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Whither Pakistan?

How can Pakistan free itself from six decades of violence and instability? According to Samir Tata, Islamabad must accomplish three tasks if it wants a 'reset' to happen — 1) reshape its relations with its neighbors, 2) modernize its military capabilities, and 3) encourage political reforms and economic development.

By Samir Tata for ISN

Pakistan is a failing state on a trajectory to becoming a failed state. It is roiled by violence unleashed by armed Islamic fundamentalist and separatist groups. The country is the product of two bloody vivisections: the 1947 partition of British India^[i], and the 1971 civil war that dismembered its two wings into Pakistan and Bangladesh.^[ii] Except for a turbulent first decade of parliamentary democracy, Pakistan has been under military rule directly or indirectly since 1958. Pakistan's military has developed two distinct asymmetric capabilities: armed Islamic fundamentalist auxiliary groups^[iii], and a nuclear weapons arsenal.^[iv] Not surprisingly, the specter of nuclear weapons in the hands of rogue Islamic fundamentalists has put Pakistan in the crosshairs of the United States.^[v] And, reflecting its myriad problems over the span of six decades, Pakistan has been unable to break the grip of economic malaise.

A turnaround strategy for Pakistan will require a decade-long effort involving three prongs: (1) reshaping Islamabad's relations with its neighbors and allies; (2) modernizing and rebalancing Pakistan's military capabilities while dismantling irregular paramilitary groups; and (3) restructuring domestic political arrangements to foster devolution, democracy and economic development.

Reshaping Islamabad's external relations

Islamabad and Beijing have had close relations for a half century rooted in a mutual interest in counterbalancing India. Now Pakistan has an opportunity to transform its relationship with China based on a new bargain: energy security for China and military and economic security in return. Beijing may not need Pakistan to counterbalance India, but Pakistan is indispensable for ensuring China's energy security.

Pakistan, by virtue of its geography and its nuclear weapons, is the only country that can provide China with an energy corridor that is outside the control of the United States or Russia. A land-based pipeline network connecting Iran's oil and gas fields via Pakistan to China's western province of Xinjiang (the Iran to Pakistan section has already been built) could provide China with unparalleled energy security.

Accordingly, Pakistan should leverage its unique geostrategic position and negotiate a long-term (ten year) strategic partnership with China that would have two critical dimensions. First, China would underwrite (through grants rather than loans) the modernization of Pakistan's conventional military capabilities, including drones, satellites, missiles and cyber warfare capabilities. Clearly, as part of guaranteeing the security of the energy corridor, Pakistan's military would have to neutralize Islamic fundamentalist terrorist and separatist groups operating in the country's northwest and southwest. Second, China would underwrite (again through grants instead of loans) an ambitious program of infrastructure development that would position Pakistan for economic take-off. Such a program would cover such areas as: alternative energy (including nuclear and solar); water and irrigation; transportation, communication, and sanitation. Pakistan could become the showcase for the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank being promoted by China. [vi]

Pakistan is indispensable to Saudi Arabia because it serves as a hedge against the loss of the American military security umbrella. Simply put, there appears to be an implicit Saudi-Pakistani bargain shrouded in ambiguity: Saudi Arabia, *in extremis*, would have access to Pakistani nuclear weapons in return for underwriting Pakistan's nuclear weapons development program and partially funding the government's budget. [vii] If Pakistan is to ensure the security of its nuclear weapons arsenal, both from the United States and domestic Islamic fundamentalist groups, Islamabad will have to negotiate a separate long-term agreement with Riyadh committing the Saudis to underwrite the cost of dismantling armed Islamic fundamentalist groups. Such an explicit agreement would help reassure the US that the risk of Pakistani nukes falling into terrorist hands is *de minimus*.

Pakistan must acknowledge that the ultimate cost of harboring, tolerating or supporting armed Islamic fundamentalist groups has been very high: it has lost the trust of the United States and its sovereignty has been compromised.[viii] The US raid into Pakistan to kill Osama bin Laden and the increased frequency of drone attacks against various Islamic fundamentalist groups operating in Pakistan's northwest (along the Afghan border) suggests that Islamabad will have to acquiesce to an American presence for the duration of the US engagement in Afghanistan (and possibly the Middle East in general) as long as Pakistan-based groups are involved in threats against US interests. The recent decision of a splinter group of the Pakistani Taliban to pledge allegiance to the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria is an ominous sign that the US could intervene more directly in Pakistan.[ix] The threat of a US effort to denuclearize Pakistan grows ever larger.

Islamabad should call for a reset of relations with Washington. Pakistan will have to lay out its relationships with the myriad armed Islamic fundamentalist groups and share its plan, with specific milestones, to disarm or dismantle these groups. In return, the US would have to commit to provide appropriate military assistance and help fund the cost of such a program (along with the Saudis). If such an effort is to be successful, transparency is essential so that the US can verify that Pakistan has kept its part of the bargain. Islamabad must accept that giving up its relations with armed Islamic fundamentalist groups is the price it must pay to preserve its nuclear weapons arsenal and regain its partially lost sovereignty.

Pakistan also has an opportunity to reset relations with India. If Islamabad is going to dismantle the various armed Islamic fundamentalist groups operating within the country (to address potential Chinese and US concerns), it also will be disarming, as an incidental part of this process, the various groups in Pakistan focused on 'liberating' Indian-held Kashmir. Pakistan's focus must be on dealing with the myriad armed groups in the northwest and southwest, and, therefore, it needs calm along its eastern borders with India.

