“Strategic Depth”: Does It Promote Pakistan’s Strategic Interests?

: Raheem ul Haque

In assessing Pakistan's response to the ongoing 'global war on terrorism' in Afghanistan, this paper presents two sets of arguments; first, I argue that Pakistan's strategic interests constituting secure and peaceful borders along with internal strength, development and prosperity, are annulled rather than furthered by the Strategic Depth policy framework, adopted and pursued for the last three decades. Although this framework has allowed Pakistan to maintain a semblance of regional military power balance with India, yet it has led to a rise of extremism and militancy within Pakistani society and to a loss of internal sovereignty. Today, this flawed policy has created conditions that have made Pakistan a sanctuary for ideological non-state actors. Second, with an in-depth analysis and scrutiny of factors and actors in the three decades of the Afghan war theatre, I submit that Strategic Depth is an outcome of the institutionalization of Ideological Guardianship mindset within Pakistan Army during the Zia years, and its continuation has led to civil-military power imbalance which needs to be altered to secure Pakistan from militancy and terrorism. Democratic consolidation, peace, prosperity and sustainable development in Pakistan hinges on abandoning the flawed, failed and nationally injurious policy of Strategic Depth.

Overview: from Muslim to Islamic

Pakistan was born with undefined and problematic boundaries. On the Eastern front it inherited the Kashmir dispute with India and on the Western front the Durand Line, which divided the Pashtuns between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Given the Pashtun ethnic factor, relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan remained bitter but generally bearable. For example, at the time of independence Afghanistan was the only country that opposed Pakistan's entry into the UN, yet, over the year's transit trade between the two counties has rarely been discontinued. On the other hand, relations with India have largely remained adversarial to hostile, punctuated by border skirmishes to outright wars (1965 and 71, while 1999 Kargil is recognized as a limited conflict). The 1971 Indo–Pakistan war and the resultant break of Pakistan had three consequences for South Asia. First, India emerged as the 'dominant power' of the region, second that intensi-
...encapsulating both Operations and Intelligence functions, ISI became independently powerful and resourceful growing in strength from 2000 employees in 1978 to 40,000 with a $1bn budget in 1988. The 1980s also saw the rise of an ideological US president Ronald Reagan, thus providing an ideological affinity for the Pak-US leadership. This affinity was to play a crucial role in subsequent years on the formation and emergence of Taliban and the internationalist Al-Qaeda. While the situation fit the strategic interests of both America to counter the Soviet Union and Saudi Arabia to counter Iran—giving it overt sectarian overtones. On the other hand, Pakistan played the role of a client state accepting America’s strategic interest of defeating the Soviet Union rather than securing its Western border; simultaneously, accepting thousands of Islamic radicals from other countries and putting up hundreds of ‘militant training cells’ to generate the radicalized manpower needed for this task. There was little realization about the cultural consequences to a plural and a relatively peaceful society. Rather than finding a political solution to the Afghan imbroglio to end war and its consequences as suggested by the Russians as early as 1983, Pakistan pressed on with America’s strategic interests to defeat the Russians in Afghanistan only to sign on the Geneva Accords in 1988. After fulfilling its strategic interests in Afghanistan, America left the region leaving behind a war torn country, millions of refugees and thousands of trained Islamist militants while additionally splashing sanctions on Pakistan soon after for its nuclear program. This period thus involved an overt State sponsorship of Islamist ideology, full throttle international support for ideological non-state militants (the Mujahideen) and institutionalization of Ideological Guardianship within the army.


The third phase of Pakistan’s history began with a transition to democracy rather than a fundamentalist ideologue at the helm, however, the ideological tilt of the military lingered on; first, the army ventured to undercut the liberal PPP in elections through the formation of an alliance of rightist parties—Islami Jamhuri Ittehad (IJI), then it dictated terms for government formation and eventually it brought an aligned political party to power. Zia’s ideological focus continued with the new army chief Gen. Mirza Aslam Baig, who disregarded Pakistan’s territorial interests by wanting to sell nuclear know how to Iran, but the deal was rejected even by the ideologically aligned civilian leader. The Soviet failure and eventual withdrawal provided further impetus to the framework of Jihad—the nexus of Islamist ideology and the use of non-state actors. Thus as the Kashmiri rose in open revolt against Indian policies and a rigged election, rather than strengthening the nationalist movement to build internal and international impetus to resolve the tripartite issue, Pakistan instead wrested the struggle away in favor of an ideological framework negating the territorial aspect of undefined boundary and nationalist aspirations at the heart of the issue. The surplus manpower and infrastructure of the Afghan war was redirected to the Kashmiri struggle with the confidence that if a superpower could be defeated so could India. The ideological aspect was pushed to its logical conclusion by Zia’s civilian protege, Nawaz Sharif with the appointment of an Islamist ideologue (General Javed Nasir, who had connections with Tableeghi Jamaat) to head the ISI thus extending Jihad operations beyond...
Afghanistan and Kashmir. It was only after the fall of civilian government that the existing military dispensation removed the ISI chief and sent personnel back to their regular army units, but only when Pakistan was threatened with being declared a terrorist state\textsuperscript{16}.

The concept of Strategic Depth evolved and was promoted under these broad considerations. With the US departure; Afghanistan still in shatters, the Western front gradually became an extension of Pakistan’s battle with India. The institutionalization of Ideological Guardianship was based on the fear of India invoked in religious terms; the non-state actors were galvanized as ideological weapons and the second line of defense against India. This provided a rationale for the option of strategic space in Afghanistan to safeguard military assets against India. Its practical manifestation was the pursuit of an illusionary and flawed policy of Strategic Depth. With Jihad now transformed into a civil war among former Mujahideen leaders, Pakistan shifted its support\textsuperscript{17} to an alternative Pashtun movement of Taliban (Deobandi Madrassa students) to bring peace in Afghanistan. While the march through Pashtun areas into Kabul was easy, the diversity of Afghanistan either afforded peace of the dead or a multi-ethnic and multi-sectarian broadening of the Taliban, an impossibility within the Taliban’s ideological framework. As Pakistan became one of only three countries (in addition to UAE and Saudi Arabia) to recognize the Taliban government, Afghanistan instead became a regional battleground. Still, even a dependent Afghan government refused to accept the territorial integrity of its neighbor\textsuperscript{18} and there was no change in the Afghan position on Durand Line. Rashid argues otherwise stating that Durand Line was never a priority for Pakistan because a fixed border would amount Strategic Depth as blatant interference in another State. He further states that even though the UN was inclined to resolve the Durand Line issue during Geneva talks in 1988, Pakistan never raised the issue then or during the decade that Pakistan proxies ruled Afghanistan\textsuperscript{19}. Thus the Strategic Depth policy became the practical manifestation of strategic interests understood through the prism of Ideological Guardianship of Pakistan military. This policy had four components; first, an undefined boundary-retaining the contested Durand Line, second, ensuring a friendly regime in Afghanistan, third, curbing Pashtun separatism and nationalism through Islamism, fourth, ensuring a safe sanctuary for training ideological non-state actors for Pakistan’s regional policy objectives.

