

## **Militancy in Pakistan**

*Kiran Firdous* \*

### **Introduction**

In Pakistan today, militancy has become an extremely complex phenomenon. Since 2001, when Pakistan joined the war on terror, there has been a significant deterioration in the security situation in Pakistan. Particularly, the July 2007 Lal Masjid incident and the December 2008 assassination of Benazir Bhutto intensified militant activities in Pakistan.

The militants are using various strategies to destabilize the country. Scores of people have been killed in suicide bombings, although most attacks have targeted the army and police. Rallies, mosques and other locations have also been targeted. Currently, the situation has become critical, specifically after the military operation called “*Rah-i-Rast*” against militants in Swat, Malakand and Buner. After the launch of the operation to free Swat from the grip of the terrorists, militants have attacked major cities like Lahore and Peshawar, and termed the attacks as retaliation for the Swat operation.

The roots of militancy in Pakistan can be traced back to many socio-political factors. Social deprivation, drug-smuggling, Afghan refugees, religious exploitation through madrasas and training centres, and external factors such as the interplay of power politics at the international level, all have had their share in spreading militancy in Pakistan.

This paper is an attempt to trace out the root causes of militancy in Pakistan with a focus on the phenomenon’s evolution. The paper attempts to analyse the role of current militant organizations operating in the country. Moreover, it aims to develop a regional profile of militant activity in Pakistan and analyse its implications for the current security environment in the country.

Before we delve into an analysis of the phenomenon of militancy in Pakistan, it is necessary to understand the concept of militancy in its current form. The word militant comes from the 15<sup>th</sup> Century Latin “*militare*” meaning “to serve as a soldier”. The related modern concept of the militia as a defensive organization grew out of the Anglo-Saxon “*Fyrd*”. Typically, a militant engages in violence as part of a claimed struggle against oppression. But the word is sometimes used to describe anyone with strongly-held views (e.g., militant Christian, militant Atheist). Popular usage sometimes sees “militant” as synonymous with “terrorist”. In other words, a militant person is a confrontational person regardless of physical violence or pacifistic methods.<sup>1</sup>

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\* *The writer is Research Fellow at the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad.*

The term militant can describe those who aggressively and violently promote a political philosophy in the name of a movement (and sometimes have an extreme solution for their goal). The various movements that seek to apply militancy as a solution, or who use militancy to rationalize their solutions for issues in the modern world, seldom share common tactics. Traits shared by many militants include:

1. Employing force or violence directly, either in offence or in defence.
2. Justifying the use of force using the ideological rhetoric of their particular group.

A militant view sometimes constitutes an extremist position. A person or group in a psychologically militant state expresses a physically aggressive posture while in support of an ideology or a cause.<sup>2</sup>

### **The roots of militancy in Pakistan: an overview**

A close look at the phenomenon of militancy in Pakistan reveals that militancy is not something new for this State. It has deep historical roots. Although the roots of militancy in Pakistan can be traced back to historical/political processes that predate the Afghan war 1979, the war in Afghanistan played a major role in a rapid increase in militancy inside the State border. Madrasas, jihadi training camps, militant organizations, and religious parties came to the forefront. The religious concept of Jihad was amalgamated with the fight against Soviets in Afghanistan for obvious political gains at the international level, without considering the long-term effects on this side of the border. The result was an increase in militant organizations and arms smuggling.

The Soviet invasion, the influx of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and the impact of Iranian revolution on Pakistani Shia community disturbed Pakistan's internal security situation, and sectarian violence increased within Pakistan. In the history of Pakistan, 1997 and 1998 were years that witnessed the highest numbers of brutal murders, killings and sectarian strife. Sipha-i-Sahaba and its splinter group Lashker-i-Jhangvi openly started targeting the Shia community.<sup>3</sup> The Shia extremist group Sipha-i-Mohammad retaliated on a few occasions, but its forces were outnumbered by their opponents.

Shias claimed that they are 20 per cent of the total population of Pakistan, while some Sunni organisations insist that the Shia constitute only seven to eight per cent of Pakistan's population. Only a very small percentage of Pakistani population holds extremist sectarian views; and there has been considerable loss of life of both Shias and Sunnis in sectarian incidents in Pakistan during 1980 to 2004.<sup>4</sup> The Salafi-sponsored militant groups were deeply involved in jihadi activities in Afghanistan and Kashmir. Due to the State sponsorship of jihad on these two external fronts, they were quite successfully able to extend their networks inside Pakistan as well.

The 9/11 attacks in United States and the initiation of the war on terror with the attack on Afghanistan, had a severe impact on Pakistan. President Musharraf's decision to join the war on terror was to have grave implications for the overall security situation in the country. The tribal areas of Pakistan bordering Afghanistan were first to witness the rise in militant activities. However, the wave of extremism and terrorism did not remain restricted to these areas alone. Acts of extremist violence soon began to spread in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), as well as parts of Punjab. Today, many major cities of Pakistan are experiencing terrorist attacks, suicide bombings, target killings, bomb blasts.

