

## Pakistan's Counterterrorism Strategy: Separating Friends from Enemies

On October 1, 2010, the government of Pakistan shut down the supply route for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) after an incursion into Pakistan's territory by NATO forces, killing 16 Pakistanis in collateral damage. Two days later, militants torched 28 NATO supply trucks near Shikarpur in the southern province of Sindh. These events reflect the inherent tension both in Pakistan's counterterrorism strategy and in its relationship with the United States and its allies in fighting the war in Afghanistan. The future of U.S. military operations in South Asia depends on the convergence of policies between the United States and Pakistan, but since the war began in 2001, interpreting Islamabad's counterterrorism policy has been difficult.

Pakistan's counterterrorism strategy in Afghanistan is rife with inherent contradictions, caught between an inclination to fight militant forces and yet having to partner with some to strengthen its future bargaining position. The policy flows out of Pakistan's multiple strategic requirements: its need to remain engaged with the United States, to save itself from the Taliban attacking the Pakistani state, and to fight India's growing presence in Afghanistan. Caught between these three issues, Islamabad's counterterrorism policy and objectives continue to lack clarity. At best, the policy illustrates the tension between Islamabad's need to protect itself against an internal enemy and its sensitivity toward the external threat from India.

The primary flaw of Pakistan's counterterrorism policy, however, is that it is defined and driven by the military and that institution's strategic objectives. It is easier to use the military option than to address the problem of changing the basic narrative

---

Ayesha Siddiqa is the first Pakistan scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and the author of *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy* (Pluto Press, 2007).

Copyright © 2011 Center for Strategic and International Studies

*The Washington Quarterly* • 34:1 pp. 149–162

DOI: 10.1080/0163660X.2011.538362

and socioeconomic conditions that drive militancy in the first place. The need to create an alternative political narrative and change the mindset in Pakistan to address those socioeconomic conditions is a far more critical issue, which receives less attention than it deserves.

## Is Pakistan Serious About Confronting Terrorism?

---

**Caught between three goals, Islamabad's counterterrorism policy and objectives lack clarity.**

Pakistan has been the main ally of the United States since the start of the war on al Qaeda and other terrorist actors in 2001. Its role has become more important with time because the threat in Afghanistan has expanded into Pakistan. The Afghan Taliban are supported by groups hiding in Pakistan's tribal areas, particularly North and South Waziristan, with the threat of militancy having seeped well into Pakistan's provinces of Punjab, Sindh, and Baluchistan. Militant forces have combined their strength to attack the Pakistani state and its citizens, resulting in the deaths of more than 10,000 civilians and security forces personnel since 2003.

The militants, especially the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), have not desisted from attacking the Pakistani army's headquarters in Rawalpindi and installations of the military's primary intelligence organization, the Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). The TTP is a network of breakaway factions from various militant groups that are not all necessarily linked with the tribal areas, but use the territory as a hideout. Although the TTP seems to be popularly identified with Hakimullah Mehsud, who represents an anti-Pakistan agenda, most other groups are from Punjab, Pakistan's largest province. Some TTP groups have links with al Qaeda. Since 2001, the threat posed by militancy has increased as the ongoing conflict, poverty, and lack of development have made it easier for the Taliban to recruit foot soldiers. The new leaders of the various Taliban and militant groups are young men, mostly in their thirties, who are battle-hardened from the last decade and are far less willing to compromise.

Both the United States and Pakistan appear to lack clarity about how to define the threat they are facing and what are attainable objectives. Although the prospective date of U.S. withdrawal has caused its fair share of controversy, Islamabad's counterterrorism policy suffers from its own set of problems, beginning with overemphasizing the military approach. On a superficial level, the main issue with Islamabad's approach to fighting terrorism is that it is almost completely controlled by the armed forces. The army has a four-tiered approach:

clear, hold, develop, and disintegrate—an approach used by the army in its operations in Swat in 2007 and in South Waziristan in October 2009.

