



# ORF Discourse

Vol.3 • No.2 • March 2008

Published by Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi

## Does the War on Terror Strengthen the Idea of Pakhtoonistan?

SAEED NAQVI

*In his four decades as a journalist, Saeed Naqvi has resisted punditry from the editor's cubicle. Almost all his journalism has been in pursuit of the dictum "seeing is believing". He has remained the quintessential reporter. When, for instance, troops landed in Sri Lanka, Indian Peacekeepers in Somalia, Haiti, Southern Lebanon, Rwanda, Namibia – the list goes on – he was there, either with his notebook and pencil or with a TV crew. He was the first journalist to interview Nelson Mandela, within hours of his release. Fidel Castro, Yitzhak Rabin, Hashemi Rafsanjani, Prince Hasan, Hosni Mobarak, President Carter and President Chirac are the other luminaries that he has interviewed. His unshakable belief is that India will have difficulty reaching the global high table unless Indian journalists see world events from Indian eyes. With this faith, Naqvi traveled to cover the 1978 Sino-Vietnam war, the 1989 Nicaragua war, Operation Desert Storm, the Occupation of Iraq, the War in Afghanistan, the US bombing of Libya, the coup in Fiji and numerous other flashpoints which have taken him to over 100 countries. He has written for every major Indian publication. His writings have appeared in The New York Times, Sunday Times, London, The Guardian and La Repubblica, Rome. Strangely, Saeed has not been a Pak hand largely because, he says, "Far too many Indians are riveted on the country – I can add nothing new". Persuaded by ORF, he broke the taboo and visited Pakistan during the February elections. "This tract", he insists, "is no punditry, but impressions of a footloose reporter".*

On the eve of the February 18 elections, no two people in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi were agreed on the certainty of elections taking place.

Elections cannot take place, it was argued then, because the establishment will not risk an open-ended process which might produce inconvenient results.

In the Pakistani context, the establishment has always meant the Army, the bureaucracy, big landlords and the United States. Partition of the subcontinent coincided with the inauguration of the Cold War. The US needed Pakistan during the Cold War, more specifically after the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

Except for a short spell in the '90s when President Clinton visited New Delhi for five days and Islamabad only for five hours, Pakistan has always been important in the US strategic framework.

Henry Kissinger's triangular and pentagonal power balance (Washington, Moscow, Beijing and Washington, Moscow, Beijing, Western Europe, Japan) left out huge gaps. During Jimmy Carter's presidency, his National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski sketched a different design – one of regional influentials. In this framework, the Shah of Iran, for instance, was the "regional influential" guarding the Gulf.

In the late '70s, at the height of the Cold War, during Carter's watch, the region from Iran upto Sri Lanka seemed unusually secure for the West. The Shah in Teheran, Daud in Kabul, Gen. Zia ul-Haq in Islamabad, Morarji Desai in New Delhi, Jayawardene in Sri Lanka—this was the line-up and it was favourable to the US.

The "Saur" (April) revolution in 1978, triggered by a botched-up Savak operation, first brought the two Afghan

\* Mr. Saeed Naqvi's report was completed two days after the Pakistan elections on February 18 but could not be published immediately. It seems as valid today as it was when the election results first came in. ORF has, therefore, decided to publish it as a Discourse.

***“The paradox of Musharraf’s war on terror soon began to catch up with him. How does he, in the name of fighting terror, attack those nurtured and trained by ISI into exactly the sort of Islamic fighting machine the US was out to exterminate?”***

Communist Parties, Khalq and Parcham, to power. This paved the way for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

This reversal was followed up with another. Within months, the Shah of Iran was dethroned. In 1980, Indira Gandhi bounced back, ousting Morarji Desai. A region which seemed secure for the West in 1977 had, within three years, turned insecure, warranting the appearance of the US Rapid Deployment Force to keep an eye on the Gulf. Gradually, the Commander in Chief in the Pacific (CINPAC), with headquarters in Honolulu, was divided into CINPAC and CENTCOM (Central Command) with headquarters in Macdill, Florida. Pakistan became the eastern most extremity of CENTCOM, its most powerful member. CENTCOM was in the vanguard of operations during Operation Desert Storm, the October 2001 invasion of Afghanistan and the March 2003 occupation of Iraq.

