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PAKISTAN *JIHAD*: THE MAKING OF RELIGIOUS TERRORISM

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Abstract

The war backed by the United States and its allies against the former Soviet Union in Afghanistan during 1979-88 and its social, political and economic fallout paved the way for extremism, militancy and terrorism in Pakistan. Further, state authoritarianism, political and social decay in the 1980s and 1990s played their part in the growth of fanatical outfits prone to violence. Following the 9/11 events in the United States, the West became obsessed with the activities of these perverse groups without giving due regard to the tolerant and liberal nature of the Pakistani society in common with South and West Asia's peaceable ethos. The revival of liberal-democratic process in Pakistan in recent months is evidence of the way its people look at religious extremism and terrorism. The United States and the international community can respond now by cooperating with Pakistan in its efforts to address militancy and terrorism through political means and advocacy.

Introduction

Following 9/11 Pakistan got embroiled in the global war on terror as a front player. Not only does Pakistan occupy a key geopolitical position in South and South West Asia, the country is also a nuclear power. There is widespread speculation that nuclear weapons could fall into the hands of religious extremists. Pakistan has also become an epicentre of radical Islamic ideology and its terrorist adherents. Elements of *Al-Qaeda* and militant Islamic organisations across the globe are attracted to it. Combating religious terrorism, therefore, is a central issue in Pakistan's relations with the United States of America and other leading players.

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The main argument of this paper is that religion *per se* is not the dominant factor in the rise of religious terrorism in Pakistan because the majority of Pakistanis have been influenced by *Sufi* traditions and liberal Islamic ideals. In other words, religion has been used as a cloak by powerful groups in Pakistani society to hide their deliberate and unplanned activities which have led to the rise of religious terrorism. It is also necessary to understand the reasons for the growth of religious terrorism and why it presents such a problem to Pakistan today. While extremism and terrorism still pose a threat to the internal security of Pakistan and to the international community, the threat is not as serious as many analysts think. The most effective way of combating religious terrorism in Pakistan lies in addressing the underlying political, social, and economic problems facing the country. Simply jailing or killing terrorists, as part of the global war on terror, merely addresses the symptom and not the disease. This paper will also explore to what extent the Islamic militants reflect the views and support of the majority in Pakistan? The paper argues that whatever support Islamic militancy got in Pakistan did not have a genuine religious base but mainly arose out of policies adopted by the West against the former Soviet Union during the Afghan War (1979-88) and the civil strife that followed, in addition to the failure of democratic institutions, rampant corruption, poverty and denial of equal rights to people rather than having a genuine religious base.

The implications of the fight against religious terrorism in Pakistan are also important for the international community. The image of Pakistan, portrayed in part by the images that appear in the West, is that of a highly "dangerous State" which is rife with religious extremism.[1] Pakistan consequently is viewed as a "hot bed" of Islamic terrorism. Analysis of the growth of religious extremism and terrorism in Pakistan shows that historically the country has had no tradition for the growth of such tendencies. The wranglings of power groups such as the military and religious parties have much to do with it. In addition, the policies of the leading foreign players, such as Saudi Arabia and the United States, have had a major impact on the rise of religious terrorism in Pakistan.

An historical explanation could provide some answers about the rise of religious extremism in the modern State of Pakistan. The paper draws upon insights from the new field of critical studies on terrorism,

[1] See Stephen Philip Cohen, "The *Jihad*ist Threat to Pakistan," *Washington Quarterly* 26, no.3 (Summer 2003): 7–25.

particularly the root causes of terrorism and considers how the State itself created conditions that were conducive to the rise of religious terrorism.[2] In addition, it is essential to examine the rise of religious terrorism in the context of power relations at both local and global levels[3] which will be the central theme of this analysis. Simply trying to explain terrorism as a consequence of religious beliefs makes no sense. There is, however, a popular notion among scholars who suggest that terrorism is a consequence of religious beliefs in the way a particular religious sect indoctrinates its followers.[4] The interrelationship between such sectarian religious groups within a national territory or surrounding region and their international linkages for gaining political, strategic, and economic ends result in terrorist activities. In this sense, religious indoctrination along with its international links generates terrorism, not religious beliefs *per se*. This is true in case of Pakistan and in the subsequent analysis it will further be elaborated.

