Security Beyond Survival

Essays for K. Subrahmanyam

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Pakistan's Security Perspective: Problems of Linearity

Ayesha Siddiqa

Since its creation in 1947, Pakistan's security perception remains India-centric. The interminable rivalry between the two South Asian neighbours resulted in three-and-a-half wars costing Islamabad the eastern wing during the 1971 war. The popular perception amongst the decision-making elite makes the rivalry sound like a battle between good and evil with the Indian 'Goliath' forever trying to vanquish the Pakistani 'David'. The conflict has also led to Pakistan's progression from conventional defence to nuclear deterrence in the past couple of decades. The upgradation of military capabilities was considered necessary for warding-off India's hegemonic designs and allowing Islamabad the capacity to pursue the Kashmir issue.

Despite the acclaimed enhancement of capabilities, Pakistan remains far away from gaining its military-strategic objectives. Furthermore, the question of whether Pakistan is secure remains largely unresolved. During the period that the country was taking steps towards gradually strengthening its military security, there was a proportional increase in internal security problems. More than being a mere coincidence, this was directly linked with the way security policy was being managed by Islamabad. The augmentation in the numbers of militant organisations, which was a direct repercussion of a peculiar approach of the state to deal with India, did not bode well for the country's overall security scene. While helping the military in terms of increasing the cost of conflict of the adversary and bogging it down in Kashmir, this policy also increased internal threats for Pakistan.

As a result, the increase in ethnic and sectarian violence appears to be a greater threat in the past 10 to 15 years than the external enemy.

Unfortunately, the military establishment appears less inclined to view the problem as arising from an incoherent policy framework. The authorities tend to see internal insecurity largely as a consequence of external threat. Clearly, the mindset in the policy making circles and the resultant security policy suffers from the problem of linearity that, in turn, is grounded in a strong tradition of the bureaucratic-organisational imperative. While the fixation with external threat posed by the traditional rival India is understandable to some extent, one also finds flaws with this construct. The monotone of the security policy is almost fascinating. This study aims at understanding the phenomenon of linearity in the context of the development of Pakistan's security perception. It will examine factors behind this peculiar structure and its implications for the country's security as well.

A LINEAR SECURITY PERCEPTION

The most noticeable feature of the design of Pakistan's security perception is its rather simplistic linearity that identifies security and national interest mainly as a response to an external threat. Such an orientation, in turn, has led to an approach based on two opposing ends of the spectrum: confrontation punctuated by short spells of rapprochement, and seeking extra-regional partnerships that could provide Islamabad with relative strength to counter its traditional adversary. In other words, the continuously high threat perception has resulted in either producing confrontational linkages or alignments that have been sought primarily to offset problems of military inferiority versus its main adversary India. Hence, Islamabad's alignments have never been proactive and, in fact, have been limited to seeking military or diplomatic assistance that could bolster Pakistan's position vis-à-vis New Delhi.

This approach is a result of the establishment's preoccupation with India. Over the past 55 years, Pakistan's security perception and agenda have been dominated by an extreme sense of threat perceived from its bigger neighbour, India. What one finds most interesting is that despite claiming an extra-regional identity (greater cultural and religious

affiliation with the Middle East), Pakistan has never ventured to extend its security vision beyond India. In fact, Islamabad's view of the entire world appears simplistic with the world divided between states that are considered important for their ability to provide any direct or indirect help in strengthening Pakistan against India and those that are of no relevance in this regard. Or to put it in another way, from the perspective of Pakistan's establishment the international community comprises two categories: states that are friendly to India and are part of the opposite camp, or those whose friendship can provide a security cushion to Pakistan against what is considered as New Delhi's hegemonic designs. Indubitably, such classification is convenient from the standpoint of the civil and military bureaucracy that seems to have control over policy making. This is because the existence of a formidable threat allows decision makers to adopt a linear and less complex approach towards policy making, especially security planning. Furthermore, this slant in policy provides greater room for sustaining bureaucratic-organisational interests since it keeps military security on top of every other agenda.

The linearity is not a coincidence. This can be attributed to the influence of the military and civil bureaucracy in policy making, especially the armed forces' influence in the power politics of the state. Pakistan's military, like any other, has found the heightened threat perception as being congenial for its interest and survival as an organisation. In fact, the inclusion of threat as part of the nation-building exercise has allowed the armed forces a key position in the politics of the country. However, this very fact has resulted in the linear design of the security perception.

Some would like to argue that the focus on a single source of threat is a position normally adopted by the political governments as well, particularly to gain popularity at home. Interestingly, such an argument is extremely popular in India.[1] Indubitably, domestic politics is a contributory factor in security and foreign policy making all over the world, especially prior to or during elections or for weak regimes. However, it would not be fair to assess the attitudes of political governments in Pakistan towards India by applying this traditional notion of the linkage between threat perception and domestic politics. Civilian governments, especially those that came to power after 1988, were more inclined to set the India-Pakistan relations on a better footing.

The dialogue between the Rajiv Gandhi–Benazir Bhutto governments (1989) or the Lahore process initiated during the second Nawaz Sharif Government (1999) bear witness to this fact.

In fact, sources were of the view that it was the army that was less inclined to engage in a bilateral dialogue even prior to 1988. The reference was to the period after the Tashkent Declaration (1966), Simla Agreement (1972), and the Lahore process (1999).[2] Moreover, it is the military that tends to benefit from both conflict and peace with India. The best example of this pertains to the Musharraf regime that initially justified its ascendance to power on the basis of its ability to uphold the Kashmir issue, which it felt was being sacrificed by the Nawaz Sharif Government. Later in 2003, it was the prospect of peace with India that seems to have bailed General Musharraf from the domestic political pressure during the debate in the Parliament on the controversial nature of his position vis-à-vis the constitution.

Therefore, like any post-colonial bureaucratic-administrative state structure, Pakistan defines security in tangible terms: as military capability to thwart any external or territorial threat. More specifically, security is defined as the ability to stave-off a military threat from India. The India-centricity of security perception is the most noticeable feature of Islamabad's strategic thinking. The two supporting pillars of this peculiar approach are:

(a) building national military capability with the objective of challenging India's military might and providing for an affective defence; and
(b) searching for military-oriented alignments, which can assist primarily in dealing with New Delhi.

