large sums of money. Pakistani journalists report that “the fighters got Rs 15,000 as monthly salary while the commanders got advances running into millions for arms and ammunition, communication, and Land Cruisers.” Pakistani analyst Ayaz Amir, a former army officer, diplomat, and politician, has said, “In effect, the army is confined to fortified bases while the Taliban are filling the vacuum outside… The result has been brutal gun law.”  

The Historical Legacy & Pakistan’s Education System  
Under Muhammad Ali Jinnah and his Muslim League, which led the movement which created the country in 1947, Pakistan toyed with some level of secularism. The problem faced by the Pakistani elite soon after independence was concern over Hindu India, which led to the active pursuit of Islamization, which in turn led to Pakistan developing an “Islamic” identity. Consequently, the country focused on
Islamic education and whereas in 1947, it had less than 140 madrasas, within 13 years the figure rose to just over 400. By 1971, when Bangladesh emerged, the figure stood at 893. Moreover, 1971 was also when the Jamaat-i-Islami movement began having its own madrasas. By the end of the 1980s, there were almost 3000 madrasas in the country. According to official estimates, Pakistan has 10,430 madrasas, with the vast majority of students coming from poor backgrounds. As Pakistan’s ruler between 1977 and 1988, General Zia-ul-Haq played a substantial part in encouraging the madrasas explosion just as Zia used Islamization to cement his rule. In doing so, Zia won over the country’s powerful Muslim clergy. The process also involved reforming the legal system to establish Sharia-based courts. Under Zia, legislation was passed to “Islamize” the economy and eradicate interest-based banks making the zakat (Islamic alms) compulsory. Zia further promoted Islamic doctrines in the press, through television, education, etc. His program coupled with the Iranian Revolution, the Iran-Iraq war, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan provided an impetus to Islamize the country. Consequently, under Zia, the madrasa system, as a report by the International Crisis Group put it, “Churned out hordes of religious graduates with few skills or training for mainstream professions. This growing army of extremists in Pakistan fought the anti-Soviet Afghan jihad alongside the Arabs and Afghans and still serves the cause of jihads from India to Russia.”

The post-September 11 Pakistani authorities have attempted to deal with the madrasa problem. In 2002, the government adopted the Voluntary Registration and Regulation Ordinance aimed to bring Pakistan’s religious schools under some form of regulatory control. The Ordinance demanded that every madrasa maintain accounts and submit an annual report to the board. The Ordinance also prohibited registered madrasas from receiving any grant, donation, or aid from a foreign source. Finally, the Ordinance stated that appointments of teachers or the admission of students would only be possible for those with a valid work visa and permission from the Ministry of the Interior.

As part of its reform program, which includes increasing the education budget, the government has proposed new legislation regarding the listing of madrasas and school prayer. The decision to expel foreign students is a positive development and is an indication of Pakistani attempts to change its reputation as the home of the Islamic radicalism; however, the attempts at reform have drawn substantial criticism from the religious Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA). Maulana Fazlur Rehman of the MMA, who also serves as the opposition leader, described the move as an attack on “one of the main pillars of Islam.” Moreover, it is clear that the battle over educational reform will continue.

Surviving Pakistani Politics: The Lack of Democratic Tradition & Sectarianism

To sustain the military campaign against al-Qaeda and the Taliban, President Musharraf has had to make certain political concessions. This involved turning a blind eye to leaders of banned groups such as the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (Army of the Pure), Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), and Jaish-e-Muhammad (JM) who preach their radical Sunni ideology. These groups are protected because of their connections with powerful political organizations, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) and the Jamaati-Islami (JI). The founder of JI was Abul A’ala Maududi. JI supported General Zia when he overthrew Bhutto in the 1970s, and it
heavily supported the jihad in Afghanistan. The JUI largely provides a more militant interpretation of Islam with roots in the Deobandi movement which seeks the establishment of a Pan-Islamic State akin to the seventh-century caliphate.\textsuperscript{36}

Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LT) is the armed wing of the Pakistan-based religious organization, Markaz-ud-Dawa-wal-Irshad (MDI). The MDI is a Sunni, anti-U.S. missionary organization that emerged in 1989. LT also operates under the name of its associated organization Jamaat ud-Dawa (JUD), which Musharraf placed on a watchlist in November 2003. The Pakistani government banned LT in January 2002.\textsuperscript{37} The SSP is an anti-Shi'a anti-West Deobandi party with jihadist tendencies. In the 2005 local elections, it operated under the name Millat-e-Islami. They, in some instances, ran in alliance with Musharraf's civilian partners. The SSP appeared on the U.S. State Department list of terrorist groups as it was believed that some al-Qaeda activists joined the SSP following the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{38}