### **Take the Fight Where...?**

The army, however, is unwilling to extend that operation into North Waziristan, which has become a bone of contention with the United States. According to Rawalpindi, the military would like to adopt a careful and layered approach to counterterrorism, by which it means it will check and destroy unfriendly forces before attending to other groups. The military is not inclined to cater to U.S. concerns about Taliban groups in North Waziristan, who have formal and informal agreements with the Pakistani army not to attack the state if the army does not attack them. Islamabad does not want to start a battle on all fronts and is willing to talk to militant forces that do not attack Pakistan. Pakistan has its definition of good and bad Taliban, as do all the other stakeholders in the conflict, including the United States.

**The primary flaw of Pakistan's counterterrorism policy is that it is driven by the military.**

Pakistan's perspective is problematic for the United States, where policymakers at the Pentagon and elsewhere saw the Swat and South Waziristan operations as a change of heart in Pakistan and an expression of the country's intention to fight. Many in the U.S. government view the present Pakistani army chief, General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani, who assumed the role in November 2007, as a more serious commander in dealing with militancy than former army chief and president Pervez Musharraf. Some of the army's good friends among the community of journalists, such as Maleeha Lodhi, Pakistan's former ambassador to the United States, and Shuja Nawaz, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, believe that the extension of operations into North Waziristan will happen in good time. Since the army has lost its own men in fighting militancy, it is keen to tackle the issue.

The Pakistani military is making an effort to clear Swat and South Waziristan of militants and establish control with the intent of denying them to the Taliban. The clear and hold operation is also meant to facilitate the state's integrating these areas into Pakistan, as they historically have not been part of the state's legal and political systems. This process needs to be carefully staggered and gradual for two reasons. First, initiating operations on different fronts at the same time could prove dangerous and strain the military's capabilities. It makes sense to adopt a policy that could be described as "divide and subdue." But expanding operations to North Waziristan has become even more difficult in the wake of

the recent floods, which have diverted the attention of both the military and the civilian government toward other issues. Hence, lack of time is considered a major factor.

Second, attacking the internal enemy is impossible without building public goodwill. Former ambassador Lodhi, while giving a presentation in Washington early in 2010, remarked that favorable public opinion made it possible for the army to launch the operation in Swat. Presumably, Taliban atrocities that made headlines in Pakistan helped the army build up public opinion against the militants. Shabana Fayyaz, a professor at the Quaid-e-Azam University in Islamabad and an expert on Pakistan's counterterrorism policy, considers the positive opinion as a major contributor to the Swat and South Waziristan operations. Positive public opinion also is considered to be a necessary precondition for extending the operation to North Waziristan.

However, the positive opinion does not seem to have helped the army to carry its operations into North Waziristan, counter the evolution of the TTP, or take care of other militant groups inside Pakistan. This gives credence to the idea that the military will not expand its operations to include all Taliban groups. There are three kinds of forces which operate inside Pakistan: the "friendly" or good Taliban in North Waziristan; the "unfriendly" or bad Taliban in North Waziristan, South Waziristan, Swat, and rest of the country in the form of the TTP; and other "friendly" militants such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM). The army does not seem willing to develop public goodwill against these "friendly" groups through a pro-active use of public and private media, which were used effectively in the case of the Swat and South Waziristan operations. This is despite the fact that the army's main narrative revolves around presenting itself and the country as victims of terrorism.

Reportedly, even General Kayani has expressed to the United States his reservations about launching operations against Sirajuddin Haqqani, Hafiz Gul Bahadar, and Mullah Nazeer, who are holed up in areas bordering Afghanistan and pose a threat to U.S. and NATO forces.<sup>1</sup> Bahadar and Nazeer are significant Taliban warlords in North Waziristan, while Haqqani heads what is known as the Haqqani network, which has strongholds in the bordering Afghan districts of Paktia and Khost and is known to help anti-U.S. and anti-NATO operations. Pakistan considers the Haqqani network as reconcilable, as it did not attack Pakistani troops when they launched an offensive in South Waziristan against Hakimullah Mehsud and other hostile militants.