## **Historical background of militancy**

### *Afghan war*

Until the late 1970s and early 1980s, militancy was an isolated phenomenon and was usually associated with periodic sectarian violence. The Islamization process started by Gen Zia-ul-Haq in Pakistan and active support for Afghan war changed the political playing field, and militant movements emerged in Pakistan. The decade-long conflict in Afghanistan gave the Islamic extremists a rallying point and a training field. Some 35,000 young Muslims from around the world joined the Afghan war.<sup>5</sup> The Afghan resistance was projected as part of global jihad against communism. The prominent theme was that Islam was a complete socio-political ideology under threat from atheistic communists. The Afghan war produced a new radical Islamic movement. Besides the warriors from Islamic countries, thousands more joined madrasas set up with funding from USA and Saudi Arabia and some other Muslim countries.

During the Afghan war, numerous madrasas were operating in Pakistan, giving religious education to Muslim students. But, at the same time, some madrasas were used to produce jihad literature, mobilise public opinion, recruit and train jihadi forces against Soviets.<sup>6</sup>

The purpose was to ensure a continued supply of recruits for the Afghan resistance. The message was simple: all Muslims must perform the duty of jihad in whatever capacity they could. It was the responsibility of the Pakistani military, particularly the ISI, to provide training to the recruits in camps inside Afghanistan and Pakistan's tribal region. As the Afghan jihad progressed, so did the influence of the jihadists coming out of these madrasas. The USA indirectly – and sometimes directly – promoted militancy, the culture of jihad and supported the clergy in its war against communism.<sup>7</sup>

The number of madrasas increased rapidly with the influence of Afghan refugees, patronage of the Pakistani military and Arab financial aid.<sup>8</sup> Madrasas affiliated with Haqqaniya chain and the the Jamiat Ulama-i-Islam faction led by

Fazulr Rehman also established networks for jihad in Pakistan's major urban cities.

### **The fallout of the Afghan war**

The role of Pakistan as a frontline state in the war against the Soviet Union led to a major fallout on Pakistani state and society. After the war, more than 2.8 million Afghan refugees remained inside Pakistan. These refugees further burdened the economy of the country. Most of the Afghan refugees were allowed to stay without any kind of documentation. Some of them established their businesses in the border area and got involved with cross-border arms smuggling and drug trafficking. Drug trafficking which various sources believe was encouraged initially by the CIA and other foreign stakeholders as a means of financing the Afghan resistance movement, went on to become the most important source of income for the militant groups.

The availability of weapons provided an opportunity for the religious groups to arm and equip their rank and file. These groups were able to divert a large portion of weapons destined for Mujahedin into their own inventories. The military successes that these militant fighters had against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan, also strengthened their resolve to extend their power within Pakistan as well. That also encouraged them to strengthen their military potential so as to be able to play a more prominent role in the affairs of state.<sup>9</sup>

As soon as jihad in Afghanistan ended, the same trained and battle-hardened Afghan warriors were now without a cause to fight for. Their attention got diverted towards the Kashmir issue, because the cause of Kashmiris' fight for freedom had much in common with that of the Afghans, and the Indian atrocities in Kashmir were such that very little was required in the way of motivation for the veterans of the Afghan war to change direction towards Kashmir.<sup>10</sup> Other countries with large Muslim minorities also provide fertile ground for an international jihad movement. As a result, jihadi parties became even more numerous and active in promoting local and regional movements.<sup>11</sup>

### **9/11 and resurgence of Militant organizations**

The attack on the World Trade in New York and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, became a watershed in world politics changing the regional and global scenario. Pakistan as frontline state climbed to centre stage in the United State's policy agenda to combat terrorism and to hunt the remnants of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda network. At that time, Musharraf was under immense pressure both domestically and from the United States on how to proceed vis-à-vis the U.S. demand of supporting its war on terror. On September 17, 2001, General Musharraf decided to provide unstinting support to the U.S. Pakistan had taken a U-turn in its policy towards Taliban by supporting the U.S. war on terror. In his address at the 58<sup>th</sup> United Nations General Assembly session, he said,

“The tragedy of 9/11 transformed security policies and changed geopolitical calculations. Pakistan took a strategic decision, based on the principles of humanity and our national interest, to support the war on terror ... Pakistan will remain in the forefront ... it is a decisive moment in history. We must decide whether to flow with the currents that threaten confrontation and the collapse of our civilization, or muster the collective will to chart the course of history towards a peaceful and cooperative global society.”<sup>12</sup>

On the domestic front, President Musharraf started to announce measures against the hard-line religious outfits.<sup>13</sup> On August 14, 2001, he ordered a nationwide crackdown on the sectarian militants. The decision came in the wake of a series of attacks on Shia mosques and Christian churches. The attack on Indian parliament on December 13, 2001 further acted as a catalyst for banning of militant organizations.

