Pakistan's Fight Against Terrorism

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Abstract: *This article analyzes that global and regional fight against terrorism from a Pakistani point of view. Not only does it examine the unique Pakistani aspects of the problem, but also the Pakistani view with regards to the actions of others, principally the United States and what is happening in Afghanistan. Although Pakistan remains engaged in global counterterrorism, it has its own terrorist problem at home. The fight against terror requires a concerted government approach, which is found lacking in the Pakistani government actions. Analyzing the counterterrorist actions of the most recent governments, the efforts and results of the military governments are contrasted with those of the more civilian governments, but finds that all have been hampered by a lack of a comprehensive national counterterrorism policy bringing all resources to bear in a coordinated fashion.*

Keywords: *Counterterrorism, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Pervez Musharraf, Zia-ul Haq*

Introduction

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon for Pakistan. It has been a reality for many years, but has acquired a menacing dimension since the catastrophic events of 9/11. Many political and military leaders (notably former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto), security personnel, ordinary citizens, women and children have been victims of terrorism. The phenomenon is complex: a host of internal and external factors have given rise to multiple centers of terrorism in the country.

During the decade prior to the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1989, Pakistan was deeply involved in supporting the *mujaheedin* that were resisting Soviet aggression. General Zia-ul Haq, the military ruler of Pakistan during the period, inflicted great damage to the polity and social structure of Pakistan by pursuing policies that not only served the *mujaheedin* in

Afghanistan but also promoted the intense radicalization of Pakistani society. From Zia's point of view, support of the *jihadi* forces would win him international acceptance, strengthen political Islam and domestically consolidate his regime. He aligned Pakistan with the United States in the Afghani *jihad* without taking into consideration the adverse fallout of associating and promoting radicalism as state policy.

During this period Washington was unabashedly promoting radical Islam as a bastion against godless communism, equally unmindful of the consequences to the region's peace and stability. From the mid-1960s on, Pakistan used various militant groups as instruments of state policy, but in tandem with United States policy, they acquired greater significance in Zia's time. He supported militant groups within Pakistan to fight in Kashmir, hoping that it would build pressure on India to come to the negotiating table. To legitimize his rule, he also allied himself with conservative and radical religious parties that were sympathetic toward these extremist groups. In addition, due to the infighting within their country, millions of Afghan refugees were streaming across the border into Pakistan, creating a demographic and security challenge that in some respects exacerbated the trend toward radicalization in the country. All of this also played into Pakistanis' deeper anxieties.

Since Pakistan's inception, India has remained the primary threat as a military and hegemonic power of the region; the legacy of disputes that the British left unresolved-especially Kashmir-has cast a deep and a dangerous shadow on Pakistan. To countervail India's growing economic and military power, Islamabad has used militant proxies to lock up Indian forces. But some of the asymmetric forces, like the Lashkar-e Jhangvi and Sipah-Sahaba that were meant to advance Islamabad's strategic interest, have grown fairly strong and autonomous so that they are even challenging the authority of the state. They have now turned inwards and are responsible for many acts of violence within Pakistan.[1] Thus the narrow security orientation pursued during military rule in Pakistan (that may have had some relevance in the past) has now become a major security challenge. It is ironic that the army, which created these multiple non-state actors as a part of its India-centric policy, is the only institution that has the capacity to handle these radical forces. In contrast, the civilian government is weak and the law enforcement agencies-police and paramilitary forces-are not truly capable of countering the menace of militancy. For instance, the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP, a network of militant groups mostly from to the tribal belt) has been involved in dozens of terrorist attacks throughout Pakistan. A few Punjab and Kashmiri-based militant organizations also have developed a nexus with the TTP and the remnants of al-Qaeda.[2] They are engaged in serious acts of violence within the country and, at times, abroad. Due to intense and sustained pressure applied by Pakistan and the United States, al-Qaeda has been weakened here. More recently, as violence has become a fundamental threat to the safety of everyone, there is a growing realization that domestic extremism represents an even greater threat to the country than India does.

In 1989, after the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan, the United States made a premature exit from the region. Afghanistan plunged into civil war and fighting ensued among the

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1   Bruce Riedel, "Armageddon in Islamabad", *The National Interest,* July/August 2009 ("Pakistan is both a patron and victim of terror. The Frankenstein created by the army and ISI is now increasingly out of control and threatening the freedoms of all Pakistanis").

2   C. Christine Fair, "Militant Recruitment in Pakistan", *Studies in Conflict Terrorism,* Vol. 27, No. 6, Nov-Dec 2004, p. 495 ("al-Qaeda uses informal networks with Pakistani organizations to obtain logistic support as well as operational support").

various *mujahedeen* groups that had been trained and supported by the CIA. The infighting and turbulence in neighboring Afghanistan proved very destabilizing, especially for Pakistan's tribal region, as well as the northern and southwestern provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan. It was during this chaotic period in Afghanistan that the Taliban came into power and Pakistan was one of only three countries that made the controversial decision to recognize the regime. Pakistan's involvement with the Afghan Taliban and the rise of its own brand of Taliban eventually led to the spread of extremism-another major source of terrorism. Pakistan's military rulers during the Afghan jihad had conceptualized the possibility of developing 'strategic depth' in Afghanistan to counter Indian hegemonic designs. Instead, Pakistan's tribal region and parts of the Northwest have fallen victim to the ideological spread of the decadent Taliban ideology.

