

# New sanctions on Iran: Will it work?

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ON 9th June, the United Nations Security Council voted to impose fourth round of sanctions on Iran for its nuclear program. The resolution, which the US pushed for, was approved by a vote of 12 to 2, with Brazil and Turkey voting against.

The resolution followed five months of arduous negotiations between the United States, Britain, France, Germany, China and Russia.

The vote is seen as a victory for the US and others because Russia and China, which had earlier threatened to veto the measure, both joined in support.

## Earlier UN sanction

It is noted that the Security Council has imposed three sets of sanctions on Iran, in December 2006, March 2007 and March 2008.

In September 2008, the Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution again ordering Iran to halt enrichment, but imposed no more sanctions, due to opposition from Russia and China.

The three sanctions relate to:

- The first covered sensitive nuclear materials and froze the assets of Iranian individuals and companies linked with the nuclear program. It gave Iran 60 days to suspend uranium enrichment, a deadline Iran ignored.
- The second included new arms and financial sanctions. It extended an asset freeze to 28 more groups, companies and individuals engaged in or supporting sensitive nuclear work or development of ballistic missiles, including the state-run Bank Sepah and firms controlled by the Revolutionary Guards. Iran again ignored an order to halt enrichment.
- The third measure increased travel and financial curbs on individuals and companies and made some of them mandatory. It expanded a partial ban on trade in items with both civilian and military uses to cover sales of all such technology to Iran, and added 13 individuals and 12 companies to the list of those suspected of aiding Iran's nuclear and missile programs.

## Why did Russia and China vote for sanctions?

Both Russia and China are against nuclear proliferation of weapons among

other countries. Iran is a party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and both countries appeared to have been convinced that Iranian enrichment of uranium could lead to manufacturing of nuclear warheads, despite Iranian claim that its nuclear programme is for peaceful goal of generating electricity.

Russia's foreign ministry later explained "stifling or paralyzing" sanctions on Iran and "our efforts aim to give impetus to a political and diplomatic solution of the issue."

China is believed to have been briefed in February this year by a secret Israeli delegation who provided classified evidence of Iran's atomic ambitions. They explained what a pre-emptive attack would do to the region and on oil supplies China has come to depend on. Israel suggested that an attack was likely should the international community fail to stop Iran from manufacturing a nuclear weapon. Whether the Israeli briefing persuaded China to support the sanctions may never be known.

## What will the fourth round of sanctions accomplish?

Three annexes are attached to the resolution. Under the first annex regarding those involved in nuclear or ballistic missile activities, one individual, Javad Rahiqi, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, is listed. There are also 22 entities listed, ranging from Doostan International Co., which supplies elements to Iran's ballistic missile program, to the First East Export Bank, which is owned or controlled by Bank Mellat. According to the paper, Bank Mellat has facilitated hundreds of millions of dollars in transactions for Iranian nuclear, missile and defense entities over the last seven years. In the second annex relating to entities affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, 15 institutions or companies are listed, while the third annex singles out three companies as entities acting on behalf of the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines.

Advocates for sanctions say the imposition of new sanctions may be viewed as a valuable tool in slowing Tehran's march to acquire nuclear weapons. The resolution will further hamper the production of highly enriched uranium at suspect sites.

The sanctions will constrict the flow of goods and financial transactions that facilitate the advanced technology available to Iranian scientists. Trade in components that have a dual usage will be aggressively targeted under the terms of the new resolution.

They argue the new sanctions are aimed at persuading banks and companies to avoid business with Iran's Revolutionary Guard, the military branch that is now involved in Iranian politics, business and foreign policy. Boeing and Exxon said new sanctions would cost Iran \$25 billion in exports to the US.

