Genesis of Militancy in Pakistan

Maryam Azam[∗]

Abstract

Militancy has become a major security issue for Pakistan. More than 40 thousand Pakistani citizens have been killed by the terrorist gangs. Militants have targeted state institutions and challenged the writ of the government. The rise of militancy and extremist tendencies has strong roots in both recent and past history of the country. The terrorist outfits operate in the cover of religion and sanctify their acts as jihad. The roots of militancy can be traced to certain internal and external factors also: Political instability, Afghan Jihad of 1979, military regimes and low socio-economic indicators. The weak democratic structures have provided space to extremism to grow. As a result, terrorism is being used to foist extremist ideologies and achieve the agendas of the militant groups.

T he militant culture in Pakistan has been on the rise for more than a decade. This has not only affected the society but also its institutions. In the absence of a sustainable long term counter-militant strategy domestic and foreign policy settings have been affected in particular since 2001.

Pakistan has witnessed various trends of militancy from intolerance to extremism, radicalization and violence. The coordination of al Qaeda with the Taliban and the induction of sectarian extremist groups into this deadly mix has given a complicated character to the militancy issue. Its solution would need a thorough examination of the factors that have been responsible for its rise over the years. The main reasons which explain the genesis and growth of militancy in Pakistan are as follows:

[∗] The author is Assistant Professor, International Relations, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore (LCWU).

Afghan Jihad

The year 1979 brought enormous changes in the Muslim world from which Pakistan could not have escaped being a Muslim society. On the external front, the Iranian revolution, occupation of the holy city of Mecca by anti-monarchy groups and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan were formative events. The Iranian revolution gave a new dimension to the politics of the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. The Sheikhdoms felt threatened by the possible expansion of the Iranian revolution whose effects rippled across to Pakistan where a substantial part of the population was Shiite.

The spiritual affiliations and sentiments were severely shocked when the holy city of Mecca was attacked on November 20, 1979. The rumours that US forces would enter the holy city to help the Saudis whipped up strong anti-American feelings in Pakistan[1]. The American Embassy in Islamabad was stormed and parts of it were set on fire by the enraged protesters.

The Soviet invasion in Afghanistan in 1979 created an entirely different situation in Pakistan affecting not only its foreign policy but also its political system as it gave a new lease of life to the military dictatorship of General Zia and brought the Saudi-Iran proxy war to this region. The Saudi-Wahabi based ideology was alien to the moderate religious culture rooted in the mystic tradition which had been dominant in South Asia for centuries. Religion thus became a strong factor in the national security discourse. The geo-strategic location of Pakistan plays an important role in its international policy. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had major geo-strategic and political implications for Pakistan. The invasion in the context of the Cold War brought the two major powers face to face in this regional arena. Pakistan acted as a front line state on the side of US. Pakistan openly condemned the naked aggression and supported the Afghan jihad and acted as a channel for the influx of Mujahedeen from Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern states. Pakistan and US collaborated on all fronts of this liberation struggle of the Afghans. The latter had no hesitation in owning the creation of the Mujahedeen. Hillary Clinton admitting this role in creating the Mujahedeen in the 1980s said in an interview that:

> "We have walked away from Pakistan and Afghanistan in the past….we had helped to create the problem we are fighting because when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan…we had a brilliant idea to come to Pakistan and create a force of

---

[1] Touqir Hussain, "Post-1979 Pakistan: What Went Wrong?" cited in "The Islamization of Pakistan 1979-2009: A Special Edition of Viewpoints," The Middle East Institute, Washington DC, (accessed on November 14, 2010), http://www.mei.edu/Portals/0/Publications/Pakistan%201979-2009.pdf

mujahedeen, equipped them….to go after the Soviets inside
Afghanistan, and we were successful. Soviets left Afghanistan
and we said goodbye leaving these people who were fanatical
and armed, in Afghanistan and Pakistan."[2]

The invading forces of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan were
considered as a direct threat to Pakistan's national security and territorial
integrity by the political and military establishments. But in this war
Pakistan was playing with fire as the jihadis were not only fighting the
Soviets but had a specific radical ideology which gradually developed roots
not only in Afghanistan but also in various parts of Pakistan. The jihadis'
motivation was to secure an Islamic state from the incursion of an infidel
power.

Influx of Refugees

The civil war in Afghanistan resulted in the exodus of more than two
million refugees towards Pakistan where due to ethnic affinity they were
welcomed. Most of these displaced Afghans settled down in camps near the
border and other places in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK). By mid-1986, the
number of the refugees had grown to around four million.[3] Due to the after
effects of war and political instability in Afghanistan these refugees stayed
on in Pakistan. Moreover, the government had little control over the
movement of people and weapons across the Pak-Afghan border. Since the
tribal belt comprising FATA has been governed by a different set of laws
called the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) inherited from the British and
the administration there is run by a political agent (PA) with the
coordination of local Maliks and Sardars, it was easy for militant tendencies
to nurture in these areas under the protective umbrella of Zia's Islamization
campaign. However, refugees who could find work and sustenance in
Afghanistan started returning to their homeland. In 2001, there were still
around two million Afghan refugees in Pakistan. A 2006 count shows 2.5
million refugees living in Pakistan[4]. According to another source some 3.6
million refugees have returned to Afghanistan since 2002 but still 1.7
million are living in Pakistan[5]. In 2010, Pakistan, with the collaboration of

---

[2] *Fox News*, July 17, 2010
[3] Mehrunnisa Ali, *Readings in Pakistan Foreign Policy 1971-1998* (New York:
 Oxford University Press, 2001), 332.
[4] Daniel A. Kronenfeld, "Afghan Refugees in Pakistan: Not All Refugees, Not
 Always in Pakistan, Not Necessarily Afghan?" *Journal of Refugees Studies*,
 October 1, 2007, (accessed on January 12, 2010),
 http://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/content/21/1/43.abstract
[5] *Express Tribune*, September, 22, 2010, (accessed on December 20, 2010),

the United Nations refugee agency, the UNHCR, started a campaign for the registration of these Afghan nationals. According to NADRA, till February 2011, 1.4 million refugees had been registered, 296,499 among them children[6]. The refugee campshave reportedly acted as recruiting cells of militant outfits and safe havens for terrorists and criminals.[7] Increase in the smuggling of weapons into Pakistan is also linked to Afghan refugees. They were also involved in sectarian clashes that took place in Kurram agency in which 200 people were killed in 1987[8].