Although Pakistan’s connections with few internationalist Jihadi groups continued because of their convergence of interest in supporting the Taliban against the Northern Alliance, they were not a part and parcel of the Strategic Depth framework as conflicting reports appeared in regards to Pakistan’s policy towards Al-Qaeda. On the one hand, Osama Bin Ladin’s training camp ‘The Lions Den’ in Afghanistan reportedly also trained ISI linked local Jihadi groups, on the other, Pakistan also repatriated foreign Jihadists to their countries in 1993.\textsuperscript{20} Yet, another report indicates that just before the 1999 military coup the Prime Minister of Pakistan had agreed in principle to support the American effort to nab Osama Bin Ladin.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{11}}\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{17}}}…the use of ideology by the State disallowed any comprehensive counter terrorism strategy while trained militants changed garbs and seamlessly moved between overtly sectarian and Jihadi organizations,

The internal cost of Ideological Guardianship combined with privatization and outsourcing of military functions (Jihad) started to be felt in the 1990s\textsuperscript{22}. The proliferation and militarization of Deobandi–Wahabi mosque–madrassa network grew in parallel to Khomeini inspired Shia mobilization deepening the sectarian divide within Pakistan. This had an impact on the more peaceful and Sufi tradition inspired Barelvis, who also resorted to militarization to protect their interests\textsuperscript{23}. As Saudi–Iran funded proxies battled it out, the use of ideology by the State disallowed any comprehensive counter terrorism strategy while trained militants changed garbs and seamlessly moved between overtly sectarian and Jihadi organizations, some hunted while others supported and funded by the paradoxical security environment. The sectarian divide had become pronounced much earlier as even General Zia ul Haq had to concede that some Ulema were using the Anti–Ahmedia Ordinance to fan sectarianism\textsuperscript{24}. Thus it was not a surprise when a decade later an ideological ally, the Taliban refused to hand over sectarian terrorists
enjoying sanctuary in Afghanistan while the same person (Riaz Basra of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi) had earlier ‘disappeared’ from the courts in Pakistan. The level of accountability for ideologically aligned non-state actors can be judged from the fact that a Jihadi commander (Qari Saifullah Akhtar) implicated in an internal military coup in collusion with military officers was let go while the officers were incarcerated. In total 997 were killed and 2,523 were injured in sectarian violence from 1989–2000. Furthermore, Pakistan’s sectarian Jihadist connections had raised tensions with neighbor Iran as the killing of the Iranian Counselor General in Lahore and the killing of Iranian Consulate Staff in Mazar-e-Sharif were blamed on groups linked to Pakistan’s intelligence agency.

Thus during this period, the Strategic Depth framework based on the internalization of Ideological Guardianship within the military and the institutionalization of non-state actors as a tool for furthering it gained momentum. Resultantly, there emerged a Jihad Industry with numerous militant organizations, some proxies of the Pakistani state and others driven by their own independent agenda. These organizations competed for battlefield success, publicized their ideology and adventures through more than a hundred publications while generating funds through State patronage, and international and domestic private contributors.

**Territorial versus Ideological Guardianship: The Aftermath of 9/11**

The dawn of Sept 12, 2001, while changing the strategic interests of the West did not alter the existing regional game play where the Pakistan–Saudi alliance backing the Taliban was pitched against the Iran–India–Russia alliance supporting the Northern Alliance throughout the 1990s. Additionally, Afghanistan had become a sanctuary of global Jihadi groups-- including Pakistani, Arab, Uzbek, Chechen, Uighur Chinese and others, each pursuing its own agendas.

Faced with territorial threat from the sole superpower, the head of ISI agreed to all American demands in Washington. But he was one of the four generals to argue against pulling out support for the Taliban in favor of America in the Corps Commander meeting. While tactically Pakistan had changed its position to safeguard the home territory, still the military deeply imbued in Strategic Depth ideology over the last two decades needed time to rethink its future options in the region now that America had become an active player. Additionally the Jihad infrastructure created over these years needed just the right compromise to avoid a blowback. This explained General Musharraf’s defensive speech to the nation supporting the American “War on Terror”, literally abandoning the Taliban, but sheepishly shielding Pakistan’s Nuclear Weapons and the Kashmir Policy, while ensuring that Pakistan was not declared a state sponsoring terrorism or was encircled by India. Pakistan accepted most American demands, breaking diplomatic ties and logistical support for the Taliban, providing bases, over flight and landing rights, and sharing of intelligence on key Taliban and Al-Qaeda leaders among others. But while getting billions in military and economic aid, Pakistan’s strategic interests of a friendly Afghan government through inclusion of moderate Taliban (who disown Al-Qaeda) or Hizb–e–Islami did not find any ears and instead a Northern Alliance dominated government was formed in Kabul.

General Musharraf was quick to conduct a military shakeup rooting out Generals who had disagreed with his policy shift and disbanding two main units of the ISI with links to Islamist militants. Against intense American pressure, Pakistan moved 80,000 soldiers to the Afghan border to stem and capture Al-Qaeda operatives entering into Pakistan. According to Rashid, Pakistani military was careful not to place security forces at the border adjoining Warizistan or Baluchistan, implying it allowed Al-Qaeda operatives’ access to Waziristan. While Pak–US intelligence worked closely to capture Al-Qaeda, Pakistani or Afghan Taliban who had been furthering Pakistan’s policy objectives in the region were not touched and simply went home or to the mosque-madrassa establishments that facilitated them. Furthermore some 500–1000 men fighting the Americans to a standstill were airlifted from Kunduz as a personal favor to Musharraf in late November. A complete strategic re-alignment had yet to come as the military safeguarded its assets either because its strategic interests still required them or because it considered the risk to take on the complete ideological network it had molded for twenty years as too high. Pre-empting Pakistan’s policy agenda, the ideological groups conducted a master stroke on December 13, 2001 (Tora Bora fell on
December 16) with an attack on the Indian parliament forcing Pakistan to stop troop deployment to the Afghan border\(^9\) and for Pakistan to reflect on who its ally and foe were as Pakistan army came face to face with the largest Indian troop mobilization since 1971\(^40\) as more than 1,000 Al-Qaeda operatives slipped through the border\(^41\).

“...attack on Musharraf clearly indicated a nexus between the Punjabi Taliban and Al-Qaeda while showing their penetration in the armed forces as more than fifty Air Force personnel linked to JeM were charged.”

The Afghan chess board which was dominated by the Pakistan–Saudi–Taliban alliance throughout the 1990s was shuffled overnight following the US and NATO engagement. America initially needed and then supported the Iran–India proxy—the Northern Alliance to dominate the Kabul government. Iran looked the other way as its arch foe America dismantled Taliban in Afghanistan. India began making strategic investments worth more than $1.2bn\(^42\), constructing road infrastructure (connecting Iranian port Charbahar to Central Asia thus bypassing Gawadar), telecom facilities which used Indian satellites and re-opening four consulates especially Qandahar and Jalalabad close to the Pakistan border\(^43\). Pakistan while logistically supporting the American “War on Terror” and capturing Al-Qaeda was unsure of its future course of action. With the history of American cut and run in 1989, its own strategic interests unchanged, its rivals gaining ground and most importantly a society socialized to the Islamist discourse through twenty years of Jihad propaganda and Taliban eulogizing by Army establishment in cahoots with right wing forces, Pakistan dithered to make a clean break with the Taliban as it would have demanded a complete reorientation of its ideological strategic outlook.