The real trigger for the spread of militancy and terrorism was, however, the iconic event of 9/11 and the subsequent United States-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. After 9/11, terrorism acquired a new and serious dimension when it became a front line state against Bush's "war on terror."[3] The relationship between the United States and Pakistan as well as between Afghanistan and Pakistan underwent a major change. The United States-led invasion of Afghanistan pushed Taliban forces into Pakistan's tribal region where they created new bases and sanctuaries. The tribal belt is a mirror image of the devastation next door. The Durand Line that separates the two countries runs through traditional boundaries among the Pashtun. The Afghans have never recognized it; every attempt to enforce the boundary has been fiercely resisted by people on both sides.[4] Spillover of the war in Afghanistan has created instability and given rise to Pakistan's own version of Taliban that at one stage extended their reach across to nearly all agencies of the tribal region and were expanding their frontiers up to Swat and Peshawar that are settled areas of Pakistan. This led to heightening concerns that the insurgency was broadening. A major military operation was undertaken in 2009 against the Tehrik Taliban Pakistan and other militant organizations to re-establish the authority of the state. The operation in Swat and South Waziristan was fairly successful but many of the militants and senior Pakistani Taliban leaders-Maulvi Faqir, Qari Zia-ur Rehman, Abdul Wali and Maulana Fazalullah-escaped to take shelter in Afghanistan and in other parts of the tribal region.

The TTP launched a series of violent terrorist attacks on security installations, main city centers, and schools in retaliation for the clearing of militant sanctuaries in the tribal region. The current situation is that the Afghan Taliban and its other affiliates, especially the powerful Haqqani group, are still located in North Waziristan and launch occasional attacks across the porous border into Afghanistan.

Their continued presence has been a major source of friction in United States-Pakistan relations.[5] Pakistan's military leadership has been reluctant to open another front as it is already overstretched dealing with militant groups in other parts of the western border. This arid mountainous and

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3   Jack Straw, "*Reordering the World". The Long Term Implications of September 11*, London: Foreign Policy Research Center, 2002.

4   Bijan Omrani, "The Durand Line: History and Problems of the Afghan-Pakistan Border", *Asian Affairs,* Vol. 40, No. 2, 2009, pp. 177-195.

5   K. Alan Kronstadt, "Pakistan-United States Relations: A Summary", CRS Report, May 2012, pp. 29-31.

neglected region in northwestern Pakistan has provided sanctuary to the Pakistani Taliban, the Afghan Taliban, foreign and domestic jihadists and members of al-Qaeda. The army and paramilitary forces periodically engage in military operations in different agencies of the tribal region to keep clearing the militant hideouts. The focus of these military operations is mostly directed against the TTP and its affiliates. In essence it has become a battle of attrition between the TTP and the army.

When the Pakistan army intensifies its operations or the frequency of United States drone attacks increases as a part of its counterterrorism policy, the militants respond by launching a wave of terrorist attacks on security installations and populated areas.[6] The most effective response to the militants should lie in clearing the sanctuaries and establishing the authority of the state in the tribal region, but that has not proven easy with a porous border, a region that has remained neglected for decades and government control historically being nominal.

The wider context is troublesome. The Afghan insurgency is, and will remain, a major engine of instability in the region. The most disturbed areas of Afghanistan lie in the southern and eastern parts of the Pakhtoon belt that are contiguous with Pakistan's western border. The presence in Pakistan of certain top leaders of Afghan militant groups (including the "Quetta Shura" led by Mullah Omar the Taliban spiritual leader), further complicates the country's problems.

There is also the continued presence of al-Qaeda that operates as a loosely-structured, amorphous body, although it is greatly diminished as a result of the Pakistan Army's ceaseless pressure. Its ideology attracts certain groups that are alienated from society or fight against injustices, imaginary or real.[7] Our experience has been that al-Qaeda exploits weaknesses in governance (and chaotic conditions) and makes common cause with local militant groups. Justice and good governance can to a great extent minimize the influence of this force. Al-Qaeda-affiliated groups have perpetrated some deadly terrorists attacks in the past, presumably on the Danish Embassy and Marriot Hotel in Islamabad. Nonetheless, not all is bleak: their operational effectiveness in the last few years has been on the decline. The loss of top commanders, especially the killing of Osama bin Laden in May 2011, and continued pressure from Pakistan and United States military and intelligence agencies has curtailed al-Qaeda's destructive potential both in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Limited successes notwithstanding, Pakistan continues to face the major challenge of terrorism and insurgency, the epicenter of which lies in the tribal belt. In North Waziristan, the authority of the state is limited and the army has so far not conducted any clearing operation. South Waziristan, Orakzai, Mohmand, Khyber and Kurram are other areas of the FATA where the military has been able to establish the authority of the state but still there exists several pockets of militant holdouts.

Pakistan's neglect of the tribal areas for decades, its deep involvement in the Afghan *jihad,* emergence of its own version of Taliban in the tribal areas and the fallout of 9/11 have nearly totally destroyed the social, tribal and administrative structure of the area. Taking advantage of these chaotic conditions, the Taliban has set up a parallel administration, are providing justice in accordance with their harsh interpretation of Islam and maintaining security by imposing ruthless measures.

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6   Randall Collins, *Violence A Micro-Sociological Theory,* Princeton University Press, 2009, pp. 440-447 ("The activities of terrorists are not unlike those of professional hit men").

7   Edward Newman, "Exploring the Root Causes of Terrorism", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, 2006, pp. 749-772.

