

## **Pakistan and Nature of the State: Revisionism, Jihad and Governance**

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The course of democracy has never run smooth in Pakistan. Every time the state is ruled by a dictator, the urge for democratic governance increases. Yet, each democratic interregnum has unfolded amid controversy and wrangling till it is no longer tolerable for the state. Ironically, looking back, scholars find only the periods of non-democratic rule more economically successful. The normal state of the state in Pakistan appears therefore to be non-democratic. While the variations in the mode of governance introduced by dictators to achieve acceptance and legitimacy have been studied, there is still space for studying the changing nature of the state itself<sup>1</sup>.

After the creation of Pakistan in 1947, Pakistan faced many problems associated with newly independent states in history. Two of them, lack of funds and opposition from India, later became a part of its nationalism, again in line with nationalisms in history: the consciousness of a 'painful birth'. The most significant factor in this consciousness was the war with India over Kashmir. It determined the nature of Pakistani

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond Hinnesbusch, 'Authoritarian Persistence, Democratization: Theory and the Middle East: An Overview and Critique', in *Democratisation in the Muslim World*, Frederic Volpi & Francesco Cavatorta (eds.), Routledge, 2007, p.12. He states in this paper, 'authoritarian regimes can adapt to new conditions; specifically, their political liberalisation or pluralisation is, for structural reasons, more likely to be a substitute for democratisation than a stage on the way to it'. Shades of this would be observable in the Muslim world as well as in the non-Muslim world but one has to agree that Muslims are more vulnerable to this substitution.

nationalism at an early stage. The unspoken ‘mission statement’ of Pakistan became based on ‘revisionism’ – a policy position requiring change in the geographic disposition determining the boundaries of the state – positing ‘injustice’ of the annexation of Kashmir by India and promising its reclamation through a ‘just war’.

Like other states, nationalism determined the nature of the ‘revisionist’ state in Pakistan. All the classical features associated with nationalism were there: India was designated as the ‘enemy state’ whose survival meant end of the survival of Pakistan because India was not reconciled to the existence of Pakistan; the use of the ‘external enemy’ as the cementing factor inside a multi-ethnic Pakistan.<sup>2</sup> From the expenditures made on defence in the first 25 years, one can say that this revisionist doctrine embedded inside Pakistani nationalism invested the Pakistan army with special importance. Over time, this developed into an institutional supremacy that periodically becomes contentious.

Pakistani revisionism placed a tough task on the army and shaped its outlook for years to come. It was required to challenge a state many times larger than Pakistan, a state it could not win a war against or annex as a trophy of war. Since these factors of ‘fundamental inequality’ normally determine the strategy of an army, strategy was discarded by the Pakistan army to enable it to challenge the Indian army tactically. In consequence, the Pakistan army became a ‘tactical’ organization whose officers had more panache than intellect, in line with the Islamic concept of jihad that relied on faith rather than on the calculus of relative military power. It fought ‘niche’ or ‘set-piece’ wars with India on the basis of Pakistan’s revisionist nationalism with results that could be interpreted vaguely as victories. India’s abstention from adopting a territorial-revisionist doctrine of defence, after the Chinese annexation of territory in Kashmir in 1962, prevented the Indian army from becoming paramount and ‘tactical’ in the same manner as Pakistan. On the other hand, Afghanistan by adopting the revisionism of Pakhtunistan vis-à-vis

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<sup>2</sup> Dr Ishrat Hussain, ‘Public Policy and Social Sciences’, in *Critical Perspectives on Social Sciences in Pakistan*, Pervaiz Tahir, Tahir Kamran & Rizwan Omer Gondal (eds.) (Lahore: GC University 2008), p.72. He states in the above article, ‘Since its inception, Pakistan has faced the monumental task to spell out an identity different from the Indian identity. Born from the division of the old civilization of India, Pakistan has struggled for constructing its own culture, a culture which would not only be different from the Indian Culture but one that the whole world would acknowledge’.

its eastern border, suffered at the hands of a much superior military power in Pakistan.<sup>3</sup>

The Cold War era helped Pakistan to continue adherence to its nationalism which also meant yielding paramountcy to the army. The army 'took over' every time it needed to remind the civilian leaders that they had reneged on nationalism. Every time it took over it also touched base with its own 'tactical' nature and provoked war with India. The fall of East Pakistan should have shaken Pakistan out of the groove of its revisionist thinking, but it encouraged revanchism instead. Under civilian rule the army was once again strengthened by this instinct for revenge. The nationalist myth of binding the nation on the basis of the 'external enemy' began to fall apart. Communities inside Pakistan that had suffered because of Pakistan's excessive attention to the 'Indian threat' began to challenge the civilian rule.

