

**Atlantic Council of Canada 2009 Graduate Student
Essay Contest**

Scenario 1

**“The Collapse of Pakistan and the NATO Response: The
Intersection of Interests”**

By Graham Brown

University Of Guelph: MA Candidate in Criminology and Criminal Justice Policy

gbrown03@uoguelph.ca

16 Harrow Ct. Guelph, Ontario. N1G 2Z1

519-265-5986

Friday, June 19, 2009

This paper is divided into two sections. The first part, an examination of the current state of Pakistan, will be reflected on in order to understand the geopolitical, social, and militaristic stages that such a scenario would play itself out on. Understanding the political, historical, and geographical relationships between the country and its allies, clarifying international policy initiatives with respect to Pakistan's struggle against the insurgency, and analyzing the cultural and social climate of the country pre-collapse will provide an understating of the context NATO members would have to appreciate in order to address the scenario of a failed and nuclear unstable Pakistan. Moreover, understanding such a context is to understand the implications, threatening or otherwise, for NATO's mission in Afghanistan. The second section will describe the efforts, both short and long term, employable to address both the results of and causes for the collapse of the Pakistani government. There will be an attempt to appreciate international interests in responding to the scenario as well as interests particular to Canada and its contribution to ISAF personnel.

On the heels of a major military offensive against Taliban fighters in the Swat Valley region of Pakistan, Defence Minister Peter Mackay iterated - somewhat to the chagrin of Pakistani officials – that Pakistan is the most dangerous country in the world¹. In April 2009, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told a congressional panel that Pakistan poses a “mortal threat” to world security, accusing Pakistan of doing little to address the Taliban insurgency that has secured somewhat of a foothold in the mountainous region of Swat. Soon after these comments, Pakistan launched its long awaited offensive. While such comments might have ruffled feathers amongst Pakistani officials and fueled a frightening but implausible pro-Taliban takeover scenario (a scenario largely discredited by international political risk assessors Eurasia Group, as well as various academics and political analysts)² Mackay's and Clinton's intent to draw attention to the extreme importance of this country to the stability of the region cannot be undervalued. In a comment that would likely be paralleled by Clinton, Mackay stated that “clearly the impact on the mission in Afghanistan is based on the ability of the Taliban to recruit, to regenerate, to re-arm and then move that insurgency back inside the borders of Afghanistan.”³ In 2007 Prime Minister Harper created the Independent Panel on Canada's future role in Afghanistan to assess, analyze, and review Canada's commitment to Afghanistan and to explore and recommend effective actions to Parliament and the government. Citing Pakistan's “domestic

¹ This remark was also made by United States nuclear proliferation expert Joe Cirincione

² As Chair of International Relations and Terrorism Studies at King's College Anatol Lieven remarked “Fears of an Islamic state or loose nukes will only come about if the west makes policy mistakes.” Such events would only transpire as a result of U.S. military action in Pakistan, states Lieven. Still, the historical presence of extremists and sympathizer elements within the Pakistani army – such as Hamid Gul, former head of Pakistan's ISI - persuaded IAEA Director-General Mohammed El Baradei to remark on the risks of internal chaos to nuclear safety.

³ The Globe and Mail - Friday, May 15, 2009.

political upheavals and recurring crises”, the Panel urged Canada along with its NATO allies to adopt a diplomatic strategy to assess the region’s risks and involve all regional actors in developing a strategy for a stable environment. Thus, while the “impending doom” rhetoric may be somewhat farfetched, it is clear that Pakistan - a country beset by corruption, years of political instability, regional infighting, and a porous border with Afghanistan - is undoubtedly seen as a vital component to NATO’s success in Afghanistan. A collapsed Pakistan, one where the prospect of nuclear armed terrorists is not only plausible but likely, would present NATO members with daunting, unprecedented tasks: the unity of Alliance interests perhaps being the most challenging.

