



Security Snapshot

Pakistan's internal & external security concerns

FEBRUARY 2014

The month of February was a rollercoaster for Pakistan's security, as peace talks with the TTP and the government, through their negotiating committees, had started – but broke down again; bringing back memories of when the hopes for the talks died down after Hakeemullah Mehsud's death). But this time, it was the government of Pakistan itching to retaliate because of major terror attacks as well as the news that the TTP's Mohmand Agency chapter slaughtered 27 FC personnel that it had held for over 2 years. As the Air Force commenced bombing sorties, and the PM allows the military to conduct operations so that the TTP learns "to behave", secret talks continue under the supervision of Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan. The policy of "respond in kind" will have to be supplemented with a tactical and strategic shift that keeps on enhancing the government's (and the state's) position of strength against this sub-national terrorist franchise: whether it is on the negotiating table or on the field of war.

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Overview

The month of February began with the release of a BBC documentary on the MQM and the controversies that surround the Pakistani political party. The MQM were agitated and unsettled by the documentary, saying that “the report had distorted facts”. But these internal political developments were overshadowed by the federal government's initiative for peace talks with the TTP – a process that had apparently suffered a deathly blow with the killing of former TTP leader Hakeemullah Mehsud in a drone strike on November 01/02, 2013. The initiative found new impetus in the month of February, as the committees nominated by the government and by the TTP held their first interaction on Thursday, February 06 in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa House at Islamabad.

These positive developments towards restoring peace and stability in Pakistan were marred by continuing terrorist attacks; the announcement by the TTP's Mohmand Agency chapter that they had beheaded 23 FC soldiers kidnapped earlier in June 2010 dealt another severe blow to the "peace process". When the Prime Minister returned from Ankara after attending the Trilateral Summit on peace in Afghanistan (hosted by Turkey, and also attended by Afghan President Hamid Karzai), he took stock of the progress made in the negotiations between the two committees and also faced severe pressure from many quarters in the government, the security apparatus (particularly the military) and society over the government's perceived weakness and continued impotence in terms of deterring terror attacks even when (indirectly) negotiating peace with the TTP.

On February 20, the Prime Minister ordered the Army and Air Force to conduct targeted military operations against the TTP in FATA in order to teach them "to behave" and to introduce some seriousness into the government's peace talks initiative on part of the militants' umbrella group. The Prime Minister had announced last month (January 2014) that if peace talks fail, a military solution will be implemented as a final resort to restoring peace in Pakistan and for destroying extremist militant groups that pose a threat to the country's internal stability.

Within a week of the PAF's bombing sorties against TTP strongholds and hideouts where major weapons caches were situated, intelligence intercepts revealed that the terrorist organization was fearful of being wiped out without getting an opportunity to fight back. In the meantime, as media attention was focused on the Pakistani state and military's retaliatory strikes against the TTP, and on continuing terror attacks, peace talks continued secretly – behind the scenes, and without the country's media getting a whiff of it – so that TTP elements who favoured peace

talks could be identified and separated from those who were against the initiative of a negotiated settlement to Pakistan's war against terrorist extremists. Once such a distinction is effectively made, it would be to the benefit of both the state and the country's security apparatus (particularly the military) to continue targeting those who oppose peace talks, and to even eliciting the support of the TTP in wiping these insubordinate militia groups out: whether this means the TTP actively "selling out" these groups, or the government targeting these TTP sub-groups without serious backlash from the main organization or without their withdrawal from the peace process, is something that must be deliberated upon.

At the same time, internal security threats posed by Baluch separatists elements must also be brought under consideration – at the Baluch provincial government level as well as at the federal government level. The Baluch Republican Army (BRA) has become extremely active in the month of February, carrying out spectacular attacks against trains as well as disrupting the supply of gas to Punjab: a holistic policy to bring estranged Baluch brethren into the Pakistani mainstream – or to eliminate them if they are bent on destroying the Pakistani state and creating autonomous sub-national units – must be developed and implemented.

On the international security and regional stability front, the main development in the month of February was the eighth Trilateral Summit between Pakistan, Afghanistan and Turkey held on February 13 in Ankara: the parties stressed on improved bilateral relations between the South Asian neighbours and on improving the security environment especially in the run-up to the April 2014 legislative and Presidential elections in Afghanistan – something that the Express Tribune called “old pledges in new times” in an editorial published on February 16.

The Saudi crown prince also visited Pakistan between February 15 and 17, and major defence agreements were signed in this period. An unusual outcome of the Saudi crown prince's visit was the media reporting of Pakistan's apparent (and alleged) foreign policy shift on the Syrian civil war: where Pakistan had previously adopted a nonaligned stance (as it had adopted in all proxy wars fought between Sunni Saudi Arabia – a major political, diplomatic and financial ally – and Shi'ite Iran – a neighbour and an important party to the peace in Afghanistan as well as developments in the landlocked country that will take place after international forces leave by the end of 2014 - throughout the Muslim world) it was rumoured that Pakistan had taken a policy "u-turn" and was now supporting the outcome of the Geneva peace process. This meant that Pakistan would support the establishment of an interim government in Syria – implying the ouster of the incumbent Assad regime – and (if media reports are to be believed) would support the Syrian rebels (who belong to the country's Sunni majority, and are also

supported by other Sunni militants pouring into Syria from all over the world – including Al Qaeda operatives and, allegedly, the TTP) by providing them sophisticated anti-tank and anti-aircraft weaponry along with training. Pakistan's Foreign Office (on February 24) and the Prime Minister's Special Adviser on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Sartaj Aziz, refuted these claims (on February 25 during a policy statement in the National Assembly), stating that there was no shift from Pakistan's original position of immediate cessation of hostilities.

The most important concern is that if the reports are true, and if Pakistan has actually shifted from its stance of nonalignment in Saudi-Iran proxy wars to a stance where it supports Saudi Arabia, it risks angering Iran: who is an important neighbour bordering Pakistan's troubled Baluchistan province, and who is slated to play an important role in resolving Pakistan's energy crisis by providing natural gas through the Iran-Pakistan (IP) "peace" gas pipeline. At the same time, another major worry is that India would assume the role of nonaligned peacemaker between Iran and Saudi Arabia: it hosted the Saudi crown prince as well as the Iranian foreign minister during an overlapping schedule period in the end of February. This would cost Pakistan dearly in terms of its status in the international community, particularly in the brotherhood of Muslim nations, and would have immense consequences – perhaps even negative ramifications – insofar as Pakistan's relations with neighbours, regional peace in South Asia, and managing the aftermath of U.S. and NATO-ISAF pullout from Afghanistan is concerned.

As Pakistan continues to develop its internal security policy by focusing on peace talks with the TTP, it must also continue to develop an effective intelligence gathering mechanism under the ambit of NACTA, which would allow the country's security forces (military, paramilitary, and police) to respond pre-emptively and preventatively to terror threats that emanate from sleeper cells and criminal groups embedded in major cities throughout the country. At the same time, Pakistan's foreign policy will be facing major challenges insofar as India's role in South Asia, its efforts of rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran, its attempts to perpetuate an anti-Pakistan regime in Kabul, and its aims to counterbalance China economically and militarily in the Asian region and in the world at large, are concerned.