Sufism Vs *Salafism*

One of the major problems in analysing religious terrorism is the definition of terrorism itself.[5] For example, the term fundamentalist is often used to describe the ideology of those committed to using violence in the name of religion. In explaining contemporary religious extremism in Pakistan, it is important to understand the nature of Islam and its historical connections to that country. An historical approach addresses a criticism that views terrorism as a late phenomenon that started after 9/11.[6]

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[2] See the collection of articles on aspects of critical research on terrorism in *European Political Science* 6, no. 3 (Summer 2007).

[3] Marie Breen Smyth, "A critical research agenda for the study of political terror," *European Political Science* 6, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 263.

[4] Natasha Hamilton-Hart,"Terrorism in Southeast Asia: Expert Analysis, Myopia and Fantasy," *The Pacific Review* 18, no. 3 (September 2005): 303–25; See also Giovanni Carraci, "Cultural and Contextual Aspects of Terrorism," in *The Psychology of Terrorism*:*Theoretical Understandings and Perspectives* ed., Chris E. Stout (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002), 57-82.

[5] For a discussion of the problems in using terminology to describe movements in Islam, see Filippo Osella & Caroline Osella, "Introduction: Islamic reformism in South Asia," *Modern Asian Studies* 42, no. 2 & 3 (March/May 2008): 247–57.

[6] See the comments by Richard Jackson, "The core commitments of critical terrorism studies," *European Political Science* 6, no.3 (Summer 2007): 244.

Islam was brought to the Indian Subcontinent in the 8th century by the Arabs. The type of Islam introduced by the Arabs to the Indian Subcontinent was of a tolerant nature as Arabs had long been in contact with other communities on the Arabian Peninsula. The Arab conqueror of Sindh (now the southern province of Pakistan), Muhammad Bin Qasim, did not attempt to impose Islam by force when he conquered the province in 712 AD. Conversion of the religious communities such as Hindus, Buddhists and others had been gradual. Moreover, many of the early converts to Islam were strongly influenced by *Sufism* (Islamic mysticism), which originated in Basra (Iraq) and Transoxania (Central Asia). Sufism emphasises a strong belief in humanity, mutual tolerance, and peaceful coexistence and is averse to coercion in matters of faith.[7]

The *Sufi Silsala* (the mystical Orders or practices of Sufism) tend to create harmony and better understanding among various Islamic sects and with other religions. Generally, *Sufism* promoted literary activities such as poetry, *Sama* and *Quawwali* (devotional singing), *Khalwa*, *Zhikr*, and M*uraqaba* (meditation). Therefore, the form of Islam that flourished in the Indian Subcontinent was a blend of the cultural, geographical, and ethnic traditions of the Arabs, Persians, Turks, and Central Asians. Even some of the *Sufi* traditions were absorbed from Buddhism and Hinduism. Consequently communities adhering to different sects of Islam such as the Shias, Bohris, Ismaelis, and Khojas settled down throughout the Indian Subcontinent, particularly in the areas that later formed the present day Pakistan, especially when they feared persecution in their indigenous lands.[8]

Pakistan's northern Punjab was more exposed to iconoclastic invaders from Afghanistan and Central Asia. However, later Muslim rulers of the region opposed persecuting people for their beliefs or imposing Islam by force. Again, as in Sindh, the process of embracing Islam had been peaceful and free of coercion. Besides the numerically dominant *Sunnis*, communities of *Shiites*, Hindus and Sikhs lived in relative harmony until the arrival of the British. In the western tribal regions of Pakistan, bordering Afghanistan – present-day Balochistan,

[7] Sufism is also known as Tasawwuf in Arabic, Turkish, Persian, and Urdu language. A practitioner of this tradition is known as a *Sūfī* or *Dervish*. The word "*Tasawwuf*" derives from the Arabic word "*Safa*" which means "pure".

[8] Hamza Alavi, "Pakistan and Islam: Ethnicity and Ideology," in Fred Halliday and Hamza Alavi, eds., *State and Ideology in the Middle East and Pakistan,* (New York, Macmillan Education, 1988), 10-3.

