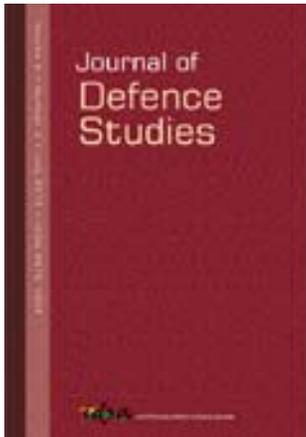


# Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses

No.1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg  
Delhi Cantonment, New Delhi-110010



## Journal of Defence Studies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.idsa.in/journalofdefencestudies>

### Instability in Pakistan

Deepak Kapoor

To cite this article: Deepak Kapoor (2013): Instability in Pakistan, Journal of Defence Studies, Vol-7, Issue-1.pp- 5-8

URL: [http://www.idsa.in/jds/7\\_1\\_2013\\_InstabilityinPakistan\\_DeepakKapoor](http://www.idsa.in/jds/7_1_2013_InstabilityinPakistan_DeepakKapoor)

## Please Scroll down for Article

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.idsa.in/termsfuse>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

Views expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the IDSA or of the Government of India.

## Instability in Pakistan

*Deepak Kapoor\**

What is happening in Pakistan today is no secret. It is a country ruled by a shaky coalition of political parties led by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). The government and judiciary are on a collision course with one Prime Minister (Yousuf Raza Gillani) having had to resign. The Army, the force behind every major decision in Pakistan, is zealously guarding its turf and dominant position in the polity, irrespective of who heads the government and unmindful of the ultimate consequences. The economy of the country is in shambles, thanks to short-sighted policies, excessively disproportionate spending on military, and an elitist approach towards governance. Even nature has played its part in the form of earthquakes and floods in pulling the economy down.

Sectarianism is rampant with the Sunni-Shia divide resulting in frequent clashes almost on a daily basis, causing bloodshed and death. Reports of forced conversions and maltreatment of minorities like Christians, Hindus, Ahmediyas, etc., are a regular feature in the Pakistani media. Fundamentalism appears to have infiltrated all sections of the society as well as the government, including the military. Resultantly, terrorism, which was being used as an instrument of state policy by Pakistan for waging a proxy war against its neighbours, is now menacingly poised to strike at the roots of its creator. However, ironically, a recent survey showed that a majority of Pakistanis continue to consider India rather than terrorism as Pakistan's enemy number one. While mindsets

---

\* The author is a former Chief of Army Staff of the Indian Army.



take time to change, it is to be hoped that it does not happen too late for Pakistan.

With over a hundred nuclear weapons reported to be in its possession, the biggest worry that concerns most other nations is the spectre of some of these falling in the hands of jihadis or terrorists. The fact that the naval base at Mehran and the air force base at Kamra have been attacked by the terrorists (the latter for the fourth time) further enhances misgivings of the international community in the ability of the current regime to safeguard them successfully. Infiltration of the military by the fundamentalists is now an established fact and it is only a matter of time when they succeed in their efforts of capturing a few nuclear weapons.

The Pakistan Army's duplicitous approach in war against terrorism in Afghanistan as well as in Khyber Pakhtoonwa indicates existence of a pre-planned agenda of domination of Afghanistan post withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). In its infatuation with achieving strategic depth, the Pakistan Army is prepared to go to any lengths, irrespective of the means, to keep Afghanistan as its pocket borough. In perpetuation of its anti-India stance, unmindful of the chaotic conditions within Pakistan, it continues to train terrorists to wage proxy war in Jammu and Kashmir and elsewhere in India. The Army's writ runs large in all important areas of decision-making, leaving the professionals playing second fiddle, even in areas of their expertise.

The regional divide in all institutions of the government and the state is starkly evident when Punjabis are blamed for total dominance in all spheres. The judiciary, the Army, the police, the administration and paramilitary forces, all see a surfeit of Punjabis, leading to heartburning and allegations of discrimination by the others. No wonder these festering wounds have led to alienation and demands for separation by Baluchis, Sindhis, and Pashtuns.

