

A TALIBANIZED PAKISTAN? :

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CANADA'S PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO NATO

Anita Singh

Doctoral Fellow, Centre for Foreign Policy Studies

PhD Candidate, Department of Political Science

Dalhousie University

Halifax NS, Canada

anita.singh@dal.ca

“Although radical Islamic groups may stage a comeback, they are very unlikely ever to impose their radical vision on Pakistan and transform it into a nuclear-armed Afghanistan”¹ argued Stephen Cohen in 2002. Yet, with the collapse of Pakistan's civilian government and a conflict between military actors and insurgents in the Northwest Frontier Provinces, NATO states must act swiftly and decisively to ensure Pakistan is not overrun by the Taliban. To date, commentators, analysts and policy-makers have looked at Pakistan, not through the lens of its own stability, but through its insurgent training camps, terrorist recruitment, and border and transmigration effects on the conflict in Afghanistan. In comparison, this policy brief suggests that the conflict should actually be examined at the regional level, considering the internal dynamics of Pakistan. In other words, how should Canada and NATO problematize the Pakistan-side of the conflict? This policy brief, written on behalf of the Canadian Permanent Representative to NATO, will proceed in three sections. First, it will provide the necessary background to conceptualize the Pakistan-problematique. Second, it will make several policy recommendations, concluding with a discussion of the larger considerations supporting the arguments from the previous section.

Background: Pakistan: A Fragile, Failed or Failing State?

It is no exaggeration, nor understatement, to argue that the internal security and stability of Pakistan will determine the security and stability of Afghanistan. Therefore, Canada and NATO's response to the crisis in Pakistan must acknowledge two variables which simultaneously contribute to the internal weakness of the state. Institutionally, the new government has had increasing difficulty consolidating its own power and legitimacy within the state, because of its internal corruption and decision to devolve its sovereignty to Taliban related groups. Protests against self-serving government corruption have turned attention from the growing insurgency in order to maintain control over political institutions. In February 2009, one year after the coalition government victory, the interim Supreme Court rendered a ruling against opposition leader Nawaz Sharif and his brother Shahbuz, the Chief

¹ Stephen Cohen, 2002, “The Nation and the State of Pakistan.” *The Washington Quarterly* 25:3

Minister of Punjab, reinstating corruption charges that had been laid against them in 1999. More importantly, this ruling barred them from running in any future election or holding public office. In light of the ruling, President Zardari used his federal power to dismiss the Punjab state government, Pakistan's largest and most wealthy state. Citizen response to this event overwhelmed security forces, as Sharif's latest 'exile' has been rejected as power-based party politics by the current government.² A mass demonstration planned for March 15, 2009 forced the army on standby, suggesting that the Pakistan army would have forcibly quashed the civilian movement if necessary. During this standoff, all access to the national legislature buildings was blocked and scores of protesting civilians were detained.³ Further, the government has blocked media such as GEO-TV that has been particularly critical of the government in recent months.⁴ The actions of the government reflect its inherent weakness and an important pattern in Pakistan's politics, political power is devolved to the personalities involved rather than stability of the government itself.

Simultaneously, the Islamist campaign has attempted to delegitimize the national government and its capability, while encouraging the growth of pseudo-statehood in tribal areas. Paradoxically, with the growth of power of the Taliban, the Zardari government's response has been to consolidate its legitimacy by devolving its own sovereignty. No other example is as telling as the March 2009 Malakand ceasefire, when the Pakistan-Taliban successfully negotiated the implementation of Sharia law in the Swat District of NWFP with the Pakistan government.⁵ Under this agreement, the government committed to the release of 12 Taliban militants and in exchange, militants agreed to an indefinite ceasefire with counter-insurgency and military forces.⁶ Unsurprisingly, there have been

² The Sharif situation has recently been cleared by the Supreme Court, which turned down the initial ruling by the Lahore High Court. This decision allows Sharif to retain his federal legislative seat and he is now allowed to run in upcoming elections.

³ Associated Press. 2009. "Pakistan troops on standby ahead of protests." 14 March. Retrieved at: <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5hkiMxbHhNH0BqgpWA2ZG6VD6wVTmAD96TOMI80>. (March 26, 2009).

⁴ CNN.com. 2009. "Pakistan blocks critical TV station." 14 March. Retrieved at: <http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/03/14/pakistan.minister/index.html>. (March 26, 2009).