After the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the Pakistani real estate was priceless for the West. The US drew up the plans, the Saudis coughed up the money and Zia ul-Haq undertook the execution of the plan which was to have a principal and a subsidiary target: the building up of the Mujahideen to oust the Soviets and, to give the Saudis their money’s worth, stabilize an Arabized, Wahabized Islam in Afghanistan as a bulwark against Iran’s Shia Islam.

As a result of these machinations, the Soviets withdrew in 1989. Indeed, the Soviet Union collapsed. Amazingly, the US had no post-Soviet gameplan in Afghanistan. The blowback from the first Afghan conflict began to gnaw at Pakistan from the NWFP to Karachi.

The spare Jehadi talent left over from the anti-Soviet conflict was redirected to Kashmir (among other places). The departure of the Soviets from Afghanistan and the incremental rise in militancy in Kashmir can be traced to the same year – 1989.

From 1989 to 1999, Pakistan went through two Prime Ministers, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, each in various degrees involved in Kashmir and Afghanistan.

In February 1999, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee undertook a bus journey to Lahore. Since by this time both India and Pakistan were nuclear powers, the bus journey was in some small measure designed for two nuclear neighbours to reach some sort of an entente.

After seizing power in 1999, Musharraf kept up an ambivalent policy towards Kashmir (India) and

Afghanistan. It was in this mood of ambivalence that Musharraf turned up for the Agra Summit in July 2001. The summit collapsed.

Then came 9/11. Musharraf made a deft u-turn on the issue of terror. He would join the US-led war on terror in Afghanistan but with one caveat: the Jihad in Kashmir would

continue because the Pakistani establishment would not be able to cushion the backlash, nor contain the implosion, if Pakistan were to turn its back on both the militancies. Quite remarkably, the US bought this line. Ambassador Robert Blackwill told his Indian guests around his famous round table (dinners at Roosevelt House were seminars with the Ambassador as the anchor) that what Pakistan was fighting was a global war on terror. According to him, the militancy in Kashmir directed by Pakistan was the continuation of an old regional conflict.

Musharraf joined the US led-war on terror because he was left with no alternative by the Americans. Double-dealing was built into his about-turn. Since Zia ul-Haq’s days, a huge machinery had been built up by the ISI, the Army and the bureaucracy in Afghanistan and all along the border inside Pakistan, stretching from Balochistan to the end of North West Frontier Province. Some of this reservoir was coming in handy for sustaining a low-cost conflict with India in Kashmir. It could be argued that an on-going conflict was also a requirement to keep such high voltage Islam from imploding. At any rate, there was never any incentive to dismantle the Islamist furniture on both sides of the border. Rather, once an Islamic institution had been set up, it became impossible to retreat from it for fear of inviting a religious backlash.

The paradox of Musharraf’s war on terror soon began to catch up with him. How does he, in the name of fighting terror, attack folks nurtured and trained by the ISI into exactly the sort of militant, Islamic fighting machine the US in its post 9/11 rage was out to exterminate?

Since the ‘80s, the US has been directly involved in the creation of entities which became the Taleban. And the US knew that this body of fighters was being trained by Pakistan.

It is difficult to accept, therefore, that the US was not aware of the consequences for Pakistan if it were made to lead the war against al Qaeda, the Taleban and elements which have for two decades been patronized by Islamabad. Of course, there would be a backlash and the Americans knew it.

Contradictions inherent in the war on terror caused Musharraf to come into conflict with, for example, Hamid Karzai in Kabul. Karzai, his influence confined to Kabul, found Pakistani fingerprints on schemes to keep the

Taleban buoyant in Afghanistan, particularly along the Pak-Afghan border.

As the chorus rose to a crescendo in the US media and Congress that Musharraf was either unwilling or unable to engage the Taleban successfully, his indispensability or otherwise became part of the western discourse.