With the changed post 9/11 scenario, Pakistan could not keep its Kashmir policy of using non-state actors intact for too long especially after Kashmiri Jihadi groups were implicated in the attack on Indian Parliament in December 2001. The attack forced Pakistan to ban Kashmir oriented Jihadi groups\(^44\), however, these groups moved their training camps to Azad Kashmir or FATA continuing training till at least March 2004\(^45\). The 3000 arrested members of banned organizations were freed after a month\(^46\) but continued American pressure forced demobilization of Kashmiri militants in 2003–04\(^47\) and closing of the intelligence’s Kashmir Cell by 2004 without extensive de-weaponization or rehabilitation. The great majority of Kashmir centric Jihadi organizations drew their manpower from Punjab. Most of these groups had trained in Al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan where their leaders rubbed shoulders with Al-Qaeda and Taliban leadership. While the ideologically imbued secular institution of Pakistan Army took its time deciding between its ideological inclination and territorial necessity, the Punjabi Taliban no doubt were clear about the ideological basis of their cause. Few restrained (Lashkar-e-Taiba) under the ISI umbrella, others split (jaish-e-Mohammad – JeM) or moved wholesale (Lashkar-e-Jhangvi) into the Al-Qaeda camp. Christian and American installations were the initial target of these groups across Pakistan in 2002 till they regrouped in Waziristan. It was only after General Pervez Musharraf came under attack in December 2003, that Pakistan military began to review its policy of maintaining connections with Jihadi groups. This attack clearly indicated a nexus between the Punjabi Taliban and Al-Qaeda while showing their penetration in the armed forces as more than fifty Air Force personnel linked to JeM were charged.\(^48\) Various senior Kashmir Jihad leaders were picked up and interrogated further increasing the gulf between the once partners. This led highly trained guerrillas along with master strategists such as Ilyas Kashmiri of the 313 Brigade to join the Afghan war theatre in 2005\(^49\). Although Kashmiri argued that he would not go against Pakistan’s interests, still the strategic guidance to Punjabi/Kashmiri groups based in Waziristan was now being provided by Al-Qaeda rather than the ISI.

On the political front, the Islamist and religious parties who came together under the banner of “Defense of Afghanistan Council”\(^50\) and later took the shape of Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (a conglomeration of Deobandi, Wahabi, Shia and Barelvi parties but effective power lay with the larger JUI & JJ) came to power in Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa (NWFP) and Baluchistan. Several factors contributed to
the emergence of MMA—its open anti-American stance, exclusion of PPP and PML–N leadership from electoral process (while Azam Tariq, the head of Sipah-e-Sahaba was allowed to contest from his jail cell), the requirement of a Bachelors degree while accepting madrassa degrees. All these factors demonstrated that the military government was falling back on its ideological proxies to cobble together a pliant government that fit its strategic interests.51 Thus as JUI virtually gave Pashtunabad, Quetta to the Afghan Taliban, heads of JUI madrassas along the Quetta-Chaman area met in Quetta with senior ISI officers for funds and student rotation every month52 and Musharraf made Ijaz-ul-Haq, son of the fundamentalist military dictator the Minister for Religious Affairs, the MMA reciprocated by supporting the constitutional amendment to make Musharraf a powerful president.

With ideological godfathers of the Taliban in power, those who had fought America alongside the Taliban as ministers, and a cadre that considered sheltering Al-Qaeda leaders a responsibility, the Afghan Taliban and other militant groups were given a free hand in organizing, mobilizing and propagating their message at the local level without any threat from the provincially controlled police.

...Pakistan managed to spark its own insurgency in FATA through haphazard military operations being ill–trained for a highly mobile war, taking responsibility for American attacks in FATA, and allowing militants to consolidate their control.

For the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, it was a time to regroup. While Al-Qaeda regenerated in its new high HinduKush safe haven, the Afghan Taliban prepared their manpower as expansion of madrassas gained pace along the Quetta Chaman Highway. Pakistan had no counter-terrorism strategy other than intelligence and operational facilitation to the Americans in hunting Al-Qaeda members, while not a single top Taliban was given to the Americans53 who themselves were also least interested, instead shifting their strategic focus to Iraq. Still the ISI (collusion with CIA is suggested) did create proxies early on either to keep the Jihad flame burning or to split the Taliban through the notion of ‘moderate’ Taliban – the Jamiatul Khudmul Koran or later Jaish Muslimin condemned Mul­lah Omar’s support for Al-Qaeda while fighting foreign forces in Afghanistan54. Initially the Afghan government became concerned about Taliban regrouping in Pakistan in mid 2003 and later as American casualties in Afghanistan doubled in 1st six months of 2004 compared to the previous year, American pressure vis–a–vis Taliban changed into threats. Americans had been pressuring for action in Waziristan since mid 2002 owing to cross border attacks and hostage taking. Pakistan had initially tried the tribal elder route to dissuade locals to shelter foreigners or to conduct cross border attacks but to no effect. It then followed it up with small scale operations which did not resolve the problem either. But following the assassination attempt on Musharraf traced to Waziristan and American pressure to tackle Al-Qaeda militants in South Waziristan, Pakistan eventually went for a larger scale operation55 leading to high military casualties at Kaloosha (See Figure 1). Two leading Pakistani journalist present varied interpretation of the operation; Gul calls it a spontaneous reaction and mobilization of people to defend a comrade leader and a wakeup call for the military in relation to militants. Rashid goes a step further terming it an intelligence failure blaming the ISI, which understood the ground realities in South Waziristan. This would lead to first of many peace agreements with FATA militants done from a position of weakness. The peculiarity of the Shakai Agreement was that it was done in ‘Jamia Arabia Ahsanul Madaris’, a madrassa rather than the usual public jirga thus subscribing legitimacy to the mullah–militant nexus in the eyes of the local people.56

The terms of agreement required tribal militants not to attack the Pakistan Armed Forces, conduct cross border attacks or to establish parallel administration while committing to register foreign militants. In turn the Army would dismantle check posts in the area, free incarcerated tribal militants and compensate the tribe for damage done during the operation. While the agreements stopped attacks on Pakistan military, attacks on NATO forces in Afghanistan spiked invoking a conflict of interest between the two partners in the ‘War on Terror’. This tactical conflict of interest could have been resolved if Pakistan and America had the same strategic vision but low trust factor...
and demonizing of the ISI and America in the Western and Pakistani press respectively precluded a real partnership for a troubled relationship instead. Thus a cycle ensued where America would either sabotage the peace agreement through a drone strike making new martyrs or Pakistan would conduct a haphazard operation coinciding with a meeting of an American dignitary inflaming a new tribe, followed by a new peace agreement.

