DOMESTIC BARRIERS TO DISMANTLING THE MILITANT INFRASTRUCTURE IN PAKISTAN

Stephen Tankel

[PEACEWORKS]

About the Report

This report, sponsored by the U.S. Institute of Peace, examines several underexplored barriers to dismantling Pakistan's militant infrastructure as a way to inform the understandable, but thus far ineffectual, calls for the country to do more against militancy. It is based on interviews conducted in Pakistan and Washington, DC, as well as on primary and secondary source material collected via field and desk-based research.

Author's Note: This report was drafted before the May 2013 elections and updated soon after. There have been important developments since then, including actions Islamabad and Washington have taken that this report recommends. Specifically, the U.S. announced plans for a resumption of the Strategic Dialogue and the Pakistani government reportedly developed a new counterterrorism strategy. Meanwhile, the situation on the ground in Pakistan continues to evolve. It is almost inevitable that discrete elements of this report of will be overtaken by events. Yet the broader trends and the significant, endogenous obstacles to countering militancy and dismantling the militant infrastructure in Pakistan unfortunately are likely to remain in place for some time.

About the Author

Stephen Tankel is an assistant professor at American University, nonresident scholar in the South Asia program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and author of *Storming the World Stage: The Story of Lashkar-e-Taiba*. He has conducted field research on conflicts and militancy in Algeria, Bangladesh, India, Lebanon, Pakistan, and the Balkans. Professor Tankel is a frequent media commentator and adviser to U.S. policymakers and practitioners regarding security challenges in South Asia and threats from Islamist militancy around the world.

CONTENTS

[It would be a mistake to discount the myriad domestic challenges facing Pakistan in terms of countering the militant threat or the degree to which they influence the establishment's active support for some groups and tolerance of others.]

Summary

- Pakistani concerns about threats to the state from a subset of its Islamist militants have been building for several years, but the military remains preoccupied with using jihadist proxies to achieve geopolitical aims. Many other barriers reinforce the status quo as well.

- Perceptions about the U.S. role in the insurgency, the belief that foreign powers support anti-state militants, that some militants will not attack if not provoked, and that others have domestic as well as geopolitical utility collectively inform the security establishment's strategic calculus for how it engages with militants in Pakistan.

- Even sincere counterterrorism efforts are hampered by capacity shortfalls and systemic infirmities.

- Political will is also lacking. Elites remain preoccupied with power and their collective interests.

- Pakistan needs a national strategy to counter militancy, a legislative overhaul, improved coordination among counterterrorism agencies, and a coherent narrative against extremism. The recently elected civilian leadership must build its own intellectual capacity on security matters and find the political will to act.

- The election of a new civilian government in Pakistan, growing concerns about the jihadist threat to the state, and the planned NATO drawdown in Afghanistan mean the United States will need to reformulate aspects of its engagement.

- The overall U.S. approach should be geared toward maintaining influence to maximize convergence on narrow security issues and exploit opportunities to reinforce positive structural change within Pakistan.

- Specifically, the United States should revise its South Asian counterterrorism architecture, maintain a transactional military-to-military relationship focused on convergent interests, boost the capabilities and confidence of the new civilian government, modify security sector assistance, and devise more realistic metrics to assess progress.

Introduction

On August 14, 2012, the sixty-fifth anniversary of Pakistan's independence, Chief of Army Staff Ashfaq Parvez Kayani addressed the Azadi Parade in the drill square of the Pakistan Military Academy in Kakul. The speech is an annual rite, but the content of Kayani's remarks was notable for its assessment of Pakistan's internal instability. By this time, the jihadist insurgency that began germinating a decade ago had claimed tens of thousands of lives. Acknowledging a litany of ills, Kayani zeroed in on terrorism and extremism: these issues, he said, "present a grave challenge" to the country.[1] Five months later, in January 2013, the Pakistan army released its latest annual *Green Book,* which included a chapter discussing Pakistan's domestic jihadist insurgency and describing it as a major security threat. This inclusion was marketed as a first and hence a sign of a heightened focus on internal security, creating the mistaken impression in some circles that the Pakistani establishment might be redefining its priorities toward defeating its jihadist insurgency and away from a focus on India.[2]

In reality, the *Green Book* does not necessarily reflect the Pakistan army's doctrine or its priorities.[3] However, though it has not yet been released, at least one expert familiar with the new army doctrine suggests that it might recognize the need to focus on the internal threat to the country's stability.[4] If true, this should be interpreted as an expansion from an India-centric to a multifaceted strategy, but not as evidence of a shift in Pakistan's security priorities or a sign that the country's leaders are today prepared to take sustained and comprehensive action to dismantle the militant infrastructure on their soil.