It is in these sanctuaries of the tribal belt, where the writ of the state is minimal or non-existent, that the TTP, the Afghan Taliban and other militant groups have been doing their training. They use it as a base for launching attacks into several parts of Pakistan and across the border into Afghanistan. Since 2009, the Pakistani army and paramilitary forces have launched several operations to clear these sanctuaries. In retaliation, the insurgents and their affiliates have launched terrorist attacks into different parts of the country. The primary motive behind the terrorist acts is to deter government from using military force, demoralize the public, demoralize the security institutions and capture power. However, sustained military operations conducted against TTP strongholds and the strong presence of regular army units in the area has weakened the ability of the militants to conduct terrorist attacks.

It is encouraging that the ownership of the fight against militancy is greater now under a civilian democratic government than it was during President Musharraf's period. The Chief of Army Staff, General Kayani, with the support of the civilian government, has shown the determination and political will to seriously engage in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations. Despite these consistent efforts, there are some areas where it has not been possible to establish the authority of the state. This is largely due to border being porous, allowing the militants to cross over into Afghanistan and merge with the Afghan Taliban.

The Pakistan government, at this stage is not prepared to negotiate with the Tehrik-e- Taliban Pakistan (TTP) leadership. Its previous experience of negotiating with these groups has led to the militants consolidating and expanding their influence. The army is currently keeping pressure on these groups and, when required, launching military operations and targeting group leaders. However, it is important to understand that TTP is a loose network of motley and disparate groups that have coalesced to leverage their impact but have little in common. The TTP and some major Afghan militant groups reside in Orakzai as well as South and North Waziristan, which are considered the base of all resistance.

The Taliban of Pakistan is a loosely-knitted group. Some are ideologically motivated and they are mostly in North and South Waziristan. Whereas, in Khyber, agency criminals, drug mafia and smugglers have worn the mantle of Taliban to challenge the authority of the state. In Khuram, agency ethnic groups are fighting for turf; in Orakzai and Bajaur a mix of ideology and criminality are acting as an incentive for insurgency. These groups will continue to give trouble for quite a while. However, if the government and the military remain steadfast to pursue militant leaders and their groups vigorously according to a well-conceived plan involving both military and other elements of national power, there are good prospects of pacifying the area within two to three years. Much, of course, will depend how the situation unfolds in Afghanistan and the extent of international support to Pakistan.

Sanctuaries in the Tribal Region

Pakistan's army so far has been circumspect in launching operations in North Waziristan that is host to the powerful Haqqani group-a battle-hardened group from the Afghan *jihad*. Its strength could vary from 3,000 to 4,000 and they could draw more from adjoining provinces of Afghanistan in the event that Pakistan launches an operation. Militants fleeing from South Waziristan and other parts of the tribal agencies have also sought refuge in this area.

Pakistan does not want to antagonize the Afghan Taliban and other militant groups residing in North Waziristan, knowing that it will have to deal with them once the American and NATO combat forces leave. The new United States and NATO strategy on Afghanistan already envisages complete withdrawal of combat forces by 2014; France, Germany and other NATO countries are leaving (or have left) earlier. Meanwhile, serious efforts are being made to bring the Afghan Taliban to the negotiating table. In such an unpredictable scenario, Pakistan would like to keep its options open and closely watch how the military situation and United States policy evolves.

Another inhibiting factor for extending military operations in North Waziristan is the danger that it could trigger a fresh wave of suicide attacks in settled parts of Pakistan- as was the case during operations in Swat and more recently in South Waziristan. High human and financial costs are another important consideration. Pakistan has lost nearly 3000 security forces and thousands of civilians in its fight against the militants. The financial cost of fighting the insurgency is already taking its toll- the defense expenditure has exceeded the budget by over 35% and demands for more money, weapons and equipment are rising. According to some estimates, Pakistan has suffered a loss of nearly 70 billion dollars for being a front-line state in the fight against militants. Pakistan's financial difficulties further create an environment for extremism and enhanced militancy.

Terrorism and the Struggle for Freedom

After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the distinction between terrorism and legitimate struggles for freedom, as in Kashmir or Palestine, also became blurred. As a result, the United States and other powers were able to suppress indigenous freedom movements with impunity if that served their purposes. It is also true that there was genuine concern that a nexus could develop between groups engaged in the struggle for freedom and those involved in terrorism.

Subsequent events have shown that these fears were to some extent justified. However, that does not absolve countries like India from addressing legitimate grievances that have given rise to insurgencies in Indian-administered Kashmir where the state itself has committed acts of brutality against its people, pushed them to the brink, and compelled them to react violently. In the absence of a clear definition of terrorism, India has suppressed genuine freedom movements through brute force.

Diverse militant groups from Pakistan that were originally engaged in Kashmir (and were part of the resistance movement with the tacit support of the Pakistani government) have now turned inwards and are involved in sectarian violence in this country. They have joined with other sectarian or ethnic organizations engaged in sectarian conflicts and committing acts of terrorism. These include Hizb-ul-Mujaheedin, Jash-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e Tyaba, anti-Shia Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipah Sahaba. Crackdowns by the government on militant groups like Lashkar-e Tiaba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, Lashkar Jhangvi, Sapah Sahaba and others have not been sustained. It is apparent that the state has been too soft and, at least as of now, unable to take on these banned groups.[8]

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8   Jacob N. Shapiro and C. Christine Fair, "Understanding Support for Islamist Militancy in Pakistan," *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 3, Winter 2009/10, pp. 79-118.

