

# Pakistan: Into the vortex of violence

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PAKISTAN is descending into ever-increasing chaos and violence with no end in sight. Things were looking better about a month back with the army operation winding down in Swat and the IDPs returning to their homes. Pakistan Army's operational success in Swat and Malakand and the killing of Baitullah Mehsud, the Head of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in a US drone attack appeared to signal a turning point on the war against the FATA militants. However, the euphoria was short-lived. Hakimullah Mehsud, Baitullah's successor, is proving to be an even more aggressive and audacious terrorist. The attacks on the GHQ, the heart of Pakistan military, and a few days later in the PAF Base, Kamra proved that the Taliban can plan and execute a complex suicide attack at a time and place of their own choosing. More worrying signs are the emerging entente between the Taliban and other militant organizations, such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP). Once nurtured by the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) to conduct terrorist operations in Kashmir and elsewhere in India, they are now increasingly turning against their mentor since the government, under increasing external pressure, clamped down on their operations. The new coalition called "Punjabi Taliban" could make the task of combating insurgency even more difficult now that the Punjabi dominated Army will be fighting in their backyard with people from their own linguistic clan.

The operation in South Waziristan has so far, from the official point of view, been a success. Army has been capturing towns and villages previously under the Taliban control. The fall of Kotkai, the birth place of Hakimullah Mehsud, on 28 October was given wide coverage. So was the fall of Sararogha or Kaniguram, tiny hamlets that have questionable strategic value in fluid guerrilla warfare. Meanwhile, in a sensational interview from the frontline, Hamid Mir, a noted TV journalist, revealed that the Army is, in fact, bombing largely deserted

villages and killing innocent civilians caught in the cross-fire. He claimed that the main body of the militants melted into higher mountains and deeper gorges, leaving small bodies to fight rearguard skirmishes and lay booby traps and IEDs, which are the ones killing most of the soldiers. The ultra-right TV strategist Zaid Hamid, along with pro-military media, has termed Hamid Mir a CIA Agent, but Mir is the only one able to give independent eye-witness account of what has been going on in South Waziristan.

It appears that Pakistan Army is neither well-trained nor well-equipped to fight the kind of warfare that it is now engaged in. Their focus had always been the Indian border, where a bulk of the forces is still stationed. Force structuring, equipment procurement and training have always been India-centric. As can be seen on TV, Pakistani soldiers, without flak jackets, traveling in open Toyota mini-trucks, becoming easy targets of Taliban ambush. Shalwar-Kameez and chappal (Sandal) wearing Frontier Constabulary (FC) are a pathetic sight at best. Tanks and artillery, although good for a show of force, could in fact, be bottled up in the mountainous terrain. The same can be said of the air force operations in the mountains. The probability of civilian losses, collateral damage in military parlance, is huge. Indiscriminate bombing, rocketing and artillery shelling could turn an otherwise passive population hostile towards the military, and Hamid Mir in his interview confirmed it. It appears that bulk of the \$11 billion that the military received from the US since 2002, were diverted to procure tanks, fighter aircraft, submarines and missiles, besides nuclear weapons all designed to fight off an Indian attack, but of little use against the militants. On the psychological front too the task is quite daunting. The military was motivated for half a century to declare Jihad against the Hindus across the border. It must be quite confusing for a Pakistani soldier to meet his adversary in the field shouting his own battle cry "Allahu Akbar." Each side is accusing the other of 'Fitnah', creating chaos and disorder in the society. The lines

drawn are not clear as they were in the past wars.

The military operations could secure the ground for sometime, but unless firm civilian government institutions are restored immediately, the militants are going to return as soon as the army leaves. This happened in Swat, where soon after the claim of victory, large number of soldiers were killed in ambush. That the militancy is motivated by extremist Wahabi/Deobandi ideology rather than Pashtun nationalism is evident from the targets chosen by the Taliban schools, especially girls schools are being demolished. The bomb attack in Peshawar "Meena Bazar" on 28 October '09 that killed mostly women and children was deliberately chosen because the customers were mostly female. The Chairman of the Shoppers' Association was warned few days earlier against females coming to shop, even if they were in Burqa. The version of Islam that the Taliban wants to impose is passed loud and clear.

