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Pakistan and Secutiry

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Pakistan's Security Paradox

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The current Pakistani offensive in the North Waziristan region of the country was waged in an effort to crack down on Islamist militants in the region, but the complicated nature of Pakistan's relationship to Islamic groups, as well as the enormous social cost to the people of the region has made this operation a difficult one to analyze. One of the largest terror groups in the region were the Haqqani network, whose attacks against Afghanistan have been numerous and deadly, most recently being linked with a suicide attack at a volleyball game in Paktika province that killed 57 people on November 23rd. [1] Despite their acts of violence, many in Pakistan consider the Haqqani a sort of ally, as they have operated in the past with Pakistani intelligence, and do not have a history of attacking Pakistanis.[2] Recently, Pakistan has come under pressure from foreign partners and investors such as China for a more hardline stance on these groups, after recent attacks in neighboring Xinjiang province,[3] and reports Tuesday that airstrikes targeted and killed 20 members of the Haqqani network may serve as a turning point for how the country treats this terrorist group that was once considered an "asset".[4]

While the military operation may be progress for a Pakistani government that has been lax on terrorists in the past, the fighting in the region has taken its toll on the local populace, with over 1.5 million residents being pushed from their homes by advancing military forces and existing militant presence. While 250,000 of them have made their way in Afghanistan, a stark reversal from past events this century, 3,000 of the poorest families of North Waziristan are currently living in the Gulan Refugee camp, which is nothing more than a "stretch of rough stones and reed bushes in the Gorbuz distric of Khost, just a few miles from the border"[5]

This constant flow of refugees would only complicate further the issues Pakistan and Afghanistan face in regards to border security and control, and if a new tough-on-terrorism Pakistan is unable to push out Taliban and other extremist forces from North Waziristan province, the mass exodus of civilians would only further entrench the region as a volatile and violent stretch of land whose proximity to the now NATO-less Afghanistan could mean disaster as both countries struggle to stabilize after years of corruption and violence. A November 15th meeting of Prime Minister Sharif and President Ghani in Islamabad resulted in Sharif pledging his support for Ghani and his current challenge to pacify a now independent Afghanistan, and a vital part of this support will be Pakistan's newfound intolerance of the Haqqani and other previously sympathetic terrorist groups.[6] Without it, we could see a total breakdown of ties between the two countries, and further disintegration of a peaceful democratic process.