Another aspect of Pakistani nationalism was its ideology, based on Islam but in no small measure propelled by a desire to differentiate Pakistan from India and prevent its 'relapse' into India. Islamic governance, based on the doctrine of non-separation of state and church, became an early intellectual challenge but could not be resolved through creative re-interpretation. The army, already in the habit of using tribal *lashkars* or non-state actors in national wars with India, consolidated Pakistan's nationalism by adding to it the element of religion. It became the guardian of frontiers as well as ideology. This was completely in tune with the Pakistan's post-1947 Muslim ethos. After the 1971 war in East Pakistan, the Pakistan army seriously inducted the concept of the non-state actors into its tactical philosophy of 'death by a thousand cuts' on the presumption that India was already in the process of falling apart.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ashley J. Tellis in *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture* (OUP) tells us that India has rationalized its anti-status quo stance by unofficially accepting that the territory it lost in Aksai Chin in the Jammu and Kashmir sector was of more strategic value to China (because of the route connecting it with Tibet) than to India. It 'compensated' itself with the thought that the 90,000 km territory claimed by China in Arunachal Pradesh in north-eastern India was still under India's effective control and was of more strategic value to India. This 'adjustment' has allowed India to normalize trade relations with China and minimize its contradictions with its militarily much superior neighbour in the north.

<sup>4</sup> Public statements by ex-army chiefs like Aslam Beg and ex-ISI chiefs like Hamid Gul keep referring to scores of insurgencies inside India which will one day unhinge India. Hafiz Said of Jamaatud Dawa repeated this in his article in daily *Jinnah* in the 6 December 2009 issue. Pakistan simply has to deliver a cut here and there to get India to implode.

### ***Jihad* and creation of ‘ungoverned spaces’**

The induction of *jihad* into national war had its consequences for the sovereignty of the state and its ‘monopoly of violence’. The formation of *jihadi* militias and their location within civil society after their military training tended to create multiple centres of power in Pakistan. Because of this new phenomenon, the first fissures of loyalty within the Pakistan army made their appearance. For the first time, during the war in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union, a kind of ‘reverse-indoctrination’ in favour of the *mujahideen* became observable inside the army: the ‘handlers’ became won over to the cause of *jihad* in supersession of the authority of the state. What comes first: Islam or the state? By the 1990s, public discussions showed that that more and more Pakistanis were inclined to say that they were Muslims first and Pakistanis later<sup>5</sup>. In the 2000s, because of the proliferation of *madrassas* as nurseries of *jihad* and as intellectual guides for the common man, the TV channels began to reflect this subordination of the state as an accepted value in Pakistan.

Pakistan always had ‘ungoverned spaces’ on its territory. This is where the non-state actors came from in the 1947, 1965 and 1999 wars against India. It is moot whether the retention of these territories was propelled by the ‘civilian’ desire to preserve the traditional way of life of the tribes or the ‘military’ need to obtain non-state actors. However after the Afghan war, in which Pakistan participated covertly together with the United States and its other allies, expanded these ungoverned spaces and brought them into the settled areas. The *madrassas* network, aided by the *mujahideen* militias, partook of the sovereignty of the state, benefited from the additional centres of power they increasingly represented. Allegiance of the army officer became divided and he began to show more loyalty to the Islamic warrior he was handling than to the Pakistan army.<sup>6</sup>

The rise of the ‘ungoverned spaces’ as bastions of *jihadi* power after 2001 began another process: the tribalization of Pakistan’s settled

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<sup>5</sup> Army General Kayani repeated that on visiting the dead of Rawalpindi’s Parade Lane mosque in December 2009, saying that the army would die for Islam and Pakistan, and confirming that the priority of faith before the state was accepted.

<sup>6</sup> *Herald*, April 2009. Major General (Retd) Faisal Alvi revealed that he had written a letter to the army chief saying that serving generals had joined up with the Taliban. Alvi was later killed by Major (Retd) Ashiq who worked for another retired army officer – denied by the Pakistan army – Ilyas Kashmiri now located with the Taliban in North Waziristan.

areas and the retreat of state governance from the provinces. This new trend in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA) was carried on the Islamic demand for *sharia* that challenged the Constitution of Pakistan and its implementation of *sharia* through the Federal Shariat Court. The *jihadi sharia* was based on the enforcement of ‘*marufaat*’ – not in the Constitution – as well as the punishment of ‘*munkiraat*’ – contained in the Constitution. By 2005, all the clergy in Pakistan, including the non-*jihadi* section, believed in the enforcement of ‘*marufaat*’ and thus indirectly rejected the Constitution. Tribalization of Pakistan was now quite visible as suicide-bombing shifted to the cities. The NWFP did not only lose the Malakand region of PATA, it lost most of the cities outside Peshawar to the Taliban, including important military and air force bases in Kohat and Bannu.<sup>7</sup>

