

Appraising the Threat of Islamist Take-Over in Pakistan

Julian Schofield and Michael Zekulin

Centre d'études des politiques étrangères et de sécurité
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Julian Schofield & Michael Zekulin

Julian Schofield is Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science, Concordia University. Publications include *Militarization and War* (2007), and numerous strategic studies oriented articles on African, East, South and Southeast Asian subjects.

Michael Zekulin is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Political Science at the University of Calgary. He is the recipient of an SSHRC. His research focus is on education, religious extremism, and public policy.

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The concurrent proliferation of nuclear weapons and rise of militant pan-Islamic terrorism have made observers concerned about the threat of a Jihadist take-over in Pakistan. Such an anti-Western and militantly Islamic regime, armed with nuclear weapons, would be in a position to spread nuclear weapons technology and terrorism throughout much of Asia. However, we argue that the probability of extremist religious groups obtaining control in Islamabad is very low. This paper does not dispute the growing organization, funds and influence of militant Jihadist and non-militant Islamist movements in Pakistan, but asserts that the military, particularly the army, is too well organized and equipped to be infiltrated or overthrown. Our argument proceeds by surveying three possible scenarios, all inspired by false-analogies: a Jihadist revolution, an Islamist electoral victory, and a Jihadist coup from within the military. They draw on historical demonstration effects, that have worried outside observers, but none of which applies well to Pakistan: the Iranian revolution, the electoral victory of the Islamists in Algeria, and the Islamist Egyptian soldiers who assassinated Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. We conclude that despite what appears to be a vibrant environment for such an occurrence, a Jihadist or a non-militant Islamist takeover in Pakistan is currently remote.

Introduction

A widespread preoccupation with the threat posed by terrorism since September 11, 2001 has placed a global focus on Pakistan. Prior to the attack on the World Trade Center, terrorism was both a domestic concern and an occasional instrument of foreign power for Pakistan. Domestically, it was faced by occasional resistance in the Northern Territories, among the Pakhtun in the Northwest Frontier Province and the Baluch of Baluchistan. Internecine terrorism wars, such as between the Sunnia and Shia, have polarized some segments of the society, and between the Mohajir-supported MQM and the Sindhis, paralyzed Karachi for nearly a decade. Pakistan backed the operations of Islamist militants in Afghanistan during the Cold War, and against Indian-occupation in Kashmir. There has therefore been an intimate connection between Islamist groups and the

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government in Pakistan, and, not necessarily related, an ongoing challenge of terrorism in Pakistan since its foundation, but particularly since the 1980s. On the surface it appears that significant gains have been made by religious extremist groups in Pakistan. Actions by the United States in Iraq and particularly Afghanistan, coupled with Musharraf's recent support of these policies has contributed to the erosion of the legitimacy of his rule, particularly among the marginalized elements of Pakistani society, and has many political scientists and analysts questioning the possibility of extremist groups ascending to power. On the surface, those who project an alarmist view of the current Pakistani environment being ripe for a Jihadist, or non-military Islamist takeover suggest the essential Islamist nature of the Pakistan army and state. This conclusion mischaracterizes Pakistan and relies on stereotypes rather than an understanding of the Pakistani state itself. This paper argues that the Pakistani military is a countervailing force to any Islamic threat to the state. This paper will be organized around a brief discussion of the Pakistan military's role in the state, followed by a survey of three scenarios of Islamist outcomes: the Jihadist Revolution, the Islamist Electoral victory, and a Jihadist military coup. We argue that all three of these scenarios are very unlikely.

The Pakistan Army

Since 1954, the army became the predominant; if not only fully functional institution in Pakistan, and as such cultivated the ability to periodically intervene in the rule of the state. This is largely the result of weak civil institutions between Partition in 1947, and a joint military-civil bureaucratic takeover of government in 1954.¹ Pakistan's principal political founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, envisioned a Pakistan that would be democratic, tolerant of religious minorities, progressive socially,

¹ The civil service had been a significant factor in Pakistan since independence. See Khalid B. Sayeed, "The Political Role of Pakistan's Civil Service", *Pacific Affairs*, 31, 2, June 1958, pp.131-146, p.131; Shirin Tahir-Kheli, "Defense Planning in Pakistan", in Stephanie G. Neuman, *Defense Planning in Less-Industrialized States - The Middle East and South Asia* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1984), pp. 209-230, p.222

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and modern in the liberal western sense.² However, economic underdevelopment, threats from India, and the absence of a viable political culture to shore-up unstable parties and political institutions led gradually to the pre-eminence of the originally unpopular former colonial army of Pakistan. The military came to dominate Pakistan more completely following a direct military coup in 1958, a period of military rule that was to last until 1971, resumed between 1977 and 1988, and resumed again since 1999. The military is an insulated and self-regulating institution, with influence over its own appointments, special access to the operations of the civil bureaucracy, and independent economic enterprises that reduce its dependence on public taxation for its welfare and pension services.³ The military, while influenced by its recruiting bases in the Punjab and the Northwest Frontier Province, is primarily a multi-ethnic technocratic corporatist enterprise, with its own ethos of legitimacy, and is therefore sensitive to what it believes are ideological threats to the allegiance of its personnel. Although the first Pakistan military president, Ayub Khan, was a Pakhtun, he unquestioningly upheld military goals over Pakhtun aspirations. Similarly, Pakistan's latest military president, ethnically-Mohajir Pervaiz Musharraf, has shown no inclination to support the Mohajirs in their dispute with Sindh.

Over the past five decades (largely since its inception) the military has gradually encroached upon the legal-political space occupied by other institutions such as the cabinet, parliament, civil services and the judiciary. This resulted in an underdevelopment of these institutions and the accession to power by the army.⁴ Even during the periods where the civilian government was in charge, the military typically exercised

² Stephen Phillip Cohen, "The Nation and the State of Pakistan." *The Washington Quarterly*, 25:3, 2002. p. 111.

³ The Shaheen Foundation is the Air Force's grouping of enterprises, and includes Pakistan Airlines. The Fauji foundation is the Army's equivalent, and is substantial. Naval assets include the select portside businesses in Karachi.

⁴ Issue Brief, "Nuclear Watch: Pakistan", 2004. Accessed on 05/30/2005 from http://www.nti.org/e3_38b.html

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informal power and was sought for its assent to civilian policies.⁵

Although Pakistan is an Islamic Republic, there has always been a clear division between politics and religion, as well as a distinction between private and public Islam. The official emphasis on Islam has been a common bond to overcome the ethnic and linguistic disparity in Pakistan that has been a frequent source of domestic friction, as was most evident when East Pakistan split off from Pakistan in 1971. Islamist elements in society, being more likely to have Pan-Islamic aspirations, are also therefore more likely to support policies than downplay particularist ethnic claims. Islamist groups have maintained the influence of the center in the Northern Territories, restrained secessionism in Baluchistan and the Northwest Frontier Province, and the broader idea of Islam has established common ground for the union of Sindh and the Punjab, Pakistan's two largest provinces (thirty-five and seventy-five million population respectively). Pakistan's strategic affinity with Islam is furthered by its effectiveness in managing external threats. Irredentist claims from Afghanistan's Pakhtun population were historically suppressed either by the monarchy, between 1963 and 1973, or more traditionally by conservative Islamist groups who felt threatened by the tribal ethnic activism in the outlying regions. Pakistan was therefore predisposed to support these Islamists. Furthermore, Islam was a useful instrument for Pakistan to impose its influence in Indian-occupied Kashmir, prior to which the mainly Sufi population did not internalize the view that Islam was a sufficient reason for secession from India.