Pakistani security policy has always been both India-centric and concerned about the internal integrity of the state. These two priorities are viewed as mutually reinforcing. Internal cohesion is believed to be necessary to check Indian aggression, and thus weakness at home puts the country at greater risk to external threats. Simultaneously, external challenges inevitably affect Pakistan at home, and New Delhi has historically been suspected of designs to dismember Pakistan from within. Thus, six months after his Independence Day remarks, General Kayani made another two speeches in which he blamed Pakistan's "external enemies" for "igniting the flames" of the jihadist insurgency and warned that despite the military's focus on internal security it is "fully prepared to defeat an external direct threat."[5]

Although no strategic shift related to the maintenance of a militant infrastructure has been made, threats to the state from a subset of its Islamist militants do significantly influence state decision making. Civilian and military leaders appear to recognize the danger certain militants pose to the state and take the problem seriously. The country's main political parties are not as wedded as the military and its Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) are to a policy of maintaining proxies but are more anxious to make peace with anti-state militants. At the time of writing, the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) had formed a new government. Headed by Nawaz Sharif, it was intent on pursuing peace negotiations, as were other political parties, but no course for doing so had been charted. The military, which has lost much blood and treasure waging Pakistan's own war on terror, opposes negotiating, at least in the short term. Some within its ranks view even pro-state groups as a long-term strategic liability.[6] Yet it is unclear whether the military leadership agrees on either the extent and nature of the internal threat or what to do about it. It is clear, however, that the security establishment's preoccupation with maintaining jihadist proxies to be used for geopolitical purposes is still the single greatest barrier to dismantling the militant infrastructure in Pakistan.

This report argues that numerous underexplored endogenous barriers reinforce the status quo when it comes to a lack of adequate action against militancy. These obstacles inform the segmented approach that Pakistani elites—civilian and military—take toward militant groups.

The security establishment continues to selectively support some militants and to counter others, in some cases using pro-state militants to do so. Its approach toward these groups is predicated on the utility they provide externally and internally, as well as on whether they threaten the state and the level of perceived influence over them. Although civilian parties are less entangled with militant groups, on the whole they are more reluctant than the military in confronting those who directly threaten the state. Politicians of various stripes are also guilty of courting militant leaders in pursuit of electoral gains.

How Pakistani officials—civilian and military—perceive jihadist threats to the state, and their will and capability to counter them, have significant implications for the country, the region, and the United States. In the short term, the explosion of jihadist violence does not appear to make it any more likely that the Pakistani security establishment will take steps to dismantle the militant infrastructure. Pakistan's support—active and passive—for some of the militant groups on its soil has become path dependent. Any reversal would bring significant costs and is obstructed by the entrenchments of institutional arrangements.[7] Over the medium to long term, it is possible, though far from certain, that steps needed to curtail the jihadist insurgency could develop a momentum of their own and help create conditions for progress against militancy in Pakistan.

Much of the information that follows will be familiar to those who follow Pakistan closely. The aim is to marshal evidence to inform the understandable, but thus far ineffectual, calls for Pakistan to "do more" against militancy. These calls are not wrong, but they are misguided, or at least incomplete, in that they overlook various elite objectives and compulsions, myriad domestic challenges, and Pakistan's strategic culture of using proxies to confront both external and internal challenges. A clear-eyed assessment of these obstacles is essential to formulating a realistic policy of patient, but firm, engagement and for managing possible contingencies that could ensue in the region.

Riding the Tiger

Pakistan played host to numerous militant groups during the 1990s. One way to understand the militant milieu at that time is to consider sectarian affiliation. Most groups belong to the Deobandi sect, which follows the Hanafi School of Islamic jurisprudence.[8] The major groups emerged from or were tied to the Deobandi Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Assembly of Islamic Clergy, or JUI) as well as the robust *madrassa* (religious school) system associated with it. The largest and most notable of them included

- Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI);
- Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM), which splintered from HuJI;[9]
- Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), which broke from HuM;
- Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP); and
- Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), which initially formed as the militant wing of SSP before nominally splitting from it.

