

Pakistan: Crisis of Confidence & Credibility

Chintamani Mahapatra*

Pakistan has all the signs and symptoms of an ailing State that may not be able to sustain itself at the current rate of deterioration. It suffers from the crisis of confidence at home. People, an important constituent of the elements that defines a State, are fast losing faith in their governing institutions. The most revered institution in Pakistan, the military, failed to detect foreign forces barging into their territory and executing an operation killing Al Qaeda supremo Osama bin Laden throwing up questions about their competence. Internally respected intelligence wing of Pakistan, ISI, has been suspected of complicity in providing hideout to Osama. The democratically elected Government has been accused of inability and inefficiency in handling natural disasters. The society is divided and the economy is foreign aid dependent. America's friends abroad—the US and China in particular have questioned the commitment, honesty and reliability of Pakistan as an ally. Pakistan's acceptance of massive US aid and then its support to anti-US terrorist networks has increased anti-Pakistan sentiments in the US. China is supposedly an all-weather-friend of Pakistan, yet it has asked for assurances from Islamabad against Pakistan-linked terrorist activities in Xinjiang province. Pakistan today is afflicted with the crisis of confidence and credibility.

Introduction

Every nation in the world goes through the natural cycle of ups and downs, prosperity and scarcity, enlargement of territories and disintegration, and hope and despair. New nation states emerge and old ones disappear in the various phases of world history. For instance, there was no Soviet Union before 1917 and the Soviet Union that existed for about 75 years disappeared in December 1991. More recently a new country South Sudan carved out by a division of Sudan. There was no country called Pakistan before August 14, 1947. After about six and half decades of independent existence, Pakistan seems to be confronting challenges that may pose an existential threat to that country. Oriental and occidental scholars, along with a few Pakistani nationals, have been debating the future of Pakistan for some years. Even an off-the cuff-remark about disintegration of Pakistan kicks up a controversy and gives rise to heated arguments.

* Prof Chintamani Mahapatra teaches at the American Studies Division, Centre for Canadian, US and Latin American Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

The fact remains that the future is mercilessly unpredictable. History books are littered with examples, about the dangerous fallacies of indulging in predictions about future of nation states. Nonetheless, scholars do indulge in futuristic analyses and such studies are completely devoid of usefulness. Futuristic studies issue warnings about coming dangers, serve as an alarm bell for regimes and even generate new ideas to tackle persistent and knotty problems. This paper is basically a reflective essay that seeks to highlight the acute domestic predicaments and foreign policy dilemma and difficulties faced by Pakistan today. The country is increasingly facing a crisis of confidence at home and a rapid erosion of credibility abroad that raises questions about the durability as a sovereign nation state.

Pakistan has been passing through a phase that threatens its territorial integrity, political stability, regime legitimacy, economic viability and social peace. There are ample examples to prove this – such as: the Pakistani people appear to be fast losing confidence in the ability of the government to provide social good, maintain law and order, help promote economic stability and, worse, provide security to human lives. Regular bomb explosions frighten the people more than what its ruling elite is so eloquent in speaking about — the threat to Pakistan from India. Terrorist bombings, spread of suicide bombers across the major Pakistani cities, a virtual war between the Pakistan Taliban and Pakistani security forces have challenged the legitimacy of the government to rule the country. As and when natural disasters strike the country, people in Pakistan increasingly look to the charity organisations run by militants than expect timely assistance from the government. Pakistan's economy has become so precarious that, despite billions of dollars of US assistance, it had to rush to International Monetary Fund for help to the tune of \$7 billion in the recent past.

