The Decline of Pakistan’s Security State: A Conference Report
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Foreword

The goal of this project was to investigate current thinking among Pakistan scholars about security outside and beyond the boundaries of Pakistan’s historical rivalry with India. We drew together a broad range of scholars who approach security quite differently; the final paper captures diverse perspectives that we believe create a baseline for understanding fundamental threats to Pakistan’s future, threats that are largely internal and more immediately dangerous than the presumed threat emanating from India. It is as much in India’s interest as it is Pakistan’s that they both resolve expeditiously the myriad problems discussed in the report. Pakistan's internal fault lines threaten regional stability every bit as much as the disputes that continue to bedevil Indo-Pak relations. This study reflects an open-ended approach to security that differs from more conventional efforts to understand Pakistan’s security dilemma. We engaged some of the often-dissonant voices from Pakistan’s civil society, major opposition parties, and even extremist groups within the country in order to develop a deeper understanding of the complicated dynamics within Pakistan. In the conclusion we will sketch out where we think this dialogue should go, with practicable steps directed at fixing Pakistan’s fundamental social and economic challenges—a powerful security threat to its future.

A tragic but visible manifestation of the need for this kind of work came in the murder of one of our most valued and lively contributors, Sabeen Mahmood. She was certainly a dissonant voice in Pakistan and paid for her dissonance with her life. Six weeks after the conference that was the basis for this study, Sabeen hosted a discussion of Balochistan at her civil society center in Karachi, The Second Floor.

A tragic but visible manifestation of the need for this kind of work came in the murder of one of our most valued and lively contributors, Sabeen Mahmood
As she was returning home, her car was stopped and she was shot several times. An investigation revealed that the killers were culpable of a number of other crimes; they confessed that they had decided to kill her even before she came to Berkeley because of her liberal values and outspokenness. Security in Pakistan—and Sabeen Mahmud’s life—has little to do with India and nuclear weapons, but a lot to do with the challenges facing Pakistani society and polity described in this study.

Three thematic lines of inquiry dominated our discussions, but what emerged over and above everything was the importance of informal mechanisms within Pakistan. Pakistan survives more because of informal adaptation to adversity within society than because of formal state-level action. In economic terms, factors such as patronage relations, the hawala system, and national identity have as much influence as foreign direct investment and national planning. We found that water access, water management, access to food, and community health were better understood through informal methods of delivery than through national-level policy. And finally, religious, class and ethnic diversity within Pakistan pose enormous threats to the security of the state precisely because of the promise on which the Pakistan state was founded.

**Pakistan survives more because of informal adaptation to adversity than because of formal state-level action**

Several implications emerge about the utility and relevance of the military narrative of security for Pakistan’s future. Pakistan is more vulnerable to decay and collapse from its own domestic societal and economic failures than it is from Indian actions. Nuclear weapons will do little to mend ethnic tensions, create jobs, improve health, stop sectarian killings or improve the daily lives of Pakistan’s citizens. In order to restore stability and political order, the actions of the state need to be reexamined and the deep dissonance between state and society bridged so that poverty, inequality, violence and repression can be addressed and real security established within the state.
The prevailing narrative ignores domestic security

The Pakistan Army has dominated Pakistan's narrative of security for almost 70 years. The political dominance of the military and its emphasis on an existential threat from external enemies have obscured not only a deeper understanding of Pakistan's internal security condition but also the real challenges that still face the state from within. Academic commentators and policy analysts have frequently placed the military at the center of Pakistani politics, often ignoring political actors outside the military who might serve as sources of stability or those who resist the security state due to its repressive and discriminatory tendencies. In order to investigate the manifold meanings, causes and consequences of internal insecurity in relation to the Pakistani state and society, the Institute of International Studies at the University of California, Berkeley organized a two-day workshop that brought together almost exclusively Pakistan-origin academic commentators from political science, economics, sociology, geography, anthropology, history and the humanities, as well as social activists and experts in social welfare. The goal of the workshop was to explore the security challenges facing Pakistan through a variety of disciplinary lenses, thereby constructing narratives of state legitimacy, security and insecurity that go beyond the narrow military-constructed definition.

The broad conclusion of the workshop was that Pakistan’s security begins at home; a continued preoccupation with a security narrative focused externally—primarily on India—exacerbates domestic vulnerabilities that pose the greatest threat to the future of the state. The Army-dominated narrative increasingly undercuts the civilian establishment’s already historically limited resources and authority; the government’s response to society’s demands for governance, security and welfare is therefore deeply inadequate. In order to rebuild political order in Pakistan, the relationship between the security state and its elite allies on one hand and marginalized and victimized social groups on the other must be transformed in such a way as to allow for greater tolerance, pluralism, a real devolution of power and the resources required to provide the civilian population with security and social protection.
The crisis facing Pakistan today, in the view of many conference participants, arises from a deep rift between a distant, financially autonomous and inwardly oriented central state—characterized by the civil and military bureaucracies in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, as well as its coopted allies and elite clients—and wide sections of Pakistani society in localities and regions suffering from exclusion, neglect, repression and violence, even as they mobilize resources and sources of stability that substantively exclude the state. This disconnect is the product of a breakdown in traditional state-society relations that were fashioned during colonial rule and renegotiated after Pakistan’s independence. The state once sat lightly over a dense network of social relationships that, while reproducing patriarchy and inequality, served as the basis for social order in the current provinces of what is now Pakistan. These older sets of relations have since been challenged by a dizzying array of forces: economic transformation and dislocation, religious movements, ethnic mobilizations, a population explosion, environmental crisis and insurgent violence. Recurrent military intervention prevented civilian governments from sustaining programs intended to address these myriad problems and in the end demonstrated that the Army too was incapable of preventing domestic social deterioration. As the civil and military bureaucracies took turns mishandling the reins of government, the country has suffered from multiple failures in the relationship between state and society.

These challenges are at the forefront of the breakdown in political order, but have historical antecedents. The centralizing state in Pakistan in the 1950s and 1960s, drawn toward bureaucratic-authoritarian governance by perceptions of existential vulnerability from India and the need for domestic resource mobilization, forestalled then-viable liberal and leftist challenges from within the national project. This eliminated progressive alternatives while maintaining—and even expanding—reliance on increasingly brittle structures of domestic legitimacy. The silencing of the early challenges to the Pakistani security state led to the rise of Bengali nationalism in East Pakistan and through brutal repression and Indian intervention, the independence of Bangladesh. Since that national calamity in 1971, the security state has relied upon
fraying structures of obedience and claims to ideological legitimacy to maintain social order in the face of unprecedented economic, political, social and environmental disruptions. The discussions in the workshop thus drew on older academic traditions that explored tensions in state-society relations, from Hamza Alavi onward – ones that have been more recently ignored in favor of the military—to explore contemporary relationships between state and society in Pakistan.

