Third World Quarterly, Vol 24, No 3, pp 463–477, 2003

Carfax Publishing
Taylor & Francis Group

Ethnic and sectarian violence and the propensity towards praetorianism in Pakistan

IRM HALEEM

ABSTRACT *This article focuses on Pakistan and its divided society, and on its decades of characteristic irresponsible and unaccountable leaderships. It argues that a culture of mistrust—a product of a society divided along ethnic and sectarian lines—and poor governance has facilitated fluid civil and civil–military alliances which have in turn legitimised praetorianism by either 1) giving rise to inter-ethnic clashes; 2) fomentation of ethnic and sectarian violence; or 3) formidable multi-ethnic opposition to civilian governments. These outcomes have consequently increased the utility of coercion and the saliency of praetorianism (direct or indirect military intervention). As such this article utilises the 'coercion thesis', put forth by scholars of Asian civil–military relations, which maintains that, as the utility of coercion increases, so does the influence and saliency of praetorianism. It is ultimately argued that Pakistan's divided society, with its subsequent ethnic and sectarian violence and fluid alliances, has contributed to the country's propensity toward praetorianism. The significance of this thesis is summarised as the need for both accountable leadership and economic recovery.*

The former chief of Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI), Gen Hameed Gul, was noted as saying 'it will be a sad day when the institution of the military indulges in a confrontation with the people of Pakistan.'[1] Gen Gul was referring to the polarisation of religious forces (groups and political parties) against the current government of Gen Musharraf in response to Pakistan's policy shift *vis-à-vis* the Taliban in the aftermath of 11 September 2001. What is most significant in Gen Gul's statement is the implication that a rise in domestic violence would inevitably elicit and justify further continued military intervention (or praetorianism) for the sake of law and order. Recent works on understanding praetorianism have pointed to a direct relationship between the significance of coercion (to maintain law and order) and the utility and saliency of military intervention, or praetorianism.[2] In other words, 'the political power and influence of the military is greatest when coercion plays a crucial role in…domestic governance.'[3] Given this hypothesis, what are the implications for Pakistan, a society deeply divided along ethnic and sectarian lines and one that has seen violence and bloodshed for the good part of the past two decades? While there is

Irm Haleem is in the Department of Political Science, Northeastern University, 303 Meserve Hall, 360 Huntington Avenue Boston, MA 02115, USA. E-mail: i.haleem@neu.edu.

ISSN 0143-6597 print/ISSN 1360-2241 online/03/030463-15 © 2003 *Third World Quarterly*
DOI: 10.1080/0143659032000084410

abundant and significant scholarship explaining military intervention and military regimes across continents, rarely has literature sought to understand military intervention in light of existing ethnic or sectarian divides. This article forwards the argument that ethnic and sectarian cleavages, through their violent outcomes, have contributed significantly to the legitimacy and the propensity towards praetorianism in Pakistan.

The study of praetorianism has long formed the basis of research and analysis, focusing on its explanations and predictions. In this article the term 'praetorianism' is used to mean both direct and indirect military rule in the tradition of S E Finer, where direct rule refers to military regimes and indirect rule refers to the implicit domination of the military in directing and influencing policies and politics.[4] While military regimes, given their tangible nature, are conceptually easier to understand, indirect military domination may need some elaboration. Muthiah Alagappa elaborates the phenomenon of indirect praetorianism in terms of the military's intention to influence politics through an 'alliance with certain political and administrative interests, blackmail (including the withdrawal of political support), and the threat and use of force' without actually assuming explicit control of the state apparatus.[5] Finer notes one such example of indirect praetorianism in the case of Brazil from December 1968 to November 1969, when the military establishment, though not in direct control of the executive, continued to influence politics by using its 'handpicked President [General Costa e Silva] to dissolve Congress and restrict civil liberties'.[6] In this article the term 'praetorianism' will be used to refer to both direct and indirect forms of military rule.

Studies of a state's propensity towards praetorianism have pointed to a number of important variables. Among the many explanations forwarded, the following have been the most influential.

1. Military professionalism, whose significance is understood in three different ways: (a) the more professional a military the less likely it is to intervene in governance;[7] (b) military professionalism breeds corporate interests within the institution that increase the likelihood of civil–military conflict and thus praetorianism, as the military seeks to guard its corporate interests;[8] and (c) military professionalism, through better training and equipment, may invite the military to play a larger role in matters of internal security and economic development, thereby increasing both its sense of efficacy and its criticism of the civilian administration, leading to a likelihood of praetorianism.[9]
2. Garrison state hypothesis: this asserts that states which are perpetually under the threat of war inevitably view their military, and its institutional development, as an essential component of the nation's survival, thus elevating the military's political status and thereby encouraging praetorianism.[10]
3. Expansion of the military's roles: the contention that the military's inheritance of non-military (socioeconomic) roles—perhaps as an outcome of the incompetence of civilian (ie democratically elected) governments—engenders praetorianism, as the significance of the military for domestic development increases its societal acceptance and thus its influence and power.[11]
4. Political underdevelopment: the argument that unconsolidated democracies

often promote political instability, which tends to invite military intervention in both state and society.[12]

5. Corrupt and inept civilian governments: an explanation that points to the civilian government's de-legitimisation in promoting praetorianism.[13]
6. Economic underdevelopment: the argument that poverty breeds political apathy on the part of civil society, which thus becomes less likely to (want to) object to any civil–military transitions in governance.[14]
7. Impact of colonialism: the hypothesis that Western colonisers, with their traditional tendency to focus on the development of military–bureaucratic structures at the expense of the civil indigenous bourgeoisie of the host state, have left behind a policy more prone to praetorianism as the indigenous bourgeoisie have become dependent on the military–bureaucratic elite for their survival.[15]