However, before one can embark upon a detailed discussion of this perception it is essential to understand India's image as it appears in Pakistan's policy making circles to comprehend the basis of this strategic thinking. Pakistan's security perception is built within the traditional framework of threat from a state actor. In Pakistan's case the threat is perceived from its traditional rival and neighbour India. This framework does not seem to have changed despite the 11 September 2001 attacks after which the threat posed by non-state actors based locally appears to be a new and far more serious problem.

One of the explanations for Islamabad's supposed negligence of the threat posed by non-state actors or the large number of militants present within its boundaries is that such elements were raised and nourished by the military establishment to fill the conventional military gap vis-à-vis India. While not being able to force a military solution of Kashmir on New Delhi, the militants were viewed as a cost-effective option. The policy did go out of control because of the involvement of these very same militants in Afghanistan and their engagement in sectarian killings inside Pakistan. However, it was only this portion of the policy that the government led by General Pervez Musharraf aimed at changing after 9/11. The other portion relating to the militant's involvement in Kashmir did not change at all.

This is the main element that underscores all external linkages forged by Islamabad and forms the basis of its national security policy. For a nation that started its history with the unfortunate experience of bloodshed and carnage that took place at the time of the independence of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, its understanding of regional and international politics evolves around the concept of threat and the need for a strong response. The India-centricity of its national security policy has imposed limitations on how the concepts of threat and security are defined. Moreover, the persistent political instability within Pakistan and its search for an independent identity in South Asia has further sharpened its insecurity and thereby allowed the armed forces to take the lead in defining security primarily as military security.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE SECURITY PERCEPTION

The development of Pakistan's security perception is primarily about the institutional memory and ethos of its bureaucracy. Due to the weak political process in the country, the making of security policy has always remained the forte of the military bureaucracy. So, when one speaks of security perception it is really the perceptions of the bureaucracy that has traditionally defined security to cater to its interests. As a result, the security perception has been deeply linked with a single threat emanating from India. While it has not been easy for Pakistan to be located next door to a large neighbour which aims to project itself as a regional power, the tendency of Pakistan's policy

makers to challenge rather than cooperate with India has led to the making of a security policy which is confrontational in nature.

INDIA: THE FUNDAMENTAL IMAGE

The primary image of India in Pakistan is that of a hostile nation and the primary threat to Pakistan's security. The country's policy making elite tends to define threat to national security mainly in terms of the threat that New Delhi poses to Pakistan. India's hegemonic policies and attitude is considered as the most imposing danger to Pakistan's survival. In fact, the greatest concern is regarding the survival of the state. Over the past 50 years and more, the dominant school of thought, which has influenced policy making in Pakistan is that the Indian leadership has never been comfortable with an independent homeland for the Muslims and would not loose any opportunity to destroy or invade Pakistan. Policy makers are equally uncomfortable with India's urge to gain regional or global prominence.[3] Any reference to India acquiring a prominent role, especially due to its comparatively greater military capacity is seen as a potential threat and as inherently antithetical to Pakistan's security interests.

A popular belief amongst the elites is that any increase in India's military capacity would eventually be used to dominate other smaller South Asian states, a situation that is totally unacceptable. As far as Pakistan is concerned, India's aspirations to become a significant force in Asia are entirely antithetical to its interests and the onus of restoring peace between the two nations rests entirely with India.[4] There are also those who believe that internal political development in Pakistan such as correcting the imbalance in the civil–military relations depends on restoration of peace in the region, which, in turn, depends on India.[5] Such perceptions have remained constant since the country's independence. Moreover, the feeling of insecurity with regards to India has been the hallmark of all regimes irrespective of whether these have been military, military dominated, or civilian regimes. As discussed earlier, the absence of a varied opinion is due to the internal dynamics of policy making in the country. Notwithstanding the fact that public opinion does not necessarily have an impact on policies in both India and Pakistan, image formation is essential for framing state

policies, thus projecting images is cardinal to the national security discourse.

India's image in Pakistan is rather limited and bleak. Despite the shared culture, the dominant image of India is that of a hostile country. The limited people-to-people contact, in fact, has not allowed people on either side of the divide to develop a better understanding of each other or to appreciate the richness of their cultures. In such a situation it is natural for the people in Pakistan not to appreciate the diversity in India's culture or politics. In addition, the years of negative indoctrination makes it even harder to acknowledge the cultural variations. In some regions, however, the anti-India sentiment seems to be of a lesser degree due to the difference in political perceptions. For instance, a number of people interviewed in the provinces of Sindh and Baluchistan did not attach the same significance to the threat posed by India as did people interviewed in Punjab and parts of the Frontier Province.[6] However, there is a consensus amongst people regarding India's image as a hostile neighbour. This image tends to sharpen particularly in Punjab and near the seat of power of Pakistan's establishment.

The constant reference to India's hegemonic designs in South Asia and the bid to dominate the region diplomatically and politically is an issue that is entirely unacceptable to the political and military elite of the country. The media, particularly the state electronic media and the Urdu language media, plays a crucial role in furthering a negative image of the adversary. This image seems to have strengthened after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the US. The Indian government's peculiar stance appears to have converted more people to the idea that India is inherently opposed to Pakistan's existence and would not loose any opportunity to hurt or embarrass its smaller neighbour. In fact, the post-9/11 developments seem to have converted more people to the idea of Indian aggressive military-political designs.[7]

What seems to be the basis of this negative image formation is the Kashmir dispute as that is flagged by the establishment as an issue on which Islamabad prefers to take a moral position of supporting the Kashmiri people battered by Indian oppression. While New Delhi's poor human rights track record in Kashmir gives strength to this notion in Pakistan, the fact remains that the publicity is aimed essentially at building unequivocal support amongst the public for the military's position. In the words of the historian Ayesha Jalal: '... there is hardly

any cause for surprise that realpolitik is justified in the rhetoric of moralpolitik'.[8]

This single-toned vision of threat seems to dominate analysis of all other threats or relations with other neighbours and regions as well. The resultant 'straightjacket' classification of countries as those that are friendly with India and, hence, cannot be trusted, and those that are friendly with Islamabad or can be potential friends has not been helpful in building diplomatic ties or running an affective foreign policy. Interestingly, there are two kinds of trends that one can observe in Pakistan's relations with other states. The first pertains to countries in Pakistan's immediate neighbourhood or those that are considered militarily equal and the aforementioned approach is specifically used for such states. The situation is different towards the second category of states, that is, those that are considered militarily powerful or are in a position to provide Islamabad with economic, diplomatic, or military assistance. In this case, relations are maintained despite the nature of relations between these states and India. For instance, Pakistan will not have a confrontational relation with Britain, France, the US, or China. This is certainly not the case for bilateral ties with countries belonging to the first category such as Iran and Afghanistan.