Pakistan's foreign policy will also need to be recalibrated insofar as relations with the West are concerned, particularly because Pakistan is engaged in negotiating peace with terrorists – and Western countries have an avowed policy of "no negotiations with terrorists" – and because Pakistan is one of the main – if not the primary – affectee of any outcome in Afghanistan during and after 2014: Pakistan will be repatriating large numbers of Afghan refugees in the summer of 2014, and

these refugees may cause problems for Pakistan's own counter-terror operations against TTP in the tribal areas bordering Afghanistan. If Afghanistan descends into chaos after 2014, the main affect of this will fall on Pakistan because Central Asian states and Iran (the other countries bordering Afghanistan, apart from China) are far ahead in terms of insulating themselves from a Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, and from the scenario that would occur if the post-2001 Afghan security apparatus (the Afghan National Security Forces - ANSF) put up a fledgling defence of Kabul (and other non-Pashtun dominated areas in the north) in the face of the relatively overpowering military might and growing momentum of the Afghan Taliban. As such, Pakistan must continue to support an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process for the landlocked country, especially as the U.S.-Taliban peace talks in Doha have failed, and as the initiative led by former Taliban finance minister Agha Jan Mutassim has been disowned and condemned (in no uncertain terms, as one of Mutassim's cohorts – former Taliban refugees minister Maulvi Abdul Raqeeb – in this peace talks initiative with the Karzai regime was assassinated in Peshawar on February 17) by the Afghan Taliban through their spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid.

External Security Issues

India's outgoing government has declared that it feels there is no need to restart Composite Dialogue with Pakistan "in haste" – this is both a sign of India heading towards elections and therefore not making any foreign policy promises, and that the BJP has a good chance of performing well in the April elections and thus relegating peace talks with Pakistan to a category of lesser importance than now or before. While acknowledging positive signals towards resumption of Indo-Pak dialogue on all spectrum of issues – from matters of mutual interest and benefit, to thorny issues that have plagued relations since the Partition of India and independence of both countries in 1947 – India's external affairs minister has said that "all the problems cannot be solved overnight". But he also said that mechanisms and "channels" for continuing talks (i.e. the Track II processes run by NGOs and research institutes, funded by both countries as well as donor agencies and friendly nations) have been "activated" as the primary means for progress on issues discussed under Composite Dialogue, even when the governments aren't meeting "so that the door to dialogue is kept open". Khurshid told media that;

"The Pakistani prime minister has suggested for initiation of composite dialogue process immediately: this is propitious move, but no miracle can be expected even after restoration of dialogue process and warmth in relations. The problems cannot be addressed overnight or within a few hours. I cannot expect any miracle to happen. We will have to move ahead slowly. We will have to wait and give time to each other [and try to

understand] that Pakistan wants dialogue in what [kind of] environment. We will have to improve our relations with neighbouring countries and better relations with neighbouring countries are in our own interest.”

It must also be noted that India’s commerce minister, Anand Sharma, canceled his three-day trip to Pakistan (scheduled for February 13 to 16) on what he called “stalled progress on trade agreements”; Sharma said on February 12 that there were “delays on the Pakistani side” and that he did not want to land up in Pakistan to find out that “they have not moved forward on their commitments”. Sharma was supposed to visit Pakistan and travel to Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad to interact with Pakistani CEOs and officials; he was also scheduled to inaugurate the “India Show” in Lahore on February 14, and participate in government-to-government bilateral meetings in Islamabad on February 16. According to officials of India’s commerce ministry, the visit hung on three main proposals which were agreed on by both sides to boost bilateral trade and to “completely normalize Indo-Pak economic relations”: these were (i) allowing trade of all goods through the Wagah-Attari border, (ii) dismantling of the negative list of 1,209 items, and (iii) bringing down the sensitive list of items to 100 under the South Asia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) over a period of five years. However, it may be that the Indian commerce minister canceled his visit because of the Pakistani government’s initiation of talks with the TTP, regardless or in spite of Pakistan’s progress on the abovementioned three issues.

India’s “foreign policy center of gravity”, according to the calculations of M. K. Bhadrakumar, is going to be in Asia Pacific: India has major engagements with South Korea and Japan, and has converted the “Look East” policy into the bedrock of its overall foreign policy course. In sum, the Indian foreign policy is going to remain the same, regardless of whoever wins the April elections, and will gravitate around:

- (i) the importance attached to relations with the United States;
- (ii) the steady expansion of strategic partnership with Russia;
- (iii) good relations with the European powers;
- (iv) the emphasis on the highly rewarding ties with the Persian Gulf countries (as long as it doesn’t conflict with the first three priorities); and
- (v) the incremental advancement of the ‘Look East’ policy, which is the latest addition

Since India has failed to counter China in Central Asia, the Middle East, and even Africa, it is expected to foster more friendly ties with its northern neighbour – which is Pakistan’s strongest military and strategic partner, especially in the immediate region – because of economic interdependence. China and India have a

US\$ 49.5 billion trade volume as of 2014; this makes China the largest trading partner of India, occupying 8.7% of India's total share of foreign trade (with the U.S. coming in second, having an 8.1% percent and a bilateral trade volume of US\$ 46 billion). But the trade is more beneficial to China than to India: India's trade deficit with China reached a record \$ 31.4 billion in 2013. Even so, both countries wish to take bilateral trade to US\$ 100 billion by 2015: this, from US\$ 7 billion in 2004 US\$ 38 billion in 2008, reaching a record high of US\$ 74 billion in 2011, and still being as high as US\$ 65 billion in 2013 (the sharp decline of US\$ 15.5 billion seen in two-way trade between 2013 and 2014 is due to a similar trend in Indian exports, though Indo-China trade has been on the decline since 2011).

While Pakistan's relations with Bangladesh have suffered because of Sheikh Hasina's government (which came into power through elections questioned even by the U.S.), the clout of opposition politician Khaleda Zia, her party (the BNP), and their alliance with the Jamaat Islami (whose leader, Abdul Qader Molla, was recently given the death penalty for being a supporter of Pakistan in the 1971 war) is undeniable. BNP polled more than 50% in the local bodies elections, and has the capacity to defeat the Awami League (AL) of Sheikh Hasina in a free and fair ballot. While the country has become constitutionally secular, it has also embarked upon the pursuit of a foreign enemy – created or visualized – to acquire legitimacy in terms of its own governance. Despite the country vowing to have decent, friendly relations with Pakistan for quite some time, recent events – such as the attack on the Pakistani High Commission in Dhaka – have strained government to government relations with a country in which a sizable minority of Biharis (who are labeled Pakistani Biharis) still lives, and a country in which trends of society and trajectories of power can be controlled by Pakistan.

Even when it comes to Sri Lanka, the election in India – and the challenges that the country's future government, a new one expected to be guided by right-wing policies, will face in the foreign policy arena – makes it challenging for the South Asian superpower-dreamer to achieve its foreign policy goals and maintain its relations in the neighbourhood. In the pursuit of friendly relations with India – at an economic level if not at a political or strategic level – Pakistan can do well to adopt and implement a South Asia policy (especially in Iran and Afghanistan, but also in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and other SAARC countries) that can cement its standing in the region and its ties with various countries where India is more often a competitor than a collaborator, coordinator, or silent spectator.