Islamization

The takeover in 1977 by General Zia-ul-Haq brought to an end a democratically elected civilian government followed by 11 years of a dictatorship during which political activity remained virtually banned, the media was throttled and an elected prime minister was sent to the gallows. The process of Islamization of the polity promoted sectarianism which deepened the militant culture in Pakistan. Khaled Ahmed, in his article, "Islamic Extremism in Pakistan", states that extremism in Pakistan peaked in the 1980s decade. General Zia combined three main interest groups, the military, the mullahs and the business elite[9] to bolster his rule. The Islamization policy politicized religious groups in Pakistan. Moonis Ahmar thinks three schools of thought define extremism/militancy in Pakistan:

- Firstly, those who believe that Zia-ul-Haq's policies were the bedrock of extremist tendencies in Pakistan.
- Secondly, those who blame it on the nexus of intelligence agencies with militant groups.
- Thirdly, those who ascribe it to unresolved social and political issues which provided space for militancy to flourish.

---

http://tribune.com.pk/story/53108/afghan-refugees-in-pakistan-to-get-new-registration-cards/

[6] *News International*, March 16, 2011.

[7] According to the UNHCR, nearly two million Afghans remain in the country — one million of whom live in camps — more than seven years after the collapse of the Taliban regime in December 2001. There are over 80 Afghan refugee camps in the country, including 71 in NWFP, 12 in Balochistan Province and one in Punjab Province, (accessed on November 10, 2010), http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,,IRIN,,PAK,4562d8cf2,4809b9991e,0.html

[8] Mehrunnisa Ali, *Readings in Pakistan Foreign Policy 1971-1998*, (2001), 335.

[9] Khaled Ahemd, "Islamic Extremism in Pakistan," *Journal of South Asia*, Lahore, (October/December), 2003.

In sum the author believes that "Afghan jihad" played a major role in the destabilization[10] and radicalization of Pakistan.

Zia's Islamization included reforms in the legal system, in the Penal Code, in the economic and educational policy.[11] The Council of Islamic Ideology was revived and given a vital role in legislation. The Hudood Ordinance, Zina Ordinance and the Zakat and Ushr Ordinances were promulgated in 1979. These not only strengthened the religious establishment[12] but also promoted a certain set of Islamic jurisprudence which eventually imbalanced the multi-denominational society of Pakistan. The educational policy designed in 1978 also had a deep social impact. The inclusion of religious education based on Hanafi school of thought that stressed Jihad, the establishment of separate women universities perceiving co-education as un-Islamic reflected the rigidness and fundamentalism of the policy. The then Federal Minister of Education, Dr. Muhammad Afzal, reportedly said that:

> "The policy of the present regime was to discourage co-education, which is prevailing at the university level only… as it is against the Islamic concept of education[13]".

Zubeida Mustafa, a known journalist, wrote in her investigative report:

> "The entire tenor of the curricula ensures that students are subjected to a massive dose of indoctrination. If you look at the textbooks minus the title page it is difficult to differentiate one from the other. Be it an Islamic book or books of English, Urdu or Pakistan Studies, each begins with chapters which are entirely religious in content or have a strong religious undertone. At one time even a biology book contained an *ayat* on jihad[14]".

Madaris

The indoctrination of society through Islamization was the Zia regime's strategy to seek legitimacy and retaining power. Dr. Nasim Asharf in his

---

[10] Moonis Ahmar, "The challenge of extremism in Pakistan: Are there lessons to be learnt from the experience of Singapore*?" IPRI Journal* v. XI, no. 2 (Summer 2011), 48, (Accessed on November 15, 2011), http://ipripak.org/journal/summer2011/Article%202.pdf

[11] Muhammad Aslam Syed, "Islam & Democracy in Pakistan," National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, Islamabad, 1995, 135.

[12] Zia Mian, Iftikhar Ahmad, eds., *Making Enemies, Creating Conflicts: Pakistan's Crisis of State and Society* (Lahore: Mashal, 1997), 29.

[13] Ibid., 256.

[14] Zubeida Mustafa, "Education and Bigotry", *Dawn*, July 14, 2010.

article, '*The Islamization of Pakistan's Educational system 1979-1989*' states that religion was a tool that Zia used to legitimize his rule. Particularly, the new education policy changed the educational foundation of Pakistan:

> "Five thousand mosque schools were approved and the curriculum of the public schools was rewritten with an emphasis on jihad and Islamization. The message of jihad initially targeted Communism. International patrons supplied funds, arms, and religious literature that were used freely in Pakistani *madrasas*. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) paid the University of Nebraska, Omaha $5.1 million between 1984-1994 to develop and design textbooks to promote jihad. Overall, about $13 million worth of such textbooks were distributed in Pakistan in the Afghan refugees camps, schools, and Pakistani *madrasas* where students learned basic arithmetic by counting dead Russian soldiers and AK-47 rifles[15]."

The Brooking Institution in a 2010 report revealed that there was a strong relationship between education and civil conflict.[16] Analysts have linked the role of madrasas, which proliferated during Zia's regime, in promoting the culture of violence, militancy and extremism. This was tragic indeed as the institution of madaris known for research and learning became an engine of extremism. Pakistan and US intelligence agencies used them as camps for Afghan Jihad and later they transformed into bases of sectarian bigotry. Government backed by foreign assistance funded them generously. Their number grew rapidly during the 1980s. The madaris are governed by different Wafaq (federation) boards relating to various Fiqh schools given in Table 1

---

[15]Nasim Ashraf, "The Islamization of Pakistan's Educational System: 1979-1989," cited in "The Islamization of Pakistan 1979-2009 A Special Edition of Viewpoints," The Middle East Iinstitute, Washington DC, (accessed on November 14, 2010),
http://www.mei.edu/Portals/0/Publications/Pakistan%201979-2009.pdf
[16] "Easy Prey for Taliban," *Dawn*, February 19, 2011.