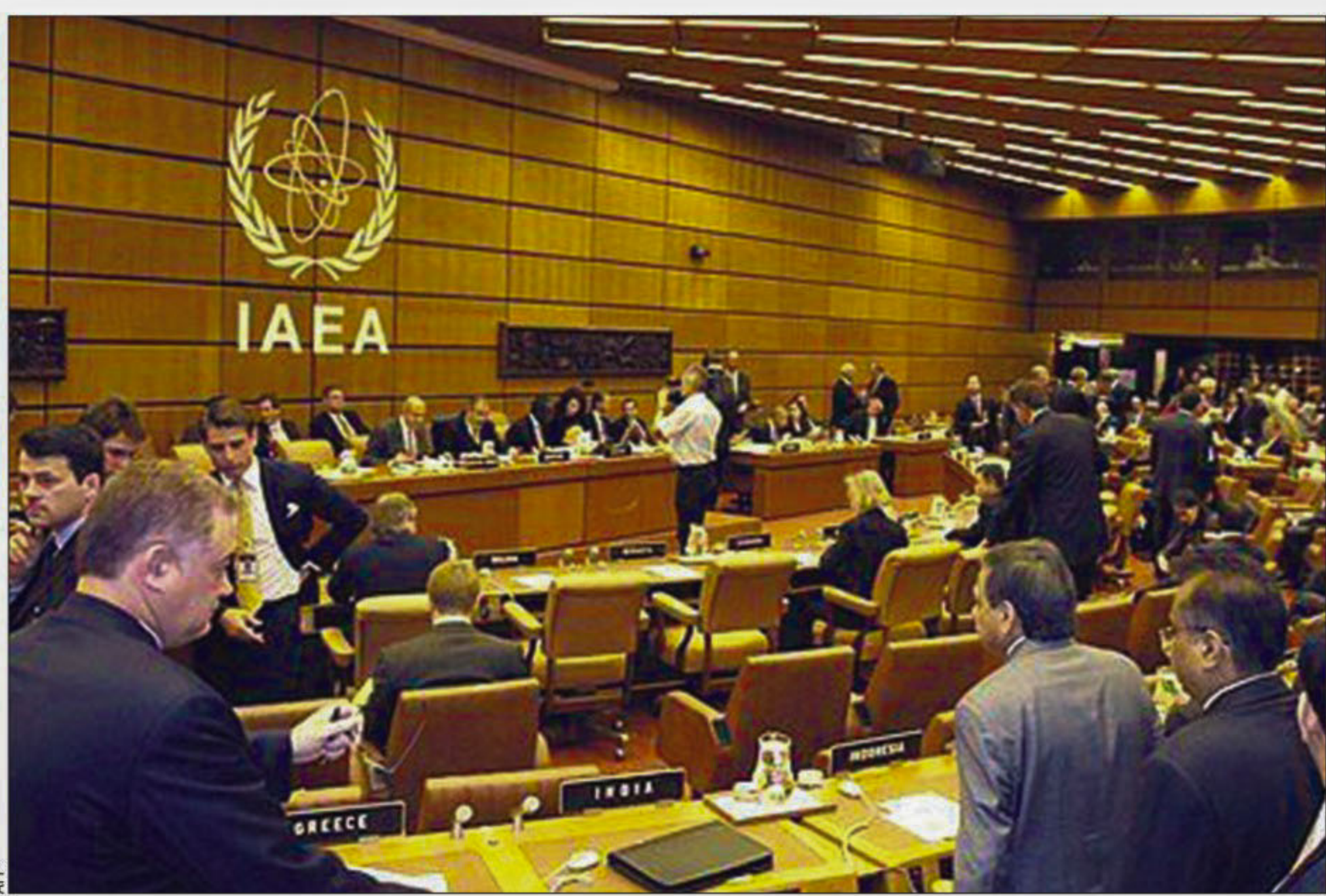
Another fallout from sanctions is that on 12 June, Russia has frozen the sale of air defence missiles (S-300) worth \$800 million to Iran. The Russian shift came on the same day the Kremlin and the White House announced that Russian President Dmitry Medvedev would meet with President Obama in Washington on June 24. The long-term value of additional sanctions lies in the wider impact on Iranian internal politics and its economy.

The Islamic leadership has weathered the mass demonstrations and agonising political schisms that emerged in the wake of the disputed June 2009 Presidential election. The government still remains on its guard and distrustful of its opposition leaders. Sanctions may demonstrate the inability of Iranian current leadership to persuade China and Russia not to support the new round of sanctions and may create division among ruling circles against the President.

