



CHATHAM HOUSE

Chatham House, 10 St James's Square, London SW1Y 4LE
T: +44 (0)20 7957 5700 E: contact@chathamhouse.org
F: +44 (0)20 7957 5710 www.chathamhouse.org

Charity Registration Number: 208223

Asia Programme Meeting Summary

Pakistan: The Impact of Regional Rivalries

8 May 2012

This event was jointly hosted with the Danish Institute for International Studies.



DANISH INSTITUTE
FOR INTERNATIONAL
STUDIES

The views expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of Chatham House, its staff, associates or Council. Chatham House is independent and owes no allegiance to any government or to any political body. It does not take institutional positions on policy issues. This document is issued on the understanding that if any extract is used, the author(s)/ speaker(s) and Chatham House should be credited, preferably with the date of the publication or details of the event. Where this document refers to or reports statements made by speakers at an event every effort has been made to provide a fair representation of their views and opinions, but the ultimate responsibility for accuracy lies with this document's author(s). The published text of speeches and presentations may differ from delivery.

INTRODUCTION

This seminar was held jointly with the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) at Chatham House on 8 May 2012. The participants included academics, government officials, NGOs and journalists.

The event was held under the Chatham House Rule.

The papers presented at the seminar will be printed in a joint analytical report published by the DIIS, autumn 2012.

SUMMARY

The provinces, administrative divisions and urban centres of Pakistan present a variety of specific challenges for Pakistan that in turn have fuelled uncertainty among neighbouring countries. This uncertainty has intensified latent regional rivalries and has made Pakistan more vulnerable to conflict and militancy and to greater interference from neighbouring regional powers.

The seminar, 'Pakistan: the Impact of Regional Rivalries', sought to deepen the understanding of how regional dynamics have compounded internal challenges facing Pakistan, stemming from tribal politics, sectarianism and contested sovereignty. The discussions explored the challenges faced by six regions of Pakistan: the Federally-Administered Tribal Area (FATA), Baluchistan, Pakistan-administered Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, South Punjab and urban Sindh. The seminar also touched upon the threat to Pakistan's security, stability and progress that emanates from within its own borders. Among the points raised was the prevalence of a profound intellectual crisis within Pakistan, rooted in chronic uncertainty about Pakistan's national purpose and identity. Added to this, the state's failure to acknowledge the diversity of Pakistan's population has made the country increasingly susceptible to external interference as its society becomes ever more fractured along ethnic and sectarian lines. The discussion highlighted the urgent need for Pakistan to focus on and invest in nation-building. This project needs to be based on providing equal political recognition of Pakistan's ethnic, tribal and religious communities, and addressing the social and economic grievances of marginalized communities. While neighbouring states have influenced and will continue to influence developments within Pakistan, particularly in its border areas, there is a concomitant need to understand the role of non-state actors within the country. If external players and non-state actors continue to interfere in Pakistan's internal affairs, Pakistan will be ill-equipped to balance its domestic demands and its foreign policy.

Pakistan is not merely a 'stage' for regional rivalries but is also an active player pursuing its own interests in other countries. However, Pakistan has also had to bear the fallout of its own regional ambitions, as its preoccupation with external conflicts, both in Afghanistan and in Indian-administered Kashmir, stymied its domestic development and economic fortunes in the 1980s and 1990s, thereby missing the momentous opportunity that globalization presented.

The first session explored the role of militancy, tribal power and Pashtun nationalism in FATA and the dialectical relationship between 'tribe' and 'nation' in Baluchistan. In FATA, the US-led war on terror has radically transformed tribal affiliations, which are now subject to overlapping cross-border activities informed

by Pashtun ethnicity in some instances and Islamic militancy in others. The session discussed how the grave political and judicial vacuum that exists in FATA has encouraged local militancy. According to on-going surveys conducted by the FATA Research Centre, there are presently close to 150 militant groups operating in and around FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with 116 in FATA alone.