Table: 1

Madaris in Pakistan

Name	Doctrinal Affiliation	Headquarters	Date Established
Wafaq-ul-Madaris	Deobandi	Multan	1959
Tanzim-ul-Madaris	Barelvi	Lahore	1960
Wafaq-ul-Madaris-Shia	Shia	Lahore	1958
Rabitatul-Madaris-al-Islamia	Jamaat-e-Islami	Lahore	1983
Wafaq-ul-Madaris-al-Salafia	Ahl-e-Hadith	Faisalabad	1955

Source: Madrassah Boards[17]

According to the National Education Statistics 2005 there were a total of 12,153 Madaris in Pakistan enrolling approximately 1,512,445 students[18]. According to latest statistics, Wafaqul Madaris Al-Arabia, which belongs to the Deobandi school of thought, has over 12,000 religious schools alone with an enrolment of around three million students. Tanzeemul Madaris, which follows the Barelvi school of thought, has over 6,000 seminaries with over 130,000 students. Rabata-ul-Madaris Al-Islamia, which is run by the Jamaat-i-Islami, has about 700 Madrassahs and nearly 100,000 students. Wafaqul Madaris belonging to the Shia community has over 500 Madrassahs and around 10,000 students[19].

Jessica Stern, researcher at Harvard University, in her work on madaris explains that there is a strong relationship between madaris and religious indoctrination. According to the writer,

---

[17] (accessed on January 23, 2014), http://jamiatulmuntazar.com/dept/wafaq.php, http://tanzeemulmadaris.com/, http://www.wifaqulmadaris.org/, http://www.uob.edu.pk/journals/TEACHING%20OF%20ISLAMIC%20STUDIES%20AS%20A%20SUBJECT%20IN%20THE%20SECONDARY%20SCHOOLS%20AND%20MADARIS%20IN%20PAKISTAN.pdf

[18] Ministry of Education, Pakistan, (accessed on September 13, 2011), www.moe.gov.pk

[19] *Dawn*, January 13, 2011.

"Madras[s]ahs are located all over the country and provide not only free education, but also free food, housing, and clothing. In the poor areas of southern Punjab, madras[s]ahs funded by the Sunni sectarian political party Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) reportedly even pay parents for sending them their children"[20].

Punjab and Khyber Paktuhnkhwa are the main tributaries of madaris. The madaris house an increasing number of foreign recruits, particularly from the Middle East and Persian Gulf. For poor families Madrassahs which provide free education, food, clothing and shelter are the best affordable option. Mumtaz Ahamd[21], in his work, *Islamic Education in Bangladesh and Pakistan: Trends in Tertiary Institutions* argues that the involvement of Ulema in NGOs working for social welfare and community services has strengthened their organic links with the locals[22]. Moreover, it has not only empowered the affiliated Madrassahs but has increased their audiences beyond Madrassahs. It can be argued that the culture of violence and intolerance is not limited to Madrassahs alone but exists in every part of society. The International Crisis Group in its report on Pakistan: "Madrassah, Extremism and Military" published in 2002 explains that though Madrassahs are being used as recruitment cells by the militant outfits but they only play a supporting role[23]. Most of them do not give military training, but the indoctrination of radicalism and resistance to change affects the minds of the learners. In June 2002, government enforced the Madrassah Registration Ordinance in which madrasahs were to register with government and their affiliated boards. Foreign students were also required to have a permission letter from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Interior Ministry. Moreover, they were prohibited from taking any funding from foreign sources. A study conducted by an

---

[20] Jessica Stern, "Pakistan's Jihad Culture," *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2000). (accessed on June 15, 2011), http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/jstern/pakistan.htm

[21] Professor in Hampton University, Department of political Science

[22] Mumtaz Ahmad, "Islamic Education in Bangladesh and Pakistan : Trends in Tertiary Institutions," NBR Project Report, April 2009. (accessed on October 20, 2010), www.nbr.org

[23] "Pakistan: Madrassahs, Extremism and Militancy," International Crisis Group (ICG) Asia Report N°36, Islamabad/Brussels, July 29, 2002, (accessed on October 11, 2011), http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/Pakistan%20Madrasas%20Extremism%20And%20The%20Military.ashx

independent organization reveals that madrassah reforms lacked the required political will and bureaucratic efficiency[24] which is affecting the whole process.

The report published by the Brooking Institution in 2010 gave a new insight into this phenomenon that the problem is beyond the madaris. It was argued that public sector education should also be scrutinized and monitored. In the increasing incidents of suicide bombing since 2005, the graduates of madaris were not involved but the children of 14-18 years of age who were mostly dropouts. The public sector education system is not based on analytical assessment and training which eventually affects social engineering of the society. Similarly, C. Christine Fair, in her survey of 141 families of militants in Pakistan has concluded that from the total only 19 were recruited from madrassahs and the same number of recruits from the public sector schools[25]. This survey shows that madrassahs are not the only supply line of militants, but serve as major cells of indoctrination.

The problem lies in the fact the leadership in Pakistan has been using religion for their political motives and vested interests and not in the true spirit of deliverance and implementation. Years of authoritarian rule, weak roots of democracy[26], fragile institutions, weak instruments of law and order and lack of political will provided the vacuum militant tendencies needed to nourish in the Pakistani society. The major tributary of Zia's Islamization and Afghan Jihad was sectarianism which is still haunting the state and society. In addition to it, though the Sunni sect is in majority in Pakistan in terms of followers but the Afghan episode strengthened the Sunni sectarian outfits through financial assistance specifically from Saudi Arabia and US. This polarization negatively affected the society as it created an imbalance in the religio-political structure of Pakistan.