The U.S. commander in Afghanistan, General David Petraeus, seems unable to convince General Kayani of the need to attack elements that the White House and the Pentagon consider unfriendly. Pakistan seems to be pushing the United States to negotiate with the Haqqani network, as the network is considered to be

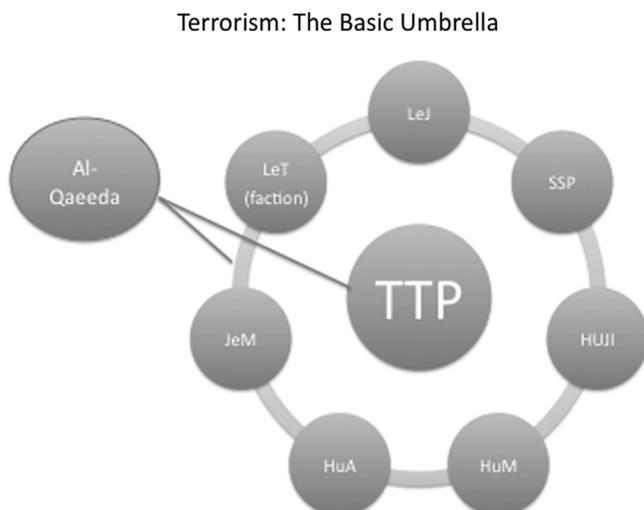
fundamental to the future of Afghanistan. Reportedly, Rustum Shah Mohmand, Pakistan's former ambassador to Afghanistan who is also a member of the Pakistan–Afghanistan jirga, believes that an operation in North Waziristan will cost Pakistan dearly.<sup>2</sup>

### ... against whom?

The threat posed by the TTP is difficult to counter because of the conceptual confusion within Pakistan's establishment. The TTP is *not* a homogenous group, but an umbrella organization which allows militants or breakaway factions from a large number of organizations to share resources—including manpower—to carry out their ideological battle. Although belonging to various religious schools of thought, the militants are inspired by the Muslim theologian Ibn Taymiyyah's philosophy of waging war against the non-Muslim world and using violence against Muslims who do not agree with a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam. The TTP does not have a central command and is comprised of Pashtun Pakistani militants from groups based in mainland Pakistan such as the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Lashkar-e-Jhangavi, Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI), JeM, and LeT. Besides LeT, which is Salafist, all the other groups have the same broad ideology from a different Islamic school of thought—the Deobandi school—which they also share with the Afghan Taliban. Most also have some links with al Qaeda (see Figure 1), but groups such as the SSP predate al Qaeda and have old links with the global terrorist network.

The TTP is a franchise of al Qaeda, with similar structures. It also draws strength from the SSP, which is considered the leading organization amongst the

**Figure 1:**



**The Pakistani army has been unwilling to extend counterterrorism operations into North Waziristan.**

---

Deobandi groups. There also are deep links between al Qaeda and the TTP because al Qaeda has acquired a more local character over the years. According to Aamir Rana, an expert on terrorism, militant commander Ilyas Kashmiri, who leads HUJI, is also now the new leader of al Qaeda in Pakistan.<sup>3</sup>

Rana believes that the July 2, 2010 terrorist attack against a Sufi shrine in Lahore represented an internal scuffle for the leadership of al Qaeda's Pakistani franchise. This indicates that al Qaeda in Pakistan is not necessarily dominated by

Arabs, but has a strong local component. It is a platform for all the militants who follow the ideology of *takfir* (the process of declaring someone as a non-believer and hence impure). The Takfiris among the Salafists, Wahhabis, and Deobandis—three broad schools of thought in Islam—tend to declare war against anyone who is considered a non-believer. Ayman al-Zawahiri is considered to be the ideologue of *takfiri* ideology in al Qaeda.<sup>4</sup> However, the *takfir* ideology has spread among other militant groups, which has allowed some militants to break away from parent organizations and merge into the TTP. The TTP believes in waging jihad even against Muslims who help non-Muslims or do not fight un-Islamic rule. Such a belief compels them to wage war against Pakistani forces, as they are considered to be toeing the U.S. line and fighting a war that is not Pakistan's.