Indiscriminate bombing has created a wave of panic and despondency in a country already suffering from shortage of essential commodities. Parents are worried about their wards' safety and so are the shoppers, bankers and industrialists. People avoid passing beside military garrisons and check posts, lest they are caught in another bomb attack. Life in big cities has come to a limbo. Government's approval rating, especially of the President, is perilously low. While the government claims to be ardent in fighting the militancy, it is not taken seriously at home or abroad. Jamaat-e-Islami, the main religious party, calls for an end of all operations against the Taliban and resumption of dialogue with them. There are many who believe that Pakistan is fighting USA's proxy war. On the other hand, US anxiety is well ventilated when Ms. Clinton publicly said, "I find it hard to believe that nobody in your government knows where they (Al-Qaeda) are and could not get them if they really wanted to. May be they are not gettable, I don't know." There are others, conspiracy theorists, who claim the whole episode is a part of the



Hindu-Jewish-Christian conspiracy to break up Pakistan the only nuclear-armed Muslim state. Pakistan, hailed in the sixties as a model for the developing world, is, forty years later, the "9th most likely failed-state in the world", a painful payback for millions toiling hard for a better future.

While the picture is bleak, there is no room for despair. A failed Pakistan or Afghanistan will have a domino effect which will engulf us all. We need to join Ms. Clinton when she assured her Pakistani audience by saying, "It is not your war only, it's our war too." India needs to publicly assure Pakistan that their border would remain inviolable and that they will cooperate with Pakistan in their war against militancy. The NATO forces operating in Afghanistan need to tighten the noose on their side. With the Afghan election circus now over, President Obama need to quickly dispatch additional troops as advised by Gen. McChrystal. The US need to increase logistic supply to Pakistan, such as attack helicopters, armoured personnel carriers

(APC), night fighting gears, intelligence and monitoring equipment, laser guided rockets etc. If outright transfer is not possible, the equipment could be on lease for use in the war against militants only. In the end, the onus is on the Pakistani government who need to come up with a long-term solution. There is no substitute to better governance for the people, especially the poor and downtrodden in FATA. The government needs to legislate to merge FATA with the NWFP administration. It needs to scrap colonial regulations that severely curbs human rights and thwart human progress in the region. It needs to replace corrupt and oppressive political agent and Sardari system with popularly elected local government and rule of law. They need to set up special economic zones to create employment opportunities for people. The government could invite NGOs from countries such as Bangladesh (BRAC is already there) to reach the desperately poor people, especially women, with educational, health and employment opportu-

nities. The government's attempt to create irregular Lashkar, local militias, is likely to backfire; those need to be disbanded before they turn into another Taliban. Public education system throughout Pakistan is poor, but in FATA it is in shambles. Modern education, even modern Islamic education is Taliban's biggest fear, as seen in the bombing of Islamic University in Islamabad on 20 October '09. School bombing has not only destroyed the infrastructures, but thousands of students, especially females are missing the schools, which is exactly what the Taliban wanted. The government as well as the donors needs to come up in a big way to reverse the situation. In the end, corruption is at the heart of the problem. Unless a relatively corruption free government could function in Pakistan, nothing else will work. Politicians and policy makers must present before the people a Pakistan that is far better than what the Taliban could promise.

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## Maritime strategy: Bangladesh perspective

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MARITIME strategy is the set of principles that govern a maritime war, in which the sea is a substantial factor. Naval strategy is but that part of national strategy which determines the movement of the fleet, in time of war. Maritime strategy determines how and what part of the fleet must be engaged in relation to the land and air strategy.

The greatest Chinese strategist Sunzu said, "War is a matter of vital importance to the state, a matter of life and death, the road either to survival or to ruin. Hence, it is imperative that it be studied thoroughly." He further said "Strategy of any war whether land, air or at sea should be valued in quick victory, not prolonged operations". Alfred Thayer Mahan, a naval philosopher said "Those nation who possessed sea

pared, the military strategy can then be formulated of which maritime strategy becomes an important component. Therefore, maritime strategy has direct relation with national strategy.