Clearly, the variables outlined in these explanations cannot be viewed as 'sufficient' in and of themselves.[16] For example, India, much like Pakistan, can be identified as a garrison state, yet India has never experienced any form of praetorianism. Therefore, a meaningful understanding of the many explanations of praetorianism must appreciate the variables as 'necessary' and not 'sufficient' and must recognise the importance of case studies in delineating the relevance of the theories.[17]

With only a few exceptions, popular literature has not accorded due weight to ethnic and sectarian divides as a variable explaining a country's propensity toward praetorianism in democratically unconsolidated polities.[18] This is most surprising, since a number of countries known for their persistent or sporadic praetorianism have also been countries with deep ethnic (if not also sectarian) divides: Burma (direct praetorianism since 1962 in part legitimised by the military's ability to contain ethnic violence); Pakistan (both direct and indirect praetorianism since 1947, perpetuated by a stubborn ethnic divide and continued ethnic and sectarian violence); Sri Lanka (indirect praetorianism in the form of national security implemented through military 'emergency measures' against ethnic violence in the north—from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam—and in the south against the threat from the Marxist–Maoist Janatha Vimukthi Youth);[19] and Indonesia (direct praetorianism, 1967–98, strengthened and legitimised by the post-1975 East Timorese struggle for independence).[20]

In fact, even in the aftermath of the most recent October 1999 *coup d'état* in Pakistan, and despite the escalating ethnic and sectarian violence in the country, mainstream scholars and journalists alike focused solely on the country's retarded democracy, corrupt civilian leadership and the country's economic underdevelopment as explanations of General Musharraf's military regime.[21] What is striking is that studies of a country so deeply divided, with as frequent an incidence of violence, should marginalise the impact of ethnic and sectarian divides in its explanation of praetorianism.

The few exceptions to the marginalisation of ethnic divide as a contributing variable of praetorianism can be found in the works of Gino Germani and Kalman Silvert, and Cynthia Enloe. In their study of some 20 republics in Latin America, Germani and Silvert examined a number of variables thought to have

contributed to military intervention, of which ethnic divide was one. According to their research 'ethnic and cultural heterogeneity' offered a significant partial explanation of praetorianism in Brazil, Peru and Bolivia as it contributed to the fragmentation of national identity and cohesion, presumably encouraging alliances that facilitated military intervention.[22] Cynthia Enloe also focused on ethnic divides as an explanation of praetorianism in Malaysia, but for different reasons. Enloe proposed that, given the overwhelming domination of one specific ethnic group in the Malaysian military, military intervention in politics would be triggered any time the interests of this particular ethnic group were threatened. Thus, according to this explanation, the overwhelming representation of the Malays in the military, at the expense of the Chinese and Indian ethnic groups, disposed the military to political intervention. As such, Enloe explained the importance of ethnic divides in promoting praetorianism in terms of the military protecting its own ethnic interests in society.[23]

In the case of Pakistan, relevant explanations of praetorianism have pointed to the impact of a colonial legacy, a garrison state, a democratically unconsolidated polity unable to muster a united opposition against any military or civilian rule, and the corporate interests of the military institution.[24] In this article I go beyond popular explanations to argue that the ethnic and sectarian divide in Pakistan has played a significant role in contributing to praetorianism through its promotion of civil–military alliances and counter-alliances which have at times legitimised military intervention.

My proposition is that a culture of mistrust, ethno-nationalism and sectarian hatreds, superimposed on a democratically unconsolidated polity, has encouraged fluid inter- and intra-group/party (ethnic or sectarian) alliances. As such, alliances have been either been civilian (between ethnic or sectarian parties, or between parties and civilian government) or civil–military (civilian ethnic or sectarian parties and the military). These fluid alliances have legitimised direct or indirect praetorianism because they have either (a) given rise to inter-ethnic party clashes; (b) fomented ethnic or sectarian violence; or (c) encouraged sectarian or multi-ethnic opposition to government. More significantly, the outcomes of such alliances have either compromised, or threatened to compromise, law and order, thereby increasing the utility of coercion and control and consequently increasing the influence of the military.[25]

This paper will examine three determinants of fluid civil and civil–military alliances. First, the exploitation, courtship and creation of ethnic or sectarian political parties by the military, intended at justifying a coup, maintaining the legitimacy of its regime, or maintaining indirect control over politics (indirect praetorianism). Second, the tendency of ethnic and sectarian political parties to forge alliances with the military, intended to destabilise a civilian government perceived to be hostile to their particular ethnic interests. Third, the exploitation of sectarian and ethnic divides by civilian governments, through their alliances and counter-alliances with ethnic and sectarian groups, intended to consolidate their rule but resulting in the fomentation of violence, thereby justifying direct or indirect military intervention.

Praetorianism and the nature of ethnic and sectarian divides

In the interest of offering a background to the aforementioned proposition, a brief outline of Pakistan's history of praetorianism, the nature of its ethnic and sectarian divide, and an illustration of the scale of corresponding violence deserves mention. From its very inception in 1947, though a multi-ethnic and multi-sectarian state (but Sunnis have always been the majority sect), Pakistan has been unable to consolidate a sense of united national identity. Pakistan's fractured national identity was exacerbated by the mushrooming of ethnic (cultural, linguistic) political parties in the 1970s and 1980s which identified their political legitimacy with their ethnicity.[26] Sporadic calls by radical Sunni groups to outlaw Shia religious practices (the minority sect), and violent action and reaction on the part of both sects have further divided society along sectarian lines.[27] Further exacerbating the ethnic divide is the fact that, similarly to Malaysia and also the pre-civil war Lebanon in Enloe's analysis, the Pakistani military has been dominated by one particular ethnic group, the Punjabis (although the Pushtoons have been a close second). This ethnic distortion has contributed to the alienation of other underrepresented ethnic groups, who have come to view the military as hostile to their interests.[28] Given that the axis of power in Pakistan has traditionally rested with the military–bureaucratic complex,[29] this alienation has further retarded a sense of a united national identity. The end result has been a divided society whose dynamics continue to legitimise direct or indirect praetorianism.