Pakistan–Afghanistan relations, in any case, have always been an extension of Pakistan–India relations with Islamabad viewing Kabul as a potential threat that could possibly aggravate during a military conflict between India and Pakistan. Under King Zahir and President Daud, Kabul was seen as pursuing policies inimical to Islamabad's interests and pushing a pro-India agenda. The situation worsened with Moscow's invasion of Afghanistan and led to the emergence of a potential two-front threat and a three sector war situation whereby Pakistan could be militarily pressured by India in collusion with Soviet Union/Afghanistan. This would have increased Pakistan's strategic problems more than tenfold and Pakistan realised the importance of having a friendly regime in Kabul. It was considered viable to adopt a military approach that favoured an alignment with the US. Improvement of ties with Washington carried the double advantage of saving Pakistan from a possible pressure from the north and obtaining technology that could improve the overall position versus New Delhi.

The 1980s was a crucial decade for Pakistan for it was in this period that Pakistan built inroads into Afghanistan and developed linkages that would help Islamabad assert itself in Afghan politics. The Geneva Accord of 1989 that resulted in the withdrawal of Soviet troops

without the removal of General Najeeb's government left Pakistan's military dictator, General Zia-ul Haq extremely unhappy as it did not ensure a friendly regime in Kabul.[9] In fact, the international community did not take any measures to put Afghanistan's politics on track allowing Islamabad greater role in Afghan politics. More importantly, the military leadership that followed Zia saw Afghanistan as providing Pakistan with the much-needed territorial depth.[10] In addition, it was hoped that the Afghan warriors would beef up Pakistan's infantry force's capacity while launching an 'offensive-defence' initiative against India.[11]

Switching its support from one war lord to another, the Pakistan Army finally rendered its wholehearted supported to the Taliban, a group of student-turned-warriors that had been trained and indoctrinated mainly in Pakistan to take control of the situation in Afghanistan.[12] It was hoped that the Taliban could consolidate control over the country and militarily overpower other elements. These objectives would have been met had the Taliban not opted for providing refuge to Osama bin Laden and turned Afghanistan into a sanctuary for the anti-US elements. The events of 11 September 2001, hence, proved to be a watershed not only for Afghanistan but also for Pakistan's Afghanistan policy. Islamabad was forced to retract its support to the Taliban and to help the US fight a war against terrorism that ensured a complete routing of the Taliban.

The change in policy is viewed as a strategic defeat in many circles in Pakistan. Some see it as a case of another failure of military planning. However, this does not mean an end to Pakistan's interest and influence in Afghanistan. The dominant Pushtoon population in Afghanistan and a common and porous border are important links between the two countries. While it would be premature to conclude that Pakistan's role in Afghanistan has been limited or has ended, it would be worth evaluating whether the future policy would continue to be determined by the military leaders. Meanwhile, there is no indication that the policy making elite have completely renounced political or military options in Afghanistan. In May 2003, there were reports of limited activities of ISI-supported-militants in the bordering areas. This, it was asserted, had begun to counter India's bid to assert itself in Afghanistan.[13] However, foreign office officials were of the view that India could not build its influence in Kabul to a degree where it could become a threat to Pakistan.[14]

What is even more noteworthy is that the Pakistan Army's preoccupation with controlling Afghan politics also put it out of sorts with Iran, a country that had been viewed in the past as providing Pakistan territorial depth. In fact, the common trend that one finds in Pakistan–Iran and Pakistan–US relations is Islamabad's urge to find its independent space to manoeuvre. In the case of the former, it was through building influence in Afghanistan that Islamabad could become independent of Iran. In the case of the latter, on the other hand, developing a nuclear weapons capability was seen as giving Pakistan the room to manoeuvre against Washington's manipulation in determining the course of the India–Pakistan conflict. Relations between Iran and Pakistan were really at a low when General Pervez Musharraf visited Tehran in 2002 to put the relationship back on track. Interestingly, this was motivated by the fear that Iran might strengthen relations with India. Currently, the limitation is due to America's attitude towards Iran and the inherent bias in Pakistan's military establishment.

The India-centricity of the security perception can also be found in other areas as well such as the official position on internal security, which is inherently seen as an extension of the external threat. The rise in ethnic and sectarian violence in the country is held as a development that can be attributed to the covert and nefarious activities of India's intelligence agencies. A popular notion is that unless provoked and funded by external actors, especially New Delhi, the various ethnic and sectarian groups would not be able to cause violence in the country. Just like India, little blame is laid at the door of erroneous policy making and inequitable bad governance, which is directly responsible for domestic unrest and socio-political fragmentation.

The nature and direction of India's domestic politics and the aggressive political statements of its leadership do not help in changing this perception. Any hostile statement from across the border reminds the people and the policy makers of their deepest fear of India wanting to eliminate Pakistan. The various conflicts with New Delhi, especially the 1971 war that lead to the disintegration of Pakistan, have left scars that are not easy to erase. This fear had reduced considerably during the 1980s and part of the 1990s. However, it regained its prominence after the BJP's rise to power in India. A popular thinking amongst the policy makers is that a party driven by historic and religious visions of Hindu dominance is antithetical to a Muslim Pakistan's existence.

