

## Pakistan's Security Perspectives

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### **Introduction**

Pakistan was born out of the traumas of its independence. It was surrounded by giant neighbors. Key adjacent countries seemed to be un-reconciled to its founding. Afghanistan was the only nation to question Pakistan's entrance to the United Nations and verbally quarreled with the new nation over the contours of the Pak-Afghan border. India was always wary of the partition, primarily out of a concern that Pakistan might inspire other minority groups to seek secession. India was doubtful that the new Muslim nation would survive without institutions and the infrastructure of government. Pakistan's very survival was questioned then and continues to be the primary concern of all Pakistani policymakers. A new country does not automatically assume its continuation. The story of Pakistan's security perspective is centered on this search for security to ensure the permanence of the Pakistan dream.

This essay seeks to outline Pakistan's security perspective today. It will examine the evolution of the Indo-Pakistani rivalry, a security competition that Pakistan's founders did not anticipate. It will examine how that rivalry has shaped Pakistani views of its Indian neighbor. It will explore how Pakistan has coped with strategic trajectories that often did not favor its national interests. Finally, it will conclude by briefly describing Pakistan's security policy today, and in particular will discuss the role of nuclear weapons in that broader policy.

### **Pakistan's Security Perspective and the Indo-Pakistani Rivalry**

The rivalry with India was an unexpected consequence of the partition of the subcontinent. By creating a Muslim homeland, the founders of Pakistan expected an end to the communal disharmony that they had seen throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As Hasan-Askari Rizvi has noted in his excellent treatment of Pakistani strategic culture, Pakistan's founders thought that the new state would protect, not

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<sup>1</sup> The author wishes to thank Dr. Peter R Lavoy and Chris Clary of the Naval Postgraduate School for helpful comments on this essay. Several of these arguments are discussed more extensively in an essay I co-authored for a forthcoming analysis of the 1999 Kargil conflict. See Feroz Hassan Khan, Peter R. Lavoy, and Christopher Clary, "Pakistan's Motivations and Calculations for the Kargil Conflict," in *Asymmetric Warfare in South Asia: The 1999 Kargil Conflict* (forthcoming, 2006).

threaten, India.<sup>2</sup> Muhammad Iqbal, in his famous address at Allahabad in 1930, said that Pakistan should not worry India, for “the North-West Indian Muslims will prove the best defenders of India against a foreign invasion, be that invasion one of the ideas or of the bayonets...”<sup>3</sup> These comments were echoed by Muhammad Ali Jinnah in the early 1940s, when he stated, “We join together as good friends and neighbors and say to the world, ‘Hands off India’.”<sup>4</sup>

Instead, India and Pakistan immediately clashed over three issues. The boundaries created through the partition process were viewed as neither fair nor just. The division of civil and military assets was inequitable. Most importantly, the accession of princely states was improper. The most glaring injustice was created by the accession into India of the state of Jammu and Kashmir—a Muslim majority state under a Hindu ruler, or maharaja.<sup>5</sup>

As a result, Pakistan found itself in a strategic competition with India. Immediately after their mutual independences, India and Pakistan fought their first of several wars. Pakistan found itself in a situation where strategic trajectories consistently favored India. India was larger geographically, more powerful militarily, and was born possessing the state apparatus left over from British colonialism. Importantly, also, India was guided by Nehru for nearly two decades after its independence. Pakistan’s founder, Jinnah, died within a year of Pakistan’s creation.

The Indo-Pakistani conflict also has an ideological dispute overlaid on top of this structural rivalry. Pakistanis deny that India is a truly secular democracy and India denies that a non-theocratic Pakistan can exist. These shared myths about “the other” complicate attempts at communication and conflict resolution. The structural rivalry is already difficult to resolve. This added ideological layer not only propels the dispute it creates cognitive biases and complicate the rivalry even further. To paraphrase an Urdu idiom, “Hakeem Luqmun has a cure for all ills, but has none for suspicions.”

Pakistan’s security policy sought to contain threats on three fronts. Internally, Pakistan faced serious ethnic divisions and questions about the proper role of religion in the public sphere. Externally, Pakistan faced threats on its northwest border with Afghanistan, and at points the Soviet Union, as well. Most importantly, Pakistan was divided into wings by a hostile India. These external and internal threats often interacted in ways that were disastrous to Pakistani security. Lesser dangers include the sponsoring of Pashtun militants by Afghanistan and the Soviet Union. Of course the most visible and traumatic danger manifested itself in the 1971 war, where India successfully severed Pakistan’s eastern wing and played midwife to the new state of Bangladesh. During the long political crisis that preceded the 1971 war, Indian analyst

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<sup>2</sup> Hasan-Askari Rizvi, “Pakistan’s Strategic Culture,” *South Asia in 2020: Future Strategic Balances and Alliances*, Michael R. Chambers, ed. (Carlisle, Penn.: U.S. Army War College, November 2002), 309.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Philip Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 46-7.