The crisis of internal security facing both state and society over the last decades is thus in part a product of the inability of the state to recognize, protect and mobilize sources of stability and political order that lie at some remove from the security state, including tribal groups, kinship networks, structures of patronage, regional nationalisms and even grounded forms of Islamism. Some of these institutions receive support from government institutions, albeit in forms of clientelism that are regularly threatened by pushes toward anti-corruption reform and ‘good governance.’ Others, from Baloch tribal groups to Shi’a communities, are wholly excluded from the state’s protection and are often the subject of its tendencies toward arbitrary violence. Many Pakistanis see these as incompatible with modernity. Yet the inability of the government to protect, provide for and negotiate with the heterogeneous units that make up Pakistani society, rather than serving the interests of the military and its elite allies, is the basis of political disorder in the country. The mutual lack of comprehension, fueled by a lack of an established interdependence, between the national security state and society thus creates and sustains structures of opportunity for the activities of violent actors.

In addition, the security state’s preoccupation with external threat and strategic balance in the region has since the 1980s led to intrastate violence more directly through the training and deployment of violent proxy actors as a means to gain ‘strategic depth’ in Kashmir and Afghanistan. In the years since 2001, many of these actors, committed to extremist objectives, have returned to Pakistan and engaged in terrorism and insurgent conflict against the state, civil society and minority communities. The preoccupation with external threats has thus produced predictable
results—decaying security at home, the proliferation of violent actors within Pakistan’s borders and increased vulnerability for the civilian population.

While it is clear that the state should have a primary role in addressing domestic insecurity, the narratives and self-understandings of the state apparatus need to be revised. This is particularly the case with the military’s nearly constant emphasis on the external threat from India, which has for decades obscured the threats growing within Pakistan. Sadly, despite the state’s professed commitment to challenging insurgent groups in order to reassert political order, violence against the civilian population from both the state and rebel forces continues. The different elements of the state apparatus, in the guise of the civilian government and the military establishment, continue to fall short in its fundamental obligation to protect its citizens.

To address the pervasive insecurity that challenges the state’s viability and legitimacy, therefore, Pakistan needs to build durable and candid channels of communication between the central state apparatus and social actors who are currently excluded from the state’s attention and are even objects of state coercion. This requires creating economic opportunity and increasing the distribution of resources to marginalized populations, drawing civil society organizations together to construct and defend a public space that can accommodate religious and cultural differences. Perhaps most importantly, it requires recognizing and addressing the structural inequities between different regions of the country through allowing expression, autonomy and dissent.

This paper explores three themes that emerged from the seminar. The first, *politics and political economy*, examines the channels of mobilization and distribution in political power and economic resources that may serve as sources for stability, with their absence or weakness contributing to insecurity. The second, *public spheres*, explores how exclusion and intolerance within society—often implicated in state policy—and the failure to defend a neutral public sphere remains a major source of instability for Pakistanis today. The third, *regionalism*, focuses on the tensions between the centers of political power and the demands for autonomy, recognition and resources from
populations who feel excluded from Pakistan. It concludes with a broader assessment of the roots of contemporary insecurity and suggests future directions in engagement, research and policy formulation.

A vivid and tragic manifestation of Pakistan’s insecurity and the lack of communication between society and the state were evident in the fate of one of the workshop’s most energetic and vibrant participants, the civil society activist Sabeen Mahmud. Two months after returning to Karachi, Mahmud hosted a discussion about the grievances of the Baloch population entitled “Unsilencing Balochistan: take two”. Returning home from this event, Sabeen was murdered. Her brutal assassination, allegedly by militants associated with the Pakistani Al Qa’ida operating in the city, starkly captures the state of insecurity in Pakistan, where voices engaged in debate about the meaning and future of security and transformation are silenced. This horrific event highlighted the often-violent responses to civil discourse that have come to characterize Pakistan’s politics. Only through a multifaceted reformation of ties between the state and society will Pakistan be able to transform a situation of deep and pervasive insecurity to a stable political order that is able to withstand pressures from extremist violence and ensure the survival of the state.
Politics and Political Economy

The political mechanisms of and the competition over the distribution of resources—from jobs to education to health—which serve as the material basis for Pakistani society, importantly affect internal security and stability. Many of these mechanisms have been under stress from the unprecedented demands from a population emboldened by democratic competition and eager for social advancement, coupled with the limited resources available for distribution, even as disinvestment and capital flight have threatened tax revenues and foreign exchange reserves. Further, the poverty, inequality and a growing sense of exclusion reproduces insecurity. Many participants in the workshop highlighted the damaged and dysfunctional institutions in the Pakistani political economy that exacerbate the gulf between state and society and contribute to the persistence of inequality. These chronic failures in institutional governance also weaken the legitimacy of Pakistan’s tentative steps towards democratic consolidation since the Musharraf years, as implicitly anti-democratic populist actions by Tahirul Islam Qadri and Imran Khan have made clear.

The lack of meaningful state involvement in regulating and promoting the economy limits the resources available to the state to provide services to the population. The Pakistani state has been relatively unsuccessful in solving chronic energy crises, stabilizing the country’s trade balances, maintaining predictable interest and exchange rates and effectively promoting Pakistani exports in world markets through trade agreements. These relative failures, coupled with the vast sums of money reserved for defense and embezzlement of state resources by rent-seeking politicians, have limited domestic investment. The perception that Pakistan is a violent country restricts foreign investment and thus opportunity; the continued inability and seeming unwillingness of the central government to address these issues will continue to diminish the attractiveness of the Pakistani market and make it more vulnerable to internal breakdown. Pakistan has positive characteristics that ought to induce more foreign direct investment: a large, still youthful and increasingly educated labor force, a strong base in raw materials and a vibrant diaspora. Yet Pakistan is dependent on
aid and loans to remain economically stable in the short run, a formula for economic instability and insecurity over the longer term.

The national budget is focused on defense and debt service, with little left over for social spending or investment; this contributes to a sense that the state is unresponsive to society’s needs. Tax collection is at very low levels, despite some institutional reform. This disjuncture between what is allocated for security at the national level—heavy defense commitments and a burgeoning nuclear arsenal directed against India—and what is left over for investment in education and training, energy and infrastructure at provincial and local levels limits the state’s capacity to promote Pakistan’s human development and thus increases instability and insecurity. Further, the strong perception among international investors that Pakistan is an unsafe environment makes investment less likely; in 2014, Pakistan’s rank in the Worldwide Governance Indicators, which reports elite perceptions, on instability and violence was 3.14 out of 100, just above Afghanistan’s 2.91; this is despite relative calm surrounding urban centers apart from Karachi and Quetta and insurgency that is geographically delimited. A new, more grounded narrative that counters a perception of widespread personal violence must be created to reverse this trend, while addressing the very real challenges facing the Pakistani economy. Otherwise, Pakistan will continue to be a beggar nation that relies for its security and survival on aid handouts and foreign loans.

