
Reaping the Whirlwind: Pakistani Counterinsurgency Campaigns, 2004–2010

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The success of President Obama and NATO's escalation of the war in Afghanistan depends to a considerable extent on events in Pakistan. The two countries share a long and notoriously porous border that permits violent extremists to pass back and forth with impunity. Both countries are home to tens of millions of Pashtuns (called Pathans or Pakthuns in Pakistan) straddling the border. Pashtuns comprise the vast majority of insurgents and terrorists in both countries. Pakistan serves as a sanctuary for a number of Afghan insurgent groups including Hezb-i-Islami (led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar), the Haqqani network, and elements of the Afghan Taliban. Pakistan has decades-long relations with Afghan insurgents, and demands a place at the table when Kabul, Washington, and Brussels finally agree to negotiations with the Taliban.

Pakistan suffered greatly from the global financial crisis of the past few years; its shaky civilian government struggles with past and present corruption, inflation, a powerful and popular military, dependence on foreign aid, and electricity outages. As if these difficulties were not enough for any country in transition from military rule, Pakistan continues its expensive and dangerous nuclear-armed face off with congenital archrival India, and wages an increasingly brutal and deadly war against its own Taliban. A peaceful and prosperous future for Pakistan depends on its capability to degrade, dismantle, and ultimately defeat its own domestic Islamist insurgency as a precondition for long-term development.

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We thus critically analyze two interrelated questions in this article, the answers to which will determine the prospects for Pakistani success in defeating its insurgency. First, how did the Pakistani military fare in its counterinsurgency campaigns from 2004–2008 under then–President Pervez Musharraf? And, second, what does the present and future hold for Pakistan’s efforts under current President Asif Ali Zardari to root out its armed militants? We devote one section of the paper to each period. Each section highlights key trends, the factors that matter most, and persistent barriers to progress. Each section closes with a summary answer to the question of Pakistani counter insurgency (COIN) effectiveness during the period under review. The overall conclusion consists of a prescriptive “to do” list for Pakistan—lessons learned from our analysis—designed to ensure that the country stays on a path toward domestic and regional peace and prosperity.

BUSH, MUSHARRAF, AND CAMPAIGNS AGAINST THE PAKISTANI TALIBAN, 2004–2008

Pakistan and India fought three major wars and one minor war since partition in 1947. The Pakistani military has, consequently, directed the vast majority of its resources, men, and equipment toward what it considers the existential threat from India. The Pakistani Army’s conventional force structure, doctrine, and training—a legacy of its rivalry with India—is the

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first of several factors that hindered its counterinsurgency campaigns during the Musharraf era. Three of the four Indo–Pakistani wars were over control of Jammu and Kashmir. The Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) has long helped train and arm militants bent on causing trouble for India in the latter’s portion of Kashmir.¹ It appears that the ISI may have been behind

the brazen and deadly 2008 attack on Mumbai as well.² Along with the ISI (and with funds and equipment provided by the United States and Saudi Arabia), the Army played the central role in training, organizing, and supplying the mujahedin fighting against the Soviets in Afghanistan from 1979–1989.³ Pakistani intelligence remained in Afghanistan during the years of civil war that followed the Soviet withdrawal, and what became the Afghan Taliban grew with ISI support from the Pashtun madrassas

and refugee camps in and around Peshawar. Direct Pakistani logistical, command, and control support was an essential element in the Taliban's seizure of power.⁴

There is widespread agreement that this support continued after September 11, 2001, despite denials by the Musharraf government.⁵ Some suspect that this support continues to this very day, which the Zardari government similarly denies.⁶ Islamabad's past support for the Afghan Taliban based in Pakistan, and its current policy of non-interference with them, is a second major factor that hinders comprehensive, nationwide counterinsurgency operations. U.S. General Stanley McChrystal (commander of American and NATO forces in Afghanistan) and other observers believe that Mullah Omar and his senior leadership can be found in or around Quetta, in the Baluchistan region of Pakistan. According to journalist Ahmed Rashid, an expert on the Afghan Taliban: "Quetta is absolutely crucial to the Taliban today. From there they get recruits, fuel and fertilizer for explosives, weapons, and food. Suicide bombers are trained on that side. They have support from the mosques and madrassas."⁷ Officials in Islamabad deny this claim as well. "From our judgment, there are no Taliban in Baluchistan," said Major General Athar Abbas, Pakistan's military spokesman.

