# STRATEGIC ISSUES

## Pakistan: From religious politics to religious extremism Part-II

AIR CDRE ISHFAQ ILAHI

CHOUDHURY, ndc, psc (Retd) HE fall of Kabul to the CIA-ISI forces in 1992 after eleven However, the vicious power struggle between Mujahedin factions led to a were busy fighting a new force comknown as the Taliban (Students), border all the way to Kabul in 1996. The Taliban were recruited from Afghan refugee camps, indoctrinated in Pakistani madrassas, and trained and equipped by the ISI. Darul Uloom Haqqania, a madrassa in Akora Khattak, about 40 miles west of Peshawar, run by Maulana Samiul provided most of the Taliban recruits and the leadership. Meanwhile, the Madrassas across Pakistan had no compromise with the Taliban. poor rural background for whom free lodging, food, as well as some educaand hungry at home. Many of these students have routinely been recruited by the Jihadi organisations to go to Kashmir or inside India to spread the Jihad. Some of them are now turning against their own government as suicide bombers or assassins. It has been reported that the poor parents with a number of sons are pressured to give one or two sons in the way of the Allah i.e. become a Jihadi. The parent's refusal could bring shame and harassment, and if they agree, financial inducement follows. Interestingly, the Mullahs or their children never decide to become a Mujahid or a suicide bomber; always the poor are sacrificed on the altar of God.

Although the Taliban government controlled 90% of Afghanistan, it was recognised by only three sponsor countries, namely: Pakistan, UAE and Saudi Arabia. Pakistan was looking for-

MRAP models.

ward to a titular government in Afghanistan that would not raise the Pakhtunistan issue. A pliable government in Kabul would mean sponsored Mujahideen Pakistan could then concentrate on Kashmir and the rest of India. years of civil war was considered a Elected prime ministers such as great victory of the religious forces Benazir Bhutto (1988-90, 1993-96) and of the government of Pakistan. or Nawaz Sharif (1990-93, 1997-99) could not alter the Islamists power structure in Pakistan. In fact, civil war that devastated Afghanistan Benazir was the Prime Minister the second time. As the Mujahedins when the Taliban were installed in Kabul. Like many, she believed that posed of young Madrassa students, the Taliban would stabilise the situation in Kabul and would open came sweeping from Pakistan's up Pakistan's trade and commerce route to Central Asian Republics. The Taliban rule in Kabul was brutal, archaic and arbitrary and brought nothing but shame on the Islamic community. Meanwhile, inside Pakistan, especially in the North western tribal belt, the Taliban influence grew and by the end of Haq, a JUI leader, claimed to have 1990s they came to represent the legal authority. Successive Pakistani government chose to conform and shortage of students especially from Although after 9/11, President Musharraf became an active partner with the US in its War on Terror, tion was far better than being jobless he maintained a cosy relationship with the religious parties at home. He needed the support of the Mullahs because most of the mainstream politicians had deserted him. Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), a cocktail of religious parties, had established a theocratic fiefdom in the NWFP. While Pakistan government was aiding the American forces in their war in Afghanistan, JUI Chief Maulana Fazlur Rahman sent thousands of armed volunteers to fight alongside the Taliban. The Maulana led the convoy in full view of the world media, but when faced with the northern army in the Jalalabad, quickly returned to Pakistan leaving his ragtag army to massacre.

being pushed out of Afghanistan in Pakistan as their rear areas to Pakistani heartland to launch their against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda 2001, infiltrated into FATA as well as regroup, recuperate and rearm. operations. Other top-level Al-Qaeda major cities of Pakistan. Large Arrest of Khalid Sheikh Muhammad, leaders arrested included Abu Pashtun migrant population in cities a top Al-Qaeda leader, from Zubaida and Abu Faraj Al-Libbi, both such as Karachi have turned these Rawalpindi in March 2003 showed connected with worldwide terror Al-Qaeda used the intervening



The Al-Qaeda and Taliban, after into their safe haven. They are using how terror network are using operations. After early successes were exchanged for Taliban prison- ate. As long as the terrorists operate forces in 2001-03, there was a let up both from the Afghan-NATO side as well from Pakistan. The Taliban and

Pakistani soil. MMA actually imple- back to haunt its creator. mented the Taliban's agenda banned co-education, put women ruling establishment, including inside Burqa, banned music, movies the military, there is not enough and videos, and dispensed harsh realization of the grave and immi-Islamic justice to the poor. MMA, of nent danger. They are still preparing the issues of illiteracy, backward- India. Latest modernization plan of The poor suffered while the rich just towards the conventional warfare left with their capital. It is no wonder rather than the unconventional that in the election in 2008, the reli- one that is raging at present. Nationalist Party (ANP) bagged the bringing parity with Indian Air even worse; they got only 3 seats out Submarine to, probably, search of 258 contested. People gave their and destroy underwater Taliban! verdict with the ballot, but then these However, since the American's democratic process anyway.