⁵ The Accord signed in Malakand amends the 1999 Nizam-e-Adl Resolution to allow the implementation of Sharia in several districts in the NWFP, including Malakand, Dir and Swat.

⁶ The International News. "12 Taliban prisoners freed under peace accord." March 8, 2009. Retrieved at: http://www.thenews.com.pk/top_story_detail.asp?Id=20814. (15 March 2009).

numerous criticisms of the Agreement, the foremost including the lack of provisions for women's rights in districts now under Sharia. Some have argued that the government signed the agreement from a position of weakness under the threat of violence, as indicated by its major concessions. In fact, an example of their unprecedented power entering the negotiations, the Taliban were even able to demand that they would only negotiate ceasefire terms with Mohammed Javed, a Taliban-sensitive Pakistan civil servant from NWFP. Similarly, Christine Fair from RAND has argued, "these deals have been essentially ratifying [government] defeats on the ground."⁷ Because of government weakness, there is no potential to enforce agreement as shown by numerous reported violations of the ceasefire by Taliban and no sign of disarmament.

Second, after the consolidation of the Pakistan Taliban under the leadership of Baitullah Mahmud in December 2007, the Taliban has shifted from being an Afghanistan-centric group to an insurgent group with national objectives for the state of Pakistan. Exemplary of this shift in political objective is the recent surge into Buner district, less than a month after the Swat sharia agreement. In fact, some argue that the negotiations of the Swat agreement were used by the Taliban simply to rearm and organize. In its hasty, yet necessary response to the Taliban's ceasefire violation, the Pakistan army has retaken Buner, forced insurgent retreat, and begun further operations in Swat.⁸ Yet, the fighting in Swat is indicative of the Taliban's objective within Pakistan. Instead of limiting its conflict to the autonomy of specific regions, these fighters now have their sights on the state. A number of warnings have been issued by Baitullah Mahsud, unequivocally stating that his group will take over Pakistan unless the government stopped its support of NATO's operation in Waziristan and Afghanistan.

Responding to the suggestion that his government was fighting insurgents on behalf of their American

⁷ Ben Arnoldy and Issam Ahmed. 2009. "Pakistan's tenuous gains on Taliban." 9 March. Christian Science Monitor. Retrieved at: <http://www.csmonitor.com/2009/0309/p01s02-wosc.html>. (15 March 2009).

⁸ By the end of May, the army had cleared the Taliban out of Mingora, the largest urban centre in Swat. Mingora has been a focal point for analysts of the region, as it is the first time in this surge that Pakistan's troops have fought in an urban setting, and the holding the city will be an important test case for the army. Reports have indicated that Taliban members have resorted to shaving their beards in order to blend in with the large numbers of refugees leaving Swat.

allies, President Zardari had recognized the national threat to the state, “We are aware of the fact [the Taliban are] trying to take over the state of Pakistan. So, we're fighting for the survival of Pakistan. We're not fighting for the survival of anybody else.”⁹

More importantly, the insurgents' increasingly national political agenda has also shifted its attacks to economic, law-enforcement and political urban targets. This is exemplified by a number of Taliban activities indicating their economic clout in the region, including the forcible takeover of two emerald mines outside Swat, inviting impoverished locals to work the mines. Further, reports argue, particularly in the Swat district, that Taliban-related insurgents have been seen delivering “vigilante” like justice, and in one incident, killing 12 suspected thieves instead of referring to local law enforcement agencies. In other cases, Taliban have been seen following mundane law enforcement tasks, including jobs such as directing traffic and public floggings for anti-Islam violations.¹⁰ Another example in early April 2009 shocked both Pakistan's secularists and international observers with the release of a videotape of an extra-judicial public lashing of a 17 year-old girl by three Taliban members.¹¹ For both the incidences in Peshawar and Swat, part of the explanation lies in each city's proximity to tribal areas, but the more disturbing evidence lies in the shift to the urban setting, targets and objective of the attacks.

Policy Recommendations

With these two challenges to state of Pakistan, and taking into account the scenario of an Islamist regime in power, this section will discuss a number of short and medium-term actions that ISAF can take to ensure that Pakistan does not become victim to the Talibanization of the region and ensure the spillover from Pakistan does not affect progress in Afghanistan.

⁹ BBC News. 2009. “Pakistan 'in fight for survival'.” 15 February. Retrieved at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7890985.stm. (February 16, 2009).