Three facts made it inevitable that Islamabad would be on the frontlines of George W. Bush's War on Terror in the wake of September 11, 2001, whether it wanted to be or not. First, Pakistan was the Afghan Taliban's direct sponsor and diplomatic supporter. Second, the Taliban regime provided sanctuary to al-Qaeda both before and after 9/11. Third, there was consensus that al-Qaeda's leadership slipped across the border into Pakistan following its escape from Tora Bora in December 2001.

President Musharraf quickly enlisted in President Bush's war, even if the majority of his countrymen did not: "According to a Gallup poll of Pakistanis in urban areas [taken shortly after the 9/11 attacks], 83 percent sympathize with the Taliban rather than the United States and 82 percent consider Osama bin Laden a holy warrior not a terrorist, although 64 percent also believe the attack on the United States was an act of terrorism."⁸ Pakistanis' affinity for political Islam, and sympathy for fugitives like bin Laden is thus a third crucial factor that restricts the country's counterinsurgency efforts; there was little public support for battling violent jihadis during this period.

General Musharraf condemned terrorism of any sort in 2002, including that by Pakistani militants in Indian Kashmir. He promised to reduce support for the madrassas that grew exponentially under General Zia-ul-Huq. A number of militant groups, formerly in (at least covert)

favor, were outlawed. Assets of terror groups were impounded, and a number of alleged al-Qaeda members were turned over to the United States for a bounty. Terror attacks were on the rise, including one against a U.S. consulate in June.

Madrassas that teach jihad (a minority), and that send their students to fight in Afghanistan or Pakistan, constitute a fourth factor that complicates Pakistani counterinsurgency efforts. Most madrassas simply provide free Islamic education to poor children. With funding from the Gulf states during General Zia's reign, the number of madrassas exploded. These religious schools compensated to an extent for the weak state of Pakistani public education. But a small number of madrassas adhering to Wahabism and other ultraconservative schools of Islam veered away from their educational missions and toward political Islam. This trend was exacerbated first by the Islamic resistance to the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, and secondly by the Indo-Pakistani dispute over Kashmir. Even though this new brand of Islam differed significantly from the open, inclusive Sufism-inspired variety practiced in Pakistan, politicians found the Islamists and their political parties useful pawns in their struggles for power in Islamabad. General Musharraf issued an order in 2002 that required all madrassas to register with the government, banned foreign funding, and made subjects besides Quran study compulsory. Musharraf's order did not fully solve the problem.

By 2003, the growing U.S. presence in Pakistan, coupled with the invasion of Iraq, fostered increased anti-American sentiment. Afghan Taliban elements were said to be "Talibanizing" the remote regions of Pakistan to which they fled. The United States and Pakistan worked closely together throughout 2004 and 2005 to hunt down alleged al-Qaeda operatives, despite differences over the status of the "father of the Pakistani Bomb" A.Q. Khan.⁹ An unrelated nationalist insurgency in Baluchistan—where Pakistan has one Army brigade and 40,000 Frontier Corps troops—complicated the hunt for terrorists.¹⁰

American officials pressured Musharraf to take action against Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), or "the Pakistani Taliban." Though it did not formally declare itself an organization until 2007, the group that would eventually become the TTP initially came together in 2002 in resistance to the Army's counter-terrorist "incursions" in the tribal areas. Officials in Islamabad suspect the TTP's late leader, Baitullah Mehsud, of organizing most of the suicide bombings in Pakistan in recent years as well as the December 2007 assassination of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (the group denies the latter charge; other observers believe Musharraf himself was responsible.¹¹) A January 2004 campaign against Mehsud's forces in

Waziristan did not end well for the Musharraf government. A peace agreement was signed in April 2004, followed by another agreement in February 2005. These accords had few enforcement mechanisms that would allow the Pakistani government to prevent TTP from providing support to the Afghan Taliban and are believed to have “strengthened the hand of the militants.”¹² Indeed, the agreements left the TTP in effective control of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) after the group killed some 200 rival tribal elders.¹³