**Figure 1: Taliban Insurgency & Military Operations in Pakistan**

Additionally, the military’s air raids, scorched earth and collective punishment practices affecting civilians in trying to kill or capture key militant commanders followed by peace agreements led to enmity with the tribe while raising commander’s profile in the tribe as often compensation was distributed through his offices. It also gave the militant commander financial strength, while pulling the army back from the areas made it easy for militants to target pro government tribal leaders who had initially invited or acquiesced government’s operation. In total 400 tribal Maliks in FATA were killed leaving the militants to run a parallel government where they were the only negotiating partner and decision makers for the tribe while hundreds of thousands of civilians were displaced. Thus in Waziristan where the Pakistan Army had initially targeted Ahmadzai Wazir militants for harboring foreign elements in 2003, by 2006 the three tribes of Waziristan, the Mehsuds, Wazirs and the Dawars were fighting together against a common enemy for the first time in history.

Thus while the Pakistani state showed policy ambivalence similar to the 1990s at a cursory level; in reality it was still focused on its ideological Strategic Depth policy, the difference being that two independent players, America and Al-Qaeda had now joined the fray. Pakistan targeted Al-Qaeda only to keep America happy while opting for peace accords with tribal militants to concentrate their activities inside Afghanistan and not attack Pakistani forces. America had yet to differentiate between Al-Qaeda and Afghan Taliban and wanted Pakistan to target both...
groups rather than sign peace accords. Al-Qaeda wanted to stay an important player in the Afghan theatre as this ensured its survival in the Waziristan safe haven primarily because it could be sacrificed for Pakistan’s strategic interests and was the primary reason for American presence in Afghanistan. Pakistan military had misjudged that Jihadis, especially the lower cadre would also understand compulsions of statecraft where Al-Qaeda was targeted while Afghan Taliban facilitated. Thus even though Pakistan’s strategic interests gained ground as Taliban insurgency flourished in Afghanistan by the summer of 2006, it had instead managed to spark its own insurgency in FATA through haphazard military operations being ill-trained for a highly mobile war, taking responsibility for American attacks in FATA62, and allowing militants to consolidate their control. The government had tried but failed to outbid Al-Qaeda, which was handsomely paying its tribal hosts for housing and security, and provided ideological guidance while military’s actions alienated tribes and only enhanced militant hold in other agencies. Additionally the State negligently allowed shifting of militants from Kashmir to the Afghan front; not realizing that they could move under the umbrella of Al-Qaeda enhancing both Al-Qaeda’s skill set and strike capability within Pakistan.

War Hits Home: The Loss of Internal Sovereignty
2007 – 2008

The spillover effects of policy ambivalence appeared as the militants’ targets increasingly moved beyond the tribal areas focusing on the State’s security apparatus. Mullah Dadullah, the Afghan Taliban Commander in Chief had earlier brokered a ceasefire between militants and Pakistan Army arguing that militants should concentrate their efforts on fighting NATO forces in Afghanistan; while foreign militants and Al-Qaeda linked groups such as Tahir Yuldashev, the head of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan disagreed.63 Although there was a short reprieve when Uzbek militants were expelled from Wazir section of South Waziristan due to infighting and with Army’s support of the Taliban commander Mullah Nazir, they found sanctuary with the Mehsuds. Thus indicating both turf wars and enmeshed linkages between groups in the tribal areas of Pakistan.

The situation had aggravation earlier when government authorities brushed aside the killing of 82 including 12 teenagers at a Tehreek-e-Nifaz Sharia Muhammadi (TNSM) seminary in October 2006 in Damadola, Bajaur in an air strike calling them militants, thus provoking TSNM movement in Swat to openly call for arms64. But it was the military’s quashing of militants in the Lal Masjid operation in July 2007 in full media publicity and national public uproar, when militants finally gave up the possibility of rapprochement with the military further moving into the Al-Qaeda camp, leading them to formulate a common strategy across FATA. Other than a spate of suicide bombings across the country, the affect of Lal Masjid could be judged from the ‘abduction’ of 200–250 security personnel in August 2007 including nine army officers who offered little resistance65.

With momentum shifting to the militants, the insurgency increasingly over taken by Al-Qaeda linked groups and under increased pressure from the international community to do more, Pakistan allowed America to setup a secret CIA base for drone attacks inside FATA in January 2008. Pakistan lost its key link with the Qandahari group66, and leverage over FATA militants with the killing of Dadullah in March 2007. His death was defining moment as it led to a shift in the Afghan Taliban leadership, which increasingly came under the control of Haqqani Network, a closer associate of Al-Qaeda. By this time, militants had carved out a territory for their command and control centers, more than 100 illegal FM Stations operated in FATA & NWFP, half of them in settled areas working as their propaganda arm67 while Al-Qaeda’s media arm Al-Sahab tripled its Audio Visual production to 58 in 2006 and 89 in 200768 for militants’ strategic guidance in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. The year culminated with formation of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) with an estimated strength of about 40,000 militants69.

As an all out war began in 2008, TTP gained an upper hand with militants seizing to try to blow up the Kohat Tunnel cutting off Peshawar’s access from the Indus High-
way unsuccessfully. It overran the Sararogha Fort, South Waziristan in January 2008 and increased suicide bombings in urban areas leading the government to launch military operations in a number of tribal agencies followed by peace agreements. While it seemed that the Pakistani State had finally woken up to the militant terrorist threat, the valley of Swat away from FATA proved otherwise as a small time mullah practically took over the territory with the help of TTP militants (foreigners included) who had shifted from FATA to get away from military operations and more importantly the drone attacks. Though he had been facilitated by the MMA government and intelligence agencies, the 2007 military operation neither closed down his propaganda radio, nor targeted his headquarters (Imam Deri) or arms dump, thus allowing the emerging Taliban to increase their control of Swat from 15% to 70%, eventually leading a Malik (tribal leader) Afzal Khan Lala to ask if Taliban and the Military were actually partners?.

The Americans unable to contain the Afghan insurgency shifted the blame to Pakistan and its inability to close down militant sanctuaries in FATA. It’s reassessment of the war shifted the focus on Pakistan to do more in the “War on Terror”. America thus supported a negotiated settlement between Musharraf and Benazir Bhutto, the head of a liberal party who could rally public support and provide the much needed civil political backing for a complete break with Pakistan’s ideological strategy, which was required to tackle the Afghan Taliban problem along with Al-Qaeda. But Benazir Bhutto, a strategic threat to Islamist, jihadi and the Islamist segment of military establishment became the biggest Pakistani casualty of war. With momentum shifting to the militants, the insurgency increasingly over taken by Al-Qaeda linked groups and under increased pressure from the international community to do more, Pakistan allowed America to setup a secret CIA base for drone attacks inside FATA in January 2008. The drone attacks would strictly be an American affair, disowned and publicly berated by the Government of Pakistan allowing it to keep its peace agreements intact with FATA militants.