¹⁰ AlJazeera. 2007. “Pakistan emergency aiding Taliban.” 10 November. AlJazeera News Service. <<http://english.aljazeera.net>> (May 17, 2008).

¹¹ Salman Masood. 2009. “Video of Taliban Flogging Rattles Pakistan.” 4 April. New York Times. Retrieved at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/04/world/asia/04swat.html>. (April 10, 2009).

Surveillance of borders and nuclear sites

During the short-term, the most important concern for Canadian and ISAF troops is that both the border and Pakistan's nuclear sites receive extra security and surveillance. Therefore, Canada's first policy option should employ its newly acquired Israeli-made Heron drones (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, or UAVs) for surveillance along the borders. Similarly, the American capabilities should be used for aerial surveillance over all-known nuclear sites while establishing radio communications with security forces in charge of nuclear sites. This form of aerial support will have three important outcomes; assuring the non-radical leadership that their crisis has not been ignored by ISAF, while simultaneously ensuring that civilian confidence in the Afghan National Army or Pakistan's Defence Forces and their capability to secure these sites is not undermined. Third, aerial support relieves ISAF from the requirement of using already-stretched military personnel to deal with the Pakistan crisis. Involving troops in Pakistan would be both ineffective, if not counter-productive, to the mission and extremely unpopular within Pakistan and NATO countries.

Not only is aerial support the most feasible, but this border security policy is consistent with Canada's continued efforts in Kandahar province. In March 2009, Canada successfully helped negotiate a border agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan to deal with the movement of people, illegal narcotics and arms, while ensuring that the border does not stay permanently closed to travellers. In fact, this border is particularly important to maintaining relations with Pashtun leaders in both countries, as they believe that the lines have artificially divided the Pashtun people. Kabul, for example, has never officially recognized the border lines, and people on both sides consider it a soft boundary. Because of the ethnic sensitivity surrounding the border, it is important that Canada allow free movement to Afghanis and Pakistanis.

American responsibility for the nuclear sites must be done by pulling armed drones from the border areas and re-establishing their presence by nuclear sites. The Obama administration has followed the Bush policy of drone attacks in the FATA region of Pakistan, killing over 500 people in

the first few months of 2009 alone. Zardari's government had repeatedly requested an end to these attacks arguing that they undermine Pakistan's sovereignty, and have the effect of inflaming the insurgency in the region. Moving these drones to assist nuclear sites would be a more efficient way of providing security in Pakistan. In fact, this policy is consistent with previous American offers in the region. During the 2007 November Emergency, the US offered to send troops to protect key nuclear and military sites in Pakistan, in case of attempted takeovers by insurgent groups.¹² At the time, President Musharraf was attempting to consolidate confidence in his government, and American interference would have undermined his ability to address his confidence crisis. Yet, with an Islamist-led government, NATO forces must balance their resolve to solve the crisis with their cautious engagement of the new regime in power.

Call for Elections in Pakistan

One of the most important actions available to the Canadian diplomatic core is the call for an election to publicly delegitimize the rule of the imposed Islamist regime. First, the policy supports the long-time Canadian goal of democratization and state-building in the region. Second, a call for elections has the effect of forcing the new regime to take a position on its own internal popularity. Third, Canada's non-interference will build support for the Canadian position in the secular and moderate sectors of the population (about sixty per cent in Punjab and Sindh). Elections are important for the "pulse" of the state, as there is ample evidence of a strong secular population in Pakistan.

For example, the elections in 2002 worried observers because of an increase of votes for conservative and religious-oriented parties. While these parties only garnered eight per cent of the total votes cast in the election, the bulk of their votes came primarily in the conflict-ridden NWFP and FATA, and their victory had an immediate effect on the politics of the region. As soon as it came to power, the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) movement in NWFP dictated the closure of entertainment, music facilities and girls' schools, and revised school curriculums that were seen to be

¹² David E. Sanger and William Broad. 2007. "US secretly aids Pakistan in guarding nuclear arms," 18 November. New York Times. <<http://www.nytimes.com>> (May 19, 2008).

inconsistent with Islam.¹³ After voters saw the result of Islamic governance, the 2008 election reversed this phenomenon, and election results swung back in favour to the secular parties, particularly in the regions once taken over by the MMA. Thereby, analysts have been able to conclude that the 2002 results reflected a lack of choice between parties, rather than evidence of an actual Islamist political movement. Stephen Cohen argues that despite the numerous state failures in Pakistan, the resiliency of political institutions, including its political parties and judiciary has left hope for state stability, and there is a secular, state-oriented civil society that is still dedicated to Pakistan's stability.