Musharraf banned eight militant groups that included: Jaish-i-Mohammad, Sipha-i-Sahaba, Lashker-i-Jhangvi, Lashkre-e-Taiba, Tehrik-i-Nifaz-i-Shariat Mohammadi, Tehrik-i-Fiqah Jafriya, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Sipha Mohammad, and Harkat-ul-Mujahedin.<sup>14</sup> Since Pakistan outlawed these groups, attacks in Kashmir and Pakistan have been carried out under other guises. One group calling itself al-Qanoon or Lashkar-i-Omar is thought to be a coalition of members of Jaish-i-Muhammad, Lashkar-e-Taiba, and other Pakistan-based Islamist groups, including the anti-Shiite Lashkar-i-Jhangvi organization.<sup>15</sup>

### ***1. Lashkre-e-Taayba (LeT)***

Lashkre-e-Taayba (LeT) is also known as Al-Mansoorian, army of the Pure, Jama'at ud-Dawa and Markaz al-Dawat-ul-Irshad (MDI). LeT is a subsidiary of Markez al Dawat-ul-Irshad, which was formed in 1987 by Zafar Iqbal, Hafiz Mohammad Saeed and Abdullah Azzam.<sup>16</sup>

Various intelligence sources consider LeT to be one of the Islamic militant groups operating in Kashmir. The main ideology of this organization is based on militant interpretations of Islam. Their objectives include establishment of Islamic rule over Jammu and Kashmir and eventually India. According to Hafiz Saeed (the main architect of the organization), jihad is the only way Pakistan can move towards dignity and prosperity.<sup>17</sup>

The group has its headquarters in Muridke, 30 kms. from Lahore. The headquarters houses a madrasa, a hospital, a market, a large residential area for 'scholars' and faculty members, a fish farm and agricultural tracts. The LeT also reportedly operates 16 Islamic institutions, 135 secondary schools, an ambulance service, mobile clinics, blood banks and several seminaries across Pakistan.<sup>18</sup> LeT maintains its ties to religious/military groups around the world ranging from the Philippines to the Middle East and Chechnya.<sup>19</sup>

The organization funds itself through donation from the Persian Gulf, the United Kingdom and Islamic NGOs. Financial strength has been the major factor behind its expansion. Handsome monetary rewards to the families of boys who sacrificed their lives in Kashmir and regular financial incomes for the families of jihadis fighting in Kashmir made jihad an attractive venture for unemployed and unprivileged youth. The primary reason behind the considerable expansion of the organization can be linked to its successful operations against the Indian forces in Kashmir.<sup>20</sup>

## **2. *Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM)***

Jaish-e-Mohammad (the army of Mohammed) is another important militant group. JeM evolved out of the Harakat ul-Mujahidin (HUM) organization. It was founded in Pakistan in March 2000 by Maulana Masood Azhar, the former leader of HUM, shortly after his release from prison in India. Mulana Masood Azhar describes the organization as:

“JeM is an international Islamic movement created at this time on the principles of Sharia. The movement brings with it an end to wickedness and an invitation of complete obedience to the Shari ... the motto of this movement in easy words is ‘jihad against the infidels and struggle against infidelity to faith’.”<sup>21</sup>

Most of its cadres came from rural areas, small towns and from madrasas. JeM also recruited among emigrant Kashmiris and Punjabis in Britain. JeM’s department of finance is very effective in collecting funds. Its network is spread over 78 districts in Pakistan. It has 30 tehsil offices working in the country. Karachi is one of the biggest centres. In the new set up of jihadi organizations, the Jaish Mohammad has been affiliated with Al-Jihad. Jaish cannot undertake any activity in occupied Kashmir under its own name and its management has been handed over to Al-Jihad.

The JeM maintains its training camps in Afghanistan and to achieve its targets, the group uses light and heavy machine guns, assault rifles, mortars, improvised explosive devices, and rocket grenades. The incident of attacking the Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly brought the JeM under the scrutiny of the United States in October 2001. The U.S. Department of State added the JeM to its list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO) in November 2001. The JeM was also involved in the December 2003 plot to assassinate General Musharraf.

## **3. *Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP)***

The SSP is the country’s most powerful sectarian militant organization. It came into prominence following the Iranian revolution in 1979. SSP is a Sunni sectarian group that follows the Deobandi School. SSP led by Haq Nawaz Jhangvi with a one point anti-Shia agenda.<sup>22</sup> Current SSP leaders include Qazi

Muhammad Ahmed Rashidi, Mohammad Yousuf Mujahid, Tariq Madni, Muhammad Tayyab Qasim and Maulana Muhammad Ahmed Ludhianvi.<sup>23</sup> With funding from some outside sources, the SSP has extended its organization across the country. It has emerged as one of the best-knit Islamist groups with nearly a million cadres.