Besides domestic issues and concerns, Pakistan has also got a severe beating in the international community in terms of its negative image around the world. Its allies, such as the United States and China, have begun to question the credibility of Islamabad. The US has blamed Pakistan of supporting insurgent groups that are killing US forces in Afghanistan. China has openly registered its protest against the Pakistani connection of terrorist activities in its volatile Xinjiang province. Afghanistan's efforts to develop friendly and cooperative ties with Pakistan have failed and the Afghan leadership has reached out to India for training its security forces. Pakistan's Afghan policy is marked by double standards, ambiguities and confusion, even as Pakistan on paper is supposed to be cooperating with the US, NATO forces and Afghan government to quell insurgency in that country. While Pakistan represents Iranian interests in Washington in the absence of an Iranian embassy there and seeks closer ties with the neighbouring Islamic country, the Shia-Sunni divide in Pakistan and the anti-Shia activities of Pakistan backed militant groups in Afghanistan have raised questions about the friendly relations between Iran and Pakistan. India's repeated appeals, warnings and even friendly gestures

have not persuaded the Pakistani government to take action against perpetrators of Mumbai 26/11 terror attacks. Indo-Pakistani peace initiatives have virtually been in a logjam for last several years.

What are the reasons behind the current predicament of Pakistan? Why have the domestic socio-economic conditions in Pakistan turned so precarious? Why has Pakistan's foreign policy failed to protect and promote the country's national interests? There is no single answer to these questions. Answers lie in both the structure and processes of governance and regional and global developments. Nevertheless, the mega trends and the big picture can be studied to find answers to the above questions. A detailed discussion of the socio-economic or domestic politics of Pakistan is beyond the scope of this paper. But broad references to these may be necessary to make a causal connection between the internal and external factors that may have contributed to the current state of affairs in Pakistan.

“Islam” as a Tool of State Craft

The genesis of the current crisis in Pakistan can be found in the relatively brief history of Pakistan as a nation state. It is now generally admitted and there is abundant literature on this- that the creation of Pakistan on the basis of “Islam” was a flawed idea. Mohammad Ali Jinnah fathered the birth of Pakistan by using Islam as a bargaining tool. He succeeded in creating the Islamic State of Pakistan, but failed to draw support from all the Muslims of the subcontinent. He was well aware that his new state would not be able to sustain itself only in the name of Islam and thus did not want Islamic groups, religious groups or mullahs to play a political role in that state. He said as early as 1948 that “... Pakistan is not going to be a theocratic state to be ruled by priests with a divine mission. We have many non-Muslims-Hindus, Christians and Parsis — but they are all Pakistanis. They will enjoy the same rights and privileges as any other citizens and will play their rightful part in the affairs of Pakistan.”¹

If Pakistan had evolved on the basis of what Jinnah truly desired, the current crisis could perhaps have been prevented. But then one cannot fault Jinnah alone. The rise of General Zia ul-Haq to power in Islamabad and his use of “Islam” for political purposes contributed further to the slow but steady decline of Pakistan as a viable state. When the US used “Islam” as a national security tool and began funding, training and arming the Afghan mujahedeen groups to wage war against the Soviet military in Afghanistan, General Zia supported Washington strategy in exchange for billions of dollars of US assistance. Zia could have contented himself, just by facilitating US efforts. But he simultaneously unleashed an Islamisation process in Pakistan that empowered domestic Islamic groups that professed and practiced fundamentalism. After hanging Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Zia had to suspend political processes and postpone elections fearing that the Pakistan People's Party

could emerge victorious in national elections and instead passed into law the Hudood Ordinance that led to implementation of severe Quran based punishments for any violation of Sharia Law. This political strategy helped Zia to keep the political parties and their leaders at arm's length, but bolstered the influence of the groups that would some day become the reason for Pakistan's political mess and insecurity.

The US turned its attention away from Afghanistan and from the mujahideens once the Soviets withdrew from that country. But successive governments in Pakistan— military or civilian—did not refrain from using Islam as a tool and created, trained, armed and unleashed the Taliban who finally captured power in Kabul. Eventually the Taliban regime became a titanic liability for Pakistan after the 9/11 terrorist attack on the US. Vali Nasr has rightly argued that the brief era of democracy that followed the end of General Zia's rule was marked by an ongoing tussle between the military and civilian leaders for political power and a contest between Islamist and secular forces to influence the mainstream political processes. The outcome of these domestic political scuffles was a coalition between the Pakistani military and the Islamic parties that resisted the forces of modernisation and moderation "by ever more tightly weaving Pakistan's foreign policy and regional interests with Islam, and thus continuing to anchor domestic politics in the debate over Islamisation."²

How extensively the Pakistani governments—civilian and military— used Islamic education to train the Taliban is reflected by the fact that the number of madrassas in Pakistan increased from 150 in 1957 to 10, 000 by 2004.³ Pakistan backed the Taliban in the ongoing violent struggle for power in Afghanistan and used other terrorist outfits against India, particularly in Kashmir with the hope that Kashmir would be snatched away from India and Afghanistan would be controlled through a Taliban regime in Kabul. The latter project succeeded and the former did not. But this strategy of using Islamic forces for foreign policy gains backfired when the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the US took place.