The list of friendly militants does not end with those present in North Waziristan. Pakistan's army is equally unwilling to eliminate other militant groups which have found safe haven in mainland Pakistan. LeT, which came to international attention because of its involvement in the 2008 Mumbai attacks, and JeM have a long partnership with the army for what Rawalpindi considers strategic reasons.

### **Pakistan's Preoccupation**

---

The Pakistani army's other major concern is India's presence in Afghanistan. Pakistan's military establishment believes that India is fomenting instability in Pakistan's southwestern province of Baluchistan, and that this can only be checked by a policy of counterforce.<sup>5</sup> The growing conventional and non-conventional military balance in India's favor compels Pakistan's military commanders to continue supporting proxy war as a policy tool.

The Kashmir issue is central to Pakistan military's interests, and LeT and JeM remain relevant to the army in this theater. When directly asked about the LeT

leadership's views on sectarian violence, the organization's spokesman, Yahya Mujahid, claimed that his militant outfit did not contribute to internal violence in Pakistan, given that its main objective is to emancipate Kashmir and Kashmiri Muslims from India's control.<sup>6</sup> Following U.S. citizen David Headley's arrest and admission that he had been involved with LeT and played a

role in the 2008 Mumbai attacks, LeT has insisted that it is only interested in jihad against India. The organization's leadership wants to distance itself from any evidence linking it with global terrorism or sectarian strife inside Pakistan.

Similarly, JeM, which was created in 2001 primarily to increase tension in Indian-held Kashmir, maintains close links with the Pakistani army and its intelligence agencies. Some sources say that Masood Azhar, the founder and leader of JeM, is comfortably ensconced in Karachi.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, he may not be the only militant in Karachi, as there is talk that some prominent Afghan Taliban also are present in the city. It was not surprising, therefore, when the Taliban's top military commander, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, was captured in Karachi in February 2010.

Rawalpindi's use of militancy as a strategic tool is a risky option, but is nonetheless considered doable. The army's argument about the battle between itself and the Taliban, and the sacrifices of the army's men, creates a powerful narrative that helps stall criticism (and potential reevaluation) about this policy from outside the organization. The public and private media in the country present the military's logic. Most private media outlets go so far as to find a joint "CIA-RAW-Mossad"—in other words, U.S.-Indian-Israeli—hand in every terrorist attack that takes place inside Pakistan. This produces strong anti-Indian and anti-U.S. sentiments in the country. Curiously, this also is a popular perception at the highest policy levels on both the civilian and military sides. Even Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari has voiced concerns about U.S. involvement in attacks inside Pakistan, according to Bob Woodward's account in his latest book.<sup>8</sup>

However, those views may represent President Zardari's perception based on feedback from the armed forces, not from an independent source of information. Zardari played a critical role in expanding Pakistan's operations from Swat to South Waziristan, including putting pressure on the military. Zardari's actions are possibly one of the reasons, as a senior foreign office official speaking in confidence said, that the army has since tried to push Zardari back from any major influence on Pakistan's policies on Afghanistan and counterterrorism. It is

**Both the United States and Pakistan lack clarity about how to define the threat.**

important to note that skewed civil–military relations are one of the major reasons behind Islamabad’s rather confusing counterterrorism policy.

The mindset and apparent confusion of Pakistani officials and society has made it difficult for Pakistan to put up a fight against militant forces that target the country. Despite the victory in Swat, the army was unable to catch militant leaders such as Maulana Fazlullah, head of the Taliban-backed Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM—movement for the implementation of Islamic Shari’a). Such failures make it difficult to boost public confidence in the government’s capacity to challenge and eliminate the Taliban, and to protect ordinary Pakistani citizens.