Superimposed on a deep ethnic and sectarian divide has been Pakistan's consistent experience with direct and indirect praetorianism. Pakistan has experienced what SE Finer would call the 'indirect continuous rule of the military' during the years 1947–58; 1971–77; and 1988–99. Samina Ahmed notes that the persistence of *indirect* praetorianism in Pakistan has meant that nearly all the dismissals of elected prime ministers in the post-1988 era were at the instigation of the military through its alliance with the presidents.[30] In addition, Pakistan has on four different occasions been under the direct rule of the military: 1958–68, 1968–71, 1977–88 and 1999–2002 (see Table 1).

Definitions of ethnic groups and sectarian divide, in the sense specific to Pakistan, should be given. The origins of ethnicity have long been muffled in academic controversy ranging between primordial or constructivist schools of thought. The definition of what comprises an ethnic group is also open to debate. In the Horowitzian sense, 'ethnic group' is defined in terms of a group with shared ascriptive identities such as language, religion, sect, race or tribe.[31] However, in the case of Pakistan, analyses of ethnic divides and violence have to be separated from their sectarian counterparts because the sectarian divide presents itself as a subset within the four different ethnic groups. Thus, an ethnic identity does not necessarily correspond to a specific sectarian identity in Pakistan. As such, the ethnic and sectarian divides present themselves as two separate phenomena. Four distinct provinces demarcate ethnic identity in Pakistan, each with its own national and linguistic identity. The provincial/ethnic divides are as follows: Punjab (Punjabi, 56% of the population); Sindh (Sindhi, Gujarati, Memoni Kutchhi, 17% of the population); Northwest Frontier province

TABLE 1
Chronology of transitions in government

1947	Creation of Pakistan.
1947–58	Civilian government. Tumultuous political climate.
1958	Military *coup d'état*, headed by General Yahya Khan.
1958–69:	Military government of General Ayub Khan.
1969	Ayub transfers power to General Yahya Khan
1969–71	Military government of General Yahya Khan
1971	Pakistan's defeat in a civil war, the secession of East Pakistan into Bangladesh.
1971–72	Military yields to the civilian leadership of Zulfikar Bhutto, initially as caretaker president but inaugurated as prime minister in 1972
1972–77	Civilian government of Prime Minister Zulfikar Bhutto
1977	Military *coup d'état*, headed by General Zia ul-Haq
1977–88:	Military government of General Zia ul-Haq
1988	Zia dies in a plane crash. Caretaker administration August–November 1988
1988–1990:	Civilian government of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (first term)
1990	Dismissed by President. Caretaker administration August–October 1990
1990–93:	Civilian government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (first term)
1993	Dismissed by President. Interim prime minister July–October 1993
1993–96:	Civilian government of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto returns
1996	Dismissed by President. Caretaker administration November 1996–Feburary 1997.
1997–99:	Civilian government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif returns
1999	Military *coup d'état*, headed by General Pervez Musharraf (October)
1999–2002	Military regime of General Pervez Musharraf

(Pushto, 16% of the population); Baluchistan (Baluchi, 3% of the population). In addition, while not represented in a separate province, though not from a lack of want, there is also the Mohajiri ethnic group, comprising 6% of the population and speaking Urdu.[32] The Mohajiris, who have been an ethnic minority in the rural areas of the province of Sindh but a majority in the urban areas (particularly in Karachi), have often felt marginalised. In the mid-1990s this sense of marginalisation led the Mohajiris to demand a division of Sindh into urban and rural so that they could be the ethnic majority in their subsequent provincial assembly.[33]

The ethnic divide has been a basis of conflict and violence for a number of reasons (where violence is differentiated from conflict in terms of its intensity and bloodshed). The dominance of the Punjabi ethnic (linguistic) group, in both governance and within the military, has fomented much resentment and distrust. Economic scarcity (in the country as a whole), exacerbated by inter-provincial migration, has created resentment towards the ethnic migrants into a province and the consequent scapegoating (the 'othering') of the newcomers. Sindhis and Baluchis, for example, have resented the migration of Punjabis and Pushtoons (from the Northwest Frontier province) into their respective provinces. Ethnic tensions based primarily on the scarcity of resources have been theoretically predicted as giving rise to ethno-nationalism not only on the part of the dominant ethnic group but also on the part of the minority ethnic group (the newcomers to

a province).[34] For example, the resentments of the Baluchis towards the Pushtoon migration into their province (Baluchistan) induced the creation of the *Pushtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party* (PMAP), an anti-Baluchi Pushtoon separatist party.[35]

Ethnic violence in Pakistan has been abundant, particularly since the 1980s, with the following examples offering some illustration of this phenomenon. Between 1985 and 1992 over 3000 people had lost their lives in the province of Sindh as a result of ethnic violence between the indigenous Sindhis and the minority Mohajiris.[36] From 29 April to 5 May 1994 the *Mohajir Qaumi Movement* (MQM)—a Mohajari nationalist political party—violently reacted against both the provincial Sindhi government as well as the federal government (which at the time was headed by a Sindhi prime minister) in what became known as the 'six-day insurgency'. During this period 32 people were killed, 70 law enforcement agencies were attacked, as masked MQM snipers took to the streets.[37] In 1991 the province of Baluchistan saw its most bloody violence between Baluchis and Pushtoons, when 22 people died as a result of a dispute over the shifting of the site of an agricultural college; the incident elicited a military curfew of 18 days.[38]