In March 2006, the Pakistani Army mounted another campaign against militants in North Waziristan, a possible hiding place for Osama bin Laden. After heavy fighting, a third peace accord was signed in September. Its terms permitted foreign fighters “who respected the law” to remain in the area.¹⁴ When asked about bin Laden, General Shaukat Sultan responded that “he would not be taken into custody as long as [he] is being like a peaceful citizen.” Shortly thereafter, the Pakistani ambassador to the United States contradicted the general.¹⁵ Criticism of the deal led George W. Bush to claim: “When [Musharraf] looks me in the eye and says, ‘The tribal deal is intended to reject the Talibanization of the people and that there won’t be a Taliban and won’t be al-Qaeda,’ I believe him, you know.”¹⁶ TTP and other militants abandoned that agreement following the Army’s assault on the Red Mosque in Islamabad and unleashed a series of suicide attacks on security forces.¹⁷ The Army launched yet another operation against Mehsud in January 2008, eight months before Musharraf’s resignation. Within twelve days, the “authorities were struggling to revive the peace accord.”¹⁸ Musharraf’s willingness to strike deals that appeased the insurgents and terrorist groups—in contradiction to the pledges he made to the United States and international community to confront these organizations—was thus a fifth factor working against the effectiveness of Pakistani counterinsurgency campaigns.

Analysis of the Bush-Musharraf Years

We identified five factors that stood in the way of serious and successful Pakistani counterinsurgency operations from 2004 to 2008: (1) conventional warfare force structure and mindset; (2) the ISI’s long history of support for and use of the Taliban and other Afghan militants as tactical assets; (3) hostile public opinion; (4) radical madrassas and mosques that indoctrinate, shelter, and provide insurgent foot soldiers; and (5) Musharraf’s failure to uphold his pledges to the international community to confront and not concede to the terrorist groups. Taken together,

these five factors make clear that the primary purpose of the halting, half-hearted, and failed Pakistani counterinsurgency campaigns was not so much to actually defeat these groups as it was to mollify George Bush and the United States.

Musharraf's lip service to Bush paid off—he avoided public criticism of his illegitimate military regime, and he received over \$10 billion of American aid. Already by the fourth quarter of 2002, the Bush administration cared

..... far more about the pending invasion of Iraq than it did about Afghanistan or Pakistan. The Bush strategy was to rely on warlords in Afghanistan, and the slippery Musharraf in Pakistan, rather than devote sufficient U.S. military resources to the region. Meanwhile, the enormous sums of aid that the United States supplied to Musharraf were not dedicated to building Pakistani counterinsurgency capacity as intended, but

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..... were redirected to conventional forces on the border with India and towards domestic economic subsidies aimed at reducing opposition to military rule. Musharraf's lack of commitment to confronting insurgent groups in the FATA and the North–West Frontier Province (NWFP) permitted the Afghan Taliban to regroup and return, and the Pakistani Taliban to organize, train, and plan. With the failure of the Bush and Musharraf strategy, the problem fell into the laps of their successors.

OBAMA, ZARDARI, AND PAKISTANI COUNTERINSURGENCY, 2009-2010

The year 2009 marked a significant change in both the U.S. and Pakistani approaches to counterinsurgency operations in Pakistan. The Obama Administration proved more willing to put pressure on the Pakistani government to forcefully confront militants in NWFP and South Waziristan. Meanwhile, the insurgents' use of extreme violence against Pakistani civilians buoyed domestic popular support for military confrontation. However, as will be revealed in the history that follows, Pakistani counterinsurgency strategy still faces many obstacles: insurgents continue to be able to broadcast their messages by radio and flee from Army attacks into more remote areas; Army campaigns have produced massive refugee flows that the government has been unable to handle; and U.S. policies such as the use of private contractors and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs)

have prompted popular backlash. Furthermore, while the Zardari government has been more willing than its predecessor to confront militants fighting against the Pakistani government, it remains reluctant to confront the Afghan insurgents who seek shelter from U.S. and NATO attacks in Pakistan's mountainous border regions.

The picturesque Swat Valley in the NWFP—sixty miles from Islamabad—has been the site of another on-again, off-again Pakistani campaign against Islamist militants. The Army's 2009 offensive there was at least partly aimed at deflecting the frequently expressed American concern that the militants could gain control over one or more of Pakistan's 60–100 nuclear weapons.¹⁹ Elements of what would become the Tehrik-i-Nafaz-i-Shariat-i-Mohammadi (the Movement for the Enforcement of Islamic Laws), led by cleric Maulana Fazlullah, began anti-government attacks in Swat as early as January 2003, which intensified in 2006 and 2007. Fazlullah, a charismatic preacher, became known as the FM Mullah or Radio Mullah, for the fiery radio broadcasts used to spread his message.²⁰ "They control everything through the radio," said one Swat resident. "Everyone waits for the broadcast."²¹ It is not clear why Pakistani security forces do not more effectively block insurgent radio broadcasts.