ists from the border areas ran into have finally moved in earnest to trouble because the Army, fight the Taliban in the FATA and equipped and trained to fight a NWFP. Recent reshuffle within the conventional battle in the plains of ISI also indicate a change of direc-Punjab or the desert of Sindh, was tion. Meanwhile, homegrown not battle ready to fight an insurgency in the rugged hills of Hindukush. The paramilitary forces they are all bidding for their time. that were initially assigned were pathetically under-armed to withstand a determined enemy. Many among them, especially the verdict for a progressive, democratic Pashtuns, were sympathetic with Pakistan. Now it is up to the politithe Taliban and often, large numbers of them surrendered without a chaos into which the Mullahfight. There were allegations at Military nexus has led them. There is home and abroad of elements much to be done immediately. The within the military, especially ISI, having retained connection and defeated militarily, politically and sympathising with the Taliban-Al- ideologically. The need for a joint Qaeda. Large numbers of Pakistani NATO-Afghan-Pakistan command forces were taken prisoners and and operational structure is immediers or huge cash. Videos of beheading of the Pakistani soldiers by the Taliban sent a chill of terror among the troops fighting there.

period to regroup and rearm. The tance of extremist political parties formation of Muttahida Majlis-e- and various militant organisations in 2002 only helped the rehabilita- battlefield that has no frontiers. tion of Al-Qaeda and Taliban in Frankenstein's monster has come

The Government's use of force Taliban-Al-Qaeda wherever they since 2007 to dislodge the extrem- might be, the Pakistan military extremist organizations are off the radar screen for the time being, but

The last election ushered in new hopes for Pakistan. People voted out the religious parties and gave their cians to guide the nation out of the Taliban-Al-Qaeda axis has to be freely across the ill defined and porous Pak-Afghan border, Pakistan cannot strongly argue against the NATO-Afghan forces crossing its Meanwhile, the Taliban, with assis- border in hot pursuit or launching The author is a freelancer.

attack on leadership targets at short notice. It would be in the interest of Amal (MMA) government in NWFP inside Pakistan have created a Pakistan to cooperate with the partners. On the political front the religious parties must be isolated and not be allowed to ride on others' Ironically, within the Pakistani shoulders and re-enter the main stage. The government needs to make people understand that religious extremism leads to violence and terror and that it jeopardizes course, were not capable of address- ing for the hypothetical war against development and progress. Especially in the tribal belt, there is ness, unemployment and poverty. the armed forces is directed much to be done on the socioeconomic front. The ANP in power provides a window of opportunity that everyone must utilize. There is a gious parties suffered their worst Pakistan air force has signed a deal need to bring all the Madrasasas defeat. In the NWFP, the leftist Awami for 100 air superiority fighters for under government control and carry out a review of the academic largest numbers of 31 seats while the Force whereas its own bases are programme. Sayid Qutub and religious MMA got only 9 seats. now vulnerable to attack by the Maududi should be replaced by Al-Nationally, the religious parties did militants. The Navy is buying Farabi, Ibn-Khaldun, Rumi and Iqbal. Inclusive Islam that encourages peaceful co-existence must be encouraged as opposed to exclusive religious parties never believed in have clearly spelt out that they Islam that espouses violence. There were going to hunt down the is a need to review the textbooks in the mainstream schools too to rid them of extremist contents. The government must ensure better educational opportunity for the poor, so that the poor youth do not fall victim to the manipulation of the religious fanatics. On the ideological front, the government needs to combat the creeping influence of radical Islamic ideology from the ME. There must be effective anti-money laundering mechanism to monitor the flow of money into and within the country to deny finance to religious extremists or their front institutions. The list of priorities can be long, yet they are urgent. The Civil Society in Pakistan is clamouring for a change from religious orthodoxy to religious enlightenment. People have already spoken by rejecting religious extremism on the Election Day. Now it is up to the government to steer the nation towards a peaceful future. A failure now will spell disaster for all of us in

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South Asia.

#### Smaller, lighter Mraps headed to Afghanistan

The Pentagon is speeding deliveries to Afghanistan of armoured vehicles designed to protect troops against roadside bomb attacks'-

smaller, lighter versions of what are known as MRAPs. The MRAPs - the acronym stands for mine-resistant, ambushprotected - are being sent as U.S. forces report an increase in the number of roadside bombs being used by insurgents against coalition forces in Afghanistan.