Superimposed on an ethnic divide has been the sectarian divide in Pakistan. This particular divide has been the basis not only of conflict but also of much bloody violence. In fact, one can effectively argue that the sectarian divide has a greater potential for causing instability and the possible 'Lebanonisation' of Pakistan than any provincial/ethnic divide because of the higher levels of emotion and consequent religious fanaticism.[39] Pakistan is divided along Sunni and Shia (two branches of Islam) sectarian lines, with roughly 75%–85% of the population belonging to the Sunni sect and 15%–25% of the population belonging to the Shia sect. The vehement rejection of contending sectarian groups by certain sectors of the population has given rise to several ultra-radical sectarian groups along with their militant offshoots. Examples of these so-called *Jihadi* groups include the Sunni Sipah-I Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), the Shia Tahriki-Jafaria Pakistan (TJP) and the Sipah-I Muhammed (SM). Between 1990 and 1997 wars among the sectarian groups claimed some 581 lives nationwide. In July 1992 the Northwest Frontier province was transformed into a bloody battleground during which seven Sunnis and three Shia were killed and 49 others injured in a matter of just three days.[40] In fact, from the period between January 1997 to October 1999, just before the onset of the current military regime, 345 people were killed in almost 123 cases of reported sectarian violence.[41] More recently, during March and April 2002, sectarian groups in Karachi have taken to targeting doctors (victims have been from both the Sunni and Shia communities). In fact, sectarian violence has become such an integral part of Pakistan that law enforcement agencies, the media, as well as government spokespersons tend to blame any terrorist bombing or drive-by shooting on sectarian hatreds.

Empirical analysis

Civil–military alliances

The army has used ethnic and sectarian divides to its advantage either by seeking alliances with groups, by actively accentuating the divides, or by creating ethnic

parties in order to legitimise direct or indirect influence. Pakistan's ISI, though initially designated the task of protecting national security by spying on foreign national diplomatic missions in Pakistan, and while still ostensibly guarding against the dangers of sedition by monitoring domestic political parties (particularly in the light of the 1971 debacle[42]), is thought to have become the sole instrument of the army for the exploitation of ethnic groups and parties to its advantage.[43] During the civilian rule of Prime Minister Zulfikar Bhutto in the 1970s, the army was actively seeking alliances with ethnic and sectarian political parties unhappy with Bhutto's government in order to facilitate praetorianism. The Jamaat-I-Islami—an ethnic group with a predominately Pakhtun leadership, belonging to the Sunni sect—was actively courted by the military to provide a broader base of support for a future *coup d'état*, a strategy that proved effective thanks to the ethnic and political polarisation of the late 1970s.[44] After assuming power, Gen Zia ul-Haq continued, to some extent, a strategy of seeking 'expedient alliances with key religious groups in order to legitimize…[and consolidate his] rule'.[45] That such courtships had a narrow political motive is indicated by the military regime's desertion of the very groups it had courted after its consolidation of power. Thus 'the Jamaat…ended up being used by Zia when he desperately wanted legitimacy and discarded when he felt he could survive on his own'.[46] Most notably, Gen Zia ul-Haq's patronage of Sunni sectarian groups is thought to have fomented sectarian violence during the 1980s, ironically providing utility to the continuation of his military regime through the imperative of maintaining law and order.[47]

Further exploitation of ethnic and sectarian divides by the military, for its political purposes, also took the form of accentuating such divides in order to legitimise its (the military's) utility. 'The widespread ethnic clashes in Karachi between the Mohajiris on the one side and the Pathans and Punjabis on the other in the mid and late 1980s [during Gen Zia ul-Haq's military regime] were widely believed to have been engineered by the intelligence agencies' in order to maintain the need for military rule.[48] On yet other occasions the military either created or assisted in the creation of ethnic political parties whose national constituency was to be found in their respective ethnic communities but through whom the army extended its political influence in society (indirect praetorianism).

The quintessential example of this was the army's creation of the Islamic Jamhoori Ittihad (IJI), with the help of the ISI, in the late 1980s.[49] The IJI was to be a coalition party that consisted of right-of-centre parties and Islamist parties, of which the Muslim League (PML) was the most important, and was to be a Punjabi political party reflecting the ethnic majority in the army.[50] Nawaz Sharif, propped up as the head of this party, was thus also a product of the army, trained and cultivated to serve its interests indirectly. It is thought that the creation of both the IJI and Nawaz Sharif in the late 1980s was intended to counter the influence of the incumbent Pakistan People's Party (PPP), a predominately Sindhi party, headed by a Sindhi prime minister, Benazir Bhutto. When in 1990 Nawaz Sharif's IJI won its place as the majority party in the National Assembly, replacing the PPP, the army's political jugglery paid off.

Prime Minister Sharif's first term in office (1990–93) was used by the army to

strengthen its relations with other disgruntled ethnic political parties, with the hope of fomenting advantageous civil–military alliances that could guarantee an avenue for continued (and legitimised) praetorianism. For example, through the endorsement of the army, the IJI re-approached representatives of the MQM both at the provincial and national levels. Strengthening relations with the MQM was important not only to counter the popularity of the Sindhi PPP, but also to provide legitimacy to the IJI government by making it appear representative of other ethnic interests. Interestingly, by extending Sharif's IJI's influence beyond the Punjabi constituency, the army was indirectly extending its hand in politics beyond its own ethnic constituency, a particularly important strategy for the facilitation of praetorianism given the culture of mistrust so prevalent in Pakistan.