Separately, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) was the biggest and most significant group to emerge from the Ahl-e-Hadith movement, which is Salafist in orientation.[10] Strong divisions existed between LeT and the Deobandi outfits.[11] Collectively, these entities are known as Punjabi militant groups, a moniker that derives from their being headquartered, and having their strongest support base, in Punjab, Pakistan's most populated and powerful province.[12] Elsewhere, Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM), formed by a dissident member of Jamaat-e-Islami named Sufi Muhammad in 1989, was based in Malakand and had a blend of Deobandi and Wahhabi leanings.[13]

Another way of understanding the militant milieu at the time is to consider activities by location. In addition to indigenous Kashmiri groups, during the 1990s the Pakistani security apparatus also backed a welter of Pakistani groups against Indian security forces in Indian-administered Kashmir.[14] These included the Deobandi HuM, HuJI, and JeM, as well as the Ahl-e-Hadith LeT. The SSP and LeJ were engaged in sectarian attacks in Pakistan against members of the minority Shia population.[15] Shia groups mobilized in response, and the country experienced escalating sectarian conflict. After its formation, JeM occasionally involved itself in sectarian violence as well.[16]

Pakistan also supported the Taliban in Afghanistan, and after the Taliban swept to power, that country became a place where many of the Deobandi groups, focused primarily on Kashmir or sectarian violence in Pakistan, came together for operational support and training.[17] TNSM mobilized men for the Taliban during this time and had links to some of those groups fighting in Kashmir as well.[18] Jalaluddin Haqqani, who hails from southeastern Afghanistan and rose to prominence as a military commander during the anti-Soviet jihad in the 1980s, accepted an appointment in the Taliban government as minister of borders and tribes.[19] The Haqqani network, though it was not known as such at the time, is Deobandi and Pashtun—like the Taliban—and administered its own training camps in Taliban-controlled territory.[20] Thus, with the exception of the Ahl-e-Hadith LeT, which focused exclusively on the Kashmir front, the major Deobandi Punjabi groups all traced their roots back to the JUI and increased their ties to one another as well as to the Taliban, Haqqani network, and TNSM during the 1990s.[21]

Al-Qaeda Throws a Curve

The decision by President Pervez Musharraf's government to assist the U.S. war against al-Qaeda and the Taliban after 9/11 strained the state's relations with all of its militant proxies to varying degrees. Musharraf's decision was predicated in part by the calculation that doing so was necessary to protect Pakistan's Kashmir-centric militant proxies.[22] Though the United States is not known to have offered any such guarantee, it did not push Pakistan nearly as hard as possible to dismantle the entire militant infrastructure or even cease active support to its proxies fighting in Kashmir.[23] The immediate U.S. focus was on al-Qaeda and the Taliban. America's request regarding Pakistan's other militant groups was to keep them off the Afghan battlefield during the U.S. counterattack. Despite this directive, with the exception of the Ahl-e-Hadith LeT, militants from all of the major Pakistani groups flocked to Afghanistan to fight alongside the Taliban, as did thousands of pro-Taliban Pashtun tribesmen.[24] Pakistani efforts to deter or interdict those crossing the border to fight in Afghanistan following the post-9/11 U.S. counterattack were uneven.[25] At the same time, Pakistan sought to prevent the United States from decimating the Taliban, providing the movement's leaders and members safe haven in Pakistan.[26]

As early as October 2001, militants began targeting U.S. interests in Pakistan as well as members of Pakistan's Christian community. In December, JeM led an attack on India's parliament. In response to U.S. pressure and to avert a possible war with India, in January 2002, Pakistan banned JeM along with LeT, TNSM, SSP, and the Shia militant group Tehreek-e-Jafria.[27] Musharraf also rebanned LeJ, which had initially been banned in August 2001. In early 2002, Pakistan's powerful ISI facilitated the reemergence of not only LeT and JeM under new names but also HuM, which Pakistan banned in November 2001 after the United States designated it a terrorist group.[28] SSP also continued to be tolerated for domestic political purposes and began carrying out its militant activities under a series of new names.[29] Some of these rebranded organizations were rebanned at various times. Others continue to operate legitimate aboveground organizations. They are still typically referred to by their original names.

Despite new names, the operating environment for all of Pakistan's jihadist groups became more difficult after 2002. Fundraising, recruitment, and training were restricted to different degrees for different organizations at different times, but every group was affected. The security establishment also launched intermittent and incomplete crackdowns against militant organizations. Overall, no consistent efforts were made to degrade the various extant indigenous militant groups at the time, with one exception. The Musharraf regime cracked down most heavily on LeJ after 9/11, contributing to its fragmentation and leading many LeJ members to ally with al-Qaeda.[30] However, the group was able to continue in part thanks to its ability to tap into the legitimate organizations connected to SSP and JeM.[31] In short, going after some groups more vigorously than others overlooked the connectivity among them, contributed to the formation of more malevolent splinters, and imperiled even sincere counterterrorism efforts.