Maulana Fazlullah’s grip over Swat was not just a battle for the imposition of Shari’a, it was largely a matter of religiously motivated warlords establishing control over a territory where Pakistan had acceded control by not providing governance and establishing a rule of law. Initially, the people in Swat responded to Fazlullah because he called for the implementation of Shari’a law, which was perceived as a faster and more cost-effective system of justice. Fazlullah challenged the traditional elite—known as *maliks*. As his influence increased, the writ of the state, projected through the police and intelligence agencies, diminished to the point of disappearing. For ordinary people, the Taliban became more of a reality than the state.

As long as the Pakistani army continues to differentiate among the various groups on the basis of their tactical position vis-à-vis the Pakistani state, terrorism will continue. There seems to be little intent to marginalize or eliminate the core militant groups operating inside Pakistan. This was made clear during a discussion the author had with the military’s spokesperson, Major General Athar Abbas, who termed the unfriendly Taliban as “splinters of splinters,” meaning that those attacking the state were just the breakaway components of otherwise friendly groups.<sup>9</sup>

It is impossible in the short to medium term for the Pakistani military to take a different look at the problem of militancy because of the outstanding disputes between India and Pakistan as well as the huge trust deficit between the neighbors. Pakistan considers India’s diplomatic and economic presence in Afghanistan as threatening Pakistan’s security, especially in Baluchistan. Not surprisingly, the chief of the ISI, Lieutenant General Shuja Pasha, once declared Taliban leaders such as Fazlullah and Baitullah Mehsud as patriots and nationalists.<sup>10</sup> In an interview to the German magazine *Der Spiegel*, Pasha similarly adopted a generous view of militant propaganda, terming it as a right in a democracy.<sup>11</sup>

The militants are considered a vital part of the army’s operational plans to counter India. Overall, the India factor has led to the seemingly divided opinion amongst the Pakistani establishment about fighting militancy, especially given

that there is a deep-rooted fear of the growing strategic relationship between the United States and India. The Washington–New Delhi civil nuclear deal is seen as disturbing the balance of power in South Asia, which is detrimental to Pakistan's interests. The friendly Taliban are a natural boost to Islamabad's drive to protect its interests, particularly in the Kashmir dispute and thwarting the growing Indian influence in Afghanistan, which Pakistan considers detrimental to its interests.

From a tactical standpoint, the abovementioned policy is a rational outcome of Islamabad's perception that the U.S. presence in Afghanistan is temporary. The Pakistani army does not want to find itself in a situation where Islamabad does not have links with the Taliban and other warlords. The Afghan Taliban are significant stakeholders in Afghanistan, and it is vital for Islamabad to keep ties with them. The Pakistani military went so far as to publicly admit that their forces arrested Mullah Baradar—who was apparently engaged in a dialogue with the Karzai government—in February 2010 to signal the Taliban that Islamabad would not allow militants to strike deals independently.<sup>12</sup> The fact that the military admitted its gameplan indicates that it expects the United States to understand its ally's security concerns.

Thus, what emerges is a policy in which Pakistani forces seem to “run with the hare and hunt with the hound.” This policy may also at least partially be a result of Pakistan's monetary dependence on the United States. U.S. diplomats stationed in Pakistan believe that the continuation of the fight against terrorist organizations helps Islamabad extract money from Washington.<sup>13</sup> And in reality, Pakistani forces do not want the United States to leave the region.

Such views emphasize the skewed nature of Pakistani–U.S. relations. The bilateral strategic re-engagement, which started after 2001, represents a patron–client relationship. Since the linkage is based simply on Islamabad providing support for U.S. security interests in South Asia, there is a trust deficit between the two states. The bulk of Pakistani decisionmakers and military commanders believe that the U.S. interest in the region will once again wane when the United States withdraws its military from Afghanistan. Therefore, as the diplomats stated, it actually benefits Pakistan to keep the threat of terrorism alive.