NATO-Pakistani Relations

Significant advances in NATO-Pakistani diplomatic and military relations have been made in recent years, growing steadily since NATO’s supply and aid efforts following Pakistan’s devastating 2005 earthquake. Increased relations have included regular political dialogues and visits from Security Council members, as well as the development of the Tripartite Commission: a joint forum on military and security issue that involves representation from the NATO-led ISAF mission, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Coincidentally, the 2007 opening of the Joint Intelligence Operating Centre at ISAF headquarters in Kabul provided not only a centralized and streamlined operations center for ISAF, Afghani, and Pakistani border security and intelligence issues, but also demonstrated the resolve and determination of the various contributors to cooperate and work side by side towards common goals of regional stability and security. This is of great significance, for until recently getting Afghanistan and Pakistan to sit together in a civil fashion has been an elusive goal for the international community. The relationship between Islamabad and Kabul has historically been one of mutual mistrust and suspicion: Afghanistan president Hamid Karzai guarded against Pakistan’s resolve to defeat the Taliban, and Pakistan apprehensive regarding Afghanistan’s close relationship with India. While this relationship is fresh and likely tenuous at best, it nonetheless provides an important milestone for potentiality and cooperation in the region. Moreover, the cozying up of the two countries – a feat likely unachievable without the influence of the international community - provides an example of NATO’s willingness and desires to extend meaningful help to Muslim populations, a goal with importance that cannot be understated. The effects are twofold: on the one hand, the mutual trust building and cooperation (if continued) between Afghanistan and Pakistan will allow each country to step forward in developing and refining its own national interests; moreover, the security and stability of each country (national interest of each) is essential to the success of the ISAF mission and can only help in beginning to create stability in the region. What may remain influential or be salvageable from these recent diplomatic advancements in the proposed scenario is hard to assess without additional information. Still, a collapsed Pakistan would likely not wipe the slate clean, and the strengthened diplomatic ties and personalized relationships created between the traditional adversaries may prove invaluable in addressing the longer term goals of restoring stability to the region.

Context

Pakistan's less than impressive history dealing with the Taliban has left the international community slightly more reserved about Pakistan's resolve to deal with the insurgency. Between 2001 and 2007, the U.S. gave Pakistan nearly \$10 billion dollars in aid; most of which was spent by the military addressing the threat from India, rather than the Taliban. As a result, the army, while skilled and well equipped for a war against India, is highly untrained in counter-insurgency operations and tactics. Moreover, Pakistan has on several occasions supported Islamic militants in their efforts against India in Jammu and Kashmir.⁴ Active Taliban and al-Qaida commanders operate within Pakistan's borders, organizing operations not only against the people and military of Pakistan but also against the ISAF in Afghanistan, and have done so largely unencumbered by Pakistani forces. As a result of increased pressure (tough talk from many U.S. officials) and billions of dollars in promised foreign aid (largely U.S.), Pakistan is only now taking on this vital fight with the Taliban. However, the country, with its 500 000 plus member army, has repeatedly asked its allies, including Canada, for military aid, requesting similar technologies (such as unmanned drones) to those being employed by the ISAF in Afghanistan. In what may or may not have been a political move, Pakistani defense minister Ahmad Mukhtar has stated that Pakistan cannot win the battle against the Taliban without international assistance (although they have adamantly opposed international troops). Germany, the United States, Turkey and Canada have all committed aid for the humanitarian fallout of the battle in Swat Valley, where some 3 million civilians were displaced in the spring of 2009. While the U.S. has been selling weapons and other militaristic resources to Pakistan, as well as providing counter-insurgency training assistance within Pakistan's borders, Canada is not willing to lift its 11 year embargo and do the same. Instead, in recognition of Pakistan's appeal for help, Canada will resume an officer-training program with Pakistan that had ended along with arms trading when Pakistan tested a nuclear weapon in 1998. While concern may be with traded arms falling into the wrong hands, the geopolitics are more complicated. India has historically been opposed to Canada's – or any other nations- aid towards Pakistan, and the strong pressure from India may likely be the reason that Canada has no plans to change its policy. Still, Pakistan has a history of accepting large aid packages and training assistance from the international community, only to rebuff officials when they ask to see exactly how the money is being spent. One would hope and expect, however, that any reluctance to aid Pakistan based on the (in)adequacy of progress reports would be overshadowed by the need to help the country stabilize and reinforce itself in the name of global security.