President George Bush's determination to overthrow the Taliban regime and wipe out the Al Qaeda presence in Afghanistan turned Pakistan once again into a frontline state. But unlike during the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan, this time Islamabad did not have the luxury of characterising US aid as "peanuts". It had little option but to join the US war against the Al Qaeda and the Taliban. By joining this war, Pakistan was neither true to the US nor to the Taliban. It joined the US in killing or capturing Islamic insurgents and terrorists- an approach that eventually resulted in the emergence of Pakistan Taliban. By maintaining lines of communication with the Afghan Taliban leadership, Islamabad double-crossed the US and lost its credibility in Washington. While providing assistance to the US in

the war against terror, Islamabad was simultaneously responsible for the birth of the Pakistan Taliban that has come to pose the most serious threat to Pakistan!

Even before 9/11 Pakistan watchers elsewhere had cautioned, against the dangers to Pakistan emanating from the use of Islam and religious extremism as part of statecraft. Jessica Stern, wrote in 2000 that Pakistani militant groups were deeply engaged in terrorist activities in Jammu and Kashmir “under the guise of holy war” and that the Pakistani government used these groups “as cheap ways to fight India”—a policy that gave birth to a “culture of violence” that aggravated sectarianism within Pakistan and subverted regional peace. Stern warned that “this monster threatens to devour Pakistani society.”⁴

Pakistani scholars who blame the US and NATO forces for the expansion of Taliban insurgency in Pakistan ignore the omissions and commissions of the Pakistani governing structure for empowering Islamic extremists in Pakistan.⁵ Jinnah would certainly have been dismayed by the current state of Pakistan where several groups of religious extremists enjoy the patronage of the Pakistani Army and ISI and other groups who are making violent attacks on the state institutions, including the armed forces and police.

Role of Armed Forces

However the institution that is chiefly responsible for weakening the state of Pakistan- ironically- is the Pakistani military. The father of Pakistan Jinnah never wanted the military to run the country. In his address at the Military Staff College of Pakistan in June 1948, he said: “Never forget that you are the servants of the state. You do not make policy. It is we, the people’s representatives, who decide how the country is to be run. Your job is to only obey the decisions of your civilian masters.”⁶ In a little over 60 years of its existence, Pakistan has come to be ruled by the army at least four times and even when a civilian government was in place, the real power of the state rested in the hands of the military leaders.

In hind sight it can be argued that but for the dominant role played by the Pakistani military, particularly the army, in the governance of the country, Pakistan could have evolved into a developed and influential middle level power and could have set itself up as an example of democracy to the Islamic world. Tiwathia Aditya has argued that “the congenital difficulties of the ‘Pakistani’ national movement contributed to a series of military rulers early in the country’s history” and that prolonged military rule with brief interludes of civilian rule “depleted institutions and subverted democratic politics” whereas “civilian governments which have broken the long spells of military rule have been subjected to Huntington’s conception of “the praetorian problem”.”⁷

Some scholars have pointed out that the Pakistan army has been largely responsible for lop sided economic development, highly unequal income distribution as ruling army generals have failed to deliver “political stability, have made the “development of honest and effective political parties nearly impossible” and in addition “undermined the independence of the judiciary, and exacerbated the underlying weaknesses of the Pakistani state.”⁸ It is equally well known that Pakistani generals teamed up with the bureaucracy and occasionally with the judiciary to perpetuate army rule and never tried to “set Pakistani society on a sustainable course that would lead to political pluralism and religious tolerance.”⁹

Poor Economic Performance

More than anything else, the military regimes in Pakistan do not have a good track record of promoting economic development through appropriate industrialisation and agricultural planning. While a detailed discussion on the economy of Pakistan is outside the scope of this paper, Pakistan’s failure in developing a viable economy, among other things, is essentially due to military’s interference in political administration and economic planning. The country has missed the opportunity to benefit from globalisation. Its socio-economic profile and political instability coupled with the alleged role of state institutions in aiding and abetting terror networks have discouraged international traders and investors. The Pakistani economy is by and large a foreign aid dependent economy.