Sectarian Militancy in Pakistan

Islam and the state has always been a debatable issue in Pakistan which was created in the name of Islam by mostly secular leaders. Cultural Islam continued to dominate the lives of the people even after the inception of Pakistan. There was no main dissent among different sects and people

---

[24] Dr. Masooda Bano, "Contesting Ideologies and Struggle for Authority: State-Madrasa engagement in Pakistan," International Development Department, University of Oxford (2000), (accessed on October 15, 2010), http://www.idd.bham.ac.uk/research/pdfs/Pakistan_madrasa.pdf

[25] C.Christine Fair, *The Madrassah Challenge: Militancy and Religious Education in Pakistan* (Lahore: Vanguard, 2009), 68.

[26] Touqir Hussain, "Post-1979 Pakistan: What Went Wrong?" (2009), (accessed on November 10, 2010), http://www.mei.edu/Portals/0/Publications/Pakistan%201979-2009.pdf

actively participated in each other's religious affairs. The radical strain proliferated by Zia's Islamization resulted in history's worst sectarian strife and killings. A 2005 International Crisis Group report concluded that "Sectarian conflict in Pakistan is the direct consequence of state policies of Islamisation and marginalization of secular democratic forces".[27] Similarly, Khaled Ahmed in his article, "Islamic Extremism in Pakistan" describes the roots of sectarianism in these words:

> "After coming to power, General Zia took over the populist slogan of Nizam-e-Mustafa and imposed Shariah on Pakistan. It really meant the imposition of the Sunni Hanafi Fiqh or jurisprudence followed [by] the majority population from which the Shias were excluded. Two early laws under Shariah enforced by him, failed miserably: the first, abolition of Riba (interest), failed because of the inability of the Islamic scholars to reinterpret Islam for modern conditions; the second, Zakat, failed because the Shia jurisprudence, called Fiqh-i-Jaafaria, had a conflicting interpretation of Zakat. In 1980, an unprecedented procession of Shias, led by Mufti Jaffar Hussain, laid siege to Islamabad and forced General Zia to exempt the Shia community from the deduction of Zakat. The concept of Sunni Ushr is also rejected by Shia jurisprudence. It appears that, when the anti-Shia movement started in Jhang in 1980s, General Zia not only ignored it but saw it as his balancing act against the rebellious Shia community"[28].

By the end of the 1990s another major division which got prominence was the stratification of the Sunni sect as Deobandis and Barelvis. Katja Riikonen in his policy paper "Sectarianism in Pakistan: A destructive way of dealing with a difference" is of the view that sectarianism is always associated with religion as it is a factor that makes an attitude, an action, and a belief on the basis of which the whole structure is governed[29]. Initially, this division was connected to Shia and Sunni but in recent years it has taken a more complex shape in Pakistan and elsewhere. The division within these sects and especially in the Sunni sect is as wide as with the Shia sect. These subdivisions have asymmetric relations with each other. It is significant to note that these groups have strong internal roots and have been used for political ends on various occasions. Despite the fact that 97

---

[27] *Dawn*, February 7, 2010.

[28] D. Suba Chandran & P.R. Chari, eds., *Armed Conflicts in South Asia 2008* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 48-49.

[29] Katija Riikonen, "Sectarianism in Pakistan: A destructive way of dealing with a difference," Pakistan Security Research Unit (PSRU), (2007), https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/psru/briefings/archive/Brief2finalised1.pdf

per cent of the population in Pakistan is Muslim, there are many theological differences within this block. It is estimated that 70 per cent of the population is Sunni whereas 20 per cent of the population is Shia. Traditionally sectarianism had been defined as strife among the Deobandi/Ahl-e-Hadith and the Shia as witnessed in the 1980s. But in recent years the menace has spread within same sects such as between Deobandi/Ahl-e-Hadith and Barelvis. The Deobandi-Barelvi conflict is apparent, the way shrines and Sufi orders are being targeted by the militants. Barelvi and Shia unlike the Deobandi esteem the Ahl-e-Bait[30] and the Sufi order. They consider them as a source of connectivity with Allah. The Deobandis consider the practices of these sects as un-Islamic.

The 'sunnification' of Pakistan through the process of Islamization was the major cause of resentment among other sects, especially the Shiite who resisted the imposition of Hanafi fiqh and refused automatic deduction of Zakat from bank accounts.

Over time Punjab and NWFP became the breeding bases of sectarianism. In 1986, at least 35 Imambargahs were burned[31] down in escalating sectarian strife. Later in the 1990s, Karachi also became the victim of ethno-sectarian militancy. Jhang, traditionally a stronghold of feudal class, became the main battlefield of sectarian violence in Punjab. It was unique in a sense that the organization (SSP) involved in acts of militancy was also involved in politics; even they were able to win seats in the National Assembly. The politicization of sectarianism in Jhang resulted in severe clashes between the Shias and Sunnis. The SSP was actively supported by the commercial class mainly based in central Jhang. Target killings and indiscriminate shooting was their modus operandi. On the other hand TNFJ (Tehrik Nifaza Fiqh Jaferia) protected the interests of the Shia community. Later on, it's offshoot Siph-e- Muhammad was also reported to be involved in acts of violence as a counterweight to SSP and later its offshoot, the Lashkere Jhangvi (LeJ).

Dr. Tahir Kamran in his work has linked sectarian militancy with *biraderi* system and the empowerment of commercial class/urbanization that revolted against the dominance of the feudal class. His hypothesis proved to be right in the case of Jhang where the feudal class dominated district politics and society.[32].

1980s and 1990s were the worst years of sectarian violence. Despite believing in the liberal interpretation of Islam both the governments of

---

[30] Ahl e Bait refers to the Family of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H)

[31] Musa Khan Jalazai, *Sectarianism and politico-religious terrorism in Pakistan* (Lahore: Tarteeb Publishers, 1993), 286.