The year 2007 was a year of political turmoil in Pakistan as pro-democracy movement gained speed along side the TTP insurgency in FATA, specifically denting the army’s morale as it was being criticized by all segments of the political spectrum – the liberal segments berating it for

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Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal, Institute of Conflict Management. 

being in alliance with the Mullah-Jihadi nexus, questioning its will to take on the surging militants while the Islamists condemned it for bringing the American war to Pakistan. The political dynamics changed as the new Army Chief took over followed by the formation of government by an alliance of secular liberal parties in the Centre and Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa in March 2008. Policy formulation now included the civilian leadership which wanted good relations with the Afghan and Indian governments along with a more independent role for America to tackle threats emanating from Pakistan but had to convince the powerful ideological guardians, the military and intelligence establishments. The overtures of the weak coalition civilian government in regional policy matters were soon rebuffed and its international credibility ruined with the attack on the Indian embassy and Hamid Karzai in Kabul.

The nail in the coffin was the December 2008 terrorist attack in Mumbai implicating Lashkar-e-Taiba, the most disciplined and the only non-state actor which had not split staying within the ISI umbrella after the demobilization of Kashmir Jihad.

**Regaining Governance: Are We Approaching the End Game 2009 – 2010?**

As Taliban control in Afghanistan increased from 30/364 districts in 2003 to 164/364 districts by end of 2008 owing partly to suicide attacks 21 (2005), 136 (2006) and 137 (2007), it was clear that the American policy of outright military victory over the Taliban had failed. America shifted blame equally to corruption in the Afghan government and the double game of the Pakistan ISI arguing that 80% of the suicide attacks in Afghanistan could be traced back to Warizistan as CIA shared evidence of ISI links with the Haqqani Network which was behind Afghan suicide attacks. The Afghan voices had started arguing in late 2007 that there could be no peaceful solution to Afghanistan without Hekmatyar & Taliban, later taken up by the British Defense Secretary. Obama laid out his Afghan Policy (Af-Pak) in March 2009 accepting both a reconciliation strategy in principle as well as the importance of Pakistan’s role in American exit strategy. But rather than initiating a political dialog with the Afghan Taliban, the American strategy involved a military buildup to break the Taliban momentum while using the eighteen month period till July 2011 to articulate a political strategy followed by draw down of troops. The reconciliation strategy was eventually endorsed by the international community in the January 2010 London Conference with even India and Russia giving up their opposition to talks with the Taliban.

**Table 2: Incidence of Terrorist Attacks/Clashes in Pakistan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Terrorist attacks</th>
<th>Operational attacks</th>
<th>Clashes militants</th>
<th>Border clashes</th>
<th>Political violence</th>
<th>Inter-tribal clashes</th>
<th>Drone attacks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2,148</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2,586</td>
<td>596</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2,113</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of persons killed</th>
<th>Number of attacks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2,267</td>
<td>3,182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>3,021</td>
<td>6,329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2,913</td>
<td>2,631</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Including insurgent and sectarian incidents.
2. Operations conducted by security forces against militants.
3. Ethno-political and sectarian.
4. Clashes between security forces and militants.

The peak years of war (2008 & 2009) in Pakistan were years of realignment as well as a movement away from clandestine to a relatively more open articulation of its interests. Pakistan had borne the brunt of the "War on Terror" losing 1,211 soldiers by Dec 2007\(^83\) along with excessive collateral damage as suicide bombings jumped from 7 (2006), 54 (2007) to 59 (2008)\(^84\). While the Pakistan military had formally launched military operations in FATA on July 19, 2007\(^83\), it still seemed to lack the resolve to tackle the insurgency holistically either because this went against its strategic goals in Afghanistan, it was scared of defections within army ranks due to soldiers subscription of Al-Qaeda ideology, or because it needed public support lost during years of military dictatorship. Gul argues that GHQ finally woke up to the internal threat when the war came home in late 2008. But more importantly, pressurized from all fronts: by the international community following Bombay massacre; by civil society in Pakistan after Swat fell to the militants; by the civil government after militants broke the Swat peace agreement; and by the Americans invoking security of Pakistan's nuclear weapons and the capital Islamabad, the military conducted a successful large scale operation in Swat with political backing. However, almost all top militant leaders escaped. This was followed by another successful operation against the command and control centre of TTP in South Waziristan in the summer of 2009 while keeping peace agreements intact with two main Taliban commanders of South & North Waziristan. This arrested the Pakistani Taliban momentum in FATA and adjoining areas thus pushing them into North Waziristan\(^86\), which was outside the writ of the State. Pakistan's new initiative increased the cost of war with 76 suicide bombings in 2009\(^87\) (Also see Table 1 & 2) and then finally the seat of power, the Army General Head Quarters (GHQ) was attacked in October 2009 while additionally army families were targeted in a mosque attack. It seemed that the army had finally taken note with a serving general stating that the army had reached a consensus in principle to go after all groups indiscriminately, irrespective of their earlier links to military institutions\(^88\).

By now, America had recognized the need to engage Pakistan in a strategic dialogue to influence its policy rather than solely using it as a client state to try to achieve American goals in Afghanistan. Although Pakistan still publicly denied the existence of Quetta Shura and the presence of Haqqani Network in Pakistan\(^89\), it picked up key leaders and incarcerated more than half of the top Afghan Taliban leadership to stall a direct channel between Karzai and the Taliban without ISI sanction\(^90\) as well as to show its leverage before entering into a strategic dialogue with America in March 2010. Pakistan finally opened up regarding its own interests in the Pak-US Strategic Dialog. America acknowledged the importance of Pakistan's role in peace talks between Kabul and the Taliban but rebuffed a civil nuclear deal similar to India's while asking the army to abandon its 30-year reliance on Islamist militants for foreign policy objectives\(^91\). Additionally, Pakistan and America were still at odds with specific aspects of their Afghan strategy, as America wanted to weaken or divide the Taliban\(^92\) through the surge, extension of drone strikes in Baluchistan and military operation in North Waziristan, to negotiate with the Taliban from a position of strength. While Pakistan agreed in principle with the need for a North Waziristan operation, it excused itself citing over-extension. In actuality Pakistan's leverage in Afghanistan depended on the strength of the Taliban with sanctuaries and nerve centers both in the Quetta-Chaman border region and North Waziristan. Additionally, the army leadership was unsure of the backlash of such an operation understanding full well that it would exceed all previous operations given NW was now a sanctuary of all kinds of militants groups (Haqqani, Hezb-i-Islami, Al-Qaeda, TTP and the Punjabi Taliban).

As Pakistan delayed the North Waziristan operation, the Americans doubled drone attacks to 90–124\(^93\) in 2010. But the Pak–US perspective differed drastically as independent Pakistani media reports put casualty figures in terms of terrorist to civilian ratio at 41:59\(^94\), while an American journal assessing all drone attacks till June 2010 put the terrorist: civilians: unknown ratio at 80:4:5:15\(^95\). This provides an apt indication of why America could not relate to the increasing anti-Americanism in the country. Although there had been an American presence in Pakistan since 2001, the terms of engagement had been settled with the Pakistan Army. But since the return to civilian rule and with it’s acquiescence\(^96\), American had increased its footprint through a $1bn embassy and personnel expansion from 300 to 1,000 including both civilians (for Kerry Lugar Bill’s civilian support) and also covert operatives outside the ISI domain\(^97\). As American pressure and operation increased...
leading to the killing of two Pakistani soldiers in Kurram Agency crossing the red line of cross border operations, Pakistan closed the Afghan border crossing constituting 80% of NATO’s non-lethal supply line for 10 days while more than a 100 trucks were burnt by Taliban inside Pakistan, further indicating Pakistan’s leverage over NATO forces just a few weeks before the Pak-American Strategic Dialogue in October. With its enhanced leverage intact, Pakistan Army, the real power in the country took steps to limit American covert operations in the country, primarily those being conducted unilaterally.

