

TO BE EMBAROGED UNTIL DELIVERY.
CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY.

PAKISTAN IN REGIONAL AND GLOBAL POLITICS

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INTRODUCTION

The interplay between the internal settings and external environment is critical to determining the place of any state in world politics. Pakistan is no exception in this respect. However, there are two features that set Pakistan apart from many other states. One is the country's well-earned reputation as a state that has shuttled painfully between quasi-democratic rule and military dictatorship at fluctuating pace and intensity, with Islam as a reference of national identity and unity. The other is the country's terrifying position as both a source of ideological extremism, aiding and spawning various terrorist groups, and a central player in fighting these phenomena. The first feature has dominated Pakistan's life ever since its creation sixty years ago, whilst the second one has become the country's modus operandi since the early 1980s and, more specifically, since the tragic events of September 11, 2001. No Pakistani leader has exploited these two features as skillfully as President Pervez Musharraf to ensure the continuity of his concealed military rule and to solidify a critical role for Pakistan in regional and international politics. In the process, he has generated important opportunities and major challenges for Pakistan at regional and wider levels. The fear of what an extremist Pakistan can produce is played upon to perpetuate Musharraf's rule and maintain international support for it. The counter-terrorism card is played to promote Pakistan as a pivotal force in shaping the regional geopolitical landscape in interaction with changing world politics.

This paper has three specific objectives. The first is to assess Musharraf's main policy postures against the backdrop of what has transpired in regional and world politics since his seizure of power in 1999. The second is to examine how Musharraf has been able to shape and manage his domestic needs in an interactively manipulative manner with the changing dynamics of Pakistan's wider environment. The third is to investigate some of the major possible scenarios for Pakistan in the medium to long run.

POLICY POSTURES

Musharraf's seizure of power through a coup on 12 October 1999 came against the backdrop of a number of important internal and external developments.

The first was that Pakistan, since the death of President General Zia ul-Haq in a mysterious air crash in August 1988, had not progressed beyond a quasi-democracy under Prime Ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif. The military and more specifically its Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), which had grown to be almost a government within the government, had continued to act as the main determinant in Pakistani politics.ⁱ

The second was that Pakistan was in the grip of a dire economic situation, as well as social divisions and sectarian strife, threatening the unity and possibly survival of Pakistan. Between 1997 and 2001 Pakistan's GDP dropped from US\$75.3 billion to US\$ 71.5 billion, and by 2001 government debt was 82 percent of its GDP. Over one-third of the government's revenue was spent on interest payments on the national debt.ⁱⁱ In the meantime, the country suffered from growing ethno-linguistic hostilities, sectarian violence and rampant corruption and administrative malpractices.

The third was Pakistan's transformation into a source of Islamic extremism, which the ISI had nurtured and deployed as a foreign policy tool to boost the country's national cohesion and regional position within an approach that aimed at creating and exploiting a favourable external environment whenever possible.ⁱⁱⁱ In this respect, the ISI had scored important successes in relation to Afghanistan, where it had raised and backed the medievalist Islamic Taliban from late 1994 to takeover the country, and in the Indian-held Jammu and Kashmir, where the ISI had supported a separatist movement through an array of radical Islamic groups. It had also managed to forge a mutually supportive relationship between them and the Taliban. Its efforts in Afghanistan had resulted in that country's becoming a hub for international terrorism, based on an alliance between the Taliban and Al Qaeda under ISI's patronage and in Kashmir had contributed to increased strife and bloodshed. In the case of Afghanistan, ISI activities had amounted to a 'creeping invasion' of the country, causing a bloody conflict between the Taliban and the anti-Taliban forces, led by the legendary Afghan commander, Ahmed Shah Massoud, who had also successfully resisted the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s.^{iv} With regards to Kashmir, the ISI's interventionism had substantially contributed to the Indo-Pakistan Kargil mini-war of early 1999, which according to some analysts had brought the two sides to the brink of a nuclear clash. Although the antagonists had pulled back from the brink under

intense pressure from a number of major powers, especially the US, only an uneasy calm had come to prevail in the relations between them.^v

The fourth was the official confirmation of Pakistan and India as nuclear powers: in 1998 India had exploded an atomic device and Pakistan had followed suit in response. This had brought international condemnation of both sides, but placed Pakistan more than India under difficult military and economic sanctions, given Pakistan's position as the weaker of the two in terms of its capacity to cope with the sanctions.

The fifth was the reduction in the US presence in the region in the wake of the defeat of Soviet communism on the one hand, and a concurrent growth of Pakistan as a bastion for Islamic militancy on the other. Washington had become especially concerned over Pakistan's backing of the Taliban and the Taliban-Al Qaeda alliance, as well as a number of other Pakistan-based radical Islamic groups – such as Lashker-e-To'iba and Harakat al-Ansar cum Harakat al-Mujahideen – in support of its Kashmir policy.