The Vajpayee Government's position on Kashmir during the Agra Summit and its propaganda against Pakistan in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the US are held as examples of New Delhi's animosity towards Islamabad. The fear amongst the armed forces regarding India's intention seems to have intensified after the ethnic violence in India's province of Gujarat. A number of military personnel voiced their concern regarding the intolerance of the majority Hindu population in India vis-à-vis other ethnic minorities. Such unfortunate occurrences convince the establishment in Pakistan of the Indian establishment's intolerance towards the state of Pakistan.[15]

Of course, this rivalry and threat has a physical manifestation as well in the form of the on-going Kashmir dispute and other boundary issues. Control of territory, in fact, is central to the bilateral hostility and Pakistan's competition with India. However, no other issue has gained the kind of significance that the Kashmir dispute has, which makes it essential to understand the significance of Kashmir for Pakistan's policy makers.

First, control of the Indian-held-Kashmir (IHK) is considered vital for Pakistan due to ideological reason intertwined with the logic of the Pakistani state's existence itself. In the words of Pakistan's President and Army Chief, General Pervez Musharraf: 'Kashmir runs in our (Pakistanis) blood'.[16] The Partition of India was on religious-ideological basis. The Muslims of India under the leadership of Mohammad Ali Jinnah had wanted a separate homeland for themselves, an idea opposed by the Indian Congress. The princely state of Kashmir, it is believed, was forcibly annexed by India in contravention of the agreed upon principles of Partition. Moreover, it is felt that the Indian leadership has denied the Kashmiri populace the right for making a choice—the right to decide on their right to join Pakistan through a plebiscite. The popular perception is that given a fair chance the Kashmiris would have opted to join Pakistan.[17] The continued Indian control of Kashmir is viewed as a challenge to Pakistan's existence as a state and its ideology. The situation is similar to India's where any concession on the issue is seen as compromising New Delhi's position as a secular state. New Delhi's refusal to hold a plebiscite in its part of Kashmir is seen as India's desire to prove the 'secularity' of its state, an idea that the Pakistani establishment does not subscribe to at all. As a result, Islamabad's India policy is dominated by a single dimension—the defence policy—which in turn is focused

on ways to liberate Kashmir from the 'clutches' of Indian domination and control.

Second, the control of Kashmir is held as strategically important for the country. The water resources and the territorial security of Pakistan can be better ensured through controlling the entire disputed territory. The recent claims by the Indian leadership regarding the possibility of stopping water to Pakistan have heightened the fear regarding India's intent or capability of making life difficult for Pakistan, a situation that must be avoided at all costs. In fact, during the eight months of troop mobilisation during 2002 certain segments vociferously argued about New Delhi's objective of strangling Pakistan by stopping its water supply. Reportedly, water is an issue that allows the official threat perception to permeate into areas such as Sindh where people are not hugely bothered by India.[18] However, the popular view in Sindh is that the water crisis it faces is not connected with India's negative manipulation of the water sources and is more due to the attitude of Punjab. The variation in public opinion, however, is not representative of official concerns. People in the government mistrust India's intent of honouring the Indus Water Treaty of the 1960 signed under the auspices of the World Bank.[19] More than the Wullar barrage issue, it is the Baghliar dam proposal that has made Islamabad sceptical of India's designs. Pakistan feels that the construction of this dam by India would alter the flow of River Chenaab in contravention of the Indus Water Treaty of 1960.[20] Such issues strengthen the establishment's will not to compromise on Kashmir.

However, it would not be fair to say that Kashmir is the only issue of contention between the two countries. There are other disputes as well including the still un-demarcated maritime boundary issue. The absence of a sea boundary is linked to the border dispute of the 60-mile-long estuary of Sir Creek in the marshes of the Runn of Kutch. The neighbours fought a limited war over this disputed territory in 1962. This area lies on the border between the Indian state of Gujarat and the Pakistani province of Sindh. Islamabad contests its claim over Sir Creek based on the map drawn out in 1914, which places the boundary on the east bank of the creek. India, on the other hand, insists on treating the line in the middle of the creek as the boundary. On several occasions, negotiations were conducted to resolve the issue, especially in the 1990s. In 1994, New Delhi offered to delineate the boundary seawards, an offer that was rejected allegedly because of other political

disputes such as that over the Siachen glacier.[21] The acceptance of an Indian plan, it was feared, would have led inadvertently to the acceptance of a boundary without really solving the dispute.[22]

One of the problems in resolving the dispute is that a baseline needs to be determined by both countries. This land terminus would help in determining the sea territory. Pakistan declared its baseline in 1996 but India did not do the same. The maritime boundary problem is considered threatening by both sides. For example, the Pakistani military authorities were of the view that India had secretly built a new naval post called 'Sikky', east of Sir Creek that was a deep-water berthing facility.[23] The post, in Islamabad's assessment, could help the Indians gather military intelligence and be used for infiltration into Pakistan and to harass fishermen. The issue is critical because the final delineation would determine the sea territory of both countries. Indian Rear Admiral (Retd.) Raja Menon believes that, depending on the final decision, the gain or loss to either country could be about 250 square miles of ocean and ocean floor.[24] So, Pakistan may not have wanted to consider the Indian offer for fear of losing territory. A demarcation, however, would help in avoiding serious incidents at sea. Needless to say, both boundary disputes create additional problems that have a human dimension to it. For instance, one cannot ignore the misery of the Kashmiri people who are the victims of the political agendas of the leaderships of the two neighbours, or the innocent fishermen apprehended by the coastguard for inadvertently crossing the boundary while trying to make a living.

It would be fair to say that the other disputes cannot be compared with the Kashmir issue that is recognised as the core issue by Pakistan. There is a clear understanding even amongst the political circles that the establishment, particularly the army would not compromise on Kashmir. This understanding plays a crucial role in the formation of political opinion. The fact that Nawaz Sharif was seen as compromising on this issue, hence, one of the reasons for his removal is sufficient to deter any political leadership to seem to be compromising on it. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that from Pakistan's standpoint the issue has acquired a life of its own, and hence, an issue on which there is little possibility of a compromise.