However, significant events starting in the early 1970s altered the balance between religion and the military in politics. The seizing of power by General Zia-ul Haq in 1977, and the 1973 overthrow of the monarchy in Afghanistan, followed by the reassertion of Pakhtunistan claims by Afghan leader Taraki in 1978, and the Soviet invasion in 1980, contributed to a Pakistani

⁵ Husain Haqqani, "The Role of Islam in Pakistan's Future". *The Washington Quarterly*, 28: 1, 2004, p. 87.

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policy of sponsoring militant Islamists. Furthermore, the Islamist Iranian revolution in 1978 politicized the Shia population of Pakistan (approximately fifteen to twenty percent of the population), compelling Pakistan to seek countervailing Sunni movements. The practical effect was that the Pakistan military, through the intermediary of the ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence), armed and trained thousands of militants, mostly drawn from the 3.5 million Afghan refugees, and organized domestic Sunni movements to manipulate elections and counter the perceived Shia threat. Throughout South Asia and the Middle East, the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union was widely viewed as an attack on Islam by an atheist power. Thus, Pakistan, also funnelled substantial funds from fundamentalist religious sponsors, mostly Wahhabist and Deobandi in the Gulf, to evangelical activities that somehow contributed to the above strategic goals.⁶

The expulsion of Soviet forces from Afghanistan created a demand for the establishment of an Islamic state in Afghanistan, and provided Pakistan with a strategy to suppress Pakhtun secessionist claims, as well as a ready supply of militants for the ongoing insurgency in Indian-occupied Kashmir. Though the Islamists never posed a direct threat to the power of the military, they did come to challenge its ability to dominate Pakistan.⁷ The resulting blowback from Pakistan's support to the Islamists was a widespread domestic gun-culture (with nearly five million small arms in circulation), well-funded and organized Islamist groups in all of Pakistan's provinces, a rise in domestic terrorism and violence, and erosion of the corporatist allegiance of the Pakistan military.⁸

General Zia-ul Haq was a practicing Muslim and endorsed public religious practice. As such, Pakistan's leading institution,

⁶ Christophe Jaffrelot (eds), *A History of Pakistan and Its Origins*, London: Anthem, 2002, pp. 139-140.

⁷ C. Raja Mohan, "What if Pakistan Fails?" *The Washington Quarterly* 28:1, 2004, p. 121.

⁸ Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan – Between Mosque and Military*, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie, 2005, p. 308.

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the army, encouraged Islamic beliefs and practices for its military members. Coupled with this, Zia's vigorous use of Islam as a means of legitimizing his regime following the left-leaning rule of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto helped create the networks of Islamic schools called madrassahs, which outsiders argue are the spawning grounds for extremist thought and ideology.⁹ By the mid 2000's the number of madrassahs grew to 9,500 sanctioned madrassahs and over 40,000-50,000 unregistered ones, essentially beyond the reach and control of the state.¹⁰

With the death of General Zia-ul Haq in 1988, Pakistan resumed a period of civilian rule, alternating between governments headed by Benazir Bhutto of the People's Party of Pakistan and then Nawaz Sharif's Muslim League, until 1999. Corruption, rising inflation, and Nawaz Sharif's intervention in military appointments led the army to a military coup. Like Ayub's regime thirty years earlier, Musharraf's government sought to impose on Pakistan a political framework derived from its own experience—the army as a model.¹¹ According to Hassan Abbas, by this time the very scale of religious extremism had reached its climax. Many extremist groups had developed independent channels of financing, thus giving them more manoeuvrability. This was the beginning of a shift in the power equation away from the army and toward the jihadi (extremist) groups, the latter being supported by the mullah parties acting as their political wing.¹² The extremist groups had emerged from under the control of the Pakistani military and intelligence apparatus. Since 1999, the army has been very gradually curtailing the influence of the Islamist groups, through the registration of madrassahs, the regulation of foreign students in the

⁹ There were 147 madrassas in all of Pakistan in 1947. By 1971 this number had grown to 900. It was due to Zia's policy of generously funding and support that by 1988 there were 8,000 madrassas (sanctioned). SATP, "Islamic Extremism and Subversion in South Asia", 2002. Accessed on 06/06/2005 from <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/ajaisahni/NATIV2002.htm>.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Cohen, *loc. cit.*, p. 113.

¹² Hassan Abbas, *Pakistan's Drift into Extremism*, M.E. Sharpe: London, 2005, p. 13.

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madrassahs, restrictions on the open display of small arms, and the selective detentions of the more extreme groups.

The Limits of Military Power

The Pakistan military is coercively the strongest single grouping in the society, possessing over 600,000 troops (with their dependents, and retirees, and economically-associated populations probably exceeding ten million), over three thousand tanks, and nuclear weapons. However, the military lacks the broad legitimacy to rule indefinitely, and inevitably promises eventual transition to civilian authority, even while it tries to extend its stay in power. This legitimacy is even absent within the military itself, which views interventions as short-lived renovations of civilian rule.¹³ However, the military disengagements from rule tend to be poorly planned and uneven, in large part because interventions are far more easily conceived of than returns to the barracks.

The military has also been unable cost-effectively to impose direct rule along the Northwest Frontier Province and in Baluchistan. In the early 1960s, particularly at Dir in 1961, Pakistan forces intervened against irredentist Pakhtun operating from within Afghanistan, and have periodically had to intervene coercively to maintain its control over the tribes. The Pakistan military was heavily involved in suppressing a Baluch tribal revolt from 1973-1978, and again in 2005 to the present. It is in the Northwest Frontier Province and the northern Pakhtun portion of Baluchistan where Islamist forces are strongest, but also where economic underdevelopment is most widespread. For example, most of the senior leaders of Jamaat-I-Islami, the most influential national religious movement in Pakistan, is mainly Pakhtun, and therefore has limited appeal among the Punjabi majority of Pakistan.¹⁴ Although mass protests against the central government are easily organized, they tend to

¹³ Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan – Between Mosque and Military*, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie, 2005, p. 128.

¹⁴ Christophe Jaffrelot (eds), *A History of Pakistan and Its Origins*, London: Anthem, 2002, 140.

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remain localized and are therefore of no risk to whichever government is in power in Islamabad.¹⁵ Furthermore, direct eradication of the militant Islamic groups is hampered by the cell structure of the few groups that directly challenge the government, the multiplicity of groups that exist, and the fact that most groups continue their effective role of suppressing regional separatism.¹⁶ It is within this context that we examine the three feared scenarios of Islamic takeover in Pakistan: the Jihadi revolution, electoral Islam, and the Jihadist military coup.

Scenario 1: The Jihadist Revolution

A violent Islamic revolution seeking to impose a theocracy, along the lines of Ayatollah Iran, is unlikely because at present the assorted Islamist groups are uncoordinated and often in rivalry.¹⁷ Following the Iranian model, revolution in Pakistan would erupt from a Jihadist insurgency coordinating a mass of disaffected citizenry, against a completely de-legitimized regime. Some detractors argue that since all other civil institutions have failed in Pakistan, the army will eventually also succumb to this fate. In fact, Hamid Gul, an ex-ISI chief, argues that the Pakistani population is increasingly becoming aware of this; his belief: Pakistan will go through its own version of an Islamic revolution led by the last stable pillar: Islam.¹⁸ In Pakistan (in 2001-2002) there were an estimated twenty-four armed Jihadi groups, most with views that were religiously fundamentalist and which espoused totalitarian

¹⁵ Mark Katz, "What if Islamic Revolution Occurs in Pakistan?", January 26, 2005. Accessed on 06/19/2005 from http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav012605a_pr.shtml.