One of the reasons, among others, for Pakistan’s retarded economy has been its national security policy that has been made and implemented by the country’s military establishment with little inputs from political parties. The Pakistani government since its independence has been following an aggressive security policy that has cost it very dearly. Months after its independence, it invaded Kashmir. Subsequently it fought several wars with India that caused its economy to spiral downwards. It has sponsored a low intensity conflict since 1989 in Kashmir and spent billions of rupees in training and equipping the anti-Indian terrorists. The amount of money it spent in creating and sustaining Taliban has not been a productive investment in any sense of the term. It received billions of dollars in US assistance during the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan, which it spent on its nuclear programme and military modernisation. The story of the ten year American war against terror and massive US assistance to Pakistan is the same.

The current economic problems faced by Pakistan are partly the consequence of its engagement in two wars—a war at home against terror elements and its participation in the war efforts in neighbouring Afghanistan as well. In addition, Mother Nature has been also been unkind to Pakistan. The massive earthquake in 2005 and the extraordinary floods in 2010 along with the two wars have had devastating effects on the economy. The latest economic survey of Pakistan has

pointed out that the Zardari government inherited several accumulated economic problems, such as a huge budget deficit, large military expenditures, low growth rates and deep-rooted inflation and then had to come to terms with unanticipated challenges, such as oil price hikes and devastating floods that crippled the government's ability to sustain a good GDP growth rate.¹⁰ Floods in Pakistan not only shaved off nearly two percentage points from the growth rate but also caused massive damage, to the tune of \$10 billion, to the country's economic structure. About 20 million people were displaced, even as flood waters submerged more than 50,000 sq km of Pakistani territory. The misery of Pakistan increased manifold as oil prices rose to \$125 from \$70 a barrel threatening the macro economic framework of the country.¹¹

A report released by the World Food Programme detailed the other woes of Pakistan. The report described the flash floods in the country as a "crisis of national and unprecedented proportions", submerging one-fifth of the country's land area and severely damaging the infrastructure, power and telecommunications systems and brutally devastating the agricultural sector. Millions of innocent and helpless citizens were deprived of access to food, clean drinking water or health services and required immediate assistance.¹²

Many countries around the world face natural calamities, including some on a more regular basis. But the government is expected to come to the rescue of its people at the time of natural disaster. Did the Pakistan government respond in an appropriate and timely way? Christian Fair writes that:

The flood exacerbated many of Pakistan's governance inadequacies, demonstrating the civilian administration's incapacity to contend with the calamity. The August 2010 images of President Asif Ali Zardari alighting from a helicopter at his sixteenth-century French chateau in Normandy outraged Pakistani citizens, who struggled to understand the government's apparent indifference to their plight while renewing their suspicions about the president's allegedly ill-gotten wealth. Zardari, co-chair of the ruling Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP), countered by explaining that Prime Minister Yousef Raza Gilani, not he, was responsible for disaster management. This did little to attenuate public anger with the government's shambolic effort to attend to the devastation.¹³

Fair argues subsequently that Pakistani army did a great job in assisting the flood victims and since the army is part of the government one could not fault the government for not doing enough. This is basically a lawyer's argument, and such arguments do not alter popular perceptions and sympathetically respond to the sentiments of the victims. According to Fair, "...the military reaped accolades because it managed to rescue more than 100,000 stranded people and coordinate sustained relief efforts in the months after the initial flooding. In considerable

measure, these criticisms of the civilian government are unfair.” Popular accolades for the Pakistani army appear to have disappeared after the surgical Special Forces operation by the US navy seals that killed Osama bin Laden. But, more significantly, what Fair misses in her article is the confidence and faith the terrorist networks gained from the masses by doing massive social work to help the flood victims in Pakistan. While the US officials expressed concern that the terrorist networks as charity organisations are seeking to spread their influence in Pakistan and might target the international aid agencies, Pakistani government, being aware of the danger, announced that it would clamp down on such charity organisations.¹⁴