North West Frontier Province (NWFP), and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) – a much more simple form of Islam flourished that reflected the conservative ways of the tribal society. In such regions, pre-Islamic tribal customs like the *purdah* (veil) and seclusion of women, opposition to female education and the custom of honour killings became interwoven with Islam to produce a socially and religiously conservative society.[9] The region that is now Pakistan, therefore, embraced different religions and sects, which generally lived in harmony and created a culturally diverse and pluralistic society. This legacy of tolerance has survived in the modern State of Pakistan in spite of the growth of sectarian violence and religious extremism, particularly over the past two decades. A majority of the Muslims in Pakistan, for instance, who are staunchly religious, do not look at religious extremism with approval. Indeed, most Muslims the world over would argue that the activities of religious extremists were contrary to the teachings of Islam.[10]

Furthermore, the main doctrinal division among Pakistani Muslims is between the *Deobandis* and the *Barelvis*. The *Deobandis* see themselves as belonging to a more orthodox form of Islam and hence can be described as *Salafists*. *Salafism* is a *Sunni* Islamic school of thought that holds the pious ancestors (*Salaf*) of the early period of Islam as exemplary models. They view the first three generations of Muslims and the two succeeding them as ideal examples to emulate and follow because in the later period, *Salafists* fear that cultural influences had diluted the fundamental teachings of Islam. *Salafism* places utmost emphasis on *Tauheed* (monotheism) and condemns un-Islamic practices such as venerating the graves of prophets and saints. As such, *Salafists* disagree with the *Sufis* and their mystical approach to Islam, as well as the *Shiites*, with their deep veneration for Hazrat Ali, the fourth righteous Caliph whom they regard as the rightful successor to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). *Salafism* is puritanical in its approach to the Islamic faith. It was originated in present day Saudi Arabia.[11]

[9] Although very dated, still one of the best balanced accounts of the spread of Islam in South Asia is S. M.Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India,* ed., Ainslie T. Embree (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964).

[10] The students that the first author interviewed at Quaid-i-Azam University and the University of Peshawar in March 2008 saw themselves as religious but strongly rejected any suggestion that their religious views made them in any way susceptible to religious extremism or terrorism. Some of these students, especial at Peshawar, came from very conservative religious tribal backgrounds

[11] Some Salafists, however, regard Wahhabism as a heretical sect.

Salafism not only places great emphasis on the proper observance of rituals but also on moulding daily conduct on *Shariah,* the Islamic law. *Salafism* is often used interchangeably for *Wahhabism*, which is based on the Islamic interpretation of Muhammad Ibn Abd-al-Wahhab (1703–1792) of Najd, Saudi Arabia. The *Wahabi* school of thought is predominant in Saudi Arabia. However, it should be emphasised that a vast majority of Muslims in Pakistan do not adhere to either *Salafist* or *Wahabi* traditions. The Deobandis opposed the formation of Pakistan on the lines of a modern nation-state and regard themselves as the main voice of *Sunni* Islamic orthodoxy in Pakistan. In their beliefs, particularly their emphasis on *Sharia*, the *Deobandis* echo many of the puritanical Sunni *Wahhabi* traditions of Islam.[12] Unfortunately, a minority of religious extremists who hold to *Salafist* views have exhibited intolerant tendencies.

The vast majority of Pakistanis, however, follow the *Barelvi* school of thought, which is less conservative and more inclusive and closer to *Sufism* with its central message of veneration for the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and mysticism. Followers of this inclusive school of Islam are far less likely to be influenced by religious extremism. It must be pointed out here that being a follower of the more conservative school of Islamic thought does not necessarily mean a commitment to extremism or terrorism.

Founding an Islamic State

A common misconception exists that Pakistan was created as a majority Muslim State for the Muslims of the Indian Sub-continent. Attempts to rewrite Pakistan's history by showing Islam as the dominant force behind the creation of the new State are incorrect because the formation of Pakistan had nothing to do with religiously motivated politics.[13] The credit for the formation of Pakistan goes to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammed Ali Jinnah, a liberal democrat and constitutional politician. He rejected religious communalism and advocated Hindu-Muslim unity until he became disillusioned with what he saw as the growing influence of Hindu thought among the leading members of the All-Indian National Congress.

[12] For a clear and concise overview of the Deobandi movement in Pakistan see Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 88-90.

[13] See an excellent study on the creation of Pakistan by Stephen P. Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution Press, 2004).