In January 2002, Pakistan banned SSP but it changed its name as Millat-i-Islami and continued its operations.<sup>24</sup> Maulana Azam Tariq (ex-SSP chief, who was assassinated on October 6, 2003) said that he and his followers had formed a new party to work for the "enforcement of Islamic edicts" in Pakistan. He said the new group is called Millat-e-Islamia (MeI) and said it wanted to bring about an Islamic revolution.

The group's activities range from organising political rallies propagating against Shia as non-Muslims and assassination of prominent Shia leaders. SSP may have approximately 3,000 to 6,000 trained activists who carry out various kinds of violent sectarian activities. SSP over the years has spread its influence in almost all corners of Pakistan and is considered to have become of the most powerful propagating groups in the country today.

The banned SSP has once again rolled up its sleeves and started getting active across Pakistan, especially in Karachi, but with a new name, Ahle Sunnat wa Aljamaat Pakistan (ASWJP). The central information secretary of the SSP and ASWJP, Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Nadeem, said that they had started work in the name of the ASWJP because of the ban on the SSP.<sup>25</sup>

#### **4. *Lashker-I-Jhangvi (LJ)***

Lashker-I-Jhangvi (LJ) is a militant offshoot of the Sunni sectarian group Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP). The LJ believes in using terror tactics to force the government to accept its demand of declaring the Shia community a non-Muslim minority and establishing an orthodox Sunni Islamic system in the country.<sup>26</sup>

The LJ made its mark as the most feared terrorist group soon after its inception. The group was responsible for most of the sectarian killings over the last decade. By 2001, LJ had been involved in 350 incidents of terrorism. When LJ was banned by the Pakistan government in 2001, most of its members sought refuge in Afghanistan with Taliban, with whom they still have ties. In January 2003, U.S. added LJ to the list of Foreign Terrorist Organisations (FTO).

A security analyst said the "the LJ has become the key player in the nexus between al-Qaeda, Taliban and sectarian groups because of its ability to exploit its network of mosques and madrasas in just about every district in Pakistan."<sup>27</sup>

LJ specialized itself in armed attacks and bombing. The LJ has also carried out numerous attacks against Iranian interests and Iranian nationals in Pakistan.

The group attempted to assassinate former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, and his brother Shahbaz Sharif in January 1999. LJ members were active in aiding other terrorists in cities of Pakistan including Karachi, Peshawar, and Rawalpindi. Pakistani authorities have publicly linked LJ members to the kidnapping and murder of U.S. journalist Daniel Pearl in early 2002. Pakistani authorities believe that LJ was also responsible for the bombing in July 2003 of a Shiite Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) in Karachi that killed over 40 people. LJ is also active in Punjab and Karachi. Some members travel and reside on the Pakistan-Afghanistan borderland.

#### **5. *Sipah-i-Mohamad Pakistan (SMP)***

Sipah-i-Mohammad Pakistan (SMP), meaning the “army of Mohammad”, refers to a Shia group. The SMP is one of the two sectarian groups spreading its roots in Pakistan. Murad Abbasi Yazdani formed the SMP in 1993.

Yazdani got convinced that the Tehrik-e-Jafriya Pakistan (TJP) would not allow its cadres to physically counter the SSP. The Shia youth had been asking the TJP to take notice of what they called excesses of the SSP whose members were alleged to be targeting some of Shia beliefs. SMP’s headquartered at Thokar Naiz Beg was created out of TJP and it adopted a more militant stance against the SSP.<sup>28</sup> Gulam Raza Naqvi is the chief of the SMP. He also has visualized the creation of a Quds force comprising both Shia and Sunni to liberate Jerusalem.

The militant group has been involved in a number of killings, assassinations and robberies. On August 15, 2001, law enforcing agencies launched a massive crackdown on SMP. Many leaders and activist were arrested from different parts of the country, e.g., Faisalabad, Jhang and Toba Tek Singh districts. At the same time, the State Bank of Pakistan froze the bank accounts of the banned organization.<sup>29</sup>

#### **6. *Tehreek-e-Jafriya Pakistan (TJP)***

Tehreek-e-Jafriya Pakistan (TJP), meaning the “movement of the followers of Fiqah-e-Jafriya”, was formed in 1992. The origin of TJP can be traced to the Tehreek Nifaz-e-Fiqah Jafriya (TNFJ). It is widely believed that Sunni clergy considered the name of TNFJ as being offensive. So Shia leadership changed the name from TNFJ to TJP in 1994. The TJP, led by Allama Syed Sajid Ali Naqvi, is a well organized group which effectively represents the interests of the Shia community. The objectives of the TJP are as follows:

- The creation of society based on pure Islam.
- Protection of social, political and religious rights of Shias.
- Coordination of all Shia organizations.
- Fight against imperialism.<sup>30</sup>

The TJP has several affiliated organizations including Sipah-e-Abbass, Sipah-e-Ahl-Bait, Imamia Students Organization and Imamia Organization. The Sipah-e-Mohammad, a splinter group of the TJP, has emerged as a prominent Shia terrorist outfit involved in the anti-SSP campaign, violence and target killings.