Newspapers reported that due to fears of militants exploiting the humanitarian crisis, even the ISI was induced to confess that the primary threat to Pakistan came from religious extremists, thus replacing India as the number one threat to the country. According to the *Daily Telegraph* a senior intelligence officer of the ISI told its correspondent that “We estimate the threat from internal forces to be priority number one,” although he stressed that India still “loomed” in its defence considerations.¹⁵ Significantly, the US ambassador to Pakistan Anne Patterson said: “Frankly we are not too concerned about the role of extremist charities because we think the people of Pakistan have a lot of domestic NGOs [non-governmental organisations] that are very active and very reputable.” However, several news agencies brought home the point that “neither the government nor aid groups” could satisfy the “overwhelming need, leaving the gap to be filled by the very same militants that threaten the Pakistani government and the U.S.”¹⁶ While the flood situation has improved and displaced people have begun to return home, the credibility of the government remains low and influence of the militants and extremists appears to have swelled.

India –Centric Foreign Policy

Yet another factor that could be regarded as having contributed to Pakistan’s present predicament is its India-centric foreign policy. Had Pakistani rulers developed a foreign policy goal and national security policy that was not just centred around India but on a well defined national interest aimed at making Pakistan a viable member of the international community, most of the misguided military adventures and unnecessary defence and security acquisitions could have been avoided. From the start, Pakistan set itself up as a rival of India in terms of military capability; articulated a misperceived threat from India and launched territorial aggression that did little to serve any fruitful purpose.

The imaginary fear of India in the early years of independence made Pakistani rulers frantically rummage around for an external ally. As and when they stumbled on the United States as an ally, they discerned straight away that Washington would not share Islamabad’s threat perception. And the divergent goals of two alliance

partners explain why the US imposed an arms embargo against Pakistan during the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965, did not fully come to the rescue of Pakistan during the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971, did not endorse Pakistan's support to Kashmiri militants and terrorists and pressured Pakistan to wind up its Kargil misadventure. Pakistani ruling elites, both civilian and military, sorrowfully failed in drawing the right lessons from the huge territorial loss in 1971 and the emergence of Bangladesh as a new nation. It was easy to blame India for dividing their country, but there was hardly any soul searching to discover, let alone deal with the internal shortcomings that were responsible for the loss of East Pakistan. The 1971 War was undoubtedly a frontal blow to Pakistan's self confidence, but the focus on India's role and a lack of judgment in assessing their internal weaknesses made Pakistani army generals vainly revengeful. It was this attitude that encouraged Pakistan to launch a low intensity conflict in late 1980s to separate Jammu and Kashmir from India.

The withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan injected a false sense of victory and persuaded Pakistan to attempt a re-enactment of Afghanistan in Kashmir. Even years after promoting militancy and insurgency in Kashmir, Pakistani rulers did not realise that this policy cost India dearly but brought little benefit to Pakistan. The only major advantage Pakistan gained from its role as a frontline ally in America's war against the Soviets in Afghanistan was the modernisation of its military by acquiring state-of-the art weapons from the US and a quiet US approval for its nuclear weapons development. Nuclear weapons and military modernisation once again instilled a misplaced overconfidence in the Pakistani army that ultimately led to Kargil War and caused embarrassment to the nation. When Pakistan's Kargil gamble was botched even after the country had developed a nuclear deterrent, it was actually time for Pakistan to have drawn the appropriate lesson and crafted a new policy towards India.