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Fazlullah's forces terrorized Valley residents through beheadings, public executions, girls' schools burnings, and destruction of government outposts. The militants established Islamic courts throughout dozens of the Valley's villages. By February 2009, as much as 80 percent of the district was under militant control.

Rather than confront the militants by force, the Zardari administration agreed to a cease-fire with the insurgents that granted them significant legal and political control over the Swat Valley.²² The deal led to loud complaints and concern in the West.²³ U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was harshly critical of the Zardari government in her testimony before Congress in April 2009. The agreement to permit the militants to enact so-called Islamic law in the area was akin, she said, to "abdicating to the Taliban."²⁴ Related cajoling followed in May from Richard C. Holbrooke, President Obama's special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan: "We need to put the most heavy possible pressure on our friends in Pakistan to join us in the fight against the Taliban and its allies."²⁵

The deal met with outrage in Pakistan too after a video of a public flogging in Swat appeared in March. Growing revulsion against the Pakistani Taliban's outrageous behavior is one of the major factors underlying improved public support for the Army's counterinsurgency offensives. The flogging victim was a seventeen-year-old girl accused of "adultery;" she cries for mercy from her Taliban tormenters on the tape.

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She had engaged in intimate relations with no one, she said. She received no trial, just a summary judgment. Her actual offense was to refuse to marry the man approved for her by her brother. Condemned by prominent Pakistani clerics, and protested across the country as a "perversion" of Islam, the episode added internal pressure for further action by the Zardari government against the militants.²⁶

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 Meanwhile, unsatisfied with control of just the Swat Valley, militants spread into the regions of Buner, Dir, and Shangla. The failure of this cease-fire agreement to curb militant activity and the popular backlash to their brutality seems to be a turning point in Pakistani counterinsurgency strategy. There have been no similar deals with the Taliban since this episode.

Instead, the Army launched a new offensive against the Taliban in the Swat, Buner, Dir, and Shangla districts. Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani called the offensive in Swat "a war of the country's survival."²⁷ The unprecedented and strong anti-militant rhetoric of the Zardari government has been a critical factor in distinguishing the current phase of counterinsurgency operations from the Musharraf years.

Fighting raged throughout May as the Taliban resisted fiercely.²⁸ Militants engaged in house-to-house fighting in Mingora, the largest city in the region.²⁹ The fighting created as many as two million refugees—the greatest number in Pakistan's history—from across Swat, Dir, and Buner.³⁰ The sheer number of refugees overwhelmed the government's capacity to meet their needs, and sparked harsh criticism for the Army's failure to foresee the crisis. Some ended up in camps run by radical Islamic charities aligned with banned militant groups (as was the case for over a million Afghans during the eighties and nineties).³¹ Other refugees, upon returning to their homes, found the Taliban still in control of their villages.³²

The next big test of the government's campaign against the insurgency came in South Waziristan, home of the TTP. Troops began to mass along the FATA border in June 2009, following the successful operation in Swat.³³ Daily air strikes pounded suspected TTP hideouts, and attempted to choke off supply lines.

"We are trying to shape the environment before we move in for the fight," said General Athar Abbas, the chief military spokesman. "We are also trying to minimize the loss of life. Ours is the only institution that can stand up to the militants, but public support is crucial. When we do move in, it must only be against Baitullah and his group. We cannot afford to provoke a tribal uprising."³⁴ That meant the campaign would not target Pashtuns residing in Pakistan but fighting in Afghanistan—a perennial irritant in United States-Pakistan relations.

In June, Shahab Ali Shah, the political agent (highest government official) for South Waziristan, issued an order to crack down on "hostile or unfriendly" members of the Mehsud tribe. Human rights activists complained that the order penalized tribe members who had no relationship with the Pakistani Taliban.³⁵ TTP leader Baitullah Mehsud—who ultimately gathered thirteen Taliban factions under his command—was killed by a missile fired from a US drone in early August 2009.³⁶ The TTP leadership settled on Hakimullah Mehsud as his replacement.³⁷ American officials urged General Kayani, the Army Chief of Staff, and General Pasha, the ISI chief, to take the fight immediately to the Pakistani Taliban in South Waziristan in August.³⁸ But the combination of the Swat refugee crisis, a hope that the TTP would splinter following Baitullah's death, and "an overstretched military unwilling to let its guard down against India" led to delays.