The Afghan government's talks with the Afghan Taliban's Agha Jan Mutassim is a signal that the Taliban moderates are ready to talk with (and therefore, acknowledge the legitimacy of) the Karzai government. This move was condemned

and disowned by the Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid, and one of the Taliban moderates – a former refugees minister – who attended a meeting held by Mutassim in Dubai was assassinated in Peshawar. There are also reports that Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami (HI, or HIG as designated by the U.S.) will be contesting the April parliamentary – which incidentally coincide with India's – elections.

While the Taliban's main operational policy on the ground in Afghanistan remains one of opposing the foreign occupation as well as their facilitators and collaborators in Kabul, there are signs that secret negotiations and extreme, serious "give and take" on both ends will take place in Afghanistan before the U.S. and NATO troops depart by the end of 2014. These processes – of including the Taliban into the formal power structures (and maybe even the Tajik-dominated armed forces and Uzbek-Turkmen-led police services) – are being given precedence to the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) that the U.S. is nudging (and at times, pushing) Karzai to ink as soon as possible: and despite threats from the U.S. about the dire consequences of a security environment in Afghanistan where there will be no residual U.S. forces, Karzai and his administration remain adamant that the new government to be elected in 2014 (and not the outgoing President of Afghanistan) will ratify it. In this scenario, the U.S. has also developed a plan to completely evacuate Afghanistan and leave a residual force of 0 (zero) troops by the end of the year: this will mean that even the Bagram and Kandahar superbases will be under the complete command and control of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), whose performance against the Taliban has been even poorer than that of the U.S. and NATO troops. This plan – and the report that U.S. President Obama has conveyed this news, and its eventuality if the BSA is not signed – adds to the "grim picture" that the U.S. and the West are painting in the global media of an Afghanistan without international security assistance. The extent to which this may be true depends on the trends of stability and security in Afghanistan during this (March) and next (April) months – if the elections can take place with reduced violence, and precipitate a result which has the effect of mainstreaming the marginalized and further reducing violence.

The result of the April elections, and the decisions as well as operations of the Taliban after April, will determine the depth and gravity of the security vacuum in post-2014 Afghanistan: it is this vacuum that is the main concern of global powers as well as regional players. Pakistan's policy of "having no favourites" may yield some benefits if the incoming administration is more friendly to Pakistan (of its own accord, understanding and volition) than Karzai's, which has been erratic in terms of its love and hate for Pakistan for numerous reasons simultaneously. But the regional security policies of the U.S., China, Russia, Central Asian states, India,

Iran, and even Saudi Arabia and Turkey, are being developed with a central focus on the possibilities of a new paradigm in Afghanistan – and how they will have to adjust their hopes and expectations (and their modus operandi, for that matter) in accordance with the actual outcome (from the plethora of possibilities that they are exploring, estimating, and visualizing right now).

Pakistan must be prepared in terms of any and every outcome in Afghanistan, and must outline its own internal policy goals and priorities (like consistent economic growth, reduction in terrorism and criminal activities, fiscal responsibility, natural resource contingencies, tackling the energy crisis, etc.) as well as its regional and global policy targets – this holistic contingency planning must be done particularly by the managers of national security, because the security situation in Afghanistan will have a direct impact on the internal security of Pakistan as regards the TTP (Pakistan's own Taliban movement, which continues to find "strategic depth" in the Taliban-controlled areas of Afghanistan) and even as regards safe havens from where Pakistan is attacked (even by anti-state Baluch elements using the border areas for refuge). Strategic depth in an insecure, ungoverned Afghanistan can not only benefit anti-state Pashtun militias like the TTP, but also allows space for Baluch separatists to conduct attacks on Pakistani soil and return to safe havens across the border. "How, why and when other actors (like superpowers and regional players) will step in" are questions that will also determine Pakistan's responses and preparations to the developments in Afghanistan, as they happen, and Pakistan must continue to facilitate peace and counter-terrorism in Afghanistan if it wishes to have peace and non-violence in its own borders. Islamic radicalism as a political phenomenon is as dangerous as it is a militarized phenomenon, but if militants give up bullets and bombs to choose the ballot, it shows that the levels of extremism and intolerance in the country are being reduced; that the nation is becoming more inclusive, especially in terms of its processes of sharing power; and that there is a chance for the prevalence and success of socio-political modernization as well as religious moderation even in deeply conservative Muslim societies, which have strict cultures in addition to strict religious observances.

An important foreign policy issue was highlighted in the month of February which has immense ramifications for Pakistan's national security objectives, its role and responsibilities towards regional security in South Asia, and its relations with Muslim countries (whether they are sectarian allies or neighbours): Pakistan's alleged decision to support the Syrian rebels via Saudi Arabia, and funnel arms to them via Jordan, is a huge but somewhat comprehensible foreign policy move by Pakistan in the Middle East. It is synonymous with its role in the GCC, and how it

has implemented its foreign policy in Bahrain as well; though Pakistan opted out of direct involvement in the Egyptian or the Libyan affair, for that matter.

This move is bound to anger Iran and test Iran's patience with Pakistan, who had adopted a policy of neutrality in the proxy wars that Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shi'ite Iran have been fighting throughout the Muslim world. As the ruling Alawite regime in Syria is allied to Iran – and Iran continues to invest heavily to prop up Bashar al-Assad's regime in Damascus by providing finance, weapons, and manpower in the form of Hezbollah fighters as well as IRGC and Quds force specialists – any move that would be aimed at tilting the existing status quo on the ground in Syria in favour of the Sunni militants would force Iran's hand not only in the Levant and the Middle East, but also in other places which challenge Iran's projection of power.

According to a report on February 24 in the Daily Times (Pakistan), Saudi Arabia wants Pakistan to supply "Anza Mk-I" or "Anza Mk-II" anti-aircraft rockets (known as MANPADS, or man-portable air-defence systems) and anti-tank rockets, which will be stored in Jordan before they are delivered to the Syrian rebels. On February 24, Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesperson Tasnim Aslam denied reports of Pakistan intending to supply Syrian rebels with weapons and arms as "baseless and have no sense". But Syrian opposition leader Ahmad Jarba told the media that "powerful arms will be arriving soon" after the Saudi crown prince visited Pakistan. Saudi Arabia has a strong influence on Syria's southern front, where it coordinates with Jordan, and has helped unite the rebel fighters in the area; on the other hand, Qatar and Turkey are responsible for coordinating with the rebels on the northern front. But Saudi Arabia has come to eclipse Qatar as the main supporter of the Syrian rebels, a development illustrated by the election last July of Ahmad Jarba, who has strong Saudi links, to lead the Syrian National Coalition, the main umbrella opposition group. The Pakistani Prime Minister's Adviser on Foreign Policy and National Security, Sartaj Aziz, also dispelled media speculation about Pakistan's alleged policy shift, saying that it is sticking to its original stance on the Syrian conflict and that there had been no shift: but the Adviser implied that Pakistan remained nonaligned in terms of Saudi-Iran proxy conflicts without clearly specifying or enunciating that it remained Pakistan's policy to be nonaligned in conflicts within or between Muslim and/or Arab countries. This clarification was also not spelled out in the Adviser's policy statement to the National Assembly on February 25.

