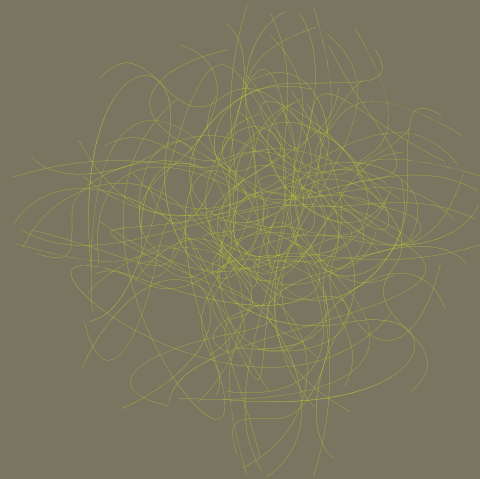


**Sources of Tension
in Afghanistan and
Pakistan: A Regional
Perspective**

**Perspectives
from the Region
in 2013:**

4. PAKISTAN

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Introduction

In line with the focus for 2013 under CIDOB's "Sources of Tension in Afghanistan and Pakistan: Regional Perspectives (STAP RP)" policy research project on the regional powers and their interests, this series is a product of field research visits to a number of the key regional powers identified in the 2012 Mapping Document <http://www.cidobafpakproject.com/> by the STAP RP project team.

Understanding the perspectives of the five main regional powers with an interest in outcomes in Afghanistan and Pakistan is a critical element in relation to this volatile region, which is currently in a state of flux as 2014 approaches. Identification of opportunities for dialogue, peace building, improved bilateral relationships and the development of regional organisations as mechanisms for dialogue, as well as examining how the regional powers see Afghanistan and Pakistan from a broader geopolitical and foreign policy perspective are key elements in enhancing this understanding.

This report is a product of STAP RP round table consultations with a range of stakeholders held over two days in Islamabad, Pakistan in October 2013, facilitated by the Jinnah Institute. This document is authored by the Jinnah Institute, Islamabad, on behalf of CIDOB. A list of those consulted is at the end of this report.

While many experts contributed to the findings presented, the final responsibility for the content is that of the Jinnah Institute alone.

“PAKISTAN: A NEW STATE OF PLAY?”

1. A New Political Arena

Participants discussing the new state of play lauded the general elections held on May 11 2013 as having been reasonably fair, with many citing them as a milestone in the country’s search for democratic consolidation. The smooth democratic transition between civilian governments was stated to be an encouraging precedent. However, the low voter turnout in Balochistan, allegations of rigging and reports of women being barred from voting in some constituencies, were seen as presenting a cause for concern. After just over a hundred days with a new government sworn in, participants were careful not to invest excessive hope in the transition alone and emphasized that political processes must not be substituted for outcomes in governance.

It was observed that the political parties’ campaigns in their ‘home’ constituencies had translated quite tangibly into provincial wins. The Pakistan Muslim League - N (PML-N) won its traditional power base in Punjab, the Pakistan Peoples’ Party (PPP) saw success in Sindh and the Pakistan *Tehreek-i-Insaaf* (PTI) had a landslide win in Khyber-Pakthunkhwa (KP). The nationalists in Balochistan also held a greater voice in the government of their province.

Participants discussed grappling with policy consensus and reform in each province, especially with regard to the social sectors. The devolution of power under the 18th Constitutional Amendment has enabled provinces to respond to their developmental needs, but policy making and implementation remain wanting thus far. Participants observed that the provincial governments’ inability or unwillingness to improve social service delivery is creating support for non-state actors, who actively respond to governance deficits by creating parallel mechanisms that deliver very effectively.

Participants also noted the recent announcement by the Chief of Army Staff General Kayani to hand over responsibilities after completing his tenure, which in their view would help equalize the strains between “institutionalism and individualism”. The importance of pursuing seniority protocols in the Army’s ranks was underscored, as was discouraging cronyism and corruption. In addition, the concentration of power among select cabinet members in the government, and allowing politics to become a ‘family enterprise’, were discussed as areas of concern. Strengthening state structures and delivering on promises made in manifestos were seen as essential in preserving democratic gains. Guaranteeing security was cited to be the single most important deliverable for the new government.

2. Civil-Military Nexus

It was acknowledged that the Pakistan Army has suffered a heavy toll in the front lines against terrorism and militancy. The military’s security narrative is seen as being based on a decade of fighting the Taliban and hinged on other well-known threat perceptions. This narrative informed the dominant view on security in Pakistan and, participants argued, had not been adequately scrutinized for the most part.