## Iran's reaction

The response from Iran was quick. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said they deserve to be "thrown in the dust bin. These resolutions are not worth a dime for the Iranian nation. I gave one of them (world powers) a message that the resolutions you issue are like a used hanky which should be thrown in the dust bin. They are not capable of hurting Iranians." Iran's parliament has threatened to abandon cooperation on its nuclear programs.

Ali Asghar Soltanieh, Iranian envoy to the International Atomic Energy Agency, says: "We invited them to come to the negotiating table, to change the confrontation to cooperation but it seems some of them are deaf. They cannot listen to honest appeals and requests and recommendations."



Iran's atomic chief, Ali Akbar Salehi, slammed China, which has emerged as Iran's main trading partner in recent years, for agreeing to the sanctions. "China is gradually losing its respectable position in the Islamic world and by the time it wakes up, it will be too late. There was a time when I wonder what the US as a paper tiger. China branded the US as a paper tiger. I wonder what we can call China for agreeing to this resolution," he told ISNA news agency.

However, both China and Iran already have mended their ties as Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad visited China on 17th June after the UN Security Council slapped Tehran with fresh sanctions.

**US and EU additional sanctions**  
The US and the European Union imposed sanctions which go beyond the UN sanctions. The European Union on 17th June followed suit with what it called "inevitable" new measures against Tehran.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev

criticised separate US and European sanctions against Iran, telling a newspaper that the big powers should "act collectively" and not unilaterally. He said the US had nothing to lose by imposing additional sanctions because, unlike Russia and China, it has no ties with Tehran.

## Critics' views

Many diplomats concede that President Ahmadinejad may attempt to use the sanctions to rally support. As economic conditions inevitably deteriorate, he can more easily blame the West for falling incomes, rising unemployment and, perhaps, a scarcity of goods in the shops.

Critics argue the new sanctions have been advertised by the Obama administration as a demonstration of world unity against the Iranian nuclear program. In reality, they are so weak and so lacking in international support that they do nothing more than showcase the recklessness of Obama's smart diplomacy.

Iran could still achieve its goal of

nuclear arms at a slower rate, however, the door would remain open for Israel or America to deliver a knock out blow by military means in future with terrible global consequences.

It may be recalled that on 28th May, at the 2010 NPT Review Conference in New York, there was an agreement by 118 nations to hold a regional conference in 2012 to discuss issues relevant to a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems (Israel did not attend and objected to this proposal).

Observers say that diplomatic negotiation is the only alternative and a creation of nuclear weapons-free-zone in the Middle East which Iran supports may lead to stability of the region. Israel has nuclear weapons and the governments in the region have been calling on the world not to apply double standards when it comes to Israel.

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# Myanmar: Hope for democracy fades

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FOR the developed nations that presume they have the responsibility to spread democracy around the world, Aung Saan Suu Kyi is a living proof of their failure to uphold the cause of democracy in Myanmar. The 65th birthday of the Noble Laureate on 19th June was another reminder to the guardians of democracy that the generals continue to keep her under house arrest in Yangon for nearly 15 years. Her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), overwhelmed Myanmar's last democratic election held 20 years ago but the generals did not want to hand power to an elected government. In many capitals round the world, individuals and rights activists celebrated her birthday while condemning the military junta. Such groups have been observing her birthday every year with no effect on the junta at all.

The developed nations must bear a lot of responsibility for the fate of Aung Saan Suu Kyi and democracy in Myanmar because they have not matched the passion and the conviction of these groups and more importantly, have not fully backed the courageous movement of the NLD, whose leaders have faced threats of all kinds, including incarceration without recourse to the law. Instead, they imposed economic sanctions that were of no particular effect and made toothless diplomatic efforts to deal with the junta. Since President Obama took office, his administration decided to follow the path of "pragmatic engagement" to deal with the junta. These efforts have encouraged the junta to deal with them on their terms. They announced that Myanmar's next parliamentary elections would be held later this year but also ensured that Suu Kyi would not qualify to participate. The junta used the case of a US national who swam the lake to Suu Kyi's house, apparently on his own to convey to her a message that her life was in danger; that went to trial and earned her an extension on her house arrest.

