



Pakistan Risk Assessment Brief

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Based on CIFP Risk Assessment Methodology

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Pakistan Risk Assessment Brief – Background and Overview

Beginning with its bloody independence from Britain in 1947, Pakistan has been a country in turmoil that has lurched from one crisis to another and has been stained by violence and conflict. Its birth was marked by unprecedented, spontaneous, and massive population transfers between itself and India, its neighbour and rival. More enduring has been the bloody conflict between itself and India over the territory of Kashmir, a conflict which celebrates its 60th anniversary this year. Kashmir, one of the most dangerous places in the world,¹ has been at the heart of a troubled relationship between these two neighbours that has broken down into major conventional war 3 times in the past 60 years (1947, 1965, and 1971) as well as 2 smaller violent conflicts specific to Kashmir (1984 and 1999) and numerous smaller skirmishes. This rivalry has contributed importantly to the acquisition of nuclear weapons by both states and to massive defence budgets, which in Pakistan consume a quarter of the state's budget.² Pakistan also has a history of exporting conflict to its neighbours. This can be seen in its support of insurgents in Afghanistan, both during the Soviet occupation (1979-1989) and today by providing them with sanctuaries and bases within Pakistan and through its continued support, or at least tacit approval, of insurgents and terrorists in Indian Kashmir.³

Pakistan is also beset by internal instability. Leadership of the country has alternated between ineffective and corrupt civilian governments and authoritarian military dictatorships put in place through various *coups d'état*. The current leader, General Pervez Musharraf, occupies the position of President as well as head of the country's armed forces and came to power in 1999 via a military coup that ousted elected former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif who has since been exiled, along with the preceding Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.⁴ Musharraf is the third military leader to come to power by such a route.⁵ Today, the government faces radical Islamic political parties and movements that are growing stronger and more influential by the day, an untamed ethnic insurgency in Baluchistan, a restive minority in the province of Sindh, and lawlessness and sporadic violent confrontations with Taliban supporters and Pushtun tribesmen along its border with Afghanistan.⁶ While Musharraf's victory in this year's upcoming Presidential elections seems assured, political stability is not; the aforementioned conflicts will likely persist and Musharraf's ability to continue surviving assassination attempts (he has already survived 3) is by no means guaranteed.

Perhaps even more worrying are the structural difficulties that would confront any leader in Pakistan. Pakistan's population is already huge and it is growing quickly.⁷ While the economy has performed well recently, and the government has been very successful in attracting foreign aid, especially from the United States,⁸ Pakistan remains a highly unequal society⁹ and much of its population remains mired in abject poverty and illiteracy.¹⁰ General Musharraf has promised much in terms of increased funding and reform for education,¹¹ but has so far failed to deliver.¹² As mentioned, the economy has been growing strongly recently with increases in foreign reserves,¹³ a rising stock market,¹⁴ a stable currency,¹⁵ strong rates of growth, and increased foreign investment,¹⁶ but this success sits on shaky foundations. Pakistan's reliance on a highly vulnerable agricultural sector for the vast majority of its exports and one quarter of its GDP in a very arid climate is concerning in a world where the prospect of global warming looks likely to bring significant changes, as well as more extreme weather and unpredictability, to the climate.¹⁷

Stakeholder Analysis

The Military – The military sees itself as the only truly national institution and as the most important defender of Pakistan against both internal and external threats. It is dominated by the majority Punjabi and the influential Pushtun ethnic groups. While the military regime supposedly supports a return to democracy shortly, the benefits that accrue to senior officers from political power provide them with incentives to stay in power and make a quick and orderly transition less likely by the day.¹⁸

Ethnic Minorities – Pakistan is a fairly heterogeneous society. Its population is made up of about 45% Punjabis, 15% Sindhis, 15% Pushtun, 10% Saraiki, and 4% Baluchi as well as some smaller groups.¹⁹ Punjabis comprise 90% of the military,²⁰ and hold most of the bureaucratic positions²¹ leading to resentment of “Punjabi Domination” by the smaller groups²² and periodic rebellion against the central government.