The mushrooming expansion of the number of such organizations has resulted in the development of new political fault lines based on ethnic and sectarian nationalism. These have been exacerbated by foreign interference: the fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan in the 1980s and the emergence of the Shia theocratic regime in Iran in 1979 led to Saudi support for Sunni Wahabi groups and Iranian support for Shia militant organizations. Pakistan became a battleground for sectarian warfare and political Islam. These internecine wars continue to date, at times attaining greater intensity. By and large the Shia, being in the minority, are the victims although the Shia have also engaged in retaliatory attacks.[9]

The total number of proscribed jihadi groups in Pakistan by 2012 has grown to 38. The government has failed to prevent banned terrorist organizations from operating under different names or going underground. After being previously banned, several major jihadi organizations, such as the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipahe Sahaba Pakistan, have operated under different names with their organizational and financial base largely intact.

There is a growing nexus among several groups despite their differing agendas. They tend to unite to reinforce their ability to achieve the common objective of weakening the state to facilitate the capture of power through unconstitutional means. Thus we have seen the involvement of Lashkar-e-Tayaba in the horrific terrorist attack in Mumbai, India in 2008 and the more recent massacre of Shia Hazaras in Baluchistan. Different radical groups also have acted independently or in unison with each other as was the case in the attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore in 2009 or the several attacks on major military installations, intelligence headquarters and places of worship.

The common denominators that facilitate the increase in power and influence of these groups include poor governance, weak state structures and the pursuit of flawed national policies. Illiteracy, unemployment, pervasive corruption and the elitist character of Pakistani society have also contributed toward extremism and radicalism. With multiple militant groups operating in Pakistan, the task of the government in combating them becomes a huge challenge. Many *jihadi* organizations also have taken cover as charities and in so doing have further expanded their influence.

It is important to recognize that terrorism cannot be effectively addressed in a linear or compartmentalized manner. Specific measures toward social and economic development have to be taken to fight the various terrorist groups and to counter extremism. However, the root causes of terrorism are highly complex and multifaceted.[10] Most importantly, the government should have a clear vision and a holistic plan to combat terrorism and develop a multidimensional strategy that strengthens development and security on a long-term basis. The absence of a clear and comprehensive policy by the government has made the task of countering terrorism difficult. It also has left the task of both the formulation and execution of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism essentially in the hands of the army leadership.

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9   International Crisis Group, "The State of Sectarianism in Pakistan", *Asia Report*, No 95, 18 April 2005 ("Cooption & patronage of religious parties by successive military governments have brought Pakistan to a point where religious extremism threatens to erode the foundations of the state and society").

10 Sidney Weintraub, "Treating the Causes", *Center for Strategic & International Studies Monthly Commentary, No. 22* October 2001 ("The discussion of poverty reduction can be brought specifically to the situation in the Middle East and South Asia. Most people in those regions, which seem to be the cradle of the terrorism movement, live in poverty.")

Regrettably, Pakistan has no coherent strategy to deal with sectarian and radical Islamist organizations that practice and preach violent *jihad*. Military governments in the past have pursued shortsighted policies by supporting some of these groups to advance their agenda. In fact, when a government panders to *jihadi* groups, it loses its credibility and its capacity to implement an effective counterterrorism or counterextremism policy.

Paradigm Shift

In January 2002, President Musharraf (in a speech meant both for the domestic and international community) made a categorical commitment to end Pakistan's support of those militant organizations that engage in acts of terrorism.[11] He declared that he would try to take effective measures against the curse of extremism and radicalism within the country. This was a paradigm shift from the policies that the army had pursued in the past.

Thousands of militants were arrested. Regrettably, most of them were later released. In Pakistan, bringing terrorists to justice has been extremely difficult and cumbersome due to weak laws and insufficient evidence. Courts have freed most of the confirmed terrorists due to lack of evidence and the fears of reprisals, residing in judges as well as the witnesses and the police. It is the duty of the state to provide protection but, fearing for their lives, witnesses did not come forward to provide evidence. In the absence of concrete evidence and with the state unable to provide judges with proper security, the terrorists were mostly just released. It is clearly the failure of the state if it is unable to provide adequate security to the courts and witnesses or to enact laws to deal with terrorists.

Democracy's Role in Fighting Terrorism

Washington in the past always preferred military rule in Pakistan, as it is easier to manipulate a few top military leaders than deal with a more complex power structure in a democracy. However, military rule has proven less effective in fighting terrorism, as experience has demonstrated. Apart from the military instrument, the fight against terrorism requires the harnessing of the full spectrum of the elements of national power-political, economic, cultural and social; it needs comprehensive solutions.

The return of democracy in Pakistan in 2008 was a positive development but with state institutions being weak, it has not been that effective in combating militants. Nonetheless, as democracy gets more deeply rooted, it can be helpful to gain and mobilize public support against militants. Democratic countries allow their citizens to vent their feelings and create moderate societies, whereas autocratic regimes suppress people and give rise to extremist movements that eventually lend themselves to terrorist activities. Pakistan's experience has been that the policies pursued during military rule have given rise to extremism and the growth of militant organizations that are involved in terrorist activity. Pakistan is still suffering from General Zia-ul Haq's policies in the 1980s, when he flirted with the Afghan *jihadists* and promoted a culture of religious intolerance. Musharraf's flirting with

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11 In a landmark speech, President Musharraf vowed to end Pakistan's use as a base for terrorism. BBC, "Musharraf Speech Highlights", *BBC News*, 12 Jan 2002.

religious parties to gain legitimacy and later siding with United States after 9/11, without taking into consideration its blowback, also gave rise to unchecked radicalism in Pakistan. Because of the unrepresentative character of the military regime of General Musharraf, he failed to counter the influence of the *jihadists* and the militants, despite enjoying nearly nine years of unbridled power.