Pakistan did make notable efforts after 9/11 to capture or kill al-Qaeda operatives and other foreign fighters, though these tapered off from 2005 onward.[32] Initial efforts included launching Operation Al Mizan, a military incursion into the South Waziristan agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) (see map 1) in 2002, following the arrival of foreign fighters fleeing Afghanistan earlier that year.[33] Resistance there was prompt.[34] Pakistani security forces repeatedly clashed with militants in the tribal areas from 2002 onward, taking numerous casualties in the process. These campaigns were underresourced and characterized by a heavy-handed approach that alienated the population even as they failed to enable the control of territory.[35] They also led to a series of failed peace deals that contributed to the Talibanization of FATA.

A Proto-Insurgency in FATA and a Principal-Agent Problem in the Heartland

In response to U.S. pressure as evidence mounted that al-Qaeda was regrouping and cross-border attacks into Afghanistan were increasing, Pakistan launched additional operations in FATA. In October 2003, for example, the army dispatched twenty-five hundred soldiers to capture militants based in Bajaur and South Waziristan. The following March, it launched Operation Kalosha II to rescue Frontier Corps (FC) personnel captured during an ambush.[36] As casualties mounted, the army pursued the first of many failed peace deals, the Shakai agreement of 2004, with Nek Muhammad, who was a relatively unknown militant leader at the time.[37] In doing so, the army legitimized the militants and Nek Muhammad as a force in the area, undercutting local tribal elders in the process. Because the agreement was signed at a Deobandi madrassa with which Muhammad was affiliated, locals viewed it as a tacit surrender by the army.[38] Nek Muhammad abrogated the agreement, however, and was killed soon after by a U.S. drone strike, the first in Pakistan and part of an agreement by American officials to eliminate anti-state militants in return for the access to airspace necessary to target al-Qaeda members hiding in the tribal areas.[39]

Despite the death of Nek Muhammad, a pattern of Pakistani military incursions into FATA followed by peace deals that empowered pro-Taliban Pashtun militants had been established. These included a February 2005 peace agreement with Baitullah Mehsud in South Waziristan and the September 2006 Waziristan Accord in North Waziristan.[40] Some analysts have speculated that the Musharraf regime was never committed to the military campaigns in FATA but instead viewed them as a favor to Washington.[41] This would help explain the readiness to forge peace deals. However, other factors undoubtedly contributed, including fears that sustained campaigns with heavy losses could sow dangerous discord among the military's rank-and-file, concerns about protecting the military's reputation, chronic capacity shortfalls, a force structure not built for counterinsurgency coupled with a lack of experience with this type of warfare and

Map 1. Pakistan Administrative Districts

TURKMENISTAN

UZBEKISTAN

TAJIKISTAN

★Dushanbe

CHINA

AFGHANISTAN

Kabul ★

Gilgit ⊙ Gilgit-Baltistan

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

⊙ Muzaffarabad

1972 Line of Control

Peshawar ⊙

Islamabad ★

Azad Kashmir

Federally Administered Tribal Areas*

Islamabad Capital Territory**

Lahore ⊙

Punjab

INDIA

⊙ Quetta

Balochistan

New Delhi ★

IRAN

Sindh

	International boundary
	Province-level boundary
★	National capital
⊙	Province-level capital

Pakistan has four provinces, one territory, and one capital territory**.*

The Pakistani-administered portion of the disputed Jammu and Kashmir region consists of two administrative entities: Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