¹⁶ Abbas Rashid, "The Politics and Dynamics of Violent Sectarianism." Accessed on 06/14/2005 from http://members.tripod.com/~no_nukes_sa/chapter_2.html.

¹⁷ "Pakistan's Urgent Need: A New Islamic Movement", (1999). Accessed on 06/19/2005 from <http://www.muslimmedia.com/archives/editorial99/editor68.htm>.

¹⁸ Robin Wright, "The Chilling Goal of Islam's New Warriors," *Los Angeles Times*. Accessed on 06/06/2005 from <http://www.angelfire.com/a14/terror/article22.htm>.

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theocracy.¹⁹ These include groups such as the Tehreek-e-Jaferia (which being of the minority Shia, is the target of many Sunni terrorist groups), the Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohhamadi, Lashar-e-Jhangvi, and the Jamaat ul-Fuqra. One in particular, the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen Al-almi group is believed to be responsible for the assassination attempts on Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf in 2003.²⁰ The inherent danger posed by these groups is that there has been a fundamental shift in their agenda. Simply, there is now a distinction between what can be termed “old” and “new” Islamists in Pakistan. New Islamists are generally protagonists of political Islam; they seek to transform politics through religion and religion through politics. This is unlike the old Islamists, who were accommodated by the secular elites, and thus avoided political confrontation.²¹

Islamist organizations are based mainly in the economically marginal and socially traditional regions of Pakistan – the Northwest Frontier Province and Baluchistan, where they currently run provincial governments (through the MMA (Muttahida-Majlis-e-Amal)).²² They have a limited presence in the Punjab or the Sindh, which are the core of Pakistan’s population, industry and military recruitment. Consequently, no Islamist proposals for a theocracy have much public legitimacy, because many view Jihadist groups in ethnic (Pakhtun) terms.²³ The political willingness of the army to confront the Islamists is indicated by its repeatedly successful

¹⁹ Abbas, *op. cit.*, pp. 201-202.

²⁰ SATP, Terrorist Groups of Pakistan: Harkat-ul-Mujahideen Al-almi. Accessed on 06/09/2005 from <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/terroristoutfits.htm>.

²¹ United States Institute of Peace, “Islamic Extremists: How Do they Mobilize Support?”, 2002. Accessed on 06/06/2005 from <http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr89.html>.

²² Abbas, *op. cit.*, pp. 228-229; Ajai Sahni. “A New Government Takes Charge.” Accessed on 06/09/2005 from http://satp.org/satporgtp/sair/Archives/1_19.htm#assessment1.

²³ Mohan, *loc. cit.*, p. 119; Jessica Stern. “Pakistan’s Jihad Culture.” *Foreign Affairs*, November 2000. Accessed on 06/09/2005 from <http://ksghome.harvard.edu/~jstern/pakistan.htm>; United States Institute of Peace, *loc. cit.*

quashing of mass protests, especially in the Punjab and Sindh.²⁴ Its reliance on informal (police and ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence Agency)) rather than overt repression indicates the weakness of the Islamist groups relative to the state. What terrorist groups there are with widespread appeal are the MQM (Muttahida Quomi Mahaz). This group, defined by ethnicity (Mohajir) and language (Urdu) more than religion, was far more militarily effective than any Jihadist group within Pakistan (and it continues its electoral dominance in Karachi, Pakistan's largest city).²⁵ The principal obstacle to an Islamic revolution is the diversity of militant groups and religious movements, making a critical mass, let alone unified front, unlikely.²⁶

In fact, the encouragement of electoral Islamism and militant Jihadism was itself a creation by Pakistan in the 1970s to counteract perceived threats of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's socialism, the shock of the Iranian (Shia) revolution, and to mobilize resistance to the Soviet occupation in Afghanistan, and later for Kashmir.²⁷ In the first example, to counter Bhutto populist socialism, the military backed the formation of the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI), led by conservative non-Islamist politicians, but with its ideology defined by Jamaat I Islami.²⁸ In a second example, Sipah-e-Sahaba, the most powerful domestic Jihadist group in Pakistan, is a Sunni Punjabi movement sponsored by the ISI specifically to suppress Shia radicalism resulting from the Iranian revolution (in effect a counter-revolutionary instrument).²⁹ When the military restrained its practice of terrorism in the 1990s, the group transformed itself

²⁴ Cohen, *loc. cit.*, p. 117; Samina Ahmed. "The Myth of the Good General Musharraf." *Observer online*, 2005. Accessed on 06/06/2005 from <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=2241&1=1>; Issue Brief, *loc. cit.*; Katz, *loc. cit.*

²⁵ SATP, Terrorist Groups of Pakistan: Muttahida Quomi Mahaz. Accessed on 06/09/2005 from <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/terroristoutfits.htm>.

²⁶ Cohen, *loc. cit.*, p. 114.

²⁷ Mohan, *loc. cit.*, p. 121.

²⁸ Haqqani, *op. cit.* p. 276.

²⁹ Abbas, *op. cit.* p. 204.

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into a political movement.³⁰ Periodic Shia-Sunni sectarian violence is a remnant of this.

A consequence of the Pakistan government's use of Jihadists in the war in Afghanistan is residual sympathy for them among elements of the ISI. Nevertheless, even if an uprising were to occur, it would be challenged by a military whose pervasive power is measured not only by its sheer size, but also by its experience in subduing large-scale popular movements, such as in East Pakistan in 1971, Baluchistan in 1974-78, and since 1947 in the North-West Frontier Province. The military's traditional supporters (the feudal landlords, emerging industrialists, and since the 1970s, the clerics) feel the greatest threat coming from the mass social movements, most often embodied in the political parties.³¹ The military emerged from the barracks to manage domestic disturbances in East Pakistan in 1952, 1954, 1956 and 1958, and ultimately suppressed the Bengalis in 1970-1971 inflicting three hundred thousand deaths and forcing ten million refugees to flee to India.³² In West Pakistan, the military intervened against domestic disturbances in 1953 in Lahore and Karachi, again in Karachi in 1957, and imposed order in Karachi during the Mohajir-Sindhi civil disturbance in the 1980s.³³ Though usually with substantial loss of life and property, the Pakistan military has never failed to impose its will on a population, except in cases of external intervention, such as the Indian invasion of East Pakistan in December of 1971. Prior to that, 40,000 Pakistani troops, along with militant Islamist militias, had imposed control over 75 million Bengalis at

³⁰ SATP, Terrorist Groups of Pakistan: Sipah-e-Sahaba. Accessed on 06/09/2005 from <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/terroristoutfits.htm>

³¹ Mary Anne Weaver, *Pakistan*, New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2002, p. 180; Owen Bennett-Jones, *Pakistan*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002, pp. 244-247.

³² Lawrence Ziring, *The Ayub Khan Era – Politics in Pakistan 1958-1969*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1971, p.7.

³³ Dawn, May 16, 1953, cited in K.L. Kamal, *Pakistan – The Garrison State*, New Delhi: Intellectual Publishing House, 1982, p.52; Ziring, *op. cit.*, p.7.

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relatively little cost.³⁴ Tens of thousands were killed in the Baluch case in the mid-1970s. The use of force is a routine method of control of the remote parts of the Northwest Frontier Province, where Jihadism is strongest and where any revolution is likely to have its origins.

