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Editor

Muhammad Amir Rana

Associate Editors

Najam U Din

Safdar Sial

Pak Institute for Peace Studies

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Pak Institute for Peace Studies
(PIPS)

Post Box No. 2110,
Islamabad, Pakistan
+92-51-2613911
www.san-pips.com,
editor@san-pips.com

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Abstracts

Afghanistan and Pakistan: A Common Security Perspective

Muhammad Amir Rana and Safdar Sial

Already struggling for stability, security and peace, neither Afghanistan nor Pakistan can afford to sink further into militancy and conflict. The Taliban insurgency and border security are two major and interconnected issues that have had an impact on security and the political situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Both countries are struggling to revive bilateral engagements for evolving joint and regional frameworks to manage border security, counterterrorism, and political reconciliation with the Afghan Taliban. The authors argue that the political reconciliation with the Mullah Omar-led Taliban and exit of international forces from Afghanistan would not resolve all problems related to border security, militancy and terrorism and the two countries in particular and the wider region in general would still face threats from the groups that seek to enforce their own versions of Islamic law and have a global jihadist agenda. Pakistan and Afghanistan have many compelling reasons to perceive and jointly respond to the diverse challenges to their respective but interlinked security and stability. However, it would not be an easy and smooth process to evolve a common perspective.

Culture of Violence versus Culture of Silence: Civil Society Responses to Extremism and Terrorism in South Asia

Arshi Saleem Hashmi

There are many factors for the rise in violence in South Asian countries, including human security deficit, want and fear syndrome, a state-centric approach, local conflicts combining with international ones and confusing ethnic and ideological matters with religious considerations. The culture of not challenging the violent discourse is the real problem in creating an intolerant society. One of the most important ways to fight the culture of violence is to demonstrate the importance of respect for diversity and pluralism and the benefits to society of developing a culture of religious freedom. What civil society can do to challenge and reduce the appeal of violent extremism has come to the fore in recent years. The role of civil society organizations in South Asian countries in countering extremism and terrorism can be significantly increased by enhancing their capacity and empowerment and by them focusing on empirically assessed needs and typology of the interventions required for that purpose in their respective countries.

Factors of Anti-Americanism in Middle East and Pakistan

Syed Manzar Abbas Zaidi

Opinion polls demonstrate that American foreign policies or actions, particularly the perceived US-Israel nexus, have significantly contributed to a rise in anti-Americanism in the Middle East. The American culture however is not that much a factor in this sentiment since the US is still the style icon for the Middle East, and it still attracts a large number of Arab immigrants. It is also significant that anti-Americanism is about the only common ground or agenda that the masses in the Middle East share with the Islamists. There is a theory of there being a tendency on the part of various Arab Muslim regimes to allow anti-Americanism to flourish as a means to demonstrate to their people that the regime is not an American 'puppet.' It certainly seems otherwise in Pakistan today. The anti-Americanism has not appeared all of a sudden among the Pakistani populace, but has been a gradual process; anti-Americanism has arguably been a constant feature of Pakistani politics, but the widespread anti-American sentiment currently prevailing amongst the population is a phenomenon best explained in the context of Pakistani leadership's support for the US-led war on terror.

Role of Religious Scholars in Counter-Radicalization and Deradicalization Strategies in Pakistan: The Need and the Scope

Safdar Sial

Pakistan needs to learn from how soft approaches for both deradicalization and counter-radicalization in world rely on and engage clergy. Religious scholars and clerics not only lead the prevalent larger religious discourse in Pakistan but in most cases the public's views resonate with those held by the clergy in the political, socio-cultural, economic and other areas, both in terms of national and international perspectives. At first, the government will have to ensure security for religious scholars so that they can work independently and without fear in state-led deradicalization programs. At present, there are extensive threats to those moderate religious scholars across Pakistan who raise their voice against the militants and acts of terrorism. Secondly, Pakistan should guide, encourage and support religious scholars vis-à-vis their role in countering radicalization and extremism. Thirdly, Pakistan should evolve a comprehensive deradicalization program borne out of political and institutional consensus. The role of religious scholars in such a program can comprise different elements including counseling, re-education, dialogue and creation of counter-extremism arguments to disengage militants from violent groups and ideologies.

Pak-Iran Relations: Views of Political and Religious Parties

Najam U Din and Maryam Naseer

After Pakistan gained independence from British rule, Iran was the first country to recognize it. Both countries signed a number of important trade treaties in the 1950s and '60s. However, bilateral ties have ebbed in the last three decades over issues ranging from security to politics and sectarian belief. This report is based on the findings of a survey of mainstream religious and political parties in Pakistan to assess their views on Islamabad's ties with Iran. The survey notes that the political and religious parties in Pakistan have considerable convergence of opinion on the shape that Pak-Iran relations should take. There is a general agreement that Pakistan's ties with Iran should be determined by national interest and not by the dictates of the US or any other country. The political parties support by and large Iran's right to pursue a peaceful nuclear program. However, with the exception of some religious political parties, there is substantial opposition to Tehran's pursuit of nuclear weapons. The survey finds clear consensus that Pakistan and Iran should work together because many of the challenges that confront them are shared and because a collaborative approach would lead to more concrete impact.

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Afghanistan and Pakistan: A Common Security Perspective

Muhammad Amir Rana and Safdar Sial

1. Introduction

Pakistan and Afghanistan have been facing multiple challenges due to resurgence of the Taliban and religious extremism that not only undermine progress, development and stability in both countries but also impact human and physical security. The war-torn Afghanistan suffered 11,016 conflict-related casualties, including 6,948 fatalities and injuries to 4,068 people in the year 2011 alone. At least 565 NATO troops also died in conflict-related incidents in Afghanistan in 2011.¹ Taliban attacks and counterinsurgency offensives continued in Afghanistan in 2012, reflecting mounting instability and the Taliban's attempts to reassert themselves as US and NATO forces started troops' withdrawal according to their exit strategy from July 2011 onwards. The situation in Pakistan is no less devastating where as many as 7,107 people were killed and 6,736 injured in 2011 in conflict and terrorism-related incidents.² In 2012, 5,047 people were killed and 5,688 injured in such incidents.³

Already struggling for stability, security and peace, neither Afghanistan nor Pakistan can afford to sink further into militancy and conflict. The talk of political reconciliation with the Taliban, and militant and counter-militancy offensives currently continue simultaneously in Afghanistan. The US and Afghanistan have serious concerns about some Afghan Taliban groups based in Pakistan, including the Haqqani Network, which has allegedly been involved in a heightened spree of lethal terrorist attacks in recent years, including suicide bombings, against 'high-value' targets in Afghanistan, particularly in Kabul. Pakistan has been trying to stem the rising tide of religious extremism and also needs to put a lid on militant violence. The situation in Pakistan has become even more disturbing since the Pakistani Taliban have expanded their operations and fortified themselves in their strongholds. They appear to have successfully multiplied their human resources, strengthened their infrastructure, terrorized the people, and dented

the morale of Pakistani security forces across the tribal belt and in the country's northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province. After Pakistan military's successful operation in Swat in 2009 the Pakistani Taliban's march towards other districts of KP close to Islamabad stopped; they relocated to various tribal districts of FATA and some of them found sanctuary in Afghanistan's Kunar and Nuristan provinces from where they have been launching cross-border terrorist attacks against Pakistani security forces and civilians since then. In 2012, they crossed the border with increasing frequency as large groups armed with sophisticated weapons and killed dozens of Pakistani security personnel and civilians. Pakistani Taliban groups, particularly the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), have once again started to consolidate their position in different districts of KP, including the provincial capital Peshawar.

All indications suggest that tough times are ahead for both Afghanistan and Pakistan, at least in the near future. American and NATO forces have failed to mitigate the threat that the Afghan Taliban pose, and the Afghan security establishment has failed to acquire the requisite capability to secure peace and stability in their country. The Taliban insurgency and border security are two major and interconnected issues that have had an impact on regional security and the political situation. The presence of a range of militant groups, including local ones, and also Al Qaeda on both sides of the Pak-Afghan border has thrust the area into international limelight and strained bilateral relations.

Although Afghanistan and Pakistan share common cultural, ethnic and religious aspects, and have developed trade and economic ties, the relationship between the two countries has always been quite turbulent. This despite the fact that Afghanistan is a landlocked country and Pakistan is its principal trading partner. The annual trade between Afghanistan and Pakistan exceeds \$1 billion. In fact, Afghanistan's transit trade through Pakistan had risen to \$1.07 billion in 2009 from \$161 million in 2000.⁴ Apart from trade dependence, Pakistan is an attractive destination for the Afghan workforce. There are also around 2.7 million Afghan refugees living in Pakistan, of which only 1.7 million are registered with the authorities.⁵

However, these ethnic, religious, cultural, trade and economic ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan—which will be discussed further in the following

section—count for very little in their bilateral relations. Kabul refuses to recognize Durand Line as international border between the two countries. Islamabad accuses Kabul of provoking and supporting Pashtun and Baloch nationalist and separatist movements in Pakistan. It has also seen with unease strengthening of ties between Afghanistan and archrival India. Pakistan's decision to support the Afghan Islamist resistance groups in the 1970s and 80s was strategic, not ideological, in nature. Islamabad was essentially trying to install a friendly government in Kabul, but its attempts seriously backfired.

After the 9/11 terror attacks in the United States, the international community expected Pakistan and Afghanistan to work together, but that did not happen as the latter accused the former of fueling the Taliban insurgency, while Islamabad blamed Kabul for supporting the Baloch guerrillas and helping the militants in FATA. After WikiLeaks, the whistleblower website, in 2010 reproduced intelligence documents about the Afghan war and Islamabad's role in it, Afghan President Hamid Karzai asked the world to review its policy towards Pakistan and send troops to that country.⁶ In response, Pakistan's Interior Minister Rehman Malik had raised the issue of militant infiltration into his country from Afghanistan, adding that militant outfits were getting their weapons from the Afghan province of Nuristan along Durand Line.⁷

In this perspective, the two countries developing a common security perspective will be far from easy. It is also clear that the US 'Af-Pak' approach that treated the two countries as a single theatre of military operation has only complicated matters further. The question, therefore, is: are the two countries able and willing to develop a joint approach to fight common security challenges?

Both countries were moving largely smoothly towards defusing bilateral tensions and evolving joint and regional frameworks to manage border security, counterterrorism, and political reconciliation with the Afghan Taliban, and improve economic and trade cooperation but the assassination of head of Afghanistan's High Peace Council Burhanuddin Rabbani in September 2011⁸ and some subsequent developments, particularly Afghanistan's signing of a strategic partnership with India the very next month, nearly derailed the process. At present, both countries are again struggling to revive bilateral engagement, particularly after Chicago

Conference on Afghanistan in June 2012.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's strategic sensitivities are growing on its western borders. It has set up more than 700 security check posts along the Pak-Afghan border, as 'low-intensity warfare' has increasingly gained more importance in the national security doctrine despite efforts to avoid such scenarios. The US operation that tracked down Osama bin Laden in Abbotabad in May 2011 and the NATO airstrikes on two Pakistani military check posts on the Pak-Afghan border in November the same year, which caused the death of 26 Pakistani soldiers, the subsequent suspension of supplies to NATO forces in Afghanistan through Pakistan and vacation of Shamsi Airbase by the US further heightened these concerns, which can lead to adjustments in the strategic doctrine.⁹ Pakistan and the US have reached an agreement regarding NATO supplies and are trying to restore bilateral trust. However, it will certainly take time to normalize ties not only between Pakistan and the US but also Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In this perspective, it is important to review the emerging security challenges and trends in Afghanistan and Pakistan, particularly along their common border, with a view to see how they impact strategic security concepts and perceptions of both countries and in order to explore prospects for an effective and shared response to such security challenges. This paper is an effort to assess the case for a common security perspective for Pakistan and Afghanistan and examines the recent sequence of events on their borders, internal and interlinked security dynamics of the two countries, and regional political trends.

2. Strategic Sensitivities

The strategic sensitivities of Pakistan and Afghanistan towards each other, the largely conflicting perceptions of matters related to security and terrorism and a trust deficit in general have constrained bilateral cooperation to varying degree throughout the post-9/11 or the so-called war on terror days. The same has been true in Pakistan-US relations.

Pakistan's security doctrine has traditionally had three components: deterrence on the eastern borders with India; strategic corridor on the north-western border with China; and neutral borders with Iran and Afghanistan.¹⁰

Recent developments have shattered Pakistan's security doctrine about neutral borders and the country has had difficulty in adjusting to the emerging scenario of rising hostilities on its western borders. With regard to India, the doctrine is fortified with the glue of ideology, and with China through a doctrine of strategic partnership. Pakistan considers that things are manageable with Iran. But when it comes to Afghanistan, with which Pakistan lacks such glue and which it sees through an Indian-centric prism, it becomes a very uncertain and sensitive matter for Islamabad. That may not create a huge vacuum as long as ISAF and NATO troops are in Afghanistan, but Pakistan will need to adjust to the new realities as withdrawal of foreign forces nears completion.

As stated earlier, Pakistan and Afghanistan have rarely been at ease with each other despite the fact that both are Muslim neighboring countries, and share over 2,500 kilometers of border, called Durand Line, which was demarcated in 1893 following an agreement between the British Empire and the Afghan king. Durand Line divides ethnic Pashtun tribes that populate the border regions of both countries.

The Pashtuns constitute the majority of the population of Afghanistan. They are Pashtu speaking people of southeastern Afghanistan and northwestern Pakistan. The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan, which comprise seven tribal agencies, are populated by slightly over three million Pashtuns, in addition to the 28 million who live in Pakistan and the 15 million in Afghanistan.¹¹ The Pashtun tribes on both sides of the border intermarry, trade and feud with one another. They largely share a common religious sect, Sunni or Hanafi Islam. These tribes have been living together for centuries and even today's Pak-Afghan border has only symbolic significance for them and tens of thousands travel across it on a near daily basis. According to Pakistan's ambassador to Afghanistan Muhammad Sadiq, some 52,000 Afghans crossed the border into Pakistan everyday in 2009 for business, employment, medical treatment, education or in order to visit relatives.¹² More visitors are now undertaking documented travel between the two countries by obtaining visas or visit permits.

The history of mistrust that the two countries share is a long one and both have accused each other of affording shelter to the other's opponents and interfering in their affairs. Pakistan accuses Afghanistan of providing

sanctuary to Baloch nationalists since the 1970s. The Pakistanis also note the fact that Afghanistan was the only country that had resisted Pakistan's membership of the United Nations in the late 1940s and that as recently as the communist regime in Afghanistan Kabul had closer ties with New Delhi than with Islamabad.¹³ After independence from British colonial rule, the 'Pashtunistan' issue provided India with a chance to pressurize Pakistan on both the eastern and western borders. Later, Afghanistan became a battleground for an India-Pakistan proxy war. India was seen to be part of a vicious propaganda campaign against Pakistan in Kabul during the communist regime.¹⁴

India's increasing influence in Afghanistan today also adds to Pakistan's concerns and strategic sensitivities. The US and its allies find it difficult to persuade Pakistan to reconsider its Afghan policy which is fundamentally India-centric.¹⁵ Pakistan has always considered India a threat to its stability and existence, and in order to counter that threat it has attempted to secure its western borders with Afghanistan over the past three decades or so.¹⁶ Afghanistan and the US are aware of Pakistan's concerns with regard to India's influence in Afghanistan. Pakistan believes that India's role in Afghanistan is not confined to development and reconstruction efforts and that New Delhi seeks to use its presence in Afghanistan to create instability in Pakistan, particularly in Balochistan, FATA and Karachi.¹⁷

Kabul claims that Islamabad supported the Afghan Taliban in the 1990s, and provided sanctuaries to them later in Pakistan's tribal areas and other parts such as Quetta from where they, along with the Pakistani Taliban, have been supporting the Taliban fighting against Afghan, US and NATO forces in Afghanistan.¹⁸ Some Afghans also criticize Pakistan's role in the Soviet-Afghan war when Pakistan's military ruler Gen Ziaul Haq had in league with the US promoted jihad in Afghanistan, funded thousands of madrassas, armed domestic Islamist organizations, and in the process "militarized and radicalized the border region."¹⁹ Other Afghan concerns relate to Pakistan's focus on only dealing with the Pashtun leaders in Afghanistan, meddling in Afghanistan's affairs and not treating the country on an equal footing. It is true that until quite recently Pakistan was blamed for its Pashtun-specific foreign policy towards Afghanistan. But over the years Pakistan, particularly its embassy in Kabul, has launched extensive efforts to reach out to non-Pashtun Afghans. Pakistan's ambassador to Afghanistan has made extensive

visits to northern Afghanistan and inaugurated several Pakistan-funded development projects there. All that demonstrated that Pakistan's Afghan policy was no longer entirely Pashtun-specific. This irritant in Pak-Afghan relations is seemingly transforming into an opportunity. Pakistan's Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar told journalists on July 24, 2012 following her briefing on Pak-Afghan relations to the Parliamentary Committee on National Security that Pakistan favored no particular ethnic group in Afghanistan and that it wanted to establish relations with all the groups equally.²⁰

Notions of 'balance of power' and 'strategic depth' have long haunted the Afghans who consider such references and perceptions by Pakistan as interference in Afghanistan's affairs. On the other hand, Pakistan believes that a pro-India government in Kabul is a critical danger to its security. The Afghan people fear a return to Taliban rule. At present, Pakistan's desired outcome in strategizing its policy towards Afghanistan seems to be a 'proxy-free' Afghanistan. Some analysts believe that Pakistan has revisited its Afghan policy and committed itself to non-interference. Islamabad has reiterated that message time and again. Pakistan's Ambassador to the US Sherry Rehman said at a meeting in Colorado in July 2012 that Pakistan's old policy of seeking strategic depth in Afghanistan had changed and so had its attitude towards India.²¹ The Pakistanis believe that the Americans have a confused strategy on Afghanistan; that the reconciliation policy, first embraced by the US in its annual review, was not aligned with the transition process; and not enough attention had been paid to development.²²

Meanwhile, the Taliban insurgency, border security and cross-border infiltrations of militants are other major and interconnected issues that have had an impact on regional security and Pak-Afghan ties. The concentration of militant forces on either side of the border, which may continue to serve as an irritant not only in bilateral ties but also in relation to the international community, is also a major concern often put forth by both sides, which will be discussed later in the paper.

3. Challenges that Call for a Common Security Perspective

3.1 Shared and Interlinked Security Threats

Over the last decade or so, Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan have

strategically operated to gain control of the frontier regions along both sides of the Pak-Afghan border. The rising Taliban threat in both countries can be analyzed on the strategic, operational and tactical levels. The Taliban have proved resolute in pursuing their strategy and ideological propaganda in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. They have well-defined targets in both countries in pursuance of imposition of their version of *Shariah*. They are trying to widen their ideological sphere by persuading the people in the name of religion and ethnicity, offering temptations and deterring them from siding with the 'enemy' that includes the West and its allies, including the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Unlike the largely cohesive Afghan Taliban, the Pakistani Taliban groups have differences on operational and tactical issues; although they do not have any major discord on the ideological level. The TTP and the groups affiliated with it are not only focused on the fighting in Afghanistan but are also bleeding Pakistan. Some Taliban groups based in Pakistan such as the Haqqani Network are solely focused on Afghanistan. A faction of the TTP, known as the Fazlullah or Swat Chapter, fled to Afghanistan around 2009 and is currently engaged in cross-border incursions and attacks targeting civilians and security forces in Pakistan.

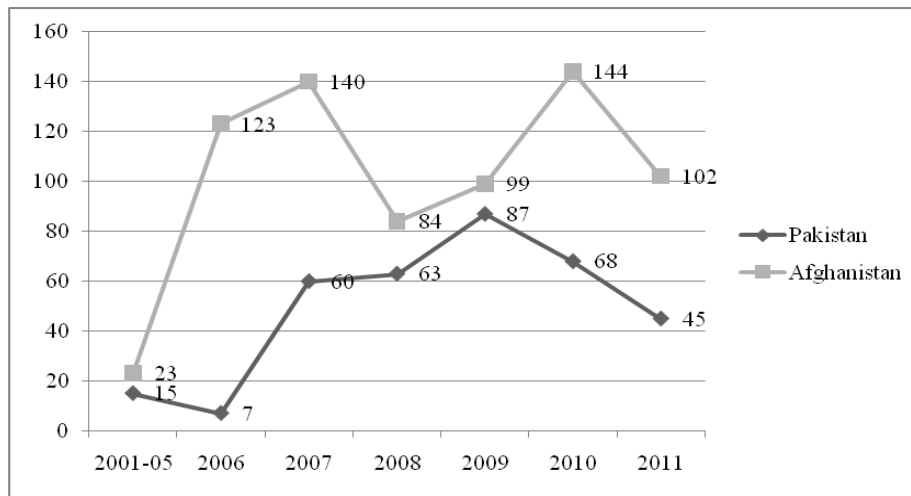
The Taliban groups have particularly become operationally active in Afghanistan and Pakistan since 2006. Counterinsurgency efforts in Afghanistan and security operations in Pakistan have failed to deter them. The Taliban's recruitment, training and deployment facilities remain intact in both countries.

Between 2002 and 2005, the Afghan Taliban consolidated their power in four southern Afghan provinces following their ouster from power after the US-led invasion of Afghanistan. This was the time when the Afghan Taliban's Quetta link was not properly monitored and the focus of security forces and law enforcement agencies was more on Pakistan's tribal areas. Over several days, starting May 18, 2006, the Taliban launched attacks in the four southern Afghan provinces, involving up to 1,000 fighters. They stormed towns that were less than 30 minutes drive from Kandahar. Mullah Dadullah, the Taliban commander in the south, claimed he had gained control of 20 districts in the region and was commanding 12,000 armed Taliban.²³ They had by then started to establish a parallel government in the south. The Pashtun affinity

and absence of justice and security helped the Taliban challenge the shaky writ of the state.

Since 2006, suicide and other attacks by the Afghan Taliban have been widespread, with targets including key political figures. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that the Taliban have regrouped and reorganized as an effective guerilla force in Afghanistan and Pakistan. By 2006, potential suicide bombers traveling from Europe and North Africa to join Al Qaeda operations in Iraq were increasingly directed to Afghanistan. French intelligence monitored a new route for militants from North Africa that ended up in Peshawar.²⁴ Between 2001 and 2005, some 23 suicide attacks were reported in Afghanistan. The number rose in subsequent years. There were 123 suicide attacks in 2006, 140 in 2007 and 84 in 2008.²⁵ Suicide attacks also increased in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA regions in Pakistan during and after 2007, with 62 and 63 suicide attacks reported in the two areas in 2007 and 2008, respectively.²⁶

Chart 1: Suicide attacks in Pakistan and Afghanistan (2001-2011)²⁷



By 2006-07 the Afghan Taliban insurgency had increased significantly in Afghanistan, not only on the southern front but also on the central and northern ones. This phenomenon has since directly and indirectly been increasing the human and material cost for US and NATO forces.

Militant activities of the Pakistani Taliban, which were confined to South and North Waziristan and Bajaur tribal regions until 2006, gradually spread to all seven tribal agencies of FATA, and to KP's settled districts of Bannu, Kohat, Karak, Dera Ismail Khan, Dir, Lakki Marwat, Swat and Tank. As the year 2008 drew to a close, frequent Taliban attacks spread to KP's capital Peshawar as well as to Charsadda, Shabqadar and Mardan.²⁸ Besides attacking the Pakistani state, institutions and people, Pakistani Taliban groups provided opportunities to foreign and other terrorist groups in FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to expand their influence and develop training facilities across northern Pakistan. Similarly, militants from Punjab and Karachi kept joining Taliban's ranks in Pakistan. These militants are normally branded as 'the Punjabi Taliban'.

Despite claims by the US-led NATO/ISAF forces of making considerable gains against Afghan Taliban insurgents the latter continued ambushes and other attacks targeting NATO and Afghan troops as well as targeted assassinations of government officials.²⁹ The Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan has expanded far beyond its strongholds in southeastern Afghanistan. Transcending their traditional Pashtun base, the Afghan Taliban are exerting their influence in the central-eastern provinces as well. The current areas of insecurity include the capital Kabul where the insurgents have struck high-profile targets on several occasions. The insurgents also have a stronghold over the provinces of Logar, Wardak and Ghazni. They have influence in areas north of Kabul as well, including the provinces of Kapisa, Parwan and Laghman.³⁰

The Afghan Taliban conducted several high-profile attacks even in the Afghan capital in 2011, particularly after the NATO-led forces handed over the city's security to Afghan forces. In September 2011, the Taliban targeted two of the most prominent symbols of diplomatic and military presence in Kabul, the American embassy and the nearby NATO headquarters.³¹ In August the same year, suicide attackers killed eight people at the British Council in Kabul. On June 18, suicide attackers targeted a police station near the Interior Ministry building, killing eight people. On June 28, Taliban militants stormed Kabul's Intercontinental Hotel and killed 13 people. In 2012 also, such attacks persisted. Security analysts have expressed concerns about the manner in which Afghan security forces have handled these and other Taliban assaults.³²

The ability of the Taliban to penetrate the Afghan capital's strongholds severely undermines the Afghan citizens' faith in their security forces protecting them. Such attacks also raise crucial questions about the ability of Afghan security forces in general to thwart the insurgents particularly when the ongoing transition in Afghanistan rests on the assumption that the country's security forces and intelligence services would be ready to assume responsibility for the areas that are transferred.³³

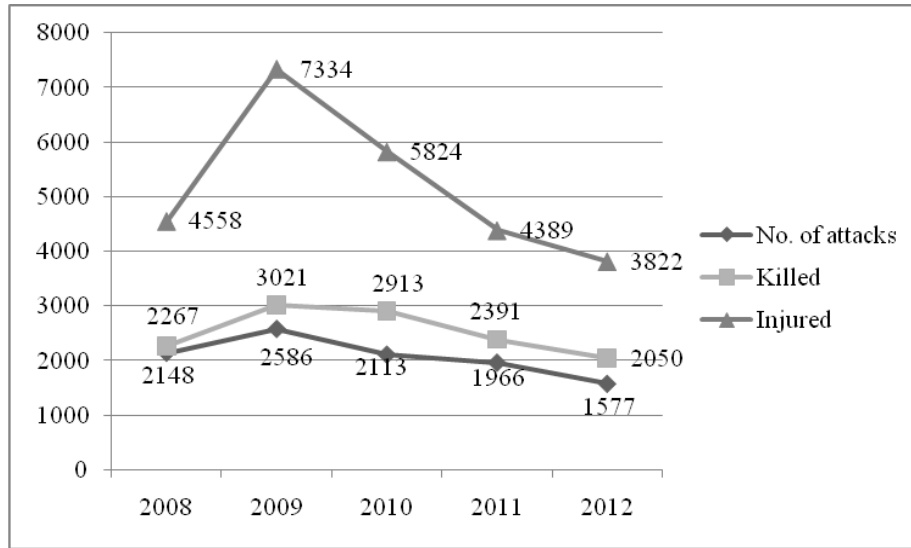
Taliban insurgents have also become a formidable challenge militarily. Besides suicide attacks and targeted killings, their ability to locally manufacture and procure improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and use them accurately to strike their targets has given the insurgency a new boost. In 2011, more than 55 percent fatalities among coalition forces in Afghanistan were caused by IEDs.³⁴ For five years, from 2008 to 2012, around 46 percent of the overall fatalities among US troops in the country were caused by IEDs.³⁵

Another factor which has added to Taliban's capability to expand their influence in various parts of Afghanistan is their ability to portray themselves as a local resistant movement of Afghanistan. Afghan Taliban have gradually distanced themselves from Al Qaeda which has enhanced their public image locally as well as internationally. Other factors that go in their favor at the local level include mounting conflict-related civilian casualties at the hands of NATO/ISAF forces in night raids and NATO airstrikes, and extensive unemployment, as well as widespread corruption under political patronage.