Interestingly, the very emergence of the MQM in 1984 was credited to the strong army endorsement of the party. Some analysts argue that one reason for this endorsement were intelligence reports that forecast that the MQM would be the most powerful counter-force to the PPP in Sindh. The endorsement of the MQM, during the military regime of Gen Zia ul-Haq, was therefore part of a strategy to counter the emerging democratic movement (of which the PPP was a part) in the province of Sindh, where it is thought the 'military government was practically facing an insurgency'.[51] Thus, supporting a political party that accentuated the ethnic divide—both at the provincial and the national levels—reinforced the military regime as it reduced the chances of a united opposition against it.

Civil–military alliances, in addition to being an initiation of the army for its political interests, have also been the initiation of ethnic and/or sectarian groups disgruntled with incumbent civilian governments. Such alliances have inevitably been pro-military, thereby legitimising praetorianism. For example, by mid-1999 Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's policies and actions had succeeded in alienating key ethnic and sectarian political parties. In the absence of the 8th constitutional amendment (repudiated by Sharif in 1997), popular support for his dismissal found no legal channels of recourse. The absence of any legal channels to dismiss Sharif's government contributed to the popular pro-military stance and the *de facto* alliance of key ethnic and sectarian parties with the army. The *coup d'état* in October 1999 was subsequently celebrated.[52] Popular alienation from Sharif's government was based on a number of reasons, not least of which was his dictatorial style of rule, which was responsible for numerous extra-judicial executions.[53] The specific alienation of ethnic and sectarian groups was based on both a perceived discriminatory allocation of resources to provinces other than his own (namely Punjab),[54] and on a popular sense that his administration was weak and ineffective and, in the aftermath of the Kargil war between Pakistan and India in 1999, on a growing sense of betrayal by the Sharif administration.

In terms of the misallocation of resources to the determinant of their province, ethnic Sindhis were particularly vociferous. Most noteworthy, this alienation from Sharif's government motivated an alliance between erstwhile ethnic/political enemies, namely the PPP and the MQM.[55] This unlikely inter-ethnic alliance, united only in its opposition to Sharif's government, inevitably provided broader legitimacy for a coup in 1999. One observer notes, 'there was no doubting the public's jubilation and relief at the removal of Sharif's government all over Sindh'.[56]

The growing sense that Prime Minister Sharif's administration was ineffective and weak emanated primarily from sectarian political parties, in part because of the increasing levels of sectarian violence associated with his second tenure in office (1997–99), contrary to his promise of reducing sectarian violence, and in part because of his handling of the Kargil debacle.[57] When, following US pressure, Sharif called off the Kargil operation and withdrew Pakistani troops in June 1999,[58] pro-Kashmiri domestic sectarian groups interpreted this as both weakness and betrayal. Perceptions of betrayal were heightened in the minds of sectarian groups when Sharif's acquiescence to the USA had him denying any prior knowledge of the operation.[59] Groups such as the Jamaat-I-Islami, as well as their *Jihadi* counterparts in Kashmir, thus took a lead in the anti-Sharif agitation.[60] This alienation from Sharif's policies and actions led to the fomentation of a formidable multi-ethnic and sectarian opposition to his administration which, in July 1999, saw the participation of over 40 000 people in a rally led by the Jamaat-I-Islami.[61] Although this rally was initially organised as a reaction to Sharif's actions in the Kargil war and was expected to be sectarian in nature, various ethnic groups such as the PPP, as well as the MQM nonetheless joined in. What is most notable here is Roger Petersen's argument, in his study of ethnic violence, that fear is a product of 'structural changes such as the…weakening [or perceived weakening or, indeed, perceptions of untrustworthiness] of the political center', which ultimately introduces the threat of anarchy and 'heightens the desire for security'.[62] The argument here is that in the case of Pakistan, a country with already existing fracture lines based on its ethnic and sectarian divides, the desire for security in late 1999 both legitimised and elicited military intervention, since the military was the only institution associated with protecting the country from all threats within and without.[63]

Civilian alliances

In the immediate onset of her first tenure as prime minister (1988–90), Benazir Bhutto forged an alliance between her PPP and the ethnic Mohajir MQM. This proposed and *de facto* coalition government agreement, headed as it was by an ethnic Sindhi prime minister, was considered important for two reasons. First, the increasing animosities between the Sindhis and the Mohajiris in Bhutto's home province of Sindh made it imperative that the national government make some efforts towards reconciliation with this group in order to broaden its constituency and legitimacy. Second, Prime Minister Bhutto was well aware of the economic power of the Mohajiris in urban Sindh, and of the fact that, feeling ethnically marginalised the Mohajiris had on more than one occasion threatened sedition. Thus, an alliance with this ethnic group was considered politically strategic.