By shifting from its status of neutrality and non-alignment in Arab-Arab or intra-Muslim conflict – overtly or covertly – in the form of supporting a caretaker setup in Syria (as per the Geneva communiqué) instead of continuing its previous policy (non-interference, "non-cooperation" in terms of no assistance to any of the

warring parties, and urging an immediate cessation of the conflict, especially in terms of lifting the sieges on different Syrian cities and stopping bombardment so that humanitarian aid may be provided to noncombatant civilians in need) regarding the issue, Pakistan has also shown that it can take a significant departure from its existing and implementable policies in the international arena. If Pakistan is indeed supporting Saudi Arabia militarily to achieve a certain foreign policy goal in Syria, the apprehensions of the U.S. and its position on this particular dimension of the Syrian civil war must also be considered: in that weapons sent to militants fighting Bashar al-Assad in Syria could also be used against other states. While the United States could allow their allies provide the rebels with anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons following the failure of Geneva talks and the renewed tension with Russia, provided those weapons to the rebels “relieves pressure on the US in the short-term, there is always a danger associated with that as a policy measure: “the long-term political worry is that MANPADS (man-portable air-defence systems) will leak and be used to bring down a civilian airliner somewhere in the world”. One must also remember – and remind Pakistan’s policymakers and policy implementers – that the results of Pakistan’s policy of supplementing non-state actors with weapons and financing – to whatever end – did not end up to be a fruitful policy for internal security (the state’s writ) or regional security (the state’s capability to project power) after 2004, and especially after 2007.

It has been reported that the latest Saudi move (to enlist Pakistan’s support) has come after frustration in efforts to get the U.S. to train and arm Syrian rebels, that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was earlier hoping for two entire Pakistani divisions to be sent to Syria (two Pakistan Army divisions apparently remain on standby for immediate deployment to Saudi Arabia in case the kingdom needs military assistance against Iran), and that the whole policy shift from Pakistan cost the Saudi crown prince Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud – who also held meetings with the country’s military leadership, including Army Chief General Raheel Sharif, during his visit – only US\$ 183 million in the form of credit for the import of urea fertilized from the Arab monarchy.

In addition, it has been reported that the Pakistani Taliban are also partaking in the fight against the Assad regime – an apparent sign that the TTP has become a potent transnational threat, and that Islamic extremists and terrorists are actively involved in conflicts against the state so as to create a security vacuum (via revolt: khuruj) and then fill it with governance according to an archaic and apocryphal version of Shariah law. At least two Al-Qaeda affiliates/franchises (the Jabhat an-Nusra, and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb – now known as Al-Qaeda in Iraq and Syria, or ISIS) are known to be taking part in the revolt against the Syrian government; at the same time, Al-Qaeda chapters in the Anbar province of Iraq

(particularly in Fallujah and Ramadi) have taken control of the cities and surrounding areas, expelling government, police and military from these Sunni bastions – now Nuri al-Maliki’s government is launching military counter-attacks in the run-up to crucial elections in the country. Al-Qaeda and its affiliates remain a threat to all Muslim states around the world: whether it is Sunni Saudi Arabia, or Shi’ite Iran or Syria, or multi-sectarian Muslim nations like Pakistan and Iraq (where it is more deadly in terms of increasing sectarian strife and supporting the Sunni or anti-Shi’ite militant extremists that already exist).

As Pakistan ceases to be non-aligned in this Sunni-Shi’ite proxy warfare being waged throughout the Muslim world, India hosted Saudi crown prince for a three-day visit from February 26 onwards while it was concurrently hosting Iranian foreign minister Javad Zarif who visited India for a two-day trip starting February 27. Former Indian foreign secretary, Kanwal Sibal, postulated that;

“It helps (India) to balance the relationship since both (Saudi Arabia and Iran) are pitted against each other in West Asia, in context of Sunni-Shia conflict... It is wise to have political communication with both sides. It is also optically good to have both visits in the same week.”

Since the Middle East region hosts around 7 million Indian expatriate workers who send approximately US\$ 30 billion back home in remittances on an annual basis, Mridul Kumar, joint secretary (Gulf) in the Indian ministry of external affairs, explained the importance India gives to forging stronger ties with countries in the Gulf;

“This is really one of the most important relationships that we have across the globe. The Gulf countries provide almost 60% of our energy requirement. The Gulf countries are our largest trading partner by far as a regional group. And we are looking at an annual trade of over \$180 billion, which is almost 26% of our global trade.”

Commentaries by Elizabeth Roche (LiveMint/WSJ) and Saeed Naqvi (IANS) regarding India’s renewed focus on “West Asia” are particularly insightful; they discuss reasons as well as intentions for India playing the role that it played in February (and that it might continue to play, until it is hindered by the U.S. or by China in doing so). As India plays the role of non-aligned peace promoter, Pakistan has badly damaged its position in the eyes of Iran as well as of Pakistani Shi’ites – even though the government dispels criticism and says that there has been no policy shift, and that it is merely reiterating its commitment to the agreements reached in the Geneva process, the opposition in the Senate as well as National Assembly has formally taken up the matter and given the government a tough time

on its increased closeness with Saudi Arabia at the expense of its ties with its Iranian neighbour. The Saudi crown prince also signed MoU's (what the Hindustan Times' Shishir Gupta termed "a major defence agreement") with India on joint military exercises, hardware sales and transfer of technology. "Riyadh has signed a similar agreement with Islamabad" in the preceding weeks, Gupta noted, and said that "Riyadh has, in the past, indicated that it wants the Indian Army to train Saudi Arabian troops in mountain warfare by setting up a combat school [and it] also wants joint counter-terrorism exercises". According to Gupta, a senior Indian official said (on condition of anonymity);

"The [defence] MoU [between India and Saudi Arabia] provides for a proper bilateral defence policy group with defence ministries on both sides setting the agenda. Given the status of Saudi Arabia in the Islamic world, this is no mean achievement. It signals that Pakistan is no longer the only favourite nation for Riyadh in South Asia."

These are indeed dangerous developments for Pakistan's foreign policy as well as its national security in terms of the immediate regional environment. Pakistan must pay close attention to India's foreign policy efforts, especially in terms of India's improving relations with China and with Saudi Arabia: none of these should happen at the expense of Pakistan's sovereignty, security, and friendly relations with these countries. However, if there is a change at the helm in New Delhi, there might be some difficulties faced by India and its government in increasing close, friendly ties with Muslim countries in the Middle East. Tridivesh Singh Maini of The Diplomat says that India has the chance to develop friendly relations with "key" Middle Eastern countries, but still needs "skill" to achieve a foreign policy trajectory that will achieve this objective;

"India can no longer afford to ignore Iran or Saudi Arabia, allow ties to be driven by a fixation on Pakistan, or view relations through the hackneyed Shia-Sunni lens. With the Saudi government flagging radicalism as a major threat, Saudi Arabia may emerge as an important partner for India. But while the Middle East offers real opportunities for India, managing the relationship will require the next government in New Delhi to exhibit considerable dexterity."