The Army's offensive did not begin until mid-October, and only then following a series of deadly and brazen terrorist attacks, including one on the Army's headquarters in Rawalpindi, and another at the Pakistan Aeronautical

Complex in Kamra.³⁹ The suicide attacks continued during the offensive.⁴⁰ Two blasts at the International Islamic University in Islamabad led to a nationwide closure of all schools the third week of October.⁴¹

Early reports from the offensive in South Waziristan found heavy fighting, uncounted civilian deaths, and desperate refugees fleeing the

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area.⁴² A detailed analysis published in September 2009 was skeptical about the prospects for success of the Pakistani Army in the tribal areas. The Army would (1) not have sufficient regular and paramilitary force ratios called for by counterinsurgency doctrine; (2) not have sufficient local militia forces to hold cleared areas; (3) require coordination with the civilian government with which it had poor relations; and (4) require American support which might prove politically disadvantageous. The analysis predicted the chance for success as “low in the short to medium term ... absent a dramatic change in threat assessments or new inducements.”⁴³

The increased U.S. aid package (Kerry–Lugar) could be seen, perhaps, as a new inducement for the South Waziristan and follow-on offensives. And the rise in suicide bombings and other attacks across the country, as well as relentless American pressure, may have forced a revised threat assessment. A Pakistani intelligence official claimed that the government would follow up with a campaign of economic and political reform in the region.⁴⁴ Pakistan reportedly asked the United States to refrain from the use of UAVs, popularly known as drones, during the campaign.⁴⁵ The United States did not heed the call for restraint: by autumn 2009, drone-fired missiles hit some forty targets in North and South Waziristan.

President Obama had ordered an increase in the number of drone attacks upon taking office. The pace grew to about one attack per week in the tribal areas by summer 2009. Both the U.S. military and the CIA rely heavily on the drones—controlled by remote pilots in Nevada and Virginia and armed with infrared cameras, guided bombs, and Hellfire missiles—for reconnaissance and targeted killings. CIA Director Leon Panetta referred to them in May 2009 as “very precise, ... very limited in terms of collateral damage and very frankly, ... the only game in town in terms of confronting and trying to disrupt the al-Qaeda leadership.”⁴⁶

Several analysts and officials challenge Panetta’s claim. “The more there are unilateral targeted strikes in Pakistan,” said Seth Jones, a RAND counterinsurgency expert, “the higher political costs for the United States, and for Pakistan, for allowing them to happen.”⁴⁷ In testimony before Congress, McChrystal advisor David Kilcullen claimed that

Since 2006, we’ve killed 14 senior al-Qaeda leaders using drone strikes; in the same time period, we’ve killed 700 Pakistani civilians in the same area. The drone strikes are highly unpopular. They are deeply aggravating to the population. And they’ve given rise to a feeling of anger that coalesces the population around the extremists and leads to spikes of extremism... The current path that we are on is leading us to loss of Pakistani government control over its own population.⁴⁸

Pakistan’s Information Minister Qamar Zaman Kaira agreed that “drone attacks are counterproductive; they don’t produce the desired results.”⁴⁹ This was a view shared by Owais Ahmed Ghani, governor of North–West Frontier Province.⁵⁰ Only 9 percent of the Pakistani public approved of the drone strikes according to an August 2009 Gallup poll. This same poll found that 59 percent of Pakistanis considered the United States the “greatest threat” to their country.

“This is a fact that the hatred against the United States is growing very quickly, mainly because of these drone attacks,” said Makhdoom Babar, the editor-in-chief of Pakistan’s *Daily Mail*.⁵¹

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The Zardari government faces a genuine challenge in overcoming public resistance to an all-out counterinsurgency campaign, although it has made headway. Only 10 percent

of respondents believed terrorism to be “the most important issue facing Pakistan” in a March 2009 poll, and yet only 45 percent supported “the Army fighting the extremists in NWFP and FATA.”⁵² Five short months later, however, 53 percent supported such an effort.⁵³