There has been a great deal of historical debate about Jinnah's motivations behind his drive for an independent Muslim Pakistan.[14] A major factor had been his growing disillusionment with Congress, which he increasingly viewed as representing the interests of the Hindu majority. Jinnah became firmly convinced that partition of British India was the only way to protect Muslim political, democratic, constitutional, cultural, and economic rights and to preserve Muslim identity.

In his efforts to promote an independent Muslim State, Jinnah was opposed by Muslim religious parties and groups namely *Deobandis* as well as the *Jamiat-i-Ulema-i-Islam, Jamaat-e-Islami* and other religious - oriented groups. They were the supporters of Congress's notion of undivided and united India. Jinnah's power base comprised of common Muslims, professionals, administrators, business elites, and landlords. In his address to the Pakistan Constituent Assembly on 11 August 1947, Jinnah clearly called for the establishment of a State that gave full rights to all citizens irrespective of their religious affiliations. He stated:

> "You may belong to any religion or caste or creed.... in the course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims will cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is a personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense, as citizens of the state".[15]

Jinnah's vision of Pakistan as a tolerant, modern, Islamic democratic State was later hijacked by religious elements who found in the new State an opportunity to advance their causes along conservative religious lines. From within and outside the State, religion was thus being used as a tool in advancing the political motives of religious parties and groups. The constitutional debate, the role of religious minorities, Islamisation, and *Sharia* were some of the examples that explained such trends and tendencies, which partly contributed toward the rise of religious extremism.

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[14] Jinnah has been the subject of many studies. See for example, Stanley Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1984); Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1994) and Akbar S. Ahmed, *Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic Identity: The Search for Saladin* (London: Routledge, 1997).

[15] Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), 12-3.

In pursuit of its geo-strategic interests, the West also contributed to the rise of religious extremism in Pakistan, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s. The West could not comprehend the fast changing dynamics of Pakistani politics during the 1970s and supported the right wing political groups against those having socialist and leftist tendencies. For instance, Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Islamic-socialist Pakistan People's Party (PPP) twice defeated religious parties in elections in the 1970s.[16] The West covertly supported right wing elements to curtail the growing influence of leftists and their cooperation with the People's Republic of China, the Soviet Union, and socialist Islamic countries.

The "Blessings" of the Military Rule: The *Jihad*

The move toward converting Pakistan into a true orthodox Islamic State intensified during the reign of General Muhammad Zia ul-Huq (1977-88), who usurped power through a military coup on July 5, 1977 by unconstitutionally overthrowing the popularly-elected government of Bhutto (1971-77). Zia was known as a devout Muslim who sympathised with hard-line religious groups. Under Zia, a close alliance emerged between the military and orthodox Sunnis.[17] Consequently, Zia introduced controversial Islamic legislation such as *Hadood* (Islamic codes), and other measures that included *Zakat* (compulsory alms-giving), Usher (agricultural tax), Islamic banking, and blasphemy laws through a handpicked and non-party undemocratically "elected" *Majlis-e-Shura* (Parliament) which gave indemnity to his actions that were illegal according to the 1973 Constitution.[18] Islamists were appointed to important government positions in the judiciary, civil services, and educational institutions. *Sharia* courts were established to try cases under Islamic law, while Islamisation was promoted through the government supported media.[19]

In addition, education was Islamised under Zia. There occurred a mushroom growth of *Madaris* (Islamic seminaries) with Government support, and funds being channelled from Saudi Arabia and other Islamic sources and, ironically, from the United States itself and Western

[16] Ibid., 13.
[17] See for nexus between Islamists and the military, ibid.
[18] Richard Kurin, "Islamisation in Pakistan: a view from the countryside," *Asian Survey* 25, no.8 (August 1985): 852-62.
[19] Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military*, 132.

countries and their allies. For instance, in 1971 there were only 900 *Madaris* in Pakistan but by the end of the Zia era, there were as many as 8,000 registered and as many as 25,000 unregistered *Madaris*.[20] These *Madaris* provided education, food, and lodging to the poor students on a charitable basis. Most of these *Madaris* started preaching a narrow version of Islamic teachings based on the *Wahabi* interpretation of Islam. Although only a tiny minority of *Madaris* preached violence, the long-term consequence of the growth of the *Madaris* was the development of a narrow form of Islam.[21] A minority of *Madaris* became training schools for *Jihad* (holy war). The narrow Islamic model of citizenship taught in schools particularly during the reign of Zia created a climate 'conducive to sectarian violence and religious intolerance by marginalising non-Muslim citizens and those belonging to minority sects.[22]