There remains a serious question mark over the capability and wherewithal of Afghan security forces to even perform routine policing duties, let alone counterinsurgency or counterterrorism operations. The presence of Taliban sympathizers and even Taliban militants in the Afghan security forces poses another challenge. As many as 79 NATO deaths in Afghanistan between 2009 and the first quarter of 2012 were caused by Afghan security forces.³⁶ Analysts assert that the current US and NATO efforts to develop the Afghan security forces focus on quantity rather than quality. Secondly, loyalty and credibility of the Afghan security forces is highly questionable. Some among rural segments of Afghan Pashtun society recognize Taliban's narrative of seeking vengeance for killing of fellow Muslims.³⁷

The situation is no less challenging for Pakistan. Despite the military's continuous operational attacks against the Pakistani Taliban and associated groups in the country's tribal agencies and in parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa the militants continue to operate not only in distant border regions but also in Peshawar, the provincial capital of KP, and are involved in terrorist attacks in Punjab, Balochistan and even Karachi, the capital of Sindh province and the financial nerve centre of Pakistan. Thousands of people including personnel of security forces, pro-government tribesmen and civilians have lost their lives in these attacks. (See Chart 2)

Chart 2: Terrorist attacks and casualties in Pakistan (January 2008- 2012)



Both Pakistan and Afghanistan believe that insecurity and violence in their countries stems mainly from cross-border movement of militants. That does not necessarily imply that the other country is primarily responsible for orchestrating the insecurity and militancy in the neighboring country. The occasional blame-game also serves domestic political purposes. But public perceptions in both countries are changing and people are increasingly convinced that by externalizing the issues of insecurity and violence, their governments primarily try to hide their own shortcomings.³⁸ Yet Pakistan's partial responsibility in the ongoing insurgency in Afghanistan and Afghanistan's partial responsibility in the insurgency in Balochistan and parts

of FATA and KP remain. According to some analysts, in both cases the two countries are exploiting already troubled situations rather than architecting them. Continued blame-game and proxy war is no solution to the situation as both countries will continue to suffer that way. Only a common perspective and combined efforts could stem the tide of militancy and terrorism in both countries.

Fortunately, the two countries have recently begun to realize that they have a common enemy in militants and terrorists.³⁹ Some analysts assert that Afghanistan has apparently started to trust the political government in Islamabad but still looks at the Pakistani military establishment with suspicion.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, it does appear that Pakistan no longer looks at Afghanistan through its erstwhile strategic depth ambition, rather it desires a peaceful and stable Afghanistan that has representation of all ethnic groups of that country, and is neither ruled by the Taliban nor by elements hostile to Pakistan. A destabilized, insecure and Taliban-led Afghanistan will have negative implications for peace and security of Pakistan, particularly in FATA, KP and Balochistan. Similarly an insecure and militant-infested tribal region of Pakistan would continue to impact the security and stability of Afghanistan.

3.2 Border Security

One of the main challenges that Pakistan and Afghanistan face is the security of their border, which is porous to a great extent for common citizens and militants. The border security and cross-border movement of militants are directly related to internal security of the two countries and the Al Qaeda and Taliban infrastructure on both sides the border. This issue is a major irritant in Pakistan-Afghanistan relations and has all the potential to transform the occasional blame-game into full-fledged hostility and even border clashes between the two countries in the absence of a common security perspective and a joint border security mechanism. If the recent cross-border incursions from both sides continue and the political reconciliation with the Afghan Taliban does not materialize bilateral relations could aggravate even further after 2014, adversely affecting the two countries' internal security. Both countries have deployed their border security forces there, with some 1,000 border posts on the Pakistani side and 100 on the Afghan side. Border tensions, attacks and clashes are mainly linked to infiltration of militants

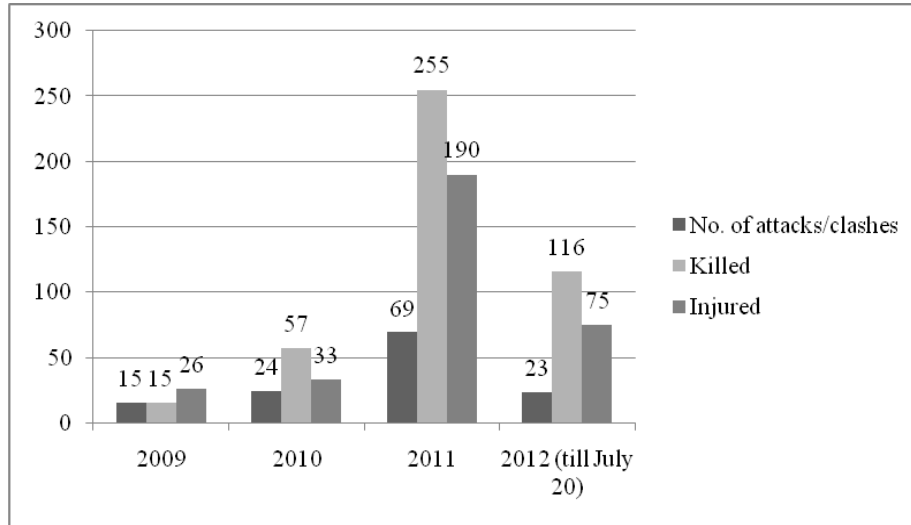
across the Pak-Afghan border. Both countries and the international coalition in Afghanistan understand that it is not possible to seal the border and that cross-border movement of militants cannot be checked without support from local tribesmen.⁴¹

A major concern for Pakistan is the likely scenario of growing instability in Afghanistan after NATO forces pull out, as that can create trouble on the Pakistani side of the border as many elements on the political scene in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province are tied to politics as power brokers on both sides. The nature of relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan may trigger recurring border tensions.

The two countries did not have any major armed conflict over their border and did not deploy regular army units there until after 9/11. Pakistan deployed its regular forces at the border for the first time—to stop infiltration of Al Qaeda and Taliban remnants—when US-led coalition forces invaded Afghanistan to oust the Taliban regime from power.⁴² The border has strategic importance for NATO and US-led allied forces in Afghanistan, not only because of the presence of terrorist networks along the frontier but also in order to secure the main overland supply routes for the international forces.

Afghanistan has also stationed troops along the border where small-scale armed clashes with the Pakistani forces have become the norm. According to data compiled by Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), between 2007 and 2010 NATO forces and Afghan National Army violated Pakistan's borders at least 194 times, which included missile and rocket attacks on Pakistani check posts by Afghan forces, clashes between security forces, and air and land incursions into Pakistan. In 2011, as many as 69 such incidents were reported in which 57 Pakistani soldiers were killed. A new and worrying development for Pakistan on its western borders has been cross-border attacks by Afghanistan-based Pakistani Taliban militants on Pakistani security forces' posts. At least 30 such strikes have been reported across Pakistan's border with Afghanistan at Chitral, Upper and Lower Dir, and Bajaur and Kurram in FATA, resulting in the killing of 250 Pakistani security personnel and civilians in 2011 and 2012. These militants are part of the Taliban factions that fled to Afghanistan's border provinces, mainly Kunar and Nuristan, and their attacks have contributed to escalation in bilateral tensions.⁴³

Table 1: Cross-border attacks from Afghanistan into Pakistan



The Pakistani authorities took up cross-border incursions with Afghan President Hamid Karzai during his visit to Pakistan in June 2011.⁴⁴ Later Pakistan's military leadership also raised the issue with NATO and ISAF commanders on different occasions. US Gen John Allen, who headed the NATO-led US forces in Afghanistan, and Pakistan's army chief Gen Kayani discussed border security in Rawalpindi in June 2012. Gen Allen offered Pakistan a joint military offensive against the banned TTP in the Pak-Afghan border region provided the Pakistani military agreed to eliminate sanctuaries of the Haqqani Network on its side of the border.⁴⁵

The Haqqani Network, based in Pakistan's tribal region, is a major irritant in Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan. The US and Afghan officials and leaders have stated time and again that they believed the Haqqanis to be behind most of the recent terrorist and suicide attacks in Afghanistan. For the last few years, they have been urging Pakistan to act against the group. Pakistan asserts that it has been conducting military operations against the militants in its territory and cannot stretch those beyond its limits and will go after the Haqqanis when it feels feasible.

3.3 Scenario after Coalition Forces' Pullout

Afghanistan faces a number of pressing security, sociopolitical, and economic challenges in the short to medium term. The viability of the Afghan state ultimately depends on its capacity to generate revenue and the will to evolve a representative political system to govern the country. The concept and framework for economic regeneration needs to be articulated by the Afghans, aided by support mechanisms from outside, where needed. The bulk of international assistance to Afghanistan so far has been allocated to traditional security schemes and only a marginal amount has been directed towards building a viable economy and the conditions necessary to sustain economic growth. The ongoing security transition from foreign to Afghan security forces is not going to bear fruit without addressing these challenges.⁴⁶

One of the key challenges ahead for Afghanistan beyond 2014 would be the sustainability and effectiveness of an 'oversized Afghan army that the ISAF is proposing to create in the next few years, as it would represent a substantial burden on the economy in the likely scenario of reduction in international resource allocation to Afghanistan.'⁴⁷ American and other international aid and military contracting money have created a massive and unsustainable economic situation. Afghanistan essentially has four economies – the aid economy, driven by NGO, USAID and CERP funding; the war contracting economy, driven by massive expenditures on private security and military transportation and construction; the narcotics economy centered in the south, and the "real" Afghan economy. Unfortunately, the "real" economy is by far the smallest of these four, and the largest two of these economies are going to shrink drastically by 2014 and could then largely disappear.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, a perception is growing in Washington that 'it can achieve its most important objectives in Afghanistan without continuing its costly and quixotic state-building effort.'⁴⁹ Such a scenario will keep Afghanistan unstable and unable to cope with the present and emerging challenges on the sociopolitical, security and economic fronts. Afghanistan will certainly need to focus more on enhanced partnerships with regional countries, particularly its neighbors. Besides trade, Afghanistan can offer transit routes for proposed gas pipelines from Turkmenistan and Iran to Pakistan and India. This regional economic interdependence could lead to the neighbors including Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and also India working jointly towards

countering terrorism and militancy.

The process of reconciliation with the Afghan Taliban has been obscure so far. The Afghan government's failure to reconcile with the Taliban would boost the insurgency and militancy in Pak-Afghan border areas. At present, both countries working together for reconciliation with the Afghan Taliban, which could lead to formation of a representative government in Kabul, seems relatively easier and a preferred option to countering the security threats from non-reconciled militants sheltering on both sides of the Pak-Afghan border. Afghanistan has not taken many serious steps regarding that and the entire process of political reconciliation is largely led by the US; the Afghan Taliban too do not recognize the Afghan government and term it a powerless puppet of the US and prefer to talk to the latter.

Nonetheless, political reconciliation with the Afghan Taliban will not resolve all problems related to border security, militancy and terrorism. Even if the Mullah Omar-led Afghan Taliban become part of the political process, which seems almost impossible at present, what will be the status and position of the Haqqani Network, Al Qaeda, TTP and other militant groups? The border areas and internal security of both countries in particular and the wider region in general will still face threats from such groups that have strong commitment to enforcing their own versions of Islamic law and some have a global jihadist agenda.

Such a scenario could drag the border region into proxy wars if Pakistan and Afghanistan continue to perceive threats to their internal security in different and conflicting perspectives.

4. The Way Forward

As mentioned in the previous section, Pakistan and Afghanistan have many compelling reasons to perceive and jointly respond to the diverse challenges to their respective but interlinked security and stability. But at the same time, it would not be an easy and smooth process to evolve a common perspective regarding that and jointly address mutual security challenges, particularly because of the political and strategic priorities and sensitivities and involvement and presence of international actors in the conflict. Afghanistan

still has a long way to go before it is able to sustain its economy and security independently and assert an independent foreign policy.

Therefore, the role of regional and international stakeholders will also be very much relevant, particularly that of the US, once both Pakistan and Afghanistan evolve and seriously commit themselves to a common security perspective geared towards jointly curbing militancy and terrorism and enhancing trade and economic interdependence. The international community should make leaders of both countries accept their responsibilities besides supporting them in fighting terrorism and securing peace.⁵⁰

Pakistan had hoped that US President Barack Obama would address the issue in broader regional perspective in his new Af-Pak policy. But the US put additional liabilities on Pakistan. With the exception of announcement of a regional contact group, no concrete steps were taken. The central purpose of the contact group, as suggested and agreed to by many American and Pakistani think tanks, was to assure Pakistan that all international stakeholders would show their commitment to its territorial integrity and help resolve the Afghan and Kashmir border issues to better define Pakistan's territory.⁵¹ It was also expected that India would be asked to become more transparent about its activities in Afghanistan, especially regarding the role of its intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW).⁵²

Some very useful attempts have been made by the two countries since President Karzai's re-election in 2009 and by the US to normalize Pakistan-Afghanistan relations through developing cooperation in the security and economic sectors and enhancing cooperation for border security and political reconciliation with the Afghan Taliban. Some high-level exchanges between Afghanistan and Pakistan in 2010 had resulted in a renewed commitment to security collaboration and trade relations, with Afghan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) signed. These overtures were proceeding smoothly until the assassination of Afghan leader Burhanuddin Rabbani in September 2011.

President Karzai had visited Pakistan in March 2010 to seek Islamabad's support for reconciliation with the Taliban. Pakistan had then principally agreed and tried to broker a deal between Kabul and the Haqqani Network but talks between Kabul and the Haqqanis failed to get Washington's backing. The Americans were apparently interested in holding talks only with Mullah Omar.⁵³

Pakistan and Afghanistan had agreed to boost intelligence sharing in August 2010 when Afghan President Karzai and Pakistan Army chief Gen Ashfaq Kayani met on the sidelines of the 31st Tripartite Commission meeting of military representatives in Kabul to discuss the revised counter-terrorism strategy.⁵⁴ A joint declaration issued at the end of the Pakistani prime minister's December 2010 visit to Kabul said the two countries reiterated their commitment to effectively cooperate, combat and defeat the terrorists and eliminate their sanctuaries⁵⁵ Similarly, in a mini-summit in Turkey on December 27 the same year, President Karzai discussed security-related issues with Pakistani officials and stressed that the security of Afghanistan and Pakistan was interlinked.⁵⁶

In February 2011, a high-level delegation of Afghan High Peace Council, led by former Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, visited Pakistan and met religious scholars, leaders of political parties, parliamentarians, and government and military officials. One of the many purposes of the visit was to explore prospects for Pakistan's role in the reconciliation process with the Taliban.⁵⁷ The Afghan Peace Council's visit to Islamabad was followed by a visit by Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Salman Bashir to Kabul for policy consultations and exploring ways of strengthening bilateral ties. In April 2011, Pakistan's Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gillani, army chief Gen Kayani and Inter-Services Intelligence chief Shuja Pasha visited Kabul in a bid to establish an "Afghan-led and Afghan-owned Joint Peace Commission" and made efforts for negotiations with the Taliban.

Despite a cooperation mechanism in the form of the Pakistan-Afghanistan-US tripartite commission established in 2003, which also comprises a Border Security Sub-Committee, and provisions and blueprints for intelligence sharing under the Military Intelligence-Sharing Working Group, they have hastened to blame each other for cross-border incursions and attacks. A meeting of the tripartite commission's Military Border Working Group was convened in Peshawar on July 6, 2011 on Pakistan's request. The committee suggested the establishment of a single point of contact with all Afghan national security forces through a hotline contact between Pakistan Army and Afghan National Army, regular border flag meetings between local commanders and interaction / jirgas between Maliks (tribal elders/influentials) of villages on either side of the border.⁵⁸

Now, when tensions between Pakistan and the US have fallen after reopening of NATO supply lines, and Pakistan and Afghanistan are also striving to normalize bilateral relations, what is needed is a workable border security mechanism through engaging the Pak-Afghan-US tripartite commission. Otherwise, the already porous border, if left unchecked, will embolden the militants to roam freely and launch attacks on both sides of the border.

Fortunately, the Pakistan-Afghanistan-Iran trilateral summit that was first initiated in 2009 has been revitalized recently. In February 2012, this trilateral summit was held in Islamabad where the three countries agreed to develop a joint framework for trilateral cooperation, particularly in the areas of counter-terrorism, anti-narcotics and border management, within six months. They further agreed to enhance cooperation for realizing the shared aspiration of their people for peace, security, stability, and economic prosperity and to ensure mutual respect for sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity as per the UN Charter.⁵⁹ This platform should be engaged seriously, not just for political rhetoric but with the aim to boost economic cooperation among the three countries; and for joint efforts to counter terrorism and manage security issues. Iran also has border security issues with Pakistan, along Balochistan where an ethnic-sectarian group Jundullah has found shelter and occasionally wages attacks in Iran. Iranian security forces have crossed the border many a time in pursuit of Jundullah militants.

Afghanistan and Pakistan need to resolve the Durand Line issue as well. But until they manage to enhance mutual trust to a level where they can resolve this issue, both can take joint initiatives to stop the infiltration of militants, terrorists and miscreants involved in creating trouble in the two countries. Pakistan has frequently offered joint monitoring of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and suggested an increase in information sharing between its security forces and NATO-ISAF troops on cross-border movement of terrorists.⁶⁰ Although both sides have agreed to set up biometric and electronic data exchange systems along Durand Line under the newly reached Afghan-Pak Transit Trade Agreement,⁶¹ both countries need to take concrete steps to make it happen. Both also must devise a credible plan for regional stabilization and strategies to address common security challenges.

The two countries should resume work on the projects that have so far not materialized due to the prevailing bilateral tensions and security issues. The

projects which are already signed by the two countries along with other partners such as Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA),⁶² Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline and CASA-1000⁶³ are considered important for expanding economic ties between the two countries and also with the Central Asian region. These projects should not become a casualty to the insecurity and militancy because they would eventually lead the partnering countries to a shared sense of security and a common perspective of countering terrorism and militancy.

Besides border security management and economic cooperation, the internal security dynamics of both countries are linked to how they deal with the Taliban on their respective side of the border and also how they help each other in doing so. There is a realization that the withdrawal of US and NATO troops and transition of security responsibility to the Afghan forces cannot occur without an end to the civil war and a settlement among the government and the Taliban, and also Pakistan, the US and the wider region.⁶⁴ Currently, the reconciliation overtures are going nowhere mainly due to the Afghan Taliban's opaque response and the distinct approaches and engagements of the US and Afghanistan with the Taliban. Rabbani's peace council had engaged with different Taliban commanders at different times. Although Afghan Loya Jirga had given the mandate to the Afghan Peace Council to carry out negotiations with Taliban, the Americans forbid them from carrying out the talks.⁶⁵

The visit to Pakistan of the new head of Afghanistan's High Peace Council Salahuddin Rabbani, son of the slain Burhanuddin Rabbani, in November, 2012 revived joint efforts of the two countries for the process of political reconciliation in Afghanistan that is very much linked to the internal security and stability of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan had then released about a dozen detained Afghan Taliban members and has said it will release more to help political reconciliation in Afghanistan. Subsequently in January 2013, a high-level Afghan defence delegation visited Pakistan and held detailed meetings with Pakistan's military establishment including Army Chief Gen Ashfaq Pervez Kayani at the military headquarters in Rawalpindi. Gen Kayani reiterated Pakistan's desire for a peaceful, stable and united Afghanistan, and assured Afghan Defence Minister Gen Mohammadi of complete support to bring normalcy in border regions to make conditions conducive for drawdown of ISAF forces in 2014.⁶⁶ The two sides also discussed cross-border attacks from Afghanistan's Kunar and Nuristan

provinces into Pakistan and agreed on better border coordination and control to prevent them in future.⁶⁷

All the stakeholders in Afghanistan should realize that the prevailing mistrust among them with regard to talks with the Taliban, with each of them intent on pursuing their own agenda, could have serious implications for all of them. Pakistan wants to help Afghanistan in an Afghan-led reconciliation with the Taliban including the Haqqanis and others because that is directly linked to its internal security. Peace and stability in Afghanistan with an end to the Taliban insurgency there will put Pakistan in a better position to deal with its own bands of Taliban, who largely justify their use of violence against Pakistan on the pretext of the war in Afghanistan where Pakistan is an ally of the US and the West in their fight against the Taliban. This, however, does not mean that violence and militancy in Pakistan will fully subside after withdrawal of the Western forces from Afghanistan and the Afghan government's political reconciliation with the Afghan Taliban because the militant landscape of Pakistan is very complex and other ideological factors such as enforcement of *Shariah*, the issues of *khurooj* (armed revolt against disbeliever rulers and government), and sectarian-related and intertribal and inter-militant tensions also motivate many to use and justify violence against the state and the people. But a peaceful Afghanistan will make Pakistan's job relatively easier.

As mentioned earlier, Pakistan's foreign policy towards Afghanistan seems to have acquired a progressive outlook with the objective of ensuring peace and peaceful co-existence in the region. A shared threat from terrorists seems to be the underlying factor. Afghanistan too has to live with its domestic and regional realities, which is perhaps what has persuaded President Karzai to think more in regional terms. That is something which can be built upon to establish friendly relations among regional countries, particularly with a view to achieving peace and security. The ongoing Indo-Pak peace process also augurs well for Pakistan-Afghanistan relations. Afghanistan and its regional stakeholders are substantively responsible for ensuring that they do not let Afghanistan drift into another civil war after 2014, as had happened in the early 1990s after the Soviet withdrawal, or at least if such a civil war starts, they will not exploit it but will act constructively to put an end to it. Either of these scenarios will have implications for peace and stability of the wider region.

Notes

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 - ² Ibid. These casualties were counted as resulting from overall incidents of violence reported from Pakistan including terrorist attacks, incidents of ethno-political violence, security forces' operations and clashes with militants, intertribal and sectarian clashes, drone strikes and cross-border attacks and clashes.
 - ³ PIPS, *Pakistan Security Report 2012* (Islamabad: PIPS, January 2013).
 - ⁴ Syed Fazl-e-Haider, "Afghan goods head for India", Asia Times Online, July 20, 2010 <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/LG20Df01.html> (accessed May 30, 2012).
 - ⁵ *Dawn*, Islamabad, July 28, 2010. These figures were quoted by the Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions in Pakistan's parliament.
 - ⁶ *The News International*, July 3, 2010.
 - ⁷ *The Nation*, Islamabad, July 27, 2010.
 - ⁸ Afghanistan claimed that the suicide bomber who killed Rabbani was sent from Pakistan, may be by the Afghan Taliban based in Pakistan.
 - ⁹ Muhammad Amir Rana, "Growing sensitivities," *Dawn*, Islamabad, December 26, 2011.
 - ¹⁰ Ibid.
 - ¹¹ Safdar Sial, "Pak-Afghan Relations: Emerging Trends and Future Prospects," *Conflict and Peace Studies* 4, no. 1 (2011).
 - ¹² Mohammad Sadiq, *Pakistan-Afghanistan: The Conjoined Twins* (Kabul: Publication Department of Embassy of Pakistan in Kabul, May 2010).
 - ¹³ Afghanistan voted against Pakistan's accession to the United Nations after its independence because of Kabul's claim on the Pashtun territories located on the Pakistani side of Durand Line. This claim quickly generated a quasi-alliance between Kabul and New Delhi, and Islamabad saw in the Soviet invasion an opportunity to try and reverse that situation.
 - ¹⁴ Aqeel Yousufzai (Peshawar-based journalist and author of two books on Taliban and Talibanization in Pakistan and Afghanistan), interview by Safdar Sial in Islamabad, February 2011.
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 - ¹⁹ Barnett R. Rubin and Abubakar Siddique, "Resolving Pakistan-Afghanistan Stalemate," United States Institute of Peace, October 2006.

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- ²³ Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos* (London: Penguin Group, 2008), 359.
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- ²⁵ Peter Bergen, Katherine Tiedemann, "Obama's War," New America Foundation, February 15, 2009, http://newamerica.net/publications/articles/2009/obamas_war_10845 (accessed February 16, 2009).
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Culture of Violence versus Culture of Silence: Civil Society Responses to Extremism and Terrorism in South Asia

Arshi Saleem Hashmi

In contemporary world politics, countries face the challenge of increasing domestic violence targeted against their own people. The many factors for that, particularly in the South Asian context, include human security deficit, want and fear syndrome, a state-centric approach, and mixing of local conflicts with international ones. Furthermore, in many cases in South Asia, ethnic and ideological considerations are confused with religious ones and religious extremism becomes an expression of ethnic identity as well when the non-religious expression of the communities is often denied a democratic outlet.

The situation in South Asia suggests that the extremists and violent radicals are united by fear. Whether they are Christian, Muslim, Jew, Hindu or Buddhist extremists, fear of being deprived of the role and status that they expect and want to achieve is the common denominator. Some groups fear change, modernization and loss of influence, others apprehend that the young will abandon the churches, temples, mosques and synagogues for physical and material gratification. They especially fear that education could undermine religious teachings and more generally fear a future they cannot control or even comprehend.

So if relative deprivation can explain the phenomenon of radicalization among the religious minorities, fear of being deprived of the status and achievement of the desired society can explain the rising religious extremism coupled with the use of violence among the religious majority. The religious majorities in South Asian are suffering from such fear that leads to tragic occurrences like the Gujarat pogrom perpetrated by the Hindu-majority extremists or Islamist militants waging jihad against the “infidels” in Pakistan or Bangladesh or the Sinhalese Buddhists resorting to violence against Tamil Hindus and Christians in Sri Lanka.