"There is a desire on the part of commanders there to get more MRAPs into theater," said Defense Department spokesman Geoff Morrell at a Pentagon news conference.

Morrell did not know how many more will be delivered, and the U.S. Transportation Command declined to discuss the numbers involved. But Morrell noted that an additional 822 new, lighter MRAPs being built by Navistar Defense will be fielded beginning in November. Commanders say Afghanistan's rugged terrain demands off-road mobility, which presents a challenge for the older, heavier

There are now 1,122 MRAPs deployed in Afghanistan, Morrell said. He said he knew of no plans to transfer to Afghanistan any of the 9,341 MRAPs now in Iraq, where U.S. forces are slowing drawing down in size. But officials are looking at whether any MRAPs that have been offloaded in Kuwait awaiting delivery to Iraq can be diverted to Afghanistan, he said.

Since Afghanistan is landlocked and no "appropriately secure" route exists for overland delivery of the large vehicles, MRAPs must be airlifted into the country, said Army Lt. Col. Frederick Rice of TransCom. Some will be flown directly from the U.S., but others will be transported forward by ship and then transferred to cargo aircraft for delivery to Afghanistan, he said.

The Pentagon still plans to acquire a total of 15,800 MRAPs, Morrell said. So far, about 10,500 have been transported to the U.S. Central Command area of operations, according to Rice.

#### USAF laying out 4-decade **UAV** plan

The U.S. Air Force's Unmanned Aircraft Systems Task Force is set to brief the new service chief and Defense Secretary Robert Gates December 15 on the long-term future of UAVs. The task force is laying out a road map for UAVs all the way to 2047, the Air Force's centennial, said Colonel Eric Mathewson, director of the Air Force Unmanned Aircraft Systems Task Force at the C4ISR Integration conference in Arlington, Va., October 17. That future will include something of a change in mind-set for Air Force intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), said Colonel (select) Scott Murray, the Air Force headquarters special assistant for ISR transformation.

"ISR and intelligence missions are no longer support operations, they are the operations," Murray said. The service is still getting its collective brain around the domain-neutral demands of persistent global ISR, he said, but transformation and moves towards more joint ways of doing things are slowly but surely coming.

"Trust is what it really comes down to," Murray said: trust that the ISR assets any war fighter needs will be where they are supposed to be when they are supposed to be there.

Source: www.defensenews.com

#### US Marines to hold joint exercise in Ladakh

After the Royal Marines, the US marines will also be holding a joint military exercise with the Indian Army in Ladakh. US Army Chief General George Casey along with his Indian counterpart Deepak Kapoor visited Ladakh and its adjoining areas to select the location where the Indo-US military exercises would be held. "Dates for these joint exercises could be decided only after the US Army chief will get satisfied with the venues for these exercises," Defence spokesman, Lt Col Anil Mathur told The Indian Express.

#### Navy diverts warship to fight Somali pirates

The Indian Navy has diverted a ship that was already in the west Asian region to the Gulf of Aden to carry out anti-piracy patrols, sources have confirmed. "The ship has enough endurance to remain there and provide security to Indian flagships carrying cargo till another warship is sent there to replace it," a sources said. The government on Thursday

had approved the deployment of an Indian naval warship with helicopters and marine commandos on board in the Gulf of Aden to carry out anti-piracy patrols of the route followed usually by Indian commercial ships between Salalah (Oman) and Aden (Yemen) in west Asia.

By arrangement with IPCS, New Delhi.

#### Indian Air Force with its own exercise

The Indian Air Force (IAF) is planning to host its own version of the US Air Force's (USAF's) Red Flag' exercise, in which it recently participated for the first time. "We are working towards holding our own multination war games with realistic war scenarios two to three years down the line, but they would be on a more modest scale," Vice Chief of Air Staff Marshall PV Naik said on 18 September.

Speaking in New Delhi after the return of the 247-strong IAF contingent from Nellis Air Base in Nevada, the venue for 'Red Flag', AM Naik said India had proved its ability to "project air power transcontinentally."

"These operations have aided in widening our horizons, provided necessary combat training with other advanced air forces of the world and prepared us for future overseas employment if required," he declared

The IAF contingent included 91 officers operating eight Sukhoi Su-30MKI fighters, two llyushin II-78 mid-air refuellers and one II-76 transport aircraft.

Domestic defense planners are eager for India to be able to conduct 'out of area operations' in accordance with the country's rising global profile. In keeping with this goal, the IAF said it had "positively exposed" and integrated its combat and transport aircraft and personnel in a transcontinental environment.