At the same time, Pakistan must also start exhibiting novel dexterity in terms of its foreign policy – it must counter Indian efforts to develop closer, cordial relations with Pakistan's staunch allies, and it must also not create an environment or scenario where its international standing or consideration as a bilateral partner is threatened in a way that India emerges as a better alternative for such a partnership than Pakistan. Pakistan must make the right efforts towards Iran, especially in terms of assurances on Syria and on impressing the necessity for

developing a robust and sustainable natural resource relationship between Iran and Pakistan: one that would not come at the expense of Pak-Saudi relations, since Pakistan would continue to remain nonaligned in the Sunni-Shi'ite conflict, and rather play the role of a strategic balancer and conflict reducer than take sides with one against another. As Pakistan bridged the diplomatic gap between the U.S. and China in 1971, Pakistan can play the same role for Saudi Arabia and Iran in terms of reducing mutual suspicions as well as the sense(s) of threat perception that these two countries have against each other. Instead of being a referee or a nonaligned bystander, Pakistan can be an active promoter of better relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia, especially as Iran's relations with the West (particularly the U.S.) are improving under President Rouhani's administration in Tehran.

After months of chilly relations, Pakistan's security relationship with the U.S. might see a positive upsurge, as CIA chief John Brennan made a whirlwind visit to Rawalpindi on February 21 and met COAS General Raheel Sharif as PAF jets were bombing TTP hideouts in FATA. According to Amir Mir of The News International, "the Raheel-Brennan meeting took place at a time when the CIA has apparently stopped its drone campaign in the tribal areas and the PAF fighter jets are targeting the Taliban hideouts there as a tit-for-tat response to the TTP-sponsored terror spree". In a press conference later, the Pakistan Army rejected any speculations that the CIA was providing Pakistan with ground intelligence regarding TTP elements and cadres; it was also revealed that Pakistan was using its own surveillance drones to keep an eye on TTP movements and to carry out its bombing sorties with pinpoint accuracy based on the intelligence derived from these modern technological platforms which Pakistan has now started to develop internally. Writing in The News International on February 26, Shaheen Sehbai confirmed that Pakistan was making "extensive and precise use of its own indigenous drones in the current surgical strikes" against the TTP, and that ground intelligence combined with accurate data by the Pakistani drones had made it possible to take out the TTP targets in the airstrikes undertaken by the Army and Air Force between February 20 and 25. Sehbai also confirmed that Pakistan did not ask the CIA for intelligence help from its drone apparatus already deployed in Pakistan's tribal areas, and was told by unnamed security officials that the latest "touch and go" visit by the CIA chief was a mere "courtesy call". Nevertheless, it must be noted that any military action against the TTP – especially in North Waziristan – will result in improvements in the Pak-U.S. bilateral relationship.

However, if the U.S. wishes to enlist Pakistan's support in urging Afghanistan's President Karzai to sign the BSA, it would be an exercise in futility: Pakistan's security managers are already making preparations and contingency plans for possible scenarios after a significant (as well as complete) withdrawal of

international security assistance forces (i.e. U.S. and NATO-ISAF foreign troops) from Afghanistan – these plans are being made in consonance with China as well as with Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and other friendly nations. Even though President Karzai has been “less moderate” in his views towards Pakistan, a new face in the Afghan Presidency may allow peacemakers such as Turkey to play a more assertive mediatory role between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Internal Security Issues

The government of Pakistan finally saw success in commencing peace talks with the TTP, even though they started in an indirect manner. The government's nominated committee – consisting of Irfan Siddiqui, Raheemullah Yousafzai, Rustam Shah Mohmand and Major (ret'd) Amir Khan; two journalists and two retired bureaucrats – met with the TTP nominated committee – led by Maulana Sami-ul-Haq, and comprising Lal Masjid khatib (mosque leader) Maulana Abdul Aziz and Professor Ibrahim – on Thursday, February 06 at the Khyber Pakhtukhwa House in Islamabad. PTI Chairman Imran Khan and JUI-F's Mufti Kifayatullah were also nominated by the TTP to represent them in the committee, but they refused to take part in the process on the TTP's behalf or as the TTP's representatives. At the first meeting, the government presented five major demands to the TTP (through their representatives/nominees): the supremacy of the Constitution, the immediate cessation of terror attacks (especially activities that may hinder the peace process), the fact that the scope of the negotiations is only limited to insurgency-affected areas in FATA, the question regarding the mandate of the TTP-nominated committee (whether they had complete authority to negotiate, or whether the TTP's nine-member political “shura” will have to be dealt with), and that the peace talks be truncated successfully in the shortest timeframe possible.

After the first meeting, Irfan Siddiqui (who is also a Special Assistant to the Prime Minister) met with PM Nawaz Sharif and Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan to apprise them of the minutiae of the first engagement with the TTP negotiators. On February 08 and 09, the TTP negotiators' committee traveled to an undisclosed location in North Waziristan to conduct meetings with the TTP's political shura (council), and alleged that the meeting site had to be changed many times because drones were buzzing overhead (and there was a chance that the meeting could have been targeted by a missile strike from those drones). Though no drone strike happened, the TTP negotiators returned to Islamabad with 15 points from the TTP's political shura, which would form the basis of further negotiations with the government. On February 13, it was reported that the TTP's political shura – led by Qari Shakeel Ahmed Haqqani – had agreed to meet directly with members of the government's nominated committee.

As the talks proceeded, terror attacks did not cease: a terror attack occurred inside the Shama cinema in Peshawar on February 11, and 13 people died in the multiple grenade attack that the TTP did not claim responsibility for – and in fact, condemned (the cinema was also targeted on February 02, and in the same manner – grenades lobbed in the cinema theater killed 05, while another 31 were injured in the ensuing stampede).

A few days later, on February 13, a suicide bomber attacked a bus full of police commandos traveling from their training center in Razzaqabad on the outskirts of the metropolis to the SSU (Special Security Unit) headquarters in Karachi – the suicide bomber was in an IED car laden with what was estimated by police to be 15kg to 20kg of explosive materiel. The TTP took responsibility for the attack that claimed the lives of 13 people, including 11 police commandos and injured approximately 50 to 60 more (numbers of the injured commandos in news reports varies from 47 to 57: at least ten of whom were reported to be in critical condition when they were taken to hospital); the TTP argued that the attack was in response to the continued operations of the paramilitary and police against TTP operatives and cadres in the city – that the state was still targeting and killing TTP terrorists (and had killed at least 60 TTP operatives according to TTP spokesman Shahidullah Shahid) under the auspices of an operation code-named "Operation Root Out" even though it was undertaking peace talks with the proscribed organization. Though the Pakistan Army has been observing a ceasefire for months now, the TTP ceasing terror activities during peace talks remained a big question even in January 2013. Among with the 15 points made by the TTP's political shura for the continuation of the peace talks was the demand that the government and the Army stop killing and dumping bodies of TTP members.

On Sunday, February 16, the TTP's Mohmand Agency chapter announced that it had butchered 23 Frontier Corps (FC) soldiers that it had earlier kidnapped in a raid on the Shongari checkpost in June 2010. The faction released a single-paged statement in Urdu along with a short video message – the video of the TTP massacring the FC troops by blindfolding them and shooting them at the back of the head was later made public on online outlets. Omer Khurasani, a leader of the Mohmand faction of the TTP, said that the government and intelligence agencies killed 23 TTP members during the peace process, and that the murder of the 23 FC personnel was a response to their "non-serious attitude" about bringing peace to Pakistan: he also said that the faction would release the video of the murder of the FC personnel.