These question marks on Musharraf would not have been of great consequence had American anxieties not been at fever pitch on another count. Iraq had proved a universal disaster. NATO allies were also backsliding on Afghanistan, with fewer countries willing to commit troops in Southern Afghanistan where resistance was the fiercest. Two defeats casting their shadow over a US election process taking an unscripted course was not something Washington was over-joyed about. More pressure was put on Musharraf. There were a series of forays, reported and unreported, into the federally administered territories by Pakistani and US troops. Absence of detailed stories in the media was mistaken for successful operations.

The entire Pakhtoon belt from South Afghanistan upto Waziristan, already agitated since the US-led war, was now in a state of rebellion. At another time, during the Bangladesh war in 1971, the mostly Punjabi Pakistani army had cracked down on a people who were ethnically different.

The crackdown in Swat and Waziristan involved sections of the Army (22% of the Pakistani army is Pakhtoon); it required the Army to hurt their own kinsmen in an area where kinship is all.

From the days of King Zahir Shah in Kabul and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the Frontier Gandhi, the Pakhtoon psyche has never accepted the Durand Line dividing the Pakhtoons between Afghanistan and Pakistan. During the various phases of the Afghan conflict since the '80s, a two-way movement across the notional line has virtually erased it from Pakhtoon consciousness. Keeping Hamid Karzai, a nominal Pakhtoon in Kabul, as a sop to the Pakhtoon nation, has not worked. In their pursuit of al Qaeda and Taleban, the coalition, variously led by the US and NATO, has caused excessive collateral damage, unable to separate an ordinary Pakhtoon from the two objects of global wrath, namely al Qaeda and Taleban. Under US pressure, the Pakistani Army's hands have also been forced in the territory of Pakistan, in Swat and Waziristan. So, the blowback, which was earlier from Afghanistan, gradually shifted to Swat and Waziristan. As it happens, there are elements in the Pakistan Army and the ISI who are also Pakhtoons and sympathetic to the jihadi cause. The heart of the trouble is now in Pakistan itself.

The deteriorating war in Afghanistan, after the failure in Iraq, increased terrorism in Pakistan (there were 70 suicide attacks in 2007 as against six in 2006). This created deep

fear in Pakistan and anxiety in the US.

The incantation became louder that Musharraf was running with the hare and hunting with the hounds in the war on terror.

Folks in Washington and Islamabad fell into deep thought. Whatever he was doing was at great risk to himself and Pakistan. The backlash was pounding him. A more diffused power structure—a President, an Army Chief and a Prime Minister—would cushion the backlash better.

The idea was receiving support from an interested party lobbying in Washington and London – Benazir Bhutto.

In 2007 matters came to a head. Musharraf, always nimble, found himself uncharacteristically in a corner.

Since 2001, Lal Masjid had been something of an issue but in 2007 the two brothers in control of the mosque, Ghazi Rashid and Maulana Aziz, became shrill against Musharraf fighting “America’s War” against terrorism.

Masood Azhar, reared in the ISI, rallied against Musharraf. This was followed by the assassination attack on the President by Masood’s men. This, not far from where Lal Masjid is located, at the heart of official Islamabad.

Musharraf’s claim that he had cleaned up the pro al Qaeda elements in the ISI is interesting for the implicit admission. The ISI was, by his own admission, infested with al Qaeda sympathisers even when he embarked on the war on terror.

As subsequent events revealed, he had clearly held back on jihadi organisations the ISI was keen to retain.

As gruesome stories of killing of innocent men, women and children from NWFP and FATA picked up in frequency, the restless occupants of Lal Masjid accelerated their jihad in the heart of Islamabad, “cleaning the capital of sin”. This was no straightforward assault on “massage parlours” and “prostitution”. One of the founders of Lal Masjid had earlier been killed in a sectarian clash. Therefore, along with the controversy surrounding Lal Masjid, Shia-Sunni tensions also surfaced.