By October 2009, the fierce debate in Pakistan over the successful passage of Kerry–Lugar (the bill that increased U.S. aid for Pakistan \$1.5 billion per year for five years) was joined by Pakistani anger over the presence of U.S. security contractors in the country, and plans for a giant new embassy in Islamabad and large consulate in Peshawar.⁵⁴ Many Pakistanis considered conditions for the new aid—including an end to support for militant groups and the exclusion of the military from politics—an infringement on their national sovereignty, and only fifteen percent favored acceptance of the new aid.⁵⁵ Military dislike for the aid package’s conditions was so strong that it resulted in a public protest.⁵⁶ Sharp questions over plans for the new diplomatic outposts, and U.S. requests to import more armored vehicles, combined with a strong public reaction against the presence of allegedly aggressive plainclothes Dynacorps security on the streets of Islamabad. Rumors that Blackwater (Xe Services) personnel were operating clandestinely in Baluchistan and elsewhere in the country, later confirmed, led some Pakistanis to claim that they were next in line, following Afghanistan and Iraq, for American occupation.⁵⁷

The Pakistani Army made considerable progress in South Waziristan in October and November of 2009, taking the symbolic towns of Kotkai

and Makeen. The Army did not flatten Kotkai with artillery, as they had other towns in earlier campaigns, perhaps reflecting a new sense of counterinsurgency savvy. However, some 200,000 locals were made refugees in the first week of operations, and government aid centers were once again

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The TTP responded with escalated bombings, including an attack on the Inter-Services Intelligence office in Peshawar.⁵⁸ The spate of bombings—designed to put pressure on both the military and citizenry—may have, once again, backfired for the insurgents. November 2009 Gallup poll found 51 percent of respondents in favor of and 13 percent opposed to the government’s offensive.⁵⁹ Typical of conspiracy-minded Pakistanis, while a majority supported the action, only 25 percent of respondents said the Taliban was responsible for the offensive with 35 percent blaming the United States and 31 percent the government. More importantly, the poll indicated the possible beginnings of a shift in Pakistani perceptions of ownership of the war. Thirty-seven percent of respondents now considered it Pakistan’s war, compared to only 23 percent the year before. Nevertheless 39 percent still saw it as the United States’ war. While the poll represents progress in the battle for popular opinion, the Zardari government has a long way to go.

The Army’s success in South Waziristan led to American calls for Islamabad to do more: to move into North Waziristan, attack the Haqqani network in the tribal areas, and flush out the Quetta Shura (Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Omar’s council thought to be hiding in the Balochi capital). The pending surge in Afghanistan had Islamabad worried that more Taliban fighters would turn up in FATA and NWFP (now known as Khyber-Paktunkwa). Pakistani officials also worried that the enhanced American commitment might not last long enough, sparked by Secretary Gates’ statements that the U.S. mission was not “open ended,” and by Secretary Clinton’s claim that “we’re not interested in staying in Afghanistan. We have no long-term stake there. We want that to be made very clear.”⁶⁰

Both National Security Advisor Jones and General McChrystal sought to ease Pakistani concerns. Washington tried to achieve a delicate balance between convincing skeptical Afghans that its presence did not constitute an occupation, and convincing skeptical Pakistani officials that it would stay long enough to “finish the job,” and that they thus no longer needed to use armed proxies in Afghanistan.

President Zardari declared at the end of October that Pakistan’s counterinsurgency efforts would not end with South Waziristan. “[T]here was no turning back from it,” said Zardari in response to concerns expressed by Secretary Clinton that Pakistan was selective in its targeting of insurgent groups, “until the complete elimination of the militants.”⁶¹ Surely this is what the Secretary of State wanted to hear, but the Pakistani Army’s actions have been inconsistent. In mid-December 2009, the Pakistani military refused U.S. demands for action against Haqqani in North Waziristan due to its concern for continued influence in Afghanistan following the inevitable American withdrawal.⁶² Within a month, however, it was reported that the Army had agreed to go after al-Qaeda assets in the Shawal and Datta Khel regions of North Waziristan.⁶³ Exactly how much further Pakistan is willing to go with its counterinsurgency efforts still remains to be seen.

ANALYSIS OF THE OBAMA-ZARDARI STRATEGIES TO DATE

We identified five factors that constituted persistent barriers to Pakistani counterinsurgency progress during 2009–2010, and that unless rectified will bedevil security forces in the future: (1) insurgent use of radio broadcasts to intimidate and control locals; (2) failure to adequately meet the needs of civilians temporarily displaced by counterinsurgency offensives; (3) militant flight from cleared districts (and their possible return); (4) inadequate recruitment of local militias to hold areas cleared of militants; and (5) the problematic role played by U.S. UAVs in the tribal areas. These barriers are not insurmountable, but will require concentrated attention and resources to overcome.