In effect, any revolution will either be still-born, pre-empted by Pakistani internal security (Special Branch, Investigative Bureau, the ISI or Military Intelligence), or confronted and ended violently in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas before it ever reaches the Punjabi and Sindhi core of Pakistan. Pakistan's army is far too strong, both in number, weapons, as well as possessing a rudimentary nuclear force, and willing to inflict losses, to be overthrown by a direct popular challenge. Nevertheless, social conditions may lead to a future revolution if the military's ability to foster socio-economic development remains weak.³⁵ In fact, Pakistan came closest to a radical political movement with the anti-Western-oriented socialist government of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto who believed that only a mass social movement could counter the army's power.³⁶ It was largely in response to this threat that the military encouraged the counter-mobilization of religious fundamentalists.³⁷

Scenario 2: Electoral Islamism

A second concern is that Islamist groups within Pakistan will manage to impose a theocracy via the electoral process, as almost occurred in Algeria in the 1990s.³⁸ This scenario entails that religious groups will gradually secure control of the media, educational curricula and judiciary, thereby ultimately replacing

³⁴ G.W. Choudhury, *The Last Days of United Pakistan*, Bloomington: Indian UP, 1974, p.156.

³⁵ Cohen, *loc. cit.*, p. 120.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

³⁷ *Idid.*

³⁸ Mohammad Shehzad, "Fighting Words, Hidden Pact". Accessed on 06/09/2005 from http://satp.org/satporgtp/sair/Archives/3_46.htmASSESSMENT2.

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secular democratic institutions.³⁹ For example, former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto warned the U.S. that the MMA (an umbrella of some of the 58 religious parties in Pakistan) could seize control of the Senate and use it to transform Pakistan into a religious state.⁴⁰ It is more likely she was trying to disparage the military regime that expelled her, by drawing attention to the ISI's manipulation of Islamist groups to counter-balance her People's Party of Pakistan (PPP). In fact the PPP can defeat almost any religiously-based party that chooses to run in its constituency, unless its candidate is physically detained by the Pakistani authorities.

For example, Pakistan's best-organized religious party, Jamaat-I-Islami, has consistently performed poorly in all national elections since independence because most issues are defined ethnically, ideologically or feudally, not religiously.⁴¹ The unprecedented and recent national success of the MMA (Muttahida-Majlis-e-Amal) religious parties in the October 2002 elections (gaining 11 per cent of the popular vote and 20 per cent of the seats) was largely the result of the military's suppression of the secular parties (Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League and Benazir Bhutto's PPP), and the fact that six religious parties united and thereby averted vote splitting for the first time.⁴² Despite military vote-rigging, the 77 seats of the Muslim League and the 62 seats of the People's Party of Pakistan still individually outnumbered the 53 seats of the MMA.⁴³ Provincially, the MMA won an absolute majority in the Northwest Frontier Province, and formed a plurality in the

³⁹ "Factors Underlying Religious Extremism in Pakistan". Accessed on 07/07/2005 from <http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr89.html>.

⁴⁰ Abbas, *op. cit.*, p. 201; Anwar Iqbal, "Analysis: Setback for Pakistan Extremists", *United Press International* (2003). Accessed on 06/06/2005 from <http://www.upi.com/view.cfm?StoryID=20030224-081836-1627r>.

⁴¹ *Newsmax.com Wire Service*, "Analysis of Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons", Sept. 19, 2001. Accessed from <http://www.newsmax.com> on 5/29/2005.

⁴² Haqqani, *loc. cit.*, p.91; Cornell, "Taliban Afghanistan: A True Islamic State?" in Brenda Shaffer (ed), *The Limits of Culture*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006, pp. 263-290, p. 306.

⁴³ Cornell, *op. cit.*, pp. 263-290, p. 305.

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Baluchistan provincial legislature.⁴⁴ In both of these cases traditional ethnically-based parties, the Pakhtun Awami League in the Northwest Frontier Province, were pushed aside by widespread concerns of corruption.⁴⁵

However, the MMA is very unlikely to expand its proportion of seats in the core provinces of the Punjab or the Sindh, or nationally. In fact, the religious parties are doing about as well as they did in the 1970, during which they also came to dominate the same proportion of seats in the Punjab, but actually attained 14% rather than merely 10% of the vote. Between 1970 and the 1990s, the religious parties rarely exceeded 5 percent of the vote, indicating that they are very far from representing the aspirations of mainstream Pakistanis.⁴⁶ There is thus the paradox that while 60 percent of Pakistanis want religious leaders to play a larger role in politics, and 78 percent believe schools should put more emphasis on Islam, they don't vote for them in elections.⁴⁷ The religious parties are nevertheless positioned to maintain their street power as measured by their ability to organize demonstrations.⁴⁸ Though even here, the Musharraf government had little difficulty suppressing those that erupted because of his close cooperation with the United States in October of 2001.⁴⁹

Therefore while some argue that there is a genuinely unprecedented increase of support for Islamic parties, but this has to be tempered by the variety of differing interpretations: for example, Jamaat-i-Islami, the most influential religious party, is as likely to warn of the Talibanization of Pakistan as are the more secular parties.⁵⁰ Jamaat-i-Islami is primarily based in the

⁴⁴ Ajai Sahni, "A New Government Takes Charge." Accessed on 06/09/2005 from http://satp.org/satporgtp/sair/Archives/1_19.htm#assessment1.

⁴⁵ Cornell, *loc. cit.*, pp. 263-290, p. 307.

⁴⁶ Haqqani, *loc. cit.*, p.95; Bennett-Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁴⁷ Wright, *loc. cit.*

⁴⁸ Cohen, *loc. cit.*, p.114.

⁴⁹ Ahmed, *loc. cit.*

⁵⁰ Stephen Phillip Cohen, "Pakistan's Fear of Failure", *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, Oct 23, 2000; Wright, *loc. cit.*

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urban middle class (much like the Islamic brotherhood in Egypt), though organized like a Communist party with democratic centralism, a vanguard, a computerized membership mailing list, and enforcement of discipline.⁵¹ Precisely because it is so well organized, the ISI has maintained an alliance with it to counter the candidates of the more secular parties, the PPP and the Muslim League.⁵²

There are no social institutions that can oppose the military while it still has some public legitimacy, and some, such as the powerful rural Zamindars from the Punjab, who support it.⁵³ Musharraf's move against some militant Islamic groups predates 9/11, and is the result of Pakistan's state re-imposing order in the frontier areas left ungovernable by the introduction of a gun-culture from the wars in Afghanistan. Some groups, especially those that contributed to operations in Kashmir, have developed political and funding bases that have made them independent of the military's control. The government's demolition of the non-conforming (with government regulations) madrassah network (educating three million students in 10,000 to 40,000 madrassahs), which had been set-up by the previous military regime of Zia ul-Haq, was largely unresisted.⁵⁴ The gravity of the Islamist threat should be put into context. Historically, the greatest threat to the military's control was Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's socialist PPP in the 1970s, which was and continues to be countered by ISI directed Islamist groups with varying levels of success.⁵⁵

Since the 1999 coup, Musharraf has furthered the army's permanent executive presence in the government, thus making moot any electoral gains by Islamist parties. First, the military

⁵¹ Bennett-Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 6; Christophe Jaffrelot (ed.), *A History of Pakistan and Its Origins*, London: Anthem, 2002, p. 225.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 240.

⁵³ Mohan, *loc. cit.*, p. 119.