There appears to be little inclination on both sides to solve the boundary issues. From Pakistan's standpoint, it is military more than the diplomatic initiatives that can force India to discuss the issue, which will earn Islamabad the title of a revisionist state in South Asia.[25]

There is also an understanding of some of the complications that a solution of the Kashmir issue favourable to Pakistan would create for India. Allowing Kashmir to accede to Pakistan on the basis of a plebiscite would create a situation where other minorities would also start to pressurise New Delhi for an independent status. In fact, a number of people in the military establishment believed that India was on the verge of a domestic chaos leading to a number of states breaking away, a view that was popular particularly in the 1980s and a large part of the 1990s.[26]

However, one can also identify a number of people who believe that the boundary disputes are not the main issue. Rather it is the divergent ideologies that will never allow establishment of normal neighbourly relations between the two countries. The division of India, the massacre that took place during partition in 1947, and the two nation theory are factors which cannot be excluded from the bilateral relation equation.[27] As a result, one is still unclear whether the rivalry with India is territorial or ideological in nature. Interestingly, Pakistan's Kashmir policy appears to have inverted Islamabad's argument that India's actions and policies are the main source of insecurity in the region. The increase in the security temperature caused by this dispute almost gives an impression that a solution of the problem would automatically restore peace between the two traditional rivals. This is despite the thesis of the ultra-conventionalist (see later section for explanation of this term) that a solution will not eradicate the hostility between the two nations. Perhaps, the ideological confrontation tends to manifest itself in the form of territorial disputes with both sides refusing to find a solution due to the ideological divide clearly established at the time of partition.

THE POLITICS OF INSECURITY

Indubitably, this preoccupation with India emanates from the circumstances in which the country got its independence in 1947. The hostile rhetoric of the Indian leadership and its resistance to give Pakistan its fair share of assets at the time of independence contributed tremendously to the insecurity. However, this alone cannot be considered as the reason for the deep insecurity that bothers the ruling elite. Surely, the circumstances such as the carnage that happened in 1947 and

what transpired between the two countries since independence provides justification for the mistrust Pakistan feels about the bigger neighbour, but one has to go beyond 1947 to find an explanation for this fear.

The peculiar psyche of the policy making elite can also be attributed to the search for identity. Having created a country for the Muslims of India, the generation that followed Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan tried to find a far more concrete justification for creating an independent state. This led them towards greater emotional, psychological, and politico-cultural alignment with the Middle East rather than the region to which Pakistan belonged. Of course, convincing the population of the efficacy of such an approach was not possible without transforming India into a permanent threat factor. The BJP's aggressive rhetoric strengthens the belief that a Hindu-dominated India would find some cause to harm a Muslim Pakistan.

Additionally, the internal political dynamics compelled the leadership to seek a confrontational relationship that could form a solid justification for a linear policy approach. The fact that soon after independence the country's leadership slipped into the hands of the civil-military bureaucracy is one of the reasons why Pakistan has embarked upon such a focused security perception. Not only that, it is in the interest of the bureaucracy to continuously prop up the single-source threat factor and such an approach is a logical course to be followed by this bureaucracy. A military threat allows policy makers to follow a simpler and less complex linear trajectory that is certainly easier for a bureaucratic-administrative state structure to comprehend and support.

The India-centricity of the security perception has also proved beneficial for the bureaucracy, as opposed to the political leadership, in claiming a larger chunk of the state resources. The consistently high military expenditure and all benefits claimed by the military are directly linked with the linear projection of threat. The military's dominance of the country's power politics has resulted in maintaining the linearity of the security perception. It is the army's preponderance in domestic politics that has also forced the political leadership to maintain the specified course of action. Over the past 50 years, the India factor has gained such prominence in the national psyche that it is considered politically risky to make any changes in the foreign and defence policies that would have any semblance of a compromise with India. At least, this is a popular perception amongst the military

in Pakistan. This makes it very difficult for the politically elected governments to make significant changes in the security policy or change the structure of relations with India. The ouster of Nawaz Sharif's government in October 1999 bears witness to this fact.[28] The fate of the Sharif government is not just a random event but symptomatic of the marginal space that the political leadership has in dictating the course of policies in areas that are of direct interest to the armed forces.

This limited canvass, as mentioned earlier, has imposed major constraints in exploring other avenues for expanding the strategic horizon. Perhaps, the only time that Islamabad thought of an extended strategic identity was during the 1970s when Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto envisioned a greater role for his country and for himself as its legitimate leader. Bhutto's aspiration was to become a prominent leader of the Muslim world and the Third World. Given his ambitious character, Bhutto was inclined towards turning Pakistan into a military power and a symbol of strength in the Muslim world. Such a status would have accorded him greater relevance in international politics and elevated his position in the world community.[29] This was, in fact, the only time in the history of Pakistan's nuclear programme that any effort was made to provide a relatively superior justification for acquiring nuclear capability.

Incidentally, it was Bhutto's bid to project Pakistan as the leader of the Islamic world that also earned Pakistan's nuclear weapons the title of 'Islamic' bomb. Quite clearly, it was never Bhutto's intent to share the ownership of the country's nuclear capability with any other country or to use it in any other mode but for his own country's security. Over the years, Islamabad gradually distanced itself from that kind of an approach. In the ensuing years it was rare to hear the argument regarding the acquisition of a non-conventional capability for rising in the community of nations or in a specific community of nations. The only other time that one heard of an equation between Pakistan's nuclear capability and the country's identity as an Islamic state was in the early 1990s and then again in 1998.[30] However, on both occasions the idea was to seek the attention of the leadership of the rich Persian Gulf and Middle Eastern states that could provide the much needed financial resources that Islamabad lacked particularly after the US sanctions of 1998. In fact, the India factor is crucial in limiting the scope of Pakistan's global outlook.

Some academics see other patterns in Pakistan's policy making as well. For instance, Samina Yasmeen has identified three distinct groups that influence the security discourse:

(a) The surrender group, which advocates reliance on the US;
(b) The independence group, which advocates building linkages with other countries on the basis of the economic imperative; and
(c) The Muslim group, which proposes political and security alignment based on religious ideology.[31]

This is quite a pertinent analysis. Nawaz Sharif was certainly moved by the economic imperative to negotiate peace with India in 1999 and this provides credence to the presence of the second group identified by Yasmeen. However, the military that overturned the peace initiative by launching the Kargil campaign was clearly averse to Sharif's approach. Ultimately, after the October 1999 coup, policies were again controlled by the bureaucracy that saw the world through its prism of threat alone. The military would not have allowed any political leader to sacrifice the Kashmir issue, which has become the core of military's vested interest and the issue through which it maintains its prominent position in the country's power politics.[32]

As opposed to Yasmeen's categorisation, one can identify three other classifications:

(a) ultra-conventional,
(b) conventional; and
(c) progressive-pacifist.

