

Weekly Pager

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Islamabad, May 17, 2009.

Pakistan is fighting four wars at the moment

Pakistan is engaged in multi-theater wars; a total of four theaters that are all inter as well as intra connected (a single theater of war is defined as a “specific geographical area of conduct of armed conflict” that is separated from another theater by natural obstacles—a mountain range, river, desert etc.).

War 1: Some 650,000 square kilometers of Afghan landmass, west of the Durand Line and surrounded by China, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (the Durand Line, stretching some 2,600 kilometers, separates Afghanistan and Pakistan). This theater went hot on 7 October 2001 when the U.S., along with the U.K., launched Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). The casus belli for OEF—or the reason for the war—was the terrorist attack on the U.S. and the stated objectives were to remove the Taliban regime, neutralize al-Qaeda and capture Osama bin Laden. For more than 7 years, NATO-ISAF forces have occupied Afghanistan as an occupying foreign force and the war theater is now getting even hotter. The combatants in this war theater are NATO-ISAF plus the Afghan National Army (led by General Bismillah Khan Mohammadi), on the one side, and the Taliban, al-Qaeda, Hezb-e-Islami, Hizbul Mujahideen, Laskhar-e-Tayaba and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan on the other side. This war theater is mostly about a war against foreign occupiers, being fought by Afghans while some of the supply lines—men and material—either originate or pass through Pakistan.

War 2: The entire geographical landmass east of the Durand Line and (mostly) west of the Indus River. This area comprises Bajaur, Mohamand, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram, North Waziristan and South Waziristan plus Chitral, Swat, Dir, Shangla, Kohistan, Battagram, Buner, Mardan, Charsadda, Kohat and Karak—some 100,000 square kilometers of physical Pakistani terrain. The western most parts—especially parts of FATA—of this theater have been hot for more than a decade, at least a couple of years before the launch of Operation Enduring Freedom. The war being fought in this area is the war of insurgency and the roots of this insurgency can actually be traced back to the fall of Kabul to the Taliban back in 1996. As a matter of fact, organized acts of blowing up CD shops and destruction of electronics has been going on in FATA long before NATO forces landed in this region. The combatants in this war theater are the Government of Pakistan, on the one side, and Tehreek-e-Taliban, Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi and al-Qaeda on the other side. Insurgent forces in this war

theater are actually trying to capture physical Pakistani territory, hold it and impose their own set of laws.

War 3: Parts of the geographical landmass east of the Indus River and west of the Pak-India border. There have been bomb blasts in Lahore, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Chakwal and Kundal. There have been suicide attacks on the staff of Army Medical College, Pakistan Army's Surgeon General, Pakistan Navy War College, FIA Headquarters, Pakistan Ordnance Factory and the Islamabad Marriott. In all of these tragedies, terrorists rush in to do whatever they have to do but never hold physical terrain. This is terrorism as distinct from theater number 2, which is insurgency.

War 4: The 2,912 kilometer Pak-India border. East of the border, Indian Army's 15, 9, 16, 14, 10, 11 and 2 Corps. West of the border, Pakistan Army's 1, 10, 30, 4 and 31 Corps. East of the border, Indian Air Force's 5 operational and 2 functional commands with at least 5 dozen air force bases. West of the border, Pakistan Air Force's 10 Main Operating Bases, 11 Forward Operating Bases and 9 Satellite Bases.

Conclusion: Theater number 1 will remain hot for as long as there are foreign occupiers. For theater number 2 and 3, the state of Pakistan—legislature, executive, judiciary and the military—would have to devise a focused National Counter-Insurgency Policy (COIN) and a National Counter-Terrorism Policy, respectively. Insurgent forces in theater number 2 would have to be cleared—disrupted, dismantled and then defeated—by Pakistan's coercive apparatus and then that cleared territory would have to be held firmly by politicians followed up by massive developmental work. Terrorists operating in theater number 3 have their roots and safe havens in theater number 2. Finally, Pakistan will not divert resources from theater number 4 to other theaters until there are superpower umbrella border-security guarantees.

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