It was generally felt that a pervasive civil-military imbalance still existed in the country, where on the one hand, military decision makers were unwilling to forgo their role in determining security policy and on the other, civilian leaders were unable to demonstrate capacity in this sphere. The military retains its traditional preserve over Pakistan's foreign policy and national security. It was agreed that the country's civilian and military leadership had to be on the same page instead of at cross-purposes, in order to confront the myriad security challenges.

Participants considered that it is vital to set parameters for intelligence-sharing and greater coordination between the military, intelligence and civilian leadership within the ambit of the newly envisioned National Security Council (NSC), and to ensure that the country's counterterrorism policy is not made the military's burden alone. Some participants noted that building political consensus around issues of national security is the civilian government's role, which in their view, had not been done effectively. The All Parties Conference (APC) was cited as a step taken in this direction, but as one which also exposed deep political fault lines and signaled a lack of political commitment to fighting terrorism.

Participants observed that the military as an institution has a responsibility to support internal governance, just as it was necessary for political cadres to be responsible for state policy. To depend on the military for safeguarding borders, fighting wars as well as securing major cities was seen as untenable, and an urgent overhaul of law enforcement agencies is needed. Rethinking the civil-military equation is made all the more necessary, as this relationship has a direct bearing on Pakistan's ties with India and Afghanistan. Through this connection, the role of the civil society in building bridges was appreciated, and the need for inclusive and pluralistic dialogue underscored, both within society as well as with Pakistan's neighbours.

3. Governance Deficits & Ungoverned Spaces

Pakistan's democratic moment notwithstanding, it was generally felt that a gaping governance deficit had come to define the country's national outlook.

The erosion in the state's capacity to govern and provide for its citizens was evident in how the ruling classes have become self-serving cliques. Participants referred to the weakened judicial system that has revitalized the traditional *jirga*, and cited examples where non-state actors were involved in local dispute resolution. A similar trend was seen in the education sector, where lower-income households prefer low-cost private education or free *madrasahs*, to state-run schools. It was argued by some that neither the previous, nor current democratic government, were capable of tackling the challenges presented in the social sectors, economy or national security. A stark manifestation of state failure was stated to be the persecution of religious minorities, under almost daily attack in contemporary Pakistan.

While participants agreed that Pakistan was not a failed state, they were concerned that national institutions, particularly those entrusted with law enforcement and justice delivery are failing. The state's monopoly

of violence is openly contested in parts of the country by militant outfits, which also vie for revenue collection in FATA and other provinces. Participants recalled that large scale natural disasters, including the 2010 flood and the 2005 earthquake, motivated organizations like the *Jamaat ud Dawa* (JuD) to carry out swift emergency response missions, much before the federal or provincial governments could devise a coherent plan. Some participants noted that detaining high profile prisoners in jails has become impossible, since detention facilities become vulnerable to large-scale jailbreaks, as was recently witnessed in Dera Ismail Khan on 29th July, 2013.

The current phase in the country's governance was compared to the 1990s, which saw two democratic governments dismissed from power for corruption and mis-governance. It was argued that large-scale resource transfers to the military have come at the cost of impoverishing the civil services. Education has traditionally been a non-priority for successive governments and Pakistan's ideological drift was seen as a result of deliberately-created dichotomies of 'good Taliban-bad Taliban', democracy versus dictatorship, and questions of "whether the war we fight is our own". It was pointed out that South Punjab, along with FATA, is a hotbed of militancy and extremism, with several no-go areas for the military or the police. Participants were unequivocal in saying that the country's top-tier leadership needs to exhibit greater clarity in dealing with extremism and that a concerted effort has to be made to re-establish the writ of the state in those areas from where it has eroded.

4. State Capacity & Response to Terrorism

The government and political parties were criticized for their approach in dealing with the militant threat. Some participants suggested that the government's soft response had given groups like the *Tehrik-e-Taliban* Pakistan (TTP) legitimacy and space. The military was held responsible for failing to arrest the growth of terrorist organizations and infrastructure.

Questions were raised about resourcing counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations, especially in urban centres. It was observed that law enforcement agencies have suffered from deep demoralization in the face of such high casualties. Participants recommended that the recruitment of Special Forces and uniformed policemen must be increased, with a greater emphasis on training, as it was not seen as the military's responsibility alone to combat terrorism. Institutional decline has further aggravated a deteriorating law and order situation in Karachi. There are only 33,000 police personnel in Karachi, according to one estimate, while over 100,000 were needed to bring stability to a city whose population is nearly 20 million.