The NLD decided not to register as a political party and thus gave up its right to participate in the next elections as required by Myanmar's election laws. Early this month, it disbanded the party acknowledging the futility of continuing as long as the junta lasted because it felt that under the military junta, the party had no chance whatever of winning. It is a pity that one of the most committed movements for establishment of democracy of our times had to end the way it has. Its decision not to register and wind up has been a conscious one taken to

snub the military junta because without the NLD's participation, the forthcoming elections in Myanmar will not gain the legitimacy that the junta wants. The NLD has also decided to disband itself to stir the conscience of the developed world to the way it has watched a vibrant movement for democracy snuffed out of its life without doing much.

In an age where military dictatorships have become history everywhere, the military junta of Myanmar did not just prevail; it outlasted successive western leaders and their governments who had opposed them by remaining in power for over 20 years now and are getting stronger. A lawyer representing the Noble Laureate told the media that she wants the NLD to continue serving the people of Myanmar by doing social work for them. A leader of NLD told the media that by disbanding, it was losing a battle but not the war as it will continue to remain active by doing social work for the people of Myanmar. Others in the party's leadership expressed views that with the current leadership getting advanced in years (Aung Saan Suu Kyi's Deputy U Tin Oo is 82), there is

need to pass on the baton to the large crop of young members of the NLD. These young members have joined the movement in recent years and they would be able to take up the fight for establishing democracy in Myanmar in the future. Such optimism notwithstanding, the chances of Myanmar achieving a democratic government and society have been pushed back indefinitely.

President Obama has called for the unconditional release of Aung Saan Suu Kyi from her house arrest. The UN Secretary General and other world leaders also joined the US President in the call. However, these calls or sanctions or pragmatic engagement will not change the attitude of the Myanmar generals. The die has been cast on democracy in Myanmar. The generals have decided to follow the footsteps of the military generals of history who have tried to become civilian leaders by electing themselves and their collaborators to form the garb of a democratic government and keep power perpetually. The Myanmar generals, however, have a few things running in their favour and may not as easily meet the fate of other dictators of

history. There is no single general who has a personal whim or wishes involving Myanmar; it is a united junta that is thrashing democracy there. The presence of a good number of secessionist movements in the country has given the military junta a strong rationale to remain in power since 1962. Their long tenure in power and unity in their midst have also helped the junta face public opposition, like the one from the NLD, far better than other military dictatorships in history that have eventually fallen to popular uprisings.

The never ending house arrest of Aung Saan Suu Kyi and the disbanding of the NLD are not the only bad news about Myanmar. Facts are coming to light about the reclusive regime's nuclear ambitions that should send a chill down the spines of the guardians of democracy. Myanmar severed diplomatic ties with North Korea in 1983 when North Korean agents tried to assassinate the South Korean President while he was on a state visit to Myanmar. It began secret liaison with North Korea not long after the present military junta came to power in 1988. By 2006 it felt confident enough to resume public diplomatic ties with North Korea, leading analysts to think an evil nexus was developing. The Economist in its June 12th edition has given some details on Myanmar's overt and covert North Korean links based on leaks from a defector from Myanmar's military who worked in the missile program; the report suggests a clear intent by Myanmar to possess nuclear weapons. Reports on the subject have appeared in other leading world dailies hinting the same. The Myanmar generals are seeking the nuclear option as they do not feel fully secure from external aggression without nuclear weapons.

The signals emanating from Myanmar are thus depressing for a world striving for peace and democracy. It is time for those who are pursuing these ideals globally to focus more positively and with the same intent with which they have pursued or are pursuing dictators and dictatorial regimes in other parts of the world. The Obama administration's "pragmatic engagement" with the military junta has been followed by the NLD disbanding itself. President Obama's call for release of Aung Saan Suu Kyi is also not likely to have any effect. It is time for the USA and its allies to re-think their strategy in dealing with Myanmar generals and at the same time look into the regime's nuclear ambitions. A nuclear-armed Myanmar would be too dangerous to contemplate.

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# Attacks in Lahore: Buildup to secession?