#### **7. *Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM)***

The TNSM is a militant group that came into being on May 10, 1989 in Dir district. The TNSM headquarters is located in Maidan, near Bajaur Agency, in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). Sufi Mohammad is the leader of the TNSM. After Sufi Mohammad's imprisonment, his son-in-law Fazllullah filled the gap and established a foothold in Swat.<sup>31</sup>

The aim of the organization is to counter the enmities caused among various political groups by means of Sharia. TNSM demanded the implementation of Sharia for the first times on May 1990, when government took no action, then workers took it upon themselves to announce the implementation of Sharia and spread the movement to other districts.<sup>32</sup> Again, it came into prominence in November 1994, when it led an armed uprising in support of Sharia in the Malakand division of NWFP.

At the start of the U.S.-led War on Terror in Afghanistan (2001), the TNSM sent thousands of armed cadres to Afghanistan to fight alongside the Taliban militia.<sup>33</sup> After the proscription of TNSM in 2002, the organisation was almost defunct, but it began to revive itself after the October 8, 2005, earthquake and the subsequent relief efforts by the extremist group.

The organization also rejects the democratic system of government. According to its leadership, the political system in Pakistan follows the Western style of democracy and termed it as un-Islamic. Sufi Mohammad has said: "We want enforcement of the Islamic judicial system in totality: judicial, political, economic, jihad *fe sabillaha* [in the way of God], education and health. In my opinion, the life of the faithful will automatically be moulded according to the Islamic system when the judicial system is enforced".<sup>34</sup>

The TNSM operates primarily in the tribal belt, Swat and the adjoining districts of the NWFP. It has substantial support in Malakand and Bajur. It is suspected that the TNSM could be behind the November 8, 2006 suicide bombing at Dargai in the NWFP in which 42 soldiers were killed.

The TNSM set up FM radio stations to campaign for funds and volunteers to fight alongside the Taliban. These radio stations were also used to air TNSM leaders' addresses to pro-Taliban rallies. Brigadier (retd.) Mahmood Shah has commented on the Taliban's radio campaign:

“The Taliban have used radio in a clever way to increase their influence and intimidate the general population. The illegal stations have contributed a lot to the spreading of militancy. They (Taliban) issue instructions on the radio to their fighters and use it to recruit and organise them.”<sup>35</sup>

### **Post 9/11 scenario: a new militant challenge**

Pakistan has played the role of a frontline ally of the United States in the war on terror since 2001. According to a report released by the U.S. in 2004, Pakistan had faced a loss of U.S. \$ 10 billion by becoming an ally on war on terror.<sup>36</sup> Despite the government’s efforts to curb religious extremism, the pattern of disturbing events continued unabated. In February 2004, some nine schools were burned down by the terrorists in the northern region of Pakistan. The reason behind these attacks was the religious extremists’ opposition to the government of Pakistan for its support to the U.S.-led over its war on terror, the decline in enrolments in madrasas and an increase in government schools.<sup>37</sup> Since May 2002, Pakistan had taken the lead in hunting down Al-Qaeda and Taliban personnel in the Tribal Areas bordering Afghanistan and elsewhere in the country.

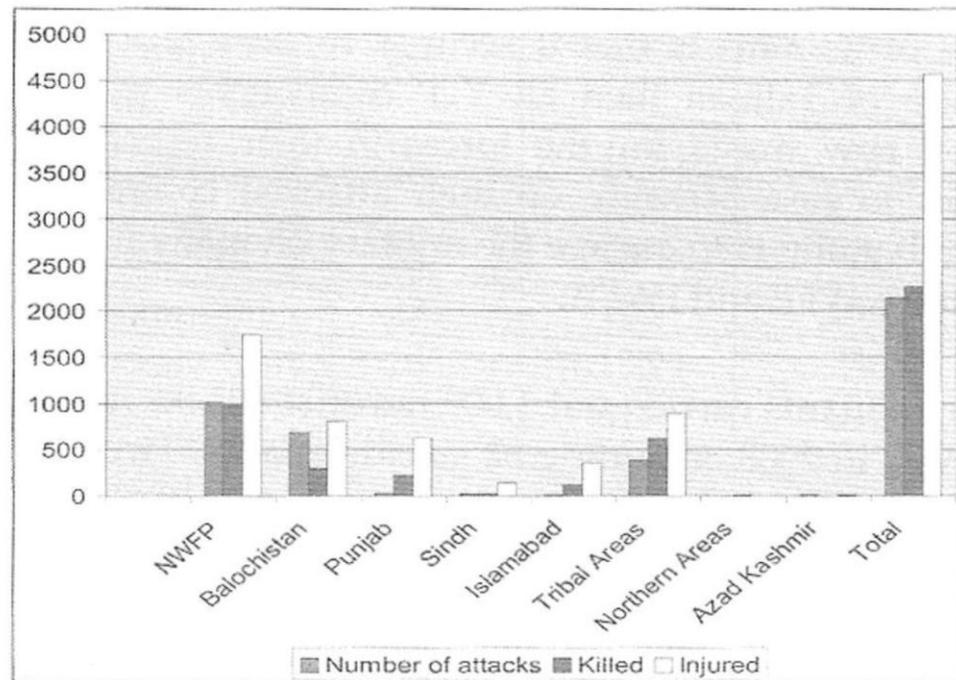
During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s, no restrictions were placed on the entry of foreign jihadi elements into Pakistan. But the Musharraf government had ordered that no madrasa should accept foreign students unless they have a permission certificate from their countries and are properly registered with Pakistan’s interior ministry. Moreover, General Musharraf forced madrasas to bring moderation in their teachings and widen the scope of their curriculum by including scientific subjects.<sup>38</sup>