However, events took a turn for the worst when the PPP–MQM alliance was seen as favouritism towards Mohajiris by Bhutto's own Sindhi constituency. With the fear of alienating her own ethnic constituency, Benazir Bhutto slowly distanced herself from the alliance and *de facto* discarded the agreement altogether. This inevitably alienated the Mohajiris and fomented ethnic conflict between them and the Sindhis at both the provincial and national levels. In 1989, when the alliance officially collapsed, MQM's opposition against the provincial and national govern-

ments turned violent. Instead of opening some kind of a dialogue with the MQM that could result in a mutually beneficial agreement, Prime Minister Bhutto instead resorted to harsh tactics by mobilising the military to suppress the MQM uprising in 1990. Indeed, the harshness of her tactics soon associated her government with using 'terror' tactics against an ethnic minority in order to oppress them politically. This mismanagement of ethnic relations alienated the military, which had not wanted to become associated with Bhutto's failed policies and harsh tactics for fear of losing its own legitimacy in the eyes of the people. Consequently, as ethnic conflict worsened in Sindh, the army instigated the early dismissal of Benazir Bhutto through the vehicle of its alliance with the president and the invocation of the 8th Constitutional amendment.[64]

Efforts at broadening her constituency over a divided society during her second term in office (1993–96) had Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto exploiting the sectarian divide through forging alliances and counter-alliances with opposing as well as contending sectarian groups. This was a two-pronged strategy. On the one hand, it was a policy of 'exchanging immunity from prosecution and freedom of activity for sectarian forces for their [political] support'.[65] On the other hand, it was a strategy that sought to divide groups within the same sectarian affiliation by pitting one against the other in order to weaken the probability of a united sectarian opposition, and to gain a foothold within hostile sectarian cliques. For example, Prime Minister Bhutto (herself a Shia) forged an alliance with the Party of Ulama of Islam (JUI), a Sunni political party whose ties to an extremist Sunni group, the SSP, were ignored. When this alliance provoked anti-government rallies on the part of extremist Shia political parties, such as the TJP, Benazir Bhutto sough to undermine one extremist group by allying with another such group within the same sectarian affiliation. Thus, in order to undermine the extremist Shia TJP, her government forged a counter alliance with the most radical of all sectarian Shia political parties, the SM in order to maintain her foothold among her sectarian Shia constituency.[66] Consequently, 'by 1995 the PPP government found itself in the position of actively supporting the most militant sectarian forces on both sides: the SSP [Sunni] through the JUI and the SM [Shia] in order to weaken the TJP [Shia] and maintain a foothold in Shia politics'.[67] Massive sectarian violence and bloodshed that resulted from Bhutto's political juggling once again increased the influence of the military by legitimising indirect praetorianism in the interests of law and order. The invocation of the 8th Constitutional amendment and the consequent dismissal of Prime Minister Bhutto were once again thought to have been instigated by the army in 1996.[68]

Summary and significance

Pakistan's fundamental problem has been a fractured national unity, polarised as it has been with ethnic and sectarian differences. Superimposed on this reality have been the legacies of irresponsible and unaccountable leaderships throughout the 1980s and 1990s (whether military or civilian).[69] A combination of these factors have bred public ambivalence and apathy towards both government and politics, leading to a disconnect between the elites and the masses. Ambivalence

and apathy, as predicted by Luttwak,[70] have further facilitated praetorianism, as the general public has seen no reason to resist it given the unrepresentative nature of civilian democratic governments. Juxtaposed on a fragmented society, poor governance and popular ambivalence, has been Pakistan's poor economic standing. With a popular view that the country's legal institutions offer no trustworthy channels of recourse—a characteristic of an unconsolidated democracy—ethnic and sectarian groups, as well as civilian and military elites, have pursued alliances and counter-alliances with each other in order to improve their political or economic standing or legitimacy. These alliances and counter-alliances have ostensibly legitimised praetorianism either by their fomentation of violence, thereby eliciting military intervention (indirect praetorianism), or by providing a justification for a *coup d'état* or the continuation of military rule (direct praetorianism).

The central point here is that poor governance, economic disparities and fragmented society, eliciting alliances for personal not collective gains (either on the part of ethnic or sectarian parties, civilian or military elites), have increased the saliency and influence of the military in Pakistan. Further increasing the utility of coercion and the influence and legitimacy of the military has been the fuelling of violence thanks to the growth of ultra-radical groups in the 1980s and 1990s that have in turn found their legitimacy in the disgruntled, apathetic and ambivalent public. British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, when commenting on the international campaign against terrorism, had noted that the only way to attack terrorism and violence was to eliminate the constituency of apathy and ambivalence upon which the legitimacy of radical groups is based. The logic and relevance of this argument for Pakistan is twofold. First, an apathetic and ambivalent public, alienated as it is from governments and the rhetoric of justice that has had little positive impact on their lives, is unlikely to pose obstacles to the workings of radical groups within its communities. Second, radical groups can more easily recruit from within a disgruntled and ambivalent population as these groups may feel they have nothing more to loose. The mushrooming of ultra-radical sectarian groups in Pakistan—such as the SSP, TJP and SM, as noted earlier in this paper—has undoubtedly increased the saliency of military coercion in the interests of law and order and thereby increased the influence of the military in society.

Based on the above analysis, the central question becomes 'how can a divided society, such as that of Pakistan, break the cycle of its propensity toward praetorianism?' The assertion here is that the antidotes to Pakistan's upward spiral of ethnic and sectarian violence and the subsequent facilitation of praetorianism is, simultaneously, economic recovery and accountable civilian leadership. Economic recovery and accountable leadership would break the cycle of praetorianism by shrinking the constituency of ambivalence that both facilitates radicalism as well as legitimises praetorianism.

The military regime of Gen Pervez Musharraf—though itself justified on the basis of countering Prime Minister Sharif's lack of accountability and reliability, as well as of the formidable inter-ethnic anti-Sharif alliance in 1999—had focused on enhancing political stability in Pakistan, primarily through the avenues of accountable governance and economic recovery.[71] To this end, the

regime had instituted a number of policies. These included reducing the National Assembly's term from five years to four and mandating a minimum requirement of an undergraduate degree for all candidates running for the assembly in order to break the unrepresentative monopoly power of *Pirs* and *Waderas* (feudal landlords) and *Zamindars* (landlords), which reflects family, not community, interests. He had also instituted a National Accountability Bureau designed to trace political and economic elites' misuse of national funds.[72] The establishment of the National Security Council (NSC), in October 1999 has also been designed to increase government accountability and representation and thereby to reduce public alienation and ambivalence and the subsequent fomentation of violence. The NSC is designed to comprise both civilian and military personnel, namely the president, the prime minister, the joint chiefs of staff, and a number of other civil and military elites. The logic of the NSC is both to introduce a system of checks on the decisions of civilian governments and to reduce the propensity of *coups d'état* by providing the military with a formal framework from which to legally register their input on domestic politics. Critics of the NSC, however, point to its likely imposition of restrictions on democratically elected governments.