Pakistan's current polity is somewhat of a mishmash of various parties, some left over from Musharraf's era and others seeking to take advantage of the current weakened administration. The events leading up to Musharraf's dishonorable discharge from Pakistani

⁴ Hussain Haqqani (2004) "The Role of Islam in Pakistan's Future." The Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, *The Washington Quarterly*, 28:1 pp. 85–96.

office contributed greatly to a great divide between the people of Pakistan and their government ; the in-between is now a growing void where trust and public confidence have never had much traction. As Shuja Nawaz notes, Pakistan is a county which does not yet know what it wants to be; crippling remnants of the preceding militaristic regime have yet to be dismantled or replaced, resulting in an administration which often lacks consensus and organization. It is a country where “provincial governors, local commanders and rich warlords are powers unto themselves”⁵ reinforced by deep ethnic, religious, and provincial-cultural relations. There is its relatively weak civil service – one that may not be trained, equipped, or even motivated to counter an insurgency. A high unemployment rate, especially for youth ages 12-25, as well as nearly half of school aged children not going to school are realities that cannot be dissociated with the insurgency; in the words of Pakistan’ U.S. Ambassador Husain Haqqani, such problems create “fodder” for the Taliban. There is no U.N. mandate and a significant amount of anti-Americanism and anti-Westernism permeates Pakistani society. As Anatol Lieven (2008) notes, Islamic fundamentalist parties have never gotten more than 15% of the vote in Pakistani elections, the number usually hovers around 10%. Moreover, as long as other state and political forces – especially the military – remain cohesive, a revolution carried out by such a small base of radicals is simply not possible. Still, the country has been described as a major hotbed of radical Islamist ideas and groups, whose military does not seem to have any preoccupation of ceding power to secularist politics.⁶ The question relevant to this paper, then, is should these institutions become permeable to influence of Islamic fundamentalists, what measures could NATO take to ensure that a) the military remain cohesive; b) nuclear sites remain protected; and c) the flow of insurgents back into Afghanistan be controlled?

NATO and the Threat - Responding to the Emergency Situation

Immediately, NATO constituents would need diplomatic efforts on building a clear consensus of common goals and objectives. An appreciation of both the immediate and long term implications of the devastating scenario would be necessary in determining these goals. Immediate implications would include the increased threat to the ISAF, Afghani Army, Afghani civilians, and the potential destabilization and collapse of Afghanistan should the insurgents effectively pursue their goals. The second immediate implication would be the security of the nuclear sites in Pakistan. Thus, there are both communal and independent interests for NATO members to pursue. That is, while protecting ISAF personnel in Afghanistan, protecting Afghani civilians, preventing further destabilization of Afghanistan, and preventing further collapse (economic, social, democratic, militaristic) of Pakistan, would likely represent collective interests , the nuclear scenario would also invoke a heightened determination of NATO members to pursue and appreciate their own national interest of security. Of course, the two are

⁵ Fareed Zakaria in Newsweek. June 25, 2007. “The Real Problem with Pakistan”.

⁶ Hussain Haqqani (2004) “ The Role of Islam in Pakistan’s Future.” The Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, *The Washington Quarterly* , 28:1 pp85-86.

linked, in that a stabilized Afghanistan (and now Pakistan) is as much for the security, unity, and economic interests of Afghans as it is to the security interests of the NATO members, in varying degrees, attempting to stabilize it.