The lack of action since the APC's decision to engage with militants was taken to be a sign of low resolve or state capacity, which emboldens extremists and militants to contest the narrative of the state. The upswing of terrorist violence during and after the May elections was perceived to be an indicator that militants have reorganized themselves and are now better prepared. The JuD's rally in Islamabad on Pakistan's Defence Day was cited as an instance where the state ceded ground to militant pos-

turing by allowing thousands of JuD followers, led by Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, who denounced India and called for the liberation of Kashmir. The ruling elite were castigated for their unspoken pacts with militias in Karachi and extremists in Punjab. Groups like the *Lashkar-e-Taiba* (LeT) continued to operate freely in Kashmir, while the state was fast losing control over many parts of Gilgit-Baltistan, Karachi and interior Sindh.

Participants were divided over how to deal with the Taliban.

Many felt that the TTP had a specific agenda of establishing its rule in FATA and KP, and it did not represent a class or national struggle. There was agreement over the TTP presenting a complex challenge, given how disparate groups had coalesced under the organization's umbrella. Some participants felt a carrot-and-sticks approach, combining talks and the use of force would be more suited, given that prolonged military engagements had arguably worsened the situation in the past. It was also agreed that care should be taken not to confuse the Afghan Taliban with the Pakistani Taliban. Some participants stated that talks with the militants alone should not comprise the entire strategy and that localized military action, along with a concerted de-radicalization programme would have to be pursued in any counter-insurgency approach.

5. Rethinking Foreign Policy

Reviewing Pakistan's policy vis-à-vis India and Afghanistan were crucial in determining internal as well as regional stability. It was agreed that Pakistan's security challenges would likely be exacerbated if the Afghan Taliban were successful in reestablishing their rule in Afghanistan, thus allowing them to use the Pakistani Taliban to gain strategic depth inside Pakistan. With the region bracing for transition and the withdrawal of ISAF forces in 2014, peace hinges upon coherent and comprehensive foreign policy.

Participants saw the impending withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan and questionable capacity of the Afghan National Army as presenting a serious cause for concern. Several participants emphasized that Pakistan's borderlands could not be outsourced to militants. Islamabad's policies in the borderlands and further beyond had brought about resentment and anti-Pakistan sentiment in Afghanistan. Some argued that it was pointless to raise the Pashtunistan issue at bilateral fora and counterproductive to insist on formalizing the Durand Line, which was widely contested in Afghanistan. At the same time, it was felt absolutely necessary to recognize the border for state authority to be established and to combat militant proxies that threaten the borderlands. Participants underscored that it was unreasonable asking Pakistan to secure territory on its side, while not recognizing the border in Afghanistan; that counter terrorism efforts in KP and FATA will constantly fail if the border is not interdicted for militants and narcotics. It was also suggested that the two countries should coordinate more closely on effective border management, trade, easier repatriation of Afghan refugees and other measures to improve bilateral relations.

It was agreed that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had cross-party political support to improve relations with India, but that resuming the composite

dialogue is fraught with multiple challenges. Participants highlighted the Indian military's attitude towards Islamabad's peace initiative, and what was seen as New Delhi's 'drift' on bilateral policy, both factors likely to present a challenge for peacemakers in coming months. The nomination of Narendra Modi as a Prime Ministerial candidate by the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP) was seen as a concern. Participants recommended that the visa regime required urgent attention so as to relax travel regulations between the two countries; and furthermore, that Pakistan would have to respond positively in alleviating Indian concerns about militant groups on its side of the border. Pakistan should also expedite the granting of Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to India, while India should reciprocate by lifting non-tariff barriers on trade.

6. Growing Religiosity & Radicalization

It was felt that Pakistani society is experiencing an increase in religious extremism, and that there is a growing empathy for extremist viewpoints, particularly among the middle classes. The participants attributed this phenomenon to the current state of education in the country. While *madrassahs* were still held to be the major source of religious extremism and rise in militancy, in the view of participants, even public educational institutions have become centres for radicalization.

Participants agreed that the policy of Islamization initiated during the Zia era had comprehensively changed the national discourse. By agreeing to Islamic Shari'a in vague terms, the state allowed a dominant strain of extremism to shape society. Examples of Friday sermons preaching the destruction of non-believers, and the state's attitude towards the JuD's march in Islamabad on Defence Day, were cited as manifestations of society's tilt towards the right. It was noted that prominent voices in the media which subscribed to extremist narratives enjoyed massive public followings on television, in print and social media. While the media is making a concerted effort to highlight the extremist strain in society, it was felt that growing radicalization in the average middle-class Pakistani household is a real cause of concern, combined with declining education standards and rising unemployment among Pakistan's youth cohort.