Security forces need sufficient radio signal jamming equipment to keep even mobile Taliban mullahs off the air. Humanitarian evacuation and relief, while expensive and logistically tricky, is not a mysterious enterprise. Future counterinsurgency operations must be preceded by adequate preparations for protection and care of the displaced population. The problems of militant flight and local militias are related. Without provision for a sufficient holding force in areas cleared of insurgents, these same militants are

likely to return. And without holding, there can be no building. Tribal area leaders and analysts expressed concern that the government, by failing to follow up a series of army operations with rehabilitation aid and economic development, is virtually inviting the Taliban back. "It is not just a question of clearing out the militants," claimed Aftab Khan Sherpao, a national legislator and former cabinet minister who lives in Charsadda. "The whole fabric of society has collapsed in this region, and it will take years to revive. Even if you weed out these people, the job has just started."⁶⁴ Sherpao and other local politicians complained that there had been little government-funded reconstruction after the spring 2009 offensives that drove the Taliban out of the Swat Valley and Bajaur Agency (less convincingly in the latter case). They said no officials had come to survey the homes and shops destroyed by the fighting, or pay the promised compensation.

In response to these criticisms, Prime Minister Gilani announced on November 8, 2009, that the government would launch a massive program to reconstruct and develop the tribal areas following completion of the military operations there. Promised U.S. aid to the region has stalled—only \$150 million of \$750 million allotted over five years has been spent since 2007—due to ongoing fighting, bureaucratic delays in both the United States and Pakistan, and the limited government presence there.⁶⁵

While it appears that Islamabad and Washington have worked out a *modus vivendi* on the use of drones in the tribal region, important questions remain. The central questions concern the legality of remote-control extrajudicial killings, and the associated civilian death toll. The Obama administration claims—in a welcome break from the silence of the Bush administration on the matter—that its UAV program proportionally targets only combatants, and is thus legal under the laws of war. The American Civil Liberties Union and the United Nations are less certain, and requested additional information and explanation from Washington. It is now evident that "beheading" the TTP (it's occurred three times thus far), while surely disruptive, does not cause the collapse of the insurgency. And if the 140 civilians killed for every terrorist killed ratio—as claimed by official Pakistani sources—is anywhere near accurate, such results can hardly be deemed proportionate.

The five problems identified from 2004–2008 have not been completely solved; there is, however, detectable progress on several of them. While the force structure and approach of the Army is changing to better conduct counterinsurgency operations (thanks to American materiel), such shifts often take a generation or more to fully take hold. The Army still offers a *de facto* sanctuary to Afghan insurgents based in the

tribal areas or hiding elsewhere (Quetta and Karachi). Public opinion is changing to be more supportive of the campaigns against the TTP but the Zardari government has yet to convince broad majorities of the necessity and wisdom of its counterinsurgency policy. Zardari has continued Musharaff's crackdown on some of the most egregious militant-allied groups hiding in mosques and madrassas. Finally, the Obama administration appears more concerned about the accountable expenditure of U.S. aid to Pakistan than its predecessor, as reflected in the several conditions attached to Kerry–Lugar.

There is additional good news for Pakistan about its counterinsurgency operations of 2009–2010. Once it brought its full power to bear, the security forces rather easily dislodged the Taliban from its strongholds. Thus, the Army proved competent at the “clear” phase of counterinsurgency operations. Islamabad ought not to have waited until Pakistanis (and the world) had seen the Swat flogging video before pushing back hard against armed militants. And yet the outcry over the video helped shift public opinion against the jihadis, and forced the government and the Army to continue their operations against the TTP. Nor can the Army wait, as it did for two months before the South Waziristan operation, to be prodded into action by suicide bombers. Effective counterinsurgency requires military forces to set the operational tempo to keep insurgents off balance.

The Taliban's brutality in Swat and elsewhere discredited it in the eyes of a significant sector of the public. There has been no further (public) deal-making with the Taliban since the disastrous decision in February 2009 to permit Swat Valley insurgents to institute “Islamic law.” Much tougher counter-militant pronouncements emerged from Islamabad; this is essential to win public support and to maintain the morale of the armed forces. Finally, the United States at long last put its logistical support effort for Pakistani counterinsurgency campaigns on a wartime footing.

COUNTERINSURGENCY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE ZARDARI GOVERNMENT

Five complex and difficult COIN-related tasks for Pakistan emerge from our analysis. A successful outcome of the country's existential struggles with terrorists and insurgents depends on completion of these tasks.