Even though the limited information provided may suggest that the scenario is beyond diplomatic intervention, various heads of defense should attempt to begin negotiations with the new radical leader of Pakistan. Moreover, concerted efforts should be made to intercept further fracturing of military still loyal to Zardari. This would require rigorous communication efforts between the dispersed elements and perhaps influence and reassurances from the top commanders and generals still loyal to Zardari's Pakistan. Even if this failed, it is important to keep in mind that not all radical Islamists are similar in ideology and determination, nor are they one cohesive unit with a common command structure. Thus, there may be steps that could be taken to negotiate and therefore downsize military action; something that both the Obama administration and Afghani government have been attempting (with success) in Afghanistan. However, such efforts would not wholly suffice in this scenario. What follows is an opinion of some of the fundamental components to assessing an Alliance response to this emergency situation.

National and International Interests

The war in Afghanistan, and potential conflict in Pakistan, constitutes a framework where national interests and international solidarity concerns intersect. This is the ultimate test for policy makers in an increasingly globalized world: as J.L. Granatstein wrote in 2007 "it is sometimes difficult to be clear about national interests in a complex world." Although not a new challenge for NATO, similar to Afghanistan, it would be an enormous challenge to balance Alliance interests with national interests in the instance of nuclear armed terrorists. Convincing Alliance members to collectively pursue a clear consensus on multilateral efforts for humanitarian reasons is one thing; convincing certain allies, in particular the United States, not to act unilaterally may border on futility. What must be appreciated is that the United States has significant interests in a stable, democratic, terrorist-free Pakistan that may go beyond the interests of some Alliance and non-Alliance members. U.S. policy interests in Pakistan are wide, not limited to counterterrorism, infiltration into Afghanistan, infiltration into Kashmir, domestic terrorism, narcotics trafficking, and nuclear weapons and missile proliferation.⁷ Moreover, trade and foreign investment between the two countries has been growing considerably in recent years. Thus, the U.S. has numerous and substantial national interests in Pakistan: interests that it would, and should, seek to protect.

What Canada's NATO ambassador must also appreciate is that the threat of nuclear armed terrorists – and the more diffuse and less identifiable/predictable these threats have become – have persuaded the United States, and others, to review and solidify their policies

⁷ Kronstadt, K. Alan. (2005) CRS Issue Brief for Congress – Pakistan-U.S. Relations. Congressional Research Service: Library of Congress.

regarding WMD and state-sponsored nuclear terrorist policies. The United States' 2006 National Security Strategy is quite unambiguous in explaining its deterrence and prevention mandates: with regard to the transfer or movement of fissile material from or to rogue states or terrorists, the use of military force is advocated to capture, kill, and prevent. The 2006 National Military Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction reiterates these tenets: "that the U.S government must be prepared to prevent – through force if necessary – nation states from supporting or facilitating WMD acquisition and/or use by terrorists."⁸ Similarly, both the U.K. and France have issued policy statements that reflect their acknowledgement of state sponsored WMD terrorism as national security threats.⁹ While all three countries have reviewed nuclear deterrence strategies, France's doctrine has been recognized as "groundbreaking and momentous in its implications."¹⁰ Among the EU/NATO associate's enhanced nuclear deterrence strategies have been to divulge its development of more employable (range, accuracy, flexibility) nuclear options and its clear assertion that state sponsored terrorists are at risk of pre-emptive strikes and nuclear retaliation.¹¹ France is also the lead nation in nuclear defensive (protection) and offensive (stand-off precision strikes) efforts; an asset which may prove valuable to allied interests (if such strikes would be sanctioned) or France's national interests. Moreover, France has consistently made itself clear that France alone will decide when and how to use its nuclear capabilities as it sees fit with regards to its national interests. India would also undoubtedly feel an extreme threat by the prospect of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of Islamist anti-India militant groups, and their desire to pre-emptively strike would likely be of real concern for the international community. A comprehensive appreciation of Indian reaction to developments in Pakistan should be a priority for the UN and NATO members. Assurances would have to be made to India – they would likely need to see a rapid response - to ameliorate this nuclear power's justifiable fears of anti-Indian militants' access to nuclear weaponry.