Crackdown on Lal Masjid was Pakistan’s Blue Star with difference: Blue Star was in the holy city of Amritsar, not in the Capital of India. Lal Masjid happened in the Capital.

The sight of lathi-wielding women shrouded in hijab gave the scene a surrealistic poignancy.

This in the city Musharraf claimed he controlled? More skeletons came hurtling down. There were 88 madrasas in Islamabad imparting Islamic education to 20,000 students from all parts of Pakistan, particularly NWFP and the tribal areas. According to the Pakistani media, the number of madrasa students in Islamabad is equal to the combined strength in religious schools in Balochistan and Pak-occupied Kashmir. Pakistani journalists noted with ironic humour that there was no cinema hall in Pakistan’s

capital city, largely because mosques and madrasas were Pakistan's entertainment outlets. This is a little unfair on Musharraf on whose watch alcohol, though still illegal, became openly available. Representation of women in the Assemblies (33 per cent) and mushroom growth of independent TV stations are also Musharraf's contribution.

The Lal Masjid eruption only aggravated the other major crisis he had set rolling in March: the sacking of Chief Justice Iftakhar Chaudhry. Chaudhry had upset Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and was seeking a redressal of 'missing persons' cases. This probe into missing persons was a very sensitive matter because 'suspected terrorists' had been handed over to the Americans for interrogation. A judicial probe would boomerang on Musharraf and the US.

Since Musharraf lost the indictment case against the Chief Justice and had to reinstate him in July, he now had two crises staring at him in the same month: a reinstated Chief Justice he hated and the Lal Masjid fallout which exposed him as incompetent.

There was a flurry of statements from the al Qaeda against the Lal Masjid operations. Baitullah Mehsud cried murder from South Waziristan, Maulana Fazlullah from Swat.

By now the lawyers were out on the streets, determined to influence the outcome of Musharraf's moves for a further extension in public life. In October came the time for his re-election.

The Supreme Court was manned by judges who were expected to favour Musharraf. They were handpicked. But the lawyers' agitation and the general decline in Musharraf's image created an impression that the judges could be influenced by the general anti-Musharraf atmosphere, suggesting that somehow an endgame was near.

Before the judges could decide the cases, Musharraf imposed an emergency. The purged judges were purged yet again.

Benazir Bhutto, cruising around Washington and London in quest of political rehabilitation in Pakistan, was promising western leaders the moon – a free hand in the war on terror and interrogation of A.Q. Khan.

Meanwhile the lawyers had closed down the courts.

The civil stir in 2007 was marked by some unprecedented elements. The street agitations by lawyers in major towns of Pakistan were possible – and this is the crux of the matter – because of the rapid spread of numerous TV news channels. It is important to note that Pakistani channels have learnt from the mistakes Indian TV made – interspersing sound bytes on serious issues with extended proliferation of trivia. All of this is explained rather timidly in India as response to "market forces", for which read advertising and TRP rating. The fact of the

matter is that the Indian media is more comprehensively managed between industry and the government.

The Pakistani news media is new with a great deal of raw energy. Advertising has not yet overwhelmed the TV screen. The result is free discussions, without ad breaks, with candour:

"I know Swat and Waziristan well. I was deputy commissioner...wonderful, hospitable people. And this President has parked tanks in the place. We are killing these wonderful people because the Americans ask us to", says Roedad Khan a senior retired Civil Servant. Or,

"Heavily equipped troops take up positions in a Swat school building. At night the school is surrounded by the local people (Pakhtoons) led by a Mullah. One of the locals yells out the name of his brother. 'We know you are there'. The brother comes out of the school. The Mullah then shouts. 'You want to kill those fighting for Islam?' he adds 'there will be no prayer on your coffin; you will burn in hell'. The entire company strolls out to surrender". This incident is repeated, totally breaching the once famous army's well earned reputation.

And all on TV.

It is realized that greater professionalism, balance, focusing on all sides of the story will gradually replace the current excitement. Until such time, the media will invite state interference. Both are bereft of experience. But the electronic media is the force opening up for the people new vistas of democracy.