Accordingly, Pakistan should offer to normalize relations with India. Such a proposal would have two key features: the current line of control dividing Pakistani-held Kashmir from Indian-held Kashmir would be considered the permanent *de jure* border, and there would be a mutual granting of 'most

favoured state' status with respect to trade between the two countries. The line of control dividing Kashmir has been the *de facto* border since 1948 and Pakistan has been unable to change that reality since then.^[x] The upside for Pakistan would be access to India's huge market – akin to Canadian or Mexican access to the US market. India's major security threat is China – primarily unresolved disputes with China over the border of the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh in the northeast and the Ladakh region of Kashmir in the northwest. India lost one war with China over these disputed borders in 1962 and cannot afford to lose another confrontation. So détente with Pakistan is in India's interest. And increased trade with Pakistan would be an added bonus.

Modernizing Pakistan's military

Pakistan's military needs to move into the twenty-first century. The objective of such a modernization program should be to ensure that Pakistan is in a position to defend itself against both external aggression and internal insurgency. The modernization program should have five key elements: establishing a nuclear second strike capacity, updating conventional military technology, rebalancing to enhance counterinsurgency capabilities, broadening the base of the armed forces, and resetting the military's relationship with the state.

Nuclear weapons are Pakistan's ultimate deterrent against any existential threat of external aggression. Certainly, they have deterred India. But in order to enhance deterrence, Pakistan needs to have a second strike capability so that it can retaliate in the event of an initial nuclear attack. Accordingly, Pakistan needs to push forward on its program to have a submarine-based nuclear weapons delivery system to complete the triad of land, air and sea- based delivery capacity.^[xi] Also, Pakistan will have to upgrade its modest submarine fleet to include a nuclear-powered submarine that can stay underwater for extended periods. China is the obvious source for a nuclear submarine (minus the delivery system for nuclear weapons), but it is unlikely to provide one until it is sure that the infrastructure of armed Islamic fundamentalist and separatist groups has been dismantled.

Modernizing conventional military capabilities will be a technology-driven effort: i.e., cyber networks, satellites and drones. This means an educated, highly trained, and well-disciplined professional military. A counterinsurgency effort aimed at disarming and dismantling armed Islamic fundamentalist and separatist groups will require a highly mobile military, which means rebalancing away from a heavy armor, static defense orientation. And, since counterinsurgency challenges will be primarily domestic, it is imperative to enhance the legitimacy of the Pakistani armed forces. Accordingly, Pakistan's military will have to accelerate its move away from the traditional concentration on Punjabi soldiers and officers to a force that is more broadly representative of all the regions of Pakistan.^[xii] Ultimately, the military must embrace as its guiding principle the idea that the army serves the state and not the other way around.

Forging a new political understanding

On the eve of independence, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan's founding father, articulated his vision: "You may belong to any religion or caste or creed – that has nothing to do with the business of the State ... We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one State."^[xiii] Jinnah died before a constitution could be drafted. None of Pakistan's constitutions, more breached than honored, have reflected his promise.

It is time to reclaim Jinnah's vision. Political stability requires a shared understanding of the idea of Pakistan. The example of the United States could be useful. After floundering for a decade under the Articles of Confederation, Americans went back to the drawing board and produced a new constitution that has stood the test of time. Pakistanis need to call for a new democratic constitution that devolves

power to the provinces so that there is a more equitable distribution of power between the center and the regions; ensures strong and independent executive, legislative and judicial branches of government; and provides checks and balances to safeguard against the usurpation of power. Religion would be the business of the individual, not the state. Such a constitution would redeem Jinnah's promise.

Moreover, Pakistan needs to succeed. As a nuclear weapons state, failure is not an option.

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[ii] Shuja Nawaz, *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, Its Army, and the Wars Within* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 249-319.

[iii] International Crisis Group, "Pakistan: The Militant Jihadi Challenge", 13 March 2009, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/pakistan/164-pakistan-the-militant-jihadi-challenge.aspx>

[iv] Joseph Cirincione, Jon B. Wolfsthal and Miriam Rajkumar, *Deadly Arsenal: Tracking Weapons of Mass Destruction* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002), 207-215.

[v] Greg Miller, Craig Whitlock and Barton Gellman, "Top-secret U.S. intelligence files show new levels of distrust of Pakistan", *Washington Post*, September 2, 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/top-secret-us-intelligence-files-show-new-levels-of-distrust-of-pakistan/2013/09/02/e19d03c2-11bf-11e3-b630-36617ca6640f_story.html

[vi] "Three major nations absent as China launches World Bank rival in Asia," *Reuters*, November 5, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/05/us-china-aiib-idUSKCN0ID08U20141105>

[vii] Kurt M. Campbell, Robert J. Einhorn and Mitchell B. Reiss (eds.), *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why Nations Reconsider their Nuclear Choices* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2004), 134-138.

[viii] Husain Haqqani, "Breaking Up Is Not Hard to Do: Why the U.S.-Pakistani Alliance Isn't Worth the Trouble", *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2013, vol. 92, no. 2, 64-76.

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[x] “Kashmir profile”, *BBC News*, 26 November 2014,
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-11693674>

[xi] Tim Craig and Karen DeYoung, “Pakistan is eyeing sea-based and short-range nuclear weapons, analysts say”, *Washington Post*, September 21, 2014,
http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/pakistan-is-eyeing-sea-based-and-short-range-nuclear-weapons-analysts-say/2014/09/20/1bd9436a-11bb-11e4-8936-26932bafd6ed_story.html

[xii] Shuja Nawaz, *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, Its Army, and the Wars Within* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 570-577.

[xiii] Stephen Hay (ed.), *Sources of Indian Tradition (Second Edition), Volume Two: Modern India and Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University, 1988), 387.

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