The ultra-conventional denotes the segment of the decision making elite that holds an extreme view of Indian policies. Incidentally, a large number of civil and military bureaucrats and religious and political elites belong to this school of thought. Indeed, where there is an issue of threat assessment, there is no major difference between the thinking of all groups falling under the first two categories mentioned here. Perhaps, the only difference relates to the thinking of people belonging to the 'Muslim' group who are known to attend to the issue of gaining power not only as a counter-balance against India but also as leaders of an independent Islamic block.

This group, which is comprised by people like Lt. General (Retd.) Hamid Gull owes its emergence to the war fought in Afghanistan during the 1980s. Although such people are limited in number, the experience during the Afghan crisis convinced them that Pakistan's purpose was greater than its current existence as a medium-sized military power that could not project its strength beyond South Asia. These people from the military, especially those who came in contact with militants fighting in Afghanistan and later Kashmir and other fronts, saw unconventional military means as a mode of averting the politico-economic power balance that was tilted in the favour of Western states like the US. However, even these people refuse to de-link Pakistan from the Kashmir issue. Another fact worth mentioning is that the entire philosophy of installing a pro-Pakistan government in Afghanistan, which formed the basis or the starting point for the thinking of the 'Muslim' group was directly linked to the military logic of gaining territory that could provide Islamabad with strategic depth in its future war with India. So, the India factor was obvious even in this segment of strategic thinking. However, this conformity to the single-source threat perception can also be attributed to two factors: (*i*) military personnel (retired or serving) would never risk propagating a change in policy for the fear of loosing access to the perks and privileges provided to them as part of the armed forces; and (*ii*) the non-state actors or the *jihadis*, who are their associates, are of the view that Kashmir could prove a vital launching pad for spreading Islam in the rest of the Indian subcontinent and even to the rest of the world.[33]

The second group (conventionalist) believe that India's agenda is not to destroy Pakistan but to influence it into subordination. Even this formulation is highly unacceptable. In fact, there is a common thread between the arguments made by the ultra-conventionalists and the conventionalists. For the military that forms part of both schools, the idea of any Indian influence is unacceptable. This was obvious from the statement made by the Chairman JCSC, General Aziz Khan recently. He is of the view that the problem was not Kashmir but India's attitude towards its smaller neighbours that it wanted to dominate.[34] The progressive-pacifist group mostly represents the non-conventional liberals (in sociological terms). Most of these people are those who have some links with India, those who had migrated from there, or generally feel more tied to the concept of a stronger India. A number of these people also are known for their links with the West through their education abroad or in other forms. One can

find members of this group amongst the upper or upper-middle class. The fact that these people have no real contacts with the grass-roots makes their perspective equally problematic and difficult for the establishment to accept.

This thinking that sees Pakistan as the strategic hub of the Islamic world is ridden with two peculiarities that are worth mentioning. First, this potential identity is closely linked with the Sunni orthodox religious school that basically cannot coexist politically with other sects. This is one of the reasons for the acute Pakistani discomfort with countries like Iran. It is a Muslim state which subscribes to a totally opposing religious sect. Also, Islamabad's engagement with the Taliban regime put it at cross-purposes with Iran and proved detrimental for the bilateral relations between the two neighbouring Islamic states. Second, Islamist group developed as a mild anti-Americanism that is contradictory to the basic philosophy pursued by the state. While a limited segment sees the US as a symbol of Western capitalism and exploitation, it cannot think of adopting an independent course due to the state's excessive dependence on America for its security.

This dependence upon the US tended to minimise an angry reaction to the US policies and also strengthened the hands of the major segment that is the 'surrender' group that, in any case, seems to dominate the security discourse in Pakistan. The continued dependency on the US has three dimensions. First, from a bureaucratic-organisational standpoint this can be viewed primarily as an issue of vested interest. Since the end of the 1950s when Pakistan joined the military pacts, South East Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO), Islamabad's bureaucracy was attracted to the financial and other resources that were provided by Washington. The military establishment has a strong bias for America as a source for weapons acquisitions. Second, the bureaucratic–organisational imperative is extended to the military's dependence on the US to gain legitimacy. The support and acknowledgement rendered by the US to military regimes provides for a strong bonding between the two countries. In the current political scenario in Pakistan, there are some who even suggest that an increased sense of insecurity at home would lead Musharraf to become more dependent on the US.

Third, from a politico-strategic perspective, alignment with the US has allowed Pakistan to acquire quality weapons and counter-balance India. Convinced of the fact that New Delhi would never negotiate a

final settlement of the Kashmir dispute, Islamabad has always wanted to use a multilateral approach by trying to bring the US in the middle of this bilateral conflict. It is believed, and rightly so, that it is only the US that can talk to India from a position of strength.

Before embarking upon further analysis of Pakistan's bilateral relations with the US, it is important to reiterate the underlying security perception. While analysing Islamabad's security perception one has to understand that its behaviour towards India can be charted along a linear trajectory. Any changes in the graph basically indicate periods of 'highs and lows'. The 'highs' indicate periods when tension with India seems to have escalated due to some policy changes, augmentation in military capability of either party, or some form of increase in the action–reaction syndrome in both countries. 'Lows', on the other hand, denote a time frame when peace or confidence building initiatives were entertained, or response was comparatively muted.[35] Incidentally, this has always been a period when Islamabad felt diplomatically isolated and militarily in a weaker position.

Since threat indicates a constant factor, any changes in its intensity were invariably accompanied by an enhancement in Islamabad's military capacity to challenge New Delhi's security planning for the region. The greatest problem always was Pakistan's inability to challenge India effectively or to reduce the level of perceived threat. Threat, it must be mentioned, includes the adversary's capability to thwart Pakistan Army's initiative to solve the Kashmir issue. Military security is the only form of safety mechanism that policy makers can think of. However, endogenous factors such as economic capacity or dependence upon external sources for the supply weapons technology are seen as elements impeding the growth of Pakistan's military prowess. In fact, Pakistan's major foreign alignments or relations with other states are primarily driven by the singular agenda of acquiring military technology that could bolster Islamabad's military capacity in responding effectively to a potential Indian threat. This is the strategic picture in which the US becomes significant.