America acknowledged the importance of Pakistan's role in peace talks between Kabul and the Taliban but rebuffed a civil nuclear deal similar to India's while asking the army to abandon its 30-year reliance on Islamist militants for foreign policy objectives.

Thus this period saw America falling back to the original Pakistani position of negotiating with the Taliban for peace in Afghanistan. Additionally, Pakistan Army practically showed its strength and leverage in all spheres of the Afghan imbroglio: taking on militant groups within the country, incarcerating Afghan Taliban leadership, strangulating the NATO supply line, and lastly arresting America’s independent intelligence operations within Pakistan. Although Pakistan had now acted in all tribal agencies of FATA except NW, it clearly discriminated between militant groups targeting the Pakistani state and those targeting Afghanistan. Thus suggesting that Pakistan’s Strategic Depth policy, which seemed to be in disarray following 9/11, was back on track and Pakistan was well positioned to negotiate its interests in Afghanistan and the region.

Rethinking Pakistan’s Strategic Interests

Afghanistan, a land locked gateway between South, Central and West Asia has been a confluence of competing interests of regional states (Central Asian States, Iran, India, China and Pakistan) and international powers (US, Russia). Pakistan’s initial interests in Afghanistan had been based on the territorial security of its unrecognized western border inhabited by 19 tribes living on both sides of the Durand Line. While America left the region following Soviet withdrawal, its sponsored Jihad, the ideological warfare that it had helped groom with Saudi Wahabi ideology and ISI’s logistical expertise was continued by Pakistan for its own strategic interests in the region. Although Pakistan had gradually left the secular ideals of its founder increasingly using Islam for bringing together a multinational state before the 1980s Afghan war, the sponsorship of Deobandi-Wahabi ideology mixed with militancy training and funding facilitation by the State had created a huge Jihad industry. This industry allowed Pakistan to gain Strategic Depth in Afghanistan and to keep India bogged down in the Kashmir border conflict throughout the 1990s but with tremendous internal costs.

As 9/11 brought the West back to Afghanistan primarily to undo the same ideological militant infrastructure it had helped germinate, it left Pakistan’s regional policy executed through ideological non-state actors in tatters while also threatening Pakistan’s territorial security. Musharraf allayed the territorial threat by joining the American “War on Terror” but America’s expedient policy framework which excluded the Taliban from the Bonn process, which Lakhtar Brahimi aptly phrased “the original sin”, led to a hostile Kabul dispensation. Further, sensing America’s lack of long term interest in Afghanistan by not putting needed boots on the ground and more importantly by shifting strategic priority to Iraq left Pakistan Army with no choice but to preserve its blood line in Afghanistan, especially when its arch enemy India was closing its grip by opening consulates near the Pakistan border and making investments which could bypass Pakistan’s strategic location as the transit trade route for energy rich Central Asia. As Pakistan’s competition for influence in the region vastly outweighed the country’s interests in the “War on Terror”, its perceived policy ambivalence towards militants was in actuality a conscious decision as Pakistan Army never considered Al-Qaeda, the Afghan Taliban or the Punjabi Taliban a threat to the State. But a forced closing of Kashmir Jihad at the threat of war with India and the incursions in FATA to net Al-Qaeda primarily to show its support for the “War on Terror” to America, redirected some militant factions to instead focus on the Pakistani State and security apparatus. Pakistan’s elite
perceived that targeting of the Pakistani state had been because of its alliance with US rather than the militants wanting State power\textsuperscript{102}. Thus Pakistan’s implicit policy has since been to convince all militant groups to concentrate their energies in Afghanistan while tackling anti-state groups who fail to understand Pakistan’s compulsion vis-à-vis America\textsuperscript{103}. Taliban still fit Pakistan’s interest well within the Strategic Depth framework, allowing Pakistan’s influence in Kabul following NATO withdrawal, check Pushtun nationalism, provide access to Central Asia and facilities for Kashmir bound militants\textsuperscript{104}. But does Pakistan want to have the same scenario in Afghanistan as the 1990s when its intelligence agency was deeply linked in an Afghan civil war (along with other regional players) while being diplomatically isolated for supporting the Taliban? The Pakistan Army Chief Kiyani while subscribing to Strategic Depth defined it as “a border we don’t need to worry about” indicating his interest in a peaceful, stable and friendly Afghanistan rather than its descent into obscurantism\textsuperscript{105}. He has stated that a gradual transition within the military establishment is under way while hinting a policy change towards non-state actors, saying that national defense will not be outsourced\textsuperscript{106}. But Pakistan still perceives Afghanistan as a battleground for influence with India as Kiyani told Obama in their meeting that US was not addressing his strategic imperatives (vis-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table3: Pakistan’s Burden of War</th>
<th>2007–8 (Rs in Billion)</th>
<th>2009–10 (Rs in Billion)</th>
<th>% increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct Cost of War on Terror</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Potential) cost compensation to victims</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of damage to property and infrastructure</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher cost of defence</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher cost of police</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher cost of private security</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Cost of War on Terror</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs to local economies</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of economic growth in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of IDPs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>n.a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs of higher risk perceptions</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall in private investment</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall in stock market capitalization</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cost of War (Pak Rs.)</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>841</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cost of War (US$ billion)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Bilateral Assistance (US$ billion)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan’s Burden of War (US$ billion)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Karachi: Social Policy & Development Centre (SPDC) 2010
This India centric security thinking which dictates Pakistan’s Afghan policy, leading to the support of the Taliban in Afghanistan and reluctance of the army to become a counter insurgency force, thus following containment rather than eradication of militants at home (military refuses to act against Lashkar-e-Taiba till Kashmir and other issues with India are resolved) is based on a number of assumptions. First, the reconcilable ideological militant groups can be separated from the irreconcilable, who can then be tackled independently without affecting the relationship with the others. Second, Pakistan alone has the strength to compete with the interests of the sole superpower, NATO and regional players who all now see ideological non-state actors as a threat to their security in a post 9/11 security environment.

Experts agree that multiple groups constitute the insurgency in Afghanistan and FATA but only Shahzad accepts that a gulf is possible between the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. The Qandahari group is less inclined towards Al-Qaeda and its foot soldiers are less ideologically inclined than the Pakistan based groups. Others argue that Mullah Omar, although key to reconciliation has little power on the ground which rests with the neo-Taliban (the new generation Sirajuddin Haqqani versus Jalaluddin Haqqani) who predominantly subscribe to the pan-Islamic Al-Qaeda ideology, the Haqqani group especially has close ties with both Al-Qaeda and TTP. Baitullah Mehsud got three members of the Haqqani family released in a prisoner swap with Pakistan Army. Thus most experts dismiss Pakistan’s strategic thinking that homegrown militants can be crushed while maintaining Afghan Taliban proxy for final settlement.