[32] Tahir Kamran, "Sectarianism in Pakistan: A profile of Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP)," The Middle East Institution, Washington D.C.(2009), 67.

Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif were unable to contain sectarian clashes. The Milli Yakjheti Council (MYC) formed in 1996 couldn't play its due role because of rift among different factions of the Jamiat-Ulema-Islam (JUI).

After the events of 9/11 the wave of terrorism which had badly shaken the roots of Pakistani society also had an element of sectarianism which has been apparent since 2006. Al Qaeda and the TTP joined with sectarian-based militant outfits to operate on a broad spectrum. 2006 was the year which worsened Pakistan's internal security paradox. According to Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) security report, there were 657 militant attacks, including 41 of a sectarian nature, leaving 907 people dead and 1543 others injured. Moreover, there were seven suicide attacks[33]. In 2006 Sunni-Shia violence erupted in Hangu and Tank during the month of Muharram. Furthermore, intra-sunni conflict surrounded the Khyber Agency where Deobandi Mufti Shakir and Barelvi Pir Saif confronted each other throughout the year. Severe clashes took place in the Kalay area of Lower Orakzai agency between Shias and Sunnis over the control of Main Anwar Shrine. Reportedly 20 people were killed in these clashes[34] . A suicide attack on April 12, 2006 in Karachi wiping out the top leadership of Sunni Tehrik, mostly belonging to the Barelvi sect and the targeted attack on high profile Shia scholar and political leader Maulana Hassan Turabi along with his nephew in Karachi aggravated the situation.

2007 also witnessed sectarian clout in Kurram agency especially in Parachinar and Khyber agency in which mostly Shia community was targeted by the militants. It is worth mentioning that sectarian organizations have systematically expanded their domain, support and targets. Starting mainly from the most populous province of Pakistan — Punjab and the industrial and commercial capital Karachi were the hubs of sectarian strife. The menace has now extended to Quetta, Peshawar, Hangu, Multan, Dera Ismail Khan, the Khyber and Kurram agencies. Target killing, bombings and the recent phenomenon of suicide bombing mostly on worshippers and religious processions and such other events are the main tactics of militants.

The recent wave of targeting the shrines of Sufi saints illustrates the complex nature of sectarian militancy in Pakistan. The attack on shrines of Rehman Baba, Data Darbar and Abdulllah Shah Ghazi shows how the Islam of the militants is different from the Islam of these Sufi saints who taught love, compassion, peace, tolerance and respect for life.

---

[33] Zahid Ali Khan, "Military operations in FATA and PATA: implications for Pakistan*,"* Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), (accessed on January 24, 2014), http://www.issi.org.pk/publication-files/1339999992_58398784.pdf

[34] D. Suba Chandran, P.R. Chari, eds., *Armed Conflicts in South Asia 2008* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 63.

According to an estimate 80 per cent of the Pakistani Sunni population follow the Sufi tradition while only 10 per cent are Deobandis, mostly Pashtuns. Contrary to this population make up some 64 per cent of the total seminaries belong to Deobandis, 25 per cent to Barelvis, six per cent to Ahl-e-Hadith and three per cent to Shiite organizations[35]. This distortion is the result of General Zia's Islamization.

The Politico-religious Discourse

The exploitation of religion by the state has played a crucial role in the growth of militancy in Pakistan. While the seminaries organised on sectarian lines served as hatcheries for sectarian strife the growing role of religious parties in the country's politics also greatly strengthened the forces of extremism in the country. Sectarian strife has been promoted through the pulpit, from mosques, imambargahs and especially through Friday sermons. Most of the members and top ranks of militant outfits had previously been associated with the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) or the Jamiatul-Islam (JUI). Most of the Deobandi madaris have political affiliation with the JUI. Maulana Sami-ul-Haq, head of an important faction of JUI, runs a madrassah in Akora Khatak, in which the present crop of the Taliban is reported to have been raised during the 1990s[36] in addition to other madaris of Peshawar (Darul Haqqania) and Karachi[37].

The religious parties in politics have played a key role in providing legitimacy to military rules during which militancy has expanded its domain. Dr. Mohammad Waseem has explained four main categories of Islamic establishments which have greatly influenced the national profile of Pakistan.

- The religious groups in politics namely the JI, JUI, JUP, MMA and their splinter group — Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan and its offshoot LeJ have all hobnobbed with governments in power. In 1993, Azam Tariq, prominent leader of SSP, was a sitting minister. In 2002 elections, MMA was able to win 60 seats in the National Assembly and form government in NWFP and join the coalition government

---

[35] Dr. Syed Farooq Hasnat, *Global Security Watch-Pakistan* (New Delhi: Pentagon press, 2012), 129

[36] C. Christine Fair, *The Madrassah Challenge: Militancy and Religious Education in Pakistan* (Lahore: Vanguard, 2009), 57.

[37] Joshuat. White, "Pakistan Islamist Frontier: Islamic Politics and US Policy in Pakistan's North-West Frontier," (New York: Centre on Faith & International Affairs at the Institute for Global Engagement, 2008), 34, Security Monograph Series, no. 1, (accessed on December 16, 2011), http://www.cfia.org/go/frontier/

in Balochistan. They openly supported the Taliban elements in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

- The sectarian setting has enhanced violence and terrorism in Pakistan. Political parties have also used sectarian affiliations for their vote bank. The sect-based politics has resulted in increasing intolerance and rigidness in the society. It has been the major cause of religious violence and hate politics. The militant organizations have in fact thrived under the protective umbrella of their parent organizations which serve as their political arm.
- The educational setting in which madrassah-based militancy has gained much attention.
- The iconoclastic setting of the Islamist establishment is generally associated with groups like the Tablighi Jamaat and Al Huda[38]. Though they are non-militant and non-political but they share common attributes such as anti-American sentiments and rejection of Western culture and thought with the other strata of the Islamist establishment.