Karachi ⊙

Arabian Sea

0	200	400 miles
0	200	400 km

little desire to learn, and the belief that by appeasing militants in FATA the state could keep violence from spreading to the settled areas. In reality, these and subsequent agreements failed to halt militant violence and instead contributed to the spread of Talibanization throughout FATA and eventually into frontier areas such as Bannu, Tank, Kohat, Lakki Marwat, Dera Ismail Khan, Swat, and Buner.[42]
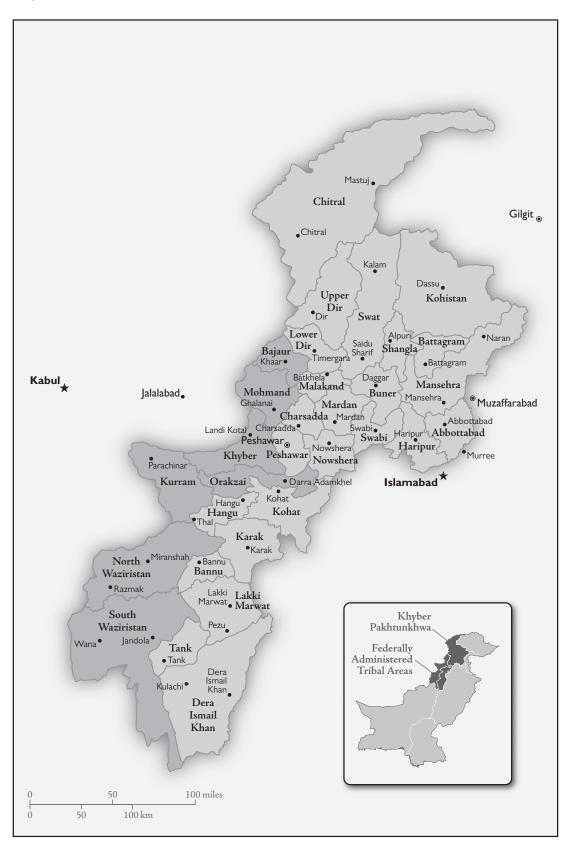
Developments outside FATA contributed to the proto-insurgency brewing in Pakistan and strengthened the nexus between Pashtun militants, their brethren from various Punjabi groups who fled to FATA during the ensuing years, and those Afghan militants and al-Qaeda members who sought sanctuary there following the U.S. invasion.

In December 2003, members of the Pakistani Air Force—motivated by Maulana Masood Azhar, JeM's amir—attempted to blow up President Musharraf's motorcade. Two weeks later, a Jaish member, who the leadership later maintained had split from the group by this time, made a similar attempt not far from where the first attack took place.[43] Concerns about the involvement of low-level military personnel and police officers in jihadist activities contributed to a crackdown in which the authorities detained more than one thousand individuals and held many without trial.[44] Some of those who escaped the crackdown remained in Punjab, but others took shelter in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, FATA, and the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), known since 2009 as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) (see map 2).[45] This practice of executing mass arrests (and later releasing many of those detained) in tandem with efforts to eliminate specific militants (often through extrajudicial means) constituted the extent of Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts during the early and mid-2000s.

Although it failed to commit fully to counterinsurgency efforts in FATA or to engage in any meaningful counterterrorism activities in the settled areas during the early to mid-2000s, the Musharraf regime did rein in pro-state groups fighting in Kashmir and took steps to thin their ranks. Following the launch of the peace process with India in early 2004—known as the Composite Dialogue—and accompanying back-channel negotiations, militants were directed to wage a controlled jihad in Kashmir for which support ebbed and flowed thereafter.[46] Kashmir-centric militant groups were curtailed further in response to international pressure the following year, and by 2006–07, militant activity declined significantly on that front, thanks in large part to the efforts of the Musharraf regime.[47] The ISI reportedly paid militant leaders to temper their activities and keep their cadre in line and sought to confine many of those no longer active in Kashmir to their training camps.[48] These men were provided food, board, and in some cases a stipend. In other words, they were paid not to fight. Many were kept in reserve. Some were channeled into their respective group's aboveground organizations, and others were steered toward early retirement and occasionally given assistance in finding a job. Positive inducements were coupled with threats of retribution against those militants who disobeyed the directive to reduce their activities in Indian-administered Kashmir.[49] The aim was to rein in, not dismantle, militant groups and hold their members in reserve, either to be demobilized or reengaged depending on regional developments.

Attempts to rein in historically Kashmir-centric groups were juxtaposed with rising support for Afghan-centric proxies, most notably the Afghan Taliban of Mullah Omar and the Haqqani network. Rather than remain inactive, some militants from Kashmir-centric groups migrated toward the Afghan front via FATA, tapping into the Afghan-centric militant infrastructure that remained relatively untouched despite repeated military incursions.[50] These westward migrating militants linked up with pro-state groups, most notably the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani network but also with al-Qaeda members and other foreign fighters, Pashtun militants who

Map 2. KP and FATA Districts

had been fighting the Pakistan military since 2002, and many of the men from various Punjabi groups who already had fled there.[51] The destruction of portions of the training infrastructure in Pakistan-administered Kashmir during the 2005 South Asia earthquake and the release of those men jailed in the 2003–04 crackdown following the failed Musharraf assassination attempts increased the militant migration.[52] In the process, these militants began contributing to attacks against the Pakistani state as well as fighting on the Afghan front.