This was the state of play when Benazir returned to Pakistan, having concluded a deal with Musharraf. The President, always suspect in the eyes of some in Washington, having become unacceptably unpopular in Pakistan, has to be saved nevertheless for want of a better alternative. He has to be kept buoyant until the dust settles on an unusual US Presidential election in January 2009, when a new administration sets its eyes on the world.

During the US campaign, resurgent Islamic militancy in Afghanistan and Pakistan coming on top would recoil on Republican fortunes. So, the war on terror must carry on. The way to preserve the status quo in Pakistan to sustain this war was to have an unpopular Presidency replaced by a reliable Troika: President, Army Chief and Prime Minister. It was in this framework that Benazir, corruption cases against her removed by one executive order, caught the plane back home.

But the day Benazir landed in Karachi, she escaped death, trailed by suicide bombers.

Her return caused Nawaz Sharif to put on his skates for the second time. The Saudis found it embarrassing to hold back their ward, Nawaz Sharif. He also had links with Islamists. Holding him back would have repercussions for the Saudis whose hand may not directly be in the Afghan till but whose fingerprints are all over the place. So Benazir,

already calculating the costs of being a US nominee after the Karachi blasts, now had the looming figure of Nawaz Sharif providing a sharp contrast on that sensitive issue of American affiliation.

That is why Benazir's killers are not easily identifiable. She returned on clear terms to fight the war in an atmosphere when the war on terror was inviting a terrific backlash. She began to read different scripts in her public pronouncements. This set the cat among the pigeons of the Pakistani establishment.

As soon as elections were delayed to February 18, the PPP protested. They wanted early elections to cash in on the sympathy Benazir's death would have generated.

At this juncture let us clarify a point. Benazir returned on terms accepted by the US, Musharraf and the Army. But she found the atmosphere hostile because of extreme unpopularity of the war on terror with which Musharraf and the US were associated.

So, she began to change her tune. Those who tried to kill her on October 18 when she returned with the script given to her and those who killed her on December 27 by which time she had begun to change her script – were these the same body of conspirators or do we now have more than one conspiracy, possibly one taking advantage of the existence of the other?

Could elections have been postponed after Benazir's death?

The lawyer's movement amplified by the media a hundred-fold as burgeoning civil society, the sinking credit of the Army for the first time in Punjab and Musharraf's unpopularity – all these factors could only be tackled by the ventilator of an election. Also, Americans needed election to keep the US Congress off their backs.

An election in a post-Benazir scenario was a risky proposition because an unexpected outcome could yield an unmanageable situation. This, when US involvement in wars overseas was right in the middle of US electoral politics. No, an unmanageable situation was "just not on".

Elections, in other words, would have to be "managed". Too much rigging would create mass unrest. Little wonder, the International Republican Institute, which was to monitor the elections, left citing a variety of reasons. It was not prepared to put its imprimatur on rigged elections. That was one reason they left. The other was they feared for their lives with increasing violence.

Could elections be rigged right under the nose of a hyper-active media and civil society? Since Benazir's death had opened up the election beyond the confines of a predetermined trio, could elections be postponed by a high profile assassination?

The elections on February 18 were

generally described as peaceful despite 20 poll-related deaths. A million names were missing from the voter's list. With regard to the political parties, each one of them was kept in good humour by the numbers the elections threw up. Yes, even the King's Party was consolable because election-eve atmospherics had suggested it would be routed.

The way this cookie has crumbled leaves Musharraf temporarily safe and increasingly unpopular. Nawaz Sharif will keep Punjab but allow the PPP to rule from Islamabad. Sharif will support it from outside.

Sharif fought these elections with his hands tied behind his back. He entered Pakistan late and hesitated on the elections. By the time he decided to take the plunge, it was too late for him to find suitable candidates. Despite these handicaps, his score was impressive. His supporters believe he did well because he was initially seen to have been disapproved by the Musharraf-US- Pak Army establishment. He was, after all, turned back from Islamabad International Airport. His campaign therefore had an anti establishment edge. This meant he was for the reinstatement of the judiciary (including the Chief Justice) and reviewing the manner in which the NWFP – FATA – Afghan war was being fought.