⁵⁴ Abbas, *op. cit.*, p. 203; Mandavi Mehta. "Islam in Pakistan: Unity and Contradictions", *CSIS Report on Pakistan's Future 2002*. Accessed on 06/19/2005 from <http://www.csis.org/saprong/islaminpakistan.pdf>. p. 16.

⁵⁵ Cohen, "The Nation and the State of Pakistan", *loc. cit.*, p. 119.

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has introduced new amendments to the 1973 constitution that will transform Pakistan's parliamentary form of government into a presidential system headed by an executive requiring military approval to rule. The amendments would give Musharraf the power to sack the prime minister and cabinet and make all senior appointments in the provinces, the judiciary and the bureaucracy.⁵⁶ Coupled with this, other controversial clauses called for presidential rather than parliamentary appointments of military chiefs and creation of a military dominated National Security Council (which came into formal existence in 2004) authorized to oversee the country's security policies, including nuclear weapons.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the government of Pervaiz Musharraf continues to sponsor the religious parties to counter the threat of the secular parties by recognizing an Islamist legislator as the leader of the opposition.⁵⁸

There is an unlikely scenario, in which the Senate chairman, who is the nominal deputy to the President when he is abroad, could become an Islamist and then seize power in a coup when the military leadership is abroad. It is very unlikely, though, that the military would be willing to respect this legislative manoeuvre and not intervene directly. Nor is it likely that the Senate will fall under the control of the religious parties.⁵⁹

Scenario 3: Jihadist-Military Coup

The third path to an Islamist regime is a military coup led by pro-Jihadist officers. The penetration of the Egyptian military by Islamists who subsequently assassinated President Anwar Sadat is a worrying prospect for Pakistan. The previous military

⁵⁶ Ahmed Rashid, "Is Terror Worse than Oppression", 2002. Accessed on 06/14/2005 from <http://www.middleeast.org/comments/1/3996.shtml>.

⁵⁷ K. Alan Kronstadt, "Pakistan's Domestic Political Developments", *CRS Report for Congress 2004*, Congressional Research Service, the Library of Congress, p. CRS-9.

⁵⁸ Haqqani, *loc. cit.*, p.91.

⁵⁹ Anwar Iqbal, "Analysis: Setback for Pakistan Extremists." United Press International (2003). Accessed on 06/06/2005 from <http://www.upi.com/view.cfm?StoryID=20030224-081836-1627r>.

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regime of General Zia ul-Haq is believed to have promoted on the basis of support for Islamist ideals, such that 30% of the military's officer corps currently has an Islamist orientation.⁶⁰ In practice this involved allowing Jamaat-i-Islami access to provide religious services within the military.⁶¹ This has to be tempered by the fact that Zia was a moderate Islamist who never questioned the dominant role of the military, and therefore did not impose his Islamist views on officers who questioned its wisdom. There is some evidence though that during his reign the focus was on mid-ranking officers (though some senior officers were sympathetic), and that this has led to some skewing in officer recruiting away from the traditional Pakistani elite to the more religious lower middle classes.⁶²

Some senior Pakistan generals sympathetic to the Jehadi cause have warned that the military will not oppose an Islamic uprising when it happens because of the large number of adherents in its ranks.⁶³ This was facilitated as much by the ISI's involvement in Afghanistan, as it was by its subsequent strengthening of links with domestic Islamist groups in Pakistan, such as Jamaat-i-Islami, which in turn has sympathizers among the lower and middle ranked soldiers, as well as a few generals.⁶⁴ The September 1994 coup attempt led by Islamist General Zaheer-ul-Islam Abbasi is one such example, though an internal military coup could be led by a younger hard-line group of officers, such as Lt. Gen. Mohammad Aziz, who directed the operations at Kargil in

⁶⁰ Sean Winchell, "Pakistan's ISI: The Invisible Government", *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 16, 2003, p. 377.

⁶¹ Dr. Pervaiz Chima, interview, July 18, 2001, Institute of Regional Policy, Islamabad.

⁶² Jaffrelot, *op. cit.*, p. 80; Bennett-Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 259; Mehta, *loc. cit.* p. 14; Ajay Behera. "Is Musharraf Spooked by His Spy Agency?", *Brookings Institute*, 2002. Accessed on 6/07/2005 from <http://brook.edu/printme.wbs?page=/pagedefs/cc0985a45b00ff3b7e55aa6b0a141465.htm>.

⁶³ Subodh Atal, "Extremist, Nuclear Pakistan An Emerging Threat?" *Policy Analysis*, 472, 2003, p. 6; Wright, *loc. cit.*; Abbas, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

⁶⁴ Haqqani, *loc. cit.*, p. 90.

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1998.⁶⁵ In the case of Abbasi, his Sunni extremism would have immediately alienated him from the 15 percent of Pakistan's population that are Shia. The Abbasi conspiracy was easily uncovered by Military Intelligence, which has operated as a counter to the ISI, and did in fact take over the Kargil operation from the ISI in 1999.⁶⁶ According to A.H. Amin, there are built-in safety measures against a coup, and this explains in part the paucity of coup attempts during military tenure as compared with other militarily-administered states.⁶⁷ The aftermath of the Abbasi conspiracy, in which the military closed ranks relatively effectively, was a clear indicator of the shallowness of the Islamist influence in the Pakistan army.⁶⁸

Another example, one former terrorist (now political) group, the Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohhamadi, has strong support among retired officers,⁶⁹ such as the above mentioned General Hamid Gul who seem to be patiently waiting for a catalyst to emerge which will propel them to power. Musharraf's unprecedented reshuffling of senior military positions since the 1999 coup seems to have indicated that the military hierarchy was at least partially influenced by jihadist sympathies.⁷⁰ The near-miss assassination attempts on Musharraf indicate that there is at least some penetration of the military by pro-Jihadist elements providing vital intelligence on his whereabouts.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Behera, *loc. cit.*

⁶⁶ Abbas, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

⁶⁷ Bennett-Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 255; A.H. Amin. "Possible Coup in Pakistan." (2003). Accessed on 07/06/2005 from http://www.satribune.com/archives/feb_24mar1_03/opinion_coup.htm.

⁶⁸ Bennett-Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 254-257.

⁶⁹ SATP, Terrorist Groups of Pakistan: Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohhamai. Accessed on 06/09/2005 from <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/terroristoutfits.htm>.

⁷⁰ Abbas, *op. cit.*, p. 233; Winchell, *loc. cit.*, p.384; Joseph Palermo. "Undermining Musharraf". History News Network (2001). Accessed on 06/06/2005 from <http://hnn.us/articles/printfriendly/358.html>.

⁷¹ Sharmeen Obaid, "Power Struggle After Musharraf Will be Very Fierce: Ahmed Rashid", 2004. Accessed on 06/09/2005 from http://www.satribune.com/archives/apr4_10_04/P1_Rashid.htm.

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Fears that the extremist groups have grown beyond the control of the army and are poised to rise up also seem to be unfounded. In a conversation between Musharraf and General Mohammad Aziz in May 1999 that was intercepted by Indian intelligence and confirmed by the CIA, Aziz told Musharraf, "We have them (militant Islamic groups) by the scruff of the neck and whenever desired, we can regulate the situation."⁷² Arguments that this conversation can be dismissed since it occurred pre 9/11, prior to mass demonstrations against Musharraf's new pro-U.S. policies can also be refuted as noted by Samina Ahmed who stipulates the ease with which the Musharraf government quashed street protests by Islamic parties after September 11 and demonstrated that religious extremists pose little menace to a military establishment.⁷³

However, an Islamist take-over from within the military in Pakistan is unlikely for two reasons. First, the military's decision-making process is not compartmentalized to prevent an internal coup (typical of developing states), that so often produce coups because of the inter-isolation of military organizations. Rather, high-level decision-making is based on a process of consensual consultation of the senior commanders.⁷⁴ Historically this is borne out: coups during civilian and military rule occur through semi-official channels of consultation among the senior leadership (usually the Corps commanders) and in consultation with key members of the bureaucracy and/or the traditional Punjabi elite.⁷⁵ Any Islamist group would have to navigate this process of consultation, which has been very

⁷² Arvin Bahl, "India, America, Musharraf, And War." South Asia Analysis Group, 2002.