Close observers assert that elements in the army and ISI continued to believe that they could manage militant organizations by working through leaders of extant organizations and local leaders in FATA to control their cadre, eliminating individual "bad apples" when this top-down approach failed.[53] Collectively, these efforts were ad hoc, poorly coordinated, underresourced, often reactive, and suggestive of a laissez-faire approach predicated on the assumption of control over the militant milieu.

The Insurgency Erupts

Pakistan's failed military incursions and subsequent peace agreements emboldened pro-Taliban militants, and by 2006, the insurgency against the state was accelerating swiftly.[54]

In July 2007, Pakistani security forces launched an assault against the Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) in Islamabad and the two madaris (plural of madrassa) attached to it. The Lal Masjid had been a well-established ISI asset, and one of its madaris, Jamia Faridia, historically attracted students from NWFP and FATA, many of who were sympathetic to militancy.[55] The Ghazi brothers who led the mosque and madaris had issued an edict in 2004 that military personnel killed fighting in FATA were not martyrs and had been arrested that year for stockpiling weapons and planning terrorist attacks in Pakistan.[56] In January 2007, they demanded that *sharia* (Islamic law) be imposed in Pakistan, and Taliban-inspired vigilante groups connected to the mosque began roaming around Islamabad to impose their notion of Islamic morality.[57]

As the provocations mounted, the Musharraf regime sought to avoid direct action, instead standing back while religious parties, such as the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), tried to negotiate a settlement. Negotiations went on for several months, during which time the vigilante campaign continued.[58] In June 2007, madrassa students kidnapped nine people from a clinic, including six Chinese women and one Chinese man.[59] The hostages were released in late June, but the situation led Beijing to bring immense pressure on the Pakistani government.[60] It is unclear whether that pressure led President Musharraf to deploy paramilitary Rangers around the complex or if he later used it as a pretext for taking action.[61] They laid siege but did not launch a raid. Instead, National Assembly members from religious parties continued attempting to negotiate while the Rangers maintained low-level firing to exert pressure.[62] More than one thousand students surrendered in the days that followed. Militants from JeM, HuJI, and LeT holed up in the complex were caught trying to escape at that time as well.[63] Many more from these and other groups remained in the complex.[64] The siege was having some success, but negotiations remained stalled. On July 8, three Chinese men were killed in Peshawar. Pakistan appears to have come under enormous pressure to act. Musharraf issued one last warning on July 9 to no avail. A day later the assault began.

The operation was a military success but had severe ramifications. Many militants, including some belonging to pro-state groups who had yet to consider participation in an anti-Pakistan jihad, considered this yet another betrayal. The raid turned a primarily FATA-based proto-insurgency into a full-blown insurgency that soon threatened to envelop the country. It also transformed the debate for Pakistan's religious parties, some of which had struggled with how closely to

embrace the Ghazi brothers' exhortations toward vigilante Islamism. With one dead and the other under arrest, the religious parties were free to embrace them as martyrs.[65] In so doing, they threw rhetorical fuel on the jihadist fire that soon engulfed parts of the country.

Some estimates suggest as many as five thousand students from Punjabi madaris headed to Waziristan in the aftermath of the raid to join the militants already at war with the state.[66] By this time, the Talibanization began in South Waziristan in 2004 had spread to other agencies in FATA. Militants were emerging in frontier areas as well. Many of these men who shared the aim of establishing "local spheres of sharia" in their respective areas of influence officially united in December 2007 to form the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), or Pakistani Taliban.[67] The TTP quickly became the face of the insurgency but never cohered into a homogenous entity with firm command and control. It became instead an umbrella organization for militants indigenous to KP and FATA as well for the splinter factions and freelancers from established Punjabi groups that provided the crucial capability to project power into Pakistan's heartland and its capital.[68] Al-Qaeda provided ideological as well as operational support for the insurgency in Pakistan, and over time some Pakistani militants joined al-Qaeda's ranks directly.[69]

Confronting the Threat

In November 2007, President Musharraf resigned his command as chief of Army Staff, making way for General Kayani. Until then, Pakistan made no sustained effort in the areas of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. On the one hand, the internal security threat had not yet manifested. On the other, these lackluster efforts created conditions for that threat to mature. Upon assuming his command, Kayani took steps to increase the army's "ownership of and commitment to Pakistan's internal security duties."[70] In 2008 and 2009, the security establishment started making more sustained counterinsurgency and counterterrorism efforts against anti-state militants inside and outside FATA.