Thus, the likelihood of unilateral state action against state sponsored terrorism (nuclear or otherwise) is a real possibility, and one that may not be limited to the United States or NATO alliance members. While Canada has been thus far been immune to a terror attack, we have been threatened on several occasions, and RCMP and CSIS officials have thwarted several terrorist attempts, including a 2006 attempt to attack prominent targets in Toronto and Ottawa. Pursuing our national interest of security must also be a priority for Canada; it is a preoccupation mitigated by the fact that member nations share a fundamental assessment of the terror threat. As Jeffrey Lightfoot notes, NATO's engagement in security enforcement operations that impact alliance

⁸ National Military Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction, 13 February 2006, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, DC 20318, p. 19, available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/pdf/NMS-CWMD2006.pdf> .

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ David Yost. "France's New Nuclear Doctrine." *International Affairs* 82, 4 (2006) 701–721: The Royal Institute of International Affairs 2006

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Jeffrey Lightfoot. "NATO Interests vs. National Interests." May 12, 2009. Found at http://www.acus.org/new_atlanticist/nato-interests-vs-national-interests.

members unequally will heighten this tension between national and allied interests.¹² Still, *pursuing* a consensus, providing viable, malleable, multilateral solutions to emergency situations must be a priority for Alliance members, for it is a test of the Alliance's enduring relevance. Perhaps this scenario would be the ultimate test.

Responding to the flow of troops

To be forthright, any reaction to the proposed scenario would be fragile without an increase in resource contributions from various Alliance members. That is, with the influx of insurgent fighters crossing the border into Afghanistan, current ISAF forces would not be able to sufficiently contain the situation. That President Obama ordered an additional 21 000 troops to Afghanistan early in 2009 is testament to the reality that current numbers are insufficient for the current situation, let alone the potentially thousands of insurgents that would likely come from Pakistan. Canada has also been vocal regarding some countries' commitment or lack thereof to the mission in Afghanistan. In February of 2009, Defence Minister Mackay told Chatham House – an institute of independent analysis and debate on world issues – that there needs to be a “frank discussion about the future of NATO.” Mackay's remarks can be seen as veiled “suggestion” for countries such as France and Germany to enhance their contributions to the mission; an issue of particular significance as Canada is set to end its combat mission in Afghanistan in 2011, and as Canada's roughly 2800 soldiers are engaged in highly important missions fundamental to the success of the ISAF mission, most notably the training of Afghani military forces and the Provincial Reconstruction Team efforts in Kandahar. While President Obama has committed the U.S. troops, there is apprehension that should other countries not step up their contributions, the NATO mission in Afghanistan would largely become a U.S. mission, a development that neither the U.S. nor Canada would desire nor support. As NATO spokesperson James Appathurai stated “Our concern in NATO is that all the other allies step up their efforts so it's not just the U.S. doing it all and the rest of us looking on and telling them how they did.” Now, one would expect that this escalation of instability and imminent threat would undoubtedly propel certain members to enhance their contributions as the situation has potentiality to erupt into not just a regional battle of epic proportions but also the global threat posed by nuclear armed terrorists. Thus, the first step Canada's NATO Ambassador should take would be to pursue and legitimate a consensus among members that these developments have significantly altered NATO's mission in the region, and such alteration will undoubtedly require additional troops on the ground, including additional forces to counter the insurgent heave from Pakistan.