TRIANGULAR APPROACH

Pakistan's policy makers have never taken a holistic view towards security whereby political, economic, and social security are

strengthened to guarantee better military security. The fact is that the country's economic backwardness that has resulted in its dependence on foreign sources for economic survival has never allowed it to build a strong defence against external forces. The absence of political stability, for which the army is equally responsible, has not allowed sound economic progress. However, the military leadership persists in pursuing the goals of its organisation's dominance in the political system.

A glance at Pakistan–India confrontation would indicate the presence of two sets of triangular relationships: (*i*) Pakistan–India–USA and (*ii*) Pakistan–India–China. This triangular relationship fits in very well with Islamabad's approach of having an external cushion to beef up Pakistan's military capability and, at times, come to Pakistan's rescue in countering India diplomatically.

In its first set of relationship with the US, which is essential for Islamabad for both external security and domestic political reasons, Pakistan's military views America as a potential source for the acquisition of superior quality conventional weapons that, in turn, are necessary for strengthening the country's defences and in giving the armed forces the ability to launch offensive operations. Weapons procured from America during the 1950s, the 1960s, and the 1980s had considerably strengthened the military's position in not only standing up to the perceived threat from India, but also challenging it. This was apparent in the 1962 limited conflict in Sir Creek and later during Operation Gibraltar in 1965.

Convergence of views between Islamabad and Washington has never been easy. In fact, towards the end of the presidency of George Bush (Senior) there were serious problems due to Islamabad's nuclear proliferation activities resulting in the US arms embargo in October 1990. Washington had used both the stick and the carrot to dissuade its South Asian ally from pursuing nuclear proliferation activities. The approach did not work primarily because: (*i*) the US was at best seen as a temporary ally that would not offer any security guarantees against India, (*ii*) Pakistan's policy makers were conscious of American interest in India, (*iii*) Pakistan–US views were divergent on India, and (*iv*) an independent military capability was necessary for solving the Kashmir issue and standing up to New Delhi's 'hegemonic' designs. The general feeling amongst the military top brass is that the US would never put sufficient pressure on India to solve the issue unless there was reason for Washington to do so. Hence, the entire Kargil episode was not only meant to force New Delhi to consider certain

policy options but also to impress upon the international community the need for pressurising India to negotiate the Kashmir issue with Pakistan.

Although one is still not able to exactly determine the objective of the Kargil operation, a senior military source suggested that expanding the operation to invasion of the Kashmir Valley was never on the cards. The military leadership understood its operational limitations.[36] Without getting into the debate of why the operation was launched, it is important to note that the military planners in Rawalpindi followed a linear and vertical approach to conflict escalation and management. The basic assumption was that due to the nuclear factor India would not be able to escalate tension beyond a certain manageable level. In addition, the pressure from the international community, especially the US, would stave off the threat of a war between the two South Asian neighbours. Thus, the military operation could provide Pakistan Army with an opportunity to create an environment in which India would be ultimately forced to negotiate the Kashmir issue. Such an approach, however, did not take into account the possibility of an opposite reaction by the international community forcing Islamabad rather than New Delhi to withdraw its forces.

The policy makers have been equally slow in appreciating changes in America's new South Asia policy or its discomfort with the linkage involving militancy, the Kashmir issue, and nuclear proliferation, which are the mainstay of Islamabad's military strategy. Washington's new policy towards the region is based on a 'non-zero-sum-game' formulation, which negates the analysis presented by analysts like Graham Chapman.[37] As mentioned earlier, the understanding was that India would be constrained from escalating tension due to nuclear deterrence while Islamabad could continue supporting militancy in Kashmir. This policy came under criticism, especially by Washington after 9/11. A number of militant outfits operating in Kashmir had links with outfits in Afghanistan and the rest of the Muslim world. The pressure exerted by the US, particularly after the 10 months of military mobilisation at the Pakistan–India border constrained Islamabad from providing maximum support to insurgency operations. Evidence suggests that infiltration was scaled down to a great extent, but by the middle of 2003 the policy had not been totally reversed.[38] What was, however, obvious to the military establishment was that the continued visibility of the linkage between the Pakistan Army and the *jihadis* would be damaging for Islamabad–Washington relations, especially as partners

in the war against terrorism. A situation where the US would abandon Pakistan would not be helpful in Islamabad's confrontational ties with New Delhi.

As opposed to this rather problematic triangular relationship, the one with China is seen as more balanced than the former. Islamabad has always looked at Beijing for material and diplomatic support. The military assistance provided by China during the Pakistan–India war of 1965 and the continued easy access that Islamabad has to Chinese military hardware including nuclear weapons technology makes China extremely significant.[39] More importantly, the Sino-Indian tension over the question of military superiority in the Asian subcontinent has been beneficial for Islamabad. Despite the apparent rapprochement between Beijing and New Delhi that has lead to China not taking a position firmly in favour of Pakistan over the Kashmir issue, it is believed that as long as this rapprochement between China and India is limited, it serves Pakistan's interests.[40]

Indubitably, a potential US-India strategic alliance would not only limit the Sino-Indian rapprochement, but it will also benefit Pakistan more in terms of making it the only dependable ally for China in the South Asian region. It suits Islamabad to have China, along with the US, as a power balancer in South Asia. This can be held as one of the explanations for Pakistan's eagerness in involving Beijing in the development of the second port at Gwadar. Although China's involvement in this port would increase the stakes and compel India to beef up its naval capability that Pakistan itself would find difficult to counter, the understanding is that China's presence would be a counterbalance to India's naval superiority. Of course, the other reason for developing a second port facility is to escape the potential threat of a naval blockade by India.

The establishment's ambition to deny India's wish to become a regional power and to solve the territorial dispute in Kashmir, manifested itself in encouraging the growth of religious extremism in the country. The military in particular provided cover to militant organisations since it was a cost-effective approach to fighting India. However, this approach resulted in transforming social attitudes and growth in the influence of militant groups that were also divided across sectarian grounds leading to greater sectarian and ethnic strife and general instability in the country. Unfortunately, the violence that ensued was always viewed as the handiwork of India's intelligence organisation, RAW. Not that there was not an element of RAW's involvement in

some incidents, but the fact remains that the establishment was responsible for breeding internal insecurity and instability.