There are two trends that set Pakistan apart from the Third World norm as a state with problems specific to itself: its permissive stance towards the expansion of ‘ungoverned spaces’ and its acquisition of nuclear weapons. Both incidentally favoured the environment of *jihad* at the expense of the sovereignty of the state since *jihad* was fought by non-state actors. The acquisition of nuclear weapons was actually more suited to Pakistan as a revisionist state vis-à-vis India than to India which had renounced revisionism vis-à-vis China. (Why India did not choose to challenge China, many times more powerful than itself, makes for a separate study reflecting non-dominance of the Indian army in the state because of the nature of Indian nationalism.) The ‘*niche*’ war doctrine of Pakistan army could now be carried out under a nuclear umbrella. After failing to tackle aggression after bilateral nuclearization, India has now

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<sup>7</sup> Khaled Ahmed, ‘Islam and its function of Retribalisation’, *The Friday Times*, 21 September 2007, After Islamization, and the part played in it by Saudi Arabia through the manipulation of the Council of Islamic Ideology, the rest of Pakistan too began its backward journey to tribalism. Jirgas and panchayats began to raise their ugly head as parallel systems of justice with the ideal of revenge-seeking at the centre of their codes of conduct. The modern state began to be pulled down gradually as the Islamic state came into its own. The Pakistani society, honour-based because of the persistence of its collective tribal memory and low ‘secular’ literacy, began to say goodbye to the municipal law already dysfunctional because of lack of reforms in the institutions that ran it. The madrassa saw itself as the presiding authority over this retribalization and instrumentalize the concept of jihad to give itself the power of the executive.

decided to confront Pakistan with Pakistan's own concept of 'limited war'.<sup>8</sup>

### **Sacrifice of governance for national security**

While external sovereignty of the state is a myth, no state can exist without internal sovereignty. Before the 20th century international order became consolidated, the only measure of a state's existence was its writ: its ability of governance over territory it claimed, including taxation and law and order. The adoption of *jihad* by the state was directly instrumental in the gradual deprivation of the writ of the state. It began in Balochistan and the Tribal Areas and crept into the cities in the shape of 'no-go' areas. Balochistan suffered as a province owing to many factors but not least because Pakistan's security concerns were focused more on the eastern border; and its only concern for Balochistan was expressed through the presence there of the Pakistan army and Frontier Constabulary (FC). The political consensus in Balochistan today is against the presence of the police, against the presence of the army and the FC, clearly a signalling for a status far beyond the confines of federalism. And when India decided in favour of 'limited war' with Pakistan it opted for activism in Balochistan.

Governance depends on the writ of the state which precedes governance. Governance in regions without writ of the state or writ shared with non-state actors will be flawed. In the Tribal Areas and in Malakand for at least two years, the local infrastructure was not in the control of the state, there was no law and order and people could survive only by renouncing their loyalty to the state of Pakistan. In Balochistan, the infrastructure is under challenge and assets of the federal state are unprotected despite the presence there of the army and its paramilitary adjuncts. The police is either non-existent outside Quetta and some other cities or under challenge from the system of levies the Baloch leaders favour. Private armies are the norm and the only order that works is the law of deterrence and intimidation. If you add up Balochistan, the Tribal Areas of FATA and PATA plus most cities of the NWFP, the no-go areas of Sindh and the city of Karachi, and an increasing thinning of the state in South Punjab, you come up with nearly 60 percent of Pakistan without proper governance, or areas where governance is not possible because of the weakness of the writ of the state.

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<sup>8</sup> *Daily Times*, 25 November 2009. 'Indian Army chief General Deepak Kapoor's address during a defence seminar indicated that the possibility of a limited nuclear war was 'very much a reality in South Asia'.

Governance, at the primitive level, means law and order. After that, comes the ability to collect taxes, especially direct taxes linked to people's incomes; tax collection is also an indicator of the 'outreach' of the state. Both factors of governance have been lacking in Pakistan for over a quarter of a century. The Third World state is generally deficient in tax-collection and, to some extent, its ability to achieve effective executive and judicial outreach. But Pakistan has certain characteristics that it doesn't share with the Third World states; it shares them rather with the failed or failing states like Somalia, Chad and Afghanistan. The first is absence of law and order in large rural and urban areas; the second is the prostration of the judiciary and the executive in the face of intimidation from the terrorists and *jihadi* organizations. The third factor that is unique to Pakistan is that foreign terrorists and Pakistani non-state actors are able to carry out terrorist acts outside Pakistan, as far afield as Europe and the United States. This opens Pakistan to invasion from the aggrieved states under international law.