Pakistan was seen as undergoing a profound political polarization and social class stratification. According to this view, the traditional left has collapsed in Pakistan, in part because of an internal crisis of competence and leadership, as well as the vendetta launched by right-wing militant groups (including the TTP) against progressive political parties, notably in the run-up to the May elections. Very few parties were expected to stand up and protest the targeting of the left, and participants were in agreement that the political leadership of the country was a house divided. Given the conservative nature of Pakistan's electorate, it was also feared that lack of education made communities vulnerable to exploitation by radical narratives. There appears to be a growing shift to the right even among the country's ruling elite.

Absolute poverty in the country now stands at approximately 54 per cent according to one estimate. Participants felt a lot more had to be done to address food insecurity and the feminization of poverty. Female illiteracy is compounded by the bombing of girls' schools in insurgency-

hit areas of the country, and it was argued that increasing economic disparity was one of the many factors that contributed to radicalization in vulnerable communities, as well as exacerbating internal class tensions in the country.

7. Non-State Actors & the Informal Economy

Non-state actors were seen to have grown in strength and power, due to a proliferation of informal economic activity. Participants readily agreed that this was an area that required urgent government attention. Several militant organizations which run social service delivery mechanisms in the country were named, that were both effective and popular, catering to education, healthcare, income and food support, across the four provinces (i.e. the majority of the country). North Waziristan was described by the participants as an 'intelligence black-hole' where non-state actors have created an informal economy that benefitted from charitable contributions. The thriving black market culture, which depends in part on illegal timber, minerals, opium and trafficking, has emerged as an endemic phenomenon embraced by the TTP and its affiliates. A growing underground transit trade with Afghanistan and smuggling has allowed the arms market to flourish in the tribal areas.

The nexus between militancy and the drug trade was also flagged as a source of anxiety for the government. Over the past ten years, there has been a tangible increase in poppy cultivation, with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reporting that approximately 400 tonnes of opium is being smuggled through Pakistan. While neighbouring countries like Iran had strict measures curtailing this flow, Pakistan has been far less active in enforcing strong measures. It was posited that money generated from the war economy is being diverted to fund terrorism and other criminal activities.

8. The Impetus for Reform

The five-year tenure of the last (PPP) government was viewed as characterized by economic mismanagement, which the newly inducted government should take care to avoid. The PML-N government is thought to be in a better position to initiate structural economic and taxation reforms and has already entered into a new agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). However, participants voiced their concerns about the conditionalities of the new IMF agreement, and the government's ability to control double-digit inflation. The PML-N's laptop distribution scheme was criticized for lacking a long-term development vision, and participants recommended that the government should undertake imaginative budget-management and sector reform instead of shifting health, education and other vital services to the private sector. There needs to be a recalibration in the budget allocation for debt-servicing, defence and public administration. It was also argued that trade with India needs to be prioritized, and that this would go a long way in bolstering relations between the two neighbours. Illegal trade worth Rs. 4 million was currently taking place between the two countries, according to one estimate, and this needed to be legalized and mainstreamed for mutual benefit.

The government needs to create at least three million jobs over the next seven years to cater to the country's growing young population. Huge leaps forward are required in social policy that percolate into the legal sector and allow swift, equitable justice to be given. At the same, tackling the problem of ungoverned spaces necessitates a change in the constitutional status of FATA. Successive civilian and military governments have failed to introduce federal writ in the tribal areas, and participants agreed that it was high time that FATA was governed and not 'administered' from Islamabad. There is an urgent need to amend Article 247b to grant legitimate constitutional entitlements to the people of FATA. In addition, it was argued that Islamabad could no longer 'outsource' its defence to non-state actors, by arming tribal *Lashkars* or militant outfits to supplement the work of the Frontier Constabulary or Army.

Reform was also required in the security sector, where the state needs to adopt a policy of zero-tolerance towards terrorism. For this purpose, the country's intelligentsia could play a pivotal role. Investments in education have to be a vital component of a coherent counter-terrorism strategy. Participants recommended that religion should be separated from the state and that as examples, the models of Malaysia and Indonesia as pluralistic Islamic societies could be followed. University campus extremism must be checked, and the mosque-*madrasah* nexus re-examined. It was also argued that improving access to education in itself was not enough, and that curricula reform is critical in arresting the growing tide of extremism.

List of Participants

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