If Sharif rode on a popular sentiment, what did the PPP ride on to notch up even higher number of seats? Sympathy factor is generally cited as the reason but other allegations will surface as the post-election scene gets bogged down in controversies. And these controversies have already begun.

Will Nawaz support PPP from the outside even if the PPP does not insist on reinstating the Chief Justice?

It requires two-thirds of the National Assembly plus the Senate to initiate impeachment proceedings against the President. But Article 58 (2b) of the constitution enables the President to dismiss the National and Provincial Assemblies.

Mushahid Hussain, PML(Q) Senator, says if PML(Q) is included in the power structure, the party, including its members in the Senate where it is still in a majority, could remove Article 58 (2b). In other words, bring the King's Party into the coalition to remove the King!

Do these elections auger well for democracy in Pakistan?

Well, Pakistan's experience with democracy has been

***“Masood Azhar, reared in the ISI, rallied against Musharraf. This was followed by the assassination attack on the President by Masood's men. This, not far from where Lal Masjid is located, at the heart of official Islamabad.”***

***“Everyone in Pakistan (including the Americans) is convinced that these elections provide only temporary respite. Inherent in a situation meant for “temporary respite”, is an aversion for dramatic changes – like doing away with Musharraf.”***

sporadic from the very start. Since the ‘50s, the army has always intervened to save the country from the misrule of the democratic ruler.

The one real election in 1970 led to the break up of the country. Has that association with democracy settled into the military establishment’s psyche?

India’s first Home Minister, Vallabhbhai Patel, almost as his first act, integrated nearly 600 princely states into the union. In 1954, Govind Ballabh Pant, as Chief Minister of UP, abolished Zamindari or Land Lordism. Land reforms, though imperfectly implemented, were an article of faith with the Congress Party.

In 1969, Indira Gandhi abolished privy purses of Princes. It was harsh on the erstwhile rulers, but an egalitarian, secular, democratic order was not possible without the ruling party having a vision and the will to implement it. Democracy was being facilitated by executive action.

Pakistan has always been under the canopy of the Army which makes it resemble Turkey, not India.

Also, Pakistan has not been able to dismantle old feudal structures. The Bhutto family owns over 20,000 acres. This scale of land ownership is common. Although economists like Akbar Zaidi argue that smaller land holdings are the vogue, the fact of the matter is that other than the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) in Karachi, the class character of all other political parties is feudal.

Ironically, as Senator Mushahid Hussain points out, the “modernizing” element in Pakistan is the Army. Musharraf is the son of a clerk in the diplomatic service and Gen. Ashfaq Kayani is the son of a non-ranking soldier!

Four years ago, when a delegation of 35 Indian Members of Parliament travelled to Pakistan, the MP who became an iconic figure overnight was Laloo Prasad Yadav, then Chief Minister of Bihar. Journalist Mazhar Abbas ascribed Laloo’s popularity to the fact that “nothing of the sort has happened in Pakistan. “A keeper of buffalo herds becoming a chief minister of the country’s second most populous state is something Pakistanis cannot even dream of.” Of course, Indians may occasionally grumble about the costs of egalitarianism, but the fact of the matter is that Indian democracy has deep roots.

Yes, there is a thin, professional middle class emerging in Pakistan. And this middle class is in its outlook and

behaviour very modern, anti-religious extremism and democratic.

This middle class’s voice has been multiplied many fold by a new and an energetic media. In the din of the moment it is sometimes tempting to overestimate the scale of Pakistani democracy because of a possibly misleading decibel level of the new

combination – agitating lawyers and a noisy TV.

Indian democracy is oceanic in its scale. Pakistani democracy is like a river, progressively encroaching upon its banks but hemmed in by the Army and feudal structures.

Everyone in Pakistan (including the Americans) is convinced that these elections provide only temporary respite.