Perhaps the key mechanism in the Pakistani political economy is that of patronage, or the distribution of goods by political actors to client communities in exchange for political support, mostly in the form of votes in elections. Such patron-client relationships are certainly exclusionary and often corrupt, but they are also at the heart of democratic competition throughout South Asia, including Pakistan. Many such networks are also buckling under the pressure of demands from the population for public services and social goods. Pakistani citizens can accept the reality of corruption at the local level if such patronage is effective in delivering necessary goods. But increasing contempt for those tied to national authority and the increasing inability of
old networks of patronage to deliver services such as health care, education, and justice exacerbate the breakdown of internal order and exposes Pakistan to exploitation by domestic and international anti-statist elements.

Nowhere is this more evident than the state’s inability to deliver the most basic good: individual security. The state is responsible for fielding an army that is skilled and productive, yet is not able to make individuals feel secure. The concentration of military resources in nuclear weapons does little to resolve social insecurities of individual Pakistanis, even though sections of elite and middle class society in Pakistan welcome increasing military influence. The state has completely failed to protect rights to safety, security and the delivery of justice, so people do not depend on the state to protect them—they take care of themselves. Those with privilege arrange for their own privatized protection by hiring security guards and building higher walls. Those who are excluded from these privatized goods feel more and more alienated from the security state.

The lack of state infrastructural capacity to provide services makes local politics a key arena for parochial contestation, bargaining and negotiating to the exclusion of national politics. The predominance of the local in Pakistani politics and society further highlights the extent to which the narratives of the security state do not address the needs of the population, leading to the prominence of other actors that can provide goods, from individual politicians or clan leaders to Islamist non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Anti-systemic forms of patronage politics can impact violence more directly, as well. This problem is particularly acute in southern Punjab, where new centers of power have arisen. Organizations associated with militant organizations such as the Jamaat ud-Dawa are now able to compete for power through resource distribution and political competition. Continued semi-covert support for such groups by clandestine agents of the state and particular politicians decreases the central government’s ability and authority to govern autonomously, thus rendering the government more
vulnerable to domestic challenge. While provincial governments have greater potential
capacities to solve the very real governance challenges faced by vulnerable
populations, they can be subject to the same challenges by social groups not well
integrated into patronage networks; the provinces are, moreover, not fully empowered
within a working framework of fiscal federalism.

Even though NGOs are at the forefront of effective service provision in the social
sector, they too are subjected to the pressures of these politics. Facing numerous
bureaucratic obstacles, they need to locate a patron who will allow them to carry out
the mission they were funded to achieve. They also in turn become patrons as they
become an avenue for talented Pakistanis to find employment or grants outside
Pakistan. The government leans on the NGO sector to accomplish basic societal
needs, but they are not a replacement for the government, given the scale of Pakistan’s
unmet needs. The central government is ceding responsibility for unmet social needs
to NGOs who operate with foreign aid. As a result, in combination with other non-
state actors adopting this model, central government capacity not only withers away,
the policy priorities of the NGOs replace national objectives. Pakistan’s social net
becomes a patchwork of NGO and other donor preferences rather than a coherent
national vision. This was evident in discussions of the ways that urban NGOs and
social activists coopted and demobilized livelihood movements by rural communities
against land acquisition by the state.

This is particularly problematic in metropolitan governance where the state appears
most absent. Pakistan’s rapid urban growth has led to the emergence of megacities.
Karachi has a population of around 23 million, Lahore 10 million, and both Faisalabad
and Rawalpindi-Islamabad have more than five million. Indeed, the phenomenon of
“conurbation” shows an extensive, connected urban network from Wagah to
Islamabad and from Lahore to Multan. Enormous population growth in Karachi and
other cities has created needs that overwhelm state capacity; slum dwellers have
responded to this overpopulation with local solutions such as sharing living space. The
lack of an explicit connection between massive numbers of urban poor and the
government undercuts any sense of loyalty to the state. Security is thus a consequence of personal support networks. Pakistan is clearly a weak state in terms of capacity and legitimacy, with politics now an arena of constant contestation, negotiation and bargaining. This creates a local level search for security below the level of the state, which comes at the price of undercutting national-level responsibility as it removes incentives or pressure on the bureaucracy to perform, even while rent-seeking from state largesse continues. The sheer scale of the needs of urban populations overwhelms efforts by even the most conscientious bureaucrats, particularly when the local authority is badly resourced and captured by local interests. As a result, even the state’s effective provision of as basic a resource as security is all but impossible, leading to a collapse of the legitimacy of the state.

A persistent feature of Pakistan’s political economy is that informal structures are formed as a response to perceptions that the state is both incompetent and malign. Informal financial transactions under the hawala system are a case in point. They enable commerce, trade and financial transactions through traditional networks of trust and reciprocity that span the Middle East and South Asia as well as diaspora populations further afield. But they also undercut the central government’s ability to tax commerce and can enable illegal activities that undermine government authority. The hawala system is thus an example of how an informal institution resists the coercive state perceived to be hostile to its interests; state efforts to draw merchants into formal financial institutions are interpreted as ill-disguised measures to combat terrorism, perhaps following the directives of the United States.

The use of large financial institutions would allow the state to monitor the flow of money; by remaining informal and beyond the government’s reach, the hawala system directly challenges state authority. Meanwhile, the attempt of the state to carry out its writ through formal financial institutions and financial accounting serves to disrupt local arrangements. The mutual hostility between official policy and local institutions thus perpetuates the gulf between the security state and society and explains the dysfunctional nature of Pakistan’s political economy.
Such dysfunction has serious consequences when it comes to conflict over key strategic resources, such as water, that have international dimensions. Water politics continue to be contentious in Pakistan. 90 percent of Pakistani agriculture is irrigated by water from the Indus River headwaters in Kashmir. Agriculture in turn directly accounts for 22 percent of Pakistan’s GDP and employs 23 million people, or 43 percent of Pakistan’s labor force. Indirect contributions from agriculture to GDP amount to 40-45 percent of GDP. Irrigated agriculture thus represents the very core of Pakistan’s political economy. Yet given the nature of downstream and upstream geography, Pakistan is inherently at a disadvantage since the Indus headwaters are located inside India.

The responses of the state to water insecurity take one of two forms: technocratic utopianism and chauvinism. More dams are the technocratic answer, but they could cause huge suffering for local populations in order to serve elite and middle class urban constituencies. In another telling of the water story, radicals argue that the solution to Pakistan’s water crisis must be a “water jihad” against India. Both of these responses ignore the vulnerability of local populations and the need to address solutions that balance the interests of different groups and regions that are all dependent on the fertility of the Indus Valley for livelihoods and social stability.

**Politics and political economy: key observations**

- Misallocation of scarce resources creates inequality, undercutting loyalty and compliance to the state.
- Widespread perceptions that Pakistan is a violent country limits foreign direct investment, undercutting Pakistan’s growth potential despite its potentially desirable investment environment, and thus reproducing instability.
- Incoherent and ineffective state policies encourage the development of alternate informal economic institutions that limit extraction of resources.
through taxation; local publics are consequently estranged from and indifferent to the state.

• In the face of national bureaucratic incompetence and incapacity, patron-client relations pervade the democratic process; the legitimacy and effectiveness of the state is therefore diminished, making it more vulnerable to predators.