Islamic Fundamentalists – The political parties espousing fundamentalist interpretations of Islam are the groups that stand to gain the most from any further destabilization of Pakistan. Musharraf has cracked down on the most radical of these, but seems to be trying to control and use the more moderate of these groups to his own advantage.²³ These groups continue to demonstrate a great ability to mobilize marginalized Pakistanis.²⁴

India – Its historic rivalry with Pakistan aside, India's major contemporary disputes with Pakistan concern its continued alleged support for the Muslim insurgency in Kashmir and terrorist bombings elsewhere throughout India. On numerous occasions, India has demonstrated its willingness to go to war over these disputes.²⁵ India would be happy to settle the Kashmiri conflict along the current line of control.²⁶

Afghanistan – The government of Afghanistan continues to hold Pakistan responsible for much of the continued insurgency in the South and East of Afghanistan. Numerous reports allege that Pakistan's intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), or at least parts thereof, is still backing the Taliban.²⁷ Pakistan was a major supporter of the previous Taliban regime in Afghanistan.²⁸

The USA – Following 9/11 and Pakistan's decision to join the US-led war on terror, the US began pouring large amounts of aid into Pakistan. A \$3 billion, multi-year aid package was committed to in 2005 with a proposed increase of almost \$400 million this year.²⁹ The Bush administration has accorded Pakistan the status of major non-NATO ally which comes with special privileges.³⁰ The US is concerned by Musharraf's support of some radical Islamic movements and previous support of the Taliban.³¹

History of Armed Conflict (CIFP Average Score: 6.33 or moderate)

Stabilizing

- By 2005, Pakistan, with UN assistance, had repatriated 2.3 million Afghan refugees, thus reducing the strain of hosting these refugees and had undertaken a census to count the approximately one million that remained.³²
- President Musharraf has generally managed to rein in many of the more radical insurgent and terrorist groups operating in Kashmir and has done more than any previous leader to create the possibility of a peaceful solution to the dispute over Kashmir with India.³³
- The army has signed a cease-fire ending the most recent conflict between itself and Pushtun tribesmen who live in the northwest along the border with Afghanistan and who have been linked with the Taliban and al-Qaeda. This conflict claimed about 800 soldiers' lives³⁴

Destabilizing

- Pakistan served as an important base for insurgent forces fighting against the Soviets during their occupation of Afghanistan and continues to serve as a base for terrorists fighting against India in Kashmir, a conflict that has cost over 40,000 lives.³⁵ Many Taliban fighters and sympathizers are continuing to use the lawless borderlands of Pakistan as a base to fight NATO in Afghanistan.³⁶
- Kashmir remains the site of the world's largest and most militarized territorial dispute.³⁷
- Pakistan also has a history of significant internal conflict in many of its regions. For example in its largest province, Baluchistan, it is currently fighting an insurgency which is only the latest of three previous significant uprisings.³⁸

Assessment: *The underlying causes of Pakistan's conflicted past remain unchanged and therefore capable of sparking renewed conflict.*

Governance and Political Instability (CIFP Average Score: 8.52 or high)

Stabilizing

- General Musharraf has demonstrated an ability to manage both the politics and the economy of Pakistan more effectively than recent democratically elected rulers such as Nawaz Sharif or Benazir Bhutto.³⁹
- Under Musharraf, the formerly tightly controlled media has been greatly liberated. Due to new technology and less censorship, Pakistanis can watch more television channels, including foreign ones, that are giving them more and better information about the wider world.⁴⁰