K. Subrahmanyam noted that the situation provided India with “an opportunity the like of which will never come again.”<sup>6</sup>

Pakistan was traumatized by the loss of its eastern half and signed the Simla Agreement in 1972. However, for Pakistan, the Indian security threat did not end with Simla. In 1974, it conducted a “peaceful nuclear experiment” jostling Pakistan out of its nuclear complacency. India continued a forward-leaning policy along the Line of Control in Kashmir, most visibly evident in the operation to seize the Siachin glacier in 1984 and plans for preventive strike at its Centrifuge plant at Kahuta. And in 1987, the large-scale Operation Brass-tacks caused real concern in Islamabad about India’s possible hostile intent, especially since Pakistan was engaged in dealing with the Soviet threat in Afghanistan. From the experiences of the 1970s and 1980s, Pakistani decision-makers were increasingly convinced that if India was presented with an opportunity to weaken Pakistan, India would seize it.

The Kashmir uprising in 1989 and 1990 surprised Pakistani policymakers. The Kashmir dispute would once again take center-stage in the India-Pakistan relationship, a position that it continues to hold even today. The unresolved Kashmir dispute was at the center of Indo-Pakistani discord throughout the 1990s and today, fostering a series of crises of increasing intensity. The next section examines how Pakistan seeks to maximize its security in a crisis-ridden environment.

### **Pakistan’s Security Policy**

When weak states confront stronger states they have two fundamental options. They can “bandwagon,” which means they accept the dominance of the stronger state and rely on the stronger state for continued safety. Necessarily, such band-wagoning requires an intense sacrifice for the weaker state. Pakistan feels that such a policy of acquiescence will put it on a slippery slope, gradually eroding Pakistani independence. Islamabad refuses the slow evolution into a “West Bangladesh.”

The second option is to balance against a security threat. Such balancing can be through the involvement of international institutions, the pursuit of alliances, or through the development of internal military capabilities. Pakistan has pursued all of these potential options in its desire to balance against growing Indian power. It found that international institutions were capricious and alliances were unreliable. Instead, Pakistan determined that only by matching India’s conventional and nuclear development could its security be ensured.

Despite uncertainties about its allies, Pakistani security policy has been shaped by strategic partnerships with the United States and China. The onset of the Cold War provided Pakistan an opportunity to seek a formal alliance with the United States. But it was soon apparent that there existed only a marginal overlap between U.S. and Pakistani security interests. U.S. security guarantees, so enticing to Pakistan, were found to have no utility when Pakistan faced Indian forces in 1965 and 1971. Pakistan drifted from the “most allied ally” to an “ally of strategic convenience.” This contrasted, somewhat, with Pakistan’s all-weather friendship with China. Though China also did not

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<sup>6</sup> K. Subrahmanyam, *National Herald* (Delhi), 5 April 1971 quoted in Dennis Kux, *United States and Pakistan, 1947-2000: Disenchanted Allies* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center, 2001), 206.

provide substantial support during periods of intense crisis, it has provided Pakistan with military, technological, and diplomatic support for several decades. Together, these political relationships have prevented India-centric positions on the Kashmir issue in international forums and these military relationships have provided Pakistan with much needed equipment and technology in the race to maintain a conventional and nuclear deterrent against India.<sup>7</sup>

Driven out of fear and concerns over its ultimate survival, Pakistan's case is analogous to another state: Israel. As Stephen Cohen has argued,

Like Israel, Pakistan was founded by a people who felt persecuted when living as a minority, and even though they possess their own states (which are based on religious identity), both remain under threat from powerful enemies. In both cases, an original partition demonstrated the hostility of neighbors, and subsequent wars showed that these neighbors remained hostile. Pakistan and Israel have also followed parallel strategic policies. Both sought an entangling alliance with various outside powers (at various times, Britain, France, China, and the United States), both ultimately concluded that outsiders could not be trusted in a moment of extreme crisis, and this led them to develop nuclear weapons.<sup>8</sup>

Pakistani policy today seeks to deny India strategic space. If such strategic space existed, India would be able to occupy it and "punish" Pakistan through coercive military policies and the use of force. Therefore, Pakistan seeks to match India's conventional developments, so that any conflict India enters into is inherently costly and risky. By being able to compete at all levels of escalation, Pakistan puts the onus of escalation and risk to take the conflict to the next level. Precisely because it hopes to deny the ability of escalation control, Pakistan is able to deter conventional conflict with India. As Michael Quinlan has noted, "Pakistan's rejection of no-first-use seems merely a natural refusal to lighten or simplify a stronger adversary's assessment of risk; it implies the retention of an option, not a positive policy of first use as a preferred course."<sup>9</sup> It is precisely for this reason that Pakistan has neither explained the redlines nor articulated a public nuclear doctrine. As U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower said to his vice president, Richard Nixon, in 1958, "You should never let the enemy know what you will not do."<sup>10</sup>

It is useful to note that the military plays a dominant role in strategic planning in Pakistan, a point of some interest to Indian analysts. The evolving nuclear command

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<sup>7</sup> See Feroz Hassan Khan and Christopher Clary, "Dissuasion and Regional Allies: The Case of Pakistan," *Strategic Insights* III, no. 10 (October 2004), <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2004/oct/khanOct04.asp>. For comprehensive treatment of U.S.-Pakistan relations see Kux, *United States and Pakistan*. For analysis of Pakistan-China relations, see John Garver, "The Future of the Sino-Pakistan *Entente Cordiale*" in *South Asia in 2020*, 385-447.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Cohen, *India: Emerging Power* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 204.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Quinlan, "How Robust is India-Pakistan Deterrence," *Survival* 42, no. 4 (Winter 2000-2001): 149-50.