### **It's not Pakistan . . . It's the Use of Force**

---

Even if Pakistan were fighting the war more honestly, however, it is doubtful the military option would produce desirable results. One of the greatest flaws of the overall counterterrorism approach of the allies—certainly Pakistan—is the concentration on the use of force. This is not to argue that the military option should not be used at all or that the state must not protect itself against terrorists.

The military option, nevertheless, does not help eradicate militancy and emphasizes the idea that change comes about through the use of force. In this respect, the drone attacks seem to add to the problem of militancy. Given the collateral damage of these attacks, there are always more people who join the ranks of the Taliban to avenge the death of their loved ones.

Unfortunately, the frustration of ordinary people, who are stuck between the Taliban on one side and U.S./NATO/Pakistani forces on the other, makes them more inclined toward violence than peace. Not all members of the Taliban are motivated by religion; there is a division between the Taliban leadership—who are driven by ideology—and Taliban foot soldiers who join the fight for monetary reasons or personal vendetta. An alternative narrative that could keep people away from militancy does not yet exist in Pakistan or in the U.S. strategy to fight terrorism. Such a narrative should include two ideas: changing the socioeconomic balance in the society to deter greater Talibanization; and creating tools that could help counter the religious ideology of militant groups.

### **Socioeconomic Priority**

Although there has been no direct link established between poverty and terrorism, a large number of people who join militant groups are from the lowest socioeconomic class in Pakistan. South Punjab and upper Sindh, which are gaining a reputation as safe havens for terrorist elements, are known areas of high poverty. The two areas rank very low in the human development indices of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. They also rank very low in terms of education.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, there is a large presence of *madrassas* (religious seminaries) in these areas which, even if they are not necessarily producing terrorists, are definitely contributing to a mindset that encourages militancy. An increase in rural poverty in a socially authoritarian environment can create political chaos, if not outright anarchy.<sup>15</sup>

In Pakistan, poverty is not just limited to economic deprivation—it also applies to the scarcity of political power or the inability to shift the status quo. The bulk of the Pakistani middle class, which is seen by authors such as Vali Nasr as a driver of change in Muslim societies due to its progressive nature,<sup>16</sup> is actually conservative with traces of latent radicalism. Members of this class have increasingly become more conservative, and even financed and supported militant outfits because of their inability to change the political system in any other way.<sup>17</sup> This is not done consciously, but is driven by the realization that orthodox religious ideology provides greater sociopolitical space than the existing system. The Pakistani state has historically failed to build an alternative narrative, and the political-party system has failed to allay the concerns of ordinary people, which creates space for radicalism and militancy to grow.

The state has not managed to correct its focus and attend to the problems of human resource and socioeconomic development. Pakistan's human development indicators continue to be abysmal, and the government has not managed to integrate the tribal areas through development work or building a legal and law enforcement system. In fairness, the state was unlucky in one sense, as its nascent efforts to fight terrorism were seriously stalled by the floods in 2010. Given that the natural calamity badly hit Khyber–Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit–Baltistan, South Punjab, Sindh, and Baluchistan, the challenges have multiplied, as these are areas with militant groups present. Since militant organizations helped provide relief, and there was no real attempt to discourage those efforts,<sup>18</sup> it has become doubly difficult to reduce the influence of militant organizations.

Since the floods, it has become doubly difficult to reduce the influence of militant organizations.

### Changing Religious Discourse

Pakistan also needs to create a new religious narrative. No amount of counterterrorism operations will work unless the government has a plan to generate a new discourse that can counter *takfiri* ideology and the orthodox interpretation of Shari'a law. It is critical for the Pakistani government and civil-society groups to combine forces and emphasize the fact that terrorism is linked with an ideological battle in the country. The U.S. fight against terrorism is one of the many layers of the current conflict, but the Muslims of Pakistan have to recognize the war as their own, which can only happen if a counter-argument is presented emphasizing ideological nuance.