Destabilizing

- In the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index, Pakistan is tied for 142nd with a score of 2.2 out of 10; the lowest score was 1.8.⁴¹ Most Pakistanis do not trust their government; rather they fear it and its corrupt and predatory institutions.⁴²
- Musharraf has marginalized the mainstream political parties and has encouraged the growth of extremist Islamic parties and movements. The growing influence and popularity of these parties has been further encouraged by their seemingly greater connection to the needs of the populace as demonstrated through their more effective delivery of social services, such as earthquake relief.⁴³
- While the media has generally become freer, freedom of the press and freedom of expression continue to be consistently undermined by the violent intimidation and coercion of journalists working for various local, national and international media.⁴⁴

Assessment: *The government, so far unable to address many causes of domestic conflict, continues to preside over an unstable society.*

Militarization (CIFP Average Score: 8.64 or high)

Stabilizing

- The military has been one of the few national institutions that have had success in uniting the country by providing a focus for loyalty and an opportunity to serve the country in the midst of a governmental and political system generally perceived to be venal and corrupt.⁴⁵
- Women have started to play a larger part in Pakistan's military in roles such as fighter pilots, in military medicine, and as sky marshals.⁴⁶

Destabilizing

- Pakistan has either the 7th or 8th largest military in the world and is generally regarded as well trained and disciplined.⁴⁷
- Since independence, the military has ruled the country for more time than not (1957-1970, 1977-1988, and 1999-).⁴⁸
- Pakistan's, albeit significant, conventional capabilities lag behind India's creating an unstable military balance on the sub-continent.⁴⁹
- Pakistan currently spends 3.9% of its GDP on its military,⁵⁰ representing approximately one quarter of Pakistan's budget.⁵¹
- Pakistan has been a declared nuclear weapons state since 1998, has a first strike policy⁵² and is believed to currently possess between 30-50 nuclear weapons.⁵³ Pakistani scientist A. Q. Khan is known to have proliferated nuclear materials to other states such as Iran.⁵⁴

Assessment: *Pakistan's inevitable conventional inferiority vis-à-vis India causes instability which is exacerbated by nuclear weapons.*

Population Heterogeneity (CIFP Average Score: 7.00 or high)

Stabilizing

- Relative religious homogeneity with 97% of the population being Muslim.⁵⁵

Destabilizing

- Tension between Shia-Sunni Muslim sects (Pakistan is 20% Shia, 77% Sunni⁵⁶) has led to recent sectarian violence. It is estimated that more than 4,000 people were killed between 1990 and 2004 due to Shia/Sunni violence.⁵⁷
- Pakistan has a history of ethnic tension and violence due to unequal distributions of economic and political power⁵⁸, land⁵⁹, water⁶⁰, and rivalries over language rights⁶¹ between ethnic groups.
- Accusations of ethnic minority discrimination at the hands of the Punjabi-dominated government are common, often leading to armed uprisings from minorities such as the Pushtuns and secessionist movements from others such as the Sindhi and Baluchi.⁶²

Assessment: *Pakistan has restive ethnic minorities whose grievances are susceptible to mobilization against the central government.*

Demographic Stress (CIFP Average Score: 7.03 or high)

Stabilizing

- Pakistan's population growth rate declined to 2.09% in 2006⁶³ and is expected to drop to 1.8% in 2007. The government is aiming to reduce this rate to 1.3% by 2020.⁶⁴

Destabilizing

- Currently Pakistan has the 6th highest population in the world and it is anticipated to double by 2035. Pakistan is expected to become the 4th most populous country by 2050.⁶⁵
- Population growth and rapid urbanization are contributing to a significant water scarcity problem.⁶⁶

- High rates of urbanization and population growth have resulted in strains on social services and a large housing backlog (There is a shortage of 6.19 million housing units in Karachi alone). This has led to the rapid growth of slums and the lowering of living standards.⁶⁷
- 39% of Pakistan's population is under 14 years of age,⁶⁸ creating a large youth bulge that could potentially lead to social unrest⁶⁹ when combined with the lack of employment and education opportunities and the aforementioned radicalization.⁷⁰

Assessment: *Pakistan's growing population will increasingly exacerbate the stress more directly measured in other indicators.*