"the experience of engaging in an entirely network-centric combat environment in limited airspace has contributed immensely to honing our capabilities," said Group Captain D Chaudhury, IAF team commander at 'Red Flag'

The exercises, he added, had helped the IAF to network its assets to provide real-time data and to integrate 'seamlessly' with the USAF alongside those of the exercise's other participants, France and South Korea. During the manoeuvres, the IAF's Su-30s flew 180 sorties alongside

28 support sorties by the II-78s and the II-76. Missions included the suppression of enemy air defenses, dynamic targeting and air-to-air and air-to-ground missions in 'real, war like scenarios'.

The IAF's special forces (Garuda) also participated in the exercises, neutralising an enemy radar site, capturing an airfield and conducting search-and-rescue operations.

Source: Janes Defense Weekly

#### New 'Typhoon' combat aircraft for RAF

The RAF has taken delivery of the first of 91 new Typhoon combat aircraft, ordered four years ago and delivered on time and to cost. The new Defence Equipment and Support Minister Quentin Davies was at RAF Conings by to witness the arrival of the second generation Typhoons.

The two aircraft flew in from BAE Systems' Warton factory in Lancashire to RAF Coningsby in Lincolnshire, where they will shortly be released for flight trials, and are expected to join front line UKbased air defence squadrons in January 2009.

Minister for Defence Equipment and Support, Quentin Davies said, "Typhoon is delivering a world-class capability to the RAF and is the cornerstone of the UK's air defence capabilities. Today's arrival of the second Tranche is an important milestone delivering to the RAF an aircraft with more powerful computer systems and the ability to carry heavier weapons - the next generation of Typhoon.

"Typhoon directly employs some 16,000 aerospace and engineering staff in some of the UK's leading companies. Militarily and industrially this programme is successfully delivering the capabilities the country needs." The production of Typhoon Tranche 2 will maintain 16,000 direct jobs

within UK's defence industry, through its principal contractors BAE

Systems on its sites in Warton and Samlesbury in Lancashire and Rolls

Royce in Bristol. Other key suppliers include Selex Galileo in Edinburgh. The Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Glenn Torpy, said, "Maintaining the flow of these advanced aircraft to front line RAF squadrons is very important. Typhoon has now been operational in the air defence role for over a year and recently achieved its multi-role capability. I am confident that forthcoming exercises and deploy-

ments will provide further demonstration of its qualities." The RAF expects to take delivery of 6 rising to 20 Typhoon aircraft every year for the next 7 years under the Typhoon Tranche 2 contract.

Source: www.defencetalk.com

### The Powell endorsement: Will it seal the deal for Obama?

M. SERAJUL ISLAM

N a campaign not going well for Senator McCain, there was more taken on October 20th gave Senator domestic terrorist. In automated calls friends of the General, he has been should be punished. Colin Powell Barak Obama an 11% point lead in the to voters in swing states, the McCain presidential vote preference of all registered voters, 52% to 41%. The real bad news, though, came in the form of the endorsement given a day earlier to Senator Obama by former Secretary of State General Colin Powell who crossed partylines to do so.

The endorsement was made all the more shocking for the Arizona Senator by the carefully chosen words in the endorsement. It was widely known that General Powell would be endorsing either of the candidates as he had met both in June and said that his endorsement would come after the conventions and the presidential debates. In NBC's popular programme "Meet the Press" last Sunday, where he endorsed Senator Barak Obama, General Powell described him as a "transformational figure" who has "displayed steadiness," showed "intellectual vigour "and "has a definitive way of doing business that will do us well." He also cited Obama's "ability to inspire", the "inclusive nature of his campaign", his attempts to reach out all across America and "because of who he is and his rhetorical abilities" as additional reasons for endorsing the candidate of the Senator from Chicago.

The superlatives that the General used to describe Senator Obama gave significant impetus to a campaign that needed it as the election for the White House entered the final lap with just a fortnight left for the election on November 4th. There was extra mileage too from the endorsement that came in the meeting that Powell had with reporters immediately after taping his "Meet the Press one between the pragmatists and the

POLL STAG

campaign said that "Obama worked closely with domestic terrorist Ayers' in an attempt to put the thought in voters' minds that Obama is "palling around with terrorists" as publicly suggested by Senator McCain's running mate Sarah Palin. Obama worked with Ayers in the Annenberg Challenge Project and Woods Fund, a Chicago charity, but independent investigations have found no evidence of a deep and strong relationship. Colin Powell thought that the attempt to link Obama to Ayers to label him as a radical "was over the top" and "was beyond just good political fighting back and forth." The General also expressed disgust at the attempt to use Obama's Muslim middle name to create suspicion in people's minds.