In an attack on a military convoy, militants martyred Major Jahanzeb Adnan on February 18, while three militants were also killed as the convoy's security force

returned fire. The attack took place in the Frontier Region of Peshawar close to the Afghan border, and was the second attack on security forces personnel in a 24-hour period: almost a day earlier, on Monday, February 17, an attack on a security forces checkpost in the Ladha area of tribal South Waziristan agency martyred one soldier.

The news of kidnapped FC personnel being slaughtered by the TTP reverberated throughout the halls of the PM Secretariat and the GHQ, as the electronic media (and because of them, the general public) questioned the efficacy of peace talks if the TTP continued to undertake terror attacks and the state had ceased fire and was unable to maintain an effective defensive perimeter in the cities and urban areas of the country. The Information Minister, Pervaiz Rashid, questioned the ethics and morality of the TTP (on Wednesday, February 19), and wondered whether the actions of the TTP's Mohmand faction was in accordance with sharia law or not. Rashid asked "People favouring enforcement of Sharia should tell what treatment captives deserve according to the Sharia ... and (whether) the treatment those (FC men) received was in accordance with the Islamic laws or not"; he also drew parallels with India's treatment of Pakistani POWs after the 1971 war, and asked if the Indian Army beheaded even a single Pakistani soldier. The meeting of the government-nominated and TTP-nominated committees, scheduled for Monday, February 17, was called off as Irfan Siddiqui termed the negotiations a "futile effort" with the TTP continuing their terrorist activities and the circumstances related to the negotiations not heading towards "the right direction".

Even though the Prime Minister – while attending the Trilateral Summit meeting in Ankara, Turkey – had said that the TTP was also hopeful for peace (and refused to give a deadline at which the talks were expected to yield an outcome, positive or otherwise), he ordered the Army and Air Force to carry out targeted military operations against TTP strongholds in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas on February 20. The PM categorically said that the murder of the 23 FC personnel was aimed at sabotaging the Government-TTP peace process, and that "Pakistan cannot afford this bloodshed". After receiving this order, the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) commenced bombing sorties against major TTP hideouts and weapons storage facilities, and also targeted militant commanders, training facilities and areas where large numbers of militants had sought refuge:

- On Thursday, February 20, it was reported that the PAF and AH-1 gunship helicopters of the Pakistan Army conducted sorties in North Waziristan (Mir Ali, Datta Khel, Machoo Khel and Khushali areas in the Shawal valley) late on Wednesday night (February 19), exactly one minute before

midnight, and targeted militant hideouts. It was confirmed that at least 35 militants – including foreigners (later identified as 16 Uzbeks and an unconfirmed number of Arabs) – were killed in the bombing raids. The number of militants killed ranged between 30 and 40 according to various media outlets. At least six strikes were carried out by PAF jets, and security officials told reporters that senior militant commanders and masterminds of the attacks on the Peshawar cinema as well as the attack on the Karachi commandos' bus (commanders Abdul Sattar, Jihadyar, Abdur Razzak) were targeted in addition to arms depots and weapons caches of the TTP. The sixth strike was conducted in Bara Tehsil of Khyber Agency in which a bomb-making factory was destroyed and two suicide bombers were killed. Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said that 175 people had been killed in 40 attacks by militants in the last 17 days, with this being the reason as to why the surgical strikes were ordered.

- On Saturday, February 22, gunship helicopters pounded TTP hideouts in Thall village of Hangu district, near areas where the militant organization and Al Qaeda are known to have strongholds. At least 9 militants were killed in these raids.
- On Sunday, February 23, PAF launched airstrikes in the Tirah valley of Khyber Agency, killing at least 38 militants and completely destroying six hideouts that were used by the TTP. The military said that important commanders of the TTP were killed in the strikes, and that IED/bomb-making factories as well as huge quantities of explosives were destroyed. Another official said that at least 18 militants were killed and 2 hideouts destroyed in the Tirah valley airstrikes. The same day, a bomb went off at a bus stop in Kohat city, killing at least 12 people including 2 women and a child – the bomb contained at least 5kg of explosives and was planted in a can of cooking oil and placed near the bus stop; it was remotely detonated.
- On Tuesday, February 25, PAF jets as well as gunship helicopters bombed targets in North Waziristan and South Waziristan, reportedly killing 30 militants and destroying militant training facilities. A stretch of land in the remote, forested Shawal valley and the Dattakhel area between the two Waziristans was targeted: 15 militants were killed in South Waziristan while 15 more were killed in North Waziristan, and a senior TTP commander was also claimed to have been killed in the strikes.

The Eastern Tribune reported that “a special band” of the Pakistan Army – including elements from the elite Special Services Group (SSG) commandos – was inserted into the operational areas of North Waziristan agency as the Pakistani

government seemed to have “launched a ground offensive in a partial capacity to compromise the militant hideouts that were weakened in Mir Ali after the air raids from Air Force jets”. PakTribune also reported on February 21 that “infantry troops” had entered North Waziristan “in search of terrorist hideouts”. On Monday, February 24, it was reported that senior TTP leader Asmatullah Shaheen Bhattani was ambushed and killed along with his aides while he was driving in the Dargah Mandi area near the Afghan border; an event that the TTP blamed on Pakistani intelligence, though it was unclear who killed the militant commander who carried a bounty of Rs. 10 million. Militant commanders, intelligence officials as well as relatives of Shaheen confirmed the reports to local as well as international media outlets – a family member told Reuters that “unidentified gunmen in another car shot and killed Shaheen as well as the driver and guards”. Asmatullah Shaheen was a senior TTP leader who was the interim head of the terrorist umbrella organization after the death of Hakeemullah Mehsud on November 01/02, 2013, before the organization named Mullah Fazlullah as its new leader – after Hakeemullah’s death, Shaheen is the most senior TTP militant to have been killed; surpassing even Adnan Rasheed, an ex-PAF employee who became one of the “most-wanted” TTP commanders – tasked with freeing jailed TTP militants – in terms of importance to the militant organization. Rasheed is believed to have been killed in a PAF airstrike in the Hamzoi area Mir Ali town of North Waziristan along with 4 family members – apart from 24 others killed and 15 others wounded – on January 21 this year, even though the TTP refutes claims of his death. After Shaheen’s death, BBC reported that “there have been a series of attacks in which unidentified gunmen have targeted militants in the tribal areas, puzzling observers about who could be behind them”. The BBC’s Ilyas Khan said that this appeared to be “part of a new emerging trend in North Waziristan, in which unidentified men have gunned down militants with known affiliations to groups aligned with the TTP”, with the attack on Asmatullah Shaheen being the fifth of its kind in February alone, and with no claims of responsibility by any group. However, it is acknowledged that the notion of peace talks with the Pakistani government raises tensions within the TTP; Ilyas Khan says that “the Pakistani security forces have been building pressure on the TTP in recent weeks – they also have a presence and a network of proxies in the area, and their role [in this trend of senior TTP commanders being killed by unknown gunmen] cannot be ruled out”.