Pakistan is now subject to insurgencies aimed at changing the map of the state from the inside. There are non-state actors, meant originally to strike outside Pakistan, who are now striking inside Pakistan on behalf of the very foreign states once targeted by Pakistan through them. There are non-state actors who are labeled foreigners but are a part of the Islamist-terrorist global movement fighting the West in general and the United States in particular. They are supposed to be located in some parts of Pakistan where the state doesn't have its writ; they are also said to be located in other parts of Pakistan where they are protected by the intelligence agencies of Pakistan. This development is complicated by Pakistan's policy of dividing the Taliban into two categories, the good and the bad Taliban, ironically the bad ones being Pakistani Taliban. The dominant sentiment in Pakistan is anti-American which means it finds itself handicapped in inhibiting militant elements opposed to the United States.

Anti-Americanism has brought disadvantages in its wake. The US policy in the region is in lockstep with the thinking of the other regional and non-regional states threatened by terrorism. Adopting an anti-American posture is advantageous in Pakistan for politicians as well as institutions looking after or enhancing their turfs. While it is empowering to be anti-American in Pakistan, it comes at the price of isolation at the international level. Given the pattern of economic dependence, Pakistan can ill-afford this isolation. Attention is deflected from this realistic scenario through appeal, once again, to national security – to 'threat from India' – which traditionally trumps threat from economic malfunction. In the absence of a Cold War environment, the

reliance on 'threat from India' is a dangerous introversion since no one among the allies of Pakistan, including the United States, believes it.

Does appeal to 'threat from India' create the sort of national solidarity it did in the past?<sup>9</sup> From evidence on the ground, it does not, but it does unite all the centres of power against the incumbent government. The provinces, demanding autonomy after half a century of uneven economic growth, apparently feel no need to curb their criticism of the federation and the federal executive in the national security interest. However, the 'centres of power', appearing on the scene during the struggle to remove General Musharraf in 2007, use the traditional anti-Indian rhetoric with the new anti-American rhetoric to attack and destabilize the federal government. Pakistani nationalism has run its course and insurrections in Balochistan and other regions do not respond to it, affirming the failure of 'nationhood' in Pakistan over time because of the imposition of the national security state from above. The media at times joins the establishment in Islamabad in insisting that Pakistan be considered a national security state in order to maintain the posture of hostility towards India.<sup>10</sup>

### **Pakistan's six pillars of the state**

All states have three mutually balancing 'centres of power' or pillars of the state: the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. As the nationalist and ideological pressures mounted in Pakistan, a fourth informal pillar was added: the army. Over time, this evolved into what is called the establishment, supplemented by other permanent institutions of the state: the military-bureaucratic pressure group. The shibboleth of

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<sup>9</sup> Christoph Jaffrelot, *A History of Pakistan and its Origins*, Anthem Press, 2004, p.37. 'The limits of national integration explain the campaigns against 'others', regularly brought into play by Pakistani leaders in order to weld the unity of the country once more. These campaigns are launched against 'bad Muslims such as the Ahmadi or against the Hindus or the Christians. The orchestration of this antagonism is all of a piece with the perpetuation of the conflict over Kashmir. Pakistan, therefore, might well be a case of nationalism without a nation'.

<sup>10</sup> Chief Editor *Jinnah* (8 Nov 2009) wrote that PPP spokesperson Fauzia Wahab told the press that Pakistan was not a security state but an economy-based state. He took strong exception to this and observed that Ms Wahab should not have said this in the open. Because not terming Pakistan a security state could harm the PPP government. He stated that if Ms Wahab had said it in rage (*tap gai*) she should learn to control herself. He thought an economy-based Pakistani state would have to normalize relations with India and that was not acceptable.

‘security’ brought the intelligence agencies of the state to the top of the establishment hierarchy. Today ISI plays the role of the strategic mind of the establishment, while an increasingly active MI confirms the dominance of the army in the establishment. Two more centres of power have been added to the pillars-of-the-state theory: the media and the *jihadi* organizations. Out of the ‘six pillars’ in 2009, five were intensely anti-American and anti-Indian in varying degrees. The executive, seen as pro-American and pro-India, was seriously undermined by this imbalance in the checks-and-balance mechanism of the state and by calls for ‘mid-term’ elections in the media, which accuses the opposition in the legislature of being too soft on a renegade government.