Originally, Islamabad had quite successfully marketed the Taliban to Washington on the ground that the militia was a Sunni movement, capable of bringing stability to Afghanistan, checking Iranian influence and opening up Afghanistan as a direct corridor to the newly emerged, but resource-rich, region of Central Asia. However, following the bombing of American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania by Al Qaeda in August 1998, the situation had changed. The Administration of President Bill Clinton had embarked on a drive to punish Al Qaeda and review its attitude towards the Taliban. It had carried out a cruise missile attack on Al Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan. It had also mounted a concerted effort to coordinate an anti-terrorism policy with India, which had bitterly complained about cross-border terrorism from Pakistan for years, and Russia, which had viewed the Taliban-Al Qaeda's support of Chechen separatists and certain radical Islamic groups in Central Asia with increasing alarm.

Further, it had engaged in a diplomatic offensive against the Taliban, resulting in certain incremental UN sanctions against the militia. The American official who played a key role in all this was the then Under-Secretary of State Thomas Pickering.^{vi} Even so, Washington had remained remarkably reluctant to do anything that could tip the balance of power in favour of the anti-Taliban forces in Afghanistan or exert enough pressure on Islamabad to drop its support for Taliban and other radical Islamic forces as a foreign policy instrument. This was largely because Washington had reasoned that, first, it needed Pakistan's cooperation for the success of

whatever anti-terrorism measure it wanted to adopt, and, second, it should refrain from taking any policy action that could possibly accentuate Pakistan's domestic problems and cause the country to implode, with a possibility of its nuclear arsenals falling in the wrong hands.

The sixth was that Washington had grown concerned about the rising power of China, confronting it with the question of how to contain the communist power. Pakistan had traditionally developed close strategic ties with China, based partly on a common anti-Indian position ever since the Indo-Chinese border war of 1962. Although Washington had ample opportunities in the past to forge close ties with democratic India, it had not done so partly because of its aversion to New Delhi's determination to pursue an independent course of foreign policy. Washington's off-and-on alliance with Pakistan from the early 1950s had taken a realpolitik dimension, but void of any lasting principle.^{vii} In this context, after many years of coolness, the US-Pakistan alliance had been revived in the wake of the long-decade Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s, which Pakistan firmly opposed. At the same time, New Delhi's adoption of a rather supportive position on the occupation had irritated Washington. Although by late 1999, Indo-American relations had warmed up, so had also to some extent the Indo-Chinese ties. This could not encourage Washington to court India to the degree which was necessary to use an 'India card' in formulating a policy that could pressure both China and Pakistan. As a result, Islamabad remained in a position to use its strategic ties with China not only to maintain a source of pressure on India, but also caution the US against pressuring Pakistan over its role in the post-Soviet environment in the region.

When Musharraf seized power, these developments confronted him with serious dilemmas and set the limits for the kind of foreign policy priorities he could pursue. He had personally been involved in most of the developments in one way or other. He was Army Chief of Staff under Nawaz Sharif, who served as Pakistan's elected prime minister for the second time from 1997 until his overthrow by Musharraf in 1999. He was an active participant in all of the major policy decisions, including Pakistan's Afghan and Kashmir adventures. In other words, he could not be exonerated of his role in the circumstances that had befallen Pakistan. He now had to deal with those circumstances from a position of leadership, needless to say in ways which could help him consolidate his military rule on the one hand, and assuage the concern of the international community, especially India, and the US and many of its democratic allies within the Commonwealth, which had expressed deep concern over the 'end of democracy' in Pakistan on the other. Initially, he could not but to act within very limited policy options.

While relying necessarily on the military, ISI and ISI-linked Islamic groups as well as the public's disillusionment with Sharif's government, he promised to return Pakistan to 'genuine democracy' as soon as possible, but signaled no major foreign policy changes. He found it imperative to defend Pakistan's nuclear status, and to prosecute Pakistan's Afghan and Kashmir policies more or less in the same manner that had previously been constructed.

In relation to Afghanistan, he stood firm on Pakistan's support of the Taliban (and by implication of the Taliban-Al Qaeda alliance) describing it as a 'national security imperative'^{viii} for Pakistan. He pleaded repeatedly to the international community to recognize the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan, as Pakistan and two of its close Arab friends – Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) – had done. He shared the military and ISI view of Afghanistan as a source of 'strategic depth' in the event of a confrontation with India, and as an important corridor for Pakistan's access to the former Soviet Central Asian Muslim republics, partly to promote a wider regional economic and strategic role for Pakistan, and partly to deny India and Iran an opportunity to enhance their influence in the region.