Accessed on 06/06/2005 from <http://www.saag.org/papers5/paper479.html>

⁷³ Ahmed, *loc. cit.*

⁷⁴ Rodney Jones, "The Prospect of State Failure in Pakistan". (2001): accessed on 06/09/2005 from http://www.policyarchitects.org/pdf/Pak_statefailure_Exsumm.pdf#search='islamic%20extremist%20groups%20in%20pakistan; Newsmax.com Wire Service, loc. cit.; Kronstadt, loc. cit., p. CRS-20.

⁷⁵ B. Raman, "Pakistan: The Mullahs' Blue Eyed General." South Asia Analysis Group (2000). Accessed on 06/06/2005 from <http://www.saag.org/papers2/paper146.html>; Amin, *loc. cit.*

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successful in suppressing ethnic as well as religious differences. Without broad support, therefore, a dedicated Islamist movement would not win support among the senior commanders and would not therefore survive. Also, despite the alleged influence of the ISI, it has historically played no role in determining leadership selection during coups.⁷⁶ In fact, precisely because the mainstream military commanders did not trust it, the ISI was replaced by Military Intelligence to conduct the Kargil operation in 1998. Therefore, the relative internal transparency of the military command structure (in the political domain) makes it difficult for an Islamist conspiracy to penetrate and then play off different internal factions to seize power. Second, despite reports that Islamic sympathizers have gained a foothold within the army, any disaffection in the military's ranks does not as yet appear to be wide or deep enough to cause institutional fractures or trigger intra-organizational conflict. Equally significant has been the repeated demonstrations that the military has the capacity to nip such dissent in the bud.⁷⁷ Hence, if one was to even accept that extremists can be found within the army's ranks, one must also acknowledge that a coup from such a position is difficult based solely on institutional controls.

The basis for the cohesion of the Pakistani military (besides its institutional discipline caused by the constant threat of attack from India) is a broad consensus among the social elite (which also populates the bureaucracy), that a secular and technocratic military is a necessary pillar of Pakistan's strength. An unrestrained Islamist ideology is viewed as a threat to the current elite, and Pakistan's ability to obtain the allies and technology it needs to counter India.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Ahmed, *loc. cit.*; *Newsmax.com Wire Service, loc. cit.*; Gaurav Kampani. "The Military Coup in Pakistan." Monterey Institute of International Studies, 1999. Accessed on 06/07/2005 from <http://cns.miis.edu/pubs/reports/guarav.htm>.

⁷⁷ Issue Brief, *loc. cit.*

⁷⁸ Pervez Hoodbhoy, "Can Pakistan Work?", *Foreign Affairs*, November-December 2004

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Another scenario involves a coup by a military Islamicized by civilian appointees. In 1992, for example, the Chief of the Army Staff General Janjua resisted the appointment of Islamist Lieutenant General Javed Nasir, to the position as Director General of the ISI, by the then civilian Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.⁷⁹ Nawaz Sharif's wealthy industrialist family had sided with the Islamists in the 1970s to counter the strongly pro-labour People's Party of Pakistan of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, which included large scale nationalizations of manufacturing.⁸⁰

The coup scenario becomes even more remote when viewed in the context of power in Pakistan. Three considerations are important in this regard. First, the traditional weakness of Pakistan's intelligence organizations. Second, the nature of the Pakistan army's consensual decision-making process. Third, the history of coup d'états, which indicates the relative rarity of these events.

Control of the intelligence organizations in Pakistan provides far less independent leverage over domestic political power than is typical for other developing countries. The main reason for this is that the Pakistan military is not coup-proofed in a way that is also typical of most developing countries. For example, military units are not deployed in layers to block each other's access to the capital, but rather deployed for war against India. Pakistani officers are not compartmentalized for fear they would conspire against the government, but are permitted the freedom of inter-unit movement necessary to maintain inter-arms cooperation and training. Senior officers are not under prohibitive counter-espionage surveillance. Although the ISI is responsible for the surveillance of military personnel (as is the MI – Military Intelligence), this is a routine function present also in the militaries of many developed states.⁸¹ Rather, the military maintains the allegiance of its members through the provision of

⁷⁹ Abbas, *op. cit.*, p.148; Haqqani, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

⁸⁰ Bennett-Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

⁸¹ Jahan Dad Khan, *Pakistan – Leadership Challenge*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999, pp. 31, 96, 102; Bennett -Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

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welfare by its organic economic enterprises, and a developed consensual system of army command, elaborated below. The consequence for the likelihood of an Islamic takeover is that the military is not sufficiently compartmentalized to be paralyzed by a sudden religiously-inspired coup. Instead, the main force army units are likely to react with relative speed to any changes not approved of by the senior military command.

In the hierarchy of Pakistan's intelligence organization comes first the IB (Intelligence Bureau), which reports to the Prime Minister and is often used for surveillance of the ISI and MI (Military Intelligence).⁸² The Special Bureau, also subordinate to the Prime Minister, may hold a similar function, though these may be curtailed since the military is in power.⁸³ The ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) is composed of 9,000 civilian and military employees, the latter of which serve two to three year tours, and has therefore a relatively weak corporate culture, making it unlikely to lead a coup on its own.⁸⁴ Under Bhutto, the IB and ISI were under the control of the office of the Prime Minister.⁸⁵ Under Zia, the ISI and MI were under the control of the office of the President, though under Musharraf, the Prime Minister (recently Shaukat Aziz) appoints the ISI chief, and the President (Musharraf) appoints the head of MI.⁸⁶ During the civilian administration of Sharif, because of his nominal control of the ISI, the military's GHQ (General Headquarters) used the MI to conduct operations in Kargil in 1998.⁸⁷

There is therefore considerable plasticity of the intelligence chain of command depending on the particular arrangements of

⁸² Haqqani, *op. cit.*, p. 223; Abbas, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

⁸³ Zia al-Huq's Defense Secretary Ijlal Haider Zaidi, interview, 29 April 1999, Islamabad.

⁸⁴ Bennett-Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 239, 241; Zia al-Huq's Defense Secretary Ijlal Haider Zaidi, interview, 29 April 1999, Islamabad; Zia al-Huq's Defense Secretary Ijlal Haider Zaidi, interview, 29 April 1999, Islamabad.

⁸⁵ Haqqani, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

⁸⁶ Abbas, *op. cit.*, p. 98, p.150; Zia al-Huq's Defense Secretary Ijlal Haider Zaidi, interview, 29 April 1999, Islamabad.

⁸⁷ <http://www.saag.org/papers2/paper146.html>.