As the PAF continued to carry out bombing sorties, electronic media reported news (on February 26) according to which intelligence intercepts of telephonic conversations between TTP leaders showed that the organization was in disarray and on the defensive: one TTP leader told the other that if things continued as they were (i.e. if the PAF continued to bomb the TTP), then the TTP would be wiped out without a fight (this was reported by Shaheen Sehbai of The News International in

the article titled “Military using made-in-Pakistan drones against TTP”). The idea of this low-intensity kinetic operation carried out by PAF bombers as well as attack helicopters of the Pakistan Army was discussed in last month's Security Snapshot as well – moreover, the use of locally-made drones for surveillance purposes, as well as the secret insertion of infantry troops complemented by SSG operatives, will be a force multiplier for Pakistan’s counter-terror operations that are ongoing side-by-side with peace efforts. This is necessary especially as the TTP has adopted a “talk-fight” approach with the government, and refuses to take responsibility for – or rein in – subordinate militias who are against the peace talks initiative and continue to target Pakistan’s institutions, civilians and security forces despite ongoing negotiations. At the same time, while destroying TTP strongholds and hideouts in Pakistan is a priority, some strategy must also be worked out for TTP’s retreat pathways to – and safe havens in – Afghanistan: will the Karzai government support Pakistan’s counter-terror efforts, or will Pakistan have to undertake hot pursuit measures by overt or covert means so as to completely eliminate at least those TTP militants who oppose peace talks with the government?

As the “talk-fight” conundrum goes on with the TTP, another internal security problem has raised its ugly head: the “Baluch Republican Army” separatist group has launched major attacks in the month of February, and has reminded the state and the citizenry that even if peace is achieved with the TTP, there are other discontented groups within the country who must also be dealt with. The BRA is headed by Brahamdagh Bugti, grandson of late Nawab Akbar Bugti, and in its most major attack this year, disrupted the gas supply to Punjab for almost two to three days: on Sunday, February 09, BRA miscreants targeted three gas pipelines – supplying gas to Punjab from Sui, Qadirpur Sawan, Pir Koh and Loti gas fields – in the Yousafabad area of Rahim Yar Khan. Earlier, on Tuesday, February 04, the BRA bombed a main railway track in Karachi, killing one girl and wounding 23 others when the Lahore-bound Shalimar Express was derailed due to the impact of the blast. The BRA claimed responsibility for the attack two days later, and Sarbaz Baloch, spokesman for the BRA, said that the attack “was a reaction to the killing of political activists and dumping their bodies in Tootak area of Khuzdar district”.

By February 16 (Pakistan Today: Taliban not the only threat) and February 17 (The News International: Train attack), Pakistan realized that there are other internal security threats than the one posed by the TTP: the BRA targeted the Khushal Khan Khattak Express (traveling from Karachi to Peshawar) near Kashmore, killing at least 07 on the spot, and wounding more than 30 when a bomb went off near Unar station (close to Jacobabad) 450km north-west of Karachi. Hundreds of meters of train tracks were also destroyed in the attack. It took rescue officials more than an hour to reach the site, and at least 02 more succumbed to their injuries on the way

to a hospital in Jacobabad town: ultimately, at least ten people – including four of the same family – were killed in the attack. Railways Minister Saad Rafique, while announcing compensation for those wounded and deceased in the attack, said that “vicious elements, claiming to be freedom fighters, had no right to kill innocent people”, and stressed that the security of train passengers will be ensured at all costs.

In all, the Conflict Monitoring Centre reported that 407 people – 68 security forces personnel, 9 razakars, 194 terrorists and 136 civilians – were killed in 192 terrorist incidents during the month of February. In addition to these figures, security forces arrested 143 suspected terrorists while 24 people were kidnapped during the month. According to the CMC report, Baluchistan witnessed highest number of violent incidents (83) but number of deaths in FATA (which witnessed 49 incidents) outnumbered other provinces/administrative units. Three suicide attacks were recorded in KP, while Baluchistan, Punjab, and Sindh witnessed one suicide attack each. In 36 attacks, terrorists used grenades, mortar shells and rockets, killing 30 people and injuring 104 others. As per the CMC report, violent activities by the terrorists in February (194) were marginally higher than the previous month (189 in January), but the loss of security personnel has been recorded considerably lower; 68 as compared to 100 in the corresponding period last month.

Recommendations

The Pakistani state’s newfound position of strength – to turn away from the negotiating table, as well as to conduct surgical strikes against the TTP that would eliminate the militant umbrella organization “without a fight” according to their own admission – against the still-proscribed TTP must be maintained; the government should try to use policy of “divide and conquer” even though the TTP has said that it will not enforce its own writ over those factions of the TTP who are against peace talks and therefore continue terror attacks – this must give the Pakistani military clear reasoning as well as an unqualified excuse to target certain elements of the TTP, while pushing others to the negotiating table, because it has been proven that with the right kind of force projection, use of military and diplomatic elements, the right timing, and with the public’s opinion engineered to support the government and the military, the TTP are no longer “invincible” (and were never as powerful as the Afghan Taliban are in Afghanistan) and should therefore be deprived of any legitimacy they have in the eyes of the Pakistani people, especially the tribesmen of FATA and the Pashtun population;

As Ansar Abbasi argued in his article for The News International (titled “Secret diplomacy by Nawaz, Nisar made it possible), it is necessary to continue the efforts to secure Pakistan from internal threats by keeping the media out of the loop vis-à-vis peace talks negotiations information, updates on military operations and surgical strikes, etc. unless and until it is deemed necessary by the country’s government, civilian leadership, security managers as well as information projection and impact analysts that certain information be shared with the media (and thereafter with the general public, and with media outlets at home and abroad – indirectly with the international community) at a given time and determining what information is revealed and what is withheld, so that the overall impact of any and every development is positive as far as the general public’s perception (primarily in Pakistan, and generally around the world) is concerned;

It is imperative that the government and the military do not allow the TTP, and especially the anti-peace-talks elements, to get critical breathing space during the proposed “March ceasefire” that the TTP says it will observe (even though its subordinate groups are breaking away from the main organization because of peace talks, and will definitely not be bound to any ceasefire), nor should they find or consolidate strategic depth in Afghanistan or any other safe haven inside or outside Pakistan: it is of utmost importance to keep all of the TTP in the line of sight as well as in the crosshairs (especially using the new, locally-made surveillance drones capability) and to ensure that military will be able to take them out at any point in time, regardless of how their capabilities develop in March and beyond;

As recommended earlier, energizing NACTA is very important so that the state can ensure that 33 intel agencies (autonomous as well as those answerable to military, police, paramilitary, etc.) are working in sync to deter terror attacks and stop them in advance (i.e. undertaking preventative counter-terrorist action instead of reactive or retaliatory action, as has been the case since February 20) – a policy of proactive intelligence gathering complemented by preventive measures against terrorism, terrorist activities and terrorist elements (militias as well as sleeper cells) must be developed and must evolve out of the current, under-implementation policy of retaliating in response to terrorist attacks that have targeted civilians or the military;

The government and the military must thoroughly think through its policy of responding after every terror strike: should the response be proportionate, or disproportionately overwhelming so as to make the TTP or anti-peace-talks terrorists think twice about committing terror attacks again? Who should be targeted in the response: cadres of anti-peace-talks terrorists, or their friends and

families and neighbourhoods? Can this policy be extended to other, non-TTP threats, like those posed by Baluch separatist elements such as BRA, BLA, etc.?