• The central government is ceding responsibility for the social agenda to NGOs who pursue their narrow interests rather than building national capacity.

• Enormous population growth—especially in Karachi—has created needs that overwhelm state capacity; informal measures adopted to address problems long ignored by the central government undercuts confidence and dependence on central authorities.

• The central state’s stewardship of common resources such as water, particularly in negotiation with neighboring countries, is over-politicized and subject to the perceptions and compulsions of the central, security state.
Public Spheres

A second area of serious concern for domestic insecurity is the decline of a pluralistic and ideologically neutral public sphere in Pakistan, which is increasingly dominated by intolerance, incivility and exclusion even as civil society actors, particularly the media and NGOs, have proliferated. An important source of such intolerance is the growing influence of ultraorthodox Islamic movements and their outsize influence on public and social policy. They behave autonomously to repress discordant voices but their leaders and activists have also been used as tools of control by the security state. Intolerance often turns into violence as sectarian groups clash, sometimes encouraged by politicians and the state as a means of attaining particular political objectives.

Insecurity is also evident in the limited willingness of the state to protect the rights and wellbeing of portions of society, specifically religious minorities and women, who are excluded by the dominant, conservative ideology.

The current roots of social intolerance in Pakistani society lie in the quest for legitimacy by the security state. Following a 1977 coup against the popularly elected Pakistan People’s Party, the Zia regime ushered in orthodox Islam as the basis for the state. This included the Hadood and Zina Ordinances, elements of ḥadīth-based personal law that are deeply inequitable to women. These ordinances also invited conservative clerics to adjudicate social and political life. Since the days of the repressive Zia regime, political elites have been unable to challenge ultraconservative principles—the clash of ideologies has been replaced by an intra-Pakistan clash of civilizations. This absence of ideological contestation makes the state more susceptible to domination by ideologues whose view of security is antithetical not only to the original conceptualization of Pakistan but also to the Pakistan Army’s view of its necessary role in society.

It is increasingly the case that economic, sectarian and party political elements are interconnected informally. The emergence of politically powerful local ulema opens up
the possibility of outsider groups entering the political scene and drawing citizens away from more accommodationist religious approaches. Pakistan as an embodiment of Islamic aspirations is becoming a competition for which Islam is the one Islam of Pakistan. In the 2013 elections, those parties who maintained effective sub rosa ties to Sunni Islamist activists in the hinterland, such as the PML-N, tended to do better, while those at the national level who rejected appeasement, such as the PPP and the ANP, suffered sustained attacks. In the past, aggressive clerics were seen as a proxy for the Army in furthering foreign and domestic policy goals. Now, collaboration between Pakistan’s rapidly urbanizing middle classes, Pakistan’s independent sectarian clerics and political aspirants is more evident, with serious consequences in the targeting of religious minorities as part of political mobilization, without the state’s capacity to interdict this violence. The traditional rural order of social control is slowly fading but new forms of state power and social order based on common standards of legitimacy and authority have not begun to replace it. The formal authority of the state as a neutral arbiter is likely to remain weak. Barring an exogenous shock, the future is likely to see the combining of client-oriented services with the selective distribution of impunity at the local level. The state’s inability to enforce accountability to the rule of law adds to general disregard for national level leadership and renders the state ineffective even when it tries to assert its constitutional writ.

The emergence of radical groups can be seen as part of the renegotiation and relocation of power from the center to the periphery. As the state cannot provide services, it is replaced by whoever can provide them at the local level. Poverty and underdevelopment are important factors in the rise of radical groups, but their growth (if not necessarily their creation) is also a structural problem emanating from the fact that these regions are rural and feudal. In the absence of central government engagement through a durable set of civil institutions for the provision of services, new political alliances and new elites are replacing the old ones. Extreme violence is unavoidably part of this shift of power from old to new elites. The emergence of alternate power centers represents a particular version of modernity that fundamentally challenges national government policy.
In south Punjab, the security state willingly delegates power to violent groups to fulfill its objectives, bypassing older structures of patronage and interest representation. It supports certain violent elements, which then compete for local power. The prime means of legitimacy and social order in the region is religion, yet traditional support for religion has slipped out of the hands of traditional religious figures and shifted towards newer, charismatic figures. As a result, traditional institutions have lost their moral legitimacy. While an expectation of material gains has become part of religious mobilization, radicals can provide alternative resources for mobilization from external sources—not least the largesse Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries provide to ultraorthodox groups—and thus vie effectively for social and political power. Given these alternative sources of authority and legitimacy, defending an alternative security narrative that empowers the local state while maintaining minimum standards for inclusion becomes a serious challenge.

The gap between the state and society in the protection of a neutral public sphere is tragically evident in the scale and scope of violence against the Shiʿa, a minority sect in Islam that nonetheless represents up to 20 percent of the population, or 40 million people. Attacks against the Shiʿa population have risen sharply in cities like Karachi and Quetta, in interior Punjab and the Northern Areas, perhaps due to the influence of radical outsiders but also because of the links between national political parties and Sunni religious organizations who are connected to sectarian militias. The parochial interests of political actors and the callous disregard of the security state for religious minorities endure as a mark of instability in the country. The response from some Shiʿa ulema against this violence is simply to reject any appeal to the Pakistani state for security, identifying instead with the transnational Shiʿa community—including those in control of the Iranian state—and disregarding the state as an instrument of security. This undermines Pakistani state institutions and authority and the claim to represent Islam at the national level. It also intensifies a proxy war within Pakistan’s borders between Shiʿa communities implicitly backed by Iran and Sunni sectarian groups funded by the Gulf monarchies. The inability of the security state to provide neutral
stability and security to all communities perpetuates suspicion about the interests of the security state and thus the spread of systemic violence.

Even in the more relatively harmless spheres of Islamist civil society there is significant scope for exclusion and the reproduction of inequality. The burgeoning influence of Tablighi Jamaat proselytization through dawat, or face-to-face street level preaching, promulgates a conservative view of women as inferior to men. This informal, sub-state religious movement undercuts central government claims to leadership and representation of the Pakistani ideal. Tablighi males wander the streets of Pakistan and seek to gain and promulgate pure virtues of Islam. They focus on separating men and women, arguing that men need to function separately from women because of innate difference in roles and capacities; they argue that purdah, or gender segregation in public and private spheres, must be enforced. This characterization of women as properly separate and unequal undercuts the goal of a unified and democratic Pakistan.