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a regime at the time. Usually, however, the ISI has held a disproportionate amount of international attention because it is most commonly tasked with manipulating domestic elections and operating militants in Afghanistan, Kashmir and possibly India. In reality, the ISI is a weak domestic player when measured in contrast to the military's main force units. In its capacity of managing the war in Afghanistan and Kashmir, the ISI was in contact with militants groups within Pakistan, Afghanistan and Kashmir.⁸⁸ However, when the militants being transhipped from Afghanistan to Kashmir were falling beyond Pakistan's control, the ISI was purged of its Pakhtun influence to bring it more into line with its military leadership.⁸⁹ It is therefore no surprise that when Musharraf believed that members of the ISI would cooperate with the Sharif regime in replacing him, the army executed a coup and the assorted intelligence organizations played only a minor role.⁹⁰

Real power in Pakistan is dominated by a council of its nine principal army corps commanders, and the GHQ staff, comprising nearly 30 generals.⁹¹ These technically non-legally but institutionalized meetings determine important international as well as domestic policy.⁹² The key position at GHQ is that of the Chief of the General, who commands Military Intelligence and Military Operations, and as the chief operations director for the corps commanders, is able to check any coup attempt.⁹³ Corps are self-contained multi-branch miniature armies comprising between 20,000 and 60,000 soldiers, and effectively being able to intervene in their respective regions. The two most important Corps are those deployed near the Army's GHQ (moved from Rawalpindi to Islamabad in 2006), particularly Strike Corps North (1st Corps)

⁸⁸ Zia al-Huq's Defense Secretary Ijlal Haider Zaidi, interview, 29 April 1999, Islamabad; Bennett-Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 241

⁸⁹ Mariam Abou Zahab and Olivier Roy, *Islamist Networks*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004, p. 18, p. 28, p. 31, pp. 34-43, p. 45, pp. 53-55.

⁹⁰ Tariq Ali, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms*, London: Verso, 2002, p. 249.

⁹¹ Weaver, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

⁹² Haqqani, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

⁹³ Raman, *loc. cit.*

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deployed at Jhelum, and 10 Corps at Rawalpindi, with the responsibility for defending GHQ and the seat of government in Islamabad. The next tier of Corps are those located in the Punjab, including the 31 Corps at Bahawalpur, 2 Corps at Multan, 4 Corps at Lahore, and 30 Corps at Sialkot. The third tier of Corps are those located outside the Punjab, including 12 Corps at Quetta, 5 Corps at Karachi, 9 Corps at Peshawar, and the Northern Army in Muzzaferabad. Nuclear weapons are most likely under the operational control of the air force, but under army custodianship.

Pakistan's first indigenous military chief, defence minister, and ultimately President, Ayub Khan, was effective at maintaining control of the military through its hierarchy and his appointments. The tradition of collective military decision-making began, therefore, with Yahya Khan in 1969, Pakistan's second military leader, whose weak position vis-à-vis old Ayub supporters required him to seek policy coalitions. The nexus for this was the principal staff officer's conference at GHQ, which was dominated by the military chiefs of the principal strike corps, the intelligence heads, and included civilian appointees.⁹⁴ The Corps cabinet was consulted by General Gul Hassan before Yahya's ejection from power in 1971.⁹⁵ Zia ul-Haq was advised by the army commanders prior to his coup in 1977.⁹⁶ Musharraf consulted the Corps Commanders when the U.S. demanded Pakistani cooperation on September 14, 2001.⁹⁷ The absence of any indication of military dissent is an indication that it was the Corps Commanders, rather than Musharraf alone, that had decided to acquiesce to the U.S. request.⁹⁸ Exceptionally, the commander of 9 Corps at Peshawar, Lieutenant General Ali

⁹⁴ Kamal Matinuddin (Lt. Gen.), *Tragedy of Errors (East Pakistan Crisis, 1968-1971)*, Lahore: Wajidalis, 1994, p.132; Choudhury, *op. cit.*, p.56; Mohammed Ayooob and K. Subrahmanyam, *The Liberation War*, New Delhi: S. Chand & Co. Ltd., 1972, p.95; Altaf Gauhar, *Ayub Khan – Pakistan's First Military Ruler*, Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1993, p.425.

⁹⁵ Haqqani, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 125

⁹⁷ Abbas, *op. cit.*, p. 219; Bennett-Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁹⁸ Ahmed, *loc. cit.*

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Mohammad Jan Orakzai, was removed from his position shortly after the first assassination attempt against Musharraf, most likely because of negligence to stop the Pakhtun-based hostility to Musharraf. All evidence is that Musharraf's rule is strongly supported by the key Punjab Corp Commanders.⁹⁹

A single exception to the dominance of the Corps Commanders is operations in Kashmir.¹⁰⁰ Both in 1965, under Ayub Khan, and in 1998, under Nawaz Sharif, local military leaders (Akhtar Malik and Mohammed Aziz Khan respectively), conducted military operations without consulting the GHQ.¹⁰¹ In the former case this was because of Ayub's personal oversight of the operation, and in the latter case it had to do with the political space opened by the confrontation between Sharif and GHQ. In both cases, Kashmir is considered a special case where ethnically-Kashmiri commanders are typically already granted freedom of action to conduct ongoing unconventional warfare.

The implication for an Islamic takeover of Pakistan is that it is unlikely without the assent of the Corps Commanders, and in particular the key Punjabi Corps Commanders, who are the least likely of all Pakistanis to be driven by religious considerations. It also indicates that any religious coup would likely face a rapid and aggressive response by a military intent on protecting its corporatist interest. As mentioned above, the 10 Corps is the gatekeeper for access to Islamabad and its subordinate 111 Brigade has been involved in every military coup.¹⁰² For an Islamist coup to succeed, not only would the commander of 10 Corps have to be an Islamist acceptable to the other corps commanders, but he would have to be able to act and consolidate his position before the other Punjab corps commanders, who command more powerful formations, intervened. One very unlikely nightmare scenario, however, includes the 10 Corps drawing on its use of nuclear weapons, as

⁹⁹ http://www.satribune.com/archives/dec21_jan3_04/P1_lead.htm.

¹⁰⁰ Abbas, *op. cit.*, p.171.

¹⁰¹ Haqqani, *op. cit.*, p. 250; Abbas, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

¹⁰² Bennett-Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 39; Dad Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 210, p. 233.

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it is responsible for the security of the Kahuta nuclear weapons complex, to counter the reaction of any countervailing corps commanders. Less importantly, assassination attempts are unlikely to result in dramatic changes in policy, but simply a transition to the next most senior consensually-supported military general, as occurred following the 1988 assassination of Zia ul-Haq.

Within the context of a military dominated by its Corps Commanders, coups are rarely attempted, and even more rarely succeed. Those that are uncovered have all been at a very early stage and very infeasible had planning been completed. The earliest coup attempt, the Pindi conspiracy of February 1951, involved a planned military revolt against the civilian government to reverse its Kashmir policy and resume war with India. Ultimately the ringleaders decided against action, but were discovered and imprisoned.¹⁰³ Ayub Khan subsequently led a successful coup in October 1958 and brought to power Pakistan's first military government.¹⁰⁴ This coup had been considered as early as October 1954, and when ultimately executed, the civilian regime was already effectively neutralized as it had on its own accord declared martial law earlier that month.¹⁰⁵ The third internal coup involved the military removal of Ayub Khan from power.¹⁰⁶ When Ayub Khan declared martial law in 1969 to contain popular protests against him, the military was in a position to block Ayub's attempt to gain support from a political party hostile to military interests.¹⁰⁷ Ayub thereupon resigned, appointing General Yahya Khan as

¹⁰³ Akbar Khan (Maj Gen), *Raiders in Kashmir*, Karachi: Pak Publishers Limited, 1970, p.162

¹⁰⁴ Hussain, *op. cit.*, p.138.