In Baluchistan the consequences of Pakistan's fragility and its resultant militarization appear to be playing out more fully against the background of these regional rivalries and the new geopolitics of the post-9/11 world. Baluchistan is a key element of the regional rivalries centred in Afghanistan, but despite differences regarding the future shape of Afghanistan, the country's neighbours - Iran and Pakistan - appear to hold a shared perspective in relation to their respective Baluchi populations. Pakistan sees the Indian presence – both in Iran and Afghanistan – as being supportive of Baluchi secessionism, but the Baluch and New Delhi have both denied the claim. No less significant are the interests of great powers, including China in Pakistan, which has clearly staked a claim to its share in Baluchistan's lucrative mineral resources and its prime strategic location. But competition over material assets is not the only reason why regional powers have focused on Pakistan. The battle of sectarian ideas is as important in defining the contours of regional rivalries.

The significance of the ideological conflict was underscored in the discussion on Punjab and Sindh. The competing agendas of Iran and Saudi Arabia have gained traction through the sponsorship of rival sectarian groups, dedicated to the dominance of particular varieties and interpretations of Sunni and Shia Islam. The vacuum created by the absence of an overarching identity has led to a smorgasbord of divergent ideologies in Pakistan's largest city, Karachi. As a result of migration, its inhabitants are influenced by jihadi ideas from Afghanistan and FATA, Salafism from Saudi Arabia, Shia ideas from Iran, and Pakistan's indigenous Sunni Islamist movements. Radicalism and jihadism are a greater threat in the 'settled' parts of the country, rather than in FATA, because jihadi movements have had a more permanent presence there. Compared with the Pakistani Taliban (the TTP) – formed in 2007 – movements such as the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) are more veteran and coherent movements based in South Punjab. Furthermore, the pivotal role of Karachi should not be underestimated as it is the 'centre' of Pakistan's economic, political and cultural life. Due to its more complex demographic make-up, events there pose a graver threat to the country in the long-run.

The final session explored the constitutional status of Gilgit-Baltistan and the issue of sovereignty in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. Ambiguity surrounding the precise constitutional status of Pakistan-administered Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan has left them effectively bereft of the means to withstand foreign interference. Until the Indian government is confident that what it terms 'cross-border terrorism' has ended, it is extremely unlikely that any Indian government would take steps towards a political settlement, which would eventually require it to renounce its claim to Pakistan-administered Kashmir. This would require a change to the Indian Constitution, and no Indian government has indicated a willingness to set this in motion. With both sovereignty and boundaries thus disputed, at least two new factors have complicated the Pakistan-China-India nexus over the past thirty years: first, the conflict in Kargil, which has injected a military dimension to the region; second, the Karakoram Highway, which has added to the strategic significance of Gilgit-Baltistan. Additionally, the rise in sectarian violence in Gilgit-Baltistan has coincided with the rise of sectarianism in Pakistan at large, combined with the increasing inability of the state to effectively enforce its writ and maintain law and order. This in turn has empowered extremist elements who are now able to operate without much official interference.

While internal weaknesses have contributed to a tendency to articulate sectarian or ethnic identities, this fracturing has taken place in an environment in which neighbouring countries have attempted to increase their voice within Pakistan, both for geopolitical reasons and to prioritize one creed over another. Awareness of the impact of regional rivalries on Pakistan's internal challenges is instructive for understanding the options and limitations available to the international community to intervene with development initiatives. The final session involved the discussion of potential entry-points, both for Pakistan and other countries, which could help stabilize the particular regions in question.

WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS

FATA/Baluchistan

- **Reviving and securing the quality of the health sector as well as the education sector.** Strengthening the health sector to supply basic health services to internally displaced people in the regions, and particularly those in the remote areas of Baluchistan and FATA. Supporting the education sector, particularly primary education, to create positive change for future generations.
- **Create microfinance institutes to support small-scale industries in Baluchistan.** These could kick-start the economy of the province, and offer more targeted benefits to the local population than more grandiose visions. These efforts are recommended for Baluchistan only, as the security situation in FATA may not allow for such initiatives.
- **Industries in FATA should be encouraged and supported.** The tribal areas engage in a number of industries, including honey gathering, livestock, fisheries, furniture, and mining for marble and gems, which offer opportunities for economic growth and job creation.
- **Managing perceptions** should be an important priority for all Western donors working in the region. This should be done with a deeper understanding of how particular projects might be susceptible to anti-Western sentiments in the regions. High-impact, high-visibility projects that change local mind-sets could be prioritised over longer-term projects which may not, in the current environment, gain local traction.