Use of Print and Electronic Media

The structure and the modus operandi of the Islamist enterprise are highly organized and systematic. The use of print and electronic media since 1980s by militant outfits to expand their set of agenda has been quite effective. They have gained access to large audiences. The audio, visual tapes and publications glorify the life of Mujahedeen engaged in Afghan and Kashmiri jihad. Muslims are called upon to unite against the evil (the West). The publicity material strictly follows sectarian lines. The circulation and distribution of this material is highly organized and systematic through mosques, madaris and Friday prayers which also serve as their funding source help them attract new recruits. The internet is another of their medium of communication targeting even larger audiences. Muhammad Amir Rana explains that the main content of militant publications exhorts that:

> "The real life of the believers starts after their martyrdom. Picking up from the same logic they motivate the believers to embrace martyrdom in jihad and reach heaven instead of being killed by Jews and Hindu bullets. In many publications there are standard articles like the last will of any martyr, a letter from his

---

[38] Dr. Mohammad Waseem, "Political Sources of Islamic Militancy in Pakistan," in *The Deadly Embrace: Religion, Politics and Violence in India and Pakistan 1947-2002*, ed. Ian Talbot, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 145-163.

mother/sister or wife eulogizing the sacrifice of their dear ones"[39].

Mostly young men are targeted. The use of coloured pictures, jingoistic slogans, inspiring stories of Mujahedeen, miseries of suppressed Muslims around the world provide motivation to join the militant cells. If the outfits are banned and their literature proscribed they re-emerge under a new name and banner. On March 6, 2002 the federal government called the provincial governments of Punjab, Sindh and Azad Kashmir to ban the publications of 22 magazines. But after two months[40] they reappeared with new names with the same agenda. For example, Lashkar-e-Taiba's magazine *Ghazwa* is now published as *Al-Jarrar.* There are instances when police have recovered hate literature from mosques and other areas. In 2010, police recovered hate literature, registration cards of members of Jaish-e-Muhammad and Afghan nationals, copies of computerized identity cards and video tapes of speeches of Mualana Azhar from Karachi[41]. It reflects the deep roots of militant structure in Pakistan that is promoting militant culture through all available means.

Kashmir Insurgency

Lashkere-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) are the two main groups that are said to have been involved in the Kashmir Jihad. Its deep roots in Pakistan are apparent since despite the government ban in 2002, it remained intact and kept working as a social welfare and tablighi organization. According to the report of the Council of Foreign Relations published in 2010, LeT is the military wing of MDI which was functional in 1989 in providing volunteers for Afghan Jihad. Later on in the 1990s, it joined the Kashmir jihad against Indian occupation forces.

Anti-American Sentiments in Society

After 2001, as a consequence of the US-led war against terrorism a new wave of militancy started in Pakistan. Due to ethnic affinity of the people of Khyber Pakhunkhwa (KPK) with the Pashtun population of Afghanistan the tribal belt showed strong sentiments against the US. They received the Afghan refugees without resistance. Due to Pakistan's alignment in the 'war

---

[39] Muhammad Amir Rana, "Jihadi Print Media in Pakistan: An Overview," *Conflict and Peace Studies*, vol, 2008, no. 1 (October-December 2008), Islamabad, 50.
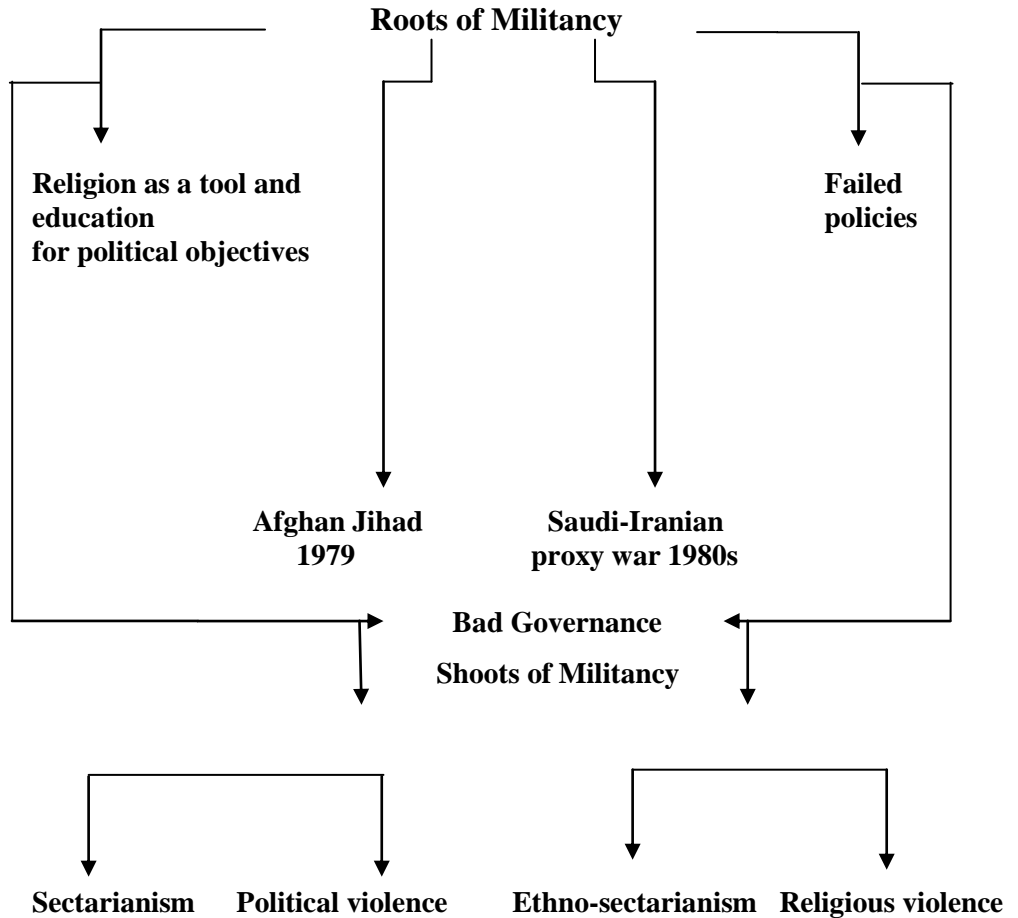
[40] Ibid., 54.