CONCLUSION

For a country like Pakistan where security is primarily defined by a military that is absorbed in multiple roles, the possible solution to its security problems lies in acquiring greater military capacity and finding alignments that would secure it from any incursions by the adversary and hence, the continued dependence on the US and China. Clearly, there is a gap between the military-strategic objectives, its tactical plans, and the national strategic planning that would entail an assessment of the resources that could be made available for fulfilling the goals outlined by the armed forces. This tension between the military establishment's urge to challenge India and resolve the Kashmir issue favourably has limited Islamabad's broader strategic view where it could find a larger meaning for the country's existence. In many respects, this has seriously contained the country's strategic potential as well. Unfortunately, one does not foresee a way out of this bind due to the prominence of the state bureaucracy in Pakistan's power politics and security policy making. Perhaps, the answer lies in the strengthening of democratic institutions so that policy making, especially security policy making, might become more responsive to the needs of the people.

NOTES

1. This observation was made during several rounds of discussions with Indian analysts and academics.
2. The sources include military personnel as well.
3. Air Marshal Zulfiqar Ali Khan, *Pakistan's Security The Challenge and the Response*. (Lahore: Progressive Publishers, 1988), pp. 8–9.
4. This was certainly the view presented by Pakistan's former foreign secretary, Shehryar Khan during a conference in Birmingham, 7–8 April 2003.
5. These comments were made by a former diplomat and member of the Pakistan Muslim League, Akram Zaki in a seminar on democracy in Pakistan held in Islamabad on 12 December 2002.

6. Interviews with academics and political activists.
7. An assessment from the discussions and informal surveys conducted in Islamabad, particularly at the Quaidi Azam University.
8. Discussion with Ayesha Jalal, 27 January 2003.
9. S.M. Burke and Lawrence Ziring, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: An Historical Analysis* (Karachi: Oxford, 1990), p. 460.
10. This was certainly the argument of Zia's successor, General Mirza Aslam Beg.
11. *Gulf Crisis 1990* (Rawalpindi: GHQ publication); and *Times* (London), 14 January 1992.
12. Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), pp. 26–30.
13. Discussion with a number of journalists working on Afghanistan.
14. Aziz Ahmed Khan, official spokesperson of the foreign office and Pakistan's High Commissioner-designate to India.
15. Discussion with a number of military officers.
16. General Pervez Musharraf's television address, 12 January 2002.
17. Interview with leading economist Mahboob-ul-Haq, 1997. According to Dr Haq, if the majority of the people living in the valley voted for Pakistan, it would favour an accession of that part of Kashmir. Moreover, his assumption was that all Kashmiris living in Pakistan's Kashmir would vote for remaining with Pakistan.
18. During a recent discussion on the politics of Sindh it was argued that some people in that province were concerned about India's designs to stop the flow of water and that water was the issue that made Kashmir important for Pakistan.
19. Views expressed by the official foreign office spokesperson, (Islamabad) 13 May 2003.
20. Kaleem Omar, 'Desalination Plants are the Answer to Karachi's Water Problems', *The News*, 10 February 2003.
21. Interview with Admiral (Retd.) Vishnu Bhagwat in Mumbai on 19 July 2000.
22. Interview with the former Pakistani Naval Chief, Admiral (Retd.) Fasih Bokhari in Islamabad in July 2000.
23. Ayesha Siddiqa-Agha, 'Maritime Cooperation between India and Pakistan: Building Confidence at Sea', Cooperative Monitoring Centre Occasional Paper, No. 18 (Albuqueyque, N.M., 2000).
24. K.R. Menon, 'Maritime Confidence Building in South Asia'. In J.R. Junnola (ed.), *Maritime Confidence Building in Regions of Tension* (Washington, DC: Report No. 21, The Henry L. Stimson Centre), p. 78.
25. See http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/defaut.asp?page=story_18-7-2003_pg3_6.
26. The presence of such a perception was an idea also subscribed to by political analysts like Nasim Zehra. During a private discussion, she conceded to the fact that certain segments of the military hoped that India would eventually break up.
27. Such an idea has been pursued especially under the Musharraf regime. The concept that the problem between the two countries is ideological rather than territorial is vehemently presented by the military.
28. Kees Koonings and Dirk Krujit (eds), *Political Armies* (London: Zed Books, 2002), p. 9.
29. Kausar Niazi, *Last Days of Premier Bhutto* (Lahore: Jung, 1991), p. 85. See also, Khaled Hassan, *Rear-view Mirrors* (Islamabad: Alhamra, 2002), p. 116.

30. The conceptual paper written by some members of the army in 1991 mentions the use of nuclear capability to gain leadership of the Islamic world. In 1998 Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif spoke of the relevance of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal for the Islamic world. His argument, however, mainly aimed at attracting financial resources for Islamic countries. See, *Gulf Crisis, 1990.*
31. Samina Yasmeen, 'Pakistan's Cautious Foreign Policy', *Survival*, Summer 1994, pp. 121–26.
32. Ayesha Jalal, 'A Letter to India: In Manto's Spirit', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 37, Nos 44 and 45, 2–8 November–9–15 November 2002, p. 4527.
33. Interview with a number of militants, November 2002.
34. *The Nation*, 24 June 2003.
35. Ayesha Siddiqa-Agha, *Pakistan's Arms Procurement and Military Build-Up, 1979–99: In Search of a Policy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Press, 2001), p. 19.
36. Interview with former naval chief, Admiral Fasih Bokhari. He was the Chief of the Naval Staff during the Kargil War.
37. Graham P. Chapman, *The Geopolitics of South Asia* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p. 275.
38. Interview with several journalists and *jihadis.*
39. Ayesha Siddiqa-Agha, *Pakistan's Army Procurement and Military Build-Up*, pp. 105–8. See also, Pervez Iqbal Cheema, *The Armed Forces of Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp.164–65.
40. This was a view given by a number of officers in Pakistan's Foreign Office.