Immediate shipments of Humanitarian Aid

Pakistan's ability to address the growing humanitarian crisis will determine whether new refugee camps become recruitment grounds for extremists. In the last month of conflict, Pakistan has become the world's fastest-growing humanitarian crisis, displacing over two million people to refugee camps near Peshawar, Islamabad and other urban centres in the country. This recent refugee displacement is in addition to the humanitarian crisis that started with initial fighting as early as six months ago and has exacerbated the plight of permanent refugees displaced by decades of conflict in Afghanistan. The successful provision of aid is absolutely necessary, as its efficiency determines the success of the Taliban and other insurgent groups. During the 2005 earthquake in Kashmir, militant groups were major providers of aid to affected populations. In a conflict sensitive to public opinion and their radicalization, United Nations, NGO and American aid provisions are crucial. The international community has responded and aid has flooded the area, but can only reach refugees if the military is able to sustain its victories.

Canada has taken some important steps in this area. For example, in October 2008, Canada donated two million dollars to aid refugees at the initial stages of the conflict. In response to this most recent outbreak of fighting, Minister of International Cooperation, Beverley Oda, has announced an additional five million to address the crisis. In a positive move, Canada has given 60 per cent of this

¹³ Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA)

funding to the World Food Programme, and the additional 40 per cent to the International Red Cross, rather than to government agencies. Second, Canada has added Pakistan to its list of 20 aid recipient countries, as outlined by the strategy in the 2005 International Policy Statement and the subsequent Harper government. In addition increased funding for the area, there are two additional policy options Canada can support. First, in recognizing the contribution of funds by other governments, the Canadian position should reinforce the recommendation that funds should be specifically earmarked for the humanitarian crisis, and not just the military offensive or government spending. Second, Canada's specific innovation should recognize that humanitarian aid not only requires food and medical supplies, but aid could be directed to specifically commission teachers in the refugee camps, to ensure that the Taliban-susceptible young people are kept occupied and safe within the camps. Therefore, this policy would have the double-effect of ensuring that the humanitarian crisis remains under control, while ensuring that the Taliban is unable to take advantage of vulnerable refugees.

Support for the Army

Recognizing the overstretch of the Canadian Army and ISAF forces in Afghanistan, combined with the American intervention in Iraq, there is little chance that NATO would be capable or willing to engage militarily to resolve the current crisis in Pakistan. Luckily, this option is not yet required, as the strength of the military as a stabilizing force in Pakistan's internal politics is relatively undisputed. Even Indian scholars, such as C. Raja Mohan, argue that "the extraordinary strength" of the army has been the "core" of Pakistani identity, providing a check-and-balance on the instability of both political and Islamist actors.¹⁴ It has become particularly relevant since the military is the only institution with the ability to stem the rise in extremism and insurgent violence and unsurprisingly so, since Pakistan

¹⁴ C. Raja Mohan is a former member of India's National Security Council. Mohan goes so far as to argue that the proliferation of insurgent violence is an indicator of state strength, because Pakistan's military establishment promoted the growth of these organizations C. Raja Mohan, "What if Pakistan Fails?" 2005; Stephen Cohen. 2002. "The Nation and the State of Pakistan." *The Washington Quarterly* 25:3, Summer; Stephen Cohen, 2005. "The Idea of Pakistan." Washington: The Brookings Institution.

historically commits nearly a quarter of its annual budget on the military.¹⁵ Even Pakistan's numerous coup d'etats have been seen as a stabilizing feature of the army. While some argue that each coup has brought Pakistan to the brink of state failure, others argue they can be seen as a check-and-balance against Pakistan's corruption-ridden and inconsistent civilian governments, as an external force able to impose clear warnings.

In the post-Musharraf era, General Ashfaq Kayani, the new Chief of Army Staff after the November Emergency, has reversed a number of destabilizing policies. For example, the military has traditionally involved itself in all areas of political control in the state, and under Musharraf, had infused over a thousand of its own staff within the bureaucratic system. Educational facilities, specifically universities, had their governance structures stacked with military personnel, resulting in revisionist curriculum and controlled access to information.¹⁶ Since Kayani, the military has recalled all its personnel from civilian posts in the government and bringing all communications between military personnel and politicians to a stop. His track record thus far has been impressive, since for the first time in Pakistan's history, in 2008, the military budget was presented to and negotiated in the National Assembly. Further, General Kayani has made a point to confirm his commitment to the democratically-elected Zardari government, unequivocally communicating this sentiment within Pakistan media and his US counterparts thus stemming any speculation of another coup d'etat in Pakistan.