[41] *Dawn*, May 12, 2010.

on terror᾽ they also developed anti-government sentiments. The MMA (Mutaheda Majlis-e-Amal) one of the main group of religious parties remained vocal in its opposition to the US. Analyst Shaukat Qadir wrote that in October 2002 elections, the victory of MMA indicates the growing anti-Americanism in Pakistan[42]. The offensive strategy of using drone attacks to target the militants in Pakistani territory has further aggravated the sentiments against the US. This anti-Americanism acts as a reactionary force and strengthens the agenda of the militants. It is estimated that only one out of every seven US drone attacks in Pakistan kills a militant leader[43]. The majority of those killed are civilians or low level fighters.

---

[42] Ashutosh Misra, "Pakistan: Engagement of the Extremes," Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi (2008), 49,54.

[43] Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann, "The Effects of the US Drone Program in Pakistan," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 90 no. 4, July 2011-August 2011, (accessed on December 4, 2011), http://www.peterbergen.com/articles/details.aspx?id=494

Figure: 1

Roots and Shoots of Militancy in Pakistan

Roots of Militancy

Religion as a tool and education for political objectives

Failed policies

Afghan Jihad 1979

Saudi-Iranian proxy war 1980s

Bad Governance

Shoots of Militancy

Sectarianism   **Political violence**   **Ethno-sectarianism**   **Religious violence**

Following are the major fault lines that have contributed to militancy in Pakistan:

- Religiosity
- Mainstream educational and madrassah system
- Dictatorial rule
- Vulnerable socio-economic indicators
- Anti-Americanism
- Afghan factor

Table: 2

Factors Contributing to Militancy in Pakistan

| Fault lines	Factor	Causes
Religiosity	Major factor	Sectarian bigotry, rigid religious beliefs, Salafi domination of society, use of religious notion by political parties
Mainstream educational and madrasa system	Contributing factor	Indoctrination of specific belief system, culture of extremism, recruiting cells of militant outfits (madaris)
Dictatorial rule	Major accelerating factor	State sponsored groups, issue of governance, lack of democratic culture and participatory approach
Vulnerable socio-economic indicators	Driving factor	Poverty , unemployment, lawlessness, intolerance and desperation in society
Anti-Americanism	Accelerating factor	Irrational behaviour towards West, feeling of revenge and resentment
Afghan policy	Major factor	Influx of infiltrators, acts of terrorism

Socio-economic Indicators as Contributing Factors

Besides political and ideological factors, poor socio-economic conditions in the country are described as the major reason driving the desperately wretched into the arms of the militant outfits. Socio-economic issues such as poverty, illiteracy, health conditions, social injustice, unemployment and issues of human rights and security have had a disastrous impact on the social fabric of Pakistan. It is a well known narrative that to contain militancy and insurgency, it is important to win the battle of hearts and minds by addressing the socio-economic issues, because it would help to fill the gap of trust between the government and the people. The issue of poor governance constantly erodes the legitimacy of the rulers. Ted Gurr in his

Psychological Factors of Civil Violence explains that violence is activated by frustration[44]. Furthermore according to Davies' theory of revolution, frustration is the foremost outcome of stagnant socio-economic development.[45] Leonard Berkowitz is of the view that frustration can stimulate anger[46] thus enhancing its frequency. Poor social conditions can always mobilize the aggression and discontentment among the deprived classes of people. Militant and extremist tendencies can be a response to these adverse conditions and violence can be used as a pressure tactic to assert the demands. Non-availability of goods and services, unaccomplished desires, a despised social system, weak democratic institutions, undesirable customs and traditions, emotional disorders, hostile environment, all contribute to enlarge the magnitude of frustration which Aberle says is "a negative discrepancy between legitimate expectation and actuality"[47].

Figure: 2

Relative Deprivation and Militancy
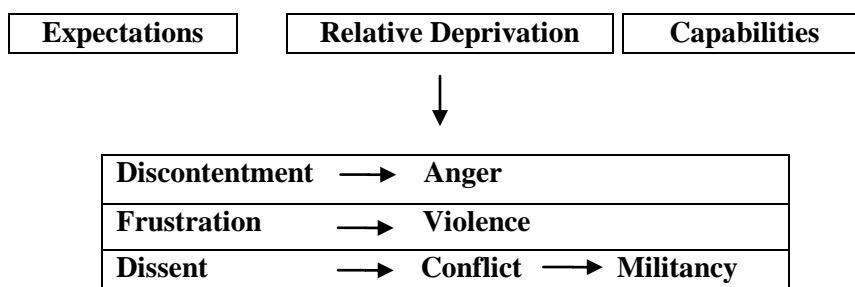
Poverty is a major socio-economic issue in any society. It can be divided into two categories i.e. urban poverty and rural poverty. In case of Pakistan, nearly two-thirds of the population and 80 per cent of the country's poor people live in rural parts of the country. Most of them do not have access to adequate basic needs of life[48]. Poverty can be taken as an

---

[44] Ted Gurr, *World Politics*, vol. 20, no. 2 (New York: John Hopkins University, 1968), 248 (accessed on 16th June 2010),
http://www.uky.edu/~clthyn2/PS439G/readings/gurr_1968.pdf

[45] Ibid., 251.

[46] Ibid., 249.

[47] Ibid., 253.