Although designation of any particular religion as a country’s official religion is permitted under international standards for freedom of religion and belief and thus is not problematic, the way it is implemented unfortunately provides one community an edge over the rest and hence leads to exploitation and sometimes violence in the name of religion. Designation of a religion as a country’s official faith also establishes an inevitable formal

inequality which implies discrimination of at least some degree which undercuts national unity, necessarily based on perceptions of common heritage and aspirations, to the extent that those outside the officially designated religion feel excluded from or peripheral to a defining characteristic of national identity.

On the one hand, religious extremism excludes, virtually automatically, anything that relative to it appears liberal; on the other hand, this same viewpoint can display a propensity to include, in respect of considerations of the policies and praxis of social organizations, all others that fall within its frame of reference or worldview. This holding together of an ideological exclusivism with an inclusivist polity, where it occurs, comprises the contextual scope of fundamentalism which is a mark of hard-line fundamentalism and gives the first point of a profile of religious extremism as such.¹

Another feature of the fundamentalist and religious extremist mindset is “negative value application”. It occurs where otherness *per se* is negated and, as a necessary corollary, the superiority of the self is asserted. The “other” is often cast as “satanic”, or at least seriously and significantly labeled as a hostile opponent, and so regarded hostilely.²

There can be many phases in the process when individual motivation transforms into group dynamics resulting in violence and militancy in a society. As Prof. Adam Dolnik puts it: first is the pre-radicalization period, a number of factors working on individuals pushing them to extreme behavior; second, cognitive opening, a situation where one is ready to take another look at what one believes and it completely changes one’s perspective triggered by thematic events; third is self-radicalization; and finally, the concept of Jihadization.³

Since the South Asian states have achieved independence, the tolerant religious nationalisms that helped spawn these nation-states have been fiercely challenged by “extremist” variants. Unlike their forebears, these variants have several distinguishing characteristics. First, they assume the religious identity of the majority as not merely an important aspect of the nation’s identity but as central and overriding. Second, they consider ethnic or religious identities that are different from those of the majority as presumptively alien and disloyal and thus create a tiered conception of citizenship. Third, extremist religious movements are often propagated by movements that believe that communal and even terrorist violence are “normal” and legitimate means of promoting their visions and of keeping religious and ethnic minorities in their (subordinate) place. Finally, and

perhaps most dangerously, religious extremism fosters intense rivalries with other South Asian nations that do not share the religious identity.

Pakistan: A Religiously Intolerant Society?

In Pakistan, the problem is not just against other religious communities for instance, violence against Ahmadis or Christians, but also within the Muslim community; hard-line religious groups differ with each other on interpretation based on sectarian beliefs, which often leads to the worst forms of sectarian violence. Religion is politicized and abused in order to instigate violent extremism by two sets of actors in Pakistan, which are somewhat inter-related but show certain differences regarding their objectives, areas of operation and targets of violence. First, there are sectarian groups belonging to the Sunni and Shia sects of Islam that resort to terrorist activities which are mostly, though not exclusively, directed against the people of the rival sect. This schism along sectarian lines is the direct outcome of the process of 'Islamization' of laws in Pakistan that was introduced by Gen Zia-ul-Haq from 1977 to 1988; sectarian violence was rare before that period. The Shias, feeling empowered after the 1979 Iranian revolution and embittered over Zia's 'Islamization' program, created an organization called Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqah-e-Jaafariya (movement for implementing the Shia law) and protested against Zia's policies. They were successful in securing rider clauses in the new 'Islamized' laws for themselves and in having the Shias in general exempted from certain aspects of those laws.

Not only did Zia himself get apprehensive about Shia power in Pakistan, the Sunnis were also agitated at the time. They feared that people might seek conversion from the Sunni to Shia sect in order to seek exemption from payment of zakat (the annual tax of 2.5 percent on the savings of Muslims collected for distribution among the poor) or from other, more rigid, Sunni family laws. Extremist Islamic nationalism and an accompanying "jihad culture" infused the country's political, educational, and military institutions, partly as a result of a combination of Zia's Afghan policy and his 'Islamization' campaign.

In the post-9/11 scenario, Pakistan's official policy has changed considerably, but domestically, the country is still dealing with the problem of countering jihadi publications and "banned" terrorist groups who appear to operate under new names. The war on terror is but one sign that the country is suffering from the malaise of "other people's war" and religious extremism armed with modern-day high-tech weaponry is a frightening scenario to imagine.

An interesting point to note in Pakistan's case is that there is a distinction between "old" and "new" Islamists, the latter being the protagonists of "political Islam" who are seeking to transform politics through religion and religion through politics within the scope of their narrow interpretation. The "old" Islamists are willing to co-exist in peace with secular politics. The new Islamists are not willing to consider such an option. The political strategy pursued by new Islamists in Pakistan is to seek to capture civil society institutions in order to eventually capture the state.

It is true that military governments in the country have depended on religious parties for legitimacy from the masses. In the initial period after independence, religious parties could not play any significant political role and the country tended to be most secular when it had been most elitist and restrictive. Later, however, long periods of authoritarian rule helped the scattered religious groups claim political power under the shadow of the military dictatorship. So what had exclusively been a conservative group of Islamic fundamentalists got into mass-based politics (for example in the 1985 non-party based elections) as a consequence of democratic openings, although they were short-term and politically weak. Unfortunately, transition to democracy in Pakistan after long periods of military rule brought forth religious parties with confrontational agenda against the proponents of pluralism.

It is important to note that due to their shared history as a single political unit under the British rule, the South Asian states depend on ideologies that enable their people to identify with their own countries. South Asian nations have sometimes inflicted their religious politics in an extremist manner on other South Asian nations in an attempt to validate their political identity.

An analysis of the relationship of religious movements with political developments demonstrates that new forms of ideological bonds, rooted in indigenous religious and cultural traditions, are challenging the Western model of the secular state. Because there is no satisfactory compromise between the religious vision of the nation state and that of liberal democracy, a new kind of confrontation, no less obstructive of a peaceful international order than the old one, may develop.

To label religious extremism as the product of ignorance, coercion, or psychopathology is to foster misunderstanding. To combat religious extremism as opposed to extremist violence with the coercive force of the state is to invite conflict if that extremism represents a widespread unmet demand for some set of services. To support "good" religion while repressing "bad" religion is to invite violence.⁴

Religious extremism fosters religiously defined conceptions of national identity that politically unify and mobilize peoples and serve as benchmarks of governmental legitimacy. Religious extremism has undermined democracy in the region by promoting a majoritarian theory and practice of “illiberal democracy” that in the words of Fareed Zakaria marginalizes and disenfranchise religious and ethnic minorities.⁵

Pakistan seems to be struggling to find a balance between secular law and *Sharia*. And *Sharia* has become a rallying cry for Islamic militant movements seeking to show religious authenticity. However, the use of Islam by militants to influence populations should not be seen as a failing of the religion itself. Religion is an overwhelmingly influential factor in Muslim life in Pakistan and thus any social movement, whether violent or non-violent, is likely to be framed in religious terms.

Pakistan is facing a dilemma where extremists often gain influence when they espouse what they tout as a purer and harsher form of Islam that includes bans on dancing, music, and education for girls and advocates punishments ordained by the religion. Militants have used *Sharia* in the face of absence of central government's authority or writ in some regions. The use of "*Sharia* justice as a political mechanism designed to invoke mass appeal" is a strategy that is difficult to counter. Among regions that are mostly illiterate, poor, and often politically marginalized, groups such as the Taliban have succeeded in defining change as destruction and justice as a spectacle.

Pakistan's ideology as interpreted now in the shape of religious intolerance and support for militancy had never been the idea of Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan. The erosion of respect for religious pluralism in Pakistan has been abetted by exclusionary laws and a history of proliferation of minority-hate material in public and private school curriculums. Religious and social intolerance against Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Ahmadis, and Shias has led to a manifold increase in religious and sectarian violence in Pakistan, particularly since the 1980s.

Myopic policies of successive governments ignored civil society altogether. Civil society, which is the hallmark of civilization and development in any country on its own continued to take up issues that concerned humanity without any prejudice. The exclusion of mention of the heroes from civil society in the curriculum creates the impression that there are no civilians worthy of mention or worthy of being presented as role models or inspirational figures for children.

The culture of not challenging the violent discourse is the real problem in creating an intolerant society. Anyone who presents alternative perspectives is considered an agent of those who are conspiring against the Muslims and those who advocate critical thinking are accused of destabilizing Islam and Pakistan. This has encouraged a culture of indoctrination through fear, with persecution complexes so strong that get in the way of all thought.

Role of Civil Society in South Asia against Violent Extremism and Violence

In order to uphold the ideal of a modern progressive state, and to tackle the politics of medieval religiosity in a post-colonial Muslim-majority state, deliberate social engineering initiatives are needed. Despite severe limitations in understanding, analyzing and defining modernity and progressiveness, there is a huge percentage of moderate urban civil society which has the intellectual quality, organizational ability and experience of social activism and is the only visible social force that can fight the religious orthodoxy and play an effective role in establishing a modern state.

A comprehensive definition of civil society includes all civic organizations, associations and networks which occupy the 'social space' between the family and the state except firms and political parties; and who come together to advance their common interests through collective action. Volunteer and charity groups, associations of professionals, senior citizens groups, sports clubs, arts and culture groups, faith-based groups, workers' clubs and trades unions, non-profit think-tanks, and 'issue-based' activist groups all form civil society.

What civil society can do to challenge and reduce the appeal of violent extremism has come to the fore in recent years. Many fear that radicalized groups and individuals seek to violently counter alternative viewpoints. The potential success of these groups poses considerable social, political, and security concerns around the world. Civil society can play an instrumental role in presenting an alternative narrative to young people.

1. Pakistan

Civil society is the arena of un-coerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. It commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil society is increasingly viewed as a key partner and actor in the development of public policy in a broad range of fields. It is also

understood as a fundamental component of cohesive, inclusive and participatory democratic societies.

In Pakistan also, effort to counter violent radicalization increasingly turn to civil society, with the state viewing civil society as a key partner in the fight against terrorism and violent radicalization. An understanding is gradually emerging that a culture of tolerance and religious harmony cannot be achieved through legislation and security measures alone, but is necessarily addressed through a broad-based coalition which generates local support and involvement.

The post-9/11 public policy debates included the government's resolve against violent extremism and religious intolerance. Military ruler Gen Pervez Musharraf identified 'sectarianism, religious intolerance and violence' as major crises facing Pakistan. He stated in 2002:⁶

[An] insignificant minority has held the entire nation hostage to their misconceived views of Islam and fanatical acts of terrorism. They are spreading the malice of sectarianism laced with poison of religious intolerance and violence. The recent attacks specially directed at the places of worship of our Christian brothers and sisters are the most shameful and despicable example of terrorism. All this in the name of Islam, these misled criminals and the terrorists' patrons and tutors even have the audacity to think their actions are the route to heaven. ...We all have to put in a joint effort to root out those who are maligning our religion and tarnishing the image of Pakistan while considering themselves ultra-Islamists. There are no quick fix solutions to the problem of sectarianism and extremism; they are to be tackled in a systematic and methodical manner.

He identified law enforcement and strengthening of security apparatus as the ways to tackle the problem, and called civil society especially the religious leaders, institutions and religious parties to help combat "the problem of sectarianism and extremism." However, what was lacking was the mechanism to do that. The education system as an instrument of policy to create an identity based on a specific idea was the key contributor that led to intolerance. Here the role of civil society is very significant; the teachers, activists, writers, actors and journalists can all help develop a strong counter-narrative against religious intolerance that has been injected in the minds of the youth through deliberate attempts that have prompted them to think in a particular manner.

Civil society has been quite proactive vis-à-vis intolerance and religious extremism but coordination between the state and civil society to address the problem has been lacking. An example of civil society initiatives against the draconian laws against women is found in various women's rights groups

that emerged in the 1980s and made a remarkable impact on Pakistan's political scene. The women's movement made concrete achievements in its struggle against the policies of General Zia's military regime, which were directed against women in the name of Islamization. A number of women's organizations in the country came together in this struggle, which included the Women's Action Forum (WAF), which has been the leading and the most effective among these, the Democratic Women's Association, the Sindhiani Tehrik, Ajoka Theater, Tehrik-e-Niswa'an and the Women's Front as well as the All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA), the oldest of these organizations which has been run by wives of senior bureaucrats and politicians and has had a reformist but rather a patronizing orientation. These organizations worked against the imposition of certain mindset against women; similar attempts against discrimination against minorities, and religious intolerance were made by civil society, but the level of action remained low because of the presence of orthodox forces that were not in favor of changing the religious status quo and hierarchy and there had been threat of direct violence against them by the extremists. In the 1980s, it was the regime that was the target of protest, but now it is not just one group that can be easily identified. The problem is more of acceptance of ideas in the name of religion without proper understanding. One can find supporters among the general public who have particular viewpoints that indirectly help extremist groups, hence encouraging the culture of violence in society.

The so-called Islamization period did not really make the people good Muslims rather bred a huge number of intolerant souls who could justify killing of human beings in the name of religion. Dr. Alavi shares the way hatred with a violent expression spread among the public:⁷

The Government embarked upon a mass publicity campaign, through all the media, exhorting people to order their lives in accordance with Islam, but as interpreted by Zia and his bigoted mullahs. Far more mischievous was Zia's call to the 'people' to ensure that their 'neighbors' did likewise. This was a charter for the mischief-makers and the bigots who took upon themselves the task of chastising women, total strangers, and molesting them under that excuse. For example, Mumtaz and Shaheed quote an instance, which is by no means unique or isolated, when a woman who entered a bakery in an upper class Lahore neighborhood, was slapped by a total stranger for not having her head covered (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987: 71). A much publicized and quite horrendous case is that of a congregation leaving a mosque after Friday prayers who found a new born baby on a nearby rubbish dump. The mullah promptly concluded that it was an illegitimate child and, in accordance with the laws of Islam, as he understood them, led the congregation of the pious Muslims in stoning the child to death. Such outrageous conduct was the direct result of incitement by the propaganda of the Zia regime, which has created an atmosphere of bigotry and intolerance.

2. India

India has the second largest Muslim population in the world and Indian Muslims have legitimate grievances against the state and the right wing 'Hindutva' ideology, most visible during the 2002 Gujarat riots. It is not the Indian state, but the Indian civil society that has through engagements at various levels prevented the radicalization of the minority community and challenged the Hindu-majority religious extremism in India.

Civil society played a significant role in undermining terrorism at the height of the Khalistan movement in the 1980s. Although there were some legitimate demands that the Sikh community had from the Indian government, it was the use of violence by several Sikh groups at the peak of the movement which was rejected by civil society; the militants descended into ordinary criminality, indulging in extortion, armed robbery and sexual violence against women.⁸ Civil society efforts through information and awareness raising exposed the deeds of these militant-turned-criminals, which aided the police and the administration in fighting terrorism. As a result, through negotiating peace and through a sustained interface between the state and civil society, the Khalistan movement met its end.

Since India has a secular constitution, civil society there brings the constitution forward every time there is injustice against minorities in the name of religion and ethnicity. The presence of strong civil society having roots in a democratic system has motivated even the common people to identify and socially isolate those who believe in violence of any kind.

3. Bangladesh

Bangladesh has gradually come out of the confrontational relationship between the state and civil society that was a result of Gen Ershad's Islamization process. Given the fact that Bengalis by temperament believe in religious tolerance and harmony, it was conflicts between NGOs and religious groups hurting their society when minority views based on religious orthodoxy were forced upon people. This was an aberration for the people, as historically Bengal has had a very strong culture mixed with religion. By the 1990s many NGOs supported popular movements against the autocratic rulers and demanded free and fair elections. As Islamic fundamentalist groups became more active in politics, clashes between NGOs and such political groups became commonplace. In 2001, the High Court of Bangladesh ruled that *fatwas* or religious edicts by local religious figureheads were unauthorized and illegal. Since the case that led to this decision was initiated by an NGO, the wrath of fundamentalist power came down with full might

upon civil society. Attacks on demonstration rallies, setting fire to NGO offices, and even targeting of individuals, especially women, linked with NGOs were the preferred methods of violent reprisals. The women's movement was historically aligned with secular nationalist struggles, and mostly embraced the modernization agenda that came with civil society. As more and more prominent voices of women's empowerment such as Farida Akhter and Khushi Kabir became intertwined with the civil society movement, the discord between Islamists and NGOs turned more vicious. The religious right is now confronted by the historically strong secular tradition and the decision of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh banning religion-based political parties to contest elections has paved the way for separating religion from the affairs of the state.⁹ That has only been possible due to civil society working in a unified manner and having a single objective of challenging the extremist agenda.

4. Sri Lanka

Religious extremism is not confined to Islam or Hinduism. In Sri Lanka, the deep rivalry between the majority Sinhalese Buddhists and minority Tamil Hindus has led to the Tamils waging a bloody separatist war that has left tens of thousands of people dead. The Sri Lanka experience demonstrates the potential long-term consequences of implementing extremist religious nationalism and then enforcing it through semi-official policies.

Although Buddhism advocates peace and tolerance, the way it is practiced by a fringe, albeit one that is growing and extremely powerful, is rather violent, fanatical and far from accommodative. The Sinhala-Buddhists' self-perception has three components. The first is that they belong to the Aryan Sinhala race (as distinct from the Tamil Dravidians) and that Sri Lanka is the homeland of the Sinhalese; the second is that they are the defenders of the Buddhist faith, the mission of protecting Buddhism having been entrusted to them by Buddha himself; and third that Sri Lanka is the home for the Sinhala language. This self-perception has created a virulent form of Sinhala-Buddhist supremacism.¹⁰ It is in the context of this Sinhalese-Buddhist triumphalism that the recent aggression in Sri Lanka against Muslims and other religious minorities and their places of worship must be seen.

In September 2011, a mosque in Anuradhapura, an ancient Buddhist city and a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization world heritage site, was demolished by a mob. The monk who led that attack told BBC that the mosque was built on land given to Sinhalese Buddhists 2,000 years ago; hence the attack. In Sri Lanka, although its society is multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual, Sinhala-Buddhist radicals have been far

more successful. The Sinhala-Buddhist identity is far stronger than the Hindu identity in India. Sinhala-Buddhist ideology has been institutionalized and the Buddhist nationalist ideology has wide acceptance among the Sinhalese.

The intolerance is quite evident in the post-LTTE Sri Lanka, especially in the attack on the mosque, where angry Buddhist monks attacked the place on the pretext that it was historically a Buddhist place of worship. In spite of this, journalists and activists everywhere are banding together to raise the level of awareness and spell an end to religious discrimination towards Hindus, Christians and Muslims in Sri Lanka. The civil society started an online campaign titled "Not in My Name". Within a week of its launch, around 1,000 people had endorsed the campaign. It had been shared over 1,000 times on Facebook alone. Hundreds had tweeted about it, some had written their own blog posts encouraging more people to sign up and many more had emailed all their email contacts the campaign and shared it with professional colleagues on networks.¹¹ From an old grandmother to leading academics, from atheists to Hindus and Christians, from Burghers and Sinhalese to Tamils and Muslims, the sheer diversity of those who had signed up to the Not-in-My-Name campaign unequivocally condemning the violence in the mosque attack was incredible. Civil society as in this particular example in Sri Lanka was trying to work as a pressure group to discourage rising religious intolerance.

Who is Benefitting from the Culture of Silence?

Without the political will and popular support, the glaring contradiction between an inclusive concept of citizenship and the appalling treatment of religious and ethnic minorities in Pakistan cannot be addressed, far less redressed. Religious extremists have made the enforcement of *Sharia* a contentious issue even among different Muslim sects and made matters worse for the minorities through the blasphemy law and restrictions on the freedom of religion. In and of itself however, *Sharia* has not been the primary cause of the problems faced by minorities insofar as it has never been enforced to cover all aspects of life in Pakistan. It is the rhetoric surrounding the enforcement of *Sharia* that has had detrimental effects on how the more bigoted sections of the Muslim community view the rights of religious minorities.

When religious minorities are attacked, killed and discriminated against, barring a few groups, society at large does not raise a voice perhaps for fear of a violent reaction from extremist groups. On the other hand, when something happens in Palestine or any other place in the Arab world, these religious extremist groups manage to gather people and take out rallies against Israeli

injustice and get worldwide attention. In what ways does this social behavior manifest itself? Those silent on violence and injustice by small but violent groups in Pakistan are contributing to strengthening these same groups, and helping them take the whole society hostage to their dictates. The concerned citizens of Pakistan need to mobilize support against the legal and political culture of discrimination that hangs like a sword over every Pakistani's head.

The culture of silence will have to be replaced by a proactive stand against religious intolerance and all shades of discrimination. If Pakistan has to remain part of the international community, Pakistani civil society will have to come forward in unison to reject the notions based on violence. As the constitution demands inclusivity, religious exclusivism will bring greater disasters than those that already threaten Pakistan and would prove fatal for the survival of the country.

A firm 'no' to all forms of bigotry and discrimination—religious, ideological and sectarian—is imperative. What Pakistanis need most to alter their present course to outright disaster is a change of mind. A thorough overhaul of the educational system is a prerequisite for Pakistan to return to the fold of moderate nations. It is up to Pakistanis to stand up and strongly oppose the culture of intolerance that has been allowed to flourish in the country, ostensibly in the name of religion, but in reality for petty worldly advantage.

There have been examples in the world where nations faced humiliation, terror and devastation but instead of revenge, they invested their energies in building themselves up again. Pakistani society is unfortunately controlled by emotions especially with respect to religion. Self-righteous behavior has led to divisions in society and to an atmosphere of fear.

The economic grievances often find expression in lack of trust of the system, in that case the propagandists manage to attract people to spit out their anger whichever way they want to, hence we find public acceptance of the extremist narrative in the country. The state and civil society have failed to come up with sufficiently strong counter-narratives to show the alternative picture to millions of simple people who depend on the information in the media.

A strong counter-narrative by civil society would help the people to see, think and express in a different manner in order to challenge the extremist narrative which is strong, consistent and more organized. While the state can capture and punish those who have taken to violence and acts of terrorism, only civil society can rehabilitate these people and reverse the process of recruitment to terrorist groups. Civil society initiatives can also prevent the disillusioned people from taking up weapons. Nothing can harm violent agenda more than

criticism from their own people. Moderate Islamists' critique of violent extremism and religious intolerance will go a long way in undermining the legitimacy of these groups.

It is true that the civil society approach is not without its problems primarily because different states have different types of societies and cultural specificities. In other words, the dynamics of civil society vary from state to state and society to society. For instance, several civil society institutions especially religious organizations and charities worldwide have served the violent agenda and have propagated hatred and intolerance. Hence one has to be very careful while identifying civil society initiatives that can build public awareness against intolerance and those which are a part of the problem itself. The extremist groups can come up with convincing arguments against western agenda, and justify violence in the name of protecting the "honor" of the Muslim "*Ummah*".

Conclusion

The next few years in Pakistan's volatile society are going to be anything but peaceful; the deep divide within Pakistani society between the ostensibly religious and avowedly secular, between the westernized liberal elite and ordinary Pakistanis threatens to further destabilize Pakistan. Amid widespread corruption, poverty, natural disasters, political instability, religious extremism, a burgeoning youth population, and a national identity crisis, how will Pakistan become a tolerant society? Mumtaz Qadri's bullets in 2011 not only killed a prominent governor of Pakistan's most powerful region, Punjab, but also the hopes of greater pluralism in Pakistani politics. The governor, Salman Taseer, had criticized Pakistan's blasphemy laws after a Christian farmhand Asiya Bibi was sentenced to death under these laws. Clerics across Pakistan's Muslim divides have issued warnings that Asiya Bibi must die and that the politicians who oppose her death will meet the same fate as Taseer. After the killing of other prominent leaders who opposed extremism, such as former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, prominent religious leader Sarfraz Naeemi, and federal minister for minorities' affairs Shahbaz Bhatti, it is only a matter of time before further tensions rise along religio-political dividing lines in Pakistan.

Until the security situation improves in Pakistan, politicians and civil society leaders will have difficulty making bold policy moves to increase religious tolerance and freedom. However, civilians can begin to effect change at the grassroots through smaller-scale initiatives.

Religious intolerance declines when a community nurtures a culture of tolerance. While laws, civil society organizations, and a break from discriminatory practices and traditions is significant, any long-term impact on the culture of violence in Pakistan requires significant policy change in the curriculum of public schools and madrassas. That means not just asking madrassas to introduce modern subjects but also to ensure that what madrassa students are taught in the Islamic studies course is streamlined according to a single policy by the state in order to contain sectarianism. Pakistan could create an independent non-partisan, public-private education watchdog agency to monitor public education. Civil society organizations such as Teachers' Resource Center in Karachi, should be empowered to train teachers in public schools, especially teachers who teach Islamic and Pakistan studies. These measures can be instrumental in coordinating federal, provincial, and local efforts to purge the national curriculum of religious and ethnic hate material. Civil society can help raise the profile of cases involving religious intolerance and persecution in Pakistan and can spotlight policy and legal deficiencies in the system that contributes to religious intolerance.

One of the most important ways to fight the culture of violence is to demonstrate the importance of respect for diversity and pluralism and the benefits to society of developing a culture of religious freedom. The media, especially electronic media, can certainly play an important role to create both informative and entertainment programs with messages on harmony in diversity. Pakistan has a deep culture of pluralist traditions dating back centuries, which the country's founding leader sought to preserve in order to strengthen Pakistan as a nation-state, while maintaining the country's Muslim identity. We need to nurture this pluralist, tolerant tradition in order to stabilize and develop the country as it faces extremists that wish to destroy Pakistan's South Asian identity, retard overall growth and development, and isolate the country from the global community.

It is also important to see if the culture of violence is influenced by democratic and totalitarian forms of government differently. This culture seems to be strongly embedded in societies that have had the misfortune to live under dictatorships of various forms and shades, i.e., systems of government based on violence, submission and brutal force. On the other hand, democracy, on its own, is not a panacea, especially when it fails to be all-inclusive.

Whatever the system of government, the most favorable conditions for the culture of violence to grow are created by disintegration or collapse of local and central governmental institutions.

A very difficult question that has to be addressed is what role religions play vis-à-vis the culture of violence? One thing seems to be clear – any attempt to determine which religions are better in this sense are counterproductive and doomed to fail. The fact remains, however, that many wars in the past have been started in the name of one religious objective or the other. Furthermore, it appears that religious institutions, as powerful instruments of ideological influence, are often used, and agree to be used, to serve the culture of violence, while religions as systems of belief and understanding of the world do not necessarily call for that role. Therefore, society should subject itself to careful self-evaluation, be it interpretation of the freedom of expression, commercialization of culture, the cult of strength or the self-perception of superiority. All this is necessary not just to overcome violent extremism but to guarantee the survival of the people in general.