Jaish-e-Muhammad (JEM) (Army of Muhammad), also known as Tehrik ul-Furqaah, Khuddam-ul-Islam, was created by Masood Azhar in 2000. Its principal aim is to unite Kashmir with Pakistan. Politically, JEM is aligned with Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam Fazlur Rehman (JUI-F), a radical political party in Pakistan. JEM draws support from such militant groups as Harakat ul-Jihad-i-Islami (HUJI) and the Harakat ul-Mujahidin (HUM). It has close ties to the Arabs who fought in Afghanistan and to the Taliban.\textsuperscript{39}

This government policy is very much in line with traditional Pakistani politics in which the army works with the clerics.\textsuperscript{40} It is a particular cause of concern as the six-party coalition of Islamic parties, the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), which campaigned on a strong anti-U.S. platform, made substantial gains in the October 2002 elections\textsuperscript{41} and continues to do well.\textsuperscript{42} At the same time, the Musharraf alliance has made life difficult for the leading secular parties, Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML) and Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP). In the October 2002 election, Sharif and Bhutto and some of their followers were barred from contesting the election as they faced corruption allegations.\textsuperscript{43}

At the heart of the political change is devolution to more power for local governments. Musharraf promoted this policy soon after taking control of Pakistan in 1999. The argument put forward by the government in favor of the process arises from its belief that good governance is linked to poverty reduction, especially as it became abundantly clear that the poor were vulnerable to predatory and dysfunctional government service-delivery agencies.\textsuperscript{44}

Devolution, on some level, has raised hopes that Pakistan is developing on a positive note. A review by the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DfID) on the December 2003 local government changes has suggested that the reforms have been successful.\textsuperscript{45} At the same time, one has to be wary that the devolution process would lead to sectarian and tribal tensions in Pakistan.

\textit{The Pakistani Economy: Enhancing Security and Stability}

The problem of poverty and the fragile
nature of the economy lie at the root of many of Pakistan’s problems. Husain Haqqani has argued that the country’s gross domestic product (GDP) stands at $75 billion in absolute terms, giving Pakistan a purchasing power of around $295 billion. This makes the Pakistani economy the smallest of any of the countries that have tested nuclear weapons. Yet there have also been some improvements, as the Musharraf government introduced much needed structural reforms which lead to a reduction in the size of the civil service, cut subsidies on energy prices, cleaned up the balance sheets of nationalized banks, raised tax revenues, and accelerated a privatization process. In 2003, due to remittances from overseas workers, healthy export growth and an increase in foreign investment and aid led to steady currency, a current-account surplus, and foreign-exchange reserves of $10 billion. This is more than double their level in 2001.

CONCLUSION

The only way to defeat militant Islamism in Pakistan is for the international community to continue to support Musharraf, despite his, or rather his party’s, clear manipulation of the local elections in August and October 2005, in which 60 people died and around 500 were injured. As Pakistan’s strongman and George W. Bush’s “friend,” Musharraf needs sufficient funds and international support to overhaul the country’s economy and, more importantly, the education and social system. Unfortunately, Musharraf has chosen to continue along traditional military lines by maintaining and forging ties with militant Islamist groups in Pakistan who not only continue to propagate their ideology but also continue to propagate sectarianism. Such a policy helps ensure that the central government can avoid ethnic, tribal, and regional opposition against it. The disadvantage of such a strategy is that it undermines Pakistani development as it allows violence, division, and distrust to continue, possibly leading to further insecurity in the longer-term. As Musharraf focuses on Pakistan’s foreign and economic policy, Islamization has entered every institution in Pakistan, including hospitals, colleges, and the direction and personnel of development projects. For example, wards at the Jinnah Hospital at Lahore have been Islamized. The person responsible for the renaming of the wards, Dr Imtiaz Rasool, a professor of surgery at the hospital and head of Surgical Unit I, had argued for more Islamic education. He has said, “I think the new generation must be taught spiritualism instead of western knowledge. It is amazing that students read Shakespeare and ignore Muslim saints.”