In 2004, when Tehrik-e-Islami and Millat-e-Islamia were banned because of their activities, they emerged again with the name of Sunni Action Committee and Millat-e-Jafriya. There was an increase in suicide bombing in Pakistan, while insurgency in Balochistan added fuel to fire.

In early July 2007, security forces stormed the Lal Masjid in Islamabad, where a radical cleric and student sympathizers advocating the imposition of Sharia law had barricaded themselves. The storming of Lal Masjid sparked numerous suicide bombings and reprisal killings, further fuelling the fear of destabilization within the capital. In fact, changing circumstances reorganized the destabilized jihadi groups at that moment.

The following chart shows the number of people killed and injured during terrorist attacks in the year 2008:

**Chart 1: Terrorist Attacks in Pakistan in 2008**



Source: Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies.<http://www.san-pips.com>

In 2008, these attacks killed 2,267 people and injured 4,558. The highest number of attacks was reported from NWFP (1,009), followed by Balochistan (682) and the Tribal Areas (385). The highest number of attacks in NWFP shows that the militant activities are at the highest level there.

According to a 2009 survey conducted by World Public Opinion about the current religious militants Taliban activities and people's response, 67 per cent of the people consider Taliban activities as a critical threat for Pakistan, while this ratio was only 38 per cent in 2007. That means that militant activities are increasing and becoming a critical threat for peace and security of Pakistan.

**Table no.1**  
**Activities of religious militants in Pakistan as a whole:**

Threat assessment	2007	2009
Critical threat	38 per cent	67 per cent
Important, but not critical threat	23 per cent	18 per cent
Not a threat	17 per cent	11 per cent

Source: world public opinion.org<sup>39</sup>

## **Militant strongholds in Pakistan: a regional profile**

Since the incidents of 9/11, Pakistan has launched several military operations against Taliban and Al-Qaeda fugitives. Pakistan has deployed its military troops including Frontier Crops and paramilitary force to search and neutralize the militant elements. In this regard, a brief description of major militant hotbeds within the country is given below:

### ***1. Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) and Frontier Region (FR)***

FATA continues to be the most violent area in Pakistan. Within FATA, violence and suicide attacks are reported from all seven agencies: Bajur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orkazi, Kurram, South Waziristan and North Waziristan. In December 2005, the militants in Mirensah in North Waziristan killed some two dozen alleged criminals and left their bodies hanging for days in the centre of town. That was the beginning of the Pakistani Taliban movement which swept to other parts of NWFP.<sup>40</sup> The incident was the first sign of a Taliban-like rule. They created an environment of fear among people.

In mid-December 2007, 40 militant commanders in Pakistan's tribal region and the North-West Frontier Province held a secret meeting to unify their forces. They created a new umbrella organization called Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).<sup>41</sup> According to TTP deputy leader Mulana Faqir Mohammad and other senior commanders, they formed the organization to pool the resources and manpower of Pakistan's Taliban to fight in self-defence if the security forces of Pakistan attack their areas and also to extend help to Afghan Taliban taking part in the 'jihad' against U.S. and International Security Forces troops in neighbouring Afghanistan.<sup>42</sup> The TTP is headed by Baitullah Mehsud in South Waziristan, currently the most powerful Pakistani Taliban commander. The TTP's objective and targets can be classified into:

#### *a. The local tribal leaders*

The TTP and affiliated groups have engaged in a deliberate strategy of assassinating those tribal elders who opposed their rise. These tribal leaders perceived to be co-operating with the government have been the particular focus of attacks.

#### *b. Rival local militants*

TTP forces also launched a number of attacks against pro-Taliban militant leaders who have resisted incorporation within the TTP and spoken out against the increasingly influential role played in FATA by Uzbek militants.