Today, the ‘existential’ pillars of the state are: 1) Legislature, 2) Executive, 3) Judiciary, 4) Army plus Establishment, 5) the Media and 6) *Jihadi* Organizations. The rise of the media as arbiter and manufacturer of pressure through ‘public opinion’ is dated to the years in power of General Musharraf who allowed a proliferation of TV channels and, through them, dominance of the Urdu-medium opinion expressed by right-leaning ideological columns. The first instalment of TV anchors came from the top-rung Urdu columnists; later, as the channels proliferated, second- and third-grade columnists too found their place among the ‘mind-benders’ of the nation. The rise of the *jihadi* Organizations was made possible gradually over the years because of the use made of them in the covert and low-intensity wars staged by the Pakistan army in Afghanistan and Kashmir. The rise of the *jihadi* militias as ‘centres of power’ arose over the years because of the protection they were given by the state in their intercourse with civil society. The judiciary too became subordinated to them in the countryside where seminaries attached to the *jihadis* could force the lower judiciary to deliver verdicts of their liking. One can say that even the higher judiciary did succumb in many cases to their intimidation<sup>11</sup>.

The campaign to oust Musharraf brought together three entities: the media, the agitating lawyers and the judiciary. There was support from civil society to this movement as the campaign symbolized rejection of military rule and elevation of a judiciary that broke the past

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<sup>11</sup> Justice (Retd) Bhatti of Lahore High Court who allowed bail to Christian Salamat Masih accused of blasphemy was killed after retirement in his chamber. In the case of sectarian killer Riaz Basra of Lashkar Jhangvi a number of judges retired during the hearing of the murder of Iranian consul Sadeq Ganji but did not pronounce judgement. Shia-killers Akram Lahori and Malik Ishaq are about to be released from Multan and Lahore courts in 2009 because the witnesses in the trial have either been killed or have resiled.

tradition of judges submitting to military takeovers. The other support for this movement was not universally recognized, the one coming from the *jihadi* organizations. The *jihadi* organizations were offended by Musharraf's switching-off of the Kashmir *jihad* and his clampdown on the Al Qaeda elements with which the *jihadis* were aligned. The religious parties, as Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) had felt betrayed by him equally after they agreed to be a part of the Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-i-Azam (PML-Q) alliance by not relinquishing charge of his dual army-chief-and-President office. The MMA parties were aligned in differing measures with the *jihadi* organizations and the Taliban and backed the movement for the restoration of the judges fired by Musharraf after his showdown with the chief justice of the Supreme Court, Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry.

After the 2008 general election the PPP government in Islamabad took its time restoring the judges fired by Musharraf and violated the agreement it had signed in this regard with the largest political party in the parliamentary opposition, and the ruling party in Punjab, Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N). As the (PML-N) distanced itself from its traditional rival the PPP and the lawyers stepped up their campaign for the restoration of the judges – this time against the PPP government – the media and the judiciary formed a bond of solidarity. During the 2007 Lal Masjid siege in Islamabad, opposition to Musharraf compelled the TV channels to take a pro-cleric stance, which affected the attitude of the Supreme Court about the Lal Masjid clerics for the same reason. It was in this way that the judiciary, the media, the lawyers and the (PML-N) were seen as 'friendly' by the Taliban, the *jihadi* militias and Al Qaeda. It should be noted that Al Qaeda had taken a stand at the highest level of its leadership on the side of the defiant clerics of Lal Masjid.

The PPP government, in light of the pledge made in the Charter of Democracy (2006) began to make moves to 'normalize' relations with New Delhi, beginning with the Trade Policy of 2008 which the 'establishment' did not like judging from the articles thereafter placed in the press. The trade policy, apart from increasing the tradable items to 2000, envisaged the setting up of an Indian factory near Lahore for the manufacture of CNG-equipped buses. In November 2008, after the Mumbai attacks by Pakistani non-state actors, the government first offered to send the ISI chief to India for consultations, then tried to subordinate the ISI to the Interior Ministry, both actions falling foul of the establishment. Earlier, President Zardari had announced that he was ready to forswear the doctrine of nuclear first strike against India because

he was not scared of India. All these purported ‘policy changes’ were opposed by an angry media remarkable in its uniformity of views.<sup>12</sup>

As observed above, the effect of *jihadi* organizations on the judiciary, especially in the districts, has been a familiar consequence of the state’s waging of covert war. Journalism too has been under the pressure of intimidating tactics in the districts where the *jihadi* militias locate themselves. The English-language press misses out on the districts news because of a lack of reporters with ability to write in English. This ‘blackout’ on the dominance of the *jihadis* in the countryside is also owed to additional two factors: 1) that the Urdu newspapers do not pay salaries to their district correspondents, forcing them to rely on handouts they receive from people whose news they get printed in the newspapers; and 2) that the intimidated district correspondents work literally as the ‘press branch’ of the *jihadi* militias, printing only news that showed the *jihadis* in a favourable light while attacking their victims, non-Muslims and Shias, as the offending parties.