Lastly, the juridical responses of the security state to internal violence are likely to undermine the basis of rule of law and the security for the population. Following the Peshawar School attack in December 2014, the security state colluded with the PML-N government in promulgating the 21st Amendment to the Pakistan Constitution, which institutes military courts for suspected terrorists; it thereby significantly damages the due process elements of both the Pakistan Constitution and common law. A majority Supreme Court ruling, a body that has in the past been willing to challenge the overreach of the security state, subsequently legitimized the military courts. Through enacting this amendment, Pakistan attempted to substitute a blunt legal solution for inadequate domestic security policies, thus ceding government’s legitimate responsibility to the military. This outcome—a kind of pre-emptive civilian submission to military authority in matters of domestic security—is ripe for abuse as it weakens the basis in the rule of law for a protected public sphere that lies outside the political compulsions of the security state.
Intolerance and the outright persecution of minorities has been a continuing feature of Pakistan’s politics since at least the 1980s. While the core of the security state, the Pakistan Army, remains a deeply if only implicitly secular institution, the inability of the state to maintain neutrality and protection for minority voices in the public sphere contributes to a deep and growing sense of menace in a country where you may be killed simply if you hold an unpopular opinion or belong to a minority religious group. The state’s disregard for the insecurity facing minority voices of any type, as well as the use of strategic violence against minorities for political reasons, is rooted in decisions to reestablish the state’s legitimacy on the basis of exclusion and repression rather than openness, respect and protection of the individual. For Pakistan’s insecurity to be addressed, these foundations need to be replaced in order that a new, free and protected public sphere is established.

**Public Space: key observations**

- The state’s inability to protect the individual is creating atomized spaces where security is personalized and the state mistrusted.
- Traditional religious leaders have lost their moral authority to radical Islamic forces empowered in the Zia era; such forces increasingly exploit state and local elites to further political agendas that engage in local, often violent conflicts for resources and legitimacy.
- Civil discourse and debate are central to a free democracy but unsolved murders of civil liberties activists and journalists create an international image of Pakistan as lawless and dangerous.
- Ideological debate has been eliminated and replaced by civilizational clash inside Pakistan, creating an increasingly divided and intimidated public.
- Religious street zealotry is marginalizing women from society and the state, making public space more insecure and the state more vulnerable.
- Religious persecution of Shiʿas has increasingly turned them away from the Pakistan state for security and toward external sources of support for secure worship, thus internationalizing sectarian tensions as a consequence of the state’s inability to provide security without prejudice.
• The use of constitutional amendment to address state judicial incompetence sacrifices individual rights and security for the priorities of the state security bureaucracy.
Regionalism

Pakistan faces a crisis of federalism due to the rejection of diverse ethnicities. Ethno-nationalist groups compete with each other for jobs, identification within the state and resources, but without the stable framework or equitable division necessary for the sustainability of such conflict. Given the domination of Pakistan by Punjab as the ethnic face of the country, ethno-nationalist alienation and the desire for separation from the state is significantly increased. The East Pakistan civil war that created Bangladesh becomes a kind of model for insurgency and the possible creation of Sindhudesh, Jinnahpur or an independent Baluchistan.

Pakistan was born with an imbalanced provincial structure. The Punjab was the largest and most populous province. It was also the home of the largest influx of refugees from India who provided the backbone of the civil services and then formed partnerships with the landed and military elites. The Punjab was also, at least traditionally, the principal recruiting ground for the military. Despite some discussion of the need to create more provinces and change this disparity, progress has been stalled. A long-standing feature of Pakistan’s politics is that the state disproportionately favors the population, and the elites that represent it, in certain regions such as Punjab while suppressing the rights and aspirations of others, especially Balochistan and the Pashtun Northwest but also southern Punjab and Karachi.

Regional imbalances such as these are inimical to long-term security and stability of the country, for two reasons. First and most obviously, both civil and violent movements against the state arise from the real perception of structural inequalities driven by the priorities of the security state and the narrow social base of its interests and those of its clients and allies in northern and central Punjab. These structural inequalities can form the basis for violent mobilization against the state, particularly when regional populations are treated as colonial subjects. Second, the reconstruction of Pakistani national identity and legitimacy, important for long-term security, requires

22
recognition of and a respect for difference in a truly multiethnic country. The rebalancing of political power and state resources that would accompany such recognition is currently not the operating principle of the Pakistani security state. To rebuild domestic security and stability, therefore, Pakistan needs to address the violently repressive actions and dismissive attitudes on the part of the security state towards Pakistan’s more neglected and repressed regions. To this end, it must continue the effort to draw previously marginalized local actors and groups into the political process, as was attempted recently in Balochistan.

Central government suppression of nationalist political movements increases a sense of isolation and marginalization among ethnic groups even at the local level. The Gwadar port development presents a compelling example of a challenge to the national government that grew out of local concerns. In the course of establishing the port, the local population has been subjected to a variety of coercive tactics by the state, using bullying, threats, hostile checkpoints, and even torture. In contrast, favored groups such as mainstream Punjabi and Urdu-speaking construction workers appear to receive better treatment with education, media access and other material rewards. A consequence of the development project was the creation of a fishermen’s movement; although initially a social movement, it became politically allied with the Baluch Nationalist Party. The BNP conducted street rallies to oppose exploitative mega-projects; activists were arrested and the movement was suppressed. The inept project management weakened social and cultural integration at the national level while it strengthened separatist and nationalist fervor within Baluchistan. Similarly, the security state’s more recent anti-insurgent actions in FATA and other Pashtun-majority areas have increased internal displacement, exacerbating ethnic rivalries and local tensions in areas where Pushto speakers constitute a minority. Increased ethno-nationalist competition and violence creates greater insecurity, leading to breakdown of national authority.

Ever since the suppression of the aspirations of Bengali nationalists led to the 1971 war and the independence of Bangladesh, the Pakistani security state and its allies have
looked upon the provinces and regions outside the Punjabi core with suspicion and contempt. Pakistani state elites do not recognize regional cultures, traditions and indeed the sources of potential support for political and social order, because redirecting resources and political power away from current deeply inequitable arrangements would threaten the state. Such structural inequality is organized regionally and has caused deep domestic insecurity for large swathes of Pakistan’s area and population, thereby creating the conditions for ethnic mobilization against the state. The official devolution of power to provinces in the Eighteenth Amendment and the recent National Finance Commission award of greater budgetary resources to the provinces under the current government constitutes a step in the right direction, but it does not erase entrenched politics and animosities that have built up over decades.

**Regionalism: key observations**

- Continued suppression of regional aspirations increases insecurity and creates conditions for internal breakdown; if domestic security is to be increased, Pakistan must reverse the violently repressive actions of the security state against populations in Karachi, Balochistan and the Northwest, while constructing a new framework of security that can both protect those populations while interdicting militants that have used regional animosities as a cover for conflict.

- Continued rejection of diverse ethnicities creates local conflicts over jobs, resources and identity; structural ethnic-based inequality undermines national authority and encourages mobilization against the state. The devolution of political power and resources is key here, thus rebalancing the asymmetry of Pakistan’s federalism even while building a new framework of interregional cooperation for security and development.

- Positive recent efforts to address imbalances—such as the redistributive awards of the National Finance Commission—may serve as a model that can be replicated elsewhere.
Informal solutions and an informal conclusion

Incompetent central governance increases local dependence on informal nongovernmental and quasi-governmental structures to create security alternatives. The informal aspects of governance that are built into Pakistani society can thus serve as hidden sources of stability and security. To answer a broad set of questions about the nature of security in Pakistan, it is therefore necessary to move away from a narrowly state-centered approach. Pakistan has been sustained throughout its history not by the actions of the autonomous Weberian state but rather by an informal order that has been relatively independent of the state. Order and stability in Pakistan arise not from what the state in any of its manifestations has done but rather from a wide range of historically connected social structures. These structures predate the creation of Pakistan and experienced little change throughout its early history.