With regard to Iran, he could count on the support of a number of Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE, as well as the United States, for several reasons. Saudi Arabia championed the cause of Sunni Islam and close friendship with the United States, and this had locked it in serious sectarian and political rivalry with Iran's Shi'ite Islamic regime. As for the UAE, it was a close partner of Saudi Arabia in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which was formed in 1981 as a response to the call by the founder of the Iranian Islamic regime in the wake of the Iranian revolution of 1978/79, Ayatollah Khomeini, for the export of the Iranian revolution to the region. The UAE also had a major territorial dispute with Iran. The dispute was over three strategic islands – Abu Musa and Greater and Lesser Tumbs – in the Gulf, which the Sharjah emirate of the UAE claimed, but which had been taken over by Iran under the Shah in 1971. Iran's refusal to return them had caused tension in Iran-UAE relations – a problem, which remains unresolved to the present day. Abu Dhabi was in search of means and ways to pressure Tehran over the issue, and this also partly explained its support for the Taliban as a means to do so. Meanwhile, the United States was keen to reinforce its policy of containment of the Iranian regime, which it had pursued since the rise of Khomeini's Islamic government to power and the famous hostage crisis, which had emanated from the Iranian detention of some 52 American embassy staff from 4 November 1979-21 January 1981 and had caused much humiliation for the US.^{ix} This could only give Musharraf confidence that despite the US's

growing aversion to the Taliban and Pakistan's support of the militia, Washington could not but to remain lenient towards Pakistan.

In the case of Kashmir, Musharraf reiterated Pakistan's historical support for the right of the Kashmiri people to self-determination, and, as an extension of this, for the ISI's continued backing of groups that had engaged in cross-border violence and linkages between these groups and the Taliban and their Al Qaeda allies. Although the cross-border violations had reduced in both intensity and frequency since the Kargil conflict, they were still at a level that had prevented Islamabad and New Delhi from reducing tension in their relations and moving faster towards a rapprochement.

However, this is not to claim that there was no tension between Musharraf's public stand and what he privately harboured. Although presenting himself as committed to the religion of Islam, he essentially wanted to pursue secular politics. As he points out in his autobiography, he had all along been deeply impressed by the secularist founder of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, and entertained a wish to style himself after him as a military-cum-civilian reformer.^x As a result, he could not feel very comfortable with Pakistan's support of radical Islamism as a major ideological strand in Pakistani politics. Yet the prevailing circumstances under which he had come to power had severely impaired his legitimacy and ability to maneuver easily against the situation. While he was personally languishing as a pariah in world politics and Pakistan was struggling under the growing weight of political, economic and social stagnation, Musharraf was confronted with serious policy confusions and dilemmas. He was badly in need of an external stimulus to enable him to break the circuit.

DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY INTERPLAY

That stimulus came with the events of 11 September 2001. Al Qaeda's attacks, which were masterminded from Afghanistan, proved to be almost a God-sent gift to Musharraf. They availed him an unexpected but necessary opportunity to prove his worth as a clever military politician, to shore up his own position, and to transform Pakistan from being a producer of extremism and terrorism to becoming an actor without whose cooperation the US and its allies could not combat the phenomena. Musharraf could now engage, with more vigour and assumed credibility than ever before, to combine politics of opportunism with that of regime preservation within an approach that would interface his political survivability with that of Pakistan. In other words, he was enabled to promote the claim that what was good for him was also good for

Pakistan. He would become indispensable to what was required to save Pakistan and Pakistan would become critical to what was needed to defeat international terrorism. This was very much similar to the way that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had enabled one of his military predecessors, General Zia ul-Haq, to revive his fortunes two decades earlier and renew Pakistan's strategic importance to the United States as a frontline state against 'Soviet expansionism'.

In the face of an ultimatum from the Bush Administration either to join the US or to side with Al Qaeda's terrorism and supporters, the Taliban, and therefore be bombed to the 'Stone Age', Musharraf shrewdly threw in his lot with Washington.^{xi} In declaring Pakistan a US partner in what President Bush called the 'war on terror', commencing with the 'Enduring Freedom Operation' in Afghanistan in October 2001, he in effect forged a new and robust alliance with the United States. He changed certain basic elements of Pakistan's foreign policy posture almost overnight, with considerable impact on the country's domestic political dynamics. He found it both imperative and expedient to turn his back on Pakistan's clients, the Taliban regime and its Al Qaeda allies and to moderate Pakistan's support for cross-border violence in Kashmir, with a commitment to do everything possible to lead Pakistan on a policy path free of religious extremism.