On the education front, Musharraf must have the resources to dismantle and challenge the independent Islamic schools that far too often breed tomorrow’s terrorists. The 2002 Voluntary Registration and Regulation Ordinance does not appear to hinder the teaching of Islamist militancy. The government’s efforts to moderate the madrasas has led to such groups as Islami Jamiat Talba (IJT) to demand the removal of education minister Javed Ashraf from the cabinet due to what IJT claims are attempts to promote secularism through the deletions in textbooks of Koranic verses pertaining to jihad. It is essential that the Pakistani government not heed the attacks and criticism of the IJT, MMA, and other religious bodies. Pakistan’s ruling class must develop a better central state education system that promotes a uniform standard based on a moderate teaching. This would play a significant role in decreasing sectarianism in the country. Such a move, however, would require
tremendous amount of courage and power, which is why the international community needs to show the people of Pakistan that it has faith in Musharraf and in the country. Most importantly, demands for democracy and reform from Western liberals would play into the hands of the radicals who have proven themselves apt at manipulating the democratic system in pursuit of their goals.

The development and growth of civilian-based political parties in Pakistan needs encouragement. Liberal western democracy must eventually emerge in Pakistan, though this must occur slowly, as the country is still evolving. The role and power of militant Islamism in Pakistan is strong partly because of decades of collusion between the authorities and the militants, who have used the threat of India and Kashmir to keep themselves in power. The danger of demanding substantial democratic reform would be to allow unsavory Muslim parties into the mainstream. This would push Pakistan further down the slippery slope of Islamist rule, as militant Muslims have the means and the finances to recruit and indoctrinate the masses. The current challenge faced by the Pakistani ruling elite is linking civilian-based political parties with Musharraf’s Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-i-Azam, PML-Q). This is a risky but necessary course as otherwise, Pakistan would continue to engage the jihadists militarily by helping them to prepare another generation of recruits. The words of Singapore’s former Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, seem to match Pakistan’s situation: “I do not believe that democracy necessarily leads to development. I believe that what a country needs to develop is discipline more than democracy. The exuberance of democracy leads to indiscipline and disorderly conduct which are inimical to development.”

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NOTES

2 Pakistani security forces have clashed with tribesmen in different parts of Dera Bugti after the latter fired rockets at a water plant of the Loti gas field. Amanullah Kasi, between the authorities and the militants, who have used the threat of India and Kashmir to keep themselves in power. The danger of demanding substantial democratic reform would be to allow unsavory Muslim parties into the mainstream. This would push Pakistan further down the slippery slope of Islamist rule, as militant Muslims have the means and the finances to recruit and indoctrinate the masses. The current challenge faced by the Pakistani ruling elite is linking civilian-based political parties with Musharraf’s Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-i-Azam, PML-Q). This is a risky but necessary course as otherwise, Pakistan would continue to engage the jihadists militarily by helping them to prepare another generation of recruits. The words of Singapore’s former Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, seem to match Pakistan’s situation: “I do not believe that democracy necessarily leads to development. I believe that what a country needs to develop is discipline more than democracy. The exuberance of democracy leads to indiscipline and disorderly conduct which are inimical to development.”

3 Senators have argued that the insurgency in Balochhistan for example has arisen from the desire of the people of the province to protect their economic and political rights. “Senators want more provincial autonomy,” Dawn, February 4, 2006. Available online at: http://www.dawn.com/2006/02/04/top7.htm.

“Senators want more provincial autonomy.”

6 The ICG has concluded that “Pakistan-based terrorists, foreign or domestic, are two faces of the same coin.” “The State of Sectarianism in Pakistan” International Crisis Group Asia Report No. 95 (Islamabad/Brussels: April 18, 2005), p. 6.


9 Mary Anne Weaver, Pakistan: In the Shadow of Jihad and Afghanistan (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), p. 32.


16 Walsh, “Most Wanted”.

17 “Report of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the UNSC Counter-Terrorism Committee on Implementation of UNSC 1373,” January 10, 2002 (S/2001/1310) [02-20780 (E) 250102 270202].

18 Taylor, “The Crucible.”


20 “Report of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the UNSC Counter-Terrorism Committee on Implementation of UNSC 1373,”

21 Walsh, “Most Wanted”.


23 Walsh, “Most Wanted”.


online at: http://www.dawn.com/2005/12/03/top4.htm


29 “‘Taliban’ gain sway in tribal region.”


31 All the figures are taken from “The State of Sectarianism in Pakistan” p. 11.


33 “Additional Information Requested by the Chairman of the Counter-Terrorism Committee,” July 19, 2002 (S/2002/797) [02-50547 (E) 300803].


39 Information obtained from “Patterns of Global Terrorism.”


42 “Pakistan’s Local Polls.”


46 Haqqani, “The Role of Islam in Pakistan’s Future,” p. 86.


48 “Pakistan’s Local Polls.”


52 “MMA to resist change in Islamiat.”