National strategy is total in concept and has potential, diplomatic, economic, commercial, cultural and military facets. Being small and a non-aligned country, Bangladesh would most probably define its maritime strategy in terms of the UN charter, that is to say territorial integrity and political independence. Bangladesh would not see threats to its maritime interests from major forces of the world. While preventing or limiting interstate conflicts through diplomatic channels (which would clearly be the desired solution) the best alternatives would be to settle the conflict without external help.

Bangladesh is a maritime country with 710 KM of coast line at the vertex of the Bay of Bengal with India

ence on the seas. The geologists found out that the most valuable assets are all under the sea - two billion tons of fish are being consumed by human beings every year. We can foresee that the powerful maritime countries would most likely entangle themselves in maritime conflict for controlling the vast seas in the near future.

The provision of 200 nautical miles Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) under the laws of the sea convention (UNCLOS 1982) has given right to the littoral states a domain of the sea to a large extent. In case of Bangladesh, this available maritime asset is a sea area equivalent to 73% of the country's total mass. The EEZ, therefore, is of paramount national interest to Bangladesh. Sea lanes are vital for the very survival of the country because it is the most viable economic link Bangladesh has with the rest of the world. Therefore, Bangladesh Maritime Force (BMF) should be able to provide coastal defense, protect EEZ, sea lanes of communication, sea ward defenses and to protect merchant shipping.

In today's world, economy can not be dealt separately. The economic life of a country relies upon free access and security of the sea ways. Moreover, we have to preserve the freedom of action at sea, being sufficiently strong to defend our presence. We should be aware of the importance of the sea which will play a vital role in coming centuries. In regards to maritime sector comments of transport economists and historians can be mentioned here as saying, "never a country is to expect to establish itself as a developed country without developing its maritime sector; as it is the only cheaper mode of transport [that] exists in the world." So we can say that we have to learn how to ride the sea.

BMF, therefore, should be made capable of withstanding pressure having the support of other deterrent forces. Bangladesh cannot aspire for command of the sea in this region, but certainly its interests must be safeguarded for both in war and in peace. It would not be wise to maintain large standing maritime forces, but the country needs a small and efficient standing maritime force with substantial reserve as deterrence.

No peace loving human being would like to see war occur, which has the potential for severe devastation. Nevertheless, war takes place because the tendency to flout international law to gain economic interests has become endemic. Availability of lethal weapons, terrorism and sabotage cause sudden crisis and skirmishes leading to wider confrontations.

With satellite communications along with reconnaissance and having devastating missiles at sea, the scenario is going to be favourable for those nations who can claim good knowledge and intelligence of the dimensions of space above, over and under the sea. Bangladesh will have to play its role at least in the Bay of Bengal accordingly. Our maritime force cannot ever say, "Ring off main engines, revert to normal, notice for steam". It will have to lift its head in Bay of Bengal and keep the boilers bunked if not steaming.

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## Draft Agreement on Iran's Nuclear Program: A Victory?

TARA SARIN

ON 21 October 2009 negotiations over Iran's nuclear programme wrapped up in Vienna. Terms such as "break-through" and "victory" were prematurely used to describe the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) preliminary agreement with Iran. The agreement was seen as a way to assuage international concerns over Iran's nuclear intentions and prove a substantial vindication of President Barack Obama's engagement policy. Even before the international optimism has settled in, the wariness has begun to creep in. How distant has the attempt to build cooperation is a question that may only be answered if the Iranian leadership accepts the proposed agreement in its entirety and after the IAEA inspectors complete their inspection of the recently discovered clandestine nuclear enrichment facility near the city of Qum.