This has undermined the ‘independence’ of the media the same way as it undermined the ‘independence’ of the lower judiciary in the districts. If the TV channels assert their independence daily by attacking the PPP alliance in government, their ‘independence’ to do so will be legitimized only if they are able to comment freely on the activities of the *jihadi* organizations as well. Most newspapers continue to write ‘militants’ instead of ‘terrorists’ and abstain from referring to the terrorist organizations by name, only applying the term ‘a banned organization’ when reporting an act of extreme violence by one of them. In a paper read at a seminar of the Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) on 18 November 2009 some observations were made about the partisanship or lack of independence of the media in Pakistan:

‘Many media experts would tell you that the newspapers and TV channels in Pakistan do not perceive the Taliban as a threat to the country or its people despite butchering thousands of men, women and children and flouting in the most blatant manner the rights and protection guaranteed by the constitution. Only a few months ago – before the launch of the military operation in Swat – countless newspaper reports and TV talk shows were opposing military action or justifying the illegal and unconstitutional demands of the Taliban when they had effectively ended the writ of the state in Malakand division and were quite literally slaughtering security forces personnel, public representatives and

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<sup>12</sup> Literature on nuclear war does not recognize the credibility of the doctrine of ‘second strike’ and therefore renouncing the doctrine of ‘first strike’ is rendered meaningless.

common citizens. At that time, there were many voices in the media either calling for reaching an understanding, or an agreement with the Taliban and ceding more territory to them, or generally writing and airing favourable reports, either out of fear or on the establishment's behest. It is painfully obvious why elements in the establishment would still be interested in a favourable press for the Taliban and other militant extremists'<sup>13</sup>.

The same paper speaks of the trouble one Lahore-based daily had with the warlord of Khyber Agency, Mangal Bagh, on calling him 'a thief' in its second editorial after noting his ransom-taking activities in the agency and in Peshawar. The terrorist warlord picked up the newspaper's reporter from Peshawar and made him grovel at his feet for hours, asking him to reveal the name of the editorial-writer. The paper finally gave in, apologized to him and placed an embargo on any news thought to be negative about Mangal Bagh and his men. The editors of a Lahore English-language weekly had to abjectly apologize to a *jihadi* organization based in Lahore for writing a critical 'inside' account of the militia. The apology was 'arranged' by the Punjab administration on the condition that similar material never be published again. A similar incident took place in Lahore after an English-language newspaper published a cartoon that gave offence to the wife of the Lal Masjid cleric, Abdul Aziz. The paper came under threat from the *jihadis* ready to die for Lal Masjid.

The PIPS paper goes on to put on record another incident which is thought to be typical of the press in Pakistan: 'A leading English language daily newspaper referred to the Taliban as militants in its coverage. Then one day someone asked the editor's wife if her husband's newspaper did not consider Taliban terrorists and if it did then why would it not say so in its reports. The following day that newspaper started referring to the Taliban as terrorists. The same week, the newspapers' reporters from Malakand and the NWFP pleaded with the main office in Lahore that the Taliban had threatened to kill them if the paper referred to them as terrorists once more. The next day Taliban had got back the tag of militants'.

More blatantly: 'In October 2009, a Taliban group sent two letters to the Lahore Press Club – one on October 12 and the other on October 14 – warning that if the media does not stop portraying us as terrorists... we will blow up offices of journalists and media organisations'. The list of threats and warnings individually sent to

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<sup>13</sup> Najam U Din, 'Mainstream media's response to radical extremism', paper read on 18 Nov 2009 at Holiday Inn Lahore, during PIPS seminar.

journalists and media organizations is a long one. One typical example was the threat to author and columnist Dr Ayesha Siddiqi carried in the publication *Al Qalam* belonging to Jaish-e-Muhammad, rebuking her on writing about the power of Maulana Masood Azhar in Bahawalpur. Dr Siddiqi understood the editorial comment as a threat and was greatly concerned about her safety as were her friends, especially as her book *Military Inc* was considered highly critical of the Pakistan army. It is a pointer to the continuing co-existence of the state with *jihadi* organizations that firing of automatic weapons in November 2009 on the house of columnist Kamran Shafi in Wah was confused between terrorists who rang him after the incident and the state itself.

The creation of uniformity of opinion in the media has directly undermined the authenticity of public opinion in Pakistan<sup>14</sup>. The interaction between moulder of public opinion and public opinion itself has given rise to the censoring of the variant point of view on the TV channels. Columnist Saleem Safi wrote in *Jang* (6 December 2009) that in a TV discussion he held the position that President Karzai would continue to be president of Afghanistan because the Americans had no alternative to him despite tentative reference to Ashraf Ghani and Agha Sherzai. He added that sadly Pakistan and the Taliban too had no alternative to Karzai but had thoughtlessly unleashed propaganda against him. Only when non-Pashtun Abdullah Abdullah came up against Karzai in the elections was it realized in Islamabad that Karzai was still the best option for Pakistan. The TV anchor so disliked his opinion that he cut it out of the show during editing.