¹⁰⁵ Mohammad Ahmad (Col.), *My Chief*, Lahore: Longmans, Green and Co., 1960, p.86; For the text, see Hasan-Askari Rizvi, *The Military and Politics in Pakistan, 1947-86*, New Delhi: Konark Publishers Limited, 1988, pp.265-271; M.S. Venkataramani, *The American role in Pakistan, 1947-1958*, New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, 1982, p.396; Gul Hassan Khan, *Memoirs*, Karachi: Oxford UP, 1993, p.134; Kamal, *op. cit.*, p.30.

¹⁰⁶ Sarbjit Johal, *Conflict and Integration in Indo-Pakistan Relations*, Berkeley: University of California at Berkeley, 1989, p.134; Choudhury, *op. cit.*, p.19.

¹⁰⁷ Kamal, *op. cit.*, p.74.

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his successor.¹⁰⁸ This military coup was relatively calm, but is also indicative of its influence.¹⁰⁹

The fourth coup attempt was a self-abnegating counter-coup by the military itself. Following the defeat of Pakistan by India in December 1971, the Punjab divisional commanders, including the chief of the 6th Armoured Division, demanded the removal of Yahya Khan, and with the support of the Jamaat-i-Islami and the Muslim League political party, proposed his replacement with General Tikka Khan.¹¹⁰ However, senior military planners, believing the military had lost the confidence of the people of Pakistan, blocked the move and instead withdrew the military from power and transferred power to civilian politician Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.¹¹¹ The military subsequently uncovered a coup plot against Bhutto by 59 of its members in March of 1973, largely in response to a widely held belief that he was responsible for the break-up of Pakistan in 1971. The sixth coup attempt was the overthrow of Bhutto by General Zia ul-Haq in July of 1977, and the re-entry of the military in power, followed unprecedented corruption and economic stagnation of his regime. Zia was himself assassinated in 1988, and this led the military to follow through in liberalization and ultimately a process of civilian governments begun by Zia himself. There is no evidence that this assassination was meant to, or even did, alter the political direction of Pakistan. There followed the 1995 Abbasi coup plot elaborated earlier, which was essentially an Islamist conspiracy, including some senior military officers, to displace the government of Benazir Bhutto that was unsupportive of the war

¹⁰⁸ Hussain, *op. cit.*, p.139; According to interview by Matifnuddin of Altaf Gauhar, cited in Matinuddin, *op. cit.*, p.120; Gauhar, *op. cit.*, p. 408; Robert Laporte, Jr., "Succession in Pakistan: Continuity and Change in a Garrison State", *Asian Survey*, 9, No.11, November 1969, pp.842-861, p.851.

¹⁰⁹ .Matinuddin, *op. cit.*, p.121.

¹¹⁰ Dilip Mukerjee, *Zulfikar Ali Bhutto – Quest for Power*, Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd, 1972, p.6; Observations on Pakistan Military Services in the Light of Recent Arrests, May 16, 1973, in Roedad Khan (ed), *The American Papers*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 912-913, p. 912

¹¹¹ Richard Sisson and Leo E. Rose, *War and Secession – Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990, p.235; Mohammad Asghar Khan, *Generals in Politics – Pakistan 1958-1982*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1983, pp.45-46; Mukerjee, *op. cit.*, p.9.

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in Afghanistan. The last and eighth coup attempt in Pakistan was General Pervaiz Musharraf's displacement of Nawaz Sharif in October 1999, the immediate impetus being the latter's threat to the military's appointment process (as well as the economic mismanagement of his government). Musharraf had consulted with the Corps Commanders to hold a coup as early as mid-September, but he was not backed at that time.¹¹² Two assassination attempts in 2003, and uncovered Islamist conspiracies against Musharraf, often inappropriately labelled coup-attempts if they involve military personnel (the latest in 2006), are unlikely to have a substantial impact on the underlying policy of his regime, which is essentially driven by consultation with senior military leadership.

In effect, then, an Islamist coup is an unlikely outcome because there is little prospect of subsequently securing the approval of the Corp Commanders, and currently the political influence of Islam among military officers is subordinated to corporatist military interests. While Islamist coups are a likely prospect given the presence of a substantial portion of military officers radicalized by Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan, these officers are a minority and are more likely to use their positions to further domestic terrorism within Pakistan.

Conclusion

The Pakistani military is likely to be able to counter each of the three proposed scenarios, thus retaining power and maintaining stability in Pakistan. The argument of this paper is that despite obvious gains made by extremist groups, and their newly found popularity in contrast to a decrease in the support enjoyed by Pakistan President Pervaiz Musharraf, it is the military itself which is the key to power in Pakistan and as such its institutional design will continue to insulate threats and exclude the religious extremists from power.

The policy implications for this are threefold. First, President Pervaiz Musharraf has been given substantial latitude by

¹¹² Bennett-Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

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Western states in how he conducts his domestic policies, particularly with regard to democratization, because of fears that radicals could somehow be elected to power if not kept in check. This argument may be accurate to the extent that mass politics is likely to have a greater impact on the politics of Pakistan if the military were to reduce its manipulation of the electoral system, but it is unlikely that this would necessarily be a religiously-driven phenomenon. Given that much of the electoral success of the religious parties is due to military connivance, their legislative influence may actually drop as elections are made more free. Consequently, increased pressure on Pakistan to democratize, and to rely on the court system rather than military coups to manage the inevitable widespread corruption that accompanies every civilian regime, will contribute more to its long-term institutional development. Once the moral hazard of international leniency is removed, a Pakistan military departing from power may be more likely to deal directly with the religious militants that are a substantial disruption to the authority of the state. As long as the Pakistan military believes that civilian governments have no legitimate right to command it, it will manipulate Islamists to counter-balance the mainstream parties.

The second major issue is that NATO should be less reticent about demanding Pakistani cooperation in its management of Taliban infiltration into Afghanistan. The frequent argument that Pakistan is doing its best within the constraints of a military and population that are partial to Islamic militants, and should therefore be allowed to proceed at its own pace, is flawed. The military is as unsympathetic with the political goals of the Taliban and its domestic and regional Islamic militants as is NATO. If the Pakistan government were serious about restoring Pakistan's democracy, it would no longer need to nurture the Islamists and could act more positively to contribute to the stabilization of Afghanistan. In return, NATO could address long-term issues such as Kabul's recognition of the Durand Line as an international border, and denial of sanctuary to militants in Baluchistan. An adjunct argument frequently made is that NATO's goals in Afghanistan are to stabilize it so that it does not contribute to an Islamist seizure of power in Pakistan. Given

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the remoteness of this outcome, NATO should make clearer its remaining reasons for committing to improve the situation in Afghanistan.

Third, despite the promised stability grounded in the seeming anti-clerical sentiment of the Pakistan military, the broader cause of radical politics in Pakistan, whether Islamist, or Bhutto's left-wing populism, is widespread poverty. Pakistan is therefore not permanently immune to revolution, especially if an economic downturn is so severe that it undermines the social bases of the military's leadership in the Punjab. Nor is it inconceivable that Pakistan is as susceptible to a Maoist as it is to a Wahhabist revolution, given the funding and influence of China and Saudi Arabia. In this scenario, Pakistan's military would have lost the legitimacy to impose its own authoritarian solution, particularly if its own members become influenced by these visions of Pakistan. Socio-economic development should consequently be a priority interest of both Western states and Pakistan's military, most attainably through liberalized trade and market access for textile exports.

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