However, he knew from the start that this new alliance was based on politics of mutual vulnerability and leverage, which if carefully and craftily managed could be highly advantageous to his regime and Pakistan. He needed Washington's partnership to help him consolidate power and lead Pakistan out of the dire predicaments in which it was placed. On the other hand, the Bush Administration needed Pakistan as a key state for not only toppling the Taliban and redirecting Afghanistan, but also successfully executing its war on terror strategy with wider aims than what it wanted to achieve in Afghanistan. The benefits that Musharraf was able to extract from the new alliance proved to be more than anybody could have originally anticipated. By presenting himself as a champion ready to fight extremism and terrorism, he was able to rapidly build an externally driven basis of legitimacy for his military rule and to gain a degree of international acceptability that otherwise would not have been within his reach.

He was no longer a pariah, but was courted as a trusted and much needed ally by the US and its allies, which rapidly dropped all sanctions against Pakistan. While exalting him to a position of a close and trusted friend, – a position, which was once reserved for the Shah of Iran (1953-1979) in the region – the Bush Administration found it politically and strategically expedient to

shower Musharraf's regime with massive economic and military assistance. For example, in three years following the 11 September 2001 events, the US military aid alone to Pakistan soared to \$4.2 billion dollars, compared to \$9.1 million in the three years before the events. Total American military, economic and development assistance to Pakistan since 2001 attacks has to date amounted to more than \$10 billion. Most of the money has come from the US Defense Department program called the 'Coalition Support Fund'.^{xii} Meanwhile, US-Pakistan relations reached such a level of closeness in 2005 that Washington elevated Pakistan to the position of a major non-NATO ally, mirroring Musharraf's personal friendship with President Bush to the extent that few of America's traditional allies could dream of enjoying.

Musharraf could use American aid not only to strengthen the military and ISI as the main backbones of his rule, but also to generate a level of economic activity that could win him support from those secularist elites and segments of the population which would mostly benefit from the development. As a result, Pakistan's real GDP suddenly grew by 5.1% during 2002-2004, with all economic sectors – from agriculture to industry – registering healthy growth, giving rise to a degree of economic and social activity that Pakistan had not experienced for some years.^{xiii} Meanwhile, Musharraf found himself in a position to push for extra political and economic leverage for the military. He further formalized and expanded the role of the military in political and economic life of Pakistan by enlarging its share in the National Security Council of Pakistan and allowing many influential military personnel to buy vast tracks of land, especially in the province of Baluchistan, at very low prices, and to secure an even greater stake in the country's new economic life.

Musharraf was suddenly placed in such a comfort zone that he could now act more in terms of what he saw fit for Pakistan under his rule than what the US's 'war-on-terror' interests dictated. He was no longer required to keep his original promise of returning Pakistan to democracy soon, or to take the necessary steps to lead Pakistan on any other path than concealed military authoritarianism. Nor did he find it compelling to come totally clean on Pakistan's meddling in Afghanistan and Kashmir. Whatever measures he adopted in the name of democratization, they ultimately amounted to surface rather than structural changes. He managed these changes in ways that could enable him to increase his personal powers, to marginalize internal opposition and neutralise foreign critics. In foreign affairs, he engaged in a public campaign that projected his regime and Pakistan as the repository of 'enlightened Islam' and defender of public good against the evil of extremism and terrorism. He refused to take any responsibility for what had transpired in Afghanistan and in Kashmir as a result of Pakistan's past policy actions.

This remains the case to the present day, as Musharraf has repeatedly blamed Afghanistan as the cradle for extremism and terrorism, and lambasted India for not doing enough to address the root causes of the Kashmir problem. He rapidly projected an image of himself as a very worthy ally of Washington, capable of not only democratising Pakistan without changing his military uniform, but also assuming a central role in protecting US interests during the difficult phase of the war on terror in world politics. Concurrently, he ensured that Pakistan remained as much of a vital regional player in the post-11 September 2001 as it was before it, but of course now in different regional and international settings. In the process, he positioned himself to give Washington what was needed to maintain its favours, but not more than that – even if at times this meant that Washington’s interests were not really served. This was so to the extent that he could get away with action as serious as nuclear proliferation, in which Pakistan’s chief atomic scientist, A.Q. Khan, had engaged. Musharraf was able to override the whole episode without any public recrimination from the Bush Administration.

In this context, he skillfully, though in the eyes of many analysts also manipulatively, focused on achieving a number of subtly self-serving foreign policy priorities and objectives.