Economic Performance (CIFP Average Score: 6.07 or moderate)

Stabilizing

- Despite hardship due to increasing oil prices and an earthquake in 2005, real GDP growth in Pakistan for 2005-2006 stood at 6.6%, this average growth rate has been maintained in the last 3 years.⁷¹ It is expected that the growth target of 7% for 2007 will be achieved.⁷²
- Foreign direct investment (current US\$) in Pakistan has increased from 308 million in 2000 to 1.1 billion in 2004.⁷³
- Public debt as a share of GDP was 54% in 2006, down from 80% in 2000.⁷⁴
- Pakistan's textile industry, which has both a raw-material base and a complete production chain, has benefited from the 2004 abolition of the textile and garment export quotas for WTO member countries.⁷⁵

Destabilizing

- Despite economic growth, almost 85% of the population live on a marginal income of less than US\$ 2 per day. "One third of the population lives on even less, and do not have the means to provide for a healthy life."⁷⁶
- Pakistan has a narrow tax base (tax revenue/GDP ratio was only 12.7% in 1999-2000). About 75.6% of revenues come from regressive indirect taxation that impacts the lower income groups more than the higher income groups.⁷⁷
- Inflation remains stubbornly high (8.4%) and is likely to exceed the 6.5% target for the 2007 fiscal year.
- The average Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation in Pakistan was 9.3% in 2004-2005 and around 8% in 2005-06.⁷⁸ High and volatile inflation is particularly undesirable in view of its greater adverse impact on low-income groups.⁷⁹
- The average annual growth rate of major crops in Pakistan has declined from 3.34% during the 1980s to 2.38 % during the 1990s.⁸⁰

Assessment: *Strong economic growth can and has had positive benefits for Pakistan's stability, but it is vulnerable to exogenous shocks.*

Human Development (CIFP Average Score: 6.49 or moderate)

Stabilizing

- There has been a decrease in the prevalence of various diseases amongst children. Measles immunization of children (ages 12-23 months) has increased from 57% in 2000 to 67% in 2004. There has also been a reduction in the incidents of the polio virus.⁸¹
- General Musharraf has pledged to double education spending as a share of GDP to 4%.⁸²

Destabilizing

- Pakistan ranks 117th out of 151 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI 0.497), with wide variances in HDI across provinces.⁸³
- The incidence of disease remains high in Pakistan; most likely due to inadequate medical coverage and poor quality of care. For example, the prevalence of fair and poor health for rural females above 25 is about 75%; for males in the same age group, it is about 45%.⁸⁴
- On average almost 90 working days per year are lost due to illness in poor households.⁸⁵
- Primary school enrollment rates in Pakistan have remained low, while the rural/urban disparity in gross enrollment has widened. This is further exacerbated by high drop out rates (15% in 2001).⁸⁶
- 54.4% of Pakistan's adult population (rates for adults above 15 years of age) is illiterate.⁸⁷
- Pakistan remains one of the few countries in the world where men outnumber women (108 men for every 100 women) due to high mortality rates for young girls and women of child bearing age as a result of gender discrimination, poor maternal health and nutrition.⁸⁸

Assessment: *Poor progress in this area is a long-term problem that, if not solved, will inhibit more positive results in other indicators.*

Environmental Stress (CIFP Average Score: 6.73 or high)

Stabilizing

- Pakistan has the world's largest irrigation system. This allows for the cultivation of 35.7 million acres of land that would otherwise be impossible to cultivate. It provides employment for ²/₃ of the population, accounts for ¹/₄ of the country's GDP, and 80% of its exports.⁸⁹