Pakistani military forces were fighting in all seven tribal agencies by 2008, and the TTP was in partial or total control of many areas of FATA, as well as portions of KP. The Swat Valley in Malakand was the most notable of the settled areas that fell to Talibanization. The military launched multiple offensives in Swat as part of Operation Rah-e-Haq (Path of Truth).[71] A third phase of the operation ended with a peace agreement with TNSM and the Swat Taliban, institutionalizing sharia in Malakand Division and the Kohistan district of Hazara Division.[72] Emboldened, they, along with other militants operating there, began to occupy areas of Swat before expanding to the districts of Shangla and Buner. The proximity of these districts to Islamabad helped catalyze Pakistani public opinion against these militants and paved the way for a major military offensive. Pakistan launched Operation Rah-e-Rast in May 2009, successfully routing many militants and pushing others into FATA or across the border into Afghanistan. It then launched another major campaign against the TTP in South Waziristan—Operation Rah-e-Nijat—the following month. The army sent seven combat brigades to support this operation, which suceeded in killing, capturing, or dispersing a significant number of militants based in South Waziristan.[73] Once again, many more fled to other tribal agencies or to Afghanistan.

Overall, approximately seventy-four thousand regular Pakistani Army troops were involved in the various operations conducted in FATA and KP.[74] Despite failing to dismantle the militant infrastructure in the region, Pakistani security forces cleared some key villages, secured significant lines of communication, and weakened the TTP infrastructure in various areas, most notably Bajaur, Swat, and South Waziristan.[75] These campaigns led to the capture or killing of Pakistani

Some estimates suggest as many as five thousand students from Punjabi madaris headed to Waziristan in the aftermath of the raid to join the militants already at war with the state.

militants involved in plotting, supporting, and executing attacks against both the state and some foreign fighters.[76] Although Pakistani officials are loath to admit it publicly, American drone strikes killed a number of notable anti-state militants.[77] Although these strikes primarily targeted those threatening the U.S. homeland or coalition forces in Afghanistan, they also reduced the freedom of movement and access to resources for some anti-state militants, disrupting their operational tempo in the process.[78] At the same time, given the perception that Pakistan allowed and enabled the strikes, they undoubtedly fueled recruitment as well.

Pakistan's counterinsurgency capabilities had improved by the time it launched Operations Rah-e-Rast (Swat) and Rah-e-Nijat (South Waziristan) in 2009.[79] Years of experience operating in FATA coupled with training assistance and capacity building provided by the United States meant Pakistan's security forces were better prepared to clear and hold territory.[80] However, some anti-state militants inevitably seep through, some pro-state militants given safe passage inevitably turn on the state, and some of the civilians who are displaced become more open to militant recruitment. More significantly, the Pakistani state has not been able to govern the territory it liberates and tackle the myriad political, socioeconomic, and cultural risk factors that contribute to militancy, making it difficult to consolidate gains. The cumulative result has been to bog down a sizeable number of troops and to displace anti-state militants who later return or begin launching attacks elsewhere.

Operations Rah-e-Rast and Rah-e-Nijat correlated with a spike in high-profile terrorist attacks against sensitive targets in cities such as Islamabad, Lahore, and Rawalpindi intended to impose costs on the state in response to the military incursions into FATA. At this stage, counterinsurgency efforts in FATA and parts of KP were poorly coordinated with the unsophisticated counterterrorism efforts in the rest of Pakistan.

In theory, civilian intelligence agencies and law enforcement were responsible for the counterterrorism efforts. The Intelligence Bureau (IB) is Pakistan's main domestic intelligence agency and technically the one tasked with internal security. The federal government also established the Special Investigation Group as a counterterrorism unit in 2003 to undertake joint investigations with provincial police departments for offences punishable under Pakistan's 1997 Anti-Terrorism Act.[81] In reality, the ISI's counterterrorism wing, ISI-CT, was taking the lead on these issues and continues to do so today.[82] It can, however, be undercut by ISI-S, which is responsible for managing liaison relations with Pakistan's militant proxies. Both entities are known to curtail efforts by law enforcement and civilian intelligence agencies either to protect militant assets or their own turf.[83] Some sources also suggest that Pakistani army intelligence, which is distinct from the ISI, has even deeper ties to the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani network. It too could undercut other actors.[84] Coordination improved toward the end of the last decade, relatively speaking.[85] The security services collectively began focusing less on individual militants and more on the linkages, cooperation, and quid pro quo among the various networks responsible for attacks in Pakistan.[86] In some instances, ISI-CT as well as civilian intelligence agencies and law enforcement also enjoyed greater latitude.[87] However, overall coordination remained ad hoc, and counterterrorism efforts still centered on preventing specific attacks or destroying discrete networks as opposed to permanently dismantling militant groups.