Besides education, attempts were also made to Islamise the military. Islamic education was incorporated into the curriculum for military recruits. Increasingly more religiously conservative officers were promoted to higher ranks. *Mullahs* belonging to the conservative *Deobandi* and *Jamaat-e-Islami* groups were appointed to work with the troops. Radical Islamic ideas influenced the younger officers and the rank-and-file of the Pakistan army. Around 25-30 per cent of officers developed fundamentalist leanings.[23] In the training of the *Mujahideen* (holy warriors), the Pakistan army's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) played a crucial role.[24] The close alliance that eventually emerged between *Mullahs* and the military became a persistent factor in Pakistani politics. For the military, the *Mullahs* and support for conservative Islam were important factors in providing an ideological justification for the dominant role the military played in Pakistani politics. For the *Mullahs*, the support of the military was to provide them with the means to increase their influence in all sections of Pakistani society.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, therefore, was a key factor in strengthening the alliance between the *Mullahs* and the military. The alliance made a major drift toward Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistan.

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[20] Rashid, *Taliban: Military Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, 89.

[21] William Dalrymple, "Inside Islam's 'terror schools'," *New Statesman*, 28 March 2005, http://www.newstatesman.com/200503280010

[22] See Iftikhar Ahmad, "Islam, democracy and citizenship education: an examination of the social studies curriculum in Pakistan," *Current Issues in Comparative Education* 7 no. 1 (15 December 2004): 13-4.

[23] Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military*, 21.

[24] Ibid., 12.

The *Mullahs* and religious parties were to be an effective counter to secular, leftist, and socialist politicians. Military dictators courted religious parties as a counter to secular opposition groups and political parties.[25] In the mid-1980s, an attempt by radical Islamic officers was made to bring about an Islamic revolution and to create a theocratic State.[26] The Pakistani military saw itself as having an historical right to protect the State, play a cardinal role in governance and formulate the country's foreign policy as politicians were perceived to be corrupt and incompetent. A more mundane goal was the determination to protect the financial interests of the armed forces.[27]

This increasing Islamisation within Pakistan, if not supported, at least, was not opposed by the West at that time. During this period, the West had to organise a strong military support for the *Mujahideen* to fight back the 140,000 Soviet "infidel" troops who by then had occupied Afghanistan. Pakistan conveniently became the epicentre for *Jihad* with finances pouring into Pakistan from the United States, Western Europe, Arab countries, Japan, and even from Jewish sources. Even the Chinese offered assistance for the Soviet pull-out from Afghanistan. In a nutshell, the prolonged war in Afghanistan gave rise to the growth of religious extremism and militancy both inside Afghanistan and Pakistan – the hot-bed of today's Islamic militancy. The Arabs, particularly the Saudis, were keen to export their exclusivist narrow form of *Wahhabi* Islam in part to counter Iranian backed *Shiite* expansion in the region.[28] The long- term consequences of the involvement of the United States and Saudi Arabia seem to have been disastrous for both the internal security of Pakistan and, in the long-run, for the United States and its struggle against religious terrorism. It can be argued that 9/11 was, in part, at least a long-term consequence of the U.S. policies toward Afghanistan.

For a while, the struggle against the Soviets in Afghanistan provided a common ground for two very different strategic and ideological objectives: for the United States, it was an extension of the Cold War between the two superpowers. For Muslims, it was *Jihad* against the non-believers (Communists). Ultimately, the very divergent ideological goals of the United States and the Islamists emerged after the

[25] This is the central theme of Haqqani's thesis, Ibid.
[26] Ibid., 21.
[27] See Ayesha Siddiqa, *Military Inc: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy* (London: Pluto Press, 2007).
[28] Rashid, *Taliban,* chpt 15.

defeat of the Soviet forces and their withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1988. No longer having a common enemy, both Pakistan and the United States became distrustful of each other. In the 1990s, the United States imposed military and economic sanctions against Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme.[29] Mistrust between the two further intensified as Pakistan was largely abandoned by the United States after the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. All sections of Pakistani society bitterly resented what was being regarded as the "treachery" and "betrayal" of the United States. The short sighted policies of the United States led to a power vacuum, which was quickly filled in by the *Taliban* and *Al-Qaeda*.