With this track record, ISAF can be relatively assured that the Pakistan army will contribute to the further stability of the country, its current mission in Swat a good example of their ability to conduct the military mission with little outside support. While the US has offered financial assistance to Pakistan's army during this conflict, Canada's position remains more constrained. For example, in May 2009, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs Peter McKay suggested that the government would be

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 52-55.

¹⁶ Shaun Gregory and James Revill. 2008. "The role of the military in the cohesion and stability of Pakistan," *Contemporary South Asia* 16:1, March. 39-61; Owen Bennett Jones. 2002. *Pakistan: Eye of the Storm*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

willing to send military aid to Pakistan. McKay's public rumination received a drastic response from the media and a number of constituents, resulting in repudiation from the PMO stating that this will not be put into policy.¹⁷

One option that Canada, along with its ISAF partners, could exercise is sending a naval fleet to conduct exercises in the Indian Ocean, resulting in a number of positive outcomes. First, it sends a tacit message to the Islamist government that it is both present in the region and willing to militarily engage if need arises. This being said, naval deployments have the benefit of being able to remain at arms-length, and are not seen to be as threatening as army deployments. Second, using naval assets does not pull away from Canadian and ISAF efforts in Afghanistan. With Canadian rotations already wearing thin, many ISAF forces can not afford the person-power it would require to deploy their armies. Third, this strategy has been used within the South Asian context previously, using naval assets to implicitly support partners in the region. During the 1971 war between India and Pakistan, the United States sent a naval fleet into the Bay of Bengal, to indicate to India that it was present and in support of Pakistan.¹⁸

Engaging India

The naval option into the Indian Ocean is also a useful mechanism to engage India over the crisis in Pakistan. Arguably, India has one of the largest stakes in maintaining a stable Pakistan, acutely aware that state failure will be counterproductive to stability in South Asia. Since the Soviet war in Afghanistan, India has recognized that the growth of extremism in Pakistan and Afghanistan has resulted in increased violence in Kashmir. Further, Pakistan's strengthened terrorist and insurgent groups have been the cause for further attacks on the Indian mainland, such as the November 26, 2008 attacks in Mumbai.

From Pakistan's perspective, one of the largest destabilizing features is its dependency on the

¹⁷ CBC.ca, 2009. "Foreign Affairs contradicts MacKay on arms sales to Pakistan." May 21. <<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2009/05/21/mackay-pakistan-nuclear.html>>

¹⁸ Sumit Ganguly, "Wars without End: The Indo-Pakistani Conflict," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 541, Small Wars, September 1995, 177.

Indian threat as its *raison d'etre*. There are two important reasons why an India-centric military is destabilizing to Pakistan. First, as long as Pakistan sees India as a threat, it will continue to prioritize spending on its conventional military over economic growth and social services. Pakistan consistently spends a quarter of its yearly budget on military expenditures and half its budget on debt-financing, which leaves very little money for internal development and state stability.¹⁹ For example, many argue that the rise of the Taliban could have been slowed with investment in the public education system, as more and more families became dependent on free education offered by radicalized mosques. Second, the army's preoccupation with India has led to some questionable decisions about the internal crisis. Even with a strengthened insurgency on Islamabad's doorstep, estimates have determined that at least 70 per cent of the military remains on the Indian border, resulting in an understaffed counter-insurgency fought by airstrikes and inefficient ground raids.²⁰ The inefficiencies of this India-centric focus is exemplified by the army's response to the tribal backlash against the Taliban. Without an adequate number of ground troops, the army initially supported the actions with helicopter gunships sent by the army, the army was unable to identify their targets, shooting indiscriminately instead and making locals weary of further government contribution to their uprising.