Finally, apart from engaging in debates on the significance of multi-religious and multi-cultural societies, Islamic religious organizations also have an important role to play in the development of civil society. The concept of civil society which respects autonomy of a citizen and her/his religious, cultural and political rights does not stand in contradiction with the Quranic injunctions and this has to be highlighted by the Muslim academics and scholars. It must be remembered here that Western notions of civil society do not transfer easily to Islamic societies, therefore, within Islamic societies which are becoming radicalized by the ideology propagated by exclusivist groups, it is important to recognize and promote the works of moderate scholars who can discuss and disseminate knowledge with logic and rationality.

Notes

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- ¹ Douglas Pratt, "Contemporary Christian Extremism: Fundamentalism, Extreme Religion and the Threat of Terror" (paper, SOF conference, Auckland, New Zealand, July 19, 2008), sof.wellington.net.nz/prattreliterr.pdf.
 - ² Douglas Pratt, "Terrorism and Religious Fundamentalism: Prospects for a Predictive Paradigm," *Marburg Journal of Religion* 11, no. 1 (2006).
 - ³ See "Understanding the Phenomenon of Radicalization in Pakistan," *Conflict and Peace Studies* (Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) 3, no. 2 (2010).
 - ⁴ Iannaccone and Berman, "Religious Extremism: The good, the bad and the deadly," National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), USA, Working Paper No. W11663, September 2005, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=819824>.
 - ⁵ See Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 1997.
 - ⁶ General Pervez Musharraf's 55th Independence day speech on August 14, 2002.
 - ⁷ Hamza Alavi, "Pakistani Women in Changing Society," <http://www.eng.fju.edu.tw/worldlit/india/pakwomen.htm>.
 - ⁸ For details on Sikh militancy see Paul Wallace, "The Sikhs as a 'Minority' In a Sikh Majority State in India," *Asian Survey* 27, no. 3 (1986): 363-377.
 - ⁹ "Bangladesh SC bans religious parties, upholds secularism," Press Trust of India, July 30, 2010.
 - ¹⁰ Sudha Ramachandran, "Sri Lankan Monks Join Rampaging Mob, Global Peace Support Group, UK, May 2, 2012, <http://www.globalpeacesupport.com/2012/05/sri-lankan-monks-join-rampaging-mob-2/>.
 - ¹¹ For details see <http://groundviews.org/2012/05/03/not-in-our-name-campaign-update-and-video/>

Factors of Anti-Americanism in Middle East and Pakistan

Syed Manzar Abbas Zaidi

The Context Debate

Anti-Americanism or anti-American sentiment can be defined as opposition or hostility to the people, government, culture or policies of the United States.¹ Many critics consider it a label utilized as a blanket dismissal of any censure of the United States as irrational.² American scholar Paul Hollander describes it as "a relentless critical impulse towards American social, economic, and political institutions, traditions, and values."³ Others hold the view that hostile state perceptions of the United States have "more to do with the vagaries of the imagination than with actual experience of that country."⁴ The recent exponential rise of the phenomenon is ascribed to particular American policies or actions,⁵ such as the Vietnam and Iraq wars.⁶

Anti-Americanism is also touted as the ideological basis upon which ruling elites gain power; this hostility is harnessed to concretize specific political or religious agendas. Another explanation is cultural relativity; Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" hypothesis is a classic example which identifies differences in culture as "the fundamental source of conflict in this new world."⁷ This encompasses the Europeans, particularly the French and the Russians, besides the obvious example of Muslims.⁸

Josef Joffe has suggested five essentialist aspects of the phenomenon: Reductionism of Americans to stereotypes; believing in the US to have an essentially evil nature; ascribing conspiracy theories to the US establishment aimed at total world domination; holding the United States responsible for creating essentially all the evils in the world; and cultural isolation from the ever pervasive influence of American culture and goods.⁹ It has also been considered analogous to anti-Semitism¹⁰ and lack of American morality.¹¹ Anti-Americanism has been equated with prejudices such as racism.¹² This term has also been explained with reference to globalization.¹³

Utilizing anti-Americanism as a symbol of irrationality, the 'anti' part of the term becomes an epitome of something pure, against which the label of 'anti' implies the antithesis of that other 'goodness.' Using this model, 'Americanism' thus becomes the unpolluted version, but at the same time the root cause of 'anti-Americanism,' since a person using the term anti-Americanism implicitly affirms his belief in American exceptionalism. It is not a coincidence that Chomsky draws parallels with the totalitarian state methods by comparing anti-Americanism to "anti-Sovietism", which was a label utilized by the Kremlin to demonize dissident or critical thought.¹⁴

In a recent book titled 'Why Do People Hate America?' the authors assert that the title is 'a question, not a statement'. Citing an exhaustive list of interventions in the last century, the book mentions that "America is an object of much fear and loathing, and this opinion is based on concrete experience with American power over the last five decades."¹⁵ This is intended to elucidate the rationale "at the heart of America: violence."¹⁶

In a monumental tribute to jingoism, John Gibson manages to pass off the entire French peoples as anti-American, the entire Arab population as mindless, the British as nursing a secret hatred for Americans, Germans smirking at American discomfort as the most hated state, etc.¹⁷ This is not rare. Many proponents of the irrationality of anti-Americanism tend to explain this as being an 'emotion' generally whipped up by anti-American governments in order to divert their publics from the real problems facing them. It naturally follows that since this anti-Americanism is irrational, it should not be related to the policies of the United States, but should be seen as an inherently held bias towards the American people and culture.

If this phenomenon is just an emotion, then this will basically act as "an intellectual short cut"¹⁸ to deligitimize the grounding of this term in geopolitics,¹⁹ with the dual advantage of relegating it to the category of atavistic prejudices such as racism, sexism, or anti-Semitism.²⁰ When emotional paradigms are utilized to describe this emotion, the most commonly used terms are fear, resentment, envy, anger and wonder; hatred and frustration are very commonly left out.

Anti-Americanism certainly has an emotional element, but not in the way many of those who decry "emotional" anti-Americanism advocate. Nor does

it falls into clearly demarcated realms of rationality as opposed to visceral or essentialist anti-Americanism; it necessarily has to be a hybrid of both.²¹ "Emotion does not preclude cognition, and since emotions cannot be fundamentally separated from the cognitive root of the valence evaluations that give rise to them, they may be theoretically as well as empirically indistinguishable. Evaluations of an object do not represent exclusively emotive or cognitive responses to that object... [They tend to] represent both. As such, one cannot separate evaluations of an object into categories that are arbitrarily emotive or cognitive."²² Thus, a more rational approach would be to argue that anti-Americanism is an emotion certainly, but one which has been shaped by cognition of events which have sensitized certain target populations to future stimuli from America.

The subject indeed has many polycentric layers; that is because the concept is far too complex to be summed up in a term that can be utilized in a non-pluralist, polemic discourse. "The term anti-Americanism does indeed have a gate-keeping function. It serves to exclude certain opinions from the 'responsible' debate. Often, the use of the term anti-American is meant to make sure that concepts that many people associate with 'America' (e.g. freedom, democracy, capitalism) are left unexamined. We should bear in mind that anyone who does not oppose this tactic is complicit in making sure that those values cannot be adequately defended. 'Anti-Americanism' is essentially a political and subjective term. If freedom of speech and democratic debate are indeed true American values, then one may rightly ask the question: 'Is there anything more anti-American than accusing someone (anyone) of being anti-American?'"²³ Thus, if the theory of 'many' anti-Americanisms is accepted, it should logically follow that there should be at least many different forms of audience which subscribe to a particular breed of the sentiment.

Arab anti-Americanism

As Paul Hollander has written: "The most obvious and clear link between anti-Americanism and modernization is encountered in Islamic countries and other traditional societies where modernization clashes head on with entrenched traditional beliefs, institutions, and patterns of behavior, and where it challenges the very meaning of life, social relations, and religious verities..."²⁴ Hollander goes on to explain: "In Arab countries and among Muslim populations, anti-Americanism is not only the monopoly of

intellectuals but also a widespread disposition of the masses.”²⁵

In deconstructing the debate stating the irrationality of anti-Americanism in the Arab world it may seem relevant to look at statistics. Zogby International polls conducted in 2002 and in mid-2004 in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and the United Arab Emirates sampled the population on a favorable/unfavorable basis. In 2002, as many as 76% of the polled Egyptians had negative perceptions of the US, compared to 98% in 2004. As many as 88% Moroccans had an unfavorable view of the US in 2004, up from 61% in 2002. The Saudi response increased from 87% in 2002 to 94% in June 2004. An unchanged perception of the US was recorded in Lebanon and an improved one in the UAE.²⁶ The main bone of contention was the US foreign policy.²⁷ A Pew Research Center report in June 2006 identified three negative Westerner stereotypes; selfishness, violence and greed. This view was held by 70% of Middle Eastern citizens who participated in the poll. Amongst the few positive stereotypes elicited, the main ones were devoutness and respect for women.²⁸ In Jordan 61%, Pakistan 27%, and Turkey 16% respondents had favorable views of Christians, while 1% in Jordan, 6% in Pakistan, and 15% in Turkey had favorable views of Jews.²⁹ A strong anti-Jew and moderately anti-Christian perception is apparent. Opinion polls demonstrate that many Arab Muslims identify with the Palestine issue, labeling it as critical, with over 50% respondents saying that that was “extremely important” in shaping their worldviews about the US.³⁰

The US-Israel nexus has arguably been the major cause of anti-American sentiment and has for long generated resentment against US policies in the region. As many as 99% of the Jordanians polled, 96% Palestinians and 94% Moroccans believe that the US unfairly sides with Israel in its conflict with the Palestinians. Most Europeans and even a plurality of respondents in Israel agree.³¹ The only voices of dissent are the Americans, 47% of whom see US policies in the region as fair.³²

The perpetually invoked Arab ‘bias’ towards the American support for Israel is frequently reenacted even amongst the European masses; a 2003 Pew Global Attitudes Project Survey found a majority of French, Germans and Spaniards, and a solid plurality of Italians and Britons focused on the belief that US policy was unfairly tilted towards Israel, notwithstanding the fact that a vast majority of all Europeans expressed support for Israel’s right to exist.³³

More recent surveys have revealed a “strong dislike for American foreign policy but much more nuanced, and often-quite positive, attitudes towards American society and culture and towards the American people.”³⁴ This is something that has been summed up as: “When you return to the US, give my love to the American people and tell your President to go to hell!”³⁵ A 2002 Zogby poll corroborated this notion when it found that “men and women in different age groups have favorable opinions about US education, freedom, and democracy [while] almost no respondents have a favorable attitude toward US policy...”³⁶ Ussama Makdisi argues that “anti-Americanism is a recent phenomenon fueled by American foreign policy, not an epochal confrontation of civilizations. While there are certainly those in both the United States and the Arab world who believe in a clash of civilizations and who invest politically in such beliefs, history belies them.”³⁷

It is also significant that anti-Americanism is about the only common ground or agenda that the masses share with Islamists in the Middle East—a region where many Islamist movements are disliked by the common people and have often been ruthlessly suppressed by the governments. Many analysts believe this anti-Americanism brings together Iran, Syria, Hizbullah, Hamas and the common people. As for the proposition that Arab anti-Americanism is a blind hatred of everything American, Lynch has argued that it has not yet reached the absolute level of “bias,” since it is still responsive to new information and tends to fluctuate based on perceptions of the US, which in turn fluctuate with American policies.³⁸ Chiozza backs this assertion by arguing that biased evaluations of the US are the exception rather than the norm.³⁹ Focusing on France, Meunier maintains that French anti-Americanism is still largely malleable in response to American policy;⁴⁰ Lynch’s studies about the Arab strain also conclude the same.

Thus, the Arab hostility should be seen primarily in the context of specific US policies, not American culture, since the US is still the style icon for the Middle East, it still attracts a large number of Arab immigrants, and American culture still exerts its all-pervasive influence through Hollywood and the music industry. Cultural dissonance is not a major cause of the divide: “it is based not on who Americans are perceived to be but on what they are perceived to do.”⁴¹ Khouri argues: “the rising anti-Americanism is driven almost exclusively by cumulative frustration and anger with the substance and style of American foreign policy in the area, and not by any imagined opposition to basic

American values of freedom, democracy, equality and tolerance."⁴² Samer Shehata postulates that anti-Americanism is "not primarily about American culture or values, but about the way the United States conducts itself in the region and the world." He adds: "Arab perceptions of America have become more negative as a result of the US war on Iraq, Washington's almost total support for Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, [and enactment of] new policies directed at Arab and Muslim immigrants and visitors to the United States."⁴³ A number of old and new grievances have added up to a perceived image of the US as a dedicated and implacable foe of Arab sovereignty and rights, with many Arab Muslims believing that America enacts its regional policies without their best interest in mind.⁴⁴

Role of Ruling Elites

There is a theory of there being a tendency on part of various Arab Muslim regimes to allow anti-Americanism to flourish as a means to demonstrate to their own publics that the regime is not an American 'puppet.' Ruling elites in such states tend to concede American requests in private but project an anti-American public image, or at least a visage of resistance to US policies; both Jordan and Saudi Arabia aided US war efforts against Iraq in 2003, even as they were criticizing the war in public.⁴⁵

One needs to recognize the nuances of the theory that ruling elites foster anti-Americanism. It certainly seems otherwise in Pakistan currently, where the unpopularity of the elites seems to have increased in proportion to the support extended by them to the US; it eventually resulted in the ouster of Musharraf, the pro-American president, not too long ago.

This anti-Americanism has not appeared all of a sudden among the Pakistani populace, but has been a gradual process; debatably anti-Americanism has always been a feature of Pakistani politics, but the widespread anti-American sentiment currently prevailing amongst the civilian population is a phenomenon best explained in the context of Pakistani leadership's support for the US-led war on terror. The negative Pakistani public opinion of America peaked in 2003, after the US invasion of Iraq.⁴⁶ Gallup Pakistan polls also corroborate that; Musharraf started out with the support of 51% of the surveyed Pakistani respondents in 2001, gradually losing support over the years,⁴⁷ while anti-Americanism remained roughly at the same high levels.⁴⁸

Pakistani attitudes towards the US should also not be viewed as a rigid monolith of uncompromising stubbornness; as evidenced during the earthquake in 2005 in Pakistan, the views grew more favorable towards America in 2006, due to its unconditional support for the victims.⁴⁹ However, they again fell to their lower levels in 2007, indicating that there is a rational choice process, which operates to drive the attitudinal change among the Pakistani people less favorably disposed towards the US. As regards American foreign policy towards Muslim states, 76% Pakistani respondents endorsed a US troop pullout from Iraq, while 75% believed the US and NATO should recall their forces from neighboring Afghanistan.⁵⁰

The Case of Pakistan

The US AfPak policy lumps together two distinct countries which is not well received in Pakistan policy echelons. This aversion to American typology of the region is a product of years of American inconsistency of foreign policy towards Pakistan. The Obama administration explicitly recognized on December 1, 2009 that American policy towards Pakistan had been inconsistent: "In the past, we too often defined our relationship with Pakistan narrowly. Those days are over. Moving forward, we are committed to a partnership with Pakistan that is built on a foundation of mutual interest, mutual respect, and mutual trust. We will strengthen Pakistan's capacity to target those groups that threaten our countries..."⁵¹ The Obama administration outlined seven aspects for improving US-Pak relations: (1) bolstering Afghanistan-Pakistan cooperation; (2) engaging and focusing Islamabad on the common threat posed by extremism; (3) assisting Pakistan's capability to fight the extremists; (4) increasing and broadening assistance in Pakistan; (5) exploring other areas of bilateral economic cooperation; (6) strengthening Pakistani government's capacity; and (7) asking for assistance from US allies for both Afghanistan and Pakistan.⁵² This policy of assistance is in no small measure shaped by the strategic role Pakistan is set to play in the region.

There have been remarkable anti-Taliban operations within Pakistan, such as the 2010 capture of Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, and many other arrests. Reportedly, Pakistani law enforcement agencies managed to arrest seven of the Afghan Taliban's top fifteen leaders in a single month.⁵³ The military success of Pakistan against terrorists has been even more spectacular, with the 2009 Pakistani military tactical offensive in Swat lauded as hugely

“impressive” by counter-insurgency experts worldwide.⁵⁴ The personnel that Pakistan’s law enforcement agencies have lost to terrorism are many times the number of casualties of 9/11. According to Pakistani military sources, the country has lost more soldiers fighting militants since 2004 than has the entire US-led coalition fighting in Afghanistan since 2001, and has deployed more troops to these operations than has the entire coalition.⁵⁵ This promoted Hillary Clinton to admit that there were “very promising early signs” of the relations between the two countries improving, and she also admitted to being “quite impressed” by Pakistani military operations in Swat.⁵⁶ Five months later, she visited Pakistan.

Siding with the US in the war on terror has not been without severe economic consequence for Pakistan either. Pakistan has reportedly suffered economic setbacks to the tune of some \$35 billion in this war on terror.⁵⁷ Consumer prices in 2008 reached their highest levels since 1975, with an inflation rate above 25% for many months and the rupee’s value hitting an all-time low, down more than 20% against the US dollar for that year. Net foreign exchange reserves declined by more than half, to less than \$7 billion. On the other hand, Pakistan was amongst the world’s leading recipients of US aid, with slated receipts of about \$10.4 billion in overt assistance since 2001. This included about \$6 billion in development and humanitarian aid, and some \$4.4 billion for security-related programs. However, the US aid to Islamabad also received negative press in Pakistan when the Pakistan-specific “Kerry-Lugar-Berman” bill was publicized; conditionalities were specifically tied into specific tactical military objectives.⁵⁸

There is an air of uncertainty amongst Pakistani policy makers when dealing with the US, despite the obvious financial and military assistance. The announcement of a possible US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan has caused a familiar debate in Pakistan about the US deserting Pakistan once again to face the storm alone.⁵⁹ According to the Pakistani foreign minister, “The [US] administration’s withdrawal date was music to the ears of the militants and terrorists.”⁶⁰ This distrust not only pertains to the Pakistani perception of US pulling out of Afghanistan and leaving Pakistan to ‘clear up the mess,’ but also regarding American overtures to India. India is the leading regional contributor to Afghan reconstruction and development efforts, having devoted some \$1.3 billion to that effort, compared to about \$300 million from Pakistan.⁶¹

Pakistan's primary goal with regard to Afghanistan is to prevent any dominant Indian influence there.⁶² Some observers saw in Gen. McChrystal's August 2009 assessment that "increasing India's influence in Afghanistan is likely to exacerbate regional tensions" a tacit agreement by the US to persuade India to keep a lower profile in Afghanistan to assuage Pakistani apprehensions.⁶³ However, there have not been signs of that happening. Resolution of outstanding Pakistan-India disputes are germane to the issue, as Pakistan eyes India's diplomatic and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan as a strategic threat.

All this adds to the perception that America is the 'near enemy', and only adds to the rampant public perception that even American benevolence like financial aid has ulterior motives. Anti-Americanism has been a binding force particularly for people in the tribal area of Pakistan and has grown with the intensity of drone attacks in the tribal belt. The prognosis of US-Pakistan relations does not seem too good, as it appears that the US does not quite know how to deal with Pakistan. The US government has done very little to engage in a relationship with Pakistanis, and the average Pakistani is aware of that. For example, when President Bush wanted to talk about Pakistan, he always mentioned President Musharraf, which was in stark contrast to the way in which he talked about India's culture, India's democratic principles, India's institutions, India's people, etc. This has come across as mollicoddling behavior to imposed dictators for most Pakistanis, who see in this American attitude a Pakistan-oriented set of double standards. Arguably, the US has never been as unpopular as it has recently become in the common citizen's eyes in Pakistan. There has been a gradual paradigm shift amongst American policy echelons that the US needs to improve its image amongst the Pakistani people, rather than just dealing with the leadership. It has now been recognized by the US that there was a need to expand US public diplomacy efforts, the dividend being "countering extremist voices."⁶⁴

Drone attacks have been a thorny issue. With a civilian fatality rate of approximately one third,⁶⁵ drone attacks have been widely condemned in Pakistan.⁶⁶ The US State Department defends the use of drones by arguing that the United States is engaged in an "armed conflict" with Al Qaeda and its affiliates, who are belligerents and thus lawful targets.⁶⁷ When the periods of détente between Pakistan and the US break down—as they have tended to do more frequently during recent years over issues such as the Raymond Davis episode and cross-border attacks—NATO supplies through Pakistan tend to get

affected. With roughly three-quarters of the supplies for US troops in Afghanistan moving either through or over Pakistan, NATO supplies are a flashpoint. Insurgents have targeted the supplies on these routes, but US military officials claim that that has not had a significant impact in bilateral ties. Stockpiled supplies can reportedly last 60-90 days in the event of severing of the supply chain.⁶⁸ The killing of Osama Bin Laden by US special forces in the Pakistani city of Abbotabad generated a round of accusations and counter-accusations which was said to mark another paradigm shift in bilateral relations, as the debate about Pakistan's territorial sovereignty versus the American need for security reached new heights. However, even the OBL incident has tended to take a back seat compared to the issue of territorial sovereignty.

Cross-border attacks that violate Pakistan's territorial sovereignty have had by far the biggest impact on Pakistan-US relations. In June 2008, US air assets delivered 12 gravity bombs on Pakistani territory, killing 11 Frontier Corps soldiers in Mohmand, ostensibly during hot pursuit of insurgents, causing a gross violation of the international border. The US administration issued regrets over the death of Pakistani soldiers, but an outright apology was not offered.⁶⁹ Shortly afterwards, a helicopter raid in South Waziristan killed 20 people, including women and children, causing an outcry of "completely unprovoked act of killing" by the US. There were nationwide protests, and the army chief issued a warning, stating: "The sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country will be defended at all cost and no external force is allowed to conduct operations inside Pakistan.... There is no question of any agreement or understanding with the coalition forces whereby they are allowed to conduct operations on our side of the border."⁷⁰

The attack on a Pakistani border check-post on November 26, 2011, in which 28 soldiers including officers were killed, represented another setback in US-Pak relations. The Salala check-post, about 1.5 miles from the Afghan border in the Mohmand region of Pakistan's FATA region was attacked by NATO helicopters. A furor of allegations against the US erupted, and relations between two countries hit an all-time low. Pakistan responded by shutting off all NATO supplies and asking the US to vacate the Shamsi airbase. The US ambassador to Pakistan accepted much later that the attack on Salala check-post was a mistake that the US wanted not to repeat.⁷¹ However, as recently as April 2012, the American administration had stopped short of issuing a formal apology. However, by that time the Pakistani media, policy echelons

and public had openly disseminated their anti-American sentiment on the airwaves and by scores of protests, not all of them by right wing religious parties but by many liberal left wing civil society activists as well. It seems that the right and the left in Pakistan had finally found some common ground in a symbolic common enemy; the United States of America.

Conclusions

As has been argued above, anti-Americanism is a hybrid of several varieties, which defies attempts at reaching a definitive term encompassing all its facets. However, it cannot just be shrugged away as blind obedience to anti-American sentiments pushed out by the elites, nor can it be comprehended in its entirety as a polemicist bias since the polls show that it has tended to fluctuate over the years in tandem with American policies, and is still responsive to the trajectories of American foreign policy in particular. This is notwithstanding the fact that there exists a substantive level of dislike and even hatred for everything American in some societies of the world including the Arab world and Pakistan, but can it be that this sentiment is the all pervasive phenomenon which drives anti-Americanism? One way of accepting this is by labeling the overwhelming anti-American pluralities as uniformly incapable of possessing a rational choice process, as populations bereft of discerning the complexities of modern political life. This does not seem logical; although there will be clusters of blind anti-American prejudice, there will also be large clusters of opponents of America as a military hegemon rather than America as a 'cultural imperialist', which is what the opinion polls show.

Impoverished Arabs and highly educated Europeans share the trait of not disdaining the American culture, but show abhorrence to American policies. Thus, there is a rational choice process which is one of the drivers of anti-Americanism, and it cannot be dispelled, no matter how hard 'anti-anti-Americanists' such as Hollander, Gibson and others try, by jingoism dressed up as political commentary, unless one ignores nearly half the human civilization by labeling them as 'they-know-nots'. Whatever the perception, it cannot be ignored that the American military hegemony is a truth in the world today, and there are inconsistencies in its foreign policies; the 9/11 attacks are usually cited as the point when anti-Americanism reached fever pitch in the world, particularly in the Arab countries and also Pakistan. Although September 11 is widely alluded to as the definitive historical

reference point whence the world's terrorists focused their energies on USA, terrorism in general kills few Americans: less than 20 a year, which is less than the number of Americans killed by lightning.⁷² Israel suffers a phenomenally higher rate of terrorist fatalities per year,⁷³ as does Sri Lanka, which has suffered on a per-capita basis the equivalent casualties of 9/11 once every three weeks for the past 20 years.⁷⁴ American public diplomacy is budgeted at one quarter of 1 percent of defense spending,⁷⁵ which tilts the American priorities in favor of 'hard' rather than 'soft' power. In the meanwhile, Abu Ghraib has eroded the last vestiges of American morality, but American scholars like Dershowitz are busy legitimizing it. Gore Vidal and Noam Chomsky's 9-11 list several states where US military intervention led to civilian unrest and killing.⁷⁶

Another way out of the anti-American imbroglio is by maintaining that the 'pesky' pollsters come up with statistics which lack intrinsic value either because they are flawed or do not reflect the truth since the respondents are following an innate anti-American response bred in them by the media, society, elites, etc.⁷⁷ But, at the same time, such studies also posit that polls often 'force' people to say what is on top of people's heads.⁷⁸

There are even more dimensions to anti-Americanism than the ones mentioned above, but a simplistic paradigm such as raw, prejudiced, all pervasive emotionality just does not pass muster; this strain does exist, but it cannot be said to be all pervasive. America needs to recognize and acknowledge the emergence of anti-anti-American constituencies, which, even as they disagree with US policies, understand that less American influence translates into less freedom; they also perceive 'blind' anti-Americanism as a blanket denial of anti-democratic and anti-market forces. This emergence presents a rare opportunity for the US to counter the politics of anti-Americanism. The US should try to promote fledgling democracy of this kind, rather than trying to export democracy as it has been doing for some time now. In order to do that it is important to evaluate the various types of anti-Americanism sub nationally and sub regionally, each in their geopolitical individuality; if 'soft power' is to be used, then this is the appropriate time to use it before anti-Americanism promotes some kind of a successful right or left wing revolution. Unilateral actions carry, now more than ever, the price tag of anti-Americanism and unipolarity will have to stand up to the test of anti-Americanism in the new confabulation of states that is the twenty-first century.