A renowned Muslim scholar, Javed Ahmed Ghamdi, argues that unless Muslim ideological theoreticians are able to admit that the Qur'an prohibits killing all non-combatants—be they in Israel, Palestine, Pakistan, India, or the United States—it will be difficult to fight terrorism successfully. Ghamdi also believes that using religion for terrorism is a tool of power and does not depict the reality of Islam (Ghamdi has aired these views publicly, for which he received death threats and had to move to Malaysia. The state was unable to provide him protection).<sup>19</sup> Another moderate religious scholar, Dr. Farooq Khan, was killed in October 2010 by the Taliban in Swat, further muffling the voices of reason and tolerance.<sup>20</sup>

Unfortunately, the Pakistani government has opted for the easy way out, choosing to project Sufi Islam as a potential bulwark against terrorism. This option seems inspired by a RAND Corporation report on partnering with alternative institutions in the Muslim world, in which Sufi Islam was identified

**Pakistan needs to change its socioeconomic balance and create a new religious narrative.**

as one such element.<sup>21</sup> The historical nature and significance of Sufi Islam is that it is more tolerant and pluralistic than puritanical interpretations of Islam. Traditionally, people from all religions, sects, ethnicities, castes, etc. visit Sufi shrines in South Asia. There is ample excitement in Washington, many European states, and Pakistan itself regarding Sufi Islam as a possible replacement for the seemingly violent orthodox version of Islam. During a visit to Washington in March-April 2010, Pakistani Prime Minister

Yousaf Raza Gilani even recommended that the United States support Sufi Islam in Pakistan, as it is the most popular version of Islam in the country.

The issue of an alternative narrative, however, is far more complex than what could be calculated numerically. Terrorists do not represent the bulk of the population, mainly since militants operating in mainland Pakistan have opted to co-exist with other social forces without challenging local traditions, unlike the militants operating in tribal areas such as Fazlullah. Militant organizations are in no hurry to recruit members rapidly, as noted in books by jihadist leaders such as JeM's Masood Azhar. The primary problem remains the underlying extremism or latent radical attitudes which seem to be growing unabated.

The growth of latent radicalism is due to a general lack of knowledge in Pakistan's religious discourse, especially concerning alternative interpretations of the Qur'an and presentations of Shari'a that do not breed hatred of the "other." Pakistan is certainly not the only country facing this problem, as such a narrative is not taking root in most of the Muslim world. But given that Pakistan is immensely affected by terrorism, it has a greater need for an alternative religious narrative, and it cannot act complacently since the popularity of Sufism is an issue that lacks clarity. The majority of Deobandis, who follow a more orthodox interpretation of Islam, also subscribe to local Sufi traditions. Moreover, Sufi institutions do not necessarily counter orthodox ideology and are not equipped with the modern methods of communication used by extremist elements.

To get out of the trap of puritanical religious interpretations, especially the *takfiri* ideology, the Pakistani government must reach out to moderate religious scholars in Pakistan, as well as the rest of the Muslim world, to initiate a debate within the society. Such scholars should focus on introducing and establishing the principle of Islamic secularism based on the separation of religion from state. Also, those members of Pakistani society who seek inspiration or reasoning from religion should be offered alternative interpretations of Islam that do not support *takfir* or discourage tolerance. This used to be the mainstream narrative in Islam, but it was pushed aside in the post-colonial Muslim world.

## Pakistani Priorities

Like other states, Pakistan's counterterrorism policy is an end product of its peculiar strategic priorities. Although the country's military and civilian authorities are conscious of the pressure the international community is putting on Pakistan to fight terrorism, top officials still are not yet convinced of the seriousness of the Obama administration to combat area militants. President Obama's announcement of a withdrawal beginning in July 2011 is interpreted as Washington losing its will and its intent to keep fighting. There are many in the strategic community in Pakistan who believe that the fight against terrorism will eventually be outsourced to the Pakistani military. Under such circumstances, Pakistan would have to continue investing in the Taliban, especially to counter India's growing social and political influence in Kabul. The link with the Taliban and other local militant groups, as has been argued here, is in part the result of Pakistan's traditional insecurity concerning India. Although militancy hurts Pakistan, there is an unwillingness to abandon it as a policy tool. Using militants as part of a proxy war is a concept well integrated into Pakistan's military strategy.<sup>22</sup>

Not only is there an unwillingness to eliminate militancy entirely, the state also has not developed an alternative social narrative that would help change the mindset producing or supporting terrorism. The subsequent sociopolitical anarchy in Pakistan adds to the problem, combining collectively to mean that the United States cannot expect Islamabad to fight the war on Washington's terms, whatever they may be in the coming months and years.