If policies on government accountability—intended to reduce the cycle of public alienation, violence and praetorianism—seem to be underway, pursuing the antidote of economic recovery will no doubt be harder. The reason for this is that Pakistan's economic recovery essentially rests on the commitment and interest of foreign government donors. In the light not only of the rising tide of sectarian violence within Pakistan since the 1980s, but also of the post-2001 precarious regional political climate, international economic assistance is much needed in order to shield Pakistan from internal or external radicalism feasting on poverty and ambivalence, and from a subsequent eliciting of praetorianism.

Notes

I would like to thank Ayesha Jalal and Amílcar Barreto for their comments on an earlier version of this article.

1 Interviewed by Mubashir Zaidi, 'The loss of strategic depth can be attributed to the unholy shadow of the foreign office', *The Herald* (Karachi), December 2001, p 49.

2 This is an argument forwarded by the contributing authors in Muthiah Alagappa (ed), *Coercion and Governance: The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001.

3 *Ibid*, p xvi.

4 SE Finer, 'The man on horseback', *Armed Forces and Society*, 1 (1), 1974.

5 Mutiah Alagappa, 'Investigating and explaining change: an analytical framework', in Alagappa, *Coercion and Governance*, p 34.

6 Finer, 'The man on horseback', p 9.

7 Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil–Military Relations*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957.

8 Amos Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977; and Ayesha Jalal, 'The state and political privilege in Pakistan', in Myron Weiner & Ali Banuazizi (eds), *The Politics of Social Transformation in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

9 Alfred C Stephan, *Authoritarian Brazil: Origins, Policies, and Failures*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973; and Mehran Kamrava, 'Military professionalization and civil–military relations in the Middle East', *Political Science Quarterly*, 115 (1), 2000, pp 67–92.

10 Harold D Lasswell, 'The garrison state', *American Journal of Sociology*, 46, 1941, pp 455–468; Lasswell, 'The garrison state hypothesis today', in Samuel Huntington (ed), *Changing Patterns of*

Military Politics, New York: Free Press, 1962; and Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

[11] Michael Desh, 'Threat environments and military missions', in Larry Diamond & Marc F Plattner (eds), *Civil–Military Relations and Democracy*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996; and Sattar, 'Pakistan: return to praetorianism', 2001. Babar Sattar, 'Pakistan's return to praetorianism', in *Coercion and Governance*, ed Muthiah Alapappa, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001.

[12] Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968.

[13] Larry Diamond, 'Is Pakistan the (reverse) wave of the future?', *Journal of Democracy*, 11 (3), July 2000, pp 91–106.

[14] Samuel Huntington, 'Reforming civil–military relations', in Diamond & Plattner, *Civil–Military Relations and Democracy*; and Edward Luttwak, *Coup d'Etat*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968.

[15] Hamza Alavi, 'The state in postcolonial societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh', *New Left Review*, 74, 1972, pp 145–173; and Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia*.

[16] A sufficient variable is one that always gives rise to a phenomenon. Thus 'x' always causes 'y' (praetorianism) and one can not have 'x' without it causing 'y'. See John Gerring, *Social Science Methodology: A Critical Framework*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p 132.

[17] A necessary variable is one that is important in giving rise to a phenomenon but does not always give rise to it. So, 'x' is important for 'y' (likelihood of praetorianism) but 'x' does not always cause 'y' and in fact 'x' may exist without it leading to 'y'. See *ibid*, p 132.

[18] Lack of democratic consolidation here implies ineffective institutional channels of redress and unaccountable and corrupt civilian leadership.

[19] See Darini Rajasingham-Senanayake, 'Sri Lanka: transformation of legitimate violence and civil–military relations', in Alagappa, *Coercion and Governance*, pp 294–314.

[20] Geoffrey Robinson, 'Indonesia: on a new course?' in Alagappa, *Coercion and Governance*, pp 226–256.

[21] Pamela Constable, 'Pakistan's predicament', *Journal of Democracy*, 12 (1), January 2001, pp 15–29.

[22] Gino Germani & Kalman Silvert, 'Politics, social structure and military intervention in Latin America', *European Journal of Sociology*, 2, 1961, pp 62–81.

[23] Cynthia H Enloe, 'The issue of saliency of the military–ethnic connection: some thoughts on Malaysia', *Comparative Politics*, 10 (2), 1978, pp 251–266.

[24] Jalal, 'The state and political privilege in Pakistan'; and Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia*.

[25] The proposition that alliances and counter-alliances legitimise military intervention is an illustration of the broader hypothesis that, as the utility of coercion increases, so does the influence and power of the military as put forth by scholars on Asian civil–military relations. See Alagappa, *Coercion and Governance*.

[26] Ethnic consciousness, though transformed into a nationwide phenomenon in the 1970s, can be traced back to the 1950s and 1960s, particularly among the Bengali ethnic group. Bengal had comprised the fifth province of Pakistan until it seceded from West Pakistan to form the sovereign state of Bangladesh in 1971. Lack of Bengali ethnic representation at the level of key institutions such as the central government and the military were primary sources of grievance and demands for secession.