When public opinion is not formed in conditions of freedom guaranteed by the writ of the state, it loses its validity and may be extremely dangerous to the survival of the state. It begins to resemble the public opinion produced in fascist and totalitarian states through a coercive state propaganda machinery. In Pakistan, this lack of freedom emanates from the weak writ of the state and the ganging up of the five pillars of state power against the executive, have brought about a dangerous trend towards populism. This has introduced distortion in the objective and expert handling of the affairs of the state, producing the

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<sup>14</sup> Ahmed Rashid, Pakistan conspiracy theories stifle debate, BBC website 27 Nov 2009. 'Switch on any of the dozens of satellite news channels now available in Pakistan. You will be bombarded with talk show hosts who are mostly obsessed with demonising the elected government, trying to convince viewers of global conspiracies against Pakistan led by India and the United States or insisting that the recent campaign of suicide bomb blasts around the country is being orchestrated by foreigners rather than local militants'.

judicial trend of ‘interference’ in areas requiring expertise rather than reference to public opinion. Populism has been defined as a negative trend in democratic societies being run on scientific lines by politicians elected by the people. Its most harmful traits include stereotyping of communities and states and the propagation of these stereotypes through dogmatic assertion. In the case of Pakistan, public opinion thus formed has damaged the economy and curtailed the flexibility of stance in the domain of foreign policy; or it has habituated the people to see the suppleness of foreign policy options as a kind of capitulation and betrayal of national honour (*ghairat*).<sup>15</sup>

### **Conclusion: getting out of India-based threat perception**

Pakistan has ‘discovered’ the political and economic disadvantage of relying on the threat perception established by nationalism. Both the mainstream national parties, after being alternately overthrown from power following their attempts to ‘normalize’ with India, pledged themselves to change the country’s India policy in the Charter of Democracy in 2006. After coming to power in 2008, the PPP government, backed by its traditionally pro-India ally parties, the ANP and the MQM, tried to fulfil the pledge made in the Charter. Apart from his efforts described above, President Zardari became the spearhead of some concrete measures in the direction of normalization. These efforts were in line with such earlier efforts to create security through ‘interdependence’ with India as the project of Iran-Pakistan-Indian gas pipeline.

There was international pressure on Pakistan during the Musharraf era to move towards economic interdependence with India to end the decades of conflict the two countries had engaged in. The World Bank offered liberal credits if any plans were made to build trade routes through Pakistan to enhance its strategic importance as a ‘trade corridor’. Musharraf was thinking in paradigmatic terms about converting Pakistan into a trading hub for the regions lying around it. Since he had begun to build the Gwadar Port – not first conceived by him, let us admit – the network of roads and railway tracks branching from the port seemed to leave India out. But later he began to speak in more general terms and

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<sup>15</sup> Lyrical columnist Irfan Siddiqi wrote in *Jang* (17 October 2009) that the bride of *ghairat* (honour) has left the house of Pakistan. And carrying the *kashkol* (begging bowl) and wandering in the streets of the world is the fate of the nation. We are empty in the pocket of our robes (*tahi-daman*) and cannot live within our means; but then why is the spark of *ghairat* rising from our ashes?

was once privately in favour of conceding the Indian request that a corridor be given it for trading with Central Asia. The idea of the Indian corridor got sidelined because the general deferred to the 'defence' angle and abstained from de-linking it from Kashmir after having strangely established the precedent of de-linking the IPI from Kashmir. As a general he probably knew that he was standing on the edge of an identity-change of the state of Pakistan. Perhaps he realized the limits of how far he could go as a military leader in changing the country from a warrior state to a trading nation.

President Zardari was less half-minded in extending this policy and moving more quickly towards a policy of economic interdependence with India. The SAARC summit had issued a declaration in April 2007 on the desire of the member states to develop 'connectivity' including roads that would link the South Asian region for trade and travel. In May 2009, when he was in Washington and met his Afghan counterpart, President Karzai, he signed an MOU with him which was significant in its strategic outreach. Pakistan and Afghanistan agreed 'to begin talks on a transit trade agreement which will ultimately allow India to use the Wahga-Khyber route for trade with Kabul'. The memorandum committed the two countries 'to achieving a trade transit agreement by the end of the year'. US Secretary of State Ms Hillary Clinton, hosting the round, said: 'This is a historic event. This agreement has been under discussion for 43 years without resolution'.