The very idea of Pakistan—the moral and political argument for the creation of Pakistan—existed separately from the structures that, many argued, would not be protected without separation from India. Yet the idea of Pakistan as projected in the 1940s was unconnected to any geographical foundation; it was an idea for a nation lacking any physical presence or geographical space. The Pakistan that emerged as a physical space ended up not being coterminous with the original conceptualization of the state, which was a highly idealized and moral vision that was intended to transcend the fact of British colonial rule. In this conceptualization, Pakistan was envisioned as a state that would transcend the local and regional, in which its citizens would together profess loyalty to a higher national meaning. Pakistan was conceived as a principle that made a claim on Muslim loyalties transcending the everyday world in which they were embedded. Yet despite this idealization of the state—embedded deeply in the motivations and self-perceptions of military elites—the very creation of Pakistan had to be based on these local structures. It was through appeals to traditional patronage and kinship networks that the state was created and political order was maintained.
The contemporary nature of political insecurity is therefore the product of the ways in which the state has increasingly distanced itself from these structures in society, intervening selectively and often violently to pursue specific objectives and otherwise operating essentially—to be blunt—on a principle of neglect. Starved for resources and buckling under the pressure of increasing social demands, the mechanisms for mediation and compromise inherent in these social structures have deteriorated significantly. The result is the production and reproduction of violence that yields a state of endemic insecurity for the Pakistani polity beyond the gated walls of the security state. Appeals to the threat from India and the consequent need for an extensive nuclear weapons infrastructure are irrelevant to the deterioration of security within the state.

The Berkeley seminar on reimagining security in Pakistan came to the following general insight. In order to rebuild a durable and long-term sense of domestic security, and thereby contribute meaningfully to the stability of a vulnerable and strategically important region, the chasm between the interests and self-perceptions of the Pakistani security state—the military, its allies and clients—and the grievances, values and interests of an excluded population must be bridged. This will mean abandoning some of the foundational concepts of the state apparatus—that of a haven for Muslims in South Asia or of existential threat from India—that have served to perpetuate inequality by ignoring regional, local and social differences and using intolerance as the basis for national legitimacy. In order to restore stability and political order, then, the actions of the state need to be reexamined and the deep dissonance between state and society bridged so that poverty, inequality, violence and repression can be meaningfully addressed.

This needs to be recognized as a political program, both from within Pakistan and with the aid of external actors that will yield answers and point to solutions over the medium-term. The short-term policy fixes that have characterized discussions on Pakistan’s security are at best ineffectual and may be dangerous over the long term, given that the tensions between state and society have deep roots and must be
untangled slowly. In the future, we need to continue our examinations in a number of
directions. We require a more focused analysis of the trajectory of informal patterns
and structures that might be potential sources of stability: which are decaying and
which are persevering? We also need to distinguish the merits from the risks
associated with different patterns and structures of governance, providing a more
nuanced set of recommendations on how to leverage the merits while recognizing and
taking steps to minimize the risks. Finally, we need to recognize and understand the
emerging political dynamics that might provide opportunities for a slow transformation
of state-society relations towards providing a deep sense of security for Pakistan.
Afterword: Background to Pakistan's Security State

Pakistan was born out of a bloody partition of the Indian subcontinent following widespread violence between Hindus and Muslims and ultimately unsuccessful negotiations over the constitutional protections of a Muslim minority in a united India. Fundamental disagreements over the accession of Muslim-majority Jammu and Kashmir to India led to armed conflict between Pakistan and India in late 1947. This conflict began the orientation of the nascent Pakistani state towards mobilizing resources for defense against a strategic competitor rather than focusing on internal societal needs. In order to execute such a mobilization, the military and civilian bureaucracy centralized power and suppressed the political aspirations of provincial actors, while making deals with traditional elites—including landlords in Punjab, pirs and makhdooms in Sindh and tribal leaders in Balochistan and the North West Frontier—to maintain political order at the local level. Pakistan did try to construct a democratic regime in the years after its founding, as the Constituent Assembly met to draw up a Constitution. But it could not overcome the tension between the logic of universal suffrage and the determination of mohajir and Punjabi statists to prevent Bengali domination of the new government, thus introducing tensions between the perceived imperatives of centralization felt by the security state and the orthogonal demands for recognition, representation and redistribution on the part of society far from political power.

Although this early instance of bureaucratic authoritarianism was responsible for Pakistan’s considerable successes in industrialization through the 1960s, it sowed the seeds of popular resistance among those who felt excluded from the fruits of development. Bengali speakers from the province of East Pakistan felt particularly marginalized by the centralized state; their ethnic mobilization led first to brutal repression and then to the independence of Bangladesh following civil war and Indian intervention in 1971. The Pakistani security state’s sense of existential threat, manifested in the humiliating defeat by India in 1971, was exacerbated by India’s 1974 nuclear test. Thus it embarked on a nuclear program and made strategic alliances with
China and the oil-rich Arab countries while ignoring the sources of instability in the domestic sphere. The lesson Pakistan’s leaders took from East Pakistan’s secession was not to redress the internal inadequacies that fostered the revolt, but rather to redouble its commitments to a narrow characterization of security around a narrow vision of Pakistan.

The populist Zulfiqar Bhutto regime, in power between 1971 and 1977, politicized the bureaucracy and exacerbated historical winner-take-all competition between groups of political elites that continued through the 1990s, while crushing the independent power of labor and other groups looking to use the state for social transformation. Further, Bhutto’s increasing intolerance of centrifugal assertions of power, as seen in a brutal counterinsurgency campaign against nationalists in Balochistan and the arrest and trial of the Pashtun nationalist National Awami Party leadership, established a pattern of confrontation between the security state and nationalist movements in the western and northwestern peripheries of the country. Bhutto’s chaotic and personalized governance led to a confrontation with the military that led to his ouster and execution.

The military regime of Zia ul Haq, from 1977 to 1988, repressed dissent, introduced shari‘a law and expanded the influence of ultraorthodox Deobandi Islam to Pakistani society. This regime’s strategic alliances with the United States and other allies against the Soviet Union’s forces in Afghanistan led to the Mujahidin insurgents being mobilized, trained and equipped by Pakistani intelligence forces in refugee camps in Pakistan’s Northwest. The involvement of the Pakistani security state with the Mujahidin insurgency has had grave long-term consequences for internal security in the country; the cross-border insurgency brought to Pakistan a proliferation of small arms, networks of radical Islamist madrassas, pervasive drug trafficking, and sectarian conflict.