Inherent in a situation meant for “temporary respite” is an aversion for dramatic changes – like doing away with Musharraf. Or, including a confirmed Musharraf-hater like Nawaz Sharif in the new power structure in Islamabad.

Leaving Nawaz Sharif out of any power structure would be like Punjab being left out. That is why there is no great aversion to Sharif supporting a PPP-led government from the outside. This gives something of a clue to acquiescence in the “temporary” nature of the post-election scene.

Even this temporary arrangement is beset with problems. The MQM finds no space in this structure. Keeping the MQM outside “the tent” opens up possibilities of Pakhtoon-Mohajir conflict in Karachi since the Pakhtoon Party, Awami National Party (ANP), led by Asfandiar Wali, will lead the provincial Assembly and be part of the PPP-led government at the Centre. Since NWFP is in the eye of the storm (war on terror), any turbulence in the Frontier will find an immediate echo in Pakhtoon ghettos in Karachi like Al Asif. Since MQM supported Musharraf during the last five years, MQM-Pakhtoon clashes are built into the situation.

The MMA was trounced in the NWFP because of the split between Maulana Fazlur Rehman’s JUI and Qazi Hussain Ahmad’s JI, the latter having boycotted the elections. But the defeat of two Islamists who have, despite their other afflictions, not yet abandoned the parliamentary system is fraught with another danger. Their cadres could drift towards the militants fighting the Americans and the Pakistani state.

ANP has come to power on a ringing denunciation of military action against Pakhtoons who have drifted towards the Taleban. Is the ANP’s a sustainable platform when the war on terror shows no sign of abating?

Nawaz Sharif is seen as the winner on a straightforward platform – against Musharraf, for the restoration of the Chief Justice and opposed to the way the war on terror

is being fought. And, he is untainted by any American affiliation.

If he is waiting for the next round of elections to become Prime Minister, surely he is not likely to abandon the route which has brought him thus far.

If the war on terror is to continue, surely Nawaz Sharif will not be let loose by the establishment to be the spoiler. He may be in for another sojourn in Saudi Arabia. This seems unlikely because of the present virile and noisy compact between the electronic media and civil society.

A remarkable feature of Pakistan's democracy is the fact of its premier leaders, Benazir Bhutto, Nawaz Sharif and Altaf Hussain, parked in London or Dubai for extended spells.

Some of them are up to their neck with proven corruption cases. But the establishment can at will grant them amnesty selectively and let them play in the electoral arena. Does all of this induce confidence in the durability of Pakistan's democracy?

There are, therefore, doubts about Pakistan's democratic future as a consequence of these elections. These doubts are aggravated by the US and NATO-led war in Afghanistan and now inside Pakistan.

If Hamid Karzai and Musharraf join hands to fight this war, the paradoxical consequence will be Pakhtoon nationalism merging with Islamists and secessionism. In other words, their coming together will bring Pakhtoons on both sides of the border closer together.

The two leaders at cross-purposes will imply Musharraf (also the Army and ISI) not giving up an ambidextrous policy – run with hare, hunt with the hounds.

If Musharraf is sacrificed, the next political or military leader will tread the same course – on the edge. Even as the tide of anti-Americanism rises higher and higher.

As far as the Americans are concerned, it is official and open – we are helping build the Frontier Rangers over the next ten years. Oh yes, we are not leaving the country in the coming decades. China, Russia, Central Asian oil, gas and oil routes, terrorism, Chinese interests in Gwadar port, Pakistan as a crucial supply route to NATO troops

in Afghanistan—these are all compelling reasons for the US to stay. Above all, how can a nuclear Muslim country, tormented by extremists, be left unmarked?

A refrain among Pakistanis is: one enmity and one friendship have cost us very dear.

Interestingly, no political party in these elections raised anti-India or Kashmir slogans.

Friendship with India has a popular echo among the people, of course, but even among the establishment. It is to New Delhi's credit that back channels have been active despite there being a power vacuum in Islamabad.

