

## Foreword

The clouds of war, both real and imagined, have thickened over the Indian sub-continent, and terrorism is at the heart of the potential for a future outbreak of open hostilities. There is, in fact, a great churning in progress in South Asia, and it is in this context that the violence in the region is to be understood. Indeed, the multiple and apparently diverse chain of events that have been set in motion by 9/11 and the American campaign in Afghanistan will have consequences far beyond the expectations and calculations of the unimaginative and substantially incompetent leadership of the two major rivals in the region – though the structural correctives of a democratic system in India may be better equipped to absorb the shocks of transformation than the rigid, quasi-feudal military dictatorship in Pakistan.

The first element in the current transformation is the fact that the network of containment alliances that had been forged by the US in the region has been significantly altered. While Pakistan's 'frontline state' status in the Cold War equation has been transformed into an ostensible 'frontline state' status in the US war against terrorism, the similarities are specious. For one, Pakistan's role in creating, supporting and exporting terrorism is no secret, and despite official American pronouncements and a desire to see Musharraf succeed in restoring a measure of security and permanence in the flux of the country's turbulent politics, the American intelligence community remains fully aware of the highly ambivalent role this state's agencies are still playing. No country – and this includes India – would like to see Pakistan spiral into a 'zone of chaos' on the Afghan pattern. There is, however, substantial scepticism and, indeed, pockets of growing anger within the American strategic community against Pakistan's continuing ambivalence towards terrorism. Moreover,

the simple equations of the bipolar world have been completely substituted by complex inter-relationships, and these include intensifying co-operation between India and the US which excludes the possibilities of the unequivocal support that Pakistan received even in its most excessive adventures in the past. The long-term trends in this context are still evolving, but the immediate future will be characterised by increasing instability and jockeying for positions, not only between India and Pakistan, but among a number of external actors who seek an expanded role in the South Asian region.

There is, at present, an inordinate focus on Kashmir as the flashpoint around which much of the present tension converges, but these contextual factors affect all the major conflicts and trends in the region, including the multiplicity of insurgencies in India's Northeast, the Maoist terror in Nepal, the course of negotiations with the LTTE in Sri Lanka, the terrorist groupings and sectarian violence in Pakistan itself, and also the patterns of transnational organised crime in the region. The present volume assesses some of the divergent trends in the structures of violence that afflict South Asia.

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