Destabilizing

- Pakistan suffers from severe deforestation (CIFP score of 7.0: High). Its current rate rests at 2.02% per year which has resulted in a loss of 24.7% of Pakistan's forest cover since 1990⁹⁰ which has in turn contributed to increased soil erosion and landslides.⁹¹
- Pakistan is prone to natural disasters ranging from earthquakes and landslides, to drought. The 2005 earthquake is still impacting Pakistan today⁹². Promised reconstruction funding from the government has not reached the majority of the population, leading to civil unrest.⁹³
- Pakistan is one of the most arid countries in the world⁹⁴ and suffers from a lack of water resources. It is estimated that in 2005 there were only 1,200 cubic metres available per capita.⁹⁵
- Pakistan depends heavily on agriculture which accounts for 24% of its GDP.⁹⁶ 90% of the agricultural land, which also supplies most of Pakistan's food, is cultivated using this irrigation system.⁹⁷
- High dependence on irrigation for agriculture is increasing soil salinity and threatening the sustainability of the agricultural system.⁹⁸

Assessment: *Unsustainable demands are being made on Pakistan's environment and resources thus threatening the livelihood of many.*

International Linkages (CIFP Average Score: 4.88 or moderate)

Stabilizing

- Pakistan is integrated into the rest of South and Central Asia through two regional arrangements, namely the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).⁹⁹
- General Musharraf's support for the US-led "war on terror" means that he will likely continue to receive backing from the USA.¹⁰⁰

Destabilizing

- Pakistan has failed to sign the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Pakistan has also been unconstructive in its role as a member of the new UN Human Rights Council.¹⁰¹

Assessment: *Despite efforts to improve international relations, Pakistan continues to face challenges as an international actor.*

Possible Scenarios for the Next Five Years

Best Case Scenario

1. President Pervez Musharraf maintains power and is “re-elected” in the 2007 elections. Over the course of what he claims will be his final term of office, Musharraf’s attempts to build a peaceful relationship between Pakistan and India continue to meet with success and a solution to the Kashmiri conflict moves closer and closer, contributing greatly to the stabilization of the region. He does not reverse his previous, albeit limited, freeing of the media which leads to growing calls for greater government accountability and more vigorous public debates on important issues of public policy. Musharraf seems to begin to indicate that he may be contemplating a return to a more authentic form of democracy after he retires. In anticipation of freer elections, political debate between parties becomes more vigorous and the mainstream political parties begin to reassert themselves, regaining some of the ground lost to radical Islamists.

2. Strong economic growth continues at its current rate of approximately 7%, fostering a continuation of the gradual increase in the government tax base¹⁰² and an increase in the size and confidence of the middle class. This in turn leads to a slight narrowing the gender gap. Although still relatively high, the population growth rate will continue to decline, partly due to the efforts of the government. Government increases in spending on education and health will begin to have an effect and increase the level of human development in Pakistan.

3. Although sporadic warfare between the government and the various ethnic groups in the outlying regions will most likely continue, most of the worst internal violence will be contained in the Northwest along the border with Afghanistan and not effect the majority of the population. The government will maintain its relative success against the most radical and violent insurgent groups in Baluchistan and elsewhere throughout the country, and will continue to support the American-led war on terror. Musharraf will be able to build a stronger and more long lasting peace on the shaky cease-fire signed with the Pushtun tribesmen in the Northwest.

Most Likely Case Scenario

1. Despite Musharraf’s efforts and what seemed to be promising initial outcomes, progress in the Kashmiri peace process flounders and the process returns to deadlock. The previously improving relationship between India and Pakistan sours due to recriminations over the failure of the latest peace initiative as both sides blame the other. The Muslim insurgency in Kashmir increases in intensity due to the faltering of the peace process, further exacerbating the conflict. The central government finds it increasingly difficult to control the borderlands as the Baluch insurgency gains strength and the conflict in Afghanistan worsens, encouraging and increasing the presence of Taliban forces and sympathizers along the border with Afghanistan. NATO increases its criticism of Pakistan’s inability to police its borders.