Washington has consistently maintained that eliminating militant havens in the border region of Pakistan is vital to success in thwarting the threat from the Taliban and al-Qaida. Pakistan has now begun this task. Should the Pakistani government cease or lose this contest, it would be up to NATO forces to not only drive the surge back into Pakistan but eliminate the threat. Some analysts maintain that the drive of Pakistani (and Afghani) militants back into

Pakistan risks further destabilizing the country. It is not fool-hearted to maintain, however, that a collapsed, terrorist-supporting Pakistan is at little risk of further destabilization. In this scenario, the ISAF cannot simply drive the forces into Pakistan – there must be significant militaristic efforts within the border region to permanently cease this flow of insurgents.

Would such an action provoke this young jihadist leader or risk significant backlash from Pakistani civilians, thereby strengthening the jihadist cause? Indeed, longer-term solutions to the failed state would have to address the issues which has made Pakistan such a culturally, ethnically and religiously divided country, not least of which include education and job creation. However we must keep in mind that a significant number of Pakistan's population does not support the Taliban or other Islamist agendas. The desire for a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Pakistan is real amongst the majority of the 173 million Pakistanis – a desire that may paradoxically be enhanced by the country's collapse. Coupled with civilian revulsion to insurgents' use of public bombings and other terror tactics, the Taliban and other militants will likely never have access to a substantial pool of 'recruits', even if, in this scenario, ISAF pursued militants into the border regions of Pakistan.

Responding to the nuclear threat

In 2002 NATO Military Authorities prepared a Military Concept for Defence against Terrorism to be approved by the North Atlantic Council. After Council approval, the Concept was endorsed by Heads of State and Government at the Prague Council, November 21 2002. The Concept, its impetus being the terrorist attacks of September 11 2001, was a strategic and analytical assessment of military operations that would be invoked as defense against a terrorist threat. Now, there is no international conceptualization (especially from the U.S.) of the Taliban as a terrorist organization, although they often carried out acts of terrorism.¹³ The reluctance to brand them as such is partially political: it stems from the notion that there are moderate and radical Taliban constituents, the former being the ones whom ISAF strategically engage with diplomatically as opposed to militarily - a terrorist brand would eliminate this demarcation and the ISAF and Afghani government would lose a powerful negotiation tool. Nevertheless, as a result of the 2002 Prague Summit, NATO has at its disposal new strategies and resources to address state sponsored nuclear terrorist threats. For example, in October of 2006 a new multinational joint force, the NATO Response Force (NRF), reached operational readiness. Designed for the rapid deployment of some 20 000 land, air, sea, and Special Forces troops, the NRF is a unit highly skilled and trained in defending populations, territory, and other forces. While possible missions may include non-combatant humanitarian and evacuation efforts, the

¹³ Taliban is a organization rooted in Pashtun ethnic groups – in Afghanistan Pashtun numbers are around 15 million; in Pakistan Pashtuns number 2-3 times of those in Afghanistan at around 40 million. Therefore there is a huge recruiting pool. Of course, there are divisions amongst the Pashtuns and most are angered by their association with the Taliban, whom they consider pariahs and nullifiers of Pashtun values.

force is highly trained in counter-terrorism and includes special operations forces comprised of chemical, biological, and nuclear units. Thus, the force can be used as an initial entry force to stand-alone or as a supplement or facilitator to additional follow up forces. One option would be to send this force into Pakistan to help guard the nuclear sites. There have been suggestions in the media, information substantiated by American intelligence sources, that the U.S. has a detailed contingency plan for infiltrating Pakistan to secure its nuclear arsenal in the event of an extremist takeover: the ultra secret military commando unit “JSOC” has purportedly been training for such an event. The NRF proposal is an alternative to unilateral action that incorporates alliance interests of global peace and security as well as members’ interests of national security. Surely, even if consensually approved, it is an option in which logistics are wrought with complexity and substantial hurdles.