After the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, agents of the Pakistani security state redeployed violent proxies to radicalize a nascent rebellion in the Indian state of
Kashmir. And as Afghanistan devolved into a bloody internecine civil war, the same agents supported the Taliban movement and their eventual capture of most of the country, including Kabul, in 1996. Pakistan’s domestic politics in the 1990s involved competition between political elites of the Pakistan People’s Party and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz. The military nonetheless retained large amounts of power over military and security policy and intervened at will in politics by helping to depose elected Prime Ministers. The military’s behind-the-scenes power was brought center stage in October 1999 when General Pervez Musharraf led a coup against Nawaz Sharif, who was perceived to be too assertive in gathering the reins of government into his own hands, after Sharif attempted to dismiss Musharraf as the Army chief.

The current internal conflict in Pakistan is partly a result of the decision by President Pervez Musharraf to support the United States’ invasion of Afghanistan, following the attacks of September 11, 2001. In order to assist US operations, Musharraf deployed regular Army forces in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) for the first time since independence. Taliban-affiliated Pashtun militias with roots in Pakistan’s Northwest started engaging these Pakistani forces in FATA as early as 2004. Following the occupation of the Lal Masjid mosque and subsequent military eviction of militants from it in 2007, anti-state militias formed the umbrella group, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, and initiated a widespread campaign of terror against government agencies, civilian establishments and prominent political figures throughout the country. In the last several years, Sunni militias have heavily targeted the Shi’a minority population, particularly in the perennially violent city of Karachi as well as Balochistan, but a low-level insurgency continues throughout much of Pakistan’s western and northwestern peripheries. The continuing incidence of terrorist attacks has contributed to a widespread feeling that violence and insecurity, which the military is beginning to address, are endemic in the country.

The military and security services have maintained a focus on external threats as the basis of internal cohesion while continuing sponsorship of violent proxies, a number of whom are engaged in violence against the civilian population inside Pakistan’s borders.
Many political elites have retreated behind walled compounds; some have even encouraged radical religious agendas and have covertly supported sectarian militias as a means of electoral mobilization. Other elites have effectively maintained social relations through engaging in political competition and clientelism, but such relative stability has only been fully successful in the wealthy areas of central and northern Punjab, Pakistan’s mercantile and agrarian core. Cloistering in other social geographies, coupled with a feeling that violence is endemic, misses the potential sources of stability that exist in localities and regions that need to be recognized if a durable sense of stability and progress is to be established.
Three issues in particular ought to receive further emphasis: First, Pakistan did try to construct a democratic regime since its founding, but could not overcome the tension between the logic of universal suffrage and the determination of the mohajirs and Punjabis to prevent Bengali domination of the new state. This fact illustrates the point made in the report about the notion of Pakistan sitting "above" the realities on the ground. The failure to agree to a constitution that would clarify what kind of state Pakistan would be had immense consequences, all of which persist to this day. This is important because it led directly to the first military intervention and the problems of path dependency that followed.

Second, the "ideology" of Pakistan deserves greater emphasis: it's really what unifies the explanations about why state failure is manifested in such diverse forms. Is Pakistan meant to be a homeland for Muslims, Islamists or merely those who lived in the provinces that formed the new state? How do both the Punjab as well as non-Punjabi provinces fit into a nation that purportedly defines itself as a homeland of freedom from Hindu majoritarianism when this was never the problem to begin with in the areas that became West Pakistan? And what is the security state's current (i.e., post 1971) emphasis on protecting the "ideology of Pakistan" meant to achieve and with what consequences?

Third, the failure of democracy at a functional level, beyond merely the formal, is important. Although cited in the analysis, it deserves greater prominence. If democracy, inconsistent though it may be in Pakistan, only continues to reproduce the preexisting social structures and cleavages, what transformative value does democracy have? And why isn't democracy in Pakistan producing a social churning as it does in India and the United States? This raises the more difficult issue of the relationship between social class and political institutions and may be worth a closer examination in future iterations.

The Pakistan state may wither, but it's not going away. This paper captures an array of forces that contribute to that withering process, but the security apparatus remains formidable. It is notable that domestic violence has been reduced by about 70% since the military (and belatedly Pakistan's political leaders) declared war on the Tehreek-I Taliban (TTP). Thus the problem Pakistan faces is less one of sovereignty per se than one of the security apparatus's national security narrative, which is buttressed by the battle against the TTP but weakened on many other fronts by the particulars presented in the paper.
Based on recent in-country experience, I see cracks opening in the national security narrative along several fronts.

- First, even the success story of the military campaign makes clear that internal security—rather than the classic Indian threat narrative—is the central and primary threat to Pakistan.

- Second, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi helps reinforce this narrative by not engaging with Pakistan, but once he re-engages, this crack will widen. The national security narrative requires a hostile India—a disinterested India doesn't open fissures in the narrative because disinterest is often redefined within Pakistan as hostility. An India that seeks normal ties, however, undercuts the classic India threat narrative.

- Third, the release of information by U.S. NGOs about how Pakistan is out-competing India on nuclear weapons is unwelcome as it, too, undercuts the military narrative of an overbearing and superior Indian threat.

- Finally, as is well argued in this paper, domestic failings and shortfalls challenge the military-driven security narrative.

The framework of this paper opens up possibilities for follow-up programming, which might be explored with possible funders. What are the best strategies to accelerate the fissures that are growing in the Pakistan military's national security narrative, by governments and by NGOs? This approach would break new and interesting policy ground.

Shuja Nawaz
The Atlantic Council

The MacArthur grant helped UC Berkeley take a valuable first step by gathering scholars and representatives of civil society at a conference to pool their ideas as a starting point for a broader and longer-lasting conversation among Pakistanis. Such a conversation is critical as Pakistan remains bound by its geography and is suffering the back draft of its own domestic and external policies in the neighborhood as well as foreign intervention in Afghanistan since the late 1970s. Breeding hard line Islamists at home and fomenting terrorism abroad as an instrument of state policy has led to an existential crisis for this nuclear-armed state. Pakistan's size and strategic location matter. If left to its own devices, it risks becoming entrenched in a militarized philosophy of governance and imprisoned by self-declared victimhood. While efforts to draw it back from its pell-mell rush into nuclear weaponization, especially of short-range and so-called tactical weapons, deserve to be supported, a wider approach that would help alter the landscape and ecosystems that foster or condone violence at home or abroad deserve serious thought. This will involve engagement with and strengthening of the non-security segments of Pakistani society: its burgeoning middle class, growing youth bulge, and increasingly active civil society that has yet to generate a center of gravity for political action and is easily
bought out or cowed down by governmental power or military power. The Berkeley project was a valuable first step in this direction.

Some of the problems identified in the report are being addressed in Pakistan, but the analysis by the Berkeley participants underscores the importance of taking action.

• Since 2014, the elected government of Pakistan has attempted to craft a National Action Plan, consisting of some 20 items to fight terrorism and militancy. Concurrently a military operation named Zarb-I Azb to clear the Federally Administered Tribal Areas bordering Afghanistan of terrorist groups has been launched with some success but has largely displaced the groups into volatile Afghanistan and the hinterland of Pakistan.