<sup>10</sup> McGeorge Bundy, "The Unimpressive Record of Atomic Diplomacy," in *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics*, Robert Art and Kenneth Waltz, eds., 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 89.

and control system is a reflection of Pakistan's strategic anxieties. Pakistan's major cities, most notably Lahore, and its strategic arteries are perilously close to the Indian border. In any potential crisis or conventional war, Pakistan must respond quickly if it is to ensure that these key centers of gravity are protected. This lack of strategic depth requires speed, quick reaction, and unity of command. This is also true for nuclear weapons. Though Pakistan would never use nuclear weapons rashly, it feels that the integration of nuclear and conventional forces is necessary to create a credible deterrent. This does not necessarily mean that Pakistan is considering elaborate nuclear war-fighting scenarios. Instead, Pakistan's command system at the highest level believes that the "conventional hand" should know what the "nuclear hand" is doing, and vice versa. Policymakers feel this conventional and nuclear integration will give them a better picture of the strategic situation in any prospective conflict. Pakistan's civil and military leadership operates jointly at the Joint Services level under a unified military command system. As a consequence, Pakistan has placed great emphasis in explaining the roles that civil and military leaders will play in the National Command Authority.

### **Security Policy under Musharraf**

Under President Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan has followed a four-pronged security policy. The most important component of that policy is the economic recovery of Pakistan, a task to which he was committed since he first took office in 1999.<sup>11</sup> His close work with Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz also demonstrates his emphasis on this goal. The other components of his security policy are designed to give Pakistan space in which it can get its domestic house in order. To achieve this, Musharraf has emphasized the importance of deterring threats to Pakistan through the maintenance of sufficient conventional and nuclear capabilities. He has sought conflict resolution with India, out of a hope of resolving substantive issues, notably an early resolution to the Kashmir dispute. Resolving disputes with India could unlock the economic potential of the Indo-Pakistani relationship. Similarly, Pakistan hopes to maintain friendly relations with Afghanistan and provide positive assistance to its reconstruction efforts. Pakistan hopes that one day Central Asian trade and resources can transit easily from Kazakhstan through Afghanistan to Pakistani ports at Karachi and Gwadar, and possibly extend to India.

Pakistan's reorientation of its Afghan and Kashmir policies has made domestic security (and economic revival) the most pressing issue for Pakistani national security. This formidable challenge will take time and perseverance. President Musharraf has emphasized repeatedly that internal security is the most pressing challenge facing Pakistan. Last year, Musharraf put it vividly, saying that the "only threat is sectarian and religious terrorism, which is eating us like termites, and it is Islam and the Muslim Ummah (community) which is paying the high cost. We all have to fight against it."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See President Pervez Musharraf, Address to the Nation, 17 October 1999.

<sup>12</sup> President Musharraf, Address to Armed Forces, Navy Dockyards, Karachi, December 2003. For details, see "Pakistan: Threat is Internal" (March 2004), [http://www.news24.com/News24/World/News/0,,2-10-1462\\_1458842,00.html](http://www.news24.com/News24/World/News/0,,2-10-1462_1458842,00.html). For a more extensive discussion, see Naveed Safdar, *Internal Security Threats to Pakistan*, master's thesis (Monterey, Calif.: U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, December 2004).

Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, Jehangir Karamat, has discussed this broad strategic reorientation. Instead of interfering with and destabilizing Afghanistan, Pakistan now supports a stable and friendly western neighbor. From a policy of appeasing domestic radicals, Pakistan has moved to confronting them in the interest of social harmony and stability. From a clandestine nuclear network with proliferation consequences, Pakistan is moving into a regime of sure command and control and international cooperation. And with India, Pakistan is moving from a policy of confrontation to one based on dialogue and conflict resolution. This reorientation has come at some cost for Pakistan. As Amb. Karamat noted, "In all such strategic turnarounds, there is a price to be paid. This price is paid in terms of the blow back, the resistance and the retaliation to the changes."<sup>13</sup> Pakistan will remain devoted to ensuring a just outcome for the Kashmiri people. Islamabad, however, is also committed to peace and dialogue, which is beneficial to Pakistan, to the region, and to the world.

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<sup>13</sup> Amb. Jehangir Karamat, "The Pakistan-U.S. Relationship: Next Steps," Speech delivered at the Brookings Institution, December 15, 2004, <http://www.embassyofpakistan.org/news120.php>.