First, on the one hand, he declared full support for the US-backed government of Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan and apparently extended whatever security and intelligence cooperation was needed to make America’s Afghan and the ‘war-on-terror’ policies work. In this, he made a remarkable public display of what he called Pakistan’s brotherly contributions to the reconstruction of Afghanistan and national resolve to fight the Al Qaeda and Taliban at all levels, and prevent them from receiving any aid from Pakistan for cross-border operations. To this end, from time to time, Islamabad captured and handed over to the US some Al Qaeda operatives as ‘high value targets’ in a blaze of publicity. In 2005, it even announced the deployment of 80,000 troops on the border with Afghanistan, resulting in some fighting with a number of tribal and foreign supporters of the Taliban and Al Qaeda in the free tribal areas of Pakistan, especially in north Waziristan, over which no Pakistani government had full control in the past. Similarly, in relation to the Kashmir dispute, he scaled down Pakistan’s support for cross-border violence, agreed to a number of confidence building measures with India and proposed ostensibly bold initiatives to secure an enduring resolution of the Kashmir problem.

Beyond these, Islamabad declared a campaign to reform the religious education, especially in Pakistani madrasas, which had been widely viewed as a source of Islamic extremism, quietly supported the US-led invasion of Iraq, although declining to send troops to Iraq for reasons of

public backlash, and secretly expressed solidarity with Washington in its hostilities with the Iranian Islamic regime. Further, it assured Washington that Pakistan's traditional close friendship with China should not be a source of any concern, given Pakistan's growing commitment to the new alliance with the United States.

Yet, on the other hand, Musharraf never failed to press for his vision of a Pakistan whose politics must be conducted on the basis of what was conducive to his interests. While maintaining his domestic reforms largely at a non-structural level, he made sure that his foreign policy actions were in line with maintaining the support of the military and ISI as his real power base and was careful not to invite a serious backlash from conservative Islamic forces. This meant that he found it imperative to sustain continuity between Pakistan's pre- and post-11 September 2001 foreign policy postures. Hence, his strenuous efforts to walk a tight rope on Afghanistan, Kashmir and Pakistan's wider regional relations within an approach of one step forward and one step backward, requiring the Bush Administration to play its regional politics more in tune with Musharraf's priorities than according to US needs. The strong lobby group that he established in Washington constantly reminded the Bush Administration and the Congress that if the US failed to remain sensitive to the complexity of Pakistan's positions under Musharraf, Pakistan could easily fall prey to serious instability. This, they maintained, could result not only in undermining America's operations in Afghanistan and its wider war on terror, but also in confronting Washington with an even greater nightmare: a collapse of Musharraf's regime and Pakistan's implosion.

In this context, the Musharraf regime has successfully pushed for four policy objectives. The first has been that, while publicly backing the Karzai government, Islamabad has privately demanded that Karzai give his ethnic Pashtuns, to which the Taliban also belong, the largest share in the post-Taliban power structure and rid his government of the influence of those non-Pashtuns, who had formed the bulk of the anti-Taliban resistance within the United Front or the so-called Northern Alliance, and who had played a critical role in the US-led ground war that had toppled the Taliban regime. To reinforce this position, Musharraf in September 2006 went even as far as to claim (inaccurately) that in Afghanistan the Pashtuns constituted almost 60 percent of the population and that the Tajiks formed a mere 5-7 percent minority.^{xiv} Yet, historically the Pashtuns have never accounted for more than 42 percent of the Afghan population, followed by ethnic Tajiks as the second largest group with 25-30 percent of the population and other minorities making up the rest.

However, the Pashtuns had traditionally dominated the Afghan political and military leaderships ever since the emergence of modern Afghanistan as an identifiable political unit in the mid-eighteenth century. Islamabad has essentially called for the restoration of this situation as necessary foundation for creating the conditions of stability in Afghanistan, and for avoiding the kind of developments in Pakistan that could adversely affect America's regional interests and operations. Yet, in this, it has chosen to ignore the fact the conflicts following the seizure of power by a cluster of pro-Soviet communists in Kabul in April 1978 had profoundly changed the Afghan political and social landscapes, empowering the non-Pashtun segments of population not to tolerate any return to past Pashtun supremacy. Islamabad has nonetheless persisted with its reasoning as part of an approach essentially designed to pressure the Karzai government and its international supporters to incorporate the Taliban in the government, and as a consequence enable Pakistan to regain some of its past influence in Afghan politics. It seems to have reasoned that the foreign forces will eventually leave Afghanistan, as the Soviet Union ultimately did, and that the prospects for Afghanistan's transformation do not look bright. As such, Pakistan should be in a position to safeguard its interests against any adverse developments in Afghanistan and the region. Hence, Pakistan's continued support in terms of provision of both sanctuary and material assistance, for the Taliban, despite a demand by the US and its allies that all such support must be stopped. Musharraf has admitted to some Pakistani support, but with a denial of his government's role in it.