The lack of political stability and weakening of state institutions due to prolonged military rule contributed to the strengthening of militants and the expansion of their influence.

In 2008, when a democratic government led by more moderate political parties replaced the military regime of General Musharraf, people expected that it augured well for the fight against terror. However, the clear verdict of the people against military-dominated rule and the rejection of religious parties regrettably were not usefully channeled against extremist forces. By acting as a counterforce, they could have cleaned the swamp of militants, but for that they needed a comprehensive policy and its faithful implementation. This required improved governance and economic development that could bring a marked difference in the lives of the people. This could also have a salutary impact on Afghanistan and Pakistan's turbulent political and social milieu.

Simply put, successful democracy in Pakistan is essential to counter terrorism but it has to be accompanied by good performance.[12] Democratic government without content or the one that cannot deliver loses the confidence of the people and strengthens the militants. Fighting terrorism in a democratic milieu should be relatively easier provided that the government enjoys credibility and performs at least to people's minimum expectations. Militant organizations tend to exploit the alienation of people that flow from the failings of the government and its policies. Thus terrorism is best beaten when moderate forces actively mobilize themselves to isolate and defeat its perpetrators. Conversely, by remaining a silent majority, they shirk their responsibility and allow a free hand to militants. Unless civil society is willing to take a strong position against the terrorists, which unfortunately has not been the case in Pakistan, only then will it be possible to construct positive and enduring strategies to take the country out of this vicious cycle of violence. In Pakistan, the present PPP-led coalition government initially made some efforts to mobilize public opinion to own the war against terror; sadly, it failed to sustain that effort. Any premature break up of the democratic institutions, despite their failings, would clearly strengthen the militants.

What the Support of the Afghan Taliban is Costing Pakistan

Until September 2001, Pakistan along with Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi were the only countries that recognized the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Even now Pakistan is accused by the United States and Western governments of sheltering the Taliban leadership and providing them with logistical support and security cover. This has given rise to misunderstandings and mistrust between Washington and Islamabad. These differences are essentially a result of different threat perceptions held by the United States and Pakistan. From a Pakistani perspective, it is the Pakistani Taliban (TTP) that are the real danger to the state. To counter the Afghan Taliban, from Islamabad's perspective, is the responsibility of the United States and ISAF forces. With Pakistan's military already overstretched,

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12 Jennifer L. Windsor, "Promoting Democratization Can Combat Terrorism", *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 3, Summer 2003.

taking on the Afghan Taliban or other Afghan militant groups like the Haqqani group is not considered strategically prudent. There is also a belief that these groups will remain well entrenched close to our borders in the eastern and southern part of Pakistan, even after the United States and ISAF have withdrawn and to invite their enmity would be against Pakistan's long term security interests.

Root Causes

In combating militant groups, apart from banning organizations and keeping close watch on their activities, it is essential to get at the root cause of the emergence of such groups. What are their motivation levels, their sources of funding and who is providing them with cover? Some serious researchers on terrorism have pointed out that there is also a need to "conceptualize terrorism as a moral issue with dimensions beyond imperialism, nationalism and sovereignty. As a result people appear in rallies and public places without remorse and raise the banner of nationalism and anti-imperialism".

The government has to treat terrorism as a criminal offence and deal with it accordingly through legal action rather than relying on military force alone to neutralize militant groups. There is also a need for the government to develop an alternative narrative that is more positive to what is being promoted by the militant organizations. Taliban, LeT, and other militant groups have become media savvy in putting across their narrative effectively.

Religious Seminaries

The impact of religious seminaries on the growth of militancy in Pakistan has been a subject of widespread and serious debate. Regrettably, there has been no progress in improving the quality of the education they provide. Seminaries have been in existence on the subcontinent for centuries and had played a significant role in promoting religious education. But the Afghan *jihad* and the exploitation of religion to serve political ends under General Zia-ul Haq in the 1980s, gave a boost to the rapid growth and political transformation of many madrasas in Pakistan.[13]

The impact of this was most felt clearly in Karachi, Baluchistan and Kyhber Pakhtunkhwa in that it altered their benign character. The madrasas have since played a key role in creating and supporting many *jihadi* organizations. Madrasas are also a means of financially supporting the jihadi organizations. The quality of education in the majority of the madrasas too, apart from a few exceptions, is basic and essentially confined to memorizing the Holy Quran. Most of the students fail to acquire the skills that are relevant for gainful employment. Most of them end up in mosques as Khateebs or Moazzins. Because of their limited horizon, their sermons take a narrow and dogmatic view of Islam; what is most worrisome is this cultivates intolerance and a rigid mindset.

There is considerable resistance to government efforts to modernize the curricula and to make madrasas financially and administratively accountable. Although the highest representative body, the Ulema, had agreed to revise the syllabus and introduce modern subjects, they have so far failed

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13 International Crisis Group, "Pakistan: Karachi's Madrassas & Violent Extremism", *Asia Report*, No. 139, Mar. 29, 2007.

to comply. The government has taken no action, even against those religious seminaries that have been preaching hatred and violence.