Although India was not mentioned as a beneficiary in the memorandum, its ghost was very much present on the occasion. Ms Clinton spelled out all the implications – a set of Western beliefs in trade as antidote to war which is not greatly appreciated in Pakistan – of what the opening up of Indo-Afghan trade through Pakistan will imply: 'Nothing opens up an area to economic development better than a good road with good transit rules and an ability to transport goods and people effectively'. The DG ISI of Pakistan was among the delegation led by President Zardari which saw the memorandum being signed by the foreign ministers of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Later, the Foreign Office in Islamabad was compelled to play down the MOU in words that implied non-commitment. Pakistan in 2009 was busy diverting the threat perception from internal elements to India.

Threat perceptions are produced by the mind. National strategies are produced by imagination on the basis of nationalism and geopolitical compulsions. Threats have to be imagined so that armies can be trained and weapons acquired accordingly. Some states have fixed enemies. All dangers are to be interpreted on the yardstick of this fixed enmity. Other nations are flexible and keep changing their perceptions of threat. It can

be Russia today and China tomorrow. External threats can be 'created' to distract from internal threats. Pakistan's permanent danger is supposed to be from India. As a challenger state it is supposed to endanger India to a point where it relents on Kashmir. But the strategy of endangering India has its reverse side, that of an anticipation of counter-threat. From early days, Pakistan endangered India in its tribal northwest. India endangered Pakistan in its tribal Balochistan. Starting 1990, Pakistan enhanced its capacity to endanger. After that Pakistan and India went into a whirlwind of action and reaction. Today it is difficult for most Pakistanis indoctrinated by the media to see who endangers first and who is merely 'reactive'.

After the November 2008 attack in Mumbai by Pakistani non-state actors, India has emerged as a source of renewed threat in Pakistan. Nationalism has made a reactive comeback 'to stand up to India's accusations'. On the other hand, India has changed its 'dialogue policy' and has increased its presence in Afghanistan as a policy of counter-threat with the clear approval of the US and its allies. Despite evidence to the contrary after the capture of many terrorists, most attacks including suicide-attacks in Pakistan are officially blamed on India. On the December 7 attack on Moon Market in Iqbal Town Lahore, the Punjab Law Minister said that the attack had come from India and Israel working together. The Punjab governor was less sure about it and linked it to the Taliban reaction to Pakistan army's successful operation in South Waziristan. The NWFP senior minister Bashir Ahmad Bilour refused to blame India for a blast that occurred in Peshawar the same day. On the other hand, Interior Minister Rehman Malik stuck to his position that India 'and others' – meaning the US – were involved in terrorism inside Pakistan. Some TV channels expressed anger at those who refused to blame India.

Public opinion, created through a unidirectional media, has come to the conclusion that confrontation with India has become inevitable. International opinion however is insistent that the epochal Indo-Pak conflict can only be resolved through economic inter-dependence. Economists located inside Pakistan seem to agree with the nationalist sentiment in favour of confrontation, but Washington-based Shahid Javed Burki, former finance minister of Pakistan and former vice-president of The World Bank, thinks it more urgent than ever that Pakistan should opt for an economic partnership with India as a means of resolving its disputes with it. After observing that Pakistan is not likely to solve its resource problem any time soon - like increasing either its domestic savings rate to invest more in the economy or its tax-to-GDP

ratio for the government to turn its attention to provide services to the poor – he proposes:

One way of opening it is to work closely with India on the economic front and get foreign investment to come from that route. With better relations with Pakistan, Indian companies may be willing to invest in Pakistan. I believe during the Musharraf period Tata Computer Services had shown some interest in investing in Pakistan, making use of the cheaper skilled labour available here compared to the demands of workers in India. The Reliance Group also wanted to develop oil storage facilities in the Jhelum area making use of the exhausted salt mines. This would have reduced the amount of freight and storage India was paying on the Middle Eastern oil. But Pakistan did not permit these investments for political reasons. A democratic government may be able to take a different policy stance. Another way Pakistan could benefit from the revival of interest in India on the part of foreign investors is to establish strong links with some of the industrial sectors in India. Automobile industry is one such candidate. Recent industry data showed sales of trucks and buses in India rose 52 per cent in October, the fourth consecutive monthly rise and the strongest expansion since April 2007.<sup>16</sup>

The civilian meaning of ‘geopolitical importance’ of Pakistan is its median position as a trade corridor; the military meaning of the term is Pakistan’s ability as a median state to obstruct trade in order to exert pressure for a better bargaining position on Kashmir. In the middle of Pakistan’s war against internal terrorism the state has once again chosen to insist on the solution of the dispute of Kashmir.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Dawn, 30 November 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Stephen Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* Vanguard, 2005, p.51. Cohen thinks the ‘Kashmir Curse’ of Pakistan has ‘seriously damaged Pakistan’s prospects as a state... a cost that several generations of Pakistani leaders have been willing to pay’.