The IAEA draft agreement is essentially providing Iran fuel sufficient for its stated civilian purposes but depriving Iran of any justification for enriching to higher levels itself. The details include that Iran would ship 1,200 kilograms of its own stockpiled low-enriched uranium (LEU) in one batch to Russia and subsequently to France for reprocessing by the end of this year, which would eventually be used as medical isotopes in Iran. The LEU would be enriched to 19.75 per cent, and that material would then be sent to France for fabrication into fuel rods and then eventually returned to Iran. The idea is to allow time for negotiations to convince Iran to freeze its nuclear programme because the LEU, if left in Iran, poses a threat that it could be turned into weapon-grade uranium and used in nuclear weapons in the near future. This agreement does not solve the fundamental problem of what to do about Iran's growing nuclear weapons capabilities and how to convince Iran to disband its uranium enrichment programme. It, however, does reduce further sanctions from being imposed on Iran and the immediate threat of military action from countries such as Israel. Iran continues to refuse to accept a halt to its enrichment, which means it has also refused to accept a negotiating structure to discuss the suspension of enrichment, which is called "freeze for freeze." By that formula, the United Nations Security Council would freeze its sanctions against Iran and Iran would freeze its LEU programme. This reaction does not confirm Iran's nuclear ambitions but does reinforce the scepticism felt by the international community.

However, state media has recently reported that Iran wants major amendments within the framework of the agreement which it broadly accepts. The changes have not been elaborated upon but Iran has stated that they would present their response to the proposed agreement within 48 hours, on 30

October 2009, a week after a deadline set by the IAEA. Iranian opposition to the agreement could be driven by concerns that it weakens Iran's control over its stockpiles of nuclear fuel and could be perceived as a concession to the West. In fact Iran has announced a preference to buy the 20 per cent enriched uranium for its reactor, rather than export its own uranium to Russia and France for enrichment. Iranian leadership appears to be deeply divided over the proposal and divergent views have emerged. In response to ambiguous statements by Iran, this development was described by the French Foreign Minister, Bernard Kouchner, as "not a good sign...it is a bad indication." Iran's response is seen as a continuation of its cat and mouse game where it has often used counter-proposals as a way to draw out negotiations with the West leading to an unravelling of the West's policy of diplomatic engagement.

Along with the draft agreement on enrichment, IAEA inspectors are undertaking a visit to the newly revealed enrichment facility. These two simultaneous pledges are seen as a litmus test of Iran's stated intent for peaceful civilian use and as a basis for more ambitious negotiations on curbing Iran's nuclear aspirations. Ultimately, the draft agreement is seen as a time-saving agreement as it makes it less likely for Iran to immediately produce nuclear weapons and creates an environment conducive for negotiating. Although it seems doubtful, if Iran accepts the agreement as is, it can be seen as a small victory on an otherwise arduous path to the goal of a permanent freeze and then suspension of its enrichment programme. The position of the West remains the same; they will look at a whole range of issues with Iran, including whether to continue negotiations, or whether it should advance to a new chapter wherein harsher sanctions are imposed on Iran.

Iran has become something of an international pariah and it is unable to operate with great legitimacy around the world, particularly after its recent election debacle. The nation is constrained and if well handled, can be kept that way until the regime becomes more transparent and cooperative on the nuclear issue. If the agreement fails, any new measure of tougher sanctions should target the leadership and regime of the nation. In the words of British scholar, Timothy Garton Ash, "there is a physics of diplomacy, but there is also a chemistry of politics" and in this context, Iran's "chemistry of politics" may prove to be the critical element that changes the dynamics within the nation to a regime that wants to symbiotically engage the international community.

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power has certain options to them which give them advantages over those nations who do not possess sea power". It was only through the use of this advantage that a nation could become great. Chairman Mao Tse Dong said, "Military (maritime) strategy is nothing but war planning, preparing and direction by war commanders". There are many strategists who gave their different views on military and maritime strategy but the centre of their strategic philosophy remained same. Some say, 'Strategy is nothing but tactics talked through a brass hat'.

Once the national security policy has been pre-

and Myanmar on her three sides. It is a country of 150 million people living in an area of 55,000 square miles, making it the world's most densely populated area. The land mass is not sufficient to provide food and wealth for this vast population so the Bay of Bengal is very vital for providing protein and natural resources for this huge nation. On the other hand, 20% of the entire living resources and 80% of non-living resources are available at the bottom of the sea. The scientists have discovered half a million various types of living and non-living resources under the sea. Therefore, there will be ever-increasing depend-