India's contribution to resolving the Pakistan crisis must be carefully engaged. Obviously, there is an anti-India bias within many sectors in Pakistan, however, there have been a series of positive movements in the relationship that would indicate India's involvement would be welcome. On a humanitarian level, India could offer a contribution to the refugee crisis in the region. There is a precedent for these actions, such as the Kashmir earthquake of 2005. In light of the crisis, Pakistan accepted many offers for humanitarian aid from foreign powers including NATO's offer for soldiers and airlift capabilities.²¹ Then, a few days after, Pakistan accepted India's offer for humanitarian aid,

¹⁹ Global Security.Org. 2008. "Pakistan – Introduction"

<<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/pakistan/intro.htm>>

²⁰ In fact, even within the context of a growing insurgency, after the November 26th attacks in India, Pakistan moved 80 per cent of its airforce to its Eastern border, assuming an Indian attack was forthcoming.

²¹ NATO, "Pakistan Earthquake Relief Operation," 9 March 2006, <http://www.nato.int/issues/pakistan_earthquake/index.html> May 15, 2006.

taking into account its geographic proximity (and the length of time it would take NATO contributions to arrive), allowing Indian helicopters to cross over the Line of Control to deliver food aid. Further, India eventually donated 25 million dollars towards humanitarian aid for earthquake relief, the first financial transfer between the two states since Independence. Second, India could offer conditional guarantees to the army that it will not take advantage of its weakened political system by threatening its border areas. In a goodwill measure, brokered by NATO forces, India could make a gesture by pulling a number of soldiers from the border area. While a realist response to this scenario would question the utility of engaging India, there are efforts that can result in small victories for Pakistan's army against Islamists.

Why These Actions Will Make an Important Difference: What NATO Forces Should Consider

There are two major reasons why these efforts will positively affect both the crisis in Pakistan and NATO's ongoing efforts in Afghanistan. Both of these explanations elucidate the dynamics of the conflict, to explain how crucial a consolidated NATO effort will be to solve this crisis.

The Fight for Public Support

Anti-Americanism (extended to all Western states) in Pakistan has been one of the main pillars of recruitment for the Taliban movement. By establishing the Zardari administration as an anti-Islam, pro-American government, the Islamist campaign has managed to delegitimize the national government while increasing its own support. Therefore, the paradox for ISAF forces is to simultaneously support the civilian government while not reinforcing the public relations campaign that has undermined Zardari's support. An apt example of this paradox is a protest held at the beginning of June in Islamabad. Wearing signs with the words "Go Taliban Go" (read: Go away, Taliban), a few hundred protesters gathered to support the government's actions in Swat. At the same time, protesters also yelled the phrase "Go America Go" indicating that Western actions in Pakistan are seen as negatively

as the extremists.²² In Pakistan, the balance of public opinion will be highly dependent on the army's success in the current battle.

The activities of the last few months have treaded the fine line of public support. On one hand, agreeing to the Sharia deal in Swat has had the result of neutralizing grassroots support for the government. Government in negotiation with Taliban members has signalled to the population that resistance will not be supported from the centre. Coupled with accusations of government corruption and the out-of-control humanitarian crisis, government leaders face the challenge of maintaining their public support. This being said, with the latest successes by the Pakistan army, and increased awareness of Taliban atrocities in Swat have provided the government with new life, as locals have begun to denounce the religious extremism associated with Taliban rule.²³ Therefore, Canada's recommendations to its NATO counterparts must carefully consider this paradox when driving policy in South Asia.

Fragmentation of Insurgent Groups

A second consideration that is important for Canada and NATO to address the current governance crisis in Pakistan are the divisions in Islamist groups themselves. There is a tendency amongst Western commentators to group militants, insurgents and terrorists under a single-heading, without taking into account the divisions between tribal, ethnic, terrorist and Taliban-related groups in Pakistan. At the organizational level, there are important distinctions between the Pakistan and Afghanistan-based Taliban, the tribal groups in Waziristan and Baluchistan, and terrorist organizations such as Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) and Hizb-ul-Muhjadeen (HuM). One of the most relevant divisions between these groups include their differing mandates vis-a-vis their vision of Pakistan. For example, while Pakistan-based terrorist groups and the Pakistan Taliban share 'foreign policy' objectives such as violence against India, unification of Kashmir with Pakistan and Islamization of South Asia, terrorist

²² LA Times, 2009. "Gutsy Pakistan protesters march against the Taliban." 31 May. <www.latimes.com>