Curriculum and Educational Reforms

One of the major factors contributing to the rise of radicalism and fanaticism is the hate material in school curriculums. Recent attempts at revising the syllabus and curriculum in Pakistan have been half-hearted and need a major corrective effort. In addition to reforming the madrasas, there is an urgent need to strengthen the current educational system. Indeed, education is one of the most critical instruments in fighting terrorism. The current spending on education in Pakistan is less than 2 percent of the GDP and that too is not fully utilized due to corruption and poor management. An increase in education spending will have to be accompanied by educational reforms and better management of primary and secondary schools.

Education in tribal area will have to be given the highest priority, as it has remained neglected for decades.

Suicide Terrorism

The use of suicide terrorism has become a major weapon in the hands of Pakistani militant groups. Individuals, normally between the impressionable ages of 15 to 25, are indoctrinated and prepared to sacrifice their lives in order to attack and destroy predetermined targets to advance the political agendas of militant groups. Most of the banned organizations in Pakistan like the TTP, Lashkar-e Jhangvi and several other jihadi and sectarian parties use suicide bombers.

Militant organizations use this inhuman practice for many reasons: it costs little, causes huge damage to the target, it is difficult for law enforcement agencies to trace the initiator of the crime, and it creates despondency among masses. The high casualty rate of suicide bombings attracts media attention; that has a huge psychological impact. By creating a shock affect through suicide bombings, terrorists believe that they can gain sympathy and legitimacy.[14]

On the other hand, frequent terrorist attacks by suicide bombers have created resentment among the people. Most of the suicide bombers are trained and indoctrinated in the sanctuaries that exist in North Waziristan and other parts of the tribal areas and launched in major cities on specified targets to create maximum impact.[15] The two main types of suicide-related, improvised explosive devices (IED) used in Pakistan have been the human and the vehicle borne. Sound intelligence, monitoring financial transactions, clearing sanctuaries in the tribal region and penetrating the agent-handling network could be effective countermeasures against the continued spread of suicide terrorism.

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14 Yoram Schweitzer, "Suicide Terrorism Development and Main Characteristics", in *Countering Suicide Terrorism*, Herzliya: International Policy Institute for Counter Terrorism, 2007, pp. 79-81.

15 *See* Paul J. Smith, *The Terrorism Ahead: Confronting Transnational Violence in the Twenty-first Century,* M.E. Sharpe, 2007.

The Nature of Terrorism

Unlike a conventional military campaign, a war on terrorism has no important physical features that have to be seized or captured. Moreover, the enemy can be elusive; experts are of the view that even those terrorist groups that are internally divided and demoralized can be very aggressive and destructive.

Terrorism is essentially a political weapon and can be very devastating even if it is a failure by normal operational standards. Defeating terrorism requires a comprehensive strategy and a long-term approach that aims at factors beyond the use of military force. The use of repressive and coercive means alone can be counterproductive. At times a humanistic approach may prove to be more successful in dealing with terrorist organizations. For instance, in Egypt militant organizations like Islamic Jihad and Gama'a al-Islamiya renounced violence and pursued their goals through non-violent political means. In Saudi Arabia several militant groups have been successfully deradicalized through a well-thought out strategy and comprehensive plan of action.

In dealing with terrorism, the psychological aspect has to be given due weight. Recent studies have indicated that those who embrace terrorism find the experience thrilling and spiritually rewarding.[16] In essence what it implies is that to win against terrorists it is crucial to address several aspects of militant behavior. Also, no policy against terrorism can succeed without winning the hearts and minds of people. For this it is crucial to work toward reducing and eventually eliminating the support of the population for the militants. The separation has to be both ideological and physical. Differentiation has to be made between the diehard core of militants and their followers with every effort made to rehabilitate the latter back into the mainstream.

To some extent, Pakistan has been pursuing this policy, although it needs to be pursued more vigorously. The practice of using the people of the area to raise militias to fight the insurgents has been successful in a few cases. The danger is that after they have developed into an effective force, the same militias could then start challenging the state itself.

The normal tactics of terrorists are that they first engage in surveillance of potential targets.[17] These could be security installations, high profile politicians, etc. Making the public aware of their methodology through media and other sources to gain their support can help in preempting the activities of the terrorists.

Terrorist organizations also play to the emotions and to religious sentiments. In Pakistan, some of them have taken up the cause of pan-Islamism to seek sympathy and support of banned international Islamic movements, including al-Qaeda, in order to advance their narrow agenda. It is crucial that the government should mount a counter campaign by exposing the harm that terrorists are doing to society and the nation by committing acts of violence.

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16 Simon Cottee and Keith Hayward, "Terrorist (E)Motives: The Existential Attractions of Terrorism", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 34, No. 12, 2011, pp. 963-986 ("The key argument advanced in what follows is that terrorism, for those who practice and embrace it, can be profoundly thrilling, empowering and spiritually intoxicating").

17 Jane's Group, "Suicide Terrorism: A Global Threat", *Jane's Intelligence Review*, April 1, 2000 ("A comprehensive knowledge of target is essential for the success of a suicide operation").

The other important aspect is to highlight the true spirit and message of Islam that it stands for peace and acts of violence are a negation of it. For this it will be necessary to improve the quality of education in the madrassas so that they have a better understanding of religion and the Quran. Extremist literature in the forms of pamphlets, books and videos that poison the mind should be banned.