Such an option of cooperation would prove tenable *only* in a situation where (a) members of Pakistan’s National Command Authority - those who ultimately control the nuclear sites - were uniformly still in allegiance with the government and (b) lines of communication are open to negotiate the coordination of assistance. In reality, however, gaining access to these sites would constitute a marvel of diplomatic ingeniousness. Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal has been described by more than one general as the “crown jewels” of Pakistan. The country has consistently emphasized the need to keep the location and number of its nuclear arms a secret; secrecy has always been a key component of Pakistan’s nuclear strategy.¹⁴ In Pakistan there is a real, perhaps understandable, suspicion of unilateral American action. The hope would be that with cooperation from deposed leader Zardari, the faithful elements in Pakistan, as well as international players (perhaps influence from China, for their close historical relationship with Pakistan), some form of agreement could be reached to allow the NRF access to these sites to assist in protection, as a supplementary force to the Pakistani loyalists. Coordination with the Strategic Plans Division, the branch of the Pakistani government designated to keep its nuclear arsenal safe, would be the first step in attempting to address the threat and potential assistance. It is in this compound, headed by Khalid Kidwai, a well respected U.S. backed three star General, where the lives of thousands or millions may be at stake. According to a recent New York Times article, the General claims the safety and security of the sites are “foolproof”: nuclear sites are currently well guarded, complete with thousands of defense troops, high-tech security and surveillance equipment, bullet-proof vehicles and impenetrable walls. Kidwai maintains - very diplomatically - that even if the government were to be incapacitated, protections and safeguards

¹⁴ David Albright (2001). “Securing Pakistan’s Nuclear Weapons Complex.” A paper commissioned and sponsored by the Stanley Foundation for the 42nd Strategy for Peace Conference. Institute for Science and International Security.

¹⁵The New York Times, January 11, 2009. “Obama’s Worst Pakistan Nightmare” by David E. Sanger.

are strong enough to prevent the arsenal from slipping out of the hands of its protectors.¹⁵ Of course, in the collapse scenario, the weight of such comments would prove only as practical as the intelligence and communication gathered by NATO forces to support them.

Conclusion

While the collapse of the Pakistani government and the subsequent potentiality of nuclear armed terrorists is likely only in the event of a multitude of policy mistakes from the international community, reflection on the conditions that would lead to the scenario are nonetheless invaluable. As U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates stated in the spring of 2009, Pakistan is the key to success in Afghanistan; it is likely the key to stabilizing much of the south-east Asia. The prospect of a “loose” nuclear arsenal is a terrifying scenario, for its implications are immense, widespread, and devastating. Such an event would push nations’ diplomacy, resolve, and patience to extreme levels just as it would likely strain and test international relationships. Not only would the scenario further threaten the success of NATO’s mission in Afghanistan, threaten to set off a heightened nuclear arms race in the mid east (especially in Iran), present a significant threat to nuclear India, embolden radicals around the world, and set off a chain reaction of security issues and policy adjustments throughout the international community, it would more likely than not give birth to a situation which would require NATO, the UN, and other international united/independent bodies’ attention for many years if not decades. Still, an insurgency cannot be defeated by military force alone. Efforts to help stabilize Pakistan, collapse or not, should include pains to: strengthen the civil society, mainly the police force; help build and support secular political parties; support democratization; and influence to end massive corruption. Perhaps Reza Aslan is correct in stating that Jihadism is a social movement - it is a global ideology, not a national one. Because it is a form of identity, the long-term solution may be to address the grievances of the movement and make the movement irrelevant by co-opting such grievances into society¹⁶ - a difficult endeavor indeed. Nevertheless, the short term resolutions to this emergency situation are also inherently difficult, complex, and multifaceted – just as the conditions which gave rise to it were. Like Afghanistan, this scenario would be a test for NATO’s resolve and legitimacy as a peace enforcement authority. Only, the nuclear threat has the potential to launch NATO into an unprecedented internal battle for the balance between Alliance and national interests.

¹⁶ Reza Aslan. (2009) “How to Win a Cosmic War: God Globalization and the End of the War on Terror.” Random House Canada.