America’s war in Afghanistan initially focused on the elimination of Al-Qaeda but has since evolved into an Af-Pak framework. This includes both a stable Afghanistan devoid of terrorist bases and civil war, as well as a stable Pakistan, which does not support militant groups, America’s concern regarding Pakistan, with some terming it the biggest foreign policy challenge of the 21st century is because of Pakistan’s mix of the fastest growing nuclear arsenal in the world and being home to a large number of terrorist organizations. This concern is now shared by other European capitals and the change of focus can be termed from the fact that Lashkar-e-Taiba is now mentioned alongside Al-Qaeda in most policy reviews. Mindful of its current weak position vis-a-vis Pakistan, which enjoys unusually strong leverage with both sides of the Afghan war, and could jeopardize the American war through reduction of intelligence cooperation and closing of NATO’s logistical route, America pursues a carrot heavy strategic dialogue to encourage Pakistan towards its own policy interests while strategizing to decrease its reliance on Pakistan. America had lost leverage in the region because of the earlier deterioration of Pak-India, US-Iran, US-China and Russia-NATO relations and thus roping in China and others to pressure Pakistan or to defuse regional tension through Pakistan India peace have not yet borne fruit. But on the contrary, American policy analysts have also put the option of cut & run in Afghanistan, putting Pakistan on the list of states sponsoring terrorism and forming a strategic alliance with India to contain a dangerous Pakistan on the table.

Additionally, America is aware of its long-term leverage over Pakistan as 1/4 of Pakistan exports are US bound, 1/3 of foreign investment comes from US, and additionally it has the power to use IFI’s to isolate Pakistan or curtail military assistance stalling Pak-Army’s American made weaponry for lack of spare parts.

Thus both assumptions underlying the current policy framework are weak, but even if they are granted, what can not be looked over is the internal cost of the Strategic Depth policy framework which discriminates between good versus bad ideological militants and uses non-state actors as a key tool for foreign policy objectives. Terrorism cant not be countered when suicide bomber training camp in Shawal, SW is run jointly by Sirajuddin Haqqani, a strategic asset for Pakistan Army focusing on Afghanistan and Qari Hussain, a hunted TTP militant commander responsible for most suicide attacks within Pakistan. Such
paradoxical security framework is a step up from the 1990s instead making Pakistan the Strategic Depth for Afghan and international Islamist militants, and leading to State’s loss of sovereignty over vast areas. It has allowed domestic terrorism for strategic needs in Afghanistan to the effect that militant’s practically gained control over people’s lives in FATA and Swat by eliminating traditional leadership. But more importantly, it is this subservience of domestic security to the Strategic Depth framework that has led to immeasurable costs in the socio-cultural domain. The continuing need of Deobandi–Wahabi schools for Jihad has led to increased religious extremism, militarization and criminality in society as other sects have followed suit in safeguarding their own communities. Sectarianism and violence earlier restricted to Sunni–Shia has taken on a new dimension as other than the Ahmedi and Shia, now the Bareilvi sect (Sufi saint mausoleums and Eid Milad–un–Nabi) is also being targeted while religious scholars (the ulema), who have passed injunctions against suicide bombings have been killed irrespective of their schools of thought. Since 2001, a total of 2,564 citizens have been killed while 5,071 have been injured in sectarian violence, triple the casualty figure of 1989–2000. Thus a change in Strategic Depth policy is necessary for Pakistan’s internal stability. While Pakistan Army as an institution is skilled in the realism of international relations, as it forgoes its ideological partner when faced with a territorial threat; It closes down and reforms sections of the ISI when faced with internal threat and insubordination; still it fails to understand that its strategic policy framework is flawed and hurting the country. An important factor in this regard is the civil military power imbalance and a lack of trust between the two institutions. The army has managed the Afghan and Kashmir policy since Zia’s time leading to a lack of rethinking and reassessment for the last 30 years as policy change is primarily an outcome of pluralism, opposition and peaceful transfer of power, the beauty of democracy. It is also perfectly understandable for a military institution to be strategically trained in a zero sum game with its arch enemy, but for that to be unchallenged State policy for decades is anathema to growth and progress of any nation. This can be judged from the fact that all democratically elected leaders since the last 30 years have either extended or accepted peace overtures towards India and Zardari’s foreign policy agenda also includes peace with India, no Taliban safe havens in Pakistan and good relations with America. But the civil political leadership has yet to gain the confidence of the powerful security establishment and lacks the institutional strength to forcefully make a case for policy change, thus the strategic policy role stays with the military.

As Pakistan’s competition for influence in the region vastly outweighed the country’s interests in the “War on Terror”, its perceived policy ambivalence towards militants was in actuality a conscious decision as Pakistan Army never considered Al-Qaeda, the Afghan Taliban or the Punjabi Taliban a threat to the State.

As the end game in Afghanistan nears, Pakistan would be well advised to understand that the root of its current predicament lies in its undefined borders in the West and East and thus its leverage should be used towards these ends. Although Pakistan is in a strong position to gain strategic space in Afghanistan, the Pakistan military should understand that this leverage is an outcome of excessive internal costs and its unaccountability. Pakistan should not confuse this short-term leverage with long-term influence, which is dependent on internal strength and strong diplomatic relations based on mutual interests. For this, Pakistan would need to bury the Strategic Depth policy framework to explore and exercise the following set of policy options: First, make a clean break from using ideological non-state actors for its policy objectives. Second, enhance its diplomatic relations (US, Saudi, and China), which were built on the foundations of security arrangements with security agenda usually trumping economic interests, to encompass a broad development focus. Third, Pakistan desperately needs to put its internal house in order and to that end seeking peace with India, which is involved in proxy wars with Pakistan and can exploit its internal troubles, would be a desirable goal. Finally, Pakistan needs to evolve a comprehensive counter-terrorism and extremism strategy, foremost being integration of FATA with the rest of the country and strengthening.
its public institutions to create the 2 million yearly jobs\textsuperscript{132} required for its current demographics. This demands a paradigm shift, which is not possible with a war in its own neighborhood that has caused 9,410 civilian and 3,325 security agencies fatalities\textsuperscript{133} while displacing more than 3 million people from their homes (although most have gone back). Pakistan continues and could leverage in Afghan­istan in strategic terms, however, time is running out and it has already lost the 1st decade of the 21st century with $43bn\textsuperscript{134} (Also see Table 3) as the cumulative cost of war to the economy and additionally reduced public services spending (due to higher spending on security) leading to Pakistan most likely missing its Millennium Development Goals 2015 targets\textsuperscript{135}. Thus there is a growing realization in Pakistan that a continuation of war in Afghanistan does not serve its national interest.\textsuperscript{136} On the other hand America has yet to devise a regional solution to allay Pakistan’s security concerns\textsuperscript{137} vis-à-vis India. It is pushing ahead with combat troop withdrawal date to 2014\textsuperscript{138} buying itself more time. Pakistan still has time and opportunity to re-strategize and devise an innovative policy towards Afghanistan combing regional and bilateral approach, whereby Afghanistan and India are seen as part of the solution to dismantle and disrupt terror­ism in the region and have stake in peace and sustain­able development of the region. Such a vision demands broad internal consensus, which implies that the civilian government and the Pakistan Army must act in unison and concert, supplementing and supporting each other and pursing shared goals.