On a general note, the country's government, civilian leadership, military top brass, security managers and policymakers need to ask themselves: would the policy of making any distinction between "good TTP" (those who agree to peace talks) and "bad TTP" (those who don't) be sustainable and yield good results in the long run – especially if the TTP promises to hold on to a limited ceasefire in which it can acquire breathing space and valuable tactical strength? In a different dimension, what will this policy do to Pakistan's standing in the international community and to its counter-terrorism strategy/policies/laws that have just been introduced and enforced? The world already blames Pakistan for making a distinction between "good Taliban" and "bad Taliban" – would the current "peace talks" initiative with the TTP (still a banned and proscribed organization) not tarnish Pakistan's image abroad?

Pakistan must reconfigure its foreign policy, especially for its neighbouring countries in the immediate region: it is clear that India is taking advantage of how KSA is bringing Islamabad closer to Riyadh and further away from Tehran (i.e. the Syria "policy shift"). Afghanistan is scheduled for elections in 2014, just like India – but the BJP is slated acquire the reins of power in Delhi: what will happen to the Composite Dialogue and the Kashmir peace process if Modi becomes PM? Will Pakistan be able to convince Modi that economic interdependence between Pakistan and India is also a good idea? Can the Nawaz-Vajpayee bonhomie of 1998-99 be revived, or will Pakistan have to become China's "Israel" because India will continue to pursue a policy designed to promote American interests in Central Asia, South Asia and Asia Pacific?

Major security related incidents in February 2014

DATE	INCIDENT	KILLED				INJURED
		C	SFs	Ter	Total	
February 1	Four militants were killed in an encounter with the Police during a search operation in Yar Hussain area of Swabi District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.	0	0	4	4	0
February 2	At least five persons were killed and 30 others injured in the night when unidentified attackers hurled two grenades at Picture House cinema on	5	0	0	5	30

	Cinema Road near Qissa Khwani Bazaar in Peshawar (Peshawar District), the provincial capital of KP.					
February 3	Four Police Officers were killed when unidentified militants attacked their vehicle in Ibrahim Hyderi area of Bin Qasim Town in Karachi of Sindh.	0	4	0	4	0
February 4	At least nine people were killed and over 40, including children and women, were injured when a suicide bomber blew himself up at a restaurant in the Koocha Risaldar area of Qissa Khawani Bazaar in Peshawar of KP.	9	0	1	10	40
February 5	A local Taliban 'commander', Shafiq, and three of his bodyguards were killed when unidentified assailants opened fire on their vehicle on Miranshah-Mir Ali road in the Pir Kallay area of NWA in FATA.	0	0	4	4	0
February 6	Four tribesmen were killed by unidentified militants in the Norak area of Mir Ali tehsil in NWA.	0	0	4	4	0
February 7	Unidentified armed militants attacked the house of a pro-government tribal elder, Gazeen Khan Bugti, killing him and eight members of his family, including three women, three children and two adult males, in Dera Bugti District.	9	0	0	9	8
February 8	At least nine people, including an infant, were killed and 10 others were injured when unidentified militants opened fire on a shrine of Meharban Ali Shah alias Jalali Baba in Saeedabad area of Baldia Town in Karachi.	9	0	0	9	10
February 9	Four women were killed and three others were injured in a suicide blast near a house in the Essa Khel Garhi area of Peshawar (Peshawar District), the provincial capital of KP.	4	0	1	5	3
February 10	Unidentified motorcyclists shot dead three school teachers in the Kach Banda area of Hangu District when they were on their way home following school duty.	3	0	0	3	0
February 11	Three people were killed in the Malir Town of Karachi.	2	0	1	3	0

February 12	At least 13 persons were killed and 19 others injured when three back-to-back explosions occurred inside Shama Cinema in Bacha Khan Chowk area of Peshawar (Peshawar District), the provincial capital of KP.	13	0	0	13	19
February 13	Nine persons were killed after unidentified assailants attacked a house by opening fire and hurling hand grenades in Badhaber area of Peshawar in KP.	9	0	0	9	0
February 14	Three suspected militants were killed in an explosion in the Bacha Khan locality of Kolachi area in Dera Ismail Khan District of KP.	0	0	3	3	0
February 15	At least 13 Policemen were killed and 58 others were injured in a suicide blast targeting a bus carrying 50 Police officers near the gate of Razzakabad Police Training Center in Shah Latif Town of Karachi. TTP 'spokesman' Shahidullah Shahid said, "We carried out the attack against the Police because they are killing our people".	0	13	1	14	58
February 16	At least four suspected militants were killed during an operation conducted by SFs in Chap Garh area of Dera Bugti District in Balochistan.	0	0	4	4	0
February 17	Five persons were killed when unidentified militants opened fire at a van near Dattakhel town in North Waziristan Agency in FATA.	5	0	0	5	0
February 18	The TTP claimed to have killed 23 FC personnel kidnapped in June 14, 2010 from Shoonkri Post of Mohmand Agency in FATA.	0	23	0	23	0
February 19	At least six people, including four children, were killed and more than 35 were injured when two coaches of the Peshawar-bound Khushal Khan Khattak Express derailed after a bomb attack on the tracks near a canal in Thull town of Jacobabad District in Sindh.	6	0	0	6	35
February 20	The Paramilitary Force conducted a search operation in Mohammad Khan Colony, Ittehad Town, during which they were attacked. The terrorist fired gunshots at the soldiers and also attacked with a grenade injuring one of	0	0	3	3	1

	them. Three terrorists were killed in the encounter.					
February 21	Police recovered four dead bodies from Surjani Town area of Gadap Town in Karachi of Sindh.	4	0	0	4	0
February 22	An Army Major, Jahanzaib, and three militants were killed in an exchange of fire in FR Peshawar of FATA.	0	1	3	4	0
February 23	At least 35 militants were killed as fighter jets targeted suspected insurgent hideouts in Dattakhel, Shawal and Mir Ali tehsils (revenue unit) of the North Waziristan Agency of FATA.	0	0	35	35	0
February 24	Militants involved in the Peshawar cinema blast (February 10) and killing of an Army officer (February 18) in frontier region Peshawar two days ago, were targeted in fighter jets shelling on their hideouts situated in Khyber Agency. Around seven militants were killed.	0	0	7	7	0
February 25	Eight persons, including seven BLF militants and one pro-Government militia member belonging to Baloch Musala Difa Army were killed while two others were injured in a gun battle between the two in Bessema area of Washuk District.	1	0	7	8	2
February 26	Unidentified militants opened indiscriminate fire on the car of Israr, a doctor, killing him and four others in the car on the spot in MPR Colony of Orangi Town in Karachi, the provincial capital of Sindh.	5	0	0	5	0
February 27	At least nine suspected militants were killed when SFs carried out shelling on their hideouts in Thall tehsil of Hangu District in KP.	0	0	9	9	0
February 28	Three people, including local QWP leader Adalat Khan, were killed and two others were injured in a remote-controlled explosion targeting his car in Gokand area of Buner District in KP.	3	0	0	3	2

Note for Table:

C - Civilian

SFs - Security Forces' Personnel

T – Terrorists

Data is compiled from news reports, and is therefore provisional

Data Source: <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/majorincidents.htm>