All the anti-Taliban measures that he has announced – ranging from deploying troops along the border with Afghanistan, and fighting both the foreign and tribal backers of the Taliban on the Pakistani side of the border, to fencing parts of the Afghan-Pakistani border and closely cooperating with the US-led coalition and NATO forces for enhancing border security – have thus far amounted to little more than impressing Washington that he remains a committed partner in the war on terror. Yet, the bitter fact is that Musharraf's alliance with the US has rested primarily on the Afghan conflict and the war on terror. Therefore a continuation of the two is in his interests for the time being.

The second has been the Musharraf regime's stand on relations with India. It has exhibited a degree of double-edginess that has complemented to a large extent its position on Afghanistan and the war on terror. While urged by Washington to improve relations with India, the regime has taken measures only consummate to its domestic needs and capabilities, and what it is required to do at a minimum to please Washington. There has certainly been an improvement in Indo-Pakistan bilateral relations, based on a number of confidence building measures since

2004. But Islamabad has not been able to build on this by cutting off all links with Kashmiri separatists and negotiating to turn the 'Line of Control' into a de jure border with India. This is not to deny that Musharraf has not come up with some unprecedented proposals for a resolution of the Kashmir; he has.

In October 2004, he proposed that India and Pakistan should identify "regions" of Kashmir on both sides of the Line of Control, demilitarise them and grant them the status of independence or joint control or under UN mandate.^{xv} The proposal was publicised enough to generate some optimism, but it was ultimately designed to soothe Washington's quest for action. As New Delhi expectedly give the proposal an initially cold reaction, Islamabad followed it up in 2006^{xvi} by nothing bolder that could bring New Delhi to the negotiating table. Two factors have hampered Musharraf's efforts in this respect. One is that the whole Kashmir problem has been closely knotted to Pakistani domestic politics, as is also the case in relation to India. It has suited Islamabad whenever needed to use it to highlight Pakistan's Islamic credentials, but it has also served diversionary purposes. Another is that given its nature Musharraf's regime has not been able to rely on a public mandate to do what it takes to secure a resolution of the Kashmir problem. Instead, it has found it easier to deflect the need for a resolution by making its usual claim that any degree of American pressure on Pakistan to do more carries a risk: the same risk in fact of endangering Pakistan's stability and America's success in the war on terror as would pressure on it to deal with the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

The third objective has been to maintain and strengthen Pakistan's position, despite its misdeeds, as a central player on the regional and international scenes. For this, again the Musharraf regime has pursued a double-act approach. It has emphasized the regime's normative commitment to expunging Pakistan of Islamic extremism by reforming religious teaching and schools, and bringing them under government control, and de-linking Pakistan from Islamic extremist groups in the region and beyond. At the same time, it has concurrently sought to promote an image of Pakistan as a closely Arab-linked and potentially Sunni bulwark against the predominantly Shi'ite and anti-US Iran and other hostile forces as part of a policy of safeguarding Pakistani and American interests in the region. While announcing some measures to deal with Islamic extremism at home, it has balanced this by constantly prompting Washington to remain content with the fact that Pakistan needs to maintain its Sunni Muslim status as a means to retaining its close ties with America's oil-rich Arab allies in the Gulf and mainly Sunni-profiled friends in Central Asia. It has intimated that without such a status Pakistan

would be unable to help America in containing possible Iranian predatory actions in Afghanistan and the Central Asian republics.

The fourth objective has focused on how to carve a critical niche for Pakistan in relation to a drive by the Karzai government and its international supporters to capitalize on Afghanistan's strategic position to strengthen the country's reconstruction and security on the basis of promoting economic cooperation and integration between Central Asia and South Asia.^{xvii} The Musharraf regime has been conscious to make sure that this drive does not result in either an emergence of a strong Afghanistan or extra leverages for India that could possibly limit Pakistan's role as a central regional player. While conscious of Kabul's close ties with New Delhi as a counter to Pakistan, and of Afghanistan joining the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the regime has endeavoured that whatever economic and infrastructural networks and facilities are built, they must be conducive to two things. One is that they lead only to the kinds of linkages between Afghanistan, the Central Asian republics and India that would not limit Pakistan's maneuverability as a pivotal actor in the process. Another is that Pakistan remains in a position to obstruct such linkages whenever it deems it necessary. As a result, on the one hand the Musharraf regime has made sure to be seen as a strong supporter of regional economic cooperation; on the other hand, it has sought to shape this cooperation in a way that has proved to be quite frustrating for Kabul and New Delhi. Again, in the context of its alliance with the US, it has been able not only to make the Bush Administration tolerate its double-edged attitude, but even to demand that Washington help it in directing the regional cooperation in a manner which would make Afghanistan essentially an extension of Pakistan. This was firmly reflected in a series of talking points that Pakistani lobbyists circulated to officials of the Bush Administration and the Congress in January 2007.^{xviii} The main message was that an economic integration of Afghanistan into Pakistan was the best way to stabilize Afghanistan and strengthening Pakistan as a foundation for enabling the US to succeed in the war on terror and protect its interests in the region against a rising Iran, Russia and China.