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Role of Religious Scholars in Counter-Radicalization and Deradicalization Strategies in Pakistan: The Need and the Scope

Safdar Sial

1. Introduction

There is empirical evidence to suggest that religious extremism and radicalization not only exist in Pakistani society to a considerable extent but are also on the rise, undermining the state's efforts to counter terrorism and militancy. Besides the presence of a plethora of religiously motivated extremist and militant groups who are playing havoc with the lives and property of the people, a culture of intolerance and a general attitude among the people of assertion of righteousness and finality of their own beliefs and their supremacy over those of all else are gaining ground in society.

Most definitions describe radicalization as a process in which an individual or a group views their own ideas and objectives as noble and superior to others. The desire to realize such objectives at all cost as well as reactions to perceived threats to such ideas and objectives may lead to use of violence. The process of radicalization in Pakistan, particularly at the individual level, might be well understood in the socio-psychological perspective but radical groups' motives for resorting to violence could be better explained in the politico-ideological perspective. The argument that mainly political motives drive violent radicalization has got extensive space in the western discourse; it also holds water in Pakistan's context.¹

Recent empirical research by Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) found that although most of the people in Pakistan did not support acts of violence and terrorism, but lack of education and critical thinking has led to confused views on violence, militancy and jihad among most people.² An alternative narrative remains conspicuous by its absence. The state and society are yet to realize the nature and implications of the threat. Academics believe that radicalization is a political phenomenon, triggered by inequality, socio-economic injustice and inequitable state policies. Clerics and religious scholars look at radicalization in the socio-political perspective but through religious shades. They argue that Talibanization is the outcome of policies of the state, including its failure to enforce Shariah in the country.³ They also express concern over 'westernization' of Pakistani society. The state links radicalization with external factors. The respective narratives are also reflected in public opinion. The PIPS study also noted increasing religiosity in

society, and identified religious extremism as the common factor in all the visible trends and patterns of religious radicalization in Pakistan.

It is, therefore, important that the state transforms the ideological mindset by developing alternative narratives and challenging the literal and extremist interpretations of Islam. With regard to that, Pakistan can learn a lot from soft approaches on counter-radicalization and deradicalization pursued by the Muslim-majority and other countries to counter terrorism and militancy. Many countries have evolved and are practicing certain approaches and strategies to prevent further radicalization of individuals and groups in their societies (counter-radicalization) and rehabilitate and reintegrate the violent radicals including individuals and groups (deradicalization).⁴

In that context, the conceptual framework of deradicalization and counter-radicalization programs has focused on educating and winning the hearts and minds of the people including those who are prone to radicalization and those who have absorbed violent ideologies, joined violent radical groups, or committed acts of violence. Such programs are generally seen as important and effective components of strategies to combat terrorism and extremism.⁵

Pakistan needs to focus on soft approaches for both deradicalization and counter-radicalization. Elements of reconciliation, counseling, dialogue, rehabilitation and reintegration, etc., imbedded in the deradicalization approach would provide the space and opportunity to the militants, either detained or at large, to look at alternatives in life, which are currently largely missing for them, and disengage from violent extremism. The counter-radicalization approach will ideologically counter the extremist narratives and prevent further radicalization at the individual and societal levels. Secondly, Pakistan requires simultaneous initiatives at both state and civil society levels in order to achieve better results.

The reliance of most deradicalization approaches in the world on religious scholars and clergy, which will be discussed later in the paper, in different activities such as dialogue and counseling with detainees, and production and dissemination of counter-extremism arguments and literature can benefit Pakistan.

2. Why Religious Scholars?

The dearth of ideological responses in the country to counter extremist and violent ideologies further confuses public opinion and makes people vulnerable to what religious extremists and militants offer them in the name of religion.

Public opinion in Pakistan is greatly influenced by the prevalent larger religious discourse that is characterized by the presence of a large number of political and non-political religious organizations, sectarian organizations, madrassas or religious seminaries, and religiously motivated violent radical groups. The clergy, which leads much of this discourse in Pakistan, exercises considerable sway over the masses when it comes to their belief systems. In most cases, the public's views resonate with those held by religious scholars and clergy, not only in the religious and sectarian domains but also in the political, socio-cultural, economic and other areas, both in the national and international perspectives.⁶

A national-level survey by PIPS in 2008-2009 revealed that more than half (55 percent) of about 1,600 respondents questioned for the survey believed that religious scholars and clerics were serving Pakistani society and Islam better than the political and military leadership and academics/intellectuals.⁷ Another study by PIPS found that even educated youth in Pakistan primarily relied on religious books for obtaining religious information and their political worldview was also indirectly influenced by religious scholars and clergy.⁸

The role of madrassas is also of significant importance in Pakistan in the context of religious debates and shaping of the general public's belief system. And here again the leading role is played by religious scholars. A study of political attitudes of religious clergy and madrassas reveals that they are eager to play a prominent political role. A clear majority of them, across the sectarian divide, believes that playing a role in politics is a religious obligation.⁹

There are, however, some fundamental issues appended to this larger religious discourse that greatly influence the public's opinion in Pakistan. First, construction and propagation of political views in this discourse—both national-level views and worldviews—is mostly carried out in religious and sectarian perspectives. The widespread prevalence of sectarian tendencies in Pakistani society—although many madrassas either conceal their sectarian affiliations or are reluctant to disclose them despite having well-known linkages with sectarian and militant groups,¹⁰ struggle of religious clergy for religio-socialization and also Islamization in Pakistan, and the pervasiveness of narrow and skewed perspectives of international politics and relations are some of the eventual outcomes.¹¹

Secondly, this larger religious discourse provides a lot of space to the extremists and militants by either supporting them or being silent to the point of acquiescence. People who mostly follow the narratives offered to them by the state and the clergy also remain confused or silent about issues of religious extremism and militancy. Religious scholars and clergy can play a

significant role in transforming people's confused views on extremism and militancy into outright rejection of the extremists and militants.¹²

Thirdly, even though a number of Islamic scholars from all schools of thought in this larger discourse condemn terrorism and religious radicalism, this condemnation is not properly presented or publicized.¹³ Fourthly, there is a glaring absence of a network of such religious scholars whose work focuses exclusively on countering the spread of religious radicalism and extremism in Pakistani society. The increasing threats to such scholars are pushing them towards isolation or silence. As a result, the majority of the people in Pakistan remain susceptible to the influence of religious extremism, which has grave implications for peace and peaceful co-existence in the country. A failure to respond to the radical and extremist ideologies and to provide the people with counter-narratives could further compound the problem.

As the religious clergy, particularly religious scholars and madrasa teachers and students, leads the larger religious discourse in Pakistan, controls madrasas and has considerable sway on the public opinion, one of the useful and effective ways to counter religious radicalism and extremism could be to engage moderate religious scholars from within the religious clergy in generating alternative ideological responses in order to counter violent radical and extremist narratives. This will not only expand and strengthen the slender constituency for peace and moderation that exists within the larger religious discourse but also help people dispel violent and extremist ideologies.

Learning from other countries and engagement of religious scholars in different elements of deradicalization programs in Pakistan such as counseling, re-education and dialogue with detained militants, and production and dissemination of counter-extremism arguments and literature could make such programs very effective and meaningful.

3. PIPS Partnership with Religious Scholars: A Case Study of Challenges and Opportunities

Pak Institute for Peace Studies launched a comprehensive program in 2011, which still continues, to counter radical and extremist narratives through engagement with leading religious scholars from all schools of thought. The 2011 phase of the program demonstrated that religious scholars were eager to play a proactive role in such programs and were keen to cooperate with the government and civil society to achieve the same objective.¹⁴

The overarching goal of this program was to promote peace and harmony in Pakistani society by countering the violent tendencies of religious radicalism

and extremism. It also aimed to counter the violent ideologies of the so-called religiously motivated militants—who posed an acute threat to the peace, security and stability of Pakistan—by creating awareness among the masses and by producing and disseminating a counter-narrative in partnership with leading religious scholars. In 2011, PIPS carried out a number of activities in three main categories of intellectual and academic discourse, advocacy campaigns, and capacity building/awareness, which included training workshops with madrasa students/teachers and religious scholars and distribution of awareness literature among them, creation and dissemination of counter-extremism Islamic literature and awareness campaigns through FM radio debates, focus group discussions and dialogues on critical issues such as *Khurooj* and *Takfeer*.

The PIPS review report on the program's progress in 2011 revealed that the overall circumstances in Pakistan were not conducive to carrying out such civil society interventions that focused on sensitive issues such as religious extremism, sectarianism and growing radicalization. Besides certain political and sociocultural constraints, the extremist and militant forces are a permanent source of pressure against such initiatives.¹⁵ It was apparently due to this reason that participation of the targeted societal groups also remained uncertain. Secondly, people hardly believed, at least until they became part of them, that such civil society initiatives could make any difference in absence of state efforts in the same direction. Indeed civil society initiatives were perceived by many in Pakistan as politicized, biased and agenda-driven instead of being aimed at and instrumental in bringing positive change.

One of the major challenges PIPS faced at the start of this initiative was related to seeking cooperation from religious scholars and their willingness to be part of it, mainly due to a prevailing communication gap between civil society and the religious circles. The trust level eventually grew as the entire program was led by the selected religious scholars and PIPS just facilitated their activities on a non-sectarian and non-political basis.

The review report also noted that although the overall level of cooperation from religious scholars remained very positive throughout the year-long PIPS engagement with them, yet there were some issues particularly pertaining to religious and ideological sensitivities. For instance, most of the religious scholars were reluctant to participate in academic and intellectual debates on controversial topics such as *Takfeer* (branding an individual, group or the government as disbeliever and expelled from the fold of Islam) and *Khurooj* (armed revolt against the government on the basis of *Takfeer*), or the topics related to religious extremists and religiously motivated militants, mainly due to fears and threats. This challenge was managed by limiting such debates to

academic and non-controversial confines, and persuading the participants about the necessity, objective and outcome of such debates.¹⁶

A particular challenge during the events, which brought together representatives of all religious schools of thought, or sects, was to ensure that no religious scholars or madrassa students from a particular sect felt discriminated against, unfairly treated, misbehaved with or not respected at par with others, either by the administrators or the scholars and madrassa students from other religious sects. This was not only vital for their effective participation but also to generate consensus viewpoints on certain issues. Tactful handling was needed a few times when some religious scholars from a particular religious sect sought to get a prominent role in such programs.¹⁷

It was also observed during joint events such as training workshops with madrassa students and teachers that although the religious scholars from different schools of thought interacted with each other quite keenly but such interaction was lacking at the level of the students. The religious scholars also noted that and managed to reduce this lack of interaction by being equally open to all students and by seeking support from religious scholars and teachers who accompanied groups of madrassa students from different schools of thought.¹⁸

Although most of the religious scholars, madrassa administrators and the other segments of society appreciated this initiative by PIPS, but some individuals and groups from within the religious clergy declared it a 'conspiracy of non-Muslims'. Some religious elements tried to politicize the initiative through their periodic publications by doing propaganda and writing editorials and articles against it and generally against PIPS. In response, PIPS engaged such religious scholars from all schools of religious thought who are considered to be influential, uncontroversial and credible among religious circles and hold respect and influence among the people.¹⁹

It was probably on account of the entire course of the initiative being led by a board of credible and respected religious scholars that the religious scholars participating in different activities largely trusted the objective of the initiative and the associated activities.

Besides these challenges, the PIPS report also mentions some opportunities, in terms of lessons learned, from the year-long program, which are very significant and promising for religious scholars' role in counter-radicalization and deradicalization programs in Pakistan. These opportunities are listed below:²⁰

- Peace was observed to be a common desire among all the religious scholars. They strongly believed that Islam was a religion of peace. They were also aware that the world did not judge the followers of Islam by what their religion offered but how they practiced Islam. This desire for peace among the religious scholars and the urge to 'correct' the practices that brought a bad name to Islam called for continuous and consolidated efforts at the state and society levels to engage them for promotion of peace and harmony in society.
- Responsibility and reform were two other sentiments largely shared by the religious scholars. They were eager to play a role in promotion of peace, harmony, tolerance and other desirable social values. They were also willing to cooperate with what they called 'genuine' initiatives of civil society meant to achieve the same objective. They were also convinced about their role in guiding the people about the religious issues which had been used by extremists and militants to sway the people in their favor. Similarly, it was also observed during implementation of various activities that madrassa students were more than willing to strengthen their capacities and skills to play their role as responsible and productive citizens.
- Interaction among different religious schools of thought and between religious and secular/liberal circles is lacking to a large extent, which breeds misperceptions and extreme views about the other schools of thought and segments. Religious scholars are very much aware of this fact. They repeatedly emphasized during various activities that immediate and effective efforts were needed to enhance interaction and linkages among religious scholars and madrassa students/teachers from different schools of thought as well as those with religious and modern/scientific education.
- Dialogue and logic, and not force, should be the only ways to create consensus on sensitive religious issues, and also to persuade people about one's viewpoint, most of the religious scholars participating in the initiative maintained. There was a clear consensus that Islam did not allow imposition of one's ideology or practices on others and that problems emerged when instruments of logic and debate were substituted by the bullet. Religious scholars were eager to engage in a constructive dialogue to resolve issues of sectarianism and generate responses to counter extremism.
- Religious scholars direly need exposure in order to observe and understand state systems, practices and intellectual trends in other parts of the world, including Western and Muslim countries, and also to observe and experience emerging trends in Islamic scholarship, research

and education in the contemporary Muslim world. This is also imperative to build their capacities and intellect to observe and analyze national and international issues with lenses other than the religious one.

4. The Scope of Religious Scholars' Role in Counter- and De-radicalization in Pakistan

4.1 International Experience

As mentioned earlier, many countries have engaged religious scholars in different elements of their deradicalization and counter-radicalization programs. The Saudi Arabian program, introduced by its interior ministry in 2003 and 2004, used Islamic scholars along with others to “deal with the wrong convictions of the detained persons in order to change and substitute them with correct convictions that agree with the middle way of Islam and its [message of] tolerance.”²¹ The ministry also established a special advisory body to oversee the program that consisted of four subcommittees: on religious, psychological and social, security, and media aspects.²²

In Egypt, the deradicalization process started in the 1990s when members of Gama'a al-Islamiya (GI) unilaterally proclaimed renunciation of violence. Once that happened, the Egyptian government supported and facilitated the revision process among the imprisoned leaders and members of jihad groups. The government also invited respected religious scholars from Al-Azhar University, one of the most well-regarded institutions of Islamic scholarship in the world, to visit prisons to debate and discuss key issues with the leaders of violent extremist groups.²³

The deradicalization program launched in Yemen in 2002 comprised a Dialogue Committee made up of Yemeni clerics and judges. The committee focused its attention on intellectual debate and dialogue, with religious scholars trying to change the ideologies of jihadis.²⁴

Morocco launched an extensive religious reform program—following the 2003 and 2007 bombings in Casablanca—with a view to counter radicalization and the appeal of violent ideologies in society. Besides strengthening the official religious institutions, the role of the mosque was also expanded to include human development. Different elements of the religious establishment, religious scholars, and pro-regime religious parties and movements were encouraged to establish their own websites to counter and rebut radical ideologies.²⁵

The Indonesian experience of institutionalized response of clergy and religious scholars to countering radicalism, intolerance and extremism and their coordination with civil society and state institutions in the country for promotion of peace, harmony, pluralism and peaceful co-existence is very rich.²⁶ Although there are some indications of a rise in intolerance towards the Shia, Ahmadia and Christian communities in parts of Indonesia but the majority of religious scholars, organizations and institutions do not approve of that and criticize those involved in promoting hatred towards or attacks against minority communities on the basis of religious faith.²⁷ Religious scholars and institutions in Indonesia work as vibrant civil society against intolerance, violence and religious extremism and radicalism. Most of them put the emphasis on educating the people for peaceful co-existence, peace and religious and communal harmony. Many religious organizations and scholars are engaged in countering radicalism and extremism through education, media productions, publications and dialogue. Institutions of religious education in Indonesia offer diverse subjects to their students; some prominent organizations such as Maarif Institute are engaged in preparing curricula for such institutions that include basic ingredients of tolerance, pluralism, peaceful co-existence and harmony besides modern subjects. Along with the government's initiatives for disengaging militants from their violent discourses and groups, Indonesian civil society is also engaged in such efforts aimed at facilitating former combatants re-integrate into society. These efforts are not criticized but supported and admired by religious scholars and institutions. Indeed many of religious scholars and their institutions are part of such state- and society-level disengagement programs.²⁸

Malaysia's deradicalization program also emphasizes on re-education, i.e., on correcting political and religious misconceptions of the militants.

A deradicalization program called the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) was launched in Singapore in 2003, with counseling for detained militants by religious clerics as the main plank of the RRG strategy.²⁹ A group of 30 Muslim clerics was engaged for rehabilitating the radicals. These clerics strive to show the detainees the flaws in the violence-oriented interpretation of Islam by the latter.³⁰

In addition to conventional means of deradicalization, the Saudi Arabia-based Al-Sakinah (tranquility) campaign is one of the initiatives that focuses on the Internet as an avenue to deradicalize those who indulge in radical exchanges online.³¹ Initiated by volunteers, the campaign was subsequently adopted by the Saudi Ministry of Religious Endowments. Trained scholars engage extremists in online dialogue to persuade them to reconsider their radical views. The campaign's target audience is the individual who uses the Internet

to learn more about Islam, and not extremists, according to one of the campaign's founders.³²

4.2 The Scope and Options for Pakistan

Until the Pakistan Army launched an initiative for rehabilitation of detainees in the conflict-hit Swat region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in 2009 after a successful military operation against extremist militants there, deradicalization was an alien phenomenon for Pakistan. The Swat program has three main components: Sabaoon, which focuses on juveniles; Mishal, which concentrates on adult detainees; and Sparlay, for family members of detained persons.³³ The rehabilitation efforts have been divided into four main modules, including an educational module that comprises formal education, particularly for juveniles, in order to enable them to continue their education. Another module includes psychological counseling and therapy for developing independent and logical thinking. The social module includes social issues and family participation and the fourth module includes vocational training to equip the detainees with various livelihood skills.³⁴

Dr. Muhammad Farooq Khan,³⁵ a leading moderate religious scholar, was the key influence in developing the Sabaoon component of the program. Dr. Khan developed counter-arguments and narratives to confront extremist points of view.³⁶ His charismatic personality was the driving force behind the success of the initiative at the initial stage but his assassination by the Taliban in 2010 was a setback for the project.

The Punjab Counter Terrorism Department subsequently started a deradicalization program. The department conducted training sessions for 300 former members of banned sectarian outfits and proscribed organizations during its three-month program launched in the fiscal year 2011-12. The Punjab government claimed that such deradicalization and rehabilitation would soon be initiated in Lahore's Kot Lakhpat and Rawalpindi's Adyala jails, two of the biggest prisons in the province, where teams comprising psychologists and religious scholars would hold sessions with terrorists and members of banned militant organizations.³⁷

The two programs mentioned above are small-scale deradicalization and rehabilitation plans which can be expanded, consolidated and regulated at the national level. A comprehensive deradicalization program should be evolved in Pakistan with political consensus and people's support. Religious scholars from all schools of thought should be consulted and taken on board not only to decide their role in the program but also to engage them in influencing public opinion against radicalization and militancy. As

mentioned earlier, the role of religious scholars in deradicalization programs in Pakistan can comprise different elements including counseling, re-education, dialogue and creation of counter-extremism arguments to disengage militants from violent ideologies and groups. A board of representative religious scholars, who hold authority and credibility among their respective schools of thought and influence among the people, could be formed for that purpose.

Sectarian and ideological sensitivities and threats to religious scholars from militants could be among the main hurdles in their willingness to be part of such programs. But as mentioned earlier, in the PIPS experience of partnership with religious scholars, the latter acknowledged their role in promotion of peace and harmony and could set aside sectarian differences and stick to the commonalities among different schools of thought provided the state was willing to engage them.

Similarly, the government will have to ensure security for religious scholars so that they can work independently and without fear in state-led deradicalization programs. There are extensive threats to those moderate religious scholars across Pakistan who raise their voice against the militants and acts of terrorism. Many of them have been assassinated by militants in targeted incidents of firing, terrorist attacks and suicide bombings. These include renowned religious scholars such as Maulana Hassan Jan, Mufti Sarfraz Ahmad Naeemi and Dr. Muhammad Farooq Khan.

Besides engaging the religious scholars in its deradicalization programs, Pakistan can guide, encourage and support them vis-à-vis their role in countering radicalization and extremism. The religious scholars are also willing to work with the country's civil society towards that end although it will take time to build trust between the two, but that will happen only if some joint efforts are initiated immediately. Similarly, the religious scholars and organizations and Islamic institutions have very important independent role to play to counter violent and extremist ideologies which bleed Pakistan and its people and earn a bad name for Islam. Some important proposals for how to engage religious scholars at these three levels, largely adopted from the PIPS report on "Engaging Religious Scholars for Promotion of Peace"³⁸ are listed below.

State-level Options

- The government should urgently start engaging religious scholars and madrassas to explore the positive roles that they can play for sectarian

harmony, peace and stability in Pakistan and fully support them to execute that role.

- The government should engage with religious elites to revive the traditional blend of religious and modern education in madrassas.
- The contemporary curriculum of various religious education (madrassa) boards teaches only a specific viewpoint to their students. The government should strive in consultation with representatives of all madrassa boards to provide an opportunity to madrassa students to study viewpoints of different religious schools of thought. Secondly, the government and the administrators, or leaders, of all madrassa boards should sit together and evolve a reformed approach towards education for madrassas where the emphasis should be on religious education and not sectarian education.
- As the religious scholars shy away from discussing sensitive ideological topics related to violence and militancy in Pakistan from the platform of civil society organizations, the government should formulate a forum of acclaimed and respected religious scholars who should discuss every aspect of violent and extremist ideologies in Pakistan in order to remove the prevailing ambiguities and guide the people properly. It is the responsibility of the government to establish a forum of prominent scholars from all sects in order to facilitate a consensus opinion on critical issues such as *Takfeer* and *Khurooj*, etc., which are used by the militants to religiously justify violence against the state and the people. The outcome of such debates and consensus should be widely published and disseminated and, if possible, made part of the curricula of mainstream educational institutions and madrassas.
- The government should partner with representatives of all madrassa education boards (*Wafaqs*), to check the production and dissemination of provocative and hate material.
- The government should form a national-level forum comprising prominent religious scholars and *Muftis* (expounders and interpreters of Islamic law), who have the authority to issue a *fatwa*, or decree on religious issues.
- The government should provide all the facilities and privileges to the madrassa students and religious seminaries which it provides to the other public and private educational institutions. Along with the required curriculum change, the perceived discrimination against madrassa education should be eliminated and certificates and degrees issued by madrassa boards should be declared equivalent to education

certificates/ degrees issued by formal educational institutions in order to help madrassa students secure their future.

- The government should try to develop cooperation between religious seminaries and national and international religious universities and institutions.

Civil Society Initiatives

- Civil society interventions engaging religious scholars and madrassas should be led by credible religious scholars, representing all religious schools of thought.
- The Pakistani society is a mix of different classes and sects. The communication gap and imbedded misperceptions about others among various segments of society lead to many conflicts. Keeping itself impartial and objective, civil society can provide a common platform to various social segments to discuss the core issues of conflict.
- The *Ulema* lead the religious discourse in Pakistan and are revered in religious circles and also by the people. They can bridge the gap between religious and secular/ liberal segments of society if they are convinced of the importance of that. Civil society should prioritize facilitating dialogue among representatives of religious and secular classes.
- The education system in Pakistan is also deeply fragmented, with each section catering to the educational needs of a particular class. The interaction among those educated from different education systems is lacking, which leads to alienation, polarization and adoption of extreme views about others. Even students studying in madrassas of different religious schools of thought have little interaction. Civil society organizations should arrange such academic, sports, debate and other events which bring together students from all education systems.
- Civil society organizations can follow the PIPS framework for engaging religious scholars to train and educate madrassa students and teachers in emerging concepts in the fields of politics, economics, science and technology, civic education, constitutionalism, philosophy, logic and history, etc. Meanwhile, in order to enhance intellectual capacity of religious scholars, similar training exercises can be arranged for them.
- Civil society should also focus on a non-religious framework of engagement of religious scholars and madrassa students/teachers, such as culture, creative thinking and writing, sports and literature, etc.

- The electronic media has a great role and potential for engaging religious scholars in a discourse for positive social change. The media should highlight the positive dialogue among different segments of society rather than promoting the differences.

Religious Scholars' Independent Role and Responsibilities

- Religious scholars should not promote sectarian differences among their followers but highlight areas where all religious sects are in agreement. Their speeches and writings should have a sense of responsibility and moderation that leads to a peaceful society.
- Religious scholars should arrange events and special activities at the grassroots which bring together scholars from all schools of thought with a view to create sectarian harmony. They should participate in each other's religious festivities and mourning occasions. Mutual interaction and dialogue at the level of madrasa students should be initiated.
- Ulema should promote peaceful coexistence, along the lines of the slogan that calls upon people to neither criticize others' sects nor abandon their own.
- Religious scholars should emphasize creating awareness among the people within their circle of influence about ethical values of Islam such as truth, good behavior, peace and justice, etc. They should discourage the people from supporting or engaging in acts of violence by telling them about the divine sanction for such actions in the hereafter.
- They should also discourage those elements who are fighting against the state and those with violent tendencies within their own sects. They should guide the nation on the pressing issues facing the country, such as terrorism and extremism, and should propagate the real message of Islam.
- They should advocate that peaceful ways and means should be utilized for reform of the state's affairs in line with Islamic teachings and principles.