The Democrats are excited with the endorsement of Colin Powel for a number of reasons. Colin Powell is as an elder statesman across the political divide of his country. A former Joint Chiefs of Staff during the first Gulf War, Colin Powell became the Secretary of State in the first Bush administration. General Powell was once widely considered as most likely to become the first black President of the USA but his association to the Bush administration came in the way of that possibility but still did not tarnish his image as an honest and powerful leader and a visionary. The fact that he crossed party line to endorse Senator Obama made his endorsement that much

There are a few more damaging elements of the Colin endorsement for the McCain camp. It has exposed a serious rift within the Republicans -

McCain camp with deep ties to the neo-conservatives, people like Randy Scheunemann who is currently a key foreign policy adviser to the Senator was earlier foreign policy adviser to Senator Trent Loft and Senator Dole, both with deep ties to the neoconservatives. In addition, Randy Scheunemann was the founder of the hawkish Liberation of Iraq and a supporter of Chalabi, a Pentagon favourite during the beginning of the Iraq War and a Pentagon favourite but deeply detestable at the State Department when Powell was the Secretary there.

on the election is being discussed everywhere in the USA now. The feedback coming out is depressing President himself called the General endorsement knowing how damaging it would be to the McCain candidature. Those in the McCain camp, in an effort to downplay the damage, are saving that Powell is a discredited political figure for the part he played is his way of hitting back.

On balance, though, this endorse-McCain at a very bad time. The general mood among most Americans is that the Republicans led by President Bush are responsible for USA's cur-

"programme. In that meeting, Colin neo-conservatives. The pragmatists rent economic plight; that the Iraq Powell told reporters that he was very among the Republicans have viewed war contributed more than its share disappointed at the attempts of the Iraq war and the execution of it a to this economic downturn and that McCain campaign to link Obama to mistake. Colin Powell is among these backing the McCain-Palin ticket L bad news this week. Gallup Poll William Ayers, a 1960s radical and pragmatists. According to close would mean encouraging those who disturbed to observe people in the brought home this point in his endorsement succinctly when he said that Obama has "fresh set of eyes" and "fresh set of ideas" and although Senator McCain is gifted, he from Alaska. Randy Scheunemann is in the end going to execute the orthodoxy of the Republican agenda with a maverick face which is not enough for America. USA needs much more than that and Obama is the one who can do that.

The Powell endorsement and the

words he used to give this endorsement to Obama have articulated the shortcomings of the McCain campaign in a manner that even the Obama Camp could not have done. First, General Powell has spelt out The impact of the endorsement clearly and effectively that McCain is no different from President Bush despite his attempts to distance himself from President Bush. Second, for the McCain camp. Analysts soft to he has underscored the fact that the Obama candidature are calling it Senator McCain is also under the a bombshell, a nail in the coffin, a influence of the neo-conservatives development that could seal the deal who are responsible for the state of and the presidency. As it became the economy and the Iraq War. Third, evident that General Powell would the former Secretary of State has endorse Obama, sources close to exposed the negative campaign to President Bush have said that the link Obama with Ayers to suggest that he has links with terrorists as disgustto request him not to make the ing and detestable. Fourth, he has effectively explained in his endorsement the mistake of the McCain camp to include Governor Palin while underscoring the value of inclusion of Senator Biden as Obama's running mate. Finally, he has articulated the in the Iraq War and this endorsement strengths of Senator Obama as a man of destiny who has the qualities and the vision to lead USA out of its curment by Colin Powell has come for rent economic and political quagmire into which the country has fallen as a consequence of the failed leadership of President Bush and his neo-conservatives aides.

Coming from a Republican of the stature of Colin Powell, this endorsement in the ultimate analysis could prove to be the catalyst to help undecided voters make up their minds in favour of Senator Obama. As one analyst has written: "He's (meaning Powell) a Republican. He's a military man. He's backed both Bushes. And he has even donated money to McCain. That is why Powell's endorsement is so powerful." Senator McCain has already acknowledged that he is now the underdog. It is now up to the Obama camp to hold on to the great momentum that the Powell endorsement has given the Obama-Biden ticket and keep McCain where he lies at the moment. The Powell endorsement may also have taken the Bradley effect that suggests that on voting day white voters, who have earlier told pollsters that they would vote for a black candidate, may ultimately vote for a white candidate instead, out of the equation, thus easing the road of Senator Obama to theWhite House.

The writer is former Bangladesh Ambassador to Japan and Director of Centre for Foreign Affairs Studies and can be reached by email serajul@cfasonline.org.