2. Despite the fall in the rate of population growth, it is not enough to counter the negative effects of a large and growing population and high population density. The continued high level of population growth and increasing urbanization lead to the already unruly major cities becoming increasingly uncontrollable, susceptible to increased crime, and accepting of Islamic extremist rhetoric. This is especially true in the expanding slums which surround the major cities where disease and poverty continue to grow stronger. In this worsening situation Musharraf falls back on support from hard-line Islamist parties; this only serves to further increase their strength and influence.

3. Pakistan’s high dependence on its irrigation system and poor maintenance cause it to deteriorate. Combined with increasing water scarcity, agricultural yields are reduced, resulting in a diminishing food supply and forcing farmers to move to overcrowded cities, which in turn contributes to worsening public health and impoverishment. Pakistan’s previously strong economic growth rate falls slightly, due in large measure to the aforementioned problems and the government’s inability to address them. Inflation, which was already high, rises, wiping out the savings of many poor Pakistanis, further immiserating the lower classes, and increasing instability.

Worst Case Scenario

1. There is a loss of Presidential control and the government fails to maintain authority. Chaos ensues, elections are cancelled, and the military re-asserts its control, this time proclaiming Chief Military Staff General Ehsan ul-Haq as Chief Executive. A less skilled politician than Musharraf, ul-Haq further marginalizes mainline political parties and depends more greatly on fundamentalist Islamic parties for political support, further encouraging an increase in their strength and influence. This Islamist tilt endangers Pakistan's already volatile alliance with the United States and angers NATO.

2. Encouraged both by government rhetoric, and by secret state support, Muslim insurgents in Kashmir renew and intensify their campaign against India leading to a major terrorist attack in New Delhi. The amelioration of the conflict between India and Pakistan achieved by Musharraf is lost and both sides begin to mobilize troops along their borders with a strong possibility of war and the exchange of nuclear weapons. Chinese troops begin to mass on the border with India.

3. Large tropical storms hit Pakistan causing massive flooding. The storm does massive damage to the already overburdened irrigation system in the southern half of the country which fails in many areas effectively destroying a significant proportion of Pakistan’s harvest in 2008. These storms coincide with a sizeable drought in the north which further reduces crop yields and pushes many marginal farmers into destitution. A country wide famine ensues. These natural disasters lead to a plummeting of Pakistan’s shaky growth rate and a deep recession.

4. Exacerbating the poor humanitarian, economic and security situation, the recession hits the outlying regions of the country hardest sparking increased ethnic unrest amongst ethnic minorities. The Baluch insurgency gains ground and inflicts numerous small defeats on the Pakistani military. The already restive Sindhi population begins to openly advocate for an Indian invasion to liberate them from the oppressive Punjabi plurality. The cease-fire that was signed between the central government and the Pushtun tribes in the Northwest breaks down and fighting resumes between government forces and tribal fighters along the Afghan border, leaving it even more porous than before.

Annex A

Scenario Construction Methodology

A brief discussion of the methodology used to arrive at the scenarios just presented is appropriate. The scenarios are grounded in assessments of contingency and vulnerability. Through research, a determination was made of what appeared to be the indicators that measured the factors, events, occurrences, relationships, and vulnerabilities that were likely to have the most impact on Pakistan in the near term (the next five years) and which of these were most contingent and dependent on divergent potential developments. Working with these assessments the various different paths that Pakistan could take over the next few years were modelled with special attention given to what were viewed as the indicators that best captured Pakistan's most important vulnerabilities; namely its history of armed conflict, its economic performance, and its environmental stress. Additionally, the strong connectivity noted between the various different indicators and the potential knock-on effects experienced by a phenomenon measured by one particular indicator on a phenomenon measured by another were also important in the design of the scenarios. An example of this would be the high vulnerability of the environment in Pakistan to exogenous shocks that would then have disastrous consequences for the larger economy which would in turn impact on development and stability. The three scenarios presented in this brief represent the interweavings of numerous potential smaller phenomenon, connection specific paths, or chain reactions that were thought to be possible. These chains have been assembled in an admittedly subjective manner to approximate the best case, worst case, and most likely case scenarios.

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