Pakistan's failed Kargil adventure did not alter its craving to destabilise India through clandestine support of anti-India terrorist groups. Since its success in putting the Taliban in the seat of power in Afghanistan, Pakistan has continued to back terrorist activities in Kashmir and other parts of India as well. Things began to change a bit only after 9/11 terrorist when the Taliban were discredited for giving shelter to Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda operatives. The US global war against terrorism and Islamabad's unwilling participation in the war on the side of the US circumscribed the Pakistani support to all kinds of terror groups, including anti-India ones. But the consequence of such a policy is now open for everyone to see. Persistent Pakistani efforts against India—both conventional wars and low intensity conflicts—have fallen short of weakening India and have rather been part of the cause for Pakistan's backward economy, weak governance, loss of confidence and integrity.

Dwindling International Credibility

Pakistan's integrity and credibility in the international community have been rapidly falling, particularly since the beginning of the 21st century. By responding to Indian nuclear weapons test promptly in 1998, Pakistan heralded itself as a new nuclear weapon power on the world stage. But it did not succeed in projecting itself as a responsible nuclear power and made the first big blunder by sending troops to Kargil. It was emboldened by its nuclear weapons to ward off any Indian incursion into its territory and it sought to prove that its nuclear deterrence vis-à-vis India was reliable. The Kargil War alerted the US and other members of the international community to the irresponsibility of a new nuclear nation that indulged in territorial aggression against another nuclear weapon power. The outcome of this episode was that the international community came to regard India as a responsible nuclear weapon power and Pakistan as a dangerous new nuclear weapon state.

Subsequently, Pakistan's integrity came to be challenged yet again when it was discovered that the father of Pakistan's nuclear bomb was a smuggler in the international nuclear black market. This provided the reason for President George Bush to refuse to enter into a civilian nuclear deal with Pakistan like the one concluded with India. President George Bush did award Pakistan the status as a major non-NATO ally for the latter's role in US war efforts against Al Qaeda and the Taliban but it meant little for Pakistan when events proved that the US President also identified India as a strategic partner. What it indicated was the US would not support its major non-NATO ally in any future Indo-Pakistan War.

President Bush's successor, Barack Obama adopted a new strategy to deal with the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan and extended the war zone to Pakistan. The Obama Administration's new strategy to fight terrorism in Afghanistan was given the title of Af-Pak, a term that bracketed Afghanistan with Pakistan. Pakistan earlier felt elated that the US was always bracketing it with India, but the term Af-Pak was perceived to be an affront. Obama's early intention to include Kashmir in his new strategy was resented by India and the idea was eventually dropped. But Pakistan had little other option. Pakistan's self confidence was further jolted when President Obama increased the number of drone attacks on suspected terrorists hiding inside the Pakistani territory and did not alter course in the face of Pakistani allegations of violation of sovereignty.

By extending America's war against terrorism to the border provinces of Pakistan during the early months of his administration and eventually according support to India's bid for permanent membership in a reformed UN Security Council and the international non-proliferation regimes, President Obama made it amply clear that Pakistan's friendship and cooperation was questionable, while India deserved

more American support to emerge as a global player. The prevailing image of Pakistan in the international community is:

- Pakistan is the most dangerous place in the world where members of the global jihad get shelter, political patronage, military training and financial assistance.
- Pakistan is the front-runner among the nuclear proliferators of the world, where a noted nuclear scientist once ran a nuclear black market and had even contacted the Al Qaeda before the 9/11 incident.
- If there is any place on earth where terrorists might manage to lay their hands on nuclear weapons, it is Pakistan. According to a Congressional Research Service report,

Some observers fear radical takeover of a government that possesses a nuclear bomb, or proliferation by radical sympathizers within Pakistan's nuclear complex in case of a breakdown of controls. While U.S. and Pakistani officials continue to express confidence in controls over Pakistan's nuclear weapons, continued instability in the country could impact these safeguards.¹⁷

- Pakistan is the only nuclear weapon power in the world that is dependent on foreign assistance for its economic survival.
- Pakistan's low economic growth rate is accompanied by rapid expansion of nuclear and missile arsenal.