Where does all this lead Pakistan to? Under the circumstances what is likely to be its future as a nation? These are difficult questions to answer purely because Pakistan has proved the pundits wrong time and again. Many analysts have already echoed the thought that Pakistan is a failed state and that it is inexorably headed towards chaos and break-up. But it must be granted to Pakistan that it has muddled through for the past five to six years proving a number of doomsday philosophers wrong in the process. Monetary assistance from the West—thanks to the war against terror in Afghanistan, from Saudi Arabia being a frontline Islamic state, and from China being a proxy for it against India—as well

as remittances from Pakistanis settled abroad have kept it going. The possibility of Western aid gradually diminishing in view of Pakistan's perfidious role in Afghanistan and the domestic economic situation worsening could lead to further problems in the near term, though a break-up is not envisaged. However, the threat is much more serious if terrorism and fundamentalism start dominating the fabric of Pakistani society. It is to the credit of Pakistan that it has mastered the art of brinkmanship, whether in the nuclear field or in the field of international relations or even in the field of terrorism. But when you play with fire you are bound to get singed, and if you are even a little lax, it could be disastrous.

From an Indian perspective, in the interest of peace in the region, it would be preferable to have a stable and progressive Pakistan as a neighbour. We would be amenable to a fair, just, and honourable solution of all outstanding issues. Turbulence and instability in Pakistan would be a major destabilizing factor in the subcontinent. The possibility that India would be exposed to large-scale acts of terrorism and communal clashes cannot be ruled out. Considering that even in times of relative peace such hostile actions to weaken India continue to take place frequently, it would be convenient for Pakistani elites to blame India for any major upheaval in Pakistan and, therefore, target it ferociously with all the resources at their disposal, with the intention to divert attention from their own internal problems. As a nation, we have been exposed to terror attacks, disinformation campaigns and communal riots, but the thread that binds us together has sustained such pressures even while coming close to the breaking point at times. Efforts to rebuild structures destroyed were redoubled, communities rallied to bring succour to those affected, and saner counsels prevailed to usher in peace. It is this thread that we need to make stronger to be able to withstand greater pressures when it comes to a crunch.

Any division of Pakistan is likely to be accompanied by large-scale shifting of populations and the inevitable bloodshed as happened during 1947 when Pakistan was carved out of India. A spill-over of refugees, especially minorities living in Pakistan, into India is very much on the cards. We are already seeing signs of it with Hindu minorities wanting to migrate from Pakistan to India due to forced conversions and atrocities being committed on them. In times of a crisis, the dimensions of such a problem are likely to be much bigger; therefore, it would be a challenge we should be prepared to contend with.

Security of Pakistan's large nuclear arsenal would remain a global concern in case of a major upheaval in that country. Besides the possibility that some of these weapons of mass destruction may fall in the wrong hands and, therefore, be a source of threat not only to the region but to the world at large, there is also the question as to how the issue of distribution of these assets would be settled. Would it lead to creation of additional states with nuclear weapons or would all of these become the property of just one state, say Punjab. In either case, the situation is likely to lead to greater instability in the subcontinent requiring deft diplomatic handling in re-establishing relationships and ensuring safe custody of nuclear arsenals.

To divert attention from the turmoil within, the possibility of a Pakistani military venture against India cannot be ruled out. This may be accompanied by a simultaneous use of terror attacks and attempts at disruption of communal harmony in order to destabilize the country. Such efforts have been made in the past, though they did not meet with much success. To ensure its security, India would have no option but to defend itself vigorously in case of recurrence of such attempts.

To conclude, as Pakistan goes deeper and deeper into red and keeps weakening financially, its options to manoeuvre will correspondingly reduce. With fundamentalism infiltrating into all sections of the society, terrorism will be used as a convenient tool to subvert the saner sections of the silent majority. Weak institutional structures would be no match for this heady cocktail of fundamentalism and terrorism. The only strong institution, the Army, is too concerned about retaining its predominance in the state's affairs and is, therefore, unable to see the impending dangers and pitfalls. Nor can it claim to have the expertise to deal with multifarious problems facing the country. Being its immediate neighbour, India is bound to be affected by the spill-over effects of any destabilization that may take place in Pakistan. Some of the linkages that existed at the time of Pakistan's formation in 1947 exist even today between the people of the two countries. The possibility of these being exploited to foment trouble within the country cannot be ruled out. India, while working towards creating a stronger communal fibre and safeguarding itself against terrorist attacks, needs to be prepared militarily as well to meet any challenges to its security.