Notes

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- ¹ Muhammad Amir Rana and Safdar Sial, *Radicalization in Pakistan* (Islamabad: Narratives, 2012).
 - ² Ibid.
 - ³ Ibid.
 - ⁴ Ibid.
 - ⁵ Mohamed Bin Ali, "De-Radicalization programs: Changing Minds?" RSIS Commentaries, No. 100, <http://www.idss.edu.sg/publications/Perspective/RSIS1002008.pdf> (accessed March 12, 2009).
 - ⁶ Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), *Engaging Religious Scholars for Promotion of Peace* (Islamabad: PIPS, 2011).
 - ⁷ Complete survey findings can be seen in PIPS research journal *Conflict and Peace Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2.
 - ⁸ A PIPS Survey, "Radicalization: Perception of Educated Youth in Pakistan," *Conflict and Peace Studies* (Pak Institute for Peace Studies) 3, no. 3 (2010): 10-26.
 - ⁹ Muhammad Amir Rana, "Mapping the Madrassa Mindset: Political Attitudes of Pakistani Madaris," *Conflict and Peace Studies* 2, no. 1 (2009): 28-39.
 - ¹⁰ Ibid.
 - ¹¹ PIPS, *Engaging Religious Scholars for Promotion of Peace*. The report describes the terms religio-socialization and Islamization as follows: Usually the term "religio-socialization" denotes a process of education through which one can learn to see the world as a world of religious significance. The term "Islamization" is borrowed from Olivier Roy, who refers to it as political mobilization.
 - ¹² Safdar Sial and Tanveer Anjum, "Jihad, Extremism and Radicalization: A Public Perspective," *Conflict and Peace Studies* 3, no. 2 (2010): 33-62.
 - ¹³ Ibid.
 - ¹⁴ PIPS, *Engaging Religious Scholars for Promotion of Peace*.
 - ¹⁵ Ibid.
 - ¹⁶ Ibid.
 - ¹⁷ Ibid.
 - ¹⁸ Ibid.
 - ¹⁹ Ibid.
 - ²⁰ Ibid.
 - ²¹ Hamed El-Said, "De-Radicalising Islamists: Programs and their Impact in Muslim Majority States," January 2012, The International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence (ICSR), King's College, London, <http://icsr.info/publications/papers/1328200569ElSaidDeradicalisation.pdf>.
 - ²² Saba Noor and Shagufta Hayat, "Deradicalization: Approaches and Models," *Conflict and Peace Studies* 2, no. 2 (2009).

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- ²³ Diaa Rashwan, "The renunciation of violence by Egyptian jihadi organizations," in *Leaving Terrorism Behind: Individual and Collective Disengagement*, eds. Tore Bjorgo and John Horgan (New York: Routledge, 2009), 122.
- ²⁴ Naureen Chowdhury Fink and Ellie B. Hearne, "Beyond Terrorism: Deradicalization and Disengagement from Violent Extremism," International Peace Institution, October 2008, <http://www.ipinst.org/asset/file/384/BETER.pdf> (accessed February 20, 2009).
- ²⁵ Hamed El-Said, "De-Radicalising Islamists: Programs and their Impact in Muslim Majority States."
- ²⁶ The author's observations during a study tour to Jakarta, Indonesia in May 2012 as part of a two-member PIPS team and meetings with several Islamic scholars and visits to various institutions and civil society organization. The visit was part of PIPS' engagement with religious scholars and was meant to explore prospects for a religious scholar exchange program between Pakistan and Indonesia.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ M. Amir Rana and S. Sial, *Radicalization in Pakistan*.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Christopher Boucek, "The Sakinah Campaign and Internet Counter-Radicalization in Saudi Arabia," *CTC Sentinel*, Aug. 2008, http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/CTCSentinel_Vol1Iss9.pdf (accessed April 19, 2009).
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ M. Amir Rana and S. Sial, *Radicalization in Pakistan*.
- ³⁴ Qazi Jamilur Rehman (Deputy Inspector General of Police, Malakand), interview by Muhammad Amir Rana, July 4, 2011).
- ³⁵ Dr. Farooq Khan was assassinated by the Taliban on October 2, 2010.
- ³⁶ Dr. Muhammad Farooq Khan, "An Overview of Project "Sabaoon"," (Report on 1st Strategic Workshop on Rehabilitation & De-radicalization of Militants and Extremists, FATA Capacity Building Project, FATA Secretariat, May 2010).
- ³⁷ Muhammad Faisal Ali, "De-radicalisation programme: 300 ex-members of banned outfits 'rehabilitated'," *Dawn*, July 24, 2012.
- ³⁸ PIPS, *Engaging Religious Scholars for Promotion of Peace*.

Pak-Iran Relations: Views of Political and Religious Parties

Najam U Din and Maryam Naseer

1. Introduction and Methodology

The epoch of Pakistan-Iran bilateral ties spans over 60 years since the independence of the former. Iran being the first country to recognize Pakistan developed cordial relations with the new country as both share geostrategic, cultural, tribal and religious bonds. However, the bilateral ties have experienced several hiccups over issues ranging from security to politics and religion. Throughout Pakistan's existence, political and military regimes have focused on their own view and perspective on Pakistan's engagement with Iran.

As the nascent Pakistani state leaned towards the US, Iran was on the same page at the time. Strong alliances with the US over geostrategic interests tied Pakistan and Iran together and both remained in the capitalist block after signing the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) treaty in the early 1950s and Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) in the 1960s. Although Pakistan and Iran have faced many changes in the dynamic international context on several fronts but they have steered clear of conflict. After the revolution in Iran, a rare combination of Islamic-oriented military regime in Pakistan extended an olive branch to Iran by. Various factors of convergence compelled Pakistan and Iran to cement relations by overcoming problems, including the issue of the Baloch insurgency in Pak-Iran bordering regions. Convergence of interest was also seen on the issue of nuclear non-proliferation. Although the activities of Jundullah soured Pak-Iran relations, both countries did not allow them to undermine bilateral ties.

Iranian support to the Northern Alliance and Pakistan's to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in the 1990s had affected both countries' relations. After 9/11, when Islamabad became a frontline US ally and opened vital land routes for NATO supplies, Pak-Iran relations improved from the sullen environment of the 1990s. In order to fathom the stance of different political, religious and militant parties in Pakistan, it is vital to comprehend their views on Iran. This report seeks to provide insight into political parties' perspective on Iran on the regional, political, religious, geo-strategic and economic fronts. In order to determine the Pak-Iran relations, a questionnaire was formulated for the parties to seek their views regarding Iran.

The questionnaire included the following questions:

1. What is the party's view on Pak-Iran relations and where does Iran lie in the party's policy?
2. What constraints and opportunities are there in Pakistan-Iran ties and how does the party plan to use them for improved relations?
3. How does the party look at the various issues between Pakistan and Iran, such as:
 - Pak-Iran- Afghanistan joint security issues;
 - Pakistan being a frontline state in the war on terror;
 - Jundullah activities across the Pak-Iran border;
 - Sectarian strife in Pakistan.
4. What would be the party's stance if the US imposes sanctions or and launches combat operations against Iran for pursuing a nuclear program?
5. What is the party's view on Iranian ties with India and how would the party rank Iran along with the Arab countries (Saudi Arabia) while formulating relations? Could it have any negative implications for Pak-Iran bilateral engagements?
6. How can trade links between the two neighbors be improved? What is the party's stance on:
 - Formal trade across borders
 - Informal trade (smuggling).
7. Pakistan has absorbed influence of the Iranian culture in art, language and living. Can that be used to promote sectarian harmony in the two countries?

In order to gauge Pakistan's perspective on Iran, both primary and secondary sources were used. For this purpose, 16 structured and non-structured interviews were conducted with mainstream political and religious parties along with a comprehensive review of the already published literature for the introductory portion.

2. Political Manifestation

2.1 Mainstream Political Parties

As a Muslim neighboring country, bolstering ties with Iran has remained a key plank of the manifestos of political parties whether they are in power or

not. Every government in Pakistan, regardless of political affiliation, has given a clear foreign policy in formulating ties with Iran.

2.1.1 Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)

The centre-right mainstream political party PML-N led by Nawaz Sharif won the second highest number of seats in the National Assembly in the 2008 elections and was briefly part of the coalition government in the centre with the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), before deciding to sit on the opposition benches. The PML-N is of the view that relations with Iran should remain strong and cordial and gives great importance to Iran as it considers that Pakistan and Iran share the bonds of religion, culture and literature. The PML-N considers that Iran has been facing western pressure because of its brave stance after the revolution and extends to Tehran the maximum possible assistance keeping in view the international obligations.

On the question of Afghanistan's security and internal stakeholders, the PML-N states that because of their strategic location, the security of Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan is interwoven and foreign occupation of Afghanistan also threatens the security of Pakistan and Iran. The party believed that the Taliban and Northern Alliance had a different approach even though both hailed from the same country. The Northern Alliance felt comfortable with Iran and the Taliban with Pakistan, but representatives of both groups had held meetings in Tehran and Jeddah in the past to overcome tensions. The party maintains the same stance for the future of Afghanistan by engaging other regional powers in talks with Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. According to PML-N, on the issue of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran do not have deep tensions that cannot be resolved by dialogue. However, the key to success is the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan.¹

To the question of Jundullah's activities in Iran and the increasing sectarian strife in Pakistan, the party considers that Pakistan does not support any group, organization or outfit that makes mischief in Iran. It believes that foreign elements have tried to ignite frictions by supporting these non-state actors, which have failed to pitch different Muslim sects and Iran and Pakistan against each other. Although there are isolated incidents of clashes, they are resolved by the leaders of the sects.

The party supports Iran's right to a nuclear program as an independent and sovereign country in order to strengthen its defense and maintain a balance of power in the region since Israel has nuclear capability. However, the PML-N also concedes the difficulties in supporting Iran in that respect as being a member of the United Nations Pakistan cannot go against the world body's

resolutions but can use its good offices with the support of other regional powers to save Iran from imposition of harsh sanctions. While talking about international pressure on Pakistan regarding issues such as the Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline and relations with countries like Saudi Arabia, the party says that national interest should be the key consideration for decision making in all these matters. For the PML-N, not every relation or interest of Pakistan would be ignored only because there is international pressure and projects like the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline would be persisted with in national interest. The party thinks that Pakistan's alliance with the US in the war on terror has not affected Pak-Iran relations as both countries understand each other's positions, keeping in view the international and regional interests.

The party sees growing Iran-India economic ties as a positive step to bring regional countries closer by strengthening interdependence and realizing regional prosperity. It also believes in formal trade ties while renouncing informal trade as the latter brings crime and various negativities into play.

2.1.2 Pakistan Muslim League-Zia (PML-Z)

Led by Ijaz-ul-Haq, the far-right PML-Z is a faction of the PML and does not hold any seat in the national or provincial legislature. The PML-Z attaches great importance to Iran, since it is a neighboring country, and emphasizes close ties with Tehran. The PML-Z believes that the close relations between Pakistan and Iran have been marred by misunderstanding on issues such as sectarian tensions and conspiracies. It believes that these issues can be resolved through dialogue.

The party believes that Pakistan started aggression in Afghanistan by making an alliance with the US and that the policy should be reviewed, especially after the US-led NATO forces targeted Pakistani military check posts in the 2011 Salala attack in which 26 soldiers were killed. The PML-Z says that nearly 80 percent of Pakistanis oppose the war on terror and after joining the US-led alliance Pakistan had suffered hugely, not only in terms of loss of life but also in the form of relations with its neighbors. With reference to the activities of Jundullah in Iran, the PML-Z denounces all forms of terrorism in the neighboring countries.²

The PML-Z holds that increasing sectarian tensions in Pakistan and the Shia-Sunni divide have implications for Pak-Iran relations. The party calls it a "tit-for-tat" reaction from Pakistan and Iran, and urges the need for the two countries to overcome the sectarian scourge by engaging each other. The PML-Z supports the Iranian nuclear program, calling it Tehran's internal security issue. Commenting on American pressure on Iran to abandon its

nuclear program, the party insists that nuclear disarmament should be bilateral and the US should also give up its nuclear apparatus. It states that unilateral disarmament creates further rifts among countries rather than improving ties.

The PML-Z says that increasing economic ties between Iran and India had not and would not pose any threat to Pakistan as India is a global economy and just as Sino-Indian ties had not undermined Sino-Pak relations an Iran-India nexus would not be a threat for Pakistan. The PML-Z says that it is a failure of Pakistan's foreign policy that it has not managed to engage Iran to the level that India has and maintains the view that taunting Iran for its connections with India would not yield any fruitful result for Pakistan.

Trade linkages among neighbors should be encouraged and Pakistan should work to build a transit trade route with Iran as it had with Afghanistan, the PML-Z says. The party believes that that would discourage informal trade and smuggling across the Pak-Iran border. Iranian culture remains a major influencing factor in Pakistan and the party believes that more conferences and dialogue should be encouraged to strengthen the Pak-Iran connection and highlight how proud Pakistan is of Persian being a substantial influence on the Urdu language.

2.1.3 Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM)

MQM, the ethno-linguistic political party led by Altaf Hussain, is the second biggest political party of Sindh behind the PPP in terms of representation in parliament. Based in Karachi, the liberal MQM has a strong influence in the metropolis of Sindh and is the only political party comprising the middle and labor classes. MQM joined the PPP in a coalition government after the 2008 general elections and carried considerable sway in national politics. Known for its "Look East" manifesto, MQM believes that Pakistan needs a robust foreign policy in a positive direction by minimizing its dependence on the west and looking east, particularly towards its neighbors. MQM reiterates that neighbors cannot be changed and lists Pakistan's neighboring countries into two categories; friendly countries (China and even Russian although the latter is not a neighbor) and brotherly countries (Iran and Afghanistan). MQM says that Iran being a "brotherly neighboring country" has a special place in the party's manifesto as Pakistan has derived ideological, cultural and religious influence from Iran and it believes that both countries have additional convergence of interest.³

Calling Afghanistan the grey area in Pak-Iran relations, MQM emphasizes addressing this grey area by engaging in a discourse with Iran and solving

the Afghan issue. According to MQM, although Pakistan's engagement in the war on terror has affected Pak-Iran relations to some degree but there is great potential to work together.

The party calls Jundullah a non-state actor using Pakistan's soil and recalls Pakistani parliaments' resolve not to allow any organization to use Pakistan as a launching pad for conducting terrorism in other countries, and to take stern action against all such organizations. To the question of sectarian violence in Pakistan, MQM rejects the notion that there has been any strain in Pak-Iran relations and calls it Pakistan's internal problem which is related to terrorism and that there is no external interference. It believes that the sectarian violence in Pakistan is not an interstate Shia-Sunni issue but intra-state terrorism crises.⁴

The party considers nuclear weapons against humanity and a constant risk to life and voices complete opposition to any country's nuclear program. However, it supports the acquisition of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes under international law. Regarding India's ties with Iran, MQM believes that Pakistan should shun its India-centric policy and stop looking at everything with a lens of negativity and try to compete with India economically. To the question of the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline and Saudi Arabian pressure over Pakistan, the MQM says that dependence on any country would undermine independence in terms of foreign policy and Islamabad should opt for multiple options for growth of economy and energy and pursue national interest while making decisions.

MQM is of the opinion that the current era is one of regional development instead of countries' development alone and no country in the world can grow in isolation. The prospect for Pak-Iran trade can be brightened by making certain protocols because both the two countries share a long and porous border. Smuggling may not be completely eliminated; however, efforts can be made to turn the region into a trade hub. In the past, Pakistan and Iran initiated Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), a successor to Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) and now they can increase their sphere of cooperation to benefit from each other.

2.1.4 Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI)

The center-right progressive PTI is the fastest growing political party in Pakistan. Led by former cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan, PTI has great influence among the youth, especially on account of its anti-corruption slogan. Regarding Iran, PTI believes in friendly ties and notes that Iran was the first country to recognize Pakistan and until the Soviet invasion of

Afghanistan, Iran was Pakistan's strong ally. Also some of Pakistan's leading political families such as the Gillanis originated in Iran. On the question of joint security issues for Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan, PTI believes in crafting an agreement where all the stakeholders contribute to security. The party strongly defends Pakistan's position and says that no one wants an unstable or volatile neighbor because of adverse consequences and that due to the decades-long conflict in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran have had to accommodate millions of Afghan refugees, an economic burden for already under-developed countries. PTI believes that the US does not want the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project to take shape and is also a hurdle in the Pak-Iran relations and argues that only national interest should dictate Pakistan's decision in this respect.

Regarding Jundullah, PTI vows that it will promptly take stern action against all those groups that use Pakistan's soil for terrorist activities anywhere. It believe that be it Pakistan, Iran or Afghanistan, it is the responsibility of every country whose soil such groups use to combat them. About the growing sectarian friction in Pakistan, the party believes that every negative action has its consequences, however, the governments of Pakistan and Iran are not involved in these activities and certain international elements are working to promote sectarian tensions to promote their agendas. PTI holds that it supports Iran's nuclear program if it is for peaceful purposes.

About growing Iran-India trade, PTI thinks it would be beneficial for Pakistan because India and Iran do not share a border so the trade will either be done through the sea or through Pakistan's territory. Using Pakistani routes for trade among Iran and India would generate revenue for Pakistan. PTI believes that Pakistan has the ability to maneuver its relations with Saudi Arabia and Iran as both know Pakistan's position internationally and Pakistan will take decisions based on national interest instead of following any other country. PTI emphasizes the importance of trade with Iran and other regional countries and vows that if it came to power it would connect Pakistan with other regional countries through rail and road links for legal trade and curb smuggling.⁵

The party says that apart from Iranian cultural influence reflected in the folklore and architecture of Pakistan that binds the two people in a bond of love and closeness, around 2 million Pakistanis speak Persian as their mother tongue.

2.2 Nationalist Political Parties

2.2.1 National Party (NP)

National Party is a centre-left democratic nationalist political party of Balochistan and is one of the largest political parties of the province. Led by Abdul Malik Baloch, the party boycotted the 2008 elections after the military operation in Balochistan. Regarding relations with Iran, the party's member Ishaq Baloch states that NP believes in the country adopting good relations with all neighbors. He argues that Pakistan should maintain good ties with Iran not only because of the long shared border but also because Iran offers business opportunities and prospects for energy needs of Pakistan.⁶ NP thinks that there should be a European Union-like organization to help the region prosper and lessen foreign interference.

Regarding the impact of the Afghan situation on Pak-Iran relations, NP chief Abdul Malik Baloch believes that the US would not leave Afghanistan as American withdrawal would have dire consequences and Afghanistan would break up and Pakistan and Iran would also face the implications. He also says that Pakistan and Iran cannot ignore each other regarding the situation in Afghanistan.⁷ Dialogue in the region would bring peace and development rather than proxy or cold war. On the question of Pakistan being a frontline state in the war on terror, the NP leader sees Pakistan as dependent on the US and argues that Pakistan can never openly support Iran as it is an ally of the US and has thrown its people into the war. NP believes that Pakistan is the main US ally in the region and acts like a guardian of US interest in the region. It thinks it is high time to stand against religious fundamentalism and eradicate intolerance.

About the activities of Jundullah, the NP stance is that every interference in the affairs of Iran would jeopardize bilateral relations and if Iran provides evidence of Pakistan's soil being used for terrorist actions in the former then Islamabad is under an obligation to eliminate all the so-called non-state actors.

About increasing sectarian intolerance in Pakistan, NP thinks it is not an issue of Shia versus Sunni or sectarian divide between Pakistan and Iran, but a matter of intolerance spread in society during the Cold War days mainly in the 1980s and there was no sectarian issue in Pakistan before the 1980s. As a peace loving party, NP is against nuclear weapons for any country, including Iran. On the question of balanced relations of Pakistan with Saudi Arabia and Iran, NP's stance was that relations should be based on national interest

instead of religious issues. It believes that if Pakistan wants relations based on national interest, it should go for India and Iran instead of Saudi Arabia.⁸

NP does not think that economic ties between Iran and India represent a threat to Pakistan as India is a booming economy and it is every country's right to trade with who it chooses. NP also wants enhanced trade with Iran as the Iranian port of Chahabar is much closer to Balochistan than any major Pakistani city so essential commodities could be imported from Iran at a lower cost. Besides that, 30 percent of Balochistan gets electricity from Iran. NP further states that if Pakistan does not open legal trade routes than the people on both sides of the border would use illicit means of trade. NP believes that legal trade and curbing smuggling would not only generate billions of rupees in revenue but the province would also get development opportunities.

To the question of cultural influence of Iran on Pakistan, NP maintains that the Baloch have their own culture, identity and traditions. Pakistan and Iran have not given rights to the Baloch in their respective lands. The Baloch want their rights while living under the laws of Pakistan.

2.2.2 Awami National Party (ANP)

Led by Asfandiyar Wali Khan, ANP is a left-wing socialist political party based in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. ANP remained part of a coalition government with the PPP government in the centre and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after the 2008 elections and has its following in the Pakhtun belt. ANP has a policy of cordial relations with Iran as it believes that neighbors cannot be changed and good relations with all neighboring countries would help Pakistan. ANP believes that Pakistan has always interfered in the internal matters of other countries and that has been the reason for Islamabad's sour relations with regional countries. It suggests that Pakistan should shun interference in other countries as every country has apprehensions about Pakistan over this policy. The party says that Pakistan has brought someone else's war to its own homeland and is now facing huge repercussions in the form of terrorism.⁹

ANP criticizes the policies of Pakistan and Iran that seek to create hegemonic influence in Afghanistan to further their respective agendas. The party says that by reverting to their past policies on Afghanistan both countries would land in a mess and efforts for a peaceful Afghanistan should be made after accepting it as a sovereign and independent country and Afghans should get the opportunity to rebuild their nation. Islamabad should also provide guarantees to the Afghans that Pakistan would not interfere in their internal

matters and would only help them in case of need. ANP thinks that Pakistan being a frontline state in the war on terror has not impacted Pak-Iran relations and Islamabad has a golden opportunity to work as a bridge between the US and Iran to sort out their differences. The party believes that if Pakistan acts against Iran at America's behest that would hurt Pak-Iran relations, but otherwise Pakistan can help normalize ties between the two countries.

About Jundullah, ANP states that the Pakistanis need to ask themselves whether all the militant *Lashkars* that have emerged in Pakistan are beneficial for the country. And if they are not then strict action should be taken against all, Jundullah included. The ANP spokesperson further asked for action against Lashkar-e-Taiba, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). ANP believes that dialogue should be the first option before considering the use of force against these groups because every party has the right to express their ideology, if the people accept that ideology then they are entitled to it and if people are against them, as everyone is against terrorism in the prevailing situation, then all those groups should be eliminated as Pakistan has long faced accusations on account of these groups.

ANP blames Gen Zia's era for the spread of sectarianism in Pakistan and points to the fact that sectarian tensions were unheard of in the country before the 1980s. It believes that Saudi Arabia and Iran fuelled sectarianism in Pakistan and now Islamabad should engage both these countries in talks for curing this cancer, as it has affected Pakistan's relations with Iran. ANP is resolutely against all nuclear weapons and does not support the Iranian program. While formulating policies regarding Saudi Arabia and Iran, the party believes that Pakistan should make decisions based on national interest and not based on dictations from Saudi Arabia, Iran or any other country. If the Iran-Pakistan pipeline project suits Islamabad's interest then that should be pursued irrespective of pressure from any country.

According to ANP, trade between Pakistan and Iran should be legal and Islamabad should promote it on priority and discourage illegal trade. ANP believes that culture and traditions can be used to understand each other rather than creating further animosity.

2.2.3 Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP)

PkMAP is a nationalist progressive party whose area of influence stretches from Pakhtun areas of Balochistan to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The party, led by Mehmood Khan Achakzai, had boycotted the 2008 general elections after terming them unconstitutional. PkMAP believes in good ties with Iran and neither country interfering in the other's internal affairs. PkMAP believes that

Pakistan and Iran have always interfered in and showed aggression towards Afghanistan, where Tehran is promoting Shias and Pakistan Sunnis. PkMAP believes that the policy is harmful not only for Afghanistan but also for Pakistan and Iran. It says that shunning this policy of interference in Afghanistan would address the problems in the war-torn country.¹⁰ The party is of the opinion that Afghanistan has remained the hub of foreign interference as the US, the Soviet Union, Arabs, China and Europe have all interfered in the affairs of Afghanistan and for Pakistan and Iran it had become an issue of creating influence in Afghanistan. Every country had worked to further its own interests in Afghanistan and the result of this policy was clear as Afghanistan had become a region where terrorist organizations mushroomed. After 9/11, the need to work against extremism and terrorism became apparent to all concerned and Islamabad joined the US in the effort against terrorism. PkMAP believes that Iran should know that Islamabad is with the US only for the sake of challenging terrorism and not to work against Iran.¹¹

PkMAP believes that Jundullah or any other militant group sabotaging the security of any other country while using Pakistan's soil should be eliminated and just as Islamabad does not like external interference in its affairs it too should respect others' right to the same. PkMAP believes that the sectarian problem in Pakistan had started during the military regime in the 1980s and was aggravating by the day. Graffiti, wall chalking, slogans and general hate material against other sects were all products of that era. It says that Pakistan and Iran were not the owners of Shia and Sunni sects. If a Shia was targeted in Pakistan, it was a Pakistani first and therefore an internal matter and a concern for Pakistan. The killings of Shias in Quetta, Parachinar and Dera Ismail Khan demonstrated increasing religious intolerance in society. However, this increasing sectarian friction is just a ploy to divert attention from the real problems of abductions, target killing and extortion in Quetta, Karachi and other parts of the country. The party believes that all these problems can be solved by using democratic and constitutional means and by promoting religious harmony in society.¹²

PkMAP does not support nuclear weapons programs and claims that money should be spent on social development and generating resources rather than on nuclear weapons. The party says that Pakistan has gained nothing by developing nuclear weapons except economic degradation and poverty. The party believes that growing Indian and Iranian ties are only meant for trade and do not interfere in the internal dynamics of either country. India's economic ties with other countries do not always mean that they are aimed at harming Pakistan.

Regarding the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project, PkMAP believes that dependence on Iran might not favor Pakistan as Iran is at odds with western nations including the US and imposition of sanctions on Iran would make it difficult for Pakistan to benefit from gas imports from Iran. The party believes that gas and energy projects should be developed with Turkmenistan and other Central Asian Republics (CARs) so that Islamabad also gets support of the international community rather than upsetting the world for opting for Iran. In addition to the Iran-Pakistan pipeline, the party believes in increasing bilateral trade as both countries have the observer status with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and can work in a collaborative manner on projects of education and development.¹³

PkMAP believes that the Urdu language is an amalgam of Turkish, Arabic and Persian language. However, the Pakhtun belt of Pakistan does not have any influence of the Iranian culture and the former is thousands of years old but the Baloch have been influenced by the Iranian culture and it can be used as a tool to bring the people of the region closer and focus on the points of convergence rather than divergence.

2.2.4 Jamhoori Watan Party-Talal (JWP-T)

JWP-T is a pro-federation nationalist political party of Balochistan and is led by Talal Bugti, a son of Nawab Akbar Bugti. The party believes in cementing relations with Iran and advocates a non-interference policy towards all neighboring countries including Iran. Commenting on the Afghan issue between Pakistan and Iran, the party's Vice-President Madni Baloch says that since the Baloch live in Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan so a joint set-up can be made to solve the issue of Afghanistan and give rights to the Baloch population in all three countries. However, according to the party's president, Talal Bugti, Afghanistan is a consistent irritant and Afghan refugees have been occupying Baloch land in Balochistan and should be sent back to their country.¹⁴ Madni Baloch believes that Pakistan's role post-9/11 has affected Pak-Iran relations as Tehran had stood up to Washington and Pakistan had become a key ally of the US.