Pakistan's army is often referred to as one of the most professional armies of the world. But it has not won a single war it initiated against India. The Pakistani army/state has hardly any control over the tribal areas of western Pakistan. More significantly, Pakistani intelligence and military became a suspect in the eyes of Pakistani people after the US navy seals discovered the hideouts of Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden in a military barrack, not very far from Islamabad, and killed him in a top secret operation without the knowledge or help of the Pakistani government. The question that arose in peoples minds about their most respected institution was whether the army/ISI was in collusion with Laden or were they too incompetent to locate him in their own backyard. The Pakistani army literally felt insulted and humiliated after the US navy seal operations took place and their intelligence had absolutely no clue about it.

The powerful ISI, the intelligence wing of the Pakistani army, has been discredited even internationally for its role in abetting terrorism in various parts of the world. The ISI's involvement in terrorist activities in India is an open secret. India has time and again shared evidence with major world powers as well as the Pakistani government who always sees ISI agents as angels. But in 2006, a British defence ministry think-tank report alleged that "Indirectly Pakistan (through the ISI) has been supporting terrorism and extremism—whether in London on 7/7 [the July 2005 attacks on London's transit system], or in Afghanistan, or Iraq."¹⁸ Two years later in June 2008 Afghan government officials accused ISI of "plotting a failed assassination attempt on President Hamid Karzai"¹⁹. In the same year, the ISI's footprint was clearly visible in the terrorist attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul in July 2008 and the November 26 terrorist attack in Mumbai.

The United States has lost faith in the integrity of ISI—an institution it has allied with and an organisation it has closely worked with for decades. In May 2009, the US defence secretary Robert Gates accused ISI of playing "both sides". In July 2010, a trove of US intelligence records were released to the public by WikiLeaks linking ISI with militant groups in Afghanistan. In April 2011, during his visit to Pakistan, the US joint chief of staff Admiral Mike Mullen complained about ISI's links with the Haqqani network. The US often praised General Musharraf for his cooperation in the war against terror, but soon the Pakistani army fell from the grace when Washington discovered that the ISI continued to maintain contact with the Taliban and even sat in strategy sessions with them. US congressmen and senators were outraged that Pakistan was using billions of dollars of tax payers' money to fund America's enemy in Afghanistan.

Pakistan is partly at war with itself (military operations in South Waziristan, Swat valley combing operations and containing the Tehrik-I Pakistan's activities) and partly responsible for inviting the US and NATO forces to intervene in its territory to fight terrorists. It has become a vicious circle. Pakistan government cannot get billions of dollars in assistance from the US without cooperating in counterterrorism efforts. But the extension of help to the US has resulted in home grown militant opposition. A large number of people in Pakistan have developed anti-US sentiments²⁰ and, by implication, anti-government (including army and ISI) sentiments.

More recently, Pakistan's all weather friend China also began to suspect a Pakistani hand in terrorist activities in its volatile Xinjiang province. Newspaper reports indicated that China had often alerted Pakistan government about the role of Pakistani militants in Xinjiang. When Xinjiang government recently went public on this issue, there was little doubt that Beijing wanted to serve an open memo to Pakistan. More embarrassing for Pakistan was release of such reports when the ISI chief Mohammad Shuja Pasha was visiting China! Pakistani President Zardari

rushed to Beijing subsequently to assure China that such culprits would be brought to book. But does Zardari exercise control over all jihadi groups in Pakistan?

Conclusion

The above analysis seeks to argue that the lack of a national vision, the persistent misperception of India, a flawed national security strategy and an immoral policy of using terror networks as foreign policy tool have brought Pakistan to a situation where its people appear to have lost faith and confidence in its governing structure. Neither military rule nor civilian administrations have been able to deliver the goods to its people.

The Pakistan army and the ISI, which commanded utmost respect among Pakistani people, also appear to have lost their credibility at home. Their role in building and sustaining terror networks has come to the open at a time when the standard of living of people has been falling rapidly. People in Pakistan seem to be not-so-silently asking the question whether the army and the ISI were hand in glove with the Al Qaeda leadership or are plain and simple incompetent and thus failed to locate Laden and miserably were unable to have any inkling about the US Navy Seal's operation in Abbotabad.