Combating Terrorism and *Talibanisation*

The *Taliban* are ultraconservative religious pupils educated in the *Madaris* in Pakistan.[30] Puritanical and fanatical, they established a strict Islamic State in Afghanistan during 1996-2001 with the help of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.[31] The *Taliban* were initially viewed as a force that could bring peace to war-torn Afghanistan because of their fervent involvement in the war against the Soviets through the warlords. Pakistan also saw that its long-term economic and strategic interests would be best served by supporting what they saw as a friendly regime in Kabul by sidetracking the Persian-Darri speaking Northern Alliance. Many Islamists in Pakistan saw the imposition of *Sharia* in Afghanistan as somewhat of a "divine" effort by their fellow believers. The *Taliban* success sent a positive signal to hundreds of thousands of pupils studying in the *Madaris* in Pakistan. In addition, Afghanistan and the frontier region of Pakistan bordering Afghanistan, once again, became the centre for Islamic fundamentalist activities. *Al-Qaeda* became the

[29] Aazar Tamana, *United States-Pakistan Relations in the Post Cold War Era: The Pressler Amendment & Pakistan's National Security Concerns* (Perth: Australian Society for South Asian Studies, 2004).

[30] See the best-seller study of Rashid, *Taliban*.

[31] For a highly critical analysis of the role that Saudi Arabia has played in spreading religious intolerance see William Dalrymple, "Saudi Arabia created the monster now devouring it. The U.S. and Britain are straining to shore up a hated autocracy," *The Guardian* (London), 14 June 2004.

natural ally of the *Taliban* channeling funds and providing sanctuary to Osama bin Laden and several of his Arab-African lieutenants.[32]

The *Taliban-Al-Qaeda* nexus enlarged the scope of their common cause against the West: supporting the Chechnya cause against Russia, the Kashmiri independence struggle against India, and destabilising pro-West regimes in the Muslim world. While Pakistan's ruling *junta* and religious parties and groups had little ideological commitment with the *Taliban*, being mainly concerned about the strategic benefits to be gained from supporting them, the longer-term consequences for Pakistan were disastrous. Pakistan became more religiously radicalised, particularly in FATA, adjoining Afghanistan.

Ironically, the overthrow of the popularly elected Government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (1997-99) on October 12, 1999 through a military coup hatched by the liberal leaning General Pervez Musharraf intensified the proxy war in the Indian-held Kashmir. It was commonly believed that the Kargil episode was Musharraf's military adventure to liberate Kashmir.[33] The Pakistani military under Musharraf was completely at odds with the liberal, business-oriented Sharif who was promoting a peaceful dialogue with India, including the resolution of the long-standing Kashmir dispute. The 9/11 events, however, changed Musharraf's posture. He was given a clear choice between the devil and the deep sea by the United States. He was asked by the United States either to join the "war on terror" or face the horrible consequences. Against this backdrop, Musharraf has had the unenviable task of trying to meet the demands of the United States to crack down hard on terrorists while, at the same time, recognising the dangers of alienating radicals and their supporters at home.[34] This dilemma continues to play a key role in Pakistan's efforts to combat terrorism even after his departure from power on August 18, 2008.

Intelligence cooperation between the United States and Pakistan helped track down and arrest leading *Al-Qaeda* suspects inside Pakistan.

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[32] Jessica Stern, "Pakistan's *Jihad* culture," *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2000): 115-126.

[33] Musharraf was criticised as being largely responsible for the disastrous intrusion of Pakistani troops into the Kargil region, which very nearly resulted in an all-out war with India. For Musharraf's version of the events, see Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 80.

[34] Musharraf's dilemma is his attempts to be battling Islamic militancy but at the same time not upsetting his religious allies is succinctly discussed by Ziauddin Sardar, "Pakistan: The *Taliban* takeover" *New statesman*, 30 April 2007.

