

By Adam Dempsey, Research Associate, UK Defence Forum

As President Obama's new strategy for Afghanistan emphasises the destruction of militant safe havens within the tribal border regions of Pakistan, the full cooperation of Islamabad's military and intelligence services is essential. Yet Pakistan's military, and in particular the Inter-Service's Intelligence (ISI), remains implicated with close links to Islamic militants. A recent US Joint Chief's of Staff report indicated that elements of the ISI continue to provide supplies and strategic guidance to militants operating within the tribal belt. Despite vocal opposition from Islamabad's civilian government of the attacks on

Mumbai, the sole militant captured implicated Pakistan's military in providing assistance and training camps in Kashmir. Yet whilst Pakistan counters that its military has captured more militants and lost more servicemen than NATO, accusations of collusion are likely to persist. Key to understanding why Pakistan's military remains a problematic partner in the 'war on terror' lies within the difficult birth of a nation.

One consequence of the post-colonial partition of 1947 was that India inherited an unequal share of assets and state apparatus from the Raj. This meant that Pakistan had to be constructed with limited access to industrial, financial and political resources. A further challenge to state-building was that Pakistan lacked cohesion in terms of national identity. Partition did not result in the birth of a pre-formed Pakistani state. Indeed 'Pakistan' is the product of a Cambridge academic who fused elements of Punjab, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Sindh and Baluchistan to create the new state's name. Such challenges to survival ensured that Pakistan's formative years prioritised a strong centralised state ahead of participatory political institutions. The initial limited scope of democratic governance helped to reinforce power relationships that favour the bureaucracy and the military. Despite regular oscillation between military and civilian rule, the military's continued grip on mechanisms of state power allows it to maintain a grip on frameworks that permit democratic participation. Such arrangements have in turn compromised attempts to consolidate a sense of national identity and instead facilitated a propensity towards praetorianism.

A further consequence of the Pakistani military's centrality to governance has been the gradual increase in opportunities to conduct commercial activities. Operating outside normal state mechanisms of accountability, these business activities are partially justified as a source of welfare for servicemen in return for state security. Initially such activities benefited from Pakistan's status as a pre-capitalist society where post-colonial drives for modernity were influenced more by politico-military rather than market devices. Especially since the Martial Law period of the late 1970s, Pakistan's military has run vast commercial networks. Amongst the most prominent ventures are the Fauji Foundation and Army Welfare Trust. Yet the military's extensive range of small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) is by far the least transparent. Incorporating such activities as the collection of highway tolls and running of fuel stations it is extremely difficult to quantify how much income the SMEs generate. It is much easier to argue

however that the military's business interests intensify its concern for control of the mechanisms of power.

As a result of their overarching influence within state power and identity, Pakistan's military has achieved a degree of financial autonomy via its business acumen. Not only has this allowed the military to raise resources outside traditional mechanisms of government it has ensured that the military has developed its own corporate identity. In her book *Military Inc.* Ayesha Siddiqua suggests that Pakistan's military businesses come with distinct norms, ethos and corporate cultures. Such elements in turn help to cement the military's strict control over entry into their respective business organisations. Pakistan's military may, therefore, provide a potential obstacle to the humanitarian elements of America's new policy outlook. Alongside the sending of an additional 17,000 troops to the region President Obama is set to request from Congress \$7.5 billion for civilian aid for Pakistan. To match this commitment America further envisages many more civilian advisors within the region. With such aid earmarked for infrastructural development chances that it will not encroach on military businesses seem slim.

An additional obstacle that American policies are likely to face lies within the Pakistani military's ability to utilise its business activities to accumulate power. As its business prowess has developed the military has been able to allocate resources to win the support of a range of groups within society. Such capabilities originate from the military's traditional Punjabi powerbase. Despite making a telling contribution to Pakistan's security posture its primacy has also allowed the Punjab to maintain military-ethnic and martial-caste ideologies. In arrogating to itself the responsibility of defending Pakistan, the military has nevertheless used various ethnicities to consolidate power. Pre-partition Pakistan's ethnic Pashtuns were amongst the least educated peoples of India. Yet within three decades they became a significant partner in Pakistan's civil-military bureaucracy. Historically the Pashtuns were integral to the colonial 'master race' system. At partition this made them an integral part of Pakistan's nascent military and therefore helped to ingrain their fundamental importance to key social structures.

The importance of the Pashtuns to the military is reinforced by Pakistan's traditionally strained relations with Afghanistan. Historically Afghanistan recognises the Durand Line not as an international border more a division of zones of influence of the Pashtun tribes. In order to rectify this situation Pakistan has consistently tried to develop a friendly administration in Kabul. Throughout the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan Islamabad provided tutelage to the Mujahideen. Support eventually extended to the Pashtun Taliban. Pakistani-Taliban relations initially began in the mid-1990s when they were utilised by Islamabad to protect trade routes with Central Asia. In doing so, the Taliban provided links to Islamic militants established in Pakistan in the aftermath of Soviet conflict. Pre-9/11 Pakistan largely ignored their fundamentalism and overlooked their provision of volunteers to fight in Kashmir. However from a Pakistani perspective the Kashmir issue was not initially coloured with a fundamentalist hue. Post-partition Kashmir became the sole Muslim majority Indian state. As such, India has been keen to maintain this status to demonstrate that Hindus and Muslims can co-exist. Yet as its name suggests, Kashmir is regarded in its entirety as part of Pakistan.

Pakistan's historical engagement of the Pashtuns and their allies therefore helps to explain why the military remain accused of links with militants on the Afghan border. Traditionally Pakistan

has sought to achieve strategic depth against their larger and more powerful Indian counterpart. Of fundamental importance to this strategy is the cultivation of a pro-Pakistan government in Kabul. Yet in the pre-Taliban era India supported successive Afghan administrations. Post-9/11 India was quick to restore diplomatic ties with Kabul and provide financial assistance for reconstruction. In response Pakistan can nevertheless rely on Kashmir to generate national consensus and justify increased troops on the border with India. The presence of extremists within Kashmir provides an asymmetric counter to India's conventional supremacy. Furthermore, the cultivation of strong relationships with Pashtuns and fundamentalists also allows Pakistan to obtain a degree of leverage within any future deals concerning the border. Yet the current American outlook for the tribal belt potentially compromises such provisions.

Whilst an increased international presence could encroach upon its business concerns, the expected cooperation of the Pakistani military potentially pits them against organisations with which it has long-standing relations. As such groups possess significant popular support and indeed share ethnic affiliations Pakistan's military is keen to avoid civilian casualties and increased social unrest. In doing so, the military is further keen to avoid challenges to its well-established power structures. So whilst the issue of Kashmir may undermine U.S. interests in the region it nevertheless eases tension on the politico-military devices that continue to dominate Pakistan. Yet as history demonstrates, the Pakistani military's continued support for fundamentalists and ethnic cliques is good for the levers of power and good for business.