Equally significant is the loss of credibility among its external allies. The United States discovered that Pakistan was using part of the American assistance to fund the murders of Americans in Afghanistan. It has severely affected the spirit of the alliance and will affect the future relationship between the two countries. The all weather friend of Pakistan has been China. Beijing is always quick to find faults with the US policies and rarely complains about Pakistan's misdeeds. But the great Chinese silence was recently broken when the Xinjiang government openly declared Pakistan's connection with terrorist activities in the province.

Not just the great allies of Pakistan but also a large part of world public opinion today has a low opinion of Pakistan for its persistent flouting of international norms and being the epicentre of international terrorism. There are not many countries in the world that would like to do business with Pakistan. There are not many people in the world who would like to visit Pakistan as tourists. Pakistan is fast losing its legitimacy both domestically and internationally. It is clearly a state that is suffering from a crisis of confidence and credibility.

Common people in Pakistan appear to begun to worry that Pakistan faces the possible threat of extinction, unless timely steps are taken now. In a blog, Riaz Haq has actually warned his countrymen by quoting Iqbal, which loosely translates as: "Listen up, pay attention, and mend your ways, o Pakistanis Or else thou shall perish and be consigned to the dustbin of history."²¹

Notes:

- 1 This quote has been taken from a blog written by a Pakistani, available at <http://www.pakpositive.com/pakistanibloggers/post/> This quote is also available at Nusrat Pasha, "Jinnah's Will to the Nation He founded," at <http://www.secularpakistan.wordpress.com/2010/01/26/jinnahs-will-to-the-nation-he-founded/>
- 2 Nasr, Vali, "Military Rule, Islamism and Democracy in Pakistan", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 58, No. 2, Spring, 2004, p. 197.
- 3 For details, see Atwan, Abdel Bari, "Al-qa'ida and the Taliban Dangerous Alliances in Afghanistan and Pakistan", in Alex P. Schmid and Garry F. Hindle, ed. *After the War on Terror: Regional and Multilateral Perspectives on Counter-terrorism Strategy*, London: RUSI, 2009.
- 4 For details see, Stern, Jessica, "Pakistan's Jihad Culture," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 6, Nov. - Dec., 2000, pp. 115-126
- 5 For an analysis of Pakistani perspective see, Ghufuran, Nasreen, "Pushtun Ethnonationalism and the Taliban Insurgency in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 49, No. 6, /November/December 2009/, /pp. 1092-1114./
- 6 This is a famous quote by Jinnah. See for instance, Miqdad Sibtain, "Pakistan's Army," *Newsflavor*, at <http://www.newsflavor.com/asia/pakistan-army/>. Pakistan Muslim League-N once put it in a newspaper advertisement. See Indian Express, at <http://www.indianexpress.com/sharifs-party-goofs-up-ver-jinnahs-comments/>
- 7 Tiwathia, Aditya, "The 'General' Problem of Pakistan", *Journal of Scholarship and Opinion*, p. 41, Spring 2006.
- 8 Three books that amply examine the state of the Pakistani polity, economy and society as a result of the Army's dominant role are: Kux, Dennis, *The United States and Pakistan, 1947-2000: Disenchanted Allies*, Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press/, 2001. Mary Anne Weaver, *Pakistan: In the Shadow of Jihad and Afghanistan*, /New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux/, 2002. Owen Bennett Jones, *Pakistan: Eye of the Storm*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.
- 9 "Pakistan: Madrassas, Extremism and the Military 2002", *ICG Asia Report*, N°36, p.1, available at <http://merln.ndu.edu/archive/icg/pakistanmadrassasextremismandthemilitary.pdf>
- 10 Available at <http://aamirilyas.com/economic-survey-of-pakistan-2010-11/>
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Available at http://www.wfp.org/countries/pakistan?gclid=CJTNOrnZlKsCFUh_6wodw2bsuw
- 13 Fair, C. Christine, "Pakistan in 2010", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 51, No. 1, January/February 2011, p. 99.
- 14 *Reuters*, August 27, 2010.
- 15 He apparently said: "India continues to loom large behind everything. That threat also remains," *Daily Telegraph*, London, August 19, 2010.
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- 19 Ibid.
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- 21 This quote has been taken from a blog written by a Pakistani available at <http://www.pakpositive.com/pakistanibloggers/post/>, n.1