Senior Pakistani diplomats talk of sharing intelligence to establish "trust" in New Delhi. Apparently, the matter has been discussed at the highest levels in New Delhi.

In 1994-95 the line in Washington was that the Taleban, despite their extremist ways, had brought down poppy cultivation in Helmand, and had imposed their own variety of rough order. Then CNN's Christianne Amanpour did a series of stories exposing the Taleban's maltreatment of women. The Taleban were dropped.

"The policy fell victim to gender politics in the US", says a senior US diplomat.

Implicit in such whispers is the possibility that somebody, somewhere is trying to persuade Mullah Omar to separate the Taleban, who are wholly Afghan and Pakhtoon, from al Qaeda who are Arabs, Chechens and Uzbeks. The difficulty of course is that in many places they are enmeshed, sometimes by marriage. In any case, for Pakistan to take a double summersault on this one may be a backbreaking exercise.

It was in the Frontier Gandhi's will that he be buried in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, not his hometown of Charsadda near Peshawar. His daughter asked him why he wished to be buried away from home. Badshah Khan's reply is available in video: "One day all of this area will be one – Pakhtoonistan."

Bangladesh happened in one stroke. Pakhtoonistan will not happen that way. It will fester for a long time. And it is festering sores that are infectious.

---

---

## ORF Discourse

---

---

This report was prepared after speaking to the following personalities in Pakistan:

1. Mr. Imtiaz Alam (Secretary General, SAFMA)
2. Mr. Mushahid Hussain (Secretary General, PML)
3. Ch. Shujaat Hussain (President, PML-Q)
4. Dr. Akbar Zaidi (Consultant)
5. Mr. Ahsan Mukhtar Zubairi (Secretary General & CEO, Karachi Council on Foreign Relations, Economic Affairs & Law)
6. Mr. Muhammad Adil Siddiqui (Ex. Minister for Labour, Transport, Industries, Commerce and Cooperation)
7. Mr. Ali Qazi (Head of Infotainment and Special Events, TVONE)
8. Mr. Syed Shoaib Ahmed Bukhari (Ex. Minister for Planning & Development Department, Government of Sindh)
9. Mr. Najam I. Chaudhri (Vice Chairman, Karachi Council on Foreign Relations, Economic Affairs and Law)
10. Mr. Abul Hasanat (Senior Editorial Advisor, DAWN)
11. Lt. Gen. Moin Uddin Haider (Minister of Interior in Musharraf's first cabinet)
12. Mr. Iqbal Jang Khan (District Officer Protocol City Nazim)
13. Dr. Muhammad Farooq Sattar (Deputy Convenor, MQM)
14. Mr. Syed Haider Abbas Rizvi (Ex. MNA (NA-244))
15. Dr. Ishrat Husain (Chairman, National Commission for Government Reforms)
16. Dr. Shahid Masood (Group Executive Director, GEO)
17. Amb. Anne W. Patterson (Embassy of the United States of America)
18. Mr. Sarmad Bashir (Deputy Executive Editor, The Nation)
19. Dr. Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema (President, IPRI)
20. Amb. Mansoor Alam
21. Mr. Fahim Zaman Khan (Executive Director, Dawn)
22. Amb. Aziz Ahmad Khan
23. Mr. Majid Nizami (Publisher and Chief Editor, Nawa-e-waqt)
24. Mr. Zaffar Abbas (Resident Editor, Dawn, Islamabad)
25. Mr. Najam Sethi (Editor, The Fiday Times, Lahore)
26. Ms. Sherry Rehman (Central Information Secretary, PPP)
27. Mr. Altaf Hussain (on phone) (MQM)
28. Ch. Ahmad Mukhtar (PPP leader who defeated Ch. Shujaat)
29. Azhar Abbas (Director, News and Current Affairs, Dawn News)



Observer Research Foundation is a public policy think-tank that aims to influence formulation of policies for building a strong and prosperous India. ORF pursues these goals by providing informed and productive inputs, in-depth research and stimulating discussions. The Foundation is supported in its mission by a cross-section of India's leading public figures, academics and business leaders.