• Other actions by the army-dominated paramilitary Rangers in Karachi and some 13,000 combined Intelligence-based operations by the civil and military have drastically reduced the number of terrorist-related actions nationwide. In 2015 some 3,615 persons were killed in terrorism-related violence, compared with 5,496 in 2014. Civilian casualties from terrorism were cut in half from 1,781 in 2014 to 905 in 2015. In Karachi alone, the crime rate was reportedly halved in 2015 in comparison with 2014 largely because of the active presence of the Rangers in the city.

• The army chief General Raheel Sharif has stated that the army’s action will “end terrorism”. Terrorism has not been vanquished, however, and powerful Islamist militant segments continue to thrive in the Punjab, where the ruling Pakistan Muslim League of Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif has run the provincial government since 2008. The PML (N) has been known to have electoral alliances with groups that support the Islamist militant parties. Privately the army chief (no relation to the Prime Minister) has warned that the army will pursue its efforts, even in the Punjab. But the army risks being overstretched or precipitating a crisis with the civil government in 2016, the final year of the current army chief’s three-year term.

• The NAP has produced mixed results and slow progress, especially in creating institutions that would allow the civilians to assert their supremacy in government. Lack of political will and financing have both allowed the military to take the lead. Parliament has been more reactive than proactive. Pockets of civil society have attempted to organize themselves to fight terrorism but a lack of coherence and consensus on how to proceed have hampered their efforts.

David Gilmartin
North Carolina State University

The paper captures a variety of different views and pulls them together in an effective and compelling manner. One perhaps unavoidable problem, however, is that when it comes to conclusions and suggestions, it is difficult to get from where things are now to a more hopeful trajectory. For example, to say that the "deep dissonance between state and society" needs to be addressed is not in fact to offer much of a
program as to how to do it. Moving from analysis of Pakistan’s many problems to practicable solutions will remain challenging.

The underlying paradox of the Pakistani situation, which this report effectively captures, is the existence of a highly militarized, yet very weak, state—at least as defined by its limited ability to command internal resources and to direct social change among its population. This seeming paradox is sustained by two elements operating on different sides of the equation:

- First is the state’s history of relative autonomy from society. This in some ways dates back, as the report suggests, to the very dynamics of Pakistan’s creation. But it has since been fostered by the state’s historical reliance on external sources of financial support and by the military’s domination of the internal budget process, virtually independently of direct democratic pressures. As a state relatively detached from society, the Pakistan state has limited ability—or desire—to direct social change from above. Yet this structure also gives the state more stability than a state that was more integrated with society might have (however much the state has been exposed to periodic upheavals).
- Second is the existence of a relatively coherent and stable society rooted in social institutions and networks operating to a significant degree independently of the structures of administration attached to the state. Pakistan is defined by a complex web of social institutions with relatively highly developed networks of local-level social bonding, tied primarily to kinship, biradari, religion, patronage, etc. (supported economically, in some areas, by support from foreign remittances from abroad). But such structures too limit social change and are marked by high levels of inequality. They have significantly dampened (though hardly entirely prevented) large-scale political mobilizations and thus have also helped to maintain social stability.

A synergy between relative state autonomy on the one hand, and relatively stable, if highly inegalitarian, social structures on the other, has thus significantly undercut the effective pressures for social change in Pakistan, in spite of the significant deprivation and injustice faced by large parts of the population. This situation has in fact weathered many vicissitudes over the years. Though this is a potentially unstable relationship that leaves room for large levels of conflict and violence on multiple levels, it remains as a defining feature of state-society relations. The manipulation of Islam in Pakistan by state and societal actors alike is in some ways a symptom of this structure.

The imperatives for significant social change in Pakistan are powerful. But the danger in urging basic change, without a clear blueprint for how Pakistan’s structure will be transformed, is that even if one could bridge the dissonance between state and society in order to allow Pakistan to develop, there is considerable near-term political danger that the breakdown of this paradoxical balance could lead to an even more chaotic situation. Although I agree, for example, with the report’s emphasis on the deep problems (and brutality) associated with the suppression of regional movements and identities in Pakistan, it is by no means clear that ceding greater power to the provinces than has already occurred would necessarily be stabilizing, as none of the
provincial governments (with the possible exception of the Punjab) have political foundations for building effective administrations with the ability and desire to mobilize social transformation. Stability should hardly be the only goal, of course, in pressing policies for social change in Pakistan, with its deep inequalities and injustices. But the dynamics of this change seem not easily amenable to outside scripting.

Matthew Nelson
SOAS, University of London

The main argument regarding the role of informal social and political patterns and the need for stronger ties between these patterns and the state is helpful. While building such ties, however, it is necessary to avoid over-centralization, the further “securitization” of society, or a new version of the Kerry-Lugar-Berman aid approach. The next phase of this project would benefit from a focused analysis of the trajectory of these informal patterns: which are decaying and which are persevering? The project could also do more to distinguish the merits from the risks associated with informal structures, offering suggestions for how to leverage the merits—promoting a state that is more open, flexible, and pluralistic—while avoiding the risks—weakening the state.

On a substantive note, the larger 'regional rebalancing' theme could be taken further. As noted, the National Finance Commission has taken some positive steps, but it would be helpful to know how various NFC lessons could be carried over into other areas, specifically in the security sector.
February 27

8:50  Introduction
      Munis Faruqui, Neil Joeck

9:00  Pakistan’s Economy and insecurity
      Dann Naseemullah
      Hawala and financial intelligence
      Noman Baig
      South Punjab: the New Modernity
      Ayesha Siddiqa
      Discussion

11:00 PeaceNiche: finding space for contested issues
      Sabeen Mahmud
      Private electronic media in radicalizing Pakistan
      Kiran Hassan
      Pakistan in its poetic imagination
      Nosheen Ali
      Discussion

1:30  Siraiki and Baloch ethno-nationalisms
      Nukhbah Taj Langah
      The necropolitics of national identity in Gwadar
      Hafeez Jamali
      Securing water and remaking national space in India and Pakistan
      Majed Akhter
      Discussion

5:50  Informal drivers of social, religious and political instability
      Matthew Nelson
      Humanizing security
      Samia Altaf
      What does the constitution have to do with human security?
      Paula Newberg
      Discussion
February 28

9:00  Politics, state capacity and social policy  
      Shandana Khan Mohmand  
      Shared kitchens: the undercurrents of population density  
      Naila Mahmood  
      Insecurity and labor in the informal economy  
      Mohammed Ali Jan  
      Discussion

11:00  Patronage, alienation and the state  
       Aasim Sajjad Akhtar  
       Middle class culture in Lahore  
       Ammara Maqsood  
       The effect of NGOs and urban activists on livelihood movements  
       Mubbashir Rizvi  
       Discussion

1:30  Pious masculinity and Islamic order  
      Arsalan Khan  
      The state, security and the Pakistani Shia experience  
      Mashal Saif  
      Discussion

3:30  Summary, conclusion and conference discussion  
      David Gilmartin  
      Kamran Ali