SIDDHARTH RAMANA

AFTER the 2 July 2010 attack on a popular Sufi Mosque in Lahore, Pakistan has once again raised the spotlight of political security in Pakistan. While recent attacks in Pakistan have been blamed on Waziristan-based Pashtun groups such as the Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP), the group has denied responsibility for the latest attack. However, local media reports have speculated that one of the suicide bombers did recently go to Waziristan for terrorist training purposes. As Punjab is starting to witness a new round of terrorist and sectarian clashes, the violence in the province threatens to escalate with a demonstrative effect for regional secessionist groups.

The Punjab province of Pakistan is the richest province in the country and home to 60% of the country's population. Punjab has traditionally been home to religious revisionist movements, which led to the formation of sectarian religious organizations. The religious zealots in the region, combined with the economic conditions of the downtrodden, provided easy cadre for the terrorist outfits, which have used them to devastating effect. Last year, a new splinter outfit of the TTP, the TTP-Punjab had taken credit for violence in the state. Punjab locals have been involved in some of the most audacious terrorist attacks including the Mariott bombing in Islamabad, the attack on the Sri Lankan Cricket team and also international plots such as the November 2008 Mumbai terror attacks.

The formation of the TTP-Pakistan was supposed to be in response to the belief that the largely Pashtun TTP wanted to take the battle to Punjab where the Pakistan government was largely based. Indeed, the Pakistan Interior Ministry had warned that attacks in Lahore would receive much greater media coverage than attacks in the Pashtun belt region. Lahore also remains a volatile city for sectarian tensions in Pakistan. It has witnessed violent attacks against its minority Shiite population and also the Ahmaddiya sect which was targeted last month.

The continued violence in Punjab gravely threatens the continued stability and future of a coherent Pakistan state. The ability of groups to mount even more spectacular attacks against government officials and citizens would lead to an emboldened stance among other separatist groups which operate in the neighbouring provinces of Balochistan and Sind. In an online publication, Jihadist groups discussed the future of Pakistan, fearing that the continued turmoil in the state would provide an excuse for an America-Jewish-Hindu takeover, and the country would be divided with an independent Balochistan and Sind province.

The successes by Jihadist groups in Punjab reflect a deep concern for security agencies, particularly over the ability of groups based in Punjab to coordinate logistical and tactical support with their allies in Waziristan. The developments in Waziristan are starting to play an important role in the psyche of Punjab-based terrorist cadre, who are increasingly inclined to fight against the Pakistan army in Waziristan or target their military installations in the Pakistani hinterland, which in turn effectively further erodes confidence in the State's security apparatus.

As Punjab based terrorist outfits continue to garner successes against security forces which would be stretched thin, and increasingly fighting their own brethren, traditional divisions in the Pakistani state would gain strength. While the Balochi separatist movement suffered a major blow with the assassination of its leader Akbar Bugti in 2006, the renewed violence could allow for a revival of its fortunes against the Pakistan government. Taking advantage of the turmoil in Punjab, a rival state, it can attempt to sabotage the vital economic pipelines which have made Punjab prosperous at the expense of Baloch province.

The role of regional actors such as Shiite ruled Iran at such a time cannot be ruled out. The Shiite-Sunni divide in Islam is described to be the oldest conflict in the region, with Sunnis viewing Shiites to be more heretical than even Jews. As Iran progresses towards becoming a nuclear weapons power, its interests in Afghanistan and Pakistan are significantly increasing as well.

In order to have a greater foothold in Afghanistan, in the aftermath of an eventual withdrawal by the United States, the Iranians would need to build its soft power in Pakistan. This year alone has seen Iranian successes relating to the rescue of an Iranian diplomat kidnapped in Pakistan and the extradition of the two leaders of Jundollah (a Sunni organization fighting against Iranian rule from Pakistan) as an indication of the inroads having been made into Pakistan.

Compounding to these problems are the tensions which exist in the Pashtun belt region of Pakistan, where historical tensions against the Pakistan state had led to a formal acceptance of weak sovereign rule over these parts. With a resurgent Taliban and al Qaeda, the Pashtun belt would push forward for the rejection of the Durand Line as a border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. These factors combined with the prevalent socioeconomic upheavals are likely to accentuate Pakistan's destabilization. It is therefore important for Islamabad to highlight the successes achieved vis-à-vis terrorist groups and stamp its authority over the federal polity.

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