In October 2001, Pakistan provided the United States with the use of four air bases to attack *Taliban* inside Afghanistan. In January 2002, the Pakistan Government imposed a clamp down on religious extremists and banned several Islamic extremist organisations. Later, in October 2003, the Pakistani army started launching attacks on terrorist sanctuaries inside South Waziristan on the border with Afghanistan. Anti-Musharraf forces, right wing groups, and pro-Islamists viewed this as anti-Islamic and against the larger national interests of Pakistan. They branded Musharraf and his government as stooges of the United States.[35] In his attempt to hang on to power, Musharraf used the pretext of the war on terror to suppress the activities of rival political parties, undermine the independence of the judiciary, and browbeat the media. For the United States and its allies, Musharraf's actions were seen as largely ineffective. For the Pakistani people, he was seen as a power-hungry military dictator backed by the United States, protecting his own interests rather than that of his country. Like his predecessor (Zia), Musharraf also used religious parties to neutralise mainstream liberal-secular political forces that challenged the political legitimacy of his government such as the Pakistan's Peoples Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz). With his growing unpopularity among a large section of the Pakistani public, Musharraf had to be careful not to alienate the traditional supporters of the Pakistan military i.e. the *Mullahs*, their followers, and the southern port city Karachi-based ethnic group, the Muttehida Quami Movement (MQM). By alienating popular forces and common Pakistanis, the success of the "war on terror" has always remained doubtful and shaky.

The Future

The geopolitical environment created inside Pakistan after 1979 eventually gave birth to militancy with the nefarious design to ultimately transform Pakistan into an orthodox theocratic Islamic State even at the expense of using violence,[36] an idea contrary to the creation of Pakistan. However, the influence militants exerted was out of proportion to the microscopic degree of support they received from the majority of fellow

[35] Ibid.

[36] C. Christine Fair, "Military recruitment in Pakistan: Implications for *Al-Qaeda* and other organisations," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 27 no. 6 (July 2007): 491.

Pakistanis. Islam in Pakistan has traditionally been flexible in its beliefs and had shown a marked degree of tolerance toward other sects and religions.

In fact, the growth of religious extremism did not naturally grow out of Pakistani society or the type of Islam that had taken root there. Rather, it has been fuelled by events such as the *Jihad* against the Soviets in Afghanistan and the support extended by religious parties and groups in Pakistan in close cooperation with the military and the West. In other words, religious terrorism is a symptom and not the main cause of the ongoing crisis in Pakistan.

Endemic economic and political wrongdoings have plagued Pakistan since independence and have partly contributed toward extremist tendencies. Most analysts, therefore, agree that the way forward in combating militancy lies in the growth of democracy and democratic tradition.[37] It is argued that such a development would undercut much of the support of radical Islamic militants. The Musharraf regime remained unsuccessful in introducing essential reforms that were badly needed to modernise the *Madaris* and to diminish fundamentalist tendencies to bring about a true modern Islamic society.[38] Conversely, the ruthless military action undertaken against *Madaris* provided further justification for religious extremism and militancy. Therefore, using military force alone to combat religious terrorism would not work unless the basic underlying problems facing Pakistani society were not addressed and tackled.

Furthermore, improvements in law and order and an independent judiciary are essential tools in order to curb religious militancy and terrorism in Pakistani society. The 18 February 2008 polls gave a clear mandate against religious extremism and brought in liberal-democratic forces to the helm of affairs in the country. Although it was a solid mandate against the authoritarian military rule, it has to be seen whether the dominance of the military, which has cowed down democracy and the judiciary for quite sometime in one or the other way in Pakistan, could be shattered altogether and brought under civilian control? In sum, global power relations and Pakistan's fast changing political and social dynamics would provide answers to most of the issues related to militancy and terrorism. It must be remembered that the militant and extremist elements would not go away by the use of the NATO military

[37] Rasul Baksh Rais, "New Politics," *Daily Times* (Lahore), 11 March 2008.
[38] Dalrymple, "Inside Islam's Terror School".

force and the actions taken by the Pakistani armed forces alone. In fact, a political solution would marginalise the militants and terrorists. The societal aspects of the Pakistani people provide an ample proof of this truth. The revival of the democratic process is yet another significant step toward achieving such goals. The United States and the international community should also cooperate with Pakistan, instead of exerting pressure, to mellow down extremism and eventually, help purge terrorism.■