THE SCENARIOS

As for future directions, one can draw up a number of scenarios. Three can be looked at as more plausible than others.

The first is that Pakistan will continue its present alternating and opportunistic course of foreign policy behaviour for as long as Musharraf's rule lasts and the US and its allies remain engaged

in Afghanistan and in the war on terror. It is now clear that Musharraf has not put Pakistan's new alliance with the US to good use in terms of democratising Pakistan and playing a role conducive to an early resolution of some destabilizing problems in the region. He has squandered some valuable opportunities for long-term gains in favour of short-term manoeuvres. This has now come to catch up with him. He is no longer in as much control of the domestic situation and capable of delivering on regional issues as he was in the first two years following his fateful decision to join the US in the war on terror. Indeed, he has so far notably failed to put Pakistan on a solid path of democratization, reduce the role of the military and ISI in Pakistani politics, retrench the pervasiveness of ISI in Pakistan's governance, reform Pakistan as a source of Islamic extremism^{xix} and pursue a foreign policy which will be conducive to a resolution of the Afghan and Kashmir problems. If anything, especially since early 2006, he has become more authoritarian as reflected in his crackdown on the freedom of the press and judiciary, and stubborn refusal to enter dialogue with the two main opposition parties – Pakistan People's Party (PPP), headed by former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, and Pakistan Muslim League (N), PML, of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif – to work out a transitional plan to democratic rule. He has done everything possible to keep Bhutto and Sharif in exile and their supporters under wraps, although there has lately been a report of secret negotiations with Bhutto. As a consequence, he has never been as isolated. Similarly, he has become more assertive, blaming others for regional failures instead of examining his own role in the process.

Yet the continuation of his rule does not appear to be in serious jeopardy for the foreseeable future. He seems to have the crucial support of the military, ISI and an alliance of various Islamic groups also called Pakistan Muslim League (Q) as the main mechanisms of internal control. He can also count on Washington's continued backing, for two reasons. One is that neither the Afghan problem nor the war on terror is likely to end in the near future. The realities of the situation on the ground in Afghanistan, the complexities of the Iraq conflict and the Israeli-Palestinian problem, and the level of anti-US anger across the Muslim world are mitigating factors. They actually require Washington to have Pakistan on side and deal with Musharraf as a ruler that it knows. Another is that Washington has now invested so much in Musharraf and promoted him to the extent that there is no one of his stature obvious as a viable alternative. This is not to claim that such an alternative cannot emerge, but from Washington's perspective it is better to continue with him than to start anew with some one else.

The second scenario is that Musharraf is either overthrown or eliminated. This is of course what happened to General Zia ul-Haq, whose death was followed by a turbulent 'democratic' period.

With an abrupt removal of Musharraf, the US – irrespective of whether there is a Republican or Democrat Administration in power – may find itself with little choice but to stand behind Pakistan's military as the most durable factor in Pakistani politics. But the problem with this is that the US would once again be backing the perpetuation of military or a military-driven rule, while knowing that such rule has done little to stabilize Pakistan in the long run. It would also fly in the face of Washington's promotion of democracy as the best system of governance. It can only complicate its stand on Afghanistan and Iraq, where Washington has zeroed in on the electoral legitimacy of governments.

The third scenario is that the US and its NATO allies pull their forces out from Afghanistan and call off the war on terror sooner than later. This could cause a serious crisis for Musharraf and in US-Pakistan relations. Such a scenario is possible for a number of important reasons. First of all, both the processes of reconstruction and security-building in Afghanistan have faltered badly so far. Afghanistan has certainly progressed beyond its dark days under the Taliban, but it has not been able to build a clean, efficient system of governance, a sound system of justice, and a secure national environment, whereby various Afghan micro-societies could trust one another, and rebuild their lives and country rapidly on the basis of a commitment to national unity. The Karzai government has grown to be highly fragmented and corrupt. Afghanistan remains very much at the mercy of the US and its allies, which has spawned a dangerous culture of dependency. Meanwhile, neither the US nor many of its allies have gone to Afghanistan because their hearts have bled for the Afghan people, and they have wanted to transform that country into a stable and prosperous state.