## Notes

1. Correspondent for the British daily *The Independent*, discussion with author, Islamabad, August 2, 2010.
2. Kamran Yousaf, "Pakistan, U.S. at odds over definition," *The Express Tribune*, October 30, 2010, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/69816/pakistan-us-at-odds-over-definition/>.
3. Mohammad Aamir Rana, discussion with author, Islamabad, July 30, 2010.
4. Yahya Mujahid and Syed Saleem Shehzad, discussion with author, Islamabad, October 10, 2010.
5. "India Supporting Militancy in Balochistan: Musharraf," *The Express Tribune*, October 10, 2010, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/60862/india-supporting-militancy-in-balochistan-musharraf/>.
6. Yahya Mujahid, interview with author, Islamabad, October 10, 2010.
7. Karachi-based journalist, confidential discussion with author, October 7, 2010.
8. Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), p. 116.
9. Major General Athar Abbas, discussion with author, Rawalpindi, November 2009.
10. This was part of Pasha's statement to a select group of media soon after the Mumbai attacks.

11. Susanne Koelbl, "Pakistan's New Intelligence Chief: 'Terror Is Our Enemy, Not India,'" *Der Spiegel*, January 6, 2009, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,599724,00.html>.
12. Dexter Filkins, "Pakistanis Tell of Motive in Taliban Leader's Arrest," *The New York Times*, August 22, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/23/world/asia/23taliban.html>.
13. U.S. diplomats from the political section of the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad, discussions with author, October 12, 2010.
14. Safiya Aftab, "Poverty and Underdevelopment," *The Friday Times*, April 9, 2010, <http://waseb.wordpress.com/2010/04/19/poverty-and-underdevelopment-by-safiya-aftab/>.
15. Ayesha Siddiqi, "Terror's Training Ground," *Newsline*, September 9, 2009, <http://www.newslinemagazine.com/2009/09/terror's-training-ground/>.
16. Vali Nasr, *Forces of Fortune: The Rise of the New Muslim Middle Class and What It Will Mean for Our World* (Free Press, 2009).
17. See Ayesha Siddiqi, "The Conservatively Hip," *Newsline*, August 31, 2010, <http://www.newslinemagazine.com/2010/08/the-conservatively-hip/>.
18. Shahzada Irfan Ahmed and Ayesha Siddiqi, "Religious Mission or Political Ambition?," *Newsline*, September 30, 2010, <http://www.newslinemagazine.com/2010/09/religious-mission-or-political-ambition/>.
19. Javed Ahmed Ghamdi, discussion with author, Islamabad, October 8, 2010.
20. Jamal Hoti, "Moderate scholar Dr. Farooq killed in Mardan," *Dawn*, October 3, 2010, <http://news.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/44-swat-universitys-vice-chancellor-dr-farooq-assassinated-fa-03>.
21. Angel Rabasa, Cheryl Benard, Lowell H. Schwartz, and Peter Sickle, "Building Moderate Muslim Networks," *RAND Corporation Monograph Series* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2007), pp. 102–103, [http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2007/RAND\\_MG574.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2007/RAND_MG574.pdf).
22. Sumit Ganguly and S. Paul Kapur, "The Sorcerer's Apprentice: Islamist Militancy in South Asia," *The Washington Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (January 2010), pp. 47–59, [http://www.twq.com/10january/docs/10jan\\_GangulyKapur.pdf](http://www.twq.com/10january/docs/10jan_GangulyKapur.pdf).