[27] Amir Mir, 'Unholy crusade', *Newsline* (Karachi), October 1999, p 69.

[28] For example, when in the early 1990s the military was called in by the civilian government to crack down on the criminal activities of some of the members of the MQM (an ethnic Mohajiri political party) in the province of Sindh, the entire Mohajiri community blamed the military for being simply anti-Mohajiri and even called for a secession. The subsequent violence only served to justify further military operations.

[29] Ayesha Jalal, *State of Martial Rule: the origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defense*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

[30] Samina Ahmed, 'Centralization, authoritarianism, and the mismanagement of ethnic relations in Pakistan', in Michael E Brown & Sumit Ganguly (eds), *Government Policies and Ethnic Relations in Asia and the Pacific*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997, pp 83–127.

[31] Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985, pp 41–54.

[32] It should be noted that, while the provinces pride themselves on their own cultural languages, Urdu remains the formal national language of Pakistan. As such, it is understood by all and spoken by most.

[33] Hasan Mujtaba & Mohammed Hanif, 'Sindh: divide and rule?', *Newsline*, March 1994, pp 27–41.

[34] Michael Brown, 'Causes and implications of ethnic conflict', in *Ethnic Conflict and International Security*, ed Michael Brown, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993.

[35] Shahzada Zulfiqar, 'The ethnic factor', *Newsline*, September 1993, pp 130–132.
[36] Zahid Hussain & Hasan Mujtaba, 'Crime and politics', *Newsline*, August 1992, p 25.
[37] Mohammed Hanif, 'Karachi's killing fields', *Newsline*, May 1994, p 26.
[38] Zulfiqar, 'The ethnic factor, pp 130–132.
[39] Mir, 'Unholy crusade', p 68.
[40] Hussain & Mujtaba, 'Crime and politics', p 25.
[41] Mir, 'Unholy crusade', p 66.
[42] Where East Pakistan seceded from West Pakistan to form the sovereign state of Bangladesh.
[43] Maleeha Lodhi & Zahid Hussain, 'Pakistan's invisible government', *Newsline*, October 1992, pp 23–34.
[44] Mushahid Hussain, 'Among the believers', *The Herald*, September 1992, pp 36–41.
[45] Talat Aslam, 'Resurgent Islam: can it conquer Pakistan?', *The Herald*, September 1992, pp 25–35.
[46] *Ibid*, p 27. See also Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: The Jamaat-I-Islamic of Pakistan*, Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1994, pp 188–205.
[47] Vali Reza Nasr, 'International politics, domestic imperatives, and identity mobilization: sectarianism in Pakistan, 1979–1998', *Comparative Politics*, 32 (2), 2000, pp 171–190.
[48] Mujtaba, 'Sindh: divide and rule?', pp 27–41.
[49] Lodhi, 'Pakistan's invisible government', p 30.
[50] Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution*, p 206.
[51] Hussain & Mujtaba, 'Crime and politics', p 25.
[52] Massoud Ansari, 'Coup, counter coup', *Newsline*, October 1999, p 41.
[53] Interview with Major General Rashid Qureshi, Press Secretary of Chief Executive of Pakistan, Army Headquarters, Rawalpindi, 26 December 2000. See also Zahid Hussain, 'Day of the General', *Newsline*, October 1999, pp 22–25.
[54] Interview with Major General Rashid Qureshi, 26 December 2000.
[55] Zahid Hussain, 'Dead end?', *Newsline*, September 1999, p 22.
[56] Ansari, 'Coup, counter coup', p 41.
[57] Mir, 'Unholy crusade', p 69.
[58] For detailed analysis of the Kargil war see Sumit Ganguly, *Conflict Unending: India–Pakistan Tensions since 1947*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2001, pp 114–133.
[59] Sattar, 'Pakistan: return to praetorianism', p 404.
[60] *Ibid*. See also Ganguly, *Conflict Unending*, p 119; and Hussain, 'Dead end?, p 22.
[61] Hussain, 'Dead end?', p 22.
[62] Roger Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p 25.
[63] Ironically, Prime Minister Sharif, the army's own creation, was ousted in the October 1999 military coup. In addition to the aforementioned popular multi-ethnic and sectarian anti-Sharif sentiments in the country, analysts suggest that Sharif had also become the Frankenstein that the army was no longer able to control, thus leading to his ouster. That Sharif had become a *de facto* civilian dictator is a fact documented by numerous, and varied, sources and complements this 'Frankenstein thesis'.
[64] Ahmed, 'Centralization, authoritarianism, and the mismanagement of ethnic relations in Pakistan', pp 83–127.
[65] Nasr, 'Sectarianism in Pakistan', p 185.
[66] *Ibid*, pp 171–190.
[67] *Ibid*, p 186.
[68] Ahmed, 'Centralization, authoritarianism, and the mismanagement of ethnic relations in Pakistan', pp 83–127.
[69] A notable illustration of unaccountable and unrepresentative civilian leadership was Prime Minister Sharif's denial of any responsibility for the Kargil debacle and his popular discriminatory allocation of national resources to provinces, respectively. Notable illustrations of irresponsible leadership in Pakistan point to the divide and rule strategies of both Gen Zia ul-Haq and Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (during both her terms in office), which resulted in the fomentation of ethnic and sectarian polarisation and violence.
[70] Luttwak, *Coup d'Etat*.
[71] Ikram Sehgal. 'Before the referendum: interview with the President', *Pakistan Defence Journal*, May 2002.
[72] MM Ali, 'The revival of democracy in Pakistan—an historical perspective', *Washington Report on Middle Eastern Affairs*, XXI (8), 2002, p 55.