About the activities of Jundullah, the party claims it is apparently an organization engaged in propaganda to create its influence, and talks could be held to eradicate it from Pakistan. On the question of increasing sectarian strife in Pakistan, JWP-T believes that the role of official agencies in this regard cannot be ruled out. It holds that Pakistan does not have any sectarian difference with Iran; however, the Shia, Sunni, Baloch and Pakhtun are being targeted by hidden hands in Balochistan. Regarding the Iranian nuclear program, JWP-T believes that being an ally of the US Pakistan cannot openly

support Iran on the issue but JWP-T supports Iran's right to pursue such a program.¹⁵

JWP-T does not support the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline because it sees that as an attempt to use Baloch land from which Balochistan will not get any benefit. The party does not see increasing Iran-India ties as a threat to Pakistan. On maintaining a balance between ties to Iran and Saudi Arabia, JWP-T sees Riyadh as a much better coalition partner for Pakistan as Iran does not support the Baloch population on its side of the border.

The party sees trade as a means for socio-economic development and supports Pak-Iran trade as the process will bring prosperity to the region, which is urgently needed in Balochistan. The party also believes that cultural flow from neighboring countries brings an optimistic view of the country and can be used to promote harmony among nations.

2.3 Religious Political Parties

2.3.1 Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Ideological (JUI-I)

The JUI-I is a far-right conservative religious political party of Pakistan which emanated from the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), an alliance of religious political parties, in 2005. Led by Maulana Ismatullah, the party believes in cordial relations with Iran. It blames the government of Pakistan for not establishing good ties with Iran and failing to benefit from trade with the resource-rich country. Talking about Afghanistan as a thorn in Pak-Iran relations, the party claims that Pakistan has owned someone else's war and made it difficult for itself to have cordial relations with Afghanistan. However, the party says that Pakistan and Iran have never had a problem that could dominate bilateral relations.

Against the backdrop of Pakistan being a frontline state in the war on terror, the party severely criticizes Pakistan's policies and claims that the meaning and definition of terrorism that Islamabad had derived to fight against its own people was the product of the west and the US. By joining their bloc, Pakistan had lost the credibility to reach out to Iran, which had openly criticized western designs and policies. On the question of Jundullah activities in Iran, the party opines that banning these organizations forces them to conduct covert operations and if the government removes the prefix of "banned", these organizations would not engage in terrorist activities in neighboring countries.¹⁶

The party believes that the government machinery is involved in the increasing sectarian scourge in the country and that is aimed at achieving vested interests and it is not an issue of Pakistan and Iran. JUI-I believes that the US intends to control the whole world, and that is why it has been opposing Iran's nuclear program. The party supports the Iranian nuclear program and argues that if the US wants Iran to close its nuclear program than US should first disarm its nuclear weapons. While balancing the equation of Saudi Arabia and Iran, JUI-I chief Maulana Ismatullah says that Pakistan has the right to make decisions based on national interest and should not pursue the dictates of any other country. The Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline is vital for Pakistan and it should not listen to American or Saudi Arabia and make its own decision by focusing on national interest.

JUI-I supports legal trade between the two countries and believes that cultural influence from Iran can bring about a positive change for both countries as, being neighbors, Pakistan and Iran are supposed to work together for improvement of relations.

2.3.2 Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)

The JI is a far-right theocratic political party of Pakistan. It is led by Syed Munawwar Hassan. The JI believes that Pakistan should have such a strong relation with Iran that no foreign power can undermine it. Iran had proposed that it could supply gas, electricity, diesel and other commodities to Pakistan and the latter should respect the offer. The JI believes that Pakistan and Iran do not have constraints but misunderstandings. Both countries had considerable Shia population so both should live in harmony.

On the question of Afghanistan, the party says that colonial powers followed their own interests and divided nations along linguistic lines to fulfill their own designs just as the US had done in Afghanistan and caused tensions in Iran-Pakistan relations. There would be civil war in Afghanistan if the US leaves now. The JI holds that it is now the responsibility of Iran, Pakistan and all stakeholders in Afghanistan to set up an interim government and the armies of the Muslim world should stay there to support such a government. Regarding Pakistan being a frontline state in the war on terror, the JI believes that it was not a decision made by parliament or the people of Pakistan, but by an individual. Pakistan does not need any kind of alliance with colonial powers and the time has come to break off ties with the US and make a strong alliance with Iran in order to nullify the agendas of the US and Israel.

The JI claims that if Iran blames Pakistan over Jundullah then Islamabad should take action against it and hold talks with Iran to resolve the issue.

However, it says that several foreign actors such as the US, Israel and India are involved in efforts to sabotage Iran-Pakistan ties by creating misunderstandings. The party believes that the sectarian issue in Pakistan is not deep-rooted and is limited only to some groups. Iran and Pakistan should strive to address sectarian friction because the opponents of the two countries are benefiting from the situation.

Regarding the pursuit of nuclear technology by Iran, the JI strongly opposes the US and says that the US has created a monopoly on nuclear weapons and is not letting other countries pursue nuclear technology even for peaceful purposes. The JI says that it has not been Muslims who have used weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons against other countries; the US has done that and continues to do so. The JI believes that Iran has every right to acquire nuclear technology. Regarding the increasing Iran-Indian nexus, the party says that Pakistan had supported Iran on many international issues therefore Tehran should support Islamabad on disputes such as Sir Creek, Siachen, Kashmir and Babri Mosque and compelling India to settle those by utilizing its economic linkages with New Delhi. The party says that Pakistan wants relations with India but not on at the cost of all these issues.¹⁷

While balancing relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia, the party states that Saudi Arabia holds special significance being home to Muslim holy places and Iran has also played the role of a leader so Pakistan cannot afford to ignore either. The JI says that in order to avoid confrontation, the three countries should consult each other for pragmatic solutions. The party supports strong trade ties with Muslim countries, claiming that 17 percent of Pakistan's exports and 11 percent import are with Muslim countries and says that Islamabad must not hand over its resources to the west. It believes that it is in Pakistan's interest to trade with Iran.

2.3.3 Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqah-e-Jafaria Pakistan (TNFJP)

Led by Agha Syed Hamid Ali Musavi, TNFJ is a Shia religious political party of Pakistan. It believes in brotherly relations with the entire Islamic world, including Iran. The party believes that Pakistan is connected politically, religiously and economically with Iran and can benefit from all these connections. On the question of US withdrawal and Pak-Iran relations after 2014, senior TNFJ member Allama Hussain Muqaddasi believes that the US will not leave this region. He believes that Washington is encircling Pakistan because of its nuclear weapons and the US is trying to sour Islamabad's relations with neighboring countries including Iran, which was why Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan were in continuous tension.

Regarding Pakistan's alliance with the US in the war on terror, the party blames the US for terrorism in Pakistan and believes that that scenario has affected Pak-Iran relations. The party also claims that Jundullah, Al Qaeda and other such organizations are products of the US, which is backing them in order to create a rift between Pakistan and Iran. About increasing sectarian strife in Pakistan, TNFJ says that that is not the issue of one institution or sect in the country, but something that concerns the entire nation, as doctors, professors and people from all walks of life have been targeted without discrimination of faith. The party believes that Iran does not have anything to do with sectarian turmoil in Pakistan.

TNFJ strongly supports Iran's nuclear program and demands that the US shun its dual policy towards the Muslim world. The party believes that trade can normalize bilateral relations and boost the economy. It asks that if Pakistan can engage in trade ties with the US why does Iran's trade with India bother Islamabad. Allama Muqaddasi also believes that Iran has the right to trade with any country including India, and that does not represent any threat to Pakistan, however it should be a matter of concern for Pakistan that Iran is trading with India and Pakistan is not benefiting from its resource-rich neighbor. The energy-starved Pakistan should buy oil, gas and electricity from Iran as it is not only the need of the hour but also in the country's national interest. While balancing relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia, Allama Muqaddasi claims that it is not a problem of Iran and Saudi Arabia, but the US does not want cordial relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The party thinks that every country has its own constraints, but Pakistan can handle ties with both Iran and Saudi Arabia.¹⁸

Trade, especially with Muslim countries, has special importance, according to the TNFJ. It says that Pakistan and Iran have huge potential for bilateral trade but the US dictates what Islamabad does or does not do. About the cultural influence of Iran, the party said that the two countries have great similarities which could be used to bring religious harmony in Pakistan and Iran.

3. Conclusion

The findings of the survey demonstrate that the political and religious parties in Pakistan have considerable convergence of opinion on the shape that Pak-Iran relations should take. There is a general agreement that Pakistan's ties with Iran should be determined by national interest and not by the dictates of the US or any other country. More generally, the political parties categorically state that Islamabad cannot afford to ignore a crucial neighboring country such as Iran, because of the huge trade potential and because the two

countries working together can help boost security for each other and also work together to promote religious and sectarian harmony.

The Pakistani political parties support by and large Iran's right to pursue a peaceful nuclear program. However, with the exception of some religious political parties, there is substantial opposition to Tehran's pursuit of nuclear weapons. The political and religious parties observe that Iran's business ties with India do not represent a threat to Pakistan and in fact point out that Pakistan is in a better position to cultivate enhanced trade ties with Iran to curb smuggling across their shared border and there is no reason why it should not do so. The survey findings also show that the political and religious parties do not think that Pakistan's ties with Iran and Saudi Arabia are an either-or affair.

Many of the political parties surveyed were quick to point to the fact that Pakistan and Iran had together signed a number of multilateral trade treaties after the middle of the last century and suggested that they should have had more expanded economic ties today after such a promising start. There were a range of views on factors that have strained Islamabad's ties with Tehran to varying degrees; these include the sectarian friction in Pakistan, Jundullah's mischief in Iran, Islamabad's role in Afghanistan and its position as a US ally. However, there was a clear consensus that Pakistan and Iran could move past any misunderstandings if both sides sincerely joined hands because many of the challenges that confronted them were shared and because a collaborative approach would lead to more concrete impact. None of the political and religious parties that participated in the survey opposed greater engagement with Iran. In fact more than one stated that since one could not change one's neighbors more concerted efforts should be made for shared prosperity and security of the two neighboring countries.

Notes

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- ¹ Siddiqui Farooq (Central Spokesperson, PML-N), interview by Maryam Naseer in Islamabad, May 17, 2012.
 - ² Muhammad Ijaz-ul-Haq (President, PML-Z), telephonic conversation with Maryam Naseer, May 30, 2012.
 - ³ Haider Abbas Rizvi (an MQM leader and member of National Assembly), telephonic conversation with Maryam Naseer, May 29, 2012.
 - ⁴ Ibid.
 - ⁵ Ali Awan (Standing Committee member, PTI), telephonic conversation with Maryam Naseer, May 30, 2012.
 - ⁶ Ishaq Baloch (Vice President, NP), telephonic conversation with Maryam Naseer, May 25, 2012.
 - ⁷ Abdul Malik Baloch (President, NP), telephonic conversation with Maryam Naseer, May 28, 2012.
 - ⁸ Tahir Bezinjo (Secretary General, NP), telephonic conversation with Maryam Naseer, May 28, 2012.
 - ⁹ Zahid Khan (Information Secretary, ANP), telephonic conversation with Maryam Naseer, May 31, 2012.
 - ¹⁰ Usman Kakar (Senior Vice President, PkMAP), telephonic conversation with Maryam Naseer, May 28, 2012.
 - ¹¹ Raheem Mandokhel (provincial Deputy Secretary of PkMAP), telephonic conversation with Maryam Naseer, May 28, 2012.
 - ¹² Ibid.
 - ¹³ Ibid.
 - ¹⁴ Talal Bugti (President, JWP-T), telephonic conversation with Maryam Naseer, May 25, 2012.
 - ¹⁵ Madni Baloch (Vice President, JWP-T), telephonic conversation with Maryam Naseer, May 25, 2012.
 - ¹⁶ Maulana Ismatullah (President JUI-I), telephonic conversation with Maryam Naseer, May 28, 2012.
 - ¹⁷ Fareed Ahmed Paracha (Deputy Secretary General, JI), telephonic conversation with Maryam Naseer, May 31, 2012.
 - ¹⁸ Allama Hussain Muqaddasi (Provincial President of TNFJP), telephonic conversation with Maryam Naseer, May 31, 2012.

Backgrounder

Evolution of Militant Groups in Pakistan (III)

Muhammad Amir Rana

Deobandi Groups during Taliban Regime

The Taliban regime in Afghanistan was another high point for Deobandi jihad groups, who enjoyed at the time the complete support of Taliban and expanded their camps to train not only Pakistani militants but also Taliban against the Northern Alliance. The Taliban leader Mullah Omar assigned important responsibilities to Qari Saifullah Akhtar, head of Harkatul Jihad-e-Islami.¹ Initially, he was made in-charge of foreign militants' cantonment in Kabul and later the military advisor to Mullah Omar.²

Saifullah Akhtar took advantage of his position and further expanded the Harkat-ul-Jihad-e-Islami (HUJI) network in Afghanistan. Before the Taliban rule, Akhtar only had two training centers in Afghanistan, but that number later increased to seven. He established his central secretariat in Kabul, called Darul Irshad, which was located opposite the presidential office. Mullah Omar also entrusted Akhtar with the responsibility of military organization against the Northern Alliance. In addition, he was given about 80 percent of the responsibility concerning the management of the police and the army. He also had practical control over the Taliban military cantonments.

Akhtar was supposed to be one of the most trusted figures in the Afghan jihad. Dr. Abdullah Azzam, the highly influential Palestinian Sunni Islamic scholar and theologian, has paid his compliments to him in these words: "He had the good fortune of collecting the most sincere and sacrificing individuals together and put them in an organizational structure because it is he who has mastered the art of jihad after Maulana Irshad Ahmad, a veteran 'Mujahid' and student of Darul Uloom Islamia Binori Town, a well known seminary in Karachi."³ During his visit to Afghanistan, Professor Khwaja Abdul Kalam Siddiqui—a Deobandi religious scholar from Multan, who traveled extensively in Afghanistan during Taliban regime and wrote a travelogue in a monthly Islamic magazine—had the following impression of Saifullah Akhtar's personality: "The Maulana [Akhtar] has an active and

prompt bent of personality. In spite of his extraordinary engagements from dawn to dusk, he is never tired. His mind is more active than his body. In whatever position he might be, he is always abreast of the current status over his wireless. He is a man of keen understanding and sharp perceptions and he knows how to deal with whom.”⁴

Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Chinioti, a Deobandi scholar from Jhang district in the Punjab province, has written in his travelogue on Afghanistan: “We were moving on a road in Afghanistan. The Taliban were busy searching the vehicles. As soon as our vehicle reached the spot, the man on duty looked at Qari [Saifullah Akhtar] Sahib and said ‘May I sacrifice my life upon you, sir. Please come in.’ I do not think there can be a greater example of confidence and recognition of human worth.”⁵ He writes further, “Qari Sahib said in the company of friends that being in Afghanistan and performing jihad activities was like following the instructions of the *Amirul Momineen* (leader of the faithful).”

Around that time, another Pakistani militant group Harkatul Mujahideen (HuM), a breakaway faction of HUJI, had developed close links with Osama Bin Laden, who had also been playing a prominent part in waging war against the US. The HuM head Maulana Fazlur Rahman Khalil had taken an active part in setting up the Al Qaeda training camp in Khost in Afghanistan. Al Qaeda militants had also been receiving regular training in HuM camps.

Maulana Khalil’s name was added to the US hit-list when in August 1998 two US ships in international waters off Karachi fired more than 50 cruise missiles on targets in Jalalabad and Khost. The missiles killed 20 HuM militants. Maulana Khalil declared in response to the attacks, “We shall definitely take our revenge.” On May 1, 2000, the US foreign office designated HuM as a terrorist organization.

Jaish-e-Muhammad (JM), established in 2000, was in the process of developing its infrastructure in Afghanistan when the Taliban regime fell in 2001. Some jihadi sources claim that Maulana Masood Azhar, founder of JM, met with Mullah Omar in Kandahar on December 31, 1999, soon after his release from an Indian prison in a swap for hostages on a hijacked Indian Airlines plane that the hijackers had taken to Kandahar. The meeting was arranged on Mullah Omar’s instance. Before announcing the establishment of

Jaish-e-Muhammad, Maulana Azhar had sought endorsement from Mullah Omar as the former reportedly considered the Taliban chief the caliph of the Islamic world and thought it was necessary to seek his opinion before making any important decision. Azhar kept growing closer to Mullah Omar on whose orders the Taliban provided the JM space for their centers and training camps in Kabul. Their closeness was to the detriment of Harkatul Mujahideen, which went into the fold of Osama Bin Laden in reaction.

Post-Taliban

After the fall of the Taliban regime, Deobandi groups passed through two transformational phases: the first was an expansion of their agenda from 2001 until 2007; and the second was emergence of Punjabi Taliban from 2007 onwards.

The Lal Masjid episode in Islamabad in 2007 divides these two phases and had triggered anti-state sentiments among Deobandi youth in Pakistan.

HUJI: The immediate effect of the Taliban fall on Deobandi jihad groups was that they lost their organizational support bases in Afghanistan in addition to the human resource losses. In the many setbacks that HUJI suffered, it lost command and control over its members and its organizational infrastructure was scattered.

In October 2001, more than 150 HUJI militants lost their lives in US bombardment in Afghanistan. Among those were important leaders such as Commander Maulana Tabassum Nazir, Commander Ustad Hasan, and Commander Asadullah. Ninety of these militants were killed on the Mazar-e-Sharif front, and the rest in Khwaja Ghar and Bagram. Qari Saifullah Akhtar had remained stationed in Kabul during this period. He reached Kandahar before it fell to the Northern Alliance. It was he who helped Mullah Omar escape from Kandahar when in November 2002 Northern Alliance troops neared the city amid intense bombing by US aircraft. Initially, there were reports that Mullah Omar had been killed but later it emerged that he had managed to flee with Saifullah Akhtar on a motorbike.

The HUJI militants fought alongside the Taliban and lost over 300 men at the hands of the Northern Alliance. The HUJI had set up six military camps with

Mullah Omar's blessing in Kandahar, Kabul and Khost. From those camps, the HUJI launched militant operations in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Chechnya.

HUJI's monthly publication *Al-Irshad*⁶ reported that until November 2002, 67 of its Pakistani militants, including 10 important commanders, had lost their lives in Afghanistan. One of its commanders said in August 2003, "Our fighters have been killed and it is our obligation to avenge their death." Saifullah Akhtar's fighters proved to be dependable associates of the Taliban and fought until the end. HUJI publications continuously eulogized and encouraged the fighters.

Saifullah Akhtar's commanders, fighting in Kandahar and Kunduz, scattered in different areas after the American bombing. Some of them crossed into Central Asia states and Chechnya in a bid to avoid the bombings. The rest of HUJI commanders and fighters headed towards Waziristan and Buner in FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, respectively. Most of them preferred to stay at their base camp in Wana in South Waziristan. The HUJI fighters belonging to the tribal areas helped the Arab fighters settle there.

But for a long time after that there was no word on the whereabouts of Saifullah Akhtar. His last message was published in the December 2001 issue of monthly *Al-Irshad* (Islamabad) in which he had addressed his fighters, saying: "The American joint forces were targeting the common citizens, so the Taliban announced to leave the cities. Governments come and go; they do not mean much to us. Our main aim is to wage jihad in the way of God and that we are doing... The mujahideen must work in a better way. They must sacrifice their lives and worldly possession and achieve places of prominence in the kingdom of God. Harkat-ul-Jihad-e-Islami is making all efforts possible on this occasion and the mujahideen must cooperate fully."

It appears that after Akhtar fled Kandahar with Mullah Omar he went to Saudi Arabia at some point. However, he did not stay there for long and took shelter in Dubai from where was captured on August 7, 2004 and handed over to the Pakistani authorities.

At the time, he was facing charges in Pakistan related to attacks on Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf, Finance Minister Shaukat Aziz and the Karachi corps commander.⁷ Amjad Hussain Farooqi, another militant commander, also involved in the attacks on General Musharraf and other government officials, was said to have acted under orders from Saifullah Akhtar.⁸ After Qari Akhtar's arrest, his brother-in-law filed a suit in the Lahore High Court against the government for taking him into custody illegally. He claimed in the petition that Saifullah Akhtar had quit jihadi activities and was working in Dubai to earn a living for his family.

Saifullah Akhtar remains a mysterious figure in Pakistan's political and jihad account. He is considered among the founders of jihad in Pakistan, who was among the first batches of Pakistani mujahideen in Afghanistan. His name was mentioned with regard to the 1995 attempted military coup case, but was then dropped from that case. Besides serving as the military advisor to Mullah Omar during the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and helping Mullah Omar escape after US forces attacked Kandahar in 2001, Saifullah was the first Pakistani jihad leader arrested abroad and handed over to Pakistan in August 2004 by the United Arab Emirates government. He was released in 2006 and arrested again in February 2008 in connection with the October 2007 blasts in Karachi that targeted former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's convoy when she had returned to Pakistan following an eight-year self-imposed exile. Akhtar was also engaged in a brawl with a rival jihadi group over the occupation of a *Khanqah* (Sufi monastery) in Ferozewala, in district Sheikhpura, and his arrest in 2008 was initially linked to that dispute, but later he was shifted to Karachi and produced in court on charges related to attempts to assassinate Benazir Bhutto.

Akhtar's name was subsequently mentioned in a high-profile missing persons' case in the Supreme Court, where the campaigners said that he was one of the many people who had disappeared after being picked up by the authorities. Qari Saifullah was never produced before a court of law, and when the Supreme Court kept asking about the whereabouts of the so-called 'missing persons', the Interior Ministry informed the court that Qari Saifullah Akhtar was among those recently set free by the authorities as there was no case against him.⁹

Saifullah Akhtar's relatives claim that he had quit jihad activities and turned into a *Sufi*.¹⁰ He had served as *khadim* (devotee) at Syed Nafeesul Hussaini's Syed Ahmed Shaheed *Khanqah* in Lahore. After Nafeesul Hussani's death in February 2008 he was building a new *Khanqah* in Ferozewala, in Sheikhpura district, and was arrested from that site along with his three sons.

Despite his important role in jihad activities, very little is known about him. Even if he has quit jihad activities no one is quite willing to believe that. It is also worth knowing if he has indeed been won over by Sufism.

Brigade 313: Another faction of HUJI known as Brigade 313, led by Commander Ilyas Kashmiri, had joined Al Qaeda's ranks. Kashmiri was killed in a drone strike in Pakistan's tribal areas in June 2010.¹¹

Once the blue eyed boy of the jihadi establishment, Kashmiri had been associated with jihad since 1984. Since the very beginning, he had been closely associated with Maulana Irshad Ahmad's Harkatul Jihad and had also shared important responsibilities on several fronts. Kashmiri's ancestors hailed from Nakial and Kotli regions of Kashmir. Apart from managing camp affairs in Kotli, he kept taking part in militant operations along the Line of Control that divides Kashmir between Pakistan and India. His role was prominent in activating Harkat-ul-Jihad in the Jammu region. As many as 3,000 mujahideen had been trained at the Kotli camp by March 2002.

Ilyas was associated with an operation at Lanjot in Indian-administered Kashmir, where in January 2000 the Indian forces had targeted the local population along with the mujahideen and killed several Kashmiris. HUJI's Brigade 313 had vowed to avenge the killings and Ilyas Kashmiri took part in an operation to do that where he was reported to have chopped off heads of Indian soldiers and also brought back the body of an Indian soldier with him. The other jihadi organizations considered the operation a significant accomplishment and praised and congratulated the HUJI over that.

Ilyas Kashmiri turned against the state of Pakistan when he was arrested twice in 2003-04 over suspicion of involvement in attacks on General Pervez Musharraf. That proved to be a turning point in his life when he decided to join the ranks of Al Qaeda and moved personnel from his Kotli-based training camp to a new one in Razmak, in North Waziristan region of FATA. He

renamed his group Al Qaeda Brigade 313 and was made Al Qaeda's military chief for Afghanistan and Pakistan after Mustafa Abu al-Yazid was killed in a drone strike in May 2010.¹²

In August 2010, the United States and the United Nations designated him a terrorist. The US placed its highest bounty for a most-wanted target, \$5 million, on Kashmiri's head. He instigated guerrilla-style terrorist attacks inside Pakistan and was involved in attacks in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi, including one on a naval aviation base in Karachi in 2010. He was also accused of organizing the December 2009 Camp Chapman attack against CIA personnel in Khost, Afghanistan.

HuM: Harkatul Mujahideen (HuM) also suffered heavy casualties in Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban regime.¹³ After the Pakistani government banned several militant groups in 2002, the HuM leadership changed the name of the group to Jamiatul Ansar but the government proscribed the new group as well in November 2003. Yet the group continued its activities under various names and is now working under the cover of a charity called Ansarul Ummah. The group has almost lost all its militant resources and is passing through a transformational phase. It is trying to be part of the new far-right political discourse in Pakistan and is an active member of Pakistan Defence Council, an alliance of right-wing parties.

HuM also suffered internal crises and like Brigade 313 two of its important commanders, Maulana Farooq Kashmiri and Maulana Badar Muneer, joined Al Qaeda's ranks. Before joining the global terrorist movement, they unsuccessfully tried to expel Maulana Fazlur Rahman Khalil, founder of the group, twice between 2004 and 2007. To counter the revolt, Maulana Khalil made an alliance with the HUJI in Pakistan's tribal areas and both organizations worked under one command and the banner of Jaish-e-Islami for a short while.¹⁴ Similar reports were published about a merger between Khuddamul Furqan, a splinter group of the Jaish-e-Muhammad, and HuM¹⁵ but an alliance never materialised. After the 2007 Lal Masjid siege in Islamabad, Farooq Kashmiri and Badar Muneer moved to the tribal areas and formed their own group with support from Al Qaeda and the local Taliban. Following Ilyas Kashmiri's death Badar Mansoor had replaced him as Al Qaeda's operational head for Pakistan and managed Ilyas Kashmiri-style terrorist attacks in Pakistan but most of his target were sectarian including

shrines that he believed to have played a role in the attack on the shrine of Data Ganj Bakhsh in Lahore. He was killed in a drone strike in North Waziristan in February 2012.¹⁶

Jaish-e-Muhammad (JM): In September 2001, amid changing circumstances, Maulana Masood Azhar, the JM chief, harshly criticized in fiery speeches American attack in Afghanistan targeting the Taliban administration and Al Qaeda. He also vowed to send Jaish-e-Muhammad fighters to help the Taliban. Around the same time, Indian parliament was attacked and Jaish immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. Rebuttals were later published. The Indian government demanded that Pakistan hand over Azhar to New Delhi for questioning. In December 2001, the US Department of Justice labeled Jaish-e-Muhammad a terrorist organization. It was in these circumstances that Azhar was arrested in Bahawalpur on December 24, 2001. He was already an accused in several cases, including hijacking of a bus in Bahawalpur, taking out illegal processions, as well as several cases under the Arms Act. One of these cases was filed in Dera Ghazi Khan and another in Gujranwala. The Dera Ghazi Khan court granted him bail in March 2002 but the Home Secretary of Punjab issued orders for his arrest.