The first task is continued application of the counterinsurgency model developed for the 2009 offensives, especially the “hold” and “build” phases in all the areas cleared of militants.⁶⁶ The 2009–2010 operations

are a significant improvement over past static, conventional approaches. No region of the country, however remote, should be off limits for Army counterinsurgency operations. Pakistan must eventually confront Afghan insurgent groups based in the frontier region. It may be true, as argued by Pakistani Army leaders, that Islamabad must deal first with homegrown jihadis bent on chaos and destruction in the Islamic Republic. This divide-and-conquer strategy is, as we have seen, borrowed from the British Raj. But Pakistan has shown little interest in going after its former Afghan clients. Years of American pressure on both Musharraf and Zardari to wipe out the sanctuaries has had virtually no effect in altering Pakistan's hedging strategy. Islamabad's dependence on foreign largesse, however, may provide the United States and other large donors with the leverage needed for Pakistan to confront Hekmatyar, the Haqqanis, and Mullah Omar.

Security forces must maintain sufficient armed presence—directly or indirectly through loyal tribal militias—to prevent infiltration and return to areas once cleared. Failure to hold areas cleared of violent militants will prevent reconstruction and future development. New F-16s, reconnaissance drones, and smart bombs as promised in early March 2010 by the Obama administration are arguably necessary.⁶⁷ They are, however, not sufficient as the problems of Pakistan's frontier areas are primarily political-economic, and not military. The TTP and other insurgent groups play to the real and enduring grievances many Pakistanis, especially in the tribal areas, have against feudal landlords, corrupt officials, and regional strongmen.

Fiscal constraints on Islamabad ensure that the cost of holding and building in Swat, Waziristan, and elsewhere will be borne by foreign donors. At the same time, the aid programs themselves (especially in the tribal areas) require improvement.⁶⁸ "Holding" and "building" includes the complete rehabilitation and reintegration of the nearly three million Pakistani civilians displaced by the military campaigns of 2009–2010. Homes, schools, medical clinics, and businesses must be rebuilt; jobs created (especially for military age males); infrastructure improved; and hope for the future engendered. The success of counterterrorism efforts also requires greater emphasis on reforming, strengthening, and improving the nation's police force.⁶⁹

The second task is to enlist the aid of important domestic constituencies—especially mainstream clerics, and the print and broadcast media—in the fight against militants. At present, too much of the media and too many clerics can be seen as part of the problem rather than as part of the solution. It is unlikely that initiatives like the \$50 million media buy in Pakistan planned by the Obama administration will "build America's

brand" (as hoped) rather than be seen as mere propaganda by listeners and viewers.⁷⁰ The Zardari government must convince the public that domestic terrorism and insurgency is indigenous (rather than the work of the CIA or New Delhi), and constitutes an urgent and serious threat to the nation. This is both a matter of blunt talk now, but also of much needed improvements in the Pakistani public education system.⁷¹

The third task is to make progress settling long simmering political and development disputes with Balochi nationalists and others in the restive province. In December 2009, Prime Minister Gilani announced the withdrawal of some Army units from the province, a willingness to talk with all exiled Balochi leaders, and a jobs program.⁷² Foreign donors, again, will have to step up to provide Islamabad the resources to address Balochistan's myriad problems (including police corruption, abuses, and mutinies).

The fourth task is to stabilize civilian rule in the country. This is a long-term political-economic project with multiple, interrelated components. These include improvement in the human rights situation in the country, especially in regions torn by strife; firmer civilian control over the military; resolution of the thousands of official corruption cases;⁷³ fixing the broken energy supply and water provision systems; civil service reform;⁷⁴ bringing inflation under control; fully integrating tribal areas into Pakistan (renaming the NWFP is a step in the right direction); and reforming feudal land tenure and cozy local business-government arrangements. Police and intelligence officials must also shut down madrassas and charities linked to the training pipeline for aspiring Western jihadis.

The fifth and final task is for Islamabad to commit fully to its talks with India (restarted in February 2010).⁷⁵ It must completely and forever cease its support for the Muslim terrorist groups active in Kashmir and elsewhere in India—New Delhi's major demand. The diplomatic benefits for Pakistan of peacefully addressing one of the world's thorniest territorial disputes will be joined by the opportunity to redeploy for counterinsurgency duty the massive forces currently guarding its border with India. In return, it might expect some reassurance from New Delhi regarding the growing Indian presence in Afghanistan, and that the status of Kashmir might eventually be settled through democratic means.■

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