[48] Arshad Ali, "Militancy and Socio-economic Problems: A Case Study of Pakistan," Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI),
(accessed on October 7, 2011),
http://www.issi.org.pk/photos/MILITANCY_AND_SOCIOECONOMIC.pdf

independent variable that deprives the poor from other basic necessities like food, shelter, health, education and even the attainment of justice. It drives people to opt for violent means to bring about change in their condition. In the context of militancy in Pakistan it is significant to note that the most vulnerable and poor parts of Pakistan — FATA (Federally Administrated Tribal Areas), South Punjab and Balochistan — are considered to be its breeding grounds. According to a White Paper of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, it is Pakistan's poorest province with an overall incidence of poverty at 44 per cent as compared to 23.9 per cent for Pakistan[49]. Moreover almost 60 per cent of the people of FATA live below the poverty line making it the most backward region of Pakistan. Balochistan is no different. It is no surprise these areas serve as recruiting grounds for the militants. In fact much before the present wave of militancy came to surface Balochistan had already had a series of insurgencies. Dr. Farooq Hasnat in his book mentions a Lahore University of Management Sciences' study which estimates the incidence of poverty in south Punjab at 50.1 per cent affecting the districts of Rahim Yar Khan, Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar, Multan, Lodhran, Vehari and Khanewal and in West Punjab at 52.1 per cent affecting districts of Mianawali, Khushab, Bhakkar, DG Khan, Rajanpur, Leyyah and Muzaffargarh[50]. Compared to that, the incidence of poverty in northern Punjab comprising the districts of Rawalpindi, Chakkwal, Jhelum and Attock at 21.31 per cent. [51] In south Punjab, 36 per cent of the rural population is poor, the second highest in the provinces of Pakistan[52].

Literacy rate in Pakistan also reflects society's vulnerability. Pakistan has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world and according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), it is 55 per cent, the country standing 160th among the countries of the world[53]. Tariq M Ashraf estimates that 40 per cent of the DJE (Dissent Jehadi Elements) who are involved in terrorist activities are poor and 79 per cent have an educational level of matriculation or below[54]. This reflects the role

---

[49] http://www.nwfpfinance.gov.pk/White_paper_%202010-11.pdf (accessed on December 15, 2011)

[50] Farooq Hasnat, *Global Security Watch-Pakistan* (2012), 127.

[51] http://pakrealestatetimes.com/showthread.php?tid=18 (accessed on December 17, 2011)

[52] Imran Sharif Chaudary, "Poverty Alleviation in Southern Punjab (Pakistan): An Empirical Evidence from the Project Area of Asian Development Bank," *International Research Journal of Finance and Economics*, (2009), (accessed on December 26, 2011), http://www.eurojournals.com/irjfe_23_02.pdf

[53] *Nation*, July 29, 2010.

[54] Tariq M. Ashraf, "Terrorism in Pakistan: Emerging Trends," (accessed on December 4, 2010), http://www.grandestrategy.com/2009/03/terrorism-in-pakistan-emerging-trends.html

of poverty and illiteracy in militancy. Unemployment caused by illiteracy is another key element. The estimated rate of unemployment in 2008 was 12.6 per cent which rose to 14 per cent in 2009[55]. Pakistan also suffers from underemployment and cyclical unemployment mainly due to lack of opportunities. The energy crisis in the past few years has made the employment situation even worse. Moreover, unemployment among the youth is rampant. The militant outfits not only provide the recruits with guns but create a relationship of dependency with the organization as it provides food, shelter and a handsome amount of money. In this way, they are compelled to fulfil the aims and objectives of the militant groups. They are properly trained and brain washed in order to accomplish the task. Hillary Clinton on this complex phenomenon stated that, "We cannot stop terrorism or defeat the ideologies of violent extremism when hundreds of millions of young people see a future with no jobs, no hope, and no way ever to catch up to the developed world"[56]. The following table illustrates that in the sprouting phase of militancy, youth unemployment was on a higher scale.

Table: 3

Youth Unemployment in Pakistan 2001-2007

Year	Sex	Youth Labour Force	Youth Unemployed	Youth Unemployed Rate %	Adult Labour Force	Youth Population
2001	MF	-	1357	-	-	
2002	MF	11996	1381	13.41	28211	27631
2003	MF	-	1609	-	-	
2004	MF	13071	1528	11.69	29981	29991
2005	MF	-	1557	-	-	
2006	MF	14447	1249	8.645	32555	31460
2007	MF	14139	1057	7.475	33415	31957
2008	MF	-	-	7.7[57]	-	-

Source: United Nation Statistical Division
              http://unstats.un.org/unsd/default.htm (accessed on June 15, 2010)

---

[55] https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2129.html (accessed on December 18, 2010).

[56] *Nation*, January 7, 2010.

[57] http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=MDG&f=seriesRowID%3A630 (accessed on January 24, 2014).

Corruption is also cited as a factor in the growth of militancy in Pakistan. The Chairman of Transparency International, Pakistan, Syed Adil Gilani, ascribes terrorism directly to poverty resulting from corruption which not only weakens governance but undermines the economy. The national corruption perception survey 2009 by Transparency International estimates that in general corruption had increased from Rs. 45 billion in 2002   to Rs. 195 billion in 2009.[58] The survey's index places Pakistan at "34th number as compared to 42nd in 2009." It means Pakistan had plunged eight more points in corruption.[59] In 2013, the global corruption survey conducted by Transparency International revealed that land services followed by police department and the judiciary were the most corrupt departments.[60] In any society police and other law enforcement agencies form the front line defence against militant activities and judiciary makes the system accountable. This adverse situation allows militants to spread mayhem without fear of retribution. The report of International Crisis Group, "Pakistan's Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militant" published in 2006 tells that the only way to deal with the challenges of militancy in FATA is to ensure rule of law and the availability of political and civil rights.

It may be concluded from the above discussion that the increasing challenge of militancy in Pakistan requires a combination of force, negotiations and social uplift to address the issue.■

---

[58] http://www.transparency.org, (accessed on December 26, 2010).

[59] http://www.dawn.com/news/599267/corruption-in-pakistan (accessed on January 24, 2014).

[60] *Nation*, January 28, 2014.