²³ For example, in early June, tribal leaders responded to a mosque bombing by forming peoples-militias and attacking Taliban strongholds. Reuters India, 2009. "Villagers fight Taliban after Pakistan mosque blast" June 7. <<http://in.reuters.com/article/southAsiaNews/idINIndia-40141420090607?sp=true>>

organizations like Lashkar-e-Toiba see Pakistan as a *platform* to conduct these objectives, and historically, their foreign policy objectives have been supported by the state as an alternative mechanism in the war against India.²⁴ Conversely, the Taliban see the current state of Pakistan and its leadership as their main antagonist, their objectives geared towards the conversion of Pakistan into a Taliban-ruled Islamic state. The divisions between these groups has become so acute that in early 2009, members of the terrorist groups Lashkar-e-Toiba and *Hizb-ul-Muhjadeen* were placed on Taliban hit-lists, demanding these terrorist groups leave Taliban-controlled areas in Swat, Dir and Mehsana Districts.²⁵

A second division between Islamist groups identifies differences between tribal groups and their Taliban counterparts. Tribal groups have long fought against the Pakistan state for their autonomy, and have used their current relationship with the Taliban to support their nationalist goals. Many tribal leaders have found the strategic “branding” of a singular Taliban heading useful as it allows them to simultaneously maintain control over their specific regions, the most susceptible regions include Waziristan, the Taliban stronghold and their organizational centre.²⁶ Yet, the imposition of Taliban, seen as foreigners by tribal leaders, has resulted in a significant backlash, stalling Taliban advances by proscribing recruitment and violence in their regions.

In early June 2009, for example, tribal leaders organized a '*lashkar*' (Urdu: 'army') as a response to a Taliban-organized suicide bombing in a tribal mosque which killed 40 people. Located in Upper Dir district, villagers surrounded two Taliban strongholds and killed 14 militants in revenge. The army's response to this counter-movement has been supportive, sometimes even arming the ad hoc

²⁴ Observers of the military's use of these actors have labeled the war-fighting “low-intensity conflict”

²⁵ Some have suggested that the 26 November Mumbai attacks were executed by a number of organizations, but this does not discount their internal differences. Rediff News. 2009. “In Swat, Pakistan army faces 1971-like situation.” 11 February. Available at: <http://www.rediff.com/news/2009/feb/11in-swat-pakistan-army-faces-1971-like-situation.htm>. (March 15, 2009). As reported by the South Asian Terrorism monitor, “Maulvi Nazir from South Waziristan, Hafiz Gul Bahadur from North Waziristan, Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, Maulana Farooq Kashmiri and Syed Salahuddin have been included in the hit lists of the Taliban.” South Asian Terrorism Portal. 2009. “Punjab Time Line – 2009.” Available at: <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/Punjab/timeline/index.html>. (March 15, 2009).

²⁶ Abbas, Hassan. "Increasing Talibanization in Pakistan's Seven Tribal Agencies." *Terrorism Monitor* V 18 (September 27, 2007): 1-5.

lashkar groups. Yet, the most significant element of this counter-movement has been its grassroots support. A sudden rise in popularity for both the government and the army have suggested that the grassroots shifted support away from the Taliban, when faced with their brutality in areas like Swat. Similarly, there are important divisions between the leadership, organization and objectives of the Pakistani Taliban (self-titled Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan or TTP) and their Afghanistan-Taliban counterparts. The TTP did officially not exist until December 2007 when they were created as umbrella group for several Islamist groups within FATA and the NWFP under the leadership of Baitullah Mahmud. Until this most recent conflict, the Afghanistan Taliban used Pakistan's refugee camps and training centres in the tribal areas as their safe haven, and were largely unconcerned with conflict in Pakistan.

Of course, Canadian policy makers should not underestimate the extent of the ties between these organizations. That being said, the divisions between Islamist groups in Pakistan indicate a more complex picture of their contribution to the stability of the state. The Taliban are not a unified or organized entity, nor are the terrorist groups within the state, each with their own objectives, leadership and territorial claim.

Conclusion

While NATO policy makers have recognized that Pakistan and Afghanistan are not separate foreign policy issues, there continues to be a tendency to treat Pakistan as epiphenomenal to the Afghanistan conflict. Yet, the case of Pakistan shows that there is an important interplay between several levels of analysis that lend to both its stability and instability, particularly in understanding Islamicism and insurgency in the state. Those that attempt to make a definitive conclusion about Pakistan's trajectory ignore the obvious complexities of the case. As a policy brief for the Canadian Permanent Representative to NATO, recognizing these complexities allows for a number of policy options that can create security in even the most difficult conflicts.