Azhar's family challenged his arrest in a writ petition to the Lahore High Court, which concluded on December 14, 2002, a year after the Indian parliament attack for which Jaish was blamed, that Azhar's arrest was illegal and ordered his release.

After this verdict, he was put under house arrest at his own home in Bahawalpur. The house arrest ended on December 30, 2003. Incidentally, this was the same date when he had been released from an Indian prison along with other militants in exchange for passengers on a hijacked Indian Airlines jet.

After his release, the jihadi organization engaged in its activities again. The government designated Jaish-e-Muhammad as a banned organization, although it emerged under a new name, as Tehrik-e-Khuddam-e-Millat.

The First Split in Jaish-e Muhammad

The first group to break away from Jaish-e-Muhammad was led by Maulana Abdullah Shah Mazhar, who was the *Ameer* of Jaish-e-Muhammad in the

Sindh province. He broke away from Jaish-e-Muhammad in October 2001 and formed Tehrik al-Furqan. Before joining Jaish-e-Muhammad, Shah was the chief of Harkat-ul-Jihad-e-Islami in Karachi, and had joined Jaish-e-Muhammad along with his entire group. The reason cited for the split was that Maulana Masood Azhar had formed Jaish-e-Muhammad with the stated objective of uniting all Deobandi organizations but had failed to achieve that.

The Second Split and Formation of Jamaatul Furqan

On May 4, 2003 Azhar wrote to law enforcement agencies in Pakistan that he had expelled 12 people from his organization for their alleged involvement in sectarian incidents and bombing of churches and sought strict action against them.¹⁷ The 12 people were: Commander Abdul Jabbar, the chief commander of JM, Maulana Abdullah Shah Mazhar, the JM head in Sindh, Maulana Ghulam Murtaza, JM finance department head, Muhammad Tahir Hayat, Ghulam Hyder, Nasir Shirazi, Naveed Farooqi, Qari Abdul Majeed, Ejaz Mehmood, Maqsood Ali Shah, Abdul Samad Soomro and Shaukat Hayat.

This sudden ouster exposed fissures within the JM ranks. Those who were driven out came together under the banner of Tehrik Khuddam-e-Islam. This led to disputes, encroachment upon each other's property and also violence. Al-Rasheed Trust, which was instrumental in strengthening Jaish-e-Muhammad, went against Maulana Azhar in the split. The splinter group and Al-Rasheed Trust maintained that Azhar had tried to forsake the path of jihad and passed on information to the government agencies to facilitate the arrest of Taliban and Arab militants. They also accused Azhar of corruption, nepotism and betrayal after these expulsions. They alleged that Commander Jabbar had been ousted to accommodate Azhar's brother, Ibrahim. The new head of the JM training camp was Yousaf Azhar, a disciple of Azhar who had taken his mentor's surname as a mark of respect, and who later became Azhar's brother-in-law. Rasheed Kamran, another brother-in-law of Maulana Azhar, was reportedly entrusted with the responsibility of managing the JM's finances and Kashmir affairs. Maulana Asif Qasmi, a close aide of Azhar, was appointed head of Al-Rehmat Trust's Kashmir chapter. The head of JM's foreign affairs section, Jahangir alias Talha, was also one of Azhar's brothers. Tahir, his elder brother, was the cashier at the JM headquarters and a younger brother, Abdul Rauf, advisor and manager of finances and later head of Al-

Rehmat Trust. Maulana Azhar was also accused of embezzlements of JM's funds and assets.

After Jaish-e-Muhammad was founded in 2000, rumors spread to the extent that Qari Saifullah Akhtar had declared support for Jaish and the entire HUJI management was merging with the former. Such rumors confused Harkat-ul-Jihad members. Jaish further stated that the central deputy chief of HUJI, Maulana Muhammad Umar, had also joined the JM. Harkat-ul-Jihad contradicted the claim immediately, and formed a committee to quash such rumors, prevent Jaish-e-Muhammad from occupying HUJI offices, and to strive to save HUJI from all schism and confusion. The committee members were Maulana Saeed Ahmad Awan, Zafar Shah, and Maulana Ustad Ajmal.

These attempts did not help the JM avoid internal crises and with the passage of time many of its commanders left the group and joined Al Qaeda or Taliban's ranks. An important commander, Ismat Muavia, formed a lethal Punjabi Taliban group called Fidayeen-e-Islam, which is involved not only in sectarian attacks but also attacks on security forces. JM splinters had contributed to setting up terrorist training camps in Swat and had a significant role in instigating the Mullah Fazlullah-led insurgency in the Swat region.

The JM continues to operate as Al-Rehmat Trust and attempts to combine its militant resources with this new identity but it has lost the capacity to resume jihad in Kashmir.

Emergence of Punjabi Taliban

The term 'Punjabi Taliban' refers to militant and sectarian outfits or their breakaway factions that have been operating in Indian-administered Kashmir and Afghanistan or have remained involved in sectarian violence in Pakistan. The Punjabi Taliban have emerged from the militant and sectarian landscape of Pakistan and share a similar worldview, ideology and political and sectarian ideas. Yet, there are a few things that stand out. Firstly, these groups detached themselves from their parent militant organizations over multiple strategic and tactical differences, mainly after describing the leaders of those organizations as puppets of state intelligence agencies.

The Punjabi Taliban thus acquired complete freedom from official control and maintained that they were following the true path of jihad. Their actions went against the stance of Pakistan-based militant organizations such as Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Muhammad and Harkat-ul-Mujahideen which oppose terrorist activities inside the country. Secondly, the Punjabi Taliban have borrowed their political narrative from Islamist political parties but they have been following Al Qaeda's *takfiri* ideology, despite the fact that these groups are not formally affiliated with the transnational militant group or Islamist political parties operating in the country. In essence, the Punjabi Taliban have been the outcome of the sudden U-turn in Pakistan's pre-9/11, pro-jihad policy. At that time, at least 104 militant organizations were operating in the country.

The Pakistan government had clamped down on the leadership of these groups at a time when Al Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban were calling for jihad against the United States and its allies in Afghanistan. Amid the clampdown, the middle and lower rank militants lost contact with their leadership and many of them were swayed by Al Qaeda's call to arms and decided to join the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Soon after that, Pakistan began to feel the repercussions of the emerging trend among the militant groups. On January 30, 2002, several newspapers in Pakistan received a leaflet from an organization calling itself Al Saiqa. The leaflet described Pakistan as *darul harb* (abode of war) and *darul kufr* (abode of the infidels) and asked the masses to wage jihad against the government and the security forces. The message from the previously unheard of organization was among the first signs that militants were turning against the state itself. A church in Bahawalpur was attacked a few days after the release of the Al Saiqa leaflet and a new group called Lashkar-e-Omar claimed responsibility.

Around the same time, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen Alalami surfaced in Karachi, which later claimed responsibility for many terrorist attacks in the city. Later, it was established that these groups were formed by junior operatives of various militant factions that had previously been fighting against Indian forces in Kashmir. Sectarian outfits such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, which had lost sanctuaries in Kabul and Kandahar after the fall of the Taliban government in Afghanistan, also joined these groups. During the Taliban regime, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi had developed close links with Al Qaeda, which later led to logistical and operational cooperation between them. Several new militant groups,

which had no prior connections with these militant organizations, also surfaced. Although a media report in 2010 quoting intelligence sources claimed that around 17 banned terrorist organizations were active in the Punjab province but independent sources count more than 37 groups operating as Punjabi Taliban.¹⁸ Overall, the Punjabi Taliban phenomenon unveiled a new approach in the name of religion in Pakistan. The two discourses that were dominant in the country earlier were: Islamization and sectarian supremacy through political means; and jihad against external forces (mainly other states) in order to “safeguard Pakistan’s ideological and geographical boundaries”.

Religio-political parties, such as the Jamaat-e-Islami, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan and sectarian parties, such as Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan and the Tehrik-e-Jafaria subscribed to the first approach. With respect to the second discourse, the manifestos of militant organizations before 9/11 emphasized the significance of jihad against “oppressive forces”, which was generally a reference to India, Israel and the United States.

The motto and the stated ambition of the militant group Harkat-ul-Jihad-e-Islami was to be the “second defense line of every Muslim state”. The two approaches were in sync with the national ideological narrative, which had remained strong for nearly six decades since the country’s creation. But the Punjabi Taliban appropriated both the agendas and pursued them through violent means. In this context, the involvement of the Punjabi Taliban in targeting sectarian, communal, foreign, political and security institutions or their support for the militants in Swat hardly seem surprising. The Punjabi Taliban belong to the Deobandi school of thought, which is not a majority sect in Pakistan.

At the same time, they do not enjoy popular support even within their own sect. The sectarian limitations may prevent them from getting popular support for their movement but their potential to generate terrorist violence – and their links with Al Qaeda and Taliban – make them a serious security concern not only for Pakistan but for the wider region and the world.

Notes

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- ¹ Author's interview with an aide to Qari Saifullah Akhtar.
 - ² Ibid.
 - ³ Monthly *Al-Irshad*, Islamabad, February-March, 2002.
 - ⁴ Travelogue *Emarat-e Islamia Afghanistan* in monthly *Naqeeb Khatm-e Nabuwwat*, Multan, March, 2000.
 - ⁵ Monthly *Al-Irshad*, Islamabad, April 2000.
 - ⁶ Issue December 2001.
 - ⁷ *Daily Times*, Lahore, August 8, 2004.
 - ⁸ Ibid.
 - ⁹ *Dawn*, Islamabad, March 3, 2008.
 - ¹⁰ Press conference by Saifullah Akhtar's brother along with his lawyer in Rawalpindi on March 16, 2007 (*The News*, March 17, 2007) for filing a suit against the publisher of Benazir Bhutto's book "Islam, Democracy and the West" for mentioning Akhtar's name as the culprit.
 - ¹¹ Staff report, "Ilyas Kashmiri — a profile," *Pakistan Post*, Islamabad, June 5, 2010, <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2011/06/05/news/national/ilyas-kashmiri—a-profile/>.
 - ¹² Ibid.
 - ¹³ Muhammad Amir Rana, *Seeds of Terrorism* (London: Millennium Publications, 2005), 137.
 - ¹⁴ Anwer Hussain Sumra, *The Post*, April, 24, 2006.
 - ¹⁵ Mohammad Imran, *Daily Times*, March 31, 2007.
 - ¹⁶ *Express Tribune*, Islamabad, February 10, 2012, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/334355/badar-mansoor-eliminated-pakistan-al-qaeda-chief-killed-by-us-drone/>.
 - ¹⁷ Asim Hussain, *The News*, Lahore, June 21, 2003.
 - ¹⁸ Muhammad Amir Rana, "The Punjabi Taliban," *Dawn*, Islamabad, July 9, 2010.

Comment

Pakistan: A Society in Perpetual Turmoil

Zubair Torwali

Pakistan's image on the international scene is anything but positive today. The country is known for Taliban, terrorists linked to Al Qaeda, sectarian violence, its unstable democracy, corrupt and failing state institutions and a nuclear capability about which fears have been voiced that it could fall into the hands of terrorists. Despite large-scale natural disasters in recent years, Pakistan's plight has failed to move the international community to extend support commensurate with the extent of the destruction.

Mired in perpetual turbulence since the country's birth in August 1947, many can argue that the ordinary Pakistanis have gained less and paid more. In terms of human development Pakistan has recently been placed at 141 out of 189 countries in the world. Poverty is on constant rise with the only variable being its intensity. The literacy rate, according to official sources, is 58 percent. Nearly half of the population is illiterate, incapable of even reading the Quran, the holy book of Muslims. During the 65 years of its existence, Pakistan has been ruled directly by the military for 30 years and indirectly for the remaining years.

Pakistan is a diverse society with as many as 60 small ethno-linguistic communities apart from four major ones, namely, Punjabis, Pashtuns, Sindhis and Baloch; and all of them have been denied their ethnic identity and forced into a single entity based on religion alone. The social identity in Pakistan is mainly based on three entities: religion, ethnicity and tribe or caste. Religious identity has further been divided into innumerable sects. However, the division based on religious identity in Pakistan is much more widespread and deep rooted. This division has given birth to the menace of sectarian violence and incessant persecution of religious minorities in Pakistan.

The Pakistani society presents a dismal scenario economically. The middle class is shrinking while the bourgeois is expanding not in number but in wealth. Feudalism and large ownership of land associated with it could not be curbed and politics is still feudalistic and tribal. Since the country's establishment, it has not been possible to root out feudalism in Pakistan because of a number of factors including the religious cover given to the argument to save it. Every time a move for reform or strike at feudalism has

emerged it has been resisted by religious leaders who have advocated that land reform, or redistribution of land by taking it from the feudals and giving it to the landless, is un-Islamic. The nexus between feudalism and the religious clique is one of the most difficult obstacles in the path of social development in Pakistan. The feudals backed by religious leaders continue to have considerable say in the country's affairs. In the overwhelmingly male-dominated society, most women lead their lives in distress, misery and despondence. Religious minorities and the poor are the least secure.

The women in general are not regarded as independent individuals in their own right. They are controlled by men – fathers, husbands, brothers and even sons. Women are considered the most significant part of a family's honour and any action by women or with reference to them that is deemed to undermine that honour can lead to their murder. They are not allowed to work freely; and men usually consider women taking up any kind of employment as against the so-called honour of the family and the clan. Recently, a local *jirga* (assembly of local male elders) in Kohistan, one of the least developed districts in Pakistan, ordered the killing of five women after a video surfaced in which they were seen dancing and clapping in a wedding ceremony. Hardly a week goes by without news of at least some girls or women being killed in the name of honour in Pakistan. Many Pakistani Muslims believe that educating girls might lead to them straying or adopting un-Islamic or immoral lifestyles. This perception is common in parts of rural Pakistan where the influence of the tribe-religious nexus is strong.

The spiritual aspect of Islam enshrined in the Sufi tradition is fast being replaced by the exhibitionist version which emphasizes on certain overt acts such as saying of prayers, observing fasting and a particular dress code, growing a beard, abstention from drinking alcohol and the annual pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia. However, values such as sanctity of human life, respect for rights of others, social honesty and truthfulness, and contribution towards humanity are generally not considered important by the followers of the religion.

The people are inclined to buy into conspiracy theories. Many of the ills in Pakistan are interpreted with a specific mindset and usually considered the doing of the United States, India or Israel. Natural calamities, including the devastating 2010 floods and the 2005 earthquake, have been described as wrath of God upon the people because of their sins. The clergy even attributes acute poverty to God's will, and sometimes calls lack of financial means a blessing.

With such stark polarization, society in Pakistan can be categorized into a number of strata in terms of how they see political power and how they indulge in it.

First are those who are engaged in the power game within the state. They are both civilian and military. The political power mainly seems a tug of war between the elites—feudal lords, religio-politico leaders, and the military generals. Now the judges and lawyers have also joined the bandwagon.

The second largest class comprises the Pakistani state-sponsored educated ones. They are usually more active in public life and the political discourse. Mainly influenced by a biased education and a robust but uncontrolled mass media, they usually do not consider democratic governments efficient. They tend to be captivated by Pakistan's Urdu electronic media. A considerable number of them also use social media, especially Facebook. The *mullah* reigns here too and perhaps more effectively. The people in this category are usually made the key drivers for political Islam and pan-Islamism. They are divided along ideological lines with an overwhelming majority siding with the religious orthodoxy.

Third, the urbanite civil society and the business class are westernized in their lifestyle. Most of them get their education from institutions abroad. The business class has nothing to do with the power in Islamabad but exercises considerable influence in the power corridors in the center. They fund the election of certain political forces for their vested interest and also have the ear of the country's powerful military and other institutions. The westernized civil society is mostly based in the country's urban centers, Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi, and its direct contact with the ordinary people is very limited, mainly owing to perceptions among the people that civil society pursues a western agenda and communicates in English or a mix of languages that the ordinary people do not understand. Of course, many civil society activists and organizations do have good intentions and legitimate concern for human rights; and have contributed remarkably to society at large, yet in Pakistan they still have a long way to go to get firm support among the masses. Most of them do not exercise their right to vote because of their dismay with the current political parties in Pakistan. However, they do have well meaning individuals among them who have been fighting for the rights of the people.

In these circumstances, there is not very much out there to pin one's hopes on. One meets bitter challenges working alongside the people for their wellbeing and social uplift. Perhaps the way to get out of these tumultuous times lies in consistently sticking to democracy with a strong support from civil society and the media.

Book Review

‘Pakistan: A Hard Country’ by Anatol Lieven

Safiya Aftab

Lieven is now a professor at King’s College London, but was previously a journalist with *The Times*, and has been writing about Pakistan, first as a journalist and then as a researcher, for many years. His latest book is therefore being taken seriously in academic and policy circles, and has generated a lot of debate, not only in Pakistan, but also in the English-speaking world in general.

The book stands out among other recent ones on Pakistan (like Ahmed Rashid’s *Descent into Chaos* and Farzana Sheikh’s *Making Sense of Pakistan*) in that its conclusions are highly optimistic. Lieven not only assures his readers that Pakistan will survive as a country but goes so far as to assert that the greatest threat to the country is not insurgency but ecological change. And even with regard to the latter, he feels that “Pakistani farmers are tough and adaptable,” and that future ecological disasters could be averted or mitigated with adequate human and financial resources.

Lieven’s broad conclusions correspond to what Pakistan’s powerful establishment and some political groups such as the religious parties and Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) have been saying for some time:

- That extremism in Pakistan is being fueled by the US presence in Afghanistan (although Lieven does not suggest, unlike the PTI, that a US withdrawal would end the problem);
- That drone attacks are counter-productive in that they have not blunted the Afghan insurgency, and have taken a terrible toll of civilian lives;
- That the US must not, under any circumstances, send ground forces into Pakistan;
- That Pakistan’s links with the Afghan Taliban should be seen in a positive light and translated into a means to bring the insurgents to the negotiating table;

- That Pakistan has legitimate interests in Afghanistan; and
- That the US needs to “limit” India’s involvement in Afghanistan if it wants good long-term relations with Pakistan.

Lieven’s conclusions come from his belief that Pakistani society is stronger than the state, and that kinship networks and the informal sector are keeping Pakistan afloat, by ensuring that its citizens have help in negotiating the government machinery, and continue to have access to some form of livelihood. In addition, he is impressed with the military’s efficiency and ability to make things work, in what he seems to perceive as a sea of civilian incompetence. He asserts that “every military coup when it happened was popular with most Pakistanis,” and that cases of corruption involving large amounts of money are “remarkably rare” in the military (he cites the case of Admiral Mansur ul Haq as an exception). He also says that retired soldiers are prized by private businesses and NGOs and offered jobs for their “qualities of discipline, honesty, hard work and higher education.” There is no discussion of the tilt towards conservatism in the ranks of the Pakistan Army, or the possibility of extremist elements infiltrating the military – something that has been talked about in the wake of repeated attacks on military bases which have fuelled suspicion of in-house collusion.

Politicians, predictably, get short shrift from Lieven. The chapter on politics is the weakest one in the book, with its emphasis on the lifestyles of the feudals, including their appalling treatment of servants, and garishly decorated houses. There is a brief discussion on the Sharifs (more descriptions of garish houses and their alleged interest in women), and a more detailed one on the MQM which highlights the allegiance of the party cadres to its leader, and ends with the observation that there is something to be said for feudalism when the alternative is “this kind of modernity.” Lieven appears wholly unimpressed by the decades long struggles of Pakistan’s political workers against successive dictatorships; the changing landscape of both urban and rural politics where party allegiance is becoming more important than personalities; the maturity that Pakistani voters have often displayed when it comes to throwing out even long-standing feudal families in elections; the role of ideological politics both in the right and left wings and how interest in such politics has had notable societal impacts.

That Lieven's sources were either limited to begin with, or were selective with what they wanted to divulge is apparent from his lack of knowledge on issues that were front page news in Pakistan. In the chapter on Balochistan, he says that the Bugti revolt was given impetus by the rape of a lady doctor in a military hospital at Sui. While this is true, he goes on to say that the government blamed a Bugti tribesman for the crime, which prompted Akbar Bugti to rebel. In fact, it was the then military government's failure to take action against the accused, a serving army officer, that fuelled resentment in Balochistan. Similarly, he postulates that the MQM's ability to develop Karachi city is "restricted by the limited powers accorded to municipal governments in Pakistan" – an interesting observation for a period when local governments with substantial powers were in place in the country, and Karachi in particular was reaping the benefits of that.

Given Lieven's familiarity with Pakistan, it is surprising that the book is full of small mistakes, which do not detract from the narrative or the broad message, but still tend to rankle. He says that Balochistan provides a third of Pakistan's gas supplies when it is actually less than a quarter. The Balochistan town of Dalbandin is referred to more than once as Dalbandia. The date of the attack on the Indian parliament is given as December 2000 in one part of the book and December 2001 in another (it is actually the latter). A good editor and fact-checker could have seen to such irritants.

Overall, Lieven's book has been popular with the military and those who project the view that Pakistan's current troubles can be explained away by its location in a bad neighborhood. For those looking for a more nuanced understanding, this is not the tome to read.

Notes on Contributors

Arshi Saleem Hashmi is a senior research analyst at Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), Islamabad, and visiting faculty at Quaid-e-Azam University (QAU), Islamabad. She is also a doctoral candidate at the Department of International Relations, QAU, Islamabad.

Maryam Naseer has a masters degree in international relations from Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad. Her area of interest is the Pak-Afghan region with a special focus on geostrategic issues. She recently completed a course on 'peace research' from University of Oslo in Norway.

Muhammad Amir Rana is an expert on terrorism-related and regional strategic issues. Besides presenting numerous research papers at international fora, he has also authored a number of books, including '*A to Z of Jihad Organizations in Pakistan*'.

Najam U Din has done his LLM in international human rights law from Lunds University in Sweden. He has worked with the English print media in various capacities since 1998, including as a sub-editor with The News, Lahore, and as an assistant editor with Daily Times, Lahore. He currently works for the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan as a research officer.

Safdar Sial has been working with PIPS as a research analyst since March 2007. His work focuses on political and socio-economic conflicts in Pakistan, media, governance and transnational security issues. He has published extensively in national and international journals and is a co-author of '*Dynamics of Taliban Insurgency in FATA*', and '*Radicalization in Pakistan*'.

Safiya Aftab is a Research Fellow at Strategic and Economic Policy Research (SEPR), a research and consulting organization based in Islamabad. She completed her M.Sc in Economics from the London School of Economics and Political Science and Masters in Public Administration from Harvard University. She has 10 publications to her credit, five being her sole endeavors and the rest as a co-author.

Syed Manzar Abbas Zaidi's areas of expertise are the Taliban insurgency in Pakistan and issues of insecurity and terrorism. A former lecturer at the University of Central Lancashire, UK, he has embedded with the UN and worked in conflict areas. He has published three books on the Taliban and insecurity in Pakistan.

Zubair Torwali is a rights activist and researcher based in Bahrain, Swat, where he also heads IBT, an independent organization for the rights, education and environment of the marginalized communities.

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LAST ISSUE



LAST ISSUE

Abstracts

Bonn Conference 2011: Prospects for Peace and Stability in Afghanistan

Safdar Sial and Abdul Basit

This paper attempts to explore the promise Bonn-II holds for peace and stability in Afghanistan and the wider region. It tries to find answers to four main questions: Why hold Bonn-II conference? What was achieved after Bonn-I? What can and cannot be achieved through Bonn-II? And finally, what needs to be achieved? There have been many positive and negative developments between Bonn-I and the upcoming Bonn-II, but many political analysts consider the 2001 Bonn agreement a failure as far as political conflict and security are concerned. Governance and institutional reforms, realization and sustenance of political reconciliation, pursuance of effective foreign policy at the regional and international level, and development and consolidation of an indigenous economy and security apparatus are some of the post-transition responsibilities for which Afghanistan has to prepare itself by 2014 with help and support from the international and regional community. The degree of success of Bonn Conference 2011 can be measured from what it offers to achieve security, political reconciliation, and a successful and sustainable transition.

Political Economy of Tehrik-i-Taliban Swat

Muhammad Feyyaz

The recent insurgency in Swat presents a novel case study of a conflict that appears to have begun with socio-political aims but soon mutated into one in which economic benefits became paramount. The terror campaign by Tehrik-e-Taliban Swat (TTS), characterized by shifting religio-political motives, raising of phenomenal organisational structure and interest-centric regulation of violence, manifests the entire spectrum of political economy of an armed conflict. This study is an attempt to narrate and analyze how the entire operation was articulated and strategized by TTS. The paper traces TTS chief Fazlullah's path to power including a discussion on how he developed his militant formations with benign support from other actors. The paper explores politico-economic dimensions of the Swat conflict and concludes by inferring that geopolitics and wealth accumulation, and not public good, were and are the principal motivations behind the facade of 'jihad' by TTS.

Maoist Peace Process in Nepal: A Way Forward for India?

Nida Naz

This paper explores the Nepali Maoists' decision to give up their armed struggle and opt for peaceful democratic means to seek the changes they had been striving for. By juxtaposing the Maoist conflicts in India and Nepal, it seeks to answer the question if lessons from the Nepali experience have any relevance to the situation in India. It argues that despite a number of inherent differences there still are a few measures in the Nepali peace process that can be used for peaceful democratic settlement of the Maoist conflict in India. The Maoist insurgencies in the two countries are analyzed to determine if the Nepali experience can be applied partially, fully, or not at all to the situation in India. This paper finds that the last two scenarios are least likely because the most suitable conflict resolution framework must be based on the internal political, economic and social aspects of a country. The first scenario is likely the most useful one where—based of common motives and causes, such as socio-economic deprivation, class segregation and people's grievances—India can follow the broad strokes of Nepal's peace process to resolve its own lingering conflict.

Sri Lanka's Post-conflict Peacebuilding Efforts and Prospects for Positive Peace

Ajith Balasooriya

This paper examines the manner in which the Sri Lankan government is proceeding with its post-conflict peacebuilding efforts to achieve positive peace at the end of the conflict. It attempts to provide narratives on the government's role in post-conflict peacebuilding as the responsible primary representative of the citizens of Sri Lanka. The first part of the paper describes the government's post-conflict efforts including immediate humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and rehabilitation and mechanisms for addressing human rights violations and accountability issues to achieve the ultimate goal of positive peace. The second part focuses on the international community's response to the government's post-conflict peacebuilding efforts.

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