The Impact of Strained/Skewed United States-Pakistani Relations

Pakistan-United States relations went through a series of crises in 2011. As a result of the unilateral raid to kill Osama bin Laden in May 2011 and the unfortunate attack on a border post by the United States Army in November 2011 when 24 Pakistani servicemen were killed, the Pakistan government reacted strongly and suspended the NATO logistic supply. After a detailed review, the Pakistani parliament has formulated recommendations to reset the relationship hoping that it would remove the irritants and bring about a more stable and enduring partnership. Security of allied forces, stability in Afghanistan and to an extent global security is dependent on the level of cooperation that is extended by Islamabad. The United States's primary interest is still that Pakistan should deny sanctuaries to militants in the tribal belt by establishing the authority of the state and provide intelligence, operations and logistic support to the allied forces operating in Afghanistan. It should also play a positive role in bringing the Taliban to the negotiating table. However, some in Pakistan would argue that America's interest in the region goes beyond fighting Islamic radicalism and is aimed at consolidating its strategic hold on the region.

United States and international concerns apart, Pakistan (looking after its own security and stability) has a vital interest in addressing the scourge of terrorism and fighting insurgency. It is concerned that after the withdrawal of NATO and United States forces from Afghanistan, the country could plunge once again into civil war. The post-withdrawal situation that would emerge in Afghanistan will have a direct bearing on Pakistan's stability, especially the tribal belt and the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. For this reason, a successfully negotiated settlement with the Afghan Taliban should contribute toward stabilizing the region.

President Bush's concept was that the war on terror is permanent.[18] This was an illogical and, in a way, dangerous concept. How can any war be of an endless duration and how can it be expected that Afghanistan (and Pakistan) would wage a permanent war on their people? The other basic difference between the United States and the Pakistani position is that Pakistan is fighting against its own people in its own territory, whereas the United States and NATO forces are fighting the Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda militants on foreign soil. The United States and the Western world at times fail to see this differentiation.

The absence of military operations in North Waziristan in the near future would mean that the frequency of United States drone attacks will continue or may even intensify. This gives rise to considerable resentment and sharpens anti-American sentiment. It is also a moral and political dilemma for the government, notwithstanding its tactical advantage.

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18 Fareed Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom,* New York: W. W. Norton, 2003 (quoting President Bush "As we wage war we must also work to make the world a better place for all its citizens").

Furthermore, there has been a large internal displacement of people during military operations. From South Waziristan alone, nearly 300,000 persons were displaced and either staying in camps or as guests in adjoining settled areas. These people have to be brought back, for which hospitable conditions have to be created so that they do not fall prey to the machinations of the Taliban and other militant groups. There is considerable resentment already among them that they were caught in the crossfire of the military and Taliban.

The government will have to take very concrete measures to develop the tribal region. With nearly 70 % of the population unemployed and a burgeoning young population (between 15 to 30 years old), more violence and increased militancy could be expected. For many, fighting for the *jihad* is a cause, a means of employment, and source of empowerment. The TTP has been paying its cadres well from its earnings from criminal activity, drug trade, and charities received from abroad and collecting local taxes.

Even close friends of Pakistan, like China and Saudi Arabia, are wary of the growing militancy and terrorism in Pakistan; they will have to be sensitive to it. The presence of Uighur dissidents and radicals in Pakistan is a cause of great concern to the Chinese. Equally worried (about Pakistan's growing militancy) are the Saudis. They have been trying to help Pakistan in the rehabilitation of militants.

The intricacies and complexities of terrorism and militancy, as well as the nature of the militant groups that are operating in the tribal areas and other settled parts of Pakistan has to be understood before any comprehensive strategy of counterterrorism can be formulated.[19]

There are different militant groups with varying agendas. First are the groups that are ideologically motivated-they are affiliated with al-Qaeda and have a pan-Islamic vision; they do not accept the concept of a modern nation-state so they is practically irreconcilable. The only way of dealing with them is through the use of military force. Then the second category constitutes those who, due to lack of employment opportunities and insecurity, have joined the militants as a relatively better alternative to what the weak and corrupt state is offering them. These groups could be won over provided the government has the political will and the capacity to provide better governance, open avenues of employment, and ensure access to justice and security. The lack of these basic services has driven the population toward the militants.

Last are those who consider becoming a Taliban or a *jihadist* as a means of employment and also of empowerment. With a rifle in their possession and reasonable income they feel empowered. This category could also include those who want to take revenge being victims of collateral damage by either United States drone attacks or Pakistan military operations in the tribal region. These divisions are not that sharp and there is a lot of overlap.

In the longer term, Pakistan needs to focus on nation building-to get its house in order- and to develop a sense of a common identity. If, in earlier days, identity was defined against an outer enemy-India-it must be redefined to help build a strong nation with viable and legitimate institutions, accountable to its people. The identity of Pakistan has been badly damaged by the policies of

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19 Majid Tehranian, "Global Terrorism: Searching for Appropriate Responses", *Pacific Review*, Vol. 14, No. 1, February 2002. ("This essay has argued that political terrorism must be fought on several fronts, against its criminal perpetrators as well as the social, economic, and political circumstances that breed and sustain them").

1980s and 1990s-both related to the Zia period-notably the promotion of militancy and the focus on *jihad* in Kashmir and Afghanistan. There must be a change in mindset-a belief in change and trust in the policies of the government. Education is the key and awareness campaigns about the true virtues of Pakistan and Islam is a way forward. But this requires long-term strategies and honest attempts at bringing changes that will wipe off the ill effects of past policies. The government will have to rise to the challenge to make Pakistan secure and free of militancy. Otherwise it will continue to drift toward anarchy and greater violence.