Punjab and Sindh

- **Foster grassroots level organizations to encourage development** of the regions. Projects should to a much greater extent be locally-led, rather than donor-led, with a more flexible range of collaborations with local institutions.

- **Set up a pooled donor fund that links local projects with interested donors.** This could help match the needs of local projects with donor objectives and allow for project due diligence while paying greater attention to local needs, issues, resources and capacities. Crucially, it should act as an impartial source of funding for local civil society organizations seeking international partnerships, based on equality.
- **Form an institute for South Asian studies** based in a South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) country (except Pakistan and India), to foster civil society dialogue and partnerships in the wider South Asian region.

Gilgit-Baltistan and Pakistan-administered Kashmir

- **Develop specialized banks and establish visa procedures to facilitate exchange of goods and services across the border in the region.** This could increase collaborative agricultural processing, cross-border trade and encourage people-to-people contact and could be used as a confidence building measure between India and Pakistan.
- **Formalize and re-direct remittances from the Kashmiri diaspora in Gilgit-Baltistan** into more productive activities than real estate and housing. Guide them through local banks which can use the transfers to fund local businesses.
- **Support community-based educational institutions** (e.g. the Karakoram International University in Gilgit) in order to promote education and its beneficial effects on local industry.

AGENDA

08.30 – 09.00 Registration & tea/coffee

09.00 – 09.15 Opening Remarks

Lars Erslev Andersen, Senior Researcher, Danish Institute for International Studies

09.15 – 09.45 Keynote speech

Ambassador Riaz Mohammed Khan, Former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, author, *Afghanistan and Pakistan: Conflict, Extremism, and Resistance to Modernity*

09.45 – 11.15 SESSION 1 | Tribe and Nation

Speakers Regional powers and militant groups in the FATA

Dr Ashraf Ali, Director, FATA Research Center

The Baluch insurgency and geo-politics

Abubakar Siddique, Senior Correspondent, Radio Free Europe

Discussant Abbas Nasir, Journalist and former Editor, DAWN

Chair Dr Gareth Price, Senior Fellow, Chatham House

11.15 – 11.30 Coffee break

11.30 – 13.30 SESSION 2 | Sectarianism and Religion

Speakers Sunni militancy in South Punjab and its regional dimensions

Dr Ayesha Siddiqa, Analyst, author, *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy*

Sindh: urban violence and regional security

Dr Mohammad Waseem, Professor of Political Science, Lahore University of Management Sciences

Discussant Dr Mariam Abou Zahab, Lecturer, National Institute of Oriental Languages, Paris

Chair Dr Mona Kanwal Sheikh, Postdoc Fellow, Danish Institute for International Studies

13.30 – 14.30 Lunch

14.30 – 16.30 SESSION 3 | Sovereignty and Territory

Speakers **Domestic politics and regional tensions in Pakistan-administered Kashmir**

Victoria Schofield, author, *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan and the Unending War*

Sovereignty and territory: Gilgit Baltistan

Cyril Almeida, Senior Columnist, DAWN

Discussant Dr Robert Bradnock, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, King's College London

Chair Dr Farzana Shaikh, Associate Fellow, Chatham House

16.30 – 16.45 Coffee break

16.45 – 18.00 SESSION 4 | Workshop Session

Group 1: **FATA & Baluchistan**

Group 2: **Punjab & Sindh**

Group 3: **Pakistan-administered Kashmir & Gilgit Baltistan**

18.00 Closing remarks

Dr Farzana Shaikh, Associate Fellow, Chatham House