The US is there primarily to punish Al Qaeda and the Taliban, and to achieve its wider objectives of the war on terror. Many of its NATO allies are there mainly because they have wanted to avoid getting involved in the fiasco that is Iraq. These allies want neither to be militarily engaged in Afghanistan for the next 10-15 years that are required at the very least to stabilize the country, nor to deploy their troops in the fighting zones which could expose them to high casualties. Although at this stage there is bi-partisan support in the US for Afghanistan, but with American politics being in a state of flux and America's superpower global interests shifting, and the commitment of many of US European allies to Afghanistan fluctuating, one cannot be certain about their long-term commitment to Afghanistan or participation in the war on terror. If there is an early exit from Afghanistan and an early end to the war on terror, Pakistan could also easily lose much of its strategic significance to the US and its NATO allies, and this could seriously affect the fortunes of Musharraf and Pakistan.

The futures of both Musharraf and Pakistan remain as uncertain as the direction of the US-Pakistan alliance and Pakistan's foreign policy behaviour. However, as the situation stands, Pakistan is likely to muddle through, drifting between the poles of authoritarianism and quasi-democracy, Islamism and secularism in its domestic politics and exploitative and double-edge postures in its regional and international relations. The domestic predicament both enables and constrains Musharraf's foreign policy and, in the same vein, foreign policy impacts directly on such constraints in Pakistan as the influence of the military and the role of the Islamic opposition. This is of course what the country has gone through since its creation in 1947. It is now in no one's interest to see a nuclear-armed Pakistan either becoming a weak state or disintegrating, with far reaching consequences for world politics. Whatever is the fate of Musharraf's leadership in the medium to long run Pakistan will survive but with much anxiety for the rest of the world.

ⁱ For background analysis, see Marry A. Weaver, *Pakistan: In the Shadow of Jihad and Afghanistan*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003, Ch.1.

ⁱⁱ *Accelerating Economic Growth and Reducing Poverty: The Road Ahead (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper)*, Islamabad: Ministry of Finance, Government of Pakistan, December 2003, p. 21; for a detailed background analysis, see Christophe Jaffrelot, ed., (Translated by Gillian Berumont), *A History of Pakistan and Its Origins*, London: Anthem Press, 2004, Ch. 8; Syed Mubashir Ali and Faisal Bari, 'At the Millennium: Macro Economic Performance and Prospects', in Charles H. Kennedy and Craig Baxter (eds.), *Pakistan 2000*, New York: Lexington Books, 2000, Ch. 2.

ⁱⁱⁱ For a detailed discussion, See Stephen Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004, Ch. 5.

^{iv} William Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, London: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2002, Ch. 10.

^v Marry A. Weaver, *Pakistan: In the Shadow of Jihad and Afghanistan*, Ch. 7; Devine T. Hagerty, 'Kashmir and the Nuclear Question Revisited', in Kennedy and Baxter (eds), *Pakistan 2000*, Ch. 5.

^{vi} Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2006, Ch. 9.

^{vii} For details, see Dennis Kux, *The United States and Pakistan, 1947-2000: Disenchanted Allies*, Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Centre Press, 2001.

^{viii} *BBC Monitoring South Asia – Political*, 26 May 2000; Arnaud de Borchgrave Interviews Gen. Musharraf, UPI, 26 September 2001; Amin Saikal, 'The Role of Outside Actors in Afghanistan', *The Middle East Policy*, 7(4) October 2000, pp. 50-57.

^{ix} For background, see Amin Saikal, *The Rise and Fall of the Shah*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980, Part II.

^x Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, London: Simon & Schuster, 2006, p. 19.

^{xi} *Ibid*, p. 201.

^{xii} Nathaniel Heller, Sarah Fort and Marina Walker Guevara, 'Pakistan's \$4.2 Billion 'Blank Check' for U.S. Military Aid', *The Center for Public Integrity*, 27 March 2007.

^{xiii} *Accelerating Economic Growth and Reducing Poverty: The Road Ahead (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper)*

^{xiv} 'A Conversation with Pervez Musharraf', Council on Foreign Relations (New York), 25 September 2006.

^{xv} *BBC News*, 26 October 2004.

^{xvi} *BBC News*, 5 December 2006.

^{xvii} See 'Afghanistan Compact of 31 January 2006', www.ands.gov.af

^{xviii} Pakistan's lobby team in Washington has included Dr Herbert Davis and Ms Esperanza Gormez, the former and present Executive Director of US-Pakistan Business Council. Also, see Amin Saikal, 'Bid to

intergrate Afghanistan will not bring democracy, *The Age*, 26 March 2006; 'Briefing by U.S. Administration Highlights Proposed Reconstruction Opportunity Zones (ROZs) for Afghanistan and Pakistan', Afghan American Chamber of Commerce.

^{xix} On Musharraf's failure to reform Madrasas and contain sources of Islamic extremism, see 'Pakistan: Karachi's Madrasas and Violent Extremism', *International Crisis Group – Conflict Prevention and Resolution*, Asia Report No 130, 29 March 2007.