Pakistan is today a soft state; the non-state actors are more powerful than the state and there is scant control over the borders. It is important to tighten the border traffic, especially on the western Afghanistan side. The counterterrorism organization set up under the federal government has failed to make an impact due to the government's indifference and turf struggle between different government institutions. Pakistan should have an organization on the pattern of United States homeland security at the federal level, albeit on a smaller scale and suited to local conditions, that can formulate and execute counterterrorism policies and coordinate between various security forces and intelligence agencies. Its other function should be to regulate and monitor border traffic.

Policy Prescription

Pakistan will have to bring about major changes in its internal and external policies. There is no doubt that the army's top leadership has come to realize the dangers inherent in promoting *jihadi* culture in the context of the Kashmir resistance movement or in promoting the Taliban in Afghanistan.[20] It is taking corrective measures to reverse its previous policies and change course. But still there are areas of ambiguity and weakness that are exploited by the *jihadi* elements.

Another major weakness is that there is no national narrative to fight terrorism at the ideological level. Nearly ten years of experience indicates that the use of force and intelligence gathering alone cannot defeat the militants. Such efforts have to be combined with ideological, political and economic instruments. The government lacks the political will and a vision to address this existential challenge. Economic deprivation and poor governance are also major contributing factors in the fight against terrorism.[21] Regrettably, the government has paid scant attention to improving governance and addressing the economic challenges that the country is facing.

Also the mindset created over the last two to three decades in some of the conservative elements within the army and intelligence agencies has to be removed so that it does not fall prey to its own policies.

Religious parties in their policies of withholding knowledge from the public have tried to exploit the Punjab- and Kashmir-based militant *jihadi* organizations, as well as the Taliban, as useful tools

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20 Amy Zalman and Jonathan Clarke, "The Global War on Terror: A Narrative in Need of a Rewrite", *Ethics in International Affairs,* Vol. 23, No. 2, Summer 2009, pp. 101-113 ("A more persuasive analysis indicates that this attack was wholly unrelated to the United States, launched by the Pakistan based Lashkar-eTiaba militant movement for reasons to do with Kashmir").

21 James Wolfensohn, "Fight Terrorism by Ending Poverty", *New Perspectives Quarterly*, Vol. 19 No. 2, Fall 2002, pp.. 42-45.

for advancing their political and sectarian agenda. This has led to instances when radical elements have penetrated the security establishment. The question arises as to what motivates security and government functionaries to develop a radical mindset and how it can be prevented.

Religious and *jihadi* organizations have come out with a vast array of literature to influence the minds of young receptive minds. Radio, television and the Internet are all powerful tools. In Pakistan, the print media in national and regional languages particularly play a major role and have a great impact on young impressionable minds. The government has failed to develop a counternarrative to neutralize the propaganda that is constantly spewed forth by these *jihadi* organizations.

Groups like the Defense Council of Pakistan that are representative of extremist groups and are highly reactionary are free to preach hatred.[22] What the government or the society at large fails to realize is that when anti-United States, anti-India or anti-West sentiment is allowed to go unchallenged, it will generate a dynamic of its own that could lead to isolation of the country and be detrimental to its interests in the long term. In any case mere negativism by itself is not a solution to Pakistan's myriad problems.

Holistic Policy

There is no counterterrorism policy at the national level. It is *ad hoc* and left mostly to the army to formulate and execute with hardly any oversight. To fight this menace, all the major state institutions-civilian government, army and the parliament-will have to develop a well-coordinated and comprehensive policy.

As there are clearly linkages between insurgency, terrorism and extremism, it becomes even more crucial that a holistic approach be taken to combat this menace.

In fact, similar thinking exists in the United States strategic community wherein a comprehensive and coordinated approach to "irregular warfare" is being recommended in the context of countries like Afghanistan. The latest United States Defense Department plan for a coordinated approach to warfare is defined as "operations that span Diplomacy, Information, Military, Economic, Societal-Cultural (DIMES) developmental activities stabilizing a country, requiring an integrated effort of all actors". It is however unfortunate that Washington itself failed to apply most of these principles when dealing with Afghanistan.

Conclusion

Pakistan should have a comprehensive policy against terrorism. It is unfortunate that despite the fact that terrorism is the greatest challenge the nation faces, it has not formulated a national counterterrorism policy. Currently the problem of terrorism is dealt with in an *ad hoc* manner and in a linear fashion. This reflects a failure of civil leadership because, while the military has a role in counterterrorism, the major responsibility rests with civilian leaders. They have proven themselves

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22 Muhammad Amir Rana, "The Case of JUD", *Dawn,* March 25, 2012 ("Though the rejection of democracy was one of the prime objectives behind the establishment of the JUD, the group now seems willing to participate in electoral politics").

to be weak, too preoccupied with issues of survival and have abdicated their responsibilities in favor of the army. As a consequence, most of the development work in the insurgency-infested tribal region is left to the army to conduct. The army, with the minimum involvement of the government, is also undertaking the deradicalization and rehabilitation programs.

To some extent, terrorism has been contained but in the tribal belt and parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province its stranglehold continues that affects every facet of people's lives. There is no simple approach to the complex problem of insurgency and terrorism, but how it will be contained is vital, for on it depends the integrity and future of Pakistan. Clearly, the military and the people have made great sacrifices in the fight against militants. The military, along with paramilitary forces, has to continue pressing against the irreconcilable militant groups. A concerted effort by the security forces that has the backing of the people should be the way forward. Additionally, the government should focus on human development, keep improving governance, promote economic development and take measures to counter the political and ideological dimensions of the threat. Prudent application of various elements of national power against militants over a sustained period of time can defeat terrorism in the long run.

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