Under Musharraf, Pakistan had reined in its India-centric proxies but did so with no intention of dismantling them and nowhere to channel them. In contrast to Musharraf, who pushed to advance the peace process with India, Kayani took a "tough, matter-of-fact line" on Pakistan's neighbor to the east.[88] In one respect, this stance was deemed a necessary corrective to the policies of the Musharraf regime, which the army leadership believed had conceded too much by reducing

Under Musharraf, Pakistan had reined in its India-centric proxies but did so with no intention of dismantling them and nowhere to channel them.

support for the Kashmir jihad without securing a political payoff in return. However, it also appears to have been part of a broader attempt to appease pro-state militants previously focused on India, some of who had become involved in attacks at home. The military and ISI also engaged some of these India-centric groups, most notably LeT, to arrest anti-state violence by former members and freelancers in their ranks who began contributing to the insurgency in Pakistan following the de-escalation of support for the Kashmir jihad.

Leaders from JeM and LeT's aboveground wing, Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), claim that they were provided additional resources to keep current members in line and induce former members who might be assisting anti-state militants either purposefully or inadvertently to return to the fold.[89] The aim may have been to gather information from these former members, monitor them, and control their activities to the highest degree possible.[90] ISI officers also reportedly goaded LeT leaders to reindoctrinate former and current members against launching attacks in Pakistan, and local clerics were encouraged to deliver the message that jihad in Pakistan was *haram* (forbidden).[91] Similar efforts, according to one of their number, were undertaken with JeM.[92] When forced to rein in LeT further following the 2008 Mumbai attacks, the ISI facilitated a pathway for increased presence in Afghanistan, where the group's fighters began appearing in greater numbers in late 2009 and early 2010.[93] In short, when it appeared that some militants from India-centric pro-state groups were getting out of line, the response was to engage those groups to rectify the problem. Moreover, no evidence in the open source indicates whether these efforts were successful.

The military also has attempted to use the Afghan Taliban and Haqqani network on numerous occasions to temper the TTP and reorient its focus toward Afghanistan.[94] For example, in February 2009, leaders from the Haqqani network helped create the Shura Ittihad-ul-Mujahideen (SIM). This umbrella group consisted of Afghan and Pakistani militants, including those involved in anti-state violence. Mullah Omar publicly reiterated his instructions that SIM, like all militant entities, focus on fighting in Afghanistan rather than attacking Pakistan.[95] It is generally believed that initiatives such as these were undertaken at the ISI's behest.[96] The Pakistani military also made efforts to prevail on other FATA-based militants to withhold support from those actors attacking Pakistan and remain focused on Afghanistan. In exchange, these entities were not targeted during military campaigns in FATA.[97] The TTP was and remains a decentralized entity with many factions operating under its umbrella; the security services also attempted to exploit and exacerbate existing fissures by negotiating with different factions at different times.[98]

Ongoing violence, which spiked during the election seasons, suggests that efforts to reorient violence externally were unsuccessful. Moreover, the dynamism of the militant milieu and protean nature of the entities within it complicate genuine counterinsurgency (COIN) and counterterrorism (CT) efforts.

Blurring Militant Boundaries

Since 2002, the number of militant focal points has increased and blurred. Afghanistan became a focal point for every major militant outfit as well as a host of smaller networks and splinter groups. India received attention primarily from LeT, though its perceived malevolent involvement in Afghanistan also contributed to the integration of these two focal points. Sectarian attacks increased from the mid-2000s onward and fused with the insurgency in Pakistan because of both the overrepresentation of LeJ members in anti-state violence and the historical connections that some TTP commanders had to SSP and LeJ.[99] In addition to prior organizational affinity, revolutionary and sectarian militants complemented one another operationally. Those associated with SSP and LeJ exploited Talibanization in FATA and KP for safe haven, and in turn, their sectarian

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

➢ HTML (Free /Available to everyone)

➢ PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)

➢ Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below