### End Notes

1. The Durand Line was agreed upon as the border between Afghanistan and British India in 1893 to be in effect for a 100 years till 1993.

2. Haq, Sadr Pakistan General Zia ul. Speeches Vol. 1 5 July - 31 Dec 1977. In the founding address to Council of Islamic Ideology on Sept 29, 1979 he is quoted “We want to make Pakistan as experiment in Islam”. On July 5, 1977 quoted “Pakistan came into being and will stay for Islam. Islamic System is necessary”.


6. Jalal, Ayeha. The State of Martial Rule, Lahore: Vanguard Books 1991. For Zia, Pakistan & Islam were two sides of the same coin. Protection & integrity of both was the task of military establishment alone.

7. ibid, p. 375.


10. The Tableeghi Jamaat and Jamiat -Ulema-Islam (JUI) are Deobandi groups while the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) though eschewing sectarian is much closer to Deobandi, Wahabi groups in ideology than the Barelvi or Shia. Among the Islamists, JUI & JI have primarily influenced State policy as elected government or through the support of dictators.


13. Retd. Yaqub Khan as foreign minister and VA Jaffery as head of the finance ministry.


16. Hussain, Zahid. Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle with Militant Islam, Lahore: Vanguard 2007, p. 27. General Nasir was sacked in May 1993 and some 1100 ISI operative were retired or sent back to their army units.

17. It is pushing ahead with combat troop withdrawal date to 2014 buying itself more time. Pakistan still has time and opportunity to re-strategize and devise an innovative policy towards Afghanistan combing regional and bilateral approach, whereby Afghanistan and India are seen as part of the solution to dismantle and disrupt terrorism in the region and have stake in peace and sustainable development of the region. Such a vision demands broad internal consensus, which implies that the civilian government and the Pakistan Army must act in unison and concert, supplementing and supporting each other and pursing shared goals.

18. Hussain, Zahid. Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle with Militant Islam, Lahore: Vanguard 2007, p. 38. On the other hand America has yet to devise a regional solution to allay Pakistan’s security concerns vis-à-vis India. It is pushing ahead with combat troop withdrawal date to 2014 buying itself more time. Pakistan still has time and opportunity to re-strategize and devise an innovative policy towards Afghanistan combing regional and bilateral approach, whereby Afghanistan and India are seen as part of the solution to dismantle and disrupt terrorism in the region and have stake in peace and sustainable development of the region. Such a vision demands broad internal consensus, which implies that the civilian government and the Pakistan Army must act in unison and concert, supplementing and supporting each other and pursing shared goals.
41. A Pakistan-India war at this time would have achieved Al-Qaeda’s civilizational war paradigm through an America-India-Israel (the ‘Christian-Hindu-Jew’) alliance versus a nuclear armed Muslim state. Still, that this later came to dominate the conspiracy theory whirlwind behind terrorist attacks in Pakistan attests either to the dominance of Islamism in the Pakistani public discourse or to the sponsorship of this discourse by the dominant military establishment.
40. ibid, p. 107.
36. ibid.
23. ibid, p. 91.
21. ibid, p. 107.
19. ibid, p. 385.
17. ibid, p. 215.
15. Jaish Al-Muslim was publicly and officially launched on Sept 17, 2003 in Peshawar.
13. Jones, Seth G. & Fair, C. Christine. Counterinsurgency in Pakistan, Santa Monica: RAND Corporation 2010 p. 74. A Lt. Gen went to the militants’ location and exchanged gifts. He thus accepted the madrassa and associated clergy as the new power in the area while subscribing legitimacy to the militants as negotiating partner rather than tribal chiefs.
12. Shahzad, Syed Saleem. ‘Another deadly blow for Pakistan’. The Asia Times Oct 31, 2006. http://www.atimes.com. Last Accessed on March 15, 2011. While Nek Mohammad was killed by a Drone strike in South Waziristan, the Pakistani Army took credit for the killing. Similarly Baitullah Mehsud was targeted by Drone few days after a peace agreement with Pak Army. Additionally the Oct 2006 American helicopter gunship strike in Damadola, Bajaur came two days before Pakistan Army and militants were to sign a peace deal.
10. Shahzad, Syed Saleem. ‘Hostage deaths add to Musharraf’s woes’. The Asia Times October 14, 2004. http://www.atimes.com. Last Accessed on March 15, 2011. Argues that September 2004 bombing by Pakistani planes leading to civilian deaths among the Mehads led the Mehud youth to join the insurgency which was earlier limited to few Waziri sub-tribes. Even Baitullah Mehsud had earlier disagreed with Abdullah Mehsud in targeting Pakistani forces only to change his opinion later.
1. Karzai’s (much criticized for being anti-Pakistan in the media) attended the inauguration of President Zardari signaling government’s intention of good relations with Afghanistan while PPP-ANP-MQM have long been considered Indophile (India loving) parties by the military establishment.
8. Karzai’s (much criticized for being anti-Pakistan in the media) attended the inauguration of President Zardari signaling government’s intention of good relations with Afghanistan while PPP-ANP-MQM have long been considered Indophile (India loving) parties by the military establishment.
86. Pakistan military’s peace agreements with both Commander Hafiz Gul Bahadur of North Waziristan and Mullah Nazir of South Waziristan stayed intact during the South Waziristan operation.
95. ‘Drones killed 98e civilians, 414 terrorists’ The News, Jan 03, 2011.
96. Shahzad, Syed Saleem. ‘All roads lead to Pakistan’. The Asia Times April 7, 2009.
114. Pakistan military’s peace agreements with both Commander Hafiz Gul Bahadur of North Waziristan and Mullah Nazir of South Waziristan stayed intact during the South Waziristan operation.
124. Among others, Maulana Hasan Jan, a deobandi (JUI-F) was killed in 2007, Maulana Naeemi, a barelvi was killed in 2009.
136. It seems time is in favor of Taliban, India and Saudi Arabia’s interests. India’s costs in Afghan involvement are negligible while its adversary Pakistan bears the brunt of war. Saudi Arabia would rather have Al-Qaeda stationed in Afghan-Pakistan border than Yemen. America & West have a falling public support for war as well as high costs in the time of an economic downturn. Afghan citizens have a war fatigue as Afghanistan has been at war since 1989. Pakistan’s internal governance problems are increasing with insurgency in Pushtun & Baloch areas, its economic disparity vis-a-vis India increasing drastically. Pakistan needs an end to war for development and for putting its internal house in order.