*c. Individuals and institutions*

A common target of almost all pro-Taliban militants is individuals and institutions that are perceived being un-Islamic, like music and video shops, girl's schools, etc.

*d. Security forces*

A large proportion of attacks are directed against Pakistani security forces deployed in FATA and NWFP which include the Army and the Frontier Constabulary (FC).

Pakistani government implicated the network in the December 2007 assassination of Benazir Bhutto, although the group denies the charge. The CIA also confirmed its belief of TTP's involvement in the assassination in January 2008. The group claimed responsibility for a December 23, 2007 suicide bombing targeting a military convoy, the July 23, 2008 Swat Valley bombing, the March 25, 2009 attack on an Islamabad police station, the March 30, 2009 attack on the police training academy in Lahore<sup>43</sup> and the March 30, 2009 suicide attack on a military convoy near Bannu.

To combat the militants, Pakistan army deployed 100,000 regular and paramilitary troops in response to the surge in militancy there. The militants faced heavy casualties by making frontal attacks instead of the hit-and-run tactics of the past. The army also suffered from a raft of suicide bombs attacks and the kidnapping of hundreds of its soldiers. Months-long battles with militants have concentrated on three fronts: the Swat valley, and Bajaur and the South Waziristan Tribal Agencies.

Shortly after Benazir Bhutto's assassination, heavy fighting between security forces and the religious militants flared in the FATA in 2008. Fierce combat continued in that area throughout the year. Almost 450,000 residents of the Mehsud territories were driven from their homes by the fighting and live in the makeshift camps.<sup>44</sup>

The following table shows the number of casualties in FATA during 2007-2008:

**Table no.2**  
**Showing casualties in FATA in (2007-08)**

<b>Targets</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Civilians</b>	424	1,116
<b>Security forces</b>	243	242
<b>Militants</b>	1,014	1,709

**Source:** Institute for Conflict Management (SATP)

Approximately 3,067 persons including 1,116 civilians, 242 security force personnel and 1,709 militants were killed and over 1,315 injured in more than 1,154 incidents in 2008. On the other hand, 424 civilians, 243 security forces personnel and 1,014 militants were killed in 2007.

Recently, a public opinion survey was conducted by World Public Opinion about Taliban as a critical threat for Pakistan. The details are given below:

**Table no.3**  
**Activities of Islamists militants and Taliban in FATA and settled areas**

<b>Threat assessment</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2009</b>
<b>Critical threat</b>	34 per cent	81 per cent
<b>Important, but not critical threat</b>	26 per cent	14 per cent
<b>Not a threat</b>	18 per cent	2 per cent

**Source:** World Public Opinion.org <sup>45</sup>

The data shows that 81 per cent of Pakistanis see the Taliban as a critical threat for the country in 2009, while Taliban as a critical threat for Pakistan were viewed by only 34 per cent of the respondents in 2007. This shows a huge increase in public opinion against the Taliban. Only two per cent of those polled considered the Taliban not a threat to Pakistan. <sup>46</sup>

Currently, the Pakistani military has launched an operation called Rah-e-Nijat in South Waziristan. The military has been positioning troops and armour in the neighbouring district of Tank while conducting artillery and air strikes into regions run by Baitullah Mehsud. The main roads in the region are also being blocked to cut off supplies to Baitullah's forces. Further north, the military is battling the Taliban in the Jani Khel and Baka Khel regions in Bannu, which borders North Waziristan. <sup>47</sup>

The government and the military are signalling that the operation is limited to taking out Baitullah Mehsud. In this regard, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General, Maj. Gen. Athar Abbas, has said: "The government has taken a principled decision to launch a military operation against Baitullah and his network,"<sup>48</sup> whereas Mullah Nazir, Hafiz Gul Bahdur and the Haqqani network were not mentioned in the target list.

The three Taliban warlords have formed the United Mujahedin Council at the behest of Osama bin Laden, Mullah Omar, and the Haqqani group recently. These three are considered "pro-government Taliban" by the Pakistani military and government because they have opposed fighting the

Pakistani military and prefer to focus their attention of Afghanistan. Hence, the government signed a peace agreement with them on February 17, 2008.

Under this agreement, it was agreed that militants would stop target-killings and attacks on security forces. No one would be allowed to set up a parallel administration in the area and all issues and disputes would be resolved in accordance with the Frontier Crimes Regulation and in consultation with the political agent.<sup>49</sup> But, on June 29, 2009, the Taliban in North Waziristan ended this peace agreement with the government, putting in jeopardy the military's plan to isolate Baitullah Mehsud in South Waziristan.

According to their demands, the government must withdraw troops from the Tribal Agency and end the U.S. Predator strikes. These demands have not been met so far. Ahmadullah Ahmadi, a spokesman for the Taliban, has recently stated: "We will attack forces everywhere in Waziristan unless the government fulfils these two demands."<sup>50</sup>

The situation on the ground is unclear as it is not known whether the military will eventually fight all three leaders of the TTP in South and North Waziristan Agency or will only try and isolate Baitullah Mehsud and destroy his network.

## ***2. The North-West Frontier Province (NWFP)***

The expansion of the Taliban and other extremist groups in NWFP can be attributed to years of neglect and inability of successive government to devise a strategy for the development of the province. That led to an increase in the activities of the militants. Peshawar, the NWFP capital, was under siege in year 2008. There were three suicide attacks among 71 terrorism-related incidents in Peshawar during 2008.

The hub of militancy in NWFP, however, has been the districts of Swat. Swat, known for its green meadows, gushing rivers and snow-capped mountain valley of Pakistan, turned into hell for the people of Swat because of the militancy prevailing over there. The valley recently witnessed blasts of power grids, bridges, gas pipelines, schools and hotels triggered by the terrorists. Thus, the district which used to be a major attraction for tourists, turned into a lion's den where nobody dared to go.

The recent militancy in Swat was totally different from the one that arose in 1994. Then it was restricted to the local militants, while the recent one had elements from outside Swat. Observers even claim that the Taliban militia had commanders from Central Asia as well. The entire Swat valley was under the strong influence of the banned militant organization, Tehreek Nafaz-e-Shariat Muhammadi (TNSM) referred to in the foregoing.

The background to the current militancy is that Operation Rah-e-Haq was initiated against extremists in the valley towards the end of 2007 and was wrapped up in mid-January with the military and the government claiming success. Soon after that, the Awami National Party (ANP) took over the provincial government, and one of their key electoral promises was to talk peace with the Swat militants. However, this sensible approach was not responded to in kind by the Swat Taliban who in fact began targetting the local ANP leadership soon after the party took the reins of the NWFP government. Each passing day, the militants consolidated their grip over the valley. It was believed that much of the Swat valley had come under control of Fazlullah and his men by the end of 2008.

Militancy and the subsequent military operation in the valley have devastated Swat. Some 2.5 million people have been displaced, nearly 1,000 innocents killed and the rest are living as IDPs in poorly-equipped camps or with host families, mostly in other parts of NWFP. The damage caused to property and infrastructure in Swat has been evaluated at Rs. 3 billion.

The following table shows the total number of casualties in NWFP in 2007 and 2008:

**Table no .4**  
**Casualties in N.W.F.P**

<b>Targets</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Civilians</b>	459	1,021
<b>Security Forces (SF)</b>	193	281
<b>Militants</b>	538	1,642

**Source:** Institute for Conflict Management (SATP)

Approximately 2,944 people, including 1,021 civilians, 281 security forces personnel and 1,642 militants, were killed and 1,748 sustained injuries in more than 2,183 incidents across the NWFP through 2008. The death count has more than doubled over 2007, a year which witnessed the sweeping transformation of the Frontier as a major battleground for radical Islam. At least 1,190 persons, including 459 civilians, 538 militants and 193 security forces personnel, were killed in 2007.<sup>51</sup>

### **3. Punjab**

The province of Punjab has also seen a spike in militant activity. During 2008, 12 suicide attacks occurred in Punjab. The Lashkre-e-Taayba and the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) draw a majority of their cadres from southern Punjab, including Multan, Bahawalpur, which is also JeM's headquarters. On September 22, 2008, the NWFP Governor Owais Ghani warned Punjab that "militant in the tribal areas of the NWFP have established firm networking (with jihadi groups)

in southern Punjab and most fresh recruits for suicides attacks are coming from there. The militants' leaders and commanders are also coming from Punjab. The militant's field commander in Swat too is from Punjab."<sup>52</sup> The Lahore attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team on March 3, 2009, in which six police guards were killed and seven Sri Lankan players injured, further heightened concerns over the rise of militancy in Punjab.

## **Conclusion**

The menace of militancy is stalking the security and future of Pakistan. The State and society of Pakistan must come up with sound indigenous solutions and innovative political, economic and educational strategies to confront this multifaceted problem.

Along with security-related strategies such as improved system of local law-enforcement, better, fair and quick dispensing of justice; long-term political and social reform is also required to address the sense of marginalization in deprived communities. Educational reform for curriculum in public schools as well as madrasa curriculum reform must be expedited to purge the educational system of sectarian and literature of hate and intolerance.

However, most importantly, the State must show clear resolve in disarming militants, shutting down terrorist training camps and ending the flow of money and weapons to and recruitment and training by the Taliban and other foreign or local militants on Pakistani territory.

It is the prime responsibility of the Pakistan government to acknowledge the gravity of the situation within the country, and it must study all aspects of the threat